

Alberto Seassaro. The demiurge

DESIGN PHILOLOGY. THE MASTERS SERIES

Edited by

Antonella Penati, Agnese Rebaglio and Paola Bertola



DESIGN FOR
SYSTEMIC CHANGE

FrancoAngeli 
DESIGN INTERNATIONAL

Design International series

DIRECTION

Silvia Piardi

SCIENTIFIC BOARD

Alessandro Biamonti, Alba Cappellieri, Mauro Ceconello, Claudio Germak, Elisa Giaccardi, Ezio Manzini, Carlo Martino, Promil Pande, Mario Piazza, Angelica Ponzio, Francesco Scullica, Francesca Tosi, Yingchun Zang

EDITORIAL BOARD

Alessia Brischetto, Alessio Caccamo, Barbara Camocini, Giuseppe Carmosino, Eugenia Chiara, Chiara Di Lodovico, Andrea Di Salvo, Elena Elgani, Silvia Gramegna, Marco Quaggiotto, Gustavo Alfonso Rincon, Fabiano Scherer, Daniela Selloni, Davide Spallazzo, Livia Tenuta

The Design International series was launched in 2017 as a place for cultural exchange between the different design souls. Over the years, the series has consolidated its position as a point of reference for international research, outlining a continuously updated research map. The Scientific Committee, consisting of experts in fashion, interiors, graphics, communication, product, service, social interaction, innovation and emotional design guarantees the level of the accepted texts. The Editorial Board, consisting of young experts in the different branches of design, supports the work of the scientific committee. After an initial evaluation by the two committees, the texts undergo international double revision.

FrancoAngeli

SERIES - OPEN ACCESS CATALOG

This volume is published in open access format, i.e. the file of the entire work can be freely downloaded from the FrancoAngeli Open Access platform (<http://bit.ly/francoangeli-oa>).

On the FrancoAngeli Open Access platform, it is possible to publish articles and monographs, according to ethical and quality standards while ensuring open access to the content itself. It guarantees the preservation in the major international OA archives and repositories. Through the integration with its entire catalog of publications and series, FrancoAngeli also maximizes visibility, user accessibility and impact for the author.

Read more: Publish with us (francoangeli.it)

Readers who wish to find out about the books and periodicals published by us can visit our website www.francoangeli.it and subscribe to *Keep me informed* service to receive e-mail notifications.

Alberto Seassaro. The demiurge

DESIGN PHILOLOGY. THE MASTERS SERIES

Edited by

Antonella Penati, Agnese Rebaglio and Paola Bertola

ISBN e-book Open Access: 9788835185482

Copyright © 2025 by FrancoAngeli s.r.l., Milano, Italy.

This work, and each part thereof, is protected by copyright law and is published in this digital version under the license Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Text and Data Mining (TDM), AI training and similar technologies rights are reserved.

By downloading this work, the User accepts all the conditions of the license agreement for the work as stated and set out on the website <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

MANAGEMENT

Paola Bertola

Agnese Rebaglio

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Marzia Mortati

Alessandro Deserti

Paola Bertola

Marco Quaggiotto

Giuseppe Andreoni

Antonella Penati

Luisa Collina

Agnese Rebaglio

DOCUMENT RETRIEVAL AND ARCHIVAL PROCESSES

Antonella Penati

Laura Carugati

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Laura Carugati

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Eleonora De Marchi

ART DIRECTION

Marco Quaggiotto

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Giada Zoncada

Arianna Priori

COVER

***Morfemi* by Alberto Seassaro**



Last day as Dean, saying goodbye to colleagues, 2010.
Photo by Fausto Brevi.

“ Il progetto, se non
ci salva, ci consola.

[Design, if it does not save us, at least consoles us.]

ALBERTO SEASSARO

Contents

ENGLISH

- 15 **Preface**
Emilio Faroldi
- 21 **Polyhedric and Polytechnic**
Alessandro Deserti
- 27 **Almost a Biography**
Antonella Penati, Agnese Rebaglio, Paola Bertola

PART 1

THE TRAINING

- 53 **1. Here Where It All Began. Politecnico di Milano in the Spirit of Experimentation**
Antonella Penati
- 69 **2. *It Was a Good Journey, After All*. Interview with Ugo La Pietra**
Agnese Rebaglio
- 79 **3. Alberto Seassaro, a Memory**
Giancarlo Consonni

PART 2

BETWEEN ARTISTIC AND DESIGN EXPERIMENTATION

85	4. Undisciplined! Antonella Penati
111	5. On Alberto Seassaro's Notational Sheets. The Texture of a Verbal-visual Writing Giovanni Baule
127	6. Do Everything, Do It Artfully Beppe Finessi
141	7. Imagining the Space of Inhabiting between Experimentation and System Giampiero Bosoni
	PART 3 IN THE FOLDS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURE: PREMISES FOR THE BIRTH OF THE DESIGN SYSTEM
155	8. The Social Role of Education and Research Antonella Penati
181	9. Two or Three Things I Know about Him Luciano Crespi
191	10. Catalyzing Energies and Ideas. Alberto Seassaro's Role at the Inception of the Degree Course in <i>Industrial Design</i> at Politecnico di Milano Fabrizio Schiaffonati
199	11. The Construction of the <i>Design System</i> in the Context of Technological Disciplines in Italy: How It All Began with a <i>Penguin</i> Who Set Out to Coordinate a Group of <i>Bats</i> Cristina Tonelli
233	12. Alberto Seassaro. Struggle and Open Debate Bianca Bottero

235	13. Alberto Seassaro and the Construction of the Italian Academic Design Network Luigi Bistagnino
	PART 4 BUILDING THE INSTITUTION TO OPEN UP TO EMERGING CONTENT
241	14. Collage and Bricolage. Or How Alberto Seassaro Invented the Italia Design System in Spite of Everyone. Even Himself Antonella Penati
259	15. Design <i>Momentum</i>. Genesis and Development of a School Paola Bertola
273	16. Teaching, According to Alberto Seassaro Luisa Collina
293	17. Mnestic Traces. Documents and Testimonies of an Institutional Revolution Agnese Rebaglio, Antonella Penati
323	18. From <i>Merceologia</i> to Cathedral Thinking Flaviano Celaschi
339	19. Design for Cultural Heritage. A Visionary Trajectory Eleonora Lupo, Raffaella Trocchianesi
355	20. Every Student Is, in Their Own Way, a Master Paolo Tinelli

- 363 **Prefazione**
Emilio Faroldi
- 369 **Poliedrico e politecnico**
Alessandro Deserti
- 375 **Quasi una biografia**
Antonella Penati, Agnese Rebaglio, Paola Bertola

PARTE 1

LA FORMAZIONE

- 401 **1. Qui dove tutto è cominciato. Il Politecnico di Milano all'insegna della sperimentazione**
Antonella Penati
- 419 **2. È stato un bel viaggio, comunque. Intervista a Ugo La Pietra**
Agnese Rebaglio
- 429 **3. Alberto Seassaro, un ricordo**
Giancarlo Consonni

PARTE 2

TRA SPERIMENTAZIONI ARTISTICHE E PROGETTUALI

- 435 **4. Indisciplinato!**
Antonella Penati
- 459 **5. Sulle carte notazionali di Alberto Seassaro. La grana di una scrittura verbo-visiva**
Giovanni Baule
- 475 **6. Fare tutto, fare ad arte**
Beppe Finessi

489	7. Immaginare lo spazio dell'abitare tra sperimentazione e sistema Giampiero Bosoni
	PARTE 3 NELLE PIEGHE DELLA CULTURA TECNOLOGICA: PREMESSE ALLA NASCITA DEL SISTEMA DESIGN
503	8. Il ruolo sociale della formazione e della ricerca Antonella Penati
527	9. Due o tre cose che so di lui Luciano Crespi
535	10. Catalizzare energie e idee. Il ruolo di Alberto Seassaro all'origine del Corso di Laurea in <i>Disegno Industriale</i> al Politecnico di Milano Fabrizio Schiaffonati
543	11. La costruzione del <i>Sistema Design</i> nel contesto delle discipline tecnologiche in Italia: come tutto partì da un <i>pinguino</i> andato a coordinare un gruppo di <i>pipistrelli</i> Cristina Tonelli
575	12. Alberto Seassaro. La lotta e il libero dibattito Bianca Bottero
577	13. Alberto Seassaro e la costruzione della rete italiana del design universitario Luigi Bistagnino
	PARTE 4 EDIFICARE L'ISTITUZIONE PER FAR SPAZIO A CONTENUTI NASCENTI

583	14. Collage e bricolage. O di come Alberto Seassaro si sia inventato il <i>Sistema Design Italia</i> a dispetto di tutti. Anche di se stesso Antonella Penati
601	15. Design <i>momentum</i>. Genesi e sviluppo di una Scuola Paola Bertola
615	16. La didattica per Alberto Seassaro Luisa Collina
633	17. Tracce mnestiche. Documenti e testimonianze di una rivoluzione istituzionale Agnese Rebaglio, Antonella Penati
659	18. Dalla <i>merceologia</i> al <i>Cathedral Thinking</i> Flaviano Celaschi
675	19. Il design dei beni culturali. Un percorso visionario Eleonora Lupo, Raffaella Trocchianesi
691	20. Ogni studente è a suo modo un Maestro Paolo Tinelli
699	Acknowledgements / Ringraziamenti
701	Authors / Autori

14. Collage and Bricolage. Or How Alberto Seassaro Invented the Italia Design System in Spite of Everyone. Even Himself

Antonella Penati

Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano

14.1 In that little room at Via Bonardi 3

There he is, alone with his thoughts. A pencil in his meditative mouth; between his fingers, a cigarette *worn down* to the impossible – strictly *Nazionali senza filtro* [unfiltered Nazionali], soft green pack – and a deck of cards ready for yet another game of *solitaire* to be played in the event of pressing duties to face, like an institutional phone call, or a grueling delivery ahead of a meeting of the Academic Senate where there is *a battle to be fought*.

