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INSPIRATION FOR INTERIOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

## Jaime Hayon

The Spanish designer heads up this year's highlights from Milan



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# Process driven

Look past the 'flamboyant' label attached to **Jaime Hayon** and you'll see the Spanish designer's real passions: discovery, dialogue and true quality





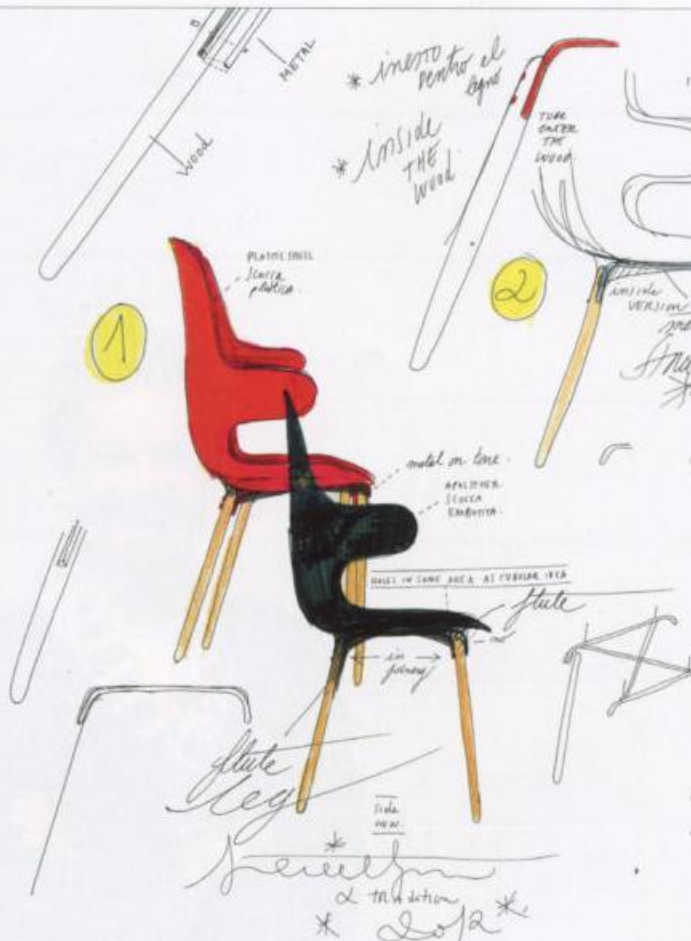


**J**aime Hayon is the type of guy who wears bright green shoes. A born showman, the Spanish designer, 37, has also been known to don a bunny suit for photo shoots. It's fitting because Hayon Studio's collection of furniture and objects has a childlike quality to it; it's as whimsical and flamboyant as the man himself, who was raised in Madrid and now splits his time between Valencia, Barcelona and London. From golden ceramic penguins and crystal vessels shaped like zoo animals, to metallic pendant lights and chairs that look as though they might come alive and walk away, one can see his imagination at work. It's the sort of stuff that makes people happy when they see it.

But Hayon's wacky persona belies an attention to detail and a business mind that has brought him international stardom fairly quickly. Since opening his eponymous studio in the early noughties, he's worked with many of the biggies, counting Bernhardt, Fritz Hansen, Bisazza and BD Barcelona Design, among others, as clients. What sets him apart is that his pieces are an antidote to the modernist, 'form follows function' brigade. Like Marcel Wanders and Maarten Baas, his products and interiors (mostly civic and retail) are highly individual and expressive; it's as much about creating something beautiful as it is about problem-solving - a definite taboo in certain design circles. Hayon sees the value in both rational industrial design and something that garners an emotional response, always with an emphasis on quality. 'It has always been about curiosity and quality for me. I do all kinds of different items but they are all linked by one thing - they're well done. I don't allow myself to bring something that isn't perfectly made.'

We're standing in Spazio Hayon, a retrospective exhibition of the designer's work in the rough-and-tumble Lambrate district of the Milan furniture fair. He is showcasing a number of collaborations with Baccarat, Bosa, Ceccotti and Sé alongside process drawings and prototypes of three yet-to-be-launched >





products; a mobile phone, a watch and a multi-purpose chair for Danish company &Tradition.

The idea was to break away from the traditional boundaries of the trade fair and try something new. 'Spazio Hayon is a platform to show the process of design. I wanted to challenge the way we do things,' says Hayon, who has spent the morning darting around the room, speaking to an admiring gaggle of journalists and design junkies about his new chair, which will officially launch later this year.

'I belong here much more than in a fair. This is the opposite way of doing things. Normally you're in the fair and the brand is the one who has the power. Obviously I work for companies that sell commercially, but I decided to have this space and do what I want to do, not what the marketing departments of those companies want me to do,' he says, chuckling. 'It's exciting because since opening yesterday we've had a lot of discussions with people who are asking, how are you going to finish the sides of the chair, how are you going to do the wood?' The chair is made of a single shell, which will eventually be available in plastic, upholstery and with or without a swivel base.

Having the renders and sketches displayed next to the prototype is a novel approach, because it sheds light on how certain problems were solved, such as the chair's cross-shaped joinery. Most interestingly, it invites critique. 'That way you can see the defects of things and bring it up a level,' says Hayon. 'Presenting here is great because it's about talking to designers and creative people about something more than how much it costs and when it's

going to be released. I'm asking for feedback. It's about discussing the profession and how we can improve it,' he enthuses.

The exhibition offers the chance to look closely at the complicated construction of Ceccotti's TwentyTwo chair, named for its 22 timber elements, made by hand. It's normally made in walnut but at Spazio Hayon there is a special edition made from a beautiful Finnish wood that takes 14 months to dry out, and therefore is not a viable option for the market. One plinth over is a collection of porcelain objects called FORMA, designed for a family-run Japanese company, Kamide Choemongama. This sits in front of ceramic clocks for Bosa and cabinets full of Hayon's magical porcelain creatures for Lladro. Further on is a Bernhardt sofa that never quite made it to Milan last year, and Sé's imposing Arpa chair. 'The idea was to bring pieces from different companies and origins together, and place them in sets where they become alive again.'

It's exhilarating to see a designer of Hayon's magnitude and success lash out at the trade fair model, which he calls 'inhuman' for its practice of having stands where big companies show 20 prototypes, of which only three get made. 'It's very artificial and it doesn't show the intelligence of design,' he says. 'It shows the piece, and how much it costs, and where you put it. But its not about surprise, it's not about being fascinated. The meeting in Milan is not just about me and my chair, and how many we're going to sell. It's about so much more than that.'

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hayonstudio.com

ABOVE Sketches for &Tradition's Hayon chair, shown in Milan to prompt dialogue and discussion

TOP LEFT Hayon's show space in Milan, where his work for multiple clients could be seen in one place

ABOVE LEFT Italian ceramic firm Bosa has made many Hayon designs, including this Joya table

ABOVE CENTRE Hopebird, also for Bosa: a sculpture that keeps an eye out for what's coming next