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## ***History of Design – Reflections***

One year ago, after a meeting with Susan Yelavich at Parsons - *The New School for Design* in New York, I began an exchange of *Letters on the History of Design* in which numerous scholars took part. These Letters are published in the first issue of the online magazine of the *Associazione Italiana degli Storici del Design* (<http://www.aisdesign.org>); all of the citations here that are not mentioned in the footnotes come straight out of the *Letters*. History of Design's loss of influence today as an autonomous discipline as well as the loss it has undergone in the field of education lies at the heart of the debate. I believe it may be of benefit to carry on such a debate taking into account both the similarities that stand out as well as any noticeable differences. Let us begin by reiterating some key points.

We live in the third phase of the Industrial Revolution, one characterized by a clear discontinuity with the previous phase with regards to design. This is nothing new: the second phase of the Industrial Revolution introduced a similar discontinuity with respect to the first. I am referring to the gap between the twentieth-century phase characterized by Fordism and the ethics-aesthetics of the avant-garde and the nineteenth-century phase characterized by the clash between the romantic and rationalist cultures, as well as between nostalgia for the community along with praise of craftsmanship and deliberate adherence to industrial society. In the current phase characterized by globalization, digitalization and new technologies, we are witnessing a profound change in the role of design. Marc Bloch, the great historian who founded the *Annales*, proposed a "regressive" way of writing history in the sense that it should date back from the present (the present stimuli, discoveries, and sources) to the past: to study "the past in light of the present and the present in light of the past." (1) It is a point that today should be kept in mind when working on the history of design. However, let us now return to the topic under

investigation. The following are some arguments that I consider relevant for a detailed analysis.

1- The situation today is that history has lost influence within the cultural debate. With regards to this, Victor Margolin refers to Hobsbawm, who in turn points out the tendency for “an a-historical, engineering, *problem-solving* approach by means of mechanical models and devices” (2) to prevail when writing history on a more general level. Some time before, Fredric Jameson (3) had already emphasized how “the weakening of historicity” or at least the demonstration of its irrationality was the main principle of the *postmodern*. Hal Foster (4) and many other authors have expressed similar views. In today’s international debate historians talk about *the eclipse of history* in contemporary society. Many of them believe that this is partially due to the difficulty they encounter when re-writing their narrations taking into account the ongoing changes that undermine traditional references.

2- Teaching history of design tends to become marginal, as the above mentioned *Letters* demonstrate. Therefore, minor attention is given to the problem concerning the training of historians of design, such as regarding a specific university-level framework (PhD’s, Master’s Degrees, etc.). Particularly, the history of design is seen “as a tool for better design ... an approach I consider to be highly instrumentalist”, as Kjetil Fallan writes. I agree with Fallan even though I believe that designers should be acquainted with the history of design rather than disregard it. I also believe that the historian of design is a historian and needs to take on the role and behaviour of the historian. This again means that we must reflect on the issue concerning the training of design historians.

The way of interpreting the history of design seems to be growing in different directions. I would like to quote two examples taken from the *Letters*: Kjetil Fallan with his defense of the history of design even as a contribution to history in general and to human thought and reflection on the world, and Clive Dilnot with his outright dismissal of the influence of the history of design. Kjetil Fallan considers himself “a firm believer in the intrinsic value of historical studies” and hopes for a development in “design history as a solid academic endeavor, and if it is ever to make an impact on the broader field of history”. On the other hand, Clive Dilnot believes that the reduced significance of the history of design is also “a result of the breakdown of the modern design project and the idea of the autonomous design discipline...”. He claims, and, in my view, rightly so, that “relevant history would change its identity in many cases, focusing less on the autonomy of the discipline and more on the factors that now bear on these fields”. What, though, does “modern design” mean? All of this perhaps began with the book by Nikolaus Pevsner entitled *Pioneers of Modern Design* (5). However, the following point must also be considered: providing a sole definition of the XX century, especially its first six or seven decades is proving to be difficult. If by “Modern Design” we intend the Bauhaus, we have to reflect on its various forms, re-examine the clash between Itten with his mystical-expressionistic ideology and Gropius, influenced by De Stijl and Geometric Abstractionism. We also have to consider

