

Polish-Italian Design Dualism. Artistic Projects by Dorota Koziara

Abstract

Polish-born, Milan-based designer, Dorota Koziara has been active on the international design scene for two decades. Her artistic career has swung between her national roots and the well-established traditions of Italian design. Working alongside the iconic Alessandro Mendini, Koziara gained a brand-new way of self-expression, smoothly intermingling between the two cultures. Her activity covers an outstanding range of projects, she is also the winner of the Third Millennium International Sculpture Competition held in Italy. Her achievements on both Polish and Italian design scenes are a unique example of how fluid contemporary trends based on national heritage can be. In this border-free society, the influences and relations between Polish and Italian design seem to be highly important. After centuries of inspiration and domination by Italian art, today's scene shows a different approach to multicultural dialogue, the results of which are apparent in Koziara's works. The article focuses on her achievements in the light of reciprocal Polish-Italian influences.

Keywords

Italian design, Polish design, design history, contemporary art, Milan



Polish and Italian design are two phenomena on the art scene so different from each other, that any attempt of comparison cannot be justified. Their historical and cultural backgrounds were forged by the geographic position which determined their entire line of development over the course of centuries. Italy, having grown out of the ancient Mediterranean traditions, holds the heritage of the Greco-Roman culture, while Poland's artistic roots date back to the tenth century as far as the organised statehood is concerned. At the same time both of them are deeply rooted in their distinctive national traditions, reflecting the ever-changing history of the countries. The history of Polish design starts as the aftermath of the leading intellectual movement – Arts and Crafts – spread in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century thanks to the British designer John Ruskin and philosopher William Morris¹. The beginnings of the twentieth century in Poland were marked by the search of the national identity through art and design, which resulted in regionalism in both spheres, represented by the prominent figures of Stanisław Wyspiański, Karol Tichy, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, and Stefan Sienicki. At that time, various artistic societies came to life, which would gather and promote Polish designers, to mention Spółdzielnia ŁAD (Order Cooperative), Warsztaty Krakowskie (Cracow Workshops) and Polska Sztuka Stosowana (Polish Applied Art)². Polish history, being marked by wars and political turmoil, resulted in a very non-linear development of design. WWI and WWII were moments of relative artistic stagnation; however, the design scene came into prominence during the period of restoration, particularly growing in strength in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, the approach to forms and materials was very innovative, providing various avant-garde solutions including plywood and then-new synthetic materials. The key-figures of that period were Teresa Kruszewska, Roman Modzelewski, Maria Chomentowska, Zdzisław Wróblewski³. In the late 1980s the Polish design scene was in the shadow, slowly rebuilding its identity since the 1990s by changing programmes at the academies of fine arts, establishing new companies and organising exhibitions and fairs⁴.

The traditions of Italian design are marked by big companies, style diversification and numerous fields of expertise, covering projects from jewellery, through interior décor, fashion, packaging up to cars and motorcycles. The history of Italian industrial design is strictly linked with the *Prima Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* (First International Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts) held in Turin in 1902, where for the first time the relationship between art and international industrial traditions was manifested,

¹ The Arts and Crafts movement, present between 1880-1910, emerged from the need of craftsmanship and high-quality items available for the public. For more on the matter, see E. Cumming, W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, Thames and Hudson, London 1991.

² See A. Kostrzyńska-Mitosz, *Polskie meble 1918-1939*, Instytut Sztuki PAN, Warszawa 2005.

³ A. Dembska, A. Frąckiewicz, A. Maga, *Chcemy być nowocześni: polski design 1955-1968 z kolekcji Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie / We Want to be Modern: Polish Design 1955-1968 from the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw*, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 2011.

⁴ I. Kozina, *Polski Design*, SBM, Warszawa 2015.

thanks to such artists as Richard Ginori, Ernesto Basile, and the Bugatti brothers. The design boom had continued alongside with new artistic movements present in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, namely Futurism, Novecento and Rationalism. The design of the 1930s began to grow thanks to Antonio Sant'Elia, Franco Albini, and Piero Bottoni. The period of reconstruction after W/WII was focused on rationalisation of design, mainly concentrated around big factories such as Fiat. The government appointed the new body responsible for the economic growth of the design industry, the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction). The difficult economic situation resulted in the rise of so-called "product aesthetics" focused on visual aspects rather than technological improvement⁵. During the 1950s and 1960s Italian design was in its heyday thanks to Marcello Nizzoli, Corradino d'Ascanio, and Osvaldo Borsani, to name but a few. At the same time, the new wave of pop-design came into prominence, enchanting global imagination with playful pieces in bright colours. The following decade however changed the perception resulting in appearance of such movements like radical design and anti-design which was fully embodied by the Archizoom Associati group⁶. In the 1960s Italian aesthetics gained international attention thanks to Massimo and Lella Vignelli whose pure design became popular in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, with Alessandro Guerriero's Alchimia Group, Italian design kept developing various ideas in different fields, promoting the scene with world-wide magazine publications, exhibitions, and prestigious fairs.

