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Storia e Ricerche

PER UNA STORIA DELLA FENOMENOLOGIA DEL DESIGN

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EDITORIALE	PER UNA STORIA DELLA FENOMENOLOGIA DEL DESIGN Giampiero Bosoni, Elena Dellapiana & Jeffrey Schnapp	7
<hr/>		
SAGGI	IL SENSO DEL DESIGN Dario Mangano	12
<hr/>		
RICERCHE	PIERO BOTTONI, INVOLUCRI PER APPARECCHI RADIO, 1932-1936 Giancarlo Consonni	29
	L'EXHIBIT DESIGN DI ROBERTO MENGHI PER L'INDUSTRIA PIRELLI (1950-1977). ALLA RICERCA DI UN METODO PER ESPORRE E COMUNICARE LA CULTURA INDUSTRIALE Antonio Aiello	44
	HANS VON KLIER: GUTE FORM E IDENTITY. NOTE SU UN PERCORSO Pierparide Vidari	67
	LA MODA PER LA VITA CHE SI VIVE. JOLE VENEZIANI L'INDUSTRIA E LA MODERNITÀ Manuela Soldi	88
	ETTORE SOTTSASS, CONSULENTE ARTISTICO PER REDAN Marco Scotti	104
	IL MATERIALE D'ARCHIVIO TRA CONSERVAZIONE E DIVULGAZIONE Gianluca Camillini & Jonathan Pierini	125
	THE EXHIBITION AS AN ARCHIVE Beatriz Colomina	136
	DISQUIET IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN ARCHIVE Alice Twemlow	147
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BIOGRAFIE AUTORI		158

Ricerche

The Exhibition as an Archive

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There has recently been a wide-ranging resurgence of international interest in the radical architecture of the 1960s and 70s, but the experimental publications that were the engine of that intensely creative period have been neglected. The exhibition Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196x -197x, which opened in New York in 2006, researched, exhibited, and documented the remarkable outburst of new forms of publication that echoed yet transcended the avant-garde publications of the 1920s, launching a whole spectrum of activist practices. The research was the basis for an exhibition that travelled to numerous venues in North America, Europe and Latin America, steadily building up a new kind of archive, an interactive archive that grows as it travels around the world. Clip/Stamp/Fold investigates how an internationally diverse group of architectural little magazines informed the development of postwar architectural culture. These publications were not simply representing architecture but were a site of architectural production in its own right, challenging building as the primary locus of experimentation and debate. Little magazines developed a series of horizontal strategies to undermine the borders between disciplines, schools, countries, etc. and established an activist network. This raises the question of new strategies today in blogs, tweets, youtube, facebook, etc. Whether they are a continuation of the activist techniques of the little magazines or whether the contemporary political climate is now built out of such networking systems and therefore whole new techniques will need to be developed.

KEYWORDS

Radical design
Magazines
Interactive archives
Archive strategies
Exhibit design

PAROLE CHIAVE

Radical design
Riviste
Archivi interattivi
Strategie per gli archivi
Exhibit design

Recentemente si è assistito a un'ampia rinascita dell'interesse internazionale per l'architettura radicale degli anni Sessanta e Settanta, ma le pubblicazioni sperimentali che sono state il motore di quel periodo intensamente creativo sono state trascurate. Negli ultimi quattro anni, Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196x -197x ha mostrato e documentato la straordinaria esplosione di nuove forme di pubblicazione che riecheggiavano - ma trascendevano - le pubblicazioni d'avanguardia degli anni Venti, dando il

via a un intero spettro di pratiche attiviste. La ricerca è stata alla base di una mostra che dal 2006 ha viaggiato in numerose sedi in Nord America, Europa e America Latina, costruendo costantemente un nuovo tipo di archivio, un archivio interattivo che cresce mentre viaggia in tutto il mondo. Clip/Stamp/ Fold indaga su come un gruppo di piccole riviste di architettura, diverse a livello internazionale, abbia influenzato lo sviluppo della cultura architettonica del dopoguerra. Queste pubblicazioni non rappresentavano semplicemente l'architettura, ma erano un sito di produzione architettonica a tutti gli effetti, sfidando l'edificio come luogo primario di sperimentazione e dibattito. Le piccole riviste hanno sviluppato una serie di strategie orizzontali per minare i confini tra discipline, scuole, Paesi, ecc. e hanno creato una rete di attivisti. Ciò solleva la questione delle nuove strategie di oggi nei blog, nei tweet, in youtube, in facebook, ecc. Se si tratti di una permanenza delle tecniche attiviste delle piccole riviste o se il clima politico contemporaneo sia ormai costituito da questi sistemi di rete e quindi sia necessario sviluppare tecniche completamente nuove.

