

Towards sustainable exhibiting

A conversation with Marco Fogarolo

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Fig. 21. Photograph of speaker Marco Fogarolo presenting at the First NSBVN Cluster Conference. Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

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The field of trade fair and exhibition design represents a complex and multidisciplinary sector, where technical, logistical, and design expertise converge, with significant economic and cultural implications.

Although it is a profession with more than half a century of history and growing importance—both from a technical and an economic perspective—the figure of the *allestitore* (exhibition contractor) continues, however, to be framed by legislation in reductive terms, especially following the Palchi e Fiere Decree (2014), which limits the role to its purely executive dimension.

This regulatory approach fails to reflect the actual dynamics of the sector, in which the *allestitore* takes on broader and more transversal functions.

Through the dialogue with Marco Fogarolo, Vice President of Asal Assoallestimenti, several central aspects emerge: the gap between normative definition and professional practice, the regulatory fragmentation that characterizes the field, ongoing experiments in sustainability, and the often nonlinear relationship between design and execution.

The analysis highlights how the *allestitore*, far from being a mere executor, acts as a strategic figure for managing safety, ensuring process efficiency, and promoting practices oriented Towards circularity and reuse.

From this perspective arises the need to rethink the regulatory and cultural fra-

mework in order to recognize the complexity of this professional role and foster closer integration between design, realization, and environmental sustainability.

The “Allestitore” Between Design, Regulation, and Sustainability

The exhibition sector is a complex, dynamic, and multidisciplinary reality in which technical, creative, logistical, and cultural expertise intersect. Exhibition design, understood as the set of practices and processes aimed at creating temporary spaces for fairs, events, exhibitions, and cultural manifestations, occupies an intermediate position between architecture, design, and industrial production.

While it plays a strategic role—economically, as a driver of a significant industry, and communicatively, as a means of constructing corporate and institutional identity—it has never enjoyed adequate recognition, either normative or cultural. The temporary and ephemeral nature of exhibitions represents both the distinctive feature and the main challenge of the field: spaces have a short lifespan, often limited to the duration of a single event, yet during that time they must meet high demands of functionality, safety, communicative efficiency, and experiential quality. The contradiction between temporariness and the need for structural and aesthetic quality creates specific challenges that require diverse skills and a design approach capable of integrating technical precision and creativity.

Within this context stands the figure of the *allestitore*, a central yet often underestimated actor.

The lack of a clear institutional definition, combined with a fragmented regulatory system, has contributed to constructing a partial and reductive image of this profession, even though it constitutes an essential link in the functioning of the entire exhibition and trade fair system.

The *allestitore* is not only the person responsible for assembling and dismantling structures, but also an operator who manages production processes, logistics, coordination of workers, safety regulations, and, in many cases, contributes directly to the technical design of installations.

This work aims to explore the role of this professional figure through an interview with Marco Fogarolo, a practitioner with long-standing experience and an active member of Assoallestimenti.

The conversation focuses on several key areas: the legal definition of the *allestitore*, the regulatory framework that governs exhibition practices, sustainability initiatives and practices, and the relationship between the *allestitore* and the design process. Through the analysis of these topics, the goal is to contribute to a dee-

per understanding of this professional role, highlighting both its critical issues and potential, while providing insights useful for its normative, cultural, and design-oriented redefinition.

The Figure of the “Allestitore” in Italy

Based on the dialogue with Fogarolo (M. Fogarolo, personal communication, June 17, 2024), it is crucial to understand how legislation defines the figure of the *allestitore* and how this definition affects the daily practice of the field, including its relationship with complementary normative instruments such as the Criteri Minimi Ambientali (CAM) for cultural events (Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, 2022), discussed during the conference.

Until 2014, there was no actual legal definition of the *allestitore* in Italy. The role was formally recognized only after a series of serious workplace accidents during public events led to the introduction of the Palchi e Fiere Decree (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2014).

This law, created mainly to enhance workplace safety, marked a turning point, as for the first time the profession of *allestitore* was explicitly acknowledged and defined as “the entity holding the contract for the assembly, disassembly, and possible construction



Fig. 22. Booth for Faberluk srl — Host 2023 — Milan.

of exhibition structures” (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2014).

Although innovative at the institutional level, this definition remains limiting, as it reduces the *allestitore*'s role to a contractual execution, ignoring the real complexity of their functions.

As Fogarolo explains, in practice the *allestitore* does not only handle assembly and disassembly operations but also oversees production, logistics, materials management, safety, coordination of workforces, and relations with institutions (M. Fogarolo, personal communication, June 17, 2024).

In many cases, the *allestitore* is also directly involved in the technical design of the exhibition. It is evident that the gap between legislation and daily reality contributes to a distorted perception of this profession: although indispensable for the success of fairs and exhibitions, the *allestitore* remains marginal in institutional and academic recognition.

From this discrepancy arises the urgency of a more articulated legal framework that can reflect the breadth of required skills and position this figure within a more appropriate system of professional and cultural recognition.

Beyond the decree mentioned above, the regulatory context of the exhibition sector remains fragmented and externally derived. Most applicable norms come from the field of construction, as in the Consolidated Building Act (Italy, 2001), which contains no specific references to exhibitions but must be applied when these are comparable to building structures, even if temporary. Similarly, safety regulations for construction sites (Ministerial Decree, August 19, 1996) apply to exhibitions involving work at height or other high-risk operations (Italy, 1996).

The existing regulation, therefore, developed from an emergency-oriented perspective, reveals the lack of a systematic and long-term vision. This has resulted in a non-homogeneous framework poorly aligned with the temporary nature of exhibitions. The documentation required to build a stand, for instance, can vary not only from one region to another but even among different fairgrounds. As pointed out by the INAIL guidelines (INAIL, Asal-Assoallestimenti, AEFI & CFI, 2020), this is due to the fact that the responsibilities of control authorities are organized on a regional basis; consequently, competent entities—such as fire brigades, local administrations, and fair organizations—apply non-uniform regulations, resulting in increased costs, delays, and bureaucratic complexity for companies in the sector. The risks arising from this regulatory fragmentation are explicitly identified in the document Trade Fair Events. Guidelines for the Management of Health and Safety at Work (INAIL, Asal-Assoallestimenti, AEFI & CFI, 2020), which stresses the need to simplify and harmonize the rules. As stated

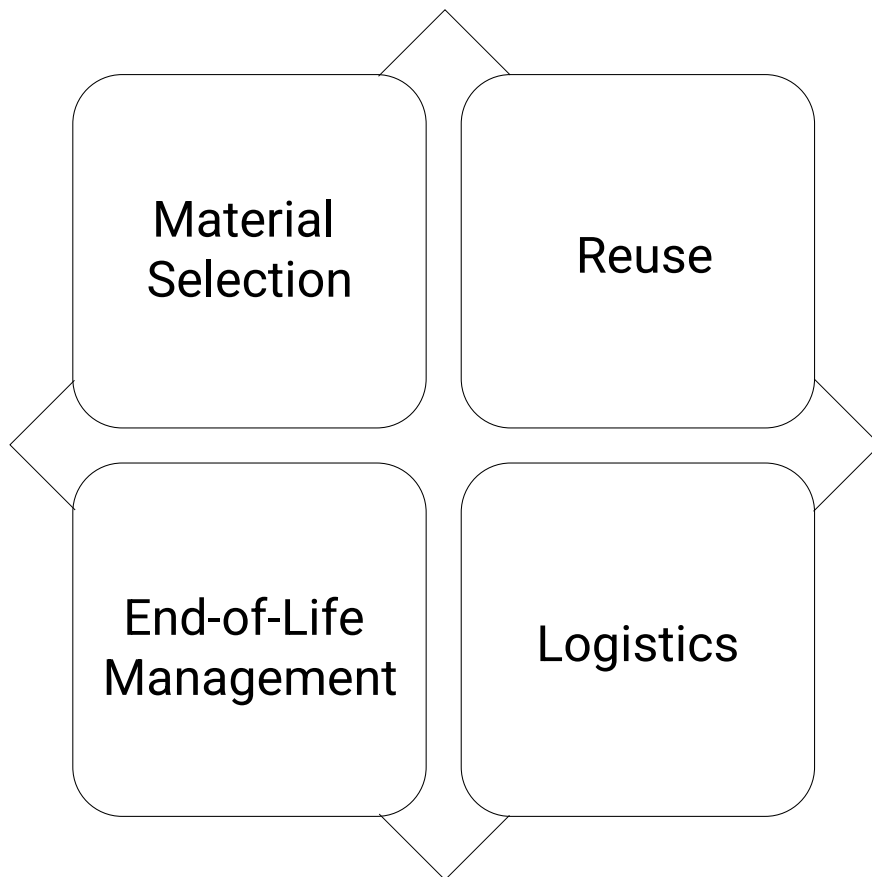
in section 3.6 of the same document:

“Inhomogeneity, fragmentation or, at times, lack of definition of the duties and competences of the figures involved in the multiple technical and organizational activities carried out by all the actors engaged in the planning, design, and realization of an event” (INAIL, Asal-Assoallestimenti, AEFI & CFI, 2020, p. 14).

Only a shared national regulatory framework could ensure uniform safety standards, greater efficiency for operators, and, at the same time, stronger international competitiveness for the Italian exhibition system.

Sustainability Initiatives – The “Push” from Clients

Within an evolving regulatory framework, the exhibition and trade fair sector is beginning to engage with the issue of sustainability, giving rise to experiments that also extend into curatorial aspects. Among the most significant examples



Tab. 4. Main strategic keywords for designing a trade fair stand in a sustainable way. Source: graphic reworking from the talk “Allestimenti: quale transizione ecologica?” by Marco Fogarolo, First NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster Conference, 17–18 June 2024.

are the Carbon Calculator (Gallery Climate Coalition, n.d.), the various toolkits developed by institutions (International Association of Exhibitions and Events, 2024), and the adoption of standards such as the Criteri Minimi Ambientali (Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, 2022), which are redefining the structure of the exhibition system. It is therefore legitimate to ask how the sector is changing and what concrete initiatives are being undertaken to enhance its sustainability.

The theme of sustainability is gradually penetrating the exhibition sector, although with different modes and timelines compared to other areas of design and temporary production (Crippa et al., 2022). One of the main drivers of this transformation lies in the figure of the client: certain companies, often referred to as “enlightened,” have begun to include environmental sustainability parameters among the evaluation criteria for projects, paying attention to material recovery, proper disposal, and, in some cases, opportunities for reuse.

This trend represents a positive signal, indicating a growing awareness among a portion of the market increasingly sensitive to corporate social responsibility and to the added value of “green” communication. However, this remains a limited phenomenon and has yet to become widespread. For the majority of clients, the economic variable remains dominant: the total cost of a project continues to outweigh environmental concerns, and sustainability criteria are still perceived as accessory elements rather than as essential and non-negotiable parameters.

In this scenario, the drive towards sustainability does not originate from an organic movement within the exhibition sector but rather from isolated initiatives of certain companies that, for ethical, reputational, or marketing reasons, choose to adopt more environmentally responsible practices. This represents a top-down form of change—generated externally rather than internally—which, however, can become a driver of innovation if properly received and developed.

In this respect, the role of client companies is crucial: through their project briefs and tender requirements, they can influence the choices of contractors and encourage the adoption of sustainable practices.

