

# THE MOZART OF MISSONI, THE COLOUR OF CONGREVE

IT WAS MY SECOND VISIT to Paris's vast Maison & Objet design show at the Paris Nord Villepinte Exhibition Centre.

This time, it was the winter 2018 show. And it was no less intimidating than my first visit in September 2017. You may recall from my report of that visit that the event is staged in the centre's eight halls, which cover a mind-boggling 246,000 square metres. Seeing all of the exhibits is impossible.

Following Maison & Objet's winter show, I bring you the latest design trends that I saw there.

I was, alas, disappointed to observe that the same colours that dominated design in 2017 were on show again. And I infer that they won't be going away any time soon. I am referring to grey – in both colour and thought – as a general trend.

Yes, there are valiant bursts of colourful endeavours by the tchotchke companies of the world but pitifully few efforts at true individualism and novel design.

Granted, I am new to the design world in this decade. Although I have the right pedigree – a BA in art history from Vassar College and a degree in interior design from Parsons School of Design – I left this business for 20 years to pursue my passion: a career in classical music.

I won't bore you, dear readers, with too many details because I intend to keep you amused in future columns with narratives about my life as an opera singer. But one thing I can tell you is this: In the theatre, we keep our drama on the stage. It is difficult enough to learn our music, show up on time, and earn our paltry living without having to backstab other artists. That sort of nonsense doesn't happen; it's written for daytime television.



Obviously, a soprano cannot sing the same notes as a baritone. So we really are not in competition with each other once we have the job. We are actually very collegial. I cannot say the same of designers. The ones I have met so far are pretty ... well, not very nice to each other.

Why is that?

What is that about?

Isn't there enough creative juice to go around? Don't they believe that the best designers will rise to the top?

And the consumer will judge?

Am I just a foolish utopian living in a dream world?

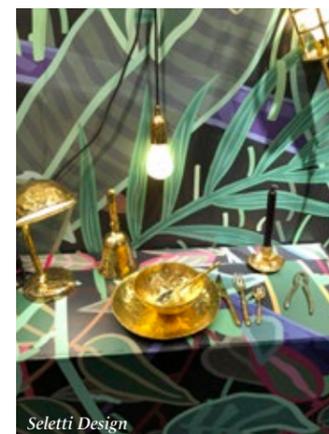
Write to us!

Scream at me, oh designers!

Tell me how it really is out there.



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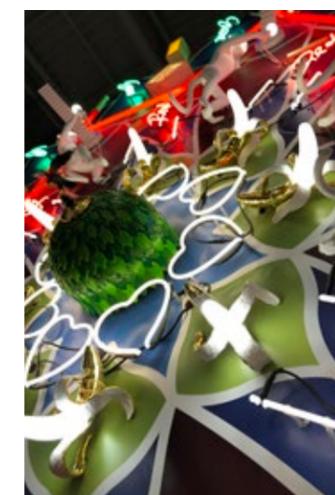
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Should designers not support each other as singers do in performance? Should that reasoning not reign in the world of design?

For instance, there I was once again in the vast, lonely, impossible-to-properly-navigate Maison & Objet Paris ...

And yes, as your publisher, I will probably attend the show twice a year to give you articles about world design trends. Aren't you excited?

And lo and behold: Everyone is still producing design that is mainly in GREY.

And yet ...

And yet ...

And yet ...



All images: Missoni



The beauty of the human spirit rises. I hear it like a Mozart overture. I hear the oboes as the purple chairs that were pushing forth. I see the green settees, and the Portuguese designers with their metal Louis XIV table legs as flutes popping out. And lo! We have a rococo concerto. There is hope like spring in the midst of the winter rain in Paris.



All images: Missoni



Some red sofas, like red roses, sounded like the trumpets of a fanfare to announce: “Don’t despair, Sharon! The triumph of the human spirit is that it cannot survive without warmth, communication, community.”

And so, the winner of the Maison & Objet show, for me, was the huge display by Missoni. The high-end Italian fashion house, founded in 1953, is known for its colourful knitwear designs. The warm zigzag patterns and lush fabrics are iconic and globally recognizable. Missoni’s presence was a soft haven in a harsh environment. Just beautiful! Can you hear the harmonies yet? If not, lean back. Relax. To quote the Restoration playwright and poet William Congreve: “Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.” This is what the world needs now.

See you at the next M & O in September. Stay cozy. And listen to Vivaldi if you get depressed in the cold.

Dr. Sharon Azrieli   
 Publisher