

Ⓜ SALONE DEL MOBILE SPECIAL

# MONOCLE

## Licence to kiln

The Singaporean duo adding the power of touch to ceramics.

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DESIGN / MILAN

## True colours Bold ideas

“Memphis is a radical company,” says Charley Veza of the pioneering Milanese design group that emerged in the 1980s. “The city was coming out of a terrible period and starting a moment of celebration, so colour, flexibility and humour were needed in interior design. That’s what Memphis stands for.” Veza has welcomed MONOCLE into his Milan apartment, which is almost entirely furnished with Memphis pieces. His love for the group

doesn’t end there: he is the CEO of Italian Radical Design, which acquired Memphis in 2022 and also owns Gufram and Meritalia. For the first time, Memphis is showing at the Rho trade hall during Salone del Mobile, alongside Italian Radical Design’s other brands. “Our pieces are exhibited in museums, published in books and taught at schools,” says Veza. “But they also need to enter more houses and be appreciated by more of the public.”

Italian Radical Design’s brands are working on collaborations with companies ranging from Snarkitecture to Soft Baroque. Veza explains that, while the designers who they work with are often from across the globe, “The mentality is Italian. Besides having the best manufacturing, Italy also has the best capabilities. We can turn complicated ideas into products.”

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## Writing on the wall

New Arabic typography and the art of posters at Design Doha.

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INTERVIEW / MILAN

## Open to all Fair play

Claudio Feltrin is the vice-president of Federlegno Arredo Eventi, the company that organises Salone del Mobile. “The 2024 edition has the novelty of bringing every exhibitor onto the ground floor,” he told MONOCLE in the lead-up to the event. “This means that you can really visit all of the fair.” Expect the same spirit of experimentation as in recent years.

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ART / VENICE

## On the move Double bill

This year two of Italy’s biggest cultural events are taking place in the same week for the first time: the Venice Biennale and Salone del Mobile. But fans of both art and design need not fret. While the jamboree in Milan will be over in a week, most of the art in Venice will remain on show until November. Shortly before the opening of the Biennale, MONOCLE visited the European Cultural Centre (ECC), which organises one of the

largest events staged in parallel with the main festival. Every year its show, titled Personal Structures, draws more than 500,000 visitors to its three exhibition spaces: Palazzo Mora, Palazzo Bembo and the Marinaressa Gardens, conveniently located next to the Biennale’s Giardini. Riffing on the Biennale’s theme, “Foreigners Everywhere”, this year’s exhibition is named *Beyond Boundaries*, with more than 200 artists from 51 countries addressing topics related to migration, identity and conflict.

Installation takes months to complete but the young ECC team pulls off the feat with flair. All that’s left for visitors to do is to put on their best walking shoes and relish the winding way along the Grand Canal. In the Serenissima, there’s always too much to see but never a reason to rush.

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## Shape of things to come

Fuorisalone’s Alcova showcase of emerging and experimental design.

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# EMERGING DESIGNERS

CERAMICS / SINGAPORE

Genevieve Ang and Clement Zheng are a Singaporean design duo whose interactive ceramics demonstrate how technology doesn't have to be a barrier to connection.

By Naomi Xu Elegant  
Photography Juliana Tan



## Close for comfort



to haptic feedback. If someone places their hand on one, the other – whether it's across the room or on the other side of the world – will heat up in response. "If I touch my piece, my partner's piece will warm up, as if transferring the heat of my touch," says Zheng. "It's about presence and how materials and technology can support communication between two people."

Ang and Zheng will present Reciproco at "Future Impact 2", an exhibition of new works by a select group of Singaporean designers who were commissioned by Design Singapore Council.

The exhibition is located in Rotonda del Pellegrini in central Milan and is the second edition of Future Impact. As with 2023's showcase, it will explore ways that design and design-oriented technology can address issues such as sustainability and environmental protection. "The not-so-hidden agenda is to make people think twice about technology and computation technology," says Zheng.

Reciproco underscores the emotional, human side of technological change, suggesting that well-designed technology can actually break barriers rather than reinforce them. "It's about being able to remotely experience someone else's warmth," says Ang. She adds that when she had her eureka moment holding the steaming mug of coffee, "The comfort [of that warmth] was what I was thinking about."

The result, Reciproco, is a pair of ceramic sculptures that respond



## Diplomatic solutions

DESIGN / SWITZERLAND

House of Switzerland Milano brings its Swiss branding expertise to Salone.

