

AN ITALIAN DESIGN STORY

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An introduction from *Francesca Molteni*

90 years of projects, objects, thoughts, words: How to narrate such a story?

In the year that celebrates the 90th anniversary of Molteni&C, an increasingly global group, M Magazine is renewing itself once more, expanding its reach both far and wide.

Molteni Mondo - An Italian Design Story is not only the title of Molteni&C's special book that captures the moment and leads the dance, with a photo essay by Californian photographer Jeff Burton. It is also the leitmotif of a narrative which, over the course of the year, has heralded the communication of knowledge that has been handed down over three generations, enriched by new experiences, desires and geographies.

Our tale is a cinematic one, built by sets, actions and details, featuring the architects and designers who translated thought into a mark. The landscape of our headquarters, the Compound in Brianza, the Italian design district - named Brianza-mondo, playing on the title of the book - is shown with its spaces for production, display, hospitality and corporate culture. It is a place in which relationships and community, roots and wings, pragmatism and utopia, stability and the unforeseen, all come together.

"A documentary film approach was the right spirit, for many reasons, with which to describe the Molteni world," Burton says. "I knew - we all knew - that we didn't want a book entirely made up of sterile imagery, which is a look often associated with the photographed documentation around design. This story was larger, and human too."

Molteni Mondo - An Italian Design Story is published by Rizzoli New York, with art direction by Beda Achermann. Through such a cinematic approach, we explore the history of documentaries on design and architecture from the 1930s to the present day, focusing not only on the figure of the designer but,

above all, on the creative process - from sign to object. The precision of research is invariably associated with the emotional involvement of the beholder, the final recipient of the story. Indeed, cinema and architecture - public arts par excellence - have much in common: scenarios, teamwork, atmospheres and clientele.

And if, in the end, it always comes down to the product of thought, here is the story of a piece of furniture that has become iconic, the D.154.2, designed by Gio Ponti for Villa Planchart in Caracas, and one of his most beloved projects.

Homes, places for life, and buildings that speak to us - like the architecture of Piero Portaluppi - are the inspirations for the mood of the 2024 collection by Molteni&C's creative director, Vincent Van Duysen. "Both share a fundamental commitment to craftsmanship, meticulous attention to detail and a common pursuit of timeless elegance," explains the Belgian architect.

As Italy is the stage for these adventures, Sicily is the backdrop for Teatro Andromeda, the open-air theatre built by shepherd-artist Lorenzo Reina, which inspired the UniFor Andromeda collection designed by LSM Studio. Likewise, the acoustic experiments in the caves of La Valltorta, Spain, a Unesco world heritage site, suggest affinities with the research carried out by Citterio, a Molteni Group company, to improve sound transmission within a space.

Nature, art, memory, science and technology have always been allies in the journey towards knowledge. The same applies in the Molteni Mondo universe, in our journey towards a better quality of contemporary living for all the years ahead.

90 Molteni. Happy anniversary, happy Italian Design Story, and happy Molteni Mondo!

Francesca Molteni studied philosophy at the University of Milan and film production at New York University. She produces and directs documentaries, television and films, and curates exhibitions. In 2009 she founded Muse Factory of Projects, and in 2012 she received the award for innovation from the president of Italy and the Compasso d'Oro honourable mention.

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90 YEARS OF MOLTENI MONDO

by Ann Morgan



To celebrate 90 years of Molteni&C, Rizzoli New York has published *Molteni Mondo - An Italian Design Story*, a book that is on sale worldwide from September 2024

Enduring designs almost always have fascinating origin stories. So how do you tell the story of thousands of products created over the 90-year history of the family-run Italian furniture company Molteni&C? After all, what narrative could encapsulate a brand that made its name with such celebrated pieces as Werner Blaser’s MHC.1 dresser prototype (1955) and Yasuhiko Itoh’s MHC.2 bookcase (1959), and continues to shape the global design conversation today?

The answer is Molteni Mondo. Edited by US culture writer Spencer Bailey, the book brings together profiles of and perspectives from a selection of the leading designers who have come into the firm’s orbit since it was founded in 1934 – among them Foster + Partners, Luca Meda, Aldo Rossi and Tobia Scarpa and Patricia Urquiola. It invites you into the world of Molteni&C through an interview with Vincent van Duysen, the company’s creative director since 2016, a personal reflection from Jean Nouvel on the creation of his landmark Less collection (1994), and a range of essays on the firm’s origin story, extensive archives and rise to international prominence.

But words alone cannot capture the spirit of an enterprise built around the look and feel of design. To achieve this, Molteni Mondo has taken inspiration from another medium: the big screen. With art direction by former Männer Vogue editor Beda Achermann and cinematic photography from Jeff Burton, the book channels the energy of a behind-the-scenes chronicle of a feature-length documentary. Brianza, the Italian design district that is home to Molteni&C’s headquarters, takes a leading role in this film in pages. Through the book’s lens, readers have the chance to appreciate the area’s special character and understand the enduring relationships with local suppliers that have helped maintain the company’s reputation for excellence.

The following extract, taken from the book’s Afterword by the Pritzker prize-winning architect Jacques Herzog, distils the book’s power. With creative partner Pierre de Meuron, Herzog has long been celebrated for his appropriation of traditional design elements in contemporary contexts, and inventive use of natural and manufactured materials. Here, he writes in touchingly frank terms about how the pursuit of imperfection has shaped his work and led to the 2023 launch of Herzog & de Meuron Objects, a special project bringing together more than 600 pieces designed by his firm since 1988.

Picking out one of these objects – the wooden Porta Volta armchair that was designed for the National Library of Israel as part of a UniFor project and produced by Molteni&C – Herzog takes the reader into his relationship with his creation. “Sitting in it is like being inside a space,” he writes. “You can move inside the chair. It doesn’t orient you in one specific way.” The thinking behind Molteni Mondo is similar: the concept is bold, but the reading experience is yours to inhabit as you choose.

LEFT
Manifesto, as installed at the 1990 Salone del Mobile
ph. Jeff Burton, Molteni Mondo by Rizzoli NY, 2024

RIGHT
Jacques Herzog with the Porta Volta chair
ph. Jeff Burton, Molteni Mondo by Rizzoli NY, 2024



AFTERWORD BY JACQUES HERZOG

Design as an independent discipline never interested me. I never felt attracted by its products, whether it was chairs, lamps or bookshelves. Quite the opposite – I felt a kind of antipathy. Cars and planes were also never on my radar. I cannot explain this, really. Maybe it has to do with the sense of perfection that is inherent in many design objects. Perhaps this is why I feel more attracted to art, where I often see more imperfection, more room to discover.

