



Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918–2018)

Toward a New Perception and Reception



WOMEN'S CREATIVITY SINCE
THE MODERN MOVEMENT



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are actively involved in various fields of trade and commerce,⁴⁴ government services, education and tourism etc. More than 60% of the population of architects are women in Nepal according to a recent review⁴⁵ and 10–15% of students are about to graduate as architects. Many of those women architects have gone to much higher studies like urban planning, project management, and landscape architecture. Some of them are in politics like Hisila Yami⁴⁶ and Dr. Sumitra Amatya⁴⁷. Some prominent architects are pursuing professional practice in Nepal like Poonam Shah⁴⁸ who is one of the established professionals and AnjuMalla Pradhan⁴⁹ who is also current Vice-president SONA. Shailita Joshi⁵⁰ and Dr. Sudha Shrestha⁵¹ are famous names involved in academia. They are leading architects who continue the legacy of women's contribution to architecture.⁵²

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Anna Maria Fundarós 'Design for Development'

44 Bhawani Rana, current president of FNCCI. "Spotlight on Leading Women of Nepal – Bhawani Rana," Daughters of Himalaya (posted March 25, 2015), <https://daughtersofthehimalayas.wordpress.com/?s=Bhawani+Rana> (accessed April 2018).

45 "Society of Nepalese Architects," Facebook, (2017), <https://www.facebook.com/societyofnepalesearchitects/>. Male and female members of SONA page.

46 Yami was one of the most high-profile women leaders in the protests. She was also the General Secretary of All India Nepalese Students' Association, 1981–1982. She was a lecturer at Institute of Engineering, Pulchowk Campus from 1983 to 1996. In 1995 she became the President of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) and served a two-year term. "Hisila Yami," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hisila_Yami (accessed April 2018).

47 "Faculty," Institute of Crisis Management Studies (ICMS), http://www.tuicms.edu.np/index.php?page=faculty_detail&sid=286. A dynamic figure in the Engineering / Environment / and Planning field, Dr. Sumitra has the inspiring record of becoming the first woman Ph.D. holder in the field of architecture, which she did from Moscow Institute of Architecture, Russia in 2001. She commands the outstanding experience and performance while she was an ED of Solid Waste Management Technical support Centre/ Government of Nepal. People close to her in working, influenced by her performance, used to regard her as 'Garbage Management Queen'. She played key role managing disaster waste during Earth quake 2015 in Nepal and prepared the Disaster Waste management Policy / Strategy for Nepal Government.

48 "Poonam Shah," LinkedIn, <https://np.linkedin.com/in/poonam-shah-40a03830>, owner of Shah consult (p) limited

49 "Current Executive Committee," SONA, <http://sona.org.np/posts/committee/current-executive-committee/detail>.

50 Vice principal of engineering college. "Faculties," Kathmandu Engineering College, <http://www.keckist.edu.np/keckist/category/faculty/faculties>.

51 "HOD, Department of Architecture," Tribhuvan University, Institute of Engineering (IOE), <https://ioe.edu.np/?s=Department+of+Architecture> (accessed April 2018).

52 Kayastha, 2018.

Anna Maria Fundarò (1936–1999) was the first woman receiving a tenure appointment as full professor of Industrial Design in Italy. She started her career in 1962 at Università degli studi di Palermo in the South of Italy. She approached the discipline at its nascent state,¹ developing between 1970s and 1990s a significant contribution to understand the role of design in relation to the context of application, in the specific case of Sicily.

Reading her texts and analysing her diverse activities through the documents filed in the Damiani-Fundarò archive-house, allowed us to retrace her original vision about the role of design in a specific context. She developed the 'Design for development' approach, according to her vision of design as a 'total social phenomenon', i.e. a phenomenon that can only be analysed in relation to other phenomena like socio-cultural conditions, techno-productive relationships, territorial policies, etc., with which it constitutes a whole system.² She disseminated her vision to different types of audience, and not only the specialised ones, besides her foresight and ability to gradually build

1 Starting from 1950s a generation of design professionals started to spread out in Italy, budding from the profession of Architecture. The first academic course about design was established in 1955 at the Università degli studi di Firenze, but only during the decades 1960s-1970s-1980s the themes characterizing the discipline were finally developed. University Design courses followed a different path, as stated by Anty Pansera, *La formazione del design in Italia: Una storia lunga un secolo* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2015).

