

# THE RETAIL observer

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AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1970



Ceramics of Italy

2018 Fall/Winter

## TILE TREND report



ABT ELECTRONICS'

**80<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**



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ABT ELECTRONICS'

# 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

expanded showroom features  
elite kitchen appliance brands

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED DESIGNER, MICK DE GIULIO CREATES  
THE INSPIRATION STUDIO DEDICATED TO ABT PATRIARCH, BOB ABT



**A**bt Electronics, the nation's largest single-store retailer of electronics and appliances, located in Glenview, IL, has once again expanded its 100,000+ square foot showroom in honor of its 80th anniversary. The new Inspiration Studio, premiered on Oct. 13, adds an additional 10,000 square feet in the loft area of the store's famous atrium, featuring premier kitchen appliances from a dozen luxury manufacturers that include Bosch, Dacor, Gaggenau, Jenn Air, La Cornue, LG, Miele, Monogram, Thermador, Samsung, Sub-Zero/Wolf, and Viking.

The idea for the Inspiration Studio was conceived by and is dedicated to Bob Abt, the Abt family patriarch who passed away last year before he had the chance to see his dream come to fruition. "We're always updating our retail environment to stay on top of the latest trends and technology, but my Dad's goal was always to do so in a way that no one else was doing it," said Jon Abt, one of four Abt sons who share the title of co-president of Abt Electronics. "His vision was to create a completely unique and unexpected space that showcases the best luxury appliance brands available and exposes Abt's customers to innovations in kitchen design."

It was that idea that led Bob to get in touch with an old friend and colleague, internationally renowned kitchen designer Mick De Giulio. Mick owns de Giulio Kitchen Design and has worked with the Abt family for more than 25 years. "His motivation was to provide the best customer experience, as with everything Bob did," De Giulio recalls. "And to accomplish that, Bob wanted quality to be felt at every level in the new space. In his words, he wanted it to be 'first class.'" Bob gave Mick total artistic freedom to bring his vision to life through Mick's unique style and creative eye.

The awe-inspiring result was many one-of-a-kind featured designs

and high-end appliances that could only be found at Abt. "We named the space the Inspiration Studio because Dad was an inspiration to the entire Abt staff who respected him not just as a boss but as a mentor," said Mike Abt, Jon's brother and co-president. "We also hope the kitchens Mick designed will inspire our customers to explore new ideas while shopping."

Some of the more original and impressive items featured in the Inspiration Studio include Sub-Zero ovens with no handles that open with one touch; Thermador's Freedom Induction Cooktop with a large, fully usable surface; Dacor's in-home wine station; La Cornue's custom oven with gas burners and an induction top, as well as a gas and electric oven all in one; and La Cornue's Island and Range set-up valued at over a quarter of a million dollars—among many other high-end appliances.

Each of the twelve interconnected spaces is devoted to a particular manufacturer, showcasing its own style. "I wanted to challenge conventional design and inspire visitors to think differently about kitchens and appliances," said De Giulio. Also impressive is that each space allows live cooking demonstrations, as they are fully functioning. All of the architecture, interior design and decorative lighting is by De Giulio and was designed with the sole purpose of bringing Bob Abt's dream to breathtaking reality.

Accentuating De Giulio's design is colorful artwork throughout the Inspiration Studio that tells a special story. Giclée prints were produced from paintings by autistic children. The paintings were created especially for the studio by children at Have Dreams, a Chicago-area nonprofit serving young people impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and coordinated through the For Autistic Kids Foundation, established by the Abt family to raise awareness and funds for children with ASD.

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