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Dezeen's guide to Milan's must-see events and installations

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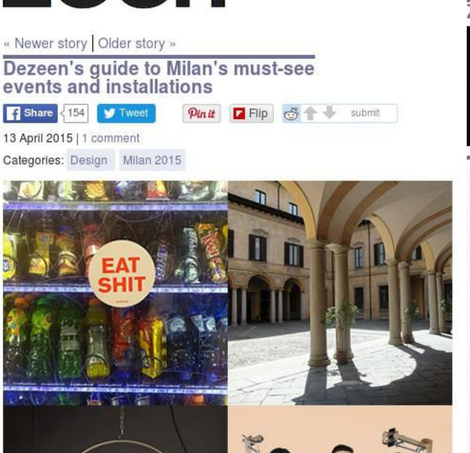


Milan 2015: with Milan's Salone del Mobile opening tomorrow, the Dezeen team present their pick of the events at the world's biggest and most important design fair.

To help you navigate the hundreds of different events, four members of our editorial team have each picked the three shows they're most looking forward to.

Marcus Fairs, editor-in-chief

For me, the big question at Milan this year is: how does the world's biggest design fair remain relevant at a time when the meaning of design is changing rapidly? As Alice Rawsthorn wrote recently, furniture has lost its cultural primacy to digital, service and other forms of design. So I'll be looking for evidence of this shift on the streets and pavilions of Milan.

Atelier Clerici

Atelier Clerici, organised by Joseph Grima's Space Caviar and Z33, is the most likely place to look for answers. It was fantastic last year – a beautiful palazzo in the centre of the city filled not with endless products but with edgy installations and debate. This year it is one of two locations where Hella Jongerius' provocative "Beyond the New" manifesto will be distributed and where the influential Z33 gallery will be "questioning the current state and growing discussion on the potential of design".

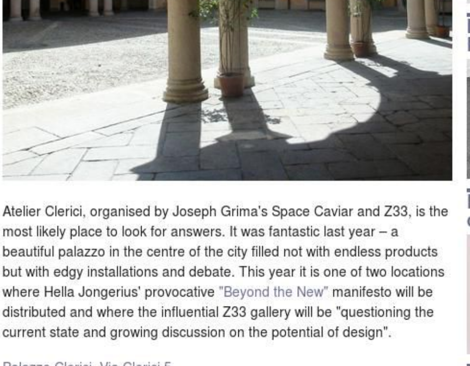
Palazzo Clerici, Via Clerici 5

Eat Shit

Design Academy Eindhoven has done more to codify our expectations of design than any other institution. But even this pioneering school has recently admitted that it is in danger of being left behind by the dominance of technology and food in contemporary discourse. It has the chance to place itself back at the forefront with Eat Shit, the first manifestation of Marije Vogelzang's new Food Non Food department at the college. More than just a "food design" course, this show promises to delve into "the politics of how, where and why we eat".

Via G Crespi/Via dei Canzi

Moustache video

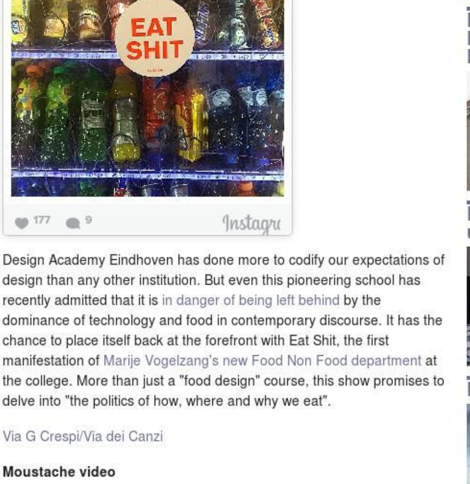


While everyone is bemoaning the way that marketing is swamping design in Milan, you have to hand it to French brand Moustache, which has executed a postmodern marketing coup by putting all its efforts into not being in Milan. Showing in the city is too expensive and ineffective, the brand claims. Instead, Moustache will release an online movie of its products and rely on blogs to promote its wares. Besides being a cost-saving exercise this is a sardonic comment on the rising importance of virtual media at physical fairs.

Anna Winston, editor

This will be my first year on the ground in Milan, having previously coordinated our coverage from our offices in London. I'm curious to see how the ongoing debate about the relevance of design fairs will be reflected in the various districts, and I'm hoping to find some design with a social conscience and ambitious exhibits.

The Department Store by Lee Broom



For the latter, I'll be heading straight for Via Alfredo Cappellini, where London designer Lee Broom is taking over a string of disused shops to create a pastiche department store. With theatrical sets arranged over two floors to form themed zones – including Ladies' Accessories and The Perfumery – the exhibition will be Broom's largest solo show yet.

