



paradisoterrestre

AUGUSTO BETTI artista + designer

curated by **Gherardo Tonelli**

opening

Saturday April 15, 2023 from 3 pm to 8 pm

on view

from Sunday April 16 to Sunday May 14, 2023

every day, from 10.30 am to 7.30 pm

free admission

special openings

Milan Design Week

from Tuesday 18 to Sunday April 23, 2023

from 10.30 am to 9 pm

On the occasion of miart and Milan Design Week 2023, **Fondazione Sozzani** in collaboration with **Paradisoterrestre** presents the exhibition **Augusto Betti. Artista e designer**, curated by **Gherardo Tonelli**. The result of a process of rediscovery and re-evaluation of the fascinating figure of Augusto Betti, the retrospective is dedicated to one of the least known and most surprising creative mind of the 20th century and features his work, which is complex and diverse but always consistent.

Painter and artist experimenting with new theories and materials, pupil of Giorgio Morandi and Giovanni Romagnoli at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna; designer and above all teacher; close associate of Silvio Ceccato, Director of Centro di Cibernetica e di Attività Linguistiche of the University of Milan and Gerardo Filiberto Dasi (Centro Pio Manzù, Rimini). A rich and stimulating life for Augusto Betti who, out of reluctance and character, relegated the outcomes of his creative production to an intimate and private dimension. On the rare occasions when he decided to participate in shows and exhibitions, his name appeared together with important figures in contemporary art such as Marina Apollonio, Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Dadamaino, Lucio Fontana, Ugo La Pietra, Piero Manzoni, and Elio Marchegiani, and his work gained recognition from distinguished critics, including Umbrò Apollonio, Giulio Carlo Argan, Palma Bucarelli, Carla Lonzi.

For Betti, art was not an aesthetic but an emotional quest. Stepping outside the classical canons, he found himself deeply exploring different areas: from energy and psychology to the mysteries of life. The exhibition delves into a forward-looking research projected into the future. It is rooted in the historical period in which it was undertaken but, at the same time, is surprisingly contemporary.

Alongside his artworks, on view also design pieces now part of Paradisoterrestre catalogue. Among these, the *Noodle* armchair (1967), created to explain to students the importance of free gestures in the generation of ideas, and the ceramic tea set - a material of choice from his hometown of Faenza - which Betti describes as his "most successful design object" (1975). Presented for the first time the re-editions of the *Prisma* armchair and sofa (1971), conceived during lectures to his students, and the *Glass* coffee table (1967), a smoked glass element whose cubic conformation allows for different compositional variations.

From the archive managed by his daughter Cristiana Betti come the very rare artworks from the "cassette" series (1959-1961); the resin and fiberglass sculptures *Pulsazioni* (1964), *Scatola dei sentimenti* (1964), *Struttura equilibrante* (1964), *Obelisco* (1965), *Ballerina* (1965), *Vibrazioni* (1967), *Orgonoscopio* (1967), *Camera con lenti* (1969); and also *Austere* chair and table (1967), *Parete luce* lamp (1967), *Foemina* chair (1967), *Ciclope* chair (1972).

Augusto Betti (1919-2013) became an orphan at the age of nine. The eldest of his siblings, he worked in the Focaccia and Melandri ceramic workshop. He could not pursue the art studies he loved but managed to attend evening classes at the local Municipal School of Drawing. In 1935 he enrolled in the mechanical construction course at the Aeronautical Institute in Forlì.

During World War II, he was a mechanical engineer with Primo Stormo da Caccia in Udine, with missions in North Africa, Greece, Algeria. At the end of the war, he began to paint: his first painting was *Il ritratto di Jole* (1945), the portrait of his young wife.

In 1946 he held his first solo painting exhibition at the Gamberini gallery in Forlì. In 1947 he was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, where his teachers were Giorgio Morandi and Giovanni Romagnoli. Here he deepened his fresco technique. At the same time, he worked in Decio Podio's painting restoration workshop, where he acquired a remarkable sensitivity and mastery of color.

