



## PRESS KIT



Since 1968, Focus has been reinventing the fireplace



# 1968, the beginning of Focus' extraordinary adventure

It was in 1967 that Dominique Imbert designed his first fireplace, the Antéfoc, for his own use in his sculpture studio, at the foot of the Cevennes, in the South of France. But the design that marked the start of the Focus brand, and decided its international future fame, is the iconic Gyrofocus created in 1968. Since then, Focus creations are found in both private salons and design museums, the most prestigious ones (New York, Stockholm, etc.) and have been awarded numerous international awards. Here we look back at 50 years that have undeniably made their mark on the history of design.



The Antéfoc  
First model  
made in 1967/68



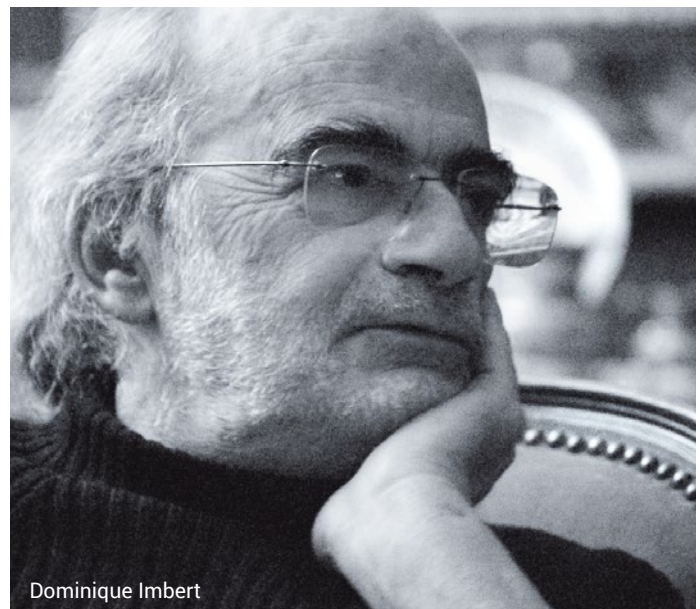
First Gyrofocus installed  
in Boirargues (34)

## Dominique Imbert

HUMANIST, ARTIST-DESIGNER  
AND VISIONARY

Dominique Imbert, Founder of Focus, was born in Montpellier in 1940. After studying literature in London and Paris, he found himself, as he said, without really knowing why or how, an ethnologist in Alaska, a cook's assistant in Manhattan, doctor in sociology at the Sorbonne and professor of letters in a Parisian high school.

And then, after four years of teaching, he abandons the blackboard for the anvil. Entrenched at the foot of the Cevennes, in a medieval village 25 km north of Montpellier, a new ardour animates him: here he welds, forges and sculpts; hammering the iron, blowing on the fire. What quest is he pursuing to challenge the fundamentals?



Dominique Imbert

On the cover page Gyrofocus *White!*

# The philosophy of design

INTERNATIONAL DESIGNERS CONFERENCE, KIEV, UKRAINE - 2001  
INTERVENTION OF DOMINIQUE IMBERT,  
REPRESENTING FRENCH DESIGNERS

## **Am I a designer? A reflection on my philosophy and my practice of design**

Am I a designer?

I did not attend design school

I did not study architecture

I did not receive a single drawing class in my life

I did not do a course of painting, sculpture, Fine Arts, History of Art ...

Nothing.

I learned to wash dishes with a Greek cook in an Indian restaurant in London during the long winter months.

I learned ethnology and spent some time in Alaska with the Inuit.

I did a PhD in Sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris ("The influence of aesthetic fact in the middle of work on human behaviour" ...) but I found myself a professor of Letters in a Parisian high school.

Good. So when a French Minister gives us the National Prize for Creation (Paris 1995), when I see our models in Museums of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux, Grenoble, Stockholm or the Guggenheim in New York, when we receive several medals of Gold Trophies of Design (Paris), when Sir Norman Foster asks me to create a model for him especially, I wonder what happened, I wonder if, like Obelix, I fell, when I was a child in a pot of design, I seriously wonder if it is better not to go to school and to have to learn everything and discover everything by oneself.

The only thing I can say is that when I was a teenager, in the country, on vacation, I spent my time making iron furniture for the village blacksmith, making steel shapes that I did not dare call sculptures.

And this disease took me back to 27 years, brutally. So, I left Paris and I created my studio in the south of France.

