15. Design *Momentum*. Genesis and Development of a School

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15.1 *Of* Design. All the Forms of Design that Exist and All Those Yet to Come

The Faculty of Design was established at a moment when favourable cultural and institutional transformations converged, and in a context where certain leading figures at Politecnico di Milano were opening up unprecedented spaces for change. It was in this phase that Alberto Seassaro was able to weave the relationships needed to materialise the project for a new School which, like many others he developed over the course of his career, was an expression of his ability to seize opportunities rapidly as they arose, leveraging available resources and motivating action through visions that were at once bold and clear-sighted. The Faculty of Design thus began to take shape starting from the very name that Alberto Seassaro gave it, starting from that *del design* [of design], which in condensed form encapsulates its most distinctive identifying trait. Following the experience of the degree programme in *Industrial Design* in 1993, the spring of 2000 saw the establishment at

Politecnico di Milano, by Ministerial Decree and in line with the government measure for the *Decongestionamento degli Atenei* [decongestion of universities], of the *III Facoltà di Architettura* [Third Faculty of Architecture]. This name, still tethered to architecture, makes it possible to slip an essentially unprecedented project into the opportunity offered by the law, while at the same time accommodating a certain conservative caution within Politecnico di Milano itself, which tends to draw what is new back inside a familiar identity perimeter.

From this moment on, Alberto Seassaro set in motion a fine-grained and insistent rhetorical work, made up of epistolary exchanges and lengthy debates ↘, aiming from the outset, with stubborn precision, at that *of design* which many, including some of the closest and most sympathetic to the project, are far from convinced by. This resistance does not stem so much from the use of the English word *design* instead of *disegno industriale* [industrial design]. The latter expression was already culturally codified and already used at the university to indicate the new Faculty. Yet the potential of the term *design*, understood in the sense of *progetto* [design as project], compared with *disegno* [drawing], whose meanings are more limited, is widely recognised, as are the constraints that the qualifier *industriale* [industrial] could introduce into the understanding of the multifaceted nature of the discipline and of its domains of application.

The whole debate in fact hinges on that *del* [of], which

POLITECNICO DI MILANO FACOLTA' DI ARCHITETTURA
Corso di Laurea in Disegno Industriale

Milano, 22 maggio 2000

Al Rettore
Prof. Adriano De Maio

Al Preside della Facoltà di Architettura
LeonardoProf. Cesare Stevan

Al Senato Accademico

Agli uffici competenti

Oggetto: *denominazione della nuova Facoltà di Architettura dedicata alla tematica del Disegno Industriale*

Caro Adriano,

la presente per fare il punto sulla questione terminologica – questione apparentemente secondaria ma importante –, al fine di adottare un criterio di denominazione riconoscibile, certo, concordato e rispondente alle diverse esigenze di comunicazione, che sia utilizzabile in questa fase transitoria, in attesa di un definitivo, prossimo, consolidato assetto statutario basato sul principio delle Facoltà Tematiche.

Le denominazioni fino ad oggi utilizzate sono state varie e non univoche:

- Nel primissimo documento con cui era stata avanzata al Ministero la proposta di costituire una nuova Facoltà ai fini del decongestionamento degli Atenei, è scritto "Facoltà di Architettura – Design";

- Nella prima comunicazione pubblica ufficiale, all'inaugurazione a Como dell'Anno Accademico 1999/2000, il Rettore comunica: "Facoltà di Architettura – Disegno Industriale";

- Il decreto ministeriale istituisce la "III Facoltà di Architettura – Bovisa";

- La relazione del Preside della Facoltà di Architettura Leonardo, con cui si indice il bando di afferenza alla nuova Facoltà illustra in modo documentato la sua denominazione, approvata dal Senato Accademico e indica:

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Alberto Seassaro defends with such determination that in the end everyone, even those still unconvinced, is forced to give way. A minimal detail, and yet a significant semantic leap, produced by the shift from a simple preposition to an articulated one: a crucial nuance for expressing the identity of the School that Seassaro has in mind. The sceptics immediately read that definite article as a form of intellectual arrogance, a will to present the school as the custodian of *il design* [the design], the only design, and thus as the bearer of the only possible disciplinary vision of design. In short, not a school *of* design like the others, but simply *the* School of Design, par excellence.

