

Davide Fornari, Davide Turrini (eds.)
Olivetti Identities.
Spaces and Languages 1933–1983

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An interdisciplinary research project carried out by ECAL/
University of Art and Design Lausanne and the University
of Ferrara in collaboration with the Association for the
Historical Archives of Olivetti in Ivrea.

With contributions by Alessandra Acocella, Chiara Barbieri, Renata Bazzani Zveteremich, Paolo Bolpagni, Alessandro Brodini, Alessandro Chili, Graziella Leyla Ciagà, Alessandro Colizzi, Galileo Dallolio, Elena Dellapiana, Amparo Fernández Otero, Ali Filippini, Caterina Cristina Fiorentino, Davide Fornari, Lucia Giorgetti, Josefina González Cubero, Stefania Landi, Lorenzo Mingardi, Elisabetta Mori, Pier Paolo Peruccio, Paolo Rebaudengo, Raimonda Riccini, Dario Scodeller, Azalea Seratoni, Daniela Smalzi, Elena Tinacci, Caterina Toschi, Elisabetta Trincerini, Marcella Turchetti, Davide Turrini, Denise Ulivieri, Carlo Vinti, Stefano Zagnoni

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Visual identity and branding at Olivetti

- Examples from showrooms, trade fairs, and world exhibitions
- Cultural activities and advertising measures of a globally unique company

Olivetti's world-famous typewriters best embody the company's industrial legacy and visible identity, which was both innovative and complex, material and immaterial.

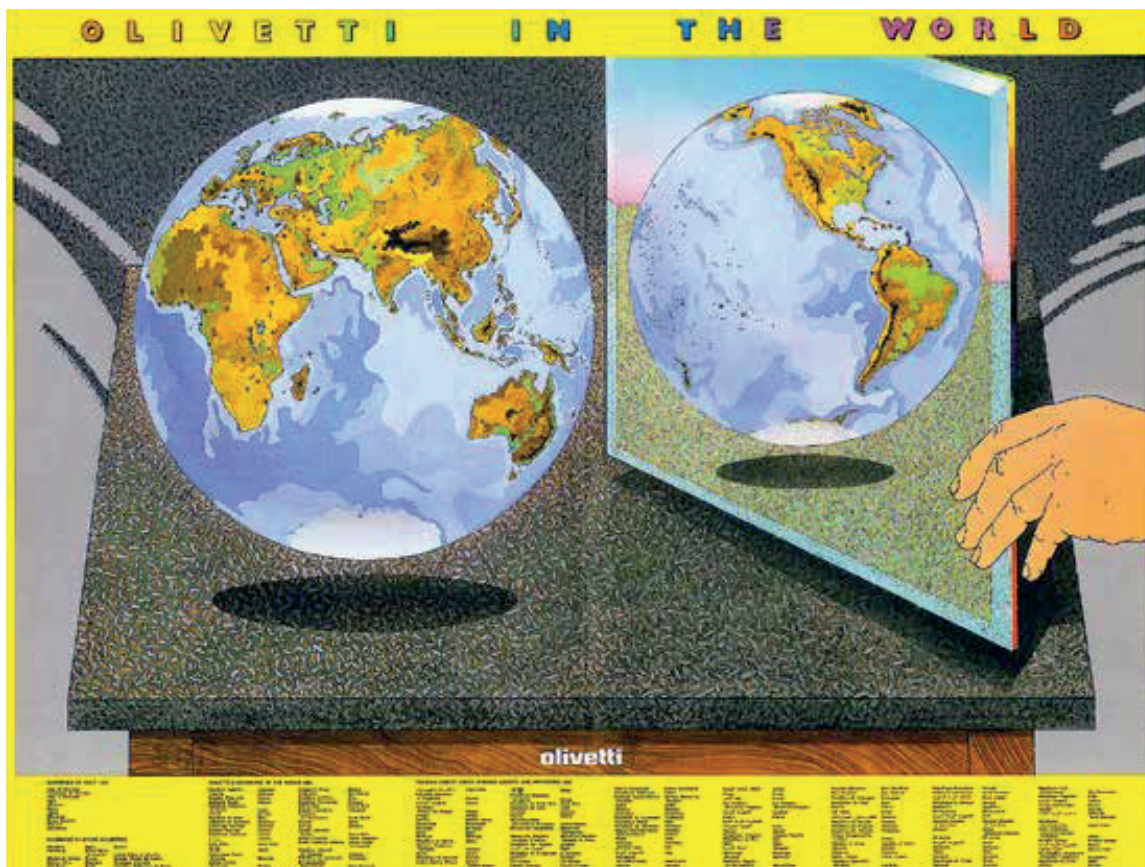
Olivetti Identities. Spaces and Languages 1933–1983 presents the results of this research with the aim of analyzing the Olivetti phenomenon as a whole, paying particular attention to the context of corporate evolution and the approaches of designers such as Xanti Schawinsky, Renato Zveteremich, Ettore Sottsass, Hans von Klier, Egidio Bonfante and Walter Ballmer, among others.

