



# NASIR KASSAMALI

CEO OF LUMINAIRE

BY KATY DONOGHUE

Portrait courtesy of Luminaire.

Salone del Mobile takes place each year in April and is one of the biggest events for the city of Milan and the design world as a whole. There is so much to see, from the actual fairgrounds to showrooms, to installations and exhibitions around the city. So this year *Whitewall* turned to Luminaire CEO Nasir Kassamali to help us get our heads around the new collections, collaborations, and creations. With more than 40 years of curating, selling, and educating on contemporary furniture and lighting, Kassamali sees Milan Design Week as a chance to both spend time with vendors and designers and share his eye with other design lovers. Here, he tells us about the new takes on contemporary living he's still thinking about.

**WHITEWALL:** *Who are the emerging designers we should keep an eye out for?*

**NASIR KASSAMALI:** Most Italian companies don't like to take risks and therefore they seek to work with established designers. Products from different companies start to look similar, and that is the result we have today. If only they gave chances to young emerging designers, they would really benefit. One such company that still does this is Cappellini. You should look out for the work of Keiji Takeuchi, Nao Tamura, Giorgio Rava, Mist-o, and Todd Bracher, just to name a few. They have a knack for originality that is refreshing.

**WW:** *From established designers like nendo and*

*Patricia Urquiola, what were some of your favorite pieces?*

**NK:** Japanese design studio nendo and its founder, Oki Sato, always manage to draw crowds to their Milan installations, which seamlessly marry minimalist sophistication with a playful character, and this year was no different. The studio took over the Jil Sander showroom right off the piazza of Sforza Castle for an exhibition of their work titled "nendo: Invisible Outlines." The ethereal exhibition placed new designs by the studio in compelling situations. There the latest projects from nendo for Flos were shown, which were refreshingly simple and poetic.

Speaking of lighting, this year was Euro luce, the biannual exposition of lighting, where Flos released a number of new projects from designers Michael Anastassiades, the Bouroullec brothers, and Konstantin Grcic, which highlighted the relationship between light and architecture of a space.

At Cassina, which has Patricia Urquiola as creative director, an exuberance was present in their new collection. Urquiola herself had a new sofa introduced, the Floe Insel, which features her characteristic soft lines and attention to upholstery.

**WW:** *Did you notice any one or several trends this year during Design Week?*

**NK:** There was a noticeable appearance of design

cues taken from midcentury Italian influences: softer pastel colors juxtaposed with bold greens and crimsons, combined with classical forms and distinct materials like brass, terrazzo, and marble.

**WW:** *Were current events on the minds of any designers or brands this year?*

**NK:** Of course, there is much concern about the financial stability of world markets. And with such a heated political climate, not only in the United States but in other countries as well, there were visible political reactions in exhibitions around the city. In the Moroso space in the city, an exhibition called "Save Our Souls" made us think about the migrant crisis with an igloo made from fifteen hundred lifejackets retrieved from the Lesbos beaches.

**WW:** *What objects are you still thinking about?*

**NK:** It is not so much about specific products, but the lingering memory of experience. One of the most striking experiences of the week was visiting Paola Lenti's display, which took place in an old and fascinating production site dating back to the last century on Via Orobica. Through a series of grand spaces, the brand showcased its collection with a concentration on what has made it famous: unique colors, textures, and materials all applied to well-designed pieces for indoor and outdoor living.