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# Bring On The Outlaws

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# SOFT ROCK

Swarovski, the go-to for all things bling, is discovering the beauty of playing it subtle.



At this year's Salone del Mobile, the annual design fair in Milan, the conversation inevitably returned to the same two subjects: Instagram (specifically, are we playing exclusively to a 10-second attention span?) and the planet (what can and should the design world do for sustainability?). It was surprising, therefore, that Swarovski, the go-to in fashion for all things bling (exhibit A: those Saint Laurent boots for fall that look like wearable disco balls and come with a \$10,000 price tag), was at the center of these discussions.

For years, the Austrian company's glittering Crystal Palace collection—think Vincent Van Duysen's nine-foot torrent of crystal strands intertwined with LED lights—has been a highlight of Milan. But this time around, the offerings were relatively low-wattage. Over at EuroLuce, where the latest trends in lighting are on display, longtime Atelier Swarovski collaborators Patrik Fredrikson and Ian Stallard were waxing poetic about their latest innovation for the brand: unrefined crystals. On view were pieces from their Glaciarium collection, including vessels that resembled ice sculptures that had been left out in the sun but were, in fact, created from 3-D scans of raw crystal formations from the Swarovski furnaces.

The play of light was also the inspiration for Veronika Sedlmair and Brynjar Sigurðarson, who were among the designers enlisted to create tabletop pieces for Atelier Swarovski Home. "Light is such a precious thing," Sedlmair notes of the origins of their prismatic paperweights and desk objects, which, even in the ornate surroundings of the Palazzo Crespi, where the collection was presented, invited sustained contemplation. "There are only one or two moments when we get sunlight in our apartment in Berlin." "Bling" is not even in their vocabulary. Both designers are vegan, for environmental reasons as well as ethical ones. "It translates in our work," Sedlmair says. "We question what we are doing. The solution isn't to cut out luxury, but to rethink it."

The cost of luxury was also on the mind of the L.A.-based, Taiwanese-born architect Jimenez Lai, founder of the aptly named Bureau Spectacular, who, as a Swarovski Designer of the Future, presented a "palazzo" made from terrazzo using Swarovski off-cuts and rejected crystals at Design Miami/Basel, in June. (In a similar vein, Lai's short-listed proposal for the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, and MoMA PS1's 2017 Young Architects Program was an open-air pavilion constructed from repurposed fiberglass swimming pools.) "It's waste material—but it's still expensive," Lai says.

Nadja Swarovski is as proud of the company's commitment to sustainability ("We are voluntary members of the UN Global Compact," she declares) as she is of her ability to reshape the perceptions of crystal as a material to consumers, designers, and the company that her great-great-grandfather founded, in 1895. "My father was in charge of manufacturing for 44 years. He was an engineer and so precise, and everything had to be perfect. I come from the art world, where we appreciate imperfection. We cannot be slaves to our self-imposed rules that might make sense in a different zeitgeist. Our world is changing, and our values are being questioned—it's a great opportunity to make a statement." ALIX BROWNE

Left: Atelier Swarovski Home clear bowl and candlesticks by Fredrikson Stallard, and blue candleholders and vases by Barbara Barry. For stores, prices, and more, go to [Wmag.com/where-to-buy-november-2017](http://Wmag.com/where-to-buy-november-2017).