

# Back to the Future

## The Future in the Past

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Conference Proceedings Book  
Oriol Moret (ed.)

*1 Design History and Histories of Design*

### 1.3 Mediterranean-ness: An Inquiry into Design and Design History

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## CONTENTS

- 218 INTRODUCTION  
Anna Calvera, ICDHS 10<sup>th</sup>+1 Scientific Committee / Tevfik Balcioğlu, Marinella Ferrara and Tomas Macsotay  
*1.3 Mediterranean-ness: An Inquiry into Design and Design History*
- 
- 221 Rossana Carullo and Antonio Labalestra  
*Sifting Time Between Design and the History of Design. Rites and Metaphors of the Ground for New Conceptualizations of the Mediterranean Identity*
- 226 Marinella Ferrara and Anna Cecilia Russo  
*Mediterranean-ness Between Identity and Genius Loci. The True Essence of Successful Design Stories*
- 231 Chiara Lecce  
*Italian Design for Colonial Equipment (1931–1942)*
- 236 Assumpta Dangla  
*Fabrics of Barcelona: The Future in the Past*
- 241 Maria Isabel del Río  
*The Contribution of Jordi Vilanova to the Identity of a Mediterranean Character in Spanish Design*
- 246 Vera Renau  
*The Design Phenomenon in Castellón: The Development of the Ceramic Tile Industry and its Eventual Establishment as a System*

### 1.3 Mediterranean-ness: An Inquiry into Design and Design History

*When the Roman Empire conquered the entire shores of the Mediterranean and called it Mare Nostrum, they constructed the notion of a Unified Mediterranean, which has never actually materialised. Intellectual travellers during the Age of Enlightenment expressed admiration for Italy, the Middle East and the Orient, and somehow discovered—or at least thought that they had discovered—some kind of common identity amongst the societies, cultures and settlements around the Mediterranean, thereby strengthening the Mediterranean Idea (from Goethe to Braudel).*

*As the centre of global trade, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Mediterranean gradually lost its importance and some Atlantic coastal cities took over the role. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean Idea has remained intact, only to be understood in terms of a union of binary opposites like Orient–Occident, North–South, order–disorder and rational–emotional. In terms of design sources, the Mediterranean encompassed both Apollonian and Dionysian qualities of creativity. How can the history of design contribute to an understanding, (re)construction, dissemination and regeneration of the Mediterranean Idea and its cultural heritage? This session will examine the concept of Mediterranean-ness in terms of design and design history. While it seeks out new, hybrid interpretations of the Mediterranean and Mediterranean-ness through design (culture), it attempts to challenge prevalent dichotomies, thereby revealing its richness and complexities.*

*The subjects to be addressed are as follows: cultural and productive actions and relationships that formed the basis for the construction and transformation of the Mediterranean Idea during the last century; the diversities and shared cultural values between North and South, East and West; Eurocentrism and the Mediterranean; challenges to and new conceptualisations of (Mediterranean) identity through design; emancipatory design practices based on the current geopolitical condition; the state of local design and design histories and the main issues, concerns, commonalities and differences; and the Mediterranean design identity, if there is one...*

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“When the Roman Empire conquered the entire shores of the Mediterranean and called it *Mare Nostrum*, they constructed the notion of a Unified Mediterranean, which has never actually materialised.” Once serving as the centre of global trade, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Mediterranean world as an idea currently survives with various interpretations and meanings. By acknowledging the fragmented, geographically discontinuous form in which scholars continue to envision the history of Mediterranean design, this strand is committed to uncovering a new link between the wealth of local histories and topics surrounding the Mediterranean Idea, from a design point of view.

All contributions represent the first step towards addressing the absence of a shared and inclusive history of Mediterranean design.

‘Sifting Time Between Design and the History of Design’ tackles Mediterranean-ness according to a combined historical and anthropological perspective to focus on a “magical” dimension that informs the relationship between design, art and craft in the regions of Italy.

‘Mediterranean-ness Between Identity and *Genius Loci*’ introduces a narrower focus on modernist and post-modernist design exponents (Le Corbusier and Ettore Sottsass) that charts the interface of modernist demands for rationality with elements of emotionality, classicism and the contemporary.

‘Italian Design for Colonial Equipment’ focuses on products developed “for the colonies” and “promoted during the 1930s, due to an avant-gardist experiment with standardised systems for mass production”.

‘Fabrics of Barcelona’ charts the 1900–1930 work of the Ponsa Hermanos factory, which “produced several silk prints featuring some of the most innovative patterns, which originated in Europe’s leading studios or were created by some of the most important Catalan designers”.

‘The Contribution of Jordi Vilanova’ concentrates on the work of the designer and his interpretation of the traditional expressive languages of the Mediterranean.

The last paper deals with the ceramic industry in Castelló, Spain. It calls for future accounts of the commonalities between countries that shared the Mediterranean tradition in terms of local production histories. This contribution builds a picture of a complex coevolution that has shaped the interactions between natural ecosystem components, societal factors and the skills and material culture of the Mediterranean region.

Even if each contribution proposes a different vision of Mediterranean-ness, the papers together contribute to the development of cross-national narratives for the Mediterranean region and help identify common methods for re-evaluating and enhancing a historical design heritage within the contemporary framework.

*Tevfik Balcıoğlu, Marinella Ferrara, Tomas Macsotay*



# Sifting Time Between Design and the History of Design.

## Rites and Metaphors of the Ground for New Conceptualizations of the Mediterranean Identity<sup>1</sup>

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Polytechnic of Bari / Mediterranean identity / History of design / Meridian thought / Mediterranean identity

The investigation highlights the research carried out at the Polytechnic of Bari between design and history of design, around the idea of Mediterraneanity, its cultural heritage and the role that it has consciously played in the contemporary world as an alternative to the “rationality” of industrial production from which modern civilization was born. The research focuses on the relationship between design, art and craft production in relation to that

“magical” dimension that has survived in the history of the South.

The intention is to outline, this way, new conceptualizations of the Mediterranean identity still widespread in Southern Europe and Southern Italy through design practices linked to the enhancement of intangible cultural heritage. The aim is to clarify the importance of the role that, in the economic and ideological contexts, both the temporal dimension of slowness

and the permanence of the rituals related to it have had for the foundation of an organic thought. It is thus intended to outline, between rational and emotional practices, a new metaphysics as an element of opportunity for continuity with the territories and at the same time as an opportunity for possible innovation of languages, techniques, attitudes and meanings, capable of introducing the elements of contemporary design like “meridian thought”.

### The Mediterranean identity: the time of the ritual between magic, cultural heritage and design

Like many magicians of the Renaissance, Cornelio Agrippa of Nettesheim tours Europe, from Cologne to Spain, from Italy to Switzerland, going as far as Puglia to lay the foundations of a partnership able to renew, on a hermetic basis, culture and society. His most important treatise is the *De Occulta Philosophia* of 1533 which will be the primary reference for most scholars of the pre-modern age.

Even after the great historical choice in favour of the “rational”, opted for at the beginning of the modern age, “the magic” tends to survive and to re-emerge in some forms of contemporary life: in the mysticism of the cult of personality, in the superstitious power attributed to technology and in the folds of the passage of time.

The magic, the hermetic tradition and the vision of the world and of man connected to it have not, in fact, been completely removed from history by the scientific revolution and, even today, they survive in different forms and at different levels in Western culture. The reinterpretation of history, like the discovery in the contemporary of rites that are rooted in magical and divination practices, can therefore still help to better grasp some aspects of modern knowledge, its metaphors and its impact on the world of men and on the society of consumption. But even more so the rites and metaphors, still very widespread in the southern regions of the European continent and of Italy, can strongly contribute to defining new conceptualizations of the Mediterranean identity. The proposed reading will therefore be functional in circumscribing how, even in the scientific field, this interpretation can be congenial to define how much the choice of rationality operated by the modern age has been a historical conquest that has long coexisted with different forms of knowledge and, how much, like every conquest, it needs to be continually updated and confirmed.

The intention of this contribution is to outline, this way, new conceptualizations of the Mediterranean identity still widespread in Southern Europe and Southern Italy through design practices linked to the enhancement of cultural heritage. The aim is to clarify the importance of the role that, in the economic and ideological context, both the temporal dimension of slowness and the permanence of the rituals that correspond to it has had for the foundation of an organic thought. It is thus intended to outline, between rational and emotional practices, a new metaphysics as an element of necessary continuity with the territories and at the same time as an opportunity for possible innovation of languages, techniques, behaviours and meanings, capable of introducing in the context of contemporary design those elements of complexity and dichotomy typical of the meridian thought. In other respects and through the presentation of some case studies, we will also try to define how, in the specific disciplinary sphere of design, this research model can lead to the enhancement of intangible cultural heritage. The contribution intends to highlight and broaden the results achieved in recent years through the research carried out at the Polytechnic of Bari, between design and history of design, around the idea of Mediterranean, its cultural heritage and its role, that has consciously played in the contemporary as an alternative to the “rationality” of the industrial production from which modern civilization was born. The research focuses on the complex relationships between design, art and craft production in relation to that “magical” dimension that has survived in the history of the South, placing the role of local material culture, its rituals and the deep meaning of everyday objects at the centre of the reflections that represent it. In the writer’s opinion, this attempt can represent a fundamental contribution to the profound understanding of the ways and rituals of popular culture that can lead to redemption from the “crisis of presence” in contexts of strong and perturbed complexity like the south of Europe.

[1] The text is the result of a libate between the two authors. However, while the first paragraph and the conclusions were written jointly, A. LABALESTRA should be given the section entitled

*The South as a “subject of thought” in the history of design* and to R. CARULLO the one entitled *Sifting time; for a Mediterranean design between ritual, memory and design*.

### The South as a “subject of thought” in the history of design

The echoes and suggestions of that “magic” practiced by the inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin can be interpreted as a rich cultural institute able to offer existential protection to the citizens of the global market. Rituals and magic symbols, as in De Martino’s lesson (DE MARTINO, 1959), do not mark a primitive mentality placed outside of history: on the contrary, they are a tool to consider them within a wider “history of Southern Italy” and of the relations between hegemonic and subaltern classes that are established in it. The text, published for the first time in 1959 by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, gives an account of the research conducted by the author on popular culture in Lucania along the course of a series of “ethnographic expeditions”, the most significant of which was completed in 1952 (Fig. 1). Through observation in the field, carried out with the help of techniques and instruments of great scientific rigor, the investigation analyses those practices of possession, fascination and magic that “because of their roughness and elementarity reveal more readily the structural and functional characteristics of that magical moment that – even if refined and sublimated – is also found in Catholicism”, that is to say, in the most complex forms of southern religiosity. According to the author, in fact:

As a stable horizon of the crisis, magic offers the mythical framework of magical forces, of fascinations and possessions, of invoices and exorcisms, and institutionalizes the figure of specialized magic operators. As an operation of re-absorption of the negative in the metahistorical order, magic is more properly rite, power of gesture and speech: on the metatemporal plane of magic, all pregnancies are conducted happily at term, all newborns are alive and vital, the milk always flows abundantly in the breast of mothers, and so on, just the opposite of what happens in history (DE MARTINO, 1959: 96).

It is precisely from the re-reading of De Martino that the elements of complexity and dichotomy typical of the “meridian thought”, as defined by the sociologist Franco Cassano, according to which it is necessary to return the ancient dignity of subject of thought to the South and to interrupt a long sequence in which it was thought only by others (CASSANO, 1996). The meridian thought is, above all, a reformulation of the image that the South has of itself: no longer “degraded periphery of the empire”, but a new centre of a rich and multiple identity, authentically Mediterranean. The historical memory, that defines the contents of the intangible cultural heritage of meridian thought, read between temporal thicknesses and ritual meanings in which emotional values and rationality coexist, presents us, in fact, a concept of Mediterranean identity, interrogative, a multiverse. In this context, the role of design is to take and restore awareness of this identity in terms of memory, to contribute to re-evaluate and re-establish it through attention to individual aspects, behaviours and stories, in their diversity. This is a decisive opportunity for contemporary design, as it offers a concrete possibility of rethinking its role, its humanistic dimension in relation to technology and to a contemporary condition in which, more and more inexorably, “the centrality of the useful erodes memory” (CASSANO, 1996: XIX). In this sense we propose a precise conceptualization of the Mediterranean identity as an antidote to the banalization and globalization of behaviours and flattened languages on a time of absolute present, the one for which profits work in the liberal context of global capitalism. The values of technology, and in general of techno-sciences, on this level become the object of specific reflection for the history of contemporary design while the dimension defined contemporary techno-nihilistic seems to escape from the critical control (BASSI, 2017: 57) from an idea of permanence of meaning and often contradictory instances. Already in the 1960s Mario Cresci made a reflection on this theme starting from the problem of the formation of design in Italy and of the models to which it should have adhered in relation to the cultural and geographical diversity of the coun-

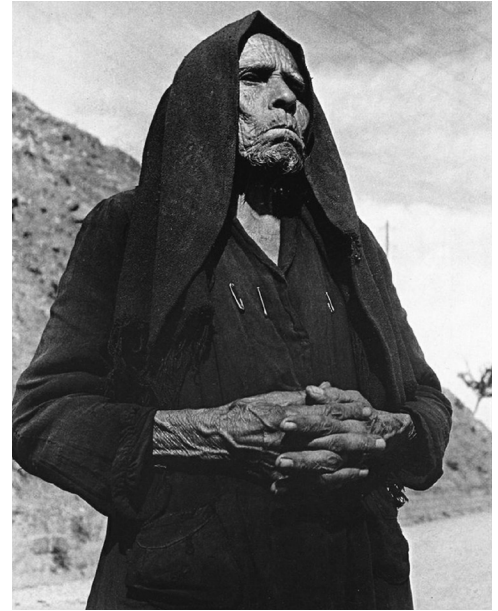


Fig. 1 Photography by FRANCO PINNA for the cover of the book *South and Magic*.

try. According to Cresci, who had his training in design in Northern Italy – with the experience of the Advanced Course in Industrial Design in Venice – and later moved to Tricarico in Basilicata, it becomes a refounding reflection of the relationship between design and subaltern culture, that

material culture that, in every region of Italy, and still for a while in the South, had and has expressed rituals, feasts, popular traditions, objects and languages that had to become in any case and necessarily reference systems for the analysis of new behaviours and new cultural and productive methodologies for all Italian culture (CARULLO and PAGLIARULO, 2013).

These are reflections that follow the sense recently taken up again by Renato De Fusco in his text *Design e mezzogiorno tra storia e metafora* of 2016, which declared the metaphorical will to investigate that idea of design intended “as a symbol of modernity in the North and the South as a symbol of underdevelopment of the South of Italy” (DE FUSCO, 2016: IX). It is a vision of greater complexity in which Design and Mezzogiorno, two entities at first sight so distant, become instead able to establish a dialectic of complex meanings and different values with respect to the modernity of the North, which has not “led to greater freedom, neither to an improvement in public education, nor to a more equi-



table distribution of wealth” (DE FUSCO, 2016: 154). In the south of Italy, on the other hand, there seems to be a specific vocation of design oriented towards the recognition of expressive value, linguistic coherence and linked to the ritual dimension that comes directly from the intangible and irrational dimension of magic to characterize everyday objects that represent the translation of ritual in the ordinary nature of everyday life. The coffeemakers of Riccardo Dalisi, one of the last exponents of the animist tradition of Italian design, and his ten-year experimentation on coffee machines for the Alessi company (DALISI, 1987) are an emblematic case.

