

Women's Contribution through the Pages of "Domus" (1946–1968): Design Exhibitions and Fairs

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Proceedings of the 2nd MoMoWo International Conference- Workshop

Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, France Stele
Institute of Art History, 3–5 October 2016, Ljubljana

Ljubljana 2018

**Proceedings of the 2nd MoMoWo International Conference-Workshop
Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, France Stele Institute
of Art History, 3–5 October 2016, Ljubljana**

Collected by Helena Seražin, Caterina Franchini and Emilia Garda

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Leafing through the Pages of Specialized Magazines Seeking for Women Architects and Designers

Women's Contribution through the Pages of "Domus" (1946–1968)

Design Exhibitions and Fairs (1946–68)

Caterina Franchini

The magazine *Domus* has proved to be an outstanding source for mapping the contributions of female architects and designers to contemporary design fields, as well as for studying their visibility and the reception of their works.

This chapter covers primarily women's contributions to the most relevant design exhibitions and fairs that were published, advertised or organised by the magazine between 1946 and 1968. The chapter presents some results of an original research study that focused primarily on furnishing, furniture design and exhibition set design, also taking into account organisational and editorial tasks that were covered by women.

The reasons for choosing this Italian magazine as a source for this historical investigation are twofold. First, unlike its competitors, *Domus* expressed a unified concept of design culture, from architecture to decorative arts and from art to industrial design, since its inception. Even today, the magazine continues to represent the world of design through a cross-sectoral approach. Second, but not least, *Domus* has always made a place for analysis and discussion by carefully selecting projects, ideas and innovations, including those of women.¹ The magazine

has played a pioneering role in recognising leading women of Modern design by publishing tributes, such as "Un omaggio a Eileen Gray. Pioniera del Design" (1968), that have stimulated public interest in the Modern Movement legacy. In 1968, the English architectural historian Joseph Rykwert, author of the tribute, wrote:

It is odd how no-one has paid homage to Eileen Gray for thirty years. [...] Eileen Gray is still working. What she has done up to date must not be taken as just a historical document; it will remain as an example of a remarkably humane and sensitive artist who has had the courage and the force to break new ground.²

Domus 1928-1999 (Köln: Taschen, 2006), 12 Vol. On *Domus* as a source for historical investigations, see: Fulvio Irace and Marianne Lorenz, *Domus 1928-1984: from the sources of modern to neomodern resources* (New York: Architectural League, 1984).

² Joseph Rykwert, "Un omaggio a Eileen Gray. Pioniera del Design," *Domus* 469 (1968), 33.

¹ For a complete historical overview on the magazine, see: Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell (eds.),

Domus as a million-room house to be explored: Women in the editorial office

For the celebration of issue 1000 of *Domus* in March 2016, Maria Giovanna Mazzocchi Bordone (b. 1947) clearly articulated the meaning of *Domus* as “a house of design, architecture, and urban planning, and of all the new dimensions where the organisation of space, the invention of beauty, the investigation of form, and the development of expertise are expressed”.³ The magazine has also become a ‘home’ for all exceptional men and women, members of the editorial staff and consultants, whose enthusiastic work is still recognisable behind every issue.

Giovanna Mazzocchi has been *Domus*’s publisher, since 1975. She is the daughter of Gianni Mazzocchi who became the publisher of the magazine a year after it was founded by Gio Ponti in 1928. Gio Ponti’s female relatives also collaborated with *Domus*.

In 1928, Ponti’s wife, Giulia Vimercati, wrote a few articles for the column on plants, flowers and gardens,⁴ and in 1930, the magazine published her table-setting decoration, which was exhibited at the *IV Esposizione Triennale Internazionale delle Arti Decorative ed Industriali Moderne* in Monza.⁵

Later, Ponti’s daughter Lisa, who was nicknamed Lisetta, took the helm of the magazine as deputy editor (1965–86). She worked for forty years in *Domus*’s editorial office under the direction of her father,

³ Giovanna Mazzocchi Bordone, “Gianni and Giovanna Mazzocchi Publishers,” *Domus* 1000 (2016), 3.

⁴ Articles by Giulia Ponti Vimercati include the following: “Le orchidee,” *Domus* 2 (1928), 32, 48; “Piante d’appartamenti: le piante grasse,” *Domus* 3 (1928), 34; “Nuovi disegni per stoffe d’arredamento,” *Domus* 16 (1929), 33, 48.

⁵ “Il concorso per l’ornamentazione della tavola alla Triennale di Monza,” *Domus* 35 (1930), 58–9.

having gained experience at the affiliated periodical *Stile*, where she had followed her father from 1940 to 1947.

Over the years, other women joined the editorial staff: journalist Enrichetta – Chicchetta– Ritter (1923–2015)⁶ in 1954, Anna Marchi in 1964 and Marianne Lorenz (d. 2010) in 1965. Marianne or Marion –as she was dubbed by Lisa Ponti (b. 1922)– became the best friend and close collaborator of Lisetta, and both women ‘have been a central factor in the success of the magazine in its gold age’.⁷

Lisa Ponti was the editor-in-chief’s right-hand person, and at the height of the 1950s, she became an independent overseer of the pages offered to artists. She then outlined the standards of art with the authority of a veteran editor until the 1990s.⁸ In 1950, Ponti wrote to his friend Gigi Radice, “My daughter Lisa is so like me at *Domus*, that programmatic

⁶ Enrichetta Ritter is the editor of the book *I pieghevoli, raccolta di oggetti progettati per ridurre il loro ingombro* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1980).

⁷ In memory of Marianne Lorenz, Anna Foppiano wrote:

“Born in Vienna, Marianne studied at the German High School in Milan, the city she lived in having followed her father, who was in charge of the famous Italian Krupps branch (“Arthur Krupp Berndorf”). [...] Ponti often used to say, with his peculiar way of smiling: “Marianne is always right”. And he also added: ‘Marianne personifies the ancient heart of Europe’, expressing his real admiration for her as well as his deep-rooted affection for Austria”. Anna Foppiano, “Marianne Lorenz,” *Abitare Archive* 1 August (2010), <http://www.abitare.it/en/archive/2010/08/01/marianne-lorenz-1932-2010-2/> (accessed May 2, 2017).

⁸ Lisa Ponti is the author of several books, including the book of poems, *Gio Ponti agli Amici* (Milano: Alfieri e Lacroix, 1941), the fairy tales *L’Armadio Magico* (Milano: Ed. Italiana, 1946) and *Gio Ponti. L’opera* (Milano: Leonardo, 1990). She has always practiced the art of drawing, and in 1992, the Galleria Toselli in Milan hosted her first exhibition. Some of her drawings were also published by *Domus*.

agreement with her is what is most beneficial".⁹

According to Lisa Ponti, 'Domus is a million-room house to be explored'¹⁰ and what can be found within the magazine depends on which door we wish to open. This chapter opens the door of the female designers' room, bearing in mind that "save for a turbulent seven years (1941–47), *Domus* was Gio Ponti's magazine for the first 50 years, reflecting his idiosyncrasies and his curiosity", as underlined by Fulvio Irace.¹¹

As an independent magazine, *Domus* represented a cultural project that aimed to promote a so-called *cultura dell'abitare* (housing culture) and intended to proclaim a type of modernity that did not coincide with either a style or a fashion. Therefore, since its early period – preceding the Second World War – the abstractionism of the artistic avant-gardes appeared to be mitigated, and the classical or folkloristic conservatism was not represented by the magazine. Probably for this reason, the magazine soon became successful abroad, turning into an ambassador of the Italian pride. As a matter of fact, *Domus* was one of the few international magazines in the era of nationalistic regimes, becoming an archetype for successive design magazines.

Due to the war, the publication was suspended in 1945 and resumed in 1946 under the leadership of architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers. From January 1946 to December 1947, the leader of BBPR (Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers) reinvented the magazine, embracing the motto 'The home of Man'. Nineteen issues were enough to turn *Domus* into both a

manifesto of Italy's rebirth and a symbol of a socially active cultural reawakening.

Between 1946, the year of its resumption, and 1968, the year of its fortieth anniversary, *Domus* reported on major design exhibitions, namely the exhibition of the Association *Riunione Italiana Mostre per l'Arredamento* (RIMA) at Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan (1946) and eight editions of the *Triennale di Milano* (1947–68).¹²

Domus became not only the magazine for architecture, design, art and urban planning –that we all know– but also a brand around which initiatives grew, giving visibility to a number of female Italian architects, designers and entrepreneurs.

