



essential retailer profile Design Republic

THE WAITING GAME

The first showroom for established kitchen and bathroom company Design Republic offers a new focus for founder Max Spenser-Morris

Words **Amelia Thorpe** Photos **Paul Craig**

The old saying “good things come to those who wait” rings true for Max Spenser-Morris, who set up kitchen and bathroom design business, Design Republic, in 2003. He has waited 13 years to open his first showroom, but open it he has, in December, on a business park in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. “We built the business up from scratch, and all the projects on our website were done without a

showroom,” he says. “But turnover was sporadic and it was a struggle without somewhere to invite clients and to get them to realise the extent of what we can do.”

Spenser-Morris, now 39, was fresh from graduating with a fine art degree when he founded his company, together with his property developer parents. Uncertain of his career route, he began by ►

▶ working on designs for kitchens and bathrooms for a residential development of 12 houses, occupying a room at home, and discovered he enjoyed the creative process. "As we built the business up, it was always the plan to open a showroom, but what would it be? What would make it appeal to the market?" he says.

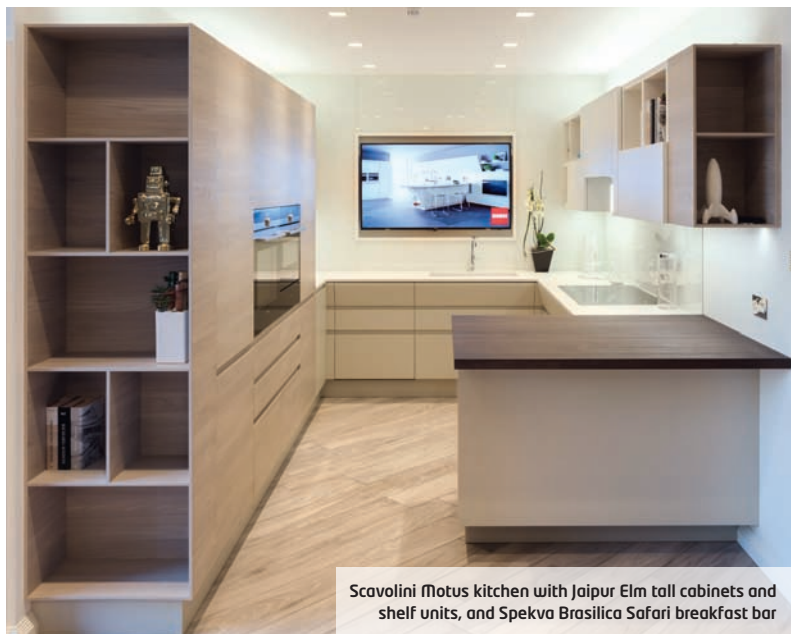
The opportunity finally arose when the property company moved to the Risby Business Park and there was room for a 100sq m showroom on the ground floor. "We went to Salone del Mobile in Milan in April 2016 to look at bathrooms by Scavolini, and then saw their kitchens," he recalls. "We were very taken with the presentation and unique elements, and felt

that Scavolini tied into our sense of design more than anybody else; we like to explore shapes and textures, and try to do something different."

The new showroom features four Scavolini kitchens, of which two feature working appliances ready for demonstrations, plus a working bathroom with steam cabinet, all designed by Spenser-Morris. "I have a monumentally huge passion for design," he laughs, "and I wanted to be able to stand back and be proud of what I have created. It wasn't easy to fit everything I wanted to into the space and make it all work together."

Now his focus is on promoting the new showroom, with a new website, search engine optimisation on Google, local press advertising, and activity

From a display of Scavolini Foodshelf furniture, looking towards a bespoke island and Scavolini LiberaMente tall units in Dove Grey satinised glass



Scavolini Motus kitchen with Jaipur Elm tall cabinets and shelf units, and Spekva Brasilica Safari breakfast bar



Inside the new Design Republic showroom, which features four Scavolini kitchen displays



Scavolini Flux Swing island in high-gloss Iron Grey with Lapitec sintered stone worktop and Berbel Skyline Edge hood, which moves up and down at the press of a remote control button

"WE CURRENTLY HAVE 15 DEALERS [IN THE UK] WHO WORK WITH SCAVOLINI, ONE OF WHICH IS THE BRANDED SCAVOLINI STORE. TWO MORE ARE EXPECTED TO OPEN IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2017. THE PENETRATION IS PROGRESSING VERY WELL"

Fabiana Scavolini, CEO, Scavolini

- » **What is your greatest challenge?** "Getting people through the door. Once they're in, it gets easier," says Spenser-Morris
- » **And your greatest opportunity?** "Now having the ability to show what we can do," he adds
- » **Strange but true** "The first person through the door when we opened the showroom was a man wondering if we wanted to buy a mattress," he says

on Facebook and social media, advertising forthcoming demonstrations. And will he carry on with contract work? "We want sales to be retail, as much as feasibly possible, because it is difficult to make enough margin on development work," he says.

