

HAWORTH

Interviews with

*Stephen Burks, Nicola Coropulis,
Matthew Haworth, Nendo,
Peter Schäfer, Hanne
Willmann and more*

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Patricia Urquiola at
Milan Design Week 2025

2025 TREND REPORT

Colour, Materials, Nostalgia
& Artificial Intelligence

PLUS
Talking Colour
with PANTONE™

MILAN 2025

INTRO



Milan, home of design

In his book ‘The Order of Time’, the Italian theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli explores the nature of time. First, he assembles all we know about that strange sand that falls through the hourglass, that mysterious shadow that twists around the sundial. Then he deconstructs everything, stripping away past, present, and future, revealing that our ignorance of time is, perhaps, far greater than our knowledge.

Finally, in the space beyond certainty, Rovelli steps into the mystery and presents a subtle, yet radical suggestion: that time, ultimately, is the story of our human experience. *We* define time. Time is the container of our stories, of our experiences, of our hopes and fears – the events and moments, riddled with emotion, that are the clay of human life.

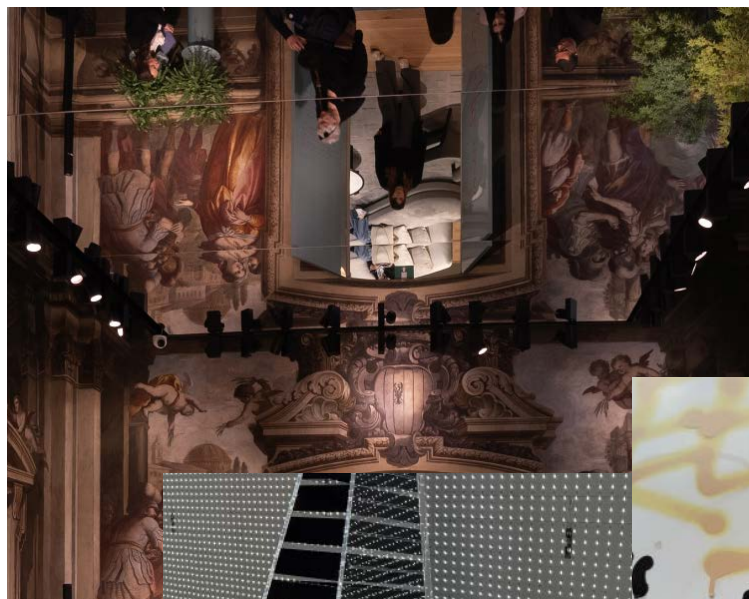
Milan is the home of design. No week looms larger in the design calendar than this string of days in mid

April. We thrill over design – even as we strip away all we know of it. We exult in the return of certain colours – even as we know that it is not the *colours* we celebrate, but the memories held within them that move us. We are moved by materials – one close to the raw earth, another a marvel of technology, a third a harmony of the two.

Beneath it all, questions stir. We ask, what is design? What *is* this strange endeavour we have chosen to pursue? What does it mean to seek to move another? Deeper still, a certain awareness thrums. Some questions are beyond answers; they ask only for a witness as they are asked.

In this report, we are pleased to make you a witness of what we have seen and the questions we have asked. May you find answers – or simply better questions. Welcome to Milan Design Week 2025.

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Clockwise from left Patricia Urquiola in front of her installation; the Ouroboros; close up of the digital knit



Year of the Snake

Patricia Urquiola reimagined the ouroboros – a classic symbol of transformation and rebirth – in the lively colours of Pantone’s Dualities range.

Patricia Urquiola’s ever-evolving imagination burst into life in *ALCHEMICA*. Curated for *Elle Decor Italia*, the exhibition playfully reinterpreted the traditions and symbols of alchemy.

Just as she blends tradition, philosophy, and metaphors with fluid ease, Patricia blends languages like a painter blends colours. ‘I think the *alchimia* is something interesting as *metàfora*,’ Patricia said. The alchemists ‘were always a little bit lost in fantasies of transformation. But the most interesting thing was this idea of trying to better things. This tension was the most interesting thing of *alchimia*.’

Visitors wandered rooms drenched in light and darkness; walked past an enormous rendition of the philosopher’s stone; passed through a chamber harmonising nature with organic products shaped by human hands; and finally found themselves before the protagonist of *ALCHEMICA*: the Uroboro. ‘This snake, that is changing the skin, is exactly the way to tell the story of this exhibition,’ Patricia said. ‘It is the symbol of transformation, and it’s something that we have to

always understand inside us.’

A sense of metamorphosis rippled throughout the exhibition. ‘Today, I think the Uroboro represents how important it is that we understand that we have to change our skin continuously,’ Patricia said, ‘with a kind of rigorousness, but at the same time, it has to be something grateful, open, colourful, with some energy.’ The ouroboros was clad in light-filled New Age pastels from Pantone’s Dualities range. ‘This is our skin that we began with – this rosé, this green, this lilac, the light green,’ Patricia said. ‘And the Pantone palette, I would say, that was very *fantástico*.’ The fabric was the same waste-minimising recycled polyester from the Haworth Cardigan Lounge.

The exhibition, crowned by the Uroboro, examined humans in our vast, complex context. ‘We are nature,’ Patricia said. And continuous change is, perhaps, our calling.

‘What is the way to move?’ Patricia asks, before answering with a smile: ‘Transforming yourself. Evolving. Being a little bit more ouroboros.’



*Clockwise from left
Tannese Williams at the
ALCHEMICA exhibition;
Haworth Cardigan chairs
in the Pantone Dualities
colours*

Finding your colour voice

“With the beautiful architecture, when the light is hitting some of these beautiful structures, there are these soft pinks and soft yellows and soft melons on the walls...”

In a room of glittering mirrors and dazzling reflections, Tannese Williams shined brightest. Tannese heads up the Fashion, Home, Interiors department of Pantone. ‘I get the immense pleasure to come up with new products, work with designers, and share that story – and help them tell their own story,’ Tannese said. ‘There are so many emotions that go with colour,’ she said. ‘There’s light, there’s movement, there’s feeling.’

The Uroboro marked the launch of the collaboration between Pantone, Patricia Urquiola, and Haworth. ‘Ouroboros is about continuous becoming, and so is Dualities,’ Tannese said. The partnership has been in the works for almost a year. At Neocon, Tannese fell in love with Patricia’s Haworth Cardigan Lounge; she saw the overlap between Patricia’s design and Dualities straightaway. Tannese didn’t know it then, but Patricia was falling for Dualities at the same time.

The range bursts with emotion. ‘For pastels, it’s really

tender and soft and forgiving,’ Tannese said. ‘And I think we need that, we need to lean into that – forgiving ourselves and learning to enjoy life.’ Tannese describes the shadows as ‘unapologetically deep,’ which for her means ‘you can go into so many layers – it’s layering in depth of emotion. It’s okay to sit in there and be grounded. It’s a human story.’

As she chatted about colour with Patricia by the Uroboro, Tannese brought up a fascinating concept. ‘It’s almost like, What’s your colour voice?’ Tannese asked. ‘You can have a colour voice this morning when you wake up and you feel like, I want to take on the world and I want to just be bright. And then there’s days that you’re like the shadows – but it’s still your voice.’

We can’t wait to help people find their colour voices together. ‘Haworth knows how to do function and fantasy really well,’ Tannese said. ‘It was an easy collaboration with Haworth that I’m sure will continue, because we stand for the same things.’

INTERVIEW



A future of unlimited possibility

“Every time I’ve come to Milan, I’ve had such a good experience that I fall a little bit more in love with it.”

In the stunning courtyard of Poltrona Frau, we caught up with Matthew Haworth, chairman of Haworth and grandson of the company’s founder.

Brands within the Haworth Group – including Poltrona Frau, Cassina, Cappellini, Zanotta and many more – displayed in over twenty locations this year. Milan felt like a vast garden – and every Haworth flower was in bloom.

‘Every time I’ve come to Milan, I’ve had such a good experience that I fall a little bit more in love with it every time,’ Matthew said. ‘And I appreciate what Milan has to offer and this bringing together of the creative, innovative design industry from around the world, sharing with each other and celebrating.’

While the brands within the Haworth Group have their own rich histories and distinct personalities, they are anchored by the same spirit. ‘We share common values,’ Matthew said, ‘but our form, our language, our expressions of that are all unique. And I think that’s really healthy for our clients, for our dealers, and for our partners.’

We asked Matthew how he felt seeing every brand put on their most dazzling display in Milan. ‘Number one,’ he said, ‘I’m just really proud of the group we’ve had over the last decade – just such a nice string of proud moments of leading and reinvention and building on what we’ve done and going forward. I’m really proud of that consistency, and all the members that deliver that.’

‘What’s important to me is that people make this happen,’ Matthew said. ‘We have hundreds and thousands of members that make this event – and all of our brands, all of our stores successful. So I’m very proud of our members. I’m proud of our company.’

