

Es Devlin. Library of Light

Library of Light is a Salone project in collaboration with the Pinacoteca di Brera and with the contribution of Milan based publishing house, Feltrinelli.

In the year of EuroLuce, the Salone del Mobile has commissioned a monumental kinetic installation by Es Devlin, the British artist and designer, known as a 'poet of light'. The work is being created within one of Milan's most venerable landmarks: the Pinacoteca di Brera. The installation reflects a phrase by Umberto Eco that came to the artist's mind as she climbed the tall shelves of the Braidense National Library: "Books are the compass of the mind, they point to countless worlds yet to be explored."

Devlin's luminous rotating sculpture is located in the centre of the 17th century Cortile d'Onore, which connects the Pinacoteca di Brera, the Braidense National Library and the Academy of Fine Arts. It is an 18 meter diameter revolving cylindrical sculpture formed of illuminated book shelves containing over 2.000 volumes. During the day, while the structure turns, the angled mirrored plane at the top of Devlin's cylindrical sculpture will reflect the sun's light into the columns, the statues of the portico and parts of the building never previously penetrated by the rays of the sun. At night, its illuminated structure creates shadow plays on the walls of the courtyard.

Es Devlin said: "I have always experienced libraries as silently intensely vibrant places where minds and imaginations soar, while clutched like kites by their seated bodies. This kinetic sculpture reflects the synaptic connections being forged, the resonances and associations at play within the minds of a temporary community of readers. As Jorge Luis Borges said, "I am not sure that I exist, actually. I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all that I have loved; all the cities I have visited."

Es Devlin continued: "I found amidst the Cortile's statues of celebrated seekers of knowledge and enlightenment only one female scholar: Maria Gaetana Agnesi. She became renowned across Europe for her study of natural resonant frequencies, including the behaviour of light, drawing a curve that became known as 'la versiera di Agnesi' (famously mistranslated as the "Witch of Agnesi,"). Later in life she wrote a guide to fusing spirituality with intellect through sustained attention and focus. I now find so much to learn from her life and practice, her navigation of her times with grace and courage, and yet, until I encountered her statue in the Cortile last year I had no knowledge of her existence. Library of Light seeks to bring her presence from the periphery to the centre of the Cortile".

Devlin's sense of the vitality of libraries is expressed through a series of collective readings including *The Order of Time*, by theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli, read in the recorded voice of the British actor Benedict Cumberbatch. Devlin's own voice will contribute phrases from the writings of Maria Gaetana Agnesi. Their voices will be underscored by a composition by British duo Polyphonia, with solo violin drawn from Beethoven's 1806 Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61.

Encompassing these voices is a firmament of over 2,000 books selected and donated by Feltrinelli on the theme of *Thought for Humans.*, chosen by the Salone del Mobile as the common thread running through the 2025 edition. Every day, at 8.00pm, visitors will be able to listen to readings "recited" by the library itself while following the text running horizontally across an LED display. Visitors can browse the books and donate their own, helping to expand this public archive during the days open to the general public, books that will become part of the Milan Library System, continuing their journey through the hands and minds of other readers. A gift to the city, commissioned by the Salone del Mobile, with the contribution of Feltrinelli, in collaboration with the Pinacoteca di Brera and La Grande Brera.

Alessandra Carra, CEO of the Feltrinelli Group, said: "Library of Light is a celebration of knowledge understood in all its vitality, as a movement from one person to another, as a driver of development and growth, both individual and collective. Books are at the heart of our lives: they allow us to change, advance, build and connect with each other. For this installation we have chosen titles from poetry, non-fiction and fiction publishers belonging to the group: books necessary to understand the present and build the future. Es Devlin's installation, walkable and usable, throws out thoughts, stories and ideas; which is why, precisely in the year of the seventieth anniversary celebrations, it represents the essence of the vision with which Feltrinelli has always pursued its cultural mission."

During the two weeks the installation is open, Library of Light will be transformed into a stage for thought and dialogue, hosting a series of meetings that will interweave art, literature, craftsmanship and reflections on our time. Through the voices of artists, writers, curators and innovators, the library will become a place in which ideas take shape, become cross-pollinated and multiply, offering visitors a chance to immerse themselves in a constantly evolving cultural experience.

The first session will focus on weaving as a means of cultural transmission, an ancient practice which, through the warp and weft, preserves memory, tradition and identity. In this context, space will be given to voices from India, the country that recently hosted the Salone. Literature will be the protagonist of the evening organised by Feltrinelli on Wednesday 9 April (7.00 pm), with a lecture on *C'era una volta il corpo* [Once upon a time there was the body] by Walter Siti, one of Italy's most distinguished Italian writers and intellectuals. He edited the complete works of Pier Paolo Pasolini for Mondadori's Meridiani series and is the author of the podcast *Perché Pasolini?* Siti has written novels that have left their mark on more than one generation, such as *Paradise Overload* (2006) and *Il Contagio* (2008). In 2013 he won the Strega prize for *Resistance is Futile*. His latest book is called *C'era Una Volta il Corpo*, published by Feltrinelli. Another key moment will be devoted to the concept of *Thought for Humans.*, which reflects on the responsibility of art and design towards humanity. An open discussion between the artist Matilde Cassani, the set designer Margherita Palli, and the architect Luca Cipelletti, moderated by Annalisa Rosso, will explore the ability of creativity to generate thought, imagine possible futures and redefine our relationship with space and matter.

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7th – 21st April

Pinacoteca di Brera – Cortile d'Onore

A project by Salone del Mobile in collaboration with Pinacoteca di Brera and La Grande Brera

With contribution of Feltrinelli

Free entrance – 9 am – 9 pm

TALK

Tuesday 8th April

7 pm, in English

Weaving Indian Art

Vinita Chaitanya, Interior Designer, Founder Prism

Urmila Chakraborty, Writer, Specialist of Patachitra Folk Art

Malika Verma, Founder Border&Fall

Moderator: Cristina Kiran Piotti, Italian-Indian Journalist and Consultant

Motifs, tapestries, weaving, embroidery, interweaving. For a long time considered "just" a refined craftsmanship of excellence from the South of the world, but now increasingly recognised as an art form in its own right. In particular, in India, textiles are deeply intertwined with cultural expression, historical memory, gender emancipation and local identities. The world of design today takes on a fundamental role in literally weaving new sensitivities and fresh looks at these both ancient and contemporary practices.



Wednesday 9th April

7 pm, in Italian

C'era una volta il corpo

with Walter Siti, Writer, Literary Critic and Essayist

Curated by Feltrinelli

Thursday 17th April

6 pm, in Italian

Thought for Humans.

Matilde Cassani, Artist and Designer

Luca Cipelletti, Architect and Museographer

Margherita Palli, Scenographer

Moderator Annalisa Rosso, Editorial Director e Cultural Events Advisor, Salone del Mobile.Milano

The theme of the 2025 Salone del Mobile.Milano communication campaign – Thought for Humans. – becomes an opportunity for a broad and multidisciplinary reflection on the role of the body in space. An exploration of the emotional and sensory aspects conveyed by direct physical experience, capable of opening new interpretative keys also for the world of design. Through different but profoundly connected practices – art, theatre, museography – a new way of thinking, inhabiting and questioning the centrality of the human being is investigated.