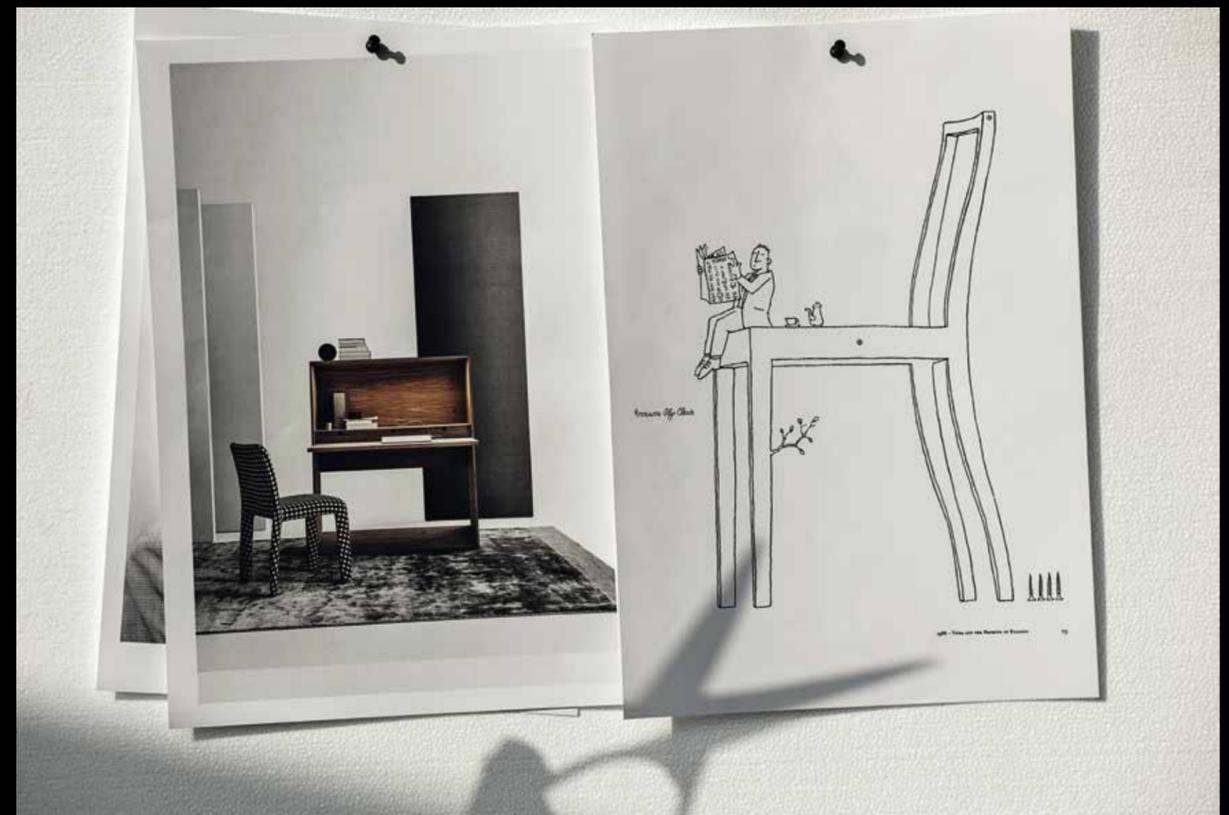
In its beginnings, Herzog & de Meuron was a lot about discovering, about imperfection. We were “bricolaging”, experimenting with technical tools like video, and doing things with our own hands. Of all the materials we were using at that time, wood was the one that worked best because it was easy to get, and we had the necessary machines and tools to work with it.

There was a carpenter in our neighbourhood who had a lathe for turning wood. Normally, he did small and often kitschy things for antique furniture that he had been asked to repair. But he could also do very large objects, like columns spanning the full height of my studio. That’s how I started to produce objects in the first place, using this old technology. These early wood columns and installation pieces could be seen as a kind of precursor to the objects and furniture pieces that we’re now doing since we launched H&M Objects.

H&M Objects summarises the activities that take place in our workshop, where a team of professional engineers and craftsmen develop prototypes for all kinds of specific and eventually also unspecific uses – unspecific in the sense that they lack a predetermined function, but could guide us towards something new and unexpected.

Basel, January 2024
From Molteni Mondo, Rizzoli New York 2024

Read Jacques Herzog’s full text at M Magazine online:



IN CONVERSATION WITH JEFF BURTON



by Isabella Smith

The photographer Jeff Burton is known for the cinematic quality of his work: bathers by a hotel pool become a study in saturated colour; tanned bodies are seen at one remove, distorted by mirrored surfaces; a woman's glance is glimpsed through a car's rearview mirror. The ordinary and extraordinary alike appear heightened and strange.



Burton's photographs have been exhibited internationally, in institutions ranging from the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao to the Barbican Centre in London. For his latest project, the LA-based photographer trained his lens on the Molteni&C headquarters in Giussano, Italy. The result is a photobook created in honour of the 90th anniversary of the family-run company, featuring candid portraits of designers, craftspeople and members of the design dynasty.

What first drew you to photographing Molteni&C?

Aside from the brand's notable historical design heritage and its long-time collaborations working with artists, I understood that Molteni&C was going to do something different with this book and I'm happy to say that I think we did.

I was introduced to the book project by Beda Achermann, who is a creative director, friend and adventurous fellow collaborator. He explained to me that the Moltenis were also adventurous, open to tell their story, and he felt that we would all get on.

Why did you decide to approach the photoshoot as if you were making a documentary film?

The idea of framing the shoot in the style of a movie was initiated by Studio Achermann. It came about organically, stemming from conversations I had with Beda about how many different hats I would need to wear to capture so many different kinds of images and stories in a very short time. I would be a photojournalist, a portrait photographer, still life photographer etc. Beda approached me because he saw me as the right artist with the right photographic spirit for this project.

A documentary film approach was the right spirit, for many reasons, with which to describe the Molteni world. I knew - we all knew - we didn't want a book entirely made up of sterile imagery, which is a look often associated with the photographed documentation around design. This story was larger and human too.

The documentary approach freed me from directing "the scene", so that I could concentrate fully, even meditatively, on being a photographer making images - a cinematographer as much as, if not more than, a director. I didn't want directed scenes.

The shooting experience was paced like a documentary film unfolding in real time and I approached the image-making very freely. Honestly, I had to by necessity. There wasn't much time to overthink.

While some photos appear staged, others look so candid they could plausibly have been snapped by a paparazzo. How spontaneous was it?

The different situations were planned, to a degree, beforehand, which gave me the freedom to be very spontaneous within this frame in real time. Almost all of the actual picture-taking was spontaneous, to tell you the truth, even the designer portraits. We set up the "situations" and Beda and I would co-direct with the crew and the family. This approach, in a natural way, allowed me to construct and document a larger spectrum of photographs and different kinds of pictures simultaneously.

How did the company's headquarters lend themselves to this cinematic style?

The idea came about because the factory and surrounding spaces look like a Hollywood studio. The headquarters is a location. It's massive and a hive of activity, with "scenes" playing out in a very diverse set of spaces. It is sprawling and quite interesting what goes on in there, as you can see.

Tell me about the decision to put the Molteni family in the role of producers and the designers as protagonists.

I don't think that is so much a casting choice as a reflection of a reality. For the record, everyone I photographed for this was a star and protagonist in my mind.

BEFORE
The Molteni family
ph. Jeff Burton, Molteni
Mondo by Rizzoli NY, 2024

LEFT
A roomscape by Vincent
Van Duysen, exploring
connections between
indoor and outdoor space
ph. Jeff Burton, Molteni
Mondo by Rizzoli NY, 2024

RIGHT
George Yabu and
Glenn Pushelberg
ph. Jeff Burton, Molteni
Mondo by Rizzoli NY, 2024

Read the full interview with Jeff
Burton at M Magazine online:



THE ICON

of Villa Planchart: Gio Ponti's D.154.2



LEFT
The D.154.2, designed by
Gio Ponti in the 1950s.
ph. Frederik Vercrussee

RIGHT
The first production version
of the chair, shown at the XI
Triennale in Milan in 1957
ph. Oliver Helbig

As the project came to life, telegrams travelled between Milan and Caracas, and ships traversed the ocean carrying marble, mosaics, gold-decorated plates, lights, sofas and armchairs – including the D.154.2. The chair is defined by its enveloping, curvy profile, with a firm yet cosy polyurethane frame that is juxtaposed with a soft, upholstered counter-frame, also in polyurethane. The armchair is a combinational game, created to be admired from above or afar, but also for everyday home life.

In 1957, Ponti repurposed the D.154.2 for the Feal Industrialised House at the 11th Milan Triennale, this time featuring a white frame and counter-frame with a green cushion and sleek chrome-plated legs featuring non-slip plastic feet-ends. Today, the chair has also been reissued by Molteni&C in an outdoor version, with new materials and technical solutions that guarantee its endurance and durability.

In 2016, the D.154.2 was honoured at the Wallpaper* Design Awards, rightfully cementing its status as a Molteni&C icon.

