

over the top design for the deluxe 21st century:  
ALESSANDRO LA SPADA

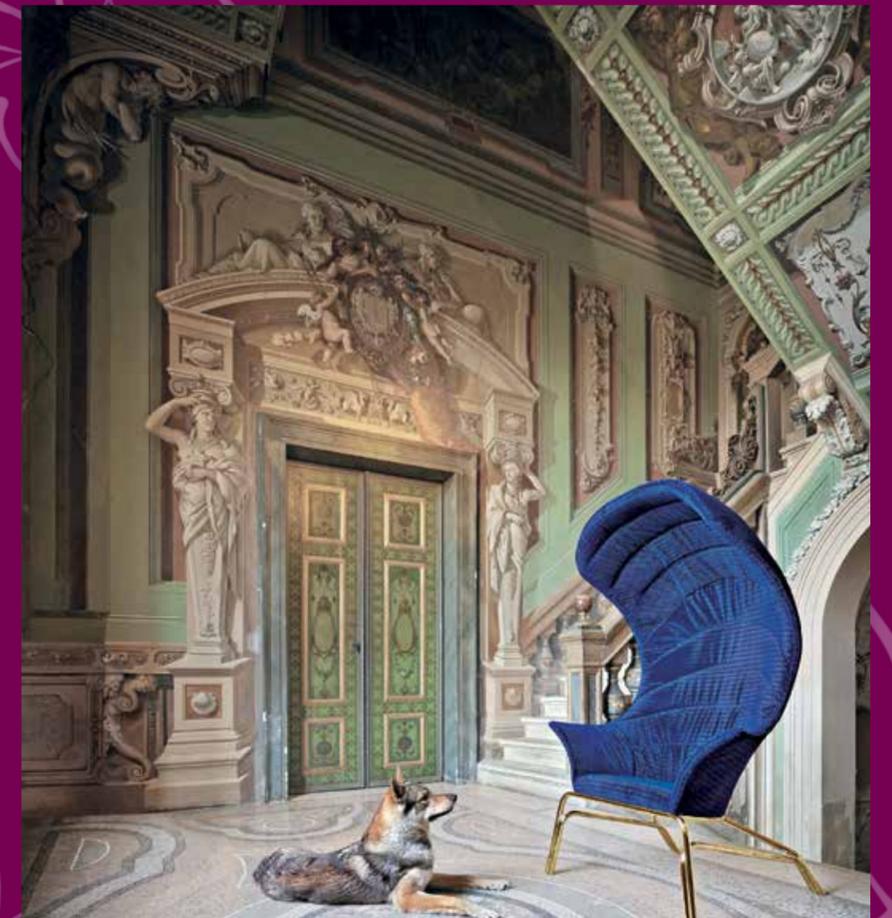


sir/a edition - kingdom

in a time where there are few new names in the design world, alessandro la spada has succeeded in making a splash with wild, over the top design that's exciting and eye-catching. ifj was pleased and surprised to meet a quiet, understated young man, quite different from the character of his design persona.

**Alessandro la Spada** was born in Reggio Calabria to parents of Sicilian origin, which he calls "the very middle of the Mediterranean". He says he grew up in a creative atmosphere where his parents passed their manual skills and encouraged his own, encouraging him to even create his own toys. He says, "Self-creating has always been a passion of mine, I used to think I could mould everything to my liking!" Music was also a source of inspiration. La Spada says, "In our house, musical instruments were part of the furniture and, though I have never attended music lessons, I could play guitar and drums and at the age of 16, I performed in the city squares with my band."

The young Alessandro's father was a professional, a histopathology technician who worked in a hospital, but who had an extraordinary gift for making clothing. La Spada says, "It was he who taught me how to use a sewing machine, and then I started to make my own 'experiments' with it, customizing jeans and t-shirts that I sold to my friends." This early creativity led to more adventurous inventiveness, as he goes on to describe. "I remember my first bicycle, a prototype that I created putting together waste pieces collected from scrap dealers. What's interesting is that the children in the neighbourhood asked me to replicate my bike for them. I had become a bicycle maker! I had a similar experience with motorcycles, putting together mechanical components on chassis that I repainted."



smania - beyond queen



smania - beyond veyron

His grandfather, a Sicilian cook, was also a source of inspiration. "He used to bring me with him to his kitchen, a real creative lab, where I observed kitchen tools and couldn't help imagining many "ready made". As it is common in the South of Italy to give nicknames, my grandfather used to call me Sandrino. Precisely in this period, the inspiration for my Art Design project "Sandrino the Butcher", that I finally realized in 2012, arose. "Sandrino the Butcher", is a reflection on the condition of the human existence, where handmade objects are the result of thinking without limits, about the fascination of the form as mere visual art, not constrained by the functional pragmatism of the object.