The research analyzed the corporate identity journey of Olivetti from the establishment of the Olivetti advertising office in 1933 to the opening of the permanent Olivetti pavilion at the Hanover Fair in 1983, which was intended as the final step in a particularly efficient corporate identity strategy.

The volume is organized in four sections dedicated to the design of showrooms and exhibition design at trade fairs and expos, the analysis of languages that have shaped corporate vocabulary as well as visual communication and interaction design, and cultural and promotional activities, respectively.

A final section summarizes the credentials of designers Santiago Miranda and George Sowden, as well as former Olivetti collaborators in sales and training.

Two visual essays featuring published and previously unpublished documents from the Olivetti historical archives complete the book.

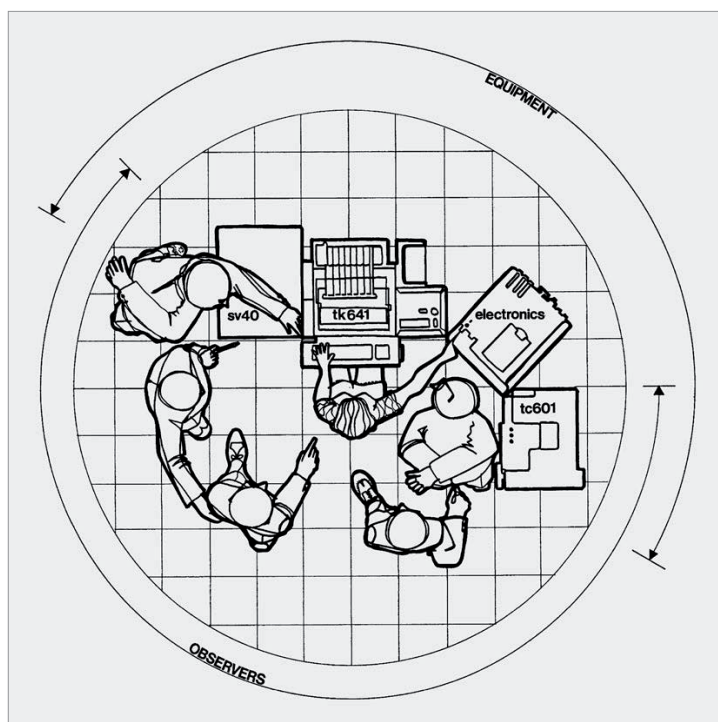


Poster “Olivetti in the World”, graphic design: King & Miranda, 1978.
Courtesy King & Miranda and Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea.

About the editors

Davide Fornari is associate professor at ECAL / University of Art and Design Lausanne where he leads the Applied Research and Development sector. He has authored, edited and served as art director for a number of publications on design, including *Mapping Graphic Design History in Switzerland* (2016), *Bianca e Blu* *Monica Bolzoni* (2019), *Carlo Scarpa: Casa Zentner a Zurigo* (2020).

Davide Turrini is associate professor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Ferrara, where he teaches design theory and sustainable design. He has conceived and coordinated research projects on Italian product design and craftsmanship. His publications include *Giuseppe Terragni. Album 1925* (2018), *Creativa produzione. La Toscana e il design italiano 1950–1990* (2015).



architecture corporate image contemporary art Adriano Olivetti Gian Antonio Bernasconi



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Olivetti Identities. Spaces and Languages

1934

1970



24

On the previous page, Olivetti showroom in Lyon, design Gian Antonio Bernasconi and Bernardino Coda, 1954. Photographer unknown.

