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The BIE oversees four types of International Exhibitions: World Expos, Specialised Expos, Horticultural Expos and the Triennale di Milano.

International Exhibitions are global events dedicated to finding solutions to specific challenges facing humanity by offering a journey inside the Expo theme through engaging and immersive activities.

The mission of the BIE is to guarantee the quality and the success of these world events, to protect the rights of their organisers and participants and to preserve the core values of Education, Innovation and Cooperation.

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Triennale di Milano

Dedicated to architecture, design and craftsmanship, the Triennale di Milano is a recurring International Exhibition organised by the Institution that bears the same name. The Institution of La Triennale di Milano is a unique cultural organisation dedicated to exhibitions and events in the field of architecture, design and crafts.

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Following a 20-year pause after the 1996 edition, the Triennale returned in 2016 for XX1st Century. Design After Design. The return of the Triennale was made possible by the support of the BIE, the Italian Government, the City of Milan, the Lombardy Region, the Chamber of Commerce of Milan and the Chamber of Commerce of Monza and Brianza.

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21ème Siècle.
Design Après Design

21st Century. Design After Design
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Professor of Visual Communication at the Free University of Bolzano
Art Director of the XXI Triennale

A Hundred and Fifty Questions (Plus One) about the Future of Design
This year’s edition of the Bulletin is dedicated to the XX1 Triennale di Milano, which has returned after a 20-year hiatus. I am grateful to the contributors – who are experts in their fields – for enhancing our understanding of the Triennale and for furthering the debate on the theme of this year’s edition – 21st Century. Design After Design.

The Triennale di Milano – the preeminent international exhibition of design, art and architecture – has had a special relationship with the BIE since the early days of the organisation. The 1933 edition of the Triennale was the first Expo to receive our recognition, and since then, 13 editions of the exhibition have been organised under the auspices of the BIE. While it is always hosted in the same city, the Triennale shares many characteristics with World Expos, including its international status and its aim of showcasing and explaining progress to the general public at large for a better understanding of the impact of innovation on quality of life.

The history of the Triennale is intertwined with the history of design in the 20th century. Back in 1933, Italian design was only just beginning to interact with industry and serial production. This complex interaction, which sought to contribute to well-being in our world, is today still at a crossroads in which design looks both to uniqueness and to mass production. From the applied arts to urban planning, from industrial production to customised 3D printing, design defines and is defined by the world we live in, and the world we want to live in.

In a fast-changing world, the Triennale is more than an exhibition of design; it is an exhibition that raises questions over the definition of design itself. The theme of the XX1 Triennale – 21st Century. Design After Design – forces us all to ask ourselves what design is – not just today, but what it was yesterday and what it will be tomorrow. The conceptual debate over the definition of design forms the crux of this Triennale.

As an Expo, the impact of the Triennale on its visitors is a measure of its transformative potential. Over the years, the Triennale has contributed greatly to public understanding of the role of applied arts and industrial design. As with other Expos organised under the auspices of the BIE, the Triennale has had a privileged role as an interpreter of society, both reflecting and anticipating social, cultural and technical changes over the years.

However, during its 20-year pause, the Triennale found itself in a fin de siècle internal conflict over its identity, its path and its future perspectives. Much has changed in the meantime – our cities are more diverse than ever, new generations are embracing certain values while abandoning others, and technological progress has driven cultural changes and the democratisation of design. The optimism of the 20th century, in which everything had an immediate solution, has come to an end. It has been replaced by a 21st century refusal to face reality, accompanied by a new spirit of exploration that tries new forms and new values while recognising that novelty is always accompanied by tradition.

The new Triennale reflects these transformations in its form, in its organisation and in its content. The scope of the event has been broadened, bringing true diversity in terms of exhibits, ideas, innovations and exchanges. The theme incorporates a range of modern-day issues, including the impact of globalisation on cultures, the planning of cities and housing, and how our society views gender roles and multiethnicity.
Preface

While still centred around the Palazzo dell’Arte, the exhibitions of XX1 Triennale are spread across 19 different venues throughout the city of Milan and its surroundings. We can also notice a change in the profiles and perspectives in the list of exhibitors, which includes developing countries as well as non-traditional actors such as museums, universities, design centres and non-profit groups. The new Triennale is unabashedly situated in the 21st century, refusing any monographic notions of the past.

The return of the XX1 Triennale provides us with an excellent opportunity to raise questions over the role of design in the current era. The theme of the XX1 Triennale – 21st Century. Design After Design – forces the Triennale to ask itself what it is. It also forces us all to ask ourselves what design is – not just today, but what it was yesterday and what it will be tomorrow. The theme incorporates a range of modern-day issues, including the impact of globalisation on cultures, the planning of cities and housing, and how our society views gender roles and multiethnicity.

Through its exhibitions, the XX1 Triennale allows us to explore the ways in which design has evolved and offers insights into the world we live in. It does not give us an image of the future, but it delves into anthropological issues that shape our present and our future. The Triennale is a place for experimenting and showcasing innovation in the area of architecture, design and craft, with the capacity to reflect socio-political, scientific, aesthetic and technological evolutions. The innovative approaches adopted in the different aspects of design touch on what is new and what is tradition, what is technology and what is human.

The contributions to this Bulletin open up this debate, exploring the complex relationship between architecture and art, and touching on how architecture differs from art from its need to be utilised. The debate continues with a look at the continual search for renewal in the modern era, as well as a discussion on the future of manual craftwork.

The challenges and opportunities facing design in the 21st century reflect greater changes in our lives, our homes and our cities, and it is essential that we keep the debate open. I wish to thank the contributors to this Bulletin for their engaging and informative articles that offer us an insight into the theme behind this new edition of the Triennale.

I would also like to express my gratitude to President Claudio De Albertis and to Director General Andrea Cancellato, as well as to Laura Agnesi and the whole Triennale team for their remarkable efforts in organising this year’s edition and for their invaluable help in publishing the Bulletin.
Claudio De Albertis

XXI Triennale. 21st Century. Design After Design

PHOTO GIANLUCA DI IOIA
Commitment. I believe “commitment” is the word.
The key word for our XXI Triennale.

We are once again hosting international participants who have taken up the challenge of embarking – or re-embarking – on a journey together with an institution that was a meeting place for many disciplines for many decades during the last century. Starting with the applied arts, it focused on the essence of design and the contribution it makes to a modern world of well-being and progress.

Interior decoration, architecture, urban planning, design, graphics, communication, avant-garde art, internationalism, social interaction, aesthetics, prototypes and mass production, the creation and circulation of good taste, industrial production, design ethics, the fusion of technique and technology, through to the latest computerisation...

La Triennale has been and still is all of this, but something far greater awaits it.

In 1933, Giovanni Muzio built a container-palazzo, at the service of everything that the harmony between art and industry was and would be able to invent and create. That’s easy, one might say: harmony between art and industry is something quintessentially Italian... And indeed this is what appears to have led to today’s Triennale: a gentle process, the work of humanistic designers, enlightened industrialists and intellectuals at one with every aesthetic form.

Anyone with the passion and will to delve into our archives would soon see that there has been nothing easy or gentle about this process, that those legendary personalities were capable of squabbling before opening what are now considered to be magnificent exhibitions, but which were ferociously attacked by critics at the time. The themes were considered to be of vital importance, the passions intense, and the debate heated.

On each occasion, the Triennale has reflected and anticipated the times: the unity of the arts and national pride under the Regime, social preoccupations during the Reconstruction, the pact with form-and-function during the economic boom, the attempt to harmonise objects with new lifestyles that were already in crisis at a time of affluence, and the experience in corpore-vivo of the loss of authoritativeness of the institutions in the late 1960s.

Then came a period of silence and a top-level revival of interest in the crucial issues affecting the onward march of the metropolis, responsibility for the environment, and questions of identity and difference. After the destruction of the Grands Récits, as Jean-François Lyotard called them, they were of crucial importance. And indeed they still are today.

The BIE has certainly played, and continues to play a key role for the longevity and prestige of the Triennale.
They joined an international community of professionals and intellectuals, as well as companies and associations, who in the 20th century were interested in interacting and discussing common themes, and who were ready to meet up every three years to take stock of the situation and also to compete.

Over the past 20 years, countless design biennials and triennials have sprung up around the world, showing that a model that many had called obsolete was actually still valid.

In the meantime, La Triennale reinforced its key role as a generator of culture in Milan, with structural works of huge scope: the Design Museum, the Biblioteca del Progetto (the Triennale Design Library), the Teatro dell’Arte, restaurants and the garden. The Palazzo is now a welcoming place with a broad public, including many who are not involved in design. It offers permanent activities for every age, with a variety of themes and approaches.

Once renovation was complete, it was time for the Triennale to take up its role as an International Exhibition once again.

The encouragement of the BIE was decisive in reasserting this presence after twenty years on the side-lines, and so too was the support of the Government, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lombardy Region, the City of Milan and the Chambers of Commerce of Milan, Monza and Brianza.

And precisely because so much time had passed, even the threshold of the millennium, the XXI Triennale has given itself truly bold objectives.

Starting with its location, moving beyond the walls of the Palazzo and interacting with the whole urban area, bringing in the ideas and skills of no fewer than 19 venues, both ancient and modern, even outside the city boundaries of Milan. This has brought a new approach to a fast-changing and expanding urban space, breaking down the separation between centre and suburbs, and forming a metaphor for a dialogue between countries far from each other.

It brings us to the core theme, “21st Century. Design After Design”, the boundless question that invites us to reflect on what it means to work on design today. Getting to grips with the new millennium and identifying the great changes sweeping through the very idea of design.

A highly original and extremely rapid globalised system of signs, with the ability to wipe out the recent past, is now within reach of all creative minds and designers in the world. And all of this is coupled with the rich history and traditions of creativity, in which every ideal, every function, every form of beauty and its opposite have already been examined and created, and adopted as a legacy.

So what are the new standards? The new visions? What are the objectives of a new form of design, pushing so insistently with its powerful technology and huge potential?

“21st Century. Design After Design” touches on key issues, such as the new “drama” of design – which is its ability to deal with the anthropological issues that classical modernity excluded from its area of interest (the sacred, the erotic, traditions, and history). It also examines the hot issues of today: gender, the impact of globalisation, the recent financial crisis and migration.
In keeping with the times, the Triennale is not looking for answers so much as means for understanding and orienting the work of designers on the vast global stage. This includes their relationships with places of coexistence – with the city first and foremost – and with the rights of everyone, and ultimately with the world of production, be it artisanal or industrial.

The Advisory Committee worked on these issues for many months and in the end created 11 exhibitions that take visitors into a great number of narratives and meanings. These range from prehistory, as a metaphor for our current condition, to multiethnictiy, from project development in the feminine (the 9th edition of the Design Museum) to going beyond the established borders of every possible “system of the arts.” They also include developing synergies between architecture and art and the boundless, and by now inextricable, relationship between traditional craftsmanship and the latest generation of production tools.

Nine more exhibitions have been put on with partners, museums, organisations and associations that have decided to join forces with La Triennale in this enterprise. This imposing spectacle is spread out over many locations, covering 22,000 square metres and bringing to life almost every district in Milan. In addition to this, a further 17,000 square-metre display area has been set up on the Expo 2015 site.

Of particular interest are the international participants, both official and unofficial, who have agreed to make their contribution and to become part of this totally renovated Triennale, with approaches that are very different and thus very useful.

Participation is close-knit or scattered, depending on the geographical area. Europe, with a voice that is harmonious but with diverse movements, is pretty well balanced. So too is the Far East, which for years has been a place of excellence by combining traditional creativity with Western models. The Middle East is well represented and there is a sampling of contributions from Central America, the Caribbean and North America, as well as from northern and sub-Saharan Africa, India and the Bay of Bengal.

**This imposing spectacle is spread out over many locations, covering 22,000 square metres and bringing to life almost every district in Milan**

The **United Kingdom** presents the new Scottish headquarters of the Victoria & Albert – the oldest decorative arts museum, set up after the Great Exhibition of 1851 – which will open in Dundee in 2018. Together with this great project of national scope, there is the experience of Gensler and of the special projects to revitalise London, as well as a pilot study for urban lighting – combining light and sociology – carried out by the London School of Economics.

**France** brings the real-life experience of the Saint-Étienne area, the French capital of design, once a city that processed raw materials, but now a living laboratory of urban substance and relational materials, for the design of a new form of community life. A centre for research and study, it is creating a post-disaster regeneration project called “Fukushima MON AMOUR” and is preparing for the 2017 International Biennale, Working Promesse.
XXIT Triennale  21st Century. Design After Design

PHOTOS: GIANLUCA DI IOIA

UNITED KINGDOM / Adventures in Design

PORTUGAL / Objects After Objects

GERMANY / Hands On! | Young Designers’ Studio

POLAND / Beauty & Pragmatism | Pragmatism & Beauty

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA / Speculative Post-Design | Practice or New Utopia?
Claudio De Albertis

BUREAU OF CYPRUS / Human Topographies | Emerging Identities

GREECE / Sustain / Ability

RUSSIA / Let Avant-Guard Heritage Be!

LITHUANIA / Julionas Urbonas, Airtime

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / Contemporary Heritage

ALBANIA / Albanian Universe | Design Between Vacuum and Energy
Germany takes on the responsibility of giving the young a design education, in a process of active co-creation, as opposed to merely accepting what industry has to offer. Throughout the exhibition there will be workshops, during which groups of students will create objects that will gradually be added to the exhibition space, which is conceptually designed as an almost real designer’s studio.

With Objects after Objects, Portugal examines the tension between modern design and what comes after it, showing the outcome of university research, with real buildings and products, and objects experienced in the interiors created by the great names of national architecture.

Poland recognises the responsibility of the designer, who is entrusted with transferring values into everyday culture, reaffirming the virtuous circle between beauty and pragmatism, which is to say, between aesthetics and functionality.

Croatia takes an even more radical approach, introducing the concept of “speculative design” as a product of critical thinking, while questioning the value of practice. This opens up a dilemma: post-design or yet another utopia?

From the scar of its division, the island of Cyprus has formulated a sort of emerging identity in the form of monuments, buildings and projects, which are shown in the display as a backdrop of architectural shadows, evanescent and ever-changing, which the visitor helps bring to ephemeral and subjective life.

Paradoxically convergent, in a fluid exchange of art, architecture and design, we find the displays of Greece and Lithuania. The first, Sustain / Ability, places gigantic symbolic columns, solid and void, to support sustainable design, comparing them with the forms of space and time. The second, Airtime, is an example of gravitational design, involving the viewer in a physical, visceral experience of the absence of gravity.

As it reconfigures its own universe, Albania unveils its Design between Vacuum and Energy project in the forms of urban planning and visual education, good governance and innovation.

Cosmopolitan, multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural, Switzerland brings four different events – an exhibition, a performance, a walk and a symposium – that focus on the concepts of transformation, globalisation and innovation.

Russia illustrates A Second Life for the Avant-Garde, with the restoration and re-use of its legendary post-revolutionary architecture, after years of neglect and of oblivion.

A second life of art and culture inspires ARK in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 6,500 square metres set aside in the past for nuclear defence: once a top-secret location, it now houses works by artists from 32 countries and opens every two years for the Project Biennial D-O ARK.
From the East, **China** comes with 3 different contributions, all related to university design teaching. Three great universities have a common desire to reconstruct values and to explore future scenarios, while fully respecting past memory, which is essential for inspiring new creativity. It also comes with a constantly evolving “class”, with the contribution of teachers, students, visitors and nature, creating the idea of a school for the 21st century.

With *Making is Thinking is Making*, the **Republic of Korea** presents a sophisticated panorama of traditional and digital handicrafts, from the return to manual labour and production culture, up to the formation of a new community project.

**Japan** sends us a message made of sounds: from the most ancient ones, from Toyama Prefecture, a centre for the production of ritual bells, to those made by futuristic Yamaha instruments.

Coordinated from **Singapore** but covering all of South East Asia, *alamak!* brings together creators from different cultural areas in an attempt to combine a poetic spirit of research with the practical approach of designers using the most advanced methods of industrial production.

*Meditation Spaces* by Taiwanese designers creates 11 spaces that can be used to facilitate the exchange of ideas between East and West, with the awareness that we are all part of an uncertain, changing world.

**Iran** takes inspiration from the age-old bazaar with a scene gradually created by a 3D printer that works endlessly to make products by Iranian designers. These are placed on the tables and the “bazaar” fills up more and more each day, giving visitors its offering of culture of dialogue and of mutual respect.

Online sharing and the economy it leads to has inspired *Stay at Home*, the project from **Lebanon**. A bed-capsule that fits into a suitcase can be adapted to any window, facilitating a nomadic experience and the sharing of private spaces, pointing to a future when the Web will even be able to influence architecture.

Devastated by war, **Afghanistan** is now going back to its tradition of art and crafts, projecting itself into the modern world with the work of designers who are internationally renowned in the fields of weaving, woodwork and jewellery.

Twenty superb designers, all operating in their own country, represent present-day **Israel**, with its heterogeneous people, and with echoes of its origins mingling with hi-tech versatility. With just one constant: humour, directed against stereotypes, prejudices and even innovation.
XXIT Triennale  21st Century. Design After Design

PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA / Re + Connect
New Chinese Design: Memory and Deconstruction

PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA / Design on Walking

JAPAN / Design of ripples and resonance, a Sound Landscape from Toyama

JAPAN / Yamaha | &JOY

SINGAPORE AND ASIA / alamak! Made in Asia

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN / Rediscover Design: Bazar

Meditation Spaces

LEBANON / Stay At Home

AFGHANISTAN / An Artistic Revival

ISRAEL / Yes &
Claudio De Albertis

HAITI / The House as a Right | From Shack to Brick | Architecture in Response to Human Needs

MEXICO / Casa México. “La Casa Ideale”

PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA / Algeria. Modernity, Rich Patrimony and Traditional Values Reconciled

ANGOLA / From Hands to Mind


LIBERIA / The Free Spirit of Liberia

CANADA, Vancouver / Laminal Labs. A Networked Studio Experiment

CANADA, Montreal / From the Workshop to the Back Alleys: Designers Engaged in Civic Life

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN / War – Water – Food – Health

MYANMAR / Teak. Before and After

PHOTOS GIANLUCA DI IOIA

PHOTO MAURO SALVEMINI
From the distance of primary needs and from the right to replace metal sheeting with bricks, comes the voice of Haiti, telling us of people who are disinherit but full of life. People with a culture of many roots and with branches so high that they connect earth and sky with a statue of the Legba spirit.

In The Ideal Home created by artists, companies and institutions, Mexico once again offers an aesthetic of proportions that combine outside and in, past and present, and the art of knowledge, renewing the close relationship it has never broken off with the Triennale.

Two great universities testify to the fresh vitality of design in Canada. From the Workshop to the Back Alleys (Montreal) illustrates a number of research projects by committed designers who work to achieve real improvements in social life mainly by intervening on processes. Liminal Labs (Vancouver) brings its laboratories to the Triennale, where students and professors put into practice participatory systems of collaboration between very distant skills and places, in the name of creativity and free innovation.

Algeria takes us into the heart of the country, with works of architecture and design in which modernity is reconciled with heritage and traditional values and, with legitimate pride, it illustrates the housing policy that has enabled it to achieve its goal of eliminating shanty towns from the capital.

Tunisia is taking part with a similar degree of Mediterranean pride, promoting “Fluid Identities”, the outcome of the 3D European Union Tempus project. Here design acts as an intercultural system for integration and as a different, more sustainable form of development model and a catalyst of multiple, very diverse methods.

The free spirit of Liberia rises up again from the pandemic that struck the country and it does so through the music of a street artist, Wesseh Freeman, and through the reaffirmation of the fundamental right of children to a healthy life and an open future. South Sudan denounces its vast global humanitarian emergency with the installation War-Water-Food-Health.

Scarcity and creativity come together in Angola and in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa, giving shape to traditional objects alongside furnishing made with recycled materials.

On another continent, Chandigarh and its urban forms constitute the tropical version of modern Western architecture as applied to India, and to its culture and transformations with regard to colonisation and local conflicts.