The main challenge for the future is to transform these experiences into widespread practice, ensuring that sustainability is no longer an optional component linked to a few exemplary projects but becomes an integral part of the operational model of the entire sector. Achieving this goal requires not only a cultural shift but also regulatory support and incentives that make sustainability not merely desirable but also economically viable and structurally embedded within production processes (Trivellin & Mancini, 2024).



Fig. 23. Booth for Contral srl — Host 2023 — Milan.

In this context, it is important to reflect on which actions can have the greatest impact and on what concrete steps and organizational strategies are needed to ensure effective and lasting implementation. During the interview, Marco Fogarolo identifies four key areas for sustainability within the sector: material selection, reuse, end-of-life management, and logistics (M. Fogarolo, personal communication, June 17, 2024). Among these dimensions, two stand out as particularly relevant and strategic: reuse and end-of-life management.

While end-of-life management is a regulatory requirement established by the Environmental Code (Italy, 2006, Part IV), and therefore represents a necessary step within the exhibition production chain, reuse emerges as a strategic practice capable of reconciling economic and environmental objectives in a virtuous way. Both strategies have significant potential for reducing the overall environmental impact of exhibition design, which by its very nature is ephemeral, temporary, and therefore structurally more impactful than permanent interventions.

Reuse did not originate in the exhibition sector as a direct expression of ecological awareness, but rather as a response to economic survival logic and profit maximization. A company that can reuse the same components multiple times gains a double competitive advantage: on one hand, it reduces production and

logistical costs; on the other, it increases profit margins, improving the financial sustainability of its business.

This logic of operational efficiency translates, albeit indirectly, into an environmental benefit, demonstrating how economic dynamics, when properly leveraged, can become drivers of ecological sustainability. In a context where environmental sustainability still struggles to establish itself as a real priority for clients and professionals, reuse thus represents a meeting point between economic rationality and environmental responsibility, opening pathways to circular economy models in a sector traditionally bound to a “use-and-dispose” logic.

A significant obstacle to the structural spread of reuse practices is the prevailing design culture, which continues to favor “custom” solutions characterized by bespoke elements created for single events or exhibitions. While this approach meets the client’s legitimate desire for uniqueness and personalization, it inevitably generates large quantities of materials that are difficult to reuse. This model increases waste, raises disposal costs, and drastically reduces the potential for circularity. This reveals a design paradox: the pursuit of communicative uniqueness—which often drives exhibition choices—ends up compromising both the environmental and economic efficiency of the system. Overcoming this limitation requires a paradigm shift in design, oriented Towards project engineering and the development of modular, flexible, and adaptable solutions.

In this view, design should no longer be understood solely as a creative exercise but as an integrated process that accounts for the durability and replicability of its components. Modular solutions—designed with compatibility and adaptability in mind—allow the reuse of elements across different contexts, reducing waste production and improving the overall efficiency of the exhibition life cycle.

Adopting such an approach also requires a cultural shift in the relationship between designers and clients. Designers must become aware of the environmental implications of their choices, while clients must be willing to embrace solutions that are less “customized” yet still visually impactful, achieving a balance between sustainability and experiential value.

In this sense, the transition Towards truly sustainable practices is not merely a technical matter but a process of cultural transformation that involves the entire ecosystem of the exhibition and event sector.

The way companies approach sustainability depends closely on their production background. Firms rooted in metalworking tend to favor modular systems in aluminum or steel, while those with carpentry traditions prefer wooden structures. There is therefore no material that is inherently more sustainable: what determi-

ness its environmental impact is the corporate know-how—the set of skills, expertise, and optimization capacities developed over time.

In recent years, numerous modular systems and solutions have been developed to renew the aesthetics and functionality of the traditional compositional structures of the 1980s. Although these introduce significant improvements in terms of aesthetics and sustainability—promoting material reuse—they generally fall short of meeting the demands of high-end installations characterized by a high degree of customization. Nevertheless, these innovations represent an important stimulus for the sector, and several companies are now experimenting with alternative approaches, developing diverse solutions that combine modularity, material reuse, and environmental awareness. The main limitation lies in the “closed” nature of many of these systems, which restrict the use of components to those within their proprietary frameworks.

This highlights the importance of developing hybrid solutions capable of integrating different technologies and ensuring greater flexibility. In the exhibition sector, sustainability has thus advanced more for economic than for ethical reasons; however, reuse demonstrates how efficiency-driven logics can yield environmental benefits, paving the way for a broader cultural transformation.

The Relationship between Exhibition Contractor and Design

It therefore becomes crucial to examine the relationship between the exhibition contractor (*allestitore*) and the design phase, to assess whether there is a genuine synergy between these two moments, and to identify which elements of the process could be improved to foster more effective integration and greater coherence between design and realization. During the interview, it emerged that the link between design and installation is one of the most significant and delicate junctions for understanding both the sector’s operational efficiency and the concrete possibilities for introducing sustainable practices (M. Fogarolo, personal communication, 17 June 2024). Design does not pertain only to the preliminary and creative phase; it decisively conditions fabrication processes, materials employed, logistics, and even end-of-event disposal costs. It follows that the quality of dialogue between designers and contractors becomes a critical factor for ensuring consistency, innovation, and the reduction of environmental impact.

At present, three scenarios chiefly characterize this relationship: in-house design; external design with collaboration; and external design carried out independently. The first occurs primarily in large exhibiting companies with a dedicated inter-

nal office, or in small and medium-sized firms that cannot outsource; the design phase is handled directly by the contractor, who may rely on an internal designer or on a trusted external professional with whom they regularly collaborate. This working model has the advantage of near-perfect adherence between the project and production capacity: solutions are conceived from the outset in relation to the systems and materials available, reducing conflicts and unforeseen events. In addition, in-house design tends to favor the use of modular, reusable components, with a consequent increase in both economic and environmental efficiency. When design is entrusted to external professionals but developed in constant dialogue with the contractor, virtuous dynamics tend to arise. In such cases, the designer can orient formal and communicative choices in light of the contractor's technical know-how, while the latter can propose alternative solutions able to optimize cost, time, and sustainability.

This model is the most balanced, as it combines design creativity with the practical experience of executing firms, allowing a genuine integration of aesthetic demands and operational responsibilities.

The most critical case occurs when the design is external and, in the initial phases, the designer works exclusively with the client, without any contact with the contractor. In this scenario the contractor receives a pre-defined concept or a rigid specification with little room for adaptation. This often makes it necessary to re-engineer the project to render it compatible with the contractor's techniques and resources, slowing processes and reducing the scope for introducing sustainability criteria. The lack of collaboration can also result in design solutions that are difficult to realize or economically untenable.

From this analysis, two distinct levels of sustainability emerge: upstream and downstream. The former is determined by initial design choices, which almost irreversibly set the degree of modularity, reuse, and circularity of materials; the latter is tied to the contractor's know-how, which can still intervene—even in the absence of a sustainably conceived project—by optimizing resources, reducing waste, and improving materials management. The distinction between these two levels highlights a crucial point: if sustainability is not integrated from the outset, the contractor is forced to operate within narrow margins, drastically limiting the effectiveness of possible practices. Only a structured and continuous dialogue among clients, designers, and contractors can enable a real transition Towards exhibition models that are simultaneously functional, aesthetically robust, and environmentally responsible.

Towards Integrated, Sustainable Installations

The interview outlines a sector in transition, marked by significant criticalities but also by emerging opportunities. On the regulatory front, there is an urgent need for a unified and coherent framework that overcomes the emergency-driven approach and recognizes the profession's complexity. In terms of sustainability, economic practices are progressively becoming environmental levers, opening spaces of convergence between efficiency and responsibility. Finally, the centrality of design underscores the need to strengthen collaboration among all actors involved, so as to combine creativity, feasibility, and environmental respect.

From the analysis of the current situation, three key points emerge: the legal definition of the *allestitore* is reductive and requires revision; sustainability constitutes a central challenge that demands alignment between economic and environmental objectives, as well as greater client involvement; and, ultimately, synergy between design and execution is a necessary condition for ensuring efficiency, quality, and the reduction of environmental impact. The sector's future will therefore depend on its capacity to build more adequate regulations, balanced economic models, and integrated design processes, recognizing the *allestitore* as a cultural actor and innovator.



Fig. 24. Booth for Longo Since 1961 — Vinitaly 2022 — Verona.

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Designing for change

The designer as a facilitator of sustainable processes

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Fig. 25. Photograph of speaker Laura Bortoloni during her talk at the First NSBVN Cluster Conference. Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

Designing for change

The designer as a facilitator of sustainable processes

This contribution examines the role of visual communication design in sustainable design processes, focusing on the responsibilities of the designer, particularly when he or she works across several competencies, as is the case in exhibit design. Through the analysis of statements and declarations taken from manifestos drawn up by designers or associations, the awareness of new requirements expressed by contexts, including regulatory ones, and the study of the processes underlying some case studies, the paper outlines possible guidelines towards the evolution of the visual communication design profession in the direction of sustainability.

Sustainability in design manifestos

Associations active in the valorisation and protection of the figure of the visual communication designer continue to question the responsibilities and role of the designer in relation ethical sustainability oriented design. The Montréal Design Declaration contains reflections that are the result of a collaborative effort with a global outlook. Signed on 24 October 2017 in Montréal by a group of representatives from the international community of designers, architects, planners and landscape architects, united in the ICoD International Council of Design,

the Declaration proclaims the potential of design to achieve global economic, social, environmental and cultural goals and includes a series of calls to action addressed to practitioners, educators and governments. The Declaration concludes by stating that all people deserve to live in a well-designed world. It sets out the qualities and capabilities of design in terms of the impact it can have in communities and identifies nine different calls to action, areas in which everyone working around design is called upon to act. These are design advocacy, design metrics development, design policy development, design standards development, improving design education, responsive design, responsible design, vigilant design, and design value recognition. The declaration recognises the need for strategic design leadership at local, regional, national and international levels, and the need for governance models and policy agendas to take design into account, recognising its ability to interplay on the path towards sustainability in its various domains: environmental, economic, social and cultural. Among these calls to action is therefore also the call to promote responsible design, defined here as the ability for designers to recognise the impact of their practice and to develop awareness of the potential for them to be both constructive and destructive in their work. The statement calls for a shift in focus from promoting consumption to improving people's lives.

Sustainability in the Carta del Progetto Grafico

In the claims expressed in the Montréal Design Declaration it is possible to recognise the echo of those already present in the historic reference document on the definition of identity and role of the visual communication designer in Italy, the Carta del Progetto Grafico formulated in 1989 by AIAP Associazione Italia Design della Comunicazione Visiva, in claiming a quality of design that is first and foremost a responsibility towards the user. Drafted at the end of the 1980s thanks to the effort of an editorial committee composed of Giovanni Anceschi, Giovanni Baule and Gianfranco Torri, appointed by a commission of drafters built within the association, the Carta del Progetto Grafico represents an essential reference for the statute of the discipline, the training of visual communication designers and the profession, while stimulating the redefinition of graphic design itself. The Carta emphasises the central role of the designer as a key figure in communication processes and social actor. The term sustainability, with the precise meaning as understood in contemporary thinking, is not present in the Carta, but several excerpts anticipate some of its fundamental aspects.