Like many of Gio Ponti's other pieces, the D.154.2 was conceived for a private client, the collectors Anala and Armando Planchart, as part of the project for their villa in Caracas, Venezuela, which was planned by Ponti to every last detail. Indeed, Villa Planchart (1953-57) is an all-encompassing work of art featuring a global approach to design that characterised the Maestro's influential work. "I dedicated my heart and soul to designing Villa Planchart, and in it, I was at liberty to express my own approach to architecture, both outside and inside," Ponti wrote in *Domus*.

The building, its interiors and its furnishings were inspired by his travels across Latin America, "from seeing some minor yet beautiful work by Oscar Niemeyer, to thinking of Luis Barragán's Casa Pedregal in Mexico City – the latter so uniquely rooted in its natural ecosystem as this building of mine appears detached from it". The result is an architecture replete with creative and amusing features that are as abundant as the tropical vegetation it embraces: a majestically decorated patio by Melotti, theatrical windows and balconies overlooking the open hall, and bright and colourful ceilings.

In celebration of its 90 year anniversary, Molteni&C is looking back on some of the products that have shaped its history: the D.154.2 and D.151.4 armchairs by Gio Ponti; the Arc table by Foster+Partners; and the Graduate bookshelf by Jean Nouvel.

by Francesca Molteni

Discover more about Molteni's
Icons at M Magazine online:



PIERO PORTALUPPI

and Contemporary Grandeur

In the centre of Milan, a short walk from the duomo, is Villa Necchi Campiglio, designed by Piero Portaluppi (1888-1967) for the Necchi Campiglio family between 1932 and 1935. Inside and out, marble, stone, brass, rosewood, walnut and mahogany collide in the villa's lush green grounds – the material palette is decadent, but constructed with understated elegance.

Little was known about the villa and its prolific architect, however, until it served as the striking backdrop to two recent films: Luca Guadagnino's *I Am Love* (2009) and Ridley Scott's *House of Gucci* (2021). In both cases, it was used to signify high society and opulence.

It is easy to see why. The facade of the villa is comprised of bands of arabescato marble, ceppo stone and granite, punctured by semi-circular steps that lead to a restrained but elegant brass and glass door. The materials are both rich – some of the costliest at the time, but also powerful in their unique qualities of colours and veining – and representative of solidity.

Portaluppi's work speaks of Italian glamour. He created the spaces that the aristocracy's lives would play out in: understated, dignified, but opulent. Over his 50-year career, he designed more than 100 buildings in Milan, and influenced countless more as his work left a mark on the city's society and cultural heritage. In residences such as Casa Corbellini-Wasserman, and public buildings such as the Hoepli Planetarium, his work reflects a luxurious and sophisticated aesthetic that demonstrates how true glamour lies in elevating the everyday into realms of understated beauty and opulence.

In 1912, Portaluppi began a collaboration with Ettore Conti on the restoration of Casa degli Atellani that would shape his professional life. As an aristocrat and industrial elite, Conti introduced him to Milanese high society, and he became the preferred architect of these circles. But it was through Conti that Portaluppi created a significant body of work outside of Milan, too. With a shared vision that industrial brilliance should also be beautiful, they collaborated on a number of hydroelectric power stations for Imprese Elettriche Conti and its subsidiaries. These projects were characterised by the same restrained elegance as his residential work but allowed for experimental elements: Centrale Idroelettrica Cadarese's green tiles

appear to interlock with stone on the facade, but it is in fact a trompe l'oeil using the sgraffito effect – layers of coloured plaster were applied while the surface of the wall was still wet, then scratched away to reveal patterns.

Portaluppi has a vast back catalogue, but he has not taken his place, with the likes of Gio Ponti and Carlo Scarpa, as one of the masters of 20th-century Italy. This oversight can partly be attributed to the same eclecticism that makes him so remarkable as a designer, spanning from neoclassicism to modernism, and making it challenging for him to fit neatly within digestible critical narratives. His concentrated work in Milan also limited his international visibility compared with his contemporaries. Navigating the complex political and cultural landscape of fascist era Italy was essential for his career, but working extensively during this period may have also complicated his legacy, as postwar architectural criticism grappled with the era's political implications. Equally, the postwar shift in architectural discourse towards modernism and brutalism, and favouring new ideas and aesthetics, meant Portaluppi's contributions did not align with the prevailing trends and priorities of the time.

On the occasion of its 90th anniversary, however, Molteni&C's creative director Vincent van Duysen was inspired by the grandeur of early-20th-century Milanese architecture, including the buildings of Portaluppi, and injected this into the



LEFT
The geometric stairway in Piero Portaluppi's Casa Boschi di Stefano
ph. Lorenzo Pennati

mood of the 2024 collection. "Both share a fundamental commitment to craftsmanship, meticulous attention to detail, and a common pursuit of timeless elegance," explains Van Duysen, continuing that "the enduring influence of Portaluppi's approach complements Molteni&C's dedication to creating sophisticated pieces that effortlessly marry innovation with refined aesthetics, forming a connection rooted in enduring design principles." Portaluppi's work was often reserved for the upper echelons of Italian society, but Molteni&C hope to consider an evolving sense of prestige, with a "more inclusive and versatile definition".

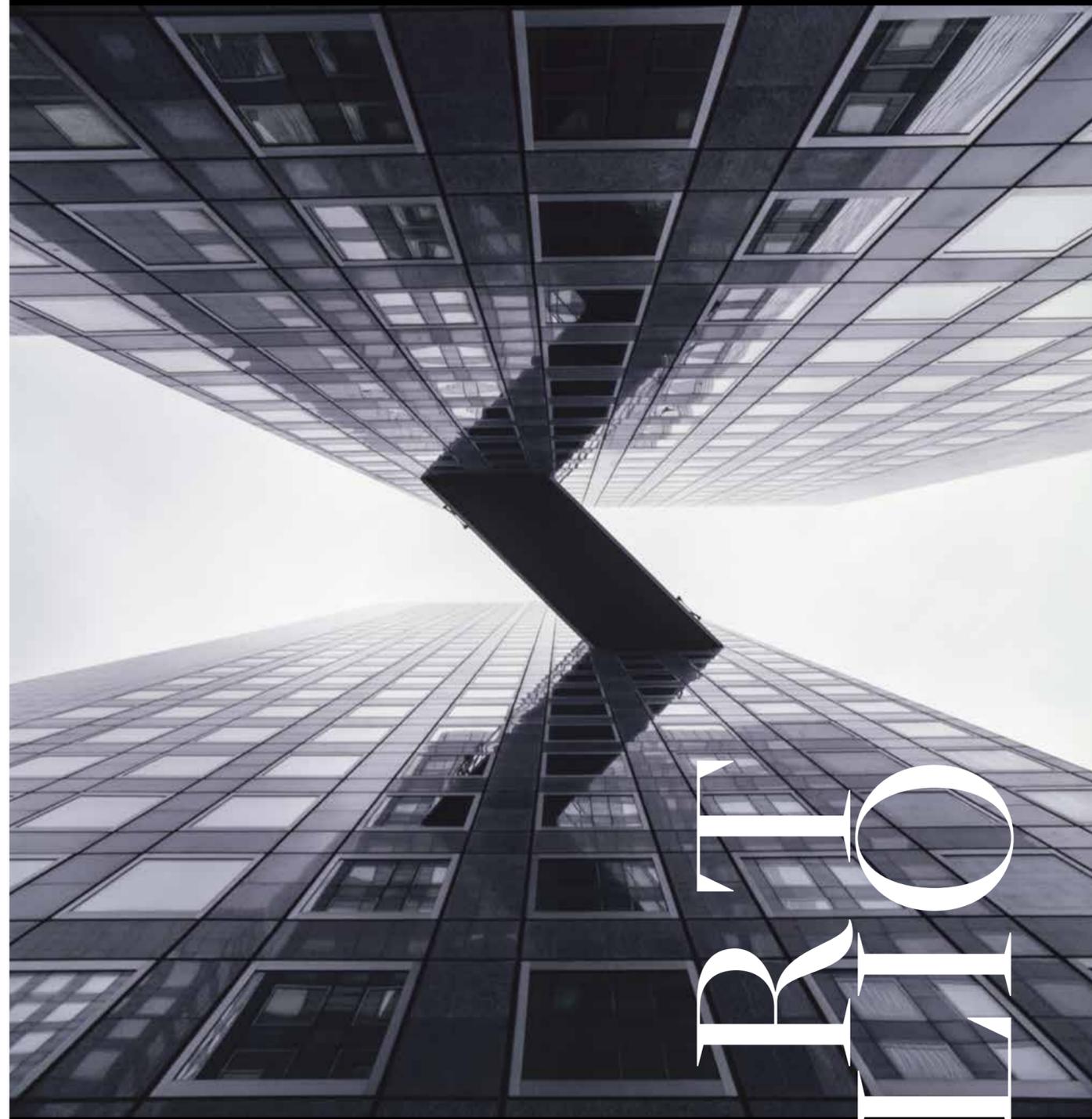
This is, perhaps, fitting. The ideas of grandeur in Portaluppi's work, though often private residences for the aristocracy, were created less through alienation or exclusivity, but rather through solidity and endurance. In an era of climate breakdown and myriad social and political crises, his works reveal how a return to natural materials and handcrafted design is necessary to create work that lasts. The floor of the corridor at Casa Corbellini-Wassermann, made of geometric rows of locally sourced red, white and green marble, takes on a fresh significance as we orient towards building using what is nearby in order to decarbonise an extractive industry. His restoration work emphasises the importance of cultural continuity: unveiling forgotten renaissance frescos at Casa degli Atellani, and combining modern architectural practices with ancient decorative techniques. Ideas of permanence and continuity are embedded in the Molteni&C 2024 collection too. As Van Duysen says: "This signifies a departure from traditional notions of luxury, highlighting a desire for meaningful design that transcends trends."

