

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 123 A

NOT FOR RELEASE

NOVEMBER, 1971

ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

Advance Fact Sheet

Director: Emilio Ambasz, Curator of Design, Department of Architecture and Design

Date: Late Spring, 1972

Sponsorship: Presented by The Museum of Modern Art with the sponsorship of the Italian Government and the companies of the Gruppo ENI (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi); and with the contributions, among others, of ANIC (Associazione Nazionale Idrogenizzazione Combustibili), LaneRossi, Fiat, Olivetti, Alitalia, Abet Print and RAI (Radio Audizioni Italiane); and with the collaboration of a large number of other Italian industries.

Summary: This exhibition will report on current design developments in Italy, examining a number of widespread design concerns of a more universal nature as represented in the recent work of Italian designers. The major emphasis will be on 12 environments for living, especially designed for this exhibition. These environments are intended for two modes of contemporary living -- the permanent home and the mobile home or trailer. Some of these environments will illustrate the viewpoints of those Italian designers who have adopted a counter-design approach, based on their belief that the problems of modern living are social and political rather than physical.

Complementing the environments, there will be a display of 180 objects produced in Italy during the last decade by more than 100 different designers. These examples of product design (furniture, lighting fixtures, electro-domestic appliances, flatware and china) were selected to illustrate the various intellectual design positions which have evolved in Italy in the last 10 years.

Background: The emergence of Italy during the last decade as the dominant force in product design has already influenced the work of every other European country, and is now having its effect in the United States. What is of particular interest about this burst of vitality among Italian designers is not simply a series of stylistic operations of product design -- although that too is certainly involved -- but a fundamental and growing awareness of design understood as an activity whereby man creates artifacts in order to mediate between his fears and aspirations and the pressures imposed by the natural and cultural world.

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Italy has assumed the characteristics of a micro-model where a wide range of possibilities, limitations and critical problems of contemporary design are brought into sharp focus. Many of the concerns of contemporary design throughout the world are represented by the diverse and sometimes opposite approaches being developed by Italian designers.

Exhibition
Content:

The exhibition will be organized into two parts: Environments and Objects. The environments, especially designed and produced for this exhibition, constitute the show's major emphasis. Their purpose is to explore the domestic landscape with a concern for its places: the artifacts and spaces which give them form, the ceremonies and modes of behavior which assign them meaning. Special attention has been paid by the designers to the new forms and usages that are emerging as a result of the changing patterns in our lifestyles, our more informal social and family relationships, evolving notions of privacy and communal life, as well as the availability of new production techniques and materials. Within each environment, the modes of use will be shown on color television screens through short films prepared by the designer of the work. In addition, a number of Italian designers who believe that substantial solutions to the problem of modern living can emerge not from physical design but from social and political involvement, have also been invited to present their points of view. These counter-design approaches will be shown by means of three dimensional and audio-visual displays.

Complementing the environments, there will be a display of 180 objects selected to describe the different design positions developed in Italy

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in the last decade.

Publication: An accompanying book, published by The Museum of Modern Art, will document the environments and objects shown in the exhibition and will also include an historical analysis of Italian design written by major Italian design critics and historians.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501, -7504