We asked Matthew what he sees ahead for Haworth and the Haworth Group. ‘I think the future holds almost unlimited possibility,’ he said. ‘One, we have a great foundation in our values, and that is the framework and the base on which everything can be based or hung upon. And then we have bridges to so many places that we can go, unique to any other group in the world.’

IN FOCUS



Great spaces empower people to thrive and work their best. As a leading global furniture maker, Haworth partners with customers, dealers, and influencers to create spaces that result in effective people and efficient real estate. With a heritage in the workplace, Haworth is the founding brand of the Haworth Group. The Haworth Group designs at the intersection where people and environments meet to create desirable spaces and extraordinary experiences. Amidst the veritable wealth of gems in Milan, Haworth Group brands dazzled. Storied brands including Poltrona Frau, Cappellini, Cassina, and Zanotta put on spectacular displays, highlighted in the brand feature pages that follow.

IN FOCUS

Cappellini

'International Interiors,' curated by Panter&Touiron under Giulio Cappellini's art direction, sought to answer two questions: what is contemporary interior design, and how is Cappellini reinterpreting its brand for the modern era?

Hosted at the Cappellini showroom in Via Borgogna, 'International Interiors' planted us in a series of familiar environments that explored everyday life. Furnishings were not just passive, functional objects; they became storytellers and companions – for who knows our daily stories better than the pieces around us?

The installation examined the warm silences that mark true intimacy, celebrating those spontaneous, unexpected moments that become cherished memories.

Few brands can explore the beauty of life over time to the depth of Cappellini. The installation was in many ways a dialogue between Cappellini's historical icons – Giulio's 'longsellers' – and the brand's latest designs, defined as ever by a sense of innovation. This interplay between past and present was another expression of that sense of nostalgia so many brands are grappling with.

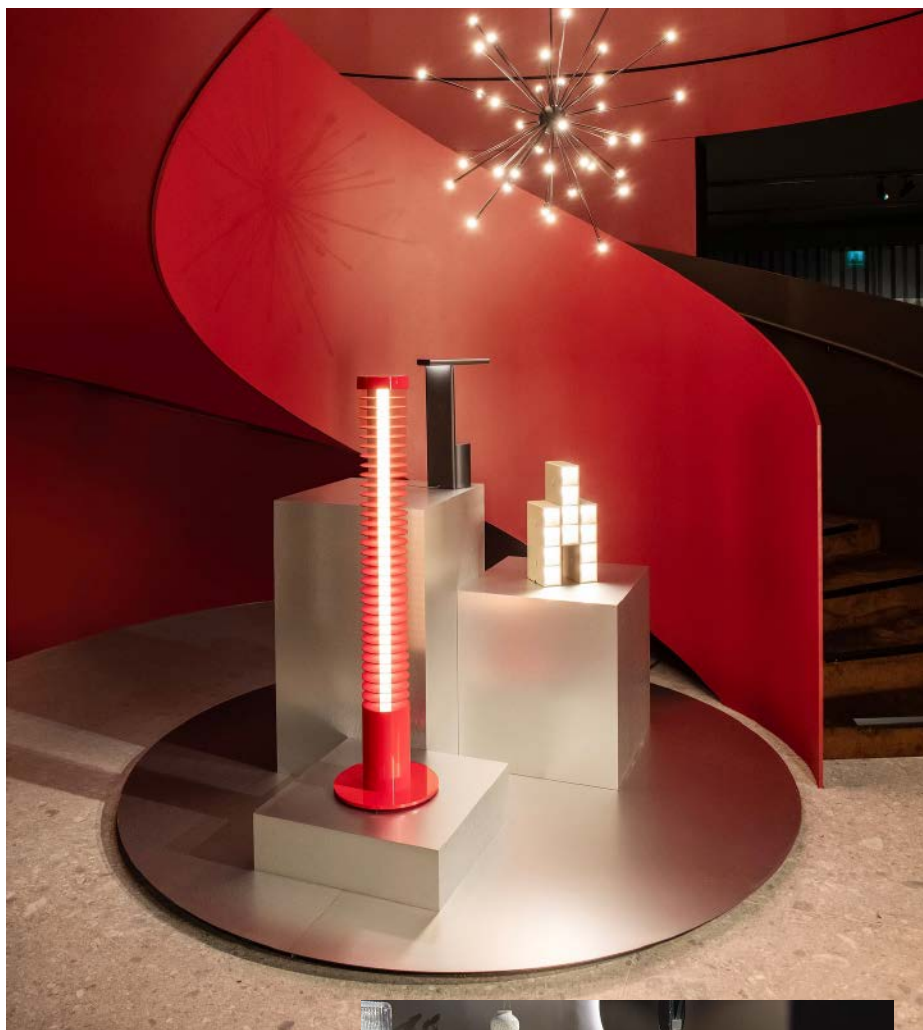
Past and present, abstract and concrete, presence and absence – 'International Interiors' created an atmosphere of subtle contrasts suspended somewhere between fiction and reality. By opening a space for a quiet, contemplative look at the furnishings that have accompanied us, Cappellini allowed those furnishings to become supporting characters full of meaning.

And that is the soft, subtle answer to the questions Cappellini posed: contemporary interior design is about human stories, and Cappellini will always be there with a cast of characters ready to join our journeys.



From top Lud'o System coffee table by Patricia Urquiola; Exhibition in the Via Borgogna showroom; Felt chair by Marc Newson; Juli Soft Plus chair by Werner Aisslinger

IN FOCUS



Cassina

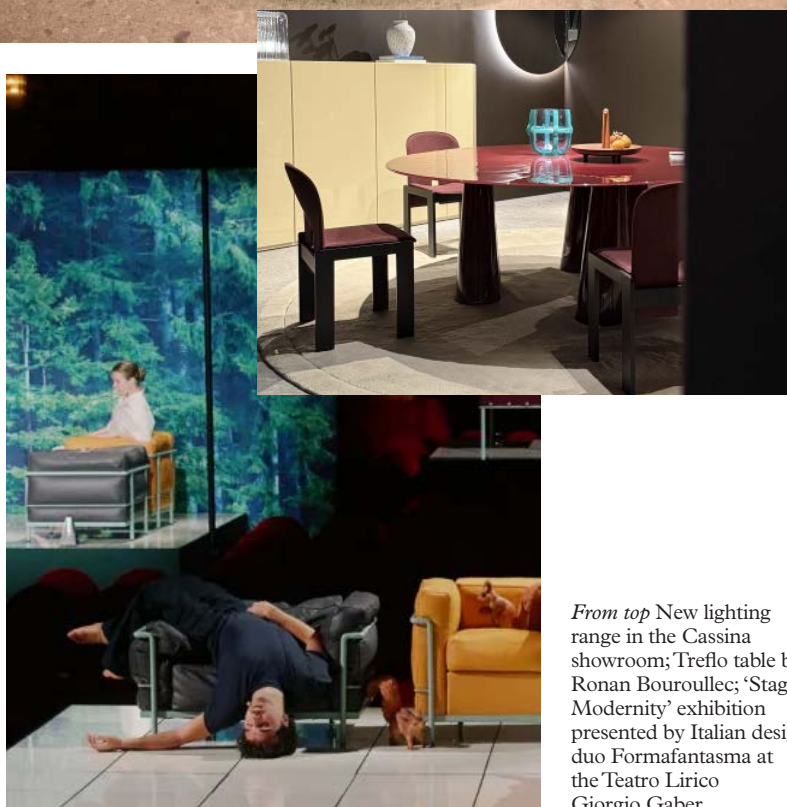
60 years ago, Cassina welcomed the Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand collection into the fold. First unveiled in 1929, Cassina brought the trio's work from small, artisanal production to industrial manufacturing, transforming them into the ubiquitous pieces we know today.

The first four pieces from the original collection – the 1 Fauteuil dossier basculant small armchair, the 2 Fauteuil Grand Confort, petit modèle and 3 Fauteuil Grand Confort, grand modèle armchairs and the 4 Chaise longue à réglage continu – are being reissued in three new colour variants. While many of us imagine these pieces in black leather and silvery chrome, colour was deeply important for the design trio. Glossy red, blue, and green frames, together with ton-sur-ton mohair velvet on the armchairs and saddle leather on the chaise-longue, bring these limited-edition versions into the world of today's home.

In honour of such a groundbreaking occasion, Cassina's Staging Modernity asked an ambitious question: What *is* modern design?

Whilst respecting the revolutionary spirit of the original project, Staging Modernity expanded the vision of the collection even further. Cassina has always been a fount of technical prowess, and circular materials have now been introduced into the range. The context of modernity is expanded as well, going beyond merely the human to encompass all of nature.

Cassina's visionary approach was not limited to Teatro Lirico Giorgio Gaber. The showroom on Via Durini showcased The Cassina Perspective, an eclectic range of products seamlessly pulled from across the decades. A spectrum of styles put a spotlight on Cassina's consistent innovation and fine craftsmanship, epitomising the company's deep design DNA.



