

The Vinson View

Inside man and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



01

CITY LIGHTS

Shining examples of Italian design, old and new, in Milan

From a schedule prepared from over 500 e-mails, and more than 60 hours spent pacing the packed pavilions of the Rho fairgrounds and Milan's streets and courtyards for Fuori Salone, I clocked up a little under a thousand snaps on two iPhones to record what I saw. Of everything, two stops – one planned, one not – really stood out.

At Euroluca I was particularly impressed by Flos. I loved how Michael Anastassiades turned the flex issue, cast cradle-style, on its head and made it an integral part of the overall design of 'String Lights', and how the glass spheres of his IC series found an unlikely equilibrium on their slanting baton-like holders. Meanwhile, Rodolfo Dordoni turned the heat-dissipating mechanics of the LED light source into a decorative focal point, as did Piero Lissoni with the straw-like tops of his 'Light Bell'. For pure aesthetics, Flos gets full marks; on function, it scores even higher. I had no idea lamps could contain a water pump with hot and cooled water, but it seems they can, and they look much better for it.

While following my carefully planned route around central Milan, I passed the showroom of silversmiths San Lorenzo. Tucked away in a smart part of town in via Melegari, San Lorenzo's shop was

designed by Afra and Tobia Scarpa in 1986. While browsing the cabinets (green wood with a lobster-coloured border and lined with custom-dyed blue felt) for treasures designed by the Scarpas, Antonio Piva, Lella and Massimo Vignelli, Franco Albini, and Franca Helg, I spotted a now out-of-production, and therefore rare and precious, piece by the Vignellis from 1972 and began to take in the rest of my surroundings.

A fabulous-looking chair turned out to be 'Miss' by the Scarpas, made in 1986 for Molteni and still in mint condition 27 years on – testament to the superiority of the Scarpas' design and Molteni's manufacturing skills. Walls were hand-finished in pale coloured marmorino, a kind of Venetian plaster, and the yellow timber I-shaped door in the lobby had the most fabulously engineered hinge, almost as impressive as the opening mechanism on the crystal-topped, brass-legged display tables. It wasn't an official nor a Fuori Salone stop on the fair circuit, but it was an excellent example of Italian design and craftsmanship, each execution more exquisite than the last. And, of course, the 1975 Scarpa-designed 'Papillona' floor lamps were made by none other than Flos. www.flos.it; www.sanlorenzsilver.it

02

SIDE LINES

It was only a matter of time before renowned interior designer David Collins introduced a range of furniture under his own name. His tightly edited line for Promemoria, launched during Salone, includes an elegant console and side table (above), chair and lamp. Hopefully it's the start of a beautiful relationship. www.promemoria.com



03

BURGER OFF

The upgrade of Milan's storied Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II is stepping up a notch or two. McDonalds has finally been given its marching orders, and will be replaced by Prada, which has been in the Giuseppe Mengoni-designed arcade since 1913. The new site will dwarf its original location, and while plans for the store are totally hush-hush, there will be much more than shopping and a far better place to eat.

TOP SPOTS

My other highlights from this year's Salone del Mobile

Patricia Urquiola's 'quake-struck' marble vases for Budri

BassamFellows' return to Milan at Agape 12

'Tea with Georg' set by Scholten & Baijings for Georg Jensen

'Atruro' desk by Christophe Pillet for Ceccotti Collezioni

Le Parc outdoor range by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti

'Semplice' lamp by Sam Hecht/ Industrial Facility for Oluce

'Hain' by RaR for Thomas Eyck

'Just Black' collection by the late James Irvine for Marsotto Edizioni

04

FRONT SEAT

Before Christophe Lemaire's last fashion show I hadn't heard of a chair casting, but that's exactly what Hermès did to seat 350 guests in the Lycée Henri IV in Paris in March. Randomly mixed with the maison's own Jean-Michel Frank, Rena Dumas and Enzo Mari chairs were specially 'cast' pieces, borrowed from all over France, by the likes of André Arbus, Borge Mogensen and Arne Vodder. All different but all front row, of course.

