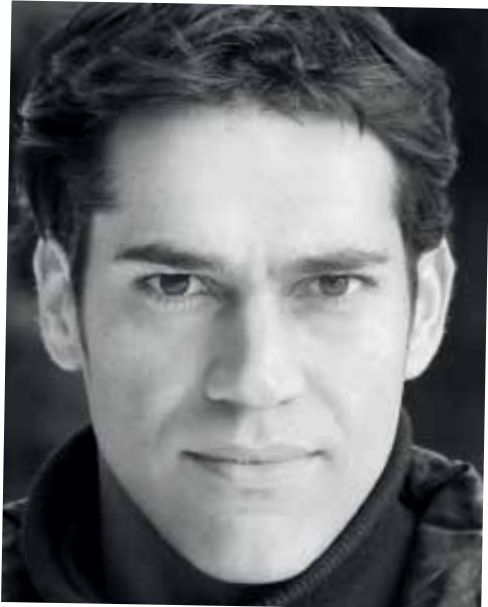


INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES: LUCA MARTORANO



By Kate Seamark

Luca Martorano is one of those people who really does seem to have it all. He freelances for some of the most prestigious design companies in Europe, earning his money by dreaming up a diverse range of beautiful, useful items, and taking pride in the quality of his creativity. He told Kate Seamark about his design work...

How do you describe your current design style?

In my design work I try to bear in mind the following four concepts:

1 Eclectic creations: I believe that working in many different fields and levels, facing different kinds of products and experimenting with different styles, makes it possible to transfer innovation and produce originality. So I like switching from a bicycle to a teaspoon, from a bathroom furniture collection to medical equipment, from a car component to a T-shirt. I switch from a concept of style to a totally technical one, from minimalist and sober pieces to decorative works. I believe that this generates originality and growth.

2 Adaptability: Our artificial world needs to be light, sober, transparent, sometimes even mimetic towards the environment we live in. We need to make products that give us more functionality and quality, by saving energy and being more efficient. To achieve this goal we need to take inspiration from nature. We have to adapt our products and our behaviour to it.





3 **Go back:** As many authors have written, the main challenge of our generation consists in switching from a model of society where the welfare of all countries is measured in terms of consumption increase, to a society where quality and durability should reduce production and consumption thus improving our lifestyle. This idea gives me a perspective: create excellent durable products, so that people buy objects they are fond of and never feel like replacing them. Hence the pursuit of a “transcendent” style, a functional look which is always up-to-date.

4 **“Less style more method”:** If I focus on a personal style sooner or later I end up coming into conflict between my point of view and the taste of the client, or a specific issue connected to the product. Instead, I start working without any style filters. I prefer following a method, which consists of analysing the functions of the required design in order to create a product that expresses those requirements and nothing more. When a single design is self-explanatory then it is the right one.

What projects are you currently working on?

A new bath collection called Neos, a plywood chair and table set, a new racing bicycle, two car wheels ranges using recycled aluminium, a watch, an electronic medical sensor system, and a collection of kitchen cutting boards.

How do you apply your design concepts to the Neos collection?

The Neos collection by Neutra is made of top-quality, durable and resistant materials which are very different from the culture of disposable sanitaryware. The collection is designed around each function and is so pure that its style will certainly be appreciated into the future. The materials are natural and selected in compliance with environmental requirements. The production is strictly made in Italy and combines advanced CNC milling machines with handmade details realised by qualified craftsmanship. Every piece can be customised by colour, wood, and stone.

What is the idea behind the Neos collection?

When we think about furniture made of stone, we still imagine heavy and bulky pieces. So the challenge in this case was creating a collection made of light, ethereal volumes. A contradiction apparently, but a positive soft visual impact actually relaxes our senses and makes us feel comfortable. If you look at the pieces, the main side of each component is flat and wide, but on the other sides a sophisticated deep cut eludes the perception of its real thickness. The supporting structure is in front of you, but you can hardly see it. The drawer fronts are simple and clean, but they don't seem to have a proper volume, like sheets of paper. Even the upper corners leave, in some cases, an empty line, which breaks the volume into two different planes, deconstructing the figure.

What has been the highlight of your career?

Actually, unlike soccer players, at 30 I hope the best is yet to come!



What is the best part of your job?

When you are in front of a white, empty piece of paper and you have to start creating an object which doesn't exist yet. And secondly, when, after many efforts you suddenly realise that the idea you came up with is about to be created, the prototype is in front of you and you tell it "oh, there you are!".

What tips can you give our readers about designing their dream bathroom?

First of all a bathroom must be functional; aesthetic factors must be considered only after having a clear idea of the purpose of every single part. But the bathroom is also the most intimate room of the house. I usually suggest concentrating on the personal habits, repeated actions, particular needs, rational aspects in general, but in this case I would

also take decisions driven by instinct and emotions. Each bathroom is personal, in some way it must represent our taste and reflect our personality.

Who are your favourite bathroomware designers and why?

In Italy we have many good bathroomware design examples. I like Ludovica + Roberto Palomba's work, and obviously Matteo Thun & Partner's approach, as they provided much of my training ground. However, I think real innovations come from young unpopular designers.

Are there any materials that you particularly like to use in a bathroom?

I appreciate real, natural materials. Water and stone, water and wood have always been a perfect match. The point is how these materials are treated and we

have to remember the modern criteria of hygiene and the fact that a good bathroom must be perfectly and easily cleaned. So what is important is also the finishing and the treatment of each surface.

What colours do you think work best in the bathroom?

What about a classic deep matt turquoise combined with walnut wood? Or a shocking polished fluorescent orange calmed by a dark grey veined stone? It doesn't matter what colours, what counts is the balance between them and the dialogue with other materials, and the shapes they cover. But I also think that towels and other objects confer an adequate note of colour to a black and white bathroom. **KBO**