CARTA DEL PROGETTO GRAFICO

TESI PER UN DIBATTITO SUL PROGETTO DELLA COMUNICAZIONE

Il comitato di redazione della Carta del progetto grafico (Innocenti, Bauli, Terzi) è stato espresso dalla commissione degli atenei (formata da Giovanni Aneschi, Giovanni Bauli, Gelsomino D'Ambrosio, Pino Grimaldi, Giancarlo Ippirani, Giovanni Lussu, Alberto Marangoni, Gianfranco Terzi) costituita ad Atene in occasione della Pressassemblea nazionale Aisp del 24 giugno 1989. La Carta del progetto grafico è stata presentata il 27 novembre alla facoltà di Architettura del Politecnico di Milano per l'approvazione di un primo nucleo di firme, firma la cui raccolta prosegue e il cui significato è stato individuato nell'apporto all'avvio di un dibattito che si ritiene particolarmente urgente. La Carta del progetto grafico che viene presentata ai soci dell'Aisp, viene contemporaneamente pubblicata su *LineaGrafica*. Successivamente, accanto al momento di approfondimento che ci auguriamo si organizzi a partire dal dibattito che avrà luogo e, se possibile, nazionale dell'associazione, la facoltà di Architettura del Politecnico di Milano organizzerà un convegno di studio e confronto. Spetterà alla rivista *Carta* la pubblicazione degli atti del Convegno, accogliendo ogni eventuale contributo anche on-line. Le firme di adesione alla Carta del progetto grafico vengono raccolte presso la segreteria nazionale dell'Aisp (tel. 02/8393747). Fax, le redazioni di *Grafica e LineaGrafica* e durante i lavori dell'Assemblea nazionale Aisp di Bologna (gennaio 1990).

1

Noi osserviamo che il sistema della comunicazione e dell'informazione dispone oggi di una presenza generalizzata, di una diffusione capillare, di un assetto poderoso.

È l'industria della comunicazione e dell'informazione a porsi come traente nello scenario contemporaneo.

Peraltro sono riscontrabili in parallelo inquietanti fenomeni di inquinamento visivo e di saturazione comunicativa, sintomi di un sistema in cui tecnologie e apparati, lontani dall'essere autosufficienti, sono bisognosi di direzioni, di scelte e orientamenti progettati.

La grafica è ormai una presenza trasversale. Dove c'è comunicazione c'è grafica. Come la comunicazione essa è dappertutto.

La grafica è là dove la cultura si fa editoria. La grafica è là dove i sistemi di trasporto si stanno informatizzando.

La grafica interviene nell'assetto multimediale della politica.

La grafica è presente non solo nella divulgazione ma anche nella modellizzazione della scienza.

La grafica è in azione là dove il prodotto industriale interagisce con l'utilizzazione.

La grafica è nella grande distribuzione dove il consumatore incontra la merce.

La grafica è anche nello sport, nell'immagine delle grandi manifestazioni come nella loro diffusione massmediale.

2

Noi affermiamo una nuova centralità del progetto grafico.

Nella cultura iperindustriale di massa, la quantità, la frammentazione, la disomogeneità, la dislocazione nell'offerta dei dati necessari all'uomo per vivere, producono una domanda di nuove sintesi e di orientamento. È indubbiamente, l'ente, l'istituzione, l'impresa che affronta il problema di comunicare fa già un primo passo nella direzione di una qualificazione dei beni e dei servizi che produce.

E ancora con la sua competenza nel pilotare l'attenzione, nell'operare distinzioni percepibili, con la sua capacità di attribuire una forma e un'identità alla comunicazione, la grafica contribuisce a conferire esistenza alle strutture della società.

3

Indichiamo la grafica come attività che si colloca dunque entro al sistema generale della progettualità orientata alle necessità dell'uomo.

Accanto all'urbanistica, all'architettura, al design industriale, al disegno ambientale, essa non solo li affianca ma interagisce con essi.

La grafica è urbanistica nelle tecniche di configurazione, nei sistemi di visualizzazione e nei metodi di rappresentazione.

La grafica è architettura non solo in quanto strumento della stesura del progetto ma anche direttamente nella presenza della scrittura nell'edificio costruito.

La grafica è disegno ambientale nella segnaletica cittadina, dei trasporti ecc.

La grafica è disegno industriale nella "grafica di prodotto", nei cruscotti, nelle interfacce, nel packaging ecc.

4

Come negli anni Trenta si avvertiva quello dell'architettura come ruolo guida delle discipline del progetto, e negli anni Sessanta, nella transizione dalla produzione al consumo, il design industriale assumeva un ruolo di coordinamento concettuale, negli anni Novanta è il progetto grafico a collocarsi in posizione strategica dentro la cultura del progetto.

5

Per quanto articolata in numerosi settori, e pur mostrando facce anche molto diverse noi, che possiamo preferire di chiamarci autori o *planner*, *designer* o creativi, fotografi o illustratori, riconosciamo la nostra professione come un'attività unitaria. Così come ribadiamo l'unità della disciplina cui fa riferimento la cultura del grafico. Sul versante della pratica mentre osserviamo la transizione dal mestiere alle specializzazioni, con-

statiamo anche che per poco ci si trovi ad affrontare un progetto complesso, il problema diventa quello del governo di processi e il ruolo assume i tratti di una regia.

D'altronde, cioè sul piano teorico, in tutte le diversissime procedure metodologiche dei singoli settori non è difficile trovare connotati comuni nella maniera di strutturare i problemi e di risolverli.

A entrambi questi aspetti, alla prassi e alla teoria leghiamo il problema della formazione, che va ripensata e organizzata sulla base di questa identità rinnovata.

In Italia registriamo, da questo punto di vista, un grande vuoto istituzionale. Ad esempio non esiste una facoltà universitaria dedicata al progetto di comunicazione.

Ma, nelle indagini analitiche dei linguaggi, delle culture e delle società, in un programma di studi di storia e teoria della grafica, in una elaborazione sistematica e metodologica, e ancora nelle ricerche specificamente disciplinari del *basic design*, senza infine dimenticare l'esplorazione e lo sviluppo delle potenzialità informatiche, noi intendiamo identificare i principali filoni di lavoro e i possibili riferimenti per un nuovo iter formativo.

6

Nei confronti dell'inquinamento prodotto da una comunicatività pletrica e da una complementare indifferenza per la cultura dell'immagine, (risultato di una forma dell'industrializzazione dei processi comunicativi, dove l'industria massmediale e informazionale, prigioniera della ideologia dell'orientamento al mercato, produce vulcanicamente informazioni), noi sottolineiamo le nuove responsabilità del progettista grafico. Difendiamo il progetto della qualità nel campo della comunicazione visiva. Rivendiamo nostre le responsabilità nei confronti dell'utenza. Competenza questa che è peraltro ciò che ci viene richiesto dalla committenza più avanzata.

Noi dichiariamo pertanto il punto di vista dell'utenza fondamento costante del nostro operare.

Poniamo, inoltre, il massimo dell'attenzione oltre che al risultato finale della comunicazione, anche a una presenza dei momenti strutturali e organizzativi della macchina della sua produzione.

Consideriamo tra i nostri compiti principali quello di agire dentro ai sistemi che producono *standard* (dal *design* di caratteri ai progetti di simbologie segnaletiche, dai programmi di immagine coordinata alle strategie di comunicazione, dai *software* grafici a tutte quelle elaborazioni che servono in seconda istanza per produrre risultati finali).

7

Ci impegnamo a mettere in atto tutte le iniziative che promuovano il riconoscimento della nostra identità professionale sia sul versante della società in generale che presso la vasta gamma della nostra committenza.

Con questa "carta" ci impegnamo a lavorare in prospettiva, come sta avvenendo in altri paesi e in assoranza con gli intenti delle organizzazioni internazionali e delle associazioni nazionali, ad una costituente della progettualità. Ci impegnamo inoltre a costruire un calendario delle iniziative per la divulgazione dei vari aspetti della professione e della disciplina.

Giovanni Aneschi, Studio Azzurro, Franco Balan, Antonio Barrese, Giovanni Bauli, Omar Calabrese, Enrico Camplani, Mimmo Castellano, Pierluigi Cerri, Aldo Colonetti, Mario Convertino, Mario Cresci, Gelsomino D'Ambrosio, Massimo Dolcini, Alfredo De Santis, Paolo De Robertis, Giorgio Fioravanti, A. G. Fronzoni, Franco Grignani, Pino Grimaldi, Max Huber, Giancarlo Ippirani, Cattina Lenza, Italo Lupi, Giovanni Lussu, Piergiorgio Maolini, Alberto Marangoni, Daniele Marini, Bruno Menguzzi, Bob Noorda, Franco Ortoni, Wando Pagliardini, Tullio Pericoli, Gianluigi Pescoldenung, Roberto Pieraccini, Valeriano Piozzi, Alessandro Polistina, Michele Provinciali, Andrea Rauch, Stefano Rovati, Roberto Sambonet, Gianni Sassi, Liza Steiner, Gianfranco Terzi, Daniele Turchi, Alessandro Ubertzzi, Massimo Vignelli, Ettore Vitale, Heinz Waidl.

Fig. 26. Mario Piazza, "Carta del Progetto Grafico", 1989. AIAP Documentation Center on Graphic Design.

Point 6 of the document states that, against the pollution produced by plethoric communication and a complementary indifference to visual culture, it is necessary to emphasise the new responsibilities of the graphic designer, defending quality in the field of visual communication, claiming responsibility for the user, advocating for quality as a key competence demanded by the most forward-looking clients. It also declares that user's point of view should be the constant basis of the designer's work and that the utmost attention should be paid not only to the final result of communication, but also to the structural and organisational moments of the process (1988). This is a fundamental point of the Charter, in which on the one hand the designer claims a new definition of quality, and on the other affirms that this objective can only be achieved through their involvement in the crucial steps of the strategic processes. It is a statement that anticipates more recent reflections, according to which the objective of design is not only the design of artefacts, but the facilitation of changes and transformations (Amatullo et al., 2022, p. 25).

In its Article 3, the Graphic Design Charter lays the foundations for subsequent reflections on the need for an interdisciplinary nature to design. The Carta proclaims the need to designate graphic design as an activity situated within the general system of human-oriented design. Alongside city planning, architecture, industrial design and environmental design, it not only complements them but interacts with them. Graphic design is urban planning in its forecasting techniques, visualisation systems and representational methodologies. Graphic design is architecture not only as a tool for project drafting but also directly in the presence of writing in the buildings. Graphic design is environmental design in city signage, transport, etc. Graphic design is industrial design when it is applied to products, in dashboards, in interfaces, in packaging designs etc (1989). What Baule describes in retrospect as a failure to perceive the disciplinary unity of graphic design (2015, p. 252) is in fact one of the qualities that underpin the possibility of graphic design to intertwine with other skills in projects such as exhibit design.

At the roots of the dialogue between graphic design and industrial design

The call in the Carta del Progetto Grafico for a new definition of quality and for the designer to have a greater presence in the structural and organizational phases of the production process foreshadowed an evolution of the design profession well beyond the mere execution of visual artifacts. This vision, which anticipa-

tes the concept of design as a process facilitator, is actually rooted in the historical work of pioneering post-war figures. Designers like Silvio Coppola already embodied what we might call a preliminary form of ecology of thought, operating across various fields of design, including graphics, architecture, and industrial design.

