

surface



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ENDORSEMENTS

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Design kingmaker Giulio Cappellini recognizes the clever and rare insights possessed by these astutely flexible talents

LANZAVECCHIA + WAI

The best design collaborations often emerge from a harmonious pairing of perspectives. That is certainly true of transcontinental duo Francesca Lanzavecchia and Hunn Wai, who have developed a uniquely 21st-century industrial design practice. Lanzavecchia is a native of Pavia, a town near Milan, and Wai is from Singapore; the pair met while studying together at the Design Academy Eindhoven, and to this day they still split their time between their home locations, taking advantage of Italy as a creative hub and Asia as a fertile place to find new business.

Following graduation—and a brief romance—the two began their professional relationship after winning the 2009 Time to Design award and residency program in Copenhagen. The collaboration resulted in their experimental Spaziale series that features wood-framed seating and shelving sheathed in a Lycra skin. The project's synthesis of color, functionality, and whimsy comes from the clash of the duo's distinctive strengths. “We questioned the ecological being of objects,” Lanzavecchia says. “You can see our two souls in this first project, the feminine and the masculine, the structure and the skin, the fact that our object allows you to establish a more intimate relationship.”

Cappellini's founder and art director Giulio Cappellini is no stranger to plucking young talents from obscurity. He recognized the team's fearless approach and chose them to participate in “Shape Your Life!,” an exhibit he curated last November at Rome's Maxxi museum. “There's never anything taken for granted in their projects. Surprise is not an end in itself, but a real response to the needs of the consumer,” Cappellini says. “Designers can look at them as points of reference for a contemporary way of designing, analyzing little-studied areas, but very important projects.”

This year the pair has received attention for a recent series of prototypes called No Country for Old Men, comprised of objects to aid the elderly, such as a chair that helps a user stand up and a line of modular canes that include surfaces for storing items. The pair's left-brain/right-brain proficiency is certainly being recognized: the studio is working on rugs for Italian brand Nodus. “It's about envisioning objects that are a little bit more human,” Lanzavecchia says. —DAN RUBINSTEIN



(FROM TOP) Francesca Lanzavecchia and Hunn Wai on a friend's rooftop in Hong Kong. Lanzavecchia + Wai's Home Sweet Car installation at a Maxxi show last fall surveying new uses for textiles in autos. Asunta chairs (2012). Portrait: Carmen Chan.