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stories

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# AND THERE WAS LIGHT!

Lighting system designs and eco-sustainability were prominent areas of interest on the occasion of the 2023 'Fuorisalone' event

A truly magnificent range of lighting system solutions and designs was presented at the 2023 Fuorisalone exhibition. Trends relating to the design and planning of interior lighting systems are evidently strong current areas of interest, together with future mobility solutions and sustainability.

It is not easy to summarise in a single word such a heterogeneous and varied array of exhibitions forming part of the Milanese Fuorisalone event, which is regularly linked and interrelated to the international Salone del Mobile e del Design exhibition. This year, adhering to the common preference, the event was once again held during the Spring, following the odd occurrences of its being organised in September two years ago and in June last year.

In any case, considering the various hubs and events, if we were to characterise the recent edition of the Fuorisalone by means of a succinct definition we would opt for the word 'light'. In particular, this solution would result from the quality and quantity of the numerous sites and hubs dedicated to this fundamental human resource, the designs and technology presented and the essential, vital nature of this primary element of our existence.

Light is everything. It is of course a fundamental factor: with respect to vision, the generation of spatial atmospheres in a variety of settings and the communication of information. As we learn from physics, without the curious and immutable qualities of light, starting from its limitless speed, life as we know it would not exist. There is thus nothing very strange about the fact that architects, planners and designers focus so intensely on the dimension of light in their endeavours to create particular ambiances, reflecting on a variety of possible sensations associated with or generated by currently existing or future dwellings and public spaces.

Of course, there are so many other aspects we may reflect upon at the numerous locations and hubs set up within the context of the Fuorisalone event and, although we intend to focus specifically on 'light' at the Milano del Design event, our aim will be to offer an illustration of its diverse nature, dividing our overview into various 'sections' and presenting a brief summary of those elements which appeared as the most interesting, innovative and stimulating.

**LIGHT - Planning the special atmosphere of an ambience and redefining environments**

Our summary will consider light, a mysterious and yet truly tangible element within our world which reveals the elements surrounding us. In Corso Matteotti, within the renowned 'district of special lights' in the heart of Milan (referred to in such a manner not solely during the Fuorisalone



V-Zug Fluxus

events) the new 'Boggy' collection by Paola Novone was presented at the **Contarati Lighting** single-brand store.

The first showroom of this company was inaugurated in an exceptional manner with a novelty that conveys a clear sense of the brand's values and identity and its vision of the so-called 'archi-decorative' lighting. The showroom installation, entitled 'Be Boggy', was set up in an original, scenographic setting, perfectly illustrating the concept of lighting technology which may become a fundamental element within the sphere of interior design and decoration, capable of modifying our perception of the spaces in which we live.

In Via San Marco, the company **L&L (Luce & Light)** presented a rather surprising inversion of the basic spatial coordinates of the sky and the earth, which appear overturned as we venture forth along an emotionally arousing path, once again essentially determined by light. The underlying concept here is to practically conceal the various products displayed in order to draw the observer's attention towards particular forms of illumination, thereby offering visitors an opportunity to experience the effects of surrounding spaces in a more intense manner.

In Via Lovanio **Ross Gardam** organised the fascinating 'Transcendence' installation, where it highlighted a careful selection of products, the design of which present a strong appeal due to fascinating forms of illumination that are generated.

The installation was dominated in particular by the undeniable charm of illuminated glass, stimulating visions of the Moon, Oceans, geometric motifs and the occurrence of illusions of movement.

The 'Fluxus' installation created by **V-ZUG Studio** was certainly worthy of note. Situated in Via Fiori Oscuri, in the **Brera quarter** of the historic centre of the city, the interactive work of art created by Stefano Roveda stimulates within the observer an emotional experience engendered by light and darkness, movement and inner sensations.

Within the sphere of artistic rather than technological endeavours, we should also consider the Milanese studio **WOA Creative Company**. This firm enhances a sense of creative appeal, presenting technology in various art forms which are linked to an emotional narrative present in digital and analogue systems, interactive exhibits and 'immersive' experiences. In particular, the company presented its 'TALIESIN' series of

lamps designed by the legendary American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. These were exhibited in Via Solferino, in an installation created by the talented Japanese architect Shigeru Ban for **Yamogawa**, a Japanese company that specialises in the production and distribution of lighting systems. The exhibition entitled 'The Harmony of Form and Function' also presents masterpieces of Japanese craftsmanship. However, the scenario was dominated by fascinating geometric shapes and the warm, indirect light of the **TALIESIN** lamps, which stimulate the senses of an observer, evoking a sense of peace and tranquility. This is often absent in our modern world but remains a central feature of the renowned 'organic architecture' of the great American architect.