These are all urgent themes, but it is the way Portaluppi demonstrated grandeur's compatibility with the everyday, elevating the most mundane human experience, that is most important to these pressing times. The spaces he created are rich in detail and texture, offering both inspiration and solace, and showing the importance of beauty in nurturing

the soul and transporting one away from the current moment.

"Grandeur should transcend time," says Van Duysen. The past is always present in Portaluppi's work, and that is why it is a rich setting in which to explore how the distilled elements of grandeur – craftsmanship, storytelling, materiality – are relevant, and vital, to design today.

The story of Piero Portaluppi continues at M Magazine online:



TO
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GABRIELE
BASILICO

ABOVE
The IBM Tour Pascal in Paris
ph. Gabriele Basilico

Gabriele Basilico studied to become an architect, before pursuing a career in landscape and architectural photography. From his early work documenting industrial areas of Milan, the coastline of France and the ruins of Beirut following the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), through to his portraits of Shanghai, Istanbul, Moscow and Rio de Janeiro, Basilico was a master of capturing both the decay and grandeur of urban spaces.

Ten years after his death, the city of Milan paid tribute to the famous photographer in two exhibitions: one at the Triennale Milano that focused on Basilico's images of the city, the other hosted at the Palazzo Reale to cover his international work, for which UniFor acted as sponsor. Basilico's collaboration with UniFor had begun in the 1980s, when he photographed some of UniFor's most famous products, such as the Modulo 3 system, designed by Bob Noorda and Franco Mirenzi, and the Master series, designed by Afra and Tobia Scarpa.

Alongside this work, UniFor collaborated with Basilico to capture the UniFor plant in Turate, which was designed by Angelo Mangiarotti, and to photograph offices, private foundations and cultural spaces around the world on which the company had worked. Starting with the IBM Tour Pascal headquarters in Paris (1983), Basilico photographed the brand's main projects up to the 2000s, including the Fondation Cartier museum in Paris (1994) and the new Edel Music AG headquarters in Hamburg (2001).

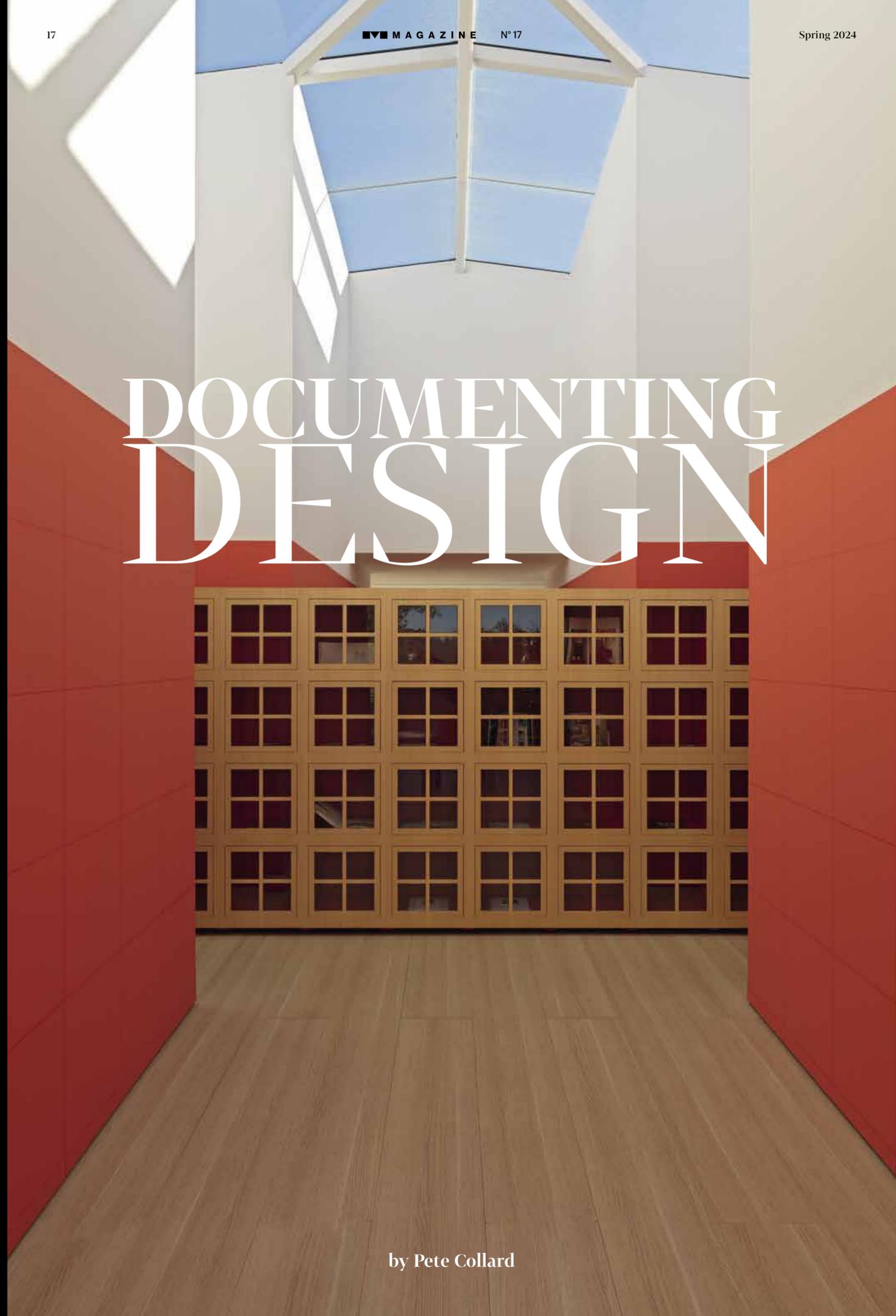


RIGHT
Elliptical table by Afra and Tobia Scarpa as part
of UniFor's Master Series, Pinacoteca di Brera
museum, Milan
ph. Gabriele Basilico



ABOVE
 UniFor showroom,
 Corso Matteotti,
 Milano, 1989
 ph. Gabriele Basilico

DOCUMENTING DESIGN



by Pete Collard



How we understand the world of design can depend on the means by which we engage with the subject. Online formats can offer a brief snapshot or introduction to a product or designer, leaving live events such as Salone del Mobile as a moment to see and experience the materiality of new collections first-hand.

of the Swiss architect drawing in his studio. The film was shown in pre-feature newsreel programmes at picturehouses across France, before travelling with Le Corbusier on his lecture tour of the United States in 1935, with the screenings accompanied, on occasion, by a gramophone recording of George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue.