Except for the many competitions organised by the magazine, such as *Formica-Domus*, *Vetroflex-Domus*, *Vis Securit-Domus*, *Ducotone*, which were not included in this chapter due to a lack of space, these initiatives were the first two *Eurodomus* fairs (1966, 1968) and the presentation *Domus Formes Italiennes* at the Galleries Lafayette in Paris (1967).

Exhibitions and fairs helped to launch Italian design and female designers on the international scene. In this context, *Domus* has published not only the works of female Italian architects who designed furniture for leading Italian companies but has also highlighted the contributions of foreign female designers and Scandinavians to design.

⁹ Fulvio Irace, "Lisa," *Domus* 1000 (2016), 8.

¹⁰ Lisa Ponti Licitra, "Un saluto," *Domus* 669 (1986), 1.

¹¹ Fulvio Irace, "The editors-in-chief and the history," *Domus* 1000 (2016), 5.

¹² For a history of the Triennali, see: Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale* (Milano: Longanesi, 1978). On design at the Triennali, see: Alberto Bassi, Raimonda Riccini, Cecilia Colombo (eds.), *Design in Triennale, 1947-68: percorsi fra Milano e Brianza* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editoriale, 2004).

The second half of the forties: The RIMA Exhibition and the VIII Triennale di Milano

The RIMA Exhibition opened at Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan in 1946. From this event, *Domus* (212) published the chairs designed by architects Lucia Ponti Bonicalzi for Brenna e Cazzini (Milan) and Emma Pasquinelli Peressutti for Fratelli Cassina (Meda).

Both architects belonged to the Milanese circle of innovative architectural culture. Lucia was the wife of engineer Giovanni Bonicalzi, who was a professor at the Polytechnic of Milan, and Emma was married to BBPR's Enrico Peressutti, who was a colleague of *Domus* editor E. Nathan Rogers.

Made of wood and plywood, the published chairs were appreciated for their plain, flexible and ergonomic shapes and for their affordable cost, which made them available to the middle class.¹³

Pasquinelli's rocking chaise-longue – marked by its pierced plywood structure – is pictured in a domestic environment, together with the same teddy horses that were portrayed on her children's furniture in the previous issue (211) of the magazine, thus associating a maternal concern with both products.¹⁴

The fabrics that covered the thin upholstery of the chairs designed by Ponti and Pasquinelli were designed and manufactured by Fede Cheti (1905–78),

whose production was extensively represented and advertised in the magazine's issues until 1996 (783), reaching the covers of *Domus* since the 1950s. This outstanding craftswoman, designer and entrepreneur founded her textile firm in Milan in 1936, and Gio Ponti was among the artists who designed fabrics and rugs for her firm from the outset.¹⁵

Fede Cheti's creations – along with those of the renowned Gegia Bronzini (1894–1976)¹⁶ and the less-known Emilia Bardi from Bergamo – were published by *Domus* (213) as examples of a productive and creative recovery of imagination and a love of Italian artisans for their work, featuring the section of the RIMA exhibition that was devoted to textiles, curtains and fabrics.¹⁷

The exhibition set design of this section – defined 'graceful' by E.N. Rogers – was created by architect Lina Bo.¹⁸ She collaborated with Gio Ponti at the magazine *Lo Stile - nella casa e nell'arredamento* until 1943, and she was

¹³ Lucia Ponti Bonicalzi and Emma Peressutti Pasquinelli, "Due espositrici," *Domus* 212 (1946), 12–3.

¹⁴ Mario Tevarotto, "I bambini nell'architettura," *Domus* 211 (1946), 28. In 1955, the same chaise-longue appeared in a long article devoted to Peressutti's home in Milan. This article highlights only the pieces of furniture that were designed by Pasquinelli's husband, Enrico Peressutti and some textiles designed by family friend Fede Cheti. Enrico Peressutti and Emma Pasquinelli, "Fra i Tetti di Milano," *Domus* 303 (1955), 16–26.

¹⁵ About Fede (Federica) Cheti's pioneering work, her friendship with Gio Ponti and her participation at the Triennali, see: Chiara Lecce, "Fede Cheti 1936-1975: Tracce di una storia italiana," *AIS/Design Storia e Ricerche* 2 (2013), <http://www.aisdesign.org/aisd/fede-cheti-1936-1975-tracce-di-una-storia-italiana>, (accessed 4 April, 2017).

¹⁶ After having won the first prize at the National textile competition in 1936 and the silver medal for the tapestry shown in 1940 at the Triennale di Milano, in 1946, Gegia Bronzini founded together with her daughter Marisa (1920–2007) the Tessitura a mano Gegia Bronzini company. Gegia Bronzini received the Diploma of Honour at the X Triennale di Milano (1954). On Bronzini's work, see: Roberto Rizzi, *Omaggio a Gegia e Marisa Bronzini* (Cesena: Clac, 2003).

¹⁷ "Al Palazzo dell'Arte. Stoffe. Allestimento dell'Arch. Lina Bo," *Domus* 213 (1946), 6–7.

¹⁸ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Divulgazioni attorno a una mostra d'arredamento," *Domus* 211 (1946), 6.

the deputy editor of *Domus* from 1944 to 1945.¹⁹

For her exhibition set design, Lina Bo stated the need to choose appropriate home textiles in an informal and provocative way. She wrote on a giant blackboard, 'vi ricordate? L'intimità dell'abat-jour e i Damschi (finti) [...] BASTA!' (do you remember? The cosiness of the abatjour and the (fake) Damasks. Enough!)²⁰.

Sharing Bo's point of view, the magazine appreciated Emilia Bardi's decorative use of warp, as well as the chromaticity and abstract motifs inspired by the Dadaist artist Hans Arp of Fede Cheti's fabrics.

Fede Cheti provided her home textiles for the widely celebrated experimental prefabricated residential quarter known as 'QT8', which was built for the VIII Triennale di Milano (T8, 1947), the first after the war. *Domus* editor E.N. Rogers devoted the entire issue 221 to this historical event, which focused on housing post-war reconstruction.²¹ In this issue, Fede Cheti's textiles are also mentioned.²²

The T8 affirmed the social aspects of architecture by emphasising the key issue

of housing for all. Italian women's contributions appeared in the exhibition sections devoted to furniture and daily-use objects. *Domus* published fabrics designed by Fede Cheti and Vanna Chiaretta and a dinnerware set designed by Lyda Levi (?), which was manufactured by the master of ceramics, Angelo Ungania.²³

On the occasion of this outstanding Triennale that focused on the house for everyone, Cheti's firm launched a textile design competition that was advertised by the magazine.²⁴ One year later, the firm continued in launching design competitions in collaboration with *Domus*,²⁵ and the firm promoted design by organising a travelling exhibition on Italian modern furniture in Milan, Genoa and Rome. Cheti and Ponti had the same purpose, spreading quality of artisanal design productions in order to boost Italian exports.²⁶

From the furniture section of the T8, *Domus* published the works of young architects Anna Ferrieri Castelli and Luisa Castiglioni, who graduated in Milan in 1943 and 1946, respectively.

After the war, Anna Ferrieri Castelli (1920–2006) became correspondent from Italy for the English magazine *Architectural Design* and was the editor-in-chief of the other leading Italian magazine, *Casabella-Continuità*. She had been in contact with architect Piero Bottoni –designer and promoter of QT8– and E.N. Rogers since

¹⁹ Achillina Bo (1914–92) graduated in Rome in 1939 and later became known as Lina Bo Bardi. In 2014, to celebrate the centenary of her birth, *Domus* and the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo - MAXXI organised an exhibition about her foundational years in Rome and Milan. *Domus* published an article she wrote in 1947 in Brazil and re-printed the first issue of the magazine *A – Attualità, Architettura, Abitazione, Arte*, which was published in 1946 by Editoriale Domus under the editorship of Lina Bo, with Carlo Pagani and Bruno Zevi. Lina Bo, "Tutto quello che volevo era avere Storia. All I Wanted was to have History," *Domus* 986 (2014), 2–5.

²⁰ "Al Palazzo dell'Arte. Stoffe. Allestimento dell'Arch. Lina Bo," *Domus* 213 (1946), 7.

²¹ By replacing Melchiorre Bega, E.N. Rogers became editor when the magazine was re-launched in 1946 after its break in 1945.

²² Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Sezione dell'industrializzazione edilizia," *Domus* 221 (1947), 12.

