

# 9. Carlo De Carli and the Editorship of *Interni* 1967-1971: Teaching, Publishing, and Furniture Design

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## 9.1 1962-1963. Some Background: the Direction of the Institute of Interiors

After obtaining a Degree in *Interior Architecture, Furniture and Decoration* (in 1955; henceforth, *Interiors*) and in *Artistic Design for Industry* (1961), in 1962 Carlo De Carli was invited to be visiting professor for the Chair of Interiors at the Faculty of Architecture of Politecnico di Milano. This was the same year when Gio Ponti, the historic holder of this chair, left his tenure and as a result handed the baton of teaching over to De Carli along with the fledgling Institute of Interiors, still an active department today. In fact, on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1962, Ponti informed the then rector, Gino Bozza, that the faculty had approved the foundation of the Institute and specified that he would communicate it «also in the name of prof. Carlo De Carli» who would replace him after his retirement [1](#).

1. Lettera di Gio Ponti a Gino Bozza, rettore del Politecnico di Milano. [Document](#)→



In De Carli's book *Architettura. Spazio Primario* (1982), almost a summation of his commitment as a teacher, researcher and designer, it was he himself who indicated his replacement of Ponti as a «succession in research and teaching».

In the 1962-1963 academic year, around the Chair of Interiors there was an established *living study centre*, to which Fulvio Raboni, Eugenia Alberti Reggio, Giandomenico Salotti, Vittoriano Viganò referred: among them, Reggio, Salotti and Viganò were destined to take part in De Carli's subsequent editorial initiative, *La rivista dell'arredamento* [*The Furniture Journal*] (1967-1971). Meanwhile, the Institute of Interiors, fully active by 1963 and directed by Carlo De Carli, brought together the teachings on *Interiors* (consisting of two years entrusted to Eugenia Alberti Reggio for the first, and De Carli for the second [2](#)), and later both to De Carli), Ornamental Sculpture (Adolfo Wildt) and Scenography (Tito Bassanesi Varisco), previously belonging to the *Gabinetti di Materie Artistiche* [Art Workshops].

In the following academic year, 1963-1964 [3](#), these were joined by the complementary subjects of Decoration (Vittoriano Viganò), Museography and Exhibition Design (Fredri Drugman) and, above all, Artistic Design for Industry [4](#), entrusted to Alberto Rosselli, a harbinger of the future development of the School of Design. From 1965-1966, Dino Formaggio (*Methodologies of Vision*) would be added to the *Polychair of Interiors*, as defined by Gianni Ottolini, then a student [5](#). The creation of a workshop of *Modelling and Furniture Technology* was

also mooted in the spaces of the Institute which occupied one room [6](#) on the mezzanine floor and two in the basement of the new seat of the Faculty of Architecture, constructed between Via Bonardi and Via Ampère to a design by Gio Ponti, Giordano Forti, and Piero Portaluppi (1953-1961). The role of liaison played by De Carli in the establishment of the Institute and in the setting up of the *Modelling* workshop was also attested by Franco Albini when, on November 27<sup>th</sup> 1965, he presided over the promotion of his colleague to full professor [7](#).



**2. C. De Carli, Programma del Corso di Architettura degli Interni.**  
[Document →](#)



**3. Copertina del Bollettino Ufficiale del Politecnico di Milano - Guida dello Studente A.A. 1963-1964.**  
[Document →](#)



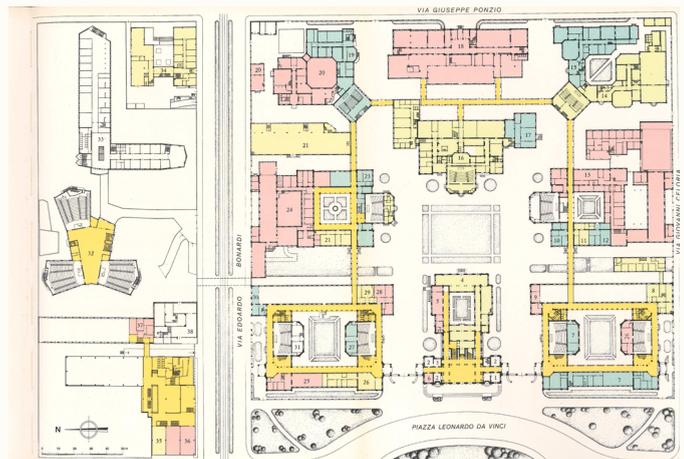
**4. Programma del Corso di Progettazione Artistica per l'Industria.**  
[Document →](#)