Currently, despite the Italian design being based on name recognition and the traditions of world-famous art and design fairs and the Polish being an in-the-making scene, they keep on growing⁷. Poland is building its identity in the field of applied arts by establishing new studios and companies, while Italy is maintaining its leading position by promoting design icons and upcoming stars through the famous *Salone del Mobile di Milano* (Milan Furniture Fair)⁸. The two separate worlds however, are linked by a distinctive figure of a Milan-based Polish designer: Dorota Koziara. Since her graduation from the Faculty of Architecture and Design, University of the Arts Poznań (UAP), her artistic career has been oscillating between her national roots and the well-established traditions of Italian design. Having been cooperating with the iconic Alessandro Mendini, Koziara gained a brand-new way of self-expression,

⁵ Ch. Fiell, P. Fiell, *Masterpieces of Italian Design*, Carlton Books, London 2013, pp. 6-23.

⁶ The group consisted of Andrea Branzi, Gilberto Corretti, Paolo Deganello and Massimo Morozzi; see R. Gargiani, *Archizoom associati, 1966-1974: dall'onda pop alla superficie neutra*, Mondadori Electa, Milano 2007.

⁷ The brief information on the history of Polish and Italian design serve only as a background for further reflections. For thorough compilation on the matter, see I. Huml, *Polska sztuka stosowana*, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1978; A. Colonetti, E. Brigi, V. Croci, *Design italiano del XX secolo*, Giunti, Firenze 2014; A. Branzi, *Introduzione al design italiano. Una modernità incompleta*, Baldini&Castoldi, Milano 2008.

⁸ For more information on the history and features of Italian design fairs, see H. Bathelt, F. Golletto, D. Rinallo, *Trade Shows in the Globalizing Knowledge Economy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, pp. 245-267; L. Lazzaroni, *35 anni di design al Salone del Mobile 1961-1996*, Comismit (Comitato Organizzatore del Salone del Mobile Italiano), Milano 1996.



Fig. 1. Swatch Italy – retail space design, phot. Atelier Mendini Archives

smoothly intermingling between the two cultures. Her activity covers an outstanding range of projects, including works for the Polish Bolestawiec factory, interiors of the Karl Schreiber palace in Lower Silesia, as well as showrooms for Alessi, Cosimo Martinelli and Swatch (Fig. 1). Koziara is the winner of the Third Millennium International Sculpture Competition held in Italy with her sculpture *Dodici Angeli* (Twelve Angels). Contrary to other eminent Polish figures connected to the broad Italian art scene, Koziara did not limit the scope of her activities to one particular field, but touched upon interior décor, scenography, furniture design, retail space design, glass work, sculpture and pottery. Her achievements on both Polish and Italian design scenes are a unique example of how fluid contemporary trends based on national heritage are. Moreover, she has gained the similar level of recognition on both markets, being the key figure featured in the leading design magazines of international range. In the border-free society the influences and relations between Polish and Italian design seem highly important. After centuries of Italian art's inspiration and domination, the nowadays undertakings show a different approach to multicultural dialogue, whose achievements are presented in Dorota Koziara's works. What distinguishes Koziara on the contemporary design arena is her characteristic pluralism in almost all of her activities, being a combination of both Polish and

Italian elements, which are selectively incorporated in her works. There is no one precise pattern for the national and foreign tradition ratio, being the proof for every project being a closed entity which gained an individual approach in terms of inspiration. The long-lasting co-operation with Alessandro Mendini was the starting point which allowed Dorota Koziara to fully understand the Italian way of designing objects of bold shapes and striking colours, often predominated by form. Her achievements, which can be considered "Italian", were principally marked by the inspirations coming from the classics of both Italian art and design, just to mention Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Alessandro Mendini and Gaetano Pesce. However, the "Polish" side is also of high relevance as she uses typically native materials and techniques, i.e. the use of wicker, so characteristic of Władysław Wołkowski, and co-operations with well-established Polish brands, to mention Bolestawiec. What is the most significant in her career is the unfettered mix of the inspiration which cannot be categorised. As the example can serve the names of her collections and their metaphorical meaning: *Pelagie* for Noti and *Renesans* for Bolestawiec.

