LOCAL ICONS. EAST/WEST
Alcantara- MAXXI Project

East and West in the creations of nine international designers

5 – 28 February 2016

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#LocalIcons

Rome 4 February 2016. Ten cities, nine designers, one extraordinary material. This year the Alcantara-MAXXI project, now in its fifth edition, takes us “around the world in a room”.

For the LOCAL ICONS. EAST/ WEST (5 – 28 February 2016) exhibition curated by Giulio Cappellini and Domitilla Dardi, designers Studio Job, Constance Guisset, Poetic Lab, Mischer‘Traxler, GamFratesi, Neri&Hu, Hans Tan, Michael Young, Poetic Lab and Cosmas Gozali create iconic objects to interpret ten cities of two main geopolitical areas, in an imaginary dialogue between East and West.

LOCAL ICONS. EAST/ WEST continues, from 5 to 28 February 2016, on the tried-and-tested theme of memories connected with a city, of the travel souvenir. After taking in the essence of Rome in the 2015 project, this year’s exhibition embraces a wider cultural dialogue between East and West. Through direct and indirect interchange among the designers, Alcantara and MAXXI generate a new cultural encounter, an exchange of views of two different ways of experiencing the modern city, channeling these reflections into prototypes which interpret the soul of cities.

Alcantara® is a material that can give shape to designs and auteur visions. The nine designers experimented with it to produce a travel narrative in images and objects suggestive of Amsterdam, Paris, London, Vienna, Copenhagen, Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei and Jakarta.

From Andersen’s Little Mermaid, an icon of Copenhagen, to Singapore’s Merlion, and from the sign of the Berlage Chair, a tribute to the Dutch designer, a proponent of the Amsterdam school, to the dynamic decorative motifs of Vienna. This creative representation of physical places takes the form of highly evocative objects or installations. The symbol of Hong Kong brings to mind the legend of Bruce Lee, Paris is a romantic moonlight stroll. Or you can lose yourself in the colourful maze of London’s eclectic underground or in Taipei’s creative cafés, whiz on your bike through the traffic in Shanghai or absorb the culture of the East, as in Jakarta.

In addition to the prototype designed to represent their allocated city, each artist also designed a box, a setting for their prototype. The exhibition is therefore designed as a large installation of ten boxes, a “world village” inside the museum.

Andrea Boragno, Chairman and CEO of Alcantara S.p.A., stated, “We are very pleased to renew our collaboration with MAXXI on a project which, this year more than ever, highlights Alcantara’s values. Its extreme cross-genre applicability – one of our material’s distinctive characteristics – has placed us on numerous markets from Europe to East Asia and involved us in major artistic, cultural and social undertakings. This approach is nurtured through our constant dialogue with the creative world and is confirmed by our partnership with MAXXI in an exhibition for which nine international designers were invited to use the softness of Alcantara® to create evocative travel journals”.

Giovanna Melandi, President of Fondazione MAXXI says, “The collaboration between MAXXI and Alcantara is a tangible demonstration of something I firmly believe in: that public and private grow together or waste away together. Through this project, we have grown together by offering the museum’s visitors a series of new, stimulating exhibitions and supporting Italian and international artists, thereby emphasising the museum’s importance as the forum for cultural interaction and inspiration that MAXXI seeks to be”.

“With projects such as the ones we have for years shared with Alcantara, we point the spotlight at the research and creativity of Italian and international designers as we have always believed that institutional/corporate dialogue is the essential basis for creating innovative visions,” says Margherita Guccione, director of MAXXI Architettura. “We enthusiastically continue this partnership to sustain the work of young creative artists, which is among the architectural museum’s main interests”.

Established in 1972, Alcantara® is a Italian product of excellence. A trademark registered by Alcantara S.p.A. and the fruit of unique, proprietary technology, Alcantara® is a highly innovative product which offers an unparalleled combination of sensory qualities, aesthetics and functional properties. Its extraordinary versatility makes Alcantara the preferred choice of the most prestigious brands in many application fields: fashion and accessories, automotive, interior design and home décor, consumer electronics. Thanks to these characteristics, together with a serious, certified commitment to sustainability, Alcantara interprets and defines the modern lifestyle, the lifestyle of those who like to enjoy to the full the products they use day-to-day and respect the environment.

Since 2009 Alcantara is Carbon Neutral-certified as it has defined, reduced and compensated for all the CO₂ emissions resulting from its activity. To document the company’s progress in this area, each year Alcantara draws up and publishes its Sustainability Statement, which is certified by the TÜV SÜD international certifying body. The Statement is also on the Alcantara corporate website.

Alcantara’s headquarters is in Milan, while the production unit and research centre are in Nera Montoro, province of Terni, in the heart of Umbria.

The MAXXI is the first Italian national museum devoted to contemporary creativity. It was inaugurated in May 2010 and is run by a private law foundation set up by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage & Activities and Tourism. In 2013 it was recognised as a private research agency. Devised as a vast cultural campus, the MAXXI was designed by Zaha Hadid, who won an international competition. It is a great work of architecture, displaying innovative, spectacular forms. The museum produces and hosts art, architecture, design and photography exhibitions as well as fashion, film and music events, theatre and dance performances, lectures and conferences with artists, architects and leading figures of our time. The MAXXI is much more than a museum, it is a platform open to all the languages of creativity, to cultural exchanges and joint ventures – a space open to all. The MAXXI is in Rome’s Flaminio neighbourhood on the site of a former army barracks. Occupying an area of 29,000 square metres with a large open plaza at its centre, the museum also includes an auditorium, a research centre with a library and archive, a gift shop, a café and a bar/restaurant. The architectural complex blends into the
city’s fabric, forming a new, open urban space that is well-organised and “permeable” to pedestrian transit. Inside, a vast, full-height atrium leads to the galleries, set on three floors. These host, by turns, the permanent collections, exhibitions and cultural events. Glass, steel and cement give the exhibition space a neutral look, while movable panels ensure installation flexibility. The flowing, graceful forms, the variety and interweave of the levels create a complex spatial layout offering different, unexpected visitor routes.