**5. Testimonianza di Gianni Ottolini.**  
[Document →](#)



**6. Sede dell'Istituto di Architettura degli Interni, Arredamento e Decorazione (n. 35). Pianta del piano rialzato delle Facoltà di Ingegneria e Architettura, in Il Centenario del Politecnico di Milano.**  
[Document →](#)



**7. Relazione della Facoltà per la nomina a professore ordinario di Carlo De Carli.**  
[Document →](#)

## 9.2 1967. *Interni*, The New Current of *La rivista dell'arredamento*

Fresh from the conception and direction of the journal *Il mobile italiano* (1957-1960) which had consolidated his contacts with a small artisan furniture business in Brianza, De Carli took over in an interregnum phase in the direction of *La rivista dell'arredamento*, founded by Gualtiero Giovanni Görlich in 1954 to appeal to readers not reached by journals like *Domus*. Supervised by the same editor between 1955 and 1957, and then by Antonello Vincenti from 1957 to 1962, after some apparent aimlessness, it was entrusted in 1967 to De Carli who changed the name to *Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento* [8](#), shifting the emphasis to the relationship between space, objects and people.

8. Copertina del primo numero di *Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento*.  
[Document](#) →



9. C. De Carli, *Contro la realtà finta*, in *Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento*, gennaio 1967, pp. 2-5.  
[Document](#) →



Already with *Il mobile italiano* (1957-1960), the designer had assembled an editorial team that included contributions by various colleagues (from Raffaella Crespi to Marco Zanuso, among others) and nurtured his ambition to connect the reality of the *furniture production centres* of Brianza and the university environment with experiments which directly involved both companies and students; in the years of *Interni* (1967-1971) he strengthened this approach, turning the journal into a showcase for the commitment of professors, young teachers and students, on the basis of the research promoted by the Institute of Interiors. The first editorial staff consisted of Nino (Giandomenico) Salotti, soon to be ordinary assistant at the Institute, and Angela Comolli Sordelli; collaborators in the research were Vittoriano Viganò, Alberto Rosselli, Marco Comolli, Benedetto Resio and, from other universities, Roberto Mango and Leonardo Mosso.

In his first editorial, De Carli stated that «the problems of interiors are the problems of the *interior space* and the *objects* that furnish it» but, perhaps in order to preserve the wide spectrum of the public to which the periodical was addressed, he did nothing to disrupt its basic layout [9](#) (January 1967): after the articles, he cut down, but did not eliminate, the serial column on antique furniture and renewed the *Notiziario* [news bulletin] on industrial production,

exhibitions, trade fairs or other curated events. The latter bulletin became *Il Corriere dell'Arredamento* [10](#) and adopted the graphics of a newspaper with its own editor, Pietro Toschi, and also began to deal with household appliances, lighting, crockery, television, etc.; further confirmation of the importance De Carli gave to the role of objects in the space of a house in transformation.



10. Prima pagina dell'inserto *Il Corriere dell'arredamento*, in *Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento*, gennaio 1967, s.p. [Document →](#)

In fact, since 1962–1963, he had identified as the objective of the nascent Institute of Interiors' activities, the study of a flexible dwelling cell, as a response to new social and behavioural needs, but also the «result of the space-production relationship», i.e. the result of a joint study of living spaces and the production of furniture. In fact, the relationship between objects, inhabited space, and people appeared from the very first articles written by De Carli: the editor described the homes of his colleagues [Marco Comolli, Alberto Rosselli (February 1967) [11](#), Franca Helg (February 1967) [12](#), Ernesto N. Rogers, Marco Zanuso (April 1967) [13](#), Enrico Peressutti, Leonardo Mosso, Lodovico Belgiojoso, Nino Salotti, Roberto Mango] bringing out their personality through their way of living and their relationship with interiors and furnishings, showing the functional and spiritual synergy between the latter, whether objects of family affection or products for series created by the designers themselves [14](#). In fact, in various cases, *the domestic portrait* was followed by an illustrative selection of the new products that had been created.



