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UNIQUE VOICE

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SPEAKING OF DENIS SANTACHIARA, MASTER OF ITALIAN DESIGN, AGE 50, HIS FRIEND ROLF FEHLBAUM, NUMEN OF VITRA, THE RENOWNED SWISS-GERMAN OFFICE FURNITURE MANUFACTURER, SAYS: "IN THE WORLD OF DESIGN, SANTACHIARA IS A UNIQUE VOICE. NOBODY'S COMPARABLE". A PITHY, PERFECT DEFINITION, BECAUSE THE ITALIAN DESIGNER ELUDES ANY LABELS, AND IS APPRECIATED FOR HIS CAPACITY TO COMBINE, IN HIS RESEARCH AND HIS PRODUCTS, FUNCTION AND SURPRISE, ENTERTAINMENT AND TECHNOLOGY.

For a better understanding of his design I have decided to divide it up into the categories of Works and Products.

The Works, in turn, have been organized in four main typologies:

ART & DESIGN: where he displays his projects.

EXHIBITION DESIGN: where he designs installations for others.

PUBLIC DESIGN: projects for places open to the public.

SMALL WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE.

attractive form, but the idea – a lamp that's a bedtime story. And the light is not the decisive element but, as Santachiara says,

"It's the rhythm that puts you to sleep, the imprecision of the moon that prompts dreaming".

The same notions apply to the marvel dispensed by a doormat which, when you rub your feet on it, is "animated" by a little bird that greets the person entering the house with a chirp. Or the sofa-bed designed for the Venetian firm Bonaldo whose metal



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DESIGN

The Products, ranging from video cameras for Panasonic to one-offs made for exhibitions, hotels or homes, are organized in four areas:

LITTLE INVENTIONS: objects that contain the seed of invention.

SURPRISE: objects that harbor and reveal an aesthetic surprise.

MUTANTS: animate products that change form or function.

PRODUCT DESIGN: creativity applied to objects with evident productive or linguistic constraints.

One typical example of his way of designing is the "Notturmo italiano" lamp, designed to facilitate slumber: it projects sheep to count, following each other across the walls.

What is innovative here is not the object, in spite of its

frame can serve as a planter in the daytime, or a foot to support the bed itself. This entire approach takes on further emphasis when applied to the public sphere. Santachiara contains the wind. After lunch he smokes a Tuscan cigar and puffs like a chimney. The roof of his house in Milan is a terrace open to the wind on all sides. His car is a Saab convertible. But he wants even more wind. He drives about 5000 km each year in his car, and about 10,000 on his big motorscooter: when

"Amore mio", shelving and furnishing system in extruded aluminium, 2002, produced by RT.



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there is no wind he fabricates it.

Santachiara says: "Spaces, in general, give me an inevitable idea of being static: if I enter a living room with columns and windows, nicely furnished, the first thing that comes to mind is to open the windows and let the curtains blow about a bit – for me it is natural, like turning on the lights in the evening. What I don't like about modern architecture are the sealed up, terribly static, climate controlled spaces, often without windows... just think about American hotel rooms.

inflatable to architecture, museums to fairs, exhibitions, furnishings, the designer from Campagnola has worked from the outset along those "border slippages" between the arts and the disciplines that have been identified as the access codes of the "new world".

"I'm interested in the creative use of time – I'm looking for a design in which there is animation, movement, rhythm, music, choreography, dance, montage, cinema. In architecture, on the other hand, time means aging.



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- 1 "Marocchino", series of soft, luminous poufs, 2001, produced by Campeggi. Photo: Ezio Prandini
- 2 "Mama" chair and "tato" pouf, 1998, Baleri Italia. Photo: Mauro Balletti
- 3 "Cicalino", coconut fiber doormat enlivened by a little bird mounted on a rod of piano-string steel. When the person entering the house cleans his feet the bird moves and chirps. 1988, Domodinamica. Photo: Miro Zagnoli
- 4 Video telephone and intercom, Competition Workshop organized by Villa Tosca dmc for BTP, 1997. Generally conceived as objects hung on the wall or built into it, video intercoms are usually flat and frontal. The gastropod shell designed by DSC gives the object the dignity of something whole, even attracting our attention, when the object is off, to the rear portions.
- 5 'Notturmo Italiano' lamp. Composed of a spot with a lens inserted in a cast aluminium body. Prototype and first series produced by Yamagiwa, Tokyo, 1985; since 1987 produced by Domodinamica. Photo: Miro Zagnoli
- 6 "Astra" glass lamp, 2000, produced by La Murrina. Photo: Josè Altuna
- 7 "Bongo" sofa-bed, Bonaldo Styling, 2001. The metal bar inserted in the back has two functions: in the bed it functions as a support, while in the sofa it becomes an unusual planter, generating a tuft of greenery that appears behind the seated user like a halo. Photo: Tom Vack

In interiors this is the attempt to create a thunderbolt... glass that changes, a light that moves, something that never stays still."

I want to give life. I want a light that never stays still, flat, but always has variations: constant, imperceptible, or perceptible, sudden. Living light."

In the 1980s Santachiara was ahead of his time in terms of paths, methods, hybrids, emotions, the breakdown of borderlines, multiple identities and the elusive flare-ups caused by the digital revolution. From electro-mechanical to digital, from car design done by hand on the wall to genetic design, from the

Denis Santachiara, born in Campagnola, Reggio Emilia, 1951.

A designer-outsider on the international scene, he began with works somewhere between art and design, shown at various events including: the Venice Biennale in 1979, Documenta 8 in Kassel, the Milan Triennale in 1982-84-86-2000, the Rome Quadriennale in 1998. His works have been featured in solo shows at the Lyon Museum of Art and the Vitra Museum.

In 1985 he created and designed the installation for the exhibition-manifesto "La Neomercé", the design of invention and artificial ecstasy at the Milan Triennale and, one year later, at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, becoming an international reference point for a "technopoetic, ironic and inventive" design. He has curated many exhibitions like "The Signs of the Habitat" at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1987, the Berlaghe Museum of Amsterdam in 1988, and in Tokyo in 1989. He designed the installations for the exhibitions "The New Persona" in 1997 at the Stazione Leopolda in Florence, and "Stanze e Segreti" at the Rotonda della Besana in Milan, in April 2000.

His objects are included in the permanent collections of many museums, including: MoMA New York, Musée des arts Decoratifs of the Louvre in Paris, National Museum of Modern Art of Tokyo, Museum of Lyon, Museum of Frankfurt, Vitra Museum and Philadelphia Museum, Collection de design du Centre Pompidou.

His interior design projects include the interiors of the Chartreuse of Avignon, for the French Ministry of Culture, the Art Hotel in Dresden and the retail banking facilities of Banca Generali.

He has worked and presently works with:

SniaViscosa, CentrostilleFiat, Progettocultura Montedison, the French Ministry of Culture, Artemide, Swatch, Mandarina Duck, Rosenthal, Panasonic, Domodinamica, BPT, Vitra, Campeggi, Superga, Bang & Olufsen, Banca Generali, De Padova, Chrysler/Benz, Foscari, Marutomy, Baleri Italia, La Murrina, Serralunga, Bonaldo, Magis, Zerodisegno, Post Design, Villa Tosca.

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