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Saint Laurent celebrates 40 years of the Memphis Group with an exclusive collaboration

Fashion 27 May

Through an exhibition and capsule collection created exclusively for its Parisian shop Rive Droite, Saint Laurent pays tribute to the postmodern and colourful design of the Memphis Group, the iconic Milanese collective founded in 1981 by Ettore Sottsass, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

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In 2021, the Memphis Group - also known as Memphis Milano – is celebrating its fortieth anniversary: in the 1980s, the Italian design movement distinguished itself by its colourful, playful and joyous abstract motifs invading all types of media related to domestic life, from furniture and posters to wallpaper and textiles... Four decades later, its aesthetic and iconic designs continue to resonate today. The house of Saint Laurent is proof of this: after partnering with the famous Baccarat crystal factory and the designer of construction games Nanoblock, its artistic director Anthony Vaccarello has now signed a collaboration with the Italian group exclusively for its Parisian boutique Saint Laurent Rive Droite. Through an exhibition and a capsule collection, the French label is reviving the bold colours, geometric shapes and wavy patterns of the Milanese design collective. In the rue Saint-Honoré boutique, iconic pieces by the Memphis Group designers rub shoulders with clothes - sneakers, dresses and hoodies - and decorative objects created especially for the occasion by Anthony Vaccarello.



Lit "Ring" (1981) de Masonari Umeda © Saint Laurent Rive Droite

With its furniture and design objects where block primary colours clash with circular and angular forms, the Memphis Group has become the emissary of the kitsch and colourful aesthetic of the 1980s. In reaction to the clear, strict and uncluttered lines of modernism, the members of the group operated a maximalist and exuberant turn in the world of design right from its inception in 1981, like the famous *Ring* bed imagined that same year by Masonari Umeda, and now exhibited in the Saint Laurent Rive Droite boutique in Paris. They revelled in an explosion of colour and graphic patterns while abandoning leather and stone to focus on grainier materials such as Formica or Terrazzo, overturning the aesthetic codes of the time. From the beginning of the 1980s, their creations inspired some of the biggest fashion designers, such as Karl Lagerfeld who decorated his Monaco flat with Memphis furniture. For his capsule collection in collaboration with the group, Anthony Vaccarello in turn relied on patterns and polychrome offering multicoloured hoodies and sneakers decorated with checkerboard and leopard prints.

Initiator of the movement, the designer and architect Ettore Sottsass builds his pieces like construction games, juxtaposing simple volumes in bright colours. While his famous luminous mirror *Ultrafragola* (1970) is currently hot news on Instagram, where people are swooning over its undulating frame in shades of pink, it is his totemic and colourful sculptural bookcase, *Carlton* (1981), that Saint Laurent has chosen to exhibit today, alongside his *Ashoka* lamp (1981). Inspired by his travels across India in the 1960s, these two creations testify to Ettore Sottsass' interest in the country's ancient rituals and recall the work of his contemporary, the pop artist Keith Haring. Ettore Sottsass's work is also recognisable by his playful and joyful motifs, most of which he invented himself, such as the cheerful serpentine of the "Bacterio" print, which form the basis of his zoomorphic *Tahiti* lamp and his bookcase presented at Saint Laurent Rive Droite. In his capsule collection, Anthony Vaccarello uses these same motifs in confetti form on bright pink crepe de Chine dresses and shirts. A new vibrant tribute to this emblematic group, that firmly anchors it in the zeitgeist.

Saint Laurent Rive Droite - Memphis, currently in the rue Saint Honoré boutique until June 23rd.