



Minotti and Natuzzi spending tens of millions showcasing their latest collections in showrooms that feel like 7-star hotels.

Louis Vuitton, the luxury brand best known for high-end luggage and handbags, created an incredible contemporary installation this year in collaboration with 12 design superstars. It used its age-old expertise in producing high-quality leather goods to deliver the most delicious brand extension I have ever seen directly into our unsuspecting homes. In 2012 it created the Objets Nomades exhibition but the 2017 show is the most elegant I've seen, and with heavyweight names such as Patricia Urquiola, India Mahavi and Marcel Wanders it's no wonder.

Patricia Urquiola's hand-woven Leather Swing Chair and the Blossom stool by Tokujin Yoshioka were the two standouts. The Blossom stool is a perfect example of what I call "biomimicry" – an underlying trend in the design world in which the design takes its lead from nature to give us the maintenance-free luxury of nature in the home.

Nilufar Gallery gave me design goosebumps with a stunningly well-curated private collection of vintage high-quality furniture, décor and lighting that had some very vocal visitors expressing their joy as they walked through its four levels. I overheard two French women sounding more like they were ploughing through a tub of profiteroles than walking through a design museum.

Paola Lenti is always my first go-to event and this year took it my breath away. Lenti is famous for her bold use of colour and revolutionary explorations in textile design. She uses high-quality climbing ropes and outdoor fabrics to create mouthwatering low lounges, rugs, umbrellas and much more. Her sophisticated pieces are as beautiful in form as they are in their colour combinations, and she amazes her audience with cutting-edge installations that can have you spending hours wandering through her many outdoor rooms.

Most of them this year were indoors, surrounded by some of the best hand-picked specimens of cycads, oversized Kentia palms and olives. There was even a collection of Aussie grass



Fashion-conscious nesters come from all corners of the globe



Clockwise from top left: Work from Local Design; Paola Lenti's installation (main) surrounded by oversized plants; Nilufar Gallery's furniture display; Unopiu's Camp Cot stretcher; the writer samples some seating; the Japanese woodworking technique Yosegi used by Marco Iannicelli. Above: Patricia Urquiola's swing chair



trees in the mix that looked to be easily more than 200 years old.

I snagged a short interview with the lady herself, and she told me she was constantly on the hunt for new materials and textile technology. We were standing by her 8m fireplace installation, all hand-woven in 1mm copper electrical wire with a perfect green patina that was then sealed and suspended from the ceiling. Lenti's design vocabulary is so diverse and sophisticated I had to ask where her inspiration came from for this year's exhibit. "Everywhere" she calmly replied.

This year's collections were all in very deep, moody hues – rich, bold colours elegantly displayed in a monochromatic format. Lenti has also incorporated a series of vivid green glazed tiles in the tables, pulling the lush colour into the furniture pieces and creating visual complements that become quite addictive.

You can lose so many days out in the halls of Salone Del Mobile, but Via Tortona is a must-visit. The raw little pop-up events that were once mostly put together by struggling art students and fresh designers have become a little more sophisticated, and sponsors such as Audi and Mini are gagging to be a part of it all to temporise their brands.

I was particularly moved by a small collection of furniture cleverly upholstered with a fabric coated in real cork. It felt like lambskin, and the natural colours were complemented by the oak frame handcrafted using the elements of the Golden Mean. Young Berlin-based Italian designer Marco Iannicelli also used a Japanese woodworking technique called Yosegi that combines four contrasting colours of wood laminated in a linear form and inlaid with a soft LED invisible light source.

The second standout for me was a digital exhibit that explored sound and mutated video recordings of lush, colour-filled gardens moving in the wind. Visually stunning, if freeze framed it might resemble a giant digital Monet.

Celebrated British designer Tom Dixon created an extraordinary exhibit in an old, ornate Italian cinema. Dixon put brass back on the map five years ago and is always a good one to watch for emerging material trends.