2 Cf. Tomàs Maldonado, *Diseño Industriale: Un riesame* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976).

a strategy for her academic mission. This paper aims to reconsider this woman as one of the protagonists of Italian design culture,³ and to link her vision to some peculiar elements stated by Piera Nobili, and also recalled by Serena Simoni, as significant constants of women designers' work since modern times, such as: project concreteness; the ability to combine design thinking with political action; the concept of 'participated spatiality' that escapes a traditional vision and a normative aesthetic code, and rather goes towards a shared and aware vision of differences.⁴

In line with a perspective of historiographical approach this paper intends:

- Contributing to map women's work in the design field and discourse throughout Italy and Europe.⁵
- Giving rise to unveil women's work in the mediation of design culture research and teaching practices, as well as communication channels, like publications and conferences about design, activities in which, since late nineteenth century, especially in Italy, women have been engaged more than as proper professional designers, highlighting how this kind of involvement started to take place also in Southern Italy only in the late 1960s.
- To present A. M. Fundarò's contribution in a historical-geographical perspective with the peculiarity of the ever-active tension between regional differentiation and national uniqueness.⁶ As attention has been paid to not to confine A.M. Fundarò in a regional/local discourse, but rather linking her reflexion on relationships to other protagonists of design and other culture in a wider Italian, Mediterranean and cosmopolitan dimension.

3 The state of research on Anna Maria Fundarò is still at its very beginning. Indeed, only two studies have been published so far, such as: Marinella Ferrara, "Anna Maria Fundarò: Protagonista della didattica per lo sviluppo dei contesti meridionali e mediterranei (1970–1990)," *Angelica e Bradamante le donne del design*, edited by Raimonda Riccini (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2017), 127–148, and Marinella Ferrara, "The critical writings of Anna Maria Fundarò: The roots and identity of industrial design in Sicily," *AIS/Design: Storia e Ricerche*, no. 6 (2015). In this essay, Fundarò's biographical facts are mainly based on these two previous publications, as well as on archive's documents and on the several texts she wrote.

4 Cfr. Piera Nobili, "Spazialità partecipata," *Da sapere, a sapere: Donne in relazione*, edited by Paola Patuelli and Piera Nobili, (Ravenna: Angelo Longo Editore, 2001), 45–57; Serena Simoni, "Didattica della storia, dell'arte e prospettiva di genere," *Insegnare la storia dell'arte*, edited by Angela Ghirardi et al. (Bologna: Clueb, 2009), 123–166.

5 For the advancement of knowledge on women work in design field in Italy see: Anty Pansera and Tiziana Occeppo (eds.), *Dal merletto alla motocicletta: Artigiane/Artiste e Designer nell'Italia del Novecento* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editoriale, 2002); Catherine Rossi, "Furniture, Feminism and the Feminine: Women Designers in Post-war Italy, 1945 to 1970," *Journal of Design History* 22–23 (2009), 243–257; Raimonda Riccini (ed.), *Angelica e Bradamante le donne del design* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2017).

6 The attention paid to reconstructing history in relation to spatial and geographical connotations, as well as temporal, finds support in many studies about the regional history, and also in the orientations of phenomenology. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York: Duke University Press, 1991), wrote that the social and cultural history, exposed in the contemporary to the short-circuit globalization-fragmentation, requires more than in the past to be studied using a 'cognitive cartography', i.e. a system of knowledge that implies representation, spatial representation and the concept of 'map'.

The Sicilian Context and the Industrial Design at Its Beginning

First of all, a briefly zooming on the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Sicily can help to seize some of the insights and main trends of the 1960s, that helped shaping and defining mindset, carrier, and objectives of A. M. Fundarò.