During the 1960s and 1970s there was an explosion of architectural little magazines which instigated a radical transformation in architectural culture. You can argue that during this period little magazines - more than buildings - were the site of innovation and debate in architecture. Reyner Banham could hardly contain his excitement. In an article entitled "Zoom Wave Hits Architecture of 1966," he throws away any scholarly restraint to absorb the syncopated rhythms of the new magazines in a kind of Futurist ecstasy:

Wham! Zoom! Rave! - and it's not Ready Steady Go, even if it sometimes looks like it. The sound effects are produced by the erupting of underground architectural protest magazines. Architecture, staid queen-mother of the arts, is no longer courted by plush glossies and cool scientific journals alone but is having her skirts blown up and her bodice unzipped by irregular newcomers, which are - typically rhetorical, with-it moralistic, misspelled, improvisatory, anti-smooth, funny-format, cliquey, art-oriented but stoned out of their minds with science-fiction images of an alternative architecture that would be perfectly possible tomorrow if only the Universe were differently organized.

If little magazines drove the historical avant-garde of the 1920s, a phenomenon that has been studied exhaustively, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a rebirth and a transformation of the little magazine. New kinds of radical publication acted as the engine for the period, generating an astonishing variety and intensity of work. In recent years there has been a huge interest in the



experimental architecture of this time, from Archigram, the Metabolists, Antfarm, Superstudio, Archizoom, Haus-Rucker-Co, etc. but the magazines that were the real engine of that revolution in architecture have been for the most part neglected.

The idea of the *Clip/Stamp/Fold* project was to present this exuberant moment of which there is some kind of amnesia. Even the very protagonists, the editors and architects involved in the production of these magazines seem to have forgotten how amazing that moment was. When the exhibition opened in New York, in the Fall of 2006, after two or three years of intense research, we had all these editors and protagonists of the period (Peter Cook, Bernard Tschumi, Hans Hollein, Peter Eisenman, Steven Holl, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alan Bois) coming to the gallery to give talks and they all seemed to be in some kind of shock. They said things like “I have goose bumps.” But the exhibition was not meant to be nostalgic. The idea was to invite reflection on contemporary uses of media in architecture and to challenge today’s architects to provoke a similar intensity.

Fig. 1, 2, 3 — *Clip/Stamp/Fold* exhibition at Storefront for Architecture, 2006.

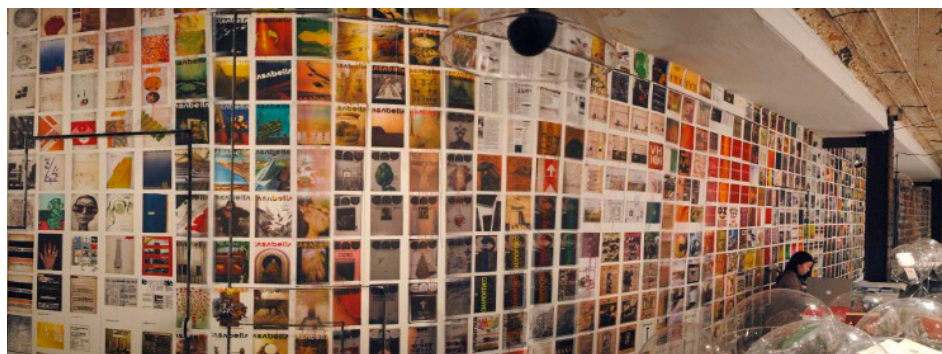




Fig. 4 — *Clip/Stamp/Fold* at Dis-seny Hub, Barcelona, 2009.

Fig. 5 — *Clip/Stamp/Fold* at Documenta 12, Kassel, 2007.



