

PRESS RELEASE

GIO PONTI

curated by **Fondazione Sozzani**

in collaboration with **Salvatore Licitra - Gio Ponti Archives**

opening reception

Thursday March 24th to Friday March 25th, 2022

from 11 am to 8pm

on view

from March 26th to May 1st, 2022

every day, 11 am – 8 pm

"I believe that each piece of furniture, though always functional, should engage the imagination of the person who designed it and the person who looks at it." Gio Ponti

10 Corso Como Seoul is pleased to present the exhibition "Gio Ponti", curated by Fondazione Sozzani in collaboration with **Salvatore Licitra - Gio Ponti Archives**. The exhibition recounts the architect's multifaceted production and approach to the arts along his career, with a major focus on design.

A pivotal figure in the architecture and design of the 20th century, **Gio Ponti** (Milan, 1891-1979) exerted a profound influence on contemporary living. Ponti's infusion of wit into both design and architecture helped to establish Italy as the acknowledged leader in sophisticated modern design, from skyscraper to cutlery.

The exhibition includes photographic images and a selection of objects that cover 50 years. A series of images highlights the architect's alphabet: the combination and comparison between objects, drawings, and architectural elements show his design approach, in particular the expressive potential of the materials he embraced in every sector, from craftsmanship to architecture.

Ceramics have been one of Gio Ponti favorite materials since 1920's when he began working at Richard Ginori, producing many tile designs for interiors and outdoors like the one on show, designed for Hotel Parco dei Principi, Sorrento (Ceramica d'Agostino, 1960 - today produced by Ceramica Francesco De Maio). A selection of the most iconic chairs is on display representing his idea of seating, including the very famous *Superleggera* (Cassina, 1955), *Lotus* (Molteni, 1953-1957) and *Dezza* (Poltrona Frau, 1965) among the others. Together with a selection of his most beautiful tables, like the table made from enameled metal (Altamira, 1954) and the coffee table in solid rosewood, with feet in satin brass and triangular top (M. Singer & Sons, 1950s - both today produced by Molteni), all these pieces embody his interest in furniture and sensitivity for shape.

"The textile is a marvelous material. A material amongst the most beautiful of all materials: a material that withholds wisdom. Textiles are colour: when printed in the home they are like the presence of the poetic compositions of the artists." Printed with bright figures - such as "Estate" (Jsa, 1957 - today produced by Tre80) featured in the show - fabric is the ideal support for Ponti's "diary of ideas" which include figures as well as geometric shape.

Gio Ponti's long research on the relationship between shape and function is visible in many of his projects at different scales. The Pirelli Tower (Milan, 1957-1960) diamond shape turns into crystal and brass lamps, Pirellone and Pirellina (Fontana Arte, 1967) as the outline of the skyscraper floorplan becomes the inspiration to draw a brass tray (Sabattini 1955-1956). Again, the sequence of triangles that turn into diamonds in the "Diamantina" carpets are reminiscent of the tile pattern often used in his architectural works.

In 1970 Gio Ponti inaugurated the church Concattedrale di Taranto, one of his last great works. In the same year he also designed a set of geometric and colorful plates, and a series of foldable furnishings on wheels. Ponti captured the spirit of the times that called for more informal homes.

The exhibition is completed by the documentary "Loving Gio Ponti" by Francesca Molteni in collaboration with Salvatore Licitra, Gio Ponti Archives.

Special thanks to Ceramica Francesco De Maio, technical sponsor of the exhibition, Fontana Arte, Ginori 1735, Cassina and Molteni&C for the support.

Gio Ponti

(1891 – 1979, Milan)

Gio Ponti was born in Milan on November 18th, 1891. In 1921 he graduated from the Milan Polytechnic University of Milan, with a short interruption in his studies due to his participation in the First World War. During the War, he was able to see the architecture of Palladio. In the same year he married Giulia Vimercati, with whom he had four children: Lisa, Giovanna, Giulio and Letizia.

