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FOR NEW
STYLES?

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WONDER IS ALL AROUND

EUROPE

EUROPE'S HOT SPOTS FOR CREATIVE COOL

EUROPE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IRRESISTIBLE TO SHOPPERS, BUT BEYOND THE BIG BRANDS AND FAMOUS STREETS OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CITIES ARE LESSER-KNOWN DISTRICTS THAT ARE INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION OF EUROPEAN CREATIVITY.

Andy Round offers fresh insight on **Paris, Milan** and **Helsinki** and explores the city neighbourhoods that are inspiring a new European cultural renaissance – from art and design to fashion and furniture.

Three very different destinations, but with one common thread: each city is perfect for discovering Europe's freshest creative talent.

USEFUL WEBSITES

■ <http://europa.eu/wonder-is-all-around> ■ www.visiteurope.com





LIVING LA VIDA MODA

MILAN'S VIBRANT BRERA DISTRICT OFFERS AN IMMACULATELY GROOMED ALTERNATIVE TO THE ITALIAN CITY'S BIG BRAND SUPER STREETS.

It is the last day of Milan Fashion Week in September and the paparazzi is stumbling backwards down the crowded streets of Brera, cameras whirring as they capture waif-thin models with endless legs emerging from another catwalk show.

At this time of year it is hard to tell the models from the stylists, the buyers from the bystanders. Everyone is armed with cases, cameras and an attitude as carefully cultivated as their haircuts.

Construction workers in overalls grin as the fashionable herd jostle past, wearing clothes that probably cost the GDP of small country.

The photographers have to move fast, but the girls just melt into a human sea of prêt-à-porter with a snatched 'Ciao, see you in Paris'.

Anyone with a passion for fashion makes the pilgrimage to Milan for Fashion Week.

Brera's polished cobbled streets attract the same expensive European heels that would clatter along the boutique streets of London's Notting Hill, UK; Brussels' sleek Sablon square, Belgium; or Berlin's tree-lined Kurfürstendamm avenue in Germany.

Clutching her next show invite is fashion student Greta Torresi. 'How much do I spend on clothes? Too much,' she says.

At a Brera corner café, Ludovico Loffreda swipes through images on his smartphone. He has just become a designer for an international menswear brand for Jil Sander, but still has time to create his own collection, featuring humorous pop art images of his own distinctive face.

Ludovico is just 24 years old and his fashion future is brighter than the glistening marble of Milan's Duomo. He pauses over his phone to show the award winning lingerie he designed recently for Danish supermodel Helena Christensen.

'Why are Milan and Brera important? The fashion schools here reinforce relationships with big companies and people come for that,' he says. 'In my school there were students from Poland, Spain, Japan, South Korea... Paris is good for couture, but Milan is good for learning business.'

It is a business that can be precarious. Award-winning designer Marta Forghieri, 32, is the head of design for Mila Schön Concept, but in 2011 also launched her new women's brand Smarteez with Plissé Srl.



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She knows the formula for fashion success, but says getting money for shows, convincing buyers, getting into shops, and meeting orders can be challenging for young companies. Still, it depends how you define success. 'It's a passion for me. I love what I do,' asserts Marta.

FLORESCENT NAIL VARNISH

Stefano Coletti is another dedicated follower of fashion. The photographer, blogger for the Italian version of Vogue, film producer and founder of the fashion blog *thestreetfashion5xpro* often visits Brera for inspiration. Tapping his tablet computer he reveals how fluorescent nail varnish splashed onto pairs of shorts can evolve into an unlikely street trend within days.

'Real fashion is on the streets. It's the combination of vintage with an obvious big brand name. It's the pink hair style that ends up on the catwalk.'

But Brera is not just about fashion. Each year thousands fly into the city for the world's biggest design fair, the annual 'Salone Internazionale del Mobile'.



The best events found a warm welcome in Brera's secret courtyards.

'The fair is about experiencing designs, not just seeing them online,' says Sergio Riga, owner of Brera's Dilmos design store. 'It's about connecting with people and meeting young designers face to face.'

Recent young designer additions to the store include work by 24-year-old Adrien Petrucci, whose

deconstructed cabinet interior is styled from shavings takes pride of place next to Philippe Starck chairs and Giulia Battisti prism tables.

Five minutes away is the showroom of an Italian furniture icon Edra and 70-year-old Massimo Morozzi, the company's art director. 'I have a problem,' grins the man who created concept cars for a Japanese car company and whose designs are exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Dr Luca Ghirardosi, fashion coordinator at the famous Academy of Brera, is nurturing the next generation of designers.