Despite a productive proto-industrial era during the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, chronologically corresponding to the Industrial Revolution of Northern European countries (conventionally dated to the period 1780–1830), in the post-Second World War times, Sicilian society was in poverty conditions, cultural backwardness, not to mention the non-existence of social thrusts and feminine emancipation. Its traditional and patriarchal reality was supported by agricultural activity, a strong religious feeling and was afflicted by political clash and *Mafia*.⁷ Economic development and emancipation began to take shape in the 1960s with the investment incentive policy in Southern Italy and the construction of three petrochemical poles. Unfortunately, this industrial policy was not able to compensate the lack of a structured and diversified production, needed for an organic and balanced economic development. So large masses of population moved from the agricultural areas to the administrative and industrial centres, with effects of evolution from agricultural to urban-entrepreneurial economy, tertiarization of activities and increased consumption. Meanwhile, the mafia put into action 'the Rape of Palermo'. The construction business ensures an easy enrichment. Palermo literally changed its face, passing from 350 to 665 thousand inhabitants in 7 years.⁸ Thus, with the industrial development increased by consumption, which was followed in the 1970s by a very low economic growth and a significant economic crisis.

In the mid-1960s Anna Maria Fundarò, coming from a bourgeois family, enrolled at the Faculty of Architecture of the Università degli studi di Palermo, where she found a stimulating and emancipatory environment that had no equal in the region. Professors coming from other realities worked in the Faculty bringing new ideas. In 1960, Fundarò graduated with Gino Levi Montalcini, one of the major exponents of the 'Italian Rationalism' coming from Turin. Fundarò learned the methods of the project declined at different scales of intervention, from the city to the furnishings.

The Protest of 1968, strengthen by the Marxist ideologies, burst at the University of Palermo, bringing up emancipatory movements. In the same year, a disastrous earthquake took place in a provincial area, the Belice. This led the region to a terrible social unease and a new wave of

7 Hohn Paul Russo, "The Sicilian Latifundia," *Italian Americana* 17, no. 1 (March 1999), 40–57.

8 Michele Pantaleone, *Antimafia: Occasione mancata* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969).

migration towards the North. Several towns and villages were abandoned and the population moved to neighbourhoods in kind of dormitories contexts.

Together with her colleagues, Fundarò started to be engaged in a criticism on the social and economic development. There was indeed a critical debate on design as the generator and supporter of the ideology of capitalist domination, following up to the explicitly commercial nature of the products. With her close colleagues Benedetto Colajanni (1927–2009), Margherita De Simone (1932–1990), Tommaso Giura Longo, Roberto Collovà, Tilde Marra and Teresa Cannarozzo, all involved in the architecture and urbanism discourse, she was then engaged to prove that university could positively act towards society, working for structuring a design approach based on a new model of economy and sociality, combining projects and participation, as well as for defining an experimental teaching method fostering design themes that are syntonetic to the problems of modernity. In 1969 Vittorio Gregotti⁹, architect, professor and editor-in-chief of the magazine *Casabella*, arrived to the University of Palermo spreading out the concept of architecture by her master Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909–1969),¹⁰ consequently inspiring young colleagues with trust in the rational values of design and production processes, in the interpretation of technologies as tools for understanding and systemically planning the territory in response to variable social needs.¹¹

In 1971, in the climate of reform for a new order of the faculties of architecture, as promoted by Vittorio Gregotti, the Faculty Council decided to establish the course of Industrial Design, which was entrusted to Anna Maria Fundarò.¹² She was able to conquer a role in the industrial design discipline that was ultimately not attractive to her colleagues. From that moment on, she put her thoughts in action on the social dimensions with extreme realism, starting a debate on the role of industrial design in the South of Italy.

Design and Real Problems

In 1970s the industrial design courses had recently been established within the Architecture Degree

9 Vittorio Gregotti (b. 1927) is one of the most renowned Italian Rationalist architects with a relevant architecture production, also in terms of theory development. He started his carrier working first for *Casabella*, while the editor in chief was Ernesto Nathan Rogers, opening a debate on the role played by design. Subsequently he was appointed himself editor in chief of the same magazine.

10 Ernesto N. Rogers, architect and professor at Politecnico di Milano, co-founder of BBPR studio, was one of the most important international architecture scholars of the Italian Rationalism movement. He was editor in chief of two of the most important international architecture magazines: *Domus* (from January 1946 to December 1947) and *Casabella* (from 1953 to 1965). Through his editorials, Rogers defined an original theoretical framework about architecture, strongly influenced by contemporary studies on phenomenology. He formed a group of young architects including Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, Giorgio Grassi, Gae Aulenti, Giotto Stoppino, Guido Canella and Giancarlo De Carlo, due to deeply influence European architectural culture.

