

# FX



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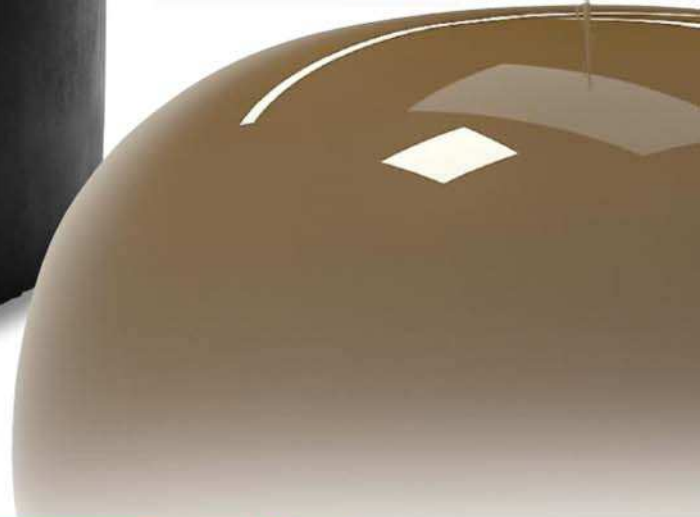
## FX focus

24 pages of comment, analysis and projects from the leading players in the retail design sector, plus top 10 performance tables and look at a virtual retail reality that could be closer than you think...

# Boxing clever

Pod life lives at the Macquarie Bank, with interiors created by Clive Wilkinson Architects





# Softly does it

FX INVITED MARIEL BROWN AND ZOE STAVROU OF SEYMOURPOWELL TO REVIEW TRENDS AT THIS YEAR'S MILAN SALONE DEL MOBILE, WHERE NATURE AND NOSTALGIA WERE DEFINING INFLUENCES

In April we once again joined the multitude of design lovers (a record 329,563 visitors) heading to Milan for the 32nd edition of the International Salone del Mobile. Little did we know that an untimely volcano eruption would mean our stay would be an extended one. So with all that extra time to look around the fair, what trends did we find?

This year we observed a gentle progression and softening of last year's 'crunched' themes, and a growing sense of both nostalgia and the need for escapism. What felt particularly positive about the show was the level at which designers and manufacturers across the board were engaging with the issue of sustainability.

## 1 Primal

The force of nature was felt at this year's show, and not just because of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption; many designers took the idea of nostalgia to the extreme, finding inspiration in the early origins of man.

At Edra's *The Barbarians* show the Campana Brothers displayed their usual confidence in form and material, exhibiting some bold new pieces. Cabana in particular caused a stir. Reminiscent of a strange creature, this piece is in fact a storage unit, entirely concealed by dangling lengths of fire-proofed raffia. The brothers' new table, called *Cotto*, had a similarly assured aesthetic. It comprises a stainless steel structure and legs with a thick aluminium top. The tabletop is set with eight large, variously shaped and textured pieces of treated terracotta that speaks of the Etruscans.

French design brand Moustache launched its second collection of furniture at this year's show, and Matali Crasset caught our eye with her new piece called *Instant Armseat*. The *Instant Armseat* is a wooden chair with one armrest (large enough to place a glass on). The seat can be transformed into a bench by joining two *Instant Armseats* together. What felt especially fresh about this design was the Pyrenees sheepskin that was thrown over each chair to add comfort. The aesthetic was reminiscent of a nomadic





lifestyle with evenings spent under the stars huddling by a campfire for warmth.

The great outdoors was also reflected in Gita Gschwendtner Quarry and Soft Crystal Series (picture 1) at the Swarovski Elements at Work exhibition. Here rock formations were channelled as she cast a plaster and resin mix as a stool and low table, with a broken-away crystal-sprinkled corner that created beauty from imperfection.