An *crowded solitude* in the 4×4 departmental cubicle on via Bonardi – by then the Dean's Office, which he shared with all the secretarial staff – *my girls*, as he affectionately called them –; with his closest collaborators; with his course and studio assistants (a sizeable group, since he had also inherited the assistants of his friend and colleague Giacomo Scarpini). It often happened that he was alone, with his ideas and visions that others – even we who worked with him side by side every day – managed to understand only after they had materialized, giving concrete form to his thought.

Inside that little room, meetings of the Degree Program Council were also held (before the hard-won conquest of dedicated spaces); there were meetings with colleagues, a constant coming and going, and he even met with students, whom he received at all hours without the need for an appointment. There, where everything began when there was nothing, I came to know his informal, forthright way of relating to others: from the most junior student to the Rector. He felt at ease in every situation and put everyone else at ease, without any need to play the buddy. In fact, he addressed students strictly in the formal register, even though he was always well disposed to listen; which did not necessarily mean it was easy to wrest a yes from him. With students in particular, he was reluctant to grant *exceptions to the rule*, because he always kept firmly in mind that the same principles had to apply to everyone.

That little room of *forced coexistence* revealed another side of Alberto Seassaro to me. He had his own notion of privacy. He was, at his core, a free person, and precisely for this reason he could, with complete calm, discuss delicate matters with colleagues in front of everyone present, just as he could make confidential phone calls to family members without censorship. An open book.

At first I was unsettled by such a public kind of private life, but over time, and as I came to know his human and political story, I understood that this was a radical trait of his: to be what one is, with no need for pretenses or hypocrisies.

Entering that little room, you found yourself facing a cabinet crammed with neatly catalogued documents and, roughly stuck on the central door, the cartoon: *Hai voluto la bicicletta? E adesso pedala!* [You wanted the bike? Now pedal!], a playful tribute from his collaborators, because he hadn't wanted the bike, they had more or less made him get on it, but from that moment he promised himself and those working with him that there was pedaling to be done, and without too much complaining! The aforesaid cabinet served as a visual separator for a small area that housed two PC workstations for the secretary's office. Apart from these two stations, the entire room was literally colonized by large white tables, with the sole exception of a small passage (more a narrow opening than anything else) just sufficient to reach the presidential seat. A place entirely similar to those

Figure 1.
Caricature portrait of Alberto
Seassaro by Paolo Ciuccarelli
(1996).

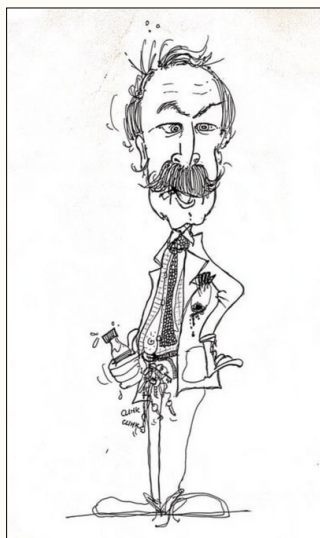
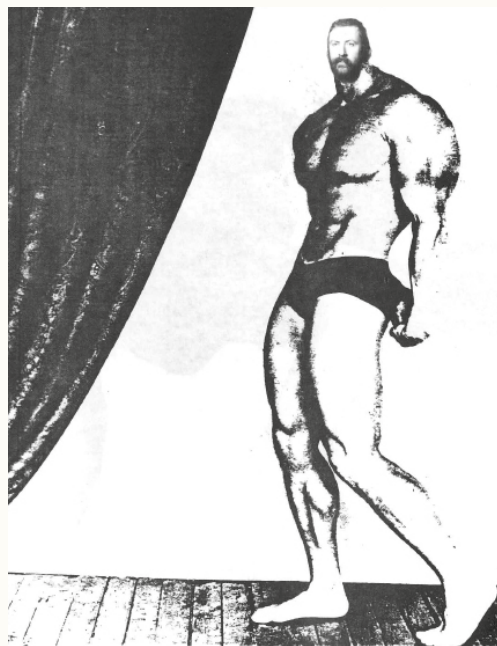
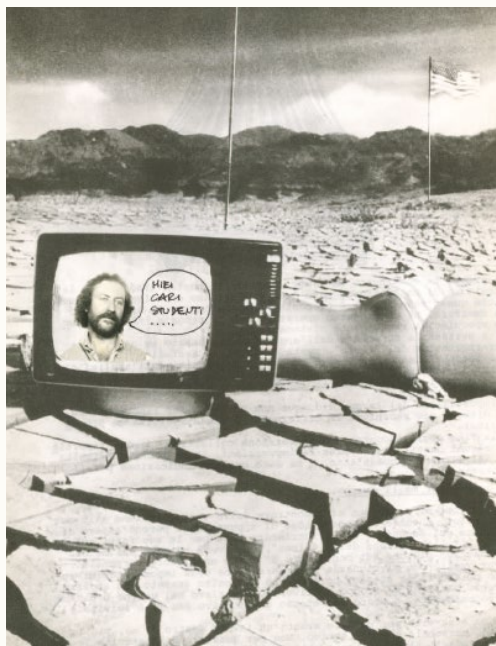


Figure 2.
Collages created by Alberto
Seassaro for teaching materials
(1980s).



of his secretaries, personalized only by a small display cabinet on the wall behind him. On the cabinet door, small snapshots of the newest arrivals in the Seassaro family, first his granddaughter Caterina, then his great-grandson Enea; a large photographic image of the Dean, Cesare Stevan, with a cut-out of a human heart in anatomical form glued to his chest and, drawn beneath it in red marker, a cascade of little droplets of blood: a collage made by Seassaro himself. Inside, proudly on view, a few little elephants – his cherished animal –, gifts from colleagues returning from some exotic trip; fines to be paid; airline tickets; loose sachets of *Aulin*; *Citrosodina*, which he gulped by the spoonful or poured straight into his mouth from the yellow tin; spray cream – the antidote to the *Citrosodina* – which he would spray into his mouth during long phone calls, producing that characteristic sound of a moka pot coming to the boil, a noise that those of us around him always suggested he decode for whoever was on the other end of the line. He felt no such need, so serenely did he live and behave, freed from the pruderies of the etiquette rules of a conformist good-manners guide.

On one side of the cabinet, a clipping from *La Repubblica* of a cartoon by Massimo Bucchi with the line *L'ambizione più diffusa è restare fermi un giro* [the most widespread ambition is to sit out a round], replaced a few years later, in the new dean's office in Building B1 on via Candiani, as a sign of a thought that updates with time while remaining the same, by an Altan cartoon reading *Vorrei vivere alla giornata, ma mi manca la necessaria visione strategica* [I'd like to live day to day, but I lack the necessary strategic vision].

Small flashes of an everyday working context that, taken together, become a self-presentation of the Seassaro spirit.

To bring it into focus, we need to pause, since we've mentioned them, on his proverbial work tables. Tables with heaps of sheets of every format (but chiefly A3 sheets, *because on A4 you can't unfold even the simplest thought*), in every color (I recall his passion for vividly colored reams of A3, which he sought out because color functioned as a tool of thematic classification and, consequently, as a visual cue amid the welter of documents inhabiting tables and surfaces), mixed with (equally colorful) document folders; clippings from magazines and newspapers; photographic images; layers of semi-worked materials; doodles, posters, flyers, mail, business cards, phone numbers; notes, *pizzini* [slips of paper], and missives from colleagues: the gathering, sediment, and stratification of a way of working in which no work can ever be said to be concluded and in which time does not proceed linearly but travels on multiple parallel planes, where many things occur at once, sometimes separately, sometimes intersecting, producing even unplanned solutions. Like searching for a particular competence to add to the teaching framework and finding the name he hadn't thought of in the catalogue of the exhibition lying there before his eyes, on the table, precisely. The table is also the place where public and private problems coexist, bills to be paid and letters to the Rector in a continuum that is life itself [14](#).

After all, planes are the philosophical places of singular and chance encounters, as Foucault teaches us (Foucault, 1978). Places where information, data, problems, and concepts, coexisting as distinct material, can, precisely by virtue of unusual proximities and juxtapositions that at first glance seem unlikely, arrive at innovative syntheses. It is not so much the singularity and heterogeneous nature of what



lies on the table that captures the imagination but, according to Foucault, the very power of contagion, the possibility of generating unthinkable mixtures deriving from the «reduction of

the interstices» separating one thing from another (Foucault, 1978, p. 6).

The pileups of elements originally separate that later find affinities allow us to grasp certain modes of contemporary innovative thought that works through *collage* and *bricolage*, techniques of making and thinking widely used by Alberto Seassaro, who was accustomed to producing

innovative – at times risky – juxtapositions starting from conceptual materials and, at times, even from human materials that were not easily associable at first glance.