11 Anna Maria Fundarò, "Il Disegno Industriale," *Per una scuola della Facoltà di Architettura di Palermo*, edited by Cesare Ajroldi (Roma: Officina edizioni, 2007), 277–295.

12 Ibid.

Program, but the discipline was not yet codified. It was applied as an integrated method in a broader education, developing skills to intervene from the territorial scale to the objects.

Anna Maria Fundarò approached design continually bringing back to the specific problems of the context in which she operated. She was looking for 'problem areas' caused by a bad architectural policy, i.e., places and themes to explore, to obtain effective results caring of territory productive systems activities and society. Some of the topics in the educational activities were the 'soft' qualities of the interiors, the design of the furnishings for social housing, and 'objects of collective use', connected to external spaces as well as to the system of public transport, to replace pragmatically urban squalor with new qualities.¹³ The primary objective of her didactic was to form a class of professionals attentive to political distortions, experts in the project at different scales of intervention and able to critically use different approaches, tools, and skills.

Her reflection focused on the 'why' of his role as a professor of industrial design in a context, where there were no industries, no job for designers, no laboratory and basic resources in the university. She wrote:

Teaching ... implies making choices about what to teach. If I'm not a designer, in the most current meaning, ... I cannot ... pass on, as it used to be within an ancient studio, that complex set of hierarchies and selections I express through my language ... I have to move this relationship on a different level ... I can do design ... building up the foundations for university to become the ... core of exchanges among various design professionals But to what can be set just as a large organizational service ... university must support a widespread, concentrated lab to be seen; a place ... in which to build, even just through design larvae as many design mock-ups as possible ... expressing ... an ethical tension of reconstruction ... the attention to a rational use of resources ... responding to a need while being useful to society ... and recognising areas and priorities of the need itself.¹⁴

In 1977, when the decay of the historical centre of Palermo followed the rapid development of the suburbs, Fundarò, with better confidence in her new role as full professor, decided to advance her strategy. She launched a methodical survey of the micro activities located in the historical centre of city, characterized by an intricate system on which the identity of the city itself was found: mixed production, residences and consumption. The study aimed at the knowledge of the productive, social and architectural resources that could contrast the abandonment and tertiarization of the historic centre as well as the ghettoization of the poorest social classes that lived in it. The survey

13 Cfr. Anna Maria Fundarò, "L'abitazione a basso costo: Progetto e Bisogno" (Dispensa del Corso di Disegno industriale, Palermo, Academic year 1973–74); Benedetto Colajanni, Anna Maria Fundarò et al., *Un'esperienza didattica* (Palermo: ISIA Edizioni d'Arte nuovo Sud, 1973).

14 Anna Maria Fundarò, "Quattro anni di progetti con gli studenti della facoltà di Architettura di Palermo," *ADS: Design per lo sviluppo* 1 (1982), 212–218.

included the analysis of the relationship between production techniques and work ecosystems, and between this and housing, taking as reference the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and D'Alambert for the study of environments, products, tools, and techniques of work, method of interviews for the documentation of craftsman' activities and productive relationships.¹⁵

In such a great project she involved her team of assistants as tutors and groups of students. Each group was entrusted with the study of a craftsman. In this way, relational processes could be triggered between the design students and the artisans capable of regenerating the productive reality, contributing a new mixture of intellectual processing and the practice of doing. She was convinced that one could start from the technical skills of local artisans to train young designers, and from the creative proposals of the students to enhance new quality of crafts and places. The historic centre would become a public laboratory for industrial design students in which they could experiment improving possibilities of a virtuous re-appropriation of the urban spaces.