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I remember the exhausting debates in which Seassaro, whom we called *Sea,* laboured to explain that *del* [of] design, drawing on all the dialectical skill at his disposal and making generous use of metaphors, a rhetorical device which, as a true exegete of Marcel Proust, he regarded as one of his most effective expressive tools. Here are some recollections of that linguistic dispute, which Sea eventually won, like so many others. That *del design* is closer to the Latin idea of *de* [de] (design): it designates a place where all knowledge about design is gathered, where the foundations of every present and future way of designing find, and will find, a definition. Or again, it is akin to the sense we give the articulated preposition when we name places such as, for example, *La casa del-la chiave* [literally, the house of the key], understood as the place where every possible key can be made because everything is known about keys, and everything about keys continues to be learned.

This is how the School of *all the designs* that exist and all those yet to come begins to take shape, ready to embody the intellectual anarchism that inspired Alberto Seassaro's vision.

15.2 Poli-*Téchne*. A Cognitive Infrastructure for Design

Alberto Seassaro's trajectory is closely bound up with Politecnico di Milano, with its history and its identity, and it is also for this reason that it does not develop within *Progettazione architettonica* [Architectural

Design] but rather in the context of *Tecnologia dell'architettura* [Architectural Technology].

Politecnico di Milano belongs to that group of universities established in Europe and North America in the second half of the nineteenth century. After the flowering of theological, philosophical and, more generally, humanistic disciplines in the first phase of academic development, beginning in the Middle Ages, the advent of the First Industrial Revolution gave a first impulse to the development of scientific studies. Universities were reorganised, with a sharper demarcation of the domains of knowledge and a particular emphasis assigned to these disciplinary areas. Their importance grew further with the onset of the Second Industrial Revolution, thanks to the increasing application of scientific discoveries in the technological and engineering fields (Cohen, 1994). It was precisely in this phase that all the main Western countries committed to the creation of universities with a strong scientific and technical orientation, with the aim of forging a more direct relationship between research, technological development and industrial development, closely interconnected with local production systems, which were often involved in their foundation and financing (Detti & Gozzini, 2009). This transformation underlies the creation of the principal polytechnic universities in Europe, such as Lausanne, Zurich, Munich, Delft and, indeed, Milan. But it also led to North American institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston and Stanford University in San Francisco (Baker, 2014).

This scientific and technological trajectory does not stop there; it gradually extends to other disciplinary domains, as happens in particular in the schools of architecture that emerge within these institutions, and as happens at Politecnico di Milano. Here the *Architectural Technology* component grows stronger over time and offers Alberto Seassaro an ideal ground on which to develop his vision of design. The *Laboratorio di Sperimentazione di sistemi e componenti per l'architettura* [Laboratory for the Experimentation of Systems and Components for Architecture], which he coordinated as a lecturer for many years, anticipates that vision, at once instrumental and experimental, of the scientific and technological dimension that would become a distinctive feature of the cultural project of the Faculty of Design. Chemistry, physics, mathematics, computer science and their mechanical and

engineering applications are all incorporated into the Faculty's educational project, but on the condition that they can be flexibly placed at the service of design. Virtually all the Engineering Departments are called on to collaborate, and all are pushed to develop new contents, new modes and new tools for teaching, not always managing, however, to break down the entrenched logics that often characterise scientific communities. In many cases, they respond with curiosity, by listening and by initiating interdisciplinary dialogues that still today nourish the educational project.

But the school's *cognitive* infrastructure needs much more: all those humanistic and artistic components that complete an idea of *sinestesia delle arti* [synesthesia of the arts], on which Alberto Seassaro had been working since his degree thesis. The academic community of *Architecture* proved unable to respond to these demands, folded in on itself around a debate that was overly abstract and ideological, too closely tied to visions far removed from the social, cultural and technological transformations then under way. The educational project therefore draws on other models and other contributions, in the conviction that the question of form must once again be placed at the centre of the education of designers and, in particular, design practitioners, and must be addressed in full in order to govern those *perceptual, symbolic, psychological, informational and communicative implications* that form carries with it (from Ugo La Pietra and Alberto Seassaro, *La ricerca morfologica* [Morphological research], 1966 – grey literature without page numbering. Alberto Seassaro Private Archive). In defining its features, a key point of reference is the teaching of industrial design in the Academies of Fine Art and the long preparatory work undertaken at Politecnico di Milano itself in the previous decade, on the initiative of Cesare Stevan, which drew on the contribution of Tomás Maldonado and on the experience he had gained as Director of the Ulm School (1957-1962). (Crespi, 1984). These insights flow into an articulated disciplinary framework that brings together *Aesthetics*, *Semiotics*, *Perception and colour*, *Ergonomics*, as well as more *exotic* teaching strands (for the polytechnic context of the time) such as *basic design*, alongside scientific and engineering contributions.

