

# ICON

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN CULTURE



## Radical landscape

An exclusive look at Mad Architects'  
Huangshan Mountain Village

Milan round-up • Ryue Nishizawa • Italian new wave • Cult of the image • The end of work

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MM Lampadari, Zorzenoni will show a series of works with the carpentry firm Scapin. 'These craftsmen are really good at making furniture for other companies, but they don't have their own brand,' he says. Scapin has a background in classic furniture, but Zorzenoni proposed that it combine this knowledge with new technology in the form of a CNC machine. 'The idea is to make something contemporary, with the quality of classic furniture.' The resulting series of wood cabinets, bookshelves and side tables is resolutely modern but retains an Italian flair: slim profiles, curved edges, geometric cut-outs and brass connection details give the pieces character. In the exhibition, the furniture will be complemented by glassware that Zorzenoni has made for Nason Moretti, a Murano glass company. The series of vases revive an old technique of layering different colours of glass.

Treviso-based designers Giorgia Zanellato and Daniele Bortotto came together to work with artisans, creating the successful *Acqua Alta* in 2013. Based on Venice's high tides, the collection of jacquard tapestries, a blown-glass diffuser, a marble lamp and a vase all referenced the weathering effects of rising water on the city's architecture. Spotted by Patrizia Moroso, the pair was asked to continue the idea the following year as *La Serenissima*: a sofa-and-table set characterised by layering. The same thing happened in 2015 with *Tessere*, a collaboration with a mosaic artisan for *Operae*, the Turin-based independent design festival. The result was a trio of outdoor carpets created out of mosaic stone and glass, but made

flexible with resin. Each carpet was a representation of a famous palace in Turin. Giulio Cappellini saw the project and asked Zanellato/Bortotto to develop it for the company as *Arengario*, a depiction of the iconic stone building that flanks the Duomo in Milan.

The designers studied first in Italy, and then at the École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) before returning to Treviso to set up their own studio. Here, they found themselves at a home advantage. 'I think it was being in Switzerland that made us realise how lucky we were living in Italy,' says ►



**TOP LEFT** Alta Marea tables, part of Zanellato/Bortotto's *La Serenissima* collection for Moroso (2014)

**ABOVE** Jacquard tapestry from Zanellato/Bortotto's *Acqua Alta* collection for Rubelli (2013)





**LEFT** La Giudecca  
tapestry by Zanellato/  
Bortotto, produced by  
cc-tapis for the Acqua  
Alta collection (2013)

in actual products without waiting for a company to understand me,' she says. The Attico products are research-based and designed to be made in small batches, each one testing or reviving a particular artisanal technique. A show of these pieces at the 2012 Salone Satellite proved a launch pad for Celestino's career working with other brands, although she continues to use Attico as a research outlet.

The skills of Italian craftsmen also form the basis of the small-batch production company Something Good, which Zorzenoni runs with fellow designers Zaven. 'We saw certain companies present things in a low price bracket, but they were not really well done,' he says. 'We wanted to work more on quality ... but for a sensible price.' The collection comprises accessories in ceramic, glass and metal – Cirripedes, for example, is a turned-iron pen holder that costs just €19. This year the mini-brand will take a break from showing in Milan but the online shop remains open for business.

For all these designers, it's an interesting time to be working in Italy. Reinvention of traditional production, more intensive work with smaller companies, and initiating artisan collaborations have all been key to sustaining their careers and finding new challenges. After the early boost of being spotted by Cappellini and Moroso, Zanellato/Bortotto is learning how to set a long-term agenda for its practice. For Celestino, it's about carving a niche in the industry and building an individual design language. Zorzenoni says that, after taking lots of requests for work, he is now more discerning about collaborations. His semi-entrepreneurial approach of working with smaller, more traditional producers is about taking greater control. 'As a young designer, I wanted to work with everybody. But you learn that some companies aren't concerned about quality or price. They want to compromise your design or only follow what the others do. That's just not interesting for me.' ♦

**RIGHT** Zanellato/  
Bortotto's Tessere  
outdoor carpet,  
inspired by the Palazzo  
Carignano in Turin and  
created with a local  
mosaic artisan (2015)