Probably the most important step in Koziara's international career was the long-lasting cooperation with Alessandro Mendini⁹. Their professional relationship started together with her first contact with the Italian heritage. It is marked by 1995 when after graduating with honours from the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań she was awarded three international scholarships. The choice was set for Rome as Italian art, culture and landscape have always fascinated the designer. Having had her masters in eco-design, Koziara was particularly sensitive to the object-environment relation and for this reason the exploration of many famous Italian countryside villas set within the landscape had a huge impact on her future career. The union between the magnificent historic architecture and its natural surrounding was the starting point, when she realised that the habitat can co-exist with substantial pieces composed within because it needs to create brand-new yet coherent landscape. In Rome, she also met Alessandro Mendini, who offered her an internship at his Milanese atelier¹⁰. The professional relationship with his studio let her design flourish on a completely different level of aesthetics. Mendini, being known as the master of Italian applied arts and architecture, has presented Dorota with the design scene and the concept of global cooperation with leading brands. The importance of the collaboration has been underlined by exhibition curated by Dorota Koziara on Alessandro Mendini entitled *Maestro del design* (Master of Design)¹¹ as well as by the solo show of Dorota¹² whose curator was Medini. The events were carefully arranged and accentuated the Polish-Italian relationships.

⁹ For more on Alessandro Mendini, see G.L. Ciagà, *Alessandro Mendini*, 24 ore cultura, Milano 2011.

¹⁰ Interview with Dorota Koziara (05.06.2017), notes in author's archives.

¹¹ Conversation with Alessandro Mendini at the opening of the show, www.asp.wroc.pl/410 (accessed 30.05.2017).

¹² Wrocław, City Museum-Old City Hall, 09.06.2016-28.08.2016.

The international career of Dorota Koziara, strictly connected to Italy, fully flourished when in 2000 she won the Third Millennium International Sculpture Award held in Franciacorta, Italy¹³. It was a transition time in her career as she was still working at the Atelier Mendini, while already running her own design studio. Her installation entitled *Dodici Angeli* has been placed in the picturesque sculpture park located in Franciacorta, among such prominent artists as Simon Benetton, Mario Costantini, Ray King, Giancarlo Marchese, Nissim Merkado, Giuseppe Rivadossi, Ilmi Kasem, Giuseppe Bergomi, Salvatore Sava, Maki Nakamura, and Giorgio Spiller. The selected pieces were donated to the Parco delle sculture in Franciacorta (Franciacorta Sculpture Park) located in Erbusco, Lombardy. The installation consists of seven pieces of wickerwork, each of them almost three meters high. The choice of the material was inspired by the long-lasting interest in bio-design, which often uses natural and environmentally friendly materials. The final effect however was far different than a regular figurative group of sculptures. Koziara's angels are highly expressive and dynamic, seem to be in a constant move. Their edges finished with pieces of straw of different length make the entire concept very suggestive, giving the impression of dramatic movement. The figures of the angels look as if they were suddenly caught in motion. This concept, applying the creative study of movement and its various faces, can be compared to the ideas of the Italian futurism, particularly to the famous painting of Giacomo Balla entitled *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio* (Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash)¹⁴ in which the artist has presented his fascination of chronophotography. The idea of fluid movement of undefined figures was also very vivid in the work of Umberto Boccioni *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (Unique Forms of Continuity in Space)¹⁵. It clearly shows that the Italian futuristic influences were very strong and inspiring for the installation, however, it is highly significant to underline a different approach to the materials. The use of wicker clearly shows fascination of ecological solutions and, in this case allowed to present the high level of dynamism and lightness which only natural materials could have provided. Moreover, Polish heritage played an important role: the material has been quite popular nationally, and kept being in use for several decades, serving such designers as Władysław Wołkowski for whom wicker was the basic work material¹⁶. The unusual sources of inspirations resulted in an installation which is a contemporary reminiscence of both Polish and Italian art and design heritage (Fig. 2).

¹³ The International Third Millennium Sculpture Award organised and sponsored by the Terra Moretti Group and supported by the Ministry of Heritage, the head of the jury was prof. Paul Restany.

¹⁴ *The Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912, oil on canvas. Currently in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York, see F.S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art through the Ages: Modern Europe and America*, Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont (CA) 2011, pp. 853-870.

¹⁵ *The Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913, bronze figure. Currently in the collection of the Museo del Novecento in Milan, see A. Graham-Dixon, *Umberto Boccioni and 100 Years of Futurism*, www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/umberto-boccioni-and-100-years-of-futurism.html (accessed 05.06.2017).

¹⁶ A. Różańska, *Władysław Wołkowski: z dziejów teorii i praktyki polskiej sztuki użytkowej XX wieku*, in "Ikonothea", n. 2, 1996, pp. 83-113.



Fig. 2. Dodici Angeli, Franciacorta Sculpture Park, 2000, phot. Ramak Fazel

The collaboration with Alessandro Mendini and the submersion in Italian design aesthetics had its impact on Koziara's works. The distinctive style of Italian furniture with its strong forms and unfettered use of colours can be rediscovered in the *Hussar* collection for Comforty¹⁷. The launch was composed of various public space dedicated elements. The main idea was to create comfortable, statement pieces which would fit in any environment such as offices, lobbies, hotels, restaurants etc. Each of the armchairs was available in different dimensions and, most importantly, with backrest of three different heights: 90, 130 and 170 cm. Such a diversity of heights allows to create a completely different character of the interior. The low-backrest pieces favour communication between people, the higher the backrests get, the more the feeling of separation and isolation grows. The highest ones provide the user with the complete seclusion. All of the pieces of furniture are available in a number of upholsteries, however the most distinctive one is colourful velvet resembling design pieces from the 1960s. The elongated backrests are not a new concept, it recalls icons of Italian design, particularly the *longue chair* for Casa M-1 by Carlo Mollino¹⁸,

¹⁷ The collection was launched in 2017, consisting of eight individual pieces. Materials provided by the Noti company.