Together with technology and the arts, the cognitive infrastructure that must sustain the education of designers needs a final ingredient,

which takes shape as a synthesis between the experimental practice pursued by Seassaro in the artistic and architectural fields and the tradition of the *Werkstätten* [workshops], the Ulm-derived ateliers dedicated to exploring techniques and materials. In the highly intellectualised context of the Faculty of Architecture, which regarded this dimension with suspicion, reading it as an *Arts & Craft* approach (Cumming, 1991), Seassaro, through relentless persistence, progressively won square metres of space to be devoted to photography, woodworking and model-making techniques. The establishment of the Faculty of Design in 2000 and the project for the new Bovisa Campus offered an opportunity to fully articulate and structure this vision in the *Laboratori Sperimentali per il Design* [Experimental Laboratories for Design], inaugurated in 2002 on an area of over 6,000 square metres.

2. Panoramica degli esterni del campus Bovisa.
Document→

3. I laboratori strumentali del Campus Bovisa.
Document→

These laboratories were not, of course, created with the aim of training tailors, carpenters or model-makers capable of materially producing artefacts, but of building spaces in which future designers could develop, experiment with and *physically* test their knowledge of artefacts. The literature of the last two decades on *embodied cognition* now offers us a solid theoretical and methodological ground on which to validate this choice (Shapiro, 2011; Höök, 2018): cognitive processes pass through the body, and cognition arises from bodily interactions with the physical world 2↘ 3↘.
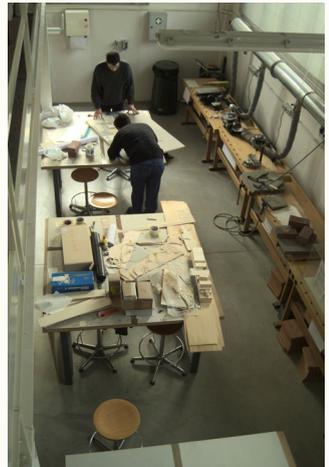
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We had agreed to relocate to the Bovisa district in 1998, into a rented building on those frayed edges of Milan that at the time were hard to recognise as belonging to the category of city.

The decision had been made on the promise that we would be the first to have a new premises. Over the following two years, Sea would remind this promise regularly and insistently both to us (to reassure us) and to the university leadership: *deported* and *hospitalised* (the reference was, of course, to the rather depressing aesthetics of the building) we had earned the new Campus. In August 2000, in the design and decision-making vacuum that August tends to produce in almost every workplace, we were there with him in Bovisa, working on the project for the *D.I. Lab*: the new system of Experimental Laboratories for Design.

15.3 Experiencing Knowledge. Laboratories for Making and Laboratories for Thinking

The learning model that organically structures the degree programmes is articulated into educational units of different kinds, which oversee the processes through which knowledge and skills are transmitted. The theoretical-critical dimensions are entrusted to single-subject courses, the interdisciplinary ones to integrated courses, and the instrumental and design dimensions to *Design studios*.

This latter teaching format (the design studios) borrowed from the tradition of the Faculty of Architecture, is undeniably the core of the new educational project and runs through it in its entirety.

The constructivist model (Piaget, 1970; Von Glasersfeld, 1995), which inspired its introduction in architectural studies, is translated into a range of studio types that feed the process of cognitive layering and *reconfiguration* accompanying students from the acquisition of specific skills functional to design, to the acquisition of the very ability to design.

The central idea of actively constructing knowledge takes shape in an educational structure which, on the one hand, leads to the accumulation of instrumental skills through dedicated studios, such as *Disegno e Comunicazione Visiva* [Drawing and Visual Communication]; and, on the other, complements these, already from the first year, with Design Studios of increasing complexity, culminating in the *Laboratorio di Sintesi Finale* [Final Synthesis Studio] in the final year.

Engaging students in design practice right from the outset, even when their knowledge and instrumental skills are still immature, is a central objective and rests on a number of specific theoretical foundations.

First and foremost is the conviction that *design knowledge*, by its very nature, cannot be entrusted to purely theoretical modes of transmission or to deductive learning. Design is learned through inductive processes, that is, through the repeated practice of designing and the self-reflection it generates (Schön, 1983, 1985). As many have argued, Nigel Cross first and foremost in his definition of *designerly ways of knowing* (1982, 2006), design implies specific modes of thinking that develop through the accumulation of cases, typical solutions and formal principles: in Piagetian terms, a progressive reorganisation of cognitive schemes. In design studios, students reread each new brief in the light of previous experiences (other projects, visual references, feedback received), thus exemplifying the constructivist idea of learning as the integration and restructuring of knowledge.