At this point, the question moved on the innovation of language. As Pierluigi Spadolini (1922–2000)¹⁶ had been experimented a few years earlier, working at Università degli studi di Firenze before to move to ISIA, the Istituto per le industrie artistiche, Fundarò chose to focus on modularity and standardization of industrial techniques to simplify typical artisanal products, rationalizing production. This approach would have allowed increasing in rationality and speeding up production, innovating forms and details with that formal simplification required by standardization, while keeping the traditional typologies recognizable. The projects derived by the study-with-the-artisans approach were then turned into prototypes. In 1979, the exhibition *Cultura materiale e Centro storico di Palermo: Un contributo di analisi dal Corso di Disegno Industriale della Facoltà di architettura di Palermo* (Material Culture and Palermo Historic Centre: an Analysis and a Contribution from University of Palermo Industrial Design Degree), promoted by the Chamber of Commerce showed the studies, projects and prototypes. Fundarò defined the exhibition 'poor' and 'socially usable', as a 'symptom of vitality' and 'possibility of change' representing a new relationship between university and communities of the territory.¹⁷

History of Design Research

History of design research represented for A.M. Fundarò the cognitive basis of the past, which was essential for understanding the present of the 'anomalous' Sicilian context, between development and underdevelopment, while looking for founding elements of material culture.¹⁸

Her historiographical approach integrated elements of museography, semiotic and anthropological research, on which the influences of her acquaintances with anthropologist, politician and friend Antonino Buttitta (1933–2017), dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy of the University of Palermo, and president of the master's degree of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology were pretty evident. Thanks to the stimuli coming from her friend's studies, Fundarò enriched her researches on the Sicilian material culture, focusing on issues related to production and consumption, as well as to the relationship among art-ideology-society. Fundarò was interested in analysing successful stories while investigating the reasons of the failure of entrepreneurial activities during Sicilian proto-industrialism times. She derived from the successful cases the best practices for the regeneration of production activities. The theory by the art historian Ferdinando Bologna, on the historian process from Minor Arts to Industrial Design¹⁹ significantly influenced Fundarò's vision. Referring to an 'ideological forgery', Bologna started analysing the historical separation between major and minor arts, in which it was identified the rupture between the system of craftsmanship and the applied arts on one hand, and industrial design on the other. The gap between the intellectual moment based on ideation and the operative one, focusing on execution, was threatening and pioneering in such a context of complicated socio-political implications, transitioning to modern age and the booming of industrial design. Thus the division of labour, in those times, became the main point of observation for Fundarò.

In the 1990s she took the opportunity to found the Ph.D. course in 'Industrial Design, Figurative and Applied Arts' in collaboration with Maria Concetta Di Natale, professor at the Literature and Philosophy Faculty of the Università degli studi di Palermo. Within the Ph.D. program, historical documentary research on industrial design and production was carried on starting from nineteenth century up to the first decades of the twentieth century, relating on different sources: direct

15 Anna Maria Fundarò, "Palermo: Le attività artigianali nel centro storico," *Il lavoro artigiano nel centro storico di Palermo*, edited by Anna Maria Fundarò (Palermo: Laboratorio universitario di design, 1981).

16 Pierluigi Spadolini (1922–2000) was one of the leading experts of modularity and standardization of architecture, attempting to achieve an integration between the moment of design and that of production. He worked in the field of the industrial building production with architectural panels.

17 See Fundarò, "L'abitazione a basso costo."

18 Below we offer a short bibliography of the texts of Anna Maria Fundarò on Italian design history: Anna Maria Fundarò, "Cultura del design: Manufatti e produzione a Palermo 1860–1910," *Per una storia del design in Sicilia: Reperti e testimonianze di archeologia industriale e cultura materiale a Palermo*, edited by Antonio Bertolino, Anna Maria Fundarò et al. (Palermo: Vittorietti editore, 1980), 7–15; A. M. Fundarò, "Design e cultura materiale: La produzione industriale del palermitano tra la fine dell'Ottocento e i primi del Novecento," *Quaderni del Circolo Semiologico Siciliano* 12/13 (1980); Vittorio Fagone, Anna Maria Fundarò et al. *Ceramica Florio* (Palermo: Edizioni Novecento, 1985); Anna Maria Fundarò, "La Wiener Werkstätte e la scuola di Disegno Industriale di Palermo: La provocazione di un confronto," *Attualità della Wiener Werkstätte: Una esperienza didattica*, edited by Anna Cottone (Palermo: Ila Palma e Istituto di Disegno Industriale, 1988) 7–8.

