



# Vincenzo

DE COTIIS

EMOTIONALLY RAW, INTENTIONALLY IMPERFECT,  
HISTORICALLY WISE BUT ALWAYS CURRENT, THIS ITALIAN'S  
WORK IS DETAILED, LUSH, AND EXPRESSED USING A  
SINGULAR VOICE THAT REFERENCES ART, CULTURAL  
AESTHETICS, AND BEYOND.

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VINCENZO DE COTIIS

Italy has always been a thrilling hub of design, art, and architecture, where the historical and ancient meet the most experimental modern prototypes. Perhaps there’s nowhere more vital than Milan—home of the annual Salone del Mobile—the international furniture fair that takes place every April and sees the entire city immersed in design exhibitions from around the world.

The city is also home to the architect, designer, and sculptor Vincenzo de Cotiis. His studio of 15 architects and designers is situated directly in Milan’s center and focuses on a variety of projects, ranging from retail concept stores to private residences, restaurants, and hotels. He also launched Progetto Domestico in 2004, his limited edition furniture and lighting collection made using mostly recycled materials, including fiberglass, brass, wood, leather, and iron. A gallery space next to de Cotiis’s studio showcases these and other one-of-a-kind works.

Research and experimentation are de Cotiis’s creative guides—and the reason why he is looked on as such a leading light in the design world today. His desire to understand and investigate the context of a project (its setting, its history, and more) combined with a fearless sense of risk-taking has ultimately led him to his unique aesthetic, a clear theme that runs throughout his work: simultaneously raw, imperfect, and yet incredibly sumptuous, which together creates something captivatingly intense. The key to his look is the sensitive mix of materials with light and space, and a glorious reveal of what was once there: original paint colors, plaster, or wooden flooring, if he’s working within the confines of an old building, and then blending it with what’s modern and discreetly functional. De Cotiis’s skill then lies in the beautiful detailing of the materials he brings in: brass that’s been polished

just so, vintage wood that’s been treated and refashioned into something sculptural, his curation of art and lighting, his original furniture, and beautiful vintage pieces.

Having grown up in the north of Italy, his mother, says de Cotiis, had incredible taste and a great love of art, which heavily influenced him. As a child, his love was drawing. “It’s a primordial passion for form and beauty, I guess,” he explains. “I have always been deeply inspired by art and architecture. Artistic movements and cultural aesthetics influence me more than specific people. I get inspiration from everything; certainly my design process undergoes countless intellectual stimuli, which I often only recognize retrospectively once something is completed.”

This sense of “inspiration from everything” extends beyond the visual to the historical and tactile, creating complex emotional reactions. “I’m passionate about everything used, as often within my work, layers of material from the past coexist with forms and new modernist surfaces,” he explains. “It is a learned game of assembly and respect between the parts. Most of the time I don’t even establish a streamlined path, but rather an unexpected process that unfolds slowly.”

Colors and materials, too, are subtle and inviting in de Cotiis’s hands. “I have a fondness for the coloring processing itself. So when it comes to using velvet for a sofa, I wash it, dye it, and rewash it until I get the nuance I’m looking for. Precisely like wall surfaces for example; very often after a first coat of paint I intervene to remove, lighten, or wash the surface.”

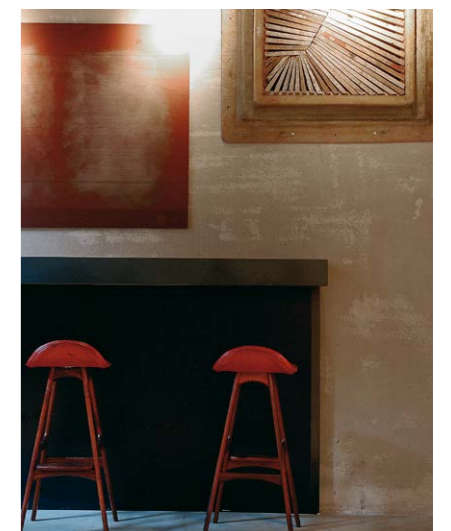
Which is precisely the sense you get as you enter any of his environments—the process and care taken to achieve a result. Straf hotel in Milan is one such example. Set within a 19th-century palazzo, this is

