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Design Driven

The auto industry offers a fresh product perspective

The kitchen and bath industry is no stranger to collaboration. But while partnerships typically occur between manufacturers and celebrity designers—take, for instance, the work of Philippe Starck for Duravit and Axor—another more exotic alliance has been taking place—that of the kitchen/bath company and the luxury car manufacturer/designer.

So, why the connection between these two somewhat disparate entities? In a word, reputation. Known for creating sleek, sexy, state-of-the-art machines, high-end car manufacturers and designers are offering more than just a car...they're selling status and, for some, the dream. And for kitchen and bath companies looking to reach new ranks of consumers, partnerships with the stars of the automobile industry can bring the same sense of craftsmanship and sex appeal to their brand.

For Poggenpohl, collaboration with Porsche Design for its P'7340 kitchen was appealing due to "their reputation for design, technology, performance and quality, as well as their loyal customer following," said Ted Chappell, president of Poggenpohl U.S., Inc. For other companies, such as Pedini, which is producing a Lamborghini kitchen (available Q1 2009), the partnership also "connects two great names," explained Amir Ilin, the company's sales manager for North and Central America, and establishes a bond between like-minded firms with similar values and philosophies.

NEW HORIZONS

But behind the famous names is a history of innovation, and of creating products from an entirely different and, according to Chappell, "untainted" perspective. Snaidero, which has worked with Pininfarina (the Italian design house of Ferrari fame) for many years on its kitchens, including Ola, Viva (no longer in production), Idea, Acropolis and Venus, wished to "break the traditional mold to offer products that would feature the very best in technological innovation and cutting-edge design,

to find new creative solutions to the organization of life in the kitchen,"

said Dario Snaidero, president and CEO of Snaidero USA.

Pininfarina Extra, Pininfarina's industrial design studio, has been busy in the kitchen and bath arena, establishing relationships with not only Snaidero, but Jacuzzi (for its Morphosis line) and Gorenje (for its Pininfarina Black Collection of appliances), too. In addition, Scavolini partnered with Giugiaro Design, creator of popular models for Alfa Romeo, BMW and Fiat, for its Flux kitchen.



INSPIRED DESIGNS

All of these collaborations have borne some truly inspiring products, some of which embody the essence of the automobile. Poggenpohl's Porsche kitchen uses aluminum titanium, carbon fiber is used in Scavolini's Flux kitchen and Snaidero's round Acropolis kitchen features a "sandwiched," lightweight aluminum structure. The refrigerator in Gorenje's

Numerous companies have partnered with Pininfarina (the Italian design house of Ferrari fame). One of them is Jacuzzi, whose resulting Morphosis line includes the Alpha tub (left). Located near luxury car painting facilities, Bertazzoni has its ranges (inset) painted alongside Lamborghinis, Ducatis and Ferrari components.



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Pininfarina Black Collection of appliances has a Quick-View window, much like the see-through engine hoods used in some of Pininfarina's high-end car designs. Other design elements include bright "racing" colors, lacquered finishes and car-inspired shapes. As Roberto Gramacioni, export manager at Scavolini, noted about the Flux kitchen, "A futuristic initial sketch, inspired by car design, led to drafting a proposal for contemporary and trendy environments with soft and sinuous lines."

As for product manufacturing, Bertazzoni is taking advantage of automotive painting techniques. Painted alongside Lamborghinis, Ducati motorcycles and Ferrari components, its ranges are completed with a hand-applied finish, which not only makes them durable, but also "gives the depth to the surfaces that no other



Snaidero wished to break the mold of traditional kitchen design by partnering with Pininfarina on five kitchens, including Idea (top). For the Lamborghini kitchen (above left), Pedini asked that its popular Integra kitchen be re-styled. Poggenpohl's Porsche kitchen (above right) was designed with the male perspective in mind.

treatment can do," explained Paolo Bertazzoni, company president. "It gives the product an unmistakable luxurious touch."

And luxury is what it's all about. Buyers of these high-end products are, according to Snaidero, "highly educated, design-savvy opinion-makers, ultra-affluent customers who like to travel the world and have a fondness for European products." They also view their belongings as a reflection of their personality and are "not afraid to define their own personal luxury and feel a sense of exclusivity in everything they do."

For Jacuzzi, whose Morphosis line was designed by Pininfarina, these products are simply "great designs targeted toward the discerning luxury customer," said Thomas D. Koos, company president

and CEO. However, Poggenpohl's Porsche kitchen is targeted a little more specifically—to affluent and design-savvy men. As Chappell said, "It was designed with the male perspective in mind. Men play an integral role in the kitchen today and we created a new marketplace with kitchens for men."

Whatever the end goal, these collaborations are creating innovative and exclusive products that combine superior design and advanced technology. For companies looking to branch out, a dual-industry partnership may pave the way toward new markets on both sides—a win-win situation for all. ■

—Sallie Moffat