

It is with great pleasure that Fonderia Nolana Del Giudice together with LABINAC announce the opening of the exhibition dedicated to the memory of Riccardo Dalisi, in Via Crispi 69, on 29 September 2022, from 12:00 to 20:00, titled

*De-growth Design:
A Tribute to Riccardo Dalisi*

When writing about Riccardo Dalisi it is easy to get lost in the many expressive and experimental aspects that characterized his life, but mentioning his participation in Global Tools remains essential. In the 1970s, together with Ettore Sottsass, Alessandro Mendini, Andrea Branzi and others, he was among the founders of the movement Global Tools. This was an architecture and design counter-school that brought together the groups and people who, in Italy, covered the most advanced area of so-called "Radical Architecture" around the magazines *Casabella* and *Spazio e società*.

At its basis, the movement desired to create a counter school of architecture and design, one with ethical and innovative premises so as to encourage an education that coincides with life and would stimulate the free development of individual and collective creativity. The use of natural materials, techniques and sustainable practices was widely promoted, as was the absence of hierarchy within the school, which operated as an institution without professors and students as such.

This experience, albeit fleeting (the movement only lived on for three years), remained very significant in Dalisi's future career, and would forever bring with it some of its key principles.

In his expressive research, which ranged from the mythical to the archaic to the sacred, 'poor' materials (such as iron, copper, brass) are used with conscious craftsmanship, having recognized in advance the theoretical debates around the nobility of such materials and their manipulation, underlining the value of popular culture in comparison with high culture and thus becoming one of the forerunners of the theory of the relationship between cultures at different levels typical of the "high and low" movement.

Riccardo Dalisi was a designer who always knew how to combine

work on an industrial scale with the artisanal. An artist *tout court*, it could be said, whose work ranged from design, in the strict sense, to the free interpretation of the artist as more commonly understood. Each artistic possibility was used by him in a special and absolutely unique way, giving a profound meaning to whatever he created.

The idea of a 'de-growth' design, in open contrast to the myth of the new that continues to advance, becomes a cornerstone in his production, which aimed at and never stopped making claims for a necessary 'de-growth'. Within this 'de-growth' the architect's task is to intervene, beginning from daily but planned long-term work on all aspects of the surrounding world, with a kind of new 'Renaissance' of thought, values and works, up to the smallest daily gesture, in an effort to reintegrate the delicate balance between man and nature as the only possible, necessary and sustainable approach to a new future.

Dalisi's deep-rooted interest in wanting to free the system from superstructures found a magnificent and fruitful way to manifest itself through the constant choice to actively involve children and students, who were seen by Dalisi as being free from any conditioning and capable of having a naïve yet immediate gaze on reality, which, he tells us, has much more of the fairytale and the fantastic in it than the myths of technology want us to believe.

His alternative design was carried out partly in the socially disadvantaged Traiano district of Naples where he worked since 1971. His experiences in this district were a testimony to his research, and to his ethical and aesthetic code.

The discovery of the great creative richness of childhood is a recurring reference in Dalisi's work, and in his writings. Children's creativity, participation and animation are, for him, two aspects of a single program: to make visible the need to establish social ties within cities, in neighbourhood life and in schools with animation projects that enliven and unite through a figurative and poetic education. In this project in Traiano, participation consists of accessibility and involvement in a creative and emancipatory maturation process that gives access to a more peaceful life within such socially deprived neighbourhoods. It was a way of highlighting the social needs of these urban territories and opening them up to design and architecture.

It is interesting to see how such an intense and immersive experience is then translated into a chair, the Traiano chair in fact, where all this turmoil, this desire to break with architectural and design traditions and the desire to create something more open, more inclusive, both in the process of creation and use, can be seen in the clear cuts that follow one another in the wood.

But also, in these heights that are out of phase and which give the seat a continuous moving aspect, never static, never predictable.

This experience in Traiano allowed Dalisi and his collaborators to define methods of regeneration of architecture and design starting from these needs. He was more successful than anyone else in bringing to the counter-design movement a concrete vision of the needs to which design and architecture can give answers and specifying how to solve them. He used to speak of "coherence that assiduously tries to translate, in the object of use, the imagination and the dream, which go hand in hand with industrial recovery without denying it".

The interrelation and experimentation between architecture, participatory design and the city are a distinctive feature of Dalisi's work, and he returned several times to different neighbourhoods of the city – such as Rua Catalana, for example. The latter has been transformed into an open-air laboratory with his light interventions, alongside many others involving different local artisans, and has been declared a World Heritage Site.

In the selection of the objects that we see here on display, all original prototypes, this joyful and playful aspect of the Dalisian approach to design immediately catches our eye. Experimentation on and with the material results in elaborate shapes, and becomes one of the designer's distinctive features.

Animal beings, for example, enter the Dalisian world, in impersonations of their most varied forms: we encounter a butterfly, which by opening its wings becomes a bench in vibrant colours (*Mariposa*, 1989), or a table in the shape of a turtle whose reticulated shell of purple painted steel becomes a piano for objects, or, finally, a 'simple' column is enriched by the inclusion of a copper bird on the top, pausing as it drinks.

This semi-immaculate visual approach, combined with the constant commitment to the reuse and recycling of materials, made Dalisi one of the pioneers in formulating the concept of sustainability as applied to industrial design, and a unique character

of his kind; he was a multifaceted and immense personality, as much as his body of work is.

Riccardo Dalisi was born in Potenza on 1 May 1931. Until 2007 he was a professor of Architectural Design in the Faculty of Architecture at the Federico II University of Naples, as well as a director and teacher of the School of Specialization in Industrial Design. In 1981 he won the prestigious Compasso d'Oro award for research on the Neapolitan coffee maker, and was awarded it again for the second time in 2014 for his social commitment.

Riccardo Dalisi's works interact in continuity and in a game of references with the Labinac works in the following rooms.

For further information please contact us at:
labinac.napoli@gmail.com