¹⁸ For more information on Carlo Mollino, see F. & N. Ferrari, *The Furniture of Carlo Mollino*, Phaidon Press, London 2010.



Fig. 3. Hussar collection for Noti, 2012, phot. Noti

the San Luca armchair by Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni¹⁹, and the Feltri armchair by Gaetano Pesce²⁰. The source of inspiration for the visual aspect of the collection came from the Polish side as well, by the inclination of the history of Polish military. The central European Hussars, who were members of the light cavalry, with their distinctive costumes and lances, provided an impulse for the eminent and elegant shapes of the pieces (Fig. 3).

Dorota Koziara maintains the relationship with Polish furniture brands which can be seen through her various projects in the field. The following examples illustrate the attitude towards design thinking in collaboration with young Polish producers. In 2014 there was the premiere of the *Pelagie* collection for Comforty²¹. Once again, the source of inspiration for the project came directly from Italy, specifically from the Pelagie Islands, an archipelago of three tiny islands south of Sicily. The *Pelagie* consists of simple tables of different heights which can be freely combined, creating the furniture archipelago of one's own. The concept of the design was to encourage the customer to the creative search for the most suitable solution. Therefore, the tables have two types of table tops, round and elliptical; they also come in different heights and legs' angles, combining various materials such as wood, painted wood and the *grigio orobico* marble. The use of wood and stone was yet another reference to the natural and eco-design, so present in Koziara's works.

¹⁹ N. Börnsen-Holtmann, *Italian Design*, Taschen, Berlin 1994, pp. 85-87.

²⁰ P. Antonelli, *Objects of Design from the Museum of Modern Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2003, pp. 4, 262-266.

²¹ Comforty is a Polish upholstered furniture brand established in 2000.

Another project made for Comforty was the bed called *Floe*. The simple, grey upholstered bed was supplemented with a tall, sculptural bedhead. It consists of eighteen grey square fields. Each of the field is divided into two triangles which are placed at different angles, emphasising the three-dimensional, structural composition of the bedhead. It is also gently bent on the side, as the side elements are optional and foldable, creating a cosy frame for the bed which closes the entire structure. The sculptural, very elegant project, visually corresponds with the tendencies in Italian fashion. It evokes the luxury trend in furniture design promoted by the Italian company Cassina²², which focuses on high-end, innovative pieces.

Yet another furniture-related project was accomplished in collaboration with Astrini Design²³. Contrary to the previous realisation, the *Due* is an outdoor collection of furniture dedicated to the urban spaces. A one-piece solution was designed to replace two seats and a table, gathering two people. The construction consists of two tall planks, which serve as backrests, in between there is a meander-like construction serving as seats and small table. The entire piece is very geometric, being built on the basis of straight angles and even thickness of materials. The *Due* comes in a few combinations, without the middle table section or with a chess board on top of it. The project clearly shows the need to connect people by creating casual interaction space within the city landscape.

One of the most recognisable projects by Atelier Dorota Koziara²⁴ was the cooperation with the Bolestawiec pottery manufactory. The entire idea behind it can be seen as intermingling within the two cultures – Polish and Italian – being the core of the artist's background. The choice of Bolestawiec as the manufacturing partner was not a coincidence. The place and its history has been known to Dorota Koziara whose roots derive from Silesia. The manufactory in Bolestawiec itself is a representative place as far as Polish design and decorative arts are concerned. The history of ceramic production²⁵ in the area dates back to the fourteenth century, however the peak of popularity was noticeable in the nineteenth century. At that time, the manufactory developed its renowned geometric-floral decoration, among which is the iconic pattern called "peacock-eye" (Fig. 4).

The collection designed by Dorota Koziara for Bolestawiec consists of several types of tableware including plates, bowls and cups. All the products are handmade at the manufactory. It clearly refers to the history of the area and the reputable traditions of Polish craftsmanship. All the patterns introduced by

²² Cassina S.p.A. was founded in 1927 in Meda, from the beginning promoting designer pieces of furniture, for more information, see G. Bosoni (ed.), *Made in Cassina*, Skira, Milano 2008.

²³ Astrini Design is a Polish brand, founded by Andrzej Stróżyk, specialising in environmental design solution for urban spaces.