Yet for Alberto Seassaro, learning to design requires going beyond the inductive process and tapping into Peircean *abduction* (Duven, 2011). As the semiotician Massimo Bonfantini, who directly contributed to the educational project as a lecturer at Politecnico di Milano explains, abduction goes beyond and integrates both deduction, which builds knowledge through analysis, and induction, which generates knowledge through the exploration of concrete applied cases (Bonfantini, 1985). Designing is the «logical form of inventiveness», that is, of thinking that produces novelty, and is brought into relation with the three Peircean types of inference – deduction, induction and abduction – which Bonfantini associates with different cognitive operations: analysis, synthesis and abstraction. Abduction has a *destabilising nature*: it introduces hypotheses that call established schemata into question, opening up the possibility of new interpretations and new practices (Bonfantini, 2021). In essence, the teaching model is designed so that students learn to design in a way that creates the conditions for the new to emerge. Building on this vision, a completely original studio component was introduced, with no precedent either in the School of Architecture or in international schools: the *Laboratorio di Metaprogetto* [Metadesign Studio]. This studio is perhaps the most

tangible expression of the encounter between semiotics and design, and of the cultural debate that marked a certain phase in the development of the Faculty's educational project, a phase that involved not only internal lecturers at Politecnico, such as Bonfantini, but also external designers who developed a structured theoretical reflection on this theme, such as Andries Van Onck. The Metadesign Studio is conceived as a studio experience in which the object of design is the design process itself, especially in its early phases of research and hypothesis formation. The aim is to develop in students a capacity for *metacognition* with respect to the elaboration of their own design thinking, and thus the ability to *design the design process*, regulating and steering their cognitive processes towards that goal of *producing the new* which constitutes the School's cultural manifesto.

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Sea was firmly convinced that every idea, every choice, every occurrence had to be aired as widely and as repeatedly as possible, beyond the tight circle of colleagues and collaborators closest to him (fully aware that this generated in many a sense of impatience, at times outright irritation – which usually had the side-effect of stretching his disquisitions well beyond what was strictly necessary). Certain notions in particular were taken up and reiterated on every possible occasion, even with students, for whom he was always accessible. I remember many of these eccentric, surreal conversations with whichever student happened to be in front of him (and who had probably come with some fairly pragmatic grievance), leaving his office somewhat overwhelmed and confused, knowing they had not obtained what they had asked for, but far more aware of the importance of abduction in the education of designers.

15.4 *In fieri*. A School in Transformation

The cultural project of the Faculty of Design emerges as a clear expression of the multifaceted, non-elitist vision that Alberto Seassaro sought to embody. The School is meant to create space for all the expressive forms, and for the theoretical, linguistic and technical re-

search, that design is capable of generating within the rich and eclectic Italian landscape, while from the outset keeping an eye on the international context. The initial degree programme was first organised into *Indirizzi* [degree tracks] and later into autonomous degree programmes, adding to the core of *Progettazione del prodotto industriale* [Industrial Product Design] both *Design degli Interni* [Interior Design] and *Comunicazione visiva* [Visual Communication], to which *Moda* [Fashion Design] was soon added as well, overcoming a certain cultural snobbery still present in the worlds of architecture and design.

This educational structure is anything but monolithic; it is conceived as an open container, capable of making room for diversity and thematic exploration. Courses and studios can be freely characterised, engaging with emerging domains and bringing research and experimental work directly into the classroom. In other words, it welcomes, without ideological prejudice, the polyphony of voices that marks the many theoretical visions of design which have always shaped the Italian DNA, embodied within the teaching staff by figures often in strong dialectical tension with one another, such as Andrea Branzi, Francesco Trabucco and Ezio Manzini. Therefore, within the School, approaches coexist that range from the exploration of the poetic, expressive and reflective dimensions of design, to the solid core of industrial design, through to a drive towards *design activism* that pushes design beyond its most established boundaries.

