

DESIGN EVENTS

Studiopepe unearths a new aesthetic inspired by ancient sacred artefacts

Presented through an immersive installation at Fuorisalone 2022, Studiopepe has created a collection of furniture and objects with Galerie Philia, marking the studio's debut into collectible design.



Studiopepe'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, 'Temenos' 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 Studiopepe 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'.



'Shu' console
(Image credit: Flavio Pescatori)

'Temenos' is the culmination of years of travels and research. Some of the places that most influenced the duo's work include Stonehenge, the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, and the Bronze Age holy wells of Sardinia. These locations, says Di Pinto, 'might not immediately feel connected to one another, but then suddenly they join up like the pearls of a necklace.' They also note that the artefacts found on these sites are incredibly modern in their aesthetic, their only decoration being linked to their sacred function.

The collection will be presented in Milan through an immersive installation based on a circular temple, with interactive elements including a film produced by the studio, which will be projected on a bed of salt (a symbol of purification in ancient rituals).

'Studiopepe's organic sculptural designs, entirely made by hand, highlight the beauty of imperfection in a finished work,' concludes Attali. 'They have produced a powerful ensemble of pieces that stand out through thematic and aesthetic coherence.'

