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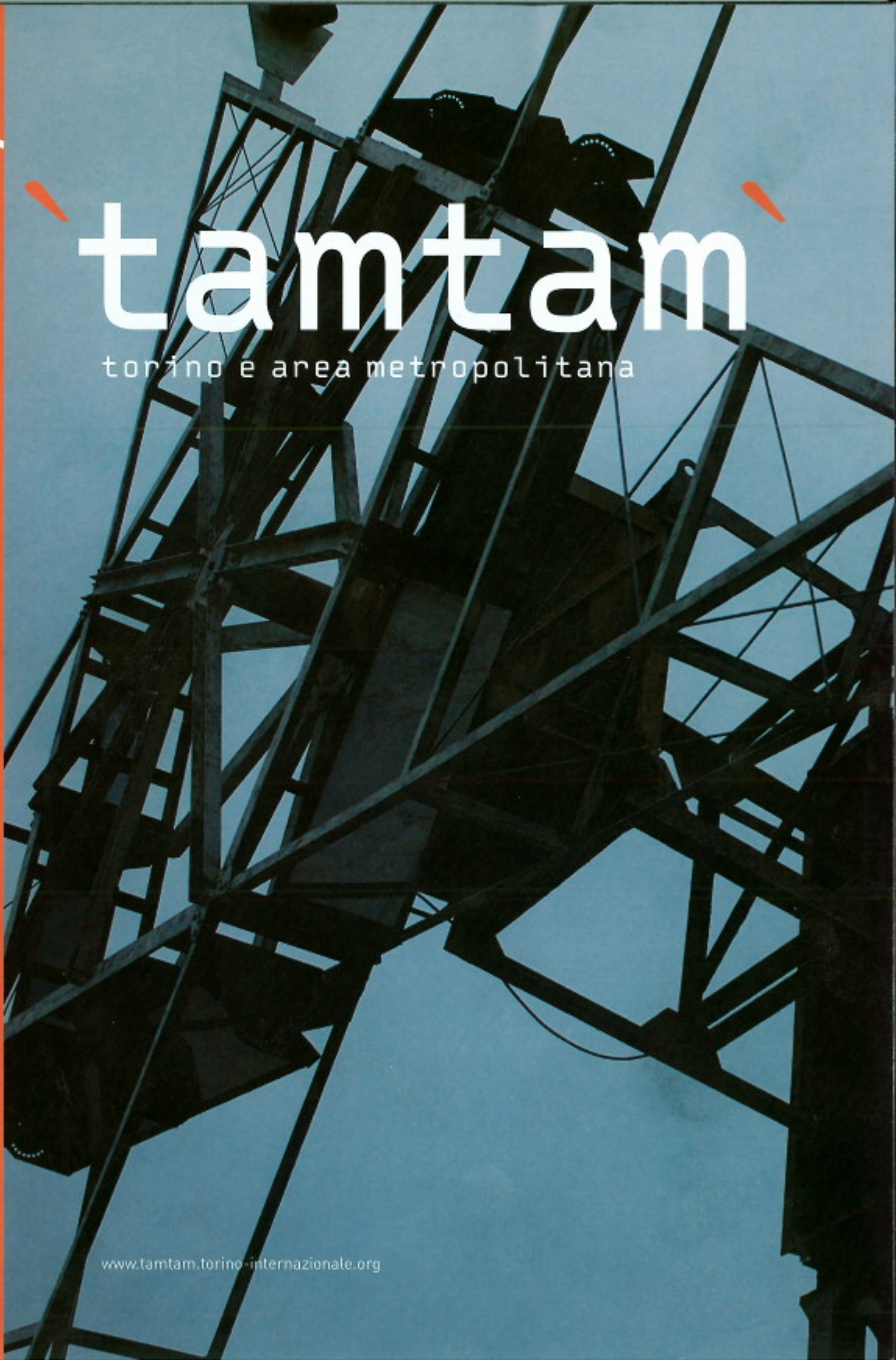

