

## Visionaries, Creators and Activists

### TRANSFORMERS

## Choi Jeong-hwa, Didier Fiuza Faustino, Martino Gamper, Pedro Reyes

**In our time of global change, boundaries between disciplines are merged and redefined. Art and design are fused and turned into actions to produce social experiments.**

**MAXXI hosts an exhibition where visitors can observe and participate in the making of a new reality through sharing the experiences of those who transform**

November 11, 2015 – March 28, 2016

[www.fondazionemaxxi.it](http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it)

*Rome, November 2015.* Crossing a hanging forest to discover that it consists of 3,000 plastic colanders, sitting on a chair that thanks to glass and fabric has changed its original form, listening to the melody produced by an orchestra made of weapons, imagining oneself all alone in the middle of the sea, clinging to a gigantic boa.

These are a few of the projects by **Choi Jeong-hwa** (Seoul, 1961), **Didier Fiuza Faustino** (Chennevières-sur-Marne, France 1968), **Martino Gamper** (Merano, Italy 1971) and **Pedro Reyes** (Mexico City, 1972). Coming from four corners of the world, they are at once artists, designers and social activists hence, **Transformers**. Together with the participation of the public, they form a visionary and mind-opening exhibition curated by **Hou Hanru**, with **Anne Palopoli**, at MAXXI from **November 11, 2015 to March 28, 2016**.

Through the works of these four creators, reality is transformed into another reality, which sparks the imagination, stimulates reflection, encourages sharing, experience, and looking beyond

“The creators – says Hou Hanru, Artistic Director at MAXXI and curator of the exhibition – are extraordinary dreamers. Their creative actions are inspired by their strong commitment to society and the environment across different geopolitical contexts of today. They are capable of transforming the everyday into the fantastic, and vice versa; they transform the low into the high, the old into the new, the common into the extraordinary, the banal into the witty, the sad into the joyful, the vice into the virtue. They thus create new and more open realities, encouraging us to live the experience of being human beings to its fullest.”

#### THE EXHIBITION

The visitor is welcomed, in the museum forecourt, by the installation *Golden Lotus* by **Choi Jeong-hwa**, a gigantic plastic flower with golden petals measuring 10 meters across, which inflate and deflate to reproduce the idea of breathing. On display in the galleries inside the museum are three other spectacular works by the artist: *Hubble Bubble*, a hanging green forest which the public can enter, explore, get lost in; the installation *Life Life*, made from long colored balloons that is renewed each day as they gradually drop, deflate, and burst, and also thanks to the participation of the visitors, who can blow up some more and add them to the rest. “My art is your heart,” is the motto of this artist who works with everyday materials and objects and transforms them, discovering the hidden value under the surface of the objects, drawing inspiration from the harmony and chaos of the urban environment.

Continuing along the exhibition visitors will meet *Post-Forma*, a special collection of chairs transformed with fabric and blown glass inserts. This is the project of **Martino Gamper**, whose work arises on the border between art and design, a work that emphasizes the work-in-progress and social participation. The chair implies rest, sociability, dialogue, exchange. MAXXI's public may use Gamper's chairs to sit, thus activating such relationships.

Although they symbolize violence and aggressiveness, they can also become music and convey a message of peace. Thus **Pedro Reyes**, who trained as an architect and loves to explore spaces and defy conventions, transforms guns and rifles into a mechanical orchestra. The installation *Disarm* is made from the remains of weapons gathered and destroyed by the Mexican army. Also on view are *Disarm Instruments*: five sculptures also made with weapons, which reproduce musical instruments like the guitar, xylophone, Pan flute, and rainstick. To complete the work and further stimulate thought, Reyes will create a newspaper with data, numbers, and disconcerting information about the making and trafficking of arms.

*Lampedusa* is a site-specific installation by **Didier Fiuza Faustino**, artist and architect who explores the intimate and intensive relationship between the social conditions of the body and the production of space. This



MUSEO NAZIONALE  
DELLE ARTI DEL XXI SECOLO

work, which ends the exhibition, is a gigantic polyester boa to which to cling to in order to survive, located opposite a large reproduction of Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. Equally strong and disconcerting is the work *Body in Transit*, a box designed to be hung from the landing gear of an airplane, a small amount of space in which to transport clandestine immigrants, a "design" work that makes a statement, presented at the Venice Biennale and currently in the permanent collection of the Centre Pompidou. The very last work exhibited is *Exploring Dead Buildings 2.0*, an installation the artist set up in Havana, in the utopian building designed by Italian architect Vittorio Garatti in 1961-65 for a dance school that never opened. Thanks to Faustino's intervention, the dilapidated building was given new life.

**The press kit and images of the exhibition** can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

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**TRANSFORMERS.****Choi Jeong-hwa, Didier Fiuza Faustino, Martino Gamper, Pedro Reyes****ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Choi Jeong-Hwa** (Seoul, 1961) is an artist and designer whose work moves between the disciplines of visual art, graphic design, industrial design and architecture. Inspired by the harmony and chaos of the urban environment, Choi undermines the hierarchy of the museum by installing his pieces on the outside of buildings. His playful practice comments on the privileged environment of art institutions and questions the prized status of artworks amidst a consumer-frenzied world. Previously, Choi has created a 10-story installation made from 1,000 discarded doors, and decorated Seoul's Olympic Stadium with garlands made from 2 million pieces of trash—transforming the building's surface into a glittering jewel. In other pieces he explores ideas of artificiality and permanence through the use of plastic food and flowers. He declines to categorize his work, leaving the audience to define his pieces on a personal level. As his motto states: "Your heart is My art."