Coppola was able to operate transversally in different project fields between graphics, architecture and product design; active in Milan in the second half of the 20th century, he expressed himself with ease between various disciplines. He worked crosswise between graphics, architecture and industrial design, going so far as to found Gruppo ED Exhibition Design in 1968, a space for research, design and dissemination that, under his leadership, would work on experimentation and overcoming disciplinary boundaries. Over the years, the group would involve figures such as Giulio Confalonieri, Franco Grignani, Bruno Munari and Pino, redefining the exhibition space as a place for dialogue, exploring the versatility of materials, such as laminates, to carry out a sequence of pure, deliberately non-functional experiments aimed at showing the research, rather than the finished product (Galluzzo, 2019, p. 14). For the current discussion, it is especially interesting to note the effortlessness with which Coppola navigates across media, shifting mate-



Fig. 27. Silvio Coppola, BERNINI con *“AMBIENTI vi augurano una serie di giorni sereni per comporre un disegno di armonia”*, 1969. AIAP Documentation Center on Graphic Design.

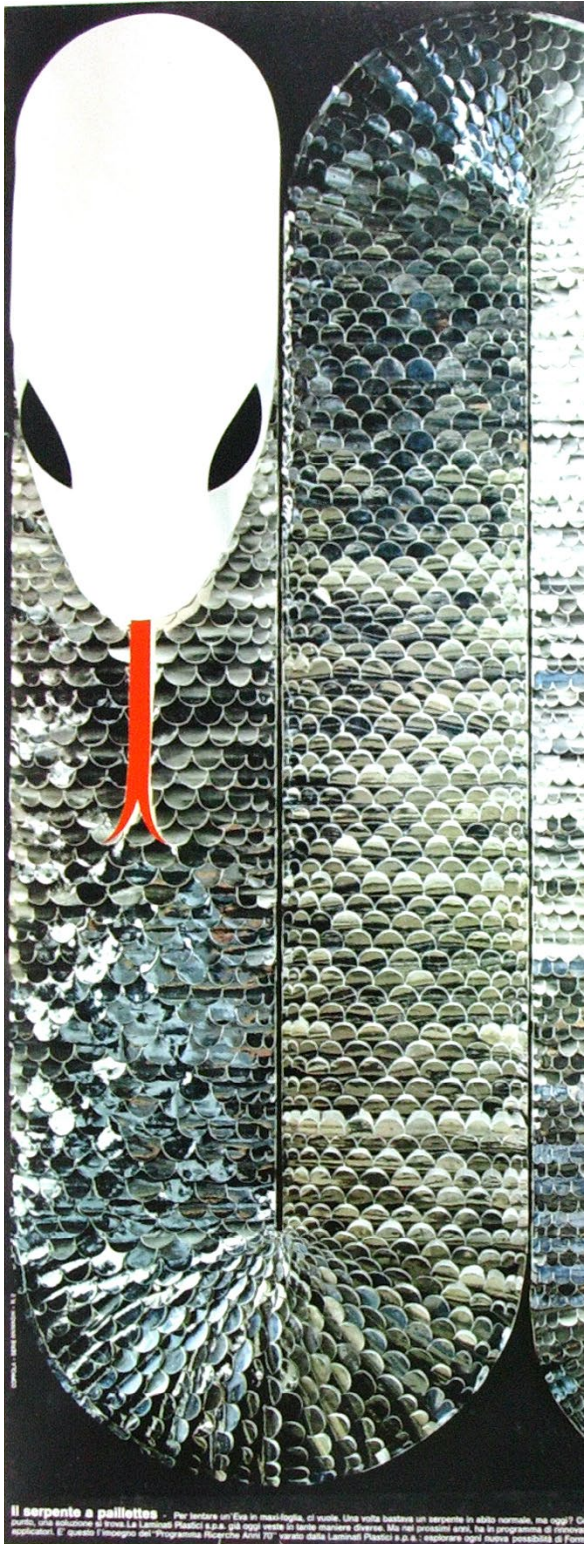


Fig. 28. Silvio Coppola, “*Il serpente a paillettes*”. Poster Laminati Plastici No. 2, serie animaghi, 1970/71. AIAP Documentation Center on Graphic Design.

materials from one area to another – a laminate can become paper for a poster, or it can bend to lightness, modular repetitions, tensions and unprecedented shapes to build. Evidence of this are both the pre designs, evidence of the research process produced by the Gruppo ED Exhibition Design, and the posters Coppola creates, often for the same laminate and semi-finished product companies. The Gruppo ED Exhibition Design’s pre designs escape from the classification of artefacts or prototypes, to restore centrality to experimentation and to the steps preceding the industrial product, in a sphere in which a rigid disciplinary classification is overcome in favour of the priority given to methodology. On the other hand, Coppola’s posters use semi-finished products that one would not normally encounter in graphic design.

Sustainability and graphic design

The complexity of the concept of sustainability challenges the communication designer in its applicability to different aspects of professional practice. Designing with a *forma mentis* aimed at sustainability certainly means promoting actions oriented towards environmental sustainability, towards the enhancement of a circular economy and the promotion of choices against

climate change. Designers can bring an ethical approach to their clients and a critical point of view towards the risk of communication-washings (green-washing, pink-washing, rainbow-washing, etc.). Designers can work to produce less, to choose sustainable media and materials, both physically when choosing like paper, supports, inks, personalisation techniques, and digital when choosing data storage suppliers. All kind of companies, from printing industries to data centres and providers are entering the world of sustainability-related accreditations, although it is an area that is not without ambiguity and the subject of frequent criticism regarding the criteria for offsetting and defining carbon neutrality. Not least, designers can work to counter an extractive approach not only towards raw materials, but also towards human resources.

As early as 2009, Belgian designer De Bondt had already drawn up her own manifesto on sustainable graphic design when called upon to design the communication and graphics for the Radical Nature exhibition at the Barbican Centre (Walker Art Center, 2014). She had analysed the most common practices and constructed a list of yes and no. The former included practices such as recycling and reuse, but also practical and operational advice such as the suggestion to use standard formats to limit waste, to favour simple easily dismantled binding or assembly systems, to opt for customisations such as blind embossing or laser engraving that avoid the need to add additional materials, to seek a reduction in the number of colours, to favour layouts with small images, and to choose local printing services and suppliers. In the nos: spot varnishes, laminating, vinyl films, mounting with glue, full colour backgrounds, heavy paper stock. De Bondt also recounted how, at that show, she questioned a high print run of flyers suggested by the client, in order to instead purchase a risograph printer and print on demand a smaller quantity of artefacts than initially planned.

More recently, Jennifer Armbrust drew up a list of 50 questions for every designer, intended as a vademecum and checklist for every designer to test their awareness of the working framework every time they go through a design process. Regarding the reflection on sustainability, questions 18 to 24 are striking. Armbrust invites us to first ask ourselves about respect, aimed both at the people we work with and the planet. This is followed by a reflection on the products one is designing for. The author invites one to think critically about their life cycle assessment, asking oneself what raw materials they are made of, how long they last, what their disposal or recycling process and waste management is, before deciding whether or not to accept a design assignment to promote that product (2023, pp. 39-40). More generally, Armbrust's fifty questions constitute a rigo-

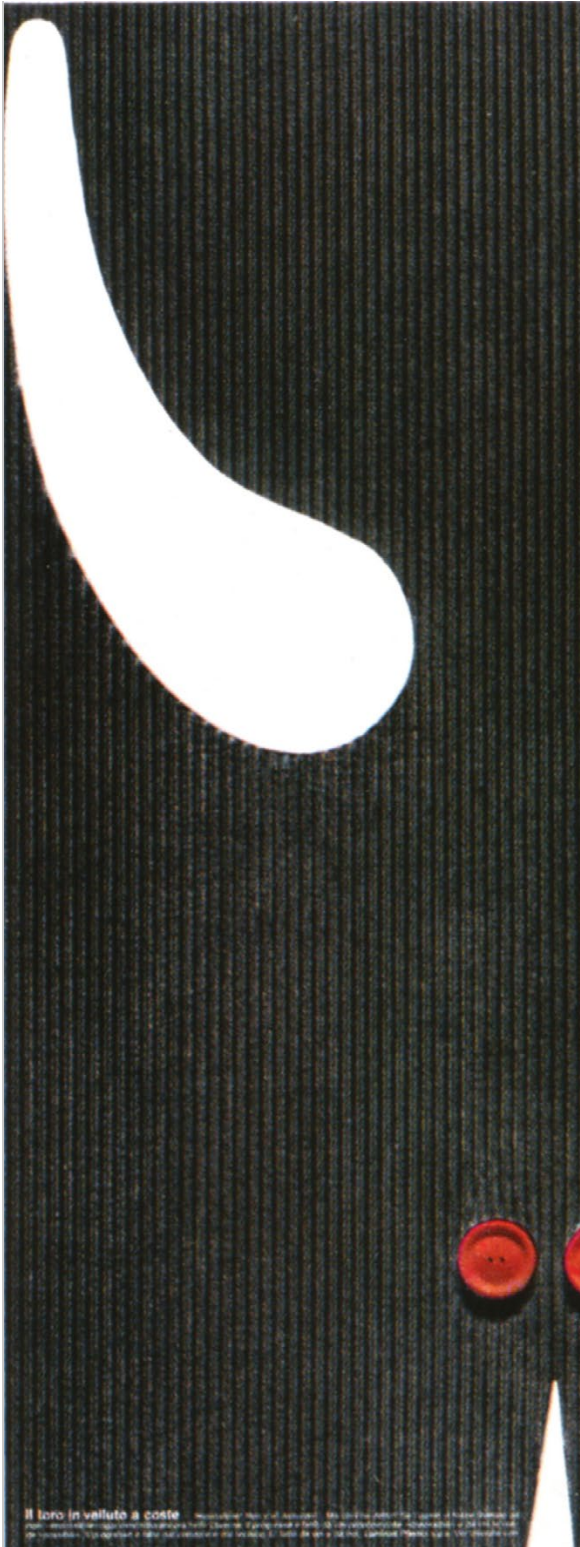


Fig. 29. Silvio Coppola, “Il toro in velluto a coste” Poster Laminati Plastici No. 1, serie animaghi, 1970/71. AIAP Documentation Center on Graphic Design.

rous test of the designer’s awareness of their position in the processes in which they participate and work.

Designing sustainable processes: Towards a set of guidelines

While the discussion of design manifestos and historical cases shows that the idea of ethical and responsible design isn’t new, today’s sustainability challenges demand a more profound, structural response. Designers can no longer simply choose eco-friendly materials or promote conscious consumption. Instead, their role must shift decisively towards a strategic dimension, where design focuses not just on the final artifact, but on the entire transformation process, acting as a bridge between data, people, and an organization’s sustainability goals.

In order to work towards sustainability, the ability to insert design into the processes of companies, organisations, and less formalised groups seems key, in order to look towards the redefinition of complex systems and new organisational cultures endowed with what Manzini has defined as sustainable qualities (2015, p. 23).

Design intended as a methodology and as a mindset, in which the designer plays in an increasingly strategic and advisory role, together with the client, in order to incorporate approaches and reflections aimed at sustainabili-

ty into the decision-making processes. The designer works first and foremost to make all those involved in the process aware of the changes underway and of the ongoing processes, and to give visibility to data and information, involving new and unexpected skills and players. For the visual communication designer this is matter of finally stepping out of the narrow role in which they have often been confined, and interpreting that redefinition of responsibility anticipated and hoped for by the aforementioned Carta del Progetto Grafico.