## 2 Contemporary Classics

The utilitarian trend of the past few years has been noticeably softened. An accomplished example of this was Patricia Urquiola's Klara armchair for Moroso. The design works on a simple, linear aesthetic that is harmonious in its curved yet essential shape, which recalls the first serial productions of the early 20th century.

Another elegant example of this trend was the Bessy lounge chair (picture 2) by Stefan Diez for German brand E15. Made of oak-veneered plywood with a simple fabric cushion, this is a modern interpretation of a classic lounge chair that has an enduring, almost timeless, appearance.

## 3 Blow up

Forms that appeared to have been 'blown up' were seen in many guises throughout the fair. An innovative example was Marcel Wanders'

Sparkling Chair for Italian manufacturer Magis. Made of transparent plastic (PET), it is produced using the same blow-moulding technique commonly used for bottles of water. By using this technique Wanders kept plastic usage to a minimum, and the result was a chair that weighs in at around 1kg.

British designer Tom Dixon's new Void Lamp has a similarly turgid form that allowed him to innovate with the quality of light given off by the lamp. Its spun double walls reflect and soften the light emitted from a concealed halogen bulb.

Meanwhile, Established & Sons collaborated with Italian glass company Venini to give the tradition of glass blowing an exciting contemporary refresh. One such project was the Print Lamp by Sylvain Willenz. The Print Lamp (picture 3) gathers, within a single bubble of blown glass, components usually found as separate items in pendant lighting. The shade, the colour, the reflector and the diffuser have effectively all been produced within one elegant gesture.

A personal favourite from this fruitful collaboration between Established & Sons and Venini was the Bouroullec Brothers' Lighthouse Lamp. Here the emphasis was on creating a sense of vulnerability. The idea was to light up a voluminous round glass structure that would be supported by a delicate aluminium stick.

## 4 Back to School

Bringing a naive and playful charm to this year's show, many pieces possessed a 'classroom-like' quality. Utilising a colour palette of primary colours and simple, pale woods, many pieces referenced the archetypal forms of things that could be found in the classrooms of our youth.

Although appearing in the first instance very simplistic, many of the pieces had a cleverness to them, whether that lay in the method of manufacture or the way in which they could be put to use. The JWC2 (Just Wood Chair 2) by Florian Hauswirth for design collective Postfossil, for instance, is an evolution of his previous work, which uses an innovative wood-joining technique. The chair consists exclusively of wood and does not require glue in its assembly. Instead, the heat generated by inserting the dowels releases adhesives present in the wood itself, forming a substantial welded bond in seconds.

Elsewhere, Stefan Diez's modular and stackable storage system New Order (picture 4) for Established & Sons is available in a selection of primary colours and has a powder-coated aluminium exterior.

The practicality of this piece was undeniable, and had all of us who saw it instantly contemplating the many ways in which we could use it in our respective homes.

## 5 Knit one, Purl one

Where weaving had captured many designers' imagination last year, this year knitting and wool made a comeback, adding cosy warmth to a number of pieces.

The Mangas Naturales rug collection by Patricia Urquiola is a lovely example of this trend. Mangas ('sleeves' in English) is based on a patchwork of different wool knits, creating a collection of various typologies with different shapes, going from Manga corta (short sleeve) to Manga de campana (bell-shaped sleeve). The result is a series of eight enchanting carpets with a lovely variety of textures and colours.

Charmingly imperfect could be one way of summing up the suitably named Granny pendant lamp (picture 5) by Australian design group Pudelskern. Each Granny is hand-knitted from Tyrolean sheep's wool and is signed by the designer.

Equally quirky was Bertjan Pot's Jumper chair for Established & Sons. Jumper consists of one continuous oversized woollen knitted cover that is created on a 'knit and wear' machine usually used for producing garments. The resemblance to a jumper is enhanced by the buttons that fix the cover on to the underside of the chair.

Interestingly, wool was not just used to idiosyncratic effect by designers. Bonbons by promising young Serbian talent Ana Kras is a sophisticated family