²³ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Sezione dell'oggetto," *Domus* 221 (1947), 21, 27.

²⁴ "Nuovi concorsi di disegni per tessuti da arredamento," *Domus* 218 (1947), 53.

²⁵ "Concorso Fede Cheti – Domus," *Domus* 226 (1948), 9.

²⁶ About this exhibition, see: Enrico Freyrie, "Dimostrazione di qualità del nostro lavoro," *Domus* 226 (1948), 56–7.

she worked at Franco Albini's studio, at the very beginning of her career.²⁷

In his article (issue 221, 1947), Rogers published a bent wooden armchair designed by Ferrieri Castelli and a sectional kitchen for minimal houses, which Ferrieri Castelli had designed together with Ettore Gentili. In addition, Rogers mentioned her –together with architect Luciano Canella and graphic designer Max Huber– as the set-designer of this exhibition section (*Mobile Singolo*), which was awarded with a Mention of Honour.²⁸

In the same article, Luisa Castiglioni (1922–2015) gained visibility in *Domus*, publishing her metal-wooden office desk with chairs.²⁹ Ten years later, her mass-produced office furniture was again published by the magazine.³⁰

Castiglioni was one of the few women to succeed in gaining professional visibility outside the boundaries of 'domestic design', to which most of her female colleagues were confined. However, *Domus's* main articles focused on architectural and interior design projects that Castiglioni undertook in collaboration with her colleague Margherita (Rita) Bravi Mori (1921–2006).³¹

²⁷ About Ferrieri's life and work, see: Cristina Morozzi, *Anna Castelli Ferrieri* (Bari: Laterza, 1993).

²⁸ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Sezione del mobile," *Domus* 221 (1947), 14, 19–20. Ten years later, the magazine published an inventive exhibition set designed by the same architect. See: Anna Castelli Ferrieri, "Un allestimento," *Domus* 322 (1956), 52.

²⁹ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Sezione del mobile," *Domus* 221 (1947), 15.

³⁰ Luisa Castiglioni, "Mobili per ufficio prodotti in serie," *Domus* 327 (1957), 44. In 1956, the same Castiglioni desk was published by Annibale Fiocchi, "Un ufficio a Milano," *Domus* 324 (1956), 49. The same year, a wooden desk by Castiglioni and Margherita Bravi Mori appeared together with desks designed by Finn Juhl and Gianemilio Piero and Anna Monti in the column "Rassegna Domus," *Domus* 322 (1956), no page.

³¹ By Luisa Castiglioni, Rita Mori Bravi, see: "Da appartamento a negozio," *Domus* 278 (1953), 42–

The fifties, from the IX to the XI Triennale di Milano: Scandinavian design culture as a reference

When Ponti returned to *Domus* as editor-in-chief in 1948, he immediately resumed his pre-war interest in Scandinavian design, at the same time promoting Italian modern design furniture.³²

In 1950, the magazine was looking at Swedish mass production of functional, plain and low-cost furniture that combined tradition with modernity for a democratic idea of design. Within this context, female Scandinavian designers were invited to write articles about Northern design shops and firms.

Swedish furniture designer and interior designer Lena Rabenius Larsson (1919–2000) presented the design of home furniture that was mass-produced by Nordiska Kompaniet (NK) in her articles.

Rabenius Larsson was an artistic leader at NK, who suggested design solutions for the simplification of domestic lifestyles. Considering interior design as a matter of public interest, she recognised the NK concept of furniture design as the epitome of practicality to be emulated by Italians. In her article, she explained how small Swedish factories, working on an artisanal basis, chose to sell simple elements in order to obtain different pieces of furniture and facilitate export. Considering the similarities to Italian manufacturers,

3; "Un negozio in vetrina," *Domus* 278 (1953), 44–6; "Aspetti di un arredamento," *Domus* 299 (1954), 35–9; "Camera studio per una persona," *Domus* 299 (1954), 40; "A Torino," *Domus* 315 (1956), 21–7; "Una casa a Brescia," *Domus* 317 (1956), 33–8.

³² About this topic, see: Caterina Franchini, "From the Embroidery to the Construction. Women in Design and Architecture: Domus 1928-1950", in Ana María Fernández García et al. (eds.), *MoMoWo: 100 Works in 100 Years. European Women in Architecture and Design. 1918-2018* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU France Stele Institute, 2016), 249–53.

she suggested the adoption of the same strategy in Italy.³³

In addition, the internationally celebrated Swedish ceramic and glass designer Tyra Lundgren (1897–1979), who had been admired by Ponti since 1934, wrote an article about Swedish designer Estrid Ericsson (1894–1981), who founded the renowned interior design shop Svenskt Tenn (Swedish pewter) in Stockholm and involved architect Joseph Frank in her furniture production.³⁴ Ponti supported the participation of Svenskt Tenn at the announced XI Triennale di Milano (T9, 1951), writing an enthusiastic article on that topic.³⁵

Thanks to these Swedish authors, *Domus* helped to initiate the interest of both customers and Italian designers in Scandinavian design, thus favouring its visibility at the T9 “International Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts and Modern Architecture”.

The T9 opened the doors of Italy and Milan to the world, inviting foreign designers to ‘display to the Italians the most efficient issue of their arts’. The aim was to form a ‘general climate of taste’, enhancing and regenerating ‘the traditional veins of spontaneous production which clearly meet the requirements of modern culture’.³⁶

The magazine mentions female designers primarily in the pages devoted to the Scandinavian sections of the exhibition. Among all other national sections, only the Italian and the French sections granted some visibility to women’s works in the pages of *Domus*.

³³ Lena Larsson, “La Svezia produce in serie,” *Domus* 248-49 (1950), 75–9. About the NK, see by the same author “La NK-bo di Stoccolma,” *Domus* 255 (1951), 53.

³⁴ Tyra Lundgren, “Valigia svedese. Conoscere Svenskt Tenn,” *Domus* 247 (1950), 43–4.

³⁵ Gio Ponti, “Valigia svedese. Svenskt Tenn in Stoccolma,” *Domus* 247 (1950), 45–56.

³⁶ “IX Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 247 (1950), 1.

The works by Scandinavian women appeared to focus primarily on ceramic, glass and textile complementary furnishing, while the furniture design scene appeared to be dominated exclusively by men. Not even the furniture exhibited at the T9 by Danish designer Grete Jalk (1920–2006) was published.

Complementary furnishing objects were designed by specialised artists and craftsmen/designers who worked for leading manufacturers in those countries. Several pictures of these works were published in issue 259 (1951), and those pictures were preceded by a Gio Ponti article that was emblematically entitled “IX Triennale di Milano. Insegnamento altrui e fantasia degli italiani” (Other people’s teaching and Italians’ imagination).³⁷ The title of this article clarifies Ponti’s point of view, whose mission was to open up new design concepts that he considered able to enhance Italian design.

At the T9, among the Scandinavians, female Finnish designers and craftsmen were the most extensively represented by *Domus*.³⁸ An overview of the works of some of these designers had already been published by Gio Ponti a year earlier in order to stimulate readers’ interest in the forthcoming international exhibition.³⁹

³⁷ Gio Ponti, “IX Triennale di Milano. Insegnamento altrui e fantasia degli italiani,” *Domus* 259 (1951), 10–3.

³⁸ “Finlandia. IX Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 259 (1951), 14–27. About Finnish craftsmen, see: Goldstein Gallery and University of Minnesota, *Suomen naisten käsityöt eilen ja tänään - Finnish women's handcraft past and present*, [exhibition, May 18-July 18, 1986], (St. Paul: The Gallery, 1986).

³⁹ Lisa Johansson-Pape (1907–89) with her modern lamps, Helena Tynell (1918–2016) and Gunnel Nyman (1909–48) with their crystals, and Ruth Bryk (1916–99) with her ceramics, were heavily promoted in the articles “Formelle di Ruth Bryk,” and “Un anno di produzione d’arte finlandese,” *Domus* 247 (1950), 41, 58–61.

The ceramics manufactured at the artist colony Wärtsilä Koncernen A.B. Arabia were designed by Tonini Irene Muona (1904–87) and Tapio Wirkkala’s wife, Ruth Bryk (1916–99),⁴⁰ whose work inspired Italian artists at this exhibition.

Porcelains for Arabia were designed by Aune Siimes (1909–64) –who received the Gold medal in 1951 and 1954– while the glass-wares for Nuutajärvi-Nötsjö were designed by Gunnel Nyman (1909–48), who received the Gold medal for the T9 posthumously.