19 Ferdinando Bologna, *Dalle arti minori al design industriale: Storia di un'ideologia* (Bari: La Terza 1972).

experiences, archival documents, communicative tools (sales catalogues and advertisement) and of course texts. Sticking to the term 'industrial archaeology', which happened to be the one currently used in those years, she wanted to re-construct a concrete vision of the industrialism in Palermo, specifically in terms of creative and executive knowledge. Finding a first objective in the registration of data that were disappearing, due to demolitions or re-functionalization of manufacturing sites, Fundarò listed all the old industrial productions that were waiting to be studied: from Florio fishing industry, to Marsala wine and food; from Solei Hebert and Ducrot furniture to iron and copper beds manufacture; from skin tanneries to coach works; from 'Albergo dei Poveri's' fabric manufacture in Palermo, to cloth factory at Palazzo Adriano; from the majolica and porcelain productions by 'Ceramica Florio', to glassworks, etc.

As a reference for this program, she developed a connection with other Italian projects, such as the one by the art critic and historian Eugenio Battisti (1924–1989) for the Centro di documentazione e di ricerca sull'Archeologia Industriale.²⁰ Her will was not to disperse documents of history in which it was possible to trace the role of design, so as not to perpetuate the distinction between arts, and to recognize (in line with the theory by the art historian, archaeologist and politician Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli (1900–1975)) that art in contemporary times had to be considered immersed in the concrete conditions of places and social situations, so as to determine a reciprocal exchange of impulses.

Relations with the Protagonists of Italian Design

In 1981, Fundarò founded the Istituto di Disegno Industriale e Produzione edilizia (Institute of Industrial Design and Construction Production). To offer her students and collaborators 'unexpected enrichments and highly stimulating situations' she started a series of activities to promote the design culture. Although these events took place locally, in few years they achieved a full national resonance.

In 1982, taking advantage from the opportunity offered by the Italian law DPR n. 382 for the appointment of not tenured professors, she decided, in total agreement with her collaborators, to assign design courses to high-level design professionals. She chose Ettore Sottsass junior (1917–2007) (Fig. 1), architect and design professional for companies like Olivetti, who had founded in 1981 the group Memphis, and Andrea Branzi, design professional, and critic, member of the

²⁰ For more information on the Research and Documentation Centre for Industrial Archaeology, see: Aldo Castellano, "A che punto eravamo rimasti?" *Archeologia industriale: Architettura, lavoro, tecnologia, economia e la vera rivoluzione industriale*, edited by Eugenio Battisti and Francesco Maria Battisti (Milan: Jaca Book, 2001), 325–338.



Fig. 1. Anna Maria Fundarò, with Ettore Sottsass at the Institute of Design, Università degli studi di Palermo. Courtesy of Damiani-Fundarò Archive.

Archizoom group. At international level, they are considered two among the greatest exponents of post-modernism in design. In 1983, Fundarò invited also Ugo La Pietra, artist, architect and designer, well known for his intense experimental activity on public, private and in-between spaces between public and private realms, on modes of appropriation, theatricality, psychology and social dynamics. Fundarò assigned him a new course *Progettazione ambientale* (Environmental Design). The didactic activities of these courses are documented in three books, promoted by the Istituto di Design Industriale (Institute for Industrial Design): *Storie e Progetti di un Designer Italiano: Quattro lezioni di Ettore Sottsass Jr*²¹ based on Sottsass' lessons and the projects realised by the students; *Merce e metropoli: Esperienze del nuovo design Italiano* by Andrea Branzi;²² and *La Conversazione Elettronica*.²³ With Ettore Sottsass, Andrea Branzi and Ugo La Pietra, students could explore the most advanced applicable design approach and methods, and Fundarò had an great empathy with these colleagues, in terms of strategy and action to apply in order to revitalize crafting and industrial production and guarantee a future for her students.

Then in 1983 the organization of a series of conferences allowed Fundarò to clarify her strategy and spread her vision about the role of design in Sicily with the slogan 'Design for the development'. It is a crucial concept for a more balanced development of contexts, which thickens the profound meaning of Fundarò's work. The series of conferences was addressed not only to the architecture students, but also to engineering students and professionals.