#### HOME AUTOMATION (DOMOTICS)

**Living today, and living in the future**  
A focus on purely physical settings and habitats within our contemporary world is never lacking at the Fuorisalone event. In this regard the fascinating - albeit rather simple - interactive multimedia installation presented by **Honey**, one of the largest household appliance brands in the world, is a primary example. At their location the firm presented a cabin in which visitors are invited to investigate and assess domestic interiors and spaces with the aid of technological instruments, and responding to

questions concerning energy saving and sustainability. This was an effective endeavour aimed at raising awareness of the need to place great importance on energy resources. Interesting efforts were also made by the firm **Design Tech**, which in a large area (3,000 sq.m) presented its exhibition of projects that integrate state-of-the-art technologies, emphasizing the concept of 'Innovation for Living'. The future of home living has constituted a core concept of many events (which may also be discovered through streaming services) organised by DesignTech to update the public on the role of 'open innovation' in the design industry. At its site located in Corso Venezia Eco Contract + Eco Design presented a recently developed series of proposals relating to flooring, coatings/coverings, fabrics and acoustic panels. All of these products are characterised by a salient degree of eco-compatibility. This new high-priority paradigm has been highlighted in other past editions of the Fuorisalone event, however the issue has been afforded great importance in this year's activities.

Finally, at the Superstudio Più multi-location in Via Tortona Samsung showcased the 'Bespoke Home, Bespoke Life' installation, which embodies the company's vision of the 'Sustainability - Connectivity - Design' three-pronged approach. In the

large area where its products were presented to the public the Korean company focused on illustrating how it is possible to make one's home more beautiful, in a connected and sustainable environment, thanks to modern technology. In the Sustainability Zone visitors were able to explore eco-friendly solutions offered by Samsung home appliances, ranging from the manufacturing process to distribution, their actual use and recycling. Moreover, this firm places a strong emphasis on the importance of sustainability and the use of recycled materials in every aspect of space design. The Bespoke Home Lifestyle section allowed visitors to experience the advantages of a high level of connectivity, using the 'SmartThings' app in the kitchen and living spaces and also various automated devices.

The Samsung stand also had an exhibition space dedicated to the work of the artist Hosuk Yang. This area was filled with Bespoke appliances, personalised with unique designs, and custom-made domestic appliances transformed into true works of art.

#### FUTURE MOBILITY

##### Considering speed and sustainable recycling

This year the ideal starting point in this regard was the Brera Botanical Garden, where the 'Walk the Talk - Energy in Motion'



L&amp;L



L&amp;L

installation was presented. This endeavour was implemented for the Italian Eni company by the architect Italo Rota, collaborating with CPA-Carlo Ratti Associati. One of the most fascinating green spaces in Milan was thus transformed into a sort of recreation ground where visitors are able to acquire knowledge of the evolution of urban mobility according to the vision of Eni Sustainable Mobility. Long sequences of 'squares', combined with a few multimedia installations, form pathways through a natural dimension and extend beside rows of various plants.

The Garden is enriched with light and sound effects that modify one's perception of space, leading us to reflect on the transformation of mobility in a sustainable manner, services for vehicle sharing and the production of organic fuel.

An opportunity to reflect on the question of sustainable mobility was certainly a

valuable feature of this Fuorisalone event. Various large automobile manufacturers were also present at a few hubs. This year, Audi, a regular participant at the Fuorisalone events, decided to draw attention to its dedication to the reuse of materials by exhibiting - besides its electric e-tron prototypes - also an interesting series of components and accessories produced with recycled materials.

It was by no mere chance that in the elegant, majestic courtyard in Corso Venezia, where Audi presented its specific vision of future mobility, the conceptual core of the message of this company was represented by 'The Domino Act', a grand circular installation (symbolically associated with the idea of recycling) created by Gabriele Chiavari. Composed of 22 manholes, the surfaces of which present visual reflections and a variety of perspectives, the installation reminds visitors of the importance of joining

forces and prioritising sustainability, with human values at the centre of everything. In Via Montenapoleone, in the very heart of the fashion-conscious city of Milan, the BMW Group presented its exhibition entitled 'A Cyclist's Journey' in a fascinating space in which individual elements of automotive design were merged in a hypothetical conception of a car of the future. Ideas regarding future developments may also derive from interaction and socialisation on the part of visitors, in a sort of osmotic process between design and the actual use of products. Finally, it is worth noting the various interesting novelties introduced by Peugeot, which, in Via Tortona, presented the original new livery of the 938 hypercar that will participate in the 2023 World Endurance Championship races. Created by the visual artist Demsky, the exterior of this extraordinary vehicle presents a blend of automotive engineering skills, design and creative process.