From top New lighting range in the Cassina showroom; Treflo table by Ronan Bouroullec; 'Staging Modernity' exhibition presented by Italian design duo Formafantasma at the Teatro Lirico Giorgio Gaber

IN FOCUS

Poltrona Frau

Poltrona Frau creatively reimagined the traditional four seasons with 'The Five Seasons' exhibition. 'The Five Seasons' explored the power of the imagination to transcend accepted boundaries and venture beyond the known and conventional.

By indwelling classic understandings of each season, the exhibition invited visitors to step outside all of them. This opened a space of contemplation where the deep essence of each season could be viewed anew.

Spring evokes spaces that embrace light and nature. Summer recalls environments that expand outward, with terraces and gardens becoming integral parts of the home. Autumn inspires cosy interiors, featuring refined tones and warm materials like leather, wood, and soft fabrics. Winter represents the quest for warmth and comfort, transforming interiors into sanctuaries with plush furnishings, soft lighting, and neutral colour palettes.

Through this process of radically re-entering the conventional, a fifth season was opened: the transcendent realm of imagination. For a brand with such rich heritage as Poltrona Frau, the best way to respect and honour the past is by continually reimagining the future. 'The Fifth Season' is a commitment to innovation, dreaming, and chasing big ideas.

Special product celebrations include a limited reissue of Milan architect Gio Ponti's Dezza armchair in an original, unpublished print by Ponti, marking Dezza's 60th anniversary; an 'Ultime notizie' ('Breaking news') special version of Renzo Frau's 1919 armchair dressed in an illustration by Fornasetti which features butterflies interspersed with newspaper clippings on a white background; and the Leica Fidelio Multimedia Cabinet by Roberto Lazzeroni, utilising Poltrona Frau craftsmanship to create the perfect home cinema.

'Environments, furnishings, and experiences for all seasons – plus yours.'



From top Mesa ellipse dining table and Lepli chair and armchair by Kensaku Oshiro; Leica Cine 1 Smart Laser TV; Leather colour swatches; Foliage lamp by Six N. Five

Top image: Poltrona Frau

IN FOCUS



Zanotta

At Milan Design Week 2025, Zanotta unveiled new collaborations and revived timeless icons from its historic collection. Colour was a key protagonist in the space, which sported a citrusy green carpet and new sour lime upholstery for zesty versions of its playful icon, Sacco.

Zanotta has always been inspired by radical design ideas. This radical spirit was evident in both classic icons and exciting new entries – and the fully renovated flagship store on Via Durini showcased the wealth of new design talent the brand has brought into the fold.

Designed by the Venetian duo Zaven, the Za:Za Max is a plush, inviting sofa with gentle rounded lines and lush, cosy padding. Za:Za Max epitomised the trend toward comfort and sanctuary.

Zanotta has an uncanny ability to anticipate trends; in addition to the citrusy lime upstairs, we also spotted expressions of a rich, amaranth red we saw all over Milan this year in both Zaven's new V-Bol vases along with Muller Van Severen's expanded Z24 collection. And Z24 used rhythmic patterns to create a mesmerising interplay between light and shadow – another manifestation of a theme we frequently encountered.

In addition to new products, classic icons were celebrated with reeditions. The Marcuso table, designed by Marco Zanuso in 1969, was a marvel of engineering: it was the first table to bond metal to crystal. And the citrus-clothed Sacco – which, as the world's first beanbag chair, is beloved by gamers worldwide – took the spotlight.

Zanotta's engineering expertise and playful design spirit have kept the brand vibrant since 1954. Zanotta has shaped Italian design with its pioneering approach and radical ideas – and that doesn't look to be changing anytime soon.



From top Sacco bean bag; Riga-Riga table and Nellee chair; Riga-Riga cupboard

INTERVIEW



Clockwise from left Jane at the ALCHEMICA exhibition; digital knit yarns; Haworth Cardigan lounge chair in Pantone Dualities colour; close up of the digital knit



Colour that defines our times

“The last six years, I’ve been working with Pantone as a member of the Pantone Color Institute – which has obviously been the dream! Pantone is probably the company everyone thinks of when they think of colour.”

With an expert colour eye like Pantone Color Institute’s Jane Boddy, a sunny afternoon chat beside a sparkling pool ringed with flowers was an apt setting. We were eager to ask Jane about Pantone’s Dualities range, which Patricia Urquiola chose as the upholstery for the centrepiece in her ALCHEMICA exhibition.

‘When we are looking at colour at Pantone, we look deep into the details of the colour to see the subtle nuances within the colours,’ Jane said, ‘and Dualities is all about that.’ Containing both light-filled New Age pastels and shadowy neutrals, Dualities finds harmony in contrast – and Jane sees a similar spirit in Milan.

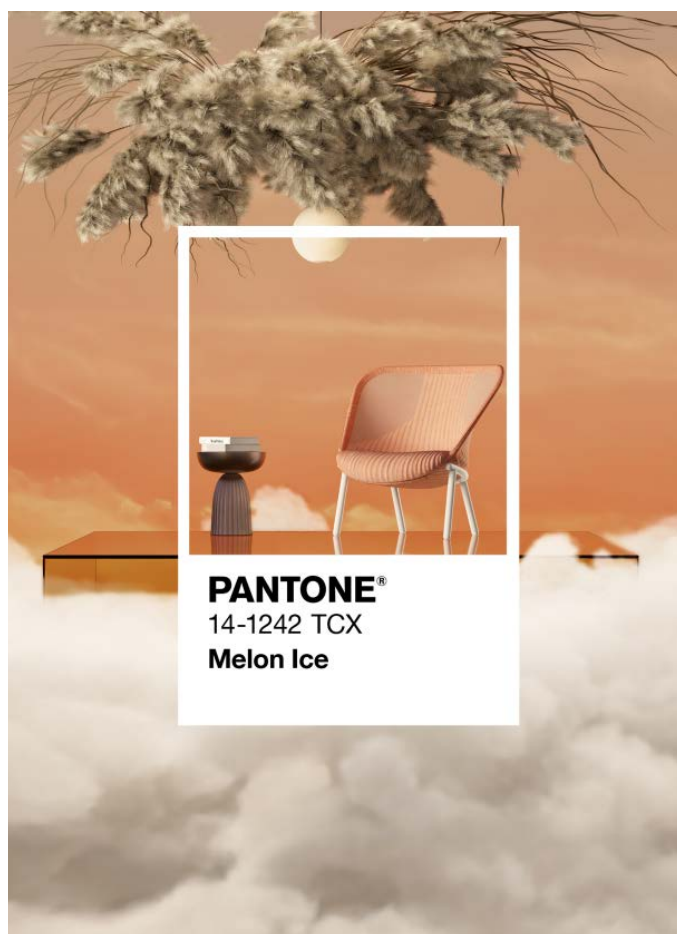
‘There is actually a bit of a parallel with Dualities and Milan,’ Jane said. ‘Look at Milan – it’s very traditional, it’s a place rooted in traditional culture. Yet at the same time when we think of Milan, we think of fast paced innovation – the

Milan design fair [is] the most cutting edge furniture design fair. So it almost sits between the two.

‘And when I think of Dualities, I almost see the same parallel,’ Jane said. ‘I’m thinking of good solid pastel tones, good solid greys, colours that you can really put the base of a good palette down with. But you’ve got in there some of these really dynamic colours – I particularly love the sour levels that are in there, like the really sour greens, very sporty and fresh. And they’re really trending at the moment.’ (Jane’s expectations were spot on; she said this on our very first day in the city, and we encountered citrusy greens frequently in the following days.)

Dualities colours were used for Patricia’s Uroboro and special-edition Haworth Cardigan Lounges – and these were ideal canvases for Dualities. ‘I think the Dualities range is all about working with colour in a really practical

INTERVIEW



Clockwise from left
Haworth Cardigan chair
in Melon Ice; matching
to the Pantone Dualities
swatches; Haworth
Cardigan chair in Pantone
Dualities colour; digital
knit swatches



way,' Jane said. 'When you look at the colours themselves – you look at the colours that are in the collection for the chairs. Each colour itself is very strong on its own. It makes a statement on its own. But when those colours combine together, the effect is quite different; it suddenly becomes a lot more natural within that snake form. So, as we see here, you've got bright colours. If these colours were on their own individually, you would see them as very strong and bold. But actually when they combine the effect is softened.'

