

FEDERICO PERI AND HONG KONG DESIGN INSTITUTE

How can human relations be stimulated in densely populated contexts? How does the culture of living change in a contemporary era marked by the disruptive innovation of new technologies? These are some of the questions investigated by *Home - Family Connection Through Design*, a project from the Hong Kong Design Institute and followed up by a multidisciplinary team in order to explore new scenarios for our domestic environment. The young designers from Hong Kong will be guided by one of the Italian designers who best represents the soul of Made in Italy: Federico Peri. He embodies the tradition of Italian design with a contemporary approach. He collaborates with companies, fashion brands, professionals and private individuals, designing projects that are closely linked to the client's identity.

Observation of and respect for the work of the great masters - Franco Albini, Osvaldo Borsani, BBPR and Carlo Scarpa - is the basis on which Federico Peri built his identity. "I feel the need to go back to designing with authentic materials as was the case in those bygone years; wood, metal and stone are some of the elements that characterised Italian design of that era and they are imposing themselves, more and more, in the current market, even in a contemporary way." says Peri. There are not many contemporary designers who know how to elegantly capture the essence of objects, working by subtraction and simplification on forms that aspire for eternity. For these skills, Peri works together with important Italian brands such as FontanaArte, Purho and Salviati, as well as collaborating with Oasis and Baxter. He was among the nominees for "best emerging designer" at the Salone del Mobile Milano Awards 2017 with his product *Galerie* designed for FontanaArte and he was nominated for the "rising talent awards" at Maison & Objet in 2018.

If we look at the history of Italian design, we can find moments of great ferment and transformation, just like the period in which we live. The celebrated 1972 exhibition, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* at MoMA in New York was an opportunity for the whole world to discover the best of the Italian design panorama, in a context in which the culture of living was changing with great pace. Emilio Ambasz, curator of the exhibition, had invited the best Italian designers - from Gae Aulenti to Enzo Mari and from Mario Bellini to Ettore Sottsass - to reflect practically on the new urgencies and nature of the domestic entity. The housing environment was intended as a place for social as well as aesthetic experimentation. Designers conceived settings and furnishings with the ability of stimulating new rituals and daily habits. While the architects and designers on display came up with a range of different responses, collectively all projects experimented with forms of mutability and adaptability, offering a vision of the world in which the immobile isolation of individual objects would be replaced by interactive configurations and dynamic relationships that would generate new 'domestic rituals'.

In 2020, the Hong Kong Design Institute's *Home - Family Connection Through Design* project focuses on densely populated contexts: not only on metropolises like Hong Kong where people are known to live in very small spaces, but also on all those cities where real estate costs and rents are excessive. The world of design is therefore called upon to come up with solutions to ensure human wellbeing and connections, through furnishings, objects or housing technologies.

Federico Peri is an explorer of the Italian design landscape in the new millennium. Among his collaborations is one with the internationally renowned gallery Nilufar, with whom he has created several domestic microcells with a multifunctional character. The refined combinations of storage units, bookcases, tables and chairs create original units with a retro aesthetic but they are also interpretations of contemporary needs. To describe his work we can use a phrase from Gruppo 7, a collective of seven Milanese architects who brought the ideas of the Modern Movement to Italy at the beginning of the 20th century: "There is no incompatibility between our past and our present. We do not want to break with tradition: it is tradition that is transformed, taking on new shapes, under which few recognise it."

Galerie for FontanaArte is a product that sums up the character of the designer and at the same time tells the tradition and history of the company. The lamp's characteristic feature is the possibility of moving the "lantern", taking it from the handle, and adapting the light to different situations of the day.

Federico Peri is therefore the ideal figure to create a bridge between Milan and Hong Kong, investigating issues that are now of a global significance. The HKDI students' research, part of the *Design Made in Hong Kong 2020-21* programme, is also supported by TCL Multimedia Technology Holding Ltd and The Hong Kong Furniture and Decoration Association.

The projects developed by the different teams explored many facets of our current condition, starting from particular situations to provide answers that have global significance.

With COVID-19, working and studying from home have become normal and widespread practices throughout the world. These activities usually require a private space where to communicate without interference. Unfortunately, not all homes, especially in big cities, have an extra room. Recently many furniture companies have responded to the need to reconcile the office and the home by offering multi-tasking solutions with flexibility in mind. With the project *Blurred boundary of work & living* Chinese students have designed furniture that interprets this complex issue, while they become a new spatial model for the future.

Multigenerational housing is a growing phenomenon all over the world: in Europe, in America and also in Asia. We are talking about extended families, households comprising several families and generations who choose to live together, under the same roof, or in an adjacent house, sharing spaces, experiences and expenses. With the project *The world is turning older* HKDI students are experimenting with new ways to connect different generations, living together under the same roof, through furniture.

The rise of vanishing space investigates possible ways of cohabitation between young workers and students who choose (or are forced) to live in shared residences. Rather than living in isolated micro-apartments, many opt for instant communities, mixed spaces open to social exchange which compensate for their small size with smart and thoughtful design. The concepts developed by the interdisciplinary working group foster relationships between flatmates and help with complex privacy management. The furniture can be transformed as required, increasing the performance and possibilities of the shared spaces.