#### Side Notes:

NAME *Vincenzo de Cotiis*  
COMPANY NAME *Vincenzo de Cotiis Architects*  
COMPANY HEADQUARTERS *Milan*  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN COMPANY *15*  
WEBSITE *decotiis.it & progettodomestico.com*  
SIGNATURE PROJECTS *Milan: Straf; Aesop store, Brera; Excelsior Milano; Krizia flagship store; T’a Milano; Antonia store, Brera Paris: Caffè Burot for Thierry Costes; Aesop store; Hotel Saint-Marc Shenzhen, China: private apartment*

#### Significant Awards:

2016 *Wallpaper\* Design Awards, Best Lair for Baxter “Fold” sofa*  
2015 *Wallpaper\* Design Awards, Best Grid for “DC1406” lamp*  
2008 *Toscana ADI Design Index, nomination for “Golden Cage”*



*At Straf hotel, in Milan, richly textured paintings add warmth and depth to a cool industrial interior that’s defined by a raw, eclectic mix of cement, bronze, burnished brass, and gunmetal.*



1



2



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Courtesy of Vincenzo de Cotiis Architects.



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5

1 Edgy vistas, tall arches, clear geometric lines, and partly unfinished walls define de Cotiis's remarkable Antonia store in Milan.

2 For this private residence in Milan, de Cotiis used rich dark woods for the floors and ceilings, then connected them with lighter woods, white walls, and warm textures.

3 For the Aesop store in Milan's historic Brera neighborhood, de Cotiis used a neutral palette of pale peach on both walls and the ceiling, while the balustrade and concrete floor are in a matching soft gray hue.

4 For the Italian brand Krizia, de Cotiis created a moody, almost stark boutique with sleek onyx and reflective mirroring in a lofty space that calls to mind an art gallery.

5 As part of Progetto Domestico, his limited edition furniture and lighting collection, de Cotiis crafted this one-of-a-kind cabinet.

where deconstruction and construction collide perfectly to create something exciting as well as luxurious and comfortable.

“When I started working on the Straf, the concept of boutique hotels was still in its infancy. The client was an enlightened person who offered me carte blanche to create the balances and dissonances: the rough with the smooth, the precious coupled with the poor. Everything comes together to create an original and inspiring atmosphere,” explains de Cotiis. “As a hotel guest myself, I definitely look for originality. I’m not interested in hotels that are over-designed or over-decorated, but neither those that are too minimal. I look for a story, cultivated references in harmony with comfort.”

De Cotiis’s design process is intriguing as he creates almost every piece of furniture himself. “It is very rare that we use furniture that is already in production; it’s more likely that we use high-quality vintage pieces (often anonymous) but that’s it. Especially for residential projects, we tend to design even the light fixtures.” His busy studio selects projects that it feels will best represent its approach. “For example, in a space like Aesop (the Australian skincare brand known for its use of plant-based ingredients), various spirits coexist, the very evident sculptural aspect, just like with the Krizia boutique or the private homes that we have designed.

The artistic component is the drive towards what we aim to do.”

Of note, is the Excelsior Milano, an expansive seven-floor, hi-tech, multi-brand lifestyle store in a former cinema, which de Cotiis designed in concert with the architectural work of Jean Nouvel. In late 2015 he created a new Milan flagship store for fashion brand Krizia, which showcases perfectly his love of unexpected materials, such as recycled fiberglass. His work for luxury confectioners T’a Milano stands out for its voluptuous velvet seating, marble floors, and brass lighting, while in contrast, the Victoria Palace, a wellness hotel in Cattolica, on Italy’s east coast, has a more earthy, calming atmosphere, since total relaxation and escape is paramount here.

Though his studio has many projects running concurrently, and his Progetto Domestico collection now shows in international galleries, de Cotiis’s hopes for the future include, “dedicating myself to global architecture that has a cultural function, such as a museum of contemporary art.” Given the unique confluence of wide-open spaces, intimate viewing areas, historical contexts, and showplaces for modernity that a museum commands—elements all on display in de Cotiis’s work—there’s no reason to believe that his dream won’t be realized very soon.

Text: Becky Sunshine