In 1979, the entrepreneur Alberto Alessi commissioned a model of coffee-maker at Dalisi's for the catalogue of his company. The assignment becomes a long and exhausting research over nine years aimed at the definition of the new Neapolitan coffee maker. In this long time the slow reflection on the traditional Neapolitan coffee maker will lead to the creation of over 200 tin prototypes that slowly recount the designer's relationship with Naples and the street of the tinsmiths – the Rua Catalana – where his studio is located. The machines seem to be progressively animated, absorbing the soul of the city, of those who thought them and of the hands of those who bent, manipulated and forced the sheet to give the impression of alchemically animating, breathing and moving. Starting from the classic “Neapolitan”, this gives life to an infinity of characters in tin, coffee makers of all sizes and appearances alternate, opening up to Alessi and Dalisi the conceptual experience of high craftsmanship, diluting the certainties of the industrial world in a fragile and poetic vein, the most appropriate to work around ancient domestic rituals and to restore the time and occultisms of the Mediterranean.

### Sifting time; for a Mediterranean design between ritual, memory and design

The present research, calibrated on the role of design for the enhancement of intangible cultural heritage, wants to go through these issues in the conviction that precisely the investigation of the relationship between history, memory and project, of the specific characteristics of Southern Italy, can give a value contribution to the contemporary design project. If De Martino in his preface to his *South and Magic*, sees “the alternative between magic and rationality as one of the great themes from which modern civilization was born” (DE MARTINO, 1959: 15), “it is up to the design to express the values through the interpretation of his material culture, and trace the sense of a fertile genesis of stories and planning” (CARULLO and PAGLIARULO, 2013).

The research *Sifting time* is a first attempt in this direction.<sup>2</sup> The artifacts belonging to the peasant material culture have been redesigned as metaphors of a slow time of memory, of duration and of rites in order to represent the original control of man on nature, to open a dialogue also made of oppositions, *dissoi logoi* (CASSANO, 2005: 7) between identities, territories, techniques and languages of places in relation to contemporaneity.

It was decided to present a case study, the first to inaugurate this research at the Politecnico, a project in two variants for the enhancement of a particular local culture: the *dwarf pea* of Zollino, a small town of Salento. It is a particular local pea ecotype that owes its organoleptic and culinary characteristics to the type of soil and the microclimate. Cultivation is carried out exclusively with traditional dry techniques (Fig. 2). From its pods it produces a seed smaller than common peas with a specific yellow-brown colour and it is expected to be consumed only in the dry state. The growers select the best peas for the next sowing at each harvest,

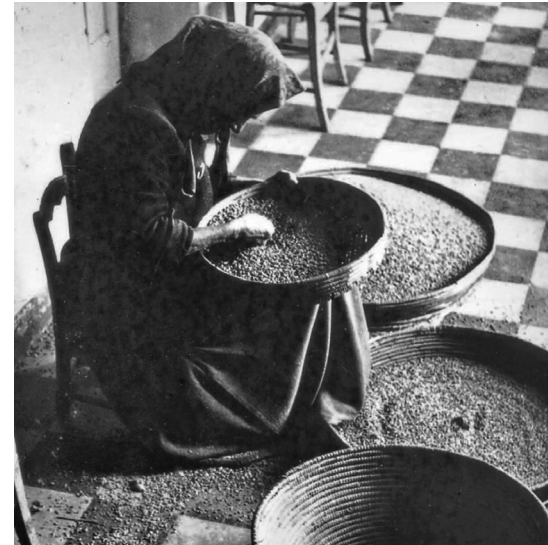


Fig. 2 Apulian woman intent on sifting legumes.

keeping the variety from generation to generation. The part from the analysis of the temporal dimension was linked to the “agricultural production times” (Fig. 3). The latter is intended as a path of domestication of nature through complex and historically stratified cultural processes following specific practices and habits of the material culture of the places “that envisage the domestication, transformation and reinterpretation of Nature. *Res non naturalis* doctors and ancient philosophers defined food”. This is because “through these paths, food is configured as a decisive element of human identity and as one of the most effective means of communicating it” (MONTANARI, 2004: XI–XII). The time of agricultural production is associated with a calendar of food that depends on the seasonal cycles of

[2] The research took place within the training offer of the thesis laboratories of the three-year Degree Course in Industrial Design, in particular the laboratories entitled “Contextual Design & Heritage. Identity and material culture of the territories”, started in the academic year 2016 and coordinated by Carullo Rossana with Antonio Labalestra for the disciplines of the history of design and with Sergio Bisciglia for the in-depth analysis of the disciplines of sociology and for taking care of interviews with the inhabitants of Zollino. The research was developed with ADI Puglia and Basilicata, in collaboration with the architects Roberto Marcatti and Cintya Concari.



Fig. 3 M. CASAFINA, mapping of traditional festivals in Zollino.

production partly cancelled today by the processes of globalization, but “attention: even in this food calendaring the cultural aspects prevailed over the natural ones [...] the primary objective was always that of modifying the foods to make them conservable beyond their seasonal dimension” (MONTANARI, 2004: 105–106), first of all the dry legumes. Likewise, the liturgical calendar also interferes with the rhythms of nature by defining links between feasts and rites, with temporal alignments and misalignments that bear witness to a symbolic and original link between the identities of places and processes of transformation of nature: “often the liturgical calendar strengthened the traditional custom to report with certain foods [...], the main festive recurrences” (MONTANARI, 2004: 106) in turn related to agricultural production.

The choice of the study theme is therefore situated at the crossroads of this complex interweaving of topics reflecting profound aspects of material culture, along a “red thread” that goes from agricultural production to the kitchen and “if something has to appear on it, above all the knowledge and the techniques of material culture, the rites and needs of everyday life [...] sought in the profound weave of traditions, customs, ways of living” (MONTANARI, 1999: VIII).

In this context the role of design is to bring back the profound rundown of the rites and needs of material culture, from the level of habit to that of awareness. It is about transforming the memory into practice, the memory into the project, the project into that fraction of discontinuity able to make the contemporary react with the slow time of duration. Time is the figure from which to start, and the one to arrive at, but it would be better to talk about different times intersected between them. The agricultural time, from the false sowing to the furrowing, from sowing to weeding, from harvesting to threshing, from *jentilatatura* where the wind separates from the seed the residues of the pods, volatile dry waste, ending with manual sorting in which through the sieve or *farnaru* the seeds are manually separated from impurities. The ritual time that is inter-

posed on the agricultural one, charging the technical act of transformation of nature with a symbolic and cultural meaning. The sowing is ritualized by the *Festa de lu focu* which incorporates the traditional focaccia of Sant’Antonio Abate; harvest and threshing with the Feast of St. John, in honour of the dwarf pea. This June 24<sup>th</sup> celebration is the magical night par excellence.

Concurrent with the summer solstice, wonders, deceptions and magical influences are repeated every year in Zollino, according to “a particular magical accentuation of southern Catholicism: and here it is no longer possible to speak of wrecked wrecks and magical-religious life forms that do not have current importance for all the strata of southern society” (DE MARTINO, 1959: 10–11). Finally, the cooking time that in turn intersects other parties and other saints, festivals and recipes from the slow cooking times of dried vegetables. The design project did nothing but attempt to reconstruct these folk-religious relics in the awareness that

the religious folk relic nevertheless acquires its historical sense, or, as a documentary stimulus that helps to understand a disappeared civilization of which it once formed an organic element, that is, as a documentary stimulus that helps to measure the internal limits and the internal expansion force of a current civilization in which it is preserved as a wreck: outside of these two possibilities of conquest on the side of thought, the folkloric-religious material remains historiographically a sort of no man’s land (DE MARTINO, 1959: 11–12).

All that remains for the design project is just giving itself the second possibility, that of measuring the strength of expansion that these folk-religious relics represent for the conceptualization of the Mediterranean identity. The project could only be the image of a wreck able to measure time and ritual and to interrogate them: *lu furnaru*, the traditional Apulian sieve, used in ancient times in agriculture and recovered to the contemporary as a vehicle to mend a temporal dimension, ritual and astronomy linked to the “timing of agricultural production” of the territory (Fig. 4).

Perforated iron sieves for legumes, wire sieves, terracotta sieves, sieves with magical powers to keep away the macerations (witches), forced to count the holes until the sunrise that would have made them harmless, sieves consulted to know the one in love or the thief in case of theft. A family of sieves was designed as temporal intersection plans in which to imprint the signs of the times aligned and misaligned between culture and nature.<sup>3</sup> On a homogeneous basis of laser-produced holes, the days and nights of agricultural and ritual times are distinguished by a manual process of beating the ancient nails originally used for manual drilling. Each nail imprints its shape, distinguishing itself from the constant time of globalization, measuring with the shape originated by the inclination and the force impressed from time to time, the complex intersections between times and rites that every place can now represent on the surface. At the same time, the tool of labour and ritual, the sieve is transformed into a symbolic form of a specific identity, brought back from habit to conscience (Fig. 5).

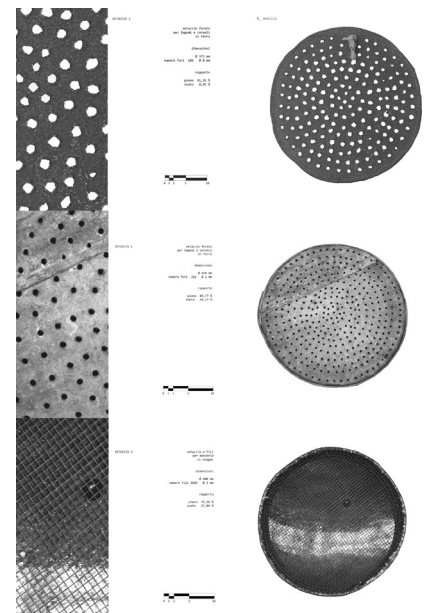


Fig. 4 G. CAFORIO, sieve mapping.

[3] The projects were developed within the graduate laboratory in Contextual design by the students Giovanni Caforio and Marianna Casafina in the academic year 2017–2018.

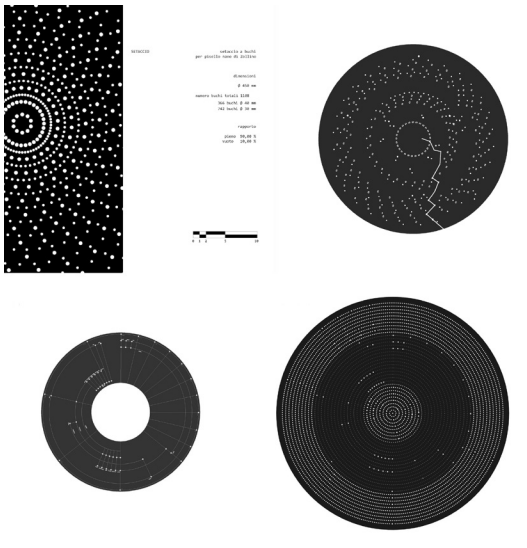


Fig. 5 G. CAFORIO, sieve prototype for perpetual calendar.

## Conclusions

The condition for the conceptualization of a Mediterranean identity, the will to represent the multiverse face, the ambiguous relations between rationality and irrationality, pass through a minute analysis of the aspects of the material culture that inhabits places.

A magical practice is readable only if it is historicized, if it is inserted in that civilization, in that era in that historical environment where the community shares that mythology or that religion, because it is in community sharing of a certain metahistorical order that magical practice, which refers to it, becomes legible and effective (GALIMBERTI, 2011: XI).

In this logic, design and history of design can contribute to read and make this condition read, bringing rationality and irrationality to a level that is no longer opposed but of possible cohabitation within different times that overlap as possible life experiences and not necessarily alternative nor linear, rather in a different measure in which “a criterion of equilibrium that subtracts thought from the mythology of progress” is possible (CASSANO, 1996: XXIX). Moreover, the mythology of modern industrial societies is already distinguished according to Wittgenstein, to be oriented, as well as a belief in the indefinite progress of the species in the belief that scientific laws explain the natural phenomena:

At the base of the whole modern conception of the world lies the illusion that the so-called natural laws are the explanations of natural phenomena. Thus they stop before natural laws as if they were something untouchable, as the ancients did before God and destiny. And both are right and do not have it. The ancients however are clearer, as they recognize a clear stopping point, while the new system must give the impression that everything is explained (WITTGENSTEIN, 1975: 68).

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# Mediterranean-ness Between Identity and *Genius Loci*. The True Essence of Successful Design Stories

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Design & Mediterranean / Design culture / Design history / Le Corbusier / Ettore Sottsass /  
New anthropocentric vision / Systemic-eco-environmental vision

This paper traces back Mediterranean-ness as *genius loci* and identity, questioning insights, materiality, phenomenology, aesthetics and communicational outcomes, referring to Ettore Sottsass and Le Corbusier. A journey in the past through Le Corbusier's and Sottsass's approaches helps to detect how archetypal resonances and Classical heritage impacted on Modern and Post-Modern design. Hence, in line with a design thinking and applied aesthetics perspective, after detailing throughout the second part the choice of broadening the considerations by moving from two singular examples, such as Le Corbusier's and Sottsass's accomplishments, inspirations and methodology, the attention shifts to how these two masters dealt, through their visions, with the idea of Mediterranean-ness and how they paved the way also to further outcomes. Subsequently, the third and last part drives the attention to issues aiming to get a better understanding of the relationship between design and Mediterranean-ness today, opening new debates and strategic approaches to reevaluate and relaunch the idea of Mediterranean-ness, not just in terms of *genius loci*, but also as a main trend of identity connotation and strategic policies.

*Et in Arcadia Ego.*

Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, 1786

**1. Introduction: Mediterranean Inspirations through Rationalism and Post-Modernism.** In line with a design thinking perspective and applied aesthetics insights, we chose to address our attention first to a master of Rationalism, such as Le Corbusier, and subsequently to an iconic Post-Modernism figure, like Ettore Sottsass, to express our considerations about Mediterranean-ness and show how Mediterranean spirit goes far beyond the simple idea of nationality or DNA. Mediterranean culture has produced indeed a unique approach to life and a peculiar attitude to embark on a multisensory journey, likely to easily seduce even the non-Mediterranean born, sublimating its own essence more in a category we can refer to as *genius loci*, in its full phenomenological and semantic expression, characterizing and influencing new culture generators. Both Le Corbusier and Sottsass transferred the idea of Mediterranean-ness in their work, turning it into a true inspirational reference, beyond boundaries. Le Corbusier was constantly characterized by the dualism deriving from the imperative need to satisfy functional requirements, though through empirical forms, and, at the same time, to follow the impulse of using abstract elements to affect the senses and nourish the mind (FRAMPTON, 1985), as expressed in 1925 in *Vers une architecture*. There, in the penultimate chapter, he indeed paralleled Classical architecture, in the specificity of the profiles of the Parthenon, to the linearity and the rigour applied by modern society to any machine-issued work. All in a sort of *harmony by contrast* (BLAKE, 1960), letting architecture and nature enhance one another, just like ancient Greeks used to believe. Sottsass, on the contrary, especially during the *Memphis* experience, stuck mainly to the paradigms of *New Italian Design*, adding to its works an emotional value, likely to differentiate iconically an object in the new consumerist society (BRANZI, 1984). So, if in the first one it is possible to unveil a dialectic habit of mind, disclosed in the contrast between solid and void, dark and light, like *Apollo* and *Medusa* (FRAMPTON, 1985), in the latter it is possible to detect the outburst of the emotional and sensual approach of Post-Modernism, in tune with a Dionysian spirit and the art-versus-design duality, showed off mainly by the ostensive character of limited edition or one-off pieces, in which the artistic soul was somehow spirited in (VITTA, 2001). In addition, these two masters practiced their architectural skills, though strongly influenced by visual arts and in an osmotic exchange with a design thinking attitude, as will be outlined in the following paragraphs through a theoretical investigation of their deep attachment to the Mediterranean essence, rather than a philological analysis of their design syntax.

