



## TRUE ORIGINAL

*Patricia Urquiola's 'Salinas' design for Boffi presents kitchens in a whole new light*

Words **AMY BRADFORD**

**S**panish-born, Milan-based designer Patricia Urquiola is a prolific talent. In the past year alone she's created seating for Moroso and B&B Italia; iridescent glass tables for Glas Italia; rugs for Gandia Blasco, Ruckstuhl and Paola Lenti; and fabrics for Kvadrat. Several of her pieces already have places in design's hall of fame: the 'Crinoline' armchair for B&B Italia, for instance, and the 'Antibodi' chaise longue for Moroso.

This year also marks the launch of Urquiola's first kitchen, 'Salinas' for Boffi. Relaxed and modular, it reflects a wider trend for kitchens that break out of the 'fixed and fitted' mould and blend seamlessly into open-plan living and dining spaces. It's inspired by the seaside resort of Salinas in northern Spain, where Urquiola's grandfather had a house. 'Throughout my childhood we went there at weekends and in summer,' she says. 'It was a place for family and it had a big kitchen. My father would go out fishing and everyone would help to cook what he caught, even the children. It was the first convivial kitchen that I had in my life, and this design is named in honour of that memory.'

The kitchen that Urquiola remembers so fondly was a classic cast-iron style: rather than units, it had lots of open shelves where you could see things. The influence on her creation for Boffi is clear. Its combination of freestanding and wall-mounted elements and black metal frame are worlds away from the kitchens in most modern homes. Instead of clunky cupboards that suck up space and light, it has a slimline, practical shelving system with terracotta vessels for utensils and herbs. 'We didn't use a traditional melamine carcass, which is how kitchens are normally made,' says Urquiola. 'The metal frame is much lighter, and more sustainable. The idea



was to use ecological materials and to have a simple design with a mix of open and closed spaces and lots of functions.' The lighter look is maintained by hiding away the plumbing, electrical supply and extraction in a 'utility rack' in the centre of the kitchen.

Another standout element is the table, which can be installed fixed or pivoting and which seats three or four people for informal meals (note the handy slot at one end for hanging up tea towels). 'When you're cooking, you always have a chopping board - for me that's very important. So the table is like an enlarged board with soft contours.'

For doors and worktops, there's an original choice of finishes that can be mixed and matched. Doors come in zinc, brass, copper and aluminium, glass, lacquer or concrete. Worktops can be made in marble, a technical ceramic called Dekton, natural lava stone decorated with a geometric pattern (an Urquiola hallmark) or Paper Stone, an eco surface made from recycled paper and cardboard impregnated with a resin derived from the shells of cashew nuts.

Boffi's press representative tells us that 'Salinas' is the first of the brand's kitchens to be designed by a woman - a fact that we found surprising, but one that doesn't faze Urquiola in the least. 'At the moment I don't have any problems, so I don't have to think about it,' she reasons. 'The other girls have to think about it - you have to fight all the time and play the game, like the men. I was just very happy that Boffi allowed me to do this project and not to work in the classic way.' How does her own kitchen compare to 'Salinas'? 'I have a modified Boffi kitchen, but this one is exactly what I need,' she says. 'Possibly I was designing my dream kitchen.' *'Salinas' kitchen, from £30,000 (boffiuk.com) ►*