Lastly, from Myanmar we see a stunning historical and cultural heritage as expressed by one of its greatest resources – teak – and a whole range of works by contemporary artists that reveal a dynamic atmosphere that blends tradition and a global outlook.
To conclude this overview of so many different parts of the world, the Triennale once again returns to Milan to examine a subject that has always been relevant, everywhere. This is the issue of the suburbs and fringes of modern and contemporary cities, especially in the age of megacities, where a true centre, a downtown area, no longer exists but is rather part of a complex system of polycentric districts.

The Triennale has always dealt with these issues over the years and indeed for its eighth edition in 1948 it designed – and, with the Ministry of Public Works, created – an entire district, the QT8, a virtuous example of urban planning and residential architecture for the working classes. Still today it is a benchmark in the topography of Milan and a model of heeding the needs of its time.

And, of course, the XVII “World Cities and the Future of the Metropolis” and the XIX “Identity and Difference” editions both focused on these issues.

Today, in the area that was devoted to World Expo 2015 in Milan, the XXI Triennale examines all the vital issues of the city in an exhibition entitled City After the City: urban landscapes, parks and green spaces, mobility systems, public art, street furniture, etc.

They are flanked by facilities for collective use, such as kitchen gardens, laid out in the form of a planetary botanical garden, to allow the participatory planning of a “new piece of city” or of a new city next to Milan. This is the work of the international summer school at Cascina Triulza, which is promoted together with the George Brown University in Toronto.

This is further confirmation of the utility of the International Exhibition, of its role as a driving force behind design, as well as of criticism of the system, and one that is capable of generating new and innovative prospects for the contemporary world.

It is with this breadth of vision that the Triennale looks to its future, and to the Exhibitions that are already lining up on the horizon.
My Triennale

Clarice Pecori Giraldi
Until just a few years ago, my professional activity focused mainly on the so-called plastic arts, in the form of painting and sculpture from various ages. Everything in my background and education had led me to that world, where I acquired knowledge and honed my sensitivities in terms of “taste” and “tastes”. More than anything, I was led to view it as a very special world, in which value was measured using criteria that were very different from those of other commodities.

A work of art is open to many interpretations, which may be historical, iconological, sociological and stylistic. All of these give the work the uniqueness that allows it to journey through time, without ever losing the thread of empathy that binds its creator to the person who experiences it, be it a collector, an art lover or a gallery visitor.

Tastes change, but works of art maintain their value in our culture and, while this can be measured in terms of money, it nevertheless goes beyond the relativity of money, for it is a shared value and a collective heritage. Time passes but the work remains, with all its meanings and stylistic features. It will be observed and examined, interpreted or simply enjoyed, acquiring as many meanings as the eyes that are set upon it.

This is what I thought of works of art, and about works of art alone, when I was asked to join the Board of Directors of La Triennale and became its Vice-President. This was La Triennale di Milano, the shrine of architecture and design, as it is known.

The place certainly wasn’t new to me, and nor were the disciplines it promoted. I’d seen lots of exhibitions, and some wonderful ones too, in Italy and abroad. The themes will be different, I thought, as will the objects, and especially the point of view: how can the uniqueness and durability of a work of art be conveyed by modern architecture and design?

I realised almost immediately that La Triennale is a constantly changing organism. Exhibitions open and close one after the other and the reception areas, the library, restaurants, bookshop, theatre and garden are frequented by the most diverse sectors of the public. Despite the “triennial” in its name, La Triennale works all year round, because this was the decision made some years ago, when the idea of a periodical international exhibition seemed to be a cultural instrument of the past, superseded by the breakneck speed of the latest communication technologies.

But, almost immediately, the Board changed strategy, the “Grande Triennale” should return to the international stage. In the meantime, design biennials and triennials had multiplied and design weeks prospered throughout the world and new ones popped up every year.

La Triennale had for too long given up its privilege as an institution permanently recognised by the Bureau International des Expositions. The BIE gives it unparalleled authority as a custodian of historical memory and as a witness and promoter of the evolution of architecture and design, with historical forays into urban planning, industrial production, fashion, jewellery, and so on, through to creative disciplines with practical purposes...

And so the Board launched a new International Exhibition. It set up the Advisory Committee, set the theme as “21st Century. Design after Design” and, in agreement with the BIE, decided that this XXI Triennale would take place in 2016. The date has been respected and the Exhibition is now open.
In the meantime, the fact that I am often at the Palazzo dell’Arte and that I am a member of the Advisory Committee has helped change the convictions I originally had when I took up my new post. My background in the history of art has brought me back to the applied arts, a sector in which I had not worked much but which, by way of proto-industrial artefacts, is the one that led to the industrial arts of the twentieth century, where La Triennale plays the lead role.

My long acquaintance with ancient art, which I cannot fail to compare with Muzio’s Palazzo, makes me see the much-lauded or controversial architecture of the present day with new eyes.

And it seems clear to me how the history of art is certainly a point of view, historicist by nature, but also a lens through which we can investigate all our cultural heritage. Not just that of the past but also that of creation, backed up by an immense heritage and goes through evolutions and revolutions, cross-references and superimpositions, to reveal the historical complexity of the present.

It does so through aesthetics and forms, because it is this that constitutes our culture of communication. It does so by bringing together local identities – the international participants at the Triennale – in an attempt to counter or accept globalisation. It does so by identifying the aspect of the mind that is at the origin of all the disciplines it gives rise to, which is forward thinking.

But this means that La Triennale is no longer the “temple of architecture and design”… But of forward thinking… So it is this that marks it out from all the other events that have popped up in recent years… It is this that puts it at the forefront of an international event packed with excitement and expectations, and the desire to be there.

Now I can see that the function of La Triennale, which has traditionally been there to promote innovation – not mere fancies – has a far loftier responsibility: that of taking in “the new and the beautiful”, but also – through its own existence and with a critical mind, coupled with the blend of discipline and risk imposed upon it by its “historical anteriority” – bearing witness to the wonderful legacy preserved within its walls. Walls that are always ready to change their appearance, and yet that always remain true to the principles of those who built them.

Much of this absolute uniqueness is the work of the BIE, which has granted La Triennale a unique privilege and a role similar to that of the needle in a compass.
Behind XX1T

The definition of its title and themes

Pierluigi Nicolin
The decision to relaunch the Triennale di Milano after a 20-year pause raised questions over how the International Exhibition could build on the legacy of the Triennale while facing down the challenges of the 21st century. The Advisory Committee for the XXI Triennale was tasked with setting these themes and guidelines, and was responsible for deciding how the themes would be implemented in order to reflect the state of design in the modern day. This document dates from December 2013 and is a compilation of the guidelines drawn up by the Advisory Committee. The notes were based on initial discussions and ultimately led to the establishment of the themes and titles of the XXI Triennale.

In announcing the twenty first Exhibition in 2016, La Triennale is putting the spotlight on the title, “21st Century: Design after Design”, the two themes it intends to concentrate on over the next two years. The term “21st Century” puts the emphasis on the extreme present-day relevance of the new century, conveying a perception of discontinuity with the myths of the twentieth century, which were those of unlimited growth, globalisation, and the definitive assertion of particular economic, financial, productive and other models. “Design after Design”, on the other hand, conveys the wish to deal with the changes that affect the very concept of design. We can also consider the dual meaning of the term “after” as it concerns the near future. It might point to an “after”, in the sense of design made subsequent to, or in spite of, the twentieth century, which is to say a vision that forces its way in as an antagonist, despite the persistence of conditions created by the previous century.

In any case, the title conveys the idea of a contemporary situation that is to be interpreted as a future that is right here, right now, like in certain science-fiction novels that paint a fresco of a not-too-distant future that appears to have taken our present to the extreme. This science fiction, that of a new approach to design which is increasingly part of our present world, is entirely focused on exploring current directions that will make the future, whether for better or for worse.

As part of its constant commitment to face the future, ever since 1923, the Triennale has alternated moments of optimism in design with confidence in the progress of the Modern Movement – the
Triennales of Zanuso, Gio Ponti, and others – with others in which these certainties have wavered, inducing those involved to focus on the attractiveness of the exhibition as such – the Triennales of Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, Umberto Eco, Ettore Sottsass, and others. More recently, there have been experiments with a philological and post-modern approach, with exhibitions of a thematic/museological nature that constituted the late-twentieth century approach. The Palazzo dell’Arte still bears the traces of these events and, as it prepares to become the epicentre of the XXI Triennale in 2016, it will build on this legacy and turn itself into an authentic “hyper-place”, right at the centre of the events, which will be held all around the city of Milan.

La Triennale will publish a list of topics that are to be examined in 2016 in such a way that, from 2014, the production model of the Exhibition programme can take shape with its own graphics and communication format. During the intervening two years there will be meetings and conferences, and books and information packs will be published. There will also be introductory exhibitions, blogs, and more, transforming the start-up programme into an innovative journey of formulation and communication of content. The public will thus be able to follow the Exhibition as it takes shape. Issues will include the huge spread of design skills throughout the nations of the world (from Europe to America, Asia and Africa), together with the rise of the global market, and the increasingly transversal nature of design with the gradual breakdown of borders between architecture, urban planning, design, landscape architecture, communication and other disciplines. The new ways in which they interact will be examined, along with the importance of the discussion about public property, the ongoing debate on the concept of innovation, and the post Fordist approach adopted by new designers, partly thanks to new technologies such as digital manufacturing. It will also look at a new vision of the city of Milan, where the Triennale is based, as an experimental area and an incubator of new forms of expertise, and much more besides. These are all suggestions to be submitted for examination by an international advisory committee consisting of experts in the various disciplines involved in the project.

The Advisory Committee will have the task of selecting those who will represent and investigate the state of design in the world of the twenty-first century as indicated by the theme “Design after Design”. Wishing to continue with the two key features of the Triennale mentioned above – the presentation of innovative content and the high quality of the exhibitions – the XXI Triennale of 2016 aims to create the intense participatory atmosphere of a festival coupled with the interactive quality,
emotiveness and the great spatial and architectural identity of a hyper-place. Moving beyond the idea of a fair, or of a traditional exhibition in pavilions, for example, may lead to the formula of pavilions representing a country being abandoned in favour of a more flexible environment, more like a sort of concept store – a place simply endowed with meaning. It can involve the mise en abyme of the name of the country or of the institution that organises it, reflecting a desire to concentrate primarily on the themes of the exhibition.

Since the XXI Triennale will last for five months, a wide-ranging programme of temporary events – “festivals” – will be put on. Within the context of the Expo, this will create opportunities for visits, debates, lectures, conferences, bookshops, training courses and workshops. It will interact closely with the international training areas, and with expert design teams and production facilities. The Triennale aims to create a “hyper-place”, around itself and the Palazzo dell’Arte, with its own special brand of design, as it has also done so successfully on other occasions, with a view to creating new processes and starting up new relationships between different parts of the world and with other institutions.

The Triennale ultimately intends to continue with its tradition of design, adopting an approach that is different from events dominated by the culture of show-business and hyper-consumption. These guidelines have been drawn up in order to prepare a plan of intent for the 2016 Exhibition, and to outline the agenda of a meeting that is to be held in Milan in early 2014 with all the members of the Advisory Committee. The seminar of this initial meeting will to all intents and purposes mark the start of operations for the XXI Triennale.

16 December 2013
The XX1 Triennale

Arturo Dell’Acqua Bellavitis
The XXI Triennale offers visitors a vast array of events devoted to design, or rather to Design after Design. Not only does this come in a long and sweeping programme with a whole series of exhibitions, events, conferences, festivals and meetings (from 2 April to 12 September 2016), but it is spread out over the city of Milan and its province, bringing together in a unified programme and under a single banner the principal centres of art and design in the city and opening them up to an international public.

Within this overall programme, the historical Palazzo dell’Arte in Viale Alemagna is, more than ever, the real heart of the XXI Triennale, with the ninth edition of the Design Museum, which has been opened for the occasion, and with the various exhibitions that will come one after another throughout the six-month period, focusing on aspects of design that have so far been somewhat neglected.

The subject of the ninth edition of the Museum is W: Women in Italian Design, a wide-ranging, multifaceted look at the contribution made by women to Italian design over more than a century. Its analysis is especially fitting at a time when, as Claudio De Alberti, the president of La Triennale, pointed out: “The GDP of Italy would rise by about 13.6%” if the employment rate of women were equal to that of men. An initial response to the theme of “Design after Design” might therefore be to call for design with greater participation by women, not so much as a means to achieve emancipation as one of creating real potential for growth. The dedication and effort of the female designers who are now celebrated by the Museum (not all of whom are as famous as they should be), coupled with the incredible quantity of studies and, as we can see here, the value of the contributions made by so many Italian women, give a good idea of how design can continue to evolve. While it is true that “creativity is neither male nor female” (de Bevilacqua) it is equally true that design is still subject to a “considerable predominance of men on the business front” (Cappellieri). At the same time, however, the message the Museum is sending to the world of exhibitions clearly shows a whole range of examples and case studies of how Italian design and fashion may be one of the most egalitarian sectors in this country.

We like to think that the success stories of Italian design may also be due to the intrinsic nature of design, as a discipline that is free and open, not dogmatic, and one that is capable of adopting innovative interpretations and ideas. It explicitly promotes creativity and thus also, implicitly (with no need for proclamations), values that have neither colour nor gender, such as equality, sharing, commitment and dedication. These are guiding principles that the Museum offers to the world as a possible legacy, as the intangible remains of what comes “after” design.

And indeed the poetic exhibition devoted to Neo Prehistory, curated by Andrea Branzi and Kenya Hara, also focuses on remains and findings with equal passion and freedom.

Arturo Dell’Acqua Bellavitis
President of the Triennale Design Museum
Architect, Full Professor of Exhibit Design at Politecnico di Milano
The hundred objects poetically collected by the two curators are linked to as many verbs in the infinitive, symbolising human activities and the “vital forces” illustrated by a world of things in which the idea of the project has lost the “project for itself” (Branzi). Starting with a natural pebble, a truly beautiful and perfect symbol of existing in its purest, most natural form, we are taken through to the first flints hewn out by the hand of man, and on to the most advanced contemporary technology in the form of smart devices, carbon fibre prostheses and digital models of artificial life. Like this, the exhibition symbolically leads to the regeneration of life itself, as though it were turning design and the planning of all things into a sort of inherent virtue that appears and then disappears without any intervention by man.

In practice, design after design also turns out to be design without design, along the course of a very long history that undoubtedly shatters the more usual principles of design history. After the great all-embracing utopias and visions of the past, in this highly complex, fragmented age of ours, with all its contradictions, design no longer claims to be a smooth, harmonious process.

And indeed, Branzi and Hara offer us a similar degree of discontinuity in design practices and operating procedures, when they talk, as designers, not only to visitors and experts but also, and especially, to other designers. This is because all the objects in the exhibition show different forms of evolution, for the evolution of human desire is the driving force that created these objects, which are at once “beautiful and fierce” (Hara). This is true to the point that they have now led us into a sort of twilight zone in which we need to stop and rethink and re-examine the history of mankind “with a stern but also benevolent eye” (Hara), to ensure that an acceleration of desire does not lead to a race in which man continues to inflict enormous damage to his own kind and to the world.

With a similar focus on the key issues of contemporary society, the Palazzo dell’Arte is also putting on an exhibition devoted to the Multicultural Metropolis, in which design is used to find the right balance in order to build bastions of coexistence and survival not just for weaker cultures but also for a fruitful “biodiversity” of design, which is now subject to standardising forces that know no borders.

Design after Design is ultimately the potential for continuing to change views and perspectives, even when destiny has already been written and history tells us of an unstoppable development that only art is able to combat. By turning into art in the service of life, design can transform this development into a force for renewal. In this context, therefore, not only analyses of interior design (the Stanze in the Palazzo dell’Arte), but also the other exhibitions that are on their way, and indeed the entire programme of events, convey a multiple vision. This reflects the spirit of the Museum as it has been for a number of years now: a spirit that we believe can not only help understand and interpret design but also, and especially, that can assist the practice of design. It encourages creativity and innovation while also showing how design is not a way of crystallising the past, but rather it is the constant movement of living, breathing matter.
As we have seen, the Palazzo dell’Arte is but the heart of the XXI Triennale and, to add variety to variety and pluralism to pluralism, the Triennale is now expanding its network of events more than ever. It is covering many miles and involving other leading institutions in the city and province of Milan in a choral reflection on design. The first of these institutions is the Museo delle Culture (Mudec), with a significant exhibition that has an evocative and intentionally cryptic title: Sempering. Even though the world of architects and designers may be familiar with the name of the German architect and theoretician Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), the general public may not know the neologism that derives from his name, and that appears here as a gerund. This is indeed one of those cases in which a name, and not just that of the architect of neoclassicism, but also that of the exhibition itself, acts as an omen or, more prosaically, a planning strategy (nomen omen, as they used to say...). Once again, exactly as we saw in the case of Branzi and Hara, it is worth noting that it is a verb – an action taking place, caught as it unravels – that indicates the type of design. In this case, it is the design of all those artefacts (objects and architecture) in which the act of construction leaves a trace of itself and acquires importance also in formal terms. Semper is therefore viewed particularly in terms of his theories and his “cataloguing of the actions that man can exert upon matter or upon its components, in order to transform them into parts of our living environment: from stacking to assembling, from carving to weaving” (Zucchi). Cino Zucchi, the curator of the exhibition, together with Luisa Collina, also notes how “there is intentionally no distinction between architecture and design in the exhibition; various contemporary works are arranged and seen through this grid of eight simple actions that, when combined, encourage us to “think with our hands”, mixing the freshness of inventiveness with the safe, patient approach inherited from our crafts tradition.” An architect-designer thus traces out a theoretical-practical line for architects and designers, taking up

By turning into art in the service of life, design can transform this development into a force for renewal

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Neo Prehistory VESPA
150 T.A.P. (Truppe Aeree Paracadutate)
1956

[Image of a Vespa motorcycle]
what has already been theorised by Stefano Micelli (a member of the Advisory Committee) in his *Futuro artigiano*. However, for the first time, here it is also backed up by examples on different scales, with an identical view of design and architecture, the outcome of a long modernist tradition that has possibly left its greatest legacy in Milan, under the slogan “from spoon to city”. In the minds of the curators, when craftsmanship encounters design it can achieve the victory of individual solutions over universal ones and of exceptions over rules, as the only true answer to the complexities of our contemporary world. This route appeared to have been already traced out when the Compasso d’Oro was awarded to Micelli’s book a couple of years ago, in a sense heralding some of the hot topics of this exhibition.

*Sempering* expresses “a question about the possible directions to take after two redeeming premises of ‘modern thought’ disappeared: that of ‘mass production’ as the solution to many problems of an economic and environmental nature, and that of the indisputable value of objects or buildings designed for the ‘average man’, who represented universal needs and who was thus not subject to local opinions or habits” (Zucchi).

So it is not just a matter of semantics but an actual question of scope, going beyond Micelli’s fruitful intuitions and actually pointing to a new design practice as well as to a new theoretical approach.

The history of Italian design has for decades been (and still is) deeply indebted to the vast, generous work of Renato De Fusco, even though this might now appear to...
be substantially undone. This is true from the very definition of “industrial design” as part of the “production of objects, based on a design, with functional and aesthetic values, that can be reproduced in unlimited numbers thanks to industrial technology.” I believe that De Fusco himself would see in this particular and multiple vision more of a posthumous victory by William Morris and John Ruskin over the likes of Henry Cole and Paxton, and simply yet another swing of the pendulum of design between opposing tendencies that have always been in conflict, but that are actually inseparable elements of a single, perpetual movement (more than of some Darwinian evolution).

Implicit confirmation of this can be seen in the pluralism not just of the Design Museum, but also of the XXI Triennale as a whole. In addition to those mentioned so far, other exhibitions will be put on, at the HangarBicocca contemporary art centre, and also at the Villa Reale in Monza, where there will be an exhibition devoted to the world of the automobile, curated by Quattroruote magazine. With “the intention of outlining [...] the future scenario of mobility [...] it offers exciting new perspectives on the theme of private and public transportation, revealing the strong social and infrastructural implications and the wide range of both plausible and highly creative visions.” Also the Pirelli Headquarters and the Fabbrica del Vapore, which both have remnants of industrial architecture, and the University of Milan, with its historic cloisters, and institutions like the Politecnico University of Milan and the Museo della Scienza e della Tecnica will be part of this multi-venue museum system.

