

THE JOURNAL

## THE PORTFOLIO: SALONE DEL MOBILE

MAY 7, 2013

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THE PORTFOLIO

# Salone del Mobile

MR PORTER meets six men shaping the future of Italian design at the renowned annual Milan furniture fair



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Photography by VanMossevelde+N

Styling by Mr Andrea Tenerani | Words by Mr Nick Vinson, Vinson&Co

Milan's Salone del Mobile is by far the biggest and best furniture fair in the world. More than 324,000 visitors from 160 countries flock to Milan each April to see the *novità* or new launches from leading Italian and international furniture brands. The fair, made up of I Saloni, is held in the Mr Massimiliano Fuksas-designed fairgrounds in Rho, where 2,500 exhibitors fill more than 200,000sqm of exhibition space, and Fuorisalone, meaning outside of the fair, where 400 others show in the city itself. The fair's protagonists are the world-class architects who, when not busy building museums, factories, hotels, homes or retail cathedrals, put their talents into product design. We met up with a handful of these clever chaps during the fair and talked to them about what makes Milan a design capital, what is Italian design and what the fair means to them.



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MR MARIO BELLINI  
ARCHITECT AND DESIGNER



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**M**r Mario Bellini graduated from the Politecnico di Milano in 1959 and was already renowned as both an architect and designer as early as 1963. Winner of no less than eight Compasso d'Oro, the "Oscars" of the design world, he also boasts 25 works in the prestigious permanent design collection of the MoMA in New York. Mr Bellini just began the renovation of the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan and recently completed the new Department of Islamic Art in the Louvre. [bellini.it](http://bellini.it)

**Q. What is it that makes Italian design and made in Italy so unique?**

**A.** It all depends on the way it built itself up after WWII. Italy was devastated; the small courageous industries immediately started to think how to rebuild and survive. We did not have big industries like in the US or Germany, so because of this, it was spontaneous, these entrepreneurs felt free to follow new ideas, experiment and take risks. We had various young architects who did not have too much to perform with architecture so they turned to design, then part of the same field.

**Q. Why do you think Milan is a focus of both design and fashion?**

**A.** Designers from all over the world come to work with small- and medium-sized companies to produce what we call Italian design. During the early 1970s young fashion designers started coming out like flowers in Milan; little by little it became strong. All around us we have great handcraft. It has something special; fashion, furniture or design, there is a spirit and a dynamic. There is the critical mass effect, so now you need to be here.



*Blazer and Shirt By Maison Martin Margiela*

**Q. Italian design is known the world over. Why do you think that is?**

**A.** More and more it's performed by designers from all over the world but it's still Italian, because they need B&B Italia, Cassina, Edra to produce.

**Q. Why do architecture, design and fashion cross over so much?**

**A.** We are in physical contact with our clothing and furniture. Fashion is fashion, architecture is architecture, but they have common roots that always refer to the human body and habitation. That is the relationship.

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