



CALL FOR PAPERS

OPVS INCERTVM

2023

Journal

Opus Incertum is the history of architecture magazine of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence.

Founded in 2005, **Opus Incertum** intends ambitions to be a broad instrument of and dissemination of research in the field of promoting the history of architecture and the city, understood in the broadest sense of the term as regards both thematic and geographical tools, as well as thematic ones.

In fact, the magazine welcomes contributions from Italian and foreign scholars specializing in the discipline, with the aim of promoting development and making known the results of original research, without any methodological approach based on a rigorous scientific approach.

The aim is to offer unprecedented perspectives and new cognitive insights on general themes or on specific topics concerning the disciplinary field of the journal.

Editors in chief:

Emanuela Ferretti, University of Florence

Exhibitions: art, design, technique (1951-1992). The multi-scale of the exhibition design

edited by Orietta Lanzarini e Davide Turrini

To continue in the path begun with the 2023 issue, focused on the development of a new idea of the museum (1934-1964), the annual journal *Opus Incertum* dedicates the 2024 issue to the temporary display (exhibitions, periodic events and fairs in a period between 1951 and 1992) as a multi-scale project – i.e. implying approaches at different scales, from the smallest detail to the definition of the exhibition space – as well as a multidisciplinary one, understood as pertaining both to the traditional fields of art, architecture and design, as well as to the most innovative multimedia and performative communication techniques, in a fruitful hybridization of approaches and statutes.

The hybrid character of exhibition display is its greatest strength, it is a show case for the image of a constantly changing society, reflecting all the creative and vital energies that a continuous renewal implies, as well as the resulting tensions and contradictions.

From the 1950s this a phenomenon that becomes even more significantly distinct: the dynamics underlying the design of exhibitions and its final results highlight the loss of centrality of some consolidated disciplines, in particular architecture, understood as a tool for governing the exhibition space and the objects contained therein with respect to the presentation and the itinerary offered to the public. Freed from the often important restrictions, the contents of the exhibitions can aspire to new forms of interaction with visitors, conveyed by unconventional mediums – for example an innovative technical-material type (use of alternative materials to traditional ones or new construction technologies and lighting) or the growing use of multimedia (graphics, printed or projected photographic images, sound recordings, videos, etc.) – which with their evolving character influence not only the way in which the content must be shown to the public, but also the symbolic (and effective) projection towards the future that they carry with them.

Although it might seem inappropriate to place chronological boundaries on the research around the exhibition design, the two specific dates that have been chosen help to circumscribe themes pregnant with peculiar meanings. In 1951, with its 9th edition, the Milan Triennale entered the international scene with a clear awareness: the practice of art and architecture must deal with two parameters with a very strong social impact – “Merchandise and Standardisation” (“merce e standard”) –, but to win this challenge with contemporaneity, artistic research must engage in a profound revision of its disciplinary basis. In this context, if the exhibition: *Architettura, misura dell'uomo* and the conference: *De Divina Proportione* highlight the need to reflect and remain firmly anchored to the “humanistic” roots of architecture, it also appears evident that it is the logic of the market and the punctual response that design, in particular, manages to provide to specific social needs that pave the way.

The international appeal of this research is demonstrated, among the numerous examples, by the exhibition: Olivetti, design in industry, that the MoMA in New York consecrated in 1952 to the extraordinary production of the industrial firm of Ivrea.

The need to increasingly meld the fields of artistic knowledge, even with pop insights, is reaffirmed again by an exhibition, a paradigm of collaboration and abolition of disciplinary borders: This is Tomorrow, set up in London in 1956. Only one year before, thanks to the first Documenta in Kassel, under the aegis of Arnold Bode, the audience had managed to reconnect to contemporary art, after the interruption of the war.

Over the decades, the exhibitions gradually commit to transform their old communication codes, in order to translate complex instances for the benefit of a wider, though less experienced audience, therefore, resorting to a powerful “impact force”. In this sense, even consolidated historical images such as those of some great Renaissance masters – Biagio Rossetti, Michelangelo, Brunelleschi – have to comply to a radical process of “critical review”, which opens up unprecedented interpretation possibilities thanks to the new critical methods of Bruno Zevi, Paolo Portoghesi, Achille Bonito Oliva and others.

The exhibition space, therefore, becomes, more than ever, a space for experimentation, sometimes controversial and disruptive, especially when confronted with wide-ranging themes. From this point of view, the Venetian Biennials of art and architecture, but above all some editions of the Milanese Triennale offer themselves as a sort of “seismograph” for emerging themes that require a global and interdisciplinary approach such as “Leisure” (1964), “The great number”; (1968), “City, architecture, design, fashion, audiovisuals” (1979-1982), “The future of the metropolis” (1988), “The project and the environmental challenge” (1992). Subjects of compelling relevance, which still occupy, decades later, the schedules of contemporary exhibitions, especially in relation to the environmental question. The chronological period chosen for the issue of *Opus Incertum* of 2024 closes symbolically with 1992, the year of the great Seville Expo dedicated to the “The Age of discoveries” – understood as a celebration of a world about to open up to globalization in its broadest sense.

On the basis of these synthetic premises, proposals for contributions from scholars of different disciplines are welcome, at any stage of their career; the participation of young scholars is particularly appreciated. The themes can be both of a general type and of individual case studies, as long as the discussion allows for exemplification of the themes specified below or other similar ones.

The following indications constitute an outline, although not exclusive or binding, of the possible topics. They may concern any context, Italian or international, and can be original critical analyses of well-known events, or contributions on experiences not yet investigated:

1. art and architectural exhibitions;
2. design and fashion exhibitions;
3. exhibitions and industry: exhibiting corporate culture;
4. the domestic living space in the context of exhibitions;
5. exhibitions of science and technology;
6. exhibitions for children: playful settings and didactic-educational strategies;
7. the interpretation of “historical” themes in the exhibition space;
8. designing exhibition displays as workshops for technical and material experimentation;
9. multimedia research in the exhibition space;
10. itinerant exhibitions and continuities/discontinuities in periodic exhibition events;
11. the relationships between curatorial processes and exhibition practices;
12. the reception of specific exhibitions and the impact of debate they generated on the design culture of the second half of the twentieth century up to the threshold of the third millennium;
13. the debate on the themes of the exhibition project in art and architectural journals and in technical magazines.

Essays – in Italian, English, French, Spanish or German – must not exceed 40,000 characters, including notes, with a set of 10 images (free of fees). There will also be short papers of 15,000 characters maximum, including notes, with 3-4 images (free of fees). Proposals should be sent to: orietta.lanzarini@uniud.it e trrdvd@unife.it

Deadlines:

30 May 2023: submission of abstract (max 2000 characters) and a short CV (max 1000 characters)

15 June 2023: notification of acceptance

15 October 2023: essay submission

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