

# A Party That Channeled Jaipur in Milan

This year at T's annual celebration of Salone del Mobile, Milan's Villa Necchi Campiglio was transformed with nods to India.



A scene from the party T Magazine threw to celebrate Salone del Mobile yesterday evening. As in years past, the event took place at Milan's Villa Necchi Campiglio. Carmen Colombo

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By Laura May Todd  
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Come mid-April, as has become tradition, several hundred members of the design world pass through the wrought-iron gates of Milan's Villa Necchi Campiglio. That's because the property — an Italian Rationalist building designed in the 1930s by Piero Portaluppi — is the site of T Magazine's fete kicking off Salone del Mobile, the city's annual furniture and design fair. Each year, T's editor in chief, Hanya Yanagihara, entrusts an artist or designer to dress the villa according to their own creative vision. This time, it was Marie-Anne Oudejans, a Jaipur, India-based designer known for richly layered interiors inspired by Indian craft and Rajasthani architecture. This project was no exception. "It's a meeting of India and Italy," said Oudejans. "Jaipur is called the Pink City, and I love the greens of Villa Necchi, so we mixed them."



The Dutch-born, Jaipur-based designer Marie-Anne Oudejans created a series of installations for the event. Carmen Colombo





Pink and green figured prominently, as with this corner of the step-and-repeat backdrop and 3-D T logo. *Carmen Colombo*



The designers Misha Kahn and Sabine Marcelis catching up beneath the arcade of ogee arches that led into the event. *Carmen Colombo*



From left: T Magazine's Nick Haramis, Tom Delavan, Hanya Yanagihara, David Farber, Kurt Soller and Adam Hargis. *Jack Hall/BFA.com*

Just past the gates was a step-and-repeat whose backdrop featured green and white stripes and palm trees. Just beyond, running along the gravel pathway, was an arcade of ogee arches upholstered with rose-pink Dedar fabric. They alluded to the gates of Jaipur and the City Palace, Oudejans said, referring to the home of Jaipur's royal family, the facade of which is partly wrought in pink sandstone and has an array of similarly arched windows. To realize the installation, Oudejans traveled with her team of in-house artisans, who'd hand-painted a series of textile panels (with curling floral motifs and long-legged birds with silver and gold highlights) ahead of time at their workshop. These were strung up alongside the wisteria hanging from Villa Necchi's stone pergola.





Oudejans set a table in the villa's dining room for an imaginary meal. The tablecloth was hand-painted by her team of artisans in Jaipur. Carmen Colombo



The ceramic plates, which featured a bamboo trellis pattern, were from Oudejans's forthcoming brand, Maison Castello Rosso. Carmen Colombo

Oudejans, 61, arrived in Jaipur 16 years ago as a fashion and jewelry designer, having founded the New York-based brand Tocca in 1994. A chance meeting led her to design her first space, Bar Palladio, in the city's Narain Niwas Palace Hotel. There, too, she made use of ogee arches, and decorated the walls with blue floral motifs that call to mind the Delft tiles of the Netherlands, where she was born. She soon became known for her surprising use of color. In Villa Necchi's dining room, Oudejans set the table for an imaginary dinner party, using a tablecloth hand-painted with leaves and bright pink flowers, decorative artichokes, miniature palm trees, cut-crystal glasses by Ecu and ceramic plates with a bamboo pattern from her soon-to-launch homewares line, Maison Castello Rosso, injecting some tropical shades into the muted space.



From left: Rafael Prieto, Pierre-Micla Audi, Laila Gohar and Nick Mumawaring.

Actual food came care of the New York-based artist Laila Gohar, 37, who upheld the Italy-meets-India theme by recreating several of the latter country's landmark structures. She rendered the Panna Meena ka Kund stepwell — a rainwater catchment surrounded by cascading tiers of stairs that's located northeast of Jaipur's city center — entirely in Casa Bosques chocolate, which guests deconstructed, brick by brick, throughout the night. Another work reimagined part of the 18th-century Jantar Mantar celestial observatory with bundled rhubarb. In the garden, guests helped themselves to crispy chickpea-and-cilantro-filled pani poori, spicy samosas and salmon- or eggplant-stuffed tramezzini finger sandwiches by the Milanese pasticceria Marchesi 1824, all of which were presented on silver platters by white-shirted waiters.





Some 450 guests — the artist and researcher Sissel Tolaas, the curator and poet Su Wu, the designer and artist Vikram Goyal, the Fornasetti artistic director Barnaba Fornasetti and the writer and art consultant Charlene Prempeh among them — mingled around Villa Necchi's poppy-fringed swimming pool, where the Milan-based DJ Mimmi was spinning experimental pop and disco tracks, many of them by artists from India, including Dhiraaj and Parvati Khan. Some of the partygoers wandered off for a moment of respite on one of the daybeds Oudejans had placed beneath the garden's plane trees. Most held a signature cocktail mixed by bartenders from the newly opened Lake Como Edition hotel: a Como-politan (vodka infused with citrus, cherry liqueur and pomegranate) or a Dolce Vita (made with gin, melissa, mastiha and citrus). For dessert, there were blondies stamped with the T logo.



Miniature cabanas holding candles floated on the surface of the swimming pool. Carmen Colombo



Gohar's totem made of bundled rhubarb was inspired by one of the structures of Jaipur's Jantar Mantar celestial observatory. Carmen Colombo



Gohar, who made most of the food for the event, arranging pieces of the Indian sweet kaju katli. Carmen Colombo





Guests mingling by the pool. *Carmen Colombo*

The mood throughout the evening was both celebratory and nostalgic. The next morning, attendees would set out to discover the fair, but for the moment they were marking an ending, as this would be T's last Salone party hosted by Yanagihara, who's departing the magazine at the start of June to pursue projects in theater. Attendees lined up to write farewell messages to her in a dedicated book from the historic stationery brand Pettinaroli. The note from the editor's longtime friend Jenna Lyons, the fashion designer and television personality, included a bright red lipstick kiss. Another sweet moment came at the evening's end: On their way out, guests were invited to pluck bags of cotton candy from bamboo frames — a nod, said Gohar, to how Jaipur street vendors transport and advertise the spun-sugar treat.

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