the formula “function times economy”, of which design is a part, a formula proclaimed by Hannes Meyer, director of the Bauhaus after Gropius, with his idea which can be summed up as “socialist Fordism”. If we consider the United States, we will see that even there, a difference exists between Fordism (one need only think of the Universal Car), *The Thirties Style* between *Art Déco* and *Aerodynamic design*, the great designers of second generation technical items (from the telephone to the refrigerator and the camera) and the European trends of the *Cranbrook Academy of Art* (which supplied the industries with great designers such as Knoll and Herman Miller). The first fifty years of the XX century provide us with a complex and articulated framework, which goes beyond earlier overly schematic texts. The Twentieth Century can indeed be split between the ethics-aesthetics of the avant-garde, with their hypotheses concerning possible futures, and Fordism with its proposal of “universal” objects. After referring to the clashes within the Bauhaus, we could continue discussing those within the School of Ulm during the fifties and sixties up through the disputes between the rationalist and the post-modern culture on design starting from the sixties and seventies. If we are indeed approaching what is defined as the third phase of the Industrial Revolution, we can immediately notice that during the fifties and sixties another cultural and design panorama was emerging, one that had come out of futurism, expressionism and surrealism, one that had rediscovered the “image” in contrast to abstractionism, one that had often experimented by creating small groups of designers. In 1956 Richard Hamilton proposed a collage showing a home interior entitled “Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing?” and the *Independent Group* designed “This is Tomorrow” for the exhibit *The House of the Future* held in London. In the United States, designers and critics such as Bob Venturi were working, in Austria the neo-expressionism of the Viennese-born Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler was approaching, while in Italy *pop design* and *radical design* had been emerging; in the seventies and eighties groups were forming such as Alchimia, Memphis and One Off by Ron Arad in England. Meanwhile, globalization and new technologies were progressing. In 1974, Immanuel Wallerstein wrote *The Modern World-System* (6) introducing the concept of “world-economy” and the first computer was created; in 1976, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak developed Apple I, a microcomputer in their garage. The third phase of the Industrial Revolution took shape. Clearly, it is useful to discuss all of this in greater detail so as to dispel that residual but still persistent view of design as a unitary and monolithic culture. Instead, design has always been a culture that, with regards to the aim and form of the project and to the ethics-aesthetics relationship, has been split up with such precision and a wealth of elaboration which nowadays is not easy to find. An analysis of this complex panorama confirms that it is difficult to talk about the “modern project” as a unique trend; we can speak of at least two conflicting “modern projects”. In my opinion, both the rationalist and the “expressionist” trends belong to the XX century, to the avant-garde age. Between the sixties and the seventies both trends co-existed until the gradual disappearance of the second phase of the industrial revolution, which was characterized by electricity and gas, by mass production and consumption, by emerging mass media and *popular* culture, and by the first and second generation artistic avant-garde and their connection with XX century design.

It now seems appropriate to put forth the following reflection. Clive Dilnot, as previously mentioned, states: "The problem of the "loss" of the history of design in studio design programs is also in part a result of the breakdown of the modern design project and the idea of the autonomous design discipline". It is certain that the *modern project* is outdated: the historic phase we are in is different from that of the XX century, with the artistic avant-garde and Fordism. We are in the third phase of the Industrial Revolution. We are in a new landscape with regards to design. However, we are not experiencing a substitution of an old model with a new one without residual effects. As with all the other past phases, the earlier dominant model is without question being replaced by a design that manifests itself in new ways; however, some of the previous ones remain, even if modified to fit the new scenario (a scenario that therefore becomes so complex that it becomes difficult to talk about only one or a few dominating trends, in particular those stylistic). Therefore, for example, it is the progressive weakening of the Fordist paradigm, and not the disappearance of the industry and therefore of industrial design, that has led to the change of this scenario.