## 2. A Journey in the Past: Le Corbusier and Classical Architecture

For the Swiss born, naturalized French, Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris, better known simply as Le Corbusier, his sort of personal *Grand Tour*, roughly retracing the journey of a gentleman of Romantic times, started in 1911. As reported in his book *Voyage d'Orient*, he went first to Greece and Turkey through the Balkans, heading then to Southern Italy and Rome (TEDESCHI and DENTI, 1999), engaging in a sort of life-long relationship with the Mediterranean sea, while increasing his knowledge of traditions of the whole Mediterranean basin

(BLAKE, 1960). However, in 1907 he had already visited part of Northern Italy and also Florence, but without paying a tribute to Rome. Apparently, he gradually discovered the beauties and the ruins of Classicism, first walking through an architectural journey all along Renaissance and the ideal conception of purism and proportions, rooted back in Ancient Greece, though revisited through Humanism (TALAMONA, 2013). His devotion to Classical culture though was a bit in contrast with the main trends ruling in France during the first decades of the twentieth century (JEANNERET, 1910) and it was Athens' Acropolis (Fig. 1) that marked a milestone in his vision, remaining as a continuous vernacular reference throughout his life (PASSANTI, 1997).

His journey was at the base of his theories about geometrical purism and proportions, composing a sort of hymn to the Apollinean essence, synthesized in three essential keywords: *nombre, géométrie, proportion*. He also took inspiration for structuring his own opinion towards materials, as pointed out by Peter Blake:

He was committed to reinforced concrete, not only because this seemed the obvious modern material of France, but also because it appeared to possess a certain amount of plain "guts", which he, being of the Mediterranean tradition, preferred to the impersonal slickness and precision of steel (BLAKE, 1960: 27).

His devotion to concrete is also visible through the *Borne Béton Lamp*, designed later on for *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille and for the Bhakra Dam and Sukhna Dam in India (CARUANA, 2016). However, visiting Southern Europe inspired even his approach to colors, that later on would have him creating his *Polychromie Architecturale* (DUVERNOY, 2013), a true color code and referring system. Also that new spirit, spreading out mostly across Northern Europe, likely to find a harmonious balance among art, mechanicism, and then industry and the human body, was reinforced by the pillars of Classical culture in terms of physical care and a pioneering body/mind approach. Indeed, the Juvenal quote *mens sana in corpore sano* was for Le Corbusier a source of inspiration (DERCELLES, 2015), then translated in terms of a harmonious way of living, hygiene, and body comfort, visible in the way he organized living space, as well as the ratios he delivered when designing furniture. His obsession was centred on a deep symbiosis between the human body and its living space (PITTOI, 2015). All the experimental approaches he embarked on in relation to sound, rhythm and theatre, such as studies on movement and the performing space, rooted him back not just to the artistic avant-gardes and their unconventional way of generating a creative synesthesia, but also to Ancient Greece, capturing that essence of drama as one of the highest expressions of the human body, though always shelled by Classical architecture's Apollonian sense of measure. And it's just through the spirit of contemplation, disclosed in front of *les grands monuments éternels*, while in Athens or in Rome, that he even started conceiving the essence of the *Modulor*, as a climax of his investigations on human body in space, inspired by the essence of Classical architecture, though possibly filtered by Leonardo da Vinci's studies

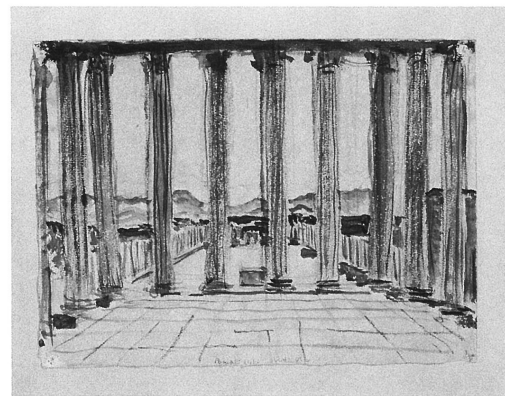
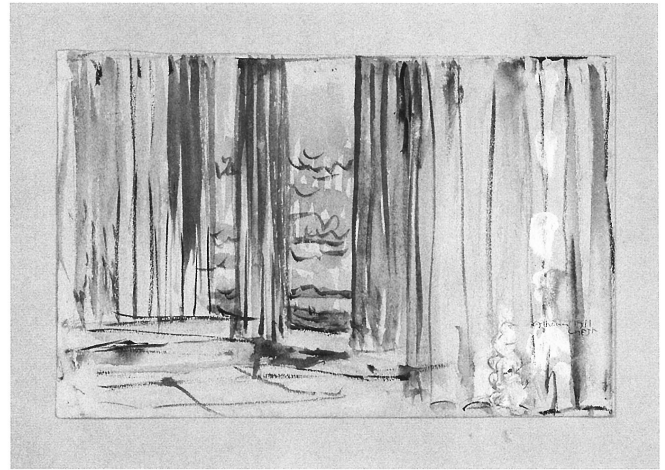


Fig. 1 LE CORBUSIER, Athens. Watercolor on paper, 1911. Courtesy: *Le Corbusier Mesures de l'homme* – catalogue expo Centre Pompidou.

on the *Vitruvian man*, where mathematics framed even organic shapes, generating a perfect balance that later on was to be responsible also for some of the principles of Rationalism. Just a few weeks before drawing in the gulf of Cap Saint-Martin, in Cote d'Azur, he wrote, as reported by several publications (CEACAP, 2011), a sort of final love letter to what had inspired his creative journey in terms of light, volume, space, movement and harmony:

Au cours des années, je suis devenu un homme de partout. J'ai voyagé à travers les continents. Je n'ai qu'une attache profonde : la Méditerranée. Je suis un méditerranéen, très fortement. Méditerranée, pleine de forme et de lumière. La lumière et l'espace. Le fait, c'est le contact pour moi en 1910 à Athènes. Lumière décisive. Volume décisif : l'Acropole. Mon premier tableau peint en 1918, « La cheminée », c'est l'Acropole. Mon Unité d'habitation de Marseille ? c'est le prolongement. En tout je me sens méditerranéen. Mes détente, mes sources, il faut les trouver dans la mer que je n'ai jamais cessé d'aimer (LE CORBUSIER, 1965).

This shows how the Mediterranean quintessence entirely pervaded Le Corbusier, who openly admitted, despite his extensive traveling worldwide, his fascination and his kind of dependence on Southern European heritage and visual culture.



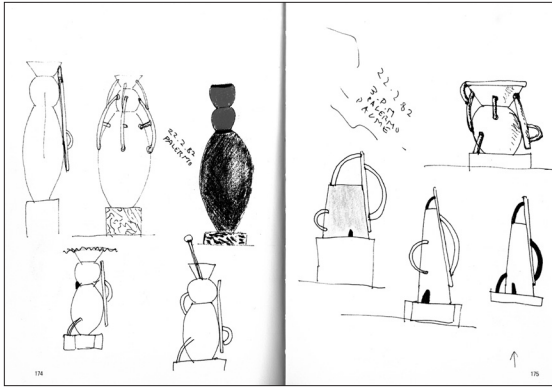


Fig. 4 E. SOTTASS, *Palermo*, 1982. Courtesy: Triennale Design Library.

with design objects, setting new paradigms by decomposing and reassembling (Fig. 4). Sottsass's Dionysian approach to design, both in the meaning launched by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, as in the original essence expressed through the Greek tragedies by Aeschylus, Euripides or Sophocles, was disclosed first by his masterly use of colors. If Mediterranean countries might have inspired him through the colors of nature and the intense shades of light, it is also relevant to mention how ancient Greeks and Romans were extremely keen on the poetic of colors themselves. They already used sophisticated dyeing techniques and most of all their architectures and sculptures used to be enchantingly colorful. Sottsass's poetry of colors differs from the one elaborated by Le Corbusier. If since 1950 the latter had associated colors to *psychophysique*, also experimenting with the creation of environments stimulating all the five senses (DE HERR, 2015), in the framework of what he called *Esthétique expérimentale*, all was in any case still shelled by purism and proportions and that unmistakable sense of harmony and measure. Inspired by his need of reinventing a new syntax, Sottsass pushed Le Corbusier's vision forward, associating his color research to what for the upper class of the time were unconventional materials, such as laminate, and a more radical and ancestral visual language. So that, if the lesson given by Le Corbusier provided Modernity with a new Apollonian sense of measure, proportion and harmony, the Mediterranean-ness exploded in Sottsass with a full Dionysian triumph of irregular shapes and colors. As reminded by Sottsass himself in one of his last interviews, while recalling his collaboration with Italian company Abet Laminati, for whom he elaborated an inedited catalogue of colors and patterns, a surface is a true generator of sensorial experience (SOTTASS, 2017). While touching, for instance, a laminate, he could feel what he defined *frissons*, a French word to refer to a sort of shivering sensation, a poetic way for expressing a fully erotic meaning (SOTTASS, 2017).

#### 4. Envisioning a Next Mediterranean Design Scenario

Le Corbusier and Sottsass rank among the main masters of European design and their lesson has been widely internalized, paving the way to contemporary practices. Indeed, several non-Mediterranean born designers have perpetuated and still are perpetuating Ettore Sottsass's approach, in a sort of climax of an unexpected oxymoron. Despite that both Le Corbusier and Sottsass contextualized and gave value to their designs thanks to a Mediterranean-inspired attitude, what it is possible to remark upon, while considering the current Mediterranean design scenario, is on the contrary a strong hybridizing process with Northern Europe. It is indeed possible to recall the specific case of *Formafantasma*, a design studio launched by two Italian designers that, after graduating from Design Academy Eindhoven, decided to settle in the Netherlands, though cultivating a phenomenology almost entirely Mediterranean-inspired. Their *Autarchy* collection or *Moulding Traditions* vases clearly show how emphasizing their cultural background, though now translated into a contemporary syntax, has made them a name on the international design scene.

While trying to envision then what the world will look like in a few decades, in terms of *Next Design Scenario*, the reason why Mediterranean countries should focus more on investing in their own identities, as well as on places and problems, is of course one of the biggest challenges of current times. If both Le Corbusier and Sottsass put at the core of their approach the strong empathy they generated with the surrounding spaces, a way to keep following their path could be that of implementing, for instance, wise and effective *Design for Territories* strategies (PARENTE, 2017). Through the centuries, the Mediterranean basin has represented an extremely relevant cultural landmark, a true creativity incubator, and a continuous source of inspiration, outlining what we have referred to in this paper as a *genius loci* in terms of phenomenology, values and approaches. Now it's time to let Mediterranean countries back to relaunch their own identity, embracing a new more holistic vision of environments and then of experiences for people (PARENTE, LUPO and SEDINI, 2018). Emerging technologies can highly contribute to carry out effective policies of valorization, development and preservation of both heritage and natural beauty, empowering the tangible and intangible resources of the place (ZURLO, 2003). Considering also that both the lessons of Le Corbusier and Sottsass have somehow generated what today we tend to define as HCD (Human Centered Design), melding together the Apollonian and Dionysian spirit, respectively characterizing their different approaches, all seems then to revolve around a new anthropocentric vision. Classical heritage and local traditions are warmly invited to open up a dialogue with the world of smart solutions, such as IoT, like connected environments and interactive urban and domestic spaces, envisioning new products and services suitable for specific domains. We reckon however that this may not be enough. The awareness of a glorious past needs indeed to blend with a fully scientific understanding of those complex processes now taking place throughout the Mediterranean contexts. Design has gone further than anthropometrics and the mere shape of things, and it is now projecting itself towards radical innovations, embracing both a micro and a macro dimensional scale (i.e. nano and bio technologies, ubiquitous information systems), as well as a strong relationship with science. Studying complex systems shows then as a cognitive and operational expertise and therefore design can't back out of it (especially if aiming not to remain just a passive observer). Intending to bridge philosophy and engineering, design has to face big

issues like environmental pollution, biodiversity, climate change, new migration flows, water shortages and all the inequalities throughout the Mediterranean basin, while overcoming dystopias and promoting an interdisciplinary approach. Envisioning a Next Design Scenario for the Mediterranean countries has to imply, then, highly speculative thinking, while investing all the imaginary potential to question the implications related to how technological evolution and systemic changes may impact on everyday life. Hence, such an attitude has to display its own capacity for outlining possible futures and building up positive changes, integrating the ecosphere with more evidence for a truly holistic vision, in line with what nowadays corresponds to a systemic-eco-environmental approach.

All in the framework of fostering innovation, generating interaction and enhancing a strong relationship between the tangible and intangible distinctions of each context, through multisensory and experiential design, responding, at the same time, to the values of harmony and aiming to a total involvement.

## Conclusion

In the framework of a fluid perspective, throughout a journey between Classical ruins and emerging technologies, we attempted to access two of the main design masters' lessons in relation to Mediterranean-ness. What emerges upon our analysis is that penetrating the multifaceted and complex essence of the Mediterranean culture and ecosystem at its deepest was not an easy matter even for two of the most iconic designers of Modern and Post-Modern times. Still in the middle of an era that is making history through new migration flows and multicultural insights, we tried to question the essence of Mediterranean-ness between identity and *genius loci*, bridging past and present, while envisioning a possible future. The Mediterranean context asks indeed for new narrations: new imaginary and symbolic involvements able to renew that anthropocentric notion inherent in a narrative identity, describing such a crucial moment. The most important solutions to current global issues should then overcome, more than ever, the restricting boundaries defining what still presents as a limited human-centered environmental and cultural world.

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# Italian Design for Colonial Equipment (1931–1942)

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Italian design / Design history / Colonial equipment / Mediterranean / Carlo Enrico Rava

The history of Italian design is strictly connected to the history of Mediterranean design for obvious geographical reasons. One specific episode of this history will be discussed here: the design of equipment for the Italian colonies during the fascist regime. The Italian colonial empire reached its maximum extension at the end of the 1930s and it included a good part of the Mediterranean area. The subject discussed here

is still little known and analyzed because of the controversial historical period to which it relates. Anyway, for the purposes of design history, it seems of great interest to rediscover the case study of furniture and equipment design “for the colonies”, promoted during the 1930s, due to its avant-gardist experimentation of standardized systems for the serial production of furniture and objects. One of the main promot-

ers of this experience was the Italian architect Carlo Enrico Rava, in fact, the paper will follow his steps through the pages of *Domus* magazine, between 1931 and 1942, to shed light on this episode which would significantly influence Italian design history after WWII.

## Italian colonialism and the evolution of the “Latin spirit” in architecture

The history of Italian design is strictly connected to the history of Mediterranean design for obvious geographical reasons. One specific episode of this history will be discussed here: the design of equipment for the Italian colonies during the fascist regime. The Italian colonial empire reached its maximum extension at the end of the 1930s: its territory was extended from the Rhone to the Balkans (Southern France, Dalmatia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania and Greece), on the Aegean islands, in North Africa (Libya) and Eastern Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia), on the small Chinese concessions of Tianjin, Shanghai and Amoy. The Italian colonial empire thus comprised a good part of the Mediterranean area (ANTONICELLI, 1961; LABANCA, 2007).

The subject under discussion is not so much studied and analyzed because of the controversial historical period to which it is related, however for the history of design it is very interesting to rediscover the case of the design of furniture and equipment “for the colonies”, promoted during the 1930s, as an opportunity for avant-garde experimentation of interesting standardization systems for the mass production of furniture and objects (IRACE, 2015).