On this occasion, La Triennale does not simply intend to illustrate the state of the art or the historiography or theory of design. On the contrary, it also intends to give real inspiration and an international stage to those who, for many years now, have been working to create increasingly efficient museum systems, in the sincere belief that the cultural institutions and museums of the future in Italy can and must be spread throughout the land.
International Participants
The Design Project

Alessandro Colombo
The supranational dimension of the Triennale has always placed the theme of International Participants, i.e. the presence of participating countries and institutions, as a central problem in the design of spaces. Many projects in various editions have been memorable, but they have always faced, in different ways, the problem within the confines of the Palazzo dell’Arte and the Parco Sempione.

On this occasion, the XXI Triennale broadened its horizons to the whole city and involved other venues and institutions in hosting the event. From this flows the main theme of the project: designing a ‘coordinated image’ that allows to the presence of the event to be recognised in locations not usually correlated with the Triennale, and to define where countries can exhibit their proposals in buildings with different types and characteristics. There are two elements that we place behind the project: the “sign” that allows visitors to recognise the event and the “door” that allows visitors to get into the event and, therefore, enter the various countries.

The geometric generating element is the triangle that, when extruded, becomes the stele – the “sign”. The composition of steles becomes the portal – the “door” – which allows the public to enter the exhibition, and which connects and unites the passage from one country to another. Steles and portals are then characterised by a corner “flat” that can be used to identify one’s location thanks to colour coding.

Depending on the specific needs of the place, the portal may be “dismantled”, it composes and decomposes to solve the various space requirements.

This simple system has allowed us to design the organisation of the spaces with a common trait, a spatial coordinate image that follows the sequence of countries without the interruption of corridors or passages, allowing visitors to flow freely from one country to another in a seamless manner. Each “door” discloses the country in which we find ourselves and announces the country in which we are going to enter. In some special cases, the portals can also intervene to dialogue with the design of each individual country.

Symbolically, the steles are gathered in front of the entrance to the Palazzo dell’Arte, on Viale Alemania, in a festive group that makes reference to the various venues around the city. This highlights the Palazzo dell’Arte as the starting point of the fascinating journey proposed by XXI Triennale to discover the theme “21st Century. Design After Design”.
Triennali and XX1T
The seismographs of the design scene

Matteo Vercelloni
“EXPOSITION: A motive for the ravings of the nineteenth-century”. With this terse statement, in his “Dictionary of Received Ideas and Sottisiers”, published as an appendix to his novel “Bouvard et Péchuchet”, written between 1874 and 1880 and left unfinished, Gustave Flaubert summarised the climate and the euphoria caused by the Universal Expositions of his time.

Certainly something has changed since the celebrations and architectural glorification of the “magnificent and progressive results” of the nineteenth-century Expos and the pursuit of architectural wonders typical of these events: today, greater stress is placed on values associated with a culture of sustainability and environmental awareness, the synergistic contamination of disciplines in design and the breaking down of their academic boundaries. In this regard, the theme of “Design after Design” at the XXI International Exhibition of the Milan Triennale appears as a symbolic slogan of emblematic reference, an opportunity to rethink design as a planning activity whose goal is the transformation of the artefacts that surround us and accompany our lives.

However, the definition of spaces, the layouts of temporary architecture, and the contents of the exhibitions triggered by the Triennale and hosted not only in Milan’s Palazzo dell’Arte but also dotted around the city and surroundings as a form of multi-venue cultural event, play an important role as the joint and physical image of the event. In his “Expositions. Littérature et architecture au XIXème siècle” (Paris, 1989), Philippe Hamon writes: “As an architectural phenomenon, the expo is both the (architectural and rhetorical) place of rationality, but also of eclecticism, at the same time of bric-à-brac and organisation; the expo is both utilitarian and picturesque; a place of fun and also a place for the presentation of knowledge; exemplary and “universal”, it is also temporary, removable and transient. A ‘Magasin d’éducation’, it is also ‘recreation’”.

In order to understand the philosophy of XXIT and the role of the International Expo organised in 2016 by the Triennale, which after twenty years returns with the conviction of its original ‘official’ form, it is useful to grasp its historical roots and role over time as seismograph of the design scene associated with the design and architecture that developed firstly at the Esposizioni Internazionali d’Arte Decorativa in Monza and then from 1933 at the Milan Triennali that replaced them, widening the investigation to the themes of design.

The events held at the Villa Reale in Monza revealed the first problems associated with the birth of ‘modern design’, and its link with a broader idea of space, of ‘possible architecture’. The goal of the Expo, the crowning of the process of affirmation of industrial culture, was to develop and stimulate the relationships between art and nascent industrial production, in a synergistic comparison made explicit by the solutions on display, by the embryonic cross-fertilisation between different disciplines and creative realities. The choice of Monza as a venue, at the heart of Brianza, emphasised the aim of directly declaring the relationship between the theme of the exhibition, the reality of the industrial and hand-crafting district established here over the
centuries, and production excellence, linked to the applied arts and furnishings in a broad sense. The Biennale of 1927 (Mostra Internazionale delle Arti Decorative) and the first Triennale of 1930 on the one hand marked the final overcoming of the ‘rustic style’, almost as though to make clear the concept that Fascist Italy with imperial ambitions could no longer afford to use ‘dialects’ (translated into popular styles and romantic revivals) even in the furniture sector. On those occasions, the perhaps overly delicate flowers of Italian *art nouveau* (called ‘stile Liberty’) withered without hope and as protagonists of the new furnishing style, the architects of the Novecento movement began to emerge. The most significant works in the Monza exhibition of 1927 were not so much the furniture and ceramics of Gio Ponti and Emilio Lancia, the lace and crochet work by Giulio Rosso, the vases by Guido Andlovitz, the little gaming table by Tommaso Buzzi, which are themselves ‘indicators’ or ‘evidential paradigms’ – in the sense given to this term by historian Carlo Ginzburg – of the new course of Italian design. What emerged from the standpoint of innovation and programmatic proposals were instead the spaces and architecture; the extraordinary ‘workshops’ presented by the Piedmont region, in which one senses the strong synergy between architect and artist; the butcher’s shop of Felice Casorati, a kind of abstract and quiet, almost metaphysical, space that arises as a possible alternative to the emerging classicism of the Milanese Novecento. Novecento and rationalism, on the other hand, are the two faces of a multilinear modernity that would remain as a complementary combination within the architectural culture and were also reflected in that of the nascent Italian design of the following years. In the 1927 edition of the Monza expo, this was joined by the *last word* from Futurism in the form of the book pavilion designed for the Bestetti-Tumminelli publishing house by Fortunato Depero. Three years later, in 1930, the management of the Expo was to all appearances monopolised by a number of protagonists of Milanese architectural culture, including Alberto Alpago Novello,
Gio Ponti and the artist Mario Sironi. The fourth Expo marked the permanence of the event from the point of view of the state, and its three-yearly nature to ensure the necessary lapse of time for a ‘freshness’ of the proposals and designers selected. On this occasion, in which the Triennale’s role as ‘seismograph of the oscillations of Italian design’ in present and future editions was already discernible, it was not so much the industrial dimension of the production of furniture and everyday items that stood out in the works on display as the definitive association of architect and designer and the transition from the figurative tradition of the artisan to that of ‘design’, in a kind of ‘evolutionary development’ via phases spread out in time rather than in a process marked by a clear will to break with the past. One can sense an effort to promote and increase the production, support and emphasis of the Italian manufacturing system through a series of ‘dedicated’ rooms, in temporary structures built specially for the occasion, and especially in the ‘furnishing gallery’ and ‘small architecture’ in life-size scale (the “Casa del dopolavorista” by Luisa Lovarini, the “Casa delle Vacanze” by Emilio Lancia and Gio Ponti, the “Casa Elettrica” originally commissioned from Gruppo 7 and subsequently undertaken only by Luigi Figini and Cino Pollini, Piero Bottoni, Guido Frette and Adalberto Libera): all of these were programmatic examples of possible examples of modernity, continued in subsequent editions at the Palazzo dell’Arte, specially designed by Giovanni Muzio in Milan and inaugurated in 1933, with a significant number of experiments. In Milan, the fifth and sixth Triennale of Decorative and Industrial Arts thus remained points of reference in which to observe changes in ‘taste’, the birth of new forms and theories about the design of the home and its furnishings, which had already emerged in earlier exhibitions in Monza, but were here expanded both in terms of intensity of development and in the physical extent of the layouts.

If in 1930 in Monza one could note a significant foretaste of the programme synthesising architecture, interior design and decoration, especially with the construction of the three small experimental houses in the Parco, at the fifth Milan Triennale, the directors – Gio Ponti, Mario Sironi and Carlo Alberto Felice – oversaw the creation of more than thirty temporary buildings dotted throughout Parco Sempione consisting of spaces designed to the last detail, including furnishings and decorations. This was a collection of ‘possible modernities’, declined in several poetically intense forms, in which the role of the architect appears central, emphasising his role as a ‘director’ and interpreter of the contemporary scene. His brief now also included the design of furniture and everyday items as being part of a global programme that also reintroduced art in the form of frescos, as an indispensable tool for the general process of a “higher artistic unity governed by architecture”, as the exhibition programme put it.

In Domus magazine, Gio Ponti described the Mostra dell’Abitazione as “a living debate on the theme of the home, represented by life-sized models”, but despite the inter-disciplinary claims, in their compositional variability and in their diverse modernist forms, those models ended by finding their perfect interlocutors and users only among the upper-middle class; these new visual forms and expressions in the field of home life were thus destined only for a limited, even ‘niche’ public. The ideal ‘tenants’ of many of the experimental buildings sum up this concept: “Villa studio per un artista” (Studio villa for an artist) by Figini and Pollini, “La casa dell’aviatore” (The aviator’s
house) by Scoccimarro, Zanini and Midena, “La casa del sabato per gli sposi” (The Saturday home for wedding couples) by Portaluppi, BBPR, Sabbioni and Santarella, “La casa di campagna per un uomo di studio” (The country home for a scholarly man) by Moretti and others, “La casa per le vacanze di un artista sul lago” (The holiday home of an artist on the lake) by Terragni, Mantero, Cereghini, Lingeri and other protagonists the Como group, along with “Casa coloniale” (The colonial house) by Piccinato, and the small colony of “Cinque case per vacanze” (Five holiday homes) by Griffini and Bottini, to name but a few. All are aimed at a precise social category: from the artist to the sportsman, from the colonial landowner to a wealthy married couple. Among these many villas and exclusive homes, the “Gruppo di elementi di Case Popolari” (Group of Public Housing elements) by Piero Bottoni and Enrico Griffini attempted to place the issue of social housing within the context of the new modernity. An effective technical and constructive experimentation were also expressed by the “Casa a struttura d’acciaio” (House with a steel frame) by Pagano and Albinì, and by the “Abitazione tipica struttura d’acciaio” (Typical home with steel frame) by Daneri and Vietti.

The largely ‘exclusive’ character of the ‘total architectural product’ of the houses at the fifth Triennale in no way diminishes their experimental nature and the effort to forge links between architecture and furnishings that they express. These are buildings that remain exemplary models in the history of architecture and Italian design. They constitute architecture and spaces in which the themes of rationalisation, rationalism and rationality emerge as policy statements, and where the furnishing takes on the lead role in the formation of the interior space. Along with the rationalist proposals, there were other exceptional ones linked to that “necessary luxury” called for by Ugo Ojetti, poet, novelist and art critic, in a letter to Gio Ponti published in Pegaso magazine in January 1933. Ojetti reflected on how “the democratic chimera and then poverty came to humble the decorative arts, and not only them”; the writer noted how poor veneering and finishing of furniture were
increasingly used to embellish furniture for the petty bourgeoisie: furniture that was “smooth, shiny as dictated by fashion, but also ready in the first damp days of winter or dry days of summer to swell and come unstuck; rationally, I mean, in line with the reason for their lie”. Ojetti contrasted this fiction and the structural poverty of contemporary furniture with the value of necessary luxury: “the important thing is not to have many items in the home or to wear things merely because they are showy; the point is to have even just one item, so long as it be beautiful in form and sincere in the use of materials; the important thing is that this object serves as model in an exhibition and, if it has the good fortune to pass the years and centuries intact, to show posterity what art was for us...”. This call for necessary luxury was answered by such as Guglielmo Ulrich with his living room in the Galleria dell’Arredamento, a space that astonished visitors for its elegance and craftsmanship in the use of materials. The walls were covered with mica and onyx from Morocco which, coupled with a Belgian black marble floor, enveloped the furnishings of simple, compact forms, but with bold decoration: linings of shagreen, parchment, silver and ebony, palm wood, polar seal leather, snake, reindeer suede, ‘mardorè’ kid leather, silk and ivory for small details. Everything was placed on large white rugs of polar bear fur. This was a ‘necessary luxury’ to which not even Gio Ponti was immune: in his arrangement of a “Camera da letto” (Bedroom), he was not above the use of silk, bronze, crystal and walnut in a linear sumptuousness enhanced by a broad-ranging dimension. In all cases, these were valid expressions of a new modernity in which the figure of architect-artist-creator was encouraged and supported over industry, thus highlighting the value of the crafted nature of Italian furniture, still partly disassociated from industrial production processes.

In the years between the fifth and sixth Triennale (1933 and 1936), the rationalist aesthetic expanded (in line with its methodological claims to ‘total design’) from architecture to furnishing, becoming ‘style’. It represented a language that ambiguously set out to respond both to a mass market with the intended use of mass-production, and to a more exclusive demand based on luxury and unique pieces. This was a situation Ponti discussed in November 1935 in the pages of Domus, speaking against the “overwhelming wave of bad taste that today dresses forms declared and touted as being modern, [...] colossal, bad furniture, all edges and tips with absurd ‘adornment’ that is all chrome metal, like in a bar”.

On the other hand, there were signals of ‘rejection’ of the rationalist language emerging from several quarters; Margherita Sarfatti, godmother to the Milanese Novecento, commented in this way on the Mostra delle Arti Decorative in the pages of “Nuova Antologia” (July 1936): “We need voluptuousness: that indispensable superfluousness that is the luxury of the spirit, even in the forms and the materials before our eyes and which transmit the sensations of touch. We are hungry for all that is soft, curved, rich”.

Despite criticism and its substantially ‘elitist’ character, rationalism was called to the fore in the persons of Pagano and Persico, invited to organise the sixth Milan Triennale of 1936, still devoted to the problem of the home. However, the “Mostra
dell’Abitazione” in this case did not seek, as in the previous edition, to propose an overview of experimental designs (even though the exhibition took place in a new temporary pavilion designed by Pagano himself), but rather to address the issue of the ‘technical aspects of home life’ in which the analysis was to provide solutions for social, economic, hygienic, urban and design aspects of home life; in other words, the exhibition was to go beyond ‘taste’ and the ‘style’ to focus on the issues of standardisation and object typing, in line also with the Fascist autarchic programme translated by Ponti into a call for a “victorious Italian quality” extended to the decorative arts.

The central role of the architect as the figure responsible for a complete programmatic and moral overhaul of the structures and spaces of everyday life was reaffirmed, as was his position as a mediator between society and industry, between creative expression and production methods. A role which, as Edoardo Persico indicated, was to be found at the operational level in the design and study of “kitchens, armchairs, coffee makers, windows, things for everyone, models for industry”, at the same time expressing “a new morality, the need for order, hierarchy, seriousness, discipline”. The idea of ‘total design’ was reaffirmed in the programme of the sixth Triennale, divided into two sections dedicated to the home and furnishings, in an effort to indicate the possibilities of architectural design within the domestic environment; from seismograph of new expressions of design, the Triennale now also sought to be a place in which the near future could be prefigured.

Alongside to the organisation of the “Mostra dei sistemi costruttivi e dei materiali per l’edilizia” (Exhibition of construction systems and materials for the building industry), which presented serial and standard production concepts relating to the construction industry, Pagano’s work for the Mostra dell’Arredamento (Furnishing Show) was directed towards introducing furniture design into the broader debate of rational architecture, finding effective links with the potential of industrial production. In this sense, the room dedicated to modern home life with projects by Franco Albini, Ignazio Gardella, Giulio Minoletti and others, with different accommodation solutions, was inspired by and responded to three basic principles of reference: applying the concept of ‘series’ to the design and organisation of the home and its furnishings, a consideration concerning the modularity and convertibility of home furnishings, removing from the modern home all materials and solutions associated with the concept of ‘luxury’ and uniqueness. This constituted a reinterpretation in a programmatic and operational key of the metaphor for a machine for living, expressed by Sant’Elia and taken up by Le Corbusier, understood as a design awareness whereby the study and definition of interior and furnishings should be accorded the same care, precision and attention as the design of gears and mechanisms for a machine. From this point of view, the contrast between objet-sentiment and objet-outil that Le Corbusier described in 1925 in his “L’art décoratif d’aujourd’hui” became newly topical. Furnishings became a ‘tool’ projected towards serial production, a theme that the seventh Triennale of 1940 would tackle directly.

The relationship between furniture and industrial production was addressed directly in the seventh Triennale of 1940. Giuseppe Pagano was the curator of the “Mostra
The study and definition of interior and furnishings should be accorded the same care, precision and attention as the design of gears and mechanisms for a machine

In the eighth Triennale of 1947 directed by Piero Bottoni, the section on furnishings was curated by Franco Albini and Luciano Canella, along with Anna Castelli Ferrieri, Ettore Sottsass Jr. and others. The catalogue-guide states: “The organisation of the furnishings exhibition is based on the premise that furnishings should not be understood as interior decoration and that each piece, when conditioned by a predetermined composition in terms of taste, does not merely satisfy a functional need. [...] The exhibition aims to establish the study of all furnishings responding to an essential need, identified not in accordance with a minimum standard but through a wider assessment of physiological and psychological needs”. This edition of the Triennale recorded the formation of a multi-faceted discipline; the issue of reconstruction was tackled with the building of the “QT8”, an entire low-cost residential district in Milan, in which the conception of the planned interiors replaced the problem of ‘taste’ with that of the configuration “of a catalogue of useful objects, an inventory of clear principles and honest programmes”, as stated the summary of the exhibition published in “Comunità”, highlighting the importance of mass production over that of the making of unique designer pieces. A transformation which, however, in the furnishings sector appeared more as a trend than a production reality, but which in the individual and collective transport sector found a fertile breeding ground. In essence, recalled Manolo De Giorgi, “the ‘proletarian’ Triennale of 1947, focusing on the theme of low-cost furnishing [...], fell headlong into the impasse of a new Existenzminimum”.

As in the case of the richest exhibitions from the point of view of composition and style – such as those organised in Como by Ico Parisi (“Prima Mostra dell’Arredamento” [First furnishing exhibition], September 1945) and in Milan by Fede Cheti in his shop/gallery in via Manzoni in 1947 and in 1948, (“Lo stile nell’arredamento moderno” [Style in modern furnishing], and “il mobile singolo” [the single piece of furniture]) – the limit of the exhibitions highlighted at the eighth Triennale was, despite best intentions, to remain anchored to the notion of the single item of furniture, the ‘artisanal’ model
whereby furniture, although not designed for a specific space and thus programmatically ‘repeatable’ and supposedly ‘serial’ and independently and freely available in every Italian home, still seemed far removed from the idea of an industrial design produced by machine and in significant numbers. In the 1950s, the Milan Triennale was again a point of reference for Italian design: the ninth edition of 1951, the tenth of 1954 and the eleventh of 1957 make it possible to observe the development of industrial design through exhibitions and debates. The “Forma dell’utile” (‘The shape of all that is useful’) was the exhibition at the ninth edition that for the first time presented a section entirely dedicated to industrial design, albeit explored from a substantially formal aesthetic approach, without indicating operational proposals for the development of design in the Italian manufacturing sector. Alongside the exhibition on industrial design, there was a section devoted to experimental furniture, “Arredamento e mobili isolati”, (‘Individual furnishings and furniture’, curated by P. Calderara and C. Ulrich), which displayed a group of pieces designed by Franco Albini summarising the start of the ‘made in Italy’ guidelines: craftsmanship and industry, series and typological innovation, research into materials. In this context, Domus magazine in April 1952 published an article by Alberto Rosselli entitled “Manifesto per il disegno industriale” (‘A manifesto for industrial design’) in which he stated: “This is the moment for industrial design, for taste, for the aesthetic of production; as it is also for culture and for technology; for civilisation and for custom; for the home, for building, and above all for our Italy, whose raw material, whose vocation has always been (wonderfully, and always by divine grace) that of – you will forgive the old-fashioned expression – creating beauty’.