However, here a clarification should be made: Dilnot believes that even with regards to "modern art", the idea of considering it an autonomous discipline is fading out as well. This does not, however, seem to lead to the end of art history but at the very least allows for new keys of interpretation. This should be true for the history of design as well, as I previously mentioned when speaking about the difficulty of the historians of design to re-write their narrations as a consequence of the on-going changes that undermine the traditional guidelines. Unless Dilnot agrees with Arthur C. Danto when he says that we are already, in Hegelian fashion, "After the End of Art". (7). Paraphrasing Danto: "after the end of design"? Perhaps, more simply, we are "after the end of the modern design project".

Lastly, globalization has been giving rise to many debates, as witnessed both by the *XX Congress of Historical Sciences* (Sydney 2005), which to a large extent has focused on issues dealing with the history of extra-European populations and many other international congresses on design. Above all, there have been debates on the concept of nation itself, criticized as "modern myth". This criticism brings many authors to prefer, with regards to the history of design, global narrations rather than those national. Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan, the editors of a recent book entitled *Made in Italy*, examine this trend considering it "both premature and unwise" and at the same time suggest "national studies that are attentive to cultural exchange and international trade and influence". (8) However, declaring the end of national narrations prevents us from analyzing our current situation; a number of nations that until not long ago were considered "void of history" are coming into being as States/Nations and are currently trying to both affirm, often in a conflictual way, and build, in a more or less mythical way, their identity. Secondly, *New World History* is developing today with the purpose of overcoming Eurocentrism while rejecting the nineteenth-century idea that "peoples without history" exist. Nations that have recently achieved their independence are claiming their own historical course and identity. They therefore reject the concept of design as being linked to the Industrial Revolution (which they did not fully experience) and push, instead, for a broader definition of design that includes the history of artifacts in general, material culture, and craftsmanship. All of this is influencing international congresses on design.

See among others the “Design and Craft” (ICDHS 2010) and “Design Dialects” (Istanbul 2013) conferences. It is obvious that this should be put in relation with other fields of study such as both “Cultural History”, which puts much attention on material culture and everyday life, and “Material Culture Studies”. All of the above, in any case, opens up to scenarios of great interest. Just to give an example, Gavin O’Brien, a teacher, researcher and practitioner in design history with a specific focus on Industrial Design History from New Zealand, is completing a paper on the ‘arrival’ of ‘design’ in New Zealand. He has written to me: “This is a topic that I see as having great cultural significance in New Zealand as the Maori, (i.e. New Zealand’s indigenous people), have no “such word (i.e., no such concept), in their culture”.

Meanwhile, Victor Margolin is in the process of writing a history in three volumes where he rejects any terms referring to an *a quo* date and therefore any distinction between design and craftsmanship. I find particularly interesting how different kinds of studies are growing and producing a vast array of results valuable for our knowledge. However, I still believe that we need a history of design as a discipline with its own autonomy, one that is able to open itself up to other disciplines such as the history of science, technology, economics, and material culture, in accordance with that objective formulated years ago by Marc Bloch for which every science is “a fragment of the universal towards knowledge”.(9)

These topics are typical of our contemporary society, while an ever-present issue in the histories of design reflects what design is and how difficult it is to affix a definition to it. According to Margolin, it is this difficulty that both renders any discussion about the History of Design impossible and makes the study of Design necessary. Actually, something similar has happened in other disciplines. To give some examples: physicists place the birth of classical physics in the seventeenth century with the Scientific Revolution; chemists date the origin of modern chemistry back to the twentieth century. It is therefore a problem of periodizations. Even though the *New World History* is pushing for an abandonment of these periodizations, I believe that one cannot write history while immersing himself/herself in a time that is linear and not broken down into phases. Periodizations are without question suggestive since they are based on theoretical assumptions, but – as Krystzof Pomian writes - “they serve the purpose of turning facts into concepts”. (10) As I have already observed, with regards to this way of thinking, any discussion about the History of Art would be impossible given the difficulty in defining what art is. The History of Art had to face historical phases with radically different notions of art. Take, for instance, the Greek notion of τέχνη (art); the distinction made during the Middle Ages between liberal and servile arts (neither painting, nor sculpting, nor architecture, nor craftsmanship were considered part of the liberal arts, i.e. arts of the free-man); the assertion made by Leon Battista Alberti during the Renaissance that “... the artist is no longer a craftsman but an intellectual knowledgeable of all disciplines and fields” (11), a statement to which I will return briefly, that records and sets in motion that process of differentiation between arts and craftsmanship.