With the advent of television in the 1950s, the voice of the designer began to be added to documentary productions, and presented to much larger audiences. In the United States, the National Broadcast Channel (NBC) helped to feed a growing interest in architecture and design, introducing Charles and Ray Eames and

be awarded the prestigious architecture prize. The inclusion of this material was critical to the narrative of the film, Molteni explains, but was also a stylistic decision. "We liked the feeling of old film, the VHS quality," she says. "Even though it's possible to clean-up old footage, we decided not to use software to improve the quality. We wanted to keep the patina – it makes it clear that these events are happening in the past. Although the quality of the footage at the Palazzo Grassi is not good, it's very moving. It's a moment that has gone."

For the viewer, this switch between modern digital film to older formats creates an instant

Yet increasingly the documentary film format has become an important tool with which the public can engage with the people, processes and histories of design, creating emotional and lasting connections.

For example, Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo (Theatre of the World) is one of the most remarkable projects in the history of contemporary design. Commissioned in 1979 for the Venice Biennale, the 25m-high floating theatre offered a vivid evocation of the city, its architectural history and cultural traditions, presented via Rossi's super-stylised design language. As Paolo Portoghesi, the Biennale's director, would later recall: "An ephemeral work like that, that travelled the world in magazines – it was a bit of a miracle."

Yet despite the extensive print documentation of the event, it is archival film footage that perhaps most accurately captures the essence of Rossi's project, with the city of Venice itself becoming the backdrop for its theatrical arrival. Grainy handheld sequences show the yellow and blue wooden structure slowly appearing, as if an apparition through the early morning fog, towed into Venice to a mooring (at the Punta della Dogana) where it was to be presented for the following months.

This footage features in the recent documentary Aldo Rossi Design, directed by Francesca Molteni and Mattia Colombo, which explores the architect's life and the connections his projects facilitated between design, object and architecture. Featuring interviews with important figures from Rossi's personal and professional lives, the film is interspersed with archival material and contemporary scenes shot while a 2022 retrospective exhibition about the architect was installed at the Museo del Novecento in Milan.

The idea for the film had been a long-term ambition of Molteni, the granddaughter of Molteni&C's founders Angelo and Giuseppina Molteni. "It was in my mind for some time to make a film about Aldo Rossi," she says. "He was very close to my family's history, through the furniture he produced with us, but also the personal time we spent together in Venice, Isola d'Elba and elsewhere. The exhibition was the occasion to put these ideas into production, to help people appreciate better some of the objects on display and understand the person that made them."

Rossi himself had a longstanding interest in film, with his long-term partner Ludovica Barassi recalling in the film that he once held an ambition to become a film director, should a career in design not work out. In that respect, it is perhaps a shame that Rossi worked on only one cinematic production, the documentary Ornament and Crime produced for the Triennale di Milano in 1973 – a slightly mournful and experimental collage of architectural scenes from the outskirts of Milan, mixed with narrated excerpts of Adolf Loos's highly influential 1913 text of the same name.

The history of architecture and design documentaries goes back much further, however, to the 1930s. One of the earliest known examples is the silent production L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui (The Architecture of Today), a study of Le Corbusier's recently completed buildings, shown alongside images

LEFT
Cartesio, designed by Aldo Rossi for the Bonnelanten Museum
ph. Aldo Rossi Design

RIGHT
A detail from the Un legno Geniale exhibition about Aldo Rossi at Molteni Museum
ph. Aldo Rossi Design



their furniture to the American public, and reflecting on the career of Frank Lloyd Wright. Like the earlier Le Corbusier film, the latter production, A Conversation with Frank Lloyd Wright, in 1953, featured sequences of the architect at work, demonstrating the means by which his world-famous buildings were created.

Portraying the creative process remains a common approach to documentary filmmaking today. Films such as Gary Hustwit's Objectified (2009), featuring Naoto Fukasawa, Jony Ive and Erwan Bouroullec, and Sydney Pollack's Sketches of Frank Gehry (2006) allow the often complicated relationship between designing and making to reveal itself on screen. As the title of Pollack's film suggests, the hand of Gehry is present throughout, as the architect explains the challenging journey from original drawings to subsequent design iterations, gesticulating between the computer screen and the models in his somewhat disorganised office, exclaiming: "We constantly go back and forth between the models and the drawings, because if this doesn't work, that doesn't work!"

According to Molteni, Rossi "lived life materially through his drawings and ideas for making", meaning that the contributions to her own film from Alberto Alessi, who was tasked with producing Rossi's ideas for metal homeware, and Bruno Longoni, with whom Rossi made furniture, provide unique insights into the design processes and the nature of collaboration. Yet her film is also poignant – perhaps unsurprising given Rossi's untimely death in 1997 at the age of 66 – with the contributions, recollections and memories creating an intimate portrait of the architect and his practice. It offers an emotive, human response that perhaps only a documentary film could have achieved.

Above all, it is the archival footage that makes Rossi's absence most keenly felt, from everyday scenes of him walking in Milan, to more formal moments, such as the 1990 Pritzker Prize ceremony at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, in which he became the first Italian to

