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IFDM – Il Foglio del Mobile

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LANZAVECCHIA + WAI

Between Pavia and Singapore. An invisible thread connects the two cities and the journeys of Francesca Lanzavecchia and Hunn Wai. A brief sentimental relationship, that started at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, turned into a professional accord with the Lanzavecchia + Wai studio and establishes a partnership made up of duality and understanding. Their creative process follows knowingly 'uncomfortable' dynamics. "Our desire, from the beginning, was to have a studio between two continents - continues Francesca - that was not satisfied with the ordinary, but asked questions with an insatiable desire for knowledge. This is reflected in our projects, which range from interiors for helicopters to limited edition carpets, from furniture for large companies to handicrafts, to things created with our own hands."

How do you manage long-distance work?

Over time, we have specialised in different areas and have discovered our respective qualities: Hann has a business-oriented approach and likes PR. My ideal dimension is instead that of the studio, I am more empathetic. We diversify design by combining our differences and always starting from research. Or it is our customers that propose new challenges and we welcome them very willingly because we do not get tired of learning. Our projects always have something to tell.

What is the glue of your collaboration?

Being in a constant 'challenge', to share insights and to make them stronger. We do not try to smooth out the differences, but to make them emerge by always asking ourselves what the reason is behind certain decisions. Not being the only one doing things helps, perhaps, giving it more intensity and depth.

You can say that you love 'discomfort' rather than comfort...

Yes, to step out of your comfort zone. It is a process that strongly helps the mind to consider the problems from another point of view and, above all, to ask yourself the right questions, from which new solutions arise. The intent is that of a project in harmony with the people who will use it, with great attention to the end user and with the aim of making life better. We are equilibrists between the world of ideas and the world of objects that must reach people.

Yours was immediately a social inclination, to make life easier. At the 2012 SaloneSatellite you presented a family of objects designed for those facing difficulties.

Lives are changing profoundly and there is a need for projects that are able to meet new needs. The collection you mentioned has been considered by many furniture companies, but it has never entered into production, but there is always a 'social' aspect. For example, companies themselves play this role by making crafts come alive. From our side, we never start from the form, it is always a dialogue, a dance, a search for something, that can bring true value.

Speaking of SaloneSatellite, you were in this year's selection committee. What differences have you found in the new generations compared to when you presented yourselves?

We tried to reward those who differentiated the proposal, perhaps by linking it to music or art. My fear is that of homologation. That, because of the new means of realisation, the attention is given to the form supported by very little experimentation. Often young people present themselves with prototypes that they haven't produced, but are made by professionals, which runs the risk that they might lose a 360° approach to the project. We thought of everything, from the screws used to the total outlook, there was room for error. The aesthetic level has risen a lot, but I am afraid that there is less meaning. I am convinced that the SaloneSatellite is the special place of choice where one can still dream, having said this - as Marva Griffin (founder and curator of the platform) says - it is essential to allow them 'as much as possible' the opportunity to gain visibility and to demonstrate their own abilities.

In your design, the playful aspect also emerges, how important is it to have fun?

On the one hand, there is the desire to change the way of looking at things, on the other, there is an ostentatious search for lightness, conveying a bit of poetry and a playful effect within established companies. All with a language that respects their DNA. A playful gesture that is not an end in itself, but accomplished together with the company. For Hermès we designed 3 windows in Singapore developing the theme of the Amusement Park, concentrating on a common memory of the days of childhood, the world can be quite a heavy place and we think that our mission can also be to make people smile. Soon we will renew the windows with an installation on the theme of the dream. *Vanity Desk*, instead, by Living Divani, is almost a portrait of the person who commissioned it, Carola Bestetti. A request that surprised me a great deal because Carola is a person absolutely without vanity and it is designed around her: the idea of wraparound curves, of an object with which one can be intimate, but with lines reduced to the minimum, where wealth and taking care of oneself is told through precious materials like leather. And also the *Clockwork* cabinet for Exto is a fun project, especially because we found in Exto very good technicians who solved this difficult challenge: a piece of furniture that is the contrary of itself. We have made visible all that is normally hidden, made the gesture of opening an exciting one, the interaction with the furniture as playful, bringing the hinges to the outside, making them jewels.

What are you presenting at this year's Salone?

Living Divani asked us to expand the *Fable* family with a series of tables that interact with each other and with the sofas, the company's core business. Then some tables for **La Cividina**, in two versions - sheet metal or wood -, which play with the cut of the slab to make it sensual and soft, and a 'U' as a leg that could be a magazine holder, but which softens the shapes. Through Wallpaper* Handmade

we have been associated with a British company, Globe-Trotter, which produces vulcanised paper suitcases in a factory that still has some Victorian-era machinery. We designed *The Collector Case*, the baggage of the collector, a hand bag that bit by bit grows into a suitcase thanks to a leather accordion mechanism. Lastly, for Opificio, a fabric manufacturer in Turin, we created the *Architrave* fabrics collection, developed with the jacquard technique.

Tavoli U per LA CIVIDINA



Is there a sphere of design that you prefer?

I think the time has come to grow in scale, to extend the design scope to interiors. Having a range of action to move from the micro to the macro surface. At the moment, we are working on our projects, producing elements of coworking and experimenting with other dimensions of design and production. So that we never stop.