

Wallpaper*

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DESIGN AWARDS 2017

The competition-crushing podium toppers who stood taller, aimed higher and thought bigger and better than the rest

Cosmic cocktails
Celestial glows
Floral armour
Rainforest rugs
Agile offices
Pretentious pancakes
Art-friendly façades
Dinky dinghies
Safe places and saunas
Blackstar signs
Magical charms

Shamelot!
Inside Trump's
White House

The Bouroullec brothers, Laetitia Casta, Amanda Levete, Tom Sachs and Ramdane Touhami cast their votes in the Judges' Awards

BELLINI AT HIS MILAN CONVENTION CENTRE, COMPLETED IN 2012. PART OF THE 15,000 SQ M SILVERY CANOPY ROOF TAPERS TO THE GROUND BEHIND HIM



BEST ELDER STATESMAN

A new show celebrates the career of Mario Bellini

Mario Bellini's long and distinguished career spans design brands and counter-trends. As a designer who grew up in the austerity of post-war Italy, then began his career at the height of Pop and the Italian industrial boom, Bellini would be forgiven for an unrooted eclecticism. Yet what defines his work (still in progress) is a commitment to a sense of place and a sense of beauty, but bound up with a functional rigour that transcends shifts in the way we interact with places and things. As his 'Italian Beauty' exhibition opens at the »



OUR BELLINI FLAG SHOWING THE DESIGNER AGED 21 AND TODAY, WITH HIS SKETCH FOR A CABINET OF INSPIRING CURIOSITIES

Milan Triennale, it's perhaps time to take stock and celebrate a lifetime in design.

This is not a retrospective, according to Bellini, but a 'prospective', and the 1,200 sq m show takes you through a career spanning six decades. The space is a stage for Bellini's many and varied products, from chairs to typewriters to lamps, with seating areas placed before vast screens to give an impressive, immersive insight into a suite of his studio's best-known buildings.

Bellini can lay claim to being one of the progenitors of modern technological style, together with other precursors like Dieter Rams and Jacob Jensen. During his long and fruitful collaboration with Olivetti, he reshaped the office landscape into a playful, colourful space that banished the tans and greys of the dominant IBM approach. And where Rams brought a Northern European austerity to consumer design, Bellini has always headed in a more humanist, playful direction.

'Italian Beauty' begins with a vast cabinet of curiosities containing objects and memorabilia that have inspired Bellini, including pieces by Gio Ponti and Issey Miyake – historical fragments of memory, art and literature. 'I've designed furniture, objects, machines, buildings,' Bellini says. 'So to design an exhibition about myself is to go back to something I did at the very start of my career. But it's also more special and challenging.'

Bellini was born in 1935. Exceptionally talented at sketching from a young age, thanks to the encouragement of a grandfather, he spent five years studying at Milan's polytechnic, graduating in 1959 and beginning his career as primarily an exhibition and product designer. In Olivetti, he found a client that shared his love of detail. In Bellini, Olivetti found a designer who could simplify its increasingly complex wares and give them a seductive yet friendly appearance. Their collaborations included the legendary 'Programma 101' of 1964, an impressive

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 1961**
'Compasso d'Oro' exhibition design, Milan
 - 1964**
'Programma 101' desktop calculator, for Olivetti
 - 1968**
'Phono Boy' portable record player, for Grundig
 - 1968**
Cassina showroom, Milan
 - 1971**
'Totem' stereo system, for Brionvega
 - 1972**
'Kar-a-sutra' concept car
 - 1976**
'Duc' sofa, for Cassina
 - 1985**
'Grazia' phone, for NTT
 - 1992**
Tokyo Design Centre
 - 1992**
Risonare Vivre Club Complex, Japan
 - 2003**
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 - 2012**
Department of Islamic Arts, Louvre, Paris
 - 2017**
Terminal 3, Fiumicino airport, Rome
- Full details of all projects at Wallpaper.com ★

calculating machine that many consider to be the first desktop computer.

The Olivetti partnership made Bellini a major force in industrial design, whose works were collected by MoMA and who was eagerly sought by other clients, such as Cassina (for whom he designed showrooms), Vitra and B&B Italia. His guiding principle is to combine functionality with finesse – or 'dreaming and doing', as he describes what he learnt in his student days. 'You have to be talented to answer needs and yet end up with beauty,' he says. 'Needs, functions, materials, costs and rules all have to come together. But beauty also comes too. To create a simple object you need grace and poetic beauty.'

Throughout his career, Bellini has always looked further afield, drawing inspiration from other cultures and approaches, including the design communities in Japan and Northern Europe. He has also had a long and favourable relationship with the US, a country he explored in a 1972 road trip after his participation in a MoMA exhibition on the Italian design scene (see W*199). In the late 1980s, Bellini was a pioneering editor of *Domus* at a time of a great renaissance in Italian product design and architecture, and his profile was buoyed by a 1987 MoMA retrospective.

His career has also spanned social and technological change, but he has never lost sight of the emotional component of design. 'Whenever we design something we look for beauty – it's a very delicate thing that connects you to the world through your senses. Beauty is a way of communicating meaning – something that connects with you and moves you.' Bellini is now an elder statesman of modern design, but his work continues to surprise and delight. ★ *Wallpaper** is the official media partner of 'Italian Beauty', curated by Deyan Sudjic, showing 19 January-19 March at the Milan Triennale, triennale.org