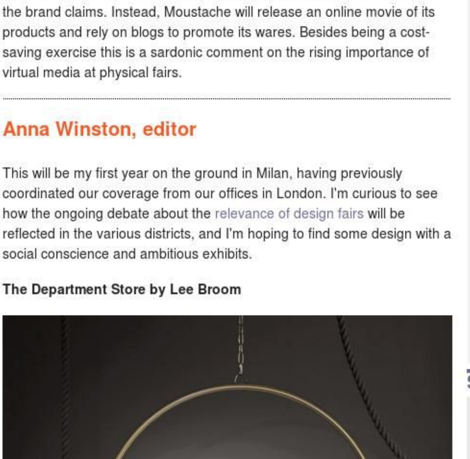
Via Alfredo Cappellini 16

Mindcraft

Denmark's annual showcase at Milan is curated this year by Danish and Italian design duo GamFratesi. Based in Copenhagen, Stine Gam and Enrico Fratesi are uniquely placed to offer a thoughtful take on the Danish city's rising fortunes as a centre of design, while Italy's industry struggles to regain its strength. The duo have invited some of Denmark's best established designers to exhibit alongside new names in a palazzo that will be covered in mirrors.

Chiostro Minore di San Simpliciano, Via dei Cavalieri del Santo Sepolcro 3

Milan Expo

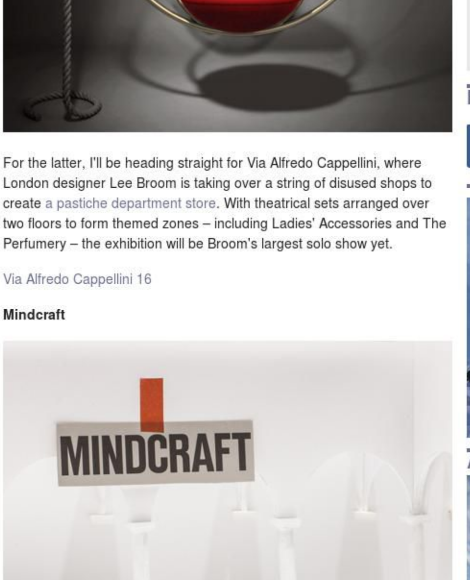


This week Dezeen will also be among the journalists getting a sneak preview of projects on the site of the Milan Expo, which is due to open at the beginning of May. The expo has not gone entirely according to plan – its original masterplanners walked off the project. This will be our first chance to have a good look at what's going on, and also see if the British pavilion by Wolfgang Buttress (above) can match the visual brilliance of Thomas Heatherwick's Seed Cathedral for the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

Dan Howarth, design editor

Apparently Milan design week is becoming too "superficial", so I'm interested in finding projects that explore the importance of image and aesthetics in both design and society. I'm also keen to discover installations that use design to stimulate our other senses rather than just sight.

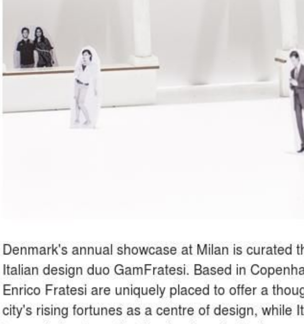
ECAL



It doesn't get more superficial than the selfie, and students from Swiss design school ECAL's photography courses are presenting a series of interactive installations that examine the phenomenon. The projects aim to demonstrate how smartphone cameras have changed the way we view ourselves, as well as the objects and spaces around us, providing a critique on a culture of self-obsession.

Spazio 16 Orso, Via dell'Orso 16

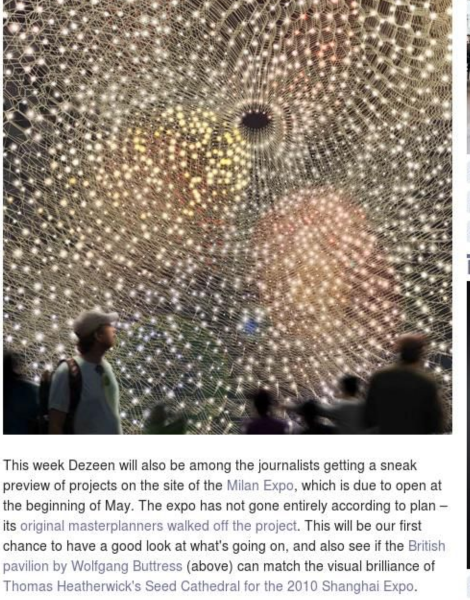
Body Building



Also on the theme of body image, artist Laura Baldassari and designer Alberto Biagetti have created a collection of products based on vintage gymnasium equipment. Vaulting horses, hanging rings and free weights are interpreted as furniture and lighting pieces for a tongue-in-cheek dig at our obsession with the way we look.

