

WIRED

Mix Italian design giant Alessi with up-and-coming young French designer Pauline Deltour for a new range of contemporary homewares *Words Sarah Baldwin*

Everyone's heard of Alessi, the go-to design company for quirky, minimalist kitchen accessories. Whether it's a cartoon-character-topped corkscrew or Mr and Mrs Chin salt and pepper shakers, Alessi's designs are some of the most iconic of the past few decades. Alberto, the man at the helm, has often courted the big guns, enlisting top architects and designers to create products for the company. The list of collaborators is almost a *Who's Who* of major players: David Chipperfield, Zaha Hadid, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison, to name a few. The result has been some mega hits, such as →



this picture The latest additions to the A Tempo range, designed by Pauline Deltour (above), include the stackable stool (£92) and a practical umbrella stand (£127)

the Michael Graves kettle with its whistling bird spout (apparently one of the most requested items on wedding-gift lists) and the Anna G corkscrew by Alessandro Mendini.

Among these shining stars is the unusual inclusion of a new kid on the block. Pauline Deltour is one of the youngest designers ever to work with the Italian giant, and was just 26 when the collaboration kicked off. She's crafted the A Tempo range, a collection of homewares made from moulded steel wire. The first products (a waste-paper basket, a fruit basket and a dish drainer) were released last year, with new additions of a laundry basket, umbrella stand and stool just hitting stores.

The idea for the A Tempo range came during Pauline's studies; she was working towards her industrial design diploma in Paris. 'I knew I wanted to work with wire,' says Deltour. 'I wanted my starting point to be a material, rather than a function.' She was attracted by the fact that wire's flexible and easy to work with – she was able to make small models herself – yet also durable. 'Wire is also used a lot in a very technical and industrial context,' she goes on. 'I wanted to look at it again and bring it back into a domestic landscape with a new language.'

The young designer spent a year working in a factory in France getting to grips with how the processes and machines worked. The chrome-plated steel wire is bent and sheared by a 3D machine, which guides and shapes the wire around a mould. The segments are then arranged side by side and joined by simple electro-welding.

Deltour finished her studies in 2006 and went to work for industrial designer Konstantin Grcic in Munich. It was he who suggested that she show her work to the Alessi team, and all it took was an email to attract Alberto's attention. Then began a lengthy dialogue between Deltour and Alberto. She had made a very high-quality prototype in the French factory, so it

was a case of sorting out details. 'We did a lot of reworking to get the correct proportions,' she says. It took a year of to-ing and fro-ing until her designs first appeared in the shops.

Although the starting point of the A Tempo range was a material rather than a function, it is the latter that's the backbone of the most recent launches. More so than the 2010 set, which was very simple, the new pieces have been accessorised to suit their application; the laundry basket has a waterproof fabric lining, the umbrella stand has a plastic container to collect water and the stool is conically shaped to facilitate stacking. 'In 2011, declining the same essential minimalism, Pauline developed an important addition to the A Tempo family bringing Alessi into the new field of small furnishing,' says Alberto. 'It seemed to me a good way to enter a product area in which I can see Alessi in the near future.'

As well as looking forward, Deltour's collection ties in well with the Alessi heritage, nodding to some of its earliest products; when it first launched, there were numerous wire baskets in its collection, only two of which are still in production. The A Tempo range's brown-paper packaging also harks back to the past, referencing Alessi's previous use of brown paper to wrap all its wares. It's a neat link, and one that's representative of the collaboration as a whole, the established brand wrapping up the young, up-and-coming star. **GD**

The A Tempo range by Pauline Deltour is available from Alessi (020 7518 9090; alessi.com)



above The A Tempo fruit basket (£108), laundry basket (£109) and citrus basket (£120) *below, left to right* Chrome-plated steel wire is cut into segments, bent into shape and then joined using simple electro-welding

