

Spring/Summer 2011 Collection

Inaugurated in May 2010 at the Die Neue Sammlung - The International Design Museum in Munich, the Alessi exhibition "Oggetti e Progetti" arrived in the United States in November 2010 and opened under a new title "**Ethical and Radical**" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Alberto Alessi explains, 'The title alludes to the two extremes between which we plan to direct our research within the new decade. On one hand, as we understand it here at Alessi, "ethical" is the search for a new simplicity, modesty, and sometimes even austerity, in design. On the other hand, "radical" is understood as a continuation, perhaps even an acceleration, of the search for highly expressive forms and decorative elements that, at least from a certain point of view, might be considered over the top.'

With the Munich exhibition, Alessi's intention was to foreshadow the trends it will be following in years to come, as interpreted through the so-called "New Topical Issues". Of the twelve projects featured in the exhibition, seven were produced in early Summer 2010, one in Fall/Winter 2010 and two in Spring 2011.

One of these is a series of pots and pans by **Naoto Fukasawa**. This can be counted among the projects with an "ethical" imprint. The other is a coffee maker designed by **Alessandro Mendini**, which finds its place among the "radical" projects.

The first for the Alessi catalogue is called "Shiba", named after the most popular breed of dog in Japan, a loyal friend to man just like pots and pans are a reliable daily companion to the family that uses them. It's not the classic, bulky and abundant battery of cookware, but rather a very limited number of elements; stripped back to the necessities. Produced in multiply (AISI430, aluminum, stainless steel 18/10), with handles in either bakelite or wood, typical of Japanese tradition, they are resistant, practical and minimalistic in both their design and use. Designed for continual use, the signs of wear can make them look even more beautiful with the passing of time. Perfect for traditional methods of cooking, this series is ideal for slow cooking – requiring minimal amounts of water– according to the canons of Eastern tradition; in short, for fusion cuisine.

Another project to come from the "new topical issues", presented in Munich and making its debut in the new collection, is a tribute to the Alessi brothers' maternal grandfather, Alfonso Bialetti. In the 1930's, Alfonso Bialetti was the inventor, designer and manufacturer of the first *Moka Express*, the popular Italian coffee maker. **Alessandro Mendini** was given the task of designing a new coffee maker, the "Moka Alessi", and reinterpreting its ingenious predecessor through the lens of the contemporary design process. The goal was to bring to market an emblematic object new to the AdiAlessi catalogue at an exceptionally accessible price.

The Spring/Summer 2011 collection will also see the introduction of an important project designed by **Marcel Wanders** to the Alessi catalogue. Hailing from Holland, Marcel Wanders has made 'new decoration' one of his hallmarks, using it unconventionally and often applied to out-of-the-way areas, sometimes even completely out of sight. This creates an enjoyable, multi-sensory experience when using the object. The series, which includes a complete table setting, is called "Dressed" precisely because the decoration, like a beautiful dress, should be designed to bring out the contents without being

overpowering. His designs are rich and expressive, somewhere between floral and baroque, but the collection manages to be elegant and light thanks to the contrast between the background and decorations, highlighted by bas-relief and shiny portions. "Dressed" includes: dishes; tea and coffee service in white porcelain; crystal glasses; cutlery in steel decorated through the coining process; a tray, placemat and glass and bottle coasters in stainless steel 18/10.

Karim Rashid, the Egyptian designer, has created a small family of objects entitled "Hellraiser", which includes a tray, citrus basket and centrepiece. Irregularly shaped, angular, with a distinctive decoration, they recall the designs of printed circuit boards. The contrast is clear when round and colourful fruits and objects are placed in "Hellraiser".

The complex process of producing porcelain with a dual-casting technology has been used for the citrus basket and tealight holder "Baby", designed by **Doriana and Massimiliano Fuksas**. This design duo have reduced and reworked the proportions of their large vase "Zouhria". The light filtering through the large holes in the lattice pattern results in an intriguing effect of light and shadows on the walls.

Rounding out the "Tonale" series by **David Chipperfield** is a new carafe in crystalline glass, a container with lid and an oven plate. Simple forms in stoneware and the soft "Morandi" colours have made this project a great success.

The informal language of **Lluís Clotet** continues to produce new effects and new products. The salad serving bowl "Enriqueta" and the centrepiece "Sumpta", with their tormented surfaces in stainless steel full of unpredictable reflections, are two new pieces for the 2011 collection.

