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LIFE



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STYLE & DESIGN | ON: DESIGN

Our picks from Salone del Mobile Milano 2016

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As always, Japan was well-represented at Salone del Mobile Milano last month, with Sou Fujimoto creating a forest of spotlights for clothing retailer H&M's COS brand, Panasonic's "Kukan — The Invention of Space" installation, as well as separate exhibitions, including the Experimental Creations

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showcase of innovative design and the unveiling of the entire series of 2016/ Arita-ware project collaborations. Here's our pick of a few unusual ideas that also showed in Milan.

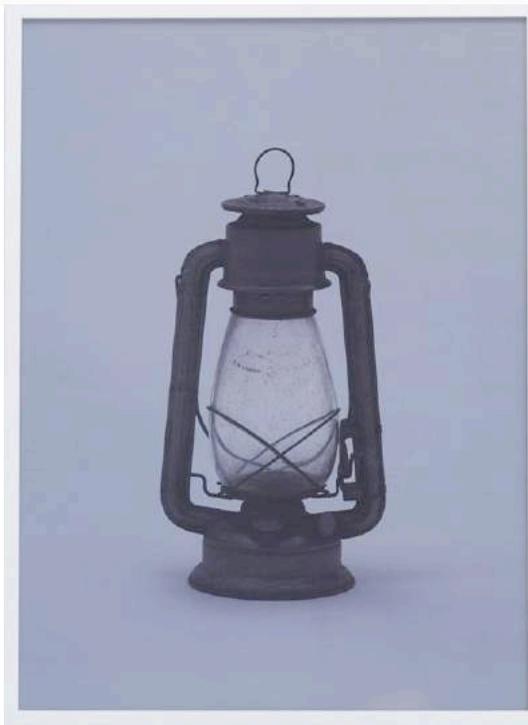
Nendo packs a comic punch

Design-week regular Nendo (Oki Sato) returned with a unique installation commissioned by the New York Friedman Benda gallery. Displayed at the Chiostro Minore di San Simpliciano courtyard, Nendo's 50 Manga Chairs take the expressive and narrative nature of manga and applies it to furniture.

Cast in gleaming stainless steel, the designs are almost reverse optical illusions — 3-D models that appear like 2-D line drawings. The steel lines of each chair trace an iconographic feature of manga, such as a speech bubble or the shape of a sound effect or action.



These chairs have been doing the rounds on design blogs, wow-ing people with their kapow and stylish referencing of Japanese pop culture. Perhaps not practical but almost all functional, they've left us wondering if commercial versions will materialize soon.



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A picture of light

Yoy is well known in Japan for tweaking ordinary objects into creations that are as witty as they are uncanny. Its dining trays protrude impossibly from the edge of table tops, vases have glowing white shadows to become lamps, while a set of shelves look like sheets of paper blowing in the wind.

Depth is a prototype that was shown alongside other recent Yoy works at the Opificio 31 event space. This time 2-D become 3-D as Depth, at first glance, appears to be an arty black-and-white framed photo of an old-school oil lantern. When switched on, however, the lantern not only glows, but it also casts a shadow within the frame. It's a simple but clever idea that involves placing a transparent image of the lamp beneath the original photograph to give the illusion of shadows when lit from behind. At just 18 millimeters wide, the frame can also be hung on the wall like a piece of art.



Natural sciences

At Spazio Rossana Orlandi, Kouhei Co. Ltd. presented a range of prototypes born from a project to realize the potential of stainless used steel and recyclable titanium.

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Designed by Satoshi Yanagisawa, who studied computer graphics, special effects and sustainable design, Ensus (SUS as an acronym for stainless used steel) comprises works that have all been inspired by nature but also employ scientific data to give them a clean contemporary aesthetic.

The Botanical Drip lights, a set of titanium trumpet-lily petals lit by tiny LED stamens, gleam with a pattern produced from water-ripple data, while the Eau desk lamp uses waveform data to mold a transparent acrylic LED cover that looks like a pool of water defying gravity. Pictured here is Cage, terrariums that are shaped like the polyhedral cells of foam, and fitted with magnets to allow you to stack them together.



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A special Offecct

Also inspired by nature is Wind, one of Swedish furniture brand Offecct's pieces shown at the main fair area of the Salone del Mobile Milano.

A series of room partitions designed by Jin Kuramoto for Offecct, Wind panels are lightly padded to provide sound insulation. The designer, however, describes them as “a concept more than individual products.”

The panels come in five asymmetric shapes — a range of oblique triangles, oblongs and ovals that evoke organic forms of nature, such as pebbles, leaves, snowflakes and honeycomb. Their earthy colors should also bring a little warmth to an office environment.

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