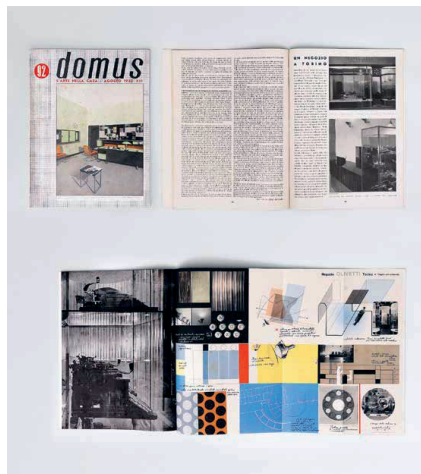
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Olivetti showroom in São Paulo, Brazil, rua Brigadeiro Tobias, design Giancarlo Piretti, 1957; decorative panel by Bramante Buffoni. Photographer unknown.

Spaces: Showrooms

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Bauhaus Turin Xanti Schawinsky Renato Zvetteremich Adriano Olivetti

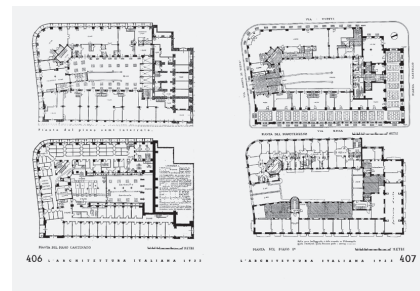


29 The Olivetti showroom in Turin published in Domus, 92, August 1939. Photo by Niccolò Quaresima.

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Olivetti Identities. Spaces and Languages

1934 1935



406

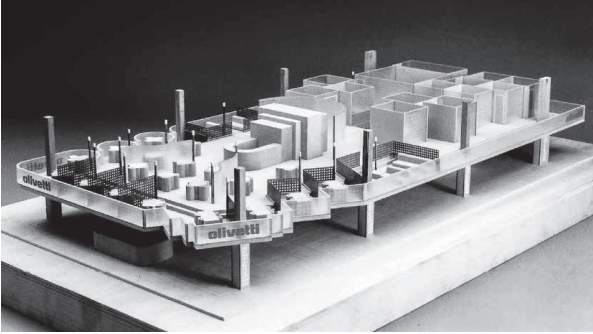

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30 Plans of the basement and ground floor of the San Emanuele block in Turin, design Armando Testa de Villa and Giovanni Bernocco (1933-1935). The rooms in the lower-left corner of the block housed the Olivetti showroom designed by Xanti Schawinsky.

Spaces: Showrooms

65

technical exhibitions integrated design Design Process Hans von Klier Perry King





63 Model for the exhibition *Design Process. Olivetti 1908-1983*, Hannover Messe, 1983. Photographer unknown.

64 Olivetti permanent stand at the 1983 Hannover Messe, which also hosted the exhibition *Design Process. Olivetti 1908-1983*. Photographer unknown.

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1952 1983



65 Exhibition *Design Process. Olivetti 1908-1983*, Hannover Messe, 1983. Photographer unknown.

Spaces: Technical Exhibitions 129

technical exhibitions exhibition design Interorgtehnika Egidio Bonfante Pier Luigi Nervi

Egidio Bonfante's Displays in Olivetti Exhibitions, from Moscow 1966 to Madrid 1972

Elisabetta Trincerini

Egidio Bonfante's work for Olivetti was multifaceted, and one can try to encompass it in two main areas: corporate graphics on the one hand, and exhibition design in various contexts on the other. Bonfante held various positions for over forty years – it is no coincidence that Renzo Zorzi described Olivetti as Bonfante's "single, tyrannical and insatiable client"¹ – but he had a monopoly on a sector within the company in Inbra that would only be defined later as "spherical architecture."

This refers to the design and installation of stands and pavilions (at times even the related graphics) at events that accompanied and promoted Olivetti's success in all international markets.

The scheduling of numerous trade fairs (or, as they were also called, "technical exhibitions") during the forty years that Bonfante spent overseeing this sector, made his job an immersive, stressful and competitive one. As Silvio Coppola noted – showing a series of successful exhibitions, including Bonfante's *Interorgtehnika 66* and the one for the Hannover Messe 69 – "trade fairs and specialised expositions are treacherous training grounds in which it is very easy to dissipate corporate images."²

Olivetti's objective was not only to present and promote production growth (which in Italy was central for many companies in the years of the economic boom), but also to make the diversity of the applicative solutions developed

immediately comprehensible for the visitor, in terms of product innovation. This had to be communicated together with the high quality of design capable of beating the competition. Last but not least, the fundamental role of research had to be highlighted.