**Didier Fiuza Faustino** (Chennevières-sur-Marne, France 1968) Didier Faustino is an architect and artist working on the relationship between body and space. He started his own practice at the crossroad of art and architecture just after graduating in architecture in 1995. He has been developing since then a multi-faceted approach, ranging from installation to experimentation, from visual art to the creation of multi-sensorial spaces, mobile architecture and buildings. His first iconic work, *Body in transit*—a minimal space critiquing the transport of illegal immigrants—, was presented at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2000. It was the starting point of critical and code free projects questioning the political role of creation and our own position as a subject and a citizen. *Stairway to heaven*—a public space for individual use built in Castello Branco in 2001—, was another early project which marked his ability to make us reconsider the boundaries between private and public, between personal and communal. Faustino's work has been honoured by several prizes and shown in collective and solo exhibitions. He is frequently invited for lectures at major universities and institutions as well as international events. Didier Faustino is currently dedicating his time between architecture (Spain, Mexico city, Portugal), art (with exhibitions in Grenoble, London and Rome) and teaching (AA School, Diploma Unit 2). He is as well the new editor in chief of the French architecture and design magazine CREE.

**Martino Gamper** (Merano, Italy, 1971) lives and works in London. Starting as an apprentice with a furniture maker in Merano, Gamper went on to study sculpture under Michelangelo Pistoletto at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. He completed a Masters in 2000 from the Royal College of Art, London, where he studied under Ron Arad. Working across design and art venues, Martino Gamper engages in a variety of projects from exhibition design, interior design, one-off commissions and the design of mass-produced products for the cutting edge of the international furniture industry. Gamper has presented his works and projects internationally, selected exhibitions and commissions include: 'design is a state of mind', Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (2014); 'Period Room', Palais De Tokyo, Paris (2014); 'Bench Years', London Design Festival commission, V&A Museum, London (2012); Project for Café Charlottenborg, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2011); '100 chairs in 100 Days', 5 Cromwell Place, London (2007). ' Gamper was the recipient of the Moroso Award for Contemporary Art in 2011, and the Brit Insurance Designs of the Year, Furniture Award in 2008 for his project '100 Chairs in 100 days'.

**Pedro Reyes** (Mexico City, 1972) studied architecture but considers himself a sculptor, although his works integrate elements of theater, psychology and activism. His work takes on a great variety of forms, from penetrable sculptures (*Capulas*, 2002-08) to puppet productions (*Baby Marx*, 2008), (*The Permanent Revolution*, 2014). In 2008, Reyes initiated the ongoing *Palas por Pistolas* where 1,527 guns were collected in Mexico through a voluntary donation campaign to produce the same number of shovels to plant 1,527 trees. This led to *Disarm* (2012), where 6,700 destroyed weapons were transformed into a series of musical instruments. In 2011, Reyes initiated *Sanatorium*, a transient clinic that provides short unexpected treatments mixing art and psychology. Originally commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, *Sanatorium* has been in operation at Documenta 13, Kassel (2012); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2013); The Power Plant, Toronto (2014); the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) Miami (2014-2015). Reyes lives and works in Mexico City.



## A NEW WORK FOR THE MAXXI COLLECTION

### **LA CITTÀ PERFETTA BY OLIVO BARBIERI:**

**thousands of images in movement describing the Adriatic coast**

**This work, realised with the support of Eni, will be exhibited at MAXXI from 11 November 2015 to 3 January 2016 within the ambit of the exhibition *Olivo Barbieri. Immagini 1978 – 2014***

[www.fondazionemaxxi.it](http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it)

*Rome, November 2015.* A new work for the MAXXI collection. **LA CITTÀ' PERFETTA** by **Olivo Barbieri**: thousands of images in movement that describe from above 400 km of the Adriatic coast from Vasto to Ravenna, traversing the Abruzzo, Marche and Emilia Romagna regions.

This work, commissioned by MAXXI Architettura and created with the support of Eni, **will be on show at the museum from 11 November 2015 through to 3 January 2016**, within the ambit of the anthological exhibition *Olivo Barbieri. Immagini 1978-2014*, which through photographs, film and other materials presents the artistic career of the photographic maestro from the end of the 1970s to the present.

Olivo Barbieri says: "*LA CITTÀ' PERFETTA* is a stinging film of 7,942 stills shot from above inserted between primary colour frames: red in the summer; red, green and blue (white) in autumn - and 22 short movies from the ground, which tells the tale of a particular area, without applying to a documentary or descriptive approach".

Full of history, geography, economics, tourism, beauty and horror, the *Adriatic City* – considered to be *perfect* for its exemplary mid of quality of life and ecological waste – shows more clearly than elsewhere the complexities and contradictions of contemporary urbanism in which physical distances are not important and "beachside" roads and railways dominate, the advance of new industrial technologies conflict with the survival of the landscape, everyone wishes to live in a single family dwelling and it is impossible to understand whether the building we are looking at is an urban, rural or touristic home or perhaps a small productive nucleus. Or even all this together. In order to recount an area so specific yet recurrent throughout the world, MAXXI asked Olivo Barbieri to climb aboard a helicopter once again and filter through his vision the images of beaches and monuments, motorways and industrial plants, the examples of excellence and the gaping wounds that characterise locations ranging from the crowded beaches of Rimini to Urbino's Palazzo Ducale, from Vanvitelli's Lazzaretto to the river valleys invaded by houses, villas, factories and warehouses, often designed by well-known names.

The Adriatic and the Mediterranean in general, through the contradictory flows of clandestine emigration – illegal and tragic – and the entertainment industry – extremely well-organized – is perceived as hyper-productive and at times aggressive. When reality is perceived as aggressive, then the images become so too. *La città perfetta* is a device that produces visual stimuli, memories of the places enter the imagination through the offended eye. It creates unexpected trajectories and temporally and spatially redefines that which we had believed to be consolidated.

