



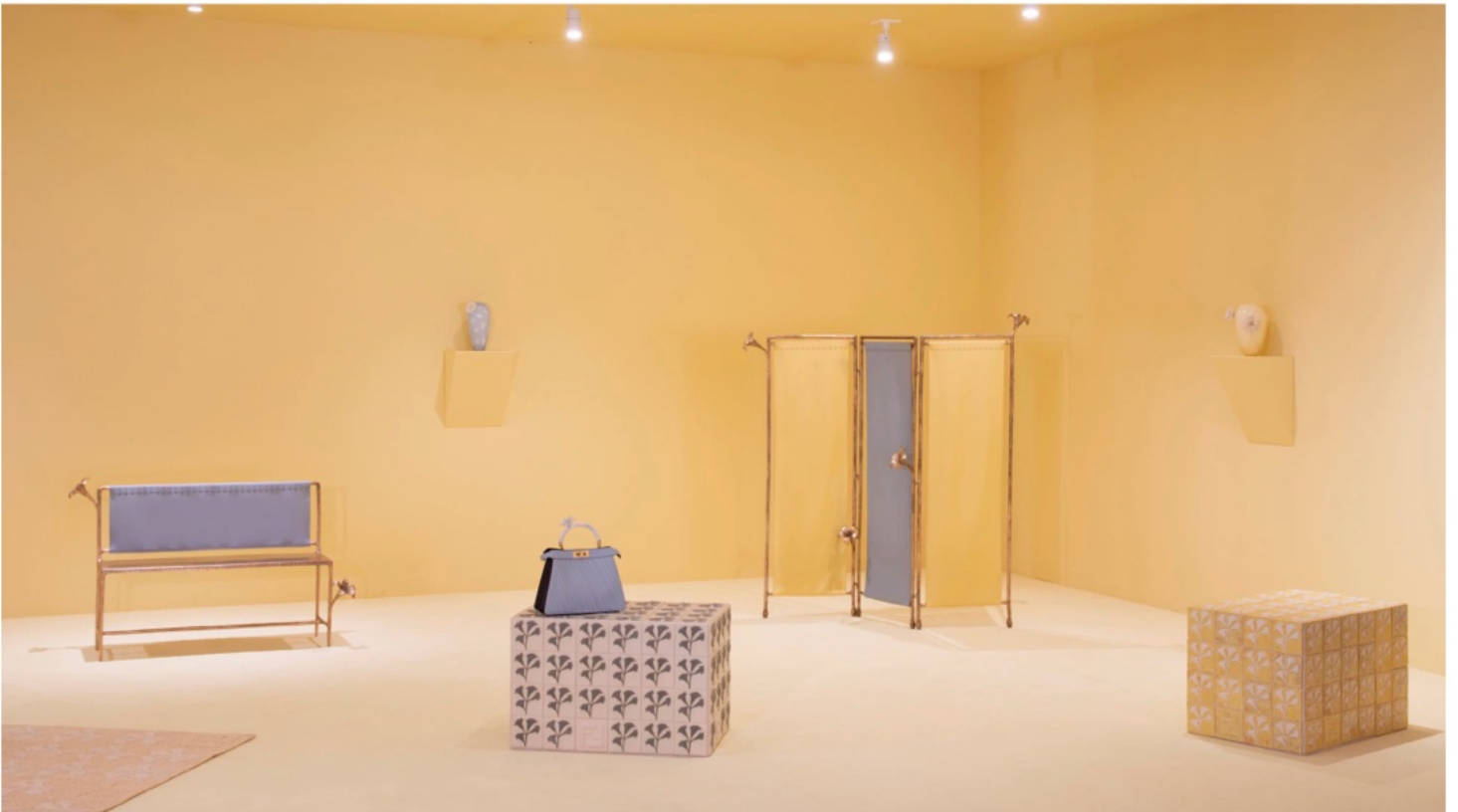
DESIGN

## At Design Miami, Fendi and Conie Vallese Reimagine Italian Craft Heritage

The Milan-based designer conjures a salon-style homage to Italian ateliers through exquisite bronze metalwork, Murano vases, and lustrous ceramics shaped with majestic floral motifs

