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Salone del Mobile 2008



Ivo_03 by Asymptote for Meta

Meta launch

SALONE DEL MOBILE 2008

It's not just the big guns and odd ingenues that get people talking at Salone. Every year there are a few high profile launches of fully-fledged companies that cause a stir and 2008 has seen the birth of Meta, which has been one of the biggest talking points of the fair.

Meta is a British company, fathered by historic London antiques firm Mallet, and seeks to combine diminishing traditional 18th-century craftsmen skills with contemporary designers. The company serves to raise awareness of fast-receding skills and frame them in a modern design guise they wouldn't otherwise be associated with. And the resulting products are quite exceptional.

Considering the first collection has been three years in the making, with over 200 craftsmen from across the globe involved just to find the right people for the task, it's no surprise the unveiling this week was such an event. The collection was revealed amidst some very beautiful oversized wooden crates in an otherwise stark setting, that's served to heighten the impact.

And what of the pieces themselves? Each would be worthy of a small essay explaining the technique, material and work that went into it. Suffice to say the likes of Matali Crasset, Toord Boontje, BarberOsgerby and Asymptote have each clearly met the challenge of working with unusual materials and traditional techniques head on.

The one that surprised us the most perhaps was Crasset's lantern. Made of paklong, a 'lost' Chinese alloy metal, Meta spent a very long time rediscovering how to make it, with a little help from Nasa scientists. The meta's USP is twofold: it doesn't tarnish and it glows gold in daylight and silver in dark and the reason it was so difficult to recreate was because the original Chinese version contained an unhealthy dose of arsenic.

There's nothing remotely poisonous about Crasset's design however. The oversized lantern is diamond shaped and very definitely contemporary, but with a distinct antique quality too, no doubt helped by the hand-blown glass panels. There's no doubt Meta is a welcome addition on the Salone circuit and one we're looking forward to seeing more from.

INFORMATION

Website
<http://www.madebymeta.com>