*La Città Perfetta*, curated by Pippo Ciorra (Senior Curator, MAXXI Architettura) with Francesca Fabiani and Cristiana Colli, is part of the *site specific* series, one of the best-known projects by Olivo Barbieri, launched in 2003 and devoted to an investigation of the form of the city, to which a section of the exhibition at MAXXI is dedicated. The artist has flown in a helicopter over 40 cities throughout the world, from Rome to Shanghai, from Las Vegas to Seville, from Turin to Montreal, from Beijing to Los Angeles, from Amman to New York and from Brasilia to Tel Aviv. Observed from above, they appear to be scale models, reiterating the ambiguity existing between reality, its representation and the way in which we perceive it.

The work has been created with the support of Eni and thanks to the collaboration of the State Forestry Corps and the Associazione Demanio Marittimo KM - 278.

Special thanks to the Regional Division of the State Forestry Corps of the Marche region and the State Forestry Corps' Aircraft Operations Centre.

**The press kit and images of the exhibition** can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

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**TRANSFORMERS.****Choi Jeong-hwa, Didier Fiuza Faustino, Martino Gamper, Pedro Reyes**Giovanna Melandri, *President Fondazione MAXXI*

A large lotus flower that “breathes,” an orchestra made up of old and abandoned weapons, chairs created from handmade fabrics, and an enormous boa that evokes the drama of immigration: in this exhibition called *Transformers*, curated by Hou Hanru and Anne Palopoli, MAXXI designs a visionary world in which there is no single reality. This is a world where everything is possible. Poised between art and design, the works by Choi Jeong Hwa, Martino Gamper, Pedro Reyes, and Didier Fiuza Faustino, who come from four different and distant countries, encourage visitors to take an active part in the exhibition, to experience the spaces in the museum in a new and unconventional way. The artists chosen design a fluid world, one that is constantly undergoing transformation, in which play thrives with political commitment, chaos with harmony, and reality with imagination. An example of this is *Disarm* (2012,) Pedro Reyes’s mechanical orchestra which uses weapons abandoned by the Mexican army to ponder the theme of violence and smuggling, but also *Body in Transit* (2000,) a cargo container used to transport illegal immigrants, ironically conceived by Didier Fiuza Faustino as a “designer” object. This disenchanted gaze before the outside reality is what characterizes the works on display here, bringing to life combinations that are moving as well as astonishing. By intervening the public plays a leading role in the exhibition, creating works of art that converse with MAXXI’s futuristic spaces. Martino Gamper’s chairs are available to visitors, and Choi Jeong Hwa’s installations can be crossed and modified.

In this fluid universe, inhabited by orchestras of armies and forests of plastic brimming with recycled objects found in landfills, everything is possible, as the banal becomes extraordinary and, as Choi Jeong Hwa himself says: “My art begins when the unusual images open your mind.” The stimulating interdisciplinary nature of *Transformers* fully reflects our museum’s mission, which in recent years has begun to resemble more and more a campus of culture, a workshop alongside exhibitions, events, concerts, debates, and meetings, for an ever-growing public that speaks the common language of the contemporary age. An essential instrument for an understanding of the exhibition is the catalogue, which can be used as a reference text, but also as a designer object, to be owned and collected. The book jackets can be “transformed” into four different posters, each of which conceived by one of the artists, four worlds that intersect and enrich each other. In addition to the words of the artists and the curators’ and critics’ essays, we have also chosen to offer readers of the catalogue an unpublished story, a mystery called *The Daily Enchantments* which Hans Tuzzi has written specially for this occasion.

The visionary universe of *Transformers* thus relives in the catalogue, itself a publishing project that is unique in its kind, celebrating the exhilarating creativity of the four artists whose works are showcased here.



**TRANSFORMERS.****Choi Jeong-hwa, Didier Fiuza Faustino, Martino Gamper, Pedro Reyes**Hou Hanru, *Artistic Director MAXXI*

1

In our time, many things are changing and even mutating. Not only our perception of the world moving from “analogue reality” towards “virtual reality.” The real world in which we are living is now quickly transforming into a new reality mixed with the analogue and the virtual. Expansions of the Internet and social media are blurring and redrawing the boundaries between us, between different subjectivities and transforming them into “inter-subjectivities.” New technologies of biological engineering and artificial intelligence are transforming the way that we define ourselves as human beings, the very substance of our life. These transformations are profound. They are also potentially alienating the original definition and forms of life.

Transformation is the keyword of our existence today. How we live and do things is transforming the reality of the world. And everyone is potentially and really a transformer.

For many, it's impossible not to be fascinated and influenced by the popular images of science fiction, the popular form of “futuresology,” or the ideology of transformation, especially its incarnations in novels, movies, popular consumer goods, and even toys. The notion of “Transformer” is often associated with the Japanese Robotic toys “Transformers (Toransufōmā)” and their movie and comic book variations. They are not only toys able to be transformed from humanoid to cars and weapons. More importantly, they are seen by many as representations of our own possible metamorphoses. They are fascinatingly designed and animated. They are profoundly imprinted in the memories and imaginations of almost everyone's brain. This “design” does not only represent a technological innovation that puts forward the power of the robotic. It also suggests a fundamental mutation of identity, questioning and defying the definition of humanity and life in the age in which our imaginations are dominated by the obsession with technological progress.

Here, man is merged with what he creates in the form of a mechanical extension of the body, and even an invention of the mind – artificial intelligence. It's an unseen way to redefine humanity. It leads towards an unknown future. This is a significant metaphor of an identity transformation that leads to the ultimate breaking-down of all boundaries between humans and the world. It points to a new world in which creatures imagined, designed and created by humans will replace “natural” lives.

With massive production and wide distribution of the images of the Transformers, and numerous other variations of humanoid-machines, which, today, have become much more sophisticated and intimately related to our bodies and minds, this future is already somewhat present in the current reality. They are invading our everyday life and state of mind by inciting us to play with them. They are haunting our desires and dreams. They are redefining generations of young people's fantasies and visions of the world.

