

Utopie Radicali : Florence 1966-1976



Photograph: Rumble sofa (1967). Artwork and photo © Gianni Pettena. Graphic Design: Christian Lange Studio, Munich.

Montreal, 2 May 2018 – The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents *Utopie Radicali: Florence 1966–1976*, an exhibition which brings together the work of **9999**, **Archizoom**, **Remo Buti**, **Gianni Pettena**, **Superstudio**, **UFO**, and **Zzigurat**—iconoclastic practitioners who made Florence a focal point for new developments in architectural thought.

The exhibition features all the personalities and groups of the Florentine radical scene for the first time in North America, more than fifty years after the movement began. It examines a moment when visionary groups and figures started a creative revolution and had a profound impact on the development of art at the global scale, through the invention of alternative living space, new models of behaviour, original discourse free of formal and fictional constraints, collective works, design, art, and pop art practices. Archival material drawn from international museums and from the private collections of the movement's protagonists themselves, including material from the CCA's Alessandro Poli archive create the opportunity for unexpected encounters and juxtapositions disseminating provocations and oppositions.

Utopie Radicali is curated by **Pino Brugellis**, **Gianni Pettena** and **Alberto Salvadori**, and will be on view from 2 May until 7 October 2018. It is organized by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, the Fondazione CR Firenze and the Osservatorio per le Arti Contemporanee.

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THE EXHIBITION

First presented at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence (October 2017– January 2018), *Utopie Radicali* reveals the complexity that underpinned the cultural scene of the time, with its intense interplay between architecture, art, design, and music, at mass concerts, discotheques, and clubs, including 9999's *Space Electronic* in Florence and 'Ufo's *Bamba Issa* in Forte dei Marmi. This radical architectural movement resulted from an unprecedented and fruitful interaction between a utopian conceptual dimension of architecture and the visual arts, cinema, theatre, and dance, together with Pop art, conceptual art, *arte povera*, land art, body art, environmental art, and happenings.

"Today, the spread of ideas that emerged in Italy in the 60s and 70s invites new insights, reactions and interpretations from different cultural contexts that can continue an international exchange and related this historical moment in Italy to contemporary challenges and crises surpassing national borders. In the future and looking backwards, this new dissemination of ideas will once again seem inevitable," emphasizes CCA Director Mirko Zardini.

The archives and works presented in the exhibition are brought together according to eight areas of research: the Pop influence and production, the discotheque as a space of multidisciplinary experimentation, urban actions as practices for redefining the idea of public space, critiquing the idea of city, landscape, and architecture itself, designing the body, nature as material, and the moon as a new possible territory.

From redefined ideas of ecology and territory to new contemporary nomadism; from the increasingly fluid and ambiguous relationship between leisure time and productive time, to the reliance on high technology for the design and "use" of the city; from applying theories of behaviour to give form to domestic space, to forging a new relationship with objects as extensions of the body; it was a time when new understandings of society were emerging from the university, where the young generation was laying claim to cultural reform and revolting against the rules, teachings, and values of an older generation, with the proliferation of student protests in Milan, Turin and Rome.

The radical research led by the architecture milieu in Florence and other cities was of unprecedented intensity, and the various perspectives it produced were later met with different fates. This movement flourished, and the creative groups that emerged from it have handed down a great legacy to the architects of subsequent generations, including Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, and Bernard Tschumi. The individual and collective protagonists of the Italian radical architecture movement broke away from modernist legacies, rejected the ideology of consumption of the postwar era, and opened dialogue with other disciplines to expand and explore the territory of design through new media.

The exhibition features about 300 objects, including original furniture, lamps, clothing, fabrics, photographs, photomontages, collages, models, and tableware.

The exhibition adopts a collective approach broken down into six sections—**POP, Azione, Disco, Città, Natura,** and **Luna**— with the following related topics:

RADICAL POP: for some members of the Florentine radical movement, the phenomenon of pop art—encountered in the United States pavilion at the 1964 Venice Biennale—had a clear influence, although each absorbed it in their own way. Ettore Sottsass, a key actor in the development of the 1960s design scene, served in those years as art director of Poltronova, a furniture factory in Tuscany. His presence attracted young talents like Archizoom and Superstudio, most of whom were educated at the University of Florence during a period of vibrant student protest.

URBAN ACTION: the performance projects of UFO, Pettena, and 9999 shared an interest in reclaiming the street—a practice also vividly seen in demonstrations during the years of protest around 1968—as a strategy for making one’s individuality public in terms of desire, creativity, and worldview.

