

SIMONE LEAMON



THIS YEAR MARKS THE MILAN
SALONE DEL MOBILE'S 50TH
ANNIVERSARY AND MY 7TH TRIP
TO THE FAMED FURNITURE FAIR

SUNDAY 10 APRIL

4.00pm Check in at Milan's swanky Hotel Spadari. Share an aperitivo with design writer Anne-Maree Sargeant, and retire to my room. My assignment: an article a day for How We Create website.

MONDAY 11 APRIL

8.00am Chat to my man. Bank rings: they've cancelled my credit card! Someone's tried to use it to bulk-buy lingerie online. Arrange new card; Rakumba's Michael Murray spots me cash.

7.00pm – 3.00am At De Padova showroom, Helen Kontouris launches a table. Swap art and design histories with Swedish designer Monica Förster, then hit Edra party. Chat with Belgium-based Australian designer Danny Venlet about the Australian diaspora: if it continues, will we ever create a distinct Australian design culture? Dinner, then back to the hotel to write my first article for How We Create.

TUESDAY 12 APRIL

10.00am – 6.00pm Fairgrounds: 2,720 exhibitors and huge crowds. Between interviews and design-pitch meetings, I pavilion-hop. The big brands stand out: Kartell, Magis and Moroso. Ceccotti Collezione is superb. At Kundalini I see Brodie Neill's brilliant new light, 'Clover', and meet Herve van der Straeten, French engineer/artist/designer. Wave at Philippe Starck, who doesn't recognise me... embarrassing! Then head to Oluce to catch up with president, Antonio Verderi. At my next meeting, the director speaks no English – bugger! We reschedule, this time with a translator. I'm fading; in a sea of people, I walk to the train and head home.

6.00pm – 4.00am The hotel's abuzz: über-designer Konstantin Grcic has checked in. Text messages circulate – what's on tonight? Nothing for me;

I have an interior design project and an article due. My wi-fi malfunctions, so I relocate to the hotel restaurant.

WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL

9.00am – 8.00pm Sweep through all four EuroLuce pavilions in four hours. Note two trends: manufacturers racing to commercialise LED and OLED – Flos and Artemide seeking the archetypal blueprint design; and designers are prominent in marketing campaigns.

Recall design critic Alice Rawsthorn's recent article, predicting 2011 would reveal whether the furniture industry has escaped recession. At my rescheduled meeting, director answers through our interpreter: "We must be careful – very careful." At Salone Satellite, where young designers present their wares, I find Melbourne's Jarrod Lim, now Singapore-based, and congratulate Kjell Grant, Melbourne Movement's founding director.

8.00pm – 2.00am Opening-night party at Ventura Lambrate with photographer Laura Wakefield. In 9,000m² of warehouse space, I hunt in vain for The Other Hemisphere and Marcel Sigel. I do find Melbourne jeweller Iris Saar Isaacs, and French glassware maestro Emmanuel Babled. Back at the hotel, I pour a wine and start my next article.

THURSDAY 14 APRIL

8.00am – 6.00pm Fell asleep on my laptop last night, deleting a whole article! Brain fried; need a writing-free day. Flick through FuoriSalone programme of 450 design events around Milan's streets. At Spazio Rossana Orlandi, see works by Omer Arbel, Piet Hein Eek, Frédérique Morrel, Manuela Crotti, Nika Zupanc, and RaR for Thomas Eyck; swap cards with Ikko Yokoyama from Editions in Craft. At Moroso showroom, Anne-Maree interviews Tokujin Yoshioka and I take photos.

We thank him with a gift of 'Bowling Arm' bangles. Then, I head back to the hotel for a nanna-nap.

7.00pm – 2.00am Nanna overslept! Race to Oluce/Knoll cocktail party; over Aperol Soda, Paolo Pasini and Massimo Amadesi outline the South American and Russian markets. Then Brodie, Anne-Maree and I head to a packed Bar Basso, we drink on the street with several hundred people.

FRIDAY 15 APRIL

7.00am – 7.00pm I write articles, collect new credit card, and eye off an electric blue Prada handbag. (Fashion tip: colour blocking's in for summer 2011.) Meet EOOS designer Harold Gründl and discuss the GFC, green design and his no-mix toilet for Duravit. Racing back to the fairgrounds, bump into Francesco Rota.

7.00pm – 3.00am Meet Antonio, Paolo and John Aiello at Bar Radetzky. Decline parties: I'm knackered. Head back to hotel to write another article.

SATURDAY 16 APRIL

6.00am – 7.00pm Family and friends call to wish me a happy 40th birthday! Check out the *Wallpaper** exhibition *Handmade* in the magnificent Brioni Palazzo, then Palazzo Morando for breathtaking Baccarat exhibition – paper and LED back-lit crystal chandeliers by Japanese designer Eriko Horiki. Then Museo Bagatti Valsecchi, for a presentation by legendary Murano glass company Venini.



ABOVE Mimmo Paladino's sculpture, *Montagna di Sale* (Salt Mountain), was installed near the Duomo during the Design Week

7.00pm – 2.00am Celebrate birthday with friends at chic Café Trussardi, then dinner at Il Primo Posto: lobster pasta and tiramisu! Smoking cigars, we walk through Isola, where I lived in 2001 – a working-class area undergoing massive 'trendification'.

SUNDAY 17 APRIL

8.00am – 6.00pm View *Dream Factories* exhibition, curated by Alberto Alessi, at Triennale di Milano. At Dilmos, see Israeli designer Ron Gilad, and Dutch designers Kiki van Eijk and Joost van Bleiswijk. At the Laboratory of Light, Viabizzuno, the showroom staff have a serious attitude problem! Le Pavillon Hermès, at La Pelota, is genius pop-up architecture by Shigeru Ban. At Produzione Privata, I buy myself a Michele De Lucchi collectible.

6.00pm – 1.00am After a whirlwind week, I enjoy a home-cooked meal with Milanese friends Monica and Luca.

Simone LeAmon is a designer, artist and the director of O.S INITIATIVE design and creative strategy studio.