The designer can work to inform and involve stakeholders in a sustainability-oriented transformation process. An opportunity for this is provided by regulatory updates on sustainable corporate governance and the obligation to include ESG (environmental, social and governance) criteria in the business plans of public companies. These are criteria for assessing a company's commitment according to three dimensions – environmental, social and governance – which give a measure of how sustainable and responsible it is. Within this framework of redefining internal processes, designers can play a key role in making the various stakeholders aware.

Visual communication designers can give visibility, and thus understandability, to the data and information that processes towards sustainability develop, thanks to the potential and tools of information design and data visualisation. As a consequence, visual and verbal languages can change and evolve - consider how the spread of information design has altered the visual landscape of communication over the last two decades. They can involve new and unexpected competences and skills, activating principles of inclusion in design development.

In short, designers in the field of visual communication with a focus on sustainability can:

- make the players involved aware
- make data and information visible
- engage new skills and expertise
- activate principles of inclusion and accessibility
- make visual languages change and grow
- questioning outcomes and impact

Testing sustainable processes

The role of an association like AIAP, in this dynamic, is significant because it can propose practices and approaches with the aim of exploring dynamics that can become good practices and models.

In order to promote sustainability and enhance the importance of information visualisation, in 2021 AIAP explored the possibilities of data visualisation applied to open data, organising URBAN DATAVIZ CONTEST together with Urban Digital Center - InnovationLab Rovigo with and in collaboration with Università Iuav di Venezia. Through a series of initiatives aimed at involving visual designers, data journalists and creative coders, the association investigated the potential of dissemination of the open data. The themes chosen in that experience - the city and its citizens, the sustainable waste cycle, urban green - were expressions of the SDG Sustainable Development Goals. The actions implemented explored the ways in which information design, data visualisation and open data can become tools for accessing information related to the urban life and foster processes of participation and open innovation.

AIAP has also interpreted the theme of sustainability through the AWDA AIAP Women in Design Award, a design award created in 2012 with the aim of understanding and promoting the work of women related to visual communication design, to investigate their languages and approaches. In the latest edition of 2023, the award integrated a section called AWDA for RIGHTS!, dedicated to graphic projects that address social issues of rights, women's work and gender inequality. It is also significant to note the increasing number of events, festivals, and events dedicated to graphic design that are taking place annually in Italy, which AIAP sponsors or supports, testifying to an awareness on the part of students and young professionals of how the profession is changing.



Fig. 30. Mario Piazza, "Carta del Progetto Grafico", 1989. AIAP Documentation Center on Graphic Design.

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Reflections for drafting the CAM Allestimenti

*A legacy of the first conference on sustainable exhibit
promoted by the NSBVN Cluster*

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Fig. 31. Barbara Di Prete presents the guidelines of the NSBVN Editorial Series.
Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

Reflections for drafting the CAM Allestimenti

*A legacy of the first conference on sustainable
exhibit promoted by the NSBVN Cluster*

The exhibit sector—comprising fairs, exhibitions, and temporary events—has a significant environmental impact due to the short lifespan of installations, the use of materials that are often non-sustainable, and the high CO₂ emissions linked to lighting, air conditioning, and transportation. Added to these environmental concerns are the regulatory challenges posed by the Criteri Ambientali Minimi (CAM, Criteri Minimi Ambientali), which, although mandatory for public administrations, remain difficult to apply effectively. The criteria are not always clear, and when adapted to the specificities of temporary installations, they often result in forced interpretations and regulatory gaps.

To address this pressing issue, a number of academic initiatives—while rooted in research—are increasingly engaging a broader range of stakeholders, including industry professionals, exhibition contractors, and trade fair and museum operators. Among these, the NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster¹, promoted by Università Iuav di Venezia, together with the projects funded under the TOCC² program and inter-university collaborations such as the Places+³ research group at the Politecnico di Milano, is developing innovative, circular-economy-based strategies for more sustainable exhibition design. These projects aim to devise methods and practices that mitigate the environmental impact of installations, raise awareness among both professionals and the public, and promote an update



Fig. 32. One of the working tables during the First NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster Conference. Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

to current regulations to make the entire temporary events supply chain more sustainable.

Within this research framework, the focus is on the work of the NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster, particularly the national conference of the same name and the subsequent working groups⁴. Both have served as key opportunities to convene Italy’s leading figures in the exhibition sector to discuss the gaps in existing regulations and, in the short term, draft supplementary guidelines to propose to the Ministry for Ecological Transition, aimed at better regulating installation processes and reducing their ecological footprint.

CAM Eventi: Towards a Cultural and Regulatory Shift

The need for a new legislative framework to regulate the exhibition sector was also addressed in the recent Regulation (EU) 2024/1781 of the European Parliament and of the Council (13 June 2024), which defines eco-design requirements for sustainable products, amending Directive (EU) 2020/1828 and Regulation (EU) 2023/1542, and repealing Directive 2009/125/EC.

This regulation forms part of the broader context of the European Green Deal

and the Circular Economy Action Plan, with the aim of ensuring that products placed on the EU market are increasingly sustainable, energy-efficient, and designed for a second life, thus reducing their environmental impact (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). Among the key criteria identified by the Commission are product durability, repairability, and recyclability.

However, these directives do not yet constitute a cohesive regulatory framework for the exhibition sector. When it comes to regulating production processes, material selection, logistics management, and the organization and execution of installations, the main regulatory reference remains the CAM Eventi (2022).

These Criteri Minimi Ambientali for Events represent an important set of guidelines for organizing events in a more sustainable and environmentally responsible way, aiming to minimize their impact and encourage the responsible use of resources. Yet, due to the sector's heterogeneity and the difficulty of addressing the specific decision-making and design processes within each supply chain, these objectives remain highly ambitious and, for now, largely unmet.

The philosophy underpinning the CAM is to limit waste and unnecessary consumption by adopting reversible and replicable solutions. Priority is generally given to recycled or reusable materials that can be employed across multiple contexts, entail low transportation costs, or utilize shared storage solutions. For catering, the guidelines encourage the use of organic, local, and seasonal foods; for waste management, organizers are prompted to promote recycling; for logistics, they are urged to favor sustainable mobility options—short-distance or low-emission transport systems. However, when it comes to the design and installation of exhibition spaces, specific prescriptions are still lacking.

It is particularly noteworthy that the CAM do not limit themselves to the “care” of the environment but also embrace a social and ethical vision of design, following the principles of Universal Design (Mace, 1997; Fortuna et al., 2023) to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all. Another crucial point emerging from the analysis is the promotion of circular economy practices—not merely as a long-term aspiration but as a concrete operational anchor. Among the recommended strategies is Design for Disassembly (Rios et al., 2015; Toniolo et al., 2021), which facilitates the reuse and recycling of installations.

As mentioned, the CAM apply to a wide range of events—from cultural to sporting and entertainment ones—encompassing various types of exhibitions, fairs, and performances. Precisely because of this broad scope and the inherent complexity of each type of event, the CAM can only become truly operational tools

if they are further refined to address specific contexts, constraints, and challenges. While much remains to be done, the fact that compliance with these criteria is already mandatory for public administrations and integrated into public procurement procedures marks a significant step forward in terms of awareness, education, and the adoption of more virtuous practices.

At present, therefore, rather than serving primarily as a binding legal framework, the CAM represent a valuable cultural opportunity to foster a shift towards sustainability—one capable of leaving a lasting, positive legacy for communities and territories alike.

CAM Allestimenti: Challenges and Opportunities

At the conclusion of the First NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Conference, the namesake Cluster organized three focus groups specifically dedicated to the regulatory framework governing the sector. The first meeting, held in person immediately after the conference, provided an opportunity to establish a multi-stakeholder dialogue among representatives from the museum, trade fair, design, and exhibition industries, as well as the academic world. The session proved hi-



Fig. 33. First meeting of the NSBVN Focus Group – CAM Exhibition Design, 25 July 2024. Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

ghly stimulating, and all participants emphasized both the need and willingness to further explore the subject through additional dedicated meetings. These subsequent discussions took place in July and October 2024 in a blended format (online and in-person).

Other professionals from the exhibition field later joined these follow-up sessions, as it was deemed essential to involve representatives from all stages of the exhibition process in order to enrich the dialogue and encourage as comprehensive and articulated an exchange of experiences as possible⁵.

A Critical Overview: Where to Start?

The analysis of current legislation on eco-design and CAM Eventi revealed numerous gaps and unresolved issues in a field facing significant challenges. The following summarizes the main critical aspects that emerged from the focus groups:

a. Limited relevance of exhibition-related issues: The first major concern, already identified in previous discussions, relates to the low relevance of exhibition and spatial themes within the CAM Eventi: out of the 23 stated criteria, only three directly concern exhibition design. This limited attention suggests that the field is considered marginally impactful. However, exhibition processes involve large quantities of material, significant logistical operations, and long-distance transport, resulting in considerable economic and environmental costs. Moreover, without proper planning, exhibitions can leave behind substantial waste. Giving the same regulatory weight to an entire exhibition process as to catering materials (e.g., tablecloths, cutlery, napkins) is, therefore, a naïve—if not risky—imbalance for a framework that aspires to be comprehensive.

b. A generalist approach: The CAM apply to multiple product categories, resulting in a generalist orientation that allows for wide interpretation—especially in exhibition design, which by nature involves extremely diverse production chains and differs significantly depending on site-specific contexts.

c. Poor alignment with real working conditions: The broad scope of the CAM comes at the cost of precision: the criteria are often perceived as overly theoretical and detached from professional practice. In the design phase, it becomes difficult to define commitments that reflect actual working conditions, making practical implementation inconsistent.

d. Lack of reference models: Due to the absence of prior experience, codified models, or dedicated literature, evaluation parameters for assessing the environmental impact of an exhibition remain unclear. This lack of benchmarks makes both interpretation and application challenging—unlike other fields (such as food and

beverage) that have developed long-standing, stratified regulations, which are easier to understand and apply.

e. Lack of private-sector responsibility: Currently, CAM compliance is mandatory only for public administrations, not for private entities. This creates market disparities and hinders the widespread adoption of a sustainability culture. Partial public–private entities, such as foundations or trade fair organizers, can often bypass compliance altogether. As a result, this tool has yet to achieve systematic implementation.

f. Absence of monitoring mechanisms: Implementing CAM requires not only careful planning but also rigorous verification to ensure that declared commitments are actually met. Such commitments should be articulated during the design phase through accessible and transparent tools, rather than via highly technical documentation that clients rarely understand. Likewise, on-site inspections and supervision are necessary to promote real accountability through collaborative oversight between public authorities, clients, and industry professionals.

g. Need for training and accountability: Closely linked to the previous point is a lack of dedicated training. In theory, responsibility for CAM compliance lies with the owner of the space (not the event organizer). When the owner is a public body, it is therefore the administration’s duty to ensure compliance. However, there is often no adequately trained personnel to perform such checks. In most cases, compliance is verified only through self-certification by the contractor, a system that shifts responsibility and offers no real guarantee of results.

h. Building professional competence: A related and equally significant issue concerns internal expertise within companies. Certain CAM requirements—such as the calculation of carbon footprint—require costly software and specific technical knowledge that many firms lack. This additional demand for skills and resources further complicates implementation and highlights the need for training programs to support the sustainability transition.

i. Short-term planning: In addition to cultural and regulatory issues, economic and organizational constraints hinder the long-term sustainability of exhibition practices. Unlike in the past, when companies could rely on three-year budgets allowing for flexible and sustainable management, today most operate with annual budgets and plan short-term installations. This severely limits the possibility of reusing designs in different contexts, reducing opportunities to integrate sustainable practices.

l. Towards a deeper culture of sustainability: Finally—and perhaps most importantly—the main obstacle remains the lack of awareness among clients and the

broader industry. Despite some progress, a genuine culture of reuse is still largely absent. Often, at the client's own request, installations are used only once and then discarded. This attitude is rooted in an aesthetic culture that values novelty, perceiving reused materials as less appealing or even detrimental to brand image. Recycling is also resisted because many companies demand custom-built, brand-specific designs, rejecting the idea of sharing or reusing components provided by trade fair organizers.