²⁴ The project was designed by Dorota Koziara in cooperation with Joanna Mazurek and Francesco Ippoliti.

²⁵ For more on the history of the town and the ceramic production, see K. Żak, J. Moniatowicz, *Bolestawiec, miasto ceramiki. Bolestawiec, Town of Ceramics*, Moniatowicz, Wrocław 2004; A. Bober-Tubaj, J. Maniatowicz, *Vademecum Ceramiki Bolestawieckiej. Handbook of Bolestawiec Ceramics*, Moniatowicz, Wrocław 2014.



Fig. 4. Renesans collection for Bolestawiec, phot. Dorota Koziara Studio Archives

the artist are geometric and modern, yet somehow inspired by the heritage of the place²⁶. Simple dots, lines and criss-cross patterns in bright colours such as blue, red and orange opened a new chapter in the history of Polish ceramics, announcing a contemporary approach which aims to attract the young audience, not necessarily familiar with the old-fashioned style of the previous products. The idea of connecting generations with the projects was particularly strong. For this reason, the title of the collection, *Renesans* (Renaissance) plays such an important role. As the designer states²⁷, there is far more than one meaning behind the name. First of all, the name relates to the re-birth of the Polish craft traditions, so vivid in Lower Silesia, where people have always been familiar with these products, growing up with them and treating them as a sign of their regional identity. The other meaning, equally significant, was the mental renaissance of design thinking, the great changes in how products should be perceived and how they can serve the user in a creative way, hence the idea of different patterns and colours which can be individually combined, each time creating a new set which was a novelty for the tradition-led brand. The level of freedom encourages the customer to take part in a creative process. The other meaning of the collection was the re-birth of hospitality, so common to both Polish and Italian culture. For the designer, a table set is always an invitation to a dialogue and meeting of different cultures focused

²⁶ Film material on the history of the project available at the "Domus" magazine website: www.domusweb.it/en/news/2016/02/17/dorota_koziara_renesans.html (accessed 01.06.2017).

²⁷ Interview with Dorota Koziara (05.06.2017), notes in author's archives.

on mind-broadening and understanding each other. It feels the same with the collection, although every pattern is different and singular, together they create a harmonious yet individual entity.

The *Renesans* collection won critical acclaim both in Poland and Italy. Many Polish design magazines, including the leading "Elle Decoration" and "Label"²⁸, praised the innovative yet tradition-rooted approach to national heritage. The mix-and-match concept which allows the customisation of each set was a new idea on the Polish market, particularly in case of historic manufactories. The collection showed a progressive attitude towards the question of ceramic design which derives from the international experience of the artist with the respect for the long-lasting traditions of the Bolestawiec manufactory.

In terms of ceramics, Dorota Koziara once again threw down the gauntlet to the typically Polish production in 2016. She accepted the cooperation offer from the Tubądzin tile manufactory. The collection of tiles entitled *Colours of Poland* was an aesthetic throwback to her motherland, inspired by all the shades of Polish nature. The typically glamorous style of designer collections, just to mention the famous tiles by Piero Fornasetti or Maciej Zień, has been replaced with the subtle structural stripes of various angles, on light-coloured tiles of different shapes and dimensions. Light blue, grey and ecru tiles can be combined together, giving the impression of the summer landscape colour-scheme. Different structural stripes in many sized mixed together introduce the dynamic arrangement. Another part of the collection were hexagonal tiles maintained in the same colour range.

The innovative approach to design can be seen in yet another project from Dorota Koziara's portfolio, i.e. *Wind of Salento* collection for Christian Dior²⁹. The design was meant to be prepared quite quickly at the end of 2013 to be ready for the exhibition *La Magnifica Forma* (The Magnificent Form) at the Homi fair³⁰, gathering twelve designers working with Italian brands³¹. The collection of candleholders was made of colourful glass, which might have been a slight reminiscence of the world-known Murano production, however the pieces designed by Dorota Koziara are made using a different technology of enamelled glass. The holders are vertical, consisting of bead-like, fluted parts which look like vertically placed necklace or bracelet. Each of the part has a slightly different colour, however they do complement each other in order to create a coherent piece³². The main colour schemes were gold and white, purple and pale grey, transparent and light blue, white and pink. The jewellery-like appearance of

²⁸ See *Dorota Koziara dla Bolestawca*, in "Label magazine internet edition", www.label-magazine.com/dorota-koziara-dla-boleslawca-ezp-5337.html, and "Elle Decoration internet edition", www.elle.pl/s/elle-deco-ludzie/dorota-koziara-projektuje-dla-boleslawca (accessed 30.05.2017).

²⁹ Velab is an Italian glass company from Talsano, specialising in chandelier production and interior décor, with over thirty years of experience.

³⁰ The Homi Fair is an annual event dedicated to the interior design and lifestyle, organised in Milan.

³¹ E. Podolska, *Warto być odważną*, in "Cer Magazyn", n. 2, 2014, pp. 4-6.