This is also a paradoxical and even schizophrenic time: because of the prevalence of these types of transformations, all disciplines are being extremely professionalized and refined. In the context of today's trans-national capitalism, they are quickly turned into profit-making tools and, at the same time, objects of consumption. Along with it, the society is unprecedentedly divided into a rich and powerful minority and a poor and powerless majority. Moreover, because of these innovations are reaching their limits. Democracy is facing major threats. We are facing a new form of alienation of humanity. A revolution, in terms of technology and concept, of material and philosophy, hence, of economics and politics, is needed. Obviously, design and artistic representations have been playing a crucial role in the making of this transformation. Designers and artists are transformers. A revolution in the fields is even more necessary and urgent. Revolutionary attempts – resistance acts, critical of the new alienation – are now being carried out everywhere in the world. Creative communities – artists, designers, architects, scientists, researchers and thinkers of different social backgrounds – are being mobilized to suggest ideas to implement this common awareness. A new ecology of creative practices are now being developed and experimented with to transform the new technologies into tools to improve our conditions of existence and social union rather than division and competition for material interests and power. A great number of experiments, especially those from the bottom of society, reinvent professions. They, along with the efficient utilization of new technologies, also encourage reviving practices excluded by the excessive technological exploration and commercialization. They tend to embrace strategies of Do-it-Yourself (DIY) and community participation while progressive positions are adopted to face the new reality of globalization and all kinds of social urgencies. By reintroducing the dimension of humanity and social good, these experiments end up enriching the contents and meanings of transformation in both art and

design. In other words, art and design, and all creative practices, should look for a new transformation of themselves.

Now, the role of the transformer – designers, artists and other creators – can be seen as the one of creating new forms of the synergy of creativity, thus causing the world to go beyond the material transformation to a new unification. Art can no longer be separated from design, and vice-versa. We are reinventing a new total creative work. It leads to new solutions to solve the schizophrenia of our time: bringing us back to a more humane, but firmly contemporary, realm: the social and the collective, the participatory, the democratic.

## 2

Claims of breaking the borders between art and design in order to reconnect artistic practices and social life have had a long history. They have formed a driving force in historical avant-garde movements such as Russian Constructivism, the Bauhaus, Pop Art and Conceptualism. They have led to the transgression of the division of the high and the low, the useful and the useless. They have always resulted in subversions of the hierarchy of aesthetic and social values. Eventually, they have opened up new horizons of emancipations of human creativity and the transformation of creative practices themselves. Today, new concerns, conditions and languages have been introduced to expand these transformative efforts. Ecological sustainability and social participation are now becoming central themes in many conversations and experiments. They exert immense influences on the making of cultural, economic and political agendas. What is extraordinarily novel is that expansion and proliferation of creative practices have also become a global tendency reaching every corner of the world. Experimental creation is no longer limited along the lineage of Western modernity. It's now being performed and reinvented everywhere. There is a major shift of creative energy and power towards the "emerging," non-Western world. Asia, Latin America and Africa are the most intense and innovative playgrounds of artistic experiments. It is absolutely vital to witness and present how people from different geo-cultural conditions negotiate with and reinvent "modernity." This "modernity" must be registered in a plural form – "modernities." It signifies the necessity of innovation with influences of diverse cultural traditions and realities. It's also time to look "back" to the "vernacular," the "folk wisdom," or the people's intelligence. It's not about the past, but the contemporary. They exist, often as a kind of "silent majority," besides the established system of design and art making derived from the "official modernist" tradition. They allow us to open our horizons to embrace cultural diversity, and truly inventive modes of living. Cultural diversity and "folk wisdom" – people's intelligence – are particularly important for creative practices in the "non-western" world in the process of becoming global. To be global does not mean simply integrating into the Western-centric "world system." Instead it manifests ambitions and actions to form a new "world system" with its own cultural values and creative ideas.

The Asia-Pacific region is doubtlessly the most dynamic zone of creative activities today. The Korean Choi Jeong Hwa, who refuses to be labeled an artist or designer, has built a creative career by producing works that transgress boundaries between art and design, between installation and architecture. He systematically embraces the aesthetics of the everyday life, especially the taste of "lower people," who make their living in places like the street markets. He collects thousands of cheap plastic housewares such as buckets, baskets, flowers and stools, etc. and turns them into excessively "kitsch" but magically "extravagant" sculptural and architectural installations to form new spaces, both indoor and outdoor. They are fantastically abundant and lavish, provocative and humorous. At the same time, they are also efficiently functional. Often, they are both furniture and architectural decorations displayed the way they would be in street markets and one-dollar shops. They are also "public art," in the forms of large, solid or inflatable flowers, etc., aiming to "please those who never go to art museums." Inspired by the counterfeit of "luxurious goods" widely produced and consumed by the majority of Korean and Asian people, he uses materials with fake luxury brands to make and sell his "designer furniture." Indeed, the fact that counterfeit products are so popular, not only in the non-Western world but also within the West – everyday, hundreds of African street vendors are selling fake luxury brand bags on the streets of Rome, Venice and Milan, for example – should be understood as expressions of the desire of the majority of the population longing for better life and, along with that, their intelligence and creativity to create their own "better world." Inevitably, with great freedom, this mounts a resistance to the domination of the economically privileged and the legal systems in favor of the powerful ones. One can also see in this kind of resistance action an amazing aesthetic subversion that defies the order of things, the "official" notion of authenticity and beauty. Choi Jeong Hwa probably understands this better than anyone else. He manages to use the same strategy to create his own "Arte Povera" and invades and transforms art museums and urban spaces into sites of manifestation of "people's values," laying bare all the contradictions of our judgements of the beautiful and the good.

