



Milan Furniture Fair is Back in NY. Exciting Events Coming Up

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The Milan Furniture Fair will be in New York from the end of November to promote Italian design, art, and culture, and to celebrate its 50th anniversary. "Leonardo's Last Supper: A Vision by Peter Greenaway" will be on exhibit. Robert Wilson will present a series of video portraits featuring famed Italian ballet dancer Roberto Bolle. Twenty Italian furniture showrooms will host an "Italian Christmas" at their retail locations. The events are co-sponsored by Federlegno Arredo (the Italian federation of wood, cork, furniture, and furnishing manufacturers), COSMIT (organizer of the Milan Furniture Fair since 1961), ITC (Italian Trade Commission), and the Italian Ministry of Economic Development

New York will host the Milan Furniture Fair (Il Salone Internazionale del Mobile) beginning on November 29. For six weeks, the best of Italian design will be on display in Manhattan. In 2011 there will be Milan Furniture Fair's 50th anniversary, and celebrations will include a series of exhibits and special events throughout New York City.



The events are co-sponsored by Federlegno Arredo (the Italian federation of wood, cork, furniture, and furnishing manufacturers), COSMIT (organizer of the Milan Furniture Fair since 1961), ITC (Italian Trade Commission), and the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. The fair will bring the best of Italian culture and the most popular Italian designs to New York. High-quality and a sophisticated artistic vision were the criteria used to select participants for this year's fair.

The Milan Furniture Fair was founded by [COSMIT](#) [2] in 1961 as a way to showcase and promote Italian design. Every April, visitors in Milan can see the latest in interior design, materials, and furniture as well as industry innovations and new technology. Last year's event drew more than 329,563 visitors and over 5,000 media professionals from around the world. The next International Furniture Fair in Milan will take place April 12-17, 2011.

We had the opportunity to attend a preview luncheon held at the now famous restaurant Manzo restaurant located at Eataly NYC, where celebrity chef and co-owner Mario Batali made a brief appearance.

Organizers, managers, artists, and representatives of leading institutions were on hand to discuss and celebrate the high-caliber, exciting program. Speakers included Director of [ITC](#) [3] North America Aniello Musella, [Italian Consul General Francesco Maria Talò](#) [4], [Director of the Italian Cultural Institute Riccardo Viale](#) [5], President of [Federlegno Arredo](#) [6] Rosario Messina, President of COSMIT Carlo Guglielmi, artist [Robert Wilson](#) [7], the Head of the Commercial Office at the [Italian Embassy](#) [8] [in Washington DC](#) [8], Lorenzo Galanti.

In addition to twenty Italian showrooms that will be decorated with the theme of an Italian Christmas, several special events are also planned.

Leonardo's Last Supper: A Vision by [Peter Greenaway](#) [9]

Presented two years ago at the Milan Furniture Fair, this provocative interpretation of Da Vinci's masterpiece will be shown in the U.S. for the first time at the Park Avenue Armory. Using advanced digital technology and craftsmanship, Greenaway created a perfect copy of one of the world's most recognizable and sacred paintings: the Last Supper. The painting will come to life before the viewer's eyes thanks to projections of images and light that seem to spring from the original painting, and will be accompanied by a soundtrack of voices, music, and other sound. Art, cinema, poetry, music, and state of the art technology combine to transform a 500 year-old two-dimensional surface into a deeply moving multimedia experience.

Perchance to Dream, Curated by Robert Wilson

Acclaimed playwright, director, and artist Robert Wilson will present a special installation that blends the beauty of the human body with the immediacy of functional design. A series of video portraits featuring famed Italian ballet dancer [Roberto Bolle](#) [10] interacting with iconic Italian design objects will be screened alongside a display of Italian furniture from the last 50 years.

New York City Street Scenes, Italian Design

To celebrate the breadth of Italian design and to usher in the holiday season, twenty Italian furniture showrooms will host an "Italian Christmas" at their retail locations during regular business hours. Prominent store banners will identify the stops on the walking tour that will guide visitors to Italian design "hot spots" located throughout the city.

An opening night party on November 29 will feature a taste of Italian cuisine prepared by [Eataly](#) [11] at Italian furniture showrooms which will be open to the public.

For President of Federlegno Arredo Rosario Messina, it will be a unique opportunity for Americans to appreciate high-concept Italian design products while experiencing Italian creativity in terms of home décor. "We are proud to come to the United States with such a worthwhile project, allowing businesses to promote the Italian home furnishings industry to the American market – a strategic market which totals 551 million Euro in exported furnishing products. We believe that these events will help to jumpstart economic recovery and growth, which we have seen signs of in recent months."

Currently, over 2,400 companies are members of Federlegno Arredo, and of these, eleven small and medium companies from Lombardy were chosen to participate in this project.



We also talked with Mr. Messina about the 'genetic make-up' of companies that present the best of Italian design. It's this 'DNA' that in times like this truly makes a difference in terms of distinguishing Italian products from the rest of the world.

"In Italy, we have companies. But a company in Italy is not only an organization, an administrative body; it is a close group of individuals within a family. Management is not only financial but personal as well. Money is not the only concern, and products are considered in terms of human value not just financial value. When a firm creates a product it is as if another child is born into the family, and so the members of the family continue to look after the child with affection. The company is an actual family, and its most important values are human not financial."

We discussed the presence of young people in the design business with President of COSMIT Carlo Guglielmi. "There are so many young people present. Italian companies operate as families, on a relatively small scale. By nature they function as a patriarchal family with grandparents and parents who are ever-present, but at the same time this industry thrives on novelty and change and so we know that we have to focus on the next generation, on our children. This requires daily contact with young people and their world, and the young people who are involved in Italian companies are proof. Young people are necessary for change and innovation."

"It has even occurred here at Eataly. It is the next generation of the Farinetti family who is reinterpreting the past and the present. It's a different energy...you have to have faith even at the expense of being wrong." And for Mr. Guglielmi, there is no doubt that "New York is the creative capital of the world. We could think of no better place to begin our celebration of Italian design while addressing and engaging young people at the same time."

For the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute Riccardo Viale, culture and business go hand-in-hand now more than ever: "This has always been the case over the course of human history and culture – just think of the Renaissance. The important thing is that the connection leads to great art and design."

Director of ICE Aniello Musella believes that the success of the initiative depends on technical and logistical details, but more importantly, on the impression it makes on the American public not only through organized events but also through a targeted campaign that highlights the industry's leaders.

We would like to quote the great [Gillo Dorfles](#) [12], who in a recent interview, while acknowledging the pitfalls, said that Italian design is still one of the best in the world. This comes from a man who has lived nearly a century of life as an art critic, painter, and an Italian philosopher – he knows of what he speaks.

The International Furniture Fair will take place in New York at the end of November. The program of events begins the week after Thanksgiving on November 29 and lasts six weeks through January 8, 2011.

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