³² For more on *La Magnifica Forma*, see www.homimilano.com/it/la-magnifica-forma-0 (accessed 02.06.2017).



Fig. 5. Wind of Salento Collection, phot. Dorota Koziara Studio Archives

the candleholders made them a stand-out of the exhibition, bringing back the glassware traditions. Light and shiny finish of the pieces subtly corresponded with the natural beauty of the Salento landscape, full of light and reflections on the water. As Dorota Koziara underlined many times³³, the experience of nature is very important in her works, as the contemplation of the wild surroundings is the only way to fully understand the beauty and the meaning of any object. The *Wind of Salento* collection has been sold exclusively to Christian Dior and is in sale at their salons around the world (Fig. 5).

Within the field of art and industrial design, Dorota Koziara has presented several other projects which won critical acclaim and established her position. The one having the broadest spectrum of impact was the scenography for the first ever play on design and architecture entitled *70 Angels of the Façade. Domus 1928-1998*, directed by Robert Wilson (Fig. 6). The show was presented for the seventeenth anniversary of the "Domus" magazine at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano between 1-3 December 1998. The performance was a huge undertaking gathering over forty cast members with a few hundred furniture and design pieces which oscillated between the concept of performing arts and theatrical play³⁴. The show pictured seven decades of undisturbed activity of "Domus" on the international architecture and design scene. Each of the

³³ Interview with Dorota Koziara (05.06.2017), notes in author's archives.

³⁴ See the official organiser's website at www.changeperformingarts.com/history/angels.html (accessed 22.07.2017).



Fig. 6. 70 Angels of the Façade. Domus 1928-1998 scenography, 1998, phot. Ramak Fazel

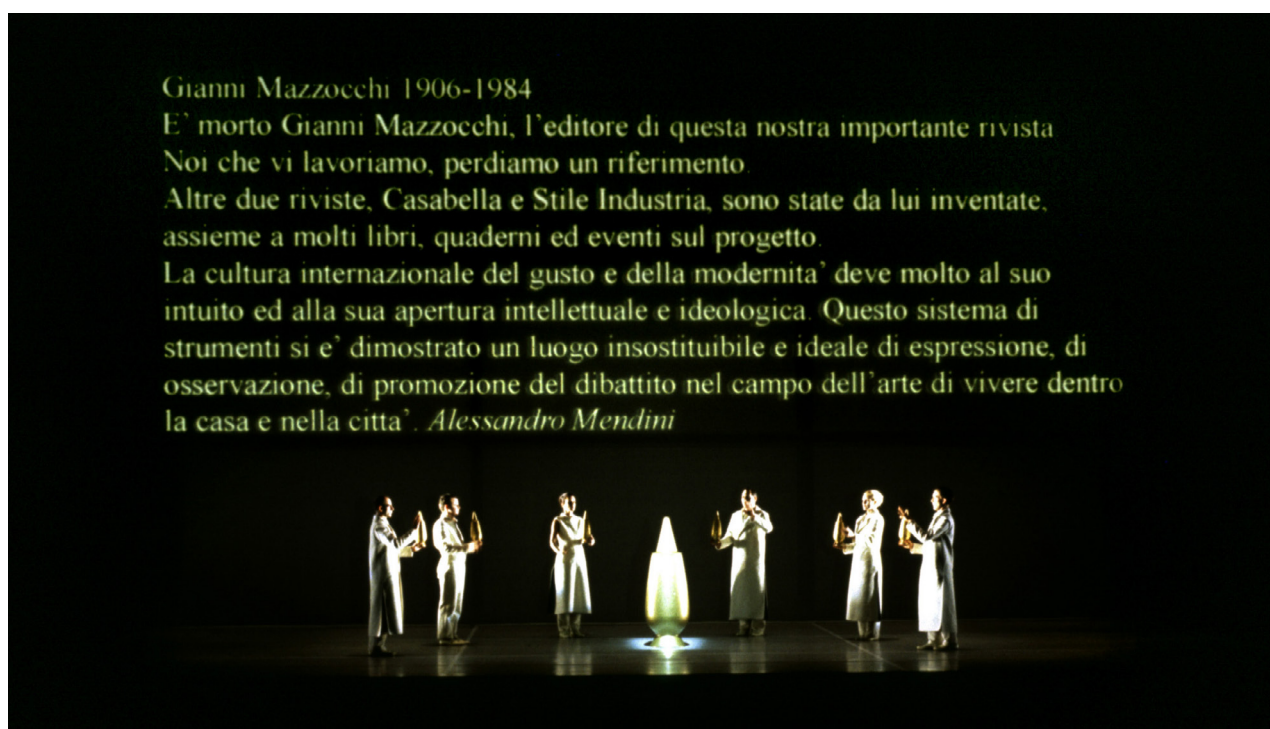


Fig. 7. 70 Angels of the Façade. Domus 1928-1998 scenography, 1998, phot. Ramak Fazel

decades was carefully designed by a studio which has been important to the development of the magazine. Mendini, who became the editor in 1979, led the publication through the post-modern era. For this reason, the period 1979-1988 was curated by his studio, in collaboration with Dorota Koziara and Elisa Mendini³⁵. The magazine was imagined as the façade of the Taranto cathedral, being constantly changed by new ideas and possibilities. The choice of Taranto was very meaningful because its famous contemporary cathedral was designed by Giovanni "Gio" Ponti, the founder of "Domus". The simple, yet colourful

