

Interview with Emanuele Chicco Busnelli, Owner of NEUTRA

'One of the main challenges is finding the right retail partners who truly understand the brand'

In this exclusive interview, we talk to Emanuele Chicco Busnelli, the owner of NEUTRA, a company with over 140 years of rich history in the processing of marble and natural stone. Renowned for its strong Italian heritage, NEUTRA has entered a new chapter under Busnelli's leadership. He took ownership of the company in 2022, has brought a wealth of experience from his time at B&B Italia, shaping NEUTRA's trajectory with a bold vision that focuses on custom-made, sculptural furniture and collaborations with iconic designers. In this conversation, he shares insights on the company's evolution, the challenges facing the industry, and exciting future plans, including global expansion and upcoming product lines.



Left: Emanuele Chicco Busnelli. Right: La Grande Muraglia Outdoor Chaise Longue in collaboration with Mario Bellini.

Can you share more about the origins of the company and how your background and experience at B&B Italia influenced the direction of NEUTRA?

'In November 2022, I took over ownership of the company, renaming it NEUTRA, thus starting a new era of research focused on unique craftsmanship and a sophisticated concept of elegance, characterised by sculptural forms. This paved the way for a new generation of marble and stone furniture with a strong personality. It also marks a new chapter in NEUTRA's evolution, supported by the collaboration with the Migliore+Servetto design studio, which oversees the creative direction.

My extensive experience at B&B Italia has significantly influenced many of my decisions and continues to do so. I grew up at B&B Italia. As a child, my father, the company's founder, used to take me there to show me the projects they were working on. Later, I officially joined the company, taking responsibility for the Marine Division until 2003. I then expanded my role to include the Contract Division, and in 2011, I worked alongside my brother Giorgio to oversee the complete reorganisation of the company as CEO.

Over the years, I had the opportunity to dive deep into every area and business dynamic, collaborate with top international architects and designers, and refine the manufacturing process with a focus on meticulous attention to detail, always striving for the highest quality and durability in our products. My time at B&B Italia ended in 2015, but I had always been clear about what I wanted to achieve if I ever took over or launched a new company.

This clarity allowed me to build a well-defined strategy for NEUTRA, creating a brand with a unique style, targeting a select clientele that values refined products, a distinctive personality, and a high degree of customisation, including limited edition pieces.'



Limited edition dining table design in collaboration with Zaha Hadid Architects.

In what markets is NEUTRA active and how are the market conditions right now?

'Currently, we are active in Italy, the UK, Switzerland, Greece, the US, and soon in India, as part of a concept store project featuring top brands, set to launch by the end of the year. In the US, our presence is primarily in Los Angeles, but we foresee future developments in New York and Miami, with the Far East being a future target as well.'

What are some of the biggest challenges NEUTRA is currently facing in the furniture industry, and how is the company adapting to the current market conditions?

'NEUTRA has unique qualities that set it apart from many other renowned brands in the industry, so one of the main challenges is finding the right retail partners who truly understand the brand, its philosophy, and its values. We aim to build a highly niche and selective distribution network of design experts capable of interpreting NEUTRA's expertise in custom-made production and distributing exclusive pieces offered as limited editions, such as the new Minera table from the Erosion capsule collection, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects and limited to only eight pieces.'

At Milan Design Week this year, you revealed the Palm Flower project in Dubai with Foster + Partners. Can you tell us more about the project?

'NEUTRA was selected by Foster + Partners to create bespoke marble elements for the bathrooms in the 11 apartments of the new "Palm Flower" residential project in Dubai. This exclusive luxury building, envisioned by real estate developer Alpage Properties, is set to rise on the "trunk" of Palm Jumeirah, an artificial archipelago shaped like a palm tree, spanning 520 km and home to hotels, villas, and upscale apartments.

Foster + Partners, in collaboration with NEUTRA, designed the bathtub, basin, and wall-hung shelf, all carved by NEUTRA from Bianco Covelano marble, taking inspiration from the building's architectural silhouette.'