In light of these considerations, the subject I would like to propose is the following: rather than questioning when design originated, could it not be more useful to verify when the designer as a professional and social figure emerged? The answer is that

such a figure gradually defined itself between the 18th and 19th centuries, when the professional figure of the engineer appeared (12), while the notion of Fine Arts was shaping itself and the Art Academies were beginning to develop. (13) Design in both architecture and applied arts developed between the 16th and 18th centuries, but, in any case, it still was representative and descriptive. It was only in the 18th century that things changed due to both the first phase of the Industrial Revolution and the development of new methods of representation which tended to take on a technical and prescriptive approach in order to mitigate the superficiality of previous methods. They should supply constructive information which is comprehensible to the person who is acquainted with the representation code used.

- During those years, the method of representation created by Gaspard Monge (1746-1818) established itself. This method, which at the beginning was kept as a secret and only known to the military for its purposes, spread widely under the name “descriptive geometry”. Monge’s Method is a representative technique that allows designers to pass on to the project manager all necessary information in order to execute the project with precision. A new way of communicating between the designer and the producer is defined, making a distinction possible between designer and craftsman. Monge’s book *Géométrie Descriptive* was translated into English in 1808. (14)
- It was, in fact, in this phase that the need to train a new professional figure (i.e. the *designer*) with the express purpose of satisfying the growing firm’s needs began to arise, particularly in England. In 1852 Henry Cole became Superintendent of the *Department of Practical Art* (formerly the *London School of Design*), where Gottfried Semper introduced *Workshops on Materials*, and Art Botany was taught using the book by Owen Jones *The Grammar of Ornament* as a reference text. This discipline tried to establish, by observing the developmental processes of nature and comparing them with high quality decoration in all nations and ages, some rules in order to separate decorative design from personal intuition and base it instead on rational and communicable methods. This is the beginning of a process that developed up until the time of the Bauhaus, with its *Workshops*, and where the Grundkurs gets defined, that Basic Design for which Owen Jones laid the foundation or at least created a necessity. Establishing a school such as Cole’s implies that there is a spectrum of knowledge that can be passed down that goes beyond learning in the workplace and thus creates a new professional figure, the designer.
- Lastly, Christopher Dresser, a collaborator of Jones who studied at the London School of Design, worked during the second half of the nineteenth century as a consultant, an artistic director and a designer. During his career, he demonstrated a keen awareness of what the role of designer entailed. He firmly believed in the equality between the “Status” of the producer and that of the designer and, in fact, was the first designer to be allowed by the many industries he had worked for to sign the products next to the firm logo, a practice that would become more diffused years later.(15)

The *techne*, the design, and the designer radically changed with the advent of capitalism and the industrial revolution. The designer, unlike the craftsman, lies outside of the production process and in this way design theories and methods not only get modified but considerably adhere to the new nature of the next phases of the industrial revolution.

1- As previously stated, in recent decades, the role of design has been growing in the professional and productive realm more than in conceptual understanding. This is a phenomenon that does not refer only to design of artifacts, material or non-material. It is a broader problem. What does designing in a context like the one we live in, which is affected by major changes, mean? On one hand, processes of modernization are spreading all over the world but on the other hand, traditions, identity and heritage and belonging are disappearing. We are in a “designing society”, meaning that the project itself becomes more and more an activity that permeates all aspects of our lives. We all have to design everything, from our vacation to our job, to our lives in addition to the world around us. The question is: in what direction is design moving? And also, what does design mean today? Methods and meaning of design are changing due to a radically changed historical situation.