Across the Pacific, one finds a counterpart, or, better still, a comrade, of Choi. He is Pedro Reyes, a Mexican who also wishes not to be labeled as an artist or a designer or an architect, but as a creator instead. In many ways, Mexicans and Koreans have comparable experiences in their negotiations with the project of modernity – to produce their own modernization projects in economy, culture and politics wrestling with the uncertainty of a post-colonial society actively seeking its place in the global system of innovation. Similar to Choi's interests in the popular culture and street life, Pedro Reyes started his artist-designer-architect practice by absorbing the popular innovations, including sources from the favelas and indigenous communities. He has not only been inspired by the magical transformations of everyday objects by the people into ingenious devices and product. He has also been learning from them about producing the public utility of things and public spaces via collective participation and collaboration. He has found intellectual strength from researching into historic references of Latin American experimental movements to bring the “vernacular” and the modern together, such as John van Lengen's *Barefoot Architect*, and, especially, Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. He puts forward the social and political significances of this kind of bottom-up and communal actions and transforms them into experimental projects of social improvement. Enduring social and political engagement has been developed as the main content of his creative projects. He organizes *pUN (People's United Nations)* (2013) to encourage the non-governmental representatives of different nations to express their opinions and solutions about the geopolitical conflicts of our time. In the meantime, he creates puppet theater work to critique the contemporary political-economic conditions through vivid and satiric examination of Marxism. More often than not, his projects are realized as somehow “futuristic” designs – furniture, objects, vehicles and architecture. The publics are invited to use them as interactive devices. They are encouraged to participate in inventing new functions and producing new conversations. The most significant examples are his projects confronting the most urgent problem of the drug war in Mexico and its consequences on politics and people's lives. In *Palas por Pistolas* (2007 - present), he asked a municipal government to collect guns from all parts of society and transform them into shovels for planting trees. In *Disarm* (2012), he has transformed hundreds of destroyed guns into a large and attractive installation that functions as a huge musical automat. Another part of the destroyed arms was turned into musical instruments. Musicians are invited to perform music with them to celebrate peace and insights of life. In Europe, the culture of DIY and communal collaboration is now becoming more and more “à la mode.” There is an excess of industrialization, technocentrism and commercialization in today's design world. Resistance to this excess and search for alternative/ corrective solutions, often with a strong consideration of ecological and environmental sustainability, are now being largely evoked and practiced by professionals. DIY and communal collaboration as a social and cultural movement, along with ecological engagements, are brought to the front of design and art experiments. This leads to a more open and innovative understanding of creative practices and their social functions. Martino Gamper, an Italian London-based designer who has been working very closely with artists and other creators, has developed a ground-breaking system of making and circulating design products. On the one hand, he emphasizes that design is an open process generated and reinvented through making, driven by a particular kind of “state of mind,” the result of revisiting a design history formed with individual interpretations and reactions. **1** On the other, he focuses his practices on the principle of recycling and reinventing found objects. The most remarkable example is his *100 Days, 100 Chairs* (2005 - 2007) project in which, everyday, he transformed one old chair collected from his surrounding environments, namely the streets or friends' homes, etc., into a new design, over a 100-day period. It's important to see that his practice has a strong connection with Enzo Mari, the Italian master of DIY design, who, for the last threefour decades, has promoted “Autoprogettazione (DIY design)” as a revolutionary solution to provide better living conditions for society beyond the conventional, namely capitalist, production and market system. Enzo Mari once stated: “All people have the capacity to design. And all are born equal.” **2** This suggests that anyone has the right to design something to improve one's condition of living. It also suggests that design, being a DIY process, can also be seen as an experience of self-empowerment and the realization of one's own creativity, through which one can create one's own values of life and one's own ways of using things and inhabiting the world. It's through this process of inventing individual and singular ways of dwelling the world that we, collectively but with diverse approaches, can make the world a more democratic place. Gamper's design practices focus on sustainability and DIY approaches. He also engages with collective actions of trans-disciplinary creations: with his wife and artist Francis Upritchard and the jewelry maker Karl Fritsch, he formed the group “Gesamtkunsthandwerk” in New Zealand. And with other designer and chef friends he has created a series of collective restaurant projects to to “trigger unusual moments of interaction and dialogue.” **3** Currently he is working on another project for the MAXXI to extend his DIY interventions in found designer chairs. He will transform eighteen chairs into new works blended with hand-woven fabrics made in London and glass fused in Bolzano. They will eventually be installed as a kind of

living-reading room in the center of one of the most spectacular galleries. The public is welcome to sit on them and rest. It is an invitation for social participation while the “works,” or the objects themselves are turned into a kind of “total installation” that “softly” defies the distinction between design and art...as well as real life. Engaging with social reality is certainly a key element in the agendas of creative people now; and this is true more and more. Some of them even choose to confront directly with the most urgent challenges in society. Didier Fiuza Faustino, a Paris-based architect and artist, has always related his practices, at once highly conceptual and intensely physical, to the question of the production of social space through design process. With a vision and tactics inspired and stimulated by “anarchist” initiatives like Hakim Bey’s idea of “Temporary Autonomous Zone (T.A.Z.)” and Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, his work explores the function of individual bodies as a fundamental force to generate space of freedom against the imposed constraints of all dominating powers. They are embodiments of independent forms of living, thinking and acting. These projects, often combining architectural rigors and artistic imagination, emphasize the potentials of transformation, negotiating for new typologies of spatial structures hovering between the private and the public, between static and mobile, between permanent and ephemeral, between political and poetic. Today, more than ever, the question of immigration becomes a major concern haunting our life and our perception of the changing world. The current crisis in the Mediterranean region, especially in the area of Lampedusa, along with other borderline areas flooded by refugees escaping from the warzones in the Middle East, etc., have been another wake-up call for all, especially for artists and intellectuals. Early in 2000, Faustino already produced *Body in Transit* – a box for human trafficking under an airplane, referring to true stories of African clandestine immigrants entering Europe hiding under the landing gears of aeroplanes – to launch discussions on the mission and ethical position of designers facing social urgency. His new project *Lampedusa* (2015), referring to the historically notorious tragedy dramatically depicted in Théodore Géricault’s painting *Le Radeau de la Méduse* (1818 - 1819), is a new design for a lifebuoy derived from the makeshift floating objects used by refugees across the seas. It sounds an even more desperate alarm for all the creative people facing this crude world.