At the tenth Triennale of 1954, industrial design was again the protagonist at both the Congresso Internazionale dell’Industrial Design, where Enzo Paci placed engineers, architects and designers alongside philosophers, writers and critics, and in the “Mostra dell’industrial design” (curated by the Castiglioni brothers, M. Nizzoli,
A. Morello and others) wonderfully arranged by the Castiglioni and Michele Provincial, which presented 150 objects of the world’s best industrial design production. Certain fundamental aspects were highlighted: the strong and consolidated presence of Scandinavian, German and British products, the verification of a concept of design understood as “the problem of form in the industrial production process constituting the fundamental encounter between art and industry”, and the affirmation of Italian Bel Design. The international exhibition was accompanied by others on the “Standard”, the “Home” and “Individual furniture”, underlining the propensity of Italian design to focus on the domestic landscape. The young furniture industrialist, Dino Gavina, sensed the role of Milan as a city of change in the field of design and the Triennali as the point of reference for new projects; Lucio Fontana at the tenth Triennale of 1954 introduced him to a meeting between the Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni brothers, Carlo Scarpa and Luigi Caccia Dominioni, who with him would produce some of the most important pieces in the history of Italian design. This professional and creative partnership between architects and industry was to form the basis of the success and spread of Italian design as a fundamental and long-lasting point of reference in the world, which in different ways would pass down a philosophy of implementation and design quality down to the present day, involving varying generations and professionals, each with their own style, such as Ludovico Magistretti and Mario Bellini, Ettore Sottsass, Enzo Mari and Piero Fornasetti; the latter working outside any standard categorisation and only recently re-evaluated by critics who had previously regarded him merely as an eccentric decorator. Only in in 2013 was he celebrated by the Milan Triennale in a large retrospective exhibition entitled “La follia pratica”, curated by his son, Barnaba.

With the “Mostra internazionale dell’industrial design” (curated by G. Dorfles, L. Ricci, M. Zanuso, S. Asti and GF Frattini, among others), sponsored by the
ADI (the Associazione per il disegno industriale, founded in 1956 as an opportunity for innovation in contemporary design), the eleventh edition of the Triennale celebrated a broad spectrum of international industrial products from a methodological point of view divided into three sections which, as stated in the catalogue, “analyse the origins and the scope of industrial design with particular reference to the principle of integration between science, art and society in the modern world of production”.

In briefly reconstructing the origins and aims of the Triennali of Monza and Milan, the intention has been to highlight the nature of research and observatory of the design scene that has pervaded the history of this great Milanese cultural institution to this day and which the spirit and the goals of XX1T reiterate once more.

This is not the right place to present a detailed history of the subsequent Triennali, their values and their increasingly multidisciplinary nature, but rather to emphasise their continuing role as seismograph, a critical tool for recording Italian and international creativity, a continuously evolving incubator of the various aspects of design culture examined with a varied and always topical eye. The Triennale di Milano has in its 83 years represented all of this, and it is to this history that the new XXI Triennale of 2016 refers, reviving its values and programmatic approach.

Decade after decade, the Triennale has, as we have seen, tackled the themes of rationalist modernity and the Novecento; in the 1950s and 60s it examined the development of an industrial culture and design together with a growing focus on social phenomena. The city, its anthropogenic landscapes and issues of urban planning were instead the subject of investigation during the 1980s, together with aspects of the domestic universe explored from the point of view of history and archetypes, but also through futuristic events such as the “casa telamatica” (“networked house”) by Ugo La Pietra (1982) and the “telecomandata” one (“remote controlled”) by Andrea Branzi, with Giovanni Levanti and Claire Brass (1986). It then stepped into the new millennium describing globalisation, ecology and environmental sustainability, more and more and necessarily broadening its brief to include all of the creative universe: photography and advertising, fashion and graphic design, new information technologies, without forgetting architecture and design, to which it has dedicated the Triennale Design Museum since 2007, which annually renews its displays, going beyond the static collection model to propose new reflections on the history and exponents of Italian design.

As Dorfles reminds us: “The Triennale has been a witness and ‘voice of conscience' during all the development of design this century, or at least during the second half of the century; it has succeeded in overcoming the rhetorical emphasis of Fascism, it has endured the shocks and blunders of the 1968 revolts; it has adapted to the advent of new technologies, to the extraordinary inventions of electronics, to virtual reality, to cybernetics; it has accepted the intervention of the New Media; and it does not disdain links with other arts – painting, sculpture, music, advertising – whenever these are applied as an integration to architectural elements”. 

This is the moment for industrial design, for taste, for the aesthetic of production; as it is also for culture and for technology; for civilisation and for custom; for the home, for building, and above all, for our Italy.
It is within this dense and multifaceted history that we should trace the momentum and philosophy of XXIT “Design after Design”, the first International Triennale Exhibition of the new millennium, which with forty international participations, installations, exhibitions and activities spread throughout the city and territory aims to “decode the new millennium and identify the changes that involve the very idea of planning”. The term design, which appears twice in the title of XXIT, has over time turned from being a noun into an adjective; we talk of design hotels, design restaurants, design space, as though the noun-adjective “design” were the necessary corollary for communicating a sense of quality and refinement, contemporaneity and modernity, experimentation and ‘style’. As Jeffrey Schnapp has declared: “After half a century in which it had to struggle to establish itself as a profession and independent discipline, endowed with techniques, skills and training models that were ‘its alone’, design has exploded. Exploded in a positive sense because, having won the battle for the conquest of its legitimacy as discipline, it has managed to acquire the gift of ubiquity, moving into wider and wider fields: a faculty of trade, corporate, urban and city planning culture, publicity, marketing and product design, services policy”.

In the programme presenting XXIT, there is also a stress on the concept of a “new ‘drama’ in design which consists above all in its capacity to deal with anthropological themes that classical modernity has excluded from its remit, such as death, sacredness, eros, destiny, traditions, history; a design, therefore, that abandons a striving for constant change in products and trends at the service of the market and which aims to be understood as the opposite of ephemeral”. From this point of view, design extends to behaviour and memories, indeed enlarging its scope to all that surrounds us, defining methods and functions to be in the world and in our time, as suggested at the beginning of this text.

Even though the Expo programme states that it is not one of the intentions of XXIT to “offer visions of the future”, we believe that the Milan Triennale’s repeated historical role as seismograph of creativity will nevertheless search for signals concerning our near future, as neatly summed up by the little yellow ‘receiver aerial’, a symbolic icon of the brilliant advertising campaign planned by the KesselerKramer studio of Amsterdam.
21st Century. Design After Design
New Prehistory
100 verbs

Kenya Hara
On the occasion of the XXI Triennale, Kenya Hara and Andrea Branzi have curated an exhibition entitled “Neo Prehistory - 100 Verbs”. The exhibition retraces the long journey from the instruments of ancient prehistory to the latest nano-technologies. A journey inspired by the power of “100 verbs” and “100 instruments” which, like streams of mysterious, life-giving energy, guide the viewer through the dark clouds of history and of infinite space.

**Viewpoint Looking Further to the Future**

The XXI Triennale di Milano International Exhibition “21st Century. Design After Design” provides a viewpoint looking further to the future, beyond just a few years. A perspective from ancient times through today, before human history shifts into a new chapter.

By creating tools, humans evolve their abilities and desires, and evolved abilities and desires push the evolution of new tools, until we can finally treat the entire environment as controllable. Furthermore, humanity is creating artificial intelligence that wields rationality beyond human intelligence, which is going to change types of desires into another dimension.

We still do not know what kinds of happiness or unhappiness this will create.

If design is to play a role that mediates conflicts between things and desires, we must now look back on history from a macro perspective, and consider what mankind has achieved.

The 21st Triennale “Design after Design” plays a vital role. It is an honour to participate in this Triennale, possibly a greater honour than I deserve.

**Fixed Verse Poetry: Human Desire**

Combining 100 individual tools and 100 individual verbs, we have attempted to translate the history of human desire into a kind of fixed verse poetry. We humans have extended our capabilities by means of instruments. The extension of our capabilities is synonymous with the expansion of desires. The evolution of instruments is the evolution of desires. We delude ourselves by equating evolution with progress towards sophistication; it is not only wisdom that evolves, but also folly, cruelty, and deceit. Is there really hope ahead in this evolution?

Human history has been depicted as changes in religion, politics, technology and economics, but in this exhibition we have dispensed with all of those warps and wefts of which history has been woven. In other words, our point of view is totally emancipated from factors like religion, technology, ideology and race, in order to look purely at the history of the desires of mankind.
The Triennale di Milano, revived after a 20-year hiatus, carries the theme “Design After Design”. Encouraged by this theme, we’re going to recapture the history of design from the very beginning of human history. Design has been delineated as the context of modernism, associated with the establishment of modern society; the ideology of John Ruskin and William Morris has been expressed as the origin of the ideology of design. Certainly, the concept of design might have arisen from rationality driven by modernism and the discord created by societal transformation. That’s all the more reason that it is necessary for us to review afresh the whole of human activity that leads to creating one’s environment through objects and groping for one’s way through life, and gives birth to aesthetics and philosophy. It is also necessary to think about the origin of design, or environment formation, retroactively to a point in time when humans began to walk around upright on two legs and make stoneware with newly freed hands.

First, please take a close look at the Stone Age. Stoneware is not some feeble tool invented by an undeveloped intellect, but a subtly produced object created with disciplined manual technique. The first instrument produced by humans must be fathomed from within the same wisdom and sinfulness that still resides in the human hand today. Stoneware is very beautiful, and also ferocious.

In it we can read simultaneously both mankind’s fate and its future.
In the birth of stoneware we find significance; it is the beginning of the continuing relationship between mankind and tools, the expansion of capability through the medium of objects. The evolution of mankind’s desires was accelerated by the progress from hunting and gathering to farming and settling in one place, and before long, the development of paper, the compass, and then gunpowder. Simultaneously, as wisdom advances, so do cruelty and deceit; humans harm humans, and perpetrate mistakes that pollute the environment that is supposed to secure our peace. The industrial revolution and the invention of the computer brought not only convenience and pleasure, but also inequality and social imbalance, awakening anxiety in people’s hearts.

Today, mankind is at a turning point, poised before the era of artificial intelligence, once again standing still in the twilight, and must reconsider what kind of existence it has. Consequently, now, it is most important that, taking an overall view of human history, we carefully recognise and identify our footsteps. It is with this meaning that this exhibition was made representing the theme of the Triennale di Milano, “Design After Design”.

So please reexamine the objects that humankind has created, from the Stone Age until today. They are full of originality, they are pleasant, and they are courageous. They are also cruel and merciless. I had the great pleasure of deliberating this exhibition with Mr. Andrea Branzi. Although it seems that humankind is somehow not quite as clever as we think, I was able to learn that the glitter of life lies exactly within the arena where we go on living and move forward without learning much from bitter experience, coupled with Mr. Branzi’s viewpoint, harsh yet warm in its view of human activity.
From new prehistory to the multiethnic society

Andrea Branzi
The general theme of the 21st Milan International Triennale will be “Design After Design”, whose meaning is that “the project” has lost the “project (or control) of itself”.

In this sense, it develops following an elliptical logic, returning to its prehistoric origins and crossing an obscure space where there is no horizon. Therefore the future is no longer that bright and reassuring place that 20th century Modernity had predicted it was, but rather a “continuous present” – perhaps better, perhaps worse than we may imagine.

This highly problematic exhibition is the result of successful collaboration between two designers, of different ages and nationalities, who together have delved into the long and often dramatic history of humankind, from the prehistoric period to nowadays. Therefore this exhibition does not only showcase the most recent achievements of science, but spans from flints to our current technologies (and vice versa). When following this path we are eternally uncertain about how to act, as we are never fully aware of our future.

Kenya Hara led this long and difficult humanistic research through his in-depth knowledge of the prehistoric period and his oriental approach of interpreting the formal qualities of the world as a moral duty (and not only a professional one). This research was interpreted as the result of a progression of 100 verbs, intended as a succession of waves of human energy, with the purpose of solving single social and individual needs.

What we see is a long sequence of events which has developed in an irregular manner, without ever having clear cause-effect links and without the chance to examine the future on the basis of present choices. Genius, chance, functionality, madness, violence, cruelty, discoveries and involutions follow one another according to a succession which is seemingly logical but often the fruit of chance and unpredictability of fate. After all this is the portrait of the prehistoric man but also of contemporary society, which precariously moves between risk and salvation.

One hundred verbs, or else one hundred vital driving forces, lead the visitor from primordial flints through to silicon nanotechnologies and artificial human organs. In an obscure and limitless space, we find everything from dolmens to highly-sophisticated tools as proof of how humankind develops without following a definite pattern. The development of humankind is partly the result of manual techniques and partly the outcome of an artificial intelligence which partially brightens the progress of human existence – which has always been riddled with obscurity and violence and filled with mysteries and myths.

The 21st century is radically different from the previous century and from its optimistic rationalism, in which Modernity served as a guarantee for a neat Future and Infinite Progress. Design in the previous century, which was so self-referential, elegant, intelligent and constantly new, developed ignoring two world wars, racial extermination, atomic conflicts and the big right- and left-wing dictatorships, without revealing any alteration in its code. Therefore, design chose Disciplinary History rather than Real History. On the other hand, other creative activities, such as Art,
“Prehistoric stone"
Holding
Holding objects
with five fingers.
Hands and stone meet
Music and Literature were radically influenced and regenerated by the big tragedies of the 20th century.

This new century, which is so complex and contradictory, must courageously look to the Present more than to the Future, because we are currently experiencing the most difficult step, in a reality which is more and more dense and blurred and in which politics and projects seem unable to put themselves forward as tools of order, organisation or justice. “Design After Design” refers to this discontinuity in project practices and in the way projects operate, thereby accepting Chaos not as a simple lack of order but as taking part in the law governing the universe made up of humankind and objects.

In this sense, “New Prehistory - 100 Verbs” means coexisting with a New Anthropology and New Dramaturgy, which retrace the dark paths of a world which finds no peace but only brilliant, generous, bright and risky driving forces, within a territory whose borders we ignore. Every time we are tempted to put forward again the idea of an Infinite Progress – its interpretation tools are however missing and violence lives side by side with (and sometimes coincides with) the miracles of Science.

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This new century, which is so complex and contradictory, must courageously look to the Present more than to the Future.

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Therefore, this is not about presenting a “pessimistic” scenario of the Present, but rather a “realistic” picture of it, far from utopian proposals and the old optimism of a Modernity which has proven it was not able to control what it generated. A better Future can result only from a more courageous awareness of the Present...

Uncertainty, fears and the vital energy of Prehistory once again trace out our path, towards a temporary Future, within a multiethnic society made up of seven billion people. Every person in this society represents an exception and a potential, but also an enigma that cannot be solved. On this topic I previously curated the exhibition “The Multiethnic (or “Multicultural”) Metropolis”, which develops the extreme paradoxes of “New Prehistory”.

This topic can perhaps be connected to one of the most important logics and political novelties of the 21st century: accepting “the existence of problems which cannot be solved” means indeed accepting both the limits of development and the limits of civil coexistence.

For the first time in history world population has reached seven billion people. Undoubtedly this number will increase in a staggering way in the future, sustained by the strength of Eros, pure genetic energy that Classical Modernity never took into account, if not as a generator of abstract numbers of anonymous human masses, manageable through the simple extension of liveable territories and the increase of infrastructures.

Today we know that we are talking about seven billion individuals, every one of whom defends his or her own sacred identity, uniqueness, genome, originality, story and love – which they do not want, quite rightly, to give up. Therefore complexity, contradictions and hybridisation have become reference points for those who deal with politics or projects, which were once tools generating order and organisation, while now they have to face “problems without a solution” – a new category of logic which has a strong impact on the 21st century.

Over recent decades, wars, famine and religious conflicts have fuelled vast migrations towards rich countries with established traditions of hospitality and tolerance – and therefore theoretically able to welcome this precious anthropological heritage without damaging it.

However, this multiethnic society, which formed spontaneously and is expanding rapidly, is far from being the playful Ring a Ring-o’ Roses we may imagine it is – as a result of mutual welcoming allowing every one of these ethnicities to preserve its own roots and ancient identities. In reality, in the multiethnic metropolis a global hybridisation is occurring among the 400 minorities that still exist in the world (but from the beginning of the previous century the same number of minorities have vanished).

More than 200 ethnic groups, who come from as many far-away countries, have been registered as living in Milan alone. These groups live next to us and, independently from our capacity to welcome them, form a precious melting pot of ethnicities which is destined to crumble into pieces, under the daily pressure which fatally breaks up its own valuable uniqueness. Pervaded by the invasive flows of global production, by mass information and by the coexistence with new habits, fashion,
music, cuisines and religions, these ethnic groups tend to fatally unravel. The result is a general and big hybridisation that even we lose ourselves in.

This is how the myth of a multiethnic metropolis, when encountering the leveling out effect produced by globalisation, tends to absorb the complexity of our society and of its possible cultural richness, thereby emptying it from ancient traces of worlds destined to vanish in the fog of the global market.

During the last century, we lived with the illusion that for every problem there was an adequate solution. However, nowadays the multiethnic metropolis represents a problem that cannot find a solution, but only careful humanitarian management, although ineffective.

Today fantastic accounts of territorial cultures and features and myths of ancient ethnic groups seem to be destined to waste away due to the stagnation of the societies hosting them. These societies will never be able to guarantee the identity of these groups – and perhaps not even their own identity. Identities have indeed melted into some sort of global cluster, made up of mutual tolerance and destructive coexistence. The ancient and untouched territories where these minorities were born have defined and defended themselves, but today they are spoilt by Mass Tourism – which, while on the one hand is the effect of a legitimate need to broaden one’s knowledge and may, of course, contribute to local wealth, on the other is accelerating the homologation of world geographies.

In a world polluted by its own development and poisoned by its own thirst for profit, the 21st century is paradoxically refusing the reality surrounding it. Environmental issues increasingly resemble apocalyptic prophecies, putting forward what are devastating solutions from an anthropological perspective. According to these prophecies, in order to save the world from a future catastrophe, we would have to reduce energy consumption to 10% of our current rate. This target could be reached only through very deep social and human changes that would inevitably be hard to heal.

Therefore we should also add the environmental issue to the “problems without a solution” category. This issue is urgently seeking the general benefit through a violent transformation of social patterns and production modes. Saving nature to the detriment of human balance is not an acceptable solution, because humans are a part of nature: this is yet another “problem without a solution” ...

Saving biodiversity does not correspond to saving multiethnicity, because humans are much more complex, delicate and fragile than the animal and plant kingdoms as a whole. But being delicate and fragile does not exclude (on the contrary, it implies) the use of violence, war and massacres. Indeed our history is a long list of battles, armed conflicts, destruction and invasions.

When we speak of problems without a solution, this may mean we are about to witness a shock that we could call Third World War. This is a war that, like all wars, does not solve problems, but instead elaborates them through pure violence. We are talking about the strengthening of technological research, new techniques of death and invasion strategies.
If we take a brave look at the world surrounding us, we will see that many factors make this extreme hypothesis probable. However, we are afraid to call things by their real name. Instead of Third World War, more careful synonyms are used, such as Asymmetric War, Holy War, Guerrilla, Terrorism, Suicidal Fanaticism or Post-Atomic War. In reality, this terminology is nothing but new tactics. These are names of single features of a more widespread Third World War, which is gradually coming into being before our eyes.

Politicians, intellectuals and even the military seem surprised by these unexpected features, so different from those of the previous century’s Big Wars. However, the Big Wars also developed gradually throughout the world, starting up with local battles and explosions. Only towards the end, when the final death toll reached 71,090,060, did mankind understand that the world had really been changed and shaken up by the war years.

Just as earthquake warning tremors are felt by some animals but not by humans, in a similar way the immediate danger of an explosion covering the Mediterranean region and extending further seems to remain in the limbo of paradoxical hypotheses.