BY RYAN WADDOUPS

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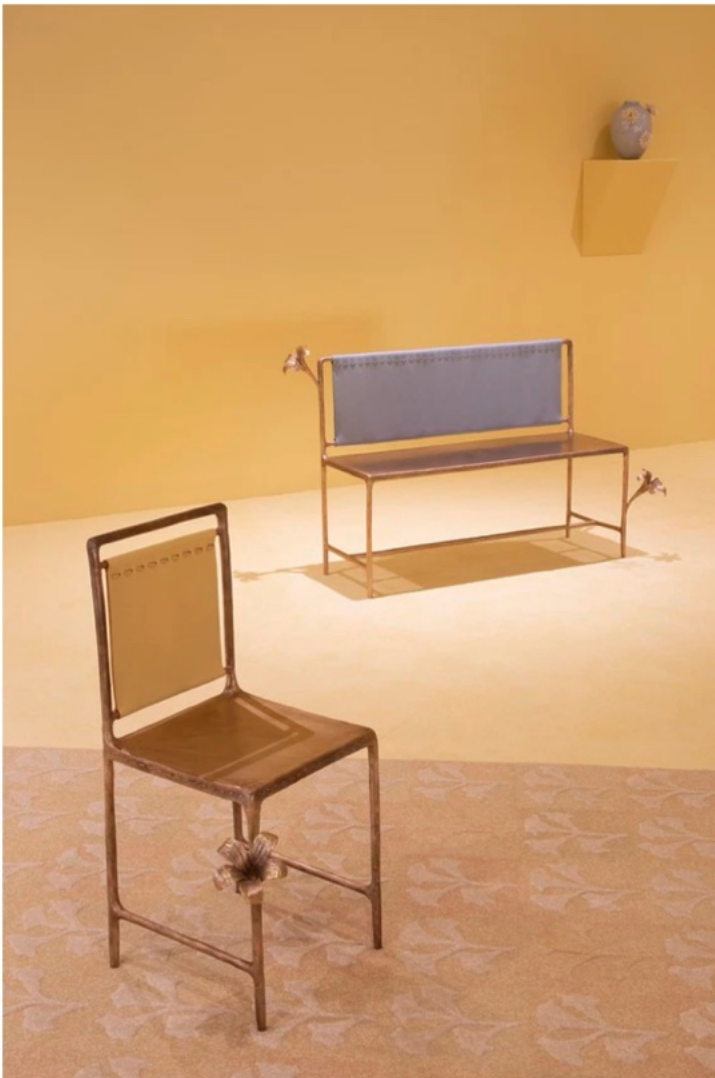


*Fonderia Fendi* by Conie Vallese.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI



Conie Vallese.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI

The 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris is widely recognized as the moment when Art Deco entered the global stage as a fully defined aesthetic movement. Italy, seeking to differentiate itself from the pared foundation of emerging French modernism, used the fair to present a rich vision of applied arts shaped by its own stronghold of master craftsmen and historic ateliers. Visitors encountered elaborate metalwork, glass, textiles, and ceramics that highlighted a profound culture of making and revealed a country eager to broadcast its creative identity through the hands of its specialized workshops. That moment continues to inspire contemporary practitioners, including Conie Vallese, whose presentation for Fendi at this year's Design Miami harkens back to that influential exhibition's maverick spirit.



Fendi presents *Fonderia Fendi* by Conie Vallese.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI



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Curator Dan Thawley recognized that Vallese's sensibility aligned with that heritage. The Argentine-born, Milan-based designer imbues her work with a sense of romantic grandeur that crystallizes beauty in tangible form, evident in cast bronze pieces adorned with sculpted flowers and in Gothic-inspired silver

cutlery. Thawley approached her earlier this year while planning Fendi's annual presentation, a commission that invites independent designers such as Peter Mabeo, Sabine Marcelis, and Lewis Kemmenoe to interpret the house's codes through their own material approach. The timing carried particular weight as this year marks Fendi's 100th anniversary. [Silvia Venturini Fendi](#) selected Vallese for the project, and the collaboration strengthened during a visit to the brand's Roman headquarters where Vallese, Thawley, and the Fendi team shaped a craft-forward direction for the booth.



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PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI

The result is [Fonderia Fendi](#), a romantic salon inspired by the Italian *salotto* that houses bronze seating, sculpted room dividers, ceramic pedestals, and handblown glass vases shaped with Vallese's floral flourishes. Thawley guided the selection of five Italian ateliers to produce the collection, including Milanese bronze foundry Fonderia Battaglia, 13th-century Venetian glass studio Barovier & Toso, carpet weavers CC-Tapis, ceramic studio Officine Saffi, and Fendi's own leather workshop. The number carries deep significance at the house: Late artistic director [Karl Lagerfeld](#) once drew the five Fendi sisters as a hand, each placed on a finger. Bruna, Carla, Anna, Alda, and Paola Fendi collectively led the company for much of the 20th century, each overseeing a defined discipline inside the Roman headquarters.

Through its network of specialized workshops, Vallese's collection mirrors that legacy and the spirit of Italy's 1925 pavilion. Bronze metalwork formed the foundation; Vallese has collaborated with Fonderia Battaglia for years, and the foundry, which has work for Arnaldo Pomodoro and Lucio Fontana, produced chairs, benches, and a screen with lilies blooming from cast frames. "Bronze is a medium that I

care for deeply,” Vallese says. She incorporated nods to Fendi’s Selleria stitching along the edges, referring to the house’s hand-sewn saddle stitch introduced by Adele Fendi in the 1920s and still carried out by artisans in Roman ateliers. Flat planes of cuoio Romano leather in anise blue and sorbetto yellow extend the detail across the seats.



