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# DESIGN



## L'Art de Vivre

WELLNESS THROUGH DESIGN

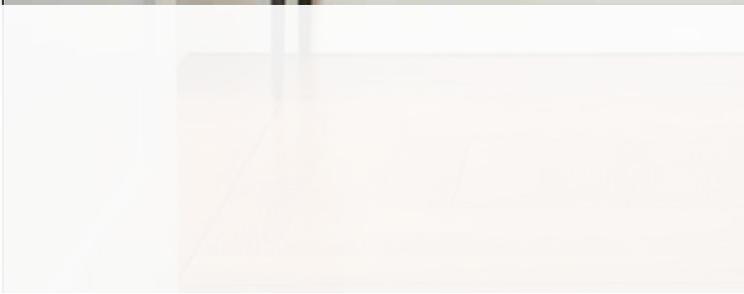




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## THE ROAD TO INNOVATION:

# Salone del Mobile. Milano 2024

The 62<sup>nd</sup> edition Incorporates Neuroscience, AI and Sustainable Solutions

by nicole haddad

Salone del Mobile, the largest, most influential furniture fair in the world, returns April 16-21 for its 62<sup>nd</sup> edition with some brilliant new developments. Formulated for maximum impact, the Milan-based fair is set to deliver an unforgettable metamorphosis powered in part by perception-altering neuroscience research, artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainable innovation.

Led by Maria Porro — the first woman president in the organization's storied history — Salone has been integrating evolutionary shifts integral to reinventing how we perceive and enjoy trade shows from a technological and cultural perspective as well as the circularity paradigm. Porro's commitment to sustainability, digitization, research and innovation, and communal alchemy has been evident since her appointment in 2021. While the 2023 show implemented a slew of sustainable initiatives — including eliminating the application of single-use carpets, collaborating with suppliers of recycled materials and instituting guidelines for sustainable trade fair installations for exhibiting companies, among many other impactful actions — the underlying goal was to reach ISO 2021 Certification for Sustainable Events Management. They succeeded and also became a member of the United Nations Global Impact. Sustainable achievements aside, the 2024 event won't just find revamped vignettes but an entire enhanced ecosystem, due in part to neuroscience experiments conducted by Lombardini22, one of Italy's leading architecture and engineering groups, in collaboration with the University of Lausanne.

To properly conduct the experiments, VR models of both the traditional Salone pavilions and a new proposed design were created. Subjects were then immersed in the two models, with analyses processed through questionnaires and cognitive tasks that allowed the researchers to measure the ease of navigation and evaluate the lived experience. Architect, consultant and researcher in applied neurosciences at Lombardini22, Federica Sanchez explains, "In order to study how the body and the brain reacted to the exploration in the two scenarios and to measure implicit parameters of mental states (state of relaxation, curiosity, surprise), psychophysiological responses were measured through heartbeat analysis and neurophysiolog-

ical responses were measured through electroencephalography (EEG)." A second phase, consisting of 100 participants walking through Salone 2024 with wearable sensors, will allow Lombardini22 to measure the subjective and implicit effect of the new pathways on the volunteers — with the objective to continuously improve.

The illuminating results of phase one led to a redesign and widening of the pavilion pathways, with stands placed against perimeter walls for better visibility. A more intuitive, symmetrical route peppered with cultural installations, spaces hosting talks and quiet areas cleverly combats fatigue — the optimized orientation eliminates almost a 1/3 of the walking time. Utilized in tandem with the neuroscience research to create a more human-centric experience, Salone will also soon unveil the details of a new multichannel communication platform produced by Publicis Groupe with the scientific collaboration of Paolo Ciuccarelli, a professor at Milan Polytechnic University. Driven by generative AI processes that will analyze emotions, debates and talks on relevant topics, brand voices and more throughout the year — the campaign is designed to instantaneously capture and condense its findings into a visually succinct narrative that will constantly evolve while simultaneously helping the fair increase visitor satisfaction.

Eurocucina — the biennial cutting-edge kitchen showcase — will anchor a myriad of compelling events related to Food Design. The pavilion will also now be conveniently linked to The International Bathroom Exhibition. In furniture pavilions 5 and 7 — legendary filmmaker David Lynch will unveil a dazzling installation. Meanwhile, SaloneSatellite will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special exhibition in the Triennale di Milano museum.

"Environmental, economic and social responsibility is a priority for Salone," iterates Porro. "We want to become a point of reference and a source of inspiration to the sector as a whole, following a business model that is as ethical as possible and that responds intelligently and coherently to the increasingly complex challenges that lie ahead." By harnessing the power of AI, neuroscience research and the knowledge of the experts of our time, Salone is at the forefront of the "responsible revolution" of the trade fair world. ✕