The Twenties

In 1923 he was appointed artistic director of Richard-Ginori pottery factory, where he renovated the production of ceramics and porcelain. In 1927 he founded "*Il Labirinto*", a collective of architects, with Emilio Lancia, Tomaso Buzzi, Paolo Venini and Pietro Chiesa, focusing on avant-garde objects and furniture. From 1926 to 1933 he was a partner with the architect Emilio Lancia, with whom he designed a furniture series for La Rinascente department store, under the brand "*Domus Nova*". In 1928, with the publisher Giovanni Mazzocchi, he founded the magazine *Domus*, which he would oversee throughout his life, making it an instrument for the dissemination of seminal ideas in architecture, interior design and decorative arts.

The Thirties

Ponti participated in several editions of the Milan Triennale. For the 5th Milan Triennale, dated 1933, he designed the Littoria Tower with Cesare Chiodi. In 1932 he founded *Fontana Arte* with Pietro Chiesa. From 1933 to 1945 he was associated with Antonio Fomaroli and Eugenio Soncini, with whom he created several public buildings including the Mathematics School at the University of Rome, the Faculty of Letters and Rectorate of the University of Padua, the Palazzo RAI and Palazzo Montecatini in Milan), as well as residential buildings, such as the very famous Rasini house in Corso Venezia, Milan. From 1936 to 1961 he was a professor at the Faculty of Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Milan.

The Forties

From 1941 to 1947 he left *Domus* and founded *Stile magazine* for the publisher Aldo Garzanti. In this period his interest in the decorative arts and theatrical scenography deepened. He collaborated with Piero Fornasetti, designed glasses for Venini, fabrics for Jsa; furniture with enamels made by Paolo De Poli. He did the frescoes for the rectorate of the University of Padua and designed furniture for the transatlantic ships. In 1948 he returned to *Domus*, which he would direct until his death, accompanied by his daughter Lisa.

The Fifties

In 1952 he founded the Studio Ponti, Fomaroli, Rosselli. He now accepted commissions to build villas around the world, including Villa Planchart and Villa Arreaza in Caracas, Venezuela. In 1954 Ponti and the magazine *Style and Industry*, directed by Alberto Rosselli, Ponti's partner and son-in-law, started the Italian Design Competition for Industrial design, the Compasso d'Oro to recognize quality in contemporary Italian design. The first skyscraper in Milan, Pirelli Tower, was a

project by Ponti realized with the consultancy for the structure by Arturo Danusso and Pier Luigi Nervi, in 1956. In these years he developed ceramic coatings to animate the surfaces of buildings.

Among the countless pieces of furniture and furnishings he designed, the chair “Superleggera” for Cassina in 1957 is easily recognized. The same year the publication of *Amate l'architettura*, his own *Diario-ideario* (a diary for ideas) came out.

The Sixties

Ponti's influence grew with the design of the Nemazee Villa in Teheran, and two religious buildings in Milan, the Church of San Francesco al Foppino, in 1963, and the Church of San Carlo Borromeo for the San Carlo Hospital, built in Milan in 1966. He receives other requests for public buildings and hotels, both in Italy and abroad.

The Seventies

Eighty years old, Ponti designs the Cathedral Gran Madre di Dio in Taranto in 1970 and the Denver Art Museum in 1971. He continued to deal with furnishings with exploring the idea of a versatile, movable form. From this, the *Apta* furniture series, and the *Gabriela* chair, known as little seat chair, are born. He died in his home in Via Dezza, Milan, in 1979.

Fondazione Sozzani

The Fondazione Sozzani was established in 2016 by Carla Sozzani and is dedicated to the promotion of culture through photography, fashion, the fine arts, and applied arts. The Foundation has assumed the patronage of Galleria Carla Sozzani and continues all relevant public functions that the Galleria has supported since 1990.
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