The exhibition was, first of all, a pedagogical project. It ended up transcending those beginnings, but that was how it started and it always retained this pedagogical core. The initial impulse was to develop an expanded educational model, a hands-on model, according to which, instead of encouraging Ph.D. students work separately on some obscure domain of research, you brought all the first year students together to work collaboratively on the production of something substantial: a book, a conference, an exhibition, a film. So the pedagogical aim wasn't simply to *reflect* on the different kinds of media but rather to *produce* media. To learn about communication by communicating.

The project was a collaborative effort of a team including myself and a group of Ph.D candidates from Princeton University: Urtzi Grau, Daniel Lopez Perez, Lydia Kalipoliti, Craig Buckey, Irene Sunwoo, Alicia Imperiale, Lisa Hiseh and Antony Fontenot. Olympia Kazi has also collaborated in the project.

The exhibition was the outcome of more than two years of research seminars, workshops, symposia, archival research, interviews, and visits with many of the editors, architects and theorists who produced these magazines and small publications. The design, fabrication, and installation of the exhibition was also part of our work. It was nice to see Ph.D.s wielding hammers and electric drills or putting up wall paper. Good therapy for writer's blocks and other pathologies of scholars.

The exhibition concentrated its attention on a particular time-period and on a particular category of magazine (the little magazine in architecture) and sought to perform a forensic survey of all such magazines in all countries. It goes without saying that the task was impossibly ambitious. We kept learning about additional magazines wherever the show traveled. So our archive continued to grow and with every venue the number of witnesses and interpretations grew as well. The “explosion” of little magazines that we sought to document turned out to be much bigger than even we had imagined at the outset.

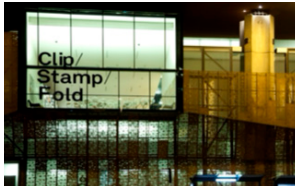


Fig. 6a, 6b — *Clip/Stamp/Fold* at the Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral (GAM), Santiago de Chile 2013.

Normally scholars are trained to work in existing archives and usually those are official archives. In this case, we developed a new pedagogical approach in which students work together on documents that are deterritorialized rather than gathered in an official place, documents that were even originally launched against institutions. In carrying out this research, scholars now have to build a new kind of archive, an archive on the move, an archive that grows, an archive that reacts to the people that see it and absorbs their reactions.

The term “little magazine” is an Anglosaxon term first used to describe small avant-garde literary publications, such as Margaret Anderson’s *Little Review* of the 1910s and 1920s, that were dedicated to progressive theory, art and culture. They were set apart from established periodicals by their non-commercial operations and small circulation. But they aimed to influence the dominant periodicals, claiming to be “the magazines read by those who write the others,” as Margaret Anderson put it. The term was transplanted to architecture in the 1970s by Denise Scott-Brown, who used the term to describe magazines like *Archigram* and *Clip Kit*, in an insightful review article.

We have used the phrase “little magazines” in architecture to refer to small circulation, self-published magazines, often difficult to obtain and produced with little or no support, on kitchen tables or in the backrooms of schools. The phenomenon is interesting both for the physical and intellectual objects produced and as something that functioned as a networked, interactive and international platform for experimental design and discourse. Little magazines operate as an infrastructure for hosting change. One can even consider, as Denise Scott-Brown has suggested, “little magazine phases in architecture” appearing “[...] when a debate has expanded enough to demand organization and a rudimentary mailing system.” Little magazines have to be analyzed as systems. Their littleness and ephemerality is directly related to the wide spread and resilient network in which they appear. Which is why they occupy archives differently and require new modes of analysis. The very shape, materiality and irregularity of these documents is intended to defeat the conventional order of our discipline. They demand of us new techniques.

The term *little* and *magazine* are not taken at face value: letters, building cookbooks and manuals, advertisements, posters, manifestos, mock-ups, flyers, postcards, and various ephemera are considered part of the phenomenon. Professional magazines can be considered *little* for certain periods of time. Changes in the magazines’ economic model and editorial policy were reflected in everything from the types of paper and printing methods used, to the kinds of projects featured in their pages. Conversely, we may see the “littleness” of a self-published, small circulation magazine dissipate as publication numbers and circulation expand. Moments of *littleness* are fleeting and improvised; the publications remain as the surprisingly permanent but almost invisible record of the pulse of a moment.