Alberto Seassaro never sought to steer these tensions towards a single, unified vision; on the contrary, he capitalised on the growth of the School to make room for everyone, to experiment with emerging themes and, where promising, to develop new educational strands and new initiatives. *Legge 509/1999* [Law 509/1999], which introduced the two-tier structure of *Laurea* and *Laurea Magistrale* [Bachelor's and Master's degrees], was interpreted from the outset as an opportunity to flank the established tracks with new pathways that would explore the potential of design vertically, through new thematic foci, and horizontally, in its interdisciplinary relations. On one front, specialised programmes are created in key sectors for the Italian economy, as in the case of the opening of the Como campus at the heart of the textile-furnishing production districts; or in the case of the nautical sector (initially as a master's programme and later as a Master's degree),

for which an adventurous triangulation between Milan, La Spezia and Pescara is set up, in order to valorise specialist competences that integrate design, mechanical engineering and naval engineering.

The second degree level is, in fact, the ideal terrain on which to develop more fully the idea of multidisciplinarity underpinning the cultural project, by forging alliances with other Departments, Faculties and universities. This is the case, for example, of the degree programme in *Design & Engineering*, which involves the Departments of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Engineering, or of the track in *Design & Management of Fashion*, developed in collaboration with Università Bocconi. Within this trajectory, Seassaro gave space to the drive towards new applied and speculative territories, showing a marked ability to anticipate phenomena that are now firmly established at international level. In this way, a genuine school of thought took shape, one that no longer regarded design solely as the *executive* function of giving form to artefacts, but as a *cognitive process* capable of fostering innovation at a systemic level. Within this transformation, figures that are sometimes very different from one another find space, such as Francesco Mauri and Ezio Manzini, soon joined by researchers and PhD candidates including Giulio Ceppi, Elena Pacenti, Stefano Maffei, Anna Meroni, Francesco Zurlo, Roberto Verganti and many others thereafter.

The domains of design expand to encompass product-service systems, services, strategies, experiences, organisations and society: the vision becomes pervasive, it permeates courses and studios, translates into master's programmes and then flows into the first English-language Master's degree at Politecnico di Milano, in *Product-Service-System Design*, launched in 2005. It was a bold choice, the expression of a highly dynamic community open to innovation, singularly led by a Dean who was anything but familiar with the English language (which, incidentally, would only many years later, in 2014, be officially adopted for all Master's degree programmes at Politecnico di Milano).

The consolidation of the School also passes through what might be described as a strategy of *cultural occupation*, which Alberto Seassaro pursues on several fronts. First of all, numbers: he opposes by every means the position of those who see only advantages in creating a kind of *boutique school* of design, like many at international level, with low student numbers (a solution that the other Faculties of the uni-

versity are, moreover, quite willing to endorse in order to curb the expansionist drive of *Design*). The annual deadline for setting enrolment targets often turns, for Seassaro, into a battle over every single additional student, driving a process, accompanied by heated confrontations, that aims to create *the largest Design School in the world*. His underlying vision is rooted in a firm belief in the social role of education that a public institution such as Politecnico di Milano must be able to interpret.

It is also strategic, because the aim is to accelerate the legitimation of the initiative by bringing a *designer in ogni impresa* [a designer in every firm] and, not by chance, design programmes were the first within the entire university to introduce a compulsory internship; but also by bringing companies and professional designers into the School, insisting that the teaching staff should never be more than 50% academics, in the conviction that its embeddedness in the economy, in society and in culture must never be relinquished. The Faculty of Design, now the School of Design, still bears many traces of that trajectory, but it has also changed significantly, continuing to display an ability to interpret and capture the spirit of the times. A project that is constantly *in fieri*, a School born and developed by seizing a *moment* of opportunity, but also capable of acquiring *moment* in the sense that physics gives to this term: a School in continuous motion.

Figure 1.
Design, è sempre boom [Design, always booming]. In *Il Giornale dell'Architettura*, October 2006.

IL GIORNALE DELL' **ARCHITETTURA**

Data 10-2006 · Pagina 44 · Foglio 1

Design, è sempre boom

A pochi giorni dalla conclusione del test di ammissione ai corsi di laurea in Disegno industriale (classe 42), diversificati nelle modalità e tempistiche proposte dai diversi Atenei, è ormai tempo di immatricolazioni e bilanci. Confrontando i dati dell'anno scorso (cfr. «Il Giornale dell'Architettura» n. 33, ottobre 2005, p.11), emergono alcune questioni di natura prettamente quantitativa. Il settore del design rimane in forte espansione, dato confermato dal-

l'*appeal* dei corsi di laurea scelti dai giovani neodiplomati, che vedono un numero di preiscrizioni quasi tutti doppi rispetto ai posti disponibili. Analizzando nello specifico i dati, emerge un trend su tutti: la ormai consolidata concentrazione del fenomeno nel Nord del paese. Infatti Milano, nonostante un leggero calo nelle preiscrizioni rispetto al 2005, si riconferma aspetto al 2005, si riconferma anche quest'anno il maggior polo di attrazione. Seguono a ruota