11. C. De Carli, *La casa di Alberto Rosselli*. [Document →](#)



12. *La piccola abitazione di Franca Helg*. [Document →](#)



13. C. De Carli, *Gli oggetti umani di Marco Zanuso*. [Document →](#)



14. Alberto Rosselli. *Realizzazioni per la produzione in serie*. [Document →](#)

## 9.3 1967–1970. The Opening Up to Young People and the Column *How Will We Be Living?*

De Carli's editorship had been open to collaborators right from the word go, following an approach that was also instructive: he had tasked Nino Salotti with preparing the terrain when it came to the *dwelling cell* for an industrialized society, by examining its amenities. The historical evolution of the kitchen (February 1967) was followed by an analysis and revamp of the bathroom, seen as a prefabricated block, a combina-

tion of sanitary ware in different rooms and, most of all, not necessarily connected to the plumbing system adjacent to the kitchen, thereby offering the rooms new possibilities of integration or spatial flexibility (March 1967). This was the first step to subsequently address the new developments of the house through the research conducted by the Institute's students involved in the workshop experimentation launched by De Carli at the university. As a result, there were also articles signed by young graduates or undergraduates, such as Piero Puddu and, in particular, by Gianni Ottolini, at the time a student activist, that is to say, De Carli's direct interlocutor in the request for teaching that wasn't *by-the-book*, but based on group work and experimentation. In fact, Ottolini's first article tells the story of the attic in which he was living, studying and receiving his friends from the faculty and university politics: thanks to a sloping roof, this was a spacious cavern or a mother's womb, an expression of the generative principle of architecture, of that *primary space* [*spazio primario*, t/n] theorized by De Carli.

In 1970, a special column was born that questioned the future of the large number society, conditioned by constant population growth and the waning of the traditional family: entitled *Come vivremo?* [*How Will We Be Living?*] (April 1970) [15](#) [v](#), and entrusted to Nino Salotti, this proposed avant-garde projects, which were frequently utopian and linked to the potential of prefabrication. Sketches of spiral dwellings or underground houses (Guy Rottier), inflatable domes, mobile homes (Archigram) and even studies of single dwelling cells which aggregated into megastructures [16](#) [v](#) [17](#) [v](#) (Fumihiko Maki and the Metabolist group, June 1970) followed one another.

There was no lack of attention to furniture either, with the most technically or conceptually innovative proposals being shown: then one-off special issues would show a range: from the grey furniture of Ettore Sottsass to the Sassi designs of Piero Gilardi and criticizing the rigidity of a predefined typological setting of the house, reinterpreting it instead as a system of relationships with people at the centre (September 1970).

An informal and creative way of living was proposed, sprinkled with brightly coloured furnishings which, as in Gianni Pettena's apartment, could be re-invented by stimulating new

15. N. Salotti, *Come vivremo?*, in *Interni*, la rivista dell'arredamento.

[Document](#) →



16. N. Salotti, *Come vivremo?*, in *Interni*, la rivista dell'arredamento.

[Document](#) →



17. N. Salotti, *Come vivremo?* Speciale.

[Document](#) →



uses of the space of the house each time, seen as the setting for an iridescent and proactive everyday life. The article, introduced by the title *Liberamente Diversi* [*Freely Different*] (September 1970) [18](#) ↘, expressed the importance of being free in living one's own spaces: in fact, Pettena's house was contrasted with that of Yona Friedman, which grew without rules according to the inspiration of the moment, teeming with objects and drawings, memories of travels, works, testimony of passages of real life which could, however, be varied as desired.

Alongside the advancement of young people and their demands, the journal nevertheless continued to present more traditional living and furnishing solutions, created by designers who worked both with established companies and with small furniture firms (Salvati and Tresoldi, Gramigna and Mazza, Ico Parisi, etc.), showing the most state-of-the-art solutions to meet the needs of the contemporary world. Both lines found a point of convergence in the increasingly flexible organization of the plan of the dwelling as in the large single room (living room, dining room, study and bedroom) and bathrooms designed with purpose-built furnishings by Ico and Luisa Parisi for a single person (January 1969), or the house in Via Argelati by Joe Colombo, with the well-known multi-purpose blocks designed for the series (June 1971).