Among the main proponents of this experience there was the Italian architect Carlo Enrico Rava. Rava was among the founders of the “Group 7”<sup>1</sup> in 1926, a group that he left two years later to promote his vision of the modern project that would draw on the so-called “Latin spirit” of which Italy, and its architects, were depositaries (RAVA, 1931).

Along with the concept of “Latin spirit”, also an interest in colonial architecture emerges in Rava. This interest is certainly fueled by his condition as a son of Maurizio Rava, who was vice-governor of Tripolitania from 1930 to 1931 and governor of Somalia from 1931 to 1935, but also by the many travels made by Carlo Enrico himself since 1927 in those same countries (RAVA, 1936).

The question of the Mediterranean nature of Italian architecture is exposed by Rava through numerous articles published in *Domus* in 1931, mainly dedicated to the vision of “A modern colonial architecture”.

In 1936 the fascist regime intensified its interest in the overseas colonies by implementing the conquest of the Horn of Africa, which was followed by the five years of the Italian empire in Italian East Africa.<sup>2</sup> In these years the Italian colonialist operation assumes a more bloody form and it “sees a more massive

operation of economic exploitation and (Italian) repopulation of the conquered areas” (COLOMBO, 2016: 719). Therefore it does not appear to be a coincidence that, in 1936, the subject of the colonies returned to be treated on the pages of *Domus* through a new cycle of articles on the major problems of the colonial construction industry, alternately edited by Carlo Enrico Rava and Luigi Piccinato.

Rava still continues to deal with the colonial theme: first in 1938 as a curator, with Franco Petrucci, of the preparation of the Italian Africa pavilion at the Mostra autarchica del minerale italiano (Autarchic Exhibition of Italian Minerals) in Rome; then as curator and designer of the preparation of the *Mostra dell'attrezzatura coloniale* (Exhibition of Colonial Equipment)<sup>3</sup> on the occasion of the VII Triennale di Milano in 1940.

In view of the 1940 exhibition, about a year before Rava publishes on the pages of *Domus* an accurate manifesto that establishes what the contents and the selection criteria of the exhibits would have been. The Exhibition of Colonial Equipment would have been first and foremost an addition to the largest and most important *Mostra dell'Oltremare* (Overseas Exhibition) organized in Naples in 1940.

In the field of this ‘equipment’ that goes from the houses to decor, to furnishings and to certain categories of personal objects, not much has been done yet, nor does it seem to us that specialized industries or artisanal

[1] Carlo Enrico Rava, Ubaldo Castagnoli (who after a while was replaced by Adalberto Libera), Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco Silva, Gino Pollini and Giuseppe Terragni.

[2] Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Abyssinia.

[3] The Exhibition of Colonial Equipment of 1940 was preceded by two exhibitions dedicated to overseas colonies in Milan: the Italian Colonial Exhibition, held in conjunction with the III Trade Fair (*Fiera Campionaria*) of Milan in 1922 and the Exhibition of Colonial Art of 1936 housed in the Palazzo della Permanente.

productions have, with some exceptions, ‘put in line’ in this sense, at least to this day. On the other hand, it is well known that in 1940 the first great *Mostra dell’Oltremare* (Overseas Exhibition) will be held in Naples, which will certainly place, among its many goals, also that of presenting the best Italian realizations in every colonial sector [...]. Therefore, in parallel with the Naples exhibition, and with the precise aim of perfecting the technical and artistic organization of the national industries related to this sector, not only adapting the production to the needs of a high standard of living, but also taking into account the E42—the World’s Fair of Rome—[...] the Triennale has decided to include in its program next year also a section dedicated to colonial equipment, entrusting me with the task of coordinating the preparation and taking care of the staging (RAVA, 1939: xv11).

### The Exhibition of Colonial Equipment at the VII Triennale of Milano, 1940

The terms of the Rava program in view of the *Exhibition of Colonial Equipment* deviate from the previous folkloristic references linked to the world of colonies and their exotic imaginary. Rava’s intentions are instead much more concrete and aimed at demonstrating a high production quality of the national landscape, useful for the realization of really practical and efficient equipment for life in the colony, seen mostly as a “nomadic” life (RAVA, 1939). In his program, Rava specifies first of all what the categories of objects would have been: modular, separable, multi-functional, foldable, light and easy to transport furniture; furniture accessories (fabrics, rugs, mats, lamps, lanterns, tablecloths, blankets); eating equipment; travel equipment; details of equipment (RAVA, 1939).

Within his program the most interesting point lies in the request for a high level of production, reachable according to the author by means of a double task: controlling the existing production, assisting it and improving it; spurring those industries whose equipment seemed suitable

for the purposes specifically exposed in the program with the creation, on special designs and projects (especially by architects), of new types of equipment (RAVA, 1939).

The projects selected for the *Exhibition of Colonial Equipment* of the VII Triennial (Fig. 1) are divided by Rava into two main types; those “designed for that nomadic life” (RAVA 1940: 22), among which: a model of field cot with mosquito net (Pecorini company in Florence), and two wicker armchairs designed by Giancarlo Malchiodi (Pacini, Florentine chair-maker); some special types of light metal cots and suspended cots based on a Piccinato project; several models of leather foldable armchairs and small chairs and an extendable armchair designed by Giovanni Pellegrini (Viganò company from Tripoli).<sup>4</sup> In addition to this category, there are also furnishings for camping and caravans of the historic Moretti company from Milan,<sup>5</sup> which created a new series specifically for the Triennale of 1940.

The second group includes projects designed for more stable living conditions, such as: tables and stools in ‘special wood with multiple receding elements’ (RAVA, January 1940: 22) and four different models of chairs (Carpenterie Tripoline) designed by Pellegrini. There are also some models of metal furniture made for colonial officers and functionaries by the company Parma Antonio & Figli from Saronno, the company (which had specialized since the early 1930s in the production of safes) had begun its collaboration with Franco Albini and Giancarlo Palanti for the project of a series of “disassembling furniture for officers in East Africa” as early as 1935, presenting some models at the Trade Fair of Milan (Fig. 2).

In this category we also find a series of bedroom furniture such as: the disassembling wardrobe and sideboard in larch and striped hemp by Alessandro Pasquali; the disassembling bedroom in bleached hardboard and sandblasted oak by G.G. Schirollo and Rava (made by Grazioli and Gaudenzi): “This room, made for the largest part in masonite, presents the particularly notable feature that it can be assembled and disassembled with maximum quickness and ease, without the need for nails, screws, or tools of any kind, being able to be packed all in a single box of limited size” (RAVA, January 1940: 22). Still on a project by Rava, we find a disassembling writing desk and office furniture in masonite and

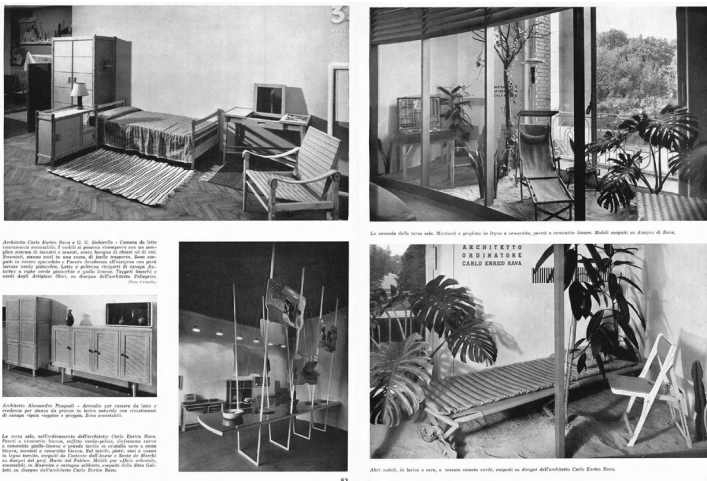


Fig. 1 C. E. RAVA, *Mostra delle attrezzature Coloniali*, VII Triennale di Milano 1940, details of the disassembling bedroom designed by Rava and other views of the exhibition, *Domus* n°150, June 1940.

- [4] The Paolo Viganò company was already known for the production of the iconic foldable field chair known as “Tripolina” (as it was produced in Tripoli), in the then Italian colony in Libya and given to the Italian armed forces during the Libyan war (1922–1932). The “Tripolina” has since become an icon of modern furnishing thanks to its practicality and transportability, but its patent dates back to 1881 by the work of the Englishman Joseph Beverley Fenby (Bassi, 2007).
- [5] The Ettore Moretti company, founded in the early 1920s in Milan and operating until the end of the 1960s, achieved a high level of specialization in the production of field tents, removable

pavilions, camping materials and waterproof fabrics, also thanks to the numerous field activities connected with the fascist regime. An example of this are the names of the numerous models in the catalog in the mid-thirties: “Milano” tent for the Air Force; “Lombardy, Romagna and Tuscany” tents used in the colonies of the *Figli italiani* (Italian Sons); “Campania” tent for the *Opera Balilla*; “Monza and Como” pyramidal tents; “Monterosa” alpine tent; colonial tents “Mogadishu, Massawa, Azizia, Asmara, Congo, Gondar” (Ettore Moretti, 1935).

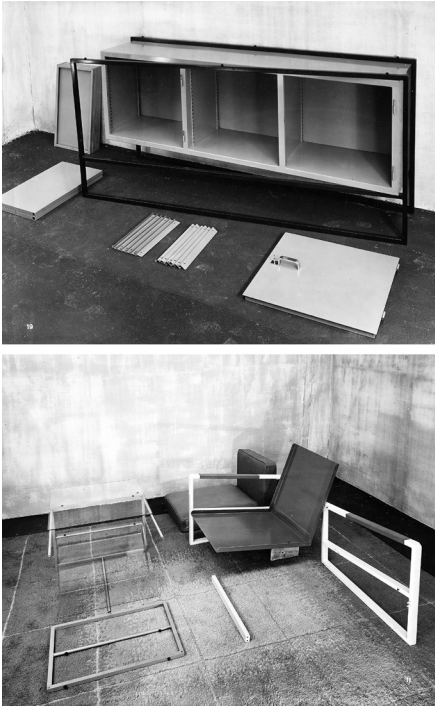


Fig. 2. FRANCO ALBINI and GIANCARLO PALANTI, disassembling metal furniture for officials' accommodations in East Africa, production of Parma Antonio & Figli (Saronno), Fiera Campionaria di Milano, 1935.

brushed chestnut. Another note has to be dedicated to the numerous artifacts of Libyan artisan production we can find at the exhibition, including numerous fabrics for furniture and clothing in wool, cotton and silk, hemp rugs, objects in braided esparto, burlap screens made of palm leaves, all designed by Pellegrini “according to a modern taste free from any folkloristic sympathy” (RAVA, January 1940: 22). And yet a series of earthenware tableware designed by Pellegrini and made with the techniques of the North African potters of Libya, Tunisia, and Djerba island (RAVA, January 1940; RAVA, June 1940).

Beyond the description of the projects featured in the exhibition, it is interesting to highlight the attention that Rava gives to a particular experimentation element applied in some of the projects, namely:

The use, not only in the accessories, but also in the furniture destined to the colony, of the so-called ‘plastic materials’, synthetic resins and the like, an experiment of singular interest given the characteristic of the total resistance of this material (as much from climatological factors as from the corrosion of insects) that could be used in exteriors of any species, an

element which is of fundamental value in the colony (RAVA, January 1940: 23).

An experimentation on materials which will result in the post-war years of strategic importance for the production of industrial design in Italy.

### The column “Per la casa e la vita in colonia” (For home and life in colony) (1941–1942)

Following the Triennale exhibition, there is the column that Rava is called to write throughout 1941 in *Domus*, once again dedicated to “colonial equipment”. A column consisting of a total of twelve mainly technical articles with brief texts alongside design drawings of furniture and accessories, particularly designed for life in the colony, “excluding those furnitures to which a mannered exoticism demands to give superficial and false colonial aspects, and also those objects, more or less decorative, which are in fact perfectly useless for life in Africa” (RAVA, 1941: 60). Also on this occasion, Rava underlines the interest and importance of experiments with materials with high resistance, non-flammability, and anti-corrosion properties, which can be attributed (according to the author) to African life, such as: masonite, hardboard and plastic materials for furniture and, for the accessories, stainless metals and all synthetic resins for their unbreakability.

For example, in the first issue of the column (RAVA, January 1941), Rava writes about the project of the architect Salvo D’Angelo for the kitchen furniture transportable by a wooden caravan, covered in aluminum sheet and linoleum, furniture that was already present as a prototype at the exhibition of 1940 (Fig. 3). A complex and compact object that can be closed on itself becoming of the size of a trunk. In the second issue of the column, there is the project by Mario Dal Fabbro for living room furniture adaptable also for a bedroom that includes a cabinet with doors, shelves and drawers that can be used both as a closet and for crockery, whose internal part is hermetically sealed by a waterproof fabric with zipper (RAVA, February 1941).

The following issues are rich in projects that follow the guidelines repeated and analyzed by Rava about the concepts of flexibility and lightness, such as the various models of chairs that can be converted into a chaise longue, types of foldable field beds that can be reduced to a suitcase and, again, a whole series of small foldable furniture (magazine racks, flowerpots, stools, etc.), most of them signed by Dal Fabbro (Fig. 4). The final result would be an exceptional collection of projects (mostly never realized) of proto-industrial furniture-equipment joined by the same rational principles of modularity, detachability, lightness, compactness and adaptability.

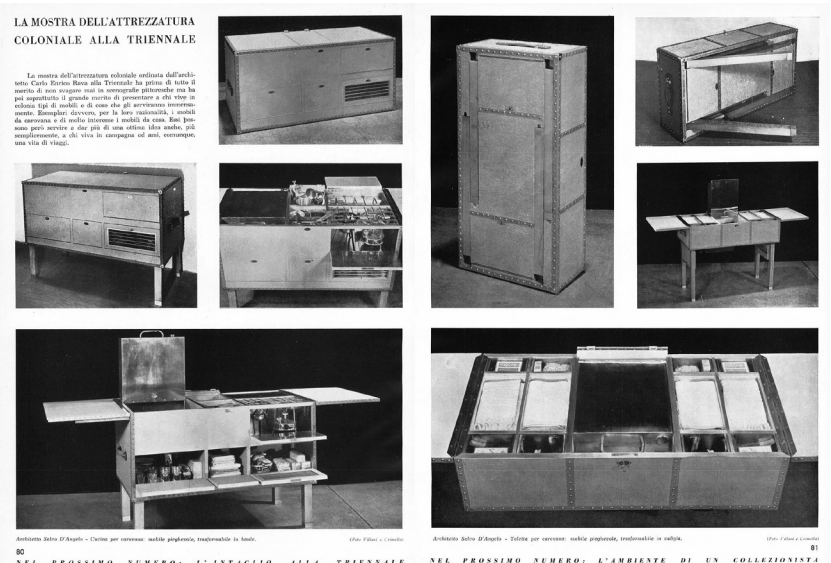


Fig. 3. C. E. RAVA, *Mostra delle attrezzature Coloniali*, VII Triennale of Milan 1940, detail of the kitchen and the dressing table for caravan travels designed by the architect Salvo D’Angelo, *Domus* n° 150, June 1940, 80–81.