This urgency is a global one. It demonstrates the profound contradictions of the world in permanent transformation driven by the conflicts between utopian ideals of progress and the reality of power struggle, in the realms of politics, economy, technology, culture and even everyday life, namely, all of human society. All revolutions are inevitably contradictory. It is absolutely necessary for us to revisit and rethink critically. Didier Fiuza Faustino’s project *Exploring Dead Buildings 2.0* (2015) shows an ongoing commitment to this reexamination. After exploring the failed utopian building of the Ministry of Highways in Tbilisi, Georgia a few years ago with a performance intervention, Faustino continues his inquiry of Utopia and its failure in another similar location – even if it is situated in another continent. This time he intervened in the famous School of Ballet, designed by Vittorio Garatti, as a part of the National Art School of Havana, a notoriously abandoned symbol of the Cuban revolution. He invited young Cubans to carry cage-like head rigs with cameras to wander through and film the “dead utopia,” condemned by both the American Embargo and the Cuban totalitarianism. Here, he does not intend to recall any nostalgia for the revolutionary impulse and the utopian plans for artistic innovation. Instead, he raises questions at a more profound level: what are the relations between the body and spatial production, between the singularity of the individual and the multitude of collective actions, between the creative minds and political-economic powers? What kind of reality has been and will be generated by their interactions? Is transformation, or, even revolution, still possible? Today, the relationship between Cuba and the USA is going through a “thaw,” or even “normalization.” Does this mean another “revolution” – a “capitalist” one this time – is coming? Are the people’s skills, which were used to design rafts for refugees trying to sail to Miami, soon to be called up to contribute to the building of skyscrapers in Havana for transnational corporations?

### 3

Ideas of transformation have been a core of a particular lineage of human knowledge. In the fields of literature and arts, “metamorphosis” has always been resorted to to create narratives of human imaginations about their own destiny, parallel to “scientific” histories. From Ovid to Kafka to contemporary Science-Fictions, along with the Chinese *Shan Hai Jin* (Classic of Mountains and Seas) and *I-Ching* (the Book of Changes), etc., “metamorphosis” has provided a globally embraced way to inscribe alternative histories with imagination and fantasia. By allowing us to transform our existences and identities between different universes and species, they represent possibilities to escape from the limitation of “reality” – the control of the power system. They are all driven by desire for freedom and creativity. Design, in the broadest sense of the word, is always resorted to to embody these pleas. Creativity is the fuel that drives the machine of transformation.

So who are and how can they be the real creators or transformers of our day and age? As Richard Florida once said, we are in the time of the rise of the creative class. And that comes with a price: social inequality and divisions that provoke chaos, protests and even turmoil. <sup>4</sup> The new challenge in this transformational moment of history is how to mobilize everyone's creativity in a democratic manner to solve the problems. We need to redefine the notion of a creative person. Here, it is not useless to recall the quasi-utopian manifestos of the generation of Enzo Mari and Joseph Beuys claiming that everyone can be a designer or an artist, namely, a creator. What they really mean is that we are all creators of our own destinies. We find ourselves in a historical period of the fundamental transformation of the economic and cultural production model towards a creativity-led one. Paradoxically, the more creativity is taking over, the more social division is increased. The prevalence of the Internet and social media also generates a new dilemma: the world is now more and more divided into the haves and have-nots in terms of access to technologies and the new environments that they have produced. Democracy is under threat. It's urgent for us to rethink the questions of equality and sharing, and to reimagine a democracy based on both creative dynamics and solidarity. The forces of bottom-up, grass-roots creativity, driven by the massive and active participation of the multitude of people, beyond the boundaries and hierarchies of the professions of arts and design, can be a major power to help solve the problems of our time, hence to contribute significantly to the transformation of a dysfunctioning social system towards a better one.

San Francisco, August 16, 2015

<sup>1</sup> *Design is a State of Mind*: "There is no perfect design and there is no ultra design. The objects speak to us in a personal way. Some should be more functional than others, and the emotional impact they have on us is very individual. The exhibition highlights a very personal way to collect and collect objects, with pieces that tell a story." Martino Gamper, exhibit website

<sup>2</sup> Enzo Mari: *25 modi per piantare un chiodo*, Mondadori, Milan, 2011, p. 7

<sup>3</sup> Martino Gamper's website: *Trattoria Circolare*

<sup>4</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books, New York, 2002





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## ENEL IS THE FIRST PRIVATE FOUNDING MEMBER OF ITALY'S MAXXI CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

Enel is a multinational power company and a leading integrated player in the world's power and gas markets, with a particular focus on Europe and Latin America. Enel Group operates in over 30 countries across four continents, producing energy through a net installed capacity of nearly 89 GW and distributes electricity and gas through a network of approximately 1.9 million kilometres. With 61 million users worldwide, Enel has the largest customer base among European competitors and figures among Europe's leading power companies in terms of installed capacity.

Culture, value and accountability are the guiding principles that have prompted Enel to forge partnerships with leading national and international institutions in order to implement innovative projects that give the public a vision of energy that is orientated towards the future. More specifically, Enel is committed to promoting art and music, putting its emphasis on young artists: in 2003 the Group became both a founding member of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and of the Teatro alla Scala.