²¹ Antonio Martorana (ed.), *Storie e Progetti di un Designer Italiano: Quattro lezioni di Ettore Sottsass Jr* (Florence: Alinea & Università degli studi di Palermo, 1983).

²² Andrea Branzi, *Merce e metropoli: Esperienze del nuovo design Italiano* (Palermo: Epos & Università degli studi di Palermo, 1983).

²³ Ugo La Pietra, *La Conversazione Elettronica: Modificazione dello spazio abitativo e dei suoi rituali attraverso l'uso di strumenti telematici* (Florence: Alinea & Università degli studi di Palermo, 1985).

Many of the main figures of the twentieth century Italian cultural scene, especially the most relevant ones, were invited in Palermo to contribute to Fundarò's project. Among which: Filippo Alison (1930–2015), professor of interior design at the University of Naples 'Federico II', with a strong expertise in furniture designed by Modern Movement masters, such as Wright, Le Corbusier, Asplund, Rietveld, Mackintosh, whose works he turned into new best sellers thanks to a clever process of reproduction, in partnership with the Italian design company Cassina, turning unique pieces of modern architecture finally accessible to everyone; Giuseppe Ciribini (1913–1990), engineer and professor of architecture technology at Politecnico di Torino, expert in building standardization and industrialization, modular coordination of complex processes, and problems in the built environment; Angelo Mangiarotti (1921–2012), Alessandro Mendini, Enzo Mari and Michele De Lucchi masters of Italian design; Vittore Fagone (1933–2018), art critic; Roberto Mango (1950–68) designer and professor at University Federico II of Naples; Anty Pansera, Italian art and design historian, professor at ISIA; and many others. All the contributions to Fundarò's strategy were documented and published in the first issue of the *Annuario Design Sicilia (ADS)* annual publication edited by Fundarò and published by Alinea Editrice. *ADS* was a cultural information tool about design activity and studies in Sicily published since 1994.

All these relations, external to her usual entourage, were crucial for Fundarò's vision and career. They contribute to create a dimension of national accordance, distant from her daily circle of colleagues of the Palermo faculty that had often tried to obstruct her projects, and not recognise her outstanding work. Various articles and reviews concerning design teaching methodologies in Palermo were published in specialized magazines such as *Domus*, *Modo*, and *Ottagono*. Many publications were edited by Fundarò and her collaborators through the Istituto di Disegno Industriale to present the promoted design activities.¹⁰ In just over 15 years, Fundarò became one of the most exciting figures of design education in Italy: incessant scholar, project developer, conferences chair, seminars and competitions organizers, and curator of several exhibitions centred on the theme of *Design for the development*.

Fundarò enters into a relationship with a series of interlocutors of different background and approaches who contribute to enlarging the field of influence of his thought. As in the case of Ludovico Corrao (1927–2002), the politician who rebuilt Gibellina after the Belice earthquake, integrating the specially created works of many artists and architect. He founded the Orestiadi di Gibellina and the Museo delle Trame Mediterranee, with the specific intention of opening a dialogue among the different Mediterranean cultures. Together with Corrao, Fundarò became an active contributor to the Corrao's project, well expressed in the book *Il sogno Mediterraneo*,²⁴ where the

24 Ludovico Corrao and Baldo Carollo, *Il Sogno Mediterraneo* (Alcamo: Ernesto di Lorenzo editore, 2010).



Fig. 2. Anna Maria Fundarò visiting Alcatel for research purposes. Courtesy of Damiani-Fundarò Archive.

contemporary history of Sicily in arts and literature is described as a tight relationship with different Mediterranean cultures, outside of any opposed fundamentalism.

At the same time, Fundarò entertained interesting relations with local institutions, such as Camera di Commercio, la Fiera del Mediterraneo, the City of Palermo, the Assessorato Regionale ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali della Sicilia (Regional Councilorship for Cultural and Environmental Heritage of Sicily), the Fondazione Curella - Centro di studi economici (Curella Foundation - Center for Economic Studies), and various municipal administrations and craft associations, that had financed the culture activities of the Istituto of Industrial Design. She entertains relations also with national realities and institutions like ADI, Abitare il tempo, Fiera di Verona, Italtel, and many others (Fig. 2). She wrote for the magazine *Nuove Effemeridi* and she collaborated for events and exhibitions by international artists and designers, such as those on Borek Sipek²⁵ and Jacques Toussaint²⁶, with the *Agora Gallery*.