He participated in a series of figurative painting exhibitions. Despite his success, also commercial, in 1955 he opened a laundry-business with his wife to be free to devote himself to experimentation in the artistic field. He named his first abstract artworks "cassette (boxes)", because they were made from square wooden boxes, about a meter wide and a dozen centimeters deep, closed by transparent material, in which he inserted elements that created changing plays of light and movement depending on the point of view. He also began to experiment with the countless possibilities of new synthetic materials. In the same years he created the "semisfere (half-spheres)", made using the bottom of demijohns as a mold, which were hung and projected colored moving images on the walls.

His work met the interests of Silvio Ceccato, director of Centro di Cibernetica e di Attività Linguistiche of the University of Milan, with whom he collaborated for several years. He also collaborated for a very long period with Centro Pio Manzù in Rimini, contributing, among other things, to the organization of the Convegni Internazionali Artisti Critici e Studiosi d'Arte, at which he met the major artists and art critics of the time, several of whom became his friends.

In 1963 a solo exhibition was held at Palazzo del Turismo in Riccione as part of the events of the XII Convegno Internazionale Artisti Critici e Studiosi d'Arte. From 1965 to 1984 he taught Professional Drawing at the Art Institute of Faenza. Particularly interested in the processes by which creativity develops, which he believed to be inherent in every human being from childhood, he carried out in-depth personal studies in this field.

He then devoted himself to design, and with Habitat Sintoni of Faenza, he realized: the *Noodle* armchair, the *Parete luce* floor lamp, the *Foemina* and *Austere* table and chair, and the *Glass* coffee table (1967); the *Flou* sofa and armchair and the *Oscillante* armchair (1968), the *Prisma* sofa and armchair (1971), and the *Ciclope* chair (1972).

In 1967 he participated with *Orgonoscopio* at VI Biennale d'arte Repubblica di San Marino - Nuove tecniche d'Immagine, chaired by Giulio Carlo Argan, Palma Bucarelli, Umbro Apollonio, Gian Alberto dall'Acqua. In 1968 he participated in the group show *Achromes* in Milan alongside Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni and others. From 1980 to 1986 he assumed the chair of Theory of Perception at the Istituto Industrie Artistiche in Faenza. His hometown Faenza dedicated to him in 2001 the exhibition *Forme della vita* at Palazzo delle Esposizioni and in 2006 the exhibition at Galleria della Molinella. His solo exhibition *Riflessi* promoted by the Municipality of Palazzuolo sul Senio dates back to 2003.

Since 2022, historic Italian design brand Paradisoterrestre has embarked on a journey to rediscover and enhance the work of Augusto Betti with the exhibition *Augusto Betti – Trasversale • Pulsazione • Ritmo* at Paradisoterrestre gallery in Bologna and by including in its catalogue the re-editions of design pieces such as *Noodle* armchair, the tea set designed in 1975, *Prisma* armchair and sofa, *Glass* coffee table.

Paradisoterrestre is a historic Italian design brand, Dino Gavina's last major enterprise conceived in the late Seventies and inaugurated in 1983. In 2017 Gherardo Tonelli relaunched the brand, with a catalogue ranging from re-editions of historical pieces - designed among the others by Roberto Matta, Kazuhide Takahama and Man Ray - to new collections in collaboration with designers and artists such as Pierre Gonalons, Tobia Scarpa, Paola Pivi and Allen Jones.

In 2018 Paradisoterrestre opened a gallery in Bologna, a hybrid space between art and design, where major exhibitions took place: *ULTRAMATTA - Roberto Matta's amazing adventure in the world of design* (2019); *TOBIA SCARPA - Dall'arte della misura silenziosamente* (2020); *Paola Pivi - Rock the art* (2021), *Augusto Betti - Trasversale • Pulsazione • Ritmo* (2022) and *Cento % Dino* (2022).

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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 Gallery has supported since 1990.

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