

INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

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swimmingly

“Textiles and color have formed the basis of our work since the very beginning.” So states Paola Lenti of her namesake company, which she founded in 1994 in Meda, Italy, and, today, produces fabrics, rugs, architectural structures, and furniture for indoor and outdoor use, employing a staff of 100.

Born in Piedmont in 1958, Lenti studied graphic design at the Scuola Politecnica di Design in Milan, and then went on to work as an art director for various fashion companies, where she would create displays and environments, designing rugs and such herself. Eventually, she went out on her own, making small glass and porcelain objects but switching to

felt rugs, which she says represented the true start of her self-named brand.

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Materials research and sustainability have been guiding forces since day one. In 1997, she began working with designer Francesco Rota, a collaboration that has produced some 70 collections and is still going strong. It was 2000 when they turned their focus to outdoor, aiming to create furnishings that are as attractive and comfortable as those for interiors. That same year was when her younger sister Anna came on as managing director, overseeing administrative and marketing aspects. Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, the company they’ve forged is synonymous with innovation but also the handmade, global but also local (except for a few items, Paola Lenti products are all made in Italy). Here, Lenti the older expounds on inspirations, recent projects, and upcoming endeavors. ➤

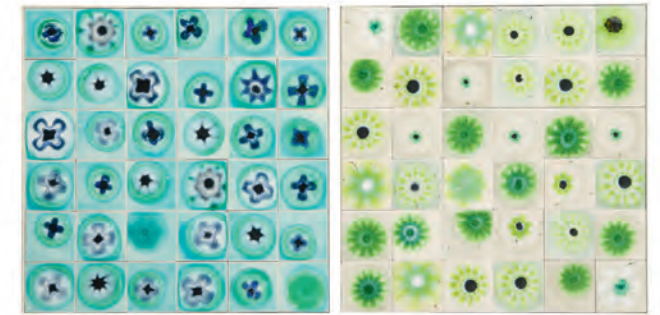


*From top: Paola Lenti seated on *Island*, a 2003 design by Francesco Rota. *Bambou*, a partition of handmade majolica cylinders by Nicolás Morales for Paola Lenti, the company, that premiered at this year's Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan.*



indoor, outdoor, and beyond

Paola Lenti celebrates 25 years of design—and looks to the future



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much that he suggested using our pieces to the restaurant's designer, Paul Bishop. We ended up providing the furniture and choosing the colors. The seating is from our existing collection but we custom-designed the square dining tables with tops of glazed lava stone.

What's coming up for the company?

PL: We are working with Adam Tihany on the MV Esmeralda cruise ship. We just completed work on 3.14 Plage, a restaurant in Cannes, France, by Olivier Sabran and Alexandra Ellena. In Vancouver, we recently finished

designing the interiors and exteriors of Living-space's renovated and expanded furniture showroom. And, we're always working on developing new materials—and improving the ones we already use.

—Edie Cohen



What inspires you?
Paola Lenti: Nature, for its simplicity, clarity, and unexpected texture and color combinations. I remember, as a child, my entrepreneur father would take me along when he went to the countryside to paint and teach me to appreciate all the surrounding

beauty. My passion for color was born with me. Another childhood memory is receiving a book of colored collage paper and cutting up and combining the dark orange and dark turquoise pieces. Each time I start selecting colors for a collection, I recall cutting those pieces.

How does color play through your collections?

PL: We focus on it not only for individual fibers but also in the fabrics we weave from those fibers, and for the collections and the ways they work together. Even our solid fabrics often have more than one color of thread woven in.

What are other constants?

PL: Research and development, finding increasingly better materials in terms of both ecological sustainability and durability. We have propriety materials that do both, such as Rope and Twiggy.

Which designers have you collaborated with?

PL: At first, it was only Francesco. But now we work with a handful, such

as Francesco Bettoni, Victor Carrasco, Claesson Koivisto Rune, Vincent Van Duysen, Marella Ferrera, Marco Merendi, Nicolò Morales, and Lina Obregón. I prefer to concentrate on just a few people for a closer collaboration. Marella and Nicolò had pieces debut at this year's Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan.

How long have you participated in that?

PL: From 1995 to 2002, we were at Salone. From 2003 on, we've been part of the Fuorisalone off-site. This year, we returned to Fabbrica Orobica, where, with Bestetti Associati, we created a series of modern environments to contrast with the enormous 1920's warehouse using partitions made from materials

such as glass, ceramics, lava stone, and fabric pieces, all of which are now part of the collection. We also had indoor and outdoor furniture introductions this year by Bettoni, Van Duysen, Obregón, and Rota.

Any projects abroad?

PL: Yes, Torno Subito at the W Dubai-The Palm hotel. The chef is Massimo Bottura of the famous Osteria Francescana in Modena. The mood there is completely different, more formal and serious, whereas the Dubai restaurant is playful and colorful, recalling the joyful Italian Riviera of the 1960's.

What was your role?

PL: A designer friend of Bottura's knew our brand and introduced him to our products. Bottura liked them so



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE W DUBAI-THE PALM; SERGIO CHIMENTI



Clockwise, from opposite top: The terrace of Torno Subito, a restaurant by Bishop Design with furniture by Paola Lenti at the W Dubai-The Palm hotel in the United Arab Emirates. Mandala outdoor partition, winner of a 2019 NYCxDesign Award in the accessory category, with Float chairs by Rota. The stoneware and glass tops of Bloom, a 2018 outdoor table by Marella Ferrera for Paola Lenti. The company's rugs at a Milan warehouse during Fuorisalone 2019. Walt, an indoor sectional sofa and lacquered side table by Rota from the same year. Calatini, hand-painted ceramic side tables for indoor or outdoor use by Marco Merendi and Nicolò Morales from 2017. Paola Lenti's custom tables for Torno Subito. Ferrera's Couture partitions of hand-cut fabric from this year's Fuorisalone.