Like the current metropolitan Japanese hermits (Ikikomori), we also look at the world only through IT tools and our eyes have been replaced by computer screens,
“Robotic arm”
Automating
Using a machine
or a computer
independently
from one’s hand.
Using machines
to implement
an action
the Internet, mobile phones and navigators. It looks as though a new phase of our anthropology has begun and our body has gradually lost its traditional perceptive powers – replaced by artificial equipment which is increasing the distance between us and the real world.

This New World War will not be fought with atomic weapons, but by humans themselves, by kamikazes who are ready to commit suicide and carry out indiscriminate massacres, by drones that violate territories without the use of armed forces and by remotely controlled missiles that randomly bomb whatever emits heat.

Therefore the main aim of a Universal Exhibition is not introducing visitors to the “splendid fate and development” of Progress, as the Italian writer Giacomo Leopardi once put it, but rather making visitors aware of the death potential that this involves.

The culture of the project is not unrelated to the ideological contents of this strange conflict. Indeed, it constitutes one of the main themes of the creeping clash between Islam and the West. On the one hand, we find our Project Society, which busies itself by expanding its illusory search for a Future made of order, science and industrialism. On the other, we see a society that refuses the Project and searches for the certainties of its own Middle Ages and of religious orthodoxy, ready, if necessary, for its own martyrdom or the martyrdom of infidels.

We should not forget that the organiser of the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 was Mohamed Atta, an architect who graduated in Cairo and completed a PhD in Germany. We could refer to him as a “designer” who saw in the Twin Towers the image of an exhibitionist and consumer civilisation lacking values and the symbol of a fragile and blasphemous financial Capitalism.

This centrality around which the Third World War seems to be shaping up is still not part of the problematic scenario of our Culture of the Project. This War is therefore occurring between two societies in which Religion plays a completely different role. On one side, there is inflexible theology and on the other a widespread and indifferent atheism – completely unrelated to the big anthropological themes such as life, death, fate, Eros, and the sacred, which are themes that have been debated in all Civilisations.

The 21st century has marked the definite transition of Western Society from the status of Architectural Civilisation to that of Commodity Civilisation. The secularisation induced by global markets and globalisation itself has not produced the feared homogenisation of brains and markets, but rather the difficult coexistence of ethnic minorities – and their very difficult preservation – which we mentioned earlier.

It seems we have moved from the certainty of the high civil value of building solid and permanent works – undisputed highlights of the urban scene, built on indestructible foundations and within secure boundaries – to a molecular system of exportable products, which circulate freely across the vast territory of a market extending from China to Australia. These products are marketable, lack foundations, can be piled up one onto the other and are capable of entering any household.
This dynamic reality de-territorialises the actual concept of city, which is no longer definable as a set of architectural boxes, constraints and barriers, but rather as a fragment of a world market which can be crossed and is fluid, boundless and borderless. This is an unlimited territory for exchanges, services and information and an intangible space definable as “a personal computer for every 20 m²”.

The crisis of cities, seen both as historical institutions and key operational centres, is therefore an issue at the very core of the 21st century. Cities have become a fragile fragment in a world market undergoing a permanent crisis. This market contradicts the hypothesis that globalisation would give rise to a mono-logical universe, based on free competition and homologated by common profit laws.

None of this occurred. Globalisation, intended as comparable to Pax Romana (or else the long period of Roman Peace established by Augustus), has turned out to be a hostile situation which has intensified local diversity and reinforced market competition. This has given rise to a widespread system of local crises, which are all different from one another and lack a shared and operating model. This has therefore resulted in an unstable and experimental world society, which continuously needs to elaborate new laws and statutes to positively manage its own state of permanent crisis.

Metropolises are no longer the symbol of civil enlightenment, but rather a shapeless and dense space, in which physical reality is interspersed with media reality and big narratives, where information technologies fuel intangible relations. As the French philosopher Pierre Restany had already argued in the 1970s in his “Manifeste du Rio Negro” (“Manifesto of the Rio Negro”) after crossing the Amazonian Forest as instructed by the Brazilian Government, the condition of South American Indians is not different from that of the inhabitants of a contemporary metropolis.

Both live in a complete and inextricable environment, in which the animal and plant kingdoms come together and technology and the realm of dreams form a wild reality, with no external boundary. They are like fish who live in the sea but never see the sea itself. In the same way, the inhabitants of this primitive metropolis never see the boundary circumscribing other territories. Primordial behaviours emerge spontaneously in our society, in which everything is contaminated and intersects. Traceurs (practitioners of parkour) throw themselves into the depths of the city like sacred monkeys, while voguers live like shamans in the media space of TV series, music, fashion and in the intangible reality. New Prehistory is therefore the paradoxical result of a society whose development coincides with the reestablishment of wild behaviours.

A minority trend among the avant-garde groups during the previous century had put forward the idea that Darwin's law was reversible, in the sense that if humankind descends from monkeys, then it can also return to its animal roots, intended as entirely free behaviour, thought and creativity. This hypothesis came to light through some of the major artists of the 20th century, such as Kurt Schwitters, Jackson Pollock and Sam Francis Bacon, who made “the gorilla inside us” obvious and revealed the conflict between the human body and the order of modernity surrounding it.
“Drone”
Operating by remote control
Operating a machine remotely.
Starting a machine (through a remote control) without a person on board

From new prehistory to the multiethnic society
The theme “Design After Design” includes and develops this contradiction, according to which the design crisis coincides with its maximum spreading across the world. This apparent paradox derives from the operative conditions of the whole industrial system, which today must face worldwide competition extending from China to Brazil. This competition forces all industries to continuously renew their commodity offer, production techniques, market strategies, services, promoting and aesthetics. In order to achieve this result, one must rely on a continuous source of innovation.

This is why, over the last ten years, the number of schools, universities and institutions that teach and promote Design as an unlimited source producing something new and unpredictable and technical and formal novelties has increased a hundred times worldwide.

Therefore, Design has become a “new mass profession” accessed by thousands of creative young people who carry out research and experiments, destined to feed a market which survives only on this energy input. Design After Design means that this activity is not targeting an elite market anymore, but rather plays a strategic role in the world economy.

Design has become a “new mass profession” accessed by thousands of creative young people
Infinite Present Epiphanies of the feminine in Italian design

Silvana Annicchiarico
Under the sign of Penelope
Weaves and twists of female creativity

On the occasion of the XXI International Exhibition, Triennale Design Museum presents its Ninth Edition W. Women in Italian Design. The Ninth Edition of the Triennale Design Museum, curated by Silvana Annicchiarico, with installation design by Margherita Palli, examines Italian design in the light of one its most delicate, most problematic aspects – but also one of the most exciting and appealing, which is that of gender.

By day she weaves, by night she unpicks. Outside her palace, the men – the Suitors – play politics by carousing. Penelope, closed in her room, plays politics by weaving. Her hands on the loom, time immobilised in the endless coming and goings of weaving. And in doing so she defends the Kingdom of Ithaca from crude and unruly suitors, and her husband Ulysses’ throne, who had been absent for far too long. She is the muse and secular patron of the ninth edition of the Triennale Design Museum. Her and her weaving.

Since the times of Ancient Greece, in the Western World (and only in the Western World), textiles have been viewed as an exquisitely feminine domain. Nails for men, knots for women. A dry-cut distinction of tools, features and roles.

Patriarchal society has always worked that way. Not realising that in their weaving women have always done just what men were doing with other equipment and different tools:

in ancient times, the loom was for women what the spear or bow was for men. If the man (hunter) captured the prey with lightning speed and the lethal energy of an arrow, the woman (woman-spider?) spun a cobweb and waited for her prey to fall inside.

Different procedure, identical results. Almost identical.

In classical mythology, it is not only Penelope who weaves. The Fates do it with the destinies of men. Minerva and Arachne do it. Ariadne does it with her thread. All of them together, these great weavers of antiquity, can be seen as a symbol of that female industriousness that we intend to pay homage to with W. Women in Italian Design.

With their looms, these women did not only knot threads, but they made spinning, weaving and interlacing some of the highest activities in human creativity.
With her loom, Penelope reasoned, plotted, calculated, deceived and narrated.

Is it just a coincidence that, in Italian, many of the words that talk about her task contain the word amare (to love) – trAMARE (to weave), ricAMARE (to embroider)?

No, it’s not accidental. Nothing is accidental in the order of language.

This presence tells us about – or at least suggests – one of the differences between male design and female design. It is found in the fact that the latter, at least in the twentieth century, was marked by an emotional involvement, an emotional connotation and an investment of pathos that male design – caught up on moving and exploring in the order of reason, profit and function – has not always been able to have.

Since ancient times, in all cultures of the Mediterranean basin (Sumerian, Egyptian, Berber and so on), the loom has been a symbol of the structure of the universe. In many myths, weaving means participating in the life of the cosmos, joining it, recreating the unity of the world in its diversity, in its opposites.

The loom, which is made up of opposites, is nurtured by them, transforming the cloth into an operation of the mind, and not just a product of a simply manual skill.

Certainly, for many centuries, the history of material cultures tells us that women worked on designs created by men. In the sixteenth century, for example, embroidery designs came from artists’ workshops, from Pollaiolo and Sassetta to Raffaellino del Garbo, and women – according to a number of sources – had a purely functional role. They worked on the samplers.
They didn’t create, they were producing. In the early twentieth century, in the first all-female company dedicated to lace and embroidery, Aemilia Ars in Bologna, women did the weaving and braiding, but the designs were all done by men.

In the Fifth Triennale in 1933, in the section dedicated to “threaded arts”, numerous high quality works were on display, all made by women but designed by men, from the Il tennis shadow-stitch tablecloth, made by Laura Colarieti-Tosti and designed by Mario Giamperi to the cross-stitch tablecloth made by Caterina De Cataldis and designed by Ernesto Puppo, and the bobbin lace placement designed by Giulio Rosso and made by Gina Mascelli-Sansepolcro (cf. Roberto Papini, La V Triennale di Milano, Ispezione alle Arti, in “Emporium, Rivista mensile illustrata d’arte e di cultura”, n. 468, December 1933, pp. 331 ff.).

Hands on one side, thinking on the other. As if to say: the hands may be yours, but the design is ours.

The patriarchy extended its domain and its design prerogative even over the most female traditional artisan activities.

Almost as if to wrest control of the main ways in which woman had historically expressed themselves and their performativity.

History, in fact, gives us other plots. And they tell us that women have always designed with their hands. They did it by weaving and braiding. Like Rapunzel, the protagonist of the famous fairy tale, who braided her 20-metre-long hair and captured and imprisoned the most charming thief in the kingdom, tying him to her, and then using her braid to regain her freedom.

Women always knit away. They knitted before the executions in Paris in the late eighteenth century (the tricoteuses of the Revolution who knitted in front of the guillotine).

And the mothers (las locas) of the Argentine desaparecidos, who knitted in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, protesting the military dictatorship over their children’s disappearance.

Adriano Sofri recalls that even on 131 line in Mirafiori, among the workers who were on the assembly line, there were women who knitted during their breaks (Il nodo e il chiodo, Sellerio 1995, p. 61).

There are women who knit while walking, women who do it in their cars while waiting for the traffic light to turn green, women who measure time by weaving strands and wefts.

That’s why, in Sleeping Beauty, when the fairy Maleficent wants to take Aurora’s life away, she does so with the needle on a spinning wheel, making a symbol of death out of what, for women, is the first tool of creativity and, therefore, of life. Aurora pricks her finger, not surprisingly, when she is no longer a child but when she has become a woman.

Weaving, spinning, braiding, intertwining. Embroidering, reweaving, knitting.

From products made by Aemilia Ars in the early twentieth century to contemporary works by Marika Baldoni and Paola Anziché. From looms by Paola Besana to those by Maria Lai, from cloth and canvas books by Marisa Bronzini to those by Franca Sonnino, from hair by Geny Iorio to wire by Benedetta Mori Ubaldini up to paper dissected by Elisabetta Di Maggio and folded paper by Sabrina Mezzaqui.

The result is a web of threads and textures, inside which is the expression, in an infinite weaving, of the intelligence, the creativity and the passion with which woman, weaving threads, have intertwined lives and destinies. In the centre, not coincidentally, is the Tenda by Carla Accardi (1965), a place that is imbued with echoes and resonances that are interwoven in memory, sewing together strands of feminist and feminine “subversive patience” in the desperately communicative research of “a room of their own”, in a creation that weaves together knowledge, different languages and disciplines.

Weaving, spinning, braiding, intertwining.

The repetitive movements acting like a mantra that frees the mind from thoughts.

Perhaps this continuous weaving of perfection and rigour conceals the anguish of the exact opposite, namely the removal of approximation and the fear of disorder.
A practice that is so fragile that at time – and Penelope knew this well – you just need to pull on a thread to undo everything.

**A black hole**

The stories of design so far told revolve almost entirely around a big black hole: the removal of the feminine. The concealment of the presence and contribution of women. The subjugation of women to a persistent and stubborn masculine hegemony.

As if women had never been there. As if they had stayed at home. As if the paradigm of the dominant patriarchal thinking would struggle to even recognise the role of women even when this was evident. It has taken almost 80 years, for example, to recognise and remonstrate, how Christiane Lange has done recently, that one of the icons of twentieth century design – the *Daybed* from 1930 – is not only attributable to Mies van der Rohe, as has been the case for decades, but above all to his devoted and discreet partner, Lilly Reich. Why such a stubborn and prolonged removal?

**No skeletons in the closet**

Male and female, of course, are categories that are increasingly called into question. _Gender_ theory attacks their claim to provide a comprehensive and indisputable
description or theory on a theme as complex as identity. The fact that gender is not a purely biological factor, but is also a socio-cultural construction is now commonly accepted. We are in a fluid phase of great change, where the proliferation of multiple and differentiated identities is likely headed in the direction of overcoming gender differences as have been known and practised over the centuries.

Does this change also involve and affect the scope of design? Has the history of design also been marked by the theme of gender identity? Will the future of design overcome these differences? If this is one of the scenarios that Design after design will have to, and must, confront, then it is first necessary to redefine the role that gender has played in our recent history. The ninth edition of the Triennale Design Museum does so by speaking about Italian design from the female point of view. It does so in order to experience a new perspective, to redefine a collection. No complaining, no resurgence of feminism, no cries for positive discrimination. Without “an endangered panda” to preserve and protect.

Twentieth century Italian design was patriarchal design. Objectively and indisputably. Design history recognises, at best, a dozen examples of female design, whereas this year’s Triennal Design Museum documents hundreds and hundreds. Women in Italian design have been and are, quantitatively and qualitatively, a significant presence that has been hidden, removed and marginalised. Women in Italian Design seeks to rectify this. Not a compensation, but rather a restored balance. Resetting the scene to enter the new territory of gender with a clear and transparent history behind it. No skeletons in the closet.

**Beyond the paradigm of patriarchal thinking**

Of course, you might be wondering why the gender issue has come to a head now.

The most convincing answer is linked to the economic and productive development of globalised society. For centuries, the patriarchal perspective has never been questioned because, after all, it was functional to productive assets and power of that world. Now the end of the industrial era and Fordist production makes that model feel wholly inadequate.

The patriarchy ends with the fall of the hierarchical pyramid model of work organisation, it ends with the fall of the family model that was proposed and practised over the last two centuries. Intangible and relational capitalism has different needs, less linked to the immediate problem solved and the mass production of heavy objects and material goods. And this leads to a greater value of a kind of creativity, but also a different way of operating and performativity. We could say that opens up to female creativity and performativity, but in view of an overall reorganisation of skills and abilities that will probably lead to surmounting traditionally understood genders and, in any case, to the definitive crisis of the undisputed hegemony of the patriarchal model.
Research on women’s contribution to design history and design culture is well advanced in many different geographical and cultural areas. In the English-speaking world, for example, in 1984 Isabelle Anscombe in *A Woman’s Touch* explored and examined the contribution of female designers in textiles and interior design, while *Women in Design* (1988) by Liz McQuiston proposes an initial mapping of all women who worked in the various disciplines of design. In the last fifteen years, research has grown with works such as *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference* (2000) by Pat Kirkham becoming indispensable reference points for the acumen with which they identify areas, methodologies, styles and sensibilities. In the French context, a book like *Femmes designers. Un siècle de créations* by Marion Vignal (2009) goes in the same direction and carefully reconstructs the female presence in design history from Art Nouveau and Bauhaus up to contemporary figures such as Zaha Hadid, Andrée Putman, Patricia Urquiola and Matali Crasset.

In Italy, Anty Pansera is to be commended as the first to systematically and passionately, with intelligence and rigour, investigate the composite and hidden universe of female Italian design, creating important exhibitions on the subject (*Dcomedesign. La mano, la mente, il cuore*, at the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali in Turin between March and April 2008) and overseeing the implementation of valuable

**Pioneers and explorers**
repertoires/dictionaries that have the merit of being an initial map for orienting the female universe in design. You need only think of a work like *Dal merletto alla motocicletta* (Silvana Editoriale, 2002), or even the dictionary published in the catalogue of the aforementioned exhibition in Turin, which presents a collection of biographies of not just female designers, but also professionals and entrepreneurs engaged in the world of design communication. Anty Pansera’s research and publications represent a vital step in recognising the role that women played in design history who have otherwise been silenced or undervalued. Other researchers followed and showed an interest in this topic: Daniela Piscitelli in the field of graphic design, with her essay *Muoversi sulle sabbie mobili* in the book *Aiap. Women in Design Award* (2016).

All of this research opened the way. It has started to redraw the map. The ninth edition of the Triennale Design Museum continues in the direction that they first suggested.

**The dogma of authorship**

However, there is still a possible limit that is shared by all of this research: the fact of applying the same authorial approach to women that was adopted by the patriarchal culture that wrote the history of design as a history made up substantially of designers: designer-demiurges who, in collaboration with industry and entrepreneurs, embody the quintessence of design culture, exhausting it in themselves and in its own self-representativity. In reality, as is well known, the category of author has long been in crisis in many different disciplines: from literature to cinema, the issue of both their presumed relevance and completeness and their theoretical stamina. Design studies proceed with the cult of the Maestro, bestowing on them the honour and burden of representing all of design, its history, its performativity. *W. Women in Italian Design* goes in another direction. First and foremost, considering how female design is an area that does not only include designers – Anty Pansera pre-empted this in her *Dizionario* from 2008 – there are also those who teach design and those who diffuse it, those who put it on display in exhibitions and those who promote it on the market. There are female entrepreneurs and communicators, archivists, teachers, gallery owners, curators all those who make up that galaxy which – especially now that design has become a mass profession – gives body to the design system, underpinning its richness and complexity. All of these figures contribute – each with their own language – to increase the social relevance and collective reputation of the discipline. Perhaps the time has finally arrived because we are really starting to leave the authorial paradigm, effective in the patriarchal culture of the twentieth century, when it came to claim design to its own specific identity, which is ineffective and restrictive today, when design is no longer about just designing objects, but increasingly also about triggering processes and relationships.

It is precisely from this belief that *W. Women in Italian Design* proposes a methodological and ordered approach that doesn’t work around bibliographic essays, but rather chooses – consciously – to represent female creativity as an underground

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**Design is no longer about just designing objects, but increasingly also about triggering processes and relationships**
river that runs through the Novecento Italiano, sometimes blustering like a mountain stream, sometimes placid and calm like a lowland river. It is not a system designed for “Authors”, but rather for objects, artefacts, projects. A system that comes from women, but then enters into the large flow of a creativity that exceeds its limits, the calculation and boundaries of the design culture that is promoted and encouraged by the patriarchal culture.

What kind of creativity emerges from the investigation of women carried out during the ninth edition of the Triennale Design Museum?

It is an unpredictable creativity, based on welcoming and caring.


**Single, teams, couples**

Leaving the authorial paradigm also means discovering that working methods and design approaches are not reducible to those net attributions of authorship in which patriarchal thinking often exempts itself from the effort of reconstructing the creative process in detail and recognising merit, contribution and collective contributions. Designs are often the result of a team effort. They come from a studio, from the collaboration of different intelligence and knowledge that are all brusquely removed from the canonical attribution of exclusive authorship: the XX chair by YZ. Where YZ is almost always a single designer, even if dozens of people have worked on the project.

The presence of couples is common in the history of Italian design: Afra and Tobia Scarpa, Lella and Massimo Vignelli, Lica and Albe Steiner, Doriana and Massimiliano Fuksas.