The press kit and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI’s website at http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/ by typing in the password areariservatamaxxi

MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo  
www.fondazionemaxxi.it - info: 06.320.19.54; info@fondazionemaxxi.it  
opening hours: 11.00 – 19.00 (Tue, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sun) |11.00 – 22.00 (Saturday) | closed Mondays, Free admission for art and architecture students from Tuesday to Friday

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ALCANTARA PRES OFFICE  for Interiors  
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Amsterdam - Studio Job Amsterdam Chair
It's an interpretation of a Berlage Chair and a tribute to Berlage who was a very important, born Amsterdam, Dutch Architect and contributor to Amsterdam school.
His famous quote: 'Nothing is ever straight'.
We say: "Some say Berlage was conceptual. Some say he was high".

Copenhagen – GamFratesi The Absence
The memory of Copenhagen represented by one of the most important Danish icons, the little mermaid. Character created by Andersen to tell a story based on the diversity and absence. It is precisely the theme of absence that we wanted to analyze.
What remains of an icon? Its origin or its memory?
An interesting part of our project aims to make us reflect on the importance of the stone as metaphorical image of the place. This element has for us an important factor. The icon would still value if it were deprived of this part? Perhaps in our case the stone has the same importance of the little mermaid. In the exhibition a spot light creates a shadow on the wall and creates the silhouette of the missing little mermaid.

Hong Kong - Michael Young Kun Fu Wing Chiun
Thinking about Hong Kong there is none more memorable than the legendary Bruce Lee who practiced his art in this city. When given the opportunity to create a piece to represent him whilst utilizing Alcantara’s best qualities, the thousand-layer shoe came to mind. With a history of more that 3000 years the thousand-layer shoe has always been linked to the practice of martial arts due to its extraordinary strength, flexibility, lightness and comfort.
The process to create a single pair is so complicated and requires such a master level of craftsmanship and knowhow that UNESCO has listed this traditional shoe as part of China’s intangible cultural heritage.

Jakarta – Cosmas Gozali A Journey toward Peace and Serenity
This installation is designed to invite people to experience and interact directly along to feel the philosophy of eastern culture through journey toward enlightenment. The concept is to re-create the Borobudur - a Buddhist sacred temple located in Indonesia and listed as one of UNESCO World Heritage Site - made from vertical tubes covered with Alcantara. These create the negative Space of Borobudur and represent the shape of Mandala, the universe in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. We create a souvenir which is a replica of the temple as a box to keep valuable things in life.

London - Poetic Lab Connecting the Past and the Future
London is a city where the old and new coexist in harmony. Innovative architecture stands naturally and proudly next to historical heritage. The London tube is a perfect example: preserved historic stations connect with some of the most technically advanced underground railroads in the world.
In order to capture the essence of the city, we have created a “London Tube Chandelier” - giving centre stage to this normally out of sight underground world.

Paris – Constance Guisset - Global Scene
This project is an invitation to stroll in Paris.
The bench and its lighting are like a boat, to visit Paris on the Seine. The visitor can seat, take his time and listen to the sound of the city. The table and the small lamp are an adaptation of the bench, a souvenir to take home in order to remind of the Parisian atmosphere of romanticism and sweet nostalgia.
All of these « local icons » share the same shade of green. It is a tribute to Art nouveau and to Paris’ famous urban furniture, designed by Hector Guimard.

Shanghai - Neri&Hu Foreverhouse
The bicycle has been a principal mode of transportation in China since the early 1900s, and even in modern cities like Shanghai, it is still ubiquitous. For many people its significance goes beyond the simple function of moving from point A to B; it is an object inextricably tied to the people's lives and livelihoods. It can carry an entire family on its two wheels, it can haul a mass of recycled items three times its own size, and it can tow a cart full of goods for sale. With the addition of a simple metal structure and draped fabrics, Neri&Hu takes the
notion of expanding the function of a bicycle to become a traveling home, a shelter with table and storage pockets.

Singapore - Hans Tan **Leo Cycloid Tessella**
The half-fish, half-lion iconic Merlion residing at the waterfront is Singapore's symbol to most visitors. Part folklore and part tourism construct, the authenticity of an engineered emblem is debatable, yet its reputation as a tourist icon is indisputable. This project extracts the scales of this biologically improbable, imaginary animal and appropriates it for domestic tessellation in Alcantara covering.

Taipei - Poetic Lab **A Story Under Every Roof**
Taipei is an incredibly busy city. The best charms of the city are the hidden secrets - tea houses, cafes, small boutiques and creative studios. Under every roof there is a different story. Our concept evokes a memory of the city through giving the observer the sense they are looking over the colourful roofs of Taipei. Each roof is represented by an open book, each one containing its own story.

Wien - Mischer'Traxler **Patterns of Vienna**
Vienna is a city full of history, music, rhythm and emotions. It is a secretive city that has to be slowly explored with open eyes. Then one can discover a lot of patterns that carry the characteristics of the city. In order to represent Vienna in Alcantara and as a small souvenir, the focus is on these patterns and structures that can be found within the city. Altogether the graphics and objects, all in typical dusty, slightly faded but still very charming colours, give an overview of what can be found in Vienna and try to capture a glimpse of Viennese atmosphere.