***Design! Objects, processes, experiences***

**First Section**

Curated by di Francesca Zanella

**April 28 – August 29, 2021**

**CSAC | Abbazia di Valserena**

Strada Viazza di Paradigna 1, Parma

The CSAC – Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione of the University of Parma has interpreted the title chosen by Parma for its candidacy as Italian Capital of Culture, *La cultura batte il tempo*, proposing the exhibition *Design! Objects, processes, experiences* within a more articulated program aimed at bringing light on the role of its archives as a place of preservation and enhancement of the memory of the project and contemporary arts. A tangible demonstration of how much the archive is not a mere inaccessible repository of silent records, but of how much it also narrates the present through the reinterpretation of memory.

The archives of the CSAC, which has a total of over 12 million pieces, is also a project in itself: for the choices made and the activities carried out to make it grow, to keep it alive through the study, cataloguing and construction of narratives carried out by different audiences.

*Design! Objects, processes, experiences* is an exhibition that proposes a reinterpretation of Italian design starting from the archives, opening some questions about contemporary perspectives.

The first perspective is memory and the future: the project's archive was born at the end of the 1970s, at a time when the modern culture of Industrial Design was going through a crisis, and therefore it is based on the contribution of some of the most active and acute protagonists of this debate, which is fundamental to fuel a debate on the future of design.

The second perspective is the one concerning the tools of design and the languages of representation: the archive gives back the heritage of knowledge developed by the generations of designers who defined the culture of Italian design from the thirties to the nineties; it also allows a reflection on the methods of design and the forms of its representation and narration.

It therefore proposes a path in which the artist and the designer - as bricoleur, artisan, anthropologist, philosopher, scientist, technologist - confront themselves on the themes of the project, on the modalities of debate with the policies of intervention on the territory and on the cultural heritage, with those of production, and finally on the different languages and practices within a multicultural society.

The first section of the exhibition, set up inside the Church of the Abbey of Valserena, seat of the CSAC, is therefore built to highlight the role of the project, the methodologies and the relationship between objects and individuals, and to compare two different narratives: the one based on the analysis of processes and the one focused on objects.

Thanks to the display of some projects and objects stored in the CSAC funds of Bruno Munari, Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Archizoom Associati, Enzo Mari, Alberto Rosselli, Mario Bellini, Roberto Sambonet, Roberto Menghi, Cini Boeri, Ettore Sottsass jr., Alessandro Mendini and Atelier Farani different design methods, production stories, communication strategies will emerge. They will also highlight the relationships with companies that have stood out in the history of the 20th century for their strong experimental component: Pirelli, Montecatini, Arflex, Poltronova, Brionvega, Danese, Olivetti.

The exhibition is designed to compare different ways of narrating design, from the display of documents to that of the objects, from a museum narration to an archival storage.

In this way a space of visualization and experience is created with which it is intended to highlight how the three keywords identified to talk about design live together, or the obsession for only one of them:

- Objects: the project is focused on the object, on its functional and symbolic dimension and at the same time on the object as an instrument of representation of cultures.

- Processes: the designer's self-reflexive moment is focused on the analysis and definition of processes, in the areas of innovation, social commitment, reflection on emergencies or the foreshadowing of the future; the designer's interpretation of the processes of industry or production is also fundamental.

- Experiences: design as a discipline oriented to the analysis of interactions between people, between people and objects or environments.

Through the projects of Enzo Mari, Bruno Munari and Roberto Sambonet, the close connections between design and artistic research are highlighted, and the different linguistic choices of these authors will dialogue with some works of the CSAC collection.

A selection of projects by Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Mario Bellini, Cini Boeri, Roberto Menghi and Alberto Rosselli will present different methods of interaction with the processes of industrial production through experimentation on materials, innovative technologies and image design.

Since the end of the Sixties, the attention of a new generation of designers began to deny the functional dimension of objects that was at the basis of modernist ideology, and claimed their symbolic dimension, recovering tools of investigation proper to anthropology, seeing in the objects tools of representation of cultures, and also elements of redefinition of living spaces.

Such an articulation will be represented through the objects, images, thoughts and performances of Archizoom Associati, Ettore Sottsass jr., Alessandro Mendini.

Finally, the exhibition itinerary investigates the body dimension, which is a comparison with the space of action (not by chance the itinerary is closed by La Grande Cina by Mario Ceroli) populated by objects, but it is also the design of the body and the dress. The dress is communication, identity object, shell, device, result of experimentation of craft techniques, industrial, object / sculpture.

In this section we will trace a trajectory between the lesson of a great Italian tailoring, the contemporary artistic research and the theoretical reflection of Andrea Mendini, Ettore Sottsass jr. and Archizoom Associati. Questions about contemporary perspectives are suggested by the intervention of Sissi with her three sculpture dresses set up in the second section of the exhibition at Palazzo Pigorini, and with the performance that will close the exhibition at the Abbey of Valserena on February 14.

Drawings, prototypes and objects are also flanked by other stories in images, such as the video produced by the Studio di Monteolimpino on the Castiglioni Brothers (subject by Bruno Munari, directed by Marcello Piccardo, photography by Michele Piccardo), and the collaborations of Marcello Mendini in video that in the eighties flank a renewed idea of objects and bodies (produced by Metamorphosy and Magazzini Criminali). Finally, the film by Muse Factory, curated by Francesca Molteni, combines the curatorial proposal with a further reading on the lessons of Italian designers and the power of the archives.