For a long period in the twentieth century, female architects and female designers worked in the studios of their husbands or partners without ever having their role publicly acknowledged. Women muses, women secretaries, handywomen, a supporting cast made up of women. And then – but not always – some of these women–companions started becoming jointly responsible. They signed objects together with their partners. They shared the honours and duties of the creative process. Working as a pair, of course, means adopting a completely different methodology than working alone, which takes the individual and his or her obsessions as unique reference points. Being in a couple in design and its development means always being willing to confront one another, taking on the other’s point of view, questioning your own. Compared to the solipsism of the creator-demiurge, the couple implicitly recognises the fragility and incompleteness of the two parts that make it up, parts that only acquire creativity, completeness and maturity by coming together. W.
Women in Italian Design welcomes the couples and women who have worked in couple, in the belief that this inclusion opens up new perspective on ways in which the creative process should be understood and narrated.

**Origine du monde**

The exhibition staged by Margherita Palli is a great metaphor for creation and creativity. It begins – staring from the bridge that leads to the museum – by entering a space that alludes to the female body and summons her most intimate nature: a kind of large womb that is inhabited by whispers, litanies and chatter where embroidery, weaves and lace hover in the air. These artefacts which have traditionally been linked to female work: weaving and knitting as apparently only domestic tasks, but which are actually capable of conveying great relational strategies.

The set-up continues like a river which initially flows calmly at the beginning of the last century and then gets livelier and more exuberant, becoming full and thriving in the twenty-first century. This great raging river flows under the protection of some saints, patron saints of daily work and craft, depicted by some of the best contemporary female Italian illustrators, all depicted with an object in her hand.

The selection does not claim to be comprehensive. It seeks to be an initial and inevitably partial collection. The objects have not been selected due to their “absolute”
These artefacts which have traditionally been linked to female work: weaving and knitting as apparently only domestic tasks, but which are actually capable of conveying great relational strategies.
On the occasion of the XXI Triennale di Milano International Exposition, Fabbrica del Vapore houses the exhibition NEW CRAFT, curated by Stefano Micelli. The exhibition gives visible form to the virtuous encounter between technological innovation and excellence in manufacturing: visitors can watch new digital manufacturing tools at work and see how they integrate and supplement the work and skills of people.

Handicrafts have experienced a rebirth in these past few years. After having long been confined to the margins of a modernity that exacted a rigorous separation between design and production, crafts are experiencing a renewed economic and cultural legitimacy. A new technological generation has given rise to a veritable revolution, one that shakes the foundations of the economic paradigm that we have inherited from the past century. The web and the digital technologies applied to manufacturing are redefining the very concept of work and, on a broader scale, the role of the individual and his/her capacity of expression and of establishing economic and social relationships. The indications of this change have multiplied over these past few years. The biggest international luxury brands have rediscovered the importance of artisanal know-how in communicating, by means of a new set of references, the worth of their products. Creative young individuals display their creations on etsy.com and other websites that cater to handmade and limited-series products, vindicating their artisan pride. Traditional manufacturers have also begun to rediscover the value of the word “artisan” as a distinctive factor in the promotion of quality, attention to detail, and personalisation. Over the course of only a few years, the word “handmade,” long associated with approximation (on the TV news, a handmade bomb is still one that refuses to detonate), has become the distinctive element of a new concept of social and economic worth. Intellectuals and scholars of international standing have contributed to the empowerment of this rehabilitation that needs to proceed by gradual degrees. Richard Sennett’s book The Craftsman, together with many others published in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, has paved the way for new concepts of work and socialness, proposing the craftsperson as an antidote to an economy otherwise abandoned to the fate of international finance. The exhibitions held at the Victoria and Albert Museum have contributed to morphing the perception of the world of crafts: The Power of Making, in particular, has contributed to a novel concept of handicrafts (3D printers first and foremost) between tradition and technological opportunity, the latter being finally available to the individual. In France, the biennial conventions organised by the Institut des Métiers d’Art have promoted a new interpretation of handicrafts, which are seen as the requalifying factor of a new way of “enterprising”: instead of seeing the artisan confined to his/her workshop, the Paris institute suggests a cultural approach that sees artisanal know-how as a resource that can distinguish the innovation of small and large businesses. This gradual rediscovery has contributed

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Stefano Micelli
Professor of International Management at the Venice Ca’ Foscari University
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The crisis of mass-production factories and of factory work in general is a manifest fact

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to changing our convictions about what manufacturing could be in the future. The crisis of mass-production factories and of factory work in general is a manifest fact: no one can reasonably believe that advanced economies will be able to accept and promote industrial activities centred on serial production. The rediscovery of craftsman-ship suggests an original perspective into what we can expect from the current technological revolutions—that is, new arrival points, something that has long been called, rather generically, post-Fordism.

**The new artisan**

The artisan who is the protagonist of the new cultural and economic scenario is not exactly the one we have inherited from tradition. Désirée Dolron’s photographs for a famous 2009 LVMH advertising campaign show artisans who do not only work in their workshops but also for a multinational company with a billion-euro turnover. The artisans of the *Maker Faires* organised throughout the world admit that digital manufacturing completes and magnifies their abilities. Many young talents have long stopped believing in selling solely from their workshops and have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by social networks and important e-commerce portals. Even though their profile is changing, these young manufacturers still have the distinctive traits that the Arts and Crafts movement has promoted. The first novelty concerns the concept of autonomous work, and the ability to manage the manufacturing process in all its fundamental stages. Artisans are different from factory
workers because they are in charge of the entire productive process. Thanks to their know-how, artisans are able to tackle unforeseen circumstances and difficulties and, most of all, can improve and innovate by capitalising on personal experience. Interpersonal exchange is still a crucial aspect: unlike those who work on an assembly line or in an office, artisans communicate with their clients and cater to their expectations. Last but not least: both old and young craftspeople share the desire to be part of communities that nourish and modernise both their abilities and professional identity on an ongoing basis. These sharing communities establish how artisanal work can be interpreted and socially recognised and legitimated. Autonomy, interrelatedness, and social recognition characterise both a traditional and contemporary reading of craftwork. How can these different factors interact with the potentialities expressed by technology and generate a different productive organisation? New Craft attempts to provide an answer precisely to this question by investigating three crucial factors: the connections between work and technology, the importance of a new craftwork story, and the relationship with the design world.

Artisans in the third industrial revolution

We will remember this decade not only for the damages brought about by a financial crisis that went beyond physiological boundaries, but also on account of the establishment of a new generation of technologies. These have irreversibly modified the border that separates the (analogical) manufacturing world from the (digital) world of information. The Economist dedicated a cover to this revolution as early as 2012. The
picture showed a strange computer connected to a brick-and-mortar factory expelling all sorts of different objects. The absolute protagonist in the issue’s articles was the 3D printer, the technology that today, more than any other, summarises and makes explicit the link between the digital world and manufacturing processes. According to The Economist, digital manufacturing technology will make it possible to produce with a variety and at a level of customisation hitherto unknown. The traditional boundaries industrial production has had to conform to from the late 1800s until now will be dissolved. This potential for tailor-made production allows for a new relationship with end users: buyers can finally request products based on their actual requirements, take into consideration different customisation options, and actively take part in the design process.

Who are the main players of this revolution going to be? Who will benefit from the opportunities afforded by technology? It is conceivable that many large companies will take advantage of these new tools to make their offer more flexible, exploiting their investment where IT and communication are concerned. Alongside large, well-established companies, a new generation of artisans will take possession of the opportunities offered by these tools in order to bring about a culture of know-how that can now be relaunched at accessible costs. The combination of digital manufacturing technology and the potential of e-commerce makes it plausible that we will be able to bet on variety and customisation, aiming at finding end users on the Internet. This will prove to be successful as long as the experimental and innovative attitude typical of American makers (an attitude Chris Anderson has outlined on several occasions) is well conjugated with the historically consolidated European handicrafts tradition. This balance cannot be taken for granted. It calls for a profoundly renovated approach to the design scenario and an entrepreneurial ability capable of evaluating heterogeneous resources. It is precisely in this new balance and these new abilities, however, that the future competitiveness of a large part of the manufacturing sector will be played out, especially in Italy.

Artisans are different from factory workers because they are in charge of the entire productive process

The value of artisanal work lies (also) in its own story

Artisans often are laconic individuals. The items they produce speak for them. This taciturn bent, cultivated over time, has solid economic causes. Talking about their work used to put artisans at risk of compromising it by revealing the very secrets that protected them from competition. Silence made it possible to keep their knowhow secret, and it was therefore only divulged in the traditional apprenticeship of a workshop, where learning meant working side by side with someone who knew more than you did, fine-tuning your skills by direct observation. This tendency to secrecy does not characterise the new craft world. The artisans who take on the challenges of technology and the international market are aware of the necessity of making the specificity of their products known to buyers who are not necessarily in the know. New artisans appreciate only too well how difficult it is to make an item attractive simply by means of a picture or a caption. The variety of goods offered on the market makes it
necessary to present and explain the product in a specific way, highlighting its cultural richness and its ties to a particular territory of provenance. In the absence of an *ad hoc* narration, it is unlikely that a potential buyer will attribute a handicraft the price that it deserves: only by knowing the specificity of the materials, and only through an appreciation of the manual skills involved does demand acknowledge the special worth of an artefact. It is hard to imagine that this sort of narration will find a niche in the advertising channels of the traditional media. The cost of narrating craft production is too high compared to the economic yield afforded by this type of communication. The only exception would be a few niche products from the international luxury world: only some brands, mostly consolidated because they are on the scene for decades, might tell their story in traditional mass media. In most cases, however, this option is beyond the financial possibilities of the companies that make of their artisanal know-how their competitive advantage. An original approach to communicating such a special resource lies in an innovative use of the web and social networks. The web makes it possible to talk about techniques and products by mainly targeting picture- and video-sharing platforms, thus dodging the typical constrictions of mass communication. In Europe and the United States, a new generation of craftspeople has started to produce and upload Youtube videostories of their activities, post pictures on Instagram on a regular basis, and describe their routines on Facebook and Twitter. Many are the websites that illustrate the production stages of innovative products. These webstories can sometimes be risky in that they may result in the copying of a product or a process. But in most cases an increasingly heterogeneous and international demand acquires basic information concerning the social and cultural value of an item. The value of artisanal work also lies in its own story.

**Designing products and planning out social relations**

Even though the design world has often underestimated its own contribution, artisans have played an important role in the diffusion of industrial design. Enzo Mari, in an exhibition held in Florence in the early 1980s, made explicit the contribution of craftsmanship in the various stages of design and industrial production, highlighting its importance. One of the first key roles Mari identified was that of the prototype developer, whose task is to transform designs into three-dimensional objects, to come to a realisation of what the limits and potential of a product are, not only from the standpoint of aesthetics and usability but also regarding the management of its serial production. Specialised craftspeople have always worked side by side with engineers and designers to produce *ad hoc* machinery and tools as well as fine-tune innovative production processes. Last but not least, artisans have always been fundamental in the fitting of complex products to specific contexts, figuring out in advance problems that are difficult to foresee. The professional figures that Enzo Mari identified in the early 1980s as crucial to industrial design processes continue to play an important role in the many companies that wager on innovative projects,
especially in Italy. Much of the success of home furnishing and fashion companies, as well as of a great deal of instrumental mechanics companies, is still bound to the persistence of characteristic profiles, which contribute, with very specific know-how and abilities, to the success of complex projects and the efficiency of complex productive chains. It is only by appreciating the specific function of these artisans, that we can explain the success of many internationally competitive medium-sized Italian companies, especially in the home-furnishing sector. Over these past ten years, the relation between designer and artisan has been empowered by new possibilities. Internet and digital manufacturing technologies have afforded new opportunities for collaboration that have explored several new models as far as the relations with the market are concerned. Self-production, in particular, is characterised by a new partnership between designer and artisan, based on the mutual acknowledgement of the worth and specificity of each. The designer welcomes the challenge of “enterprising” by promoting a direct relationship with demand—that is, without the mediation of a client from the world of industry. The artisan takes part in the project, bringing into play his/her know-how and manufacturing expertise, which is functional to the production of limited series and unique items. The fact that the success of trade fairs and similar events is mainly reliant on these types of businesses bears witness to the international demand for innovative and independently experimental projects and products as opposed to consolidated economic formulas. Ever increasing availability of flexible and affordable technologies permits the envisioning of these enterprises and the proliferation of entrepreneurial experiences focusing on a new
model of organisation of the relation between design and craftwork. This implies the evolution of the role of the artisan's as well as that of the designer. The management of production processes that blend tradition and technology is the artisan's responsibility; it is the designer's task to dilate the project's traditional dimension, taking in aspects such as communication and marketing, also and especially on the web. Both bear the burden of having to find new ways of relating with customers who are more highly aware and attentive than they used to be, determined to actively take part in the design and production processes, customers who want to establish a relation with the culture of design and manufacturing. This new interaction with the user is one of the factors that call into question the very concept of project and production. As Carlo Martino observes elsewhere in this book, the project is open to a cross-fertilisation generated by direct contact with the client, the characteristics of the materials, and technological feasibility. An open project, that is, that thrives on new interactions and confirms its validity precisely because it considers different interlocutors. The element at play is a new way of creating value by means of dialogue and relating. It is by no means a given that the world needs a new table or a new dress. What is certain, however, is that the world needs new social and cultural connections mediated by objects that succeed in connecting diverse cultures and sensitivities.

Over these past ten years, the relation between designer and artisan has been empowered by new possibilities
Architecture as Art

Nina Bassoli, Gaia Piccarolo
On the occasion of the XXI Triennale di Milano International Exposition, Pirelli HangarBicocca houses the exhibition Architecture as Art. The exhibition, devoted to the relationship between Art and Architecture, aims to create a very special form of “encroachment” – at least in as far as architecture exhibitions are concerned – with an exhibition space arranged in such a way as to convey an understanding of architecture as an artistic event.

The exhibition presents fourteen “actual” samples of architecture, arranged in a sort of atlas that is intended to illustrate the themes and subjects that represent the new responsibilities of the architecture of the 21st century. So the spatial organisation of the exhibition avoids making up for the absence of the “real thing” with surrogates like drawings, texts, photos or models and, on the contrary, induces visitors to look at architecture from a different perspective, making it easier for them to discover its distinctive artistic character. Michel Desvigne, Catherine Mosbach, Studio Mumbai, Rural Urban Framework, El Equipo de Mazzanti, Amateur Architecture Studio, Atelier Bow-Wow, Rural Studio, Josep Llinás Carmona, João Luís Carrilho da Graça, Maria Giuseppina Grasso Cannizzo, Lacaton & Vassal, Studio Albori and nArchitects have been asked to find the architectural equivalent of entries in a possible dictionary, such as Portico, Entrance, Rehabilitation, Roof, Shelter, Pavilion, etc. These figures should be seen as picks that can be used to unlock the expression of architectural ideas with regard to new paradigms, such as the new idea of active and participatory public space, the new ecological model or the merger of architecture with the discipline of landscape design.

Architecture as Art turns, right from its title, on a subtle paradox. Although it sets out in fact to present architecture as art, it aims at the same time to stress that the artistic character of architecture resides precisely in what distinguishes it from art: the need to be utilised.

The patterns proposed in the form of questions to the architects have been received, in an unexpectedly common manner, with a particular accent on the use of the installation by the public. The significance of the work will not lie in its being a typological or formal model, but in the possibility—almost a request—of being tested, inhabited and finally transformed by the passage of visitors. The installations have been put on display with the theatrical emphasis of the dark room, but the agitated rhythm of their succession suggests a type of proxemics very different from the one due to contemplation of the work of art and its aura. Visitors are encouraged to interact, to try out the experience of a threshold, a porch, an odour, a meeting. They are prompted in short to clarify the pattern by showing that it functions well, as in a tableau vivant, or “like the examples in the entries of a dictionary.”

Visitors are encouraged to interact, to try out the experience of a threshold, a porch, an odour, a meeting.
The architects involved have not in any way been persuaded to act like artists, but have displayed at every stage a desire to be able to respond to as many limitations as possible. And so, in a rhetorical role-playing game, we in turn were given the part of clients, of architects, in order to create the imaginary conditions to which they had to respond.

The exhibition is the outcome of this process, of this dialogue. Many of the architects invited to take part have tried to re-create the material conditions in which they are accustomed to work, imposing on themselves a logic of economy of resources over and above the constraints of the budget at their disposal. Rural Studio, for example, constructed its project around bales of paper found at a recycling plant in the vicinity of Milan, treating them as if they were blocks of stone from a local quarry, although short-lived ones; Rural Urban Framework (RUF) evoked their usual context through the use of blocks of concrete and metal cladding plates developed for some projects in rural China; Studio Albori felt the need to provide for a second life of the installation after the exhibition, assigning it a less temporary use integrated into urban life.

Visiting the countryside around Newbern, one of the most depressed parts of Alabama, dotted with the small and essential interventions of the students at the Rural Studio, what emerges is in effect an unexpected link with the experiments that the RUF is conducting with students at Hong Kong University in the Chinese
The installations offer visitors to the exhibition a window onto these worlds without any need to illustrate them in a didactic way, but through the succinct force of a good example, significant in so far as it is real. What comes out of this is the clear thesis, as obvious as it is radical, that architecture is in itself a vehicle of meanings and that it includes, even in a small and incomplete portion, an extract of the entire palimpsest of its place of origin. Even the mobile homes of Alabama take on a new significance when seen alongside these works of architecture, as do the patterns of Chinese rice paddies or the ordinary sidewalks on which the Studio Albori inserts a small domestic structure, a bench, an intimate corner that you can run into by chance. The values transmitted to the local community by this architecture so attentive to the resources of the place are offered in the space of Pirelli HangarBicocca to a new, international and completely different community.

The desire to transmit this palimpsest of the place of origin is expressed in the first place through materials, so that we find in all the installations clear signs of a return to the material. This is what the operation proposed by Studio Mumbai is principally about: the pillars extracted from granite quarries near Chennai have been placed without any mediation on the floor. Visitors are transported momentarily into the stratified and dusty landscape of the quarries, in which the traces of cuts and marks left by the quarrelling process configure an archeological terrain that powerfully evokes the idea of a degree zero of architecture that resonates in the real object. In other cases, the process interferes with the new context into which it has been transplanted and with the requirements of its realisation in situ. Amateur, for example, makes use of traditional Lombard bricks to build a wall that is both an expression of a poetics of space drawn from a certain Chinese landscaping tradition and of a poetics of material that leaves the traces of the passage of time visible, an approach that was developed in
Nina Bassoli, Gaia Piccarolo

Rural Urban
Framework’s shelter

Michel Desvigne’s garden
buildings like the Ningbo Museum. It is interesting in this connection that reference was made by Wang Shu to Carlo Scarpa. The action of time on material and the desire to make the process of transformation clear are at the center of many installations in the exhibition. The abstract landscape imagined by Catherine Mosbach is modified over the course of the six months of the work’s life by the action of organic substances that come into contact with the surface of the display panel. The mould that grows as a result composes an ecosystem on an ambiguous scale, an educational and at the same time poetic example of an approach to design as stratification and interaction of the effects of the weather and the landscape.

While I was describing the various installations to Josep Llináš—we were speaking in a mixture of Spanish, English and Italian, allowing us to choose the words with greater intensity—he said to me that he’s happy that his work expresses something not found in the others: the sensual and passionate figurativeness typical of his Catalan culture. Strong and direct elements like fire, water and blood are evoked in the architecture of Josep Maria Jujol, who was Luis Buñuel’s brother-in-law—he told me—and a neighbor of the young Juan Miró. He talked about this in the same precise and concrete way in which Bijoy Jain spoke of black magic or cow dung (two natural kinds of coating: a sort of pitch made with seed oil and a muddy plaster made from bovine excrement). These are his materials, the words he uses to compose the syntax of his language. In Architecture as Art I don’t think it is possible to speak of a homage to the masters, just as you can’t describe a process, only show it in action. Llináš interprets some of the expressive elements of Jujol’s Casa Mañach and reshapes them with his own hands to learn his language and make it his—and ours—moving, like his “master,” “in the intersection that is generated between a timeless scenario and the time that marks the rhythm of existence.” Atelier Bow-Wow’s installation stems from requirements that are not so distant from this: representing a portion of a lost work of architecture from the past in the form of a synecdoche in order to bring it back to life for use in the present. At the heart of Kazuo Shinohara’s Uncompleted House is placed a piece of ornamental facing by William Morris, establishing a dialogue and an interaction between universes that are remote in not just chronological but also geographical terms. As a comment on this dialogue, a makeshift sink located just outside the perimeter of the space so as not to offend the pure design of the master activates the domestic environment with a ritual—“behaviourology”—that is everyday and hyperreal: it is the stamp that makes it possible to bring the operation of criticism back to the dimension of design.