Rugs made by adopting ancient *täkänä* and *ryijy* techniques were designed by Alli Koroma and manufactured by Suomen Käsityön Ystävät. The tapestries were designed by Laila Karttunen (1895–1981) for Hämeelinnan Käsityöopisto and by Dora Jung (1906–80). Both textile designers were mentioned in *Domus* several times. Karttunen had already appeared in an article on the V Triennale (1933),⁴¹ while Jung was mentioned for the first time in 1939.⁴² Dora Jung received the Grand Prix at both the IX and X Triennale (1951, 1954) for her damasks⁴³ and at the XI Triennale (1957) for her curtains. In 1962, the magazine published

⁴⁰ Ruth Bryk’s work was published by the magazine for the first time in 1949. “Ceramiche, sbalzi e smalti. Rassegna,” *Domus* 328 (1949), 38. In 1962, *Domus* devoted an entire article to the Wirkkalases: “Viaggio in Lapponia,” and “Ritorno a Helsinki,” *Domus* 387 (1962), 23–36, 37–45.

⁴¹ Carlo A. Felice, “Le Arti Applicate Straniere alla Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 65 (1933), 247. This article also shows a tapestry designed by Eva Anttila, a rug designed by Eva Brumer, ceramics designed by Elsa Elenius and toys designed by Eva Gardenberg, together with a chair designed by Alvar Aalto.

⁴² “Artigianato straniero. Quattro nuovi tessuti,” *Domus* 136 (1939), 84; “Documenti d’artigianato straniero. Tessuti,” *Domus* 140 (1939), 73. In these articles, Finnish designers Maga Tikkanen and Greta Skogster Lehtinen are also mentioned.

⁴³ “Finlandia forme nuove per la Triennale,” 298 (1954), 46; “La Finlandia alla Triennale,” *Domus* 300 (1954), 22.

an article about her studio in Helsinki, showing her innovative sacred tapestries that made her famous in this field.⁴⁴

From the Stokmann-Orno firm were published the innovative aluminium lamps designed by Lisa Johansson Pape (1907–89) through the exploration of the potentialities of new industrial techniques. Her revolutionary creations received medals at the IX, X and XII Triennali and had an enormous influence on the subsequent design of lamps.

The article about Finnish design at the T9 offered the perception that traditional materials and manufacturing techniques could peacefully coexist with innovative materials and manufacturing techniques in the field of modern design.

Regarding the Danish section of the T9, blankets designed by the female Icelandic pioneer of textiles and early member of the Danish Female Artists’ Society, Júlíana Sveinsdóttir (1889–66), are published in the same magazine issue 259 (1951), in addition to ceramics and textiles designed by other leading designers.⁴⁵

All works created by female Danish designers were exhibited together with Finn Juhl and Mogensén’s armchairs and Hans Wegner’s tables and wooden chairs. Thus, the perception of women’s contributions to design was that of playing an ancillary decorative role in suggesting an *unicum* of a lively modern Danish lifestyle, even though some of these women designers were already known by

⁴⁴ “Ritorno a Helsinki. Nello studio di Dora Jung ad Helsinki,” *Domus* 387 (1962), 46–7.

⁴⁵ Ceramics designed by Nathalie Krebs (1895–1978), Gertrud Vasegaard (1913–2007) for Bing & Grøndahl and Eva Stæher Nielsen (1911–76) for Saxbo-Stentøj, rugs designed by Ea Koch (1905–87), the wife of the architect and furniture designer Mogens Koch, and textiles designed by Marie Gudme Leth (1895–1997), Inger Marie Ostenfeld (1905–2016) and Helga Foght (1902–74) are published in “Danimarca. IX Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 259 (1951), 28–33.

the magazine.⁴⁶ This ancillary perception of female creations appears to have also been assumed by the Swedish section, where women were represented through their home accessories in ceramic, glass and textiles.

Ponti had already demonstrated his admiration for Swedish design since the 1925 Paris exhibition, publishing some articles on Swedish design and on the exceptional productions of the department store Nordiska Kompaniet (NK), particularly the mass-produced furniture department, which was directed by Lena Rabenius Larsson.⁴⁷

In the article devoted to the Swedish section of the T9, the productions of NK are largely represented by women designers, some of whom were already known by the magazine readers.⁴⁸ Among the textile designers mentioned, the most well known were the pioneer Märta Måås Fjetterström (1873–1941),⁴⁹ Viola Gråsten (1910–94)⁵⁰ and Astrid Sampe (1909–

2002),⁵¹ who as director of the NK textile department was able to adapt artisanal ideals to industrial needs since the 1930's. Textile designers Märta Afzelius (1887–1961), Susan Gröndal (1901–95), and Sofia Widén (1900–61) appeared for the first time.

In addition to the works of the ceramists Tyra Lundgren and Anna-Lisa Thomson (1905–52) –recurrently mentioned in the magazine's issues– works designed by glass designer Monica Bratt (1913–61) for Reijmyre Glasbruk appeared in the magazine for the first time.

Scandinavian women's design was valued in the magazine for its poetic feeling, while Italian women's design was appreciated for its playful inventiveness. The 'La Garretta' tent designed by Fede Cheti and Gianni Ratto and a coffee set designed by the ceramic designer Antonia Campi (b. 1921) appeared as emblematic works of this trend.

The amusing weekend tent for ladies named 'La Garretta', in orange tint, had great success at the T9.⁵² Equipped with scissors for gardening, magazines and small chairs designed by Marco Zanuso, this tent was presented as a perfect place for ladies to chat. The walking coffee-set in black and white was also funny and ironic, but in a different way.⁵³ The ceramic designer A. Campi was already known by *Domus* readers because her creations had been published together

⁴⁶ Nathalie Krebs was mentioned by the magazine for the first time in 1934 in the column "Idee per la casa dalle Riviste di tutto il mondo," *Domus* 77(1934), 39. A vase designed by Gertrud Vasegaard was published in 1950. "Un negozio esemplare. Arredamento di Finn Juhl per 'Bing & Grondahl', Chopenaghen," *Domus* 250 (1950), 46. Two vases designed by Eva Stæher Nielsen were published in 1940. "Per voi e per la vostra casa Domus sceglie le migliori idee da tutto il mondo," *Domus* 149 (1940), 80.

⁴⁷ "Arredamento svedese con mobili tutti in serie," *Domus* 250 (1950), 20; "La serie per i bambini. La Svezia ci insegna," *Domus* 251 (1950), 33.

⁴⁸ "Svezia. IX Triennale di Milano," *Domus* 259 (1951), 34–41.

⁴⁹ Playing a leading role in the revival of hand weaving in Sweden between the two wars, Märta Måås Fjetterström was mentioned by the magazine for the first time in 1935, together with Elsa Gullberg (1886–1984), who was a pioneer of textile design for industrial production. Gio Ponti, "Un arte da incoraggiare," *Domus* 87 (1935), 35.

⁵⁰ Viola Gråsten, "Tappeti scandinavi," *Domus* 248 (1950), 80–1.

⁵¹ Astrid Sampe textiles were published for the first time in 1935. E. Rosselli, "Nuovi tessuti e ricami dalla Svezia," *Domus* 94 (1935), 32–3. In 1939, her fabrics for NK were published together with Tyra Lundgren's glasses for Venini and Aune Simes' ceramics in "Come le foglie," *Domus* 144 (1939), 56–7. Astrid Sampe is mentioned by *Domus* until the sixties.

⁵² "Fede Cheti alla Triennale," *Domus* 259 (1951), 61–4.

⁵³ Gio Ponti, "Sezione ceramica – Italia," *Domus* 260 (1951), 35.

with tapestries designed by Gegia Bronzini (1894–1976) in issue 252 (1950).⁵⁴

Up to this point, the perception provided by *Domus* concerning the contributions of women designers appears to be represented primarily by fields belonging to the applied arts, which were traditionally considered to be feminine, such as textiles⁵⁵ and pottery, but some exceptions appeared. A bed and a sofa designed by architect Franca Antonioli (later Helg) (1920–89) were published in the article devoted to the apartment realized by the Italian department store La Rinascente.⁵⁶

Domus offered visibility to the ‘apartment *minimum*’ designed and furnished by architects Luisa Castiglioni and Margherita Bravi. In this interior design, walls became closets that combined the industrial material Formica laminate with plywood, thus obtaining an original solution.⁵⁷ This design was the only interior designed by women for the T9 that was published in the magazine issue.

