



COLIN LEE – BULTHAUP  
LIVING KITCHENS (PTY) LTD

Born and raised in Cape Town, Colin Lee attended UCT where he qualified as a Chartered Accountant. After completing a three year training contract with Ernst & Young, in 1994 he moved to UK and joined an international life assurance company as Finance Manager. In 2000, he went on to launch his career as an opera singer – a long established passion. Against the odds, he rapidly established himself as one of the leading *bel canto* tenors in the world and is one of only three South Africans in history, to have achieved the 'Grand Slam' in opera – i.e. singing in all five of the world's major opera houses.

How did the transition to high-end kitchen design occur?

Colin Lee has never been involved in kitchen design per se, or in the kitchen industry. And yet the quality, beauty and craftsmanship of the bulthaup product and its innate architectural aspect was to appeal to him as both a businessman and an artist. 'What drew me was the ability to create architectural living spaces using exciting and dynamic materials, which are beautiful, durable and practical. bulthaup is about passion, creativity and individuality. Every kitchen is as unique as the individual who purchases it. It must be able to adapt and serve its owner at different stages in their lives as the very heartbeat of the home.'

The bulthaup connection started some 12 years ago when Colin Lee sourced a kitchen for his London home on the advice of a long-time friend who was one of the top designers at bulthaup at the time. After a visit to Cape Town on holiday in 2010 they noted that bulthaup had no presence in Africa, or South Africa. They felt that with the right team, they could make use of their business experience and talents as

designer / project managers, to introduce bulthaup to the South African market. The eventual result was the opening of bulthaup, Cape Town in February 2013.

He feels that in terms of design and architecture, South Africans are discerning and well-versed in international trends and developments; the demand for high quality product exists. Germany is a leading exponent, where the design philosophy of the product, its craftsmanship and attention to detail set global standards; bulthaup being a prime example.

He adds: 'bulthaup is about more than just kitchen cabinets and worktops, it's a redefinition of the living area, a product perfectly designed and crafted for each individual space. Those who share this desire for quality and craftsmanship are prepared to invest in a superior product that will remain timeless and functional for years to come. Our first 12 months in South Africa has proved beyond doubt that the bulthaup brand and philosophy is understood and appreciated.

'The distinguishing factor between locally manufactured kitchens and bulthaup is the level achieved in the bulthaup plant with advanced tooling / equipment and the materials used: solid wood, aluminium, wood veneers (smooth or rough-cut), lacquers and laminates, composite stone and stainless steel. Through such technological advances, bulthaup is now able to provide finishes that are not only beautiful but also both durable and practical. Most of these are not available locally; they reveal a precision in craftsmanship that can only be achieved under controlled factory conditions.

'To re-think space and be truly innovative you don't just need in-depth expertise and uncompromising design, quality and craftsmanship. Everything we do is based on established factors that drive us to go the extra mile – to think outside the box – invoking passion and consistency. bulthaup builds on the traditions and values of previous generations. After all, there is no future without a past.'

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