Space is activated and modified by use, but it is a use moulded by the rituals of living in a broad sense—we could say poetically—rather than by the concept of function. The device for crossing into external space developed by Maria Giuseppina Grasso Cannizzo is composed of metal tubes that hang down from above, and it is the very act of passing through it that determines the ever-changing forms of the gaps. With a similar intent, Giancarlo Mazzanti has used his “machine for involving the visitor” as the manifesto for an architecture able to interact with people and give rise to unexpected modes of
The uneven and claustrophobic route through the installation is a metaphor for the liberating potentialities of play in architecture and for its spilling over into an actively shared conception of space. Like a fragment of reality, the uneven and claustrophobic route through the installation is a metaphor for the liberating potentialities of play in architecture and for its spilling over into an actively shared conception of space. If the tactile and deformable membrane that envelops it constitutes a visually permeable diaphragm between inside and outside, putting the “audience”—absolute protagonist of the work—on stage as in a “shadow theater,” João Luís Carrilho da Graça’s installation stages the more intimist ritual of the meeting in the dark, hiding from external view the exchange of glances that is presumed to be taking place inside it.

The members of the nArchitects studio also reject a dimension of pure construction and speak of some of their works as “almost buildings”: almost but not quite. Through this reductive device, their vaulted canopy expresses a typological research applied on a real scale, but it is also in part an anthropological experiment on the possibilities for use of the pattern.

Architects with a highly structured theoretical framework like Lacaton and Vassal or Michel Desvigne have used the occasion to present a sort of manifesto of strategies developed over years of research, like the additions to residential grands ensembles faithfully reproduced in a corner of the Shed space of Pirelli HangarBicocca by Lacaton and Vassal, or the succession of trees planted with varying density along the entrance routes by Desvigne.

Anne Lacaton replied to our initial invitation with some unease: “The principle of representing space in an exhibition with an artistic installation always raises complex questions of meaning. For us, space is defined in response to specific situations, with particular limitations and constraints. Our approach to design is shaped in these conditions, around people, their movements, their relations. How can this complexity be reflected in a conceptual representation?”

What emerges, however, from the form taken by the various installations is that they are not representations at all. They do not allude to a theory outside of themselves, not do they convey symbolic meanings. Rather they are models that express in full the desire of architecture to be utilised and that seem to be proposing in a new form—in keeping with requirements, inclusive and open to the unexpected—the modern faith in being able to have an effect on the planet through design.

So the voices that make up the diverse and open panorama of our atlas represent an ideal community of reference that, with a particular rooting in completely different places and contexts, seems to outline a common direction for contemporary architecture. This, at least, is our desire, the prospect we hoped for from the exhibition.
Material and technique, process and pattern in contemporary architecture and design

Marginalia for the *Sempering* exhibition

Valentina Auricchio
Luisa Collina
Simona Galateo
Cino Zucchi
The Triennale di Milano is a particularly significant tradition in Milan: originally called *Esposizione internazionale delle arti decorative e industriali moderne e dell'architettura moderna*, from 1933 to 1996 it animated debate, elaborating scenarios and creating relationships and short circuits between society at large and various figures from the design disciplines – architecture, urban planning, design, fashion, cinema, communication and the arts in general.

The V Triennale in 1933, the first edition hosted in the Palazzo dell’Arte di Giovanni Muzio in Milan, was the opportunity to present Italian Rationalism to the world with contributions by Gio Ponti, Mario Sironi, Giuseppe Pagano, Franco Albini, Renato Camus, Giancarlo Palanti, Giuseppe Mazzoleni, Giulio Minoletti and Luciano Baldessari. The central theme was the holiday house (Villa Studio per un Artista by Figini and Pollini; Casa del Sabato per gli Sposi by BBPR and Piero Portaluppi) but, thanks to Piero Bottoni’s contribution, also the working class home. The following exhibitions continued this latter theme, associated with the emergencies and challenges that Italian society gradually found itself having to confront. Among these was the issue of post-war reconstruction, developed by Piero Bottoni and leading to QT8 (VIII Triennale in 1947); Prefabrication and Industrial Design (X Triennale in 1954); School (XII Triennale in 1961); The Future of the Metropolis (XVII Triennale in 1988) and Environmental Challenges (XVIII in 1992). However, the edition that gave rise to the most debate may, paradoxically, have been the one that is remembered as the one that never opened: “The Great Number” directed by Giancarlo De Carlo in 1968, and occupied by students on the day of its inauguration.

Though it is true that the Triennale has never taken place at particularly regular intervals, more than three years have rarely gone by between one edition and another. Interrupting this tradition for over twenty years, and introducing in its stead a series of continuous events, has on the one hand given perspective to many past episodes, but on the other, has led to the emergence of other places and other “formats” for reflecting on architecture and design.

“*If someone were to ask me about what I’ve meant to say, I reply that I haven’t wanted to say anything, but wanted to make something, and that it’s this intention of making which has wanted what I’ve said.*”

– Paul Valéry, *Variété III*, 1936
So what does it mean today to be part of a team of curators in charge of starting up a new edition of the International Triennale?

How is it possible to distill a given theme after twenty years of absence, in an age characterised by innumerable social emergencies and significant changes and innovations?

What does it mean to create a cultural project as an exhibition, at a time when everything is now within the reach of the internet, where comfortably, with the simple gesture of a finger, we can surf in unusual places, and access an infinite archive of information in continuous evolution?

Data and images of all kinds are transmitted via ether at high speed and density. Architecture and design portals every day feed our desire for discovery and innovation.

So our team has tried not to accept the divisions of kind between design disciplines and to find new relationships between designing in architectural projects and designing in design projects, and in many other “hybrid” manifestations, remembering the multidisciplinary, multi-scale origins of both the Triennale and the international exhibitions of the past, both of which are BIE exhibition “formats”. In Italy, design and architecture have always fed into each other, sharing theory and expertise. Conceiving and actualising this mindset meant having to hypothesise the presence of certain relationships and themes in architectural designing and contemporary designing that could constitute the central nucleus of the future exhibition.

In searching for a way to make this configuration tangible, we identified a possible guide, a figure to look to for reference, in Gottfried Semper. He wormed his way into our research, almost unnoticeably at first, then more and more consciously, with his singular experience as a maths student, architect, historian, critic of comparative architecture, exhibition designer, expert in polychromy in ancient civilisations and the industrial arts; professor of metallurgy in the newly born London School of Design, and also professor of architecture at the famous ETH in Zurich.

Our attention fell on a fragment of this long intellectual journey, from 1850 to 1860, a decade that centred on the first Universal Exhibition, in London, in 1851. Semper found himself at the centre of the nascent debate about the relationship between art, craftsmanship and industrial production; between design and realisation; among new materials, technical possibilities and stylistic imitation; between pre-modernity and industrial society.

Inside the great greenhouse of the Crystal Palace, Semper saw the reconstruction of a Caribbean hut, and also chair N°14 produced in curved wood by Michael Thonet; he observed and reasoned over the plethora of artefacts on display – functional objects and useless ornaments; industrial items and craft products from the colonies – and over the machinery for their manufacture.

Everything before his eyes spoke of great variety, but also of “atrocious bad taste”1,2.

It was in this period that in his writing Semper sought to bring back order to the great heterogeneity of shape, materials and construction techniques to be found among the artefacts surrounding him.
Gottfried Semper: structure and ornament

“Tectonics is an art that takes its model from nature, not in its concrete manifestations, but in conforming to its laws [...]. The field in which this art expresses itself is the world of experience; its works exist in space and appear to our eyes as bodies, through their shape and colour. Tectonics is therefore a true cosmic art; the Greek word, cosmos, which has no equivalent in any living language, designates universal order and ornament contemporarily. There exists a harmony between artistic creation, tectonics and the universal laws of nature that is also represented in decoration.”

Gottfried Semper, Theorie des Formell-Schönen, 1856-59 ca.

Designer of the Opera in Dresden, but also of the barricades built in the same city in 1849, after the failure of the insurrection, Gottfried Semper went into exile in London, where he curated the display in some sections of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was held in the huge glass and iron structure of Crystal Palace. In the same year he wrote Die vier Elemente der Baukunst (The Four Elements of Architecture).

In the course of his argument in defence of the polychromy of Greek architecture, he listed the elements of an ideal original dwelling that for him were basic to all architecture and architectural techniques from any time or place: hearth, roof, enclosure and mound.

Many nineteenth-century treatises had tried to found architectural discipline on constructive principles common to all civilisations. The originality of Semper lies in using them to order the variety of the ‘industrial arts’. In his text he relates ceramics and metallurgy to the fireplace; hydraulics and masonry to the mound; carpentry to the roof and its supports; weaving to its partitions. The delimitation of domestic space by rugs or mattings – rather than by the erection of the masonry structure which sustains them – is seen by Semper to be the primeval action of architecture.

Many maintain that the idea of this ‘original’ dwelling came to Semper from his observation of the model Caribbean hut displayed in the Crystal Palace, within which he had curated the Canadian, Danish, Swedish and Ottoman sections of the Exhibition. On that occasion Semper met Henry Cole, the Exhibition organiser, who later founded what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum and who played a large part in the teaching of industrial design. It may also have been the phantasmagoric spectacle of new manufactured products from the industrial revolution displayed under the great glass and cast-iron dome – and the need to establish the logic of their form, overcoming the conflict between new technical possibilities and slavish imitation of past forms – that gave rise to the complex, theoretic-pedagogical attempt of the next work by Gottfried Semper, the two volumes of Der Stil published in 1860-1863. In this work he attempts to put into continuity craftsmanship and architecture, figurative archetypes and technical evolution, natural data and material culture. In Der Stil,
Gottfried Semper almost paradoxically maintains that “the use of any technical products remains essentially the same at all times. It is based on universal human needs”, whereas the materials which the objects are made of are highly variable depending on their geographical availability, and the ways in which they are constructed are subject to an equally extensive evolution depending on technical developments. In his book, he divides materials into four categories according to their possible technical applications. These are: “1. pliable, tough, highly resistant to tearing, of great absolute strength; 2. soft, malleable (plastic), capable of being hardened, easily shaped and formed, and retaining a given form when hardened; 3. stick-shaped, elastic, principally of relative strength, that is, resistant to forces working vertically along the length; 4. strong, densely aggregated, resistant to crushing and compression, thus of significant reactive strength. It is thus suited to being worked into any required from by removing parts of the mass or by inserting regular pieces in strong systems, constructed on principles of reactive strength.”

From each of these categories, Semper derives altogether four main ‘branches of technique’: the first associated with weaving, the second with pottery, the third with tectonics (carpentry), the fourth with stereotomy (masonry art). Semper goes on dealing with the cross connections between these categories, making a finer distinction between a technique that produces or transforms a material and a technique for its assemble into a complex artefact: in his opinion the way bricks are produced, for instance, belongs to pottery, but the way they are put together belongs to stereotomy/masonry art; the production of mosaic tiles is part of stereotomy, but their arrangement into a mosaic belongs to textile art. Lastly, Semper affirms that metals can be included in virtually all the above categories, both because they are endowed with almost all the mechanical properties by which he catalogued the materials, and because of their variety of processing possibilities (melting, laminating, forging, welding, nailing).

In a manuscript of 1852, which talks about an ideal museum of applied art and possible criteria for its organisation, Semper considers all complex artefacts as the products of a combination of these techniques. He hypothesises their arrangement on the coordinates of a big square; the products of a single technique would stand at the four corners of it, and between them, in a sort of naturalistic taxonomy, all the intermediate products would be arranged progressively according to the combination of techniques used in their production.

Again in Der Stil – anticipating some of the fundamental elements of the Gestalt theory, which was so important in the teaching of design and architecture in the following century – Semper analyses the ‘Gestaltungsprinzip’ (design principle) in natural forms like snowflakes, flowers or tree branches, seeing it as the fruit of a balance between “symmetrical equilibrium” and directional growth dynamics. In this sense, in many decorative motifs found in historical architecture, he sees natural laws of growth combined with a technical dimension and an artistic one which, in architecture and the ‘technical arts’, his “constructional-technical conception of the origin of basic architectural form” states to be firmly intertwined.
Many of Semper’s considerations must be interpreted against the background of a debate that has been going on for at least the last three centuries of design culture, and the roots of which we can find even earlier: the discussion about the priority of idea (today we would say concept) over technique, and about the relation between form, material and means of production.

The body of the Sempering exhibition

The curatorial idea of interpreting and cataloguing some of the main contemporary “form-making” processes grew out of Gottfried Semper’s classification model.

A year after Milan’s World Expo, and more than one hundred and fifty years after the publication of his writings, which classification would Gottfried Semper adopt to interpret the plethora of artefacts that shape our environment today, and that exceed the established borders of any possible ‘system of the arts’, of any separation in skills and areas of design of objects, architecture and landscapes? Which categories would he employ to sort the multitude of ways through which ‘form takes shape’ in contemporary design? The categories developed by Gottfried Semper – that do not relate so much to the material itself, but rather to some of its physical properties in connection with a number of possible ways of manufacturing and assembling it in complex structures – can today be taken as a kind of ‘mnemonic guide’ of design attitudes often born from a specific art or technique and then widened to different situations. The natural material, its extraction and finishing techniques and the modalities for its assembly to create larger structures, thus give form to a complex triad, never completely static.

In observing today’s design production, we have identified eight different practices, synthesising some structures recurring in this triad: techniques of union and metamorphosis of the elements that constitute today’s architectures and design products, and at the same time different formal archetypes, patterns which establish a kind of ‘abstract decoration’.

Eight different processes have been identified and correlated with likewise possible actions that the mind, the hand or the machine put in place to operate upon their matter. These are:

- **stacking** the action of the bricklayer;
- **weaving** the action of the basket-maker and the weaver;
- **folding** the action of the tinsmith;
- **connecting** the action of the carpenter;
- **moulding** the action of the potter and the sculptor;
- **blowing** the action of the glassblower and the glassmaker;
- **engraving** the action of the engraver and the goldsmith;
- **tiling** the action of the tiler and the mosaicist.
All these categories delineate the conceptual system of the exhibition which takes physical form in the exhibition path.

**Eight ways of thinking with your hands**

**Stacking – the action of the bricklayer**

*Stack* noun – Circular or rectangular pile of hay, straw, grain, etc.; pile or heap, usually neatly arranged: a wood stack, a stack of newspapers; *verb* – To pile into a stack; make a stack or pile of something.

The action of stacking means putting solid elements one on top of the other to form an upright, stable shape held in place by the force of gravity, the laws of physics associated with their barycentre. The piling up of elements whether of different shapes and sizes or all the same, in a dry construction or joined by cement and mortar, is a constructive action that lies at the base of many architectural structures and many objects of use. For Gottfried Semper masonry work is the outcome of two primordial techniques: weaving and stereotomy. The latter
Children learn to stack objects as soon as they gain control of their own hands: it is almost an instinctive gesture, perhaps driven by the desire to build and then destroy.

The challenge of stacking lies in exploring the laws of statics empirically. When we build a pyramid (whether of playing cards, jars or paper cups), we compete to see who manages to create the highest in the least time. It is an exercise, a pastime, or elementary didactics: a lesson for children but also for trainee designers. In the examples of architecture and design objects selected, the stacking consists in repeating a module or placing similarly shaped serial elements one on top of the other. The action of stacking does not necessarily always require “modular” shapes: dry walls can be made of irregularly shaped stones; it is not therefore the shape and size of the module that determine the action, rather it is the ability to combine different elements that respect the laws of statics. The outcome consists of architectures and products, generally made of a single material, characterised by vertical, articulated shapes.

Weaving – the action of the basket-maker and weaver

Weave verb. – To form by interlacing alternate threads stretched lengthways with transverse threads; fig. contrive, devise or construct (a narrative etc.) skilfully. To form (separate elements) into a finished item by interlacing or blending; fig. to intermingle or blend elements into an intricate and connected whole.

In the field of applied arts, the action of weaving is firmly connected with the variegated fibres of the textile universe. The rugs and upholstery fabrics of Gunta Stölzl (the only woman master in the Bauhaus textile workshop), Anni Albers and Margarete Willers are real 3D experiments in colour, shape and texture, inspired by their training with masters of the visual arts like Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Johannes Itten. Weaving has always been considered more of a decorative art than an industrial or applied art; the latter term being of English origin while the former comes from the French term arts décoratifs, where the adjective highlights the ornamental rather than the functional aspect. In the heated debate between craftsmanship and industry, it is classified in Italy among the “lesser arts”. Still today its learning is entrusted to the master craftsmen who safeguard its skills in spite of attempts to redeem it, first by the Deutsche Werkstätte and then by the Bauhaus at the start of the 20th century.
Although the mechanization of weaving – and the Jacquard technique as its “decorative” version – was one of the driving elements behind the industrial revolution, basketry or basket making by the very nature of its production procedures is destined to remain a craftsman’s skill.

Gottfried Semper himself insisted on seeing the textile origin of non load-bearing spatial diaphragms – in German Wand means “partition” and Gewand means “dress”. He saw them more as matting or hanging rugs than as walls. The evolution of modern architecture has increasingly differentiated between the load-bearing function and the function of delimiting a space, to the point of generating the curtain wall; but also in the production of objects, the idea of designing a multi-layer “skin” for an object has been gaining weight.

In the selection of objects and architectural examples on display, the investigation into weaving highlights the patterns and shapes embedded in this art over the centuries. It is an art that unites topology and materials, but also the new possibilities for “variations on a theme” offered by increasingly advanced technologies and by ever-freer experimentation.
If paper aeroplanes and boats have always been part of the staple diet of learning through play, origami is certainly the art that best describes this section of the exhibition. A fold, a geometric deformation of a two-dimensional surface that results in a more or less sharp corner, works on the flexibility and thinness of a sheet of material. Each material often requires a different process, ranging from the simple manual folding of paper to the mechanical folding of metal, or the folding of plastics by electrical resistance.

The art of origami is Japanese by origin (from Japanese, ori fold and kami paper) and is historically associated with spiritual customs and rites. In mediaeval Japan there was a series of epistolary forms dedicated to the sending of written communications created through origami – love letters, secret messages, missives between spouses – some with special folds known to few to protect their contents. Indeed, there is something magic about the possibility of transforming a simple sheet of paper into an animal or an intricate wrapping for a special gift. Folding turns a two dimensional semi-finished product into a complex structure, the material and structural simplicity of which amazes and attracts us at the same time. Origami calls for a knowledge...
of shapes and a mastery of geometry. Studies of origami in Japan reach the highest
levels of scientific and artistic research, ranging from the poetry of Akire Yoshizawa
to aeronautic engineering studies for industrial products by Taketoshi Nojima and
Ichiro Hagiwara and fashion items by Issey Miyake.

Simple or complex folding sequences can give materials very different shapes,
characterised by rigid forms and often intricate geometry. The configuration of full-
ness and void by folding generates unprecedented shapes and spaces, where the
surface acquires volume, depth and texture yet maintains the lightness of the ma-
terials as its peculiar characteristic.

**Connecting – the action of the carpenter**

*connect* verb – To join, link, fasten together (two things, one thing to or with another); link in
sequence or coherence.

In eighteenth-century treatises the term “tectonics” referred to the carpenter’s art,
elevating it however to an ideal construction model in which the manual work of
Man orders the built shape according to the nature of the materials and its rules. A
craftsman’s work found its peculiar characteristic in understanding the nature of
every element, and in finding its appropriate form by using the materials most suit-
able to its role in the artefact. In his book *Der Stil*, Gottfried Semper talks about car-
pentry as the art of combining elements with a linear profile that are resistant both
to traction and compression (qualities shared by both wood and steel). Years later
Paul Schmitthenner defined an architectural act with the concept of *augestaltung*
(building design) precisely because it is not merely a question of joining materials
through the laws of statics, but rather of the ability to match the carpentry techniques with the formal solution, where making the structure visible externally also implies a firm control of its visual effect.