The global contemporary scenario is in fact quite different from a couple of decades ago, when the term “postmodern” had seemed to have clarified the meaning of all new transformations. Nowadays, the term “postmodern”, at least in the world of design, is not very prevalent. We still speak a lot of postmodernity, even if the definition that we try to give it—one that is at least ambiguous as possible—is not always successful. One thinks of “liquid modernity”, the brilliant and tautological formula by Sygfried Baumann. Looking over at the titles of this author, we can see that the term “liquidity” has become its *logo*, as well as a *passé partout* that serves to define everything, love, life, fear, and the world itself. We also talk of second modernity (Manuel Castells), reflexive modernity (Ulrich Beck), and the third phase of the industrial revolution (many historians of economics). However, the scenario is better defined with regards to its real distinguishing traits. We are now becoming quite aware of the third phase of the industrial revolution, in which we currently find ourselves, with its globalization, all-pervading digitization, deep changes due to scientific findings and their applications (either presumable or on-going). This phenomenon does not only pertain to design; in fact, the issue concerns what design in a society with such changes entails. However, it should be borne in mind that similar questions were raised, in ways that were different each time, during every previous phase of the industrial revolution.

Let us consider one aspect of our present reality. Objects of design are launched in the market as new “aesthetic goods”, valued at figures which are typical of the art market, a phenomenon which has been dubbed Design Art and is present in fairs, galleries, exhibits, from the *Design Miami-Basel* fair to FIAC (International Fair of Contemporary Art) in Paris, from the *London Art Fair* to the museums of Shanghai. This phenomenon typifies

the world of *furniture* design, as well as other areas. In recent years, in architecture, design by the *archistars* (architecture of special effects, *brand architecture*, etc.) has been establishing itself. These furnishings and works of architecture are signed; they are “visual stimuli” that aim for a communicative impact proposing the unusual, the anomalous, the excessive. They are objects with either an emphasized expressiveness or, on the contrary, an ostentatious minimalism that present themselves as icons of a new spectacularization of daily life and are able to make a breakthrough in the world of hyper goods. In 2007, Larry Gagolian commissioned a series of objects for his gallery in New York from Marc Newson with prices ranging from 100.000 to 400.000 dollars. Similarly, a dormeuse in aluminum designed by Newson, known as the Lockheed Lounge, has also become an icon since it was displayed in a video for the song “Rain” by Madonna in 1998; this is an example of media diffusion.

Still in 2007, an exhibit at the Cooper Hewitt Museum of New York entitled “Design for the 90% of the world” (with reference to the book written by Victor Papanek in 1972 “Design for the Real World”) showed a series of projects designed in order to deal with, using simple and economic solutions, problems in some areas with poor living conditions, insufficient growth rates and non-existent or meager technology. The culture of design is divided between *Design Art* and *Design for the 90% of the world*, with a clear split of the ethic-aesthetic nucleus that, according to many, had characterized design in the past, at least in research.

However, this is only one aspect. In the last two and a half centuries, design has faced the problem of how to configure objects which are made by machines and with new materials, in a society defined by a gradual urbanization, a profound socio-economical and cultural transformation and by changes in both the quality and quantity of consumption. Along this complex path, the figure of designer has become more defined and honed as a socially recognized professional figure.

Here lies another issue. Today, within this new phase of the industrial revolution, the sectors in which design has previously worked are multiplying, the first reason being geographic expansion. Until a few years ago, design had only been present in some industrialized countries. Today, where the international competition is intensifying due to globalization, design is all over the world and many nations invest in design as it is considered a *plus*, not only for companies but also for the their own economic systems. The number of designers, teachers and students of design is growing. The profession is no longer reserved for the few or the elite but is instead widespread in different nations. Likewise, the type of design is also expanding. Every kind of product undergoes processes related to design as well as processes that are often aimed at improving the product's aesthetic, allowing it to compete in globalized markets or at least to withstand the competition of imported goods.

