

DESIGN

# MAGIC AND LOGIC



Architect and Designer Monica Armani was in Cyprus at the invitation of Ergo Home Group for the recent opening of the B&B Italia single brand showroom in Nicosia. Here, she reveals her sources of inspiration and explains her unique approach to creating timeless designs in a range of media.

By Athena Yiazou

**W**here do you usually find inspiration and how do you successfully combine function and beauty in your designs?  
I believe that the first quality of those who are creative is curiosity and I have trained myself to observe everything around me and live every moment of my life. For everything that attracts my attention and suggests some emotion – from a small object to a building’s architecture – I make an assessment; I try to understand how it was designed and built and to imagine why it was made in this specific way. This endlessly feeds a sort of personal archive that is always in progress. I then combine this process with my observation of nature and this has often helped me define a new design. It is the convergence of all these experiences that leads me to create my projects, in which I am always looking to combine design and function.

**What aspects of your life have shaped your design principles and style?**

Returning to the subject of observation skills, I have been particularly lucky. I was born and raised in an international style. My father is a rationalist architect who completed his studies in the United States in the 1960s and our homes have always been furnished with pieces that have contributed to the history of design. My father taught me to observe these pieces and understand their design from when I was a child. This was the introduction that allowed me to start my career and then have the opportunity to work with big brands by creating bestsellers that enable me to continue growing.

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**Are there any other designers whose work you especially admire?**

I like to think that my designs reference the Bauhaus school and represent a crossover between “less is more” by Mies van der Rohe and the genius of the design of Arne Jacobsen.

**Can you tell us more about your unique ‘Design in Molecules’ approach?**

DNA is defined as the basic and distinctive qualities, or molecules, of a person or thing. These molecules are fixed and immutable. Similarly, I thought of defining some molecules, which I believe should participate in my creative process. Years of experience have allowed me to identify these molecules and convince myself that, for me, any successful project lies in their disciplined application. Of course, like any successful marriage, it takes the right mix of magic and logic to create this special alchemy of molecules.

**You work closely with your husband, Luca Dallabetta. Are there challenges in combining your professional and personal lives and, if so, what are some of the ways you have found to overcome them?**

I have told you about my creative process, which is also possible thanks to my husband. Having lived through many experiences together and by sharing our life and passions, we have reached an understanding that allows each of us to access our creativity in a very fluid way. During the development process of a new project, we have an understanding that often goes beyond words. Sometimes, confrontation may also be strong but then we quickly arrive at a synthesis that convinces both of us and expresses our vision. It is great fun as we quickly move from ‘storm’ to ‘quiet’, often thanks to a good glass of wine or a walk in our beloved Dolomites.

**What are some of the current trends in your areas of speciality that have particularly captured your attention?**

One is surely the great demand in today’s market for outdoor fur-

niture. The possibility has been created to think up and propose sophisticated, highly emotional, exclusive furnishings, created to set up new places to experience outdoor spaces. This theme has always fascinated me very much and, over the years, I have created objects with a lot of charm for the outdoor world. With the latest collection for B&B Italia, Allure O’ and Flair O’ Outdoor, I think I have created objects that will surely be the protagonists in the world’s most beautiful terraces and gardens.

**From your experience, are there certain design concepts that usually resonate more with consumers? If so, can you give some examples?**

One is balance. I think that some companies and their designers often propose collections that mistakenly try to emulate the world of fashion, focusing on some extreme design rather than colour combinations, without thinking about the long life that a piece of furniture has. In reality, the objects proposed by the brands I work for become a success when they are at least 10 years old and some of them achieve it after more than 50 years. And this is thanks to the balance in every sense that any long-selling item must have inherent in its DNA.

**Can you tell us more about your cooperation with Ergo Home Group here in Cyprus? For example, will you be showcasing specific projects and/or products?**

The Ergo Home Group team that invited me to Cyprus and with whom I have been working have shown great professionalism and competence. Their long experience in the world of kitchens bears witness to their organisation and service skills. The collaboration with B&B Italia confirms their choice to act as highly qualified interlocutors in the world of design. The event dedicated to me was an opportunity to present my new Allure O’ and Flair O’ Outdoor collections for B&B Italia, which introduce unique designs and materials. They are inspired by the 1960s and the O’ is a tribute to Jackie Onassis, the undisputed icon of style and elegance of that era. **G**