After all, the criteria that drive associations and analogies are personal and strongly connected to the subject's cultural history, a history inclined to include rather than exclude. And indeed, as Maffessoli teaches us, collage does not discriminate because «collage is *stricto sensu* a metaphor that carries into the same place, that brings together» (Maffessoli, 1986, p. 123).

The studio posters themselves can be considered a place – the place – where Seassaro brought distant and diverse thoughts and people into convergence, as Michel Foucault put it: «like, on the operating-room table, the umbrella and the sewing machine» (Foucault, 1978, p. 6). The most disparate materials on the table, gathered over time, cut out from their original contexts, constituted, in fact, a reservoir of suggestions from which to draw so they could be re-aggregated. These elements, in fact, once brought together, then and only then, existed and took shape, becoming real and, above all, realistic, possible, indeed obvious. Behind those names juxtaposed at first by sheer intuition, there followed hours of dialogue, discussion, verification, adjustments, changes of course. In this, he was certainly helped



by solid knowledge; by his artistic and personal history, rich in encounters, friendships, loves, relationships, opportunities, experiences cultivated in what he liked to call *cazzeggio libero* [unstructured messing around], to which he attached considerable importance and to which we will return in the closing.

And he was probably helped as well by always being in a sought-and-willed *altrove* [elsewhere] with respect to the places, debates, and salons of design, whose mainstream, for him, authentically popular, was always to be observed from a proper distance.

His way of designing the new consisted in proceeding by parts and by integrations, without letting himself be shackled by preordained schemes or by scaffolds and perimeters established a priori, while keeping very clear what the context made available to him, including the constraints which he was in any case highly skilled at circumventing (never underestimating them but riding them in order to subvert them in the project; after all, *sparigliare le carte* [to reshuffle the cards], that is, to change the rules of the game, create disruption, or sow confusion, was among his declared ambitions) and the system's topics of interest, which he was well disposed to pick up and embrace. The very ends of the institutional project were shaped step by step, revisited and adapted to the context's resources and needs, filtered through the lens of a mode of thinking that was always political, never innocent. A *modus operandi* that very sharply captures his *forma mentis* when faced with the complexities of design.

As we stated in the Introduction to this text: «The disruptive force of Alberto Seassaro's action lies precisely in taking what the system has at its disposal, in terms of human resources, knowledge, instrumentation, spaces, organizational customs, and, through painstaking work of adaptation, micro-transformations, and tactics, designing a strategic action of unimaginable scope [...]».

È il meglio che abbiamo; Sono i migliori che abbiamo [This is the best we have; They're the best we've got], he would say to colleagues and collaborators whenever, faced with specific needs, one could respond in human and material terms only with *soluzioni arrangiate* [makeshift solutions] (another expression he used frequently). And in that *they're the best we've got* there echoes *il migliore dei mondi possibili* [the best of all possible worlds] from Voltaire's *Candide* – a reading he loved and

had raised to a life philosophy – together with a critique of easy optimism, according to which *everything is fine in the best of all possible worlds*. (Voltaire, 1950) His strength, instead, lay in everyday commitment, in reckoning with the concreteness and limits of reality.

From the very beginning it was clear to him – and it was his guiding spirit – that patience and time would help to fine-tune contents and means more *acconci* [fitting] (another term he used frequently). After all, as Sennett reminds us (2009, p. 19), in the *artigiano-demiurgo* [artisan-demiurge] [see the Introduction in this text], «the use of imperfect or partial tools stimulates the imagination to develop the capacity to repair, to improvise». In the same way, the lack of resources perfectly suited to the ends forced one to come to terms with them – not by reducing them, but by adapting, adjusting, and reorienting them.

Particularly noteworthy here is the concept of *contingency*, which the epistemologist Tagliagambe (1997, p. 48) interprets as an incentive to change one's current situation through transformative explorations typical of creative activity. It is a form of creativity, the one generated by contingency, that knows how to choose alternatives that are not only conceivable but also concretely achievable.

De Certeau speaks in this regard of *minute techniques* (2001, p. 9), an inventiveness governed precisely by the art of making do that leads to recombining heterogeneous elements and knowledges on the basis of a practical intelligence that, astutely, invents procedures, adapts schemes (ibidem, p. 96), transfers and reuses subjects and knowledges by exploiting the multiple potentialities implicit in each, while at the same time following the principle that many elements/people are replaceable with others. These are forms of design that draw on whatever the context makes available to produce results that do not claim to be replicable or to become a model, but simply to resolve *contingencies*. They are processes that evolutionary approaches to innovation have described precisely as practices of *bricolage* (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Ceruti, 1995): ingenious practices triggered by necessity, supported by an intuitive, hands-on sense, able to set in motion our intrinsic ability to repurpose what is available for performances different from those for which things were designed, recombining them, or recombining some of their parts or elements, and at times yielding original outcomes (Joyce & Craig, 2011). Results that, though deriving from

the fortuitousness of the available elements that dictate the logic of their assembly, once realized seem to be «the most obvious thing» one could have done (Freeman, 2007). The action of the *bricoleur* is in fact characterized by the use of materials and components that are imperfect, suboptimal with respect to the intended outcome, and in this way the very purpose, partly shaped by what is available for use, is itself resolved in an approximate yet effective manner. (Lévi-Strauss, 1966)

This stepwise proceeding through successive adaptations, with ends that narrow in scope and transform over time while nonetheless producing effects of great impact, has much to do, as we noted above, with contemporary modes of design, where grand narratives give way to local and transitory elaborations of meaning. (Penati, 2006)

From many quarters, this trait has been discussed, with the claim that in Seassaro it stemmed from his anarchic spirit.

I believe that, despite his readings of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and the theoretical writings on anarchy that nourished his youth, and despite what was said about him, Seassaro was not anarchist, especially if one thinks of anarchy in its cultural sense. I think that Alberto Seassaro's way of thinking and designing, both in projects of more limited scope and in the major projects he brought to maturity, drew more from a Dadaist way of doing and thinking.

His Dadaist bent is evident in his habitual use of modes – of thinking, making, and comportment – that, by analogy with the logic underlying collage practices, lead him to generate innovative meanings, selecting and assembling, in a randomness only apparent, source materials that acquire significance solely in the final project.

And this way of being also emerges in his frequent use of the Dadaist idiom *il pensiero mi si forma in bocca* [my thought forms in my mouth], which he had elevated to a mode of observation, reflection, and judgment, indicating a thought not pre-constituted but taking shape in speech, in argumentation. In argumentation it seeks the grounds of its own credibility.

Dadaist, then, in the way of organizing thought as well as in narrative style: why have a fixed lesson in its contents and telling? The outline is enough, and then the contents are improvised, as in jazz scores; why organize a talk, a presentation according to a sequence of slides? The succession of slides conditions thought, whereas among con-

cepts one can invent endless links and sequences. This is why those who followed his lectures for years maintain they never heard one identical to the previous. This is why, in shaping the teaching framework – even when the results had proved gratifying both in the themes proposed and in the groups of instructors included in the Study Manifesto, he never tried to crystallize the educational offering; on the contrary, his motto remained: *Every year we change!; Create unique, unrepeatable realities; Never propose the same topic again, never place the instructor in the same slot. Routine kills design pedagogy; What kind of instructors are those who, in 2000, teach using acetates from 1965, while outside these walls everything has changed!?*

The teaching work groups were likewise composed by often selecting personalities, experiences, and project visions at opposite poles on the plane of theoretical-critical reflection. Or, if dissimilar personalities were not placed in the same group, they were brought to meet students in successive teaching experiences, so much did he abhor the idea of a single way of thinking, of the *scuola di pensiero* [school of thought]. He never shared absolute, dogmatic visions. He cultivated the idea of the anti-model so that each student could be formed while being contaminated by diverse poetics and cultures of design.

But let us linger a moment longer on *collage and photomontage* as ways to construct reality, to rectify it, to reinvent it. Collage provides unconventional means of inventing new realities by making their different facets perceptible, as was typical of the Cubists, but it also offers unusual ways of representing reality by juxtaposing different materials and techniques, introducing defamiliarizing inserts into given contexts, or rendering certain elements dystopian through their juxtaposition.

And for Seassaro, collage was also a true instrument of representation. Here a fundamental role was played by his immersion in artistic culture and his deep knowledge, not only theoretical but practiced during his years of study in Brera, of pictorial techniques, from the most traditional to those of the avant-gardes.

His penchant for collage was always and inevitably accompanied by a mania for cutting things out: removing from their original context any article, cartoon, or magazine cover that caught his interest, so as to make them available for new contexts of use. This ran from his youth to his very last days. Hence containers filled with meticulously ordered

clippings: from the covers of *Alfabeta* and *La gola* (by Pedrazzini) to those of *Il Male* (by Liberatore), *Frigidaire* (by Pazienza, Scòzzari, and others), up to Altan's satirical cartoons, as well as Umberto Eco's *Bus-tine di Minerva*, Umberto Galimberti's essays in *il Venerdì di Repubblica*, and so on. Cutting out is an act that, in itself, already summons infinite possibilities of reuse.