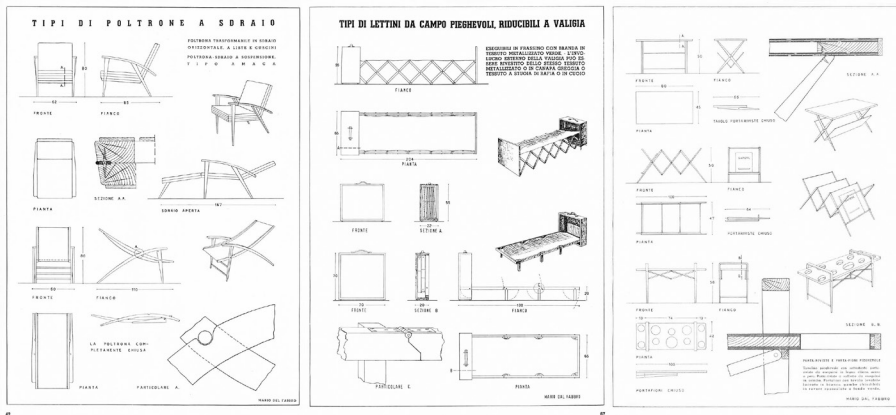


Fig. 4 From left to right: MARIO DAL FABBRO, drawings for a chair convertible into chaise lounge and a suspension armchair-lawn chair, *Domus* n°160, April 1941, p.42; MARIO DAL FABBRO, types of folding camp-beds reducible into a suitcase, *Domus* n°162, June 1941, p.67.; MARIO DAL FABBRO, folding magazine rack and flowerpot, *Domus* n°167, November 1941, p.31.

In January 1942, Rava writes an article entitled “Of the utilitarian equipment of the dwelling” (RAVA, 1942) in which he states:

During the whole of 1941 I kept alive in the pages of *Domus* the issue of colonial equipment and I noticed that this problem should fundamentally interest the categories of small-scale artisans, while waiting for the big mass production to become possible, a production that, by ensuring a constant average of high quality, must be the supreme purpose of every industrial activity. Now, it seems almost superfluous to specify that these considerations, beyond the limited colonial sector, are good for the whole field of furniture production, and that consequently, since this year our column regards the entire field of utilitarian household equipment, the above principle will be the basis of our directives and of our criterion of choice (RAVA, 1942: 88).

This last article by Rava represents a true watershed between the collapse of the colonial empire and what would have happened after the world war, representing a valid testimony of that crucial passage that we want to highlight here: a movement of translation that took place between those principles of design and production triggered by the “practical” necessities of life in the colony, towards those that instead would have been the essential prerequisites of the design for Italian industrial production in the post-war period.

### Heritage of the “practical” spirit in the Italy of reconstruction

The projects for colonial equipment can fall into that history in which “the productive pragmatism and the tension to the project as a technique of mediation and negotiation between different cultures served to partially redeem the colonial adventure from its more hateful and backward events, building a platform of dialogue that was not only depredation and oppression, but also enhancement and understanding” (IRACE, 2015: 203).

A redemption that occurs above all in terms of a design legacy rather than a real cultural or more concretely productive contamination (in fact, the traces of important collaborations with producers in the area of North Africa or East Africa are lost in the post-war period). What undoubtedly strikes is the continuity of thought that is rediscovered in the years of reconstruction, after the war, relative to the principles of practicality and economy dictated by the new urgent need to

give back a house (and therefore also all its “equipment”) to all those who had lost it. Architecture remained obviously of primary interest, but right from the start the same architects also jointly deal with the theme of the interiors. This is borne out by the words of Ernesto Natan Rogers (editor of *Domus* magazine since 1946, whose subtitle would be “The House of Man”): “The furniture, the saved one, come back to the city: we architects want to help it in this first act of reconstruction. Reconstruction of one’s home” (ROGERS, January 1946: 6).

A few years earlier there is an episode that is worth mentioning here, namely the “Riponibili” (Storable) furniture program undertaken by Gio Ponti with the company SAFFA<sup>6</sup> between 1943 and 1945.

The meeting with the industry was an opportunity to create a program that expressed a practical concept of furniture. The “Riponibili” (Storable) furniture program consisted of the definition of standard-type furniture, to be produced in series, low cost, conceived in the sign of minimum obstruction and maximum furniture transformability and mobility. This standard-type furniture is traced back to a series of furnishing elements according to the characteristics: storable, foldable, modular and stackable (BOSONI, PICCHI, STRINA, 1995: 62).

The production was not successful, but this is undoubtedly one of the first attempts to apply industrial organization in the field of wooden furniture, an attempt that anticipates by a few years the most extensive programming introduced first by the RIMA exhibition of 1946 and again by the VIII Triennale of the 1947. RIMA (*Riunione Italiana Mostre Arredamento*, Italian Assembly of Furniture Exhibitions) was a private initiative that in 1946 took charge of rebuilding the bombed Palazzo dell’Arte to set up a series of exhibitions of individual furniture projects oriented by the principles of “economy, practicality and good taste” (ROGERS, July 1946: 6), with the primary objective of an upcoming future series production. It is interesting to report the impressions of Rogers concerning the general tone of the RIMA furniture exhibition:

[6] *Società Anonima Fabbriche Fiammiferi ed Affini* (Anonymous Society of Matches and Like Companies; Milan, 1871–2002), since the 1930s also started to produce poplar plywood for the production of wooden furniture and packaging.



# Fabrics of Barcelona: The Future in the Past

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## Textile printing / Barcelona / 20th century

In design history there are numerous experiences of revisiting creative languages of the past. In Barcelona, as William Morris did in the field of textiles, there were numerous attempts of recovering a local expressive language for fabrics. In this sense, the textile factory Ponsa Hermanos took a look at their past to find their own future. During 1900–1930, the factory produced several prints on silk with some of the most innovative patterns, originated at the main studios in Europe or created by some of the most important Catalan designers, such as Alexandre de Riquer, J. Vidal y Ventosa, Josep Palau i Oller, etc. Fortunately, the Ponsa Hermanos collection has been preserved at different textile museums in Catalonia. Around the 1960s, the factory issued new prints made by local designers. These designs feature a very specific style yet integrated in the European context, where new trends appeared rapidly. In this paper, we attempt to highlight the similarities between Modernisme/Art Deco and Op-Art and psychedelia by studying unreleased prints by Ponsa. Through these samples we propose a consideration: can the legacy of the Ponsa brothers contribute to historians, designers and editors finding the future in the past?

### Textile printing in Barcelona

In design history there are numerous experiences of revisiting creative languages of the past. In Barcelona, as William Morris did in the field of textiles, there were numerous attempts of recovering a local expressive language for fabrics. This was promoted by the theorists Francisco Miguel y Badía, and Joaquim Folch i Torres, who gave meaning to the language of textiles in the Peninsula. Francisco Miguel y Badía stressed the importance of studying the works of previous eras (MIGUEL Y BADÍA, 1899). Looking at the past, the present and the future, the designer could create under the inspiration of the old textiles. Folch i Torres proposed to design students to visit the textile collections of Barcelona, to visit the ancient textile collections, to be inspired by them and to elevate them to the maximum expression (FOLCH I TORRES, 1917). At present, when globalization threatens a loss of origin of the motives of textile designs, looking towards local production is also very necessary.

Between the 18th and 20th centuries, textile printing was an important activity for the Catalan economy. The new trends in textile printing were often inspired in foreign models, specially from France and Italy. The printed fabrics could reproduce the same motif, or could be created from the original motif, just by modifying and adapting the final result to the preferences of Spanish customers. Sometimes, designs were entirely copied, or were ordered from local designers or just modified in the factories. New trends were compiled in trend books that were published in the main centers of reference. The trend books were sent to the factories and design studios. From the very beginning of the printing sector in Europe, the decision of which design was to be finally printed was important for commercial success.

### The Ponsa Hermanos company

The Barcelona company Ponsa Hermanos (1859–1982) succeeded in the recovery of the trends of previous decades and, in some occasions, revisited its past to find the future. Ponsa Hermanos was a company of small dimensions, which produced different prints in silk with designs of the highest novelty, especially from 1900 to 1930. It had a second moment of splendor during 1960s and 1970s, when it recovered the language of the Modernisme and Art Deco periods, as well as some of the motives of the first avant-gardes. The legacy of Ponsa Hermanos is preserved in the Museu de l'Estampació de Premià de Mar (Textile Printing Museum of Premià de Mar), in the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona (Design Museum of Barcelona) and the Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil de Terrassa (Textile Museum of Terrassa). These collections preserve pattern books, wooden blocks, headscarves, dresses and designs for printing. Among the collection of nearly 500 samples and 15,000 original designs, those belonging to 1900–1930 are especially prominent, in addition to the designs of Op-Art, hippie and psychedelic trends.

Fabrics, just like other decorative arts, were subject to the rapid circulation of new trends, as in fashion, furniture, graphic design, etc. The production of wallpaper is very similar to furnishing fabrics. It was common for the same design for upholstery to be printed on wallpaper, thus giving rise to the *cordonées*. In the design of applied arts, it is very common to assimilate artistic trends and present a closely-related language for graphic arts, textiles and or-

namental objects. This is common in other countries in Europe. But not all the fabrics that were made were the latest trend. There were also customers who preferred classical motifs, such as polka dots, stripes, small flowers or simple geometric shapes, which were printed for decades. There was latest novelty customer demand and also customers who preferred less risky tendencies. In the Museu de l'Estampació de Premià de Mar it is possible to document the same motif designed in the 1890s, and then printed in the 1920s and 1970s. The original drawing is from 1890, it was printed in the 1920s in one colour and in the 1970s the motif had different acid colours.

Among the Catalan artists who worked for Ponsa Hermanos at the height of the company, we can mention Alexandre de Riquer, Joan Vidal i Ventosa, Josep Palau Oller, Josep Mompou, Enric Moyà, Josep Ferrer Albert, Josep Porta and the Marsà studio. Vidal i Ventosa was known in the circles of the modernist gatherings that took place often in Els Quatre Gats, with Pablo Picasso, and later at the Guayaba Café, with the artists Manolo Hugué, Ismael Smith and Isidre Nonell. His production of designs for printing is still not very known although he practiced this profession for years. Frequently, artists have drawn for printing, but most of the time, this remains unknown because it has been considered a minor activity. The prints reflect the artistic movements, and in the case of Ponsa Hermanos there are direct references to Modernisme and Art Deco, as well as some cubist, constructivist and simultaneist prints. Their most significant works can be found between the 1900s and 1930s.

There is an extensive group of designs for prints signed by Josep Palau Oller, an artist who also designed furniture, toys and other specialties (CARBONELL, 2003). His work stands out for the simplicity and closeness to the Art Deco language. His creations approached the style of At elier Martine, with schematic drawings, simple and elegant, or designs for toys transferred into fabric. Alexandre de Riquer created a series of designs for La Sedera Franco-

Espan ola, a textile company bought by Ponsa Hermanos. The Catalan artists assimilated the new European trends and were placed at the same level of quality as foreigners. Ponsa Hermanos also acquired a large number of original drawings from designers in Paris, Lyon and Mulhouse.  douard Sins also designed for Ponsa Hermanos. It was common that businessmen from Barcelona visited this famous studio. Other companies in Barcelona, such as La Espa a Industrial, also printed designs bought abroad, or Catalan companies such as Lyon-Barcelona, which visited the main French studios and acquired drawings for their collections. In the companies, original drawings were bought and often adapted it to the taste of the country, maintaining the essence of the compositions and motifs. Ponsa Hermanos worked for many years and continuously with C. Lefranc, who had his studio in Lyon, and L on Kittler and Ren  Schrameck of Mulhouse. Ponsa Hermanos also visited the At elier Martine of Paul Poiret. There are important foreign designers: E. P. Bonaparte, Arthur Litt, R. Blaise, J. Berger, Marc Rimaud, Landwerlind, J. Vernaison, Helder, Fred L vy, R. De Grandclos, Louis Lang, M. Adrouer, Louis Inwiller, Georges Ordatchenko, etc. (PREVOSTI, 2005).

The introduction of the new avant-garde movements involved deep research in an age of exploration at all levels. Ponsa Hermanos followed the Art Deco trends for textiles and received the new avant-gardes. Thus, simultaneism, cubism, Russian constructivism and the forms of De Stijl are represented in their collections of prints. The floral motifs took on a geometric character, in fabrics with an explosion of colors and a strong movement. A dynamic effect was obtained by juxtaposing planes, geometric figures or abstract sinuous forms. The representation of the rose took special prominence, transformed and simplified by flat areas of color and synthetic forms. Occasionally, floral or plant forms took inspiration from the underwater world, and vice versa. They were jellyfish, hedgehogs, fish, small organisms, algae and other elements

that received an abstract treatment (DANGLA, 2016). Nature was a great source of inspiration. In textile printing, bird representation is very frequent, and in the Art Nouveau and Art Deco era the peacock took on special prominence (Fig. 1).

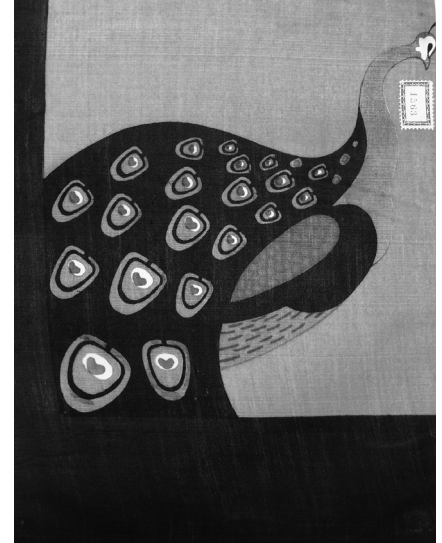


Fig. 1 The peacock is a very popular motif in textile printing. Some of the most interesting designs for textiles belong to the *Modernisme* and Art Deco movements. Printed silk, Ponsa Hermanos, MEPM (c. 1920).   Esther de Prades.

The attractive and vibrant feathers of the birds were a pretext for the most varied compositions. The colorings used for print on silk were anilines, of lilac colors, intense violet, bright red, vibrant oranges, lemon yellows, ultramarine blues, malachite greens, bright pinks, and a wide range of tonalities. In this period, the chemical industry offered new colorings with vibrant shades. The color palette was very complete and contrasted with the traditional dyes.

The fascination for exoticism was also a recurring theme at Ponsa Hermanos. From the beginning of textile printing in Europa, scenes inspired by China—*chinoiserie*—were reproduced and Japanese fabrics became popular. Looking to the East made these compositions richer. During the 1920s at Ponsa Hermanos, series of drawings with Egyptian motifs were published: papyrus sheets, funeral trousseaux and ritual objects were of great visual richness and elegance. The representation of leisure

scenes was also a topic of interest: the show, music, dance, ballroom dancing, the actor Charles Chaplin in the role of Charlot and other moments of fun and chill. The scenes were printed on handkerchiefs or destined to furniture. In the collections of Ponsa Hermanos and La Sedera Franco-Española there are also images of Amazons, tennis players, driving women and models dressed in the style of Paul Poiret. It is the reflection of the new woman of the 1920s. Some of these compositions would be retaken in the years from 1960 to 1970, as a central motif for handkerchiefs and dresses.

At the height of Ponsa Hermanos, the golden age of 1900–1930, their creations can be considered the same level as the newest foreign prints. The rich exchanges that took place between professionals, the frequent trips abroad, the concern for the adoption of new trends and the use of tools such as trend books, allowed designers from Barcelona to be compared as being equal to foreign designers. Barcelona knew how to adapt and reformulate the proposals with its own, genuine language. The prints were showy, high quality. Numerous colors on natural silk, which turn them into appreciated articles due to the quality of their fabrics, drawings and colors (Fig. 2). The good relationships between professionals of Barcelona and the reference centers of Europe in the field of textile printing is a lesser-known aspect, and it is still under investigation. It was a common fact that all the directors from the renowned companies traveled abroad to find out the latest news, or received foreign designers in their companies.