A Design-Oriented Perspective: Where Do We Want to Go?

Over the course of the discussions on the CAM Eventi, the need emerged to draft a dedicated CAM Exhibition Design (CAM Allestimenti), expanding and deepening certain points already present in the current regulation while tailoring them more closely to exhibition-specific requirements. It was therefore proposed to prepare a supplementary framework that would address the sector's needs with a more vertical, targeted document.

In order to structure such a document comprehensively—taking into account all phases that characterize the design process, from the selection/availability of materials to the management of logistics, transport, and possible storage; from scheduling to the calculation of environmental impact and the structuring of the network of actors involved; from production through on-site installation, and from disassembly to end-of-life planning—the meetings were organized around a series of programming, design, and production parameters, grouped into operational macro-categories (see Table 6).

What follows are reflections shared in the working groups, intended to constitute an initial corpus of meta-design guidelines for a future CAM Exhibition Design.

a. The “right” timelines for sustainable installations: the first key aspect concerns the management of design and execution timelines, a crucial node for the sustainability of installations. Especially in the trade-fair context, there is often an imbalance between commercial activities—which begin well in advance—versus the design and production of the installation (compressed into a few months, if not a few weeks before the event) and the installation/disassembly phases, to which only a few days are allotted. Such compressed timelines create a precarious condition for the contractor, often leading to the use of pre-assembled materials that are less sustainable but more cost-effective. Many events impose rigid deadlines for dismantling, forcing operators to destroy artifacts that could otherwise be reused if properly taken down. Proper scheduling should therefore adopt a systemic view of the project, allocating adequate time to production and installation

Parameters for the Management and Coordination of an Exhibition Setup	Strategic Aspects (Phases of the Exhibition Cycle)	Impact Calculation (KPIs and Tools/Actions)	Actors Involved
<p>Programming (Time):</p> <p>Advance space allocation</p> <p>Biennial/triennial trade fair installations</p> <p>Misalignment between commercial activity / design / production / installation timelines (<i>Short times prevent full optimization of logistics and design processes. e.g., 9 commercial months, 3 months for everything else, 5 days for installation</i>)</p>	<p>Choice of materials:</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Consult existing academic research archives on eco-materials.</p>	<p>Characteristics? (<i>Mono-material / Multi-material</i>)</p>	<p>Organizer / Manager</p>
	<p>Logistics / Transport:</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Who and what is transported is often uncontrollable, since routes are sub-contracted.</p> <p>NEED: Rationalization of movements.</p> <p>QUESTION: Would building loyalty with logistics companies help achieve greater control?</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Local contractors = savings in logistics but more production; international contractors = more transport but less on-site logistics.</p> <p>NEED: Standardization to allow the relocation of installation phases.</p> <p>QUESTION: Save on logistics by producing new materials, or save on production with heavier logistics operations?</p>	<p>Ease of transport? (<i>Weight / Dimensions</i>)</p> <p>Emissions? (<i>Distances to cover</i>)</p> <p>→Carbon Calculator</p> <p>→Global Footprint Network</p>	<p>Client / Exhibitor</p>
<p>Design (Production Phase):</p> <p>Everything that is done is paid for by the exhibitor.</p> <p>There is difficulty between trade fair districts and organizers in communicating additional costs in favor of sustainability.</p> <p>Every design choice affects the cost per square meter (+ cost = - area).</p> <p>There are general technical guidelines issued by fairs to leave exhibitors some freedom.</p> <p><i>Fairs are now working on creating new guidelines (e.g., banning plasterboard unless recovery methods after use are clearly declared).</i></p> <p>The need for beautiful, impactful installations often clashes with the timing and requirements of environmental criteria.</p> <p>A collective effort is required to align all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Installation (Implementation Phase):</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Modular systems differ from pre-fitted ones (the latter being contracts with the trade fair organizer).</p> <p>NEED: Provide designers with tools to foster a systemic vision.</p> <p>QUESTION: How can the scenic/visual impact of installations be reconciled with sustainability?</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Advantages and disadvantages of parametric systems - a balance must be found between personalization and modularity.</p> <p>NEED: Personalization that reflects the exhibitor's and the fair's identity.</p> <p>QUESTION: How can customization be guaranteed?</p>	<p>Ease of Assembly / Disassembly? (<i>Number of components / Number of different materials / Disassembly possibility</i>)</p> <p>→Decentralized construction (on site).</p> <p>→Study of parametrically modeled components to provide to designers.</p> <p>→Research projects on parametric prototypes for trade fair installations.</p> <p>→Installations using aluminum and fabric systems with take-back schemes for storage by the manufacturer.</p>	<p>Designer</p>
	<p>Culture</p> <p>Horizontal, humanistic approach—not just technical. Technical limits often make professionals feel restricted in choices and possibilities.</p> <p>It's a matter of culture and awareness.</p> <p>Each actor should take responsibility, without limiting creativity and design freedom, as long as process criteria are respected.</p> <p>Can the Cluster promote this topic through cultural tools (e.g., competitions)?</p> <p>Goal: Develop process-oriented criteria.</p>	<p>End-of-Life Management:</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Reuse practices are still perceived as fragile if not shared.</p> <p>NEED: Different logics between museums (custom, rarely reused) and fairs (reuse easier and frequent for economic reasons). Storage is a problem.</p> <p>QUESTION: Define standardized, modular but flexible construction systems?</p> <p>Social Responsibility:</p> <p>CURRENT SITUATION: Focus is solely on economic sustainability.</p> <p>NEED: Training and skills-building for public employees.</p> <p>QUESTION: How can clients be made aware or "educated"?</p>	<p>Reuse? (<i>Number of possible reuses: how many cycles it can withstand</i>)</p> <p>Storage? (<i>Volume / Storage costs</i>)</p> <p>Social Impact?</p> <p>→Present data clearly (raise awareness)</p>

Tab 6. Strategic themes emerged during the focus group, structured around the phases of programming, design, production, implementation, and management of an exhibition.

and thus avoiding improvised decisions that undermine sustainability.

b. Towards systemic design: equally crucial is the role of design—on the client-consultant side as well as the contractor’s technical side—called upon to collaborate synergistically rather than, as sometimes happens, conflictually. Design must concern not only the formal and communicative output of the installation, but also the selection of the most suitable materials, coordination of assembly, and—last but often overlooked—the supervision of proper disassembly. A programmed systemic approach—capable of accommodating in the project the materials’ life cycle, second life of components, or their proper disposal—is fundamental to reducing the economic–environmental impact of the installation.

c. Sustainability data as communicable and certifiable requirements: alongside the responsibilities of designers and contractors, it is essential to invest in client training and in better communicating the sustainability values embedded in projects. Over-optimizing an installation can appear disadvantageous to a client who, lacking adequate awareness, may choose the cheapest or most easily customized option rather than the most sustainable one. The transition towards more ecological choices should therefore be accompanied by an objectifiable communication and information framework based on reliable, comparable data: the aim is to build a shared set of parameters that industry professionals can convey as project data on par with cost, duration, finish characteristics, fire resistance, etc. This is not about “educating” the client so much as demonstrating the economic convenience of ecologically sound choices; to that end, the support of third parties such as universities—able to certify and guarantee the reliability of proposed solutions—appears essential.

d. The value of creativity and innovation: on the design front, beyond technical knowledge and scheduling capability, training can encourage designers to interpret production scraps as creative, sustainable opportunities rather than as mere (and useless) residues. It follows that investing in research and development—reimagining the aesthetic potential inherent in recycling and reuse—becomes important, with the involvement of start-ups and small firms already proposing innovative solutions. In this vein, consider the experiments by Social Factory which, for Gruppo CAP (the integrated water-service operator for the City of Milan) at the “Ecomondo” trade fair in Rimini (2021), outfitted the entire pavilion with production scraps, valorizing negatives from milled sheets to create furnishings and other spatial components.

Furthermore, the fair presented the first research conducted by the company with the Politecnico di Milano⁶ on new materials produced with experimental



Fig. 34. Furniture designed for the setup of the CAP Group stand at Eco-mondo 2021.

Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

techniques by recycling waste with no source separation (plastics “contaminated” with aluminum, paper, and other residues typically found in food packaging). These panels—exhibited to date for demonstration in various shows—have strength suitable for use in furniture and cladding; they are of great interest because they signal the company’s sensitivity to ecological issues while also carrying strong narrative and aesthetic value, as their material “imperfections” simulate the veining of fine marbles. The intention is to propose them in future stands as research directly applied to exhibition artifacts.

e. Parametric exhibition solutions between standardization and customization: given the need to mediate between production requirements and brand-representation needs, there is an opportunity to valorize modular and modifiable construction systems that allow flexibility in the form, size, and repetition of installations while also ensuring a distinctive creative signature and recognizability of the exhibition artifact. In this perspective, parametric solutions are recommended, making individual project elements more easily manageable according to the client brief and enabling more effective responses to their needs.

A concrete example of this approach is the pavilion assembled by Materieunite at “CPHI Barcelona 2023”

(Materieunite, 2023), designed using a parametric construction system in fire-retardant honeycomb cardboard. The client, operating in the pharmaceutical sector, had historically used “single-use” stands, without considering reuse as a worthwhile option. However, after being presented with a report including an economic and environmental analysis—highlighting the advantages of reusing the installation the following year—the client, faced with objective data, was convinced of the choice (underscoring the importance of “accompanying” clients towards a culture of sustainability). The following year the stand was expanded by 50% (from 108 m² to 153 m²): approximately 70% of the installation was reused, retaining the structure, furnishings, and walls. This substantial reuse yielded significant cost savings and a clear reduction in resource waste. Another noteworthy feature concerns the volume of stored material once the stand is disassembled: all panels can be folded onto themselves and compacted, occupying minimal space, with obvious benefits for both transport and storage. This (highly customizable) installation can therefore be considered a best practice within a systemic vision in which production, logistics, assembly, and warehousing are designed upstream, consciously.

f. Codifying suitable tools and methods for impact assessment: it would be de-



Fig. 35. MILANO CIRCOLARE – The City that Reduces, Recovers and Recycles, BASE Milano, 2023; Design Differente, Salone del Mobile. Photo: ClusterNSBVN_Iuav.

sirable—and necessary—to identify a shared tool to analyze an installation’s life cycle and calculate its CO₂ impact. Unfortunately, this goal remains elusive: assessing the environmental impact of an installation is still extremely complex, and the identification of a definitive, accessible, universal calculation model appears distant. While it is simpler to trace the chain for mono-materials, more complex installations require consideration of each material’s life cycle and integration with data relating to the entire installation process. Moreover, the international logistics of installations can make their environmental impact even more significant (and more complex to estimate).