The reader may notice that the wall paper and time-line of the exhibition includes big magazines such as *AD*, *Casabella*, *Domus* and *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* that we felt had been infected by the logic of the little magazine for a time. For example, *AD* during the years of Peter Murray and Robin Middleton as editors, decided to pass on advertising, change the paper quality, and start publishing the same kind of work that little magazines were publishing. This is what we have called “moments of littleness” in big magazines, which are a crucial part of this phenomenon and include the *Casabella* of Mendini, the *AD* of the *Cosmorama* years. *Cosmorama* was a section of the journal printed in cheap, non-glossy, colored, rough paper and dedicated to ecology, counter-culture, new materials, electronic technology, mobility, and disposability. If Margaret Anderson wanted the big publications to read the little ones. Here, the logic

A hypothesis of *Clip/Stamp/Fold* is that the proliferation of new technologies of communication and reproduction has played an enormous role in defining historical and contemporary avant-garde practices. These innovative and energetic publications helped form a global network of exchange amongst students and architects, but also between architecture and other disciplines. They acted as incubators of new ways of thinking and a key arena in which the emerging problems facing architectural production could be debated. These concerns include ecology, activist politics, the space program, cybernetics, radical architecture in Italy, the recovery of the 1920s avant-garde project, May 68, and the emergence of the skyscraper, among others. Many of these concerns continue to feed debates in the present.

Indeed practically all the themes that preoccupy us today can be said to have emerged during those years. You encounter the first concerns with recycling, energy responsibility, cardboard architecture, emergency architecture, synthetic materials, digital data flow, global mobility... You encounter the first oil crisis of the 1970s, the emergence of computers, machine intelligence, polymers, terrorism... everything and anything but architecture understood in the conventional sense of a building or of the architect as builder.

Look at the covers. You rarely see the image of a building or the face of an architect. In the moment in which Hollein famously claimed that "Everything is Architecture" everything but architecture is splashed across the covers of radical magazines in an orgy of intense and sophisticated graphic design. The covers alone could be the subject of an in-depth study.

It is for this reason that a wallpaper made of little magazine covers served as one of the exhibition's highlights. 720 covers were woven into a seamless horizontal panorama with the aim of nakedly exposing the radical ambitions of an era. To stand in front of this technicolor wallpaper is to be overwhelmed with the energy and precision of the period. Certain patterns become immediately clear. Interconnections and shared obsessions between different magazines. A formidable network of little publications collaborating as a single intelligent organism. All the limits of architecture are tested on the covers, even before we enter any one of the journals where the shock waves keep expanding exponentially. The wallpaper is the outer surface of the whole new space of architectural creativity generated in the 60's and 70's, a space that is a carefully constructed architecture in its own right. To reconstruct this electrifying surface in the gallery is to invite architects and scholars to reenter that space, and renew the urgent challenge to our limits.

Fig. 9 — Cover of *Architectural Design*, February 1967.



Fig. 10 — Cover of *Domus* n. 477, spring 1970.



Here are some of the themes that emerge in these little magazines:

a. Space Programs: Scale, Capsule, Satellite

The space program was a catalyst for re-thinking new social and architectural problems raised by these new technological developments. The mobilization of a vastly expanded sense of scale was counterposed by miniaturization, a fascination with the new existence-minimums of the sealed capsule and the space suit. The launch of satellite communications generated an enthusiasm for planetary interconnection, as well as a concern about the expansion of forms of political and intellectual power beyond traditional territorial limits (fig. 9).

b. Cybernetics: Information, Networks, Hardware/Software

Cybernetics can be defined as the study of communications and feedback control processes in biological, mechanical, and electronic systems. With its emphasis upon the manipulation and creation of networks of information, in parallel with the theories of Marshall McLuhan, cybernetics propelled the substitution of information for material in architectural discourse. Information becomes the material of architecture. The influence of cybernetics mobilized multiple new investigations of global urbanization patterns, new biological analogies, a fixation on computation, as well as the emergence of the crucial distinction between hardware and software (fig. 10).

