

Studioepe unearths a new aesthetic inspired by ancient sacred artefacts

Presented through an immersive installation at [Fuorisalone 2022](#), Studioepe has created a collection of furniture and objects with [Galerie Philia](#), marking the studio's debut into collectible design



The Ra mirror, left, and Isi monolithic chair, both part of the Themenos collection by Studioepe for Galerie Philia

Studioepe's new collectible furniture and objects collection demonstrates that contemporary design and the history of ancient civilisations can go hand in hand. Presented by [Galerie Philia](#) at [Fuorisalone 2022](#), 'Themenos' is named after the circular sacred area found in ancient Greek temples and is inspired by the items collected by the [Luigi Pigorini National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography](#) in Rome.

'The collection explores the notion of sacredness in its anthropological and historical complexity, and the symbols given to objects and furniture pieces throughout history,' explain Studioepe founders [Arianna Lelli Mami](#) and [Chiara Di Pinto](#).



Although this is their first foray into collectible design, the Milan-based pair have often employed the codes of the genre in their work, especially in what they call ‘Manifesto projects’, experimental and research-based designs that over the years have set the creative tone of the studio. Of these, the 2016 ‘Ossimori’ collection featured sculptural objects (lamps, mirrors) exploring future archaeology, and its research and aesthetic planted the seed for ‘Temenos’.

To develop ‘Temenos’, the designers worked closely with Galerie Philia co-founder Ygaël Attali, a long-time admirer of their work: ‘I remember a feeling of serenity and calmness when I first walked through a residential project of theirs in Milan a few years ago,’ he recalls. ‘I was particularly fascinated by their passion for history and archaeology blended with contemporary art and design. We share similar passions, so it made sense to honour their vision and our common interests with a new collection.’



Leading up to the project, Attali, Lelli Mami and Di Pinto shared conversations about the history of design and objects, their typologies, and their changing meanings across space and time. 'The theme that was recurrent in our discussions was the concept of sacrality and its limits,' says Attali. The trio pondered what makes an object sacred, and how spatial design can add a sense of spiritual importance to an object.

The 'Temenos' collection includes objects whose aesthetic references ancient artefacts and architecture, imbued with modern functionality. In the hands of the studio, thrones become armchairs, altars morph into more modern tables. The breadth of their research is also evident in a series of smaller objects that include the 'Menhir' candleholder and 'Canopic' vases, respectively referencing Bronze Age monoliths and Egyptian artefacts. 'As we study and learn more about these cultures, we discover connections between beliefs, collective imagination, archetypes – they are like threads connecting humanity,' says Lelli Mami. 'This is what design is based on: objects that everyone can understand.' The primitive forms of the objects stand in contrast with their exquisite craftsmanship and sophisticated material palette: translucent onyx is paired with charred wood, terracotta, mirrored metal and white plaster. Lelli Mami describes the overall aesthetic as 'sculptural primitive with a decorative refinement'.