Today if a hundred people work for Focus, if we export more than 50% of our production (Western and Eastern Europe, Japan, USA ...), we continue however to try to ignore fashion or market demands.

I am lucky to be able to continue to respond to intuitions and to do it with pleasure.

That's what I do that teaches me what I'm looking for. What interests me is what moves me and what moves me is to discover, hidden in the depths of some forms, a wink of the material, an inner life, a soul.

It is in this one that one really finds something other than this kind of cold and conventional algebra which makes our environment.

I have great pleasure in spitting a meaning to forms, a clandestine meaning, a poetry. Without poetry we exist without living.

For me, design is the expression of a tension between poetry and need, between graphic art and functionality, between the emotional and the rational.

But am I a designer, the question always remains ...



## Focus' long and close links with architects

Focus has always been selected by the greatest contemporary architects: Sir Norman Foster, Snøhetta, MK27 Studio, Isay Weinfeld, SeARCH, Paola Navone, ...

First in France and then throughout the world, these real directors of Focus creations remain the privileged partners of the brand.

Focus contemporary fireplaces are found through the most beautiful scenographies of the whole world mixing architecture and design. In residential projects, prestigious hotels, restaurants, museums, created by renowned architects, Dominique Imbert's minimalist chimneys play centre stage.

### A STORY OF FIREPLACE WITH LORD FOSTER

The architectural firm Foster & Partners called in 2000 for Dominique Imbert to imagine a Focus fireplace for the headquarters of an international electronics company located on the outskirts of London. In anger at seeing the project he proposed to be entirely modified, and determined to make no compromises, Dominique Imbert decided not to proceed with the proposal despite the interest that could be had by working with this prestigious practice and despite the financial importance of this project. "Life is too short to make shit" is the fax that Dominique sent to the architectural firm that asked him to reconsider his decision! It was then Norman Foster himself who invited him to return to London and meet him personally. In half an hour Dominique Imbert's initial project was accepted.

During his conversation with Norman Foster, Dominique Imbert could not help but ask him the question: "But how and why did you want a Focus creation? He replied with a smile: "In the library of our office, we are constantly selecting the best products in the world. In the section "chimney", there is only one catalogue, guess which one?



The first Filiofocus,  
designed by Dominique Imbert,  
for the architecture firm Norman Foster.  
Ceiling height 14 meters



# Made in France with conviction

From the beginning, the brand Focus has always been based in Viols-le-Fort, in the south of France, in the former home of Dominique Imbert who saw the birth of his first Antéfocus. This is where his head office resides; this is also where the Atelier Dominique Imbert imagines, designs and creates the furniture with the "Focus" signature. Thus, it is from this tiny medieval village, at the foot of the Cevennes, that Focus today exports everywhere around the planet.

Manufacturing place: Cavaillon.



The Viols-le-Fort showroom

## The creation workshop

FOCUS is, among others:

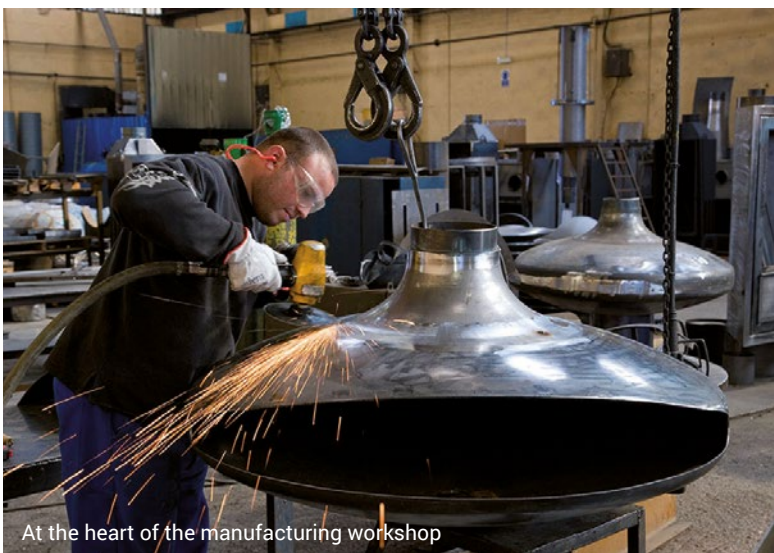
- the trademark of Atelier Dominique Imbert s.a.s.
- a model (Antéfocus) created in 1967
- a model (Gyrofocus) created in 1968
- a current range of 65 models of fireplaces and stoves
- 100 models made in the year 1980, more than 2300 in 2017
- 85 employees (30 in Viols-le-Fort in Hérault and 55 in Cavaillon in Vaucluse)
- nearly 50 Partner-Resellers in France and Partners in 55 Countries
- a turnover of 10.5 million euros in 2017, of which 58% is exported

But the Dominique Imbert Workshop is first and foremost the human adventure of a small Hérault company that has gradually gained the trust and support of all its employees as well as the recognition of its peers and the public in the whole world.