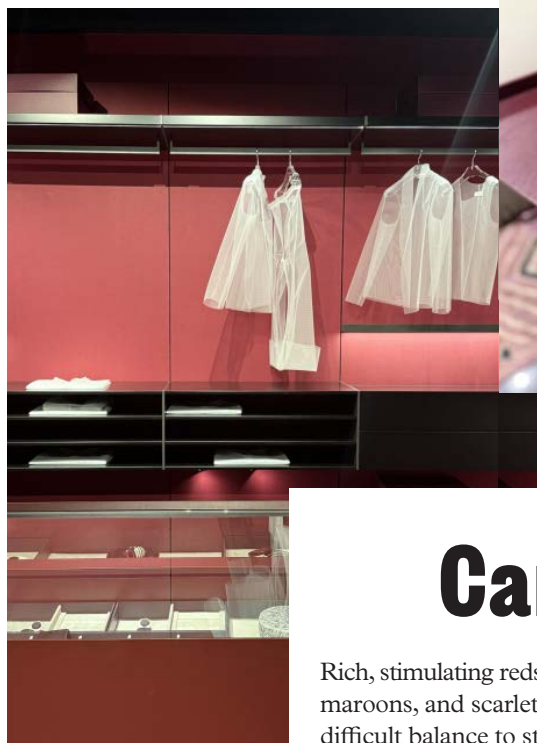
Dualities pastels capture the dynamism our moment seems to cry out for. 'The New Age pastels are actually a colour range that defines our times,' Jane said. 'We are now in an era which is all about really dynamic pastel levels. And within the Dualities collection you've got a real mix... there are pastels which have more of a softened, smoked aspect to them, or pastels which have more life within them. In some cases you might even say those pastels get close to a neon – but they're not a neon, they're just a really punchy, lively pastel tone.'

The shadow side of Dualities boasts a material practicality. 'What's really important about the shadows collection is, it's one of the first times I've actually been able to work with blacks, greys, whites, soft neutrals, which actually do reflect how people work with those colours,'

Jane said. 'So when people think of a black level, it's not just about hard, solid, black, heavily saturated – there's actually blacks which have more purple within them, more green, more pink. Same with greys. Grey traditionally is actually quite hard to work with, because it can really look very different – it can be either be very pink and soft, or it can be quite concrete-like, where it's got lots of blue within it. And then particularly with white tones as well – whites these days, you've got combinations of ultra optical white, very hard and aggressive. But going all the way down to more of the organic, softer off whites, that's actually where I think the colour range is really clever, because it reflects the materials of today. If we're working in organic unbleached cottons, of course those materials wouldn't be bleached. Therefore you'd need like a softer, less optical white. And you'll find those colours within the range.'

We asked Jane about Pantone's 2025 Colour of the Year, Mocha Mousse. '[It's] a really good example of when you look at a colour and look beyond the expectation,' Jane said. 'So you're looking at a brown, but actually, when you look at the brown itself, it's very soft. It's got a real velvety softness to it. It has lots of pink within it as well. It's a colour which in different light situations will change how it looks – and the Dualities range has a very similar approach to it.'

TRENDS

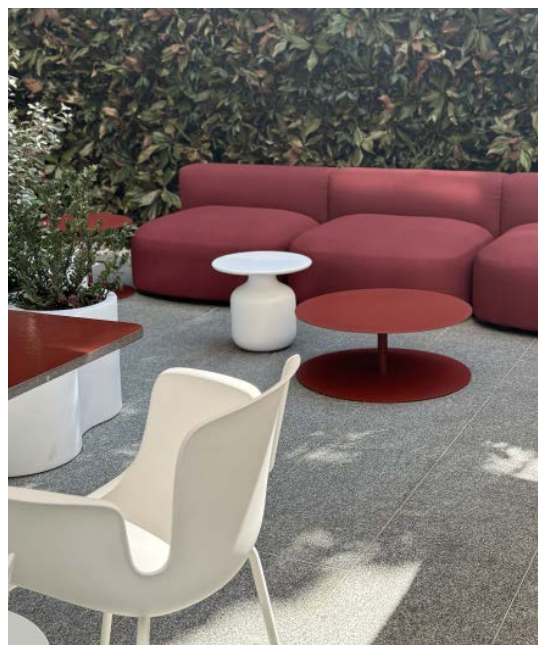


Clockwise from top left Walk-in wardrobe by Cassina; Shelving unit by Karakter x Cassina; Sideboard by Zanotta; Installation by Patricia Urquiola; Containers by Kartell; Putdoor sofa by Cappellini; Wall covering at the ALCHEMICA exhibition



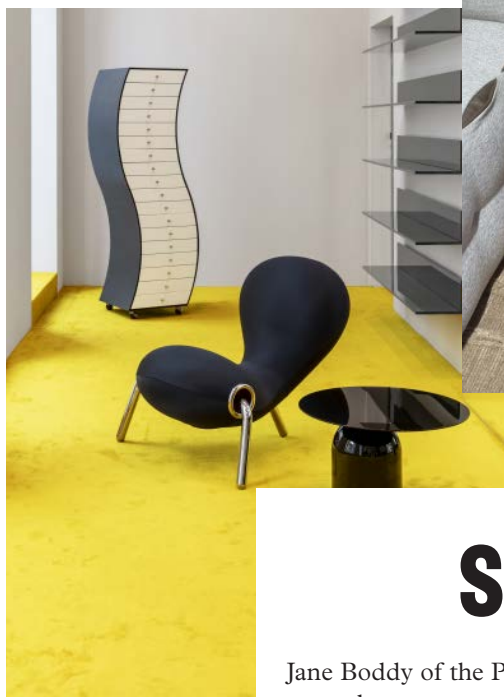
Campari Soda

Rich, stimulating reds were prominent in Milan this year. The amaranths, maroons, and scarlets we saw were vibrant, but not overpowering – a difficult balance to strike, but one that this red – which we affectionally referred to as ‘Campari’ – managed with aplomb. An aperitif known for its deep red hue, Campari hails from just west of Milan. The original carmine colour was derived from insects called cochineals (though we’re happy to report that Campari no longer uses bugs to get that vivid shade). This rich red invites active contemplation, keeping mental energy up. On furniture, this red creates vivid pieces with real presence; there is a confidence to them, but they don’t demand attention (see Zanotta’s images for excellent examples). On larger, sweeping surfaces, rich red paint, wallpaper, or rugs result in truly captivating spaces, such as Cassina’s Ghost Wall walk-in wardrobe. Perhaps surprisingly, Campari red worked quite well with orange and plum.



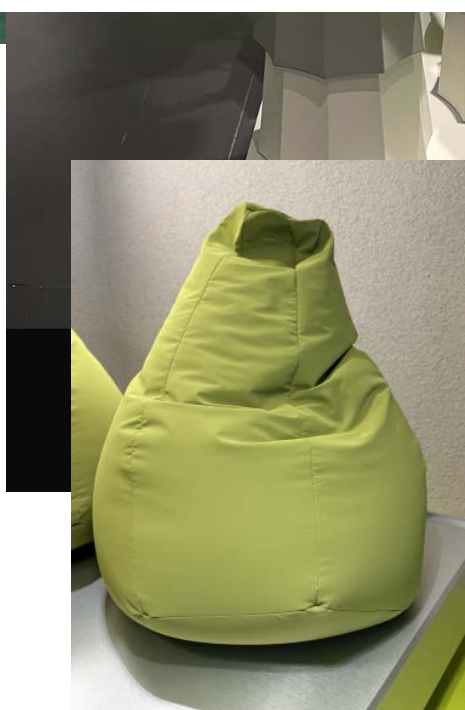
TRENDS

Clockwise from top left Flooring at Cappellini; Side table at Fendi Casa; Flooring at Zanotta; Stool by AMDL CIRCLE; Bean bag and chairs by Zanotta; Armchair by Cappellini



Sour citrus

Jane Boddy of the Pantone Color Institute mentioned the trend toward sour greens on our very first day in Milan – and she was spot on. *(Read her interview page 12.)* Bright, joyous citrus were frequent sights. These fizzy tones were not relegated to spunky little accent pillows – they were the main outfit for many pieces. Zanotta embraced lime; their iconic Sacco, upholstered in green citrus, was the first piece visitors saw as they entered. In case anyone missed the Sacco, the carpet across the entrance floor was also bright lime. Cappellini used lemon similarly, filling a room with bright yellow carpet and on a zippy Sofa with Arms. These limes and lemons were bright, exuberant, and optimistic. The emotional effect was palpable – the innocent joy of pieces upholstered in these colours put a little pep in our step. Many days are tough – but some days, we're just happy. On those days, bring on citrus joy!



Top left and middle left image: Cappellini

INTERVIEW



Design in the in-between

“The more time you spend in a state of difference, the more sense of home you feel. You begin to feel comfortable encountering otherness.”

Designed by Stephen Burks *Man Made*, the *Particulaire* installation by Calico Wallpaper filled a sunny courtyard with memories. A wallpaper mural depicted dozens of mementos that Stephen Burks and Malika Leiper collected from all over the world while a selection of magnified versions stood in the courtyard – taken ‘from the wall to create a larger than life experience,’ Malika said.

As Stephen and Malika were conceptualising the mural, they noticed that their rooms were ‘full of little objects from our travels,’ Stephen said – and with that, the concept for *Particulaire* sprang to life. ‘Each one of those objects tells a story,’ Stephen added. ‘So there’s this cumulative narrative that was so exciting.’