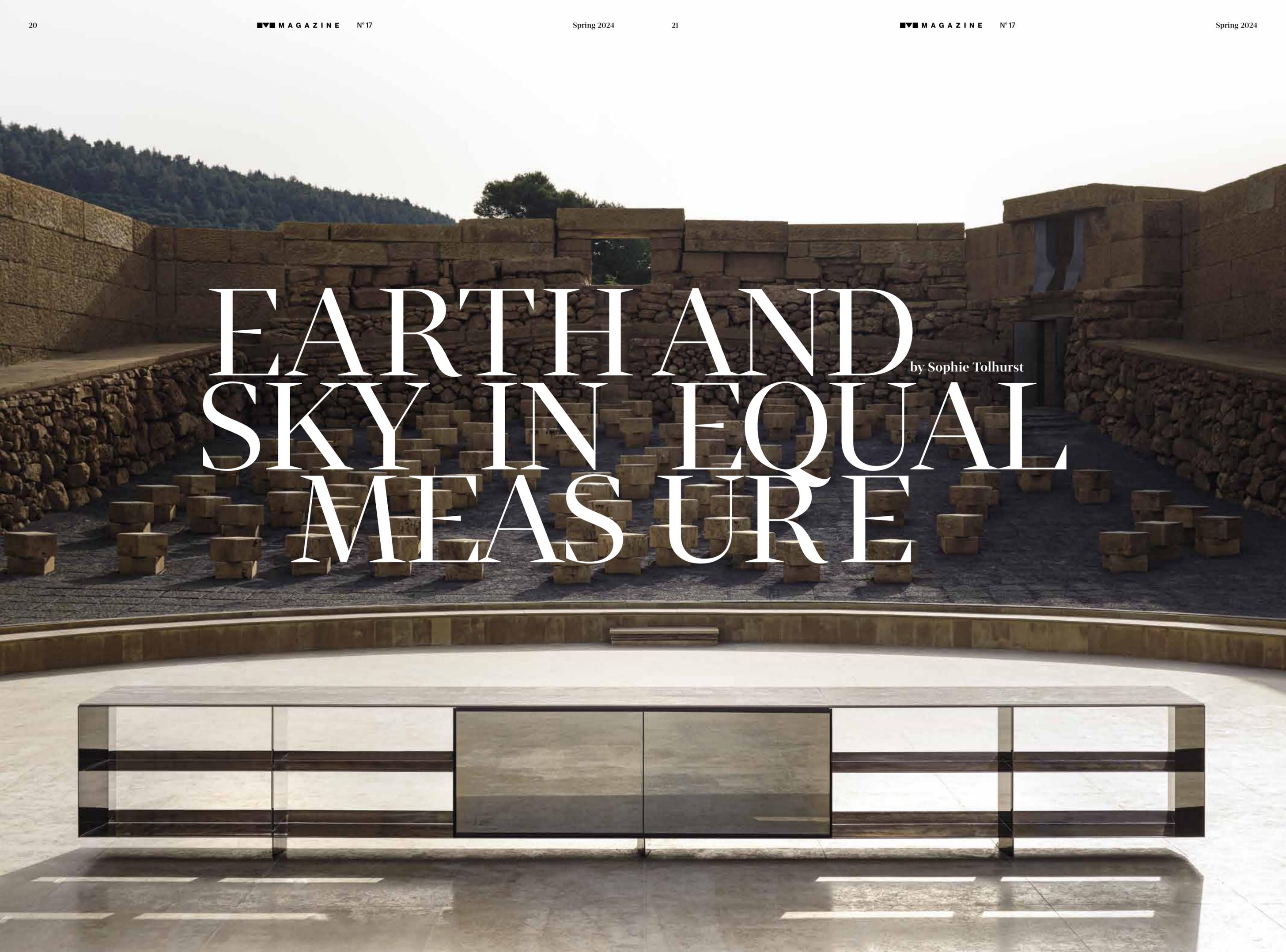
cognitive shift, and captures one of the essential elements of documentary filmmaking. It offers an encouragement to engage in a closer study of the scenes as they unfold, perhaps in the expectation that they are rare or previously unseen. The death in 2013 of architect Fabrizio Fiumi (a founding member of the avant garde Gruppo 9999), for instance, led to his filmmaker daughter Elettra discovering boxes of previously unknown amateur film footage among his possessions. By studying the reels, shot in Italy and America during the 1970s and 80, Elettra embarked on a highly personal journey, discovering her father's life and formative years, and the radical architectural scene that he helped to create. Her resulting film, Radical Landscapes (2022), demonstrates how changes in consumer technology can amplify the fragile nature of the lives seen on screen – memories of people who live on in obsolete technologies.

It is these emotive yet technological qualities, coupled with the skill of the filmmaker in creating an engaging narrative from disparate sources, that demonstrate the unique capacity for documentary to engage on multiple levels. And as the speed of video production and consumption quickens ever faster on social media, it is perhaps heartening to know that slower-paced formats remain popular, and that audiences are keen to learn more about the hidden or untold stories from the world of architecture and design.



EARTH AND SKY IN EQUAL MEASURE

by Sophie Tolhurst





The new Andromeda Collection by UniFor, designed by Washington D.C.-based LSM Studio, takes inspiration from a site-specific artwork atop a hill in Sicily. High up in the Sicani mountains sits the Teatro Andromeda, an open-air theatre built by artist and shepherd Lorenzo Reina over many years.

In this remote rural region, the striking sight of the stone theatre is matched only by that of its hilltop location – an elemental place where sky and Earth meet. At an altitude close to 1,000m, it is one of the highest open-air theatres in the world. Yet when approaching the Teatro Andromeda, visitors see only the dry stone wall of a sheepfold like any other in the region. Among these natural stones, however, are others that have been more precisely chiselled with sharp lines. And two of these great stones flank the entrance to the theatre, before the space opens out to reveal a circular stage and geometric stone stools.

Reina is from a shepherding family, but became fascinated by art from a young age. He had considered pursuing a career in the field, but later took control of his family's farm and sought to reconcile the two strands of his life. A self-defined shepherd-artist, or "scultore-pastore", Reina has crafted a space for art within his 300 acres of grazing land in the village of Santo Stefano Quisquina, about 60km south of Palermo. "The spirit, like the wind, blows where it wants to, and it blew here, in this place where I used to take the sheep out to graze," he says. "And strangely, as if enchanted, the sheep seemed to stand as still as stones, ruminating motionlessly. I sensed that a strange energy was flowing from this place, and I began to gather the first stones here."

Reina gave the theatre its name after learning about the Andromeda galaxy, or galaxy M31, part of the Andromeda constellation. First recognised by Greco-Roman astronomer Ptolemy and included in The Almagest, his 2nd-century astronomical guide, the constellation was named for the myth of Andromeda, daughter of Queen Cassiopeia and King Cepheus of ancient Aethiopia. The story tells how the king was punished by the gods for the hubris of suggesting his daughter was more beautiful than the deities. As penance, Andromeda was chained to a rock on the coast to be sacrificed to the sea monster Cetus – which is why the constellation's brightest stars are said to map the figure of Andromeda with arms spread and bound – before chance would have her rescued by Greek hero Perseus.

Placed at the boundary of the terrestrial and celestial, the theatre's materials are solid and earth-hewn, yet their geometric forms take on new life with the changing light of the sky. Its 108 stone seats appear scattered, rather than arranged in regular, regimented rows, yet they carefully correspond to points in the constellation. With one cuboid stone form stacked at 45 degrees on top of one another, they appear as eight-pointed stars from above. A focal point, at the centre-back of the stage is a disc held aloft in the centre of an arch.

As both site-specific artwork and architecture, the Teatro Andromeda has been designed, according to Reina, for the dramatic tensions of both forms: "In this way, I tried to conform the theatre to nature that stages itself." Surrounded by clouds and mountains, the backdrop cannot help but lend its own drama to the productions that take place there. Meanwhile, assembled around the theatre, are a number of further artworks and structures created by Reina and others, making up his Fattoria dell'Arte (Art Farm). There is Giuseppe Agnello's sculpture Icaro Morente (Dying Icarus), in which Icarus lies prostrate on the ground and surrounded by feathers after his fall from the sky, while the approach to the theatre draws visitors past Reina's own sculpture, Imago della Parola (The Imago of the Word), a large upright mask with holes for eyes and a mouth, positioned such that the mouth fills with light at the summer solstice.

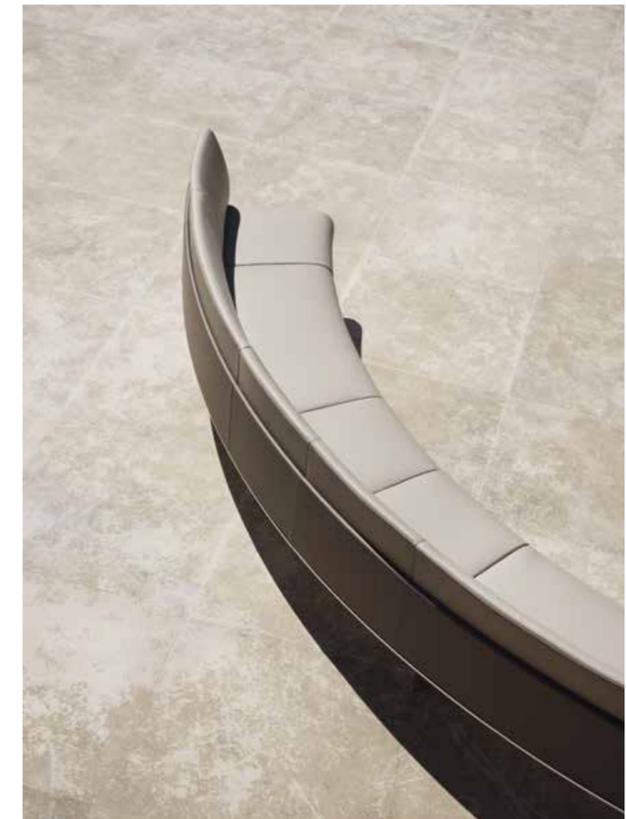
With its purity of materials, careful craft and visual drama, it is unsurprising that the Teatro Andromeda has proved to be inspirational to designers. The Teatro Andromeda was chosen by architect Mario Cucinella for inclusion in the Italian pavilion of the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale, representing the country's southern region: the unique vision of an

individual who is both farmer and artist, and a work of architecture born of the land and the traditions of working it. And now the site has inspired the UniFor Andromeda furniture collection, debuting at Milan Design Week 2024.