A virtuous example of evaluation was proposed in the “Generative Circularity” installation at Fuori Salone 2022 (Materieunite, 2022), which used a model to calculate impact and represented it through a comparative infographic. While not a complete LCA, its simplicity and communicative accessibility make it a good starting point for future developments.

g. A multi-actor system: finally, to ensure coherent, attentive implementation of the points above—pursuing their concrete, applicable translation—it was deemed necessary to specify the individual actors involved in the installation process which, by breadth and complexity, sometimes presents areas of overlap that are



Fig. 36. ICE Pharma Pavilion at CPHI Barcelona 2023, designed and set up by Materieunite. Photo: Materieunite.

unclear in terms of roles and responsibilities. To assign duties and tasks to specific parties, seven main actors were identified (which may also coincide in practice): event promoter/organizer, event manager, exhibitor, contractor, designer, service providers, and “reuse actors”—a term increasingly used to designate all those commercial operators who foster sharing and recycling dynamics (consider, for example, the “NonSiButtaViaNiente.it” sharing platform, which makes exhibition materials from the national museum network available online). For an effective drafting of a CAM Exhibition Design, it is considered useful to structure the document so that prescriptions are divided not only by the macro-distinction between museum and trade-fair exhibits, but also according to this grid of responsibilities.

An appendix note (not a formal point within these suggestions for a future CAM Exhibition Design) underscores the leading role of the public sector. The choice to make CAM a mandatory requirement for public procurement—and a rewarding factor when requesting patronage—is considered appropriate; however, even if the transition towards sustainability can be led by the public sector, the goal is that the private sector will want to (more than merely have to) follow suit.

The Eco-exhibition designer and the Cultural Responsibility of Project.

The discussions undertaken make it clear that new skills and new design processes are needed to reverse the trend of “unsustainability” that permeates the exhibition sector.

This means, first and foremost, building new competences and new professional profiles, with the aim of developing the role of the Eco-exhibition designer (eco-allestitore) capable of steering the transition towards more sustainable exhibition practices. Designers’ responsibility is crucial to ensure that sustainable solutions are not merely seen as feasible options but become priority choices: their skills and sensitivity are essential to achieve a balance between aesthetics and environmental and economic sustainability in a field often marked by challenging timelines.

Fundamental differences must also be underscored between the museum and trade-fair spheres—two domains with distinct operating modes and differing issues and sensitivities regarding reuse and the spread of sustainable practices. In the museum context, reuse is often subject to prior agreements, given the specificity of installations and the presence of curators; conversely, in trade fairs, reuse is

more widespread, both for economic and fiscal reasons and due to the prevalence of turnkey contracts and rental structures. Nevertheless, museums are progressively adopting strategies similar to those of fairs—for example, promoting the circulation of exhibitions through other venues—thus fostering the design of easily demountable installations. The convergence between museum and trade-fair practices offers a valuable opportunity to develop innovative construction and design systems capable of extending the lifecycle of installations without compromising quality. Although significant operational differences remain between the two sectors, this scenario suggests the opportunity for parallel experiments, able to tailor proposed solutions to the specificities of each context.

Finally, it is evident that sustainability in the exhibition realm must be addressed not only from a technical-regulatory perspective but also—if not above all—from a cultural one: the goal of drafting CAM Exhibition Design (CAM Allestitenti) thus becomes a pretext for a broader reflection. On this basis, the Cluster has examined its own role as a tool/platform for promoting wider environmental (and social) awareness, going beyond purely technical criteria and shifting attention towards a broader culture of design as an act that is both responsible and visionary.

A change of perspective is therefore proposed: from *Criteri Minimi Ambientali* to “minimum design criteria”—a slogan that masks a crucial observation. Addressing sustainability as a cultural issue, rather than as a purely technical or engineering topic, represents a fundamental paradigm shift. It is not a linguistic flourish, but primarily an ethical, political, and, ultimately, regulatory matter.

In summary, the coordinated working groups—and this essay, which reports their outcomes—aim to trigger process innovations, codify replicable and measurable practices and methods, move beyond the limitations of current operating procedures, and lay the groundwork for future guidelines that more closely match working realities and can involve both public and private stakeholders in a challenge that must, by necessity, be collective: bringing about a significant system-level change capable of supporting a sustainable transition in which design plays a key role.

The success of this transition will depend on our ability to establish structured collaboration among key actors (fairs, museums, industrial clusters, and public bodies), underpinned by clear agreements, effective regulations, and innovative tools. Only through this integrated approach will it be possible to build a more sustainable and democratic future, in which the exhibition world is fully engaged.

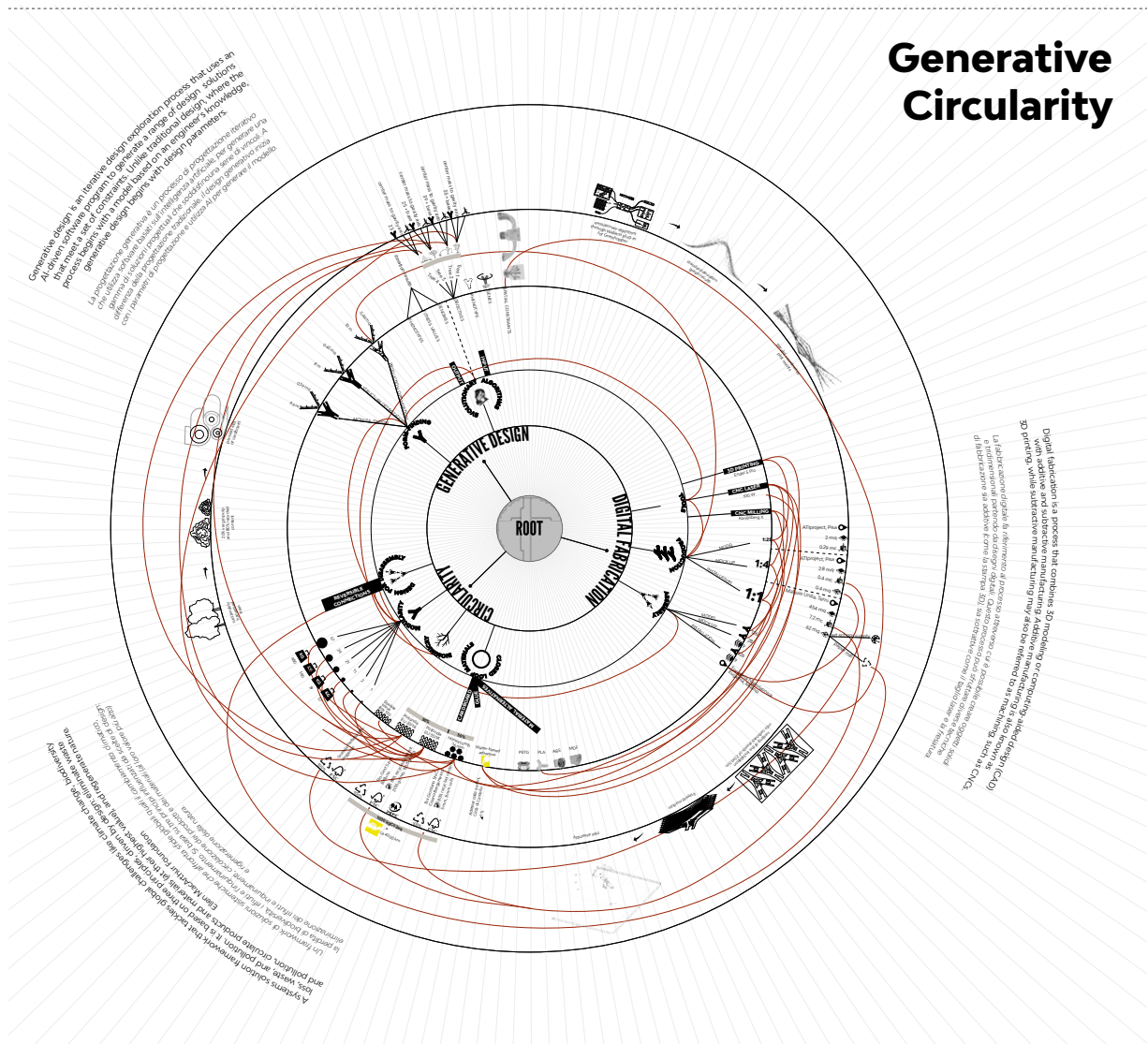


Fig. 37. Infographic of consumption data for the Generative Circularity project, conceived by ATI Project – Research and Development Department, and realized by Materieunite.

Notes

¹ Università Iuav di Venezia. (n.d.). NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit: Promuovere l'economia circolare negli allestimenti espositivi. Inter-university cluster composed of three Italian and two foreign universities, with more than 25 stakeholders including institutions, museums, associations, and companies.

² Research funded through the public notice for the submission of capacity-building project proposals for cultural operators, under the NRRP, Mission 1 – Digitization, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism; COMPONENT 3 – Tourism and Culture 4.0; MEASURE 3 – Cultural and Creative Industries; INVESTMENT 3.3 – “Capacity building for cultural operators to manage the digital and green transition”; Sub-investment 3.3.3 “Promote the reduction of the ecological footprint of cultural events by fostering the inclusion of social and environmental criteria in public procurement policies, thereby steering the supply chain towards the eco-innovation of products and services” (Action B I); funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU and managed by the Italian Ministry of Culture.

³ Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design. (n.d.). Places+: Design of places for sustainable transitions (B. Di Prete, A. Rebaglio, E. Lonardo, L. Ratti); research line “Places+ Sustainable Exhibit.”

⁴ First NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster Conference, Università Iuav di Venezia, Ca' Tron, 17–18 June 2024.

⁵ The various focus groups included representatives of fairs and museums (including Fiera Milano, Triennale di Milano, Musei Civici Veneziani, Fondazione Prada); design firms and exhibition contractors (including beMatrix, Fogarolo Allestimenti, Foscarini, Materieunite, Plotini Allestimenti, Saviola); trade associations (e.g., ADI, AEFI, AIAP, FederlegnoArredo – ASAL Assoallestimenti, ICOM); logistics firms (Fercam); universities and public bodies (Università Iuav di Venezia, Politecnico di Milano, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, University of Ferrara); and professional designers.

⁶ Research program “CAPitoli urbani,” carried out by the Politecnico di Milano – Department of Design (Places+ group) for CAP, 2021–2023.

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On display

Exhibit design, Università Iuav di Venezia, new paradigms of sustainability

The paper examines the evolution of exhibit design in Venice and the central role played by the Iuav University of Venice in education, research, and experimentation within this disciplinary field. Since the post-war period, the Venetian context has established itself as a privileged meeting ground between historical-critical inquiry and design practice, thanks to the contributions of architects, designers, and scholars of international standing. Several paradigmatic episodes — from the Murano Glass Exhibition (1953–59), a foundational example of a design system, to the recent establishment of specific academic programs in interior and exhibit design — bear witness to the continuity and innovation of Venetian research. The essay also highlights recent transformations, from the revival of exhibit design as a disciplinary field to the creation of the cluster NSBVN – Non Si Butta Via Niente, with particular attention to sustainability as a new design paradigm.