Rwanda, Japan, Mexico, Senegal, Denmark – the range of places represented was as varied as Stephen and Malika’s travels. But as tangible as the memories seemed, the very nature of the objects highlighted the gap between past and present. That sense of the in-between – design in liminal spaces – is rooted in the studio’s spirituality. ‘In meditation,’

Malika says, ‘there’s a tool I’ve used to think about where you are and an object in front of you. Now focus on that space in between. And that’s one way to remove yourself from your own mind and get into that state of emptiness and void.’

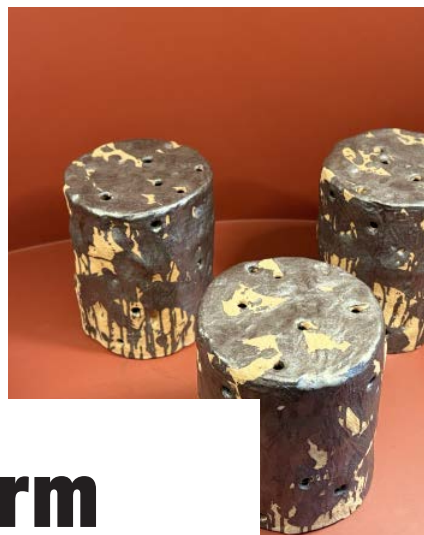
‘How do you occupy what isn’t there?’ Stephen asked. ‘And by occupying what isn’t there, you have a chance to reflect upon what is there.’

With such an openness to the intangible, the immaterial, the unseen, we were curious what role materiality plays for the studio. ‘Material is a tool, colour is a tool,’ Stephen said. ‘We try to lead with a concept and a big idea. And then as we begin to focus that, the right material comes along, the right form comes along, and you start to feel the right thing.’

Their approach results in a fascinating interplay between form and the formless. ‘The immaterial factor is – it’s something we can’t touch, but we know it’s there,’ Stephen said. ‘Most of the universe is composed of something we can’t touch, but we know it’s there. And we can begin to address that, because it connects us all.’

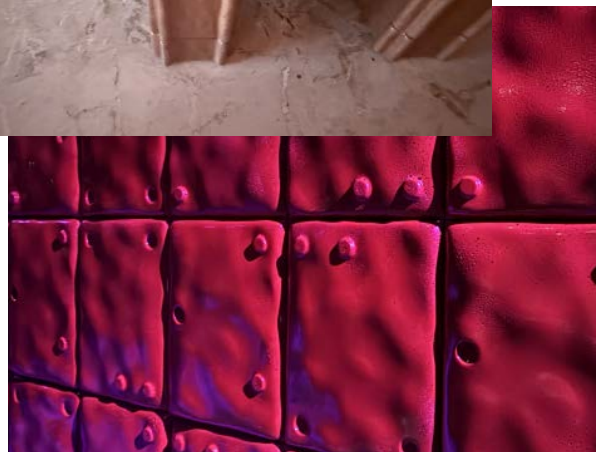
TRENDS

Clockwise from top left Coffee table by Kettal; Art at Cassina; Cabinet and console by Cimento designed by Patricia Urquiola; Tiles designed by Patricia Urquiola; Dining table by Cassina; Taps by Gessi; Wall texture at Cassina

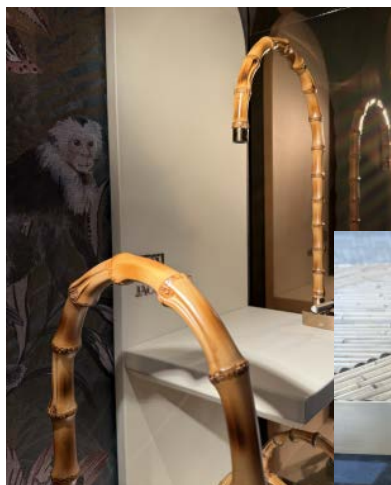


Rustic Charm

Milan has been the home of skilled artisans for hundreds of years. In an age where most of our lives seem to be lived digitally – which brings many positives along with it, such as expanded community, easier communication with dispersed family and friends, and accessible information – the rustic gains a certain charm. This was particularly well explored in Elle Decor Italia's ALCHEMICA, curated by Patricia Urquiola. The playful interaction with rustic sciences of the past – the alchemical tradition – created a natural space to explore organic, nostalgic forms. Cimento's new RIVA collection, designed by Patricia, is defined by irregular details which combine to form rhythmic, almost watery patterns. The collection feels modern even as it calls to mind ancient glazed pottery. That sense of merging the modern and rustic was also evident in a Cassina display, where a raked plaster wall finish was complemented by a similar texture on a metal dining table.



TRENDS

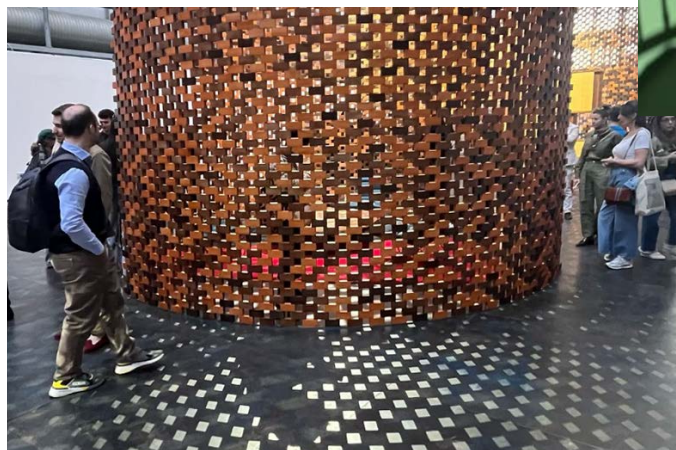


Clockwise from top left Armchair by Ralph Lauren Home; Taps by Gessi; Coffee table by Fendi Casa; Installation by Gucci; Installation by Saint Laurent; Flooring designed by Patricia Urquiola



Rooted in Nature

As technological advances become ever more complex, it seems natural materials take on more significance. While natural materials remain useful and tend to have sustainability benefits, the great sweeping march of material progress steadily replaces the traditional with the 'modern'. (Recall the outcry earlier this year when Hong Kong announced it would soon replace its iconic bamboo scaffolding with metal.) But even as our profound connection to nature frays, the bond can never be severed. This year we found several exhibitions that created an organic encounter with nature and natural materials. Gucci's exhibition focused on bamboo, examining it as both a structural material and a container for memories. Saint Laurent enclosed its Charlotte Perriand exhibition with stunning screens made of wooden blocks, which celebrated both the natural wood and the interplay of light and shadow that the screens created – calling to mind a walk through the dappled shade of a forest.



Top left image: Ralph Lauren Home

INTERVIEW



Design that moves the heart

“I think there’s no city in the world that is as free as Berlin. Everybody can just be who they are and how they want to be.”

In the elegant courtyard of the Casa Brera hotel, we met Hanne Willmann, a vibrant young designer heading up the Berlin-based Studio Hanne Willmann.

As much as we talked about Milan this week – it is known as the Home of Design for good reason! – we wanted to hear Hanne’s take on Berlin, another global capital of design.

‘It’s a very special city with a crazy background,’ Hanne said, ‘and that makes it such a free city, I think. I feel like there’s no city in the world – and you might correct me, coming from LA! – that is as free as Berlin. Everybody can just be who they are and how they want to be. Everybody can say what they want... but in general, yeah, [it’s] the freedom, the “feeling super free and open to everything” spirit.’

Hanne has a warm, thoughtful awareness of the person at the end of the product. She spoke of her design philosophy as an affection that sparks between a product and the person that product accompanies. ‘The most important part about products is that people really, really love your product,’ she

said. ‘It shouldn’t just be a trend and they want to have it because at the moment it’s cool – it should be something they fall in love with forever.’

‘And that’s the most sustainable thing to have,’ Hanne added, ‘because if you connect with a product on a deeper level, then you will never give it away. Then you will give it to your children afterwards, maybe. But you won’t just want to get rid of it because the trend is over.’

Trends, of course, come up a lot in conversation in Milan. ‘I don’t really like the word “trends” – but that’s what every designer would say!’ Hanne said, laughing. ‘I think trends... there’s like thousands of mini trends. And I wouldn’t even call it trends. Many, many movements. And a lot of things are repeated, and if it’s repeated twice or three times, that’s nice. I mean, you need repetition to actually fall in love with things.’

‘Sometimes you need to meet certain products again or certain colours again,’ Hanne said. ‘The more often you see it, the more you fall in love.’

INTERVIEW



Memory is the key, Emotion is the door

During a very busy week, we were thrilled when Oki Sato of Nendo took the time to write us his thoughts on materials, emotions, and memory.

For you, how are materials and emotions connected?

I feel that there are three key elements connected to emotion: color, material, and form. I aim to create designs that move people emotionally by carefully balancing and prioritizing these three components.

Do you begin with an emotional impact in mind and find material that will match it, or do you begin with the material, and let the emotional impact remain open to interpretation?

Definitely the former. I begin by conceiving a story that generates emotional value, and then I consider the most suitable colors, materials, forms, and techniques to suit it. It's like fitting puzzle pieces together – a very logical process.