Later, in the 1940s and following decades, the Barcelona studios gained strength and the presence of local artists increased. But the result was not as spectacular as in previous occasions due to historical circumstances. Spain was in the middle of its postwar period and the austerity made the prints more discreet, with fewer colors and synthetic silk or rayon. The most important trend of the 1940s was a series of drawings with black background and motifs, usually floral, of red, cyan, yellow and white colors.

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a revolution in Barcelona in design for textiles. It is worth mentioning the presence of women designers—some directed design studios—that had a relevant role both in number and in the quality of their designs. Some of them were Joaquina Masalles, active since the 1960s, and Rosa Rodrigo. Some design schools were born in the city. The old school of design ‘La Llotja’, and also the Massana school, for example, began study plans with print subjects. As a result, between 1967 and 1970 the Barcelona studios Cims, Incra, Doñate, Fontanals, Balanza and Homs were born, among others. Barcelona was prepared to create talent, it was a design center and in the 1990s it was still designing successfully. The studies of original designs are the result of a long tradition in creation and research, which are born within the academic sphere, are linked and evolve at the same time as social demands, in a constant dialogue between editors and clients.

Ponsa Hermanos produced the drawings in Barcelona, and some fabrics were exported to be sold in Paris or Switzerland, where they had representatives. The designs were reputed for having their own language in a Europe where trends circulated with great rapidity and styles followed one another at great speed. Between 1960 and 1970 Ponsa published new prints, in an imitation of the famous foulards of Como and Paris. There have been documented headscarves printed in the 1920s, and compare and contrast them with earlier times, and there are many similarities in the colours and motifs. Scarf designs were purchased in the 1970s from the famous Paul Martel studio. The company bought original designs for clothing from other renowned studios, such as Veronelli from Como, but also had studios or firms from Barcelona. The new Barcelona professionals learned aspects related to the composition of prints and elaboration of registers or rapports. It was important that the motif fit perfectly



Fig. 2 Ponsa Hermanos printed natural silk with bright and numerous colors during 1900–1930 and 1960–1970, such as this composition inspired in Claude Monet's compositions. Printed silk, Ponsa Hermanos, MEPM–Museu de l'Estampació de Premià de Mar (c. 1925). © Esther de Prades.

in the process of printing, so that the separations between moulds could not be noticed, or that the colors were conveniently separated, so that they did not overlap. The work of the colorist required precision and ability to achieve the desired effect. The importance of the trade of the colorist and engraver sometimes remained forgotten, when it's so decisive over the final result.

Some foreign cartoonists based in Barcelona also designed for Ponsa Hermanos. Italian Mario Resmini spent a lot of time drawing for the factory. He made some floral drawings that were printed with nuanced colors and white lacquers for the profiles. Ponsa also wanted the Polish designer Kluczewsky to work exclusively for them, but he finally went to work for Estampados Farreró, a Barcelona company that exported its collections around the world. The style of Kluczewsky is characterized by flowers made with watercolor. The superimposed colors, the brushstrokes and the shades of grey are characteristics of his production. To achieve this effect of transparency and fluency, it was necessary that the engraver had great skills. In this sense, Ponsa bought flat screens for printing from the best studios of Barcelona or close to the city, who knew how to translate the watercolor effect into the flat screens.





Fig. 3 Designers of printed textiles took their inspiration from the artistic movements of the period. The new engraving techniques permitted them to reproduce the brushstrokes and watercolour look. Printed textile, Ponsa, MEPM (c. 1968). © Veraicon.

### The flat-screen engravers

A second aspect conditions the final result of the fabrics. In the transposition of the original design to the flat screen, engraving plays a decisive role. From the 1930s the main Spanish engraving workshops were based in the village of Premià de Mar, near Barcelona. Their expert hands provided nuances, shading, blurring, profiles, exclusive methods that could only be made by specialised engravers. For example, the floral drawings of Klucevsky were interpreted and managed to imitate the brushstroke of the artist on the photolith to later record on the flat screen. At the time, there were numerous examples of fabrics printed with brushstrokes motifs, in imitation of the artistic movements of the period (Fig. 3). The town of Premià de Mar was a pioneer in the introduction of flat screen printing, and the activity of engraving became its main economical activity until the end of the 20th century.

Another remarkable advance in the history of textile printing is the SCI-TEX computer, presented at the ITMA textile fair in 1975, which was a revulsive in the engraving of photoliths. The Catalan company Grabados Virmit was the first engraving studio in the world to acquire the new machine, composed of 12 bulky modules, because of its high cost only five copies were made. The company Ponsa commissioned engravings from Grabados Virmit. The new machine, which incorporated a scanner and tools for the edition and rep-

etition of motives, was a fundamental advance. With this new machine, repetition designs could be made with maximum accuracy, a job that could not be done with the same perfection by hand. Currently, this object, unique and restored in December 2017, is preserved in the Museu de l'Estampació de Premià de Mar. The machine worked constantly, in three shifts a day, and allowed companies in Barcelona city and province to make new articles. The engravers of Barcelona had their own style, taking into account the expert hands of local designers, engravers, and the specific machinery used in Barcelona, Premià de Mar and other places close to the city. There is a characteristic style that we wanted to identify under the name of 'Fabrics of Barcelona'. Under this concept we want to bring together the prints that were made in Barcelona capital and province, which came from different Catalan companies. The language is close to the trends in the rest of Europe, but at the same time they have special characteristics that we are currently studying.

### Fabrics of Barcelona

In this study we want show the similarities between motifs and colors in the productions of Ponsa Hermanos during Modernisme and Art Deco, in prints made by Barcelona designers, and those of the Op-Art, hippie and psychedelic trends of its successors. There are many examples of similar designs, both in the form and colors of anilines used. In the era of Modernisme and Art Deco a new language was created that resulted in the so-called Decorative Arts. For example, in this period and in later decades the flower of opium repeats itself, geometries in movement, and very strong profiles. Aquatic forms were reproduced, and were retaken half a century later. Through concrete examples, and some unpublished works, we can contrast this look with the past (Fig. 4). Other forms inspired in the At elier Martine, where natural motifs inspired in the waterworld are drawn as they have never been seen. Flowers and plant motifs also attracted the customers, with strong profiles, usually black, and large areas of flat and bright colors (Fig. 5).

This study could be the base of the recovery of a particular autochthonous language, which could be used in museums, research and knowledge dissemination. The legacy of Alexandre de Riquer, Josep Vidal i Ventosa and Josep Palau Oller was imitated by the authors who were trained in the design schools of Barcelona. Even foreign artists installed in the city were protagonists of a new style that defined the production of fabrics. These designs were exported, in some part, to foreign lands, confronting the generalized idea that trends

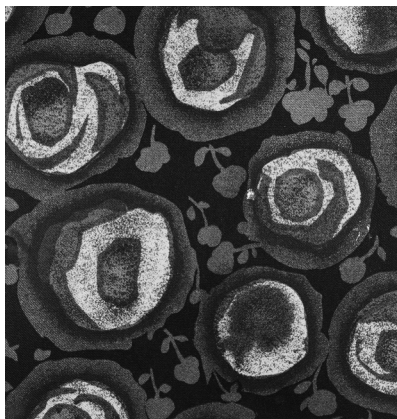


Fig. 4 The At elier Martine, during the Art Deco period, created a new language with floral motifs inspired in the subaquatic world, and these motifs were recovered in the 1960s and 1970s. Printed textile, Ponsa, MEPM (c. 1970). © Veraicon.

Fig. 5 Psychedelic motifs were very popular in the late 1960s and 1970s, some of them inspired by Modernist and Art Deco prints, with acid colors, strong profiles and dynamic compositions. Printed textile, Ponsa, MEPM (c. 1972). © Veraicon.

were defined only in the reference centers, such as Paris, Como and Lyon. Thus a language of Barcelona that crossed borders has been detected.

For this reason it's necessary to continue the study of Ponsa's legacy to know the most characteristic work. The denomination of 'Fabrics of Barcelona' refers to this characteristic style. Within the function of textile museums, where textile collections are conserved, studied and disseminated, it is important to study the autochthonous, the identity mark of the territory. It is important to know more about the heritage conserved in Catalan textile museums because this will help us discover new aspects of the fabrics of Barcelona. In this sense, in 2016 a set of 200 samples corresponding to the selected epochs was digitized, where some similarities between the 1900–1930 and 1960–1970 designs of the Ponsa factory can already be contrasted. In some of them it is clear how the company knew how to read its past and create new trends inspired by the designs it produced in previous decades.

Our proposal is for this legacy to be used today as inspiration for prints and factories. The models of the past could be a good source of inspiration. The case of Ponsa Hermanos is a good example: the recovery of the designs from 1900–1930 lead the company to a second golden era. Some designers who worked for Ponsa still remember their activity. The Ponsa legacy is preserved almost entirely in the textile museums mentioned previously. This allows us to understand the evolution of the designs within a set that was a reflection of the changing tastes of the clientele, and the assimilation of these new trends.

As we have seen previously, the Ponsa Hermanos collections have been studied for the most part. A monograph has been published, new aspects have been published in articles and congresses, and some works have been shown in temporary exhibitions. However, there is still work to expand its dissemination. The Ponsa Hermanos prints could be an inspiration for 21st century companies, as a reflection of Barcelona's local talent. They are an example of the rich exchange with other countries. Finally, we propose a reflection: can the legacy of Ponsa Hermanos help historians, designers and producers to find the future in the past, so that its importance is well valued, and being used as an inspiration for current textile prints?

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# The Contribution of Jordi Vilanova to the Identity of a Mediterranean Character in Spanish Design

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Spanish design / Mediterranean design / Jordi Vilanova / La Cantonada / Identity

The so-called Mediterranean style is one of the identity marks of Spanish design, being a style born out of concrete historical, geographical, cultural and political circumstances. Such a style is characterized by pure, simple forms, without ornament, atemporal,

functional, and with a strong cultural component. The Catalan interior designer Jordi Vilanova belongs to this style; that becomes patent in his own ideology, based on the humanistic attitude of the multi-disciplinary group La Cantonada, to which he pertained. This

study intends to prove the contribution of Vilanova's work to the Mediterranean style in Spanish design through the analysis of some of his furniture and interior design projects.

## Identity and design

The concept "identity" refers to a quality or set of qualities with which one person or a group of people feel themselves intimately connected. In this sense, identity has to do with the way in which individuals and groups define themselves when relating – "identifying" – with certain characteristics (MOLANO, 2008). Gui Bonsiepe (2012) posed a list of concepts that can be useful to analyze how identity would materialize in the field of design:

1. In the form of a set of formal or chromatic features.
2. In the taxonomies of products, that is, in the types of products distinctive of a culture.
3. In the use of local materials and its corresponding manufacturing methods.
4. In the use of a specific project method (empathy with a determined tradition rooted in a region).
5. In the theme typical of the context.

Moreover, Guy Julier (2006) remarks on the importance of the role of design in the creation of identities, envisaging design as a cultural practice with an economic value. According to Julier (2010), one identity is marked by circumstances like geography, culture, politics, economy, etc. Finally, the term "design culture" proposed by Julier highlights the importance of products communicating with the users, transmitting an identity, so a series of values are detected by users.

## Mediterranean design

Contrary to what happens in Scandinavian or Italian design, there is a clear absence of bibliographical references and scientific investigation works that address the matter of Mediterranean design. There are some recent publications that address the Mediterranean identity in design. One is Martínez, Pastor and López (2014): "Mediterranean influence in the Spanish design identity", and the other is the doctoral thesis in the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia defended by Laura Beatriz Picca (2016): "Diseño mediterráneo. Bases para la creación de un modelo".

In Europe there is an ample diversity of cultures and subcultures. The greatest distinction we can find is between Mediterranean culture (found in Spain, Italy, France and Greece), and Anglo-Saxon culture, in northern countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. As a result of it, we can say that there are a series of

values and dimensions peculiar to Mediterranean or Southern European culture, and values and dimensions peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon culture or Northern European culture (PICCA, 2016).

It happens the same inside the Mediterranean region. According to Vanni Pasca (2009), the Mediterranean is a group of regions marked by cultural, social and geographical similarities and differences. Regarding industrial design there are countries with an industrial approach, versus countries with a clearly artisanal one. In this spectrum, Spain and the Latin Mediterranean lay in-between, being a region that combines tradition and present.

## Spanish design

Design is intimately linked to the development of industry, and in Spain there was a very late, slow and fragmented industrializing process, unevenly spread among different areas of the Spanish territory. In the 1950s, there were already two regions with consolidated economic power: the Basque Country, thanks to the development of a metallurgical industry, and Catalonia, whose textile industry had been structured around small companies (JULIER, 1991). Thus, the first industrial areas were in the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean. This industrial lateness allowed artisan tradition to disappear later in Spain than in other countries like Italy or France, where craftsmanship was transformed earlier (MARTÍNEZ, PASTOR and LÓPEZ, 2014).

The Spanish territory has also various languages, traditions and nationalities, which complicates the procurement of the main features of Spanish industrial design (CAPELLA, 2010). However, inside this diversity and eclecticism, we can say that the influence of the Mediterranean sharpens (MARTÍNEZ, PASTOR and LÓPEZ, 2014).

This so-called Mediterranean style in Spanish design shares mainly aspects like the use of local materials such as wood, ceramics, glass and textiles; and a low technological level due to a slow industrialization, which has allowed the survival of traditional artisanal production techniques. Martínez, Pastor and López (2014) conclude, after an analysis of relevant cases in the history of Spanish design, that the Mediterranean style or character is defined by its purity, simplicity, transcendence in time, far from vanguards and trends, and with a high cultural com-

ponent and whose functionality is above all, as long as it transmits certain local feelings and emotions.

The historical, geographical, cultural and political circumstances generate some features in design, hence generating a specific style. This Mediterranean style grants identity to Spanish style and is key in speaking about a local design culture (JULIER, 2010). We cannot forget that design as a discipline is also affected by political phases and changes that countries goes through. Hence in Spain it went from being a suspicious activity for the Francoist regime, because of its ties to modernity, to be recognized beyond its borders during the 1960s thanks to the end of the autarchic period, and finally becoming part of the cultural environment after the fall of the dictatorial regime, with a widely publicized boom in design.

### The case of Catalonia

Catalonia was the first area in Spain to live through the industrializing process and with time it became an example by obtaining its own design culture, alien to the rest of the country. An urban and social rethinking took place, that served as an example to other European cities, and which evoked such values as modernity, Europeism and technology. To become the best example of change from the previous regime, Catalonia used design as a tool of change, understanding this activity as a cultural practice, with an economic value (JULIER, 2005).

### Jordi Vilanova and La Cantonada, an ideology of its own

Within this Mediterranean style has been classified, in multiple occasions, Jordi Vilanova i Bosch (1925–1998), a Catalan interior designer and cabinet maker whose career started in Barcelona at the beginning of the 1950s, peaked in the 1960–70s, and continued until his death.

Among his first works of Mediterranean character must be included the series of furniture that Vilanova conceived for a series of tenements in working-class neighborhoods of Poblenou and La Bordeleta, built by the architect Jordi Bonet in the late 1950s. It was a full furnishing of a flat for just 30,000 pesetas (VÉLEZ, 1999) that included bedrooms, living rooms, seats, curtains, bedspreads, etc. They were characterized for being simple, functional, combinable and specially thought out for small spaces and economies: a 'Mediterranean solution' (BONET, 1995). However, the proposal was not well received by the future tenants who, as happened with other vanguard projects, refused having in their living rooms functional and sincere furniture, which showed their cheapness.