A device used to facilitate a thought that is never improvised, yet susceptible to those modifications and deepenings that can emerge from time to time when reflecting on the structure and on the ways of articulating the unfolding of the project, and that may require integrations, inserts, or even a revisiting of the order and sequence of topics. A way of thinking and representing thought that is already born hyper-textual, with cross-referencing marks, off-page additions, corrections, erasures, and displayed shifts of position. In Seassaro's many writings, contemporary and friend of Isgrò, it is immediately evident that erasures, too, are a text, one that lets us intuit the leaps and transitions of thought.

A device accompanied by a kit of narrative marks, figures and symbols placed on the page to meet the need to communicate mental processes and paths more effectively, including the possibility of going back and putting everything back where it started. A writing made not only of words, but of spaces and directions that are themselves already a visual text, and then signs, drawings, diagrams, tables. The cosmos boxed in and ordered with tailorly precision across pages crowded with thoughts that, despite their apparent visual disorder, are born already expressed in an utterly finished form.

There is at least one further path that must be followed through to the end to grasp the qualities of his way of thinking by designing: it is total immersion in artistic languages and, more broadly, in visual languages, in writing through images, and among these, in particular, that of comics, which shapes his design style. Comics provide him with the visual-culture tools that fuel his distinctive way of explaining and accompanying the processual phases of the project, through script-graphic narratives made of drawings, tables, and illustrations to support or make written texts more immediate, or, conversely, to contaminate project pages with written notations. His attraction to forms of visual text also came from his earliest, rudimentary learning

tools: above all the illustrated pages of the *Enciclopedia dei ragazzi* [Children's Encyclopedia], which, by his own account, he had avidly absorbed and from which he said he learned all the essentials at a time when the encyclopedia still had the power to encompass and catalogue all available knowledge, offering it through the richness of images derived from an important tradition, that of didactic illustration. A great comfort for a generation whose schoolbooks were almost devoid of images. He would recount that children's books, too, lacked them, and when illustrated pages did appear, imaginative worlds opened up for him beyond the text. And indeed, his vast historical, geographical, and artistic knowledge was highly vivid, and he always sought, even in oral storytelling, to render it visually.

The panoptic urge to fix complex systems with pen in hand by translating them into visual syntheses is remembered by everyone who worked with him and who had the arduous task of digitizing what he had produced by hand. His tables, his procedural and schematizing drawings did not merely represent what existed; they were already configurations and preconfigurations capable of giving a precise relational order to the various elements. In other words, they were always acts of design that contemplated multiple alternatives.

These schemas could range from the Study Manifesto, for which he defined a format still in use today, a visually codified world of complex information that set out the educational programming framework for each degree program, all the way to more complex schemas (such as those that related upper-secondary studies to university courses, to Master's programs, *Corsi professionalizzanti* [professionalizing courses], *Corsi d'alta specializzazione* [advanced specialization courses], PhD programs, etc.). Schemas conceived, for example, so that a student could grasp at a glance, without reading pages and pages of the Student Guide, the Faculty's entire educational offering, with the many options available to them in their university and post-university path.

In producing the schema, he had in mind, already from the first stroke, the entire *canovaccio* [framework], the proportion, and the placement of the various parts in the page space, by virtue of their interactions. Collage intervened as a *remedium* where some element had to be integrated because it had not been foreseen or had emerged in the course of the project. We all remember the famous

A.S. 26/4

VIAIO IN GRAN GARABAGUA

(dalla raccolta notiziata tempo
(RUSCONI 1981))

Di Henry MICHAUX e di SEARSAPO

pitore infornale
 scrittore di chiese di viaggio veni (Ecuador 1923)
 o immaginazioni Viaggio in Gran Garabagua (1981)
 Nel paese della magia
 Qui Pademmi

Scrive e dipinge in viaggio
 o in "trip"
 sotto effetto dell'acido (LSD)

Preziosi il senso della quotidianità
 nelle sue descrizioni: non c'è storia - né tempo
 né grandi eventi

è sempre il particolare
 il personale
 che determina un senso anomalo
 del generale
 del politico

M. è un antropologo dell'immaginario.
 descrive se stesso nelle infinite possibilità del suo 10.

L'10 diventa mondo, Universo, totalità

"10 è fatto di tutto. Una flessione in una frase, si tratta forse di un altro io che cerca di apparire? Se il 10 è il mio io è di un secondo io? Io non è che provvisorio (forse) faccia davanti a qualcuno, io ad Ammonio che si cambia in un'altra lingua, in un'altra parte) e quello di un nuovo personaggio, che un incidente, una coincidenza, un colpo sulla testa libera per l'esclusione del precedente, e con sapere generale, spesso formato istantaneamente. Tra dunque gli del tutto continuo. Forse non si è fatti per un solo io. Si ha tutto a velocità attente. Pregiudizi dell'unità. In una doppia, tripla, quadrupla vita, ci si sentirebbe soggiornare a proprio agio, come così e paralizzanti del subconscio mille al conetti (ovattati degli altri io sopiti). La più grande fatica di una giornata e di una vita potrebbe proprio essere dovuta alla sforzo, alla tensione necessaria per conservare uno stesso io attraverso le tentazioni continue di cambiamento".

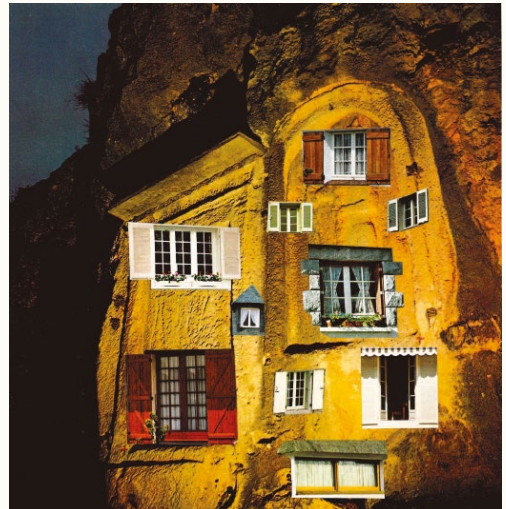
M. si identifica con tutti gli 10 diversi 10 possibili.

Il suo 10 si espone, e assume (involontariamente?) aspetti e comportamenti di altre forme di 10 esistenti.

La dominanza degli 10, invitata per non dover soffrire la realtà, al tempo stesso la rivela.

(Lo stesso procedimento che c'è in Quiver)

Il vero 10, è sempre la morte: presente sempre.



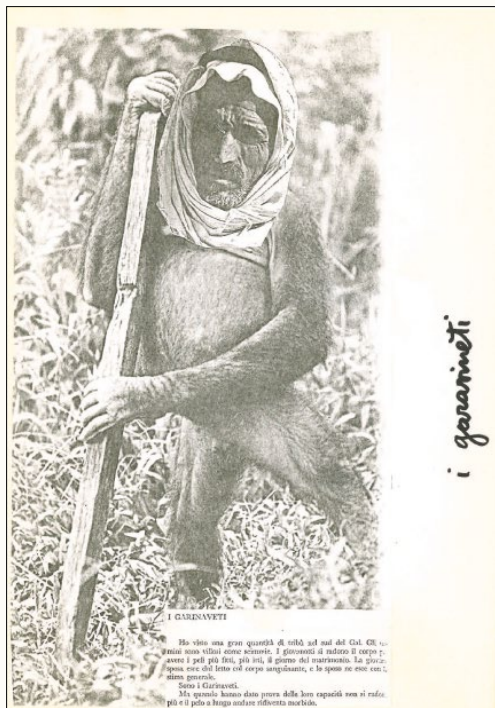


Figure 3.
Visual translations of Michaux's text *Voyage to the Great Garabagne* created using the collage technique by Alberto Seassaro and used as teaching material for Architecture students.

giunte [add-on joints] of multiple sheets, or intersections of sheets within sheets.

Alberto Seassaro's verbal language was anything but banal, both in written prose and in speech. A language of warm, empathetic humanity, trained by his readings of François Rabelais, among his favorite authors. Characterized also by great lexical richness, with the use of concrete, colloquial, popular, and even dialectal terms: a collage here as well. In this he bore the imprint of writers like Gadda, whose work he was introduced to by Bruna Bianchi, a fine linguist and translator, his companion for many years.

He grasped in Gadda the plurality of linguistic registers – from scientific and philosophical terms to archaic usages and even dialect – that he especially flaunted in his writings. Some of his recurring words – *alfine* [at last], *vieppiù* [all the more], *verboso* [verbose], *imperituro* [undying], *acconcio* [fitting], *cimento* [trial], *tenzone* [contest], *scalchignato* [battered], *macché* [no way], *sgorbagna* [colloquial: a mess/kludge], *cippirimerlo* [zilch; sweet nothing], *ciau pep* [colloquial interjection: *so long!*] – and some of his sayings – *El püsse san el g'ha la rognà* [the healthiest one has the mange; i.e., even the perfect have flaws] – testify to a repertoire ranging from slang to high register to dialect. And, on this last front, one cannot overlook the influence exerted by his unbridled love for Jannacci's texts – to whom he would have awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

He was also quick to coin neologisms: *abluire* [to blue-highlight], for example, a term he used to indicate the act of highlighting text on a computer (which, as is known, turns bluish); *ignatico* [enig-stagnant], a midpoint between *enigmatico* [enigmatic] and *stagnante* [stagnant] (as in *qui la situazione si fa ignatica* to say a situation is complex and knotted), where the onomatopoetic *gn* digraph perhaps owes something to Gadda's neologism «*gnommero*» [snarl; tangle]. Or *museabile* [museum-worthy; museable], as Eleonora Lupo and Raffaella Trocchianesi remind us in their chapter.

