

A Party With Floating Sculptures in an Iconic Milanese Garden

The designer Misha Kahn created fabric-covered inflatables for T's annual Salone del Mobile celebration.

By Laura May Todd
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For a party to mark the start of the Salone del Mobile design fair in Milan, the sculptor and designer Misha Kahn designed about 20 inflatable works that were installed throughout the gardens of the city's Villa Necchi Campiglio. Credit...Carmen Colombo

Each year, T's editor in chief, Hanya Yanagihara, commissions a different artist or designer to create an installation on the grounds of the Villa Necchi Campiglio, a grand 1930s-era private home turned museum in Milan. The occasion: a party to celebrate the beginning of the city's annual Salone del Mobile design fair. Past artists have made trompe l'oeil cities and fantastical flower gardens. But the idea for this year's iteration, overseen by the American sculptor and designer Misha Kahn, 35, was simple: "The concept for the party," he said, "was 'party.'"

Laura May Todd, "A Party with Floating Sculptures in an Iconic Milanese Garden," *The New York Times Style Magazine*, April 8, 2025.



Kahn gave each style of balloon a name. The orb-shaped Carousel was covered in silk and several different types of jacquard velvet. Credit... Carmen Colombo



Kahn's Hot Air Balloon, made with a patchwork of all the fabrics used throughout the installation, hung above the bar. Credit... Carmen Colombo

"Villa Necchi as a context is so buttoned up. The architecture is so rigid and careful," said Kahn (who is the partner of T's editor at large, Nick Haramis). He wanted to contrast the Rationalist aesthetic of the building, designed by the architect Piero Portaluppi, with what he called "rowdy balloons." Just inside the property's wrought-iron gates, he arranged a cluster of outsize inflatables — covered in colorful patchwork fabrics supplied by the Milanese textile brand Dedar — that variously resembled puffy lampshades, lightbulbs and chandeliers. They were fabricated by the upholsterers at Tappezzerie Druetta, a furniture manufacturer in Piedmont, Italy, that also produces Kahn's squiggly Mole Eats Worm sofa, a version of which was stationed below. More sculptures hovered, lantern-like, around the villa's pool. Some, strung up between magnolia trees, brought to mind sausages trussed with shibari knots. "I wanted them to feel a bit 'Bridgerton' and a bit bondage," Kahn said. "Romantic, yet with something off about them." Calamari — each balloon had a name — was a floating bouclé orb with flower-esque protrusions in Dedar's dragon-covered Scaramouche fabric; Jellyfish resembled a tentacled invertebrate layered with gathered sheaths of velvet and embroidered wool satin.

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Misha Kahn on his Mole Eats Worm sofa. Credit... Daniele Venturelli/Getty Images



As night fell, the sculptures were illuminated, giving them the look of upholstered chandeliers. Credit...Carmen Colombo

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It wasn't the first time Kahn, who is based in New York, has experimented with inflatables. "We once made them in the studio using bedsheets and fabric dye," he said, referring to pieces he produced for a 2018 installation of oversize abstract forms at the HotelAmericano in Manhattan. The artist's surrealist furniture is defined by outlandish shapes seemingly untethered from function and convention. His 2023 exhibition "Staged" at Friedman Benda gallery in Los Angeles featured a tapestry whose motifs were partly inspired by a chewed piece of gum. During Milan Design Week, he's also showing his Azimuth series — square, wall-hung mirrors surrounded by vivid halos of ceramic and enamel — and launching carved wooden chairs as part of his new homewares line, Abject.



The chef Rose Chalalai Singh designed a menu of Thai-Italian snacks for the occasion, including arancini made with Thai rice. Credit...Carmen Colombo



Patsy spritzer cocktails — made with sparkling Falanghina white wine from Feudi San Gregorio — were mixed by bartenders from the seaside hotel Il Pellicano. Credit...Carmen Colombo

When the party guests — among them Nadège Vanhée, the creative director of Hermès; Simone Bellotti, the newly appointed creative director of Jil Sander; and the artist and designer Laila Gohar — began arriving on Monday night, Milan's dreary wet winter had only just given way to spring sunshine, and a slight chill still hung in the air. But there was also a hint of Italian summer, thanks to the bartenders of the seaside

hotel Il Pellicano — celebrating its 60th anniversary this year — who had traveled to Milan from Tuscany for the evening. Dressed in navy pullovers bearing the hotel's logo, they poured vermouth, gin and chinotto Teller Negronis; Patsy spritzers made with bitters, wild berries and orange liqueur; and sparkling Falanghina white wine and rosé from the Calabrian vintner Feudi di San Gregorio. Meanwhile, servers passed around snacks by the Bangkok-born, Paris-based chef Rose Chalalai Singh: tangy grilled eggplant curry pizzas; arancini made with Thai rice; hunks of Parmesan on curry-infused crackers; and crostini topped with fragrant Thai sausage.



Kahn chatting with party guests.
Credit...Carmen Colombo



The back of his jacket, by the Japanese brand Issey Miyake. Credit...Carmen Colombo

As the sun set, spotlights illuminated Kahn's sculptures, making them appear as if they were glowing from within. Singh's Thai-Italian creations were followed by teardrop-shaped chocolates from the Milanese pastry shop Sant Ambroeus, as well as shots made with spinach, cucumber, mint and spirulina provided by the skin-care brand Humanrace. Around 9:30, a breeze swept through the villa's gardens, catching the ribbons trailing from the inflatables and making them sway. It also signaled the party's end; by 10 p.m., guests had started to file out onto the street, carrying custom Dedar-fabric tote bags containing gifts for the week ahead: a copy of T's latest issue, a fabric-

covered journal and, to counteract the inevitable late nights, Humanrace's signature three-minute facial kit.



The Milanese pastry shop Sant Ambroeus created balloon-shaped chocolates for dessert. Spinach, cucumber and spirulina shots were provided by the skin-care brand Humanrace. Credit...Carmen Colombo

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