By Nic Monisse  
Photography Andrea Pugiotto

Located in Brera for the duration of Milan Design Week, House of Switzerland Milano is a project initiated and co-led by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, and Presence Switzerland, a unit of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs that is responsible for championing the Alpine nation's image abroad. Located at Casa Degli Artisti, for the third year running, the house will showcase a host of talent from the country with an exhibition featuring works from Swiss brands, studios and design schools. To find out more about this design-minded diplomatic outpost, MONOCLE catches up with Alexandre Edelmann, acting head of Presence Switzerland, and Pro Helvetia design specialist Marie Mayoly (both pictured).

**Why establish House of Switzerland Milano?**

**MARIE MAYOLY:** Our goal is to give visibility to the full scope of Swiss designers. This is not just an exhibition, it's a living showcase that is intended to be a space for open discussion.

**ALEXANDRE EDELMANN:** We're looking at how we can tackle global challenges. We want to connect designers with issues and other creatives to find solutions. We want to have a positive impact on the world.

**What are the big issues you're hoping to tackle in this year's showcase?**

**MM:** This year's theme is joy. We chose it as a topic because we wanted to explore emotive connections to the design process and how it acts as a motor for creativity. **AE:** It's not just about tackling "joy" as a specific issue; it's more about creating a mindset around joy and how it can give people and designers a reason to invest time, energy and money into answering an issue. If you find joy in what you're doing, then chances are you're going to get good at it. If you enjoy the co-creation process, then the likelihood of you working with other people is higher. It's about exploring joy as an energy.

**What do you hope people will take away from the showcase at the House of Switzerland Milano?**

**MM:** That joy is a catalyst for change and that design as a practice is empowering. We also hope that the people who are coming to see the exhibition understand that Switzerland is open-minded and eager to have international discussions.

**AE:** We want to extend the discussion of what it is that makes a product joyful. At every step of the process joy is needed.

In addition to showcasing Swiss design talent, the House of Switzerland Milano will play host to Monocle Radio's pop-up studio during Milan Design Week. Visit us at Via Tommaso da Cazzaniga, Corso Garibaldi, 89/A, 20121. design.swiss

## Going for gold

PRODUCT DESIGN / JAPAN

Salone's Satellite Award for young designers offers material success.

By Zayana Zulkiflee  
Photography Andrea Pugiotto

The Salone Satellite Award, an annual prize presented to the top emerging designer showing at Salone del Mobile, is not only a marker for the direction of the design industry but a career launchpad for its winner. In the 25 years since the launch of Salone Satellite (a section of the trade fair dedicated to designers under the age of 35), a host of its participants have gone on to pick up prizes including the coveted Compasso d'Oro, Italy's top gong for product design.

It's a path that last year's winner, Honoka, will be looking to follow. The Japanese design collective won with its bespoke material, Tatami Refab, made by mixing biodegradable resin with discarded tatami mats composed of Igusa grass. "We wanted to pass on the beauty of tatami to future generations," says designer James Kaoru Bury from Honoka of their choice of material, whose ubiquity has waned since Western-style interiors have trended in Japan. To make the material, Bury (pictured) and his team ground discarded pieces from mat-manufacturer Ikehiko Corporation into powder and combined it with resin to make an eco-friendly substance capable of being shaped through new 3D printing techniques.

The resulting, see-through, seaweed-hued pallets lend themselves well to bouncy geometric stools, softly lit lamps and Ikebana-inspired lattice vases. "Many thought that our tatami resin was made from glass because it is very glossy," says Bury of the intrigued audiences at Salone del Mobile in 2023. "Many people expressed interest in our project, given that our material is 100 per cent plant-based, with no oil."

Honoka is committed to enhancing the material's properties, including its scent and humidity-regulating capabilities. It's also collaborating with other Japanese material suppliers and reviving forgotten crafts, such as porcelain, with an eye towards Salone 2025. And, hopefully, a Compasso d'Oro soon after. *Salone Satellite, Salone del Mobile, Pavilions 5/7, Fiera Milano*



**Award winners**

The Compasso d'Oro is presented by Italy's Association for Industrial Design. It's one of the world's most important design awards – eight Salone Satellite participants have gone on to collect the prize:

Davide Groppi, *Italy*  
Harri Koskinen, *Finland*  
Patrick Jouin, *France*  
Jean Marie Massaud, *France*  
Adriano Design, *Italy*  
Francisco Gomez Paz, *Argentina*  
Daniel Rybakken, *Norway*  
Felicia Arvid, *Denmark*



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