And he is optimistic about the future, thanks to the new showroom. "Tangibility – that's critical," he says. "You wouldn't buy a car without seeing it first, you would want to have the experience of seeing it and touching it, and the same applies to kitchens and bathrooms. We have built up a level of confidence with our designs, but with this tool, we will increase sales, absolutely." ■

The island features a bespoke panel made by Biden Designs with mirror behind, framed in an Arenastone quartz worktop and side panels



Scavolini HQ in Pesaro, Italy

company profile

Scavolini

Who are we? Fabiana Scavolini, CEO

Where are we? Via Risara 60/70-74/78, 61025 Montelabbate, Pesaro, Italy. Tel: +39 0721 443 333. www.scavolini.com

What we do Italian manufacturer of kitchen, bathroom and living-room furniture

Business history Scavolini was founded in Pesaro, Italy, in 1962 by brothers Valter and Elvino Scavolini. Initially, it produced a small range of fitted kitchens; today it manufactures 30 different ranges with more than 350 finishes, together with nine ranges of bathroom furniture, and now living-room furniture. The business

remains family owned, and founder Valter Scavolini is president. Daughter Fabiana Scavolini is CEO. All the furniture is manufactured in Pesaro, Italy. "We currently have 15 dealers [in the UK] who work with Scavolini, one of which is the branded Scavolini Store. Two more are expected to open in the first half of 2017. The penetration is progressing very well," says Fabiana Scavolini. "Our objective for the next few years is to reach 40 dealers." She adds: "Design Republic is a top-class partner that has made one of the highest-level showrooms we have in the UK"

Sales stats "Annual turnover of the Scavolini Group is about €200m," says Fabiana Scavolini



Scavolini Foodshelf units in matt Bianco Prestige and Lagoon Blue with Neff ovens and extractor

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Left, the Quooker boiling water tap, KWC Inox mixer with light, and Quooker soap dispenser are shown above a Kohler Poise sink with sliding bamboo cutting boards



Max Spenser-Morris, MD, outside his new showroom in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

retailer profile

Design Republic

Who are we? Max Spenser-Morris, MD

Where are we? Risby Business Park, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 6RD. Tel: 01284 812 590. www.design-republic.net

What we do Independent kitchen and bathroom retailer

Business history Founded by Max Spenser-Morris in 2003, the business remains family owned. For 13 years, the company has operated from an office, selling kitchens by Häcker and a bespoke offering. It opened its first showroom in December 2016, with a focus on kitchens by Scavolini, from £25,000, plus a bespoke offering, from £40,000, made by a workshop in Newmarket.

Kitchen prices average £35,000; most expensive to date, £160,000. Appliances by Sub-Zero & Wolf, Siemens, Neff, and Berbel. Sinks and taps by KWC, Quooker, Zip, Blanco and Franke. Bathroom prices from £25,000; average £30,000; most expensive to date, £75,000. Bathroom products by Teuco, Samuel Heath and Keuco. Furniture by Scavolini and a bespoke furniture offering

Sales stats "Annual turnover was around £700,000-plus, but with the showroom, we want it to be more than £1m in the first year," says Spenser-Morris
Staffing levels Two members of staff - Max Spenser-Morris and project manager Ian Slater



"We went to Salone del Mobile in Milan in April 2016 to look at bathrooms by Scavolini, then saw their kitchens. We were very taken with the presentation and unique elements, and felt that Scavolini tied into our sense of design more than anybody else"
Max Spenser-Morris, MD, Design Republic



Scavolini Foodshelf units in matt Bianco Prestige and Lagoon Blue with wood-effect laminate worktop and splashback, KWC Eve mixer and Franke Pebel sink



Recessed Scavolini Flux Swing units are finished with a bespoke aluminium 'picture' frame; they house working Siemens StudioLine appliances

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