

Evolutionary intelligence



The A.I. family is growing. The Starck-Kartell-artificial intelligence triangulation has produced a new lounge chair and a console. Between sustainability and efficient production, we take stock of the advantages of generative design with Lorenza Luti, the brand's marketing director

The new A.I. Lounge indoor-outdoor armchair, designed by Philippe Starck, set in a minimalist Kartell house. It has a recycled thermoplastic technopolymer structure with mineral filler and soft touch treatment, and a seat padded with polyurethane foam, upholstered in fabric.

A.I. IS A PROJECT THAT, METAPHORICALLY, RESOLVES THE ETERNAL DILEMMA between reason and feeling: the reason of the machine, of industry, and feeling understood as creative thought, the very essence of the human spirit, in this case Philippe Starck's. The result: two million A.I. chairs sold in four years. These are the numbers of a "success in terms of both image and sales, also independent of the innovative concept of design with the help of artificial intelligence," explains Lorenza Luti. A success "that has prompted us to develop an entire family that now comprises, in addition to a chair and stool, also a console, a new type for the company, and an indoor-outdoor lounge chair."

Presented in its final version at the last Salone del Mobile in Milan, these two models reaffirm the added values of generative design – developed with Autodesk for the chair's resounding debut in 2019 – now managed in an internal process, "because we now know what inputs to give to the

machine and how to use it." Luti continues: "The gain is in terms of sustainability and timing. Artificial intelligence calculates the exact amount of material needed for the mechanics, the injection and the correct flows in the molds, halving their design times. This is essential since these are giant steel complexes that move on three axes. The prototyping phase was very quick, with only one example in 3D. Our standard production process is quite long, especially for chairs: from the first design to the finished product it takes at least two years to reach the market. Here, it only takes a few months."

The algorithm reduces the material in a sustainable way, but it also shapes the voids aesthetically. Obviously under appropriate direction: in fact, the sign is unequivocally Starckian: "Philippe Starck, with his provocative genius, proposed the use of AI certainly not to replace the role of the designer, as everyone always imagines, but as an aid to de- →



Left, the A.I. Lounge, with structure available in white, black, grey and green. To the side and below, the new A.I. Console, also made with the technopolymer created in collaboration with illycaffè by recycling espresso capsules.

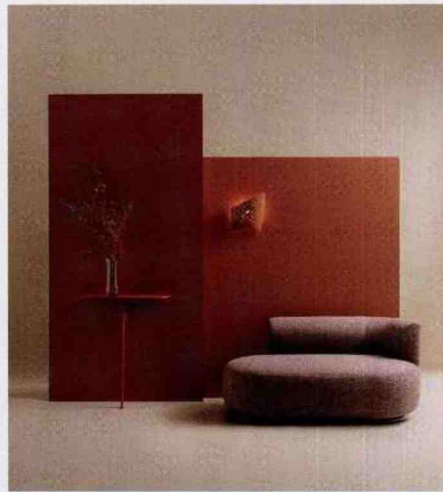
→ sign, especially in the prototyping phase before the mold. He used the algorithm to optimize his project in terms of sustainability and reduce the material as far as possible, based on his design, of which at least 15% is saved. At the same time, by working on the voids, he enhanced its formal tautness. Just look at the beauty of the connection between the armrest and the rear structure in the armchair."

But what material are we talking about? "For the production of the A.I. Lounge we use a thermoplastic technopolymer recycled from industrial, non-post-consumer production waste, deriving mainly from the automotive and household appliance sectors, with a high-quality soft-touch finish. For the first time, we also print the inside of the cushion internally, a kind of memory foam with two different densities, again made from recycled material. In the console, on the other hand, we have introduced the technopolymer derived, in collaboration with illycaffè, from the recycling of espresso capsules."

Sustainable innovation, to the cry of Kartell Loves the Planet, is synonymous for the brand with research into materials, including bioplastics, recycled technopolymers, polycarbonate 2.0 from renewable materials, and the latest frontier of the transparent recycled material "which we are applying to all PMMA products."

In addition to the natural evolution of the A.I. collection, it is far from clear that generative design is now permanently fully accepted as Kartell's modus operandi. "Artificial intelligence is not indispensable. It's an aid, and its use also depends on the type of project and the technology needed to carry it out. Probably Starck himself, since he was the first to use it, is already looking further, searching for new inventions." A kind of confirmation comes from the designer himself who, recently interviewed by Interni, said: "I'm proud to have been the first, over seven years ago, to have used artificial intelligence. I asked the computer: help me to rest my body with the minimum of matter and energy. The led to the creation of the A.I. chair, successfully sold worldwide. But now the use of AI is becoming increasingly complicated, because meanwhile it no longer has a creativity totally detached from human, cultural and affective considerations. And then it also makes it possible to develop projects in a matter of seconds. Already there are so many aspiring designers who are asking the computer: design me a plastic chair like Starck. It really happens. We've done some tests. Artificial intelligence could become a magical disaster."

"The usual provocateur!" comments Lorenza Luti from a distance, laughing. "To us AI is a magical helper." **Katrin Cosseta**



"AI is not indispensable. It is an aid, and its use also depends on the type of project and the technology that needs to be used to carry it out. It certainly won't replace the designer's hand. In the A.I. collection you see Starck's touch, his unmistakable sign"