

STYLE
 INTERIORS

STEAL
 THE
 SHOW

If your home could travel, the Milan Furniture Fair would be the first place it would want to visit. Packed with stunning objects from bright new talents and big-name designers, the fair is a showcase for interiors. Becky Sunshine picks her favourites

The annual Milan Furniture Fair is the biggest event on the international design industry's calendar. A week when all the designers, buyers and journalists descend on the Fiera Milano trade hall to see new products, discover fresh talent, enjoy a programme of citywide exhibitions and drown in prosecco.

Hundreds of designers showcase thousands of products for every sector of the homeware market - utilitarian, sustainable, ridiculously expensive and even unusable conceptual pieces fill the fair. Canny manufacturers are there to snap up emerging new names while editors and retailers chin scratch as they try to nail new trends (everyone loves a trend - it's easier to sell to a target market).

This year's big themes were copper - in lights by German designer Sebastian Herkner for furniture company ClassiCon and even in

a desk by Tuscan sculptor Giacomo Ravagli for the Italian Nilufar Gallery - and products made from sustainable materials (a coconut-fibre table by British designer Jake Phipps, bamboo lights by the Campana Brothers for Baccarat, a banana-tree fibre coiffeuse by Armani Casa). Many big brands concentrated on heritage and plundered their own archives: Swiss furniture company Vitra reworked the iconic Prouvé Standard chair in black plastic, while Finnish company Artek celebrated the 60th anniversary of Alvar Aalto's Stool 60.

Japanese studio Nendo was perhaps the most prolific exhibitor. Its work included patchwork-style glass lights for Czech house Lasvit, an installation of tables for Israeli quartz manufacturers Caesarstone and room products in collaboration with Luca Nichetto.

But out of all the objects on show, these are the five that we wish we could have left with in our luggage... ■

BEST GADGET
 JOHN PAWSON
 HANDMADE
 KNIFE FOR WHEN
 OBJECTS WORK

"People are surprised by how long it takes to make something as apparently simple as a knife," says celebrated architect John Pawson of his new steak knife. The blade, created for When Objects Work, a Belgian company that produces exclusive objects by leading designers, took three years to develop. "When it comes to a house, people understand a life cycle measured in years, but for me it's all architecture - there's essentially no difference in the way I set about designing a building or a table." Made by Kai, the Japanese master craftsmen and makers of Samurai swords, the Damascus-steel blade features 16 ripple-like marks. The ebony handle is elegant, slender and beautifully balanced. £170 (whenobjectswork.com)

BEST COLLABORATION NINA TOLSTRUP

For London design gallery 19 Greek Street, the Danish designer used end-of-line Marc by Marc Jacobs fabrics to create sofas, daybeds, chairs and tables. "Upcycling, sustainability and finding beauty in the unloved is important to me," she explains. Price on application (19GreekStreet.com)



BEST LIGHTING
 MICHAEL
 ANASTASSIADES
 FOR FLOS

As well as his own collection at lighting exhibition EuroLuce, the Cypriot-born designer presented pieces at the Wallpaper* Handmade show and two collections for lighting company Flos. One is called IC, a reference to British police radio code for suspects' ethnicity, which Anastassiades uses to classify his designs of table lamps and lights. Our favourite was this opaline sphere set on fine brass rods. "It's about balancing a sense of anxiety with something peaceful," he explains. Production starts later this year (flos.com)



BEST BRAND MULLER VAN SEVEREN

A highlight of the fair, Belgian photographer Fien Muller and her partner sculptor Hannes Van Severen's collection of tables, lamps and chairs uses unpainted steel and simple polyurethane for shelves (and follows the catering industry's colour coding). This Strangled Rack is beautifully made ("It has to be well done, otherwise it loses its aesthetic purity," says Muller) and versatile. Prices from €550 (valerietraan.be)



BEST TABLEWARE
 BETHAN GRAY
 FOR WALLPAPER*
 HANDMADE

The Welsh designer teamed up with Yorkshire stone specialists Lapcida to create an Alice-in-Wonderland-like collection of white Carrara and black Marquina marble tabletop pieces. "I'm used to making furniture," explains Gray, "so it was lovely to explore this scale." See her work in London at the Inside Design series, Great Western Studios, 26 April-8 May. Made to order (bethangray.com)

