

Pioneering the future

At the CSD 2020, Filippi 1971 will present several examples of products made in composite material, including new postforming super light wall units laminated with real wood veneer in high gloss finish. It is an anticipation of future productions with which the Bergamo's company is ready to revolutionize the RV sector.

The innovative postforming high-gloss doors made of super light composite materials laminated with real wood veneer

Words Renato Antonini



Always operating in the industrial furniture sector, Filippi 1971 entered the RV world in 2001 with the activity of laminating wood-based panels: increasingly consolidated, the Italian company has become one of the leading businesses at a global level. But it is in 2016 that Filippi 1971 started a new journey, adding other types of production to the traditional ennobling activity. VittEr® was created, the compact laminate produced in Berbenno with high performance and potentials also for the RV sector; then the internal joinery shop was opened, where complete furniture kits for campers and caravans are impeccably made; finally, the production of components in composite materials was started, bringing real innovation into a sector anchored to old building techniques. All this

succeeding in combining the supplies for the RV manufacturers with interventions in other sectors. *"The experience matured in half a century of activity has allowed us to face various changes, - says Francesca Filippi, marketing manager at Filippi 1971 - which have made the company grow and master some challenges that were once unthinkable, such as the introduction of composite materials in the RV industry. We are no longer just a manufacturing company, but an enterprise capable of also working as a consultant alongside OEMs, offering services as partners for complex design projects. And I think that one of our main assets is that we are very active in different areas, for example in the nautical and residential and contract furniture sectors. The RV industry still represents 70% of our turnover and it benefits from the stimuli deriving from the integration between different sectors".*



Ivo Bolis and Francesca Filippi



Company Profile

Founded almost 50 years ago and active in the furniture industry ever since, FILIPPI 1971 firmly fits into the recreational vehicle world in 2000, starting to supply laminated lightweight panels to motorhome and caravan manufacturers around the world. In 2013, the partnership with the entrepreneur Giorgio Levoni opens to a new phase of consolidation and expansion that sees, among other initiatives, the launch of a new production line using the digital printing for the customization of the panel surface. At the end of 2016, the relentless activity of FILIPPI 1971 R&D delivers VittEr®, the new generation compact laminate which is highly customizable in the design and texture, is scratch-, fire-, and water-resistant and 100% formaldehyde-free. At the beginning of 2017 a new building is set up exclusively for the manufacturing of complete furniture kits; the cabinet making has then been completed with the production of curved doors and any kind of special components, taking the range of action even broader than ever. The RV industry is the core business for FILIPPI 1971 but its activity is extended also to alternative niche markets which always push them to innovate, thanks also to the "FILIPPI Lab" R&D department recently enlarged and equipped with an autoclave featured in the composite products area. Today FILIPPI 1971 delivers to more than 20 countries worldwide.

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Super light postforming doors in real wood veneer with high gloss finish

Innovations are often introduced on high-end products and then move on to lower market segments. Filippi 1971 developed a series of doors in composite material, derived directly from a project for the nautical sector. These are very high-level processes which will initially be reserved for motorhomes in the highest market segment. *"We have developed new doors for the wall units made of composite material, - explains Ivo Bolis, sales manager of Filippi 1971 - doors that have unique characteristics: they are super light, laminated with real wood veneer and finished in high gloss post forming. We are certainly talking about a product with medium-high positioning, but thanks to the use of composites we have been able to optimize resources: if we had made them with more traditional systems, for example with expanded polystyrene inside the sandwich core, paradoxically we would have had higher costs. With these doors, real wood becomes the protagonist again and the concept is to bring the best cabinet-making processes on an industrial scale".* The new postforming doors by Filippi 1971 have a surface layer of real wood veneer applied onto a composite material support. The wood is painted to give resistance and protection to UV rays, achieving an exceptional aesthetic result. As it is known, the glossy finish is the most difficult effect to obtain in the RV sector. Furthermore, the new doors can be drilled at any point without needing to identify a frame, thus allowing high-strength gluing to be used for fixing the various accessory elements. *"We are mixing different technologies with various kinds of products, working in multiple sectors, - Francesca Filippi explains - for example we have just made some carbon fiber battens for the sails of racing boats. I think that combining skills from different sectors is very interesting and helps us achieve excellent results from an aesthetic and technical point of view, aiming to save weight significantly. There are all the conditions for industrial optimizations centered on the RV sector".*

Below: VittEr Lite kitchen top evolution

On the right: carbon fiber rear seat belt structure

The composite kitchen top

Last year the concept of a kitchen top in VittEr Lite, the new composite material by Filippi 1971, was presented at "Interzum", the international furniture components fair in Cologne, and then at the Düsseldorf Caravan Salon 2019 and it was quickly chosen to equip motorhome models of the Trigano group. Now we are witnessing an evolution of the project: in the first version the sink was made of steel, fixed under the top, now instead the sink and worktop are made in one single mold. *"We are working to offer complete kitchen tops - says Ivo Bolis - that also integrate the cooking unit, allowing maximum design flexibility. We are already at an advanced stage with the fire resistance tests and are very enthusiastic about the next developments and steps".*

The structure for seat belts

"Today the iron support structure of the seat belts is the heaviest element of a camper after the chassis - says Francesca Filippi - and this is why we have set ourselves the primary objective of revolutionizing this element. We are able to do this using our autoclave and light composite materials". The resistance of carbon fiber and other advanced materials do not require binding geometries, the support element of the seat belts could be designed with different shapes from the current ones and perhaps integrate parts of the furniture or even technical-plant elements. With composite materials the structure of the seat belts has a significantly lower weight and can have a different shape that would allow to optimize the internal spaces and reduce the working hours for the assembly, also because if it integrates other technical or furnishing elements it would count as one piece to mount instead of two or three. The advantages would therefore be noteworthy.



The new autoclave for composite materials