Venezia, Torino e Bolzano, che si attestano su valori pressoché invariati. Una disomogeneità dimensionale tra Nord e Sud, accentuata ulteriormente dall'attivazione di un nuovo corso di laurea in Design industriale presso la Facoltà di Ingegneria di Brescia (95 domande per 60 posti), segno di una domanda ormai stabile concentrata prevalentemente presso i luoghi di produzione. Al Centro, Firenze fa registrare un netto

aumento (da 668 a 917 domande per 300 posti), mentre l'Università di Camerino si mantiene pressoché stabile.
Benché nell'arco degli ultimi anni anche gli atenei del Sud con i loro corsi di laurea siano diventati sempre più competitivi per l'offerta didattica, solo Palermo ha registrato 365 domande per 100 posti (erano 253 del 2005), mentre Bari e Napoli segnano una leggera flessione.
❑ Rita D'Attorre

I numeri dei test di ammissione ai corsi di laurea in Disegno industriale*

Città	Istituto	Facoltà	Corso	Posti	Pre-iscritti*
Bari	Politecnico di Bari	Architettura	Disegno industriale	50	227
Bolzano	Libera Un. di Bolzano	Design e arti	Design	68	128
Brescia	Un. degli Studi di Brescia	Ingegneria	Disegno industriale	60	95
Camerino	Un. degli Studi di Camerino	Architettura	Disegno industriale e ambientale	70	106
Firenze	Un. degli Studi di Firenze	Architettura	Disegno industriale	300	917
			Progettazione della moda	150	233
Genova	Un. degli Studi di Genova	Architettura	Disegno industriale	120	199
			Design navale e nautico	30	84
Milano	Politecnico di Milano	Design	Design	890	2.453
Napoli-Aversa	Seconda Un. degli Studi di Napoli	Architettura	Disegno industriale e Disegno industriale per la moda	200	356
Palermo	Un. degli Studi di Palermo	Architettura	Disegno industriale	100	365
Roma	Un. degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza	Architettura Ludovico Quaroni	Architettura degli interni e allestimento	300	909
			Architettura degli interni e allestimento (Pomezia)	100	246
			Disegno industriale	145	657
			Disegno industriale (Pomezia)	59	95
		Architettura Valle Giulia	Arredamento e architettura degli interni	150	1.147
			Grafica e progettazione multimediale	150	637
Torino	Politecnico di Torino	Architettura I	Disegno industriale	140	238
			Progetto grafico e virtuale	170	204
Venezia	Iuav di Venezia	Design e Arti	Disegno industriale	120	541
			Arti visive e dello spettacolo	120	170
	Un. degli Studi Rep. San Marino		Design industriale (San Marino)	120	98
	Iuav di Venezia		Design della moda	60	161

* Fonte: dati Miur e facoltà proponenti · *Test unico per i corsi di laurea*

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Politecnico di Milano

staff should never be more than 50% academics, in the conviction that its embeddedness in the economy, in society and in culture must never be relinquished. The Faculty of Design, now the School of Design, still bears many traces of that trajectory, but it has also changed significantly, continuing to display an ability to interpret and capture the spirit of the times. A project that is constantly *in fieri*, a School born and developed by seizing a *moment* of opportunity, but also capable of acquiring *moment* in the sense that physics gives to this term: a School in continuous motion.

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It is not easy to recall all the experiments undertaken, the thematic lines opened and then discontinued, all the projects and transformations carried out. And I believe that *Sea*'s most important legacy lies precisely in his intellectual curiosity, in his readiness to look at what is new without prejudice, accepting a certain familiarity with error and failure and always finding the tenacity to look ahead, to transform, to change.

I remember a remark of his, made in response to my delight at having wrapped up yet another project with an impossible deadline: «I'm glad you enjoy finishing things». Since then, I have nurtured the seed of doubt, which by now has become a certainty, about the real importance of outcomes and milestones; and I know that meaning, motivation and gratification lie not so much in the results themselves, but in the process of bringing them about, and even more in the project of conceiving them.

Alberto Seassaro believed in the salvific power of design, the only means we have to navigate that boundary between the unfathomable depth of knowledge and the most vital expressions of the world.

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