c. Ecology: Whole Earth Systems, Artificiality, Retreat

Ecological concerns were closely tied to a rethinking of the condition of the house and its natural, urban, and global economies. The house was re-conceptualized in terms of “whole earth systems,” which entailed the recycling of both material and energy, and hybrid systems of natural and artificial elements. A more extreme and radical response encouraged a retreat to self-sufficient shelters in nature, autonomous from established communities. Architectural magazines found themselves in an incredibly intimate dialog with a wide range of counter publications. Self help manuals (*Whole Earth Catalog*, *Dome Cook Book*, *Shelter*, *Farallones Scrapbook*) featured architectural designs. And architectural magazines featured self-help techniques. For example, the *Cosmorama* section of *Architectural Design* repeatedly presented amateur recycling and habitation experiments in American backyards. Figures like Buckminster Fuller acted as crossovers, regularly moving back and forth between architecture and the counterculture (fig. 11).

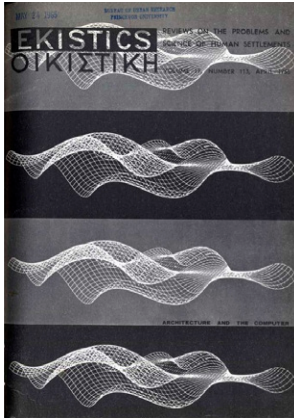


Fig. 11 — Cover of *Ekistics*, April 1965.

d. May 68 and other civilian protests and institutional critiques

The emergence of various protest movements that developed around the globe in the 1960s are often associated with the events of May 1968. What is less known is the parallel critiques of the field of architecture by architects which de-emphasized the architectural object in favor of questions of self organization, urban sociology, and participation. This wider expression of political protest and self-questioning was fostered in different ways by many little magazines around the globe. In some cases we find specific issues devoted to protest movements and to instances of brutality against demonstrators (*Architectural Design*, *Arquitectos de Mexico*, *Architecture Mouvement Continuité*, *Casabella*, *Le Carré Bleu*, *Perspecta*). Other magazines became the vehicles for student demands for reforms in architectural education (*Melp!*, *Klubseminar*, *ARse*, *Arquitectura Autogobierno*). In other magazines, this critical self-questioning contributed to the formulation of ideological and historical critiques of architecture’s role within culture (*Angelus Novus*, *Carrer de la Ciutat*, *Contropiano*, *Utopie*) (fig. 12).

e. Theory: History, Autonomy, Modernity

The 1970s saw also the rise of what is understood today as architectural “theory.” Magazines like *Oppositions*, *Arquitecturas bis*, *Lotus...* launched a whole new kind of discourse. They cultivated a general philosophical and historical self-consciousness. These magazines often modeled themselves in the image of the avant-garde magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, giving the

contemporary theorist the status of a radical artist. Eisenman, for example, claims to have started *Oppositions* because he felt there was never an avant-garde in the USA and that a magazine was the necessary vehicle for it. But, ironically, this “avant-garde journal” was in reality a history/theory journal; at least in the USA, *theory* was the new avant-garde.

In conclusion

A networked system of little magazines became an intellectual engine. Its massive capacity is a direct product of how little magazines were, their fragility, even ephemerality. As Peter Cook put it in one of our interviews: “No matter how repressive your school was, they couldn’t prevent something from coming through the letter box.” The letterboxes of schools became the central distribution mechanism or many such magazines. The little pamphlets in the letter box sustained an extraordinary intellectual capacity, radically displacing the traditional publications.

Fig. 12 — Cover of *Le Carré bleu* 3, 1968.



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Laurea magistrale (2015) in Interior Design presso il Politecnico di Milano, dal 2020 è dottorando presso il Politecnico di Milano (Dip. Design) con una tesi di ricerca sul professionismo colto milanese nel secondo dopoguerra. Ha svolto attività di ricerca sugli allestimenti, e la relazione tra arti e design. Dal 2017 presso il Politecnico di Milano è cultore della materia nell'ambito della progettazione di interni e allestimenti, storia del design e storia dell'arte contemporanea. Presso istituti privati ha svolto attività di docenza e tutorato riguardo la storia del design e delle arti.

