



SIGHT SELECTION During the Milan Furniture Fair, Paola Lenti showcased her work using the grounds of the Chiostro dell'Umatorio.

MILAN

CROSSING BORDERS

For Luminaire founder Nasir Kassamali, some of Salone del Mobile Milan's top experiences were to be found outside the fairgrounds.

As told to Drew Limsky

This was my 43rd year at the fair. In years past, if you left the fairgrounds, there was very little activity. Now, there's a lot more. If you were to visit everything outside and inside the fair, it would take you 54 days. The growth has come from the fact that the participating fashion brands and all the car companies now clearly understand that they have an audience.

Another thing I can say that has changed is that some brands are taking more risks beyond simply changing the color of a cabinet or introducing a chair with arms that didn't have arms the year before. Still, the model—bringing prototypes and merchandise to the

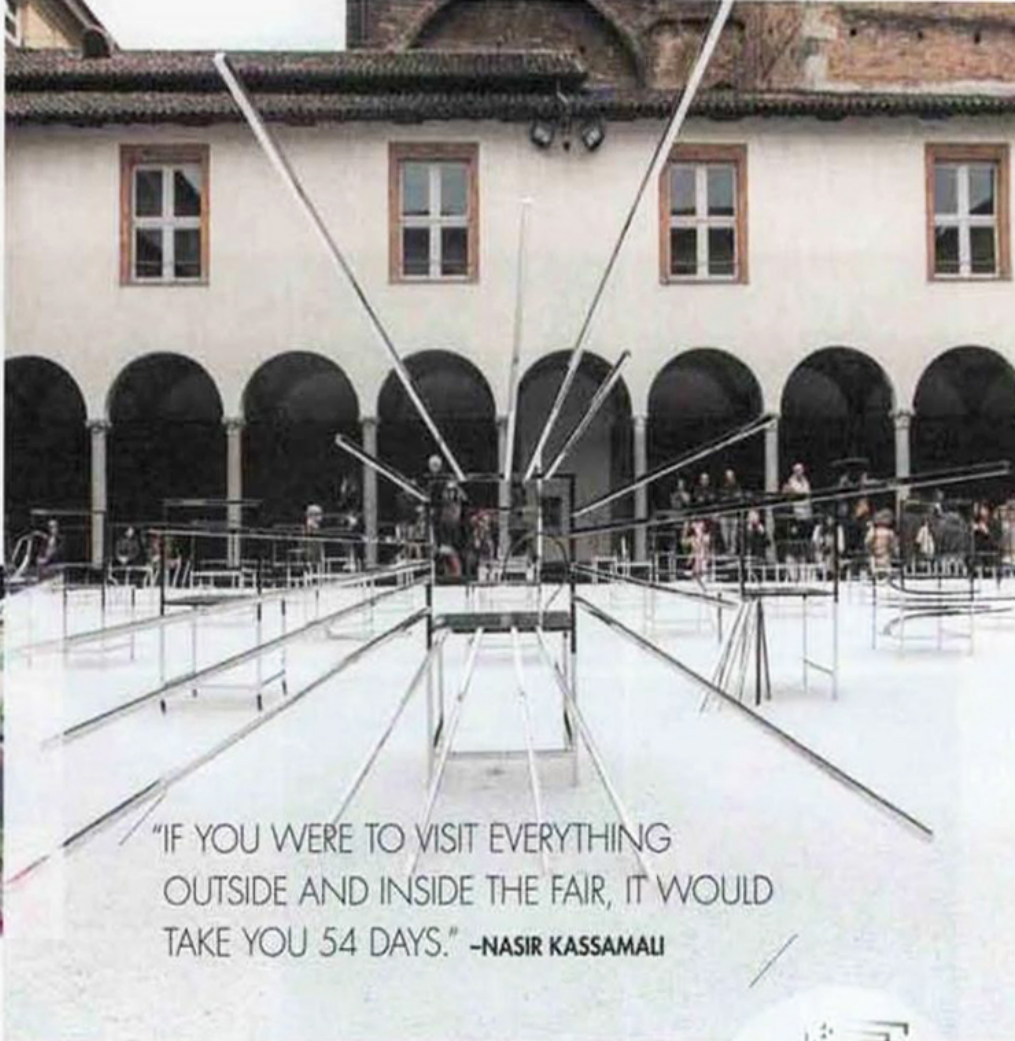
fair—is the same. I would like to see more disruption, more thinking about the future, in the way that Uber and Airbnb have disrupted their industries.

The best installations were done by the Japanese. Takeo (takeo.co.jp), a paper company from Japan, mounted an unbelievable installation called *Subtle*; the Japanese revere paper because the tree is original. And Nendo's (nendo.jp) display, *50 Manga Chairs*, located outside the fair in a historic cloister, was unbelievable. He created the chairs for New York gallery Friedman Benda. Each chair reflected an aspect of

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DIVINE INSPIRATION Clockwise from top left: Nendo's chairs were inspired by Japanese cartoons; Nendo's exhibit was set within a cloister; Nasir Kassamali (center) in Milan.



"IF YOU WERE TO VISIT EVERYTHING OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE FAIR, IT WOULD TAKE YOU 54 DAYS." —NASIR KASSAMALI

...CONTINUED manga—Japanese comics and cartooning. Another great installation was what Sou Fujimoto (sou-fujimoto.net) created for COS, a fashion house owned by H&M. Held in Cinema Arti, a theater built in the 1930s, it was a light and sound experience called *Forest of Light*.

Last year Cassina (cassina.com) appointed Patricia Urquiola as art director to improve the brand's image, and in one year, Patricia has done an incredible job. Cassina's stands are usually the same as everyone else's stands, so the first thing she did was inaugurate the stand to make it a piece of architecture. Typically the stand is a box, but she built it with concrete bricks [and] made it see-through. Called *Origins of the Future*, it contained pieces by Philippe Starck, Piero Lissoni and Zaha Hadid. There was a question of how Patricia would maintain the heritage of Cassina and she showed that she could.

Patricia made the brand current; she is a disruptor. A brand can't play the

same old tune. They have to collaborate with the best designers and architects, and focus on their core competencies—as Boffi and B&B Italia have done, and as Cassina is doing with Patricia. She considers me a mentor—we've done many exhibitions with her.

Paola Lenti (paolalenti.it) was also very impressive and has been extremely consistent over the last 10 years. The whole idea for them is not to be in the fair and not to be in a showroom. They've always taken a monastery—this year it was the Chiostri dell'Umanitaria—and every year their challenge is to do it better than the previous year. They imported Sicilian food, Sicilian wine and 500 Sicilian trees. The scent came from the flowers on the trees. If you were to clock it, I'm sure you would find that each person spent more than an hour there. It's about being at the forefront of creating a unique experience. They recognize that this is an experiential market that's best if done from the heart. ■

EDITOR'S PICKS

NENDO

Manga chairs, from \$15,000, at Friedman Benda, 515 W. 26th St., New York, friedmanbenda.com



CASSINA

Otto sofa (shown here), from \$15,645, by Piero Lissoni; Zephyr sofa, to the trade, by Zaha Hadid; and Passion chair, to the trade, by Philippe Starck, all at Poltrona Frau Group Miami, 59 NW 36th St., Miami, poltronafraumiami.net

PAOLA LENTI

Ease outdoor chairs, from \$7,750, at luminaire, 2331 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, luminaire.com

