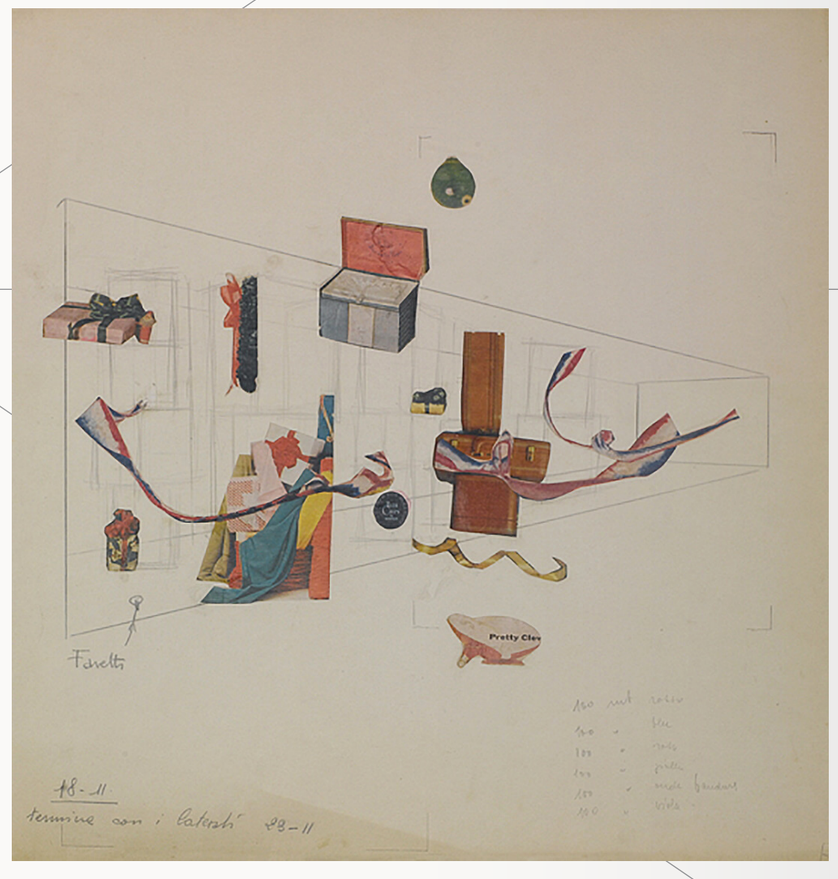
CITY OF WINDOWS

MILANO SHOWING OFF

Fulvio Irace

Edoardo Persico was the first to understand Giò Ponti's manifesto of functional aesthetics when he wrote in "Stile": "a knife, a dress, a glass, and an iron have their decency not only in price or function, but also in their design: they are expressions of a single style in which the perfect functionality of the modern product finds its bliss in its shape".
In 1930, the column "La città che si rinnova" in "Casabella", featured his warning to his readers: "the appearance of a shop is almost always intimately linked to the goods sold in it, and the evident complacency with which the visitors enjoy renovated premises is a sign of the favour modern objects enjoy among Italians".
The obsession with being absolutely modern has always been the driving force behind Milan ever since the National Exhibition in 1881 reaffirmed its role as the capital of Italian industry and consequently, the myth of "moral capital".
Design was the outcome of the union of art with the products of industry: the democratic art that was exhibited in the streets in those glass theatres that were the shops. Nizzoli's dummy marked the luminous beacon of Baldessari's legendary Bar Craja. Asnago&Vender's Viganò opticians or Persico and Nizzoli's Parker shop displayed windows like typographic pages. Melchiorre Bega's Motta patisserie was an invitation to the pleasures of taste. Not far away, the windows of La Rinascente unfolded like screens where the imaginings of artists were superimposed on the reflected images of enraptured shop-watchers.
In Milan, the shop window has always represented the synthesis of the combination of art and work, because as Adriano Olivetti used to say: "you have to do well and make it known".
For this reason, from 1 to 5 March, MuseoCity is launching the "Musei in Vetrina" project under the banner of the idea of a "widespread museum" in alliance with some prestigious Fashion and Design showcases.

FULVIO IRACE
Fulvio Irace was professor of "History of Architecture and Design" at the Politecnico di Milano. He is one of the founders of the MuseoCity association, which has been organising the Museo Segreto and MuseaMilano editions since 2017. Author of numerous monographs, he regularly publishes in important popular and scientific journals.

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