

# The Museum of Modern Art

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ITALY: **THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE** edited by Emilio Ambasz. 432 pages; 380 illustrations (110 in color); clothbound \$15.00; paperbound \$8.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in collaboration with Centro Di, Florence. Clothbound edition distributed to the trade by New York Graphic Society Ltd. in the United States and Canada.

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ITALY: **THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE** edited by Emilio Ambasz, the first book to survey recent design developments in Italy, will be published by The Museum of Modern Art in conjunction with a major exhibition opening at the Museum on May 26. This publication will provide a historical and critical context to the exhibition as well as extensive illustrations of the objects and environments on view.

During the last decade, the emergence of Italy as the dominant force in design has had a profound influence in Europe and the Americas. This phenomenon is important not only because of the high quality and diversity of the forms produced, but also because it has generated a lively critical debate on the sociocultural implications of product design, raising questions of vital concern to designers throughout the world.

For many designers, the aesthetic quality of individual objects intended for private consumption has become irrelevant in the face of such pressing problems as poverty, urban decay, and the pollution of the environment now encountered in all industrialized countries. Consequently, they are increasingly shifting the focus of their attention from the well-designed object to man's total environment, seeing the designer's function as one that can mold patterns of behavior by creating new settings for freer, more adaptable life styles. Some, however, despairing of effecting social change through design, regard their task as essentially a political one. They therefore abstain from the physical designing of either objects or environments and channel their energies into the staging of events and the issuing of polemical statements.

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Their approach thus parallels that of many artists in other mediums who view art in primarily conceptual terms.

ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE is the first publication to deal comprehensively with these challenging developments. The over 150 objects of Italian design of the past 10 years are all reproduced in color or black-and-white, as are a dozen environments by well-known Italian designers specially commissioned for the occasion, and the two awarded prizes in a concurrent competition for young designers under 35 sponsored by the Museum. Each environment is accompanied by a statement in which the individual or group responsible for the project clarifies his position regarding the present and future role of design.

In addition to essays by Emilio Ambasz, Curator of Design at The Museum of Modern Art and director of the exhibition, the book contains contributions by a number of outstanding Italian critics and art historians. Taken together, these articles comprise the first historical survey of contemporary Italian design and a critical analysis of its various intellectual and formal positions within the context of international design today.

A native of Argentina, Emilio Ambasz received his M.F.A. degree in architecture from Princeton University and taught at its School of Architecture, the Carnegie Institute of Technology, and the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, Germany, before being appointed Curator of Design at The Museum of Modern Art in 1969. He is a fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and recently directed the research program Institutions for a Post-Technological Society: The Universitas Project, sponsored jointly by the Museum and the Institute. Active himself as a designer, Mr. Ambasz designed the cover of this book and has also directed and installed a number of exhibitions and contributed articles to various journals in the United States and abroad.

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