Atelier Biagetti, Piazza Arcole 4

Be Open



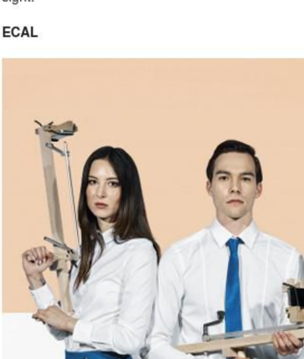
To create a sensual feast for the nose rather than the eyes, creative thinktank Be Open has enlisted a stellar lineup of designers to create pavilions based on perfumes that are no longer in production. Located in Brera's botanical gardens, the spaces in The Garden of Wonders by the likes of Jaime Hayón, Tord Boontje and the Campana Brothers will all be designed to provide olfactory stimulation rather than visual (though they'll probably look quite nice too).

Orto Botanico, Via Brera 28

Jessica Mairs, design and architecture reporter

I'm used to seeing designers present work in their own showrooms, so it will be interesting to see how they will stand out within the design-saturated context of Milan, especially with the emergence of yet another design district – 5vie – which will be inaugurated on Wednesday.

Max Lamb: Exercises in Seating



One of the highlights of 5Vie will be Max Lamb's exhibition in a vast concrete-floored warehouse. The British designer is presenting almost a decade's worth of his work in chairs and stools. Laid out in a giant ring, the designs chronicle Lamb's progression from RCA student to established name and are constructed using a wide variety of materials from cast concrete and hewn timber to expanded polystyrene, welded metal and engineered marble.

Space Sanremo, Via della Zecca Vecchia 3

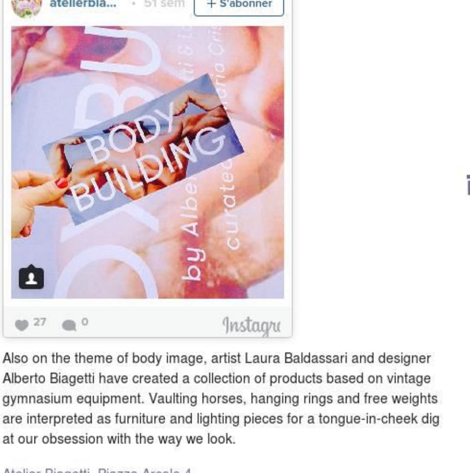
Lettuce Entertain You

A photo posted by Stanford Shopping Center (@stanfordshop) on A...

After Bethan Laura Wood's harvest-inspired takeover at London's Ace Hotel during the London Design Festival, I'm interested to see what she will make of her next subject – lettuce. This week, Wood is creating an installation inside the Milan boutique of fashion designer Tory Burch for the launch of a salad-themed ceramics collection by American designer Dodie Thayer, incorporating lettuce-inspired plates and teacups.

Tory Burch, Via della Spiga 9

Alchemy: Material Obsessions

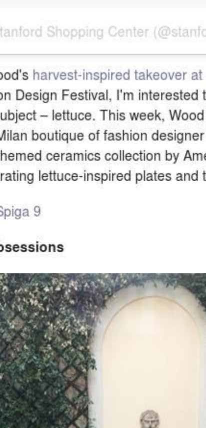


The Vivienne Westwood flagship store in Milan will host an exhibition of furniture making by tutors and technicians from London architecture and design school The Cass. Partially made and disassembled furnishings will be intertwined with Westwood's clothing collections and mirrors by London design brand Tiipoi, in an exhibition designed to showcase processes rather than products. The Cass upholstery technician Jude Dennis will also host workshops in the courtyard, turning raw materials into finished products.

Vivienne Westwood, Corso Venezia 25

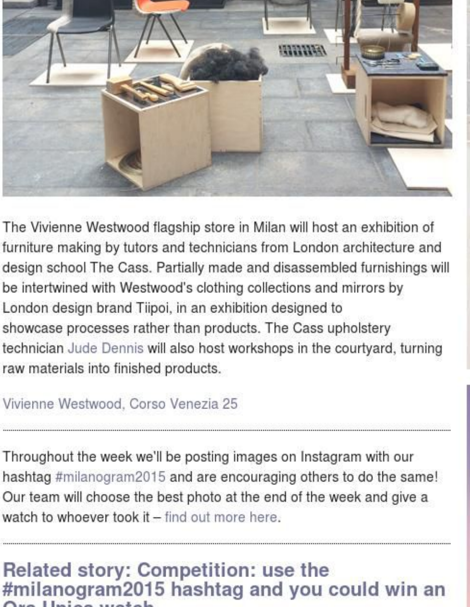
Throughout the week we'll be posting images on Instagram with our hashtag #milanogram2015 and are encouraging others to do the same! Our team will choose the best photo at the end of the week and give a watch to whoever took it – find out more here.

Related story: Competition: use the #milanogram2015 hashtag and you could win an Ora Unica watch



Competition: we're giving away a NAVA watch by designer Denis Guidone, courtesy of Dezeen Watch Store, for the best image of Milan's design week posted to Instagram using our #milanogram2015 hashtag. More »

More from Milan 2015:



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