

## MILAN: CAPITAL OF DESIGN. The Generation of Masters

Screening Programme:

*Amare Gio Ponti*, by Francesca Molteni, Italy, 2015, 34'

*Achille Castiglioni. Tutto con un niente*, by Valeria Parisi, Italy, 2018, 38'

*Vico: il grande semplice*, by Valeria Parisi and Matteo Moneta, Italy, 2016, 56'

*Franco Albini. Uno sguardo leggero*, by Valeria Parisi, Italy, 2017, 30'

*Alfabeto Mangiarotti*, by Davide Maffei, Italy, 2022, 81'

*Sinceramente, Gae*, by Didi Gnocchi and Matteo Moneta, Italy, 2022, 55'

*Gae Aulenti e la sua casa-archivio*, by Francesca Molteni, Italy, 2022, 8'

*Un angelo su Milano: Mangiarotti e la città*, by Francesca Molteni, Italy, 2023, 10'

*Cini Boeri. Autonomia e funzione*, by Cecilia Fabiani and Emilio Neri Tremolada, Italy, 2013, 8'

Milan's lesson begins in the streets, where architecture and objects reveal an entire generation of Milanese designers — by birth or by adoption — who embodied the city's most progressive and dynamic spirit. Not merely tireless professionals, but generous educators, interpreters of a distinguished polytechnic tradition and a culture of remarkable intellectual depth. These figures helped transform Milan into a permanent laboratory of ideas, where design and architecture converse with art, technology and everyday life.

Visionary and multifaceted, Gio Ponti was the great ambassador of Italian style worldwide, capable of combining elegance with functionality. Founder and editor of *Domus*, he shaped an imaginative universe that influenced generations of designers. His architecture — such as the Pirelli Tower — and his design objects, from Richard Ginori porcelain to furniture for Cassina, testify to a unique ability to unite rigour and lightness, tradition and modernity. Ponti did not merely build; he taught others to see the world as a space to be continually reinvented.

A master of irony and reduction, Achille Castiglioni demonstrated that design arises from attentive observation of the simplest things. With his brothers Livio and Pier Giacomo, he created icons such as the Arco lamp and the Mezzadro stool, transforming everyday objects into extraordinary inventions. His approach combined intelligence and playfulness. "If you're not curious, forget it," he would tell his students at the Politecnico. For Castiglioni, design was never self-referential: it had to offer functionality and pleasure in use, without sacrificing poetry.

Rigorous and cultivated, Franco Albini embodied the most ethical and austere dimension of Italian Rationalism. Architect, designer and exhibition designer, he worked with meticulous attention to detail and materials, seeking structural lightness and formal clarity. His museum installations and furniture — such as the Margherita chair — remain models of balance and refinement. At the Politecnico di Milano, Albini shaped generations of students, teaching that architecture was both civic service and cultural responsibility.

Engineer and architect Angelo Mangiarotti was a master of sobriety and precision. His work is grounded in a continuous search for the relationship between function and beauty, with particular attention to innovative uses of materials. Celebrated for bridging industry and craftsmanship, he created furniture and buildings in which technical perfection meets almost sculptural sensitivity. For Mangiarotti, Milan was an open laboratory in which to experiment with uncompromising essential forms capable of becoming timeless.

The only woman among the great masters of her generation, Gae Aulenti asserted herself in a male-dominated field with an original and authoritative language. A cosmopolitan architect, she transformed

iconic sites such as the former Gare d'Orsay in Paris and Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Her lamps, including the Pipistrello, reveal a particular sensitivity to the relationship between light, space and atmosphere. Her house-archive in Milan still tells the story of an intellectual who regarded design as both a civic and poetic act.

Architect and designer with a strong social ethos, Cini Boeri consistently placed the individual and the quality of living at the centre of her work. A pupil and collaborator of Gio Ponti, she pursued an idea of architecture as a space of autonomy and freedom, designing homes, interiors and furniture intended to improve everyday life. Her modular armchairs and sofas — such as the Bobo and the Serpentine — reflect a sensitivity to informal and adaptable uses of space. With courage and coherence, Boeri paved the way for new, democratic and inclusive forms of living.

A master of anti-rhetoric, Vico Magistretti elevated the ordinary into the extraordinary through a sober and cultivated design approach in which simplicity becomes refinement. His work embodies a “theory of practice”, where aesthetics arise from function and lightness becomes value.

Each of these masters, with their own voice and language, helped transform Milan into a capital of design — not only through the quantity and quality of their work, but through the cultural imprint they left behind. Their architecture, objects and teaching generated a legacy that continues to nourish the city and new generations of designers. In their work, technical innovation, formal rigour and poetic sensitivity intertwine, presenting an image of Milan not as a mere showcase of excellence, but as a living place of dialogue, experimentation and memory.

This series invites us to explore that heritage not as a static archive, but as an organism in constant transformation: the testimony of a city that, through design, continues to question itself, reinvent itself and project itself into the future.