

MILAN DESIGN WEEK

Collaboration nation



DESIGN / NEW YORK

Yabu Pushelberg is an international studio housing everything from architects to decorative artists. Its seven new collaborations will bring Canadian design to the forefront at Milan.

Writer *Henry Rees-Sheridan*
Photography *Max Burkhalter*

Glenn Pushelberg and George Yabu met in the late 1970s as students in the School of Interior Design at Ryerson University in Toronto. But it wasn't until a few years after graduating that their paths as designers crossed.

"We were both looking for studio space at the exact same moment," says Yabu. The pair decided to seek a place together and soon found that they had a shared design affinity. "When we started, pre-computers, we would begin separate pencil drawings and our lines would meet

in the middle to form one image," says Pushelberg.

The duo founded their studio in 1980. "We began as an interior design practice," says Pushelberg, chatting from the firm's office in downtown Manhattan. "I mean, that's what we went to school for."

In the decades since, Yabu Pushelberg has expanded into an international studio working across buildings, interiors, landscapes, lighting, products, styling and branding. So far this year, the studio has opened several large-scale projects, including interiors for the North American showrooms of the Italian natural stone design company Salvatori.

Yabu Pushelberg now includes decorative artists, a lighting consultancy and architects. For Yabu, this model of collaboration between highly trained specialists is important. "One of the reasons our practice resonates with makers is because we have a dedicated team to solve problems in unusual areas of design," he says.

The studio will serve up seven new furniture and lighting projects at this year's Salone del Mobile. Each is a collaboration with a well-known European designer and one of them – the Kono Wall Lamp, designed with Spanish lighting manufacturer Marset – sits in front of us on the table during the interview. It neatly embodies the fusion of technical expertise and refined aesthetics that has come to define Yabu Pushelberg's work.

For Pushelberg, Salone holds particular appeal due to its location. "Europe in general is kind of the last frontier of getting people to know who we are," he says.

He still detects a snobbery towards North American designers from those in the Old Continent but relishes the opportunity to prove them wrong. "Nobody thinks that North American designers can create as good a product as the Europeans do," he adds. "Well, we're here now."



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(1) A Yabu Pushelberg chair taking pride of place (2) The firm has a dedicated team to find design solutions (3) George Yabu (on left) and Glenn Pushelberg



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EXHIBITION / MILAN

Form in photography

During Salone, Flexform is connecting furniture and photography with an exhibition of images by Italian photographers at its Moscovia showroom. Here are three publications from exhibitors.

• CLAUDIA JACOB

1 'Photographer' by Gianni Berengo Gardin, Thames & Hudson



Photographer: Tony Hily

The self-taught Berengo Gardin was one of the most prolific postwar era photographers. This portfolio offers the most comprehensive collection of his works. A compelling account of a photographer who documented contemporary affairs with poetic flair.



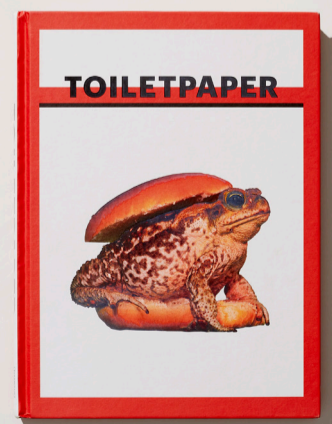
2 'Spaces in Between' by Gabriele Basilico, Skira



Milanese photographer Basilico's compilation of largely unpublished works offers an insight into the architectural spaces in some of our most lively and vibrant cities. Basilico often used traditional black-and-white film to capture the essence of our industrial centres in their purest forms.



3 'Toiletpaper Volume II' by Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari, Damiani



Bursting with eccentric images designed to unsettle our perception of aesthetics and beauty, *Toiletpaper Volume II* offers a vibrant curation of the past five issues of the magazine, alongside original works designed for a range of international publications.



TALKS / MILAN

Material world

Renowned architecture historians Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley join the 2023 edition of Prada Frames Design Symposium, a multidisciplinary programme of talks taking place during Milan Design Week, to present on their specialist subject: human and non-human construction in the wider ecosystem. The duo are well placed to comment on the topic, having previously written a book called *Are We Human? Notes on an Archaeology of Design*, in which they challenge designers to take a step beyond simply creating for humans.

• POLINA MOROVA

How did you get involved with Prada Frames for this talk?

MARK WIGLEY: This year's subject explores materials as living entities. What's exciting for us is to actually argue the opposite – that we should not only perceive materials as life forms but life forms as materials. Bacteria is the first form of life: it makes trees possible, as well as buildings. So there's really no line between living entities and materials. What we would like to do is talk about what happens to design when you put that idea at the very centre of the design practice.

What did you learn about the relationship between humans and design in your book?

BEATRIZ COLOMINA: Design is often understood as serving a human: "I make this cup so I can have a cup of tea." However, we concluded that design is not simply serving the human but is redesigning the human entirely. Think about our bodies: over time, they are shaped by our shoes and our clothing. You can argue that this is happening with all aspects of design, including phones that are now part of us and have redesigned our bodies, our eyes, our ears and our memories. We design things – and these things redesign us.

How does taking an archaeological view on design help you when it comes to your work?

BC: We are historians; when you dig you find hidden secrets.
MW: Because it's always interesting to know what design is trying to hide and what architecture is afraid of. What is repressed?