Thus, as is clearly evident in the Fuorisalone 2023 event, future mobility will not involve any serious renunciations in terms of automotive design and speed and - on a jestful note - we might even suggest that the aim would be to attain the 'speed of light! However, this future prospect will definitely emphasise the need to respect the environment and invest in sustainability.

#### AND BEFORE WE MOVE ON ...

The fascination felt by visitors exploring exhibits and products during the Fuorisalone event is always quite insatiable. Considering the broad scope of the event it would not be possible to reduce an overview of the various hubs and activities to simply three exhibition categories, although these may indeed comprise a broad range of proposals and suggestions. Above and beyond the categories we have presented in this article, there were many other aspects. Various activities, ideas and forms of participation were not so easily classifiable and yet equally captivating.

For example, during the Design Week, in order to discover the Artcoustic brand it was necessary to visit the Danish exhibition area. Anyone who visited this presentation would discover the products of an elegant and refined brand and a company that has been designing modular and innovative loudspeakers since 1998. Artcoustic is able to offer architects and designers a sound of great quality, with customizable cabinets that will fit into any type of environment. The Superdesign Show was another extremely interesting event dedicated to

international design. Organised at the Superstudio Pib location, this was a large exhibition subdivided into various thematic areas focusing on the threefold concept of INSPIRATION-INNOVATION-IMAGINATION. In fact, the installators centred on development, innovation, new technologies and sustainability and were characterised by a visionary approach, stimulating visitors to pose questions and seek appropriate answers. The EstEtica Fluida installation curated by Food Design Stories was yet another event worthy of note.

At this site, thanks to the endeavours of twenty independent designers, the extremely important theme of the protection of water resources was highly emphasised. We should also mention the Canon brand, which proposed its 'A Casa Ovunque '23' project in Via Savona. This formed part of an exclusive event of the Sfera MediaGroup and the Playful Living platform. In this case the aim was to illustrate how technology can enrich people's lives, enhancing their creative powers, allowing for the generation of high-quality content and introducing innovative spaces that are linked and characterised by a high degree of personalisation.<sup>1</sup>

A Casa Ovunque '23' represents a mul-

ti-functional space (family, work, events, training) developed by combining the principles of the 'Kiyoshi' (cf. Jap.: 'living and working together for the common good') philosophy and of Canon's corporate mission, involving a commitment to supporting people with innovative imaging solutions. Canon's technological achievements, comprising various cameras, camcorders, video cameras and printers, were presented to the public during the Design Week, while the company also made an effort to draw the attention of those present towards rethinking our environment, imagining a new way to live, work and spend time together in groups. With regard to the Metaverse, the spaces occupied during the 'A Casa Ovunque '23' event also comprised a particular area dedicated to this vision of the future. And, finally, we enjoyed our all-encompassing - albeit quite rapid - visit to the historical premises of the University of Milan.

During each edition of the Fuorisalone event, innumerable sources of information relating to innovation and design are available and presented in an authentic, collective open-air workshop.

We may conclude by suggesting that this year the crown of originality would be rightly claimed by the monolithic Momentum

installation created by the MAD Architects design team members Ma Yansong and Andrea D'Antrassi. At the centre of the old courtyard of the university an enigmatic, gigantic cube - perhaps in some way reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's monolith - was installed. Rising from the ground, the cube is enveloped in a vaporised mist and rendered even more photomontage-like by a play of lights and reflection resulting from its silver-coated surface.

The structure would appear to be an off-the-cuff idea of an architectural nature, fully materialised and yet still in an initial phase of development, and conveying the sense of a creative, freshly-redesigned project. Other installations also worthy of interest are 'The Ombra' conceived by Massimo Iosi Gini, in which plants and wooden elements remind us of the extent to which architecture always depends on Nature, and 'The Cabinet de Curiosités' by Annabel Karim Kassar, a multi-level labyrinth that invites observers to reflect and move beyond their essential visual perception and discover how architecture may modify our emotional balance, once again through the effects of reflection and light, which as previously noted, has been an essential element of this edition of the Fuorisalone. ◆



Momentum