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editoriale

Torino Internazionale

With four-fifths of the world's population now living in urban centres, modern cities are able to play an independent role, even with respect to other nations. They have the means to design their territory, decide their priorities regarding development, increase their potential and conduct international relations. This is why they adopt Strategic Plans, in order to decide how to govern their future.
Torino was the first city in Italy to adopt a Strategic Plan.
This plan – which was signed in year 2000 – involves institutions, political representatives, business and society as a whole in a project to redefine the city's identity. Few cities in Europe had a similar plan, and many do not have one today. The objectives were ambitions: to improve integration within the international system; to construct a wide-spread and unitary metropolitan government; to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives; to support employment; to make Torino a centre of research and education; to transform it into a city of culture and tourism; to improve the quality of life.
The Strategic Plan pinpointed a shared vision of social and economic development. Over the past few years, the city has put forth enormous resources and new instruments to give more power to the local system. Infrastructural projects, urban transformation, the upgrading of entire neighbourhoods, cultural policy, support of economic development, and promotion of Torino in Italy and in Europe, are beginning to show their first results. The city's image, the scope of the construction projects and the financial resources attracted were all further increased when the city was awarded the XX Olympic Winter Games.
Torino Internazionale – with its 120 partners, including public bodies, institutions, universities, cultural centres, companies, unions and trade associations – is the association which promotes strategic planning methods, monitors its actions, communicates to the public the opportunities for development created by the Plan and encourages the public's participation. Torino Internazionale also follows single projects such as Torino 2008 World Design Capital and the Metropolitan Urban Center.
Like other large European cities, Torino finds itself at the peak of major social and economic transition. The change concerns the passage from an economic model characterised by industry to a model that looks to intellectual production, the so-called knowledge society. Thanks to its high quality scientific, technological and cultural potential, Torino possesses all the characteristics to make the changes documented in the Strategic Plan. To support the change underway to the best, five years on from its foundation Torino Internazionale opened a new planning process, commissioning research and organising discussion meetings attended by more than 500 people. Finally, the 2nd Strategic Plan was presented on 1 February last year.

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The exhibition on industrial design is back

Piemonte Torino Design

CLAUDIO GERMAK
Politecnico di Torino

As part of the Cultural Olympiad, the new-look Torino Design exhibition is back with revamped collections in the Sala Bolaffi.

The 1995 exhibition was the brainchild of the Società degli Ingegneri e degli Architetti (the Association of Engineers and Architects) and was put together by Giorgio De Ferrari, a professor of Industrial Design at the Politecnico di Torino. The new version inherits the former's concept and mission: to document the heritage and culture of industrial design projects and products in the Piedmont region through an exhibition geared towards the general public that will nevertheless satisfy connoisseurs and experts looking for an up-to-date overview of the field. As in 1995, when the exhibition followed a prestigious foreign tour (Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Chicago, New Delhi and Tokyo), the new version will first go on show outside Italy and then return home in time for the Torino 2008 World Design Capital event.

The result of two years' of thorough research, the 1995 exhibition turned the spotlight on the then little-known but deeply-rooted excellence of Piedmont design in different sectors. Showing the excellence inherent in product and process, documented in the different stages of design and production, and going beyond the better-known car industry, the exhibition also brought design closer to the general public. Visitors to the exhibition had an opportunity to discover the intense and complex work behind those famous objects with their extraordinary designs: from Giugiaro's original sketches for the Panda, to the heyday of Turin's pop design movement, from the very first Alessi product to the cutting-edge technology of the Ferrino tents that Messner took to the Pole.

Once back from Tokyo, the exhibition was affected by the autumn 2000 floods which caused almost irremediable damage to the collection. But this event did not stop the exhibition's investigative momentum, which turned from a reading of the phenomenon on a merely regional scale to an analysis of the potential of innovation, that is, of the possible factors involved in change to the system. Alongside "obvious design", or the widely-acknowledged ability of Piedmont's design system to act as a strategic promotional and economic resource for the region, a new concept is establishing itself: that of "possible design", in new markets, in new sectors and technologies and in a different approach to design. This is a leap forward for design, which widens its cultural horizons with new products that, without surrendering any of their essential functional and production characteristics, embrace sustainable technologies, establish interactive relationships and become more user-friendly. These products go beyond the role of simulacrum and stimulate new senses. They are objects not only to be admired; they are there to earn our trust. Useful and fun, they are to be touched and smelled. They can be shared by different users while maintaining the same appeal. Some may even be useless, but all of them are meaningful.

One of the tasks of the Piemonte Torino Design exhibition is to show just to what extent humanistic "viruses" have infected the industrial production system. There are over 200 objects on display, designed and produced in the region, and organized along thematic lines. There are some new additions to the latest exhibition, such as coffee, wine and chocolate, as well as food design, a young and highly attractive sector. More established sections reflect the pioneering skills and excellence that led the way and which still today (apart from one or two painful withdrawals from the scene) hold out against the new-comers; for example, the sports equipment and other products from industrial districts like Verbano-Cusio-Ossola for taps and household goods, pens from Settimo Torinese, and the tech-design of industrial machinery and electronic devices, and aeronautics. Alongside assembly-line production, there are some fine examples of carefully researched recovery of the craftsman's art, and of cooperation between training institutes and large industrial groups working together towards sustainable innovation. The car industry is represented by its own vast literature: in a kind of library-cum-sitting room, with real car seats, visitors can consult the huge range of publications produced by the giants of the local automobile industry.

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