It is in this context that **Enel has joined up with the Fondazione MAXXI, becoming the museum's first private founding member.** Enel's participation in the Fondazione MAXXI will see the company offer it a membership contribution over the next three years, while the business will also partner the foundation in an ambitious energy efficiency plan for the museum that will highlight sustainability and energy savings.

Enel's focus has always been on developing the best solutions for the economic and social development of the countries in which it operates, the enterprises that produce their wealth and the people, who represent their driving force. The company does this acting with respect for the environment and the communities that host its operations.



## ARCUS: INTERVENING IN SUPPORT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In the month of February 2004, the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities was responsible for the constitution of Arcus SpA, a limited company devoted to supporting art, culture and the performing arts, in accordance with Law No. 291 of 16 October 2003. 291. The company capital is wholly underwritten by the Ministry of the Economy, while the company's day-to-day activities are based on the programmes established by annual decrees adopted by the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities – who also exercises the shareholder rights – together with the Minister for Infrastructures. Arcus may also develop independent projects.

**Arcus's** declared aim is that of providing innovative support for significant and ambitious projects within the world of cultural heritage and activities and its possible interrelations with the country's strategic infrastructures.

**Within the ambit of Arcus's mission**, supporting projects entails identifying important initiatives, contributing to the completion of planning, intervening in organizational and technical aspects, participating – where appropriate or necessary – in the financing of the project, monitoring its development and contributing to its successful outcome

**It is important** that Arcus's modus operandi is clearly understood, as explained above: the company intervenes to provide organizational and financial support for significant projects, but in no way is it comparable to an agency for the distribution of funding, nor may it be numbered among the "scattershot" distributors of public or private funds.

**Arcus** is, therefore, an original instrument for the support and launching of significant and innovative projects within the panorama of Italian culture. Economic support, where provided, must be seen as wholly instrumental within the ambit of a cultural project that is conceptually valid and operationally shared.

In more detail, Arcus provides assistance for initiatives relating, for example:

- to the establishment of projects for the restoration, redevelopment and improved fruition of the cultural heritage;
- to the preservation of the landscape and cultural heritage through actions and interventions also designed to mitigate the impact of existing or forthcoming infrastructures;
- to support the programming, monitoring and evaluation of interventions in the cultural heritage sector;
- to promote planning within the cultural heritage and activities sector and that of the performing arts;
- to identify and support projects valorizing and protecting cultural heritage through interventions with significant technological contents;
- to support projects relating to cultural tourism in the broadest sense of the term;
- to promote the birth and constitution of cultural catchment areas in relation to emblematic examples of cultural heritage within the ambit of an integrated and systemic vision capable of linking local cultural heritage, infrastructure, tourism, allied industries and transport;
- to intervene in the broad-based sector comprising initiatives designed to render the cultural heritage fully accessible to the differently able.

**To achieve its aims** Arcus draws on resources detailed in article 60 of Law 289 of 27 December 2002 (Financial Law 2003). The legislation provides for 3% of the funding for infrastructures being devoted to expenses relating to interventions safeguarding and in favour of cultural heritage and activities. Arcus is identified as the recipient structure for these funds. Furthermore, in accordance with article 3 of Law No. 43 of 31 March 2005, the above-mentioned percentage is increased annually by a further 2%. Moreover, the company may receive finances provided by the European Union, the state and other public and private bodies.

**Arcus** also works to bring potential stakeholders into contact with the various projects. When necessary, therefore, the company contacts foundations with banking origins or otherwise, local authorities, exponents of local bodies and civic society, the universities and private individuals in order to aggregate around the initiatives increasing resources and coordinated financing.

**Arcus's ambitious project** is therefore that of becoming the "glue" that renders operative the systemic capacity for the promotion and planned support of initiatives designed to enhance the cultural heritage and activities, with a view to ever better conservation, fruition and valorization. By taking appropriate measures, Arcus favours the necessary convergence of the various stakeholders, thus contributing to the success of the various cultural projects identified.





## Alcantara and MAXXI: Artistic Excellence and Creativity

A timeless material, unique of its kind and with vast expressive potential, Alcantara partners with art and architecture to open itself up to new interpretive languages.

After the success of the three exhibitions *Can you imagine?*, *Shape your life!* and *Playful interaction* (fully described in a dedicated catalogue) the partnership between the Italian company that has been producing the homonymous trademark material for nearly forty years and the national Museum of 21st century arts goes on.

During the three years of its existence, the Alcantara-MAXXI project has seen two institutions – museum and company – work together and apply themselves in a continuous exchanges of skills and experiences. This generated a collaboration-and-dialogue model of enormous creative intensity and, over the years, has involved more than twenty well-established designers and young international talents.

*“The partnership between MAXXI and Alcantara is strategic and works on a new form of collaboration between a museum and a company,”* says Giovanna Melandri, President of the MAXXI Foundation. *“While both MAXXI’s and Alcantara’s core business includes supporting and promoting up-and-coming creative talents, this kind of joint venture goes far beyond the traditional concept of sponsorship, opening the way to a creative alliance that enriches all those involved.”*

*“It’s our firm belief,”* states Andrea Boragno, President and CEO of Alcantara S.p.A., *“that today the meaning of an efficient relationship between a company and a museum is in their concrete will to explore new expressive spheres, disengaging themselves from their role as a simple patron and, rather, choosing to establish a true cooperation, which stems first and foremost from an exchange of knowledge.”*

This vision is shared by Margherita Guccione, Director, MAXXI Architettura, who states that, *“Alcantara-MAXXI is a new model of collaboration between a company and an architecture museum. The interchange gives both of them an opportunity for sincere dialogue focused on a common, innovative vision. Thanks to the involvement of 21 international designers we have over the past three years looked to the future and experimented, in MAXXI’s exhibition spaces, with the creativity and versatility of this incredible material.”*

