

1961 and all that

West Side Story won the Oscar for Best Motion Picture in 1961. JFK was in The White House, Harold Macmillan in Number 10 and Yuri Gagarin in outer space. Mick Jagger was studying economics while The Beatles made their debut at The Cavern Club and Barbie got a boyfriend called Ken. Mark Simpson of HKS reviews the 50th Milan Salone Internazionale del Mobile for us.



B&B Italia



Poltrona Frau



Alias

▶▶▶▶ upholstery, furniture, textiles, rugs and accessories. I liked Munro, a generous take on the classic Chesterfield sofa by Donna Wilson, made in the UK using traditional methods and materials. A very deep comfortable sofa that, although designed for domestic use, would work really well in more relaxed commercial settings.

Ercol are a brand that all UK designers should know. If you don't, ask your mum, or even your granny. The company was established in 1920 by Lucien Ercolani, is still family run and best and known for his classic 355 Studio Couch and 405 Love Seat. Designed by Ercolani in the late 50s they were exhibited here in new colours and fabrics and sat very comfortably alongside the contemporary work of SCP, Case and others. Ercol became huge in the 60s and 70s but perhaps lost their way in design terms. They have a new design team in place now however, who are refreshing their classic pieces and developing new product with the likes of Matthew Hilton.

I particularly like the 401 Butterfly Chair designed in 1958 and the 392 Stacking Chair of 1957. Strong but light and

versatile, it is suitable for contract and domestic use. It was used extensively in schools before the 1962 Hille Polypropylene chair by Robin Day became so ubiquitous.



Ercol

Case exhibited a well designed and affordable series of products for the home including the 675 chair – designed in 1965 by Robin Day and recent work by Matthew Hilton, Shin Azumi, and a chair

called Sunray by William Warren, which surely takes at least some inspiration from a certain Mr Ercolani.

B&B Italia opened their via Durini showroom. Here they launched new products by Antonio Citterio, Patricia Urquiola and Gabriele and Oscar Buratti. Of those, the Beverly chair, a contemporary re-work of the Directors Chair by Citterio and Husk by Urquiola really stood out as being products which will be very popular.

Cassina again seemed to concentrate on new takes on their established catalogue. Whereas last year they reintroduced vintage colours on the Le Corbusier LC range, this year they launched external versions using hi-tech upholstery materials.

The classic LC4 chaise was exhibited in original colours and a new edition of the Tokyo chaise by Charlotte Perriand from 1940 was shown. New product included Moov by Piero Lissoni and Sled by Rodolfo Dordoni; both nice but safe.

Jean Marie-Massaoud is a French architect and designer who has quietly built up a range of elegant designs for the likes of B&B Italia, Poliform and Poltrona Frau, for ▶▶▶▶▶



B&B Italia



Tecno

▶▶▶whom he designed the Archibald chair in 2009 and Kennedee sofa in 2007. The latter is an elegant interpretation of 50s Florence Knoll which wouldn't look out of place on the Mad Men set. This year he has designed Brooklyn, reminiscent of both the Barcelona Chair and the Paul Kjerholm PK22; it is compact and very useable in smaller reception spaces or breakout areas.

The Triennale Design Museum is always worth a visit. It holds exhibitions throughout the year, with special displays for design week. InterfaceFLOR took a large space here for a surreal installation entitled 'The Positive Floor' designed by Francesco Maria Bandini. Visitors entered a completely white room and navigated between tall iceberg like prisms. A ceiling constructed of mirrored hexagonal panels allowed the visitor to view the exhibit from

below and see the top of the icebergs, which were carpeted using new designs. An imaginative room apparently 'reflecting Interface's credentials in design, innovation and sustainability'. I hope for those reasons it is used again elsewhere and not just thrown in a skip.

Also exhibiting here were Tecno, an Italian brand who have dropped off the radar in recent years and are still best known for the Nomos range designed by Foster and Partners in 1986. Under new management, they re-launched themselves this year. Centre stage was the P40 Chaise Lounge which has long been a favourite of mine. Designed in 1956 by architect and designer Osvaldo Borsani, it could again be compared to automotive design of the era, expressing the mechanics of its movement with polished metal gears, sleek and

upholstered here in red like a classic Ferrari Berlinetta.

Something old, something new – to be honest I liked a lot of the old. This year's 50th Salone did demonstrate to me that despite the plethora of new products launched here every year since 1961, it is the classic mid-20th century designs that continue to be as relevant and inspirational as when they were first produced. Thankfully they do still make them like they used to ●

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