To close, two notes on Seassaro's thought. The first describes Alberto Seassaro's way of working with fellow colleagues.

Alberto Seassaro belonged to a generation that Andrea Branzi, speaking of Joe Colombo, a few years younger than Seassaro and in some respects his inspiration, baptizes as *the jazz generation* (Branzi, 2011, p. 5).

A generation that «knew [...] how to sense that the era of great harmonies, of great symphonies, was coming to an end and, in their place, an anarchic social creativity was taking the stage» (Branzi, 2011, p. 5), with the magic of chorality, with deft improvisation outside given scores, with solo performances yet effects in unison. Having worked with Alberto Seassaro for a very long time, I cannot recall a single project conceived without, at its base, the inclination to form a group, to let each person play their part, introducing individual creativity and interpretation held together by an adaptive score; to accept *off-program – off-score*, precisely – as something to be valued; to build ironclad design processes in which, however, the flexibility of collective intelligence made room for improvisation; to welcome the combination of different rhythms and sensibilities; to make working together light and engaging. In this task, he put in the swing himself! Among the stories drawn from his musical past, jazz emerges as a metaphor for a certain way of understanding creative interaction among people and for the necessity of yielding something personal so the group can prevail. That is how his first youthful jazz-band project was born: Alberto Seassaro, a proud trumpet player, realizing there were too many trumpets in the group, said, *evabbé io suonerò il banjo altrimenti la band non si fa* [fine, I'll play the banjo, otherwise the band won't happen]. With all due respect to Charlie Parker! Controlled jazz anarchy is a fitting image for twenty years of working together.

The second concerns Alberto Seassaro's relationship with making and the relationship between his making and time.

Procrastination was the watchword. Wasting time was a conquest of life. Alberto Seassaro's success is undoubtedly the product of his brilliant, visionary ideas, of his bold ruptures and his battles to achieve the impossible, but above all of continuous, intense, almost obsessive work. Intensity is a hallmark that aptly characterizes both his being and his doing, and it attests to his passion.

And yet that *continuum* consisted, at once, of an attention that never shifted from the objective and of working in fits and starts: meditative pauses in a wandering without apparent destinations. In those moments he was elusive.

No sooner did his eyes light up at a new goal to chase, and no sooner had he unleashed his stalwarts on projects whose ultimate meaning

only he mastered, than, after stirring up half the world, creating expectations, setting deadlines, the running after things would diabolically turn into being chased by things. The things to be done became an obsession; the things to be done constrained him, distressed him. Keeping him from being ensnared became everyone's job.

These pauses, these intervals, were a necessity: as a deadline approached, urgency made him razor-sharp, productive, focused: there he was, writing in one sweep, almost without hesitation or second thoughts, and mapping out cluster-projects that touched teaching, research, and design simultaneously.

Wasting time as an art. He loved rewatching Fellini's interview on the loss of time elevated to a lifestyle, indeed, to a true life goal. But not the wasted time of *I vitelloni*, idle time in pursuit of vainglorious aims (another term belonging to Seassaro's vocabulary, which he had duly underlined in his reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*), rather time spent seeking the *intervallo perduto* [lost interval], distraction, detachment, separation, the zones of passage between one thing and another, the voids that must be cultivated because there, precisely there, unexpected experiences can occur. Wasting time as the art of the pause that adds knowledge.

When he put his head down to work, even then intense labor never coincided with optimizing time and energy. On the contrary, if he could, he lingered *wasting time* even during work time. *Never optimize! Optimization was an annoyance, a mortal sin of the contemporary age! In design, economies of scale, the pared-down approach, don't pay; you must always do more, overflow.* Why do little when you can do a lot? Why work by day if you can work at night? Why work on weekdays if you can work on Sunday! To the complainers he'd reply: *you're bound to petty-bourgeois rules!* Then, though, he'd make himself forgiven by bringing you something he knew you adored, for example *caldarroste* [roasted chestnuts] kept warm in his *blu marin* [navy blue] sweater, to quote Jannacci's *Musical*. Perhaps it is the sum of these traits as «the breezy tone even on the most important occasions [...] while at the same time maintaining a subtle sense of institutions combined with the ability not to lose sight of every small detail of the world around him in order to inscribe it within the design he has in mind», as Luciano Crespi recounts in his chapter in this volume. Or the union of «a

firm determination and a vision that might have seemed impracticable, with the gifts of a fine strategist, concealed by irony and by a *dégagé* attitude that neither intimidated the world of architects nor alerted them to his real intentions», as Cristina Tonelli instead relates here, or, again, his deftness in the «microphysics of building», as Flaviano Celaschi reminds us in his chapter, that led Alberto Seassaro to *depistare* [throw off the scent], to use again a term that appears in Luciano Crespi's chapter, an entire system marked by decades of inertia, proceeding step by step, collage by collage, inexorably toward the goal. A goal that he himself had neither foreseen nor perhaps fully wanted, so great was his desire for a free life. From the day after his retirement, Alberto Seassaro no longer concerned himself with anything relating to Politecnico di Milano. To those who asked him for news of the Politecnico he would reply: *Politecnico? It was my job, I loved it and it gave me much, but it wasn't my life. My life is elsewhere.*

References

- Branzi, A. (2011). Joe Colombo. Fagone V. e I. Favata (a cura di). *Joe Colombo*. Il Sole24ore.
- Ceruti, M. (1995). *Evoluzione senza fondamenti*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- De Certeau, M. (2001). *L'invenzione del quotidiano*. Roma: Edizioni Lavoro.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *Le parole e le cose*. Milano: Rizzoli.
- Joyce, S. R., & Craig, B. (2011). Methodological Bricolage – What does it tell us about Design?. Retrieved April, 3, 2023. New Castle: Northumbria University Press. <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/8822/>.
- Freeman, R. (2007). Epistemological bricolage. How practitioners make sense of learning. *Administration & Society*, 39(4), 476-496.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966). *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Maffessoli, M. (1986). *La conoscenza ordinaria. Compendio di sociologia compendente*. Bologna: Cappelli.
- Penati, A. (2006). Design come motore di innovazione di sistema. Bertola, P. e Manzini, E. (Eds). *Design multiverso. Appunti di fenomenologia del design*. Milano: POLI.design, pp. 59-70.
- Sennett, R. (2009). *L'uomo artigiano*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Tagliagambe, S. (1997). *Epistemologia del confine*. Milano: Il Saggiatore.
- Voltaire, (1950). *Candido*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Acknowledgements / Ringraziamenti

Design Philology research project was promoted and supported by the Department of Design at Politecnico di Milano (as part of the *Design for Systemic Change* project funded by Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca within the Dipartimenti di Eccellenza Program 2023-2027), the School of Design, and the POLI.design Consortium.

Il progetto *Design Philology* è stato promosso e sostenuto dal Dipartimento di Design del Politecnico di Milano (come parte del progetto *Design per il Cambiamento Sistemico* finanziato dal Ministero dell'Università e Ricerca nell'ambito del Bando Dipartimenti di Eccellenza 2023-2027), dalla Scuola del Design e dal Consorzio POLI.design.

Authors / Autori

Paola Bertola

PhD in Industrial Design and Multimedia Communication and full professor of Design at Politecnico di Milano. She teaches in the MScs in *Design for the Fashion System*, *Product Service System Design* and *Management Engineering* at Politecnico and in several international programs. She is Deputy Director of the Department of Design and Scientific Director of the Gianfranco Ferré Research Centre. She coordinates the joint program with the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. She is cofounder of *Fashion in Process Lab* within the Department of Design. Her research focuses on creative processes, and the role of design in guiding digital transformation in CCIIs, as a key driver towards more sustainable and equitable paradigms. In 2011 she was awarded with the ADI *Compasso d'Oro* Prize for Research.

PhD in Disegno Industriale e Comunicazione Multimediale e professoressa ordinaria di Design presso il Politecnico di Milano. Insegna nei Corsi di Laurea Magistrale in *Design for the Fashion System*, *Product Service System Design* e Ingegneria Gestionale presso il Politecnico,

oltre che in diversi programmi internazionali. È Vicedirettrice del Dipartimento di Design e Direttrice Scientifica del Centro di Ricerca Gianfranco Ferré. Coordina il programma congiunto con il Fashion Institute of Technology di New York. È cofondatrice del *Fashion in Process Lab* all'interno del Dipartimento di Design. La sua ricerca si concentra sui processi creativi e sul ruolo del design nell'orientare la trasformazione digitale nelle industrie culturali e creative (CCIs), come elemento chiave per paradigmi più sostenibili ed equi. Nel 2011 ha ricevuto il Premio Compasso d'Oro ADI per la Ricerca.

Luigi Bistagnino

Architect and designer. He promotes the zero-waste transformation of agri-food and industrial systems. Former Full Professor of Design at Politecnico di Torino, he founded the Bachelor's Degree in Design (1996); the Systemic Design research group; the Master's Degree in Systemic Design (2002). Coordinator of the Doctoral Board in Design (1996–2015). He teaches courses at the University of Lyon, ECAM (France), UEMG (Brazil). Co-founder of the Systemic Design Research and Education Center, Politecnico di Torino. He sits on the scientific committee of Deloitte & Touche's Food & Agriculture research and on the committee of the UNISG Sustainability Laboratory, Pollenzo. Research coordinator, among his publications: *microMACRO*, the complex of systemic micro-relations generates the new economic-productive model (2016).