Andromeda was designed by LSM Studio, with the project led by LSM's founding partner Debra Lehman Smith and director Mark Alan Andre. LSM has collaborated with UniFor for 30 years, but while most

Reina's craftsmanship and exacting approach, which saw him finesse the Teatro Andromeda over decades, it is also the artwork's timeless nature that appealed. "It really symbolises this collection because it's not about the past," explains Lehman Smith. "It's not about the future. It's not about a trend. And it's not defined by a single moment of time."

The collection – comprising tables, credenzas and sofas, made of polished and chromed aluminium,



LEFT
Round and elliptical coffee tables, with mirror-polished metal frames
ph. Alberto Strada

RIGHT & SPREAD BEFORE
The curved Andromeda sofa
ph. Alberto Strada

of their work has been project-specific, this is the first collection to be released commercially. Despite this wide release, however, it remains a collection in close dialogue with the site that inspired it. Marco Maturo, co-founder of Studio Klass and art director of UniFor and Citerio, says that he came across the story of Reina and his theatre when looking for a singular architectural site in Italy, and was drawn to its unique, "autarkic" style. "This theatre in the middle of Sicily was designed by someone who had no clients, so was completely free," he says. As development for the collection, Maturo met Reina, who told him how he had studied art in Rome, where he had become influenced by architect Aldo Rossi. In particular, Reina was inspired by Rossi's floating Teatro del Mondo, created in 1979 for the Venice Biennale. Reina has also exhibited work since 1979, but it is his own theatre, the Teatro Andromeda, which is the major achievement of his more than 40-year career.

Describing the Teatro Andromeda as sitting between a traditional Greek theatre and something more esoteric, and with an innate "sense of beauty", Maturo explains that UniFor and LSM Studio were immediately inspired by the site. "The purity of this place immediately seemed to us capable of restoring that fine line between delicacy and rigour, the conceptual heart of the collection," he says. As well as

travertine, leather and glass – mixes curved and angular forms, much as the architecture of the theatre does. When placed in the Teatro Andromeda, for instance, the collection's curved sofa, which was designed for lounge or waiting areas of working environments, echoes the roundness of the stage, while the reflective finish on its monolithic credenzas and the wide rhomboid legs of the tables reproduce the mountain surrounds, as the flat plane of the tabletop all but disappears into the horizon.

Maturo chose to photograph the UniFor Andromeda Collection in the Teatro Andromeda, working with photographer Alberto Strada, with minimal editing, "because we did our best to [reproduce] the feelings that we had there". Shooting at sunrise and sunset, "chasing the light", Maturo says, the furniture "was fluctuating in between the sky and the Earth, depending on how you [moved] around it. In that place, you feel two elements: the first one is the Earth, and the second is the sky; it's a place where [they are] 50/50."



A History of Architectural Acoustics: AMPLIFYING AND SILENCING SOUND

by India Block

At La Valltorta gorge in Valencia, Spain, there are figures of humans and animals that were painted onto the rock face by our prehistoric ancestors many thousands of years ago. In 2012, two archeologists published a paper revealing the results of a series of sound experiments they had conducted in the gorge. It transpired that these ancient artworks had been deliberately placed in rock shelters where the reverberation of a human voice would be most effective. Perhaps people would sing or clap in ritual around these designs, celebrating the abundance of the local hunting grounds. Or maybe the artist simply liked to hum as they worked, cocooned by stone walls that reflected their own voice back to them. Sound and its reverberation has always been important to our most creative work, and the emerging field of archaeoacoustics only adds to our evidence base for this.

Manipulating sound within space may, therefore, have been with us since before recorded history, but its applications have been hugely varied: as the requirements for our work and leisure spaces have changed, design and technology has had to keep pace. The threads of architectural acoustics run right through from rock shelters to the high-tech acoustic panels developed by Citterio, an Italian manufacturer

match struck on stage from any seat in the theatre; although when students from Eindhoven University of Technology used microphones to investigate, they found that, realistically, you'd have to be sitting fairly close to the stage. Archaeoacoustics strikes again.

Clap your hands in front of the Temple of Kukulcán, the grand stepped temple of Mexico's ruined ancient city of Chichen Itza, meanwhile, and a chirping sound will ripple up the limestone. In 600 CE, the temple's architects specifically engineered this spatial sound effect to mimic the call of the quetzal, a bird considered sacred by the Maya. Or murmur words at one part of the Whispering Gallery of St Paul's Cathedral in London, England, and someone on the other side of the dome will be able to hear your secrets transported by the stone – an effect that led to the late 19th-century discovery of whispering-gallery waves by Lord Rayleigh. Using architecture and design to play with sound through reverberation can create moments that invoke the divine.

History is full of grand architecture that plays with amplifying acoustics. But while architects have always known how to make sound project and resonate through a space, coping with sound pollution and proofing against it is a more modern issue. Hearing chirps, whispers and claps may work for historic places

away in a room, or the reverberation time. Sabine went down in history as the founder of architectural acoustics, with the Sabin – a unit of sound absorption – still bearing his name. But Sabine's work was more than purely theoretical – he actively helped architects to design spaces more sensitively. When the designers of St Thomas Church in New York ran into an acoustical issue, they called on him for input. While they wanted the grandeur of a neo-gothic cathedral, the reverb that would be created by sound bouncing off its stone – ideal for choirs and a mass delivered in Latin – would jumble the words of the Protestant sermons that were to be delivered in the space. As such, Sabine collaborated with Rafael Guastavino, a Spanish building engineer, to create the Rumford tile. By mixing and firing peat with clay, the peat burned away to create a porous clay tile that could absorb sound. Now architecture could be both sweeping and grand – but still suited to communication.

By the 20th century, these ideas were being pushed even further, as the everyday world became significantly louder. Cars replaced horse-drawn carriages, aeroplanes began to roar across the sky, and mass transit systems shuttled people on their noisy way to work. And at work, silence was not to be found either. In 1906, 13 years before Sabine died, the architect Frank Lloyd Wright created the first open-plan office in Buffalo, New York. The Larkin Administration Building was designed like a factory floor, with office furniture made of metal. Magnesite, a mineral with acoustic properties, was shipped over from Greece and used everywhere in the building, from the floors to the desktops, to absorb the office sounds. By the 1940s, the fortunes of the Larkin Company had declined, and its flagship office was later demolished – but in Europe its idea for the open-plan office had taken off, with non-hierarchical seating arrangements appealing to postwar ideals of social democracy. But while the abolishment of the boss's corner office may have been one thing, the reverberating sounds of scores of people talking and typing with no walls to impede the noise was quite another.

Citterio was founded in 1958, and over the course of its history the company has done much to address the noise pollution problem plaguing open-plan workplaces; indeed, it describes "acoustic comfort" as being the lynchpin of the contemporary office environment. As reverberation causes discomfort in enclosed spaces, Citterio's designers set about applying acoustic engineering techniques to manipulate materials for offices so that they could absorb unwanted sound, rather than bounce it around the space and cause disturbance. This has been Citterio's concern for decades, resulting in the creation of the Citterio Sound System, or C-SS. Composed of partition walls formed of high-tech polyester fabric on wood particle backing with aluminium frames, C-SS can be manipulated to create pockets of quiet and privacy within clattering and buzzing open-plan offices. Its most popular application is for meeting rooms, where it is important that attendees can hear each other without distraction, while their conversations remain private. Yet C-SS has a multitude of uses, from creating break rooms for moments of calm in workers' days, to reading rooms for quiet study.

