



THE REFLEX STOVE BY MICHAEL GELDMACHER FOR MCZ: THE INVISIBLE ESSENTIAL

In the history of MCZ, a leading brand that produces stoves and fireplaces, 2019 will be remembered as one of the company's milestone years.

Despite being one of the brands in the heating sector that has distinguished itself most for its focus on design – it won the iF Design Award in 2010 – today, MCZ is taking a further step in this direction by teaming up with three prominent figures in the field of international design: Patricia Urquiola, Paola Navone and Michael Geldmacher, who designed some of the new products of 2019. These designers have one thing in common: none of them have ever worked in the fire sector. They decided to take different approaches to fire, based on their experience and personality, while still being open and curious, unbiased by preconceived notions – which are typical of those who experience something for the first time – and giving original and alternative perspectives.

Let's take a closer look at the projects by talking to those directly involved, starting with Michael Geldmacher and then with Andrea Brosolo, Marketing Manager of MCZ Group.



How does the decision to work with designers of the likes of Patricia Urquiola, Paola Navone and Michael Geldmacher fit into MCZ's strategy?

Andrea Brosolo: Working with designers with extensive experience in the furniture industry has allowed us to bring fire back to the forefront of the latest living trends. An increasing number of consumers want homes that are beautiful to live in, in a broad sense, therefore cosy, energy-efficient, healthy and sustainable. The revival of the domestic fire fits perfectly into this trend.

Michael Geldmacher designed Reflex, a stove that expresses the poetic and philosophical nature of fire. How did you decide that Geldmacher was the right designer for an MCZ stove?

Andrea Brosolo: We had already heard of Michael as he had worked on several interesting projects with Italian companies, especially with Kristalia, which we know very well as it is based not far from MCZ's headquarters. In fact, it was thanks to Kristalia that we got in touch with Michael. He was eager to step into a field that was completely new to him, right away. We were impressed by his original and holistic approach to the project. Before coming up with a proposal, Michael completely immersed himself in our world: he was interested in knowing every detail of our products, technologies and their daily use.



So Michael, what was it like to step into the fire sector for the first time?

Michael Geldmacher: It was a completely new world to me, and yet one full of inspiration and interesting discoveries. When embarking on a new project, it is best to do some research first, understand the client's world, set yourself a goal, know who your competitors are and know your target market, but especially to find a gap that needs to be filled, an opportunity to create something different.

From research to the project...

Michael Geldmacher: At first I considered stoves as merely aesthetic objects, and I wasn't thinking about their technological and functional aspects. The first questions I asked myself were: how can I come up with something new, beautiful and interesting in a world where it seems like everything has already been created? How can I create something special in a market where anything is possible? And, above all, how can I design a different and unique stove without just disguising it?

Is asking yourself questions the first thing you do when you embark on a project?

Michael Geldmacher: Yes, thinking is my preferred approach method: I always try to deal with an issue conceptually at first, and then in terms of design. Thinking outside the box, without straying too far from formal aspects: this balance is what leads to successful projects.

So, did you take a conceptual and almost philosophical approach when designing the Reflex stove?

Michael Geldmacher: While drawing conclusions from my research, I found an analogy between most stoves: whatever the shape of the stove, the flame remained the same. It's a technical matter: most pellet stoves work the same way, which is why the flames all look the same. So I wondered how I could change the nature of the flame without changing the technology, focusing more on the effect of the flame than on the flame itself. The reflection, light and flicker of the flame evoke powerful emotions and provide a sense of warmth, conviviality and safety: a warm home on a winter's night, a warm light in the corridor, lava and blazing steel express the primal power of fire. Or even a distant cave in the middle of the night: you can't see the cave, but just the flicker and the reflection of a fire. That is how I realised that it is not the visible, but the invisible that arouses emotions and stimulates the imagination.



How did you then go about creating the object?

Michael Geldmacher: In the initial phase, we tried experimenting abstractly to understand the nature of reflection and shadow in order to find the ideal light diffusion, from both an emotional and a technical point of view. We then went on to experiment with different materials and objects: coffee machines, colanders, perforated ladles, grills of all kinds, and even blades, which created the best effect. In the end, we made our first prototype, which is something I always find very exciting. It is the first time that ideas become reality, the first time that models, drawings and renderings get a “reality check”. Paper is very patient, as they say in German. Three-dimensional animations and Photoshop disguise things easily and create an illusion, whereas with steel, aluminium and all authentic materials there is no room for inaccuracies or fanciful ideas. So we, as designers, are dependent on specialists and engineers and their expertise. It was a pleasure for me to work with leading specialists, who not only helped me find solutions to technical problems but also solve aesthetic issues. Sometimes I really struggle to convince the technical department that details are necessary, but I immediately got along with the people at MCZ. Designer and engineer think alike.

Andrea Brosolo: Reflex was the result of a long series of experiments, which I believe perfectly reflect Michael’s personality. He enjoys experimenting, which in this case involved playing with shapes, materials and colours. Once the best solution was found, Michael worked closely with our designers to complete the prototype. Our product is quite technical and has several limitations. High temperatures, smoke expulsion, the pellet hopper and, last but not least, heating capacity are a major hindrance to creativity. I have to say that Michael and our engineers got along very well right from the beginning, which allowed us to overcome obstacles while taking care of all the aesthetic details.



How can design positively influence the world we live in?

Michael Geldmacher: Design should bring about change in society and has the potential to do so. But not if it only feeds people's vanity and their need to stand out from the crowd. Ideally, design should always be approached with an awareness of the world's current problems, that is, pollution, waste of resources and lack of education. A good level of education is what allows us to make decisions for the good of society, and, by creating good products, as designers we can play a role in education.

Andrea Brosolo: In my opinion, design is the most effective mean of persuading an increasingly large number of consumers to choose eco-friendly, sustainable and energy-efficient products. A product can't be "good" just because it doesn't use fossil fuels: aesthetic quality is also a key component of a "good product". As a result, environmental performance and cutting-edge, attractive design are set to become the ideal combination.

You can download the images presented in the press release and the text by clicking on the following link:

http://www.ergo-online.it/press/MCZ_Interview_Geldmacher.zip

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