Architetto e designer. Promuove la trasformazione a zero rifiuti dei sistemi agroalimentari e industriali. Già Professore Ordinario di Design al Politecnico di Torino, fonda il Corso di Laurea in Design (1996); il gruppo di ricerca Design Sistemico; la Laurea Magistrale in Design Sistemico (2002). Coordinatore del Collegio di dottorato in Design (1996–2015). Tiene corsi presso l'Università di Lione, ECAM (Francia), UEMG (Brasile). Cofondatore del Systemic Design Research and Education Center, Politecnico di Torino. È nel comitato scientifico della ricerca Food&Agricoltura di Deloitte&Touche e nel comitato del Laboratorio Sostenibilità UNISG, Pollenzo. Coordinatore di ricerche, tra le sue pubblicazioni: *microMACRO*, il complesso delle micro relazioni sistemiche genera il nuovo modello economico-produttivo (2016).

Giampiero Bosoni

Full Professor of Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design. An architect, he collaborated with Figini and Pollini, Gregotti, and Mari, with whom he developed an interest in the theory and history of architecture and design. He has written and edited about 20 books and published more than 300 articles in international journals. In 1997 he founded the Permanent Collection of the Triennale Design Museum in Milan. In 2009 MoMA in New York commissioned him the book *Italian Design* dedicated to the Italian section of their collection. President (2018–21) of the Italian Association of Design Historians and co-editor of the AIS/design Journal (2022–2025). Member of the Scientific Committee of the Fondazione Alinari (2008) and of the Centro Ricerche Ferré (2021), and board member of the Fondazione CASVA (2022).

Professore Ordinario di Architettura di interni e allestimento. Architetto, ha collaborato con Figini e Pollini, Gregotti e Mari, con i quali ha sviluppato l'interesse per la teoria e la storia dell'architettura e del design. Ha scritto e curato circa 20 libri e pubblicato più di 300 articoli in riviste internazionali. Nel 1997 ha dato vita alla Collezione Permanente del Museo del Design Triennale di Milano. Nel 2009 il MoMA di NY lo incarica del libro *Italian Design* dedicato alla sezione italiana della loro collezione. Presidente (2018–21) dell'Associazione Italiana Storici del Design e co-direttore della rivista AIS/design Journal (2022–2025). Membro del Comitato Scientifico della Fondazione Alinari (2008) e del Centro Ricerche Ferré (2021) e consigliere d'amministrazione della Fondazione CASVA (2022).

Bianca Bottero

Former Full Professor of Architectural Technology, she taught Environmental Design at the Second Faculty of Architecture at Politecnico di Milano. She carried out research on urban design, sustainability, and social housing with the ABITA Laboratory, which she directed. In 1987, together with Spagnoli and others, she created the international yearbook *Housing*, which she directed until 2000. With the *Associazione Alfabeti*, she teaches Italian to non-EU women in the San Siro neighborhood. Among her writings and edited volumes: *Progetto e gestione dello spazio nelle società complesse* (1984); *Progetto o metodo. Var-*

iazioni sul tema della Salina di C. N. Ledoux (1988); *Decostruzione in architettura e in filosofia* [Deconstruction in Architecture and in Philosophy] (1991; 2002); *Progettare e costruire nella complessità. Lezioni di bioarchitettura* (1993); with Di Salvo and Faré, *Architetture del desiderio* (2011). Recent writings: *Città vs cittadini? No grazie* (2023); *Città femminili? Ahimè, non ancora* (2024); *L'urbanistica è quantistica* (2025).

Già Professore Ordinario di Tecnologia dell'architettura, ha insegnato Progettazione ambientale presso la II Facoltà di Architettura del Politecnico di Milano. Ha svolto ricerche sulla progettazione urbana, la sostenibilità e l'abitazione sociale col Laboratorio ABITA da lei diretto. Nel 1987 ha creato con Spagnoli e altri l'annuario internazionale *Housing* diretto fino al 2000. Con l'Associazione Alfabeti, insegna italiano alle donne extracomunitarie del quartiere San Siro. Tra i suoi scritti e curatele: *Progetto e gestione dello spazio nelle società complesse* (1984); *Progetto o metodo. Variazioni sul tema della Salina di C. N. Ledoux* (1988); *Decostruzione in architettura e in filosofia* (1991; 2002); *Progettare e costruire nella complessità. Lezioni di bioarchitettura* (1993); con Di Salvo e Faré, *Architetture del desiderio* (2011). Scritti recenti: *Città vs cittadini? No grazie* (2023); *Città femminili? Ahimè, non ancora* (2024); *L'urbanistica è quantistica* (2025).

Flaviano Celaschi

PhD, Full Professor of Design, University of Bologna. He works on advanced design and innovation driven by project cultures. He taught at Politecnico di Milano (1995–2004 and 2009–2012); at Politecnico di Torino (2004–2009); at the University of Bologna (since 2012). He co-founded with Alberto Seassaro the first Italian Department of Design at Politecnico di Milano and the university consortium POLI.Design. He founded and directed the *Centro di Ricerca per le Imprese Culturali e Creative* at the University of Bologna; the Design School of UNISINOS in Porto Alegre, RGS, Brazil; he has taught and taken part in conferences and workshops worldwide. Dean of Italian professors of Design; scientific lead of Spoke 1 of the national research PNRR PE11 – *Made in Italy Circolare e Sostenibile*.

PhD, Professore Ordinario di Design, Università di Bologna. Si occupa di advanced design e innovazione guidata dalle culture del progetto. Ha insegnato al Politecnico di Milano (1995-2004 e 2009-2012); al Politecnico di Torino (2004-2009); all'Università di Bologna (dal 2012). Ha co-fondato con Alberto Seassaro il primo Dipartimento di Design italiano presso il Politecnico di Milano e il Consorzio universitario POLI.Design. Ha fondato e diretto il *Centro di Ricerca per le imprese Culturali e Creative* presso l'Università di Bologna; la Scuola di Design di UNISINOS a Porto Alegre in RGS Brasile; ha insegnato e partecipato a convegni e workshop in tutto il mondo. Decano dei professori italiani di Design; responsabile scientifico dello spoke 1 della Ricerca Nazionale PNRR PE11 – *Made in Italy Circolare e Sostenibile*.

Luisa Collina

PhD, Full Professor of Design at Politecnico di Milano, she works on service design, interior design, and strategic design. Since 2000 she has held various roles within the Design System at Politecnico di Milano: Head of International Relations of the School of Design (2000–2015); Coordinator of the Master's in *Product-Service System Design* (2005–2015); Dean of the School of Design (2016–2021); and Coordinator of the *Landscape, Environments, and Mobility Design* Section of the Department of Design (2023–present). From 2013 to 2019 she served as President of the international association Cumulus, of which she is currently Honorary President. Since January 2024 she has been Vice President of Fondazione Politecnico di Milano.

Dottore di ricerca, Professore Ordinario di Design al Politecnico di Milano, si interessa di design dei servizi, interni e design strategico. A partire dal 2000 assume diversi ruoli all'interno del Sistema Design del Politecnico di Milano: è stata responsabile delle relazioni internazionali della Scuola di Design (dal 2000 al 2015); coordinatrice del Master in Product-Service System Design (dal 2005 al 2015); Preside della Scuola di Design (dal 2016 al 2021) e coordinatrice della Sezione *Design del paesaggio, degli ambienti e della mobilità* del Dipartimento di Design (dal 2023 ad oggi). Dal 2013 al 2019 è stata Presidente dell'associazione internazionale Cumulus, di cui è attualmente Presidente Onorario. Da gennaio 2024 è Vicepresidente della Fondazione Politecnico di Milano.

Giancarlo Consonni

Poet, painter, urban planner, and historian of architecture and the city. He is Professor Emeritus of Urban Planning at Politecnico di Milano. He directs the Archivio Piero Bottoni. His research ranges from the formation processes of the contemporary metropolis to architectural and urban culture, the historical-anthropological characteristics of spatiality, and urban design. His latest book is *Non si salva il pianeta se non si salvano le città* (Quodlibet, 2024). He has published seven poetry collections: with Scheiwiller, *Viridarium* (1987) and *In breve volo* (1994); with Einaudi, *Vûs* (1997), *Lui* (2003), *Filovia* (2016), *Pinoli* (2021), and *Il conforto dell'ombra* (2025). His pictorial work is partly gathered in fourteen small volumes published by La Vita Felice.

Poeta, pittore, urbanista e storico dell'architettura e della città. È Professore Emerito di Urbanistica del Politecnico di Milano. Dirige l'Archivio Piero Bottoni. Le sue ricerche spaziano dai processi di formazione della metropoli contemporanea alla cultura architettonica e urbanistica, ai caratteri storico-antropologici della spazialità, al disegno urbano. Il suo ultimo libro si intitola *Non si salva il pianeta se non si salvano le città* (Quodlibet, 2024). Ha pubblicato 7 raccolte di poesia: con l'editore Scheiwiller, *Viridarium* (1987) e *In breve volo* (1994); con l'editore Einaudi, *Vûs* (1997), *Lui* (2003), *Filovia* (2016), *Pinoli* (2021) e *Il conforto dell'ombra* (2025). La sua opera pittorica è in parte raccolta in 14 volumetti editi da La Vita Felice.

