



iSaloni 2001

BRETT LITTMAN REPORTS FROM EUROPE'S DESIGN MECCA

Milan Furniture Fair
4 - 9 April 2001

Milan is a city obsessed with design. It is the fashion capital of Italy. Prada, Gucci, Romeo Gigli, Pucci and Armani all have fully outfitted flagship stores here. People in Milan, however, don't just like to dress well. Milan is also home to major contemporary furniture and lighting companies such as Boffi, Kartell, Cassina, Club House Italia, Dilmus, Ingo Maurer and Moroso. Here the interior counts just as much as the exterior.

Despite prior knowledge of the hype surrounding Milan's design consciousness, nothing can prepare you for the international furniture fair—the iSaloni. Occupying more than 26 airplane hanger sized pavilions at the Fiera, plus more than 150 auxiliary sites and parties around the city, iSaloni is a whirlwind of taxis and late nights. According to the press releases there are 2,524 exhibitors from 35 countries and predictions of more than 165,000 attendees over 5 days. Getting hotel rooms, taxis and restaurant reservations is difficult—plan ahead.

At the Fiera, Buildings 9 and 20 were the most interesting. Salone Satellite was an international showcase of the work of young designers and students, and where Australia and New Zealand were well represented. At the Melbourne Movement's booth, Josephine Sibley's organic white leather couch made by connecting three oval forms, Jim Moody's

Dune Chair and Holly Grace's glass objects were standouts. Edward Wong, Ruth McDermott and The University of New South Wales also had booths. Material Connexions had an interesting display of alternative fabrication resources. This New York based group has always been at the forefront in terms of researching and developing new products like soft-gel, lightweight plastics and new forms of bendable metals that can be incorporated into furniture and interior designs.

Building 20 was the holy grail. All of the major contemporary furniture companies had their booths here. Kartell's collection of chairs and lounges were displayed in an environment covered in Astroturf to highlight their new indoor/outdoor plastic furniture. Philippe Starck, Martin Van Severen and Piero Lissoni have created innovative designs that exclusively use transparent and opaque polyurethane to capture, diffuse and block the transmission of light. Lissoni's Form, a simple plastic lounge perfectly balanced on two light metal support structures makes for an elegant and austere form. Starck's ERO/S/ is reminiscent of Verner Panton's *Cone Chair* but is more lightweight and durable because of its plastic construction. Piergiorgio Cazzaniga's subtle white felt and leather *Smooth* and *Lips* series for Dema were sensuous and purely luxurious. Vladamir Kagen's Club House Italia collection is best seen in action at the new Nubu located in the lobby of the Armani on via Manzoni 31.

Smash, at Spazio via S. Marta 14, was a collection of glass vessels by nine international designers. Each designer was commissioned by Covo to develop a series of glassworks to be fabricated in Murano. James Irvine's semi-solid glass cylinders in yellow, orange, white, blue and green, and Stefano Giovannoni's organic hourglass vessels with a Bullseye pattern, were surprising and unexpected for a project like this. Prada Foundation's exhibition highlighting their future building projects was a show and tell for the senses. Plastics, perforated metal, concrete and architectural models were laid out on long tables encouraging the viewer to pick things up and touch them. A minor distraction was footage from the recent Prada runway show in Milan projected onto the tables, so every once in a while a shoe walked across your hand.

EKWC at Spazio Consolo via dell' Apirca 12 featured experimental ceramics. Six designers were each given residencies at the EKWC studio in the Netherlands to create unique ceramic objects. Gold stained teacups and saucers and an octagonal module dining set were examples of how one can breakthrough the hackneyed designs that plague the tabletop. Several special museum exhibitions were organized this year to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the fair. 1951-2000 *Made in Italy* at the Triennale di Milano surveyed the history of modern Italian design. Cars,

motorcycles, chairs, typewriters, posters, glass and espresso machines created by Olivetti, Scarpa, Ponte, Vignelli, Maurer, Sottsass and Ferrari were all on display. In addition, five special rooms were created to explore the relationship between design and art. *Chairs in Contemporary Art* at the Palazzo Affari followed this theme and presented 40 international artists including Joseph Kosuth, Andy Warhol, Tony Cragg, Paul McCarthy, Bruce Nauman and Mona Hatoum, who have all used chairs in their paintings, sculptures or installations.

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Left to right: *Cloud Three* by Josephine Sibley, *Dune Table* by Jim Moody, *Flow23* by Amelia Indriani Santosa, *Fish Forms* by Holly Grace.