³⁵ B. Finessi, *70 Angels of the Façade. Domus 1928-1998*, in "Domus", n. 3, 2016, p. 180.

scheme of the scenography, with big screens playing quotes and photographs, accentuated the post-modern quests of the 1980s. One of the most meaningful scenes in the decade of the 1980s presented in the play was the mourning and tribute to Gianni Mazzocchi, the publisher who purchased "Domus" in 1929 (Fig. 7). Six people stood on stage wearing white garment, reverentially approaching the central piece, the enlarged, highlighted version of Mendini's *100% Make Up Vase* designed in 1992 for Alessi³⁶. They were all carrying the pieces of design, foreshadowing the new era of the 1990s as the entire project of the *100% Make Up* series consists of 100 identical porcelain vases decorated by different designers³⁷. In the background, there was a quote by Alessandro Mendini reminiscing Gianni Mazzocchi as the leading figure of design publishing in Italy whose innovative approach led to the new way of perceiving the art of living in the city and at home³⁸. This particular scene depicted the ever-changing nature of design being investigated by "Domus" and its editors. The participation in the anniversary of "Domus", the leading Italian design publication, was a great ennoblement for a non-Italian artist. Her cooperation with Robert Wilson continued, and in 1999 she designed the scenography for his *The days before* performance for Lincoln Centre in New York.

As far as interior décor is concerned, Koziara has designed many exhibition spaces in Italy and abroad. The most recognisable ones were the interior designs for the Alessandro Mendini shows: *Fragilisme* (Fragilism, Paris 2002), *Mendini tra le arti* (Mendini between the Arts, Vicenza 2001), *Atelier Mendini* (Lugano 1998).

³⁶ Ciagà, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

³⁷ Antonio Abate, Carla Accardi, Sanchita Ajampur, Yael Applefeld, Qinuajuaq Ashevak. Paolo Bertozzi, Stefano Del Monte Casoni, Gabriel Bien-Aimé, Lapo Binazzi, Alighiero Boetti, Andreas Brandolini, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, Sergio Calatroni, Juli Capella, Sergio Cappelli, Patrizia Ranzo, Nigel Coastes, Cocktail (Renate von Brevern, Heike Mühlhaus), Gianni Colombo, Riccardo Dalisi, Nicola De Maria, Jan Digerud, Emmanuel Ekefred, Brian Eno, Ellinor Flor, Dan Friedman, Elisabeth Fritsch, Piero Gaeta, Giorgio Galli, Béatrice Santiccioli, Louise Gibb, Piero Giaraldi, Anna Gili, Milton Glaser, Michael Graves, Marie-Christina Hamel, Jan Mohamed Hanif, Pitt Heinke, Yoshiki Hisminuma, Yong Ping Huang, Aussi Jaffari, Christer Jonson, Bodys Isek Kingelez, Inka Kivalo, Mark Kostabi, Randi Kristensen, Milan Kunc, Kunstlug (Heiko Bartels, Hardy Fischer, Harald), Shiro Kuramata, Quim Larrea, Cheikh Ledy, Stefan Lindfors, Kamba Luesa, Esther Mahlangu, Valente Malangatana, Karel Malich, Massimo Mariani, Giusi Mastro, Kivuthi Mbuno, Alessandro Mendini, Antonio Miralda, Seigei Vladimir Mironenko, Alexandre Mocika, Paola Navone, Sinya Okayama, Luigi Ontani, Heikki Orvola, Salcido Javier Perez-Gil, Eduardo Pla, Plumcake (Gianni Cella, Romolo Pallotta, Claudio), Giorgio Rava, Ravage (Clemens Rameckers, Arnold Van Geuns), Ronaldo Pereira Rego, Roberto Remi, Cheri Samba, Andreas Schulze, Suresh Sethi, Raja Babu Sharma, Jari Silvennoinen, Ettore Sottsass, Gregorio Spini, Philippe Starck, Peter Struycken, Sybilla, Guillermo Tejeda, Cyprien Tokoudagha, Dagmar Trinks, Maurizio Turchet, Twins Seven Seven, Masanori Umeda, Hilde Vemren, Robert Venturi, Guido Venturini, Nanda Vigo, Mara Voce, Acharya Vyakul, Birgitta Watz, Gisbert Weiss, Hannes Wettstein, Y.A./Y.A.(Young Aspirations/Young Artists), Leonid Yentus, Rhonda Zwillinger.