Luciano Crespi

Recognized by the international scholarly community as the leading figure of an *allestitivo* [exhibition-based] design approach he terms *design del non-finito* [design of the unfinished], aimed at the regeneration of *avanzi* [remnants]. Among his publications on the subject: *Stop City Now: progetti di architettura dal finito al non-finito* (2025); *Regeneration of Abandoned Spaces: A New Design Approach* (2024); *Design del non-finito. L'interior design nella rigenerazione degli 'avanzi'* (2023); *Manifesto del design del non-finito* (2018). He edited *La progettazione tecnologica* (1987) and, with L. Tedeschi and A. L. Viati, *Marco Zanuso. Architettura e design* (2020). He was Associate Professor of *Cultura tecnologica della progettazione* [technological culture of design] and

later Full Professor of Design at Politecnico di Milano, among the founders and Chair of the Bachelor's Degree Program in Interior Design.

Riconosciuto dalla comunità scientifica internazionale come capo-scuola di un approccio progettuale *allestitivo* che definisce design del non-finito, finalizzato alla rigenerazione degli *'avanzi'* Tra le pubblicazioni sull'argomento: *Stop City Now: progetti di architettura dal finito al non-finito* (2025); *Regeneration of Abandoned Spaces: A New Design Approach* (2024); *Design del non-finito. L'interior design nella rigenerazione degli 'avanzi'* (2023); *Manifesto del design del non-finito* (2018). Ha curato *La progettazione tecnologica* (1987) e, con L. Tedeschi e A. L. Viati, *Marco Zanuso. Architettura e design*, (2020). È stato Associato di Cultura tecnologica della progettazione e poi Ordinario di Design al Politecnico di Milano, tra i fondatori e Presidente del corso di laurea in Design degli interni.

Alessandro Deserti

Full Professor at Politecnico di Milano, where he serves as Director of the Department of Design until 2025. His research focuses on design-enabled innovation processes, examining the methods and tools that support them. In recent years, he has explored how organizations can initiate or evolve these processes in emerging fields, integrating them with systemic and organizational transformations to address technological, environmental, and socio-economic challenges. He has extensive experience in international research collaborations, particularly within European research and innovation projects.

Professore Ordinario al Politecnico di Milano, dove ricopre il ruolo di Direttore del Dipartimento di Design fino al 2025. La sua attività di ricerca è focalizzata sui processi di innovazione abilitati dal design, con particolare attenzione ai metodi e agli strumenti che li supportano. Negli ultimi anni ha approfondito come le organizzazioni possano avviare o sviluppare tali processi in ambiti emergenti, integrandoli con trasformazioni sistemiche e organizzative per affrontare sfide tecnologiche, ambientali e socio-economiche. Vanta una lunga esperienza in collaborazioni di ricerca internazionali, con particolare riferimento ai progetti europei di ricerca e innovazione.

Emilio Faroldi

Architect, PhD, Full Professor at Politecnico di Milano, he is Deputy Rector and the Rector's Delegate for the Development and Valorization of Spaces. He publishes on architectural and technological design; takes part in design competitions, receiving prizes and honorable mentions; and has built works in Italy and abroad, some published in leading journals. Former Editor in Chief of *TECHNE_Journal of Technology for Architecture and Environment*, he is Director of the Master in Sport Design and Management and teaches the doctoral course *Italian Architecture and Construction from the Post-War period to nowadays. Dialogues between Inheritance and project*. Professor of the International Academy of Architecture, he is a member of the Scientific Committee of the *Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione* [Center for the Study and Archive of Communication] in Parma.

Architetto, PhD, Professore Ordinario al Politecnico di Milano, è Prorettore Vicario e Delegato del Rettore allo Sviluppo e alla valorizzazione degli spazi. Pubblica sui temi della progettazione architettonica e tecnologica; partecipa a concorsi di progettazione ricevendo premi e menzioni; realizza opere in Italia e all'estero, alcune pubblicate nelle principali riviste di settore. Già Editor in Chief della rivista *TECHNE_Journal of Technology for Architecture and Environment*, è Direttore del Master in Sport Design and Management e titolare del Corso di Dottorato *Italian Architecture and Construction from the Post-War period to nowadays. Dialogues between Inheritance and project*. Professore della International Academy of Architecture è Membro del Comitato Scientifico del *Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione* di Parma.

Beppe Finessi

Architect, PhD. A pupil of Corrado Levi, he carries out teaching (Associate Professor at the School of Design, Politecnico di Milano), critical work (editor at the magazine *Abitare* during Italo Lupi's tenure), and research (he has curated exhibitions and publications on several great masters of Italian design, such as Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Vico Magistretti, Angelo Mangiarotti, Pio Manzù, Alessandro Mendini, Bruno Munari). In 2010 he founded and directs *Inventario*, with which

he won the ADI Compasso d'Oro (2014), while other publications of his received two Honorable Mentions (2016). He curated *Il Design Italiano oltre le crisi*, the seventh edition of the Triennale Design Museum (2014), and *Il cucchiaino e la città*, the inaugural and permanent exhibition of the ADI Design Museum (2021).

Architetto, PhD. Allievo di Corrado Levi, svolge attività didattica (Professore Associato alla Scuola del Design del Politecnico di Milano), critica (redattore della rivista *Abitare* durante la direzione di Italo Lupi) e di ricerca (ha curato mostre e pubblicazioni su alcuni grandi maestri del design italiano, come Achille e Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Vico Magistretti, Angelo Mangiarotti, Pio Manzù, Alessandro Mendini, Bruno Munari). Nel 2010 fonda e dirige *Inventario*, con cui vince il Compasso d'Oro ADI (2014), mentre per altre sue pubblicazioni ha ricevuto due Menzioni d'onore (2016). Ha curato *Il Design Italiano oltre le crisi*, settima edizione del Triennale Design Museum (2014), e *Il cucchiaino e la città*, esposizione inaugurale e permanente dell'ADI Design Museum (2021).

Ugo La Pietra

He lives and works in Milan. He has described himself as a *researcher* of visual arts and communication. He has presented his research through many exhibitions both in Italy and abroad. He has curated a number of exhibitions at the Triennale di Milano, the Venice Biennale, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon, the FRAC Museum in Orléans, the Ceramics Museum in Faenza, and the Ragghianti Foundation in Lucca. He was awarded the Compasso d'Oro for The Research in 1979 and Compasso d'Oro for his Career in 2016. His research experience in art, architecture and design led him to develop such themes as *La casa telematica* (MoMA, New York, 1972 - Fiera di Milano, 1983), *Rapporto tra Spazio reale e Spazio virtuale* (Triennale di Milano, 1979, 1992), *La casa neo-eclettica* (Abitare il Tempo, 1990), *Cultura Balneare* (Centro Culturale Cattolica, 1985/95).

Viive e lavora a Milano. Si è sempre dichiarato *ricercatore* nelle arti visive e nella comunicazione. Ha comunicato le sue ricerche attraverso mostre in Italia e all'estero. Ha curato diverse esposizioni alla Triennale

di Milano, Biennale di Venezia, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Lione, Museo FRAC di Orléans, Museo delle Ceramiche di Faenza, Fondazione Ragghianti di Lucca. Ha vinto il Compasso d'Oro per la Ricerca nel 1979 e il Compasso d'Oro per la Carriera nel 2016. Le sue esperienze di ricerca nell'arte, nell'architettura e nel design lo hanno portato a sviluppare temi come *La casa telematica* (MoMA di New York, 1972 – Fiera di Milano, 1983), *Rapporto tra Spazio reale e Spazio virtuale* (Triennale di Milano 1979, 1992), *La casa neoeclettica* (Abitare il Tempo, 1990), *Cultura Balneare* (Centro Culturale Cattolica, 1985/95).

Eleonora Lupo

Associate Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, with a PhD in Industrial Design and Multimedia Communication. Her main research interests concern product and process design cultures, Design for the Cultural Heritage system, and cultures of design research and scientific publishing, dealing with a pluriversal approach for decentring design knowledge and narratives. She is vice president of SID Società Italiana del design, a member of the Board of the PhD Program in Design at Politecnico di Milano, and of the Collegium of Reviewers of The Design Journal.

Professoressa associata al Politecnico di Milano, PhD in Disegno industriale e comunicazione multimediale. I suoi principali interessi di ricerca si rivolgono alle culture del design di prodotto e di processo, al design per il patrimonio culturale e alle culture della ricerca e pubblicazione scientifica, tramite un approccio pluriverso per decentrare la conoscenza e narrazione del design. È vicepresidente della SID Società Italiana del design, membro del collegio di Dottorato in Design del Politecnico di Milano e del Collegium of Reviewers di The Design Journal.

Antonella Penati

PhD, Full Professor of Design at Politecnico di Milano. She served as President of the Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Design (2004-2010) and as Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Design (2002-2010) under Dean Alberto Seassaro. From 2019 to 2025 she has been Coordinator of the Design and Cultures Section of the Department of Design. Main research areas: the nature of design knowledge and modes of

knowledge transmission in education; design culture as a driver of socio-technical innovation dynamics (*Mappe dell'innovazione. Il cambiamento tra tecnica economia e società*, 1999) [Maps of Innovation: Change among Technology, Economy, and Society]. On the nature of the socio-technical object she has recently focused on pharmaceuticals (*In-Home Medication. Integrating Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Design-Driven Pharma Practices*, 2024).