Design today means designing not only products but also tridimensional artifacts. It is worthy to note how, in cities, design of service facilities for either public or private entities as well as interiors of shopping malls and reception, recreational and cultural spaces is growing. The design of these kinds of equipped indoor areas, which is increasingly defining urban communal and social life, has led to a narrowing of the gap between *furniture*, *interior* and *exhibit design*. These urban areas are where, since 2008, for the



first time in history, more than half the world's population has been living. Moreover, *corporate image* design has developed within strategic design, event set design, design for the enhancement of local resources, etc. There is more and more of an interconnection between tridimensional and visual artifacts, and the design of new visual scenarios is increasingly mingling with art, photography, video and the web. For some time, there has been a theoretical and practical merging together between product design and graphic design. It is an international process that has influenced all of the most recent books on histories of design. See for example Daniel Reizman's *History of Modern Design* whose subtitle reads "Graphics and Products since the Industrial Revolution" (16). Reizman, in the chapters dedicated to the various phases of the history of design, next to product and trend analysis, inserted paragraphs on graphics and design of visual communication. What should be borne in mind, however, is the role of *industrial design* since, at a global level, industry has most certainly not disappeared in developing nations such as India, China, and Ex-Soviet Union Nations. Even in some African nations, thanks to mostly Chinese capital investments, infrastructures and industrial ventures are continually being realized.

Among the most recurring topics on the international level worthy of exploration is the criticism of a way of writing the history of design based on a system of highly linguistically characterized objects. Obviously, this system of objects includes furniture, defined with a certain shared sense of humor, "gourmet items" (17) as it were. Stimulating this line of research is the fact that in modern production, more and more objects ranging from electronics to motorcycles are designed by large and complex teams making the identification of a single designer impossible. Here, however, this point needs further clarification. Although having a large project team makes it difficult and probably unnecessary to focus on a single or main designer, at the base of any kind of object there is, in one way or another, a project culture that a historian of design should investigate.

However, today, compared to the above situation, something profoundly new is happening. New technologies not only have a strong effect on all new design trends but on other aspects as well. They create new procedures and new themes, ranging from *Interaction Design* to *Service Design*, from *Pervasive Computing* to *Rapid Prototyping*, from *3D Printing* to *Autoproduction Design* (along with the related growth of the *makers'* ideology) etc. Also worth mentioning are new processing techniques such as CNC machines and laser cutters, in addition to new materials and their performances. These are intelligent, sensible, interactive, smart materials that define new daily life scenarios. It is precisely in this field that design is gradually moving away from the idea of solving complex problems according to the formula of the Bauhaus "Art/Technique/A new Unit". Today, if on one hand processes of aesthetic improvement are expanding, on the other specializations prevail.

In the field of design, lack of attention to history, or marginal attention is given in our schools. This is not only a phenomenon of today. In the international symposium "Design: History and Historiography", held at the Politecnico of Milan in 1991 (18), I pointed out that there was no trace of history courses in the Bauhaus (except, it seems, a conference

held by Pevsner) and this also applies to the school of Ulm. Walter Gropius, in his letter to Ernesto Nathan Rogers, director of Casabella magazine, wrote: "My opinion is still the one that a student should be introduced to history not during his/her first year of university but later on. I know from my personal experience, coming in contact with the great masters of the past can be a little frustrating...". (19) Most probably Gropius' stance is still based on the rejection of the nineteenth-century *historismus* and on the *Bauhausian* attempt to reject styles and stylism. However if one thinks of, instead, Hannes Meyer's formula (design is "function times economy"), things are culturally different. At the time of the conference of Milan in 1991, I attributed this finding to the *historismus* influence of the school of Vienna and the neo-positivist philosophy (and I extensively quoted the self-criticism of Gustav Hempel) (20).

Today, twenty years later, in light of the present situation, I think that Margolin is right when he refers to the trend of a prevailing use of an "a-historical, engineering, problem solving approach by means of mechanical models and devices".