More or less finished wooden beams joined in a load-bearing structure by intersections or joints is one of the most elementary construction techniques, and a form of architectural expression well-rooted in our subconscious. This structural model, of rectangles braced with diagonal beams, can be found in traditional constructions in most European countries and has come back as a theme for discussion and experimentation in the contemporary era, when the use of wood-based materials assembled into structural frames produces architectures and design objects that take a new critical look at tradition. Metal structures have also become objects of investigation and experiment. Like wood, it also generates elastic structures, produced by joining often repetitive, standardised linear elements.

The projects on display are evidence of a return to tectonics, in which the primordial nature of Fachwerk in architecture and the essentiality of wooden bars in the design of objects becomes the manifesto of an aesthetic which rejects the figurative elements of the academic arts to return to work on the fundamentals of construction as a source of clarity and formal lightness.

**Moulding – the action of potter and the sculptor**

**mould** noun – Hollow container with a particular shape, into which a soft or liquid substance (e.g. jelly or molten metal) is poured to set or cool into that shape; verb – To bring (material) into a particular shape or form; shape or model the character, style or development.

There is something demiurgic in the action of moulding, in the act of shaping a mass; right from early infancy modelling play is reminiscent of ancient building activity, handicraft and sculpture with clay or mud. Since the last century the use of shapeless materials (first and foremost concrete) has encouraged experiments in shape and form with extraordinary results. From the plastic yet angular shapes of the second Goetheanum by Rudolf Steiner to the softer, articulated forms of Antoni Gaudi; from the Endless House by Frederick Kiesler to the One Piece Chair by Nathan Lerner, moulding seems to condition the designer's free expression of form less than other techniques. Passable as a substance to be thrown into moulds of any complexity, and used for its rough, coarse character, free from right-angled slavery, Miguel Fisac has chosen reinforced concrete as his favourite material. He called it poured architecture and explored expressive shapes in which the characteristic puckering left by formwork made of rigid iron rods and flexible plastic film “solidified” in swellings like a quilted fabric. With totally innovative materials and instruments, the action of moulding often turned into the creation of objects or buildings characterised by complex surfaces, conceived and designed with sophisticated instruments, but printed by means of formwork or silicon moulds.

The selection of projects constitutes a free yet precisely shaped micro-landscape, in which the action of moulding generates the idea of a single body even where light materials simulate only the uninterrupted continuity of a more ductile substance. Whether it is a question of complex shapes that work by the virtual subtraction of
volumes – in a plastic game of “take away” where the material used almost loses its original consistency – or of masses obtained by metallic spirals that seem to be animated by unknown natural forces, the material seems to lend itself without resistance to the act of thought, at times reaching the ideal of pure expression, conceived in a synthetic way.

In this context, the additional process of the new-born 3D printers, both for the creation of objects and of architectural components, configures a new system of moulded shapes of which we perceive only the results.

Blowing – the action of the glassblower and the glassmaker

The invention of glassblowing, in the early first century B.C., led to an enormous increase in the range of shapes and designs that glassworkers could produce. Glassblowing consists of inflating a mass of molten glass to turn it into a bubble, with the aid of a blowpipe, until it gradually hardens as it loses heat. The two major methods of glassblowing are free-blowing and mould-blowing. On one hand, free-blowing requires the blowing of air into a portion of molten glass which has been spooled at one end of a blowpipe. This blowing has the effect of forming two elastic skins – one
internal and one external – during the cooling process, speeding up manufacturing and giving greater freedom to the artisan. On the other hand, mould-blowing relies on an existing carved mould, usually wooden or metal, to give molten glass a shape. The mould can be used many times and eventually discarded. New moulds can be made, or a copy of the first mould can be made from an existing glass object. In this way, copies and variations can be produced, slightly modified and duplicated. The development of mould-blowing techniques enabled the faster production of glass objects, encouraged mass production and widespread distribution and thus the shift from craft to industry.

In the last 100 years, the action of blowing has taken another direction with the invention of synthetic materials and the use of other gases besides air – helium, nitrogen, hydrogen – together with alternative strategies such as pumps, ram-air, billowing and suction to shape objects and enclosures of any size. The invention of synthetic materials, most commonly derived from petrochemicals, has caused the development of all sorts of inflatables. Initially used by the U.S. military, inflatables have developed in parallel to technological innovation and now range from bubble jewellery to space exploration equipment. At the end of the sixties inflatable products were considered to be avant-garde in architecture, design and in fashion. In Italy, the group De Pas, D’Urbino, Lomazzi experimented the field through temporary architectures and industrial products, as for instance in their proposal for the Italian pavilion for the Expo 1970 in Osaka and the famous inflatable armchair “Blow” designed in 1967 for Zanotta. Due to the ephemeral nature of inflatable artefacts, experimentation in this field is ongoing and blurs the borderline between temporary and permanent.
Engraving – the action of the engraver and the goldsmith

*en-grave* verb – To inscribe or ornament (a hard surface or object) with incised marks. To carve (an inscription, figure, etc.) upon a surface or object.

Skin tattoos and engraved wax tables try to give permanence to the fun and free spirit line of a stick in the sand. Puncturing, graffiti and marquetry were born as a complementary action to weaving; while weaving gave birth to a surface by tying a string, these actions reveal the winding of the lines and the infinite meshes of the arabesque through a subtle violence of the burin on a continues surface, engraved and punctured hence weaving the light. The moralism of the early Modernism, held together with an idea of design based on the values of efficiency and production capacity, seems to banish the concept of the ornament from architecture and design artefacts. Architect and designer Peter Behrens sustained that machine-made objects, destined for serial production and the mass market, should be free of decoration, basic in form and respect rigorous canons of proportion. While in the creation of artworks or unique design pieces, adornment was considered a value, as the expression of man’s “spirit”, in standardised architectural components and in serial design decoration was seen as the sign of a “bad copy”, a fake, relegated to the Kitsch.
However, recent years have been marked by a more open, pluralist vision. Engraving is one of the techniques used on a surface to create a decoration or a texture. The selection of products and architecture on display in this section illustrate the various engraving techniques: etching, fretwork, printing and more technologically advanced techniques (laser cutting, waterjet cutting and other processes carried out with digital support). Contemporary artefacts investigate and challenge the limits of standardisation, mixing artisan and industrial techniques to develop new production combinations. The border between the “handmade” of the craftsman and the “machine-made” of industry is becoming almost imperceptible, to the point of deceiving the observer, leaving him free to determine the value of an object by the end result.

**Tiling – the action of the tiler and the mosaicist**

**tile** noun – A small piece of baked clay of regular shape and size used in a series for covering a roof, paving a floor, lining a wall or fireplace. **verb** – To cover with tiles.

Whereas, in the action of connecting, the load-bearing structure itself is the centre of interest, in the action of tiling, attention focuses on the covering. In his famous *Prinzip der Bekleidung* (Principle of Cladding), Gottfried Semper asserted that the operation of delimiting a welcoming space, covering it with rugs and fabrics, comes before that of erecting the structure. He places the walls in the category of weaving, where the surface that encloses the room is independent of the construction, and its shape and form belong less to the art of masonry than to that of weaving or mosaics.

In the history of architecture and objects of use, the arrangement of tiles or the multi-coloured tesserae of a mosaic is used not only to embellish an object through a sort of “accumulation of handiwork”, but also to generate patterns and designs that are valuable not so much for their representational content as for their geometrical and structural complexity, which forms a “visual tapestry” as a background to our lives. Late nineteenth century ornamental repertories bear witness to the cultural and ethnic variety of these motifs, but also to a series of geometric laws that underlie them, which seem to survive the specific representational content of each decoration. This “abstract” machine underlying the decoration has been rigorously studied from the mathematical cataloguing of all possible translations and reflections on an ideal tessera, until it has become the basis for a series of software able to transform any motif in a decoration, like a matrix kaleidoscope. In recent years, new construction and production processes have made the decoration of surfaces economically sustainable and achievable by serial processes.

The selected projects show the unquenched desire for visual stimulation required of the surfaces of objects and buildings, and how the texture theme has found new abstract formulations, breaking the anathema that the Modern era had left in its necessary search for purity and essentialness.
A neologism, an intellectual contribution to contemporary criticism

The selected projects are the result of research that looked at the international production of the last decade of architecture, landscape design, and objects of use, through the classifying filter of the eight identified practices. Each displayed project was chosen not for its uniqueness, but rather for its ability to represent a common way of operating; it was not included for standing out among the others, but to give evidence to comparisons and cross-references.

The path does not find its *raison d’être* through its individual elements, but rather through its sequences and in the resonances they create; as receivers of weak and diffuse signals, retransmitting them in amplified and understandable messages. The set of the selected projects for each section witnesses directly, in a self-evident way, the ‘semperian’ practice that generated them, giving rise to dialogues and references between the architectures and products displayed regardless of the diversity of scale, function and context in which they have been conceived.

We find well-known names in the international scene side by side with younger and lesser-known designers; small accessories and everyday objects which show similarities with furniture and entire building projects; the traditional sectors and the *made in Italy* products are confronted with more unusual artefacts.
The outcome of this research is embodied in a dense exhibition, with an open view approach but selective and rigorous in identifying the cases. What emerges is a rich and complex picture of contemporary design, in which works deeply rooted in their own contexts coexist with others that reinterpret or reinvent established practices, creating a gigantic and ever-changing “Chinese Whispers” of images and design practices.

A variegated picture, where industry and crafts, advanced manufacturing processes and rediscovered manual skills, global innovation and local traditions come together in new combinations, distant more than ever from the ideals of universalism and mass production typical of Modernism.

It would have been impossible for a new word not to take root from this experience, a small contribution for the future:

Sempering, (z’mp’r’ŋ); Engl. present continuous of the verb “to semper”. In architecture and design, a constructive action on a material or component which leaves a meaningful formal trace on the final product. Neologism from the surname of the architect Gottfried Semper, 1803-1879.

2. Gottfried Semper’s book Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst: Vorschläge zur Anregung nationalen Kunstgefühles bei dem Schlüsse der Londoner Industrie-Ausstellung was published on 11th October 1851, a few days before the close of the Universal Exhibition. It is one of the first meticulous analyses of the art industry, and with it of the emerging new materials and new industrial processes; new markets and new capitalist societies.
3. “The use of wickerwork for setting apart one’s property, the use of mats and carpets for floor coverings and protection against heat and cold and for subdividing the spaces within dwelling in most cases preceded by far the masonry wall [...]. Wickerwork, the original space divider, retained the full importance of its earlier meaning, actually or ideally, when later the light mat walls were transformed into clay tile, brick, or stone walls. Wickerwork was the essence of the wall. Hinging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence, and so on.” Gottfried Semper, Die vier Elemente der Baukunst. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Baukunde, F. Vieweg, Braunschweig 1851 (Eng. transl. by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Hermann, The four elements of architecture and other writings, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, pp. 103-104).
4. “Architecture, in its relation to the fine arts as well as in its own right, will be a major theme of our considerations. Yet these higher realms of art represent only one of the outer limits of the field to be investigated. In this field we also encounter those simpler works to which the artistic instinct was first applied: adornment, weapons, weaving, pottery, household utensils – in a word, the industrial arts or what are also called technical arts.” Gottfried Semper, Der Stil in den technischen und taktionischen Künsten; oder, Praktische Aesthetik. Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde, Frankfurt am Main 1860 (Engl. transl. by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson, Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetic, Getty Publications, Los Angeles 2004, pp. 72-73).
5. Gottfried Semper, Style, p. 107.
7. The manuscript cited, from 1852, preserved in the National Art Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum ref. 86 FF.64., enabled Semper to obtain a teaching position at the National School of Design from its director, Henry Cole. “Most of the productions of Art and Industry wear a Mixed Character, and are related to more than one of the above given four families [note of the editor: it goes without saying that the thing also applies to the works in metal]. They must be placed and arranged together in the Collection so as to form the intermediate Members between the extremities or limits of the Collection, which are formed by the objects representing the pure fundamental motives.” Gottfried Semper, The Ideal Museum. Practical Art in Metals and Hard Materials, (MAK Studies) Schlebrügge Editor, Vienna 2007, p. 57, cited on the blog by Giovanni and Francesco Mazzaferro (English version) http://letteraturaartistica.blogspot.it/2015/11/gottfriedsemper.html.
8. Gottfried Semper, Style, p. 106.
A Hundred and Fifty Questions (Plus One) about the Future of Design

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In the future, will designers design in order to solve problems or to create new ones?
Will tomorrow’s designers be provocateurs or creators?
Will tomorrow’s designers be autonomous or subordinate?
What role will designers play in the society of the future?
What will the new frontiers of design be?
How will the profession of design change?
How many ways will there be to define design?
Will design be local or global?
Will there be neighbourhood designers?
Will there be village designers?
Will being a designer still be a profession, or will we all be designers?
Will it be easier to design objects?

Will we still design objects?
What role will software play in the work of a designer?
What role will social media play in communication?
Will designers design new social media?
How many ways will we have of creating designs?
Will there be TV programmes on design?
Will we still buy design objects?
What will tomorrow’s designers think of yesterday’s masters?
Who will the new masters be?

Will being a designer still be a profession, or will we all be designers?
Will designers construct a number of objects or processes?
Where will we go to buy design objects?
Will we still print posters?
How much information will we have access to?
Will design be self-produced in the future?
How will design and new technologies interact?
How will design and nature interact?
How will design and the economy interact?
How will design and production interact?
Will creating design be a matter of delegating or of constructing?
Will design be more a matter of organisation or of planning?
Will designers be the new craftsmen?
Will handicrafts still exist or will there only be efficient industries?
Will we own objects or will we just use services?
How will design and art interact?
How will design and science interact?
How will design and designers interact?
Theory or practice? Will design still focus on doing?
Will designers be open to indictment and prosecution for their designs?
Will the profession be exercised more by small firms or by big names in the future?
Will there still be avant-gardes in design?
Will designers be closer to journalists or to advertising agents?
What language will tomorrow’s design talk?
How immaterial will tomorrow’s design be?
Will the designer of the future be an anonymous face or a superstar?
Will the designer’s profession still be creative or will there be algorithms to draw the perfect logo?
Which will be more important, the designer-engineer or the designer-artist?
Will designers have professional ethics or will anything be allowed?
Will the design of the future be for the masses or for niche markets?
How much will the designer of the future earn?
What channels will be used to finance design?
Will designers also be entrepreneurs?
Will design be viewed as a common asset or as the privilege of a few?
If everything is design, who will the designers be?
Augmented reality designer, avatar programmer, cybernetic director, embodied interactions designer, intelligent system designer, real-time 3-D designer, nanotech designer: what and how many design professions will there be?
What will design schools be like in the future?
How will design be taught?
Who will teach design?

What will tomorrow’s designers think of yesterday’s masters?

Will designers be the new craftsmen?

Will the design of the future be for the masses or for niche markets?
Giorgio Camuffo

Who will teach design?

Where will people study design?
Will design also be on the curriculum of lower secondary schools?
What will tomorrow’s teachers be like?
What training will design teachers need to have?
What knowledge will new designers have to have?
Self-learning or academic education?
By hand or on a computer?
How will the history of design be taught?
What will the relationship be between design and research?
Who will fund design schools?

By hand or on a computer?

Will there be African designers?
In which part of the world will a new idea of design take shape?
What role will design play in the economy?
Will there be designers on the boards of companies?
Will designers be able to play a strategic role in society, industry, politics and culture?
Creative or decisive?

Creative or decisive?

What will the relationship between design and data science be?
Will designers be able to intervene in political and social issues?
Climate, migration, demography, war, food, water, mobility: what contribution will design make to the great issues and challenges of the future?
Will designers be able to make instruments to help improve the world?
Participation or design?
Will designers hold political posts?
Design or “mass self-communication”?

Will design be mass-produced or customised?

Will there be more men or women designers in the future?
Will design be male or female?
Will female designers change our idea of design?
Will designers still all be dressed in black?
Will they be narcissistic, self-centred and vain?
Or will they still be terribly thin but bearded, philosophical and critical?
Speculative, critical or technological and 3-D?
Will design be mass-produced or customised?
Will we be able to design and make what we need?
How fast will we be able to connect to the Internet?
To what extent will the digital world enter our lives?
Will we still use pencils to draw?

Will we read books or will we all be digital readers?
Will shops still exist or will it only be possible to buy online?
How will books be designed in the future?
How will reading devices evolve?
What will the relationship between design and publishing be like?
A Hundred and Fifty Questions (Plus One) about the Future of Design
What will the relationship between design and literature be like?
Will designers also be authors?
Will designers also be publishers?
Will we only use new technologies or will we also go back to traditional ones?

What role will the viewer/consumer/prosumer play in the future of design?
Will communication be indiscriminate or targeted?
Will designers design for the real world or for the virtual world?
What will the official language of design be? Chinese or Hindi, or still English?
How will design and politics interact?
How will design and medicine interact?
How will design and food relate to each other?
How will design and agriculture relate to each other?
How will design and biology relate to each other?

What will the role of design be for the collective memory?
Will designers specialise in a particular field or will they be able to deal with a range of things?
Will design be more a matter of thinking or of doing?
Will fashion still influence design?
Will design be culture or counter-culture?
Is good design what is shown or what is hidden?

Will designers be atheists or religious?
What distinctions will there be between the various spirits of design?
Will we still need design and designers?
Will there be a Ministry of Design?
Will we receive design catalogues by post?
Will copyright still exist?
Will the cities of the future communicate like companies?
Will there be an archaeology of design?
Will there be a universal visual language in the future?
Will the designers of the future get their hands dirty out in the field or will they work in aseptic laboratories wearing latex gloves and white coats?
Will dictatorships still need design for their propaganda in future?
Will the design of the future try to create new utopias or will it be cynical and disillusioned?
Will design products in the future have PDO and PGI labels, like wines and cheeses today?
Will big data mean that products and services will be individually designed in the future?
Will a trade union for designers be set up in the future?
How much rubbish will tomorrow’s design produce?
Will tomorrow’s design be recyclable or will it produce toxic waste?
In the future, will design create only the surfaces of objects, or also their structure and core?
Will design only help convey information or will it also interpret it?
Will there be a monopoly in the design market?
Will there be such a thing as emergency design?
Will designers have their own political party?
Will the design of the future simplify our daily lives or make them more complicated?
Will meetings still be held around a table, or will they all be on Skype?
Will designers also play a role in cinema and television?
Will communication designers still work on printed paper or design only on digital devices?
In the future, will designers design genetically modified organisms?

What will future designs exhibitions and next Triennales be like?
Bureau International des Expositions

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Triennale di Milano

Dedicated to architecture, design and craftsmanship, the Triennale di Milano is a recurring International Exhibition organised by the Institution that bears the same name. The institution of La Triennale di Milano is a unique cultural organisation dedicated to exhibitions and events in the field of architecture, design and crafts.

Born in 1923 as the Monza Biennale of decorative arts, the Triennale di Milano has, since 1933, a long history with the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE). Between 1933 and 1996, a total of 13 editions of the Triennale were organised under the auspices of the organisation. Following a 20-year pause after the 1996 edition, the Triennale returned in 2016 for the 20th edition, organised under the theme “First Century. Design After Design”. The return of the Triennale was made possible by the support of the BIE, the Italian Government, the City of Milan, the Lombardy Region, the Chamber of Commerce of Milan and the Chamber of Commerce of Monza and Brianza.

www.triennale.org Facebook / Twitter: LaTriennale
The Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) is the intergovernmental organisation embodying the commitment of its Member States to lead, promote and foster International Exhibitions for the benefit of the citizens of the international community.

The BIE oversees four types of International Exhibitions: World Expos, Specialised Expos, Horticultural Expos and the Triennale di Milano.

International Exhibitions are global events dedicated to finding solutions to specific challenges facing humanity by offering a journey inside the Expo theme through engaging and immersive activities.

The mission of the BIE is to guarantee the quality and the success of these world events, to protect the rights of their organisers and participants and to preserve the core values of Education, Innovation and Cooperation.

Created in 1928 by 31 countries, membership of the BIE has grown to 169 Member States today. The headquarters of the BIE are located in Paris. www.bie-paris.org Facebook / Twitter: bieparis

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