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Alberto Bassi is a historian and critic of design, and Full Professor at the Iuav University of Venice, where he also serves as Rector's Delegate for Communication. He coordinates the master's degree program in Product, Visual and Interior Design. He is a member of the Scientific Committee of the Iuav Archives of Projects, as well as of several editorial boards for design journals and book series. He has collaborated with design magazines such as *Casabella*, *Abitare*, and *Auto & Design*, as well as with major newspapers, and is the author of numerous books, including *La luce italiana* (Electa, 2004), *Design anonimo in Italia. Oggetti comuni e progetto incognito* (Electa, 2007), and *Food design in Italia. Il progetto del prodotto alimentare* (Electa, 2015), which received the ADI Compasso d'Oro Award in 2018. His most recent publication is *Design contemporaneo. Istruzioni per l'uso* (Il Mulino, 2017). He is President of the Scientific Committee of the national technological cluster MinIt – Made in Italy and founder of the Veneto Regional Innovative Network Face-Design, where he also serves as scientific coordinator. He has participated in several national and international research projects and currently oversees the integration of Iuav's design area within the innovation ecosystem INEST–PNRR.

The profession facing the challenge of change

The strategic role of the project

The essay analyzes the exhibition design sector in Italy, highlighting the gap between the legal definition of the allestitore (exhibition builder) and the actual complexity of this professional role, which encompasses technical design, logistics, safety management, and material handling. Drawing on the experience of the NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster and the project Exhibit 2.0: The Ecological Turn, it underscores the limitations of a fragmented regulatory framework and the need to rethink operational practices in light of the ecological transition. The chapter emphasizes the strategic role of clients in promoting sustainability criteria — with particular attention to material reuse and end-of-life management — and reflects on the importance of dialogue between designers and builders to ensure coherence and reduce environmental impact. Within this framework, the essay introduces the figure of the eco-allestitore, a new hybrid professional profile trained through online courses, technical libraries, regulatory toolkits, and open-access resources — capable of combining creativity, efficiency, and ecological responsibility.

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Designing for the future

Museography, sustainability, and the life cycle of exhibitions

The essay offers a critical reflection on the concept of the sustainable exhibit, analyzing its museological, museographic, and expographic implications in light of the cultural, environmental, and digital transformations shaping the contemporary museum. Following a semantic mapping of terminology and ICOM definitions, the author examines the organization's growing commitment to sustainability, with a particular focus on global guidelines and recent Italian initiatives. Central to the discussion are the challenges posed by material reuse and recycling, the protection of authorship in exhibition design, and the obsolescence of digital devices — issues that call for a critical reassessment of exhibition practices. The sustainable exhibit thus emerges as both a design and cultural paradigm that demands new skills, interdisciplinary approaches, and a rethinking of the exhibition lifecycle. Sustainability, once a limited best practice, becomes a structural principle of museum design, capable of guiding the future of cultural institutions towards responsible, inclusive, and enduring models.

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Valeria Arrabito is the Secretary-General of the Italian Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the global organization of museums and museum professionals dedicated to the research, preservation, and promotion of the world's natural and cultural heritage — present and future, tangible and intangible.

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Her expertise includes nonprofit management with a strong focus on public-private partnerships, fundraising, human resource management, patronage, and relations with investors and sponsors.

Towards sustainable exhibiting

A conversation with Marco Fogarolo

The exhibition design sector in Italy constitutes a complex and multidisciplinary field that brings together technical, logistical, design, and cultural dimensions. Despite its growing importance, the professional figure of the allestitore (exhibition builder) continues to be narrowly defined by current legislation — particularly by the Decreto Palchi e Fiere (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2014) — which confines the role to that of a mere contractual executor.

This contribution is based on an interview with Marco Fogarolo, professional and representative of ASAL – Assoallestimenti. Structured around four guiding questions, the interview bridges the worlds of research and professional practice, highlighting the gap between regulatory definitions and daily work, the regulatory fragmentation that generates inefficiencies, the potential and limits of sustainability initiatives, and the complex relationship between design and construction.

Through this dialogue, the contours of a professional figure emerge who — beyond the label of executor — plays a strategic and cultural role, decisively influencing safety, efficiency, and sustainability within the sector.

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Davide Crippa, architect and PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, studied under some of the masters of Italian design, completing his education with an interdisciplinary perspective. In 2004, he founded the Ghigos studio and has since carried out wide-ranging research through exhibitions, installations, and internationally relevant projects. From 2007 to 2021, he taught at the Politecnico di Milano and the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan; he is currently Associate Professor at the Iuav University of Venice and, since 2022, Director of the Master's in Innovation Design and Management at the same university. He writes articles and books on design theory and criticism, consistently focusing on evolving scenarios. His current research explores the potential of interaction design and digital fabrication technologies within a circular economy framework, with a specific focus on the sustainability of exhibition design.

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Lara Migliori holds a degree in Interior Design from the Iuav University of Venice, where she completed her thesis on political exhibition design in the postwar period. Her academic background follows an interdisciplinary trajectory between historical research on exhibition practices and sustainable design, combining the study of curatorial history with innovative strategies for circularity and environmental impact reduction. She currently collaborates with the Sustainable Exhibit cluster and the platform Non Si Butta Via Niente, focusing on sustainability and circularity in temporary exhibitions.

Designing for change

The designer as a facilitator of sustainable processes

The discussion on the responsibility and role of the designer towards sustainability-oriented design is intense. This a theme already traceable in Carta del Progetto Grafico, which questioned the new responsibilities of the graphic designer (Anceschi, Baule & Torri, 1989), claiming an idea of quality intended as the designer's responsibility towards the user - a sort of ecology of thought, already present in the work of many post-war Italian designers, capable of moving transversally in different fields of design, between graphics, architecture and design. Designing with a *forma mentis* aimed at sustainability means not only dealing with the environment, choosing sustainable tools and materials, but also knowing how to dialogue with the client by incorporating into the work processes an approach oriented towards making all the players involved aware of the decisions, giving visibility to data and information, and involving new skills and figures.

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Visiting communication designer, graphic facilitator, lecturer, artist and printmaker. Bortoloni trained as a visual communication designer at the ISIA in Urbino. In 2013, she founded Ida Studio, a visual communication design studio based in Rovigo, Italy. She has held lectures, seminars and taught graphic design in various public and private institutions in Italy and abroad, including University of Ferrara, University of Udine, Ecole nationale supérieure des arts visuel de La Cambre, Brussels (Belgium), Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (Brazil). Her prints have been exhibited in Bristol (UK), Canton (USA), Basel (Switzerland), Brussels (Belgium), Nara, Echizen (Japan), Taipei (Taiwan). She is currently a PhD student at the University of Ferrara.

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Born in Perugia in 1964, 2nd level academic diploma at Isia in Urbino. He is the founder and owner of the Bcpt Associati studio, which has been working on communication design and branding on a national and international level since 1992. In 2003, he founded the Comodo collective, which focuses on content design and social innovation. His work spans strategic design and consultancy for corporate and institutional branding with applied to retail, environmental design and more recently product design. Over time, he has been involved in communication projects in the cultural field and the promotion of territories and communities. He is national president of AIAP (Italian Association for Visual Communication Designers). Since 2006 he has been Professor of Project Methodology at ISIA in Urbino. Since 2014, he has been Professor of Brand Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia and since 2018 he has held the Interior Design course at the Department of Design of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Perugia.

Reflections for drafting the CAM Allestimenti

*A legacy of the first conference on sustainable
exhibit promoted by the NSBVN Cluster*

The analysis of the Criteri Ambientali Minimi (CAM) for events highlights several critical issues regarding their applicability and the lack of specific parameters for the exhibition sector. By comparing existing regulations with current practices in the fair and museum contexts, the essay underscores the urgent need for regulatory updates that introduce more concrete strategies for the sustainability of exhibition setups. Among the proposed solutions are Design for Disassembly, the use of reusable materials, and the standardization of dismantling processes. The text also advocates for the creation of a dedicated CAM Allestimenti (currently absent), aimed at more effectively regulating material management and the life cycle of exhibition installations. The involvement of reuse platforms, collaboration among actors across the supply chain, and the promotion of new design practices are identified as key factors in facilitating a sustainable transition within the sector.

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Barbara Di Prete is Associate Professor at the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano, where she conducts research at the intersection of urban, exhibit, and interior design. An architect and PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, she co-founded the Ghigos studio in 2003, realizing projects for internationally renowned institutions such as MAXXI, Expo 2015, MoMA, and Triennale di Milano.

Currently, through the inter-university research groups Reside, Places+, and NSBVN, she investigates the role of design from a sustainability perspective—both energetic and social—and explores strategies for the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings. Her recent research projects include De.Sign. The Role of Design in the Energy Transition Process (for ENEA); CAPitoli Urbani (for CAP); AMSHI – Advanced Solutions for Mitigating the Impact of Heat Islands on Urban Roads (for Alta Scuola Politecnica); and Greenway dei Due Parchi. Vivere il Territorio (for Regione Lombardia, ongoing).

Riccardo Palomba

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Riccardo Palomba is a designer specializing in participatory design and digital product development, with experience in both academic and corporate contexts. He has collaborated with institutions such as the Politecnico di Milano and the Iuav University of Venice, working as a Junior Researcher and Research Fellow, as well as with companies like NonSiButtaViaNiente Sbarl and Save The Duck SpA, developing UX/UI design projects and communication strategies. He has gained experience in managing complex networks, including a national network of museums and fairs committed to sustainability in the exhibition sector.

Since his master's thesis, he has collaborated with associations and local organizations to co-create future scenarios and sustainable development strategies. His research focuses on methodologies for territorial regeneration, with a particular emphasis on interventions in abandoned rural contexts.

In 2023, he co-founded and currently serves as President of InTra Aps, a social promotion association that develops regenerative methodologies to engage people in designing the future of their territories.

In a world where sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity, exhibition design — a discipline inherently ephemeral and temporary — is also called to reinvent itself.

This volume tells the story of the emergence of a new professional figure: the “eco-Allestitore” (eco-exhibition designer), a mediator between creativity and responsibility, capable of integrating design, technology, and environmental care.

Born from the experience of the *NSBVN – Sustainable Exhibit Cluster* and the project *TOCC – Exhibit 2.0: The Ecological Turn*, the book brings together reflections, research, and practices shared by universities, cultural institutions, companies, and professionals.

It traces a path that unites theory and action, past and future, transforming the ephemeral from a synonym of waste into an opportunity for connection, innovation, and sustainable culture. *Towards the Figure of the Eco-Exhibition Designer* is not merely a collection of essays but an invitation to imagine new ways of designing and inhabiting temporary spaces — building a lasting legacy made of shared ideas and practices, not waste.

Davide Crippa, architect and PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, studied under some of the masters of Italian design, completing his education with an interdisciplinary outlook. In 2003, he founded the Ghigos studio and has since carried out wide-ranging research spanning exhibitions, installations, and internationally significant projects. From 2007 to 2021, he taught at the Politecnico di Milano and the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan; he is currently Associate Professor at the Iuav University of Venice, where he explores the potential of interaction design and new digital fabrication technologies within a circular economy framework, with a specific focus on sustainable exhibition design.

Barbara Di Prete, architect and PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, is Associate Professor at the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano, where she conducts research between exhibit and interior design. In 2003, she co-founded the Ghigos studio, realizing projects for museums and institutions of international renown (MAXXI, Expo 2015, MoMA, Triennale di Milano). She currently works with the research groups Reside, Places+, and NSBVN, investigating the role of design from a sustainability perspective.



ISBN 978-88-3294-254-5

Open Source: 0,00€