



A CUT ABOVE THE REST

Gaspari Menotti SpA is a leader in the manufacturing of machinery for the processing of marble and granite, including gang saws and slab and tile processing lines. Barbara Rossi spoke to Stefano Roberti, the company's marketing and commercial manager, to find out what's behind its continued success.



Gaspari Menotti SpA started its work in 1956 in Carrara, northern Tuscany, having been established by Mr Gaspari Menotti himself. Its location was not casual, as the town and its surrounding area are famous for their white marble and Gaspari Menotti started as a manufacturer of smaller machinery for the processing of marble slabs (cutters and small cutting centres). Its activity soon evolved to include marble and granite gang saws, which launched the brand as one of the world leaders for this type of machinery. A later development was the offer of complete systems (including polishing/resin spraying machinery) which evolved into today's com-

prehensive range. This includes many solutions with regard to cutting lines, and polishing and resin-spraying systems.

Nowadays the company is a world leader in the production of diamond wire machines for transforming blocks into slabs, specifically single- and multi-wire machines and block-cutters/shapers. It has 80 employees, a conspicuous network of agents all over the world and a turnover close to €30 million. Its core products are the previously mentioned multi-wire machines for the transformation of granite into slabs, marble gang saws, marble and granite polishing machines, and resin lines.

"In terms of new products we are focusing on customised intelligent cutting centres, called Smartcut, to obtain cut-to-size slabs. Another focus is our Multi-wire GMW Series for transforming granite blocks into slabs, with models available in different measurements and varying in terms of their cutting size capacity. Our GMW range is very significant in terms of revenues."

The company operates from a single site in Carrara, which could easily accommodate a production volume increase. This hi-tech facility currently occupies a 65,000m² area (20,000m² of which are covered) and houses both production and the head office.

There is also an internal department dedicated to R&D (technical, mechanical and electronics) which employs 10 engineers. All new product design is carried out in-house, on a continuous basis. "We have several on-going projects both for the improvement of existing models and for the development of brand new solutions, using innovative technologies."

Being smart

"The Smartcut machines, which transform the slabs into the ideal format for the client, are totally customised so as to fulfil clients' needs with regard to cutting requirements and space availability in their factory. Individual machines,

such as cutters and polishers, are usually standard, but once they are incorporated into a 'turn-key' system an element of customisation comes into play, as we determine which machines and models are to be included according to customer requirements."

The company's clientele is mainly composed of marble and granite product manufacturers serving the construction sector. Geographically Gaspari Menotti serves countries all over the world and 95 per cent of its turnover derives from exports (mainly to non-EU countries). Its core markets include Brazil, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, Italy, North Africa, other African countries, the USA and Argentina.

"In the future we will increase our business in fast developing countries such as those on the African continent. Of particular interest will be countries such as Namibia, Angola, Mali, Togo, Kenya and Nigeria. Also, we will keep a watchful eye on South East Asia, for instance Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh.

"Multi-wire machines will remain our core business, as they have replaced the previously used granite gang saws for transforming this material from blocks into slabs. I believe that they will hold their ground for a number of years. Smartcut machines, which replace traditional cutters, are also going to be important ▷

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for future development. Demand for these is likely to increase as they feature a very high level of automation and require just one operator, thus bringing labour cost savings at a time when this is a real issue. Turkey has shown a lot of interest in our Smartcut machines, but I have to say that the response seems to be positive in other markets as well."

Acquisitions and collaborations

As well as growing organically, the company could be open to acquisitions and other collaborations. In fact, it has already established a joint venture with Bulma, a Spanish company

with expertise in the development of radio-frequency heating system ovens. The two companies have worked together on the development of a special machine for epoxy resin hardening. The result of this collaboration is the MIR 2200, which replaces old ovens with a superior technology and offers the possibility for just-in-time production. In fact, when slabs were in need of repair through the use of resin, traditional technology required a 24 to 48 hours' stocking time after the initial treatment of the slab, so that the resin could harden and become part of the actual slab material before this could be polished. With MIR 2200,

which also takes up much less space than older ovens, the hardening process only takes seven minutes and can be carried out on line with the polishing machine.

"Our growth will be based on our innovative products, including MIR 2200, multi-wire machines and Smartcut, but as mentioned we are always open to external collaborations if these can expand our volumes and further establish us on the market. I don't expect many changes at organisational level, as we have reached a stability of production which allows us to face the future quite confidently." □