Above New ceramic vase collection TassTumu designed by Nendo for Cappellini. TassTumu can easily be stacked, to form true micro-architectures. The concept of modularity and stratification, expressed by the Japanese terms Tass (“to add”) and Tumu (“to stack”), allows for creative and versatile combinations.

What role does memory and nostalgia play in Nendo designs?

Memory plays a very important role. Rather than focusing on highly specific memories, I find that broadly shared ones – experiences many people have in common – are preferable.

By incorporating these kinds of memories into a design, it becomes possible to create something that resonates with users and stirs their emotions. You might think of memory as the “key” and emotion as the “door.” Using the right key allows you to open the door.

How can memory of the past – in both materials and craft techniques – enhance the materials and craft techniques of the future? I believe that utilizing cutting-edge technology is essential for evolving materials and techniques from the past and carrying them forward into the future. At the same time, such collaborations can also help advanced technologies become more seamlessly integrated into everyday life.

In terms of materials, what is Nendo super excited to work with these days? Are there any new materials you hope to work with in the near future?

Although we don't have any final output yet, I'm currently exploring whether the expressions and values of natural materials like wood and stone can be translated onto industrial materials such as metal and resin. I've been conducting experiments along these lines daily for the past few years. I hope you'll look forward to seeing what comes out of it.

TRENDS

Clockwise from top left Armchair by Edra; Side table by Fendi Casa; Glass objects designed by Patricia Urquiola; Aqua Chairs by Tokujin Yoshioka; Side table by Italia; Sideboard and light by Fendi Casa



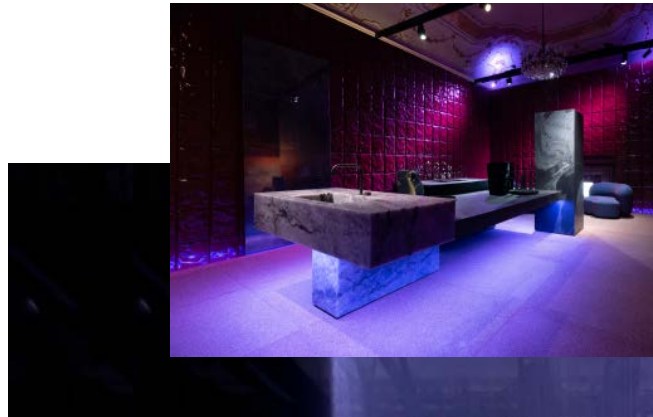
Chill Factor

Water captivates us. ‘The same river doesn’t flow twice,’ Heraclitus said – and perhaps it is that very elusiveness that forces us to continually try to capture what can’t be captured. But is the ever-flowing dance of water not captured in the form of ice? This year, reflections on water were chilled. Icy inspiration was everywhere. This was encapsulated perfectly in a beautiful installation by Tokujin Yoshioka, which included a series of Aqua Chairs sculpted from ice. Alternatively titled *Sculpture of Light* (if one reflects on water, one will quickly reflect on light), the chairs melted over the course of the week, poetically erasing the capturing of the intangible that ice allows to take place. Lasvit presented ‘Soaked in Light’ – another light/water combo – that explored the fluid nature of water. Ice, water, even vapours – these are timeless themes that are inexhaustible.



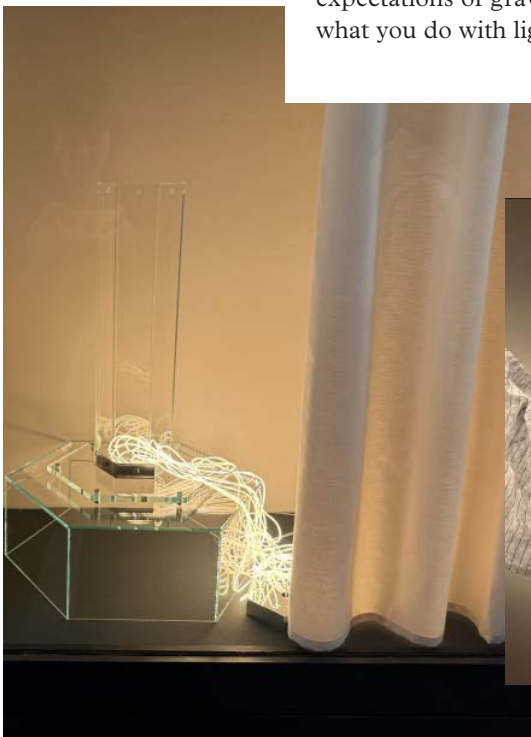
TRENDS

Clockwise from top left Light by Flos; Room installation at ALECHEMICA exhibition; 'Making the invisible visible' exhibition by Google; Sofa by Edra; Light by Flos; Light designed by Formafantasma for Flos; Exhibition design by Hermès



Ultraviolet

Milan explores light in new ways every year. In 2025, there seemed to be a fascination with disentangling light, even to the point of playful destruction – like a child playing with modelling clay, designers took apart light as they knew it. We call this trend 'Ultraviolet' for its strange overlap of presence and absence – it is light that affects us, and yet it is unseen (unless you're a bird, bee, or one of the very rare humans who has some perception of it). Formafantasma exhibited a table and lamp combo that seemed to be a single piece sealed by an invisible, micro layer of UV glue. Google's 'Making the Invisible Visible' exhibition was a thrilling exploration of light. 'Curtains' virtually made light into something almost tangible. Stepping into the curtain, you felt you were truly in a separate space from someone standing outside. Hermès' installation made massive blocks seemed to float – defying our expectations of gravity with light. We can't wait to see – or unsee? – what you do with light this year.



INTERVIEW



The longing for sanctuary amidst change

“We’re always striving to make things better. In design, you are trying to improve a function; in art, in design, we strive for beauty.”

On a plush sofa in Zanotta’s beautiful showroom, we caught up with Larissa Sarjeant, Haworth’s Managing Director for Germany. After fifteen years in the fashion industry, Larissa has a keen eye for trends, craft, and fabrics.

We began by asking how memory might enhance craft. ‘Memory of the past is basically the basis for everything,’ Larissa said. ‘As human beings, we build on the knowledge that we acquire. So we remember things, and we try to learn from them, because we’re always striving to make things better.’

Considering Larissa’s background in fashion, which is ever rhyming with past movements, we were curious to hear her thoughts on nostalgia. ‘I think there is a certain nostalgia in the air right now,’ she said, ‘and maybe it has to do with the fact that there is so much change happening because of the technological revolution with artificial intelligence and, everywhere around us, the way we consume information. That’s a big change, and change is always scary to us humans – so we long for things that we know and that we feel comfortable with.’

Larissa sees several themes returning. ‘I think we are seeing certain colours come back that are reminiscent of the past – very warm colours. And in terms of forms, it’s actually interesting, because there are two trends. On the one hand, there’s a lot of talk about Bauhaus again; many designers are inspired by that. On the other hand, everything is also very organic right now – we’re sitting on this very rounded, super comfortable sofa.’

This turn toward round, cosy comfort was a theme Larissa touched on. ‘You want to feel comfortable and cosy and safe,’ she said. ‘As humans, you always want to feel protected. And materials, and acoustics, and the functionality – that all really helps being creative, if you feel at ease and comfortable in a space.’

Larissa found an apt metaphor to describe how well-crafted pieces can help people do their best work. ‘If something works well, then you have no friction,’ Larissa said. ‘A well laid out kitchen where everything works helps a cook to craft wonderful meals – and the same is true for an office space.’

INTERVIEW



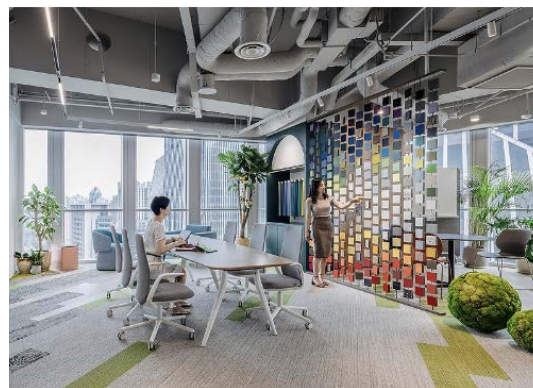
Reinventing design

“The city is so inspiring, and so creative, and there’s so much happening. I love the combination of art and products.”

In a charming corner of Cassina’s showroom we welcomed Peter Schafer, Design Director at Gensler Munich, for a conversation about AI in design.

‘We’re using AI mostly at the early stages of the design process,’ Peter said. ‘It’s helpful to really understand the location, learning a little bit about the history, about the building, about the street, what’s important in the neighbourhood.’

