



## The Compasso d'Oro and Salone del Mobile.Milano: 60 years together

*An itinerant exhibition winds its way through the pavilions of EuroCucina and the International Bathroom Exhibition. It narrates a chapter in the unparalleled story of Italian design, built on discoveries, technology, design and business culture, customs and sociality through 250 pieces that have won Compasso d'Oro honourable mentions or awards.*

The long-established **Compasso d'Oro** award, organised by the ADI-Association for Industrial Design, was set up in 1954 after an idea by Gio Ponti to highlight the value and quality of Italian design products, has been – and continues to be – a testament to and a social and cultural expression of its own time. As such, it has always found the true protagonists of the award in the companies exhibiting at the **Salone del Mobile.Milano**. **Many, or rather very many products showcased at the event have mapped out the story of the award**, garnering recognitions while marking out the history of customs, society and modern living.

As part of the celebrations for its 60<sup>th</sup> edition, the Salone del Mobile.Milano aims to pay homage to its exhibitors, the beating heart of the fair, celebrating their unwavering commitment to presenting innovative products and processes each year in the name of quality.

The installation, **curated by the architect Alessandro Colombo with Paola Garbuglio**, is split into two sections: **Design/in the Kitchen**, featuring kitchen-related products, in Pavilions 9 and 11 of EuroCucina and FTK – *Technology For the Kitchen*, and **Design/in the Bathroom**, featuring bathroom furnishing, in Pavilions 22 and 24 of the International Bathroom Exhibition.

The decision to concentrate on these particular types of products – all from the ADI Design Museum Collection in Milan, curated by ADI – selected as examples/winners of the Compasso d'Oro, is intended to focus attention on the efforts of these two sectors in the fields of research, innovation and sustainability. It comes as no surprise that the **winners at the early editions of the award included a great many products for the kitchen**, a space symbolic of post-war renewal and recovery. Furnishings, electrical appliances, equipment, stoves and saucepans were subject to the revolutionary approaches of the designers at that time. Kitchens became experimental laboratories, inventing elements that had previously not existed or were relegated to the domain of craftspeople. The new kitchens created a brand-new space, taking on the most varied of functions, previously associated more with architecture than with furnishing – such as ranges, sinks and marble tops, that were heavy and difficult to move. All elements that, as design evolved, changed from being freestanding to being built-in, perfectly integrated.

**Design/in the Kitchen** is narrated through the primary elements, in a philosophical approach common to all the world cultures. **Earth, Water, Fire and Wind**, and their characteristic



physical states – **solid, liquid, transformative and mobile** – taking the visitor through the world of kitchens and fixed equipment; the receptacles and saucepans; the electrical appliances that transform the ingredients and the materials right up to the “mobile” objects, tableware and everything that sits on the table. **Four tables for four stories.** The **table** has been chosen deliberately as the main narrative tool, **abstract in a large circle** that floats beneath a large, luminous textile “chandelier.”

The **overall display** is characterised by these hanging textile structures, composed of long stoles at a distance from one another, which converge in a single point, making for a hugely impactful effect. Each area, besides being distinguished by a particular theme, can **also serve as a place to stop and to socialise**, thanks to the provision of seating. The “huge circle” focuses the attention on the products, either **showcased physically or through photographic images** taken from the history of photography, architecture, film, comics and publicity illustration and accompanied by quotes from literature and poetry.

From the **table, as a distinctive and connotational hallmark of the kitchen**, handy for preparing and consuming food, a surface on which to set out and display ingredients and, lastly, a place for gathering and interface, the exhibition moves to the pavilions of the International Bathroom Exhibition and to the **bathtub, as a distinctive and connotational hallmark of the bathroom**. It is in the bathtub that we immerse ourselves, around which all the equipment is arranged, which, as in kitchens, has changed enormously over the last 60 years, adding value to the bathroom as a place of wellness and a status symbol to its traditional functions, not to mention the importance of design and technological evolution.

This foray into the evolution of the bathroom takes the form of two islands that dialogue with the concept of what is **contained and stays in water** and **what lies around water**. Thus, as in a metaphysical space, **tapware, boilers, washbasins, sanitaryware, saunas, tubs, radiators** emerge, either literally or in image form, from the suspended illumination of the display. **All pieces** that, in one way or another, have improved our quality of life, especially since the post-war period when homes increasingly began to adhere to hygiene, ventilation and quality standards, studied and advocated by the Modern Movement, alias Italian Rationalism, bringing attention to bear on the bathroom.

This itinerant exhibition is one of the collateral events celebrating the Salone del Mobile, and is basically a rightful tribute to stellar Italian design pieces, to the companies that produced them and the designers who dreamed them up. It's also a journey through the different forms of design and a reflection on how design has marked the great changes in society, reacting to the new cultural paradigms with original inventions, vocabularies and content.

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