'I think Milan has lost a lot of its spontaneity, with too many huge brands that you can see in any city,' he says. 'But students come from all over the world to our courses in Brera and their passion will ensure it continues to be a centre for creativity.'

EUROPE

'Real fashion is on the streets. It's the combination of vintage with an obvious big brand name. It's the pink hair style that ends up on the catwalk.'

'I'm more interested in new techniques than the end product. See this rosewood table? The white flashes? These are parts of wood that are usually thrown away. Here we made them into something unique.'

There is a lot of creativity to savour in Brera. Just walk the streets with Marco Torrani, president of Brera Design District, an initiative created to promote the area's design stores.

Within a couple of hours you will find yourself lost among outlets selling fantasy furniture by one of France's biggest names, an international brand showcasing futuristic kitchens and vintage stores piled high with 1950s pinball machines and velvet casino chairs.

BESPOKE PERFUMERY

Spend more time (ideally using a Brera Design District map) and you will discover stores selling antique chairs upholstered in bright contemporary fabrics, independent outlets selling affordable fashions from around Europe, galleries featuring artwork from Germany, Italy, France and Holland and even a bespoke perfumery selling scents that were created for Catherine de Medici.

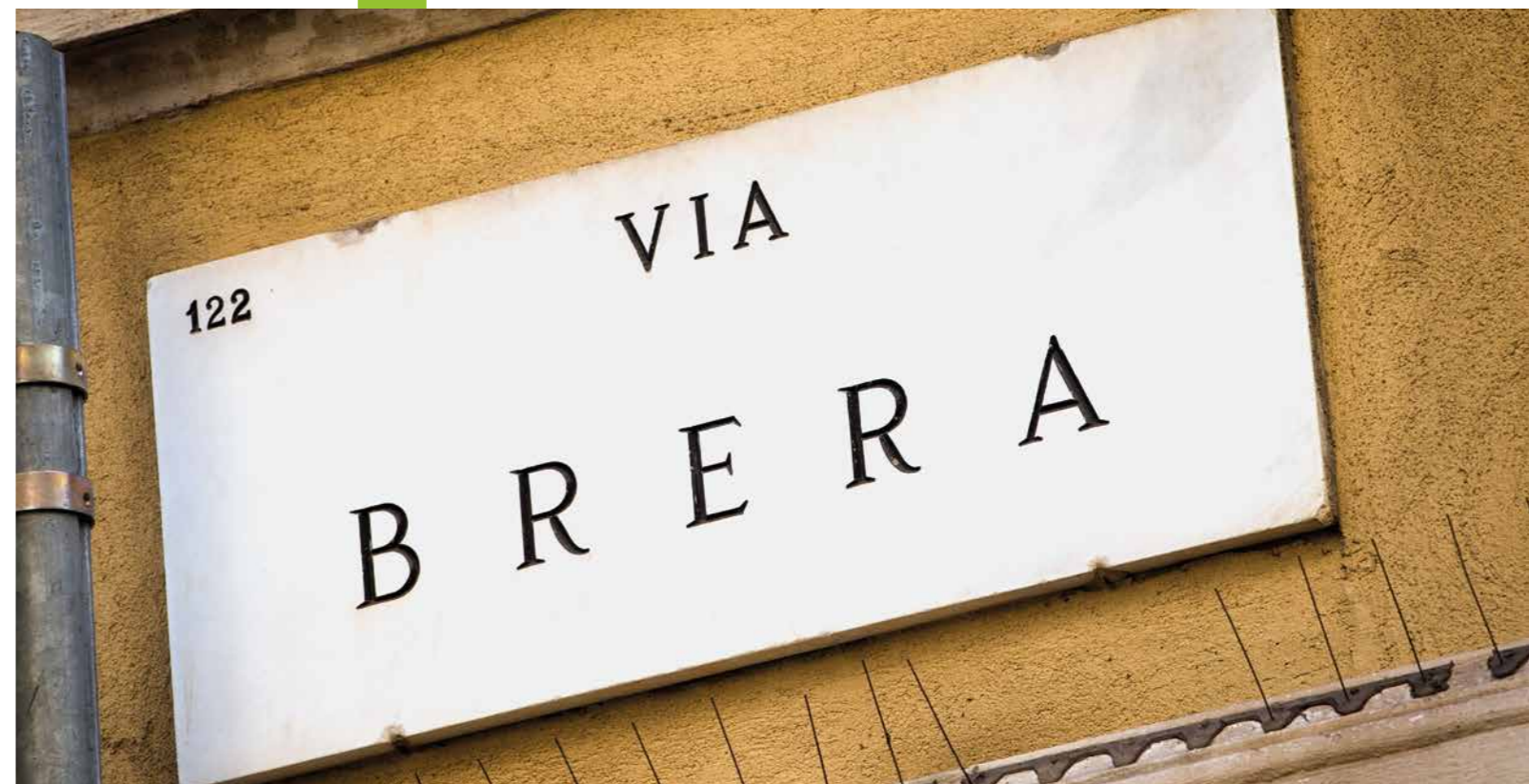
Brera's design legacy started centuries ago. 'For hundreds of years Brera was a base for artisans, many of whom were involved in the construction of Milan's Duomo,' says Marco.

