

## **Interview with Marcel Wanders and Gabriele Chiave (Creative Director at Marcel Wanders) about the Circus Collection for Alessi**

### **1. How did the collaboration between Marcel Wanders & Alessi come about?**

Marcel Wanders: Since its beginning, Alessi has been the standard for excellence in the area of kitchenware, particularly with stainless steel. Alessi is a company that creates with integrity. They have been known to make prototype after prototype until they perfectly express the vision of the designer. I wanted to collaborate with them in the deepest roots of their company, but do so in a way that brings an innovative approach to stainless steel while adding another level of creativity. Knowing this we explored how we could merge colour and stainless steel in fun, unexpected and unique ways. We were very inspired by the challenge of combining the functionality of kitchenware with the imagination and pageantry of the circus. With the concept of the circus, and the surprising display it's known for, we were able to bring colourful delight and energy to what Alessi has built its reputation upon.

### **2. What is the design concept behind the Alessi Circus collection?**

Marcel Wanders: The circus is that sensory experience that never leaves you. It's magical. It's mystical. It's larger than life. That's what we capture in this collection – that one-of-a-kind spectacle. The concept throughout the pieces borrows from the historical, unexpected symbols from the circus universe resonating an experience of wonder and amusement. In addition to this, our goal was to create collectible heirlooms.

Gabriele Chiave: Indeed, as we see them, these products are the new antiques. They are a family of playful objects for the whole family. The circus universe offers us so many angles into the design from bold, geometric patterns of circles, stripes, conic shapes to dynamic colours such as white, black, yellow, red and gold. The elements are wildly engaging and festive. Our collection is unequivocally designed to bring smiles and delight.

### **3. What items are part of the Alessi Circus collection?**

Gabriele Chiave: The kitchenware collection includes plates, trays and bowls made of stainless steel, as well as ceramic bowls of varying sizes and mugs. We also created tinplate and glass storage containers. The items we designed lend themselves very well to the bold patterns and surprising colours of the circus. In addition to the kitchenware, we also designed a special set of circus characters, as functional as they are entertaining. These unique personalities complete this circus collection – bringing the perfect touch, smile and magic to the table. This collection is a set of keepsakes that will be loved and cherished and kept by people forever.

Marcel Wanders: However, these are not just plates and mugs and bowls. The character group includes a set of five distinct classical kitchen tools as specially-made sculptures. Each has its own fantastical personality and purpose. The Candyman collects sweets. The Strongman is a nutcracker. The Jester is a corkscrew. The Ballerina balances atop a musical box, rotating on a ball to avoid a small, scary mouse. And The Ringleader is a call bell symbolizing the ringmaster of the circus, being transported by a monkey chasing a banana. When you look into all the detailing it is bewildering!

### **4. Which item(s) is (are) the most iconic for you?**

Marcel Wanders: The kitchen tool characters are truly iconic. Each has their own captivating personality and express the fantastical individual personas that make the first, and most lasting,

impression upon you at the circus. With high quality and expressive details, they bring the whole circus collection to life.

Gabriele Chiave: Which is why as collectibles, they truly become family heirlooms that are passed down from generation to generation. As Marcel says, we delightfully expanded on the eccentricity of the circus, making the experience unforgettable!

## **5. What sets this collection apart in terms of your design language?**

Marcel Wanders: What's important to keep in mind is that we created a new design language for Alessi, highlighting the decoration on stainless steel, the traditional material used by this Italian company. Since 2012, with the Fatman, the coloured stainless steel has become a revelation and with it we created an entirely new collection for Alessi. Furthermore, what helps set this collection apart is the circus itself. The iconic patterns and bold colours of the circus relate well to what we do in our studio. We often use bold graphic elements – colours, shapes and patterns – to create a contrast that stirs emotions. And nothing moves people like when they are surprised.

Gabriele Chiave: I couldn't agree more. The circus inherently offered us a grandiose presence that we were able to bring to plain stainless steel. It has always been our goal to create and design quality products that serve those who use them. Making products that work and bring meaning to their life is essential and is part of our DNA as a studio. This collection accomplishes that purpose but becomes spectacular when designed to evoke unexpected wonder.

## **6. How long did it take you to develop this collection and what was the biggest challenge? (and why)**

Marcel Wanders: This collection was an amazing undertaking. We worked on the entire set for five years. From a concept standpoint, I think our challenges actually came from ourselves and our desire to create something outstanding, worthy of the Alessi brand and the expectation we have ourselves. We made every effort to make the right decisions on patterns and colours that would express the unique atmosphere of the circus and work perfectly with stainless steel. Another challenge was finding the right way to design and manufacture coloured stainless steel. Innovating and reimagining what they have done so well for so long required a lot of time testing and exploring possible solutions.