Fendi presents *Fonderia Fendi* by Conie Vallese.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI



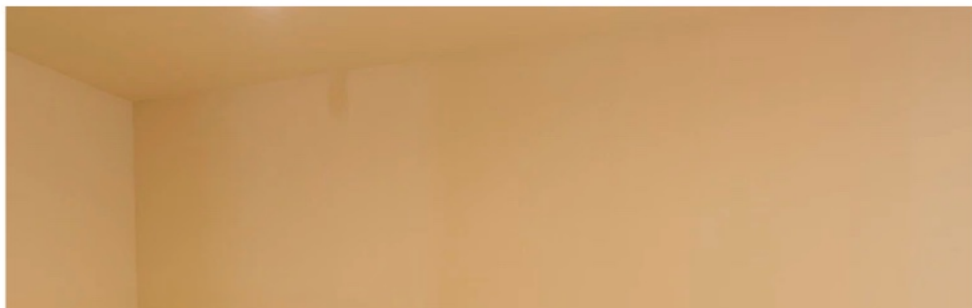
*Fonderia Fendi* by Conie Vallese.  
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Vallese entrusted legendary Murano workshop Barovier & Toso to create opaque vases that carry her floral imagery into blown glass. Each piece features a curved profile with petals that rise from the surface, echoing the florals in her bronze works. “I’ve worked with glass in Murano, and it’s very difficult,” she admits, having absorbed wisdom from Venetian masters who have painstakingly perfected the craft for more than four decades. Officine Saffi also advanced botanical nods through modular benches and cube-shaped pedestals made with bespoke embossed tiles, each carrying a tableau of orchids and the house’s double-F monogram. A wool rug by CC-Tapis, meanwhile, repeats Vallese’s fantasy flowers across its plush surface.

The pieces comes together inside Fendi’s salon-style booth, a pale cocoon washed in a sunny shade of pastel yellow. Vallese studied Fendi’s signature yellow and, using Alkemis organic pigment paints, adjusted it into a gentler register shaped by Miami’s natural light and Art Deco architecture. “I wanted the booth to have a steady presence of sunshine, something very optimistic,” Vallese says.

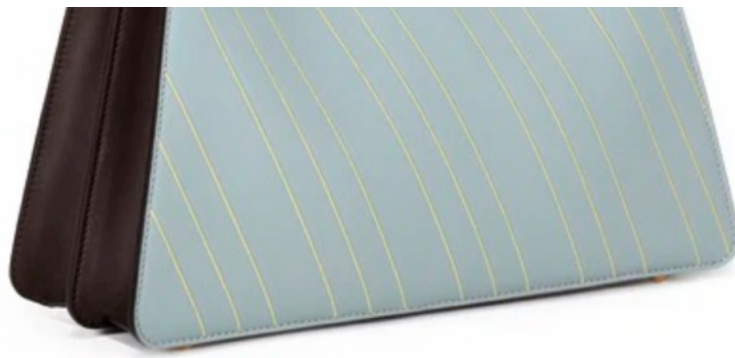




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PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI

The color story continues through a limited-edition Peekaboo bag that Vallese reimagined for the occasion. That project began with a visit to Fendi's leather ateliers in Rome, where she observed firsthand the entire making process. "I had no idea of the magnitude of craft and precision required to make a Peekaboo," she says. "Everyone was working with their hands in incredible ways." The experience guided her palette and decisions on stitching and proportion, resulting in a reversible model in pale yellow and blue diagonal-striped calfskin with sculpted details, including a ceramic handle with a sprouting flower produced with Officine Saffi. The piece is available in a limited run of five at Fendi's boutique in the Miami Design District.





The limited-edition Peekaboo bag by Conie Vallese.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FENDI

Flowers appear throughout her work, but Vallese prefers a more open reading of the motifs she sculpts and paints, likening florals as emblems of passage and change. “They give me feelings of nostalgia because they have a life cycle,” she explains. That idea moves nimbly through her dazzling bronze, ceramic, and glass creations, each material carrying the motif in wildly different states yet settling into a deliberate, intentional arrangement that feels perfectly at home. It creates a steady backdrop for Vallese’s visual language—and Fendi’s timeless Italian craftsmanship—to continue shining, perhaps for another 100 years.

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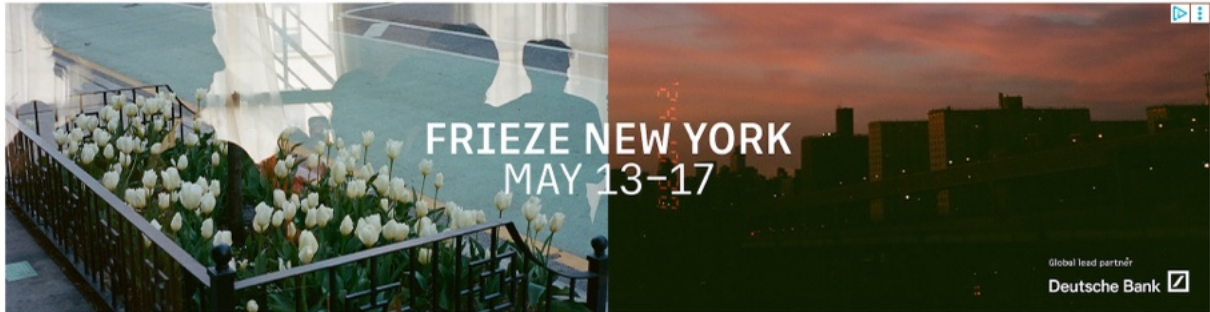
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