Conclusion

This paper brings to light Anna Maria Fundarò, a Sicilian woman and a protagonist of the mediation of design culture in Italy. Her career started at the Università degli studi di Palermo, during the years

25 Anna Maria Fundarò, *Portrait Borek Sipek Designer* (Palermo Agorà, 1989).

26 Anna Maria Fundarò, *Un'intervista via fax: Jacques Toussaint* (Palermo: Agorà, 1990).

of the youth protest that characterized the end of the 1960s in Italy. This period of emancipation allowed her to achieve positions of great relevance that she managed to maintain with her determination, long-sightedness, and wit. Year after year, she sharpened intents and methods of her work, defining with awareness and coherence her research itinerary. Thanks to the multiplicity of actions carried out, the relationships built, and the critical questioning, her project for the community became increasingly clear and precise.

Despite her distance from the main centres of the debate on contemporary project visions, she became the interpreter of the national movement of revaluation of the role of craftsmanship, that was spreading along with 'Radical Design', but finding in it an instrument for the reactivation of productive and residential qualities of the urban centres in Sicily. Fundarò put at the core of her teaching, without excluding craftsmanship, the development of a design culture capable of improving interior spaces, as well as the external spaces of the city in a systemic vision of the project; to enhance the typical productive activities with the innovation of techniques and the search for expressive languages; to enhance cultural heritage through new uses and functional practices. Her discourse was based on strong critical responses and supported by a robust ethical tension. In the tense national debate, her voice as a Sicilian woman, living and working far from the centres of the debate on design, anyhow and remotely made her name, finding in her writing activity and in the care for editing and publications her authoritative space, as well as the precise characterization of her intent in the Sicilian context, still exerting a powerful influence on the Sicilian Academic context. Although very little has been written about Fundarò, her design discourse remains a significant contribution not only at the local level.

In the 1980s the Fundarò defined her Design for development.

In 2005, year of the foundation of the Master Degree Course in Design for Mediterranean at the Università degli studi di Palermo, Vanni Pasca, the Design History and Theory scholar that strongly contribute to this foundation, explained:

This is a definition that arises from the need to define a concept capable of structuring teaching and research in a context like Sicily, characterized by insufficient economic development, and by an incomplete modernization process, because it is partly passive, that is in part immediately and pursued by the ruling classes and by civil society in general. With the word modernization, we mean here the process of displacement and consumption from traditional forms to evolved forms, with a relevant process of social transformation, marked by the prevalence of urban life models, by the transformation of the family structure, the role of women and so on. 'Design for development' therefore expresses the will and attempt to contribute, with the design of physical or visual quality artefacts, to regional socio-economic growth, with reference not only to local or national markets but also to international ones; and together to participate, with the diffusion of a culture linked to the modern project, to the affirmation of a culture of

contemporaneity ... to give just an example, the ability of Sicilian wine producers to merge traditions and new technologies, achieving a first essential improvement of the quality of local products, and to affirm them on the international markets, with a strategy that goes from the presence to the fairs to the integrated communication, is at the base of one of the important and modern achievements of Sicilian production ... But it should be emphasized that Sicily is a land of great perspectives for tourism in general and the cultural one in particular, with its landscape, archaeological, museum and artistic wealth; here arises the need for the development of equipment, which is still insufficient or backward, in the hospitality, spa and port sectors ... around these issues, it may be useful, indeed necessary, to assume a role of Sicilian design in the Mediterranean countries, both as regards its northern band, more industrially evolved, and as regards the band of countries that define the southern shore of this mythical sea.²⁷

Acknowledgment

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²⁷ Vanni Pasca, "Università degli studi di Palermo: Corso di laurea in disegno industrial," in Rossella Bertolazzi, *Il futuro della città Slow Fast: La luce* (Bologna: Editrice compositori, 2005), 108–109.