Alongside Castiglioni and Bravi, the young architect Eugenia Alberti Reggio (d. 2015) stands out, together with costumer Emma Calderini (1899–1975). They were the authors of the exhibition set design of the “Straw section”, for which Eugenia Alberti

Reggio also designed a modern-shaped armchair that experimented with this traditional natural material.⁵⁸

Again, *Domus* demonstrated its interest in the use of traditional natural materials for modern innovative design by publishing a bamboo table and wooden dining table designed by Charlotte Perriand (1903–99), which were presented in the French section.⁵⁹ This table was similar to the table Perriand designed for her attic that was published in 1946.⁶⁰ Perriand was also the set designer of the sections “Formes utiles” and interior design, while the widely renowned textile designer Paule Marrot (1902–87) was in charge of the set design for the textiles and tapestries section.

Concerning the T9, *Domus* provided once again the perception that women’s creations were mostly confined to the field of home accessories, even when they were subjected to mass production, as was the case for the USA’s selection of daily life objects.⁶¹

This perception changed slightly at the X Triennale (T10, 1954), which was devoted

⁵⁴ Antonia Campi, “Ceramiche e stoffe,” *Domus* 252 (1950), 72. An ashtray designed by Campi was published the same year in the column “Galleria della ceramica,” *Domus* 245 (1950), 59.

⁵⁵ In the Italian textile section, besides textiles by Cheti and Bronzini, *Domus* also mentioned fabrics designed by Irene Kowaliska (1905–91). “La sezione dei tessuti alla Triennale,” *Domus* 261 (1951), 34–5. Born in Poland, Irene Kowaliska worked in Italy, becoming one of the leading figures of the German colony of Vietri. In 1954, at the X Triennale, she won the Gold medal for her textiles and tapestries.

⁵⁶ Carlo Pagani, “Un appartamento per quattro persone,” *Domus* 262 (1951), 2–5.

⁵⁷ “Alloggio a pareti armadio per tre persone alla IX Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 262 (1951), 6–9; “Dispensa, tavolo e letto,” *Domus* 266 (1952), 64.

⁵⁸ “Le paglie alla Triennale,” *Domus* 261 (1951), 36–7.

⁵⁹ “Francia. IX Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 260 (1951), 27–31. In the article are mentioned the ceramics designed by Guidette Carbonell (1910–2008), Elisabeth Joulia (1925–2003) and the duo Pierre and Anne Mestre.

⁶⁰ “L’abbaino di Charlotte Perriand,” *Domus* 208 (1946), 6.

⁶¹ Among the admirable examples of “Useful form” (as defined by Belgioioso, Peressutti and Rogers, who were in charge of the US exhibition at the T9), there were: a tea set designed by Hungarian-born American industrial designer Eva Zeisel (1906–2011); a porcelain spice mill designed by the ceramic entrepreneurs Trudi and Harold Sitterle; a metal table lamp designed by Swedish architect and furniture designer Greta Magnusson Grossman (1906–99), and a hand-held ashtray designed by Japanese American pottery designer Minnie Negoro (1919–98). Alberto Rosselli, “Gli oggetti alla mostra U.S.A.,” *Domus* 260 (1951), 43–6.

to the unity of arts and to Industrial design, which had its first international exhibition here.

Women won numerous prizes and awards⁶², and Scandinavian women started to gain visibility in furniture design. In addition to designs in ceramics, textiles, and glass and the lamps designed by the Finnish designer Lisa Johansson Pape, who received the Gold medal,⁶³ *Domus* (300) published a straw and metal chair by the Danish designer Grete Jalk⁶⁴ and a chair by the Finnish designer Maija Liisa Komulainen.⁶⁵

Along with Scandinavia, Austria has been perceived among the countries where the applied arts have acquired distinctive features. *Domus* explicitly recognized the great role played by women in this country and mentioned the textile designers Eva Sobotka –winner of the Silver medal– and Paula Ptacek, who exhibited at the T10. The magazine prized the constant advancement of ceramics by Maria Bilger Bilyan (1912–97)⁶⁶, who received the Gold medal, as well as the of Helene Fischer and the wooden toys of Grete Rader Soulek (1920–97), which were inspired by Finnish ceramics designed by Kaipainen.⁶⁷

⁶² Women from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Great Britain and Israel won medals, primarily for textiles, ceramics and glass. Finnish and Swedish women received the largest number of medals and awards. “I Premi della Decima Triennale di Milano,” *Domus* 303 (1955), 27–34.

⁶³ “La Finlandia alla Triennale,” *Domus* 300 (1954), 18–23.

⁶⁴ “La Danimarca alla Triennale,” *Domus* 300 (1954), 30.

⁶⁵ “Allestimento per il Mobile singolo alla Triennale,” *Domus* 300 (1954), 61.

⁶⁶ See also Maria Biljan Bilger, “Ceramiche e arazzi viennesi,” *Domus* 271 (1952), 42–3; “Maria Biljan Bilger. Ceramiche,” *Domus* 299 (1954), 56.

⁶⁷ “L’Austria alla Triennale. Rassegna,” *Domus* 299 (1954), 9.

In addition to the interest shown in the playful and sometimes ironic combination of folk tradition and modernity, the magazine highlighted the surprisingly innovative and inventive use of plastic in designing dishes and cups that Zahara (Zohara) Schatz (1916–99) exhibited after having experimented with this new material for the creation of jewellery in the USA.⁶⁸ According to *Domus*: “Her production in Israel is original and new, and has been developed in the freest forms that enjoy this matter entirely pliant, weightless, transparent and with the possibility of great ‘inclusions’”.⁶⁹

Concerning the section of the young State of Israel, in addition to the plastic items designed by Zahara Schatz, the article devoted to this section shows a picture of copper dishes designed by painter Louise McClure Schatz (1916–97), who was better known as one of the “California Seven” group from Big Sur. The first received a Diploma of Honour, while the second received the Silver medal. Zahara was the daughter of Boris Schatz, founder of the “Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts” in Jerusalem (since 1906), and Louise was her sister-in-law. When they all moved to Israel, they founded the arts and crafts workshop “Yad”, with the goal of creating and selling alternative art objects that differed in style from those of the Bezalel School.

Through the pages of *Domus*, Italian women are perceived as more involved than others in set design. They began also

⁶⁸ Zahara Schatz’s pieces of jewelry were part of a large exhibition on industrial design that was organised by the Detroit Institute of Art in 1949. See “Una esposizione americana,” *Domus* 241 (1949), 15–21.

⁶⁹ “La sua produzione in Israele è originale e nuova, e si è sviluppata in forme più libere, che godono di questa materia del tutto pieghevole, senza peso, trasparente e con la possibilità di « inclusioni » fantastiche”. From “Israele alla Triennale. Rassegna,” *Domus* 299 (1954), 14.

to appear as members of committees and consultants.

The magazine devoted a well-illustrated article to the Hall of Honour's interior design by Architects Franca Antonioli Helg and Franco Albini, which received the Grand Prix.

In the well-known original hall, which was built by Giovanni Muzio in 1935, the two winners of the design competition created a suspended auditorium whose structure supported the showcases.⁷⁰ In addition, Franca Helg conceived the set design for both the "Retrospective" and "Italian Schools of Art" exhibitions,⁷¹ and architect Eugenia Alberti Reggio, together with Sergio Favre, was in charge of the "Italian commodities sector" set design.⁷²

Winner of the Gold medal for her textiles, Fede Cheti was the only female member of the organising committee, and she was in charge of the textile section, and Maria Luisa Pedroni was a consultant for urban planning projects⁷³, a field of male prerogative, but no woman was a member of the Board of Directors, even at the next XI Triennale (T11, 1957).

In 1957, Milan became an aspired destination, as the Triennale event was already recognised by exhibitors as an opportunity to enter the world market, and *Domus* publisher Gianni Mazzocchi joined the executive committee.

