

Work in Progress

An exhibit at Salone del Mobile shows the process—not just the product—of cutting-edge design.

BY TIFFANY JOW

If you've been to Salone del Mobile in the past four years, chances are you've been seduced by Ventura Lambrate, the Wonderland-like spectacle of ambitious, experimental work by students and young creative technicians. Known for its high-quality presentations and well-balanced selection of international talent, the multi-venue affair takes place in Lambrate, a post-industrial area of northeast Milan. Ventura Lambrate's creators and curators, Margriet Vollenberg and Margo Konings of the Dutch studio Organisation in Design, see it as a means to provide nascent designers critical visibility in the early stages of their careers. The result is an energetic *mise-en-scène* that's become one of Salone's must-see events.

This year, Ventura Lambrate added a new component called Ventura at Work, a showcase of 20 exhibitors whose projects focus on the processes of creative production. Based in an old printing factory, the show presented designers working alongside their finished products: drawing, building, and running equipment—getting their hands dirty. Among those featured were Dutch siblings Graham and Doug van der Pas, who work under the name Cookie Bros.; they unveiled their wood Tattoo lounge chairs, one of which was covered in ink by tattoo artist Danny Boy Sawyer (who was on hand to give complimentary tattoos). Italian designer Andrea Brena set up a knitting station to teach visitors a technique used to make his furniture. Architect Peter Pichler showcased his garment racks coated with automotive paint, while Bologna-based Bulbo created a plant-filled kitchen to display LEDs made for indoor gardening. Rounding out the offerings were presentations by universities and school affiliates like Works, a collective of recent alumni from the Royal College of Art. For Vollenberg and Konings, however, the event was less a novelty and more a practical response to what they see as a growing shift in design.

“A few years ago, we began observing the first signs of designers who not only designed an object, but also designed the machine and invented the material to make it,” Vollenberg says, citing Thomas Maincent's Spider Farm

and Jan van der Wiel's Gravity stool, the latter of which was shown at last year's Ventura Lambrate and this year's London Design Museum Designs of the Year exhibition. It is a fundamental change, she says, in which the role of the designer is expanding to include that of a developer, engineer, or scientist. Regardless of whether this interdisciplinary approach arose out of necessity or shifting trends, Vollenberg and Konings felt the need for a bigger platform to show the capability and far-reaching skills of their collaborators. The duo selected exhibitors from Ventura Lambrate's open call for submissions, and designated Ventura at Work as a place to present objects and the ideas, tools, and techniques used to make them.

More than a collection of public workshops, Ventura at Work is, for Konings, an essential component to a flagship event like Salone. “These designers mark the trends and direc-

tions that our society is heading toward,” she says. “One day these talents will hold sway.” Will another installment of the exhibition occur next year? “Who knows?” Konings and Vollenberg say in unison. By then, the next movement could be under way.





(OPPOSITE). Anna Korshun's TKTKTKK

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT)
Bas van Poppel next to Atelier van Asseldonk's Safe Storage. Charley Reijnders's geometric Crystal Home in wood, resin, and plexiglass. Andrea Brena and TKTK yarn at his Knitted Army station.