THE CLUB AS PRODUCTION SITE: leisure time was the main theme of the 1964 Milan Triennale, curated by architect Vittorio Gregotti and semiotician Umberto Eco. The designers of the radical movement absorbed these stimuli, and in the countercultural climate influenced by American underground cinema and the pop concert tour, they declared youth entertainment to be the foundation of society.

A NON-PHYSICAL ARCHITECTURE: since the model for economic development in 1960s Italy was closely linked to the factory, liberation from the logic of labour was an important feature of the radical utopia.

THE HUMAN SCALE: inspired by the happenings and performances from the era—informed by sexual liberation and the growing need to assert individual worldviews—the body itself becomes a site of experimentation for radical architecture.

URBAN VISIONS: the idea of the utopian city assumes various forms in radical movement projects, often sparked by reflections on leisure time.

NATURE AS MATERIAL: as a cultural strategy in the 1960s—and not only for survival—growing numbers of countercultural exponents gave up on imposed urban living and set out to construct their own physical environments.

THE EXPANDED SPACE: in 1969 the NASA space mission Apollo 11 put the first three humans on the moon. The imaginary triggered by this event translated into several radical movement projects, although the American triumphalism of the Apollo missions was subdued by a more European emotional tone.

For detailed information, please note that gallery texts are available upon request.

Graphic design by Christian Lange Studio, Munich.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Opening lecture and talks—Tuesday 1 May at 6 pm

To mark the opening of *Utopie Radicali: Florence 1966-1976*, the CCA presents flashbacks and keywords with Lapo Binazzi, Gianni Pettena, Alessandro Poli, Alberto Salvadori, as well as video recorded statements for the occasion by Giorgio Birelli, Andrea Branzi, Alberto Breschi and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia. The event will take place mostly in Italian, with simultaneous translation into French and English. It will be followed by a reception and the opening of the exhibition.

So that more parents can attend CCA's public events, pop-up play sessions are offered in collaboration with The Lion and The Mouse. The first session will be on the occasion of the exhibition opening, on 1 May, from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Free, fully insured, and for children three years and up who are able to use the washrooms independently.

Tour and conversation "Curatorial Loaf"— Thursday 17 May at 6:30 pm

The first *Curatorial Loaf* will begin with a tour of the exhibition *Utopie Radicali* hosted by Francesco Garutti, CCA Curator, Contemporary Architecture, and is followed by a discussion and communal meal of bread, butter, and salt, in a friendly atmosphere. The tour and the conversation will take place in several languages, including English and French.

Family program "Futurniture"—Sunday 27 May from 11 am to 4 pm

On the occasion of Montreal Museums Day, the CCA invites to the workshop *Futurniture* to propose an exploration of ideas from the exhibition by following silly imposed rules and making layered drawings from spoken descriptions. Families will create furniture for a new global disco collaboratively. For children ages 5 to 13 years, accompanied by parents. In English and French, Shaughnessy House.

RELATED EXHIBITION

Architecture as Storyboard – 21 September 2018 to 20 January 2019

Starting September 20th 2018, objects from the archive of Alessandro Poli—Italian architect, designer, artist, and member of Superstudio from 1970 to 1972—will be on view in the Octagonal gallery, offering expanded interpretations of many ideas inside *Utopie Radicali: Florence 1966-1976*.

This exhibition will explore how elements of film—storyboard, script, and audio—generated a new language for architecture. Alongside a growth in decentralized, experimental, and underground cinema at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, many groups from inside the field of architecture explored the short film as a medium to expand architectural discourse, embedding their projects with bold reflections and projections of society and communicating with a broader audience through references to popular culture.

The experiments of Alessandro Poli with storyboard and collage for films such as the Superstudio's "Vita" (1972) and "L'architettura interplanetaria" (1972), will contribute to ongoing discussions on how to narrate architecture ideas in today's culture, one that is increasingly visual and image-dependent.



PUBLICATION

Accompanying the exhibition, the publication *Radical Utopias*, edited by Gianni Pettena, Pino Brugellis and Alberto Salvadori, and published by Quodlibet Habitat, recounts all the theoretical and visual work of the Florentine radical architects. It provides a unique and unexplored panorama of one of the twentieth-century's capitals of architecture. The book includes forewords by Arturo Galansino, Director General, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi; Umberto Tombari, President, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze and Mirko Zardini, CCA Director. They are followed by essays by Gianni Pettena, Pino Brugellis and Manuel Orazi, Alberto Salvadori, Marie-Ange Brayer, Maria Cristina Didero, Marco Brizzi, Manfredo di Robilant, among other authors. Available at the CCA bookstore.
352 pages, ISBN 9788822901330 English / 9788822901149 Italian

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ABOUT THE CCA

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 by Phyllis Lambert, on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collection, exhibitions, public programs, publications and research opportunities, the CCA is advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society today.

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