

A Life In Design

ROBERTO PALOMBA + LUDOVICA

The uber-cool Milan based design duo Roberto Palomba and Ludovica of **ps+a** who have defined the looks for numerous luxury brands with their mature approach to design

Words/Mridula Sharma

Defying rules and trends, they have, for the last 25 years, made an indelible mark in the design world with their work, be it furniture design, architecture projects, indulgent products for the home, spa or bath fittings. Their signature style reflects a harmonious blend of organic forms and geometric angles, creativity and details, nature and the mysterious.

Roberto and Ludovica were invited to actualise Driade's theme of 'Fifty years of Landing on the Moon' to celebrate the furniture company's 50th anniversary. For this ps+a, designed three major seating pieces, The Full Moon, The Moon and The Neil Sofa, named after Neil Armstrong, which has a light, cushiony feel, inspired by the weightlessness of being in space. In a quick conversation, Roberto discusses the coming together of this design theme...

Your inspirational emotion for this collection?
When Driade said that they wanted to work around the theme of 50 years of Landing on the Moon, my mind travelled to a recent visit to Japan. In a town by the river, just outside Tokyo, the municipal authorities have created

THIS PAGE Roberto Palomba and Ludovica Serafini of ps+a; fabric upholstered the Full Moon seat designed for Driade's 50th anniversary.



The Driade stall at Salone this year, had an unusual light quality that made it appear washed in moonlight. It was the particular shade of white, reflective surfaces and finishes working in tandem with the layout, that conjured an imagery of being enveloped in bright moonlight. On speaking with Roberto, we discovered that it was part of the plan, to drive home Driade's theme of Apollo. Effusive and affable, Roberto with his typical sense of humour and charm showed us around and spoke of his thought-process—special moments and emotions that were at play when he designed the collection.

a platform for people to watch the reflection of the moon in the river water. During my latest visit, standing there, watching the reflection on a full moon night, I had a magical moment. It was an overwhelming feeling to be part of such a pristine moonscape, so to say. The imagery of being wrapped in a bright silvery light is something that has not left me... hence when Driade came up with this theme, it was the resurgence of that overwhelming feeling. It is the spirit of that moment, which I have tried to infuse in this collection. It gets reflected in colours, shades, finishes, shapes and the quality, and the pieces are named Full Moon and The Moon and the Neil Sofa, which has a slight bouncy feel that co-relates to the weightlessness of landing on the moon. Fifty years ago Driade was investigating ways to add touches of art to the interiors realm. Combining the works of artists and designers, design+art has become their DNA. Till today they continue to make pieces that make a statement. The new collection is a continuation of their design core values.

Which part of the design process is the most exciting for you?
Creativity is beautiful in every part. I would say that everything that is not found in nature, someone must draw it, whether it be a mobile, a faucet, a car or a house. This also implies a designer's responsibility in making good design. There isn't a part that I prefer throughout the creative process. I like to invent, to create. Making the design work, constructing its functionality, I like to see my projects grow. So right from drawing to the final product, each stage of work is equally exciting!

"No matter what we design, our designs are 'free' in the sense that we are always curious and challenging ourselves," said Roberto and Ludovica on an earlier occasion.



FROM TOP: Ecoes mirror for Kartell; the Metropolis wallpaper designed for Textureae; the Neil sofa designed and named after Neil Armstrong; Arrival light for Artemide and The Moon chair for Driade.



Your creative feed?

Certainly, for inspiration, one has to travel far and wide. Fortunately for me, I can travel distances in my head! I travel very far, everyday... (happily) in my head. Everyday, for me, it is as if I get onto a plane and a part of me is transported to the subconscious world of memories to find inspiration and new ideas. Thank God, I do not have to pay for tickets and I don't use drugs!

Favourite activities to recharge your batteries, so to say!

I love to travel, even though much is with my imagination, I do make the time for physical travel, and find the time to read a good book. This is all that I need. I also love to spend time with my friends and to visit the cities of the world.

Your dream project would be...?

The next one...!

Roberto's most recent city of love is Jaisalmer. He was in India recently and travelled to Rajasthan. He came back all exhilarated about the golden glow in the city. 'It was almost surreal to be surrounded and bathed in the hue (of the Jaisalmer stone)'. Roberto is also totally in love with Indian food and can even make 'naan' back home in Milan. Just as he can't wait to be back in India, we can't wait to have him here with us!

‘Verses that emerge when something awakens an emotion already internalised’

Lines by Ludovica who also writes poetry. Here 'Verses' refers to designs.



CLOCKWISE from top: Bathroom furniture for Kartell for Laufen, the collection includes accessories as well; the latest flat-face handheld shower WaterCandy for Zuchetti. Kos that has been making news lately; Rubineto faucet for the same company; the Come Together sofa designed for Poltrona Frau and the Quadrat MiniPool Relax an outdoor bathtub designed for personal wellness, for Kos.