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Le sue ricerche hanno intrecciato il progetto urbano con un ampio quadro di conoscenze e di esplorazioni: la storiografia, l'antropologia, l'economia, la geografia, la filosofia e con esperienze artistiche, in particolare la letteratura, il teatro e la pittura, come parti essenziali per la corretta lettura dei processi di formazione della metropoli contemporanea. Dirige l'archivio Bottoni. Tra le sue pubblicazioni, *Piero Bottoni: architecture and design in Milan* (con M. Cassani Simonetti e V. Finzi, Silvana 2018); *Urbanità e bellezza* (Solfanelli 2016), *Terragni inedito* (con G. Tonon, Ronca 2005); *Piero Bottoni opera completa* (con G. Tonon, L. Meneghetti, Fabbri 1990).

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Jonathan Pierini

È un disegnatore di caratteri e progettista grafico. Ha ottenuto un diploma di laurea triennale presso ISIA e un diploma specialistico in Type & Media presso KABK in Olanda. A Londra ha lavorato presso Dalton Maag Ltd. Dal 2011 al 2017 è stato ricercatore a contratto e professore aggregato presso la Facoltà di Design e Arti della Libera Università di Bozen Bolzano. Da settembre 2017 è direttore di ISIA Urbino dove insegna Storia del Libro e della Stampa, tipografia e progettazione grafica. Dal 2017 è direttore di *Progetto Grafico*.

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Marco Scotti

Marco Scotti (Parma, 1980) storico dell'arte, assegnista presso l'Università Iuav di Venezia, è dottore di ricerca in Storia dell'arte presso l'Università di Parma, ateneo con cui ha collaborato anche come studioso, curatore e borsista al Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione (CSAC). Nella sua attività curatoriale, ha realizzato mostre per MAXXI, Fondazione Cirulli, CSAC Università di Parma, MSU Zagreb; ha ideato, con Elisabetta Modena, il museo digitale MoRE www.moremuseum.org dedicato alla valorizzazione e conservazione di progetti di arte contemporanea mai realizzati.

Manuela Soldi

Assegnista di ricerca presso l'Università Iuav di Venezia con un progetto relativo all'archivio aziendale Bottega Veneta. Docente di Heritage e progetto della moda presso la stessa università e di Catalogazione e gestione degli archivi presso l'Accademia SantaGiulia di Brescia. I suoi interessi di ricerca comprendono la storia della moda, dell'artigianato e del Made in Italy. Collabora con varie realtà culturali per la valorizzazione di archivi e collezioni. Ha pubblicato *Rosa Genoni. Moda e politica: una prospettiva femminista fra '800 e '900* (Marsilio 2019).

Alice Twemlow

È research professor presso la Royal Academy of Art dell'Aia (KABK), dove dirige il gruppo di lettura "Design and the Deep Future", e professore incaricato presso la cattedra Wim Crouwel di Storia, teoria e sociologia del design grafico e della cultura visiva dell'Università di Amsterdam (UvA). La sua ricerca affronta le complesse interrelazioni del design con il tempo e l'ambiente e si manifesta in scritti, mostre, conferenze e formazione. Tra le sue pubblicazioni, *StyleCity New York* (Thames & Hudson, 2003); *What is Graphic Design For?* (*Essential Design Handbooks*) (RotoVision, 2006); *Sifting the Trash: A History of Design Criticism* (MIT Press, 2017).

Pierparide Vidari

Architetto, docente di progettazione presso il Politecnico di Milano e in diverse istituzioni internazionali. Nel 1970 diventa consulente nel dipartimento di Olivetti Corporate Identity coordinato da Hans von Klier e avvia e organizza l'*Archivio e Centro Documentazione dell'industrial design Olivetti* di cui diventa il responsabile. Realizza diversi incarichi progettuali e curatoriali Olivetti, con particolare attenzione al mezzo audiovisivo. Fra le sue numerose pubblicazioni, si ricordano, *On my Vespa, Italy on the move* (Ed. Triennale di Milano, Ed. Charta, 2006); *Lezioni su Olivetti - Storia, editoria, design. Con un'intervista a Renzo Zorzi* (con M. Broggi e Pier Unicoqli, 2018).

