

The Museum of Modern Art

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ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

Director: Emilio Ambasz

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RELEASE NO. 35

House Environment

Designer: Gae Aulenti

Patron: ANIC - Lanerossi

Producer: Kartell

This environment is made up of four types of shelf components:

The first consists of one planar and two corner elements. In combination they may be manipulated to form a bed, cupboards, either linear or centrally oriented bookcases, inclined seats, etc. In the arrangement illustrated a number of these elements combine to form externally and internally oriented storage units, a small enclosure whose roof is used as a bed, and an inclined plane to rest on. The second, third and fourth types of components of this environment are: an extensible table with modular service units, including a sink and two electric burners; a chair with legs and edges corrugated; and a lamp with eight rotating heads. It is in the nature of this design that any combination assumes a volumetric, architectonic quality. In this way the elements of furniture are treated as buildings and the domestic landscape is handled as exterior space.

First type (planar and corner elements):

Material: polyester, fiberglass reinforced, rubber jointed.

Color: red.

Second type (table):

Material: steel structure, ABS plastic surfaces.

Color: dark green.

Third type (chair):

Material: fiberglass or rigid polyurethane.

Color: black.

Fourth type (lamp)

Material: metal.

Color: yellow.

Color film for TV directed by Massimo Magri (Politecne, Milan).

Photo credits: Valerio Castelli.

Statement by Dott. Arch. Gae Aulenti

January 11, 1972

"Nothing is built on stone, all is built on sand, but we must build as if the sand were stone". Jorge Luis Borges - "Fragmentos de un evangelice apocrifo".

Architecture is made beyond the strife of governments, wars and fame.

Architecture is concrete space, a positive thing which has as its substance the fabric of the city, where both private and collective factors contribute to the transformation of Nature through the exercise of reason and memory.

Not one of man's objects, be it monument or den, can escape its own peculiar relationship to the city, which is the manifestation of the human condition.

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It is then only possible to analyse the object if it can be defined as a dialectic form of the whole: if we can demonstrate how it finds its place and its laws of being, within the whole.

The existence of the object is defined within the positive conditions of its own relationship to the city, that is in the connection established between economic and social processes, forms of behavior, norms, techniques, characteristics which, even if not expressed by or present in the object itself, allow its existence, the discovery of its relationship to other objects: allow it to find its place.

This premise is the prop and stay, the hope of reality, which is the only possible key by which to interpret the object, for it serves to eliminate the ambiguities, contradictions, discords, and distortions of our chronicle.

The objects with which we generally come into contact are very numerous indeed, they are mostly new, but also rather precarious and inconstant, and at least some of them are doomed to rapid disappearance; some have been seen to appear with possible uses which have up to now never been exploited: they distort behavior, they unleash anxieties and hypnoses, are ready to cause harm to nervous systems and cause casualties in the realm of intellectual adjustment, even criminality.

Their being depends on wrong rules together with inertia towards beliefs and traditions, it depends on a desire "not to see," not to confront an objective interpretation of the world.

Their being is the result of an incapacity to rediscover their rich and full relationship to the whole, and it is only this relationship which can allow the object to take shape and constitute its historical conditions for existence, thereby becoming an instrument of criticism.

If the condition, the rule, for designing an object is this general one I have

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described, the design can't help but find its correct relation to a sphere of which it is not the center.

A home area should be designed in its general form, for its positivity cannot but reside in the sum of the conditions, and a synthesis is attempted through the special elements of these conditions, and the uses to which the objects are put. This is possible only by using and testing every yardstick used for the definition of a city.

We are concerned with making things appear in their complexity and consistency, even if the effect can only mean limiting the sphere, the use of fragments only. In this case the choice is limited to the recovery of the positive significance of man, who fulfills himself through his will to achieve an aesthetic, creating for himself an artificial environmental atmosphere.

This choice, holding out the hope of a more authentic existence for man, the rediscovery of his stable and permanent values, is a poetic choice, an arbitrary selection, and it therefore has a symbolic value, it is a pointer to the birth of a new reality.

The conscious principle in design is that of achieving forms which can create experiences, and which can at the same time welcome the experiences of everyone with the serenity of an effortless development determined by an independent critical capacity.

The emergent object in the design is made up of elements composed in such a way as never to conceal their original inspiration, while at the same time remaining open to a definition of their future values.

The function of design is the arrangement of spaces both concave and convex, it is the integration of different types of space, and we can measure its integrity by comparing the rules for its use, and the areas which it can elaborate with other spheres of reality.

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The relationship of these areas to complementary objects (in this case: table, chair, lamp) can be shown to animate different objects successively.

THREE POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

1st objective description

1. System of three different elements: one of which is linear and two angular; according to different arrangements, areas for the following uses can be created: bed, cupboard, bookcase-either linear or central, seats.

Material: fiberglass, rubber joints, cages of structural metal.

To be prepared for production.

2. Extensible table: with modular service units: simple surface, kitchen surface, container surface.

Material: steel structure with ABS surfaces.

Ready for production.

3. Chair: corrugated form.

Material: fiberglass or rigid polyurethane.

Ready for production.

4. Lamp: eight rotating elements.

Material: metal.

To be prepared for production.

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2nd subjective description

1. pyramids: form as a specific shape placed within reality and as the measure of a process of transformation.
2. line and right angle: geometry as generator of day to day mutability.
3. shell: nature as the generating force behind the forming of things, their properties and qualities.
4. fire: allegory as synthetic, comprehensive representation of an idea through images.

3rd critical description

- 1&2. The single elements express in themselves values which are not self-sufficient, symbolic of a will to create experiences.
- 3&4. The two objects express autonomous values, self-sufficiency symbolic of a rational will.

GAE AULENTI, active as a designer in Milan, took her degree in architecture at the Politecnico in Milan, and has been assistant lecturer on architectural composition at the universities of Venice and Milan. From 1954 to 1962, she was a member of the editorial staff of CASABELLA CONTINUITA; and from 1966 to 1969 served as vice-president of the Association for Industrial Design (ADI). Her projects and designs have been published in both Italian and foreign publications. For her contribution to the Italian Pavilion at the XIII Triennale, Milan, in 1964, she received the First International Prize.