



Our friend's eclectic

Dealer, designer, producer, Claudio Loria so loves design he lives in his gallery, Leclletico. And, happily, lent it to us for Wallpaper* Handmade

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALBERTO ZANETTI, TOMMASO SARTORI WRITER: JJ MARTIN

Since quietly opening its doors in Milan last year, gallery Leclletico, the site of our 2013 Handmade exhibition in April, has been steadily building a reputation for cool. A back-alley design resource for midcentury furniture and an incubator of contemporary design, the gallery lives up to its eccentric moniker thanks to its unconventional owner Claudio Loria and his energetic multi-tasking. Loria dabbles in collecting, dealing, designing and producing - all of which comes together in a heady mix in his gallery home.

Loria stumbled upon the expansive, two-floor former fabric warehouse four years ago when he heard it was closing and wanted to clear its vintage textile merchandise. 'I stuffed my car with all that could fit,' he recalls of the 1950s and 1960s fabrics he stumbled upon. 'And when there weren't any more to buy, I started buying the furniture. And when the furniture was gone, I started dreaming of what the space could be.'

Fanatically persistent, Loria sweet-talked the elderly owner over espresso three times a week for two years in order to convince him to rent

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him the space. When he did, Loria transferred his vintage furniture collection into the gallery, painted the entry walls an eye-busting fuchsia with black trim, and promptly set up shop.

Since then, his vision for the space has slightly morphed from his original shop concept. 'It will no longer be open to the public,' he explains. 'It will be just for architects, designers and retailers.' Loria will continue to collect and deal in the unusual midcentury designs for which he is known. But the gallery's principle activity, *Produzione Lecllettico*, will be split into two types of new production: *Ufficio Técnico Lecllettico*, limited-edition furniture designed by Loria and produced by master craftsmen in Brianza; and *Collaborazioni*, furniture designed by young talents of Loria's choosing, produced by his network of Italian artisans, and sold through his gallery to select retailers and architects.

For his own designs, Loria has created four objects inspired by the 1950s and 1960s - a chair, a couch, a mirror, and a bookshelf - and given them subtle new shaping and modern

restructuring. They are handcrafted in solid oak and all feature vintage fashion fabrics that he has carefully collected throughout the years. When the fabric runs out, Loria pulls out a new bolt with a different design from his basement.

For the *Collaborazioni* arm, Loria acts as a talent-scout for up-and-coming designers and a bridge for them to work with capable suppliers in Italy. 'I only want to work with unknown designers,' he says. 'I like the fact that they are young and I am young, so together we help each other grow.'

His first collaboration, in 2010, was a series of nestling marble tables that doubled as stools.

SHOWTIME

Above left, Loria's sofa, chairs and mirror from the *Produzione Lecllettico* collection. The 'Solar System' light is a one-off by a friend of his and the 1940s side tables are by Gio Ponti. Above, Loria with a 1960s mirror by Eugenio Carmi, a 1950s Italian sideboard and a 1970s Italian table. The 1960s chandelier by Barovier & Toso was hung from an iron 'swing' by Loria to form part of his 'It was, now it is' collection

They were designed by Jim Harmon-Tan, but it was Loria who managed the project and found the marble supplier in Carrara. For the *Wallpaper* "Handmade event, Loria unveiled fruits of his latest collaborations, including solid oak benches topped in brass designed by Shirley van Piere, a huge fold-out wardrobe by Hosun Ching (who also designed our drinks cabinet, page 171), a mirror shelf by Runa Klock and a glass-topped table by Marco Guazzini. All were produced by Loria's trusted Brianza carpenters, a hardworking gang of septuagenarians who hand-delivered the merchandise the night before the event and stayed on to celebrate the next evening.

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So, it appears, is Loria. Now that he has a new grip on his gallery's core function, he plans to milk it as a hotpot for creative ideas in new frontiers. 'What I'd really love to do next is to design interiors for a hotel or restaurant. Everything I see is so boring.' ★