Founded in 1972, **Alcantara** represents a prime example of Italian-produced quality. As registered trademark of Alcantara S.p.A. and result of a unique and proprietary technology, Alcantara® is a highly innovative material, offering an unrivalled combination of sensory, aesthetic and functional qualities. Thanks to its extraordinary versatility, Alcantara is the choice of leading brands in a number of application fields: fashion and accessories, automotive, interior design and home décor, consumer-electronics. These features, together with a serious and certified commitment in terms of sustainability, make Alcantara a true icon of contemporary lifestyle: the lifestyle of those who want to fully enjoy their everyday life, respecting the environment. Since 2009 Alcantara is certified “Carbon Neutral”, having defined, reduced and offset all the CO2 emissions derived from its activity. In 2011 the analysis was extended to the whole product lifecycle, including also use and disposal phases (“from cradle to grave”). To mark out the path of the company in such a field, every year Alcantara draws up and publishes its own Sustainability Report, certified by TÜV SÜD international authority and available also on the corporate website. Headquartered in Milan, Alcantara production site and R&D department are located in Nera Montoro, in the heart of Umbria Region (Terni).





## SKY ARTE HD

- SKY CHANNELS 110, 130 and 400 -

**PAINTING, SCULPTURE, MUSIC, LITERATURE, DESIGN, ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF EXPRESSIONS:**

### **ART AND KNOWLEDGE ARE THE HEART OF THE PLATFORM**

**SKY ARTE HD** it's the first Italian TV channel dedicated to art in all its forms and it's now available to all Sky subscribers (who have HD in their subscription) on channels **110, 130 and 400** of the platform. Painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, theater, design and all forms of artistic expression are found within a single schedule dedicated not only to the fans who have the opportunity to deepen their interests, but also to the curious ones than can get closer to art in a brand new way, through both the major international productions (Sky Arts, BBC, Channel 4, Arte, PBS, Sundance Channel) and the original ones of the channel. Sky Arte HD tells the infinite resources of the world's artistic heritage, with a special consideration for the Italian extraordinary tradition and our artists' talent and it uses a contemporary and never didactic language, characterized by the contamination of genres.

The channel hosts all the languages of art. On the one hand, the Sistine Chapel, which was presented on Sky Arte HD in all its expressive power thanks to the original production *Michelangelo - The heart and the stone*, broadcast on Sky 3D with an exclusive documentary on the Sistine Chapel, on 1<sup>st</sup> November. On the other hand, the channel tells the provocations of Marina Abramovic and the charm of conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, or rock legends as Jim Morrison, eclectic talents as Tom Ford and the queen of photography Annie Leibovitz.

Among the **original productions**, there are programs especially created for children, such as *Art explained to kids*, which uses cheerfulness to help children and parents to discover art as an element that can be part of everyone's life; furthermore, there are travels in the contemporary world, as *Potevo farlo anch'io* hosted by Alessandro Cattelan and Francesco Bonami, who travel with us among the wonders and the paradoxes of the greatest masterpieces of contemporary life, with an ironic approach. Local events have a great relevance on the channel: exhibitions, shows and retrospectives will be told in the report *Great Exhibitions*, which describes step by step the complex mechanism of an exhibition, from the transport of works to the vernissage.

On the occasion of the Salone and Fuorisalone 2013, Sky Arte HD realized the original production *De.sign*, which led the audience in the heart of Milan design week with **daily capsules** dedicated to the **Fuorisalone**, with a **final report** on the whole **2013 edition** and an important doc series on the history of design. Another Sky Arte HD original production is *Bookshow*, a show entirely dedicated to books that tells their story through a simple but in-depth tripartite structure: **a book, a place, a guest**. *The crossed destinies hotel* is a carefree colorful cartoon which talks about particular meetings that have changed history; the set is a hotel where the room doors open and close on the fate of the protagonists. In June, Sky Arte HD presented *Contact*, another

original production that takes an extraordinary and fascinating journey in the forbidden city of photo proofs, near the **famous photographers of Magnum Photos**, the legendary agency founded in 1947.

In October, Sky Arte presents **Unveiled Masterpieces: Greta Scacchi** will explain how a great artist, as well as an extraordinary artistic interpreter, can also be a **real storyteller of her time**. In November a new season of **Contact** and **Street Art**, an original production dedicated to the world of street art, will be broadcast on Sky Arte.

Sky Arte HD relies on the contributions of Enel, main sponsor of the channel and of its flagship shows, as *Michelangelo - Il cuore e la pietra*. Enel participates actively in the creation of ad-hoc productions, such as *Corti di luce* and the specials dedicated to *Enel Contemporanea*, the contemporary art project sponsored by the company, now in its 6th edition.

Sky Arts HD has also signed some important partnership with the Istituto Luce-Cinecittà and with festivals, exhibitions and fairs to tell the main Italian cultural events, such as the Festival della Letteratura of Mantova, the RomaEuropa Festival and Artissima. Sky Arte HD will be a media **partner of the MAXXI**: starting from the month of October, there will be some original productions which will describe the main exhibitions of the season of the National Museum of the Arts of the XXI century (MAXXI).

In line with modern language of programming, the channel has a strong presence on the web and on social networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), thanks to the website [www.skyarte.it](http://www.skyarte.it) and Sky Go, the **streaming service program that allows you to watch Sky on PC and smartphones. The main contents of Sky Arte HD are also available on the Sky on Demand service.**

*«We are making a big commitment – says Roberto Pisoni, head of of Sky Arte HD – because talking about arts on television, with all its facets and in a brand-new and original way is a great bet. Art, in its various expressions, both ancient and contemporary, both cultured and popular, is a life-changing experience, that offers an infinite source of exciting stories. We are proud to offer it to the Sky audience.»*

Sky Arte HD Press Office

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