ARTISTIC INSPIRATION

The Pinacoteca museum gives Brera its artistic soul thanks to seminal artworks such as Caravaggio's painting from 1606 'Supper at Emmaus'. 'But for me this is the most important,' says curator Emanuela Daffra, standing in front of 'The Dead Christ' painted by Andrea Mantegna in the late 15th century. 'It's like nothing of its time. It's three-dimensional. The paleness demands contemplation and the wounds look frighteningly fresh.'

DESIGN CLASSIC

A short walk from Brera is Milan's Triennale, the first museum to be dedicated to Italian design. 'Design follows social change and influences it,' says director Silvana Annicchiarico. 'So we change our exhibitions entirely every year because design is always changing. It's our job to tell the story so far.'



BRERA USEFUL WEBSITES

- breradesigndistrict.it (Italian)
- www.triennale.org/en/ (English, Italian)
- <http://pinacotecabrera.org/en/> (Italian)
- www.turismo.milano.it/wps/portal/tur/en (Italian, English, Chinese)



PARIS

■ ART WITH SOUL

THE PARISIAN DISTRICT OF BELLEVILLE IS AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE FRENCH CAPITAL'S ARTISTIC MOVEMENT AND A HEAVEN FOR HIPSTERS.

Wild and wonderful things come to life in the Belleville home of Laurent Debraux. Wobbly stools sway on knives instead of legs, steel branches writhe robotically and black iron filings transform into a wriggling caterpillars at the flick of a magnetic switch.

The birthplace of these kinetic creations is Laurent's workshop where skeletons of machinery lie among the carcasses of clocks and endless bric-a-brac. 'I like to take things apart. Give them new life,' he says of his sculptures. 'I can't paint, I can't draw, but I can make people smile.'

Offering a fierce independence reminiscent of the Copenhagen bohemian district of Christianshavn and an individualism that would not look out of place in the 'independent' artists' neighbourhood 'state' of Užupis in Vilnius, Belleville is the epitome of a contemporary European creative district, slowly becoming gentrified but still with an appealing gritty edge.

In a hidden Belleville courtyard workshop, Catherine Arnaud hacks 300 kg of alabaster into fragile tendrils that appear as light as sea coral in complete creative comfort.

Next door, Suzel Galia chips, drills, hacks and polishes a stone's colours into the organic, shapes that have sculpted her own international reputation. 'I can make a lot of noise here in peace,' she laughs.

REVOLUTIONARY PAST

This influx of new artists is the latest chapter in Belleville's history of low-income tenants and revolutionary past, says Loïs Pommier, coordinator for

Ateliers D'Artistes De Belleville. The organisation was set up in 1990 to support independent artists through tours, events and campaigns to protect their creative spaces from development.

Stroll around with Loïs and he will reveal Belleville's hidden lanes, changing street art and fiercely individual architecture. In other words, the perfect place for creativity to thrive. 'In 1990 there were 100 artists here now there are 300,' he says.

Annual open door events by Ateliers D'Artistes De Belleville, where the public can visit artists in their studios, now attract up to 15 000 visitors every year and have inspired similar events from Benin to Brazil.

Those opening their doors include painter Philippe Barnier and Catalan charcoal artist Carlos Lopez who arrived at Belleville 20 years ago. 'Why, here? The rents were affordable and I liked the countryside feel of the park and lanes.'

Accessories designer Hélène Eber-Specher spent time in Tokyo, Japan and made her first bag from a kimono. Belleville is now home to her. 'I love the village feel here. It doesn't feel like Paris.'

FABRIC PARROT

In the shop of couturier Stéphanie Coudert, there is a caged fabric parrot opposite a dress that looks like a yeti on the run from Lady Gaga's costume department. It's made from hair extensions and was created by Coudert for French singer Barbara Carlotti.

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'If I had a place in the west of the city it would be cramped and I would have to focus on being commercial,' she says. 'I don't want the weight of commerce on my shoulders, I want creative focus. Also, as a child I spent time in Iran and Iraq and I love the immigrant dialects that add personality to Belleville.'