**18. *Liberamente diversi*. Document** →



## 9.4 1967-1969. The Faculty of Architecture Experimentation

Carlo De Carli's activity as editor of the journal *Interni* was strongly linked to his role as professor and dean of the Faculty of Architecture [19](#) ↘: from the pages of his journal he gave voice – and this was a unique case in the publishing scene – to the most cutting-edge demands of the student movement with whom he shared the urgency of a radical renewal of teaching, net of the most ideological arguments. The common goal was to overcome a rigidly autocratic, academic university profile with no inclination to change, to finally place the underlying motives of architectural design at the centre of teaching and research activities, subdivided into all its scales (from ur-



**19. Nomina di Carlo De Carli a preside della Facoltà di Architettura per il triennio accademico 1965-1968.**  
**Document** →

ban planning to interiors) and understood as a concrete response to the most pressing needs of Italian society.

In the 1962-1968 academic year, in the midst of the sit-ins (the Faculty of Architecture, which had already been occupied from February 14<sup>th</sup> 1963 to March 6<sup>th</sup> 1963, was occupied again from January 26<sup>th</sup> 1967 to March 21<sup>st</sup> 1967 and then again from March 4<sup>th</sup> 1968 to June 20<sup>th</sup> 1968) Dean De Carli assumed responsibility (with a certain amount of brava-do which he would later come to pay for personally) for launching the so-called *experimentation*, that is, workshop-style teaching, arranged around *research groups* and characterized by a spirit of collaboration

between teachers and students [20](#). From this standpoint, his was a teaching model which drew directly on Gropius' Bauhaus experience, whose principles of methodological clarity,

continuous experimentation, and the designer's sense of social responsibility, he believed were still current and consistent with the cultural climate of the 1960s. And so, taking advantage of a Circular from the Minister of Education Luigi Gui [21](#) which permitted *cautious* experimentation, the Faculty Council of March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1968

20. Occupazione della  
Facoltà di *Architettura*.  
[Document](#) →



21. Circolare del Ministro  
della Pubblica Istruzione  
Luigi Gui.  
[Document](#) →



22. Verbale del  
Consiglio della Facoltà  
di *Architettura* del  
Politecnico di Milano  
n. 186/A.  
[Document](#) →



23. C. De Carli, Programma  
del Corso di *Architettura  
degli Interni, Arredamento  
e Decorazione*.  
[Document](#) →



[22](#) rearranged the teaching and research structure and based it on working groups, proposed by the teachers and freely chosen by the students, which were then set up within the individual Institutes – Composition, Interior Architecture, Humanities, Urban Planning, and Construction Sciences – thus giving an institutional guise to a situation which already existed, establishing the work for the following academic year, and also offering a concrete contribution to the long-awaited university reform.

As regards the research groups linked to his own Institute (see the syllabus of the *Interior Architecture, Furniture and Decoration* course, A.Y. 1967-1968 [23](#)), De Carli published the best projects in *Interni*, and indeed by the April 1967 issue some

studies prepared by the students of the first *Interiors* course were being presented by Nino Salotti, proposing a new layout of the spaces for children within a dwelling cell. In the August 1967 issue, Gianni Ottolini illustrated under the title *Ricerca sull'Abitazione* [*Housing Research*]

[24](#) other projects which more generally concerned the internal layout of dwelling cells starting from the following principles: fluidity of spaces and paths, unity of furniture, fixed furnishings understood as proper spatial diaphragms. This research, based on a detailed analysis of the dwellings of the IACPM [Autonomous Institute of Public Housing in Milan], was later documented in more detail by Ottolini himself in *Spazio e arredo della casa popolare: un'indagine* (1981). Along the same lines of research were *Three Housing Studies* (March 1968) [25](#) and *Two Project Proposals* (June 1968) which organized the interior space as a unitary fact starting off from its *habitability and liveability*: these expanded the *day zone*, conceived the kitchen as a piece of equipment, rejected corridors and hallways, organized the space with wall-mounted wardrobes and/or movable walls, and created a wealth of routes and sightlines inside the house.

In the September 1968 issue, De Carli published under the title *Primary Space and Equipment* some design studies by students of the second *Interiors* course, which presented a further step forward by introducing the concept of *equipment* defined as a «physical object of high functional and structural complexity, a component of a system and capable of conditioning or generating space» [26](#).

A notion developed further in the projects published under the titles *Place Objects for the Dwelling Cell* (October 1968) and *Habitability and Technology* (November 1968), which used prefabrication systems to propose, in the one case, blocks in plastic laminate and fibreglass to provide certain amenities for daily living



24. G. Ottolini, *Ricerca sull'abitazione, in Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento*. [Document](#) →



25. P. Puddu, *Tre studi sull'abitazione, in Interni, la rivista dell'arredamento*. [Document](#) →



26. G. Lenti, *Lo spazio primario e l'attrezzatura*. [Document](#) →



27. *Oggetti luogo per la cellula di abitazione.*  
[Document](#) →



(kitchen, shower, toilet) [27](#) ↘ and in the other, box elements assembled by means of metal tie-rods that acted as furniture-containers, while at the same time subdividing the space of the house [28](#) ↘.