For Peter’s team, AI tools are often brainstorming assistants. ‘It’s really helpful at a very early stage for prototyping, running many iterations. Just understanding what is possible,’ Peter added. ‘Let AI come up with some crazy ideas, and maybe that leads you somewhere. Who knows?’ We were curious if Peter thought the rise in AI may result in greater



Above Designed by Gensler, the HWS-Haworth Customer Experience Centre in Shanghai, China is redefining brand showroom through a human-centric design that links people with nature, space, technology, and furniture. A collaborative space designed to elevate productivity and inspire innovation, promoting health, wellbeing, and social connection.

affection for artisanal elements. ‘There’s a higher appreciation for the handmade, absolutely. We’re already seeing that people are reaching more to natural products, to made elements.’

But more than the contrast between human designers and AI tools, Peter is interested to see the harmonious relationship that will develop. ‘I’m really curious to see the fusion of both,’ he said. ‘Maybe it’s going into the art, or into the craft, into product design, where the advantages, the positive sides of both, fused together, will create something new that we wouldn’t be able to do or we wouldn’t have thought about... we’ll completely reinvent how we look at design.’

While Peter sees the significant promise in AI tools, pressing real-world questions remain. ‘We also need to be careful who owns the software,’ Peter said. ‘Is it accessible for everyone? What data is it learning from?’ he asked, adding, ‘Who defines what is good design?’

Sustainability concerns are also rife. ‘That’s the most interesting question about AI,’ he said. ‘It helps us so much, but it uses so much energy... and it needs a lot of cooling. And unfortunately the sources are not the most sustainable ones. We need to push the tech giants to be more transparent on the energy use. I think there’s a lot of information that needs to be shared.’ But Peter remains optimistic. ‘We’re still early,’ he added. ‘So there’s hope.’

TRENDS



Clockwise from top left Sofa by Cappellini; Armchair by Cappellini; Sofa by Fendi Casa; Rug by Zanotta; Armchair by Fendi Casa; Wall covering by Kettal; Dining chair by Fendi Casa



Cosy up

Full on frizz is in. Previous years saw us take tentative steps toward texture; we used subtle boucles and evoked plush sweaters and quilts. This year, flirtation was flung right out the window as brands abandoned texture restraint. It seems there is a psychological resonance to this embrace of materiality. In tumultuous times, we seek sanctuaries. Our shared global moment is turbulent; it seems to be crying out for spaces of comfort, spaces that invite us to nestle in with a warm drink in our hands. We want reassurance, perhaps, or even just a moment of rest. Fendi Casa exhibited several utterly plush options, including a sofa so cosy-packed that soft fur burst out from the seams. Werner Aisslinger's ever-evolving Juli chair added the Soft Plus, which brings an utterly adorable 'static kitten' upholstery to the range. This longing was reflected in soft sofas with gentle, rounded lines – sofas we couldn't help but sink into, sighing contentedly. Go ahead – push cosy comfort to the max this year.



Top left and middle image: Cappellini

TRENDS

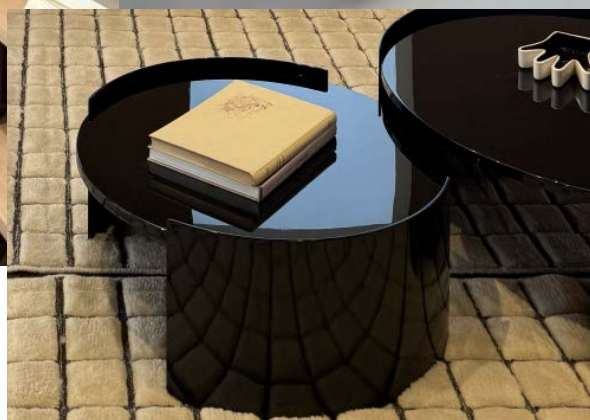
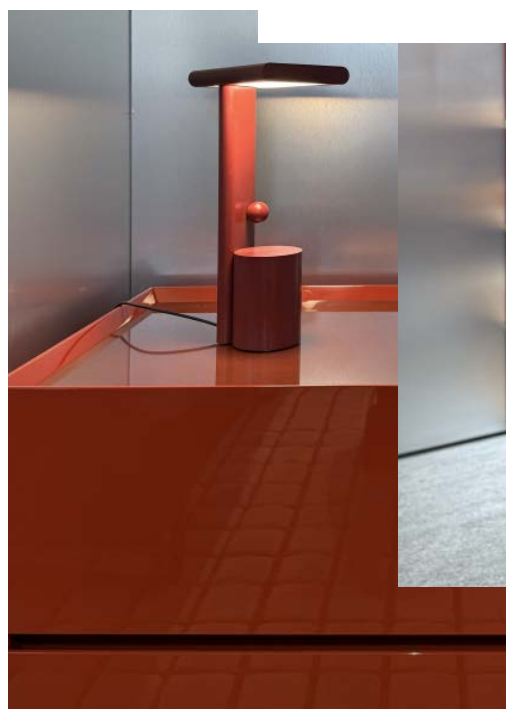


Clockwise from top left Mirror designed by Patricia Urquiola; Coffee tables by Cassina; Shelving unit by Cassina; Sofa by Fendi Casa; Coffee table by Cassina; Bookcase by Zanotta; Chest of drawers by Cassina; Bookcase by Cappellini



Shine Bright

Every article about Milan Design Week will inevitably include some reference to bright lights, shining stars, brilliant luminaries – and that is absolutely accurate! We are fascinated with light and reflection; every year in Milan there are profound explorations of light in all its physical, reflective, poetic, and contemplative varieties. In a product sense, we encountered mirrors and mirrored surfaces, including an increase in gloss compared to prior years. At Cappellini, the Red Bookcase by REJO studio – a female duo of Palestinian architects – sported a bold open pore lacquer. Zanotta exhibited Z24, a bookcase and chest of drawers by Muller Van Severen, which featured a deep red gloss. Cassina introduced both Ghost Box, a family of containers in new high-gloss finishes. A sofa at Fendi Casa combined a plush furry upholstery with refined, reflective chrome finish. This year, don't be afraid to shine.



Middle left Image: Cappellini

INTERVIEW



Looking back to look forward

“I like to say that we are like a nice tree that has very solid roots, but also big leaves that are projected towards the sky.”

The morning we caught up with Nicola Coropulis, CEO of Poltrona Frau, Milan was at her most beautiful. On a sunny terrace above the showroom, we talked about what craft, memory, and heritage mean to one of Italy’s most storied brands.

‘First of all, it is a great pride and a great honour to represent this heritage,’ Nicola said, ‘which is actually the founding root of our brand. But it is also a great responsibility to preserve this heritage, keep it alive.’

‘And the only way to actually keep it alive,’ Nicola added, ‘is actually through innovation and through constant research and development... I like to say that we are like a nice tree that has very solid roots, but also big leaves that are projected towards the sky. So this is actually a metaphor that says that our heritage is the base on which we build.’

Even with such a rich archive, Poltrona Frau transcends time. ‘I like to say that the famous architect and friend of mine – and I’m proud of to be a friend of his – Michele De Lucchi said about Poltrona Frau, that it is the only company where

a product developed in 2025 can easily, with no problem, sit together with a product that was designed more than a hundred years ago. They have the same family feeling and they are rooted in the same values of craftsmanship, quality and Italian elegance.’

Poltrona Frau is working to keep that tradition of quality alive. ‘Our goal is actually to create our own school of crafts,’ Nicola said. ‘We have done an experiment last year with Atelier dei Saperi, which means the Crafts Atelier, where retired members of Poltrona Frau, retired craftsmen, have taught younger people how to cut leather, how to sew it, how to upholster their products. And some of the ladies that attended the course are now already employed with us.’

Poltrona Frau has a vast store of memories – but the brand does not rest on past successes. ‘We are not nostalgic at all, actually,’ Nicola said. ‘We think that the past is a good memory of things that are useful to learn from. The present is what we live... We look back, but always with the idea of looking forward.’

