The Home Front: Vancouver-based designer shares highlights from Salone del Mobile

Joy Chao shares products and trends from the fair

By **Rebecca Keillor**
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Vancouver interior designer Joy Chao attended this year's edition of Salone del Mobile in Milan. PHOTO BY © LUDOVICA MANGINI | SALONE DEL

Joy Chao is the lead interior designer at Vancouver-based firm John Henshaw Architect. Chao has just returned from Salone del Mobile 2024 (Milan Furniture Fair), where the latest home design products and trends have debuted.

Postmedia sat down with Chao to hear about her show highlights.

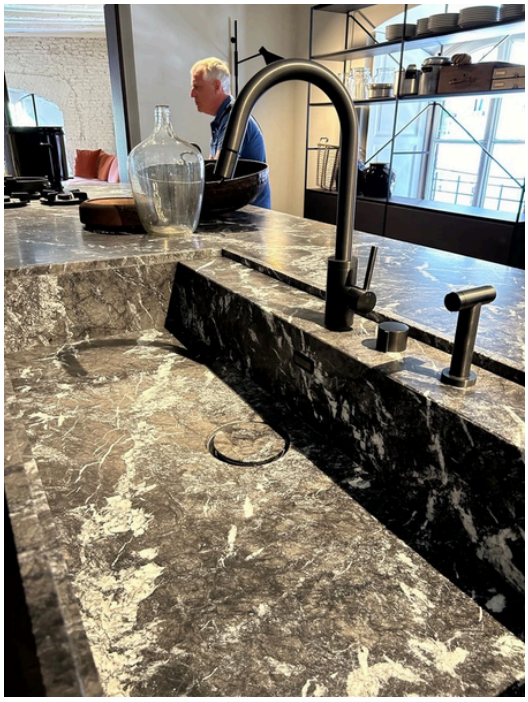
Fancy faucets

One of Chao's favourite booths at the fair was not the largest or showiest, she says. It was that of faucet and bathroom brand Kohler.

"Instead of walking into a room of faucets and showers, a beautiful school of fish sculpture piece was at the centre stage. The piece was created by David Franklin during his residency at Kohler," she says.

The Kohler booth featured some of their most recent products, including the colourful "Kast" sinks and saunas (among other home spa features).

"As a designer, I'm excited about all the new offerings, and I can't wait to get these new products into my next projects," says Chao.



The latest in kitchen design at Salone del Mobile 2024. PHOTO BY JOY CHAO

Hidden cooktop in this kitchen design at Salone del Mobile 2024.PHOTO BY JOY CHAO

High-end kitchens

Snaidero Cucine showcased four to five different styles of high-end kitchens at the fair, and her personal favourite was probably Elementi, says Chao.

"This kitchen combined the innovation of aluminum 'honeycomb' lightweight door panels with a ribbed European walnut finish in super matte lacquer."

Compact home gyms

One of the coolest products Chao came across at the fair was the Technogym Bench because of its compact size and packed features.

"At 44.5 by 14.8 by 17.9 inches, the bench combines a workout bench with multiple sets of dumbbells, elastic resistance bands, weighted knuckles and an exercise mat. It's probably one of the most compact home gyms one can get," says Chao.

"There is also a Technogym App one can download to maximize usage and get the most out of this setup."

Targeted outdoor warmth

Sarah Janssens of IDC Home represented several Belgian manufacturers at the fair, including Heatsail.

Heatsail uses FAR-infrared radiant heating to warm up people in an outdoor space instead of an entire outdoor area, using minimum electricity, says Chao.

These heaters also act as a light source, she adds.

Coffee faucets

Another show highlight for Chao was drinking espresso, filtered water, hot water and soda water from the same faucet in the Casa Gessi Milano, which served Nespresso coffee from the Vita faucet. She says it's worth sacrificing under-counter kitchen space to combine all these features.

Latest in bathroom design

Advances in PVD technology — a thin coating to bathroom, kitchen and laundry products like tapware, showers and accessories — have resulted in many more finishes being offered rather than only polished chrome and matte nickel, says Chao.

Unique shower door finishes at Salone del Mobile 2024. PHOTO BY JOY CHAO

More colour is being embraced in home design, says Joy Chao.PHOTO BY JOY CHAO

"A few years back, matte black and brass were the most exciting finishes we had seen in years. Now, we are seeing all kinds of finishes: black metal, polished or brushed copper, bronze, yellow, dark bronze, nickel and colour finishes. The choices seem endless."

These finishes are also available for hinges and handles on glass shower doors.

Soft curves

Chao says that soft curves still dominate home design, and this was evident at the fair. She saw many curvy designs, "almost bulbous shapes," in rich, earthy tones such as clay red, olive green, grey blue, and mustard yellow mixed with soft beiges.

"Rich, textured natural stones such as travertine and arabescato are making a comeback. Not surprisingly, the advance of LED technology is getting into all sorts of furniture design now. We see thin bands of LED installed in the interior of cabinetry, lighting up drawers, wardrobes, shelves, etc. Some display shelves are utilizing pin-sized LED spots, lighting up objects as precious pieces of jewelry."