



# POSTCARD FROM MILAN

BY ANNA SANSOM

The Salone del Mobile, Milan's furniture fair, is the annual mecca for the design world, where trends are set and pioneering products are launched. The 55th edition in April attracted more than 370,000 visitors, two-thirds of which came from abroad.

Designers are seeking new ways to maximize the contrasting effects of colored glass, as seen in Nendo's ethereal layering of variously hued sheets of glass in the aptly named Layers cabinet for Glas Italia. BD Barcelona Design unveiled Humberto and Fernando Campana's Aquário cabinet with pools of colored glass etched into a playful, low, horizontal wooden piece inspired by the idea of an aquarium.

Re-editions of design icons and classics continues to be a strong design trend, one example being Bertjan Pot's bright upholstery for the Utrecht armchair, designed by Gerrit Rietveld in 1935, at Cassina. Patricia Urquiola, Cassina's art director, also presented her new Gender armchair, the identity changing according to the combination of materials and colors, and Konstantin Grcic's architectural Props collection: laser-cut metal sheets folded to create partition screens and ledges that carry a certain tension.

One of the talking points was about Vincent Van Duijsen becoming creative director of Molteni&C and Dada. The Belgian designer and architect, known for his precise, minimal aesthetic, launched several bold pieces, such as the Paul sofa. "It's a deep sofa that is a protagonist of the space and has oversized cushions sewn into it that people can position randomly," he said.

At Kartell, the new proposals by Tokujin Yoshioka and Alberto and Francesco Meda pushed

the limits of how plastic can be used in lighting. The faceting of Yoshioka's Planet light evokes a very finely cut diamond, while the Aledin LED table/desk lamp by the Medas (a father-and-son team) has two aluminum rods encased in thin polycarbonate—its graceful simplicity belying the complexity of its development.

Outside the fair, several hundred presentations, cocktails, and exhibitions took place around the city under the umbrella of satellite events called FuoriSalone. In the Ventura Lambrate district, Lensvelt—in collaboration with Space Encounters Office for Architecture—showed the Boring Collection of office furniture, which scooped the Milano Design Award for best concept. Entirely produced in muted gray, the collection was devised to be an affordable refinement of office furniture—"sober gray, no fuzz, no pretensions"—that allows strong interior design and architecture to prevail, the furniture being in the background.

In the Moooi showroom, Paul Cockledge's Compressed Sofa made visitors smile. It's an intimate, cozy one-person sofa with a slimline seat squashed into a big curvaceous blob that tilts upward at one side. Made from foam and marble, contrasting modest and noble materials, it comes in two versions that are the positive and negative of each other. "The idea came from twisting, stretching, and pushing my fingers into a block of foam on my studio desk and realizing that by doing that you get these really beautiful, curvaceous shapes," said the British designer. "So I scaled the idea, made a huge block of foam and dropped a piece of marble onto it, which is the

place for the person to sit."

For many, a standout event was the stunning installation of Nendo's 50 Manga Chairs in an arched courtyard of the Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia. Ori Sato, the Japanese designer behind Nendo, drew ideas from manga comics to create a collection of stainless steel chairs that are all imbued with personality and self-expression, taking the same archetypal chair as the starting point. One has a baby chair attached behind it, a second has a huge speech bubble, a third casts a shadow onto the ground, and others have an explosion of lines emanating from them.

The active role that objects play in our lives was underlined in the exhibition "Neo Prehistory" at the Palazzo della Triennale. Curated by Andrea Branzi and Kenya Hara, it traces the passage of time from the prehistoric through to nanotechnologies by marrying one hundred verbs with one hundred instruments. "Exist": an unprocessed, natural stone (date unknown). "Bedeck": a bronze brooch for fastening clothes (799 BC–700 BC). "Remote-operate": a drone (2015). "Regenerate": a hologram visualization of a reproduced heart (2016). This show is not about lighting and furniture; instead it offers an exceptional perspective on the relationship between language, actions, and the tools that man has invented.

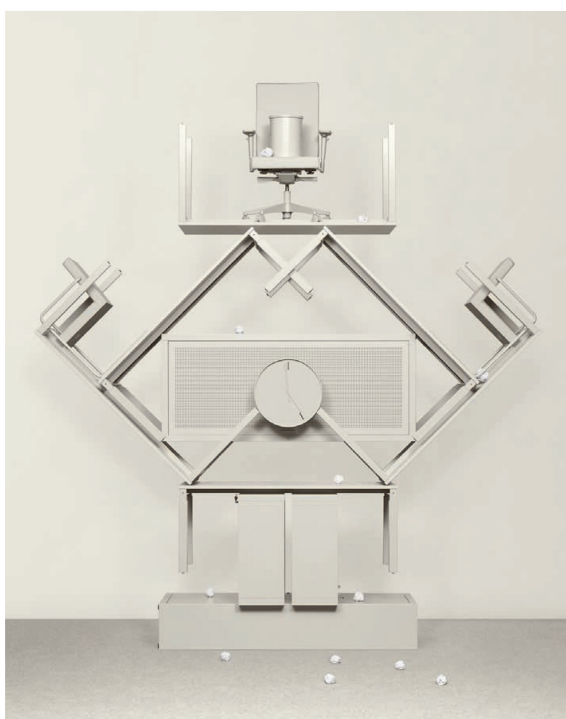
"Neo Prehistory" is at the Palazzo della Triennale, Milan, until September 12, 2016. "Nendo: 50 Manga Chairs" will be at Friedman Benda, New York, from September 8 to October 15, 2016.

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Sansom, Anna. "Postcard From Milan," *Whitewall*, September 2016.

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Opposite page:  
Nendo's 50 Manga Chairs installation.

This page, clockwise from top:  
Paul Cockledge's Compression Marble Sofa, 2016,  
designed for Moooi.  
BO Barcelona Design unveiled Humberto and Fernando  
Campana's Aquário cabinet.  
Lensvelt's Boring Collection of office furniture in  
collaboration with Space Encounters Office.

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