## The manufacturing plant

Extending the original workshop which was created in 1892, the manufacturing company is heir to more than one hundred years of experience in steel work. Théus s.a.s., a subsidiary and manufacturing unit of the Atelier Dominique Imbert group, is located in France in the Vaucluse, on the motorway axis and T.G.V. North-South, more precisely in Cavaillon. At the heart of one of the most important logistic platforms of southern Europe, are placed at the disposal of an international clientele, on a ground of 22.000 m<sup>2</sup>:

- 7800 m<sup>2</sup> of workshops equipped with an important and versatile production equipment,
- an office of C.A.O./D.A.O. endowed with powerful 2D and 3D software; this last one allows to design and develop on plane or for the F.A.O. objects of complex form,
- 400 m<sup>2</sup> of offices.



At the heart of the manufacturing workshop



The manufacturing unit in Cavaillon

## A new management team with more than 80 employees

In the spring of 2015, Dominique Imbert entrusted the management of the company to a tandem of two particularly experienced employees, composed of Laurent Gaborit, former sales director France and Jean-Marc Chaliér, former CFO of the company. Dominique Imbert, founder and CEO of Focus, remains at the helm of the company.



Laurent Gaborit



Jean-Marc Chaliér

## Key dates

- 1967** - creation of the first chimney: Antéfoc
- 1968** - creation of Gyrofocus
- 1975** - first participation at Batimat (France), with only one model
- 1980** - a hundred models sold in the year
- 1985** - from artisan status to that of SARL Atelier Dominique Imbert, with 4 jobs
- 1988** - Focus in Japan

- 1993** - takeover of the manufacturing plant and all staff.
- 1994** - Opening of a store in downtown Montpellier
- 1995** - National Award for Creation
- 1996** - Entry of Gyrofocus to the Museums of Contemporary Art of Bordeaux ...
- 2014** - 50,000th model sold
- 2015** - launch of the first model suspended, swivel, double flow

## Awards

- Best craftsman of Languedoc-Roussillon (1976)
- Selection of Premio Design Italiano (Rome 1992)
- Habitat Fair Trophy and Innovation Award (Toulouse 1993)
- National Prize for Creation (Ministry of Commerce and Handicrafts - Fondexpa - Paris 1995)
- Winner of the Innovation Prize (Batimat - Paris 1999)
- Export Trophy (Avenir 2000 - Paris)
- Norman Foster and Associates Selection (London 2000)
- First Prize of the Competition of Excellence (Chambre des Métiers - Montpellier 2001)
- 3 Gold Medals of Design Trophies (Batimat - Paris 2001- 1997 - 1994)
- Selection "Top 100 most beautiful companies of France" (1st of Languedoc-Roussillon) (magazine L'Entreprise - July 2003)
- Silver Medal Design Competition (Stuttgart - 2004)
- 4 silver medals of the Design Trophies (Batimat - Paris 2007 - 2005 - 1995 - 1993)
- First prize for German Internet users (Online magazine homesolute.com - 2009)
- Nominations to the Observateur du Design 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 (Paris)

