



**ITALIAN DESIGN, 1960-1994**  
**An exhibition from The Denver Art Museum**  
**at the**  
**Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts**

In April 1997, the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts will celebrate the influence of Italian design on Western design since 1960 in an exhibition entitled, *Italian Design, 1960-1994*. Organized by The Denver Art Museum, with the support of the American Federation of Arts, the exhibition presents a new interpretation and a comprehensive study of Italian design, including furniture, ceramics and glass and such consumer products as telephones and typewriters, drawn from the collection of The Denver Art Museum.

In the early 1960s Italy emerged as a major force in Western design, and since the 1970s the country has become the world's major design center as a result of its roles in the reinvigoration of the Bauhaus tradition of modernism and the beginning of the postmodernist design movement. The alliance of government, industry and designers -- most of whom were trained as architects -- was remarkably successful in creating an "Italian look" which quickly received international recognition.

For the Bard Graduate Center venue, *Italian Design, 1960-1994* will be divided into two parts, each considering one of the two prevailing philosophies which have dominated Italian design over the last four decades. The first part of the exhibition on view from April 11, 1997 through June 22, 1997, will focus on modernism, widely viewed as one of the most influential design movements of the twentieth century. Many of the precepts of modernism originated in the 1920s at Bauhaus, the noted German design school. Bauhaus designers and their modernist successors sought to develop and refine a new aesthetic that reflected the profound changes wrought on Western society by the Industrial Revolution. Objects in the exhibition such as Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni's "Sanluca" armchair (1961), Carlo Scarpa's "Doge" table (1969) and Massimo and Lella Vignelli's "Ciga" flatware (1979), will demonstrate the commitment to highly abstract form, avoidance of ornament or historical reference, and experimentation with new technology, which often utilized industrial materials (e.g., glass, aluminum, plastic), that characterized modern design.

Part two of the exhibition, on view from July 18, 1997 through September 10, 1997, will consider anti-modernism, which marked a new philosophical and practical approach to Italian design. The movement began in Italy in the late 1960s, ultimately bringing about a fundamental shift in Western design. Reacting to the social unrest of the late 1960s and unconcerned about creating functional objects or a singular aesthetic, the anti-modernists envisioned design as art, an art which should remain untainted by the commercial aspects of mass production. Italian anti-modernist designers made a distinct move away from mass production and most often relied upon handcraftsmanship, creating objects in limited production. Examples in the exhibition such as Piero Gilardi's "I Sassi" seating (1967), Gae Aulenti's "Patroclo" lamp (1975) and Aldo Rossi's "Cabina dell'Elba" furniture (1980) exemplify the intuitive design approach of anti-modernism. Geometric forms favored by modernists were abandoned in favor of images from pop art, kitsch, and non-Western art, as well a decorative ornament and pattern. A fascination with historical eclecticism is perhaps anti-modernism's most controversial, if not pervasive, aspect.

*Italian Design, 1960-1994* will be installed in two floors of gallery space in the Bard Graduate Center's main building on New York City's historic Upper West Side.