

Kartell

In its seventy-year history, Kartell has devoted great attention to research, innovation and technological development processes. Quality, design and industrial products have distinguished its progress over time, starting from functional objects for domestic use which revolutionised the history of post-WWII design, through to the creation of the most sophisticated products which team manufacturing technology with innovative materials like carbon and biopolymers. The company's history is intertwined with the dedication and passion of three generations who have been actively involved in the development and evolution of a brand that today comprises 150 Flagship stores, 850 Kartell spaces and 1,500 clients all over the world.

Founded by Giulio Castelli in 1949, in the early years Kartell took its first steps to produce the distinctive design that would come to epitomise the 'Made in Italy' label. From the outset, the company worked with the greatest designers and architects of the day, in particular Anna Castelli Ferrieri, Giulio's wife and one of the first female architects, plus Gino Colombini, Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Joe Colombo, Marco Zanuso, Gae Aulenti, Richard Sapper, Giotto Stoppino and Ignazio Gardella. In the '70s, Kartell also established an innovation centre devoted to communication, another aspect which the company always considered to be inextricably linked to the product development process in those years.

In 1988 the company was acquired by Claudio Luti, the son-in-law of Giulio and Anna Castelli who had a background in fashion. The sensibility that Luti had developed under the Versace fashion house, with a love for perfection and tasteful design, heralded a new start for the brand. Luti sought collaborations with designers and architects like **Philippe Starck, Ron Arad, Antonio Citterio, Ferruccio Laviani, Piero Lissoni, Patricia Urquiola, Mario Bellini, Alberto Meda and Vico Magistretti**, who were responsible for those products that soon came to symbolise the brand. The fresh approach to materials dictated the new direction and brought real turning points for Kartell: studying, manipulating and enriching materials resulted in an end product which, although made entirely of plastic, offered unprecedented characteristics. The Maui chair, Bookworm bookshelf, Battista and Gastone trolleys and Mobil drawer unit were products that all broke with tradition, advocating highly innovative design.

The turning point came when, after years of research and thanks to a revolutionary innovation, **in 1999 Kartell became the first company in the world to use polycarbonate to produce furnishing items.** The result was La Marie, a completely transparent chair with modern, minimalist design which paved the way for **Louis Ghost, still one of Kartell's best sellers today.** From that moment on, the company worked tirelessly to perfect and develop the theme of transparency that became its unique and original calling card; carrying on its research into surfaces and shapes, it embraced new technologies and high-performance materials that enabled it to create products like the Masters chair, the hi-tech Piuma chair which is ultra-lightweight and thin thanks to the use of carbon fibre, and the SmatriK armchair made with an innovative injection-moulding process that enables the creation of a three-dimensional structure. **Alongside the habitat division, Kartell relaunched its lighting division, writing a new chapter in the history of lighting design.** Lamps like FL/Y and Bourgie, and more recently Battery, Planet, Kabuki, Lantern and Space can be credited with shaping the brand's signature style and making it recognisable the world over.

Kartell today is a company that looks to the future, with Claudio Luti sharing the helm with his children Lorenza and Federico, who joined the firm from different professional backgrounds following their university studies. Today Lorenza is Marketing and Retail Director and Federico Commercial Director.

The company has expanded its horizons with new divisions and new product families, introducing new lines ranging from the soft line to another specifically designed for outdoors, as it continues to move with the times and evolve, also employing non-plastic materials and experimenting with new technologies.

Recounting a company's history requires one to trace the strategic trajectory, analyse the development stages and the corporate image. **Over its seventy-year history, while Kartell has never lost sight of its mission, it has shown an ability to change, anticipating changing tastes and the needs of a market and an international clientele adept at choosing and mixing. It was the first company to use plastic for furnishings, opting for high-end positioning and playing with colour.** It invented transparency and then moved on to textiles, working with fashion designers and artists of international renown, including Bob Wilson and Lenny Kravitz. It created fashion collections with Normaluisa, Alessandro dell'Acqua for N°21, Moschino, Christian Lacroix and Paula Cademartori and ventured into the world of Tableware, Bathroom accessories and Fragrances.

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To illustrate all this, in 1999 **Kartell opened a museum to celebrate fifty years** in business and recount the extraordinary relationship between plastic and design. In 2015 the museum underwent a refurbishment. Housing 1000 exhibits, the Kartell Museum is spread over an area of approximately 2500 m² located inside the grounds of the plant designed by Anna Castelli Ferrieri and Ignazio Gardella, in Noviglio. The highly original exhibition designed by Ferruccio Laviani offers visitors an immediate interpretation: the collection is arranged in chronological order across three floors and follows a synoptic table divided into the following categories: exhibitions, design, technology and communication.

While to recount its history Kartell avails of its own corporate museum, **to illustrate its present, the brand employs an eclectic and intense range of communications**, through exhibitions, displays, events and co-marketing activities that involve both the network of stores worldwide and social media channels. Kartell today is a company that looks to the future, an international, technological company focused on the development of retail and online distribution, customer service and growing the contract sector. For the past few years, Kartell communications have focused largely on the web, with the brand's official website and pages attracting an ever-growing number of fans and a high level of engagement and interaction, testifying to how deeply Kartell and its products resonate with the public.

Kartell flagship stores amplify the brand through special displays that change between four and six times per year, plus dedicated events staged during the week of the Salone del Mobile fair. The company's retail network of directly owned and franchise stores is constantly expanding, with ever-strategic openings in countries consolidating its global leadership. **"Kartell's strategy has always worked on multiple channels**, offering a consistent online and offline purchasing experience. The e-commerce platform was launched in 2014. The direct and indirect online retail network is global and today Kartell is also developing new partnerships for the USA and China.

Among the core values of Kartell today is an unwavering dedication to sustainability and protecting the environment, underlined through the industrial manifesto "Kartell loves the planet". Passion for excellence, which has guided Kartell's every move from the outset, has led the company to focus on environmental responsibility and good sustainability practices. The entire production process supply chain sees Kartell committed to safeguarding the environment and observing sustainability protocols. Every day, Kartell is directly and wholeheartedly involved in laying the foundations and building its story, which is the story of products designed and created thanks to partnerships and investments in technological innovation, creative solutions and new materials that deliver ever-better performance and eco-friendly credentials.

For further information:

Kartell - International Press Office - Tel. +39.02.900121 - Email: press@kartell.it