

People

A blend of creativity and culture runs through the work of Danish-Italian design duo GamFratesi

Places

We report back from Italy with the best from the Salone del Mobile, Euroluca and Milan Design Week

Products

As we prepare to leave Europe, we ask international kitchen brands for their views on the UK market

Projects

The Cote d'Azur is the dramatic location for Asian practice AB Concept's first European home

Professional

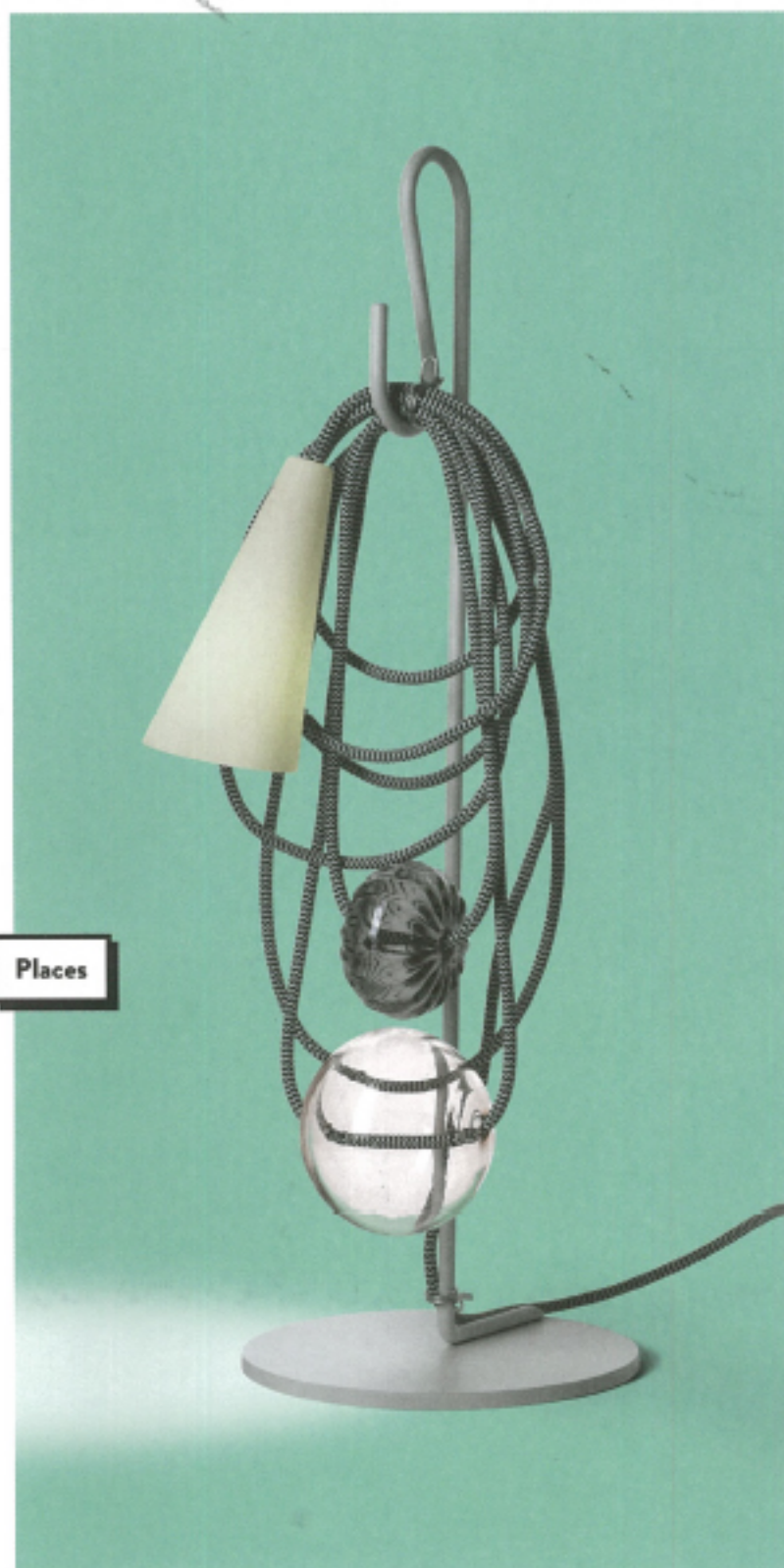
Archives: a valuable resource that can be mined for commercial benefit as well as design inspiration