28. P. Puddu, *Abitabilità e tecnologia.*  
[Document](#) →



These projects, although immature on formal and spatial levels, were influenced by the climate of strong experimentation which characterized the 1960s and which De Carli documented in the pages of *Interni*; suffice to think of the research of Kenji Ekuan and Archigram, the human containers of Parisi and Somaini (December 1968) as well as the *total furniture* of Vitelli and Ammannati (July 1967) and the mon-oblocs of Joe Colombo (June 1971).

## 9.5 Furniture and *Production Centres* between Handicraft and Industry

On April 9<sup>th</sup> 1968, the rector Bruno Finzi, in a very heavy climate of strong opposition within the University, invalidated the Minutes of the Faculty of Architecture Council meeting, thereby cancelling the *experimentation* begun by De Carli and on the following August 9<sup>th</sup> the Ministry of

29. Revoca a Carlo De Carli delle funzioni di preside della Facoltà di Architettura.  
[Document](#) →



Education revoked his appointment as dean [29](#) ↘; De Carli expressed all of his bitterness in the May 1968 editorial of *Interni*:

«We have given strength to the assemblies of the Faculties of Architecture which I believe to be a fundamental tool for the restructuring of the Faculty» and then in that of the following month: «I gave everything to the Faculty: time, health, and honest suggestions». Despite this, projects for a freer and more flexible way of living, reflections, experiments with and by students continued to run through the pages of the journal, including all those projects in collaboration with local furniture companies (Cantù, Lissone, Mariano Comense) that laid the foundations for an effective synergy between teaching, research and production that is still the bedrock of the teaching at the School of Design. In the October 1971 editorial entitled *I Defend the Faculty of Architecture*

30. C. De Carli, *Difendo la Facoltà di architettura e i mobili insieme al farsi architettura.*  
[Document](#) →



*and Furniture Together with Becoming Architecture* [30](#) ↘

De Carli praised Cantù's experiments because they proposed a «relationship between furniture and living, believing that the extraordinary and expensive object in itself has run out of time», and those

of Mariano Comense in which «A group of young people tries to move the waters not to numb them; on the contrary, to wake up the sleeping helmsmen» and that of Lissone, in presenting the *Casa '70* initiative. Referring to prior experiments – the *Houses in the Park* (*V Triennale*, 1933) and the experimental QT8 district (1945-1954) – in the November 1969 editorial he was already asking: «But is it not possible to exemplify a "furnished house without rooms" in Lissone, where there is a tradition of working on home furnishings that has considerable precedents? [...] Is it really not possible to collaborate within a group of scholars, designers, builders, operators? Concretely?» [31](#). And then in the November 1970 issue of *Interni* he published five projects by students and researchers of the Faculty of Architecture that were exhibited at the 15<sup>th</sup> *Lissone Week*: integrated projects of furnishings and new building and urban typologies starting from the concept of the home as a social service, with particular attention to economic-social housing, the metropolitan context, and the theme of the urban fringe [32](#). The following year he made room for other projects which arose from a collaboration between the Faculty of Architecture and the local companies of Brianza, this time for the *Selettiva* exhibition in Cantù (November 1971), valorizing the artisan tradition, a heritage of popular culture that demanded to be nourished by experimentation and continuous research to meet the demands of society.

This commitment to the revival and renewal of artisan production had already begun in the fifties on the occasion of the first *Selettiva e Concorso Internazionale del Mobile di Cantù* [Selective International Furniture Competition in Cantù] (1956), the foundation of the journal *Il mobile Italiano* (1957-1960) and then with the editing of *Interni*, culminating in 1972 with the assignment that the CNR [National Research Council] gave him to conduct a survey on the difficulties of furniture production in the Brianza area (Lissone, Mariano Comense, Lurago d'Erba and Seregno). De Carli developed all of this in sync with his other research, approved previously, on the relationship between the units of architecture in primary space and the components of industrialized architecture; thus clearly indicating what the target direction should be. These positions were so important for De Carli that they led him to withdraw his resignation from the Chair of Interior Architecture that



31. C. De Carli, *Lissone e la casa senza stanze del Comune di Milano*. [Document](#) →



32. C. De Carli, *Lissone, Mariano Comense, Cantù: per la casa*. [Document](#) →

33. Lettera di Carlo De  
Carli al presidente del  
CNR.  
[Document](#)→



he had presented only the week before to the Ministry of Education in view of the fact that he was disappointed by the failure to reform university studies. In fact, he believed that «this research activity is already indicative of a position that reforms, constructs and illuminates the meaning of "research and experimentation" by clarifying the cause which made me resign from the School» [33](#)↘.

