



50 years of challenges: the spirit of a legacy

The Berbenno company celebrates its first 50 years by looking at the successes achieved, but above all at the resilience it has been able to demonstrate in difficult times, as well as the ability to reinvent itself, always setting new goals. Today it is a world-renowned company in the production of semi-finished and finished products for the furnishing of RVs

Words Renato Antonini

A fiftieth anniversary from its foundation is always an important point of arrival for a company: it tells about a maturity achieved with strength, courage and resourcefulness of the people who created it and made it grow. Filippi 1971 has reached this important milestone, the year of foundation being an integral part of the name itself and symbolizing half a century of activity.

Foundation and development

Many years ago, Ernesto Filippi and his wife Vittoria set up a small turning shop in Berbenno, in the Imagna Valley, a mountainous area in northern Italy in the Bergamo district. It was July 17, 1971. The company, which was then called Filippi Ernesto snc, grew with the production of semi-finished products in solid wood: until the mid-90s it was engaged in the supply of lathe-worked elements, such as table and chair legs, tailor-made for internationally renowned furniture companies.

"My grandparents were able to seize the opportunities of an avant-garde furniture sector in Italy, becoming suppliers for top-quality companies, - says Francesca Filippi, granddaughter of the founders and current Sales and Marketing Manager of Filippi 1971

- but they also had one practical spirit: by exploiting processing waste, they were the first to create wooden curtain rings. Millions and millions of these rings came out of the Berbenno factory every year. Even then, the company had an ante-litteram idea of sustainability that continues today".

For the company these were years of hard work but also of excellent results, until at the end of the 1990s a great crisis in the wood-furniture supply chain came unexpectedly.

The RV revolution

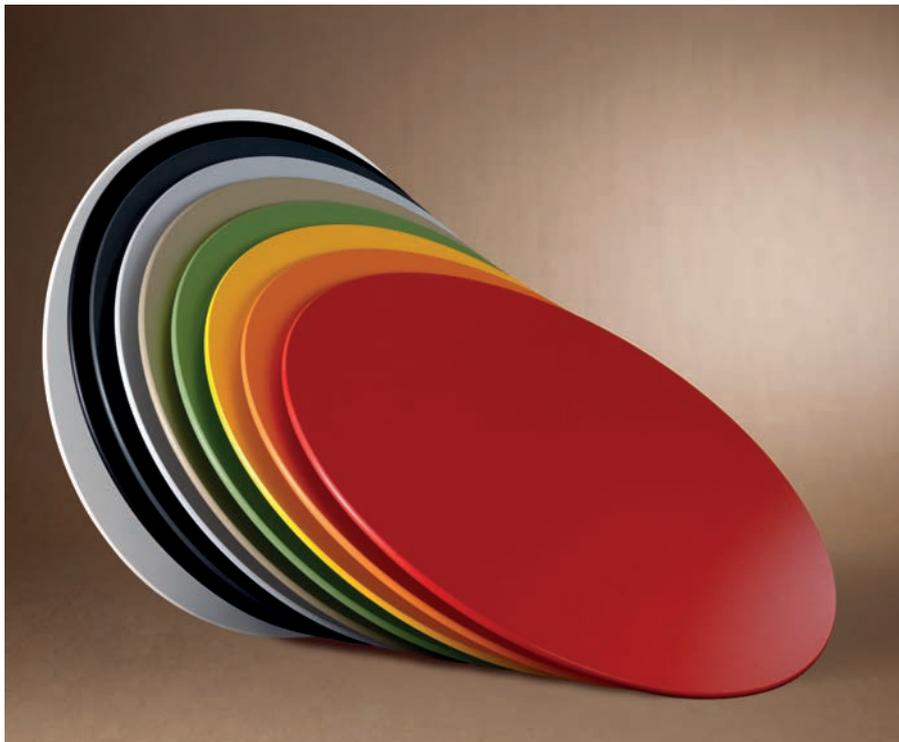
"Those were difficult years - the brothers Gino and Salvatore Filippi, respectively President and CEO of Filippi 1971, as well as sons of the founders, explain to us - but fortunately the critical phase lasted only a few years".