Indeed, immigration gives Belleville its distinctive character. Home to Greeks, Jews and Armenians, followed by Africans, its large China town is vibrant testimony to the district's latest arrivals. 'I think the character of Belleville is always changing, but its sense of community is an important constant,' says Angélic Agnero, founder of walking tour company Paris Par Rues Méconnues.

It's a sentiment repeated by every visitor. 'I was the sort of baby that wore designer clothes and my parents used to tell me not to come to Belleville because

it was edgy,' grins 25-year-old Capucine Piot, founder of über popular 'beauty addict' blog babillages.net and a former online editor for French Vogue.

'But I come for street style,' she says. 'Hipsters here might adapt fashions that seem unbelievable at first, but that look will have taken a long time to get right. Sometimes I can't believe the styles I see. Then months later it's everywhere.'

One trend that's gaining momentum is the Biennale de Belleville 'Since 2010 our aim has been to showcase international and local talent,' says curator Patrice Joly. 'We've put the district on the international creative map. The Biennale in Venice cost 10 million euros, but we did this for fifty-thousand. Belleville might not have a lot of money, but we have a lot of passion.'



HOT FAVORITE

Belleville may change its style as fast as its street art, but there are plenty of independent creatives nearby worth discovering.

> **Centre Commercial offers vintage furniture, art and ethically-sourced fashions at 2 Rue de Marseille, while four doors away Medecine Douce crafts jewellery that combines gems with non-traditional materials.**

> **Inspired by South of France summers and bright 1930s imagery, Chichi Paris is an elegant new accessories brand created by the dynamic design duo of Tristan Lahoz and Anne-Line Desrousseaux.**

> **Fashion and food are served up in equally generous portions at Carmen Ragosta's chic and cheerful atelier/bistro at 8 Rue de la Grange aux Belles.**



EUROPE

TALES FROM THE RIVERBANK

'Only 20 have been made and they sell for 12000 US dollars,' says designer Yiqing Yin, revealing a dramatic fur coat, its micro-pleated layers cut into a striking sculpture. 'I like to take traditional skills and give them a contemporary twist,' she says.

Yin is one of the creative tenants working in Paris' coolest new venue, Cité de la Mode et du Design (City of Fashion and Design). Built on a former industrial wasteland on the banks of the Seine river, close to Gare d'Austerlitz, the complex provides studio space to emerging and established designers.

It also offers space for fashion shows, pop-up exhibitions and is home to Paris' famous Institut Français de La Mode (French Institute of Fashion), open air rooftop hangout Wanderlust and boutiques that include Magasin 1 and Magasin 3 that showcase new design talent and established favourites.

PARIS USEFUL WEBSITES

- <http://ateliers-artistes-belleville.fr/en/> (French)
- labiennaledelleville.fr (French)
- www.citemodedesign.fr/la-cite-en (French)
- www.paris-prm.com (French, English)



HELSINKI

CREATIVE CAPITAL

DESIGN DISTRICT HELSINKI OFFERS A PERFECT INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY AND CLASSIC FINNISH DESIGN, WHILE NEARBY KALLIO SHOWCASES EDGY STYLES OF THE FUTURE.

'In Finland, good design has always been a way of life,' says Aino Vepsäläinen, project manager at Finland's Design Forum. 'Form follows function. The aim of design is simply to make products and services do their job better. Design is not a luxury in Finland. It is for everyone.'

Design is embedded in Helsinki's DNA. It is so good you do not think about it. It is as ubiquitous as a Kaj Franck coffee cup, as cutting edge as a Tapio Wirkkala knife and as effortlessly cool as Eero Aarnio's bubble chair. Helsinki was voted World Design Capital in 2012, but the Forum has been promoting Finnish design with the Society of Crafts and Design since 1875.

Today the Forum's shopping outlet is based in the heart of the neighbourhood known as Design District Helsinki. It sells work by more than 300 Finnish creatives, ranging from bulbous lamp designs by Kariin Nuutinen to ceramic-glassware by Pia Wüstenberg.

BOLD NEW IDEAS

'Helsinki might give a stark first impression but you'll soon discover a city packed with open-minded people and bold new ideas,' says Linda Bergroth, who with the arts-design collective OK Do, won Design Forum Finland's Young Designer of the Year Prize 2012.

Many of these creatives are in the heart of the Design District, a neighbourhood of 25 streets, which has become a hot spot for cool designers. It started in 2005 with 50 members, but is now packed with more than 200 stores, workshops and galleries.