## 9.6 *Interni* and Industrial Furniture

During the years of De Carli's editorship, the journal began to alternate its focus on the artisan production of furniture, prominent especially in the early years, with one more closely linked to the themes of prefabrication, the use of new materials (plastics, from fibreglass to plexiglass) but also included the sociological problems of housing.

In the October 1967 issue, he had already given visibility to the exhibition organized by the Institute of Interiors on the theme of the *dwelling cell* which presented, in addition to student projects, also some furnishing elements produced by the companies most heavily committed to experimenting with the technical and expressive potential of new materials, such as Tecno, Sormani and Kartell. «The purpose of this small exhibition», wrote De Carli, «is to bring to the Faculty a concrete documentation of production through the most recent or less recent prototypes and still valid so that the "nature" of the object is clear; possible suggestions in the field of usage technique; the "measurements" of the relationship between object and environment can be verified» [34](#)↘.

34. C. De Carli,  
Esposizione alla  
Facoltà di Architettura.  
[Document](#)→



Updates on the most advanced research from the point of view of the mass production of furnishing elements and accessories took place on the pages of the journal, not only with the presentation of individual objects, interiors and spatial solutions, but above all through reports on the most important national and international exhibitions, fairs and reviews such as, for example, the *Habitat Expo* in Montreal, the *Salone del Mobile* in Milan, *Eurodomus 2* and *3*, the *International Furniture Fair* in Cologne, on the occasion of which De Carli (March 1968) pointed out that, «technological evolution stimulates the competitive capacity of companies and causes unprecedented applica-

tions of new materials. All this to urge production to constantly adapt to new ways of living coinciding with economic and social progress».

To promote this strategy, *Interni* collaborated with the Sormani company in an international competition for the design of new furnishing elements and for the research and application of new materials [35](#) ↓: the designers who won first prize presented a system of modular elements starting from polyurethane foam matrices,



35. C. De Carli, *Per un'abitazione nuova*.  
[Document](#) →

**a solution of surprising simplicity, devoid of any formal appearance [...] made up of parts so correctly composable that they can be used for the definition of spatial relationships that are useful and alive in favour of an interior to which, above all, they give freedom, that is, the ability to be composed in relation to the moments of life. (February 1969)**

Other reports concerned exhibitions that were even more advanced in anticipating future living, such as *Visiona 2* [36](#) ↓ – «a pleasant play of shapes, colours and lights that takes us to the border between utopian worlds of living and already achievable proposals» (May 1970) – and the *Housing and Tomorrow's Life* section at the *Cologne Furniture Fair IMM* [37](#) ↓ which published Rudolf Lubben's project: a futuristic proposal organized around a «centre for rest and meditation, automatically rotating and enclosed by a shelving. Coloured lights are mounted on the circular frame of the ceiling. Above the sleeping area, the transparent dome reveals the starry sky» (June 1970).



36. P. T, *Viaggio tra le fibre*.  
[Document](#) →



37. *Kosmosolarium*.  
[Document](#) →



38. C. De Carli, *Spazio Primario*, Hoepli, Milano 1982, copertina.  
[Document](#) →

The replacement of De Carli as the journal's editor, due to disagreements with the owners over his editorial line and also conditioned by the climate of strong conflict within Politecnico, abruptly put an end to this original synergy between teaching, research and journalism that was to make an essential contribution to the cultural and professional training of a new generation of designers.

In 1982, by publishing *Architettura. Spazio Primario* [38](#) ↓, De Carli retraced his human, professional and academic backstory, focusing with particular attention on the period of the 1960s and 1970s that was crucial for him. A year after publi-



cation, when he was already close to retirement (1985), the time was considered ripe for the launching of an experimental five-year course in *Industrial Design and Furniture* within the *Architecture Degree* program (1983-1988).

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