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POST-CONTEMPORARY HANDICRAFT

Besides populating our living spaces, today's objects also serve the purpose of filling the mental spaces in our life.

When we assumed to design the architecture of a new house, the whole process would start by choosing one single object, the most beautiful on earth, bewitching us with its very presence. By placing this object in the middle of the surrounding empty space, we determine the point of view from which observing and touching it, the way it will be illuminated, the distance between this object and every new object adding on to it. That's how the new home would come into being: little by little, from the object we chose all the way down to the table hosting it, the chairs surrounding it, the lighting fixtures illuminating it. And ultimately, we would start thinking about the walls, the windows and, in a nutshell, the shape of the entire house. The house would be designed around the object. I think we should choose a symbolic, thought-provoking object, a sort of silence facilitator, significantly reminding us of century-old rituals as well as suggesting future visions.

Today's design, instead, is about the opposite process: it gets underway starting from the walls, the definition of space, the choice of the materials. Eventually, we fill the house with all sorts of objects: functional, beautiful, dull, bulky, brand new or grandma's, maybe even unnecessary or redundant ones.

A question spontaneously comes to the mind: how do we choose the object to stand out as the underlying, ultimate element of the architecture and of the space we inhabit? Maybe it is a symbolic object. Maybe it is an object that strives for perfection. Maybe it is an object that hints at the passing of time. Three aspects beautifully epitomized as one by mysterious objects poised between art, design and handicraft. Art comes to our help when we talk with God, while offering us the symbolic and ritual references we need.

Design provides a significant interaction with everyday life and reveals whether the object at issue belongs to our time. Handicraft is helpful to talk about the time spent in obsessively pursuing total perfection or intentional, controlled imperfection.

I am fascinated by the shamanic presence of objects, by the simultaneous presence of past, present and future their souls harbour, and I feel somehow comforted when I strive to understand them inside out. Despite the effort we lead in designing and crafting them, objects develop a vital drive of their own irrespective of the designer, a drive that has them live a mysteriously independent existence. The objects thus born, find a life of their own, regardless of the design intentions. It is evolutionary objects, flexibly adapting to the future by adding forever new meanings to the original ones and bravely looking forward. It is no longer handcrafted, industrial objects or "finished" objects only as we have known them so far; they are the result of a yet unexplored energy. They are the offspring of an attitude that I believe harbours a disruptive innovation. And to approach them, I call them offspring of the uncontaminated, enthusiastic attitude of post-contemporary handicraft.

Post-contemporary handicraft needs being explored extensively, we are to interact with it as a yardstick to assess the quicksand design confronts. If we want to focus on the frontier of advanced experimentation, we are to leave behind the certainties of the fish which confidently swim in the water, and silently listen for the unpredictable panorama of objects we struggle to comprehend entirely.

I like more and more the idea we cannot understand objects completely; I have come to a stage when I growingly enjoy designing objects I can question to find out where they come from and what they expect from us: after all, they only ask for extra attention, care, love and lots of silence.

It is the post-contemporary objects: objects indifferent to their time and to the passing of human time; objects that fill us with questions and provide no certainties or answers; objects that offer us their troubled souls from the tables hosting them; objects that ask us to try and understand who we are and where the hazy future that lays ahead is going to lead us.

Let us follow them by trusting our restless designers' instinct, and we will be the first to quietly enter the universe of genuine and durable beauty.