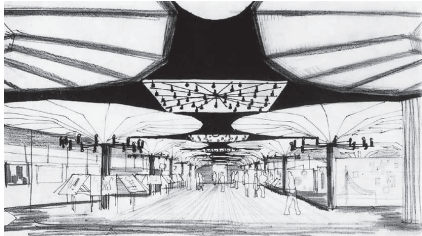
The definition "ephemeral architecture" is interesting because it is based on the staging of an idea, regardless of the usual tools of construction. Ephemeral architecture, indeed, can be understood as a sort of abstraction, a mental process, in some ways disenchanting, through which the concept of architecture itself is isolated and expressed with tools that tend to refer to the world of art. Moreover, the fact that Egidio Bonfante, although trained as an architect at the Polytechnic University of Milan, had always been an artist (his only activity outside the work for the "tyrannical client" mentioned above) may not be accidental in relation to the interchangeability of the tools of art and architecture and their respective alphabets.

It is not easy, at present, to draw up a comprehensive catalogue of the exhibitions designed by Bonfante. The Olivetti Historical Archives dedicated an exhibition and a short catalogue to him in 2003, but no specific funds has yet been set up. Among the dozens of events that Bonfante was responsible for, the Moscow exhibition *Interorgtehnika* in Sokolniki Park in September 1966 is the best described in the Inbra Archive, thanks both to the written documentation of various kinds – press releases, telexes on the presentation of the event, a draft of President Arrigo Olivetti's speech for the inauguration – and to a double series of pictures by Ugo Mulas and Aldo Ballo.³ It is unthinkable to analyse the Moscow exhibition, though certainly distinctive, separating it from a series of subsequent stylistically similar exhibitions (for which we refer to the images). Even though *Interorgtehnika* deserves particular attention for the reasons that will be outlined below, we are not dealing with an exhibition like the more

1 Zorzi 2003: 6.
2 Coppola 1971: 73.
3 AASD, Fondo Renzo Zorzi, Mostre ed eventi, Archivio Renzo Zorzi-Mostre ed eventi, 17, 80-82, 1966.

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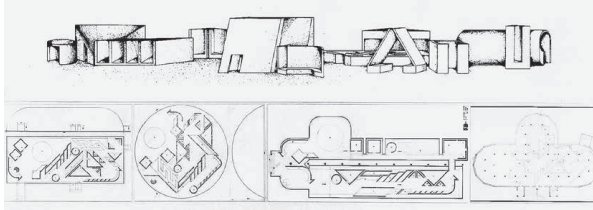
1966 1972



71 Project sketch by Egidio Bonfante for the *Interorgtehnika* trade show, Moscow, 1966.

Spaces: Technical Exhibitions 145

exhibitions exhibition design Formes et recherche Gae Aulenti Giorgio Colombo



80 Composition modules, floor plans and sections for some stages of the exhibition Olivetti formes et recherche, design Gae Aulenti, from the book Design Process. Olivetti 1908-1983, pp. 128-133.

81 On the following page, poster for the exhibition Olivetti formes et recherche in Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs (20 November 1969 - 1 January 1970); graphic design Cino Trini Castelli with Roberto Pieracini, 70 x 50 cm, 1969.

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Olivetti Identities. Spaces and Languages

1969 1971



Olivetti
formes et recherche

MUSEE DES ARTS DECORATIFS 107 RUE DE RIVOLI PARIS
DU 20 NOVEMBRE 1969 AU 1 JANVIER 1970. TOUS LES JOURS SAUF LE MARDI
DE 12 H. A 18 H. LE DIMANCHE DE 11 H. A 18 H.

Spaces: Technical Exhibitions

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communication design corporate image Design Process public relations Hans van Kler



95 Cover of the catalogue of the exhibition Olivetti: Design in Industry, MoMA, New York; graphic design Leo Lionni, 1952. Photo by Niccolò Guaresima.

96 Olivetti advertising installation on the motorway; design Giovanni Pintori, 1960s. Photographer unknown.

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Olivetti Identities. Spaces and Languages

1950 1977



Languages: Visual Communication and Interaction Design

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