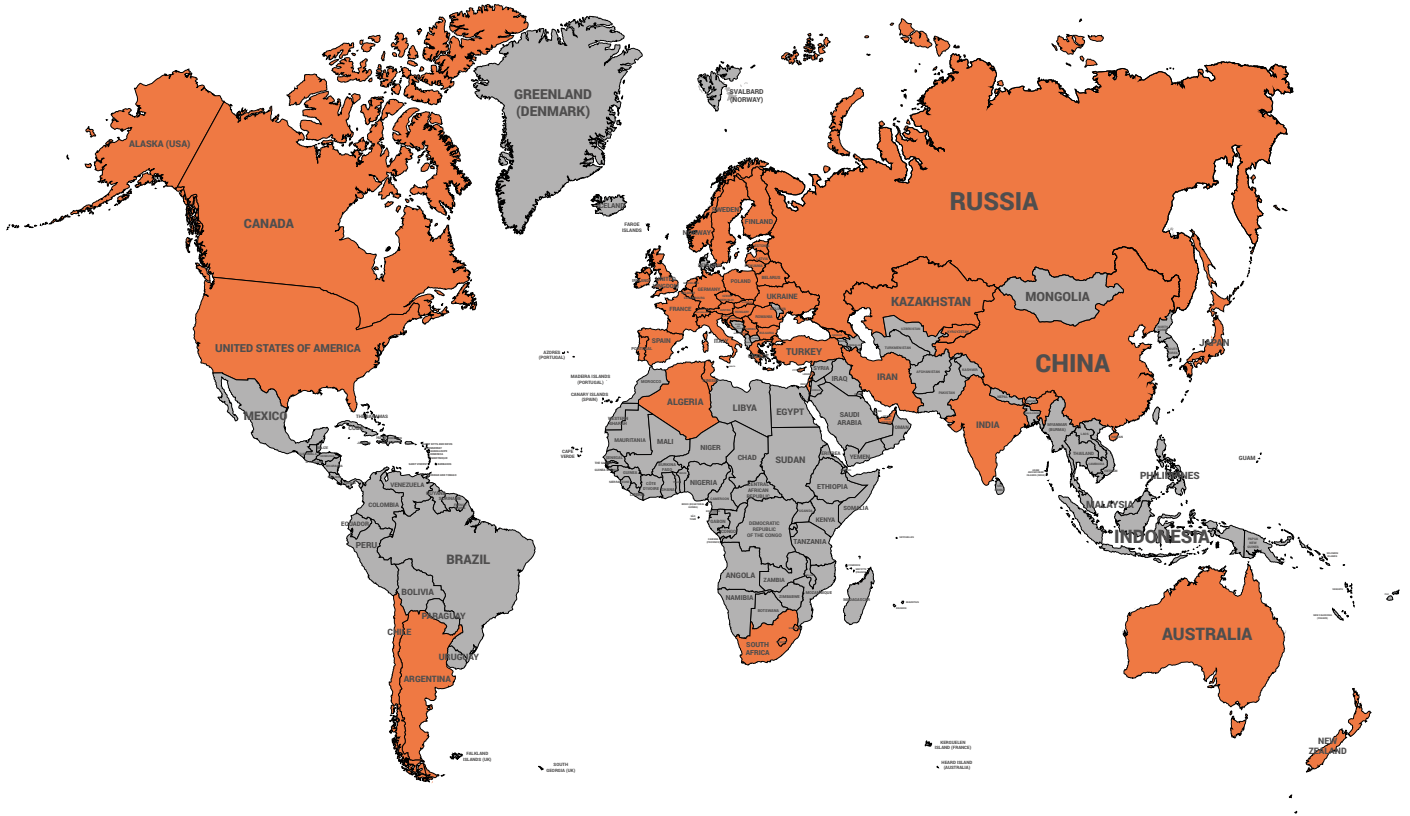
- "First prize of the most beautiful object in the world" (Pulchra contest - Italy 2009)
- Appointment to the "Design Award of the Federal Republic of Germany" (Germany 2010)
- Award for the "Most Inspired Creation of Helsinki Design Week" 2010
- 2009 Superflame Prize of the Polish magazine Świat Kominkow for the whole work
- Performance Award - Journal "Les Echos" - Montpellier 2011
- Star Observateur du Design (Paris 2002 and 2013)
- Interior Innovation Award Winner 2014 and 2015 (Germany)
- Reddot Winner 2014 (Essen - Germany)
- Gold Medal of the German Design Award 2017 - Slimfocus model
- Hearth & Home exhibition (Harrogate - England) - Curvifocus: "creation of the year 2017" and "gas product of the year 2017"
- Winner of the German Design Award in Gold 2019 - Boafocus



# International trade & commerce

More than 50% of Focus' business is done internationally. Beyond the legendary Gyrofocus, it is the set of Focus creations that, for several years, cross the borders of France.

The international enthusiasm is such that today the export share of the "Atelier Dominique Imbert Group" reaches more than 50% of its activity. If we had to map the most amateur countries of our chimneys around the world, we would first find Europe, with Italy at its head (which we know the passion for design), then Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and England, but also on the other side of the globe: Australia, Russia, the United States, Canada, Japan, and more recently China.



