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presents

AUGUSTO BETTI *Trasversale • Pulsazione • Ritmo*

10.05 > 30.06.22
Paradisoterrestre gallery
Via De' Musei 4, Bologna (IT)

Historic Italian design brand, Paradisoterrestre is pleased to present *Trasversale • Pulsazione • Ritmo*, retrospective exhibition dedicated to Italian artist Augusto Betti (1919-2013), for ART CITY Bologna 2022 on the occasion of ARTEFIERA. The exhibition at Paradisoterrestre Gallery intends to offer visitors the opportunity to (re)discover this extraordinary artist, thanks to the precious contribution of Cristiana Betti, the artist's daughter and with the patronage of the Municipality of Faenza, birthplace of Augusto Betti, where he lived and worked for his entire life.

"In my constant research of historical design pieces, I came across some incredible objects designed by Augusto Betti. Studying his biography, I discovered that this exceptional production was only a small part of his creative life. His greatness was clearly evident from his design pieces, which I would define as rare pearls. Thanks to his daughter Cristiana, I was able to deepen my knowledge of Augusto Betti's entire production, also and above all as an artist. This, which for me has been - but I believe for many others will be - a real discovery, only confirms Dino Gavina's visionary intuition of art and design as an essential combination.

- Gherardo Tonelli, Paradisoterrestre

In Betti's artistic production, always accompanied by teaching, Reichian orgone theory, attention to materials, involvement of the observer, relevance of random aspects and of intuition in creativity and design intertwine in a mixture of theory and practice well summarized in the artist's words "[We have a perfect example of how] in the design process, the work of the hands integrates with that of the mind, suggesting new solutions and how important it is to let go, not intentionally, but through doing". Precisely from this consideration, the *Noodle* armchair was born during a lesson to his students at the end of the 1960s. In order to explain the importance of free gestures in the generation of ideas, Betti took one of his signs and gave it three-dimensionality, transforming it into an armchair. Homemade tagliatelle lover, he saw the same shape in his creation and so he named it *Noodle*, underlining also in the choice of the title the importance of leaving space to intuitions. Thus the exhibition becomes also the occasion to present for the first time Paradisoterrestre re-edition of *Noodle* armchair.

The three key words in the exhibition title are both a poetic statement and a guide to the show. "Trasversale/Transversal", "Pulsazione/Pulsation" and "Ritmo/Rhythm" are concepts whose explanation is entrusted to the artist's own words and to the exhibited pieces. On view the extraordinary results of Betti's researches: from his first experimentations with artworks from the "cassette" series (1959-1961), to his 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); among the exhibited design pieces: *Noodle* armchair (1967, Paradisoterrestre Edition 2022), *Austere* chair and table (1967), *Foemina* chair (1967), *Prisma* armchair and sofa (1971), *Ciclope* chair (1972).

Appreciated by his illustrious contemporaries - including the art critic Giulio Carlo Argan, the great artist Lucio Fontana, the founder of Centro Pio Manzù Gerardo Filiberto Dasi - for reticence, modesty and character, Betti's work remained largely unknown. In his notes: "I have never took part in exhibitions, much less in art prizes, if not under pressure". Creativity and design were for Betti almost private issues, shared mainly with his students. A forward-looking research, with roots in the historical period in which it was undertaken but at the same time very up-to-date. With *Trasversale • Pulsazione • Ritmo* Paradisoterrestre aims at making his incredible research and production finally recognized as he deserves. And may Betti forgive us but - like him - we are firmly convinced that "The work of art is a model of behavior that remains available for those willing to enjoy it. [...] My works are not a point of arrival. I hope that young people can draw further conclusions from them."

Thanks to Cristiana Betti and Sergio Callegari; architect Silvia Maggi and Bianca Sangiorgi.

With the patronage of the Municipality of Faenza



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AUGUSTO BETTI (Faenza, RA 1919 - Vidracco, TO 2013)

Augusto Betti had a tough childhood: orphaned at the age of nine, being the eldest of his brothers, he was obliged to work for Focaccia and Melandri ceramic laboratory. He could not continue his beloved studies, but he managed to attend evening courses at the local Municipal School of Drawing after work. In 1935, he began attending a mechanical construction course at the Aeronautical Institute of Forlì. He participated in the Second World War as an engineer of the Primo Stormo da Caccia of Udine, with missions in North Africa, Greece, Algeria. At the end of the war he started to paint. His first painting was a portrait of his young wife *Il ritratto di Jole* in 1945.

In 1946 he held his first solo exhibition at Gamberini gallery in Forlì. In 1947 he had the opportunity to enroll at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, where he had as teachers, among others, Giorgio Morandi and Giovanni Romagnoli. He deepened in particular the fresco technique. While attending the academy, in the afternoon he used to work for Decio Podio's pictorial restoration laboratory, frequented by eminent Bolognese artists of the time, where he acquired a remarkable sensitivity for and mastery of colors. In the period following the Academy, he took part in a series of exhibitions.

Despite the success - also commercial - of these exhibitions, in 1955 he decided to start a business with his wife in order to be free to devote himself to artistic experimentation. He named his first abstract artworks "cassette (boxes)", because they were made from square wooden boxes, about one meter wide and a dozen centimeters deep, closed by transparent material, in which he enjoyed inserting elements that created plays of light and changing movement, according to the point of view. A true pioneer, he also began to experiment with the countless possibilities of new synthetic materials, which he obtained directly from Bayer, Hoechst or B.P.D. in Colleferro, focusing in particular on transparencies, colors and lens effects. In the same years he created also the "semisfere (half-spheres)", made using the bottom of demijohns as a mold, which were hung and projected colored moving images on the walls. During the final years of his life, he continued the production of these pieces. In his opinion, art was not an aesthetic research, but an emotional one. Out of the classical canons, art led him to explore in a deeper way different fields, from energy to psychology, to mysteries of life.

His work met the interests of Silvio Ceccato, director of the Centro di Cibernetica e di Attività Linguistiche of the University of Milan, with whom he collaborated for several years. He also closely 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, on the occasion of which he met the major artists and art critics of the time, several of whom became his friends.

In 1965 he was appointed as Professional Drawing teacher at Art Institute in Faenza, a position he held until 1984. Particularly interested in development processes of creativity, which he believed to be innate in all human beings since childhood, he carried out in-depth personal studies in this field. His students often progressed quickly from mediocrity to excellent results. To provide them with practical examples, he dedicated himself to design: in 1967 *Noodle* armchair, *Parete luce* floor lamp, *Foemina* and *Austere* table and chair and *Glass* coffee table, in 1968 *Flou* sofa and armchair and *Oscillante* armchair, in 1971 *Prisma* sofa and armchair and in 1972 *Ciclope* chair, all edited by Habitat Sintoni (Faenza), with which he participated in the most important design events. Many companies, in Italy and abroad, wanted to work with him, but he refused because he did not want to leave his hometown.

In 1967 he took part with *Orgonoscopio* at "Sesta 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 exhibition *Achromes* in Milan alongside Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Castellani, Gianni Colombo, Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni and others. In 1980 he started teaching Theory of Perception at the Higher Institute for Artistic Industries (ISIA) in Faenza which he held until 1986. In 2001 the Municipality of Faenza dedicated to him the exhibition *Forme della vita* at Palazzo delle Esposizioni and in 2006 another exhibition at Galleria della Molinella. The exhibition *Riflessi* promoted by the Municipality of Palazzuolo sul Senio dates back to 2003.

For Augusto Betti, art was a philosophical and spiritual journey, which led him to a very profound understanding of the mysteries of life and of the world.