The American designer **Dror Benshetrit**, in collaboration with the Jewish Museum in New York, makes his debut with a totally new type of product for the Alessi catalogue. An object related to the customs of Judaism, the *Mezuzah* is a small rectangular-shaped box, designed like a mini-sculpture in die-cast steel, containing a parchment with verses from the Old Testament. Tradition calls for putting the *Mezuzah* on the right inside surface of the entrance door of every home or public place. Its name, "Connection", refers to its original purpose to remind one of the constant link with God.

Based on the success enjoyed by the "La Via Lattea" series of professional knives for Officina Alessi, once again **Anna and Gian Franco Gasparini** have designed a set of cheese knives known as "Milky Way Minor". Derived from the previous series but designed with smaller blades, they are intended for use at the table and by private gourmets. For this reason they have been placed in the Alessi catalogue. The small knife block, created in naturally moisture resistant laminated bamboo, was designed as a hard protective case that opens like a book, keeping the knives in full view for easy identification and access to the interior for easy cleaning.

LPWK - Gabriele Chiave has designed a new typology for Alessi, a knife sharpener. Entitled "Fioretto", this sharpener is equipped with a sturdy handguard and grip. Both of these elements are made to look like a flower and a fencing foil. After use, it can be placed in a vase like a flower. It is made of coated steel, using a zirconium electrolytic process that provides the best abrasive effect on the blades. The handguard and grip are in white thermoplastic resin.

Ushering in a new entry to Alessi's list of Australian designers is **Helen Kontouris**, designer of the new egg cup "Scoop". Made in stainless steel, its form is derived from an egg around which the designer has simply added a wide brim that simultaneously functions as a spoon rest. Long and narrow, the spoon has been designed to easily scoop out the contents of the egg. It can also be used to serve finger food or individual mini portions.

Created by **Frederic Gooris**, designer of the purse hook "Minou" and keyring "Pip", "Pirouette" is a new spinning desk organizer that can also be used as a toy! The top's body is in painted metal, while the handle is in multicoloured thermoplastic resin.

Another addition to the desktop is the stainless steel letter opener "Uselen", shaped like a hummingbird in flight. **Giulio Iacchetti** designed the object with an elegant sense of economy of motion.

Further enriching two successful collections in the Alessi catalogue, are two new objects added to their respective families. One is a vase cover for the project called "La stanza dello Scirocco" (*Room of the Desert Winds*), designed by **Mario Trimarchi**. Its shape extends up one side of the vase, providing support for long stemmed flowers, such as orchids. The other is a liquid soap dispenser for the series of bathroom objects "Birillo", designed by **Piero Lissoni**. The form has been reduced to its essentials and its large stainless steel shell hides the pump system which is normally visible.

Another addition to the Alessi line, but this time for the AdiAlessi catalogue, is a filter coffee maker and a double wall carafe for both household and professional use from the hit series "Adagio", designed by **Kristiina Lassus**.

Last but not least, two special and sophisticated projects for the Officina Alessi catalogue. The first is by the young Italian architect **Elena Manfredini**, who lives in California where she worked for several years with Greg Lynn. She has designed a fruit bowl in open-work stainless steel, inspired by a pattern that reflects a contemporary interpretation of the Arts & Crafts movement. It is a succession of flowers, clovers and shamrocks, hence the name "Blossom", fruit of a complex production process with two different variations: one in 18/10 stainless steel, thus mirror polished; the other in white epoxy resin coated steel.

The second project is by **Mario Trimarchi**. It is a small, simple "Croce" (*cross*) to be hung on the wall, made of a sheet of stainless steel bent so that the cross is at an angle to the wall and its double, clad in black PVD, seems to cast its shadow on the wall. "Croce" does not want to be seen as a direct invitation to religious commitment, rather, more modestly, as a symbol of peace. It is accompanied by a collection of images of crucifixes that traces their evolution in art history.

This is in brief the account of all the new projects by Alessi for Spring 2011. One part has a "radical" imprint, the other "ethical". But is that really the way it is, Alberto Alessi asks himself? Or couldn't it be the other way around? "It would be far more useful –he concludes– to be convinced that Beauty, in all of its facets and contemporary complexity, can still save the world!"