

Portrait of an iconic brand

focus[®]

CREATE BEYOND CONVENTION

Focus, the leader in suspended fireplaces

Focus has been revolutionising the world of stoves and fireplaces since 1968. Its current catalogue includes 20 iconic models, which it regularly adapts to meet changing contexts (ecodesigned wood-burning models) and to exploit new types of fuel (gas, bioethanol, electric) without impacting the appearance of their timeless design.

The company has also forged collaborations with renowned creatives who share the same sensibility, from the British architect Norman Foster to the Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta to the French designer Thibault Desombre. Dominique Imbert's closest collaborator for 15 years, Christophe Ployé, now head of design projects at Focus, designed the award-winning Bubble firebowl.

Dominique Imbert (1940–2021), an imprint on 20th-century design

The avant-garde spirit of Dominique Imbert, artist, humanist and founder of Focus, is reflected in each Focus fireplace. The Gyrofocus, which he designed in 1968, was the first of his steel, suspended fireplaces with a 360°-pivoting hearth. This disruptive and visionary design has become iconic, today a legend in international contemporary design.

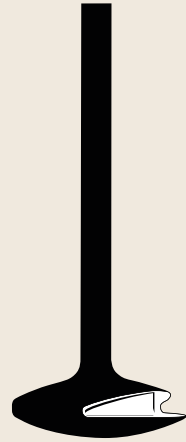
Outstanding savoir-faire, 'Made in France'

Every Focus fireplace is made in France by artisans who shape, burnish and assemble the steel by hand with a rare savoir-faire. The Focus metalworks' craftsmanship, innovation and excellence has won it the French label of a 'Living Heritage' company (Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant), where it joins an exclusive club of prestigious French firms.





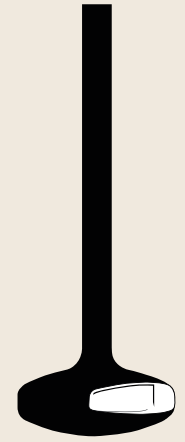
Slimfocus



Gyrofocus



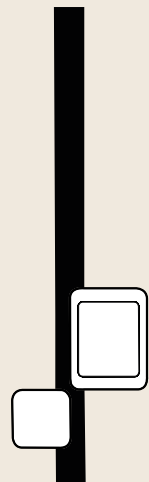
Ergofocus



Domofocus



Bathyscafocushublot



Grappus**



Bubble®*



Wood



Gas



Holographik®



Bioethanol



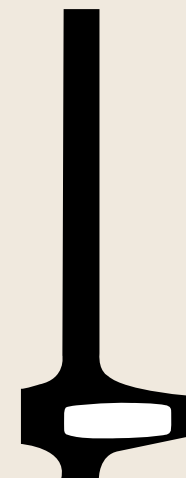
Filiofocus



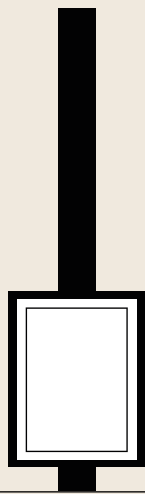
Bathyscafocus



Meijifocus



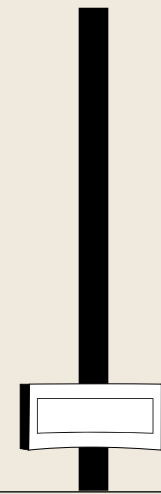
Hétérofocus



Eurofocus



Agorafocus



Curvifocus



Boafocus





WOOD



GAS



ELECTRIC



BIOETHANOL



WOOD BY FOCUS
Pure authenticity

A dreamlike allure that captivates, an atypical shape that intrigues, Focus fireplaces continuously renew a unique quest: to suspend fire in a way that defies reality.

For over 50 years, Focus has breathed its soul into each of its fireplaces, reinventing fire to render it sublime. Beyond the secrets of wood, gas or bioethanol combustion, Focus combines its technical expertise with its vision of designing magnetic creations. The design inspires and sets the tone; it creates an atmosphere, summer and winter alike. Even with no fire burning, the bold, organic shape of a Focus fireplace catches the eye. Focus has carved out an unparalleled niche through its multiple award-winning designs and projects for such prestigious architects as Renzo Piano and Norman Foster.