A few women succeeded in joining commissions, primarily as collaborators or secretaries. Student Carla Federspiel and architect Lidia Bolieau were the only two

women involved in the "Mostra internazionale dell'abitare". Architect Raffaella Crespi (b. 1929) was responsible for the Straw section of the Art productions Exhibition, and architect Eugenia Alberti Reggio was in charge of temporary exhibitions. Only two women were commissionaires of the foreign sessions: Eva Benedicks (1902–75) for Sweden and Mia Seeger (1903–91) for Germany.⁷⁴

About T11, *Domus* published only textiles, glass, and ceramics by female designers, keeping its appreciation for the Scandinavians, albeit female Polish ceramists also gained visibility.⁷⁵

At the T11, many women from all countries were awarded the Gold and Silver medals by the international jury, which was formed only by men. According to "Notiziario domus" (issue 338, 1958), only two women received a Silver medal for their furniture: the French designer Janine Abraham (1929–2005) for the metal armchair she designed together with Dirk Jan Rol and the Cuban-born Clara Porset (1895–1981) for her chairs in straw and rattan that were exhibited in the Mexican section.⁷⁶ The pioneer of modern furniture design in Mexico had already gained visibility in *Domus* in 1953 (issue 281), publishing an article about the exhibition dedicated to 'Art in everyday life' that she curated in Mexico City in 1952. This exhibition was based on the concept of enhancing original artisanal features in association with modern

⁷⁰ "Il Salone d'Onore alla Triennale," *Domus* 300 (1954), 6–9.

⁷¹ "Le scuole d'arte italiane alla Triennale," *Domus* 300 (1954), 57.

⁷² "Alla mostra merceologica alla Triennale," *Domus* 300 (1954), 64.

⁷³ M.L. Pedroni collaborated together with Giancarlo De Carlo, Gerardo Guerrieri and Jaques Lecoq in the scenario of the movie "Una lezione di urbanistica", which focused on ridiculing the rationality of houses in Modernist cities.

⁷⁴ Lists of names of the collaborators for the T11 are published in the column "Notiziario Domus", *Domus* 331, 333 (1957), no page.

⁷⁵ A rug designed by the Finnish designer Uhra Simberg Ehrström (1914–79) was published together with Polish ceramics designed by Wanda Golakowska (1901–75), Julia Kotarbinska (1895–1979), and Lech and Helena Grzeńkiewicz (1908–77). "Per la XI Triennale," *Domus* 334 (1957), 47–8.

⁷⁶ "Notiziario Domus. I Premi alla XI Triennale di Milano," *Domus* 338 (1958), no page.

design for industry, a concept that was cherished by Gio Ponti.⁷⁷

The sixties, from the XII to the XIV Triennale di Milano: From 'Home and School' to 'The Greater Number'

The XII Triennale di Milano (T12, 1960) was marked by a subtle nostalgia, as if modernism was already starting to bend inward in self-admiration. Refusing to become an exhibition of items, this event was devoted to a specific topic: 'Home and School'. The contributions of three female Italian architects, Gae Aulenti (1927–2012, degree 1953), Anna Ferrieri Castelli (1920–2006, degree 1943), and Franca Helg, clearly emerged through the pages of *Domus*.⁷⁸

Gaeatana (Gae) Aulenti was in charge of creating –together with Luigi Caccia Dominioni– a new route to access the Triennial from the park, hence negating the monumentality of Muzio's entrance in favour of a friendlier approach to the building. Moreover, Aulenti's 'apartment for urban centre' was considered to be among the most anecdotal works of this exhibition. Through an article published a few months earlier, readers were already aware of Gae Aulenti's professional practice as an interior designer.⁷⁹

Anna Ferrieri Castelli was mentioned twice, for the prestigious set design of the Italian section, which she created together with her most renowned colleagues Achille and Piergiacomo Castiglioni, and for her set design of the 'House and

School exhibition'.⁸⁰ Here, the famous duo of Italian architects, Franca Helg and Franco Albini, exhibited its furniture for Poggi (Pavia).⁸¹

Unlike the foreign sections of the previous editions of the Triennale, the encounter with a new generation of designers was in full swing.⁸² The magazine prized both glassware and woodenware designed by the Finnish designer Nanny Still Mckinney (1926–2009), who had already received a Mention of Honour for a set of cutleries at the T10.⁸³

Eva Benedicks was again responsible for the Swedish exhibition, and for the first time, at the T12, Italian women were appointed to design the most relevant spaces, even if together with their male colleagues.

Finally, when at the XIII Triennale di Milano (T13, 1964), a new and different world was at the doorstep, two creative Italian women gained visibility for their emblematic works. Artwork by the young architect and artist Nanda Vigo (b. 1940) – known by magazine readers– enlightened the monumental staircase, offering to visitors a signal of an unexpected freedom in the relationship between art and design.⁸⁴

Gae Aulenti's 'Arrivo al Mare' (Arrival at the Sea) gained the foreground, becoming a powerful iconic image of this 'Pop Triennial' dedicated to leisure. Published in issue 417, this installation gave life to Picasso's *Two Women Running on the Beach* by transforming the women into

⁷⁷ Clara Porset, "Sedie messicane," *Domus* 281 (1953), 50–1.

⁷⁸ "Notiziario Domus. Commissioni e incarichi per la 12° Triennale di Milano," *Domus* 361 (1959), no page.

⁷⁹ Gae Aulenti, "Due arredamenti sullo stesso principio," *Domus* 367 (1960), 11–20.

⁸⁰ "Alla XII Triennale di Milano," *Domus* 371 (1960), 13–6.

⁸¹ "Alla XII Triennale nelle sezione italiana," *Domus* 373 (1960), 21.

⁸² See "Alla XII Triennale nelle sezioni straniere," *Domus* 371 (1960), 17–30.

⁸³ "Nanny Still, vetri e legni," *Domus* 373 (1960), 49–50.

⁸⁴ "Prime immagini della tredicesima Triennale. La sezione introduttiva e la sezione italiana," *Domus* 417 (1964), 2.

nymphs undressing to the recorded sound of the waves. This work criticized the spirit of the whole event, which was about leisure activities, sports, hobbies, travel and experimental movies, and it was one of the most spectacular and best-loved works.⁸⁵

A long and very well illustrated article on the interior design of the Olivetti shop in Buenos Aires by Gae Aulenti was published in issue 466 (1968), demonstrating the renown gained by the architect.⁸⁶ In the subsequent pages of the same magazine issue, the XIV Triennale di Milano (T14, 1968), which was devoted to “The Greater Number”, was documented. Concerning women’s contributions to this Triennale, the magazine acclaimed white ceramic panels designed by Rut Bryk (1916–99) for the Finnish stand⁸⁷ and mentioned the clothing rack shop fittings designed by the renowned architects Paola Lanzani (b. 1933) and Enrico Castellani.⁸⁸

In addition, the magazine published a large photo of an ‘equipped space’, where Fede Cheti fabrics upholstered giant cushions. This space was designed by Giulio Confalonieri (1926–2008), the graphic designer who in 1966 created the legendary corporate identity of the *Eurodomus* exhibition. As in an Op Art work, a photo of a naked woman covered every surface of the empty cubic stand where Cheti’s cushions were lying down on the floor on both sides of the writing “Ti Amo” (I love you).⁸⁹

⁸⁵ “Prime immagini della tredicesima ..,” *Domus* 417 (1964), 12–3.

⁸⁶ Gae Aulenti, “Buenos Aires, il negozio Olivetti,” *Domus* 466 (1968), 7–14.

⁸⁷ A picture of one of these panels is published in “A Milano la XIV Triennale,” *Domus* 466 (1968), 27.

⁸⁸ A picture is published in “A Milano la XIV Triennale,” *Domus* 466 (1968), 38.

⁸⁹ A caption of a large picture describes this stand. “A Milano la XIV Triennale,” *Domus* 466 (1968), 38.

On 30 May 1968, the T14 was occupied by students on the very day of its inauguration, thus becoming known as ‘The Triennial that lasted one day’. As mentioned by Marco Romanelli, “A few days later, the front facade of Muzio’s building bore the red writing ‘*La Triennale è morta*’ (the Triennial is dead)”.⁹⁰

Women’s contributions to *Domus* events and their reverberations

Domus became more and more an active stakeholder in the design scene, especially in the fields of furniture and interior design for modern housing. From the second half of the sixties, *Domus* began to promote new leading commercial activities and events that shared its aim of modernity, such as the *Centro Flay Casa* in Milan, the *Eurodomus* fairs and the exhibition *Domus Formes Italiennes* at the Galleries Lafayette in Paris.

In 1966 and 1968, *Domus* inspired the first two editions of *Eurodomus* in Genoa and Turin. *Eurodomus* was conceived by Gio Ponti –together with Giorgio Casali and Emanuele Ponzio– as a the first ‘pilot exhibition of the modern house’.