³⁸ "È morto Gianni Mazzocchi, l'editore di questa nostra importante rivista. Noi che vi lavoriamo, perdiamo un riferimento. Altre due riviste, "Casabella" e "Stile Industria", sono state da lui inventate, assieme a molti libri, quaderni ed eventi sul progetto. La cultura internazionale del gusto e della modernità deve molto al suo intuito ed alla sua apertura intellettuale e ideologica. Questo sistema di strumenti si è dimostrato un luogo insostituibile e ideale di espressione e di osservazione, di promozione del dibattito nel campo dell'arte del vivere dentro la casa e nella città" [direct quotation, see fig. 7].

All of the projects were visually coherent with the artistic heritage of the Italian designer, colourful, playful and full of contrasts. The distinctive features applied to all the shows were the multiplication of a certain object to gain a much stronger visual effect, isolation of the most iconic pieces, such as the famous *Proust* armchair, making them the focal point in a surreal, dream-like surrounding. The exhibition in Lugano, for instance, presented Mendini's objects under large transparent cupolas with strong metal construction, one of the zones was filled with photographs and drawings presented in a chaotic way, some pieces of furniture were hung from the ceiling, all of that to emphasise Mendini's style, the unhampered stream of creativity, bright colours and distinctive forms.

In addition to her design career, Dorota Koziara has many achievements in the field of curatorial works and design promotion. Having gained international recognition, she became the "ambassador" of her homeland abroad. Since the opening of her own studio, she has been successfully promoting the Polish design scene, presenting its history and current state. In 2005 Koziara organised the first exhibition entitled *Polish Designers* which opened at the famous Salone del Mobile in Milan. Ever since she has been strongly bonded with any Poland-related event organised at the Salone, to mention *Polish Design* (Milan 2013)³⁹, *You. Me. Design Comforty* (Milan 2014), *Polish Design. Tomorrow is Today* (Milan 2017)⁴⁰ as well as in other cities: *Polish Designers* (Milan and Berlin 2005), *Costruttivismo Polacco* (Polish Constructivism, Caraglio 2005), *Polish Design. Wielkopolska Region* (Milan 2012). Koziara has also curated several group and solo shows of Italian artists in Poland and abroad such as *Mendini* (Poznań 2004), *Touch and Go. Ramak Fazel Exhibition* (Wrocław 2007), *Marco Ferreri, designer italiano* (Marco Ferreri, Italian Designer, Wrocław 1999), *Roboty po drodze. Men at Work* (Wrocław 1998), *Pinot Gallizio e il suo tempo. 1953-1964* (Pinot Gallizio e his times. 1953-1964, Alba 2007). It shows how important is the role of design education in her career. The participation in exhibitions and fairs is yet the only method to bring design consciousness to the public, particularly important in terms of Poland which is currently growing its own design scene (Fig. 8).

Concluding, all the presented examples of Koziara's artistic activity undoubtedly prove that she is a designer of international recognition, who consistently unites her native Polish side with the adopted Italian background. The furniture, glass and ceramics products show a thorough understanding of the history of European design. She combines her fascination for bio-design with the search of formal innovation typical of Italian design. Works such as *Hussar* or *Floe* are bright examples of Italian-inspired pieces which became an integral part of Polish design thanks to their production and promotion in Poland. Traditional materials such as wicker, on the other hand, inhabited Italian art scene thanks to the *Dodici Angeli* installation which derives from Koziara's

³⁹ A. Sural, *Polish Design in Milan*, 31.03.2013, www.culture.pl/en/event/polish-design-in-milan (accessed 01.06.2017).

⁴⁰ The exhibitions present design achievements of the students and alumni of the Polish design faculties, www.fuorisalone.it/2017/it/eventi/1087/polish-design-tomorrow-is-today (accessed 01.06.2017).



Fig. 8. Mendini exhibition, Wrocław, phot. Dorota Koziara Studio Archives

in-depth knowledge of Polish art history. Apart from her artistic activities, she is also a critic and curator. All the previously presented exhibitions show how important is education in terms of design, especially in Poland. Moreover, she is a promoter of Italian culture in Poland, proving that the borderless Europe has developed a unique, new style of design, where various influences and trends can co-exist in one project.

Dorota Koziara demonstrates that design can be a cross-cultural dialogue, where any inspirations, quotations and art-plays are possible, and most often welcome. The intuitive fusion of Polish origins and Italian influences make her an inspiring phenomenon on the European design scene. In a world where the search for the national identity and the roots of art and crafts has been the value for several decades, the idea of fluid oscillation between two contrasting backgrounds seems an innovative approach. The trend towards globalisation proved to be a solution for the ever-changing society, seeking new ideas from outside the box.