Focus has become an integral part of highly singular spaces, finding its way into contemporary art museums, international design shows and design magazines. Telescopic or pivoting, hearths that upend expectations by requiring logs to be placed vertically, that fall from the sky like a raindrop, or open like a porthole onto the fiery core of the Earth, Focus fireplaces embody artistic expression that has won a central place in countless spaces. From Australia to Asia, in latitudes where heating is not customary; from the Americas to Europe, the French company has made its mark on every corner of the map.

The popularity of Focus fireplaces with enthusiasts, aesthetes and architects is clearly linked to Focus's principle of loyalty.

Loyalty to its timeless signature that each era has made its own. Loyalty to its production site, which has been based in Cavailon in Provence since the 1970s. And loyalty to its head office in the medieval village of Viols-le-Fort, nestled in the Mediterranean scrubland that edges up to the foothills of the Cévennes. It is here that Focus perfects its unmistakable style, dreaming up pioneering ideas in ancient stone walls.

Before these walls steeped in history became home to the Focus team, there was only a building in ruins, but a free spirit with a passion for life imagined the potential of these limestone foundations. Dominique Imbert was an ardent visionary ready to take on anything to fulfil his artistic ambition. While he would become known as an artist of fireplaces, he began as a man of letters. Following an academic career that earned him a PhD in sociology at the Sorbonne, he took a post teaching literature in a Paris Lycée. Yet the adventurous spirit that drove his originality was already apparent, taking him to wander the streets of Manhattan and immerse himself in the wilderness of Alaska. So when his heart told him to return to his first love – sculpting – Dominique Imbert left the hustle and bustle of Paris, swapping a promising, stable career for a bohemian existence in the old stone farmhouse that would be the setting for all of his artistic experimentation.



GAS BY FOCUS

Controlled passion

Facing harsh winters in his rural home, this artist who transformed metal into a variety of objects and furniture was inspired to come up with a new creation: a fireplace, designed with the simple objective of staying warm. From a few pieces of sheet metal, he designed what would become the Antefocus – his first fireplace, and one that broke new ground at the time. But it would be in the heady year of 1968, when activists argued for the power of the imagination, that this self-taught artist had an epiphany inspired by the shape of an ashtray he had crafted. In a doubly visionary feat, he reinvented an object that had remained unchanged for a thousand years.

Detach the fireplace from the wall, hang it from the ceiling suspended above the floor, with a hearth that can rotate 360°. This was the inception of the Gyrofocus.

While the first Gyrofocus was received with scepticism by the profession, pioneering contemporary architects would be invaluable influencers. From the outset, the Gyrofocus proved to be an object of desire and design. Considered an outlier by some, an innovator by others, the creator of the suspended fireplace navigated between these two poles for several decades. He got by selling his sculptures, while struggling to find a production site that would manufacture his concepts, which he never lost faith in. His tenacity eventually led him to the doors of Théus, a centuries-old metal workshop where the first works engraved 'Imbert' were forged. This metalworks in Provence accepted the artist's somewhat unorthodox approach and his insistence on invisible welding.

When he created Focus in 1985, the artist became an entrepreneur. He assembled a small team of four enthusiasts who would still be with the company 30 years later. With this collective united around a shared vision, the founder's free spirit was allowed to roam. For this generation that loved confrontation and challenge, it was an era of chain-smoking with their feet on the table and passionate conversations that lasted far into the night. In those early days of the adventure, there was already a determination to be creative at every level, a refusal to bow to the dictates of the market. At Paris trade shows, improbable demonstrations involved wood fires lit in flueless prototypes.

In its radical, freewheeling genesis, Focus was a start-up before its time, and not only creatively; it was also wired to the most advanced technologies.

In the 1980s, computers were still the preserve of those in the know. Those passing by Focus's head office in the sleepy village of 500 souls rubbed their eyes as they discovered a network of state-of-the-art computers – equipment that was rare outside national research agencies at the time. Promotional videos, servers, desk-top publishing and computer-aided design were enlisted by the team. The company grew, winning its first international contract and bringing Focus to



HOLOGRAPHIK® BY FOCUS

Spirit of fire

East Asia. In 1988, 300 Paxfocus fireplaces were ordered for a luxury building in Japan, broadening the reach and vision of the company and launching it into the era of industrial logistics with the management of time zones, large-scale production and transport by container ships.

