

Milan furniture fair

A few of our favourite things

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THE annual furniture extravaganza that is the Salone del Mobile takes place in Milan every April. For all the talk of recession in recent years and of a loss of flair among Italy's traditional furniture-makers, the "Salone" is still the place to go to spot the latest trends in design and interiors. For one week the city fills with armies of designers, journalists, manufacturers and retailers pounding the well-heeled pavements to catch some of the hundreds of shows on offer. Though much here is derivative, superfluous or downright ridiculous, the festival also offers furniture that is beautiful, exciting and innovative. Sometimes, if you're lucky, all three.

Here then are five of this year's more interesting stories, designers, materials and products.

Fillip glass

One of the most notable craft shows was by J. HILL's Standard, a company that works with hand-blown and hand-cut crystal glass, and aims to give a material long associated with dusty mantelpieces a new lease of life. Based in Waterford, Ireland, where at one time the world's finest cut lead crystal was produced (and over 3,500 craftsmen were employed), the company was founded by a

local, Anike Tyrrell. The crystal was hand-cut in Ireland but blown (by mouth) in the Czech Republic. Yet with the opening of a lead-crystal-making workshop in Waterford slated for the near future, Ms Tyrrell hopes the product will be 100% made in the town very soon. (The picture shows one of the crystal series made by Martino Gamper. Credit: Tom Brown.)