Even in Italy in many courses of design the increasing tendency is towards an organizational-managerial training with an "*operationalist*" perspective, meaning that the project is reduced to a list of operations to be put in place in order to achieve a fixed target or towards a social-technical approach that gives much attention to the processes and much less to the final result in its ethical - aesthetical complexity. The risk is that a generation of designers devoid of historical consciousness is shaping itself; a generation devoid of reflection on the meaning and responsibility of design, with some experience in data mapping and organization of operations in flowcharts, but with a tendency never to reach the design moment (21) or with experience in developing technical processes aimed at design objects but with a complete indifference to product quality. Viek Wadhwa, Vice President of Academics and Innovation at Singularity University in Silicon Valley, says: "Kids from Silicon Valley only deal with what they believe is interesting, but often lose sight of what is important. They often waste their time trying to invent just another more or less useless app. I believe that innovation in medicine, energy, nutrition is more important: these are things that count for mankind." (22). This is surely a partial and perhaps a somewhat moralistic statement, but one worth reflecting on it.

The idea of a unitary culture of the project is being replaced by one based on specialization. This is both a mirror and a manifestation of on-going changes that are objective and need to be addressed without looking back, but instead by thinking of the etymological meaning of the word itself: to project = to throw forward. This priority given to specializations is indeed testament to how the need for both any form of reflection on the project and any theoretical-methodological approach is extinct. Thus, we return to the problem mentioned at the beginning: the need to reflect today on the role of the History of Design, as an autonomous discipline, one essential for training with the sole purpose of rethinking design.

This can be done by being aware that, as Gadamer has written, "with the critical research..." "history" always gets re-built and described again. The book of history never ends nor has it ever been written in a definitive way" (23). However, I do think Gadamer is correct when he asserts that "despite the absurdity of events and history [...] we are required to search tirelessly for both the understandable and the meaningful" (24).

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All of the quotes without footnotes are taken from “Letters on Design” published in the section “On Design History” in <http://www.aisdesign.org>.

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  - (8) Cf. K. Fallan, G. Lees Maffei, “Introduction: the History of Italian Design” in *Made in Italy. Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*, Bloomsbury Academic, London/New York 2014, p. 2.
  - (9) Bloch, M., *Apologia della storia o Mestiere di Storico*, Einaudi, Torino 1998, p. 180.
  - (10) K. Pomian, *L'ordine del tempo*, Einaudi, Torino 1992, p. 176)
  - (11) Cf. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*, 1435, poi *De re edificatoria e De Statua* (1464) .
  - (12) J. K. Finch, *The story of Engineering*, Anchor Books- Doubleday & Co, New York 1960.
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  - (14) S. Lawrence, *History of Descriptive Geometry in England*, Proceedings of the First International Congress on Construction History, Madrid January 2003
  - (15) V. Pasca, L. Pietroni, *Christopher Dresser*, Lupetti, Milano 2001, p.25. In particolare Dresser difende lo status delle arti applicate nel suo saggio *Ornamentation Considered as High Art*, presentato nel 1871 alla Royal Society of Arts.
  - (16) D. Reizman, *History of Modern Design*, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, London 2003/2010.

- (17) cf. K. Fallan, *Design History - Understanding theory and method*, Bloomsbury, London- NewYork 2010.
- (18) V. Pasca, "Design: storia e storiografia", introduzione al *Convegno Internazionale di Studi Storici sul Design- Design Storia e Storiografia*, Politecnico di Milano 1991, in: Atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Studi Storici sul Design, Progetto Leonardo, Bologna 1995.
- (19) Lettera di "Gropius a Rogers", Casabella / Continuità, n.275, 1963.
- (20) cf. V.Pasca, id., p. 21.
- (21) Cf. V.Pasca, "Design in futuro", in *XXI Secolo. Gli spazi e le arti*, Treccani 2010.
- (22) Cf. nòva in Il Sole 24ore, 30 marzo 2014.
- (23) R. Koselleck, H.G. Gadamer, *Ermeneutica e !storica*, il Melangolo. Genoa 1990, p. 48.
- (24) H.G Gadamer, *ibidem*, p.43.