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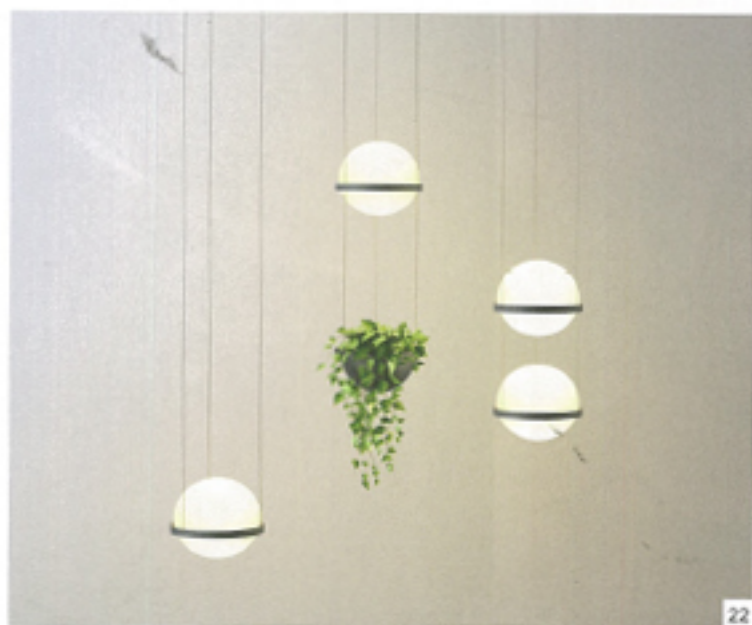
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for residential design professionals

Places



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19 SkLO

This US-Czech company spreads its creativity across three collections: objects, projects and lighting. Drape Skirt 9 is a new lighting piece for 2017, with nine individual glass globes suspended on fabric cables threaded through brass rods, seemingly drawn together to create a skirt effect. Four glass colours are available: pale blue, olive, smoke and white. sklo.com

20 Davide Groppi

The stand for Italian manufacturer Davide Groppi was particularly busy during EuroLuce. Groppi's QuiQuoQua deconstructs the familiar pendant light that hangs over many dining tables. A light source, recharged via a USB connection, is magnetically attached to a metal dish suspended from the ceiling by a fine steel wire. davide-groppi.com

21 Anglepoise

UK manufacturer Anglepoise showed a number of new pieces, including these Mini Ceramic shades (used for pendant, wall light and desk lamp) that change from gloss white to translucent when illuminated. This is the first time the company has used ceramics in its collections. The 13-cm diameter white shades are complemented by grey fabric cables and chrome fittings. anglepoise.com



22 Vibia

Horticulture is making a definite return to the home and this Palma design by Antoni Arola combines plant life with lighting. Graphite or matt white aluminium frames combine with opal glass globes in three different formats (two wall-mounted, one suspension). vibia.com

23 Lasvit

Hong Kong-based designers Terence Ngan and Ed Ng, partners at design practice AB Concept, have designed Flux, their first piece for Czech specialists Lasvit. As well as the mouth-blown clear glass, metallic paints have been used on the inside of the piece to evoke 'light reflecting off the ocean surface and the traces left by a receding tide'. Flux is also available as a retail piece for Lasvit customers. lasvit.com

24 FontanaArte

A number of designers showed new Asian-inspired lanterns in April and Denis Guidone's Kanji family for FontanaArte takes its inspiration from Ming-dynasty Chinese porcelain. The hand-blown glass diffuser comes in two shades (frosted white or translucent glass) illuminated by an LED ring that runs around the inside of the black metal structure. Available as a table or suspension light. fontanaarte.com

Finding the sweet spot

by Rebecca
Hoh-Hale

AB Concept couldn't say no when offered the chance to design a new home - its first residential project - on this spectacular site in the south of France

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CULTURAL BLENDS are hard to achieve, as anyone who has grown up with a foreign culture will know. There is a natural urge to find the sweet spot that exists in that mix, where both parts are allowed to sing, be heard and complement each other. This house in the South of France has found that sweet spot. Created by Hong Kong design company AB Concept, it is a family-centric getaway for a Western business man who already has a home in Hong Kong; a three-storey villa that is both impressive and subtle, east and west, in equal measure.

'The project was still under construction before Terence and I started,' says Ed Ng, co-founder of AB Concept, with Terence Ngan. 'We received an enquiry from France to see if we would be interested in designing a house. When we received the floor plans and renderings, we saw it as a significant milestone for us as it would be our first residential project in Europe. It had been designed to accentuate and complement the natural surroundings while the interiors present a space that remains true to the studio's design philosophy.'

The layout comprises three bedrooms, two reception spaces, a swimming pool, hammam, a guest area and library and had already been fairly fixed by the architect. Despite its size and stature, the client

wanted an understated feel and chose AB Concepts for its elegant but cross-cultural style. This has become something of a signature look for AB Concept following projects like the Ten Trinity Square, Four Seasons project in London, as well as a converted British colonial building in Hong Kong (the former Central Police Station), which houses a luxury Chinese and Western restaurant under the same roof.

'The villa sits on the French Riviera, one of the most renowned vacation spots in the world, and naturally we took our first bit of inspiration from the impeccable view of the coastline,' says Ng of their first steps. 'We wanted to use the local elements to contrast with a foreign feeling that is unique to the location, hence the introduction of elements from Asian culture whilst merging them with Western features. The client knew we could understand such expectations. He didn't want the Oriental aesthetics to be too bold, but wanted something subtle that could co-exist with this modern building by the French Riviera.'