Imagine the creative shops of SoFo, the designer area South of Folkungagatan in Stockholm, mixed with the vintage store vibe of Amsterdam's De Negen Straatjes and you get a good idea of what Design District Helsinki is about. But best of all it is ideal for anyone looking for a crash course in Finnish creativity.

Start with the district's 140-year-old Design Museum to see how Finns took on the challenge of manufacturing everything from scissors in the 17th century to the mobile phone designs that defined the 1980s, then go in search of some take-home vintage classics.

Here in the centre of a giant underground space is a 'beehive' lamp by the legendary Alvar Aalto. 'What price Finnish design? A new version of that lamp would be 700 euros,' says the store's Timo Penttilä. 'But an edition from 1950 was recently auctioned for 60 000 euros. Prices for classic Finnish design have soared in the past few years.'

The district's streets are the perfect hunting ground for the design classics of tomorrow, whether it is the staple-gun art of Sasha Huber at photographer Katja Hagelstam's Lokal gallery, the 'paint-splashed' shoes of Minna Parikka, the contemporary glass and ceramic of Anu Penttinen, or the bubble jewelry of Anna Heino.

'I think one of the reasons we have a vibrant design tradition is that we have a strong history of crafts and we are inspired by the nature around us,' Heino says.

Natural inspiration is a creative thread for many of the district's designers. Ilona Hyötyläinen's new range for Miun features fabrics printed with nature

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'Finland is at the crossroads of Slavic and Scandinavian cultures,' she says. 'This has led to an interesting mix of dark and light, pure shapes and traditional handcrafted details. It's a mix of melancholia and pure shapes.'

photography, while Paola Suhonen's latest collection is inspired by the countryside of the 1930s.

Suhonen's label IVANA Helsinki significantly redefined Finland's design landscape when she became the first Finnish fashion designer to be featured in Paris Fashion Week. And that was only in 2007.

So what is the appeal of her style? 'Finland is at the crossroads of Slavic and Scandinavian cultures,' she says. 'This has led to an interesting mix of dark and light, pure shapes and traditional handcrafted details. It's a mix of melancholia and pure shapes.'

INTERNATIONAL BUYERS

'People like Paola made a difference,' says fashion designer Mirkka Metsola. 'International buyers know about Finnish design now and that helps people like me.' Mirkka, who was formerly part of a group of fashion designers known as FEM, now creates two ranges per year and even showcases the work of a collection of Dutch creatives known as Designers On Tour.

However, Metsola prefers her workshop and store to be based on the edgy streets of nearby Kallio. 'It feels genuine here,' says her neighbour Anna Jaakkola, who customises bicycles. 'Yes, the street life is colourful,' grins graphic artist Teemu Keisteri. 'But Kallio is a great base for my work.'

Nearby is the labyrinth of cooperative creativity known as 'Made in Kallio'. Here, workshops accommodate jewellers, printers, shoe designers, bicycle makers, graphic experts, photographers and videographers. In rooms behind the café, robotic arms draft giant graphics, three-dimensional printers pop out plastic figurines and hydroponic plants are controlled remotely.

'Customers can enjoy a rare level of interaction here,' says co-founder Jon Sundell. 'They can see the products and also spend time with the people who produced them. We add another dimension of creativity to the city.'



DESIGN FOR LIVING

In 2013 the Finnish design legend Arabia celebrates 140 years of producing quality tableware. Why should Arabia matter? 'In Finland we have grown up with Arabia items around us,' says the company's Concept Manager Irina Viipola. 'We inherited these affordable functional pieces from our mothers and grandmothers.'

Legendary designers such as Alvar Aalto created glass for Arabia in the 1930s, while Kaj Franck revolutionised tableware in the 1950s with multifunctional pieces that were perfect for tiny post-war apartments where space was precious.

Today this tradition of creativity continues. In the studio of Kim Simonsson there is a ceramic girl with an elephant head; in Pekka Paikkari's workshop reconstituted glass is prepared for an installation and in the atrium Aimo Katajamäki's sinister ape heads greet visitors.

'Arabia continues to support top level Finnish ceramic art by providing studios and materials to artists,' says Viipola.

HELSINKI USEFUL WEBSITES

- www.designforum.fi/en (Finnish, English) ■ www.designmuseum.fi/en/ (Finnish, English, Swedish)
- <http://en.uusix.fi/> (English, Finnish) ■ www.visithelsinki.fi/en (several languages)

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www.visiteurope.com



BRERA

breradesigndistrict.it (Italian)
www.triennale.org/en/ (English, Italian)
<http://pinacotecabrera.org/en/> (Italian)
www.turismo.milano.it/wps/portal/tur/en (Italian, English, Chinese)



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