This international exhibition concerned the house’s modern design for both industrial and artisanal production, emphasising creative design values as those values were able to identify, on the cultural ground, the truth of the style of contemporary civilisation.⁹¹ Both editions of the event represented the most significant values of their time in terms of good design, production, and utility in the new competitive market context.

⁹⁰ Marco Romanelli, “*Domus* in the Triennale - The Triennale in *Domus*,” *Domus* 1000 (2016), 35.

⁹¹ “Fiera internazionale di Genova, Eurodomus,” *Domus* 436 (1966), no pages.

*The 1st Eurodomus and Centro Fly Casa:
Modern house design*

During the 1st *Eurodomus* in Genoa (1966), under the overall coordination of Gio Ponti, designers wished to encourage industrial standards in terms of embracing new materials or making use of traditional materials in a new way.

In addition to the experimental flat by Domusricerca, which was designed by the 'Gruppo 1' group formed only by men,⁹² some women exhibited their works, whose images were published in *Domus* issue 440, among the most relevant designs of this *Eurodomus*.⁹³

A detail of a heavy weft furnishing fabric and a McGuire's chair imported from the USA by Levi's gallery-shop represented the Milanese firms Fede Cheti and Lyda Levi, respectively.⁹⁴ The works designed by a young couple of architects, Afra Bianchin Scarpa (1937-2011) and Tobia Scarpa (b. 1935) –son of the famous architect Carlo Scarpa– featured the production of Stildomus, which was a firm founded in Rome by the equally young designer Aldo Bartolomeo in 1956.

Designed by the Scarpas, the magazine published a new lamp that looked like a theatre reflector –equipped with two flaps on both sides to orientate the light– and a modular series of shelves with glass showcases called 'Torcello'. The shelves were made of machine-made wooden panels, with the same profile on all four sides and held together by a special metal angle plate, thus being easy to assemble and adaptable to many different

compositions, according to the needs of users.⁹⁵

Young artist-designer Nanda Vigo of the Gruppo Zero also gained visibility with one of her 'Cronotopi', an outstanding light trek formed by layers of glass panels through which light refracted.⁹⁶ It is worth noting that Nanda Vigo would be the first woman to conquer the *Domus* front cover in 1984 (650).

Together with furniture designed by Ettore Sottsass, Angelo Mangiarotti and others, a photo of Poltronova's multicoloured stand showed Gae Aulenti's 'Sgarsul' rocking chair in the foreground and the blown glass lamp/vase 'Giova' in the background.⁹⁷

In addition, Aulenti saw published her set design for a series of furniture items by the *Centro-Fly Casa* (Milan), which was defined by the magazine as 'a lively space, almost a three-dimensional paint'.⁹⁸ In this stand, she exhibited her tubular green garden furniture pieces together with lamps designed by Umberto Riva.

It was no accident that Aulenti designed the Flay Casa stand; in fact, she was the architect –or better to say, the art director– in charge of the interior design of this department store for good furnishing. For this work, she studied department stores, design centres and showrooms in the USA and in Europe, thus achieving original results, as pointed out in a well-illustrated *Domus* article.⁹⁹

From the same article, we know that among the exhibited items that were for

⁹² The Gruppo 1 team was formed by Rodolfo Bonetto, Cesare Casati, Joe Colombo, Giulio Confalonieri, Enzo Hybsch, Luigi Massoni and Emanuele Ponzio. "La prima realizzazione di 'Domusricerca'," *Domus* 440 (1966), 7–26.

⁹³ "Le immagini più significative della prima Eurodomus," *Domus* 440 (1966), 27–87.

⁹⁴ "Le immagini più significative...," *Domus* 440 (1966), 56 (Lyda Levi), 83 (Fede Cheti).

⁹⁵ "Le immagini...Stildomus," *Domus*, 440 (1966), 76.

⁹⁶ "Le immagini...Nanda Vigo," *Domus* 440 (1966), 29.

⁹⁷ "Le immagini...Poltronova," *Domus* 440 (1966), 74.

⁹⁸ "Le immagini...Centro-Fly Casa," *Domus* 440 (1966), 44.

⁹⁹ Gae Aulenti, "A Milano, un 'grande magazzino' per l'arredamento moderno," *Domus* 438 (1966), 21–30.

sale in the shop, there were those designed by the women designers Renata Bonfanti, Anna Fasolis, Graziella Guidotti, Majia Heikinheimo, Elwine Lavene, Jela (Gabriela) Ferrario Mari (Enzo Mari's wife), Ornella Vitali Noorda (Bob Noorda's wife), Anna Nuzzo Olivetti, Carla Venosta, and Teresa Muzio Maffei in the children's corner. Furthermore, through its refined pictures, *Domus* advertised several of Aulenti's pieces, such as the 'Black and White chair' produced by the Centro-Fly, her widely celebrated 'Pipistrello Lamp' (by Martinelli Luce) and the 'Stringa' series of sofas and armchairs (produced by Ettore Sottsass' Poltronova firm, founded in 1957). Two years later, this series appeared in the article devoted to Aulenti's interior-design for Max Mara Maison in Milan, whose modern elegance was achieved through transparency and warm colours.¹⁰⁰

Opened in Milan in January 1966, the *Centro-Fly Casa* was the first department store in Italy to be conceived around the ideas of quality design items, quality in use, price and commercial quality. Aulenti succeeded in creating a suitable set design for this purpose.

Domus Formes Italiennes and the 2nd Eurodomus: Spontaneity and freedom of design

The concept of *Casa Centro-Fly* appears to correspond to the *Domus* definition of quality, as explained in the advertisement for the exhibition *Domus Formes Italiennes* at Galeries Lafayette in Paris (1967):

[...] for *Domus* quality implies not simply good materials, perfect works and workmanship, and functional utility but also imagination and

visual expression, signified by form and colour.

When the idea of a civilisation equal for all has been finally fulfilled, there will be no fear of uniformity, if each nation will develop the expression of its own particular genius with greater spontaneity and freedom.¹⁰¹

In fact, following the success of the 1st *Eurodomus*, Galeries Lafayette entrusted *Domus* with the organisation of a special presentation on Italian productions that were able to disclose the '*Domus's* spirit'. This presentation, revealingly named *Domus Formes Italiennes*, was part of the exhibition *Présences d'Italie*, which covered 2000 m² of the department store in Paris. *Domus* followed the principles established for the 1st *Eurodomus*, which aimed to open Italian production to a wider international market.

This exhibition features three expressions of the 'Italian form', each one presenting itself through a modern design dedicated to a modern audience. The first expression centred on the quality of products brought within reach of a wide public, without social discrimination. The second expression was dedicated to the cultural presence of a public, which plays a part in the evolution and production of form. The third expression was represented by works of art and single pieces.

These three expressions were characterised by the common denominator of quality, which does not discriminate among things of major or minor importance, thus setting up an inclusive criterion for good style.

¹⁰⁰ "Per la moda", *Domus* 465 (1968) 32–3.

¹⁰¹ "Aux Gallérie la Fayette. Présence d'Italie. Domus Formes Italiennes," *Domus* 446 (1967), no page.

Through these three expressions, *Domus* introduced to the public the promoters of a contemporary improvement of forms.

As advertised by the magazine, the exhibitors were '[...] "The Italians" of that great "international nation" of men working in "tomorrow's hope"'.¹⁰²

Out of 100 creators, there were 12 women, and the works of a only few of those women were published in magazine issue 450, namely, the carpets designed by Renata Bonfanti, cylindrical night tables designed by Emma Schweinberger Gismondi for Studio Artemide, a prototype of an adjustable bookcase designed by Piera Uggeri Raimondo for Print laminate, and a modular coloured bookcase designed by Carla Scolari and Paolo Lomazzi –at that time, a couple who specialised in furniture for children– for the Xilografia Milanese firm. Once again, Gae Aulenti found her own place in this issue, which published from the Parisian exhibition her very colourful chairs, with a frame in tubular enamelled iron and a seat upholstered with a fabric she had designed and made in collaboration with the Pistoia Art School.¹⁰³

Aulenti is confirmed as a constant presence in the magazine, being significantly represented in issue 463, which was devoted to the 2nd *Eurodomus* that opened in Turin from 22 March to 4 April 1968.¹⁰⁴

Domus appreciated both her 'Rimorchiatore' (tugboat) and 'La Ruspa' (bulldozer). The first –produced by Candle (Milan)– is a single multipurpose object in yellow painted metal, housing two different lamps, an ashtray and a flower vase; the second is a table lamp in

enamelled steel, made by Martinelli Luce (Lucca).