Acoustic design has come a long way through time and place, from the ancient amphitheatres designed to amplify sound through reverberation, to Sabine's theatre cushions applied to dampen unwanted sounds in an Ivy League lecture hall. C-SS is part of that history, representing the research that has resulted in office products that can create pockets of sound control that at once embody thousands of years of technological advancement, yet recall the rocky overhangs that sheltered the prehistoric artists of La Valltorta gorge as they went about their creative work in perfect resonance.

The result was Sabine's equation, a formula used to calculate how long it takes for a sound to die



LEFT
Citterio's Wood Wall System with glazed panes and sliding doors, opening on an executive office
ph. Alessandro Saletta

RIGHT
A detail of Citterio's acoustic box, designed for acoustic insulation and maximum comfort
ph. Alessandro Saletta

and a part of Molteni Group since 1969, which creates modular partitions specifically designed to absorb sound and create ideal environments for creative work.

Yet while Citterio's contemporary technology builds on a long history of engineering sound via architecture and design, it also runs counter to much of the historical treatment of sound within space – a history that has often emphasised amplification, rather than absorption, of sound. The La Valltorta gorge is one example of this phenomenon, and so too is the Epidaurus theatre in Greece – a space that has always shouted about being an acoustically optimised workplace. In the 4th century BCE, its architects created a curving, tiered theatre where a performer could project their voice to 14,000 spectators at a time. Legend had it that any audience member could hear a

of worship and celebration, but that's the last thing you want in a contemporary place of work. In 1895, this was the problem facing Wallace Sabine, a physics lecturer at Harvard University. One of the school's lecture halls was effectively unusable for teaching because the reverberation in the space – the time that sound lasts beyond its original production – made lectures unintelligible. Sabine was tasked with fixing it. Undertaking his work at night, while the rest of the campus was silent, he ran thousands of experiments using different sound-absorbing materials to test how they dampened the reverb. He pilfered the red fabric seat cushions from the university's theatre, piling them up to ascertain their sound absorbing effects.

The result was Sabine's equation, a formula used to calculate how long it takes for a sound to die

Learn more about between architectural acoustics and Citterio at M Magazine online:



The Kitchen as LIVING SPACE



by George Isleden

Kitchens are everyday spaces that exist to meet an immediate functional goal. When well designed, they are highly calibrated to support the convenient preparation of food.

Yet kitchens can also be more than this – they are also social spaces, as well as rooms in which we reflect on our relationship with food, family, friends and history. “I realize that in the kitchen I am grappling with the same questions as in my academic study,” writes Rebecca May Johnson in her 2023 book *Small Fires: An Epic in the Kitchen*, a text that sets out to “blow up the kitchen”. *Small Fires* is a book that thinks deeply about kitchens and the cooking that takes place within them – in short, it is a text that highlights how kitchens are spaces that deserve more careful consideration than they have hitherto received. “I am taught that the

Review, “it did not win the status of ‘profession’ for housewifery, which remained a degraded, if at times romanticised, undertaking.” Schütte-Lihotzky may have achieved notable advances in the functioning of kitchens, but she did less to frame the space as anything other than a site of domestic labour.

Today, we are perhaps better able to appreciate that kitchens can serve multiple purposes at once. They are functional spaces, whose efficient operation can ease a considerable quantity of domestic chores (labour that remains unpaid and, frequently, unrecognised), but they are more than this too. They

Molteni&C Kitchens Dada Engineered’s designs exist to support the people who will use them, and to meet their varied needs – they are platforms for whatever performance their users wish to bring to bear within them.

This, then, is the nature of the contemporary kitchen: it is a stage for life, or a blank page onto which we might write whatever story we wish. Throughout her book, for example, Johnson explores cooking in relation to the acts of writing and reading, particularly in terms of recipes. “The recipe is a method for responding to things,” she writes. “Things have agency



work of critical thinking takes place outside of the kitchen,” Johnson writes, “and that cooking in domestic space is not connected to the endeavour of serious thought.”

In Johnson’s text – which blends memoir, social critique, food writing and critical theory – she seeks to turn the tables on limited conception of kitchens as purely functional spaces, repositioning cooking, and the physical spaces in which it happens, as sites for the production of knowledge. The kitchen is a room in which domestic labour occurs, but so too is it a space for critical inquiry, rebellion against social expectations, and self-performance. “When I cook the recipe, I experience the difference between the knowledge promised by language, and the unboundedness of embodiment, which is both richer and more dangerous than the text can convey,” Johnson writes. “[...] I am writing against the tendency for people to diminish cooking as almost the opposite of thought.”

The template of the modern kitchen was set in the 1920s when architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky designed the Frankfurt Kitchen. Widely considered the progenitor of the modern kitchen, Schütte-Lihotzky’s compact design sought to introduce modern ideas of efficiency and Taylorism to its operation, so as bring “the rationalization of housework”. Schütte-Lihotzky saw her task as being one of spatial and operational optimisation – she famously remarked that she “had never concerned [herself] with cooking in [her] life” – and her design envisaged the kitchen as a kind of factory workstation or machine. The kitchen, under this conception, was a space for production, although not in the same manner as Johnson frames it. “While the Frankfurt Kitchen simplified kitchen chores,” wrote the architectural historian Susan Henderson in a 2015 edition of *The Architectural*

are also spaces for recreation, in which people may cook for pleasure or self-development. They are spaces for experimentation, where people try out new ideas and thereby explore their own preferences, talents and identities. And they are spaces for socialisation and connection, where we cook together, share experiences, and bond over the preparation and consumption of a meal. The contemporary kitchen can be a stage – one that permits multiple different performances at the same time.

This kind of multivalence is visible in the design of Molteni&C Kitchens Dada Engineered – a collaboration of craft and technology that began in 1976 when Molteni&C partnered with kitchen specialists Dada to drive innovation in the field. Designed by leading practitioners such as Vincent van Duysen, Molteni&C Kitchens Dada Engineered creates products that prioritise the integration of cutting-edge technologies that support precision functioning. The Prime kitchen, for instance, includes Vionaro drawers that feature an exclusive, highly engineered movement and patented anodised aluminium sides – highly engineered design features that ensure a perfectly smooth closure. Meanwhile, the VVD kitchen includes an advanced aluminium load-bearing structure that allows the kitchen’s elements to be suspended above the floor. Yet this interest in the technical operation of the kitchen is paired with a focus on its more emotive, personal qualities. The company utilises a range of warm, natural materials such as wood and marble, with each kitchen developed through careful attention to the human value that expert craftsmanship can bring to a space. In Van Duysen’s Ratio kitchen, for example, thermo oak is paired with Breccia Capraia stone to create a warm, Mediterranean atmosphere that feels a world apart from the more distant rationalism of the Frankfurt Kitchen. In this respect,

in many directions. Like words, they have histories and contexts, but when I perform the recipe, things become other things in a messier transformation than words in a sentence. They spatter my shirt red.” The kitchen is the room within the home in which materials are physically transformed, and where our own thoughts might be similarly transformed with each process, repetition and meal. “The recipe is a text that can produce spattering,” Johnson notes, “because it was spattering before it was language.”

LEFT
A VVD kitchen from Molteni&C Kitchens Dada Engineered
ph. Alessandro Saletta

RIGHT
The VVD kitchen was designed by Vincent van Duysen
ph. Alessandro Saletta

The story about the role of the kitchen in the home continues at M Magazine online:



AN ITALIAN DESIGN STORY



D.154.2 ARMCHAIR GIO PONTI



Molteni & C