

STRONG!

illy and the



art of espresso

Kalòs kài agathòs, beauty and goodness, are, according to Greek culture, the elements that embody the ideal of perfection. At illy in Trieste, Italy, it is said that the balance between the beautiful and the good has long been found. It's about aesthetics and yes – also about coffee, of course.

Andrea Illy is President, his mother Anna Rossi Illy is Honorary President and his sister Anna Illy jr. is responsible for the relationship with coffee farmers. In doing so, she is continuing her father's work, the son of the company's founder, Francesco Illy, who died in 2008. The iconic coffee business is today managed by the third generation of the Illy family. Tradition and continuity are certainly not the worst ingredients when it comes to quality. But a successful brand must always remain open to new ideas. This balancing act seems to be working quite well here in Trieste.

Someone familiar with ideas is Carlo Bach. Born in Cologne in 1967, the artist, began working with illycaffè a good 20 years ago. In 2005 he became the company's art director. Bach lives in Udine and is responsible for communication and design as well as the illy Art Collection. For the German-Italian, the cups designed by artists are a fitting expression of the company's vision of the beautiful and the good. Bach is convinced that anyone who drinks an espresso from an artist's cup connects the perception of the taste of coffee with the visual and aesthetic experience of contemporary art. The Art Collection cups with their graphic or conceptual motifs in his eyes become an object where the different languages of the illy universe collide: "the art and science of espresso". With this attitude, Carlo Bach is the living proof that a traditional brand like illy can remain curious and act courageously.



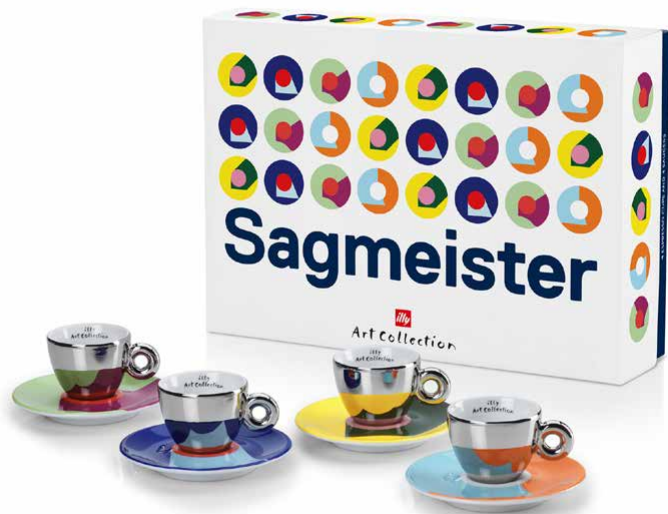
Photo: illy

Carlo Bach,
Art Director at illycaffè

Bach talks about the creation of the first collection. Andrea Illy's brother Francesco proposed the idea back in 1992. A year earlier, the designer and architect Matteo Thun had designed the distinctive cup. Francesco Illy wanted artists to understand this everyday object as a kind of canvas. The results were impressive from the very first moment, says Carlo Bach. The story took its course, and the idea is as alive today as it was on the first day. Over a hundred internationally renowned artists have left behind great works to this day; he carries on and names artists such as Michelangelo Pistoletto, Marina Abramović, Anish Kapoor, Jan Fabre, William Kentridge, Yoko Ono, Gillo Dorfles, Robert Wilson, Maurizio Galimberti, Max Petrone. Most recently, the New York-based designer Stefan Sagmeister was another big name.

Matteo Thun designed the distinctive illy cup in 1991

Stefan and I met almost 20 years ago, says Carlo Bach. At the time, Sagmeister was responsible for creating the book accompanying the David Byrne exhibition. illy was a sponsor of the exhibition, explained Bach, who considers Sagmeister to be a brilliant designer. Even back then, he was hoping for a collaboration one day. When Stefan Sagmeister published the wonderful book "Beauty", Bach was convinced it had to happen. This is how the illy Art Collection NOW-BETTER came about. Sagmeister translated data derived from tweets into colorful graphics.



The collection of ephemeral tweets visually translated. Mirrored cups invite to reflect.

The highlight: the cups were given a mirrored surface on which the graphics of the saucers are reflected – an invitation to reflect on seemingly endless messages. In the eyes of Carlo Bach, this is perfect evidence of Sagmeister’s talent.

The current illy logo also has its origins in art. None other than Pop Art artist James Rosenquist, who died in 2017, designed the sweeping typography on the red square. The old logo, on the other hand, was – in typical 1960s style – angular and rigid. Everything looked technical, according to Carlo Bach. There was no room for poetry at all. It wouldn’t have represented a Brand that has long stood for much more than being ‘just’ a coffee producer. At first, various agencies and brand specialists were commissioned with the project, reports the art director. It turned out all those experts were far too conservative in their ideas. And that wasn’t the right approach for a brand that wanted to break free from restriction. So it was proposed to turn to James Rosenquist, who – as luck would have it – was just in the process of designing the illy Art Collection. The

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So James Rosenquist was used to working with logos. The American made his way to Trieste with a picture in his luggage that was immediately met with enthusiasm.

young Rosenquist worked in signwriting and painted commercial billboards and shops in New York. He later used the language of advertising in his artistic work.



Stefan Sagmeister works as a designer in New York – preferably for customers whose products and services he values.

He succeeded in what all others had failed to do, explains Carlo Bach, by solving three problems at once: Rosenquist visualized the transition from an engineering brand language to a softer, artistic and poetic language. He retained the brushstroke; the legibility was impressive, and the illy brand’s aesthetic clarity was unmistakable.

Art director Carlo Bach is still impressed and considers the logo to be as timeless as it is unique. When asked how he prefers to enjoy his coffee, Bach circles back to creative work. He confesses to drinking a lot of coffee, but he is even productive in his coffee breaks as he is testing the latest prototypes of the illy Art Collection. He wants to understand whether the designs would convincingly resonate with him. This 100% focus on each cup of coffee allows him to fully and consciously experience the energy of the coffee.

What does someone like him think of Coffee To Go – after all, people all over the world are walking the streets with coffee mugs in hand. The pandemic sometimes made him do it himself, but Bach doesn’t really like it. He’d rather sit down for a moment, ideally in good company, having a good conversation.

You can tell that Carlo Bach loves his job, the coffee and the brand. He enjoys moving in an environment where quality counts and creativity is highly valued. It’s the perfect fit. The beautiful surrounding countryside and Trieste itself,



Anyone who elaborately composes nine different types of Arabica beans also pays attention to its packaging. illy uses a special process in which oxygen is removed before inert gas is added at a pressure higher than the atmospheric one. This not only preserves the aroma, but it even intensifies it.

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being a very cosmopolitan city with naturally excellent cuisine. Would he like to reveal a few insider tips? With pleasure, says the likeable creative. For food, he recommends Harry's Piccolo. Michelin Star chef Matteo Metulli's restaurant is an absolute must for a fine dining experience. And it's easy to find too: right on the sea promenade in Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia. Another 'must see' when visiting the city is the magnificent Miramar Castle with its beautiful gardens, once built for the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria.



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