Alessandro la Spada attended a technical school in Reggio Calabria, driven by his passion for mechanics and simultaneously attended an institute for art. He says, "I kept on drawing, and my schoolmates used to ask me for graphic customizations of their own drawings." On graduation, he registered to study architecture, but realized that architecture was not for him.



lamurrina – jardin de verre – amethyst



besana / oro – handle



lamurrina – jardin de verre – honey



longhi – ianus

besana / oro – armchairs



His path was then directed by "a very dear friend, who later became my wife, Paola", who urged him to strike out on his own, and go to Milan, to the well-known European Design Institute. However, after a short attendance left to join the "Interior Design" course at the IDI'AC, the Interior Design Institute & Creative Athenaeum, which he describes as "a school with less titles but where the relationship between teachers and students suited me better and reminded me the atmosphere of a craftsman's studio. It's no accident that I remained there for 5 years as a teacher, after my 3-year apprenticeship."

longhi – ianus



**Here are some excerpts of the IFJ conversation with the designer.**

**ifj :** *Who do you admire in the creative world ?*

**AS :** The first designer I looked up to was Bruno Munari. I was so interested in him, that I would have done anything to know him, even start working as a waiter in his favourite restaurant... which is what I have really done! But I hold many people in high esteem: Marcel Wanders, Jaime Hayon. I also like the freshness of India Mahdavi, an interior designer, and the poetic content of the art of Studio Job group. I also am interested by Tom Dixon, whose interpretative ability has passed from the handmade objects of his beginnings, to industrial products, up to the producer's role he plays now.

**ifj :** *Your designs are all extravagant, over the top explosions... where does this come from ? Is it your own personality ?*

**AS :** They say we all have a 'doppelgänger', a "double", usually bad, that lies inside each one of us and with whom we sometimes alternate, even without noticing it. I have always had a predilection for the more instinctive and less pragmatic side of myself; my personality is my inspiration. I do not think I am a "pure" designer. The care for every detail and the passion for the molding of materials naturally bring me to prefer the artisanal object made in limited edition. I am very fond of objects where artisanal virtuosity and poetic narrative are evident.



longhi – ianus

sir/a edition – marble drop fireplace



smania – beyond continental



milldue - hilton

visionnaire – victorian kitchen



sir/a edition - kingdom



visionnaire – victorian kitchen



besana / oro – consolle+chairs

smania – beyond sveva



lamurrina – jardin de verre



longhi – ianus

**ifj :** *You once mentioned that you become the end user, like an actor, and you design for them... tell us more.*

**AS :** It may seem contradictory with what I have said before, but I am convinced that when passion becomes business you have to come to an arrangement and find a different working method. For this very reason, my starting point in developing a project is a precise understanding and interpretation of my client's need. What I mean by "need" is above all the emotional necessity that makes the consumer feel emotionally involved and represented by the objects.

**ifj :** *Do you feel designers have a responsibility to both the market and the environment in what they create?*

**AS :** Designers cannot avoid thinking about the repercussions their products will have on the environment. I am quite sure that our awareness towards the environment has deeply changed

during the last years, even in the teachings of institutes. I am personally more concerned by companies that keep on producing questionable objects without any limit, thus provoking a saturation of the market. I totally agree with Philippe Starck when he says "I hate design!", and I would also add "long live handicraft!"

**ifj :** *You are a young man... what are your dreams for yourself? What do you dream of creating?*

**AS :** I don't consider myself anymore as a "young designer", but if it's true that you become old when your dreams give way to regrets, then I feel very, very young! As I said before, I have always been attracted by production. My still unrealized dream is to create a technological artisan workshop to produce bespoke products: from motorcycles to furnishings, maybe even food... or whatever my passion will drive me to ! ifj