Dottore di Ricerca, è Professore Ordinario di Design al Politecnico di Milano. Ha rivestito il ruolo di Presidente del Corso di Laurea in Disegno industriale (2004-2010); di Preside Vicario della Facoltà del Design (2002-2010) con Preside Alberto Seassaro. Dal 2019 al 2025 è Coordinatrice della Sezione Design e Culture del Dipartimento di Design.

Principali ambiti di ricerca: la natura dei saperi progettuali e le modalità di trasmissione di conoscenza in ambito formativo; la cultura del design come motore di dinamiche di innovazione socio-tecnica (*Mappe dell'innovazione. Il cambiamento tra tecnica economia e società*, 1999). Sulla natura dell'oggetto socio-tecnico ha di recente focalizzato l'attenzione sui farmaci (*In-Home Medication. Integrating Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Design-Driven Pharma Practices*, 2024).

Agnese Rebaglio

Designer and PhD, Associate Professor at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on the role of design in innovation processes related to interiors, with an emphasis on their cultural significance and, in particular, urban spaces, from a perspective of sustainability and inclusion. She is scientific director of the Specializing Master *Design for Public Spaces* provided by POLI.design. She has developed research in the field of: design for urban social inclusion; processes of urban regeneration; energy sustainability promoted by design; circular economy for new production chains. Promoter, for the Interior Design Degree Course, of GIDE (Group for International Design Education), a network of European design schools that collaborates in educational programs.

Designer e PhD, professoressa associata di Design presso il Dipartimento di Design del Politecnico di Milano. La sua attività di ricerca si

concentra sul ruolo del design nei processi di innovazione degli interni, con riferimento alla loro portata culturale e in particolare degli spazi urbani, in una prospettiva di sostenibilità e inclusione. È direttrice scientifica del Master di Specializzazione in *Design for Public Spaces* offerto da POLI.design. Ha sviluppato ricerche nei seguenti ambiti: design per l'inclusione sociale urbana; processi di rigenerazione urbana; sostenibilità energetica promossa dal design; economia circolare per nuove filiere produttive. Promotrice, per il Corso di Laurea in Interior Design, di GIDE (*Group for International Design Education*), una rete di scuole di design europee che collaborano in programmi educativi.

Fabrizio Schiaffonati

Architect. Lecturer at Politecnico di Milano from 1967 to 2019. Full Professor in Architectural Technology from 1980 to 2012. Visiting professor at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio (2001-2005) and at Università Bocconi, Milan (2006). At Politecnico di Milano he directed the *Istituto di Tecnologia*; the *Dipartimento di Programmazione Progettazione e Produzione edilizia*; and the *Dipartimento di Scienza e tecnologie dell'ambiente costruito*. He promoted and coordinated the PhD programmes in *Innovazione tecnica e progetto nell'architettura* and *Design e tecnologie per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali*. In 2006 he was among the founders of the *Società italiana della Tecnologia dell'architettura*. His main projects are published in *Calamida*, *Lucchini*, *Schiaffonati Architetti* and in *Tecnologia Architettura Territorio*.

Achitetto. Docente al Politecnico di Milano dal 1967 al 2019. Professore Ordinario in Tecnologia dell'architettura dal 1980 al 2012. Visiting professor all'Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio dal 2001 al 2005 e all'Università Bocconi di Milano nel 2006. Al Politecnico di Milano ha diretto l'Istituto di Tecnologia; il Dipartimento di Programmazione Progettazione e Produzione edilizia e il Dipartimento di Scienza e tecnologie dell'ambiente costruito. Ha promosso e coordinato i Dottorati di ricerca in Innovazione tecnica e progetto nell'architettura e Design e tecnologie per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali. Nel 2006 è tra i fondatori della Società italiana della Tecnologia dell'architettura. I principali progetti sono pubblicati in *Calamida*, *Lucchini*, *Schiaffonati Architetti* e in *Tecnologia Architettura Territorio*.

Paolo Tinelli

Milanese, architect. He was trained at the *Artistico di Via Hayech* thanks to the teaching of Mauro Staccioli for sculpture, Carlo Cavallotti for architecture, and Anna Finocchi for Art History. He graduated in Architecture at Politecnico di Milano with Enrico Mantero in 1989. He learned the multimedia approach of Studio Azzurro from Paolo Rosa and Leonardo Sangiorgi, and approached museography thanks to the Museo Storico Etnografico della Bassa Val Sesia created by his father. He designs with Ettore Sottsass and collaborates with Patrice Martinet in theatre. Alberto Seassaro, founder and Dean of the Faculty of Industrial Design at Politecnico di Milano, involved him in a teaching collaboration that lasted more than twenty-seven years. In his professional practice, he contaminates architectural culture with constant research in the world of art and design.

Milanese, architetto. Si è formato all'Artistico di Via Hayech grazie agli insegnamenti di Mauro Staccioli per la scultura, Carlo Cavallotti per l'architettura e Anna Finocchi per la Storia dell'Arte. Si laurea in Architettura al Politecnico di Milano con Enrico Mantero nel 1989. Comprende, da Paolo Rosa e Leonardo Sangiorgi, il multimediale di Studio Azzurro e si avvicina alla Museografia grazie al Museo Storico Etnografico della Bassa Val Sesia creato dal padre. Disegna con Ettore Sottsass e collabora con Patrice Martinet nel teatro. Alberto Seassaro, fondatore e Preside della Facoltà di Disegno industriale del Politecnico, lo coinvolge in una collaborazione didattica durata oltre ventisette anni. Nella professione, contamina la cultura architettonica con la costante ricerca nel mondo dell'arte e del design.

Maria Cristina Tonelli

She graduated in Florence in Modern Letters with an art-historical focus and was a Postgraduate Fellow and University Researcher at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa; after moving to the Faculty of Architecture in Florence she became Associate Professor and subsequently Full Professor of Industrial Design at Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on the history of industrial design and fashion: specifically, on the historical-critical analysis of design and product in relation to their cultural, technological, economic, and production fabric. Among her

most recent publications are texts on innovation in eighteenth-century England, on Giovanni Klaus Koenig, on Alberto Rosselli and *Stile Industria*, on Gianfranco Gualtierotti, as well as several essays on Tuscan products.

Laureata a Firenze in Lettere moderne, con indirizzo storico-artistico, è stata Perfezionanda e Ricercatore universitario presso la SNS di Pisa; trasferendosi alla Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze è diventata Professore Associato e in seguito Professore Ordinario di Disegno industriale presso il Politecnico di Milano.

La sua attività di ricerca verte sulla storia dell'industrial design e della moda: in specifico, sull'analisi storico-critica del progetto e del prodotto in rapporto al loro tessuto culturale, tecnologico, economico e produttivo. Delle sue ultime pubblicazioni si segnalano i testi sull'innovazione nell'Inghilterra del Settecento, su Giovanni Klaus Koenig, su Alberto Rosselli e *Stile Industria*, su Gianfranco Gualtierotti, nonché diversi saggi sul prodotto toscano.

Raffaella Trocchianesi

Architect and Associate Professor at the Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano, she teaches Interior Design Studio and Exhibit Design Studio at the School of Design. Director of the Specializing Master's IDEA_Exhibition Design, and of the Specialization Course Design and Digital Technologies for the Intangible Heritage, she mainly deals with Design for Cultural Heritage in terms of museography and exhibition design, communication and enhancement of local areas, new models and narratives of cultural experiences, and the relationship between design, Humanities and arts. She is currently scientific lead on the project Sound Design & Cultural Heritage.

Architetto e Professore associato presso il dipartimento di Design del Politecnico di Milano. Insegna *Design degli Interni* e *Exhibition Design* presso la Scuola del Design. È direttore del Master *IDEA-Exhibition Design* e del corso di specializzazione *Design e Tecnologie Digitali per il Patrimonio Culturale Intangibile*. Svolge attività didattica, progettuale e di ricerca prevalentemente nell'ambito del design per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali in termini di allestimento, museografia, nuovi modelli

di fruizione, narrazione e linguaggi per la cultura, relazione tra design Humanities e arti. È responsabile scientifico del progetto di ricerca *Sound Design and Cultural Heritage*.

This volume is part of *Design Philology* editorial project aimed at enhancing the history of design at Politecnico di Milano and, in particular, inaugurates the series *The Masters*, dedicated to the figures whose thought has fueled the cultural pluralism that is the hallmark of the entire institutional project.

The remembrance of the Masters begins with Alberto Seassaro, the demiurge, a Dean capable of giving *Design* a home by conceiving and building the first Italian Faculty at Politecnico di Milano and guiding it to the scope we know today: that of a major international system for education and research. A designing intelligence, he is owed the construction of the cultural community of the *Italian Design System*. It was no simple challenge, because in the case of design we are dealing not only with a discipline worthy of teaching and autonomous research paths, but also with an emergent phenomenon of Italian culture whose outcomes are celebrated as the splendors of an imaginative synthesis that has become, beyond our country as well, a model of invention. In the background of this quasi-biographical account lie the intertwinings with the worlds of art, architecture, and design, and the cultural imprint toward experimentation that Alberto Seassaro received during his formative years at Politecnico di Milano.



FrancoAngeli

La passione per le conoscenze