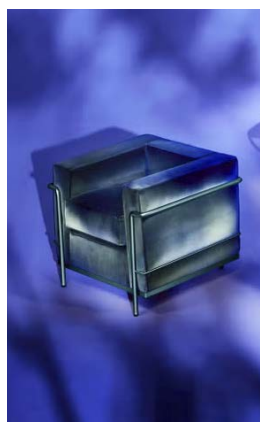
TRENDS



*Clockwise from top left
Armchair by Cassina;
Lighting by Poltrona
Frau; Armchairs by Saint
Laurent; Vico Magistretti
Armchair by Kettal;
Armchairs by Poltrona
Frau; Armchair by Cassina*

Past Perfect

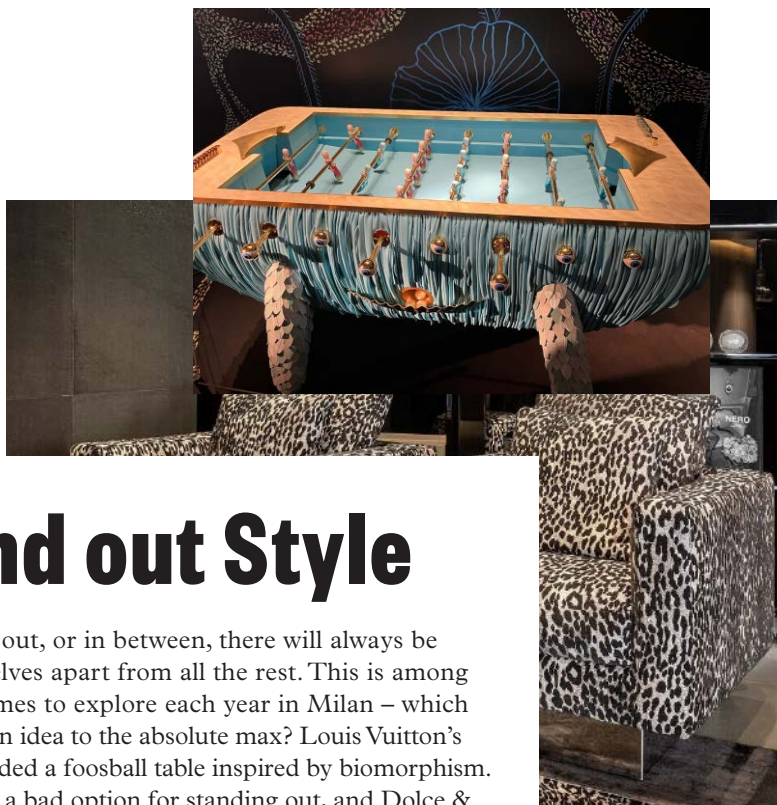
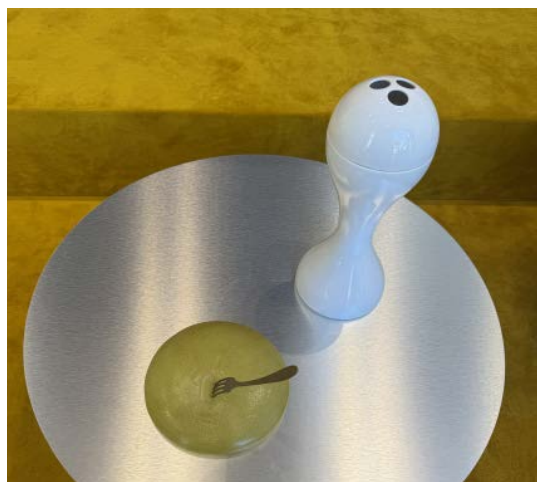
The past, the present, the future: Milan Design Week is inevitably a moment to reflect. It is a time to celebrate the anniversaries of icons whilst wrestling with how to bring classic visions into the future – into a world that is changing in unprecedented ways. How do we keep memories alive? How do we resurrect the forgotten, giving past geniuses their due? Any lover of design would be deeply thrilled to see that Charlotte Perriand only gets more prominent every year; Saint Laurent exhibited unseen designs from her archive, including the beautiful Le Fauteuil Visiteur Indochine. Cassina's Staging Modernity celebrated the 60th anniversary of its Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand collection. And Poltrona Frau exhibited Gio Ponti's Dezza in an exclusive Ponti illustration for its 60th anniversary. In ever-thoughtful Milan, the past is in good hands.



Top right image: Saint Laurent; Staging Modernity image: Cassina

TRENDS

Clockwise from top left Coffee table by Cappellini; Foosball table by Louis Vuitton; Armchairs by Dolce & Gabbana Casa; Armchair by Poltrona Frau x Fornasetti; Bean bag by Zanotta; Outdoor sun loungers by Dolce & Gabbana Casa; Mirror by Cassina; Table by Cassina



Stand out Style

No matter what is in, out, or in between, there will always be pieces that set themselves apart from all the rest. This is among the most thrilling themes to explore each year in Milan – which pieces are just taking an idea to the absolute max? Louis Vuitton's Objets Nomades included a foosball table inspired by biomorphism. Leopard print is never a bad option for standing out, and Dolce & Gabbana home showed in feline-clad chairs. Poltrona Frau displayed Renzo Frau's classic 1919 armchair in an affecting butterfly-and-text print by Fornasetti. Cassina collaborated with Italian artist Pietro Terzini on 'ME FROM OUTSIDE'. A stirring work of both literal and metaphorical reflection, the installation included a mirror with the message 'WE SEE WHAT WE WANT TO SEE' scrawled upon it. And Zanotta, no stranger to radical design ideas, reinterpreted their iconic Sacco in a myriad of ways.



Top right outside and bottom middle images: Dolce & Gabbana Casa; Middle right image: Poltrona Frau

INTERVIEW



Life is better in a beautiful space

“Every time you come [to Milan Design Week], you can see all these lifestyle brands pushing the evolution of design.”

Amid the hustle of Via Durini, Cassina’s outdoor lounge created a bubble of serenity – and it was the perfect spot to sit down with Anand Amornrattanavej, the winsome vice president of Euro Creations.

Based in Bangkok, Euro Creations brings Cassina, Poltrona Frau, and Haworth to clients in Thailand and beyond. ‘We believe life is better in a beautiful space,’ Anand said. ‘People are craving for more beauty and design... when the space is right, you feel better.’

Anand looks for the ‘life behind the brand’ – that energy that distinguishes great brands from ordinary ones. As family-run businesses, he sees similar spirits at Haworth and Euro Creations. ‘Brands that are run by family give the spirit of an entrepreneur and the spirit of care in every detail,’ Anand said. ‘All these things reflect back to the product, reflect back to the brands.’

Anand spoke of the detail and craft in Thai design. ‘If you go up north, if you go up northeast, you would see a lot of craft in our own style. And it’s beautiful. And many, many

Thai products influence or inspire European brands as well... it’s a mix of culture, which makes design even more interesting.’

Anand is always pleasantly surprised during Milan Design Week, which he described as the Davos of design. ‘Every time you come, you can see all these lifestyle brands pushing the evolution of design,’ he said. And yet even as these brands evolve, Anand notes that Cassina and Poltrona Frau consistently maintain their distinctive DNA. ‘The most important thing is not to forget the roots of your brand,’ he said.

We ended our conversation with a discussion about time and memory. ‘You cannot ignore the past, because the past is what is happening in the present, and it will somehow influence the future,’ Anand said. He spoke glowingly of Cassina’s Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand collection, which is almost a hundred years old – but feels entirely fresh. Such design is ‘timeless,’ Anand said. ‘If you design it right, I think it’s just in its own time zone – and it will last forever.’

INTERVIEW



The intersection between people and space

“It doesn’t necessarily have to be a commercial environment. You can walk into a restaurant, a hotel, a residence – even now with Interiors in Motion, we have vehicles, boats, yachts, airplanes. All of those environments can have a Haworth offering.”

Brian Kelly never fails to light up a room. In addition to his role as Haworth’s Managing Director for the Middle East and Africa, Brian recently became the head of the Real Estate and A&D Division for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In our brand new dealer showroom in Milan, we asked Brian how Haworth has transformed.

‘[Haworth] has had this huge brand transition over the last 10 to 15 years,’ Brian said – and the ‘catalyst for this evolution’ were the Haworth



Above Haworth showroom at the Forum Progetti in Milan

Lifestyle brands. ‘The addition of the Lifestyle brands, predominantly here in Italy, allowed us to diversify our offering to the market – but also to elevate our brand within the A&D community.

‘We added “We Lead with Design” as one of our core values as an organisation,’ Brian said, ‘and ever since then, you’ve seen the commercial interiors division have collaborations with the likes of Patricia Urquiola... You’re building that bridge between our Commercial Interiors brand to the Lifestyle Design brand.’ On that note, we were thrilled to announce a collaboration with Pantone in Milan this year. ‘Pantone – that’s something we’re very excited about launching here in Milan,’ Brian said. ‘Dualities [is] the bridge between light and dark, where again, design is ever evolving.’

Pantone’s Dualities range was not only displayed on Patricia Urquiola’s Uroboros – it was also featured on special edition Haworth Cardigan Lounge chairs. ‘[Haworth Cardigan] is beautiful, and it’s comfortable, and it’s arguably the most sustainable product in that category right now. It’s been a great success for us so far.’

The elevation of Haworth as a design-led brand will continue to open doors in the design community. ‘We’ve moved from an office furniture company to now a company that really can be the intersection between people and space,’ he says. ‘It doesn’t necessarily have to be a commercial environment. You can walk into a restaurant, a hotel, a residence – even now, with Interiors in Motion, we have vehicles, boats, yachts, airplanes. All of those environments can have a Haworth offering.’

What could possibly be left, we asked? ‘Space,’ Brian said with a laugh. ‘If anyone needs furniture on the moon, we’ll be there!’

LAST WORD



Continue the journey

Milan Design Week 2025 was a celebration of design – the stunning, the surprising, and the spectacular. The timeless was examined from new angles. Classic materials were reinvigorated. Joyful colours pushed the envelope.



Spark – our blog

Check out our curated content related to knowledge topics in the workplace and beyond.



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Your daily, on-the-ground dose of the stunning, the surprising, and the spectacular: re-experience Milan Design Week 2025.



Creative Minds – Designer interviews

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