Light fittings firms committed in their production other women architects, such as Franca Helg, Giovanna Massari and Eleonore Riva, whose works were worthy of publication.

Helg's cubic lamp in moulded glass was presented within the stand of Fontana Arte (Milan), together with her ceiling lamps. A wide range of large glass light-fittings, designed by Giovanna Massari, was presented by Leucos (Mestre, Venice). Ponteur's stand (from Bergamo) exhibited the lamp designed by the young architect Eleonore (Peduzzi) Riva for Studio Artemide, who would manufacture her iconic ashtray 'Spyros' just one year later.¹⁰⁵

Domus gave space to designers who conceived furniture and home fittings that fully explored the possibilities of new synthetic materials with playfulness. 'Cubo', which was a cube made of expanded polyurethane foam that was surprisingly convertible into an armchair for two, was designed by Adriana Baglione, together with Luigi Moretti and Paolo Orlandini, for the French firm Airborne (Montreuil-sous-Bois, stand by Olivier Morgue).

Made of PVC were brightly coloured rugs, screens and tablecloths designed by Alda Casal that were presented within Ponteur's stand (Bergamo) as new ideas for housing in a new low-cost material.

Plastic laminate low tables and chairs were offered by Carla Venosta and Marcello Pietrantoni within the small section of furniture and object prototypes.

¹⁰² "Aux Gallérie la Fayette. Présence d'Italie..." *Domus* 446 (1967), no page.

¹⁰³ "« Domus Formes Italiennes » una mostra a Parigi," *Domus* 450 (1967), 11–38.

¹⁰⁴ All of the above-mentioned design pieces are published in "Eurodomus 2 in Turin," *Domus* 463 (1968), 5–68.

¹⁰⁵ Eleonore Peduzzi Riva (b. 1939) was already known by *Domus* readers because her light metal furniture pieces were published in Eleonore Peduzzi, "Mobili italiani in grande serie, in lega leggera," *Domus* 396 (1962), 52. In 1963, her works were advertised in the column "*Domus per chi deve scegliere mobili in serie*," *Domus* 399 (1963), d105; *Domus* 401 (1963), d122.

In addition to this section of prototypes for mass production, the magazine prized the small section devoted to Italian handicraft, which was organised under the supervision of *Eurodomus*. In this section, Renata Bonfanti and Sandra Marconato gained visibility through their artisanal items.

Do-it-yourself furniture pieces were exhibited by the French firm Sébilleau (Rendon, France). In addition, *Domus* published a range of chairs and tables called 'Puzzle-wood', which were made of wood bricks designed by Nicole Schneegans and others, for both children and grown-ups. When unpackaged, the parts fitted one into the other like a puzzle, but they were packed in flat boxes for shipment.

Unlike in the issue devoted to the 1st *Eurodomus*, this time, Lyda Levi's and Fede Cheti's firms were finally presented entirely by their stands. Lyda Levi showed Whonen-Kurt Freygag (Hamburg) and McGuire (San Francisco) pieces of rattan furniture for which she was the agent for Italy, while Fede Cheti designed the stand of her firm as an all-white show-window to exhibit her new creations of furnishing fabrics, printed cotton velvets, linen and silks, which were all designed by her and specifically manufactured for the 2nd *Eurodomus*.

Conclusions

From the mid-1940s to the first half of the 1950s, the presence and role of women in *Domus* appeared to be secondary, remaining in the shadows of their relatives or colleagues. Later, women slowly began to gain ground.

During a transitional period of the magazine's history, the young architect Lina Bo was able to become the deputy director of *Domus* from 1944 to 1945, a

position that was later covered by Ponti's daughter.

Except for a few Swedish women designers who have written articles on design companies in their country, women's contributions to the magazine have been limited to 'female' columns and topics, such as "Plants, flowers and gardens" (Giulia Vimercati Ponti and Maria Teresa Parpagliolo), "Antiquities" (Anna Marchi) and "Art" (Lisa Ponti).

Well-skilled professional figures belonging to the *milieu* of the high Milanese industrial bourgeoisie entered *Domus*'s editorial office in the mid-1960s, such as Marianne Lorenz, who had already received a master's degree in the USA – a rather unusual choice for the time – and had gained her first working experience in Gio Ponti's office.

During the short leadership of Ernesto N. Rogers, the magazine published furniture designed by women belonging to the Milanese circle of innovative architectural culture, who were wives or partners of the magazine editor's friends. Their creations at the RIMA Exhibition (1946) were considered to be advanced in terms of the use of materials and techniques, as well as of their affordable design, which made them available to the middle class.

Although women's works remained a minor presence in the magazine during the period covered by this study, *Domus* offered to its readers a lively perception of their contributions to the most relevant design exhibitions and initiatives. This perception seems to be related to the capability of women designers to express their creativity in both artisanal and industrial fields, experimenting with both natural and artificial materials and often developing playful and iconic items. This approach enabled design to cross the boundaries of narrow circles of connoisseurs, thus directing modern design to the widest public.

Once cited by *Domus*, women designers' names had a tendency to become recurrent over the years. Textile and furniture entrepreneurs, such as Fede Cheti, Gegia Bronzini and Lyda Levi, remained a constant presence for entire decades. Works by Gae Aulenti have dominated the scene since the 1950s, passing unconventionally through interior design, industrial design and exhibition set design, before conquering architecture. The multiple appearances of the Finnish ceramist Ruth Bryk can be explained by Ponti's admiration for Finnish design, as well as by the fact that she was the wife of the more well-known glass designer Tapio Wirkkala.

The perception of a gendered hierarchy in *Domus*'s 'unity of the arts' clearly appears from this study. Considering the full range of design, the 'male nature' of furniture design was still dominant in the 1950s, especially in the context of Scandinavian design. Conversely, ceramics, glassware and textiles were perceived as 'female' fields of design, as these fields were traditionally associated with domestic origins and were typically hand-made. Ponti's interest in artisanal tradition is played out in the pages of *Domus*, and women made up the majority of those practicing the modern craft-based design that was able to re-invent folk shapes and motifs.

In the 1950s, Scandinavian women's contribution to design helped to change the pre-war crystalline and paradigmatic interpretation of modernity. Through the pages of *Domus*, these women revealed an indisputable ability to master different materials, forms and production techniques, demonstrating their important role in the history of Scandinavian design. Their contributions facilitated the development of a more 'humanistic' design approach, especially

for products designed for mass production.

In addition to the great visibility offered to women designers in the fields of textiles and ceramics, Italian women gained visibility before Scandinavian women in furniture design. The young Milanese architects Anna Ferrieri Castelli and Luisa Castiglioni gained visibility in the magazine due to the publication of their furniture creations, which were exhibited at the courageous VIII Triennale di Milano (1947), "A Home for Everyone". Nevertheless, furniture and industrial design appeared to be a marginal option for women until the second half of the fifties. Mass-produced office furniture pieces designed by Luisa Castiglioni remained an exception of visibility achieved outside the boundaries of "domestic design".

In the sixties, this perception began to gradually change due to the commitment of young Italian women to the growing field of industrial design. These women were primarily young architects who belonged to a Milanese progressive elite. Considering the established male domination of architectural practice, the commitment to furniture design, interior design and exhibition set design would have appeared as a real professional opportunity for those women. Although the presence of women in *Domus* increased, at the exhibition *Domus Formes Italiennes* (1968), out of 100 creators, just 12 were women.¹⁰⁶

The history of women designers that emerges through *Domus* appears to be more like a sequence of differences or

¹⁰⁶ The women designers participating at *Domus Formes Italiennes* were Titina Ammannati, Gae Aulenti, Renata Bonfanti, Anna Ferrieri Castelli, Franca Helg, Maria Lai, Liisi Meronen Beckmann, Gabriella Saladino, Emma Schweinbeger Gismondi, Carla Scolari, Piera Uggeri Raimondo, and Nanda Vigo. "« Domus Formes Italiennes » una mostra a Parigi," *Domus* 450 (1967), 38.

exceptions rather than a progress in time, thus revealing Gio Ponti's idea of History, as her daughter Lisa pointed out –by quoting Edoardo Persico– when she left *Domus* in 1989.¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁷ Lisa Ponti Licitra, “Un saluto,” *Domus* 669 (1986), 1.

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