Later Vilanova co-founded the artistic multidisciplinary group La Cantonada (1960–1975), which carried out integral public art projects with a humanis-

tic character, and proposed the renovation of sacred art through the company *Ars Sacra*. The group was also formed by the ceramist Jordi Aguadé, the goldsmith and jewelry maker Aureli Bisbe, the architect Jordi Bonet and the painter Joan Vila-Grau. It takes its name from the studio of Vilanova, situated on the corner of the streets Freixa with Ganduxer, and which became the central headquarters of the group where all members conversed, debated and organized different activities. Vilanova acted as a coalescer, an orchestra conductor (VALVERDE, 1963), coordinating and always looking for common and individual projects for all members.

While in 1960 design circles with a more industrialist character achieved official status thanks to their association with the already existing entity of the FAD (Foment de les Arts Decoratives), and leading to the Industrial Designers Association (ADI-FAD), La Cantonada organized its first permanent exhibition of the common works. An exhibition that is well documented in its catalogue for 1961, where they presented themselves as a 'team open to the present currents in a Mediterranean sensibility', showing their clear will to be linked to their origins and country, Catalonia.

The next year, the group participated jointly in an exhibition with the name I National Salon for Home and Decoration, in the Montesión galleries in Barcelona. Jordi Vilanova presented a bedroom and living room with 'white wood' furniture (Fig. 1), that won a mention in a contest that was called. From 1962 on, the FAD supported the organization of monographic salons called Hogarotel, destined to show the novelties in home automatization, decoration, hostelry and gastronomy. Vilanova attended those annual salons, both individually and with La Cantonada, with modern proposals that offered his very characteristic Mediterranean line (VÉLEZ, 1999), and that were adapted to the demands of new urban promotions.

The editions of Hogarotel with more repercussion took place in the late 1960s. In all of these editions, Vilanova and La Cantonada clearly positioned themselves on the opposite side of mass production and a standardized universe.

The ideology of La Cantonada was based on a truly humanistic attitude (VÉLEZ, 1999). Its beginnings coincided with the beginning of the development of industrial design in Catalonia, however that was based on different premises than La Cantonada's, seeking for a highly standardized product, produced in big series. Contrarily, La Cantonada opted for the creation of items in small series, made in a semi-artisanal way, adapted to specific necessities, with more personality and less technological. This is what art critic Joan Perucho qualified as the third way in La Cantonada's second catalogue:

Between an esthetic of masses and an esthetic of privilege, there is an esthetic "à la taille de l'homme", that is to say, for the common man. The economist Wilhelm Röpke called this [...] the third way. This third way, applied to our goal, is the "small series", and refers above all to objects for long-term use; those which go along with man and get integrated in a memory we could call intimate and familiar. The small series, versus the standardized universalization of big series, is inspired, on the contrary, on the stylistic localization of ways of living. It is then, a truly humanistic attitude. So it has been understood by the admirable team of La Cantonada who, for a long time, produces with growing success an order of creation fully immersed in the Mediterranean sensibility, and so very ours (PERUCHO, 1965).

In the year 1965, the invitation received to attend an exhibition in New York that promoted external trade made Vilanova decide to present a good collection of his products joined by this catalogue that included a selected sample of pieces by artists from La Cantonada. The assembly was carried out by Vilanova and Bonet and the sample was well received.<sup>1</sup>

Although the chances of getting into the American market were slim, for Vilanova it was the consolidation of the idea that his proposal was valid, besides being more and more accepted by a customer base that was expanded and effective both in the city and either the coast or the mountains. According to Bonet (1995), Vilanova achieved a synthesis of traditional forms – of a Catalan wealthy peasantry or small rural bourgeoisie, even in the wealthy houses of the city – and a practical interpretation, well carried out, polished, sober and elegant, that could give satisfaction.

In the 1960–70s, before shops like Vinçon, Pilma, and more recently, IKEA appeared in Barcelona, Jordi Vilanova had already opened three shops that offered design services and sales of modern objects (CAMPI, 2016). Nowadays, Vilanova is known as the introducer in Spain and Catalonia of the ‘white wood’ furniture, that is to say, a furniture without color or shiny varnishes, functional, simple and refined, giving it a line of Mediterranean tradition.

### Scandinavian influence in the work of Vilanova

We can say that the “style” of Jordi Vilanova, both in the furniture and in the environments, answers to rationalist criteria, and more concretely to its organicist current. Vilanova was a great admirer of Scandinavian furniture for its respect to the dignity of the wood and for its perfect quality and execution.

From what the Nordics have taught us, we make use of what has a practical and modern sense, but we try to create a Mediterranean style [based] on the creations of our regional craftsmanship, multiple in facets, all along the Mediterranean. That inspiration we can update, giving it a practical sense and a purity and stylization of lines befitting to modern tastes and requirements. From that popular furni-

ture we suppress all the accessory. In this way we get a functional style in which the artistic and the racial flavor are present. After all, Nordic furniture found its inspiration in the Mediterranean coasts (VILANOVA, 1964).

The core of Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – in spite of their differences, finds a common identity around industrial design as a promoter of a culture. The base of Scandinavian design is founded on its democratic approach, continuously in search of an ideal society, with a better quality of life through technology and functional and affordable objects (FIELL, 2003).

Around 1920, modern Scandinavian design was characterized by a moral humanistic attitude, rooted in the ideals of Lutheranism – official religion that promulgates salvation through work in the benefit of all. It is those beliefs that have influenced all the democratic philosophy from which Scandinavian design has evolved.

Although there are notable examples of innovative designs in Scandinavian countries before WWII, the real bloom of Nordic designers at an international level arrived in the early 1950s. In comparison with the rest of Western Europe and the United States, industrialization burst relatively late in Scandinavia, which allowed for a better preserving of the artisanal traditions (FIELL, 2003). Joining ancestral craftsmanship with modern design, Scandinavian designers manage to elaborate high quality items, suitable for industrial production.

Jordi Vilanova traveled a lot around Europe, and he promptly attended to furniture fairs. His favorite destination was the Copenhagen furniture fair sited at the Bella Center. Vilanova was a great lover of Danish design. In 1973 he started licensing some furniture pieces from designers Søren Nissen and Ebbe Ghel, and he also collaborated with the Danish design center Den Permanent.

For him, the synthesis between functionality and humanity, the balance between tradition and modernity typical of Nordic design provided a possible model to follow in Catalonia, not in the forms but in the spirit and productive modes. For him this was the example that in the South of Europe there could be produced a modern design that evoked the essences of the Mediterranean culture without falling into folklorism (CAMPI, 2016).

### Project analysis

The following images show interior design projects and home decoration, with furniture and complements designed by Jordi Vilanova and some of the components of La Cantonada. They have been selected with the objective of analysis and prove their suitability to the parameters of the so-called Mediterranean design, previously described.



[1] As evidenced in the international press of the time. The famous columnist Eleanor Spaak wrote two articles (“Spanish Updated” and “Children today are more sophisticated than adults”) in the *Home Furnishings Daily* magazine, where she praises Jordi Vilanova’s work.

Fig. 1 Showroom, 1961 (© Fundació Història del Disseny).



Fig. 2 Living room, 1965 (© Fundació Història del Disseny).

According to Martínez, Pastor and López (2014), Mediterranean design shares aspects like the use of local materials and a low technological level due to slow industrialization, which has allowed the survival of traditional and artisanal production techniques; and is defined by its purity, simplicity, transcendence through time, far from vanguards and trends, with a highly cultural component and in which functionality is above all, while it transmits certain local feelings and emotions.

Through all the photographs we can observe a continued use of local materials. Wood is a constant resource in the work of Vilanova, since apart from decorator he was a cabinetmaker trained in the well-known Casa Busquets and in the workshop of the furniture maker Lluís Gili. He used pine and beech wood, with natural finish, without varnish (See Fig. 1, 2 and 4). In Figs. 3, 4 and 5 the wood has been lacquered in red (headboard, nightstands and cupboard) and blue (fronts of the kitchen cupboards).

Ceramics appear through the pavement and complements in decoration, provided by his colleagues of La Cantonada: ceramic panels with sacred themes, bowls and planters. Jordi Aguadé was trained with the well-known ceramist Llorens Artigas and worked jointly with the painter Joan Vila-Grau in the making of ceramic murals. In Fig. 5, the kitchen has been completely coated with ceramic tiles with a floral motive by Aguadé himself. The cover of the kitchen table has been coated with the same matching ceramic finish.

The textiles are natural in origin, like cotton used in the covers and upholstery of seats and cushions (Fig. 2) and the bedspreads and curtains in Fig. 3 and 4. The floral motives are from painter Vila-Grau. Other fabrics of natural origin are applied in the furniture, like the bulrush in the headboard, chairs and stools in Fig. 1, 3 and 4, or the raffia in the carpets and baskets in Figs. 1 and 2. The textiles of animal origin, like leather, are used in the seats of the chairs and the stools and in the beds, through the technique of *tiracord* (Fig. 1 and 2), and the upholstery of the kitchen chairs (Fig. 5).

Moreover, artisanal and traditional production techniques survive especially in the production of furniture through their own 'editing' at a small scale. Local techniques also stand out like the *tiracord* – consisting in the crisscrossing of leather straps that run through leads in the wood, or the weaving of bulrush for the seat fabrics, that Vilanova also applies to the headboard of the bed (Fig. 3).

Vilanova configured functional spaces, clear and luminous, where he controlled the Mediterranean light through curtains, and used plants to moisturize the environment. He was the creator of a kind of furniture based on pure lines, simple and orthogonal, that answers to the wish for formal austerity defended by the group. The most important thing was its functionality over stylistic vanguards, ensuring its persistence through time. Such persistence was also ensured thanks to the quality of the materials. The high cultural component links to the group's humanistic moral attitude, that refers back to the North of Europe, but with a native point of view.

### Conclusions

As indicated at the beginning of the text, design has an important role for a group of individuals to create its own identity, with the intention of differentiating themselves, since the products communicate a series of values that are detected by the users. At the same time, a series of concepts elaborated by Bonsiepe can help explain how an identity materializes through design:

1. In the way of a set of formal or chromatic characteristics. That is to say, through the contribution of the own designer, in this case, of Jordi Vilanova. It is a modern proposal for simple furniture, functional, with pure lines, sincere, combinable, thought out for small spaces and small economies. In general, pieces are of white wood, without color or dark varnishes.
2. In the taxonomies of products, the types of products typical of a culture. Among the furniture by Vilanova we can highlight those destined to furnish bedrooms, dining rooms and living rooms. But he also worried about decorating with lighting and decoration accessories befitting to the spaces, like curtains, bedspreads, lamps and other items. They are spaces thought out for the requirements of the new urban promotions of that time, but also perfectly valid for second homes in the coast or mountain.



Fig. 3 Double bedroom (© Fundació Història del Disseny).

3. In the use of local materials and their corresponding fabrication methods. The slow industrialization in Spain produced a low technological level, and thus, it allowed the survival of artisanal and traditional production techniques. Companies like Jordi Vilanova's subsisted through providers (carpenters, upholsters, metalworkers...), so they became a kind of 'editors'. Apart from that, the use of local (or national) prime materials like wood, leather, raffia, bulrush...
4. In the use of a specific project method. As we have seen, Vilanova and La Cantonada positioned themselves against the massification of big series and standardization, finding them dehumanizing. On the contrary, they advocated for the creation of objects with a humanistic character, adapted to specific needs based in an austere way of life, made in a semi-artisanal way and hence less technological. In short, "small series objects", those found between the esthetic of privilege (craftsmanship) and the esthetic of masses (industrialized items). We understand his will to create a language specific to Catalan design that was to be qualified as "Mediterranean", but inserted in the modern rationalist current and far from folklorism. The same way Scandinavian designers did it, uniting their artisanal traditions – preserved thanks to a late industrialization – with modern design.
5. In the thematic typical of the context. In a context of Francoist dictatorship during the 1960–70s, intellectual and cultural circles of Catalan society looked forward to standing out from a society impoverished through their circumstances and to modernizing themselves through design. It was a certain sector of the Catalan bourgeoisie that wanted to break from old style canons of the market, who widely accepted the style of furniture and space resolution that Vilanova proposed (FELIP, 1995).

In the consumption of such a proposal there is an identity strategy from this progressive Catalan sector that feels "identified" (connected, related) with the values of an ideology transmitted by the products of Vilanova and La Cantonada.



Fig. 4 Double bedroom (© Fundació Història del Disseny).



Fig. 5 Kitchen (© Fundació Història del Disseny).

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# The Design Phenomenon in Castellón: The Development of the Ceramic Tile Industry and its Eventual Establishment as a System

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Design history / Design studies / Industrial design / Ceramics tile industry / Castellón

The main goal of this research is to study the development of the ceramic tile industry in the province of Castellón (Valencian Country, Spain), understanding it as an example of a local or regional economy of Mediterranean tradition consolidated as a powerful production center on a global level. In the context of the history of design, specifically in the history of industrial design, we will analyze the historical bases of this legitimation process whereby Castellón establishes itself as an important center regarding industrial ceramic production. In the same way, we will question the functioning of the current field of the ceramic industry in this geographical center and how design has influenced its consolidation. We conceive this field as a social unit that is amenable to examination, considering the role of the different professional institutions that take part in it: design schools and universities, research centers, design museums, professional associations, among others.

## Introduction

According to data from the ASCER – the Spanish Association of Ceramic Tile and Flooring Manufacturers – in its observations on the economic balance of the Spanish ceramic sector in 2016, in recent years Spain has established itself as the largest producer in Europe, in addition to being the leading ceramics exporter of the European Union. Moreover, the report elaborates on its concentration in the geographical area of the Castellón province as one of the main characteristics of the tile sector in Spain, reaffirming the importance of production centers such as the communities of Onda and Alcora, among other influential areas. According to the ASCER: “the sector is constituted as a cluster or industrial district relying on a whole series of auxiliary industries and related organizations in a defined geographical area. This confers a unique character upon it and is one of the keys to its worldwide competitiveness” (ASCER, 2018).

The main purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the genesis and progressive establishment of the Ceramic Industrial District of Castellón and show the ways in which the design factor has turned out to be key in this process. In the first place, we will contextualize the historical development of the ceramic industry in this geographical enclave. We propose the final stage of Francoism (1960–1978) and the first democratic decades in the history of Spain (1978–2016) as key moments in the professionalization and consolidation of industrial design in Castellón. We will reflect on the positioning of the different institutions related to the field of design specialized in ceramics that emerged during this period.<sup>1</sup> From this analysis, we present our hypotheses on the formation of a design system of the ceramic industry in Castellón.<sup>2</sup>

## The origins of the ceramic industry in Castellón: from the pottery tradition to the industrial development of the 19th century

We will make some observations regarding the origins of the sector, offering key data to situate the investigation in relation to the idea of the Mediterranean character and the enhancement of its cultural heritage in a holistic sense. During the Islamic period, the Iberian Peninsula was a powerful ceramics producer in the Mediterranean, particularly regarding architectural ceramics for pavements and claddings, which promoted new tastes and technologies in other European countries and the surroundings. Focusing on the case of Valencia, we must point out the prominent role of Paterna and Manises (Valencia) as production centers. In these centers, the existence of important Hispanic-Moorish tile workshops, large-scale producers and exporters mainly to Italy and other countries around the Mediterranean and Europe in the 14th and 15th century has been well-documented (GOMIS MARTÍ, 1990: 53–55).