Over the course of the Focus odyssey, no fewer than 150 models have been designed. Some, completely cubic or triangular, hurtled by like comets, while others have stood the test of time. The Filio, Bathysca, Slim and Ergo have become veritable trademarks of the company. Whether carefully drafted or scribbled on a loose bit of paper, the design of Focus fireplaces has never been travestied for the sake of sales and profitability: no dubious modifications, no unsuitable colours. Each questionable request has been dismissed to respect a vision that refuses to compromise. Instead, projects are continuously perfected and customers guided towards models or installations in keeping with the ambience of a space. This insistence has never deterred Focus buyers, who have listened and chosen to suspend from their ceiling a work that keeps them warm. Out of attachment, they dismantle, take away and reassemble their Focus fireplaces each time they move.

If in 2014, Dominique Imbert handed over the reins to two close associates, it was because he trusted their well-considered strategic plan for the coming years, as well as their ability to develop and perpetuate his work. Sharing the artist's humanist values, these two colleagues had confided and conversed with the founder over the decades. Arriving at the company somewhat by chance at a ten-year interval, between the two of them they now have a combined career spanning 60 years at Focus. The pair have played an active role in this great epic: from the opening of Focus's showrooms to expanding into new markets, including saving the historic production site when it was in difficulty, allowing it to continue making all Focus products. They overcame the challenging period following the financial crisis and contributed to the growth that has enabled the company to maintain its unique expertise. But above all, the co-directors anticipated the Ecodesign transition, substantially and steadfastly investing in research and development.

Focus has found a new impetus, adapting and flourishing in an intense period of creation.

This new momentum has allowed Focus to anticipate regulations that would challenge the existence of open fireplaces. It took a decade of research and prototyping to redesign existing models and close the hearth with glass, the time necessary for Focus to meet performance standards without impacting the appearance of its award-winning models. Although traditional fireplaces can hide defects behind their brickwork or marble, Focus fireplaces must find more sophisticated solutions, as the tiniest detail is visible.

Because regulations and standards have considerably increased the technical challenges of the production process, Focus took the decisive step to launch its own training centre. There, production cycles, protocols and installation solutions are taught to the company's 150 employees and its network of dealers. Over and above technical expertise, the brand's unique aesthetics are also instilled at the Focus Academy. From sales representatives to steel crafters, from quality



BIOETHANOL BY FOCUS
Air of freedom

control specialists to installation professionals, each is taught to hone their eye, to examine the slightest detail; each is proud to be the heir to a legacy where art and industry beat in unison.

When an order arrives at Focus's head office in Viols-le-Fort, it sets in motion a whole ecosystem of 70 professions that includes the creative teams, the sales force who travels all over the world, and the craftsmen and women at the production site. Each organic, visionary design is turned into made-to-measure plans and undergoes pre-machining checks before being crafted at the production site in Provence. It is here that the smooth feel of a Focus model is honed using a talent that is as precise as it is rare: the art of craftsmanship. Lasers and machining tools soon give way to the human hand, the sparks of welding, the polishing of the sheet metal and the fine-finishing. When the time comes to set the fireplace in its chosen interior and light its first fire, it reflects all that Focus offers through its uncompromising savoir-faire, dedication and skill.

Under the watchful eye of Christophe Ployé, who has been in charge of design projects since the early 2000s and ensures the style consistency of the Focus universe, the company has forged collaborations with renowned creatives who share the same sensibility, from the French designer Thibault Desombre to the Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta to the Dutch designer Huub Ubbens. This has allowed Focus to explore new fireplace shapes and lower energy options that find their place in positive energy homes, buildings with increasingly effective insulation, or alternative spaces such as tiny houses, which, like Focus, lie outside the system, but ahead of the times.

The company will continue to burn bright with its creative spirits who are developing new concepts, from connected devices to holographic fires, a solution conceived for hotels that seek to offer stand-out experiences. Yet these future-forward innovations will never alter the fundamental philosophy of the company.

Focus retains its iconic signature: the delight in provoking a reaction with its iconoclastic designs, revealing poetry from a simple sheet of steel.





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