At the beginning of the New Millennium, in fact, the company saw a possibility of an outlet in the RV sector. But this meant changing production processes considerably, passing from the production of elements created on the lathe to the more sophisticated laminated plywood panels.

"We had great courage - continue Gino and Salvatore Filippi - we threw ourselves into a new adventure with the desire of giving con-

tinuity to our company reinventing ourselves". A new plant was built and new machinery purchased: in mid-2001 the production of laminated panels began. The company, which in those years was called Filippi Legnami (still keeping some business in the timber trade), took all the necessary steps to enter the sector head-on at an international level: in 2003 the first participation in the Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf, which worked as a springboard





VittEr®: high performance material

In 2016 the R&D department of Filippi 1971 created VittEr®, a new generation compact laminate for the interior and outdoor design. VittEr® is a very resistant waterproof and fire-proof paper-based full-color material, available from 2 to 30 mm, that does not require edging. The layers can be customized as desired and the top surfaces can be customized with digital printing. VittEr® is FSC®-certified, it is formaldehyde-free and it is suitable for direct contact with food. Perfect in the kitchen and bathroom areas, it is a surprisingly versatile material with the additional characteristic of being antibacterial, thanks to the production with silver ions.

Fun fact: the name VittEr® is the acronym of the first names of the company founders, Vittoria and Ernesto.

towards the markets of Australia and New Zealand. After the experience with these distant markets, supplies to European companies arrived as well, thanks also to the appreciation for the Italian poplar plywood used. A new phase of development began in 2013 thanks also to the cooperation with the entrepreneur Giorgio Levoni: the product range was expanded and both melamine panels and digital printing were introduced to be able to offer customization to the clientele. The joinery department was opened in 2017: the company was no longer just a manufacturer of laminated panels, but also an integrated partner for RV builders, being able to supply complete furniture kits. Shortly thereafter, the production of curved doors began in the expanded joinery department, further widening the offer. In a surprising crescendo, in recent years Filippi 1971 has also given life to two decidedly advanced projects: the creation of the VittEr® compact laminate (see Box) and the opening of a Research and Development department dedicated to the processing of advanced composite materials serving the RV and the boat

industry, as well as the design field.

"In a few years the company has grown in size and turnover, - explains Ivo Bolis, Sales Manager of Filippi 1971 - because it had the courage to expand its offer and invest in new areas. Today 70% of our growing turnover derives from the RV sector".

The capacity for innovation is not limited to the RV world: the continuous process of renewal of the company, with a precise business project followed by the architecture studio Basaglia + Rota Nodari, has led Filippi 1971 to approach the world of design furniture by collaborating with architects and designers, creating the Vit-

tEr Design® by Filippi 1971 brand.

"We will exhibit at the 2023 edition of the Salone del Mobile in Milan - says Francesca Filippi in her role also as Project Manager in the design furniture sector - and I am proud to announce that the VittEr Design® by Filippi 1971 brand has been included in the ADI Design Index 2021 ("Research for the company" category) and will compete in the 2022 edition of the Compasso d'Oro, the most recognized award in the design field, aiming to acknowledge and promote quality industrial design projects and products". The first collection of POP & Déco furniture was made predominantly in VittEr®: the products stand out, as requested by the Permanent Design Observatory, "for originality and functional and typological innovation, for the production processes adopted, for the materials used, for the formal synthesis achieved", without forgetting the "particular attention paid to products that express respect for the environment". Ultimately, another important step forward for a company that, in its fifty years of history, has been able to demonstrate an extraordinary dynamism.



Nick Calandriello

The new branch in Australia

Australia: a love that never fades, indeed, a relationship that is consolidated. Australia was among Filippi 1971's first export markets already in the early 2000s, and the relationship with Australian companies continues today. And this is why Filippi 1971 Pty, the company's Australian branch based in Melbourne, was opened in May 2021. It operates in the distribution of laminated panels and design components for the RV sector, under the expert guidance of Nick Calandriello, a professional who has been working in the sector for years.