[1] Design historians such as Isabel Campi have stated in relation to the history of product design that in those territories in which design has been consolidated as a professional activity, the study of existing institutions in the field is interesting and suitable for analysis (CAMPÍ, I.: *La idea y la materia. Vol. I: El diseño del producto en sus orígenes*. Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2007, p. 230–231).

[2] For a definition of the design system, see CALVERA, A. (Coord.): *La formació del sistema disseny BarCELONA (1914–2014), un camí de modernitat. Assaigs d'història local*. Publicacions Universitat de Barcelona, 2014.



It is precisely, then, that the Mediterranean was a powerful trading center on a global scale, and we could locate Valencia as a local example of the protohistory of ceramic industrial design within this macro-region. Although the canonical design history tends to situate the beginnings of the design practice parallel to the industrialization of the process, it's worth mentioning a characteristic feature, namely, the existence of dynamic production or trading centers prior to the Industrial Revolution in the Mediterranean. Thus, we can maintain that there was already a certain idea of product design present in an organizational system based on workshop and guilds, something relevant when reworking the transnational map of design history.

On the other hand, ceramics history experts agree in locating the foundation of the Real Fábrica de Loza Fina and Porcelana de L'Alcora in 1727 as a direct forerunner of the Castellón ceramic industry. Its promoter was the illustrated Buenaventura Ximénez de Urrea, IX Count of Aranda. The existence of pre-industrial pottery workshops in the area, given the natural conditions of the geographical location that facilitated the sourcing of raw materials for production (soils, clay, water and firewood for the ovens), led him to promote this project. The creation and/or modernization of the Royal Factories (*Reales Fábricas*) in Spanish territory was an initiative of the newly established Bourbon monarchy. These were private companies that operated thanks to Crown privileges. That is, a direct intervention by the State to mediate in the progress of the industrial sector in Spain, where traditional agrarian activity predominated and would continue to prevail. This public intervention was inspired by the French illustrated model of the Manufactures Royales promoted by Minister Colbert in the Louis XIV period (CABRERA BACHERO, 2015: 20–22).

The Count of Aranda published the operating ordinances of the factory, which included the policy of the government, economy, and management of the company. An Apprentice Academy was created within the manufacturing dependencies with the aim of providing the workers with technical and cultural knowledge: that is how masters and officials of drawing, painting, wheels, varnishes or furnaces, among other specialties, were trained. To enter the Academy you had to meet certain requirements: knowing how to read and write, having knowledge of basic mathematics, and you were expected to be from the county of Alcalatén (CABRERA BACHERO, 2015: 52). In this sense, this organization system is essential to situating it as a key historic precedent in the establishment of a possible design system in Castellón. In fact, since the development of the fine earthenware factory and its influence, other historical centers were established for the mass production of ordinary earthenware and tiles in Castellón, such as in Onda or Ribesalbes: this model is considered as a bridge between the craft workshop and the industrial factory (TODOLÍ, 2008: 171–172).

This production center contributed to the formation of the key pillars of ceramic production in the Plana de Castellón during the nineteenth and early twentieth century that prevail until today. Fleeing the jurisdiction of the owners of the Royal Factory, workers from L'Alcora were gradually established in work-

shops and independent potteries in the neighboring towns – the so-called *Fabriquetes* – imitating the products of the county manufacturer (ORTELLS CHABRERA, 2005: 39). The boom of the mass-produced tile industry took place during the second half of the 19th century, driven by the increasing use of ceramics in the construction of new city extensions in Barcelona and Valencia, both in sumptuous and popular architecture and to the detriment of the production of artistic ceramics and pottery (GOMIS MARTÍ, 1990: 220). Companies that were originally located in larger towns, such as Valencia, moved their production centers to this area, mainly to Onda. In 1889, the first railway line connecting this town with the port of Castellón was inaugurated, close to the main transit routes that connected Barcelona and Valencia. In terms of labor, this relocation involved a reduction in wage costs and working conditions. The workers in the region of La Plana had no other alternatives but agriculture, and there were no established trade unions at the time, so labor unrest was much less common than in the cities, such as Valencia, with its traditionally established industrial network (PRADES ALBALAT, 2016: 64).

This first territorial expansion led to the consolidation of Onda as the main center to produce mass tiles in Castellón at the beginning of the 20th century. The foundation of the School of Ceramics of Onda in 1925 is particularly interesting related to the development of design factors: technical ceramic workers were trained in both production processes and chemistry, decorative arts and more specializations essential for the sector. On the other hand, the Tile Manufacturers' Guild was founded in 1927, which over time would establish itself as the present Spanish Association of Ceramic Tile and Flooring Manufacturers (ASCER, 2018). If factories specializing in luxury manufacture for the Spanish aristocracy emerged in Alcora in the 18th century, the mass production of tiles was consolidated in Onda when the sector was in full process of industrialization in the early twentieth century. The entirety of factories and production centers of the province of Castellón, established in Alcora, Onda, and other neighboring communities, reached 71% of the total production of the Spanish state towards 1929, a quota that was maintained until after the Civil War (ORTELLS CHABRERA, 2005: 43–44).

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**The industrial reconversion of the 1960s and 1970s and the pillars of the professionalization of design in the Valencian Country in the case of ceramics.**<sup>3</sup> The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the subsequent establishment of the Franco regime meant a paralysis of the modernization and technological progress in the ceramic industry that had started at the beginning of the 20th century. The activity of the specific sector of ceramic coatings and pavements, which had established itself in the beginning of the 20th century, is gradually resumed, but with scarce resources and following outdated manufacturing processes: a working system based on the exploitation of cheap labor and little investment in innovation and product quality. The shortcomings in terms of design were evident, becoming one of the main problems of the sector around 1950 (GOMIS MARTÍ, 1990: 250).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, an industrial reconversion took place in the tile sector. On the one hand, this was due to the construction boom promoted by the National Housing Plans (1955 and 1965). On the other hand, the new composition of the world order meant the international unblocking of Spain, so the export of tiles to a foreign market, that had already started at the beginning of the 20th century, was resumed. A process of technological renovation was then initiated, considering that many of the factories had so far worked with traditional Arab ovens. Businessmen started to massively import machinery made in Italy, the main ceramic producer in the world. During the decade of 1960, for the first time, the sector of the population dedicated to the industry surpassed the one dedicated to agriculture in the Valencian region. The productive levels of the sector would reach maximum quotas during the 1970s, but with a notable deficit in terms of technological innovation and design policies (ORTELLS CHABRERA, 2005: 45).

The businessmen once again grouped together to resume the activity of the Valencia Fair of International Exhibitions, promoted since 1917 by the so-called Gremial Union of Valencia, with the particularity that, instead of a single fair, monographic competitions began. Thus, the first Toy Fair (FEJU) took place in 1962, the first Spanish Furniture Fair, the *Madera y Mimbre* (wood and wicker) – the current furniture fair, Habitat – in 1963, and the first Ceramics and Glass Fair – current CEVISAMA – in 1965 (IMPIVA, 2009: 25). In this sense, we would like to point out that after several attempts, in 1959 the activity of the old Tile Manufacturers' Guild in Onda starts showing greater consistency under the name of ANSIA – National Trade Union Association of Tile Industrialists (ASCIER, 2018).

The desire for renewal and modernization from the cultural context increased. For the first time, there was talk about design as a solution to the problems that dragged the country. In the cultural context of Valencia, the first articles published on design appeared in *Suma y sigue del arte contemporáneo* magazine, edited by the entrepreneur and collector José Huguet and

directed by the art critic Vicente Aguilera Cerni (IMPIVA, 2009: 9). Originally, *Suma y sigue* was dedicated to contemporary art and architecture, and its advisory board was formed by members such as Giulio Carlo Argan, Bruno Zevi and Alexandre Cirici Pellicer. The magazine “will be the tip of the iceberg and expression vehicle for the small hub of professionals interested in design, who, in one way or another, would participate in the active life of the magazine” (IMPIVA, 2009: 22).

In the context of the cultural circle surrounding *Suma y Sigue* magazine, the *I Conversations on Industrial Design* were organized in the College of Architects of Valencia in 1967. With the sponsorship of the company Vikalita S.A., producer of Railite, and led by the architects Salvador Pascual and Juan José Estellés from the COACV, the main members of ADI-FAD – Foundation of Arts and Design of Barcelona were invited to the conference to present their ideas about the importance of design in the development of a country's economy. The main presentations on the subject were held by Antoni de Moragas, Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, and Tomás Maldonado. According to the information collected in a subsequent publication, the main goal of the meeting was, in Salvador Pascual's words, “to create a group that promotes industrial design among us in Valencia” and to establish design in Valencia “as a normal activity that is essential to our emerging industrial and consumer society”, making explicit reference to the case of the ceramic industry, among other regional industries (Vikalita; COACV, 1968: 3).

As for the application of design to the ceramics industry, other institutions which over time would end up sustaining the network that supports the state of the current sector were also founded during this period. On the one hand, designers, ceramic artists, and professionals from the sector, in general, promoted the creation of the Manolo Safont Tile Museum, founded in Onda in 1968. Safont, an artist and ceramic painter trained in the workshops of the tile factories in Onda, was a promoter and leader of the cultural life surrounding the museum and its exhibition halls, who was concerned with promoting the protection of the mass-produced ceramic tile heritage. On the other hand, the Institute of Ceramic Technology (1969) was created in the context of scientific and/or academic institutions, initially linked to the Polytechnic University of Valencia and later relocated to the Universitat Jaume I of Castellón; this represented the first attempt to establish a high research entity focused on innovation and the development of new technologies applied to ceramics.

We highlight these events and the creation of the first associations of entrepreneurs, exhibition fairs, cultural and scientific institutions related to the ceramic industry as the field's first contact with the professional design world. It was not easy to break through, considering the difficulties in a context of extreme industrial cultural precariousness such as that of the Franco regime in Spain. However, we conceive these first attempts at organizing as the origins of the professionalization of design. Alongside the demands coming from the industry itself, the cultural activation that was developed among circles of intellectuals linked to ceramics, as in the case of Manolo Safont, was decisive in relation to the increasing appraisal of design.

[3] See RENAU, V. and ANDRÉS, I., 2018, “Notas acerca de la profesionalización del diseño en el País Valenciano: el caso de la cerámica en Castellón (1960 – 1978)”, available in *Fundació Història del Disseny*: <http://www.historiadeldisseny.org/wp-content/uploads/Notas-acerca-de-los-or%C3%ADgenes-de-la-profesionalizaci%C3%B3n-del-dise%C3%B1o-en-el-Pa%C3%ADs-ValencianoRenau-y-Andres-1.pdf> (Last accessed: 10/06/2018).

**Design and the consolidation of the Ceramic Industrial District of Castellón: 1978–2016.** In 1978, the present Spanish Constitution came into force, following the death of the dictator Francisco Franco (1975) and the subsequent process of democratic transition. The 1980s were a period of cultural growth in every aspect that would be questioned with the beginning of the economic crisis that unleashed after the events that marked the history of the country in 1992, namely, the Universal Exposition of Seville and the Olympics in Barcelona. Design was an integral part of all this, living its own revelation during the 1980s. This decade is considered as a key period in the professionalization of the sector in the Spanish state: “Being a designer became a real job then, although in those moments used to be more enjoyable in the company of artistic creation than in industrial warehouses” (TORRENT, 2013: 185).

In the case of the Valencian industry, it was then that the idea of design as a solution to the industrial problem took hold: “The entrepreneur understood that it was not enough letting objects evolve with the passing of time, but rather that an intervention on them could multiply the chances of success” (TORRENT, 2013: 189). Thus, design started to be applied in the traditional industrial sectors, such as furniture, toys, footwear and ceramics, but with differences between them. In the case of ceramics, the debate on the function of design would be much smaller than in sectors such as furniture or lighting (TORRENT, 2013: 195). It would not be until the 2000s that it would establish itself as a goal among the companies within the sector.

During the decade of 1980, the institutional network that would support the later industrial development was established in the field of ceramics. The *IMPPIVA* – The Institute of Small and Medium Companies (*Instituto de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa de Valencia*), 1984 – was founded: the official promoter of the first contemporary design policies in the region and collaborator with the main research centers or sectoral fairs, such as *ITC* and *CEVISAMA*. In the same way, the Association of Designers of the Valencian Country (1985) emerged as a result of the negotiations initiated during the 1960s and 1970s as we discussed above. On the other hand, the Alcora Ceramics Museum created in 1994 emerged from the cultural field with the aim of recovering and conserving the heritage related to the local ceramic production.

As for educational institutions, the Universitat Jaume I established in Castellón official education programs regarding design and ceramics, as the Technical Engineering in Industrial Design degree – which would later become the Degree in Industrial Design and Product Development – in 1991. Moreover, in 1994 the Schools of Arts and Crafts of the Valencian Community – the school in Castellón being the one specialized in ceramics – published a manifesto regarding its role and responsibility in the training of specialized professionals, highlighting its commitment to action regarding the necessary step from the quantitative product to the cultural product (TORRENT, 2013: 191).

The process of creating these institutions, in the same way as the consolidation of the aforementioned ones, established the necessary institutional support network for the establishment of Castellón as a leading global enclave in ceramic production and quality (AS-

CER, 2018). Recent studies on the current state of the sector describe the region as a cluster or ceramic Industrial District (ID), which consolidated in the 2000s and after the global economic crisis in 2008. The concept of ID, which was used by Alfred Marshall at the end of the 19th century, was reclaimed by Giacomo Becattini in order to analyze the local systems of economic organization of the North-East-Center of Italy in the 1980s: specific areas characterized by an industrial profile and which display a certain economic dynamism, as well as a high industrial growth rate. According to Becattini, an ID consists of “A socio-territorial entity characterized by the active presence of a community of people and a group of companies in a natural and historically delimited area” that also share “a homogeneous system of values and perspectives [...] that spread through the district, supported and transmitted through generations thanks to a system of institutions and customs (markets, companies, technical schools, unions, political parties, business associations, etc.)” (BECATTINI, 1992, in GINER PÉREZ and SANTA MARÍA BENEYTO, 2003: 196).

The ceramic ID of Castellón is frequently compared to the industrial city of Sassuolo in Italy, also a Mediterranean ceramic production center, consolidated at a global scale. The productive systems of these production centers are based on the concentration of small and medium-sized companies, specialized in the different productive phases of the ceramic sector. In Castellón, these would be tile and ceramic cladding manufacturing companies, the production of frits, enamels and ceramic colors, extractive and spraying industries, as well as industries aimed at producing machinery and auxiliary industries and support institutions (BUDÍ-ORDUÑA, 2008: 387–390). The operating strategy of the sector is based on the restructuring and re-orientation of production, especially after the global economic crisis of 2008: against the idea of competing by expanding the production capacity and maintaining low prices, the role of the departments that are responsible for product design has been strengthened, something that had been lacking in the Spanish ceramics industry until now. Thus, compared to the power of new production countries such as China, India or Brazil, investment in research and development and the implementation of the design and sustainability factors constitute the seal of quality of the Italian and Span-

ish industry (BUDÍ-ORDUÑA, 2008: 395–396). However, it was basically the evolution of the industry itself that finally ended up demanding the application of design.

In short, it is an integrated system based on both cooperation and competition relationships, supported by the network of local and/or national institutions that we have pointed out, which play a key role in boosting the sector and consolidating it as an ID. In its entirety, an economic model in which the global and the local interact, and which is based on a tradition and historical processes that are distinct from Fordist mass-production. We believe that it represents an example of local design history, which can make interesting contributions to large-scale narratives in the history of design in favor of an understanding of the global design phenomenon.

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