

Italians (at Least Italian Designers) Do It Better

Giulia Madron (September 04, 2013)



Valentina Del Clotto and Simone Spalvieri, winners of the first prize.

Italian design gets off to a start in New York City with the Top Young Italian Industrial Designers Prize. Alongside this special contest event a selection of the works of the ten finalists will be on view. "Innovating is looking at the ancient, getting rid of the old," said Giorgio Vasari in the sixteenth



century—and Italy today is the ideal country where this can still happen.

The Big Apple opens its doors to Italian quality, creativity and innovation in a field in which Italy has played a key role over the last century and where it still continues to leave its mark.

This special contest event was established by Riccardo Viale, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York, and conceived and developed by Architect and renowned Designer Massimo Vignelli, President of La Fondazione “Friends of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York”. It will take place this year from September 6 through the 26, during the eagerly anticipated Fashion Week, which attracts an international elite in the fashion and design worlds. An exclusive, by-invitation-only preview will take place on September 9th with two special guests of honor: Franca Sozzani, Editor in Chief of Vogue Italia and Lapo Elkann, President of LA Holding of Italian Independent.

This is the perfect occasion for promising young designers to show their works and gain international visibility. Every year, important Italian academic institutions in the field are invited to highlight the best designers among their graduates. Ten of them are then selected by a commission coordinated by Massimo Vignelli. But only three winners will go on the special podium awaiting them in New York City.

This year the bronze medal has been awarded to Paolo Cappello, born in 1980 in Verona. With a degree in Industrial Design from the Politecnico of Milan, in 2007 he set up his own studio in Verona where he collaborates with professionals in architecture, graphics and communications. His talent, recognized worldwide, has already led him to receive many important awards. “Italy is the homeland of industrial design, of good planning made for real industry and great distribution. It’s a history that belongs to our country,” says Paolo, who is proud to see his work also recognized in New York and to become an ‘ambassador’ of Italian culture to the United States.

The silver medal has been awarded to Davide Angeli. Born in 1982, his career took off in 2004 after meeting the Italian master of design Michele De Lucchi. He worked for various companies including Ferrari, curated several exhibitions in Italy and Europe and also designed the interiors for Moschino and other famous firms. Today he is a Professor of Industrial Design at the European Institute of Design in Milan and, working at Studio De Lucchi, he also cooperates with renowned advertising companies such as Oliviero Toscani.

According to Davide, Italian design has been the avant-garde in the world of applied arts for more than 50 years. “It’s a way of thinking and planning that’s unique, despite globalization, because of its deep roots in Italian culture.” He likes quoting the renaissance master Giorgio Vasari, who in the second half of the sixteenth century stated that “innovating is looking at the ancient, getting rid of the old.” “Italy is the ideal country where this can still happen,” Davide adds. “This exhibition of Italian design, young and still unknown to many, is testament to New York’s ability to look at the future being even today the heart of cultural meeting and exchange.”

Last but not least, the gold medal has been awarded to two young designers: Valentina Del Ciotto and Simone Spalvieri. With respective degrees in Interior Design and Industrial Design from the Politecnico of Milan, in 2009 they founded the Spalvieri/Del Ciotto Studio, a meeting place for ideas, research and experimentation. Their work, characterized by formal, functional and simple designs, has already found great success in Italy and abroad. Their Italian and foreign collaborations include the likes of Colombo Design, Established & Sons and Nespresso.

“We feel a great responsibility in representing the new Italian design in New York,” they agree. “This city plays a fundamental role in the creation of the ‘Italian Myth’ in the world of design.” According to both, Italians are not only masters of style and design but they are also able to roll up their sleeves during difficult moments. “Now we are more willing to change and we would like our works to reflect our desire for renovation.” The challenge, they say, is to “combine the high quality of Italian products and their planning, transmitted to us by the masters, with the potentiality of expansion and cultural opening offered by the Internet and today’s media.” In a constantly changing world, and because of new communication methods and technology developments, “being a designer is extremely complex.” What we have to preserve, they say, is “Italian culture and its product quality and planning, the only value that makes us recognizable and competitive all over the world.”



While these talented young designers are in New York, they will be introduced to curators, graduates and deans of architecture and design departments affiliated with prominent academic institutions. There will also be several meetings with representatives of industrial firms in order to bring their talent to the attention of entrepreneurs aiming to develop collaborations and other business opportunities.

The Prize includes a wonderful exhibition at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York, curated by Massimo Vignelli and presented by Pirelli, with a selection of one or two works of the ten winning designers as well as a series of collateral initiatives. After its first stop in New York, the exhibition will be on view in Miami this December, during the Design Fair/Art Basel Miami week.

This initiative is intended to become a yearly event for young talent in the Italian Design sector...and we all wish them good luck!

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