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INSPIRATIONS

THE TRENDS IN OUTDOOR LIVING TO WATCH FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2019

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

WITH JOANA ASTOLFI



Joana Astolfi is an artist, architect and designer who draws visual inspiration from a broad universe of found objects. Porcelain statuettes, miniatures, vintage chairs, lamps, toys, diaries and photographs of people she never met populate and shape her creative vision. Her artworks, installations and window displays are inspired by imperfections, mistakes and a cheeky sense of humour.

We started by discussing the artist's inspirations, which is a rather complex question to answer. Inspirations are something incredibly abstract. What strikes us as awe-inspiring might be something incredibly mundane for someone else. And the artist made it quite clear.

“For me, everything comes from art. Although I am an architect, everything comes from the basis of art, so I always make a very strong connection between art and architecture.”



“We have two departments, architecture and art. We do interior architecture projects closely linked to shops, restaurants and hotels. We make shop windows, where our main client is Hermès, with whom we have worked with for 5 years.”

For Joana, it's all about concept. She needs to tell a story, her story. It's all about a narrative, and how to best portray it. It's like a Triptych: a conjugation between art, architecture and a story, ultimately creating a full painting.

“I always have to tell a story, and it has to be one that is perceptible. The narrative, the concept, the rigour of the project, the execution are all crucial in my projects and so is consistency, risk-taking and making mistakes.”

We couldn't end the conversation without discussing the main challenges that an artist like Joana faces. The artist highlighted two Goliath-like challenges that she usually faces: time and budget. Time, because the Sistine Chapel wasn't painted in just one night. And budget because you can't really put a price on an artistic intervention.

“The deadline is always a pivotal question. People always ask for projects for yesterday. In architecture people still understand that it is a work that takes some time. But art takes a long time.”

It is highly unlikely, to say the least, to speak with an artist about architecture without mentioning art. For Joana, to make an artistic intervention in the midst of an interior architecture project is something unique, and close to the artist's heart.

“In our interior architecture projects, I can intervene in a transversal way. For example, the artisan participates a lot. Lately, and for a long time, the clients ask us to make artistic interventions in space.”

Joana is quite the Jack of all trades. Her studio has two major departments: interior architecture and the artistic one. It might strike you as an expected combination, but the end result is everything but foreseen.



CovetED was also interested to know what type of dream project the firm would like to do, to which Cheryl Eisen responded,

“A boutique hotel, where all of the rooms are unique and have different personalities. I love to mix vintage pieces with new ones, to make things feel real and authentic.”

Moreover, a unique aspect about the IMG firm is that 75% of the company employees are women and Eisen even calls her company “Fempire”, as she further explains,

“Something I love about that is that it’s an environment where women can really thrive, feel free to be themselves, to be emotional and whatever it is that we are. I think it really creates a more creative environment for women to feel empowered.”

Furthermore, the company has actually won three Stevie Awards for Women in Business, including the Fastest Growing Company of the Year and Female Entrepreneur of the Year, which were a massive honour for them.

The designer is often drawn to objects or pieces that really make a statement, from sculpture pieces to shiny metals, as well as massive pieces, everything gold and unique lighting fixtures, as this can clearly be seen in the company’s products.

In conclusion, the next steps for the company seem to be moving onto new markets, since that they are growing so much. As of recently, they have started doing a lot of work in Miami and it is an incredible opportunity to expand one’s style, not only because of the characteristics of the city, but also because the houses are enormous there and it will truly allow for the company to diversify itself!