## Craftsmanship and knowledge

## A UNIQUE DESIGN

Superbly ignorant of fashion, Dominique Imbert, an atypical sculptor-designer, seeks above all to respond to his intuitions: "That's what I do that teaches me what I'm looking for," he says. "What interests me is what moves me and what moves me is to discover, hidden in the depths of some forms, a wink of the material, an inner life, a soul. It is in this one that we really find something other than this kind of cold and conventional algebra that makes our environment. I have great pleasure in spitting a meaning to forms, a clandestine meaning, a poetry. Without poetry we exist without living," continues this literary.



## GYROFOCUS - THE ICONIC MODEL

## DOMINIQUE IMBERT DESIGN

- Presentation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux (France)
- Presentation at the National Centre of Contemporary Art in Grenoble (France)
- Lecture at the Guggenheim Museum in New York (United States)
- Elected "most beautiful object in the world" at the Pulchra Design Awards (Italy)
- Elected "most inspired creation" by the 68,000 visitors of Design Week in Helsinki (Finland)
- Classified object "20th century design icon" by the reference journal *Schöner Wohnen* and in the Encyclopedia of Design by Callwey Editions (Germany)

## TECHNICAL DESIGN

### **When drawing becomes matter.**

Design is the physical birth of the model. This is the stage where the design office strives to give life to the creation of the designer. In the field of the chimney and the stove, the task is not easy because beyond the technical constraints of manufacturing are added those of the regulations, national and international, in terms of efficiency and respect for the environment. After the imagination has spoken, models after models, prototypes after prototypes, tests after tests, years after years, finally appears the "first model". For information, one of the latest models of the brand, the Slimfocus, required 3 years of technical design.



## THE FABRICATION

The craftsmanship is the culmination of both design and research

The know-how of our craftsmen and fabricators makes it possible to tailor all the adaptable parts of our stoves and fireplaces, making each model unique.

A quality control at each stage of manufacturing is a guarantee of high performance well-made products for our customers

Our added value: made-to-measure French manufacturing.

## A responsible company

### ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Since its creation, Focus has always paid particular attention to the quality and durability of its fireplaces:

- the materials used are fully recyclable
- of rigorous design and manufacture, our models are guaranteed for a minimum period of 5 years, which is certainly a rarity in France, and products over 35 are still running.

At the same time, Focus has taken steps to promote the development of "good environmental practices" at some of its suppliers. For example, the printing of catalogs is entrusted to a printer that has been awarded the "Imprim'Vert" label (a benchmark for sustainable printing), which guarantees that it has engaged in a voluntary process of good environmental management of the chemicals used to produce the products and printed media.

In the same spirit, anxious to have a reduced carbon footprint, Focus manufactures in France and takes into account the location in the choice of its subcontractors and suppliers.

### WOOD AND THE ECOLOGICAL ISSUE

Wood energy, far from being a relic of the past, is clearly one of the ways to a sustainable future and can be considered as the best way to store and restore, over a few decades, solar energy. Similarly, wood heating can be considered, with solar heating, the least polluting on the planet.



Wood is a renewable energy because the resource is quickly reconstituted, unlike fossil fuels that take several million years to rebuild their stock. The surface of the French forest has almost doubled since 1827 and now covers 16.5 million hectares, equivalent to 30% of the national territory. We are far enough from fanciful statements predicting the disappearance of the national forest. It can be assured that biomass is one of the major marketable energy sources of the future.

Wood supplies our country with ten million TOE (tonnes of oil equivalent), which represents 4% of total primary energy consumption. Wood is the first renewable energy consumed in France: it is an ecological heating, efficient and economical. Every year, in France, an economy of 51 million m<sup>3</sup> of fossil fuels is achieved thanks to the valorisation of logs.

Focus is a historical member of the SER (Union of Renewable Energies) and an active member of the Flamme Verte label: beyond the purely energy performance of the devices, this label guarantees the environmental performance while preserving the quality of the air. This label is supported by the ADEME (Agency for the Environment and Energy Management) to meet the objectives and challenges of the necessary energy transition.



## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - STRONG TERRITORIAL ROOTS

With more than half of its sales worldwide, Focus could have made the utilitarian and mercantile choice to relocate the production of its chimneys in countries where social, wage and environmental conditions are much less restrictive than in France. A transfer of the historic headquarters of its activities (Viols le Fort is a medieval village at the foot of the Cevennes) to an area on the outskirts of major cities, closer to logistics and communication routes, would also have been possible. Inverse choices and the maintenance of a territorial anchorage have been favoured, allowing the gradual creation of thirty jobs in a less populated area of Languedoc.

Aware of its economic, ecological and social responsibility, twenty years ago Focus decided to take over the factory which had made all its models, Cavaillon in South of France. Thirteen employees were kept. To date, close to 70 jobs have been created at this manufacturing site and very heavy investments have recently been made.

With the acquisition of the Cavaillon plant, Dominique Imbert was both grateful to those close to him who took risks, and ensured the sustainability of his independence. At the same time, he was transforming the modest factory into a factory that now manufactures for Russia and Brazil, for Australia and North America.

Innovation, design, sustainability and social responsibility, these are the values that have guided Focus since its creation and which, no doubt, will continue to drive its development in the years to come. These original, militant and pioneering choices have led to the success of Focus's artistic, entrepreneurial and economic adventure and the motivated, active, proactive team that surrounds the founder and creator of the Focus models, Dominique Imbert.

It is thus demonstrated here that beyond ephemeral fashions, short-term profitability concerns and commercial opportunism for sustainable development, other business models are not only possible but essential for the future. and the well-being of man in his environment.

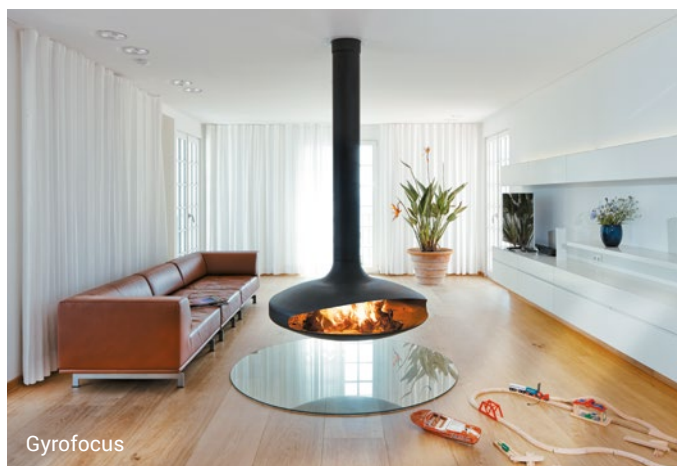


The Dominique Imbert Workshop



# The Focus collection

FOCUS MARKETS ABOUT SIXTY MODELS - WOOD OR GAS - INDOOR OR OUTDOOR







## The latest creations and innovations

### FOCUS WHITE!, OUTDOOR, BOAFOCUS AND LENSFOCUS : THE LATEST RELEASES

They attest to the brand's ability to innovate again and again:

- **The *White range!*** dresses a selection of emblematic models of the brand of white and gives them purity and lightness to further sublimate the flames.
- **The range of outdoor fireplaces** allows you to experience the pleasure of fire according to Focus outdoors.
- The **Boafocus**, inspired by the Little Prince of Antoine de Saint Exupéry combines compactness and practicality of gas.
- The **Lensfocus**, an extremely minimalist built-in design fireplace that shows a remarkable, unusual and nonconformist presence.

### AUGMENTED REALITY, AN INTUITIVE APPLICATION

Now essential in the areas of planning and architecture for a realistic projection of future projects, the application of augmented reality is essential. By allowing to visualize in 3D the future chimney on the existent, it facilitates the projection and the arrangement of the spaces. In addition, a specific program allows you to see the model of your choice from all angles, thanks to an automatic scaling. Easy to use, the app is available on Google Play and App Store.

Once the model chosen, it is possible to get in touch with a reseller to present his favorite project and finalize his choice for a technical study and a quote:

[www.focus-creation.com/points-de-vente](http://www.focus-creation.com/points-de-vente)

Practical information :

[www.focus-creation.com/visualisez-nos-cheminees-dans-votre-interieur](http://www.focus-creation.com/visualisez-nos-cheminees-dans-votre-interieur)

App available in French, English, German, Italian, Spanish.



You will find an **online press service** on the website

**[www.focus-fireplaces.com](http://www.focus-fireplaces.com)**

which offers you releases and images in low and high definition to download.

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