The seamless result has been achieved with a blend of exotic materials associated with the east for all the detailing of the key stand-out pieces in the home, of which there are many. These include the large scale cabinetry fronted with sections of

shagreen leather; mother-of-pearl cladding on the walls of the reception areas; bespoke bronze oriental motifs over custom glass panels, and the marble used so much in the East which was equally perfect for a South of France property. At the request of the client these were all sourced from, and pre-made in, China.

'When the client asked us to appoint a contractor in China, we thought it was very brave of him, as logistically, it could have been a mess,' says Ng. 'The home's interiors were prefabricated in the workshop and every single piece, from a vanity counter to the doors were disassembled, put into containers and then reassembled on site. This was a big challenge, requiring a lot of precise co-ordination and site visits to the workshop as well as the actual site. With great co-ordination between the workshop, French architects and extremely skillful workers, everything turned out perfectly and ended up being quite seamless. So the moral of the story is that geographic "hindrances" really shouldn't be hindrances at all in design these days.'

Given the beautiful light of the Cote d'Azur, one key aim was to keep the space as open and reflective as possible. In the entrance hall and first reception room the afore-mentioned mix of mother-of-pearl



Projects



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Projects



Opposite page, top Understated but careful details subtly underline references to east and west, as seen here in one of the living room spaces

Opposite page, bottom The staircase with its translucent glass treads runs like a contemporary dramatic thread through all three floors

Top left A sophisticated mix of materials is layered in every space - leather and metal chairs contrast here with the stone around the fire

Below left The calm interiors extend into the spa areas. Simple stone detailing here allows an ornate water fountain to take centre stage

Top right The site has a spectacular vantage point with views down the French coast, something the designers were keen to highlight

Below right Details such as shagreen panels and bespoke shelving provide continuity, as here in this striking dining room with its dramatic table

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and travertine marble are a typical example of the clever use of materials throughout.

'We tried to use as much glass as possible on the ceiling skylight to allow natural lighting to shed through. The living room and dining room flooring are light beige filled travertine marble and all other areas are wide plank smoky oak,' says Ng. 'There is also a glass staircase that sits in the middle of the house and really is the core of this villa. Consistent throughout the entire home, the shelving units along with sofas and upholstery were a mix of bespoke cabinetry designed by Terence and myself as well as items from the homeowner's personal collection.'

A purpose-built bookshelf extends from the top floor down to the basement, which highlights the verticality of this villa and also allows for the client to enjoy the blue sky throughout the year. It serves as the main daylight source throughout the building with minimal usage of artificial lighting.

Down the staircase at the garden level is a marble-topped, wood base standalone bar standing proud in front of the floor-to-ceiling window, as well as more of the beautiful shagreen cabinetry which also acts as a door which leads to the stairwell. On this floor there are also guest quarters, plus an office space, a second guest bedroom and garden terrace.

Above this are the master suite and a third bedroom space and bathroom. In the master suite the client requested a continuation of the feeling of understated luxury which has clearly been achieved. This detailing is evident in the slightly more elaborate versions of the Chinese style mini screens, this time in oak rather than bronze. The bed's pleasingly curved headboard is in

Canvas by Hermes and sheer curtains have been used to diffuse the light, with blackout blinds integrated into the window system. At night, the shutter comes down to provide extra security and full a full blackout effect.

The bathrooms in the home are definitely the location of some of the most knock-out features of the property. Again there is the cooling feel created by marble



Left Flooded with light in the day, the bedroom's sheers, blinds and shutters provide the darkness needed for deep sleep at night

Projects



Left, top and bottom
Panelling in different
materials gives a sleek
finish to these bedrooms



Top right The sanded
limestone bath forms a
dramatic centrepiece in
the main bathroom



Below right A variety of
stone surfaces create
sleek and polished
spaces in the bathrooms



Below The simple
straight lines of the pool
echo the angular
simplicity of the house

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but this time mixed with the more humble material of limestone at its centre.

'The inspiration here comes from traditional Chinese art,' describes Ng, 'including nearly transparent embroidered double-sided silkscreens to cover the windows. As an extension to the tree branches outside that are visible from the space, the silkscreens include embroidered flower branches and birds, a further reference to off indoor-outdoor living. Whilst the screens allow ample natural light to flood the space, they also serve as dividers for privacy. It's quite a raw feature, but we tied the entire bathroom together with a bathtub made of sanded limestone. This surprising central feature breaks up the luxury associated with the south of France to bring in the naturalness of the surrounding environment.'

AB Concept has certainly delivered the client's aim for a subtle cross-cultural vision, a very 'feng shui'-style balance has been achieved in the convergence of eastern and western cultural styles, tranquility and grandeur, opulence and calm.

'We fully understand that cultures can co-exist with others harmoniously and they all influence each other,' concludes Ng, 'creating the most interesting visuals when multiple cultures are blended together.'
abconcept.net



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