

INTERIOR DESIGN

10 Qs with... Made IT

by Andrew Stone | Tuesday, July 30, 2013



Ilaria Petreni (left) and Alessia Vitti (right) of Made IT.

This Spring, a group of accomplished Italians architects, artists, designers, and tech wizards set up shop at the center the [International Contemporary Furniture Fair](#) in New York. Known collectively as Made IT, they debuted their first-ever collection, a handful of sleek, progressive items, crafted with the intention to marry centuries of Italian design history to the modern sensibilities of today. The Lazio-based collective—whose clientele includes Bulgari, Fendi, Italy’s Internal Ministry, and even the Vatican—offers a one-point approach to Italian design, décor, and materials. Here, [Ilaria Petreni](#) and [Alessia Vitti](#), principal designers of the collection shown at ICFF, offer a glimpse of Made IT’s ambitions.

Interior Design: What are the unifying principles at the heart of the Made IT design collective?

Ilaria Petreni: Our unifying principle is to represent the excellence of Italian interior production, and to design items that represent expertise, tradition, and innovative techniques all at the same time.

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ID: What would you say are its ultimate goals?

Alessia Vitti: Made IT means bespoke and unique design, using fine and different materials in the very exclusive, Italian way. Our aim is to export the Made IT concept and merge it with the particular needs and requests of different clients, be they private or public.

ID: You recently took on the challenge of redesigning a Cardinal apartment at the Vatican... How did you approach a project of this magnitude?

IP: This project was a real challenge, given the high-end details and materials used. Our design team had to sign very strict disclosure agreements that prevented any kind of photography, video, or documentation of the redesign process. Vatican Swiss Guards supervised the entire project, and all phases have been kept top-secret. Within the 2,200-square-foot Cardinal apartment, we did all of the upholstery, sofas, beds, curtains, and carpets. A great amount of research went into determining the high quality tapestry fabrics such as Italian silk and velvet damasks as we tried to respect the colors, style, and sumptuous interior of Vatican rooms.

ID: What have your high-end retail clients been looking for, and how have you sought to bring them fresh design solutions?

AV: ICFE was the first experience in the U.S. for Made IT, and it was a great opportunity to test our expectations about the high-end American market.

IP: We proposed multifunctional and multimedia items such as the “Turtle” chaise longue, with its speaker system, iPod dock, and amplifier built into the structure. It can be used for listening to music in the living room or simply lying on it, and is made of different modular shaped pillows that can be used singularly or divided. We also brought the Sound Wave screen, conceived for restaurants and hotels, with a plexiglass panel and sound transducers built-in. It is simultaneously a holder of bottles or magazines and a communication medium, with video projection and an incredible sound effect.



Made IT's Turtle chaise longue with built-in speakers, iPod dock, and amplifier on view at ICFE.

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ID: How did you come to identify the specific materials you work with—from these specific sources—as the ideal elements with which to create your pieces?

AV: Each member of the collective is a leader at working with a specific material and technique. For our first collection, which debuted at ICFE, the materials were chosen to create a balanced design between innovation and tradition, modern and classic style—matching, for example, plexiglass with wood; marble with carbon fiber.

IP: The collection represents the variety of skills and materials of Made IT—the possibility of using many materials together, as well as an extensive experience and integration technology.

ID: What are some specific technological offerings—the computer console, the entertainment center, the portable kitchen—that receive strong feedback?

AV: All of the technology pieces received a strong feedback, and the public was well impressed by our combination of technology mixed with Italian tradition.

ID: In this sense of “form meeting function,” how do you approach the challenge of integrating new technology into your aesthetic vision?

IP: This expression is very important in our philosophy. We try to balance technology with design—and in this case technology is functional within the design. For example, the sound transducers inside the Sound Wave screen are almost invisible, but they produce an incredible and crisp sound. The technology is very important, but it’s visually very discreet; almost secret. This is the “magic” aspect of our collection.



Sound Wave screen by Made IT, on view at ICFE.

INTERIOR DESIGN

ID: How important is the artistic influence on your collection, and how will this continue to expand?

IP: I'm an architect who studied in Florence, and worked in [Ateliers Jean Nouvel](#) in Paris. Alessia worked and taught in the fashion environment. For both of us, our art background and education has been very important within our design views.

AV: The artistic component is an Italian attitude towards life. It was not a specific choice but a natural process, one that we won't neglect using in upcoming collections.

ID: How do you plan on expanding Made IT in the future?

IP: We have been in touch with some very famous Italian designers and intend to grow our design team, to stimulate debate and draw new inspiration for our future products.

ID: How do you think your collective can impact world-view of contemporary Italian design?

AV: I hope that MadeIT will become a symbol of “Made in Italy... restores Italy”—meaning that the craftsmanship can contribute to bringing Italy out of the economic crisis. We're convinced that in the future, the importance and value of Italian handicraft will again be recognized as a benchmark of quality and style, all over the world.



Caffé Propaganda in Rome by Made IT. Photo by Viviana Berti.