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Abstract. Archizoom Associati design studio is one of the founding groups of the Radical Movement in Florence dating back to the 1960s. Their design activity is extremely significant in understanding the philosophy of the movement and their design works challenged functionalist design aesthetics and the mainstream ideology at the time with sarcasm, subversion, irony, and a playful design language. Andrea Branzi, which was the leader of Archizoom Associati, together with his 50-year reflection on Italian architecture and design, has witnessed this rebellious design philosophy. Based on the historical background, practical activities of Archizoom Associati and the design teachings of Andrea Branzi, this article aims to review the theoretical consciousness into architecture sphere and the empirical research into contemporary design practice.

1. Introduction
Whenever the modernist design movement is mentioned, it is inevitable to think of the German Bauhaus, a period when the post-modernist phase is scrutinized, the Italian radical design is a case study that undoubtedly contributed to our notion of understanding design today. Alessandro Mendini, a legendary Italian designer and architect, in the article “The Art of Italian Design” sums up in five significant movements the history of Italian design: Futurism, Bel Design, Radical Design, Alchimia, and Memphis[1]. He believes that in the history of world design, Italian design has always been characterized by a particular style, concerning both the aesthetics and the innovation of industrial and architectural design. The artistic sense of the Italian design is the direct inheritance of the Italian history and culture, particularly of the Renaissance period, while the design innovation is the result of the spontaneous and continuous experimentation from the “design studios”[1]. Italians consider design as a fundamental value rather than an added value. Although the “design studios” differ from one another in terms of “design” methodology and ideology, their emotional drive and dramatic playfulness seem to be a tacit trait.

2. Radical atmosphere and environment: History of Archizoom Associati
After the Second World War, despite the rapid recovery of the economy, in Italy, social reforms and urban planning progress have been hindered by political interference. Urban plans and architectural projects are often used as bargaining chips in political struggles, and most of the architects had set their political orientation[2]. During the 1968 protests that broke out in France, its influence had spread throughout Italian students, affecting as well the architecture students. Architecture was used as an
instrument for political and ideological criticism. Architectural design was also seen as a mean to regain the cultural rights that were stripped away by the capitalist society and its labor division, a way to freely express their ideology to the mass. In Florence, during the 1960s, the newly graduated architecture students were frustrated by the general stagnation and depression of the construction industry. These students spontaneously formed design groups and self-proclaimed themselves as “Italian radicals”. Those groups included UFO, Gruppo 999, Superstudio etc. [3], amongst which the most far-reaching one is Archizoom Associati.

In December 1966, four new graduate students from the School of Architecture of the University of Florence, Andrea Branzi, Gilberto Corretti, Paolo Deganello, and Massimo Morozzi gathered together and established a common goal together, an ambition to found the Archizoom Associati design studio [4]. The name Archizoom comes by mixing the prefix of the British architecture group “Archigram” of the 1960s, with the name of “Zoom” magazine [5]. In 1968, Dario Bartolini and Lucia Bartolini joined the group. Inspired by the British Utopian graphic architectural language and pop art, they co-hosted the “Superarchitetture” exhibition with the Superstudio architecture group. In this occasion, they also declared the establishment of “Paper Architecture” experimental research study [5]. At the same time, some architecture students of the University of Florence decided to occupy Florence’s city square by putting up installations. The action of this time was done as a protest against the conservative and traditionalist way of urban planning that does not make use of the architectural tools and knowledge, that they have learned to enact in a real urban transformation. At that time, Branzi, as a student, proposed a fundamental change in the concept of the city: The idea of an inexpressive, catatonic architecture, the outcome of the expansive forms of the logic of the system and its class antagonists, was the only form of modern architecture of interest to us. A society freed from its own alienation, emancipated from the rhetorical forms of humanitarian socialism and rhetorical progressivism: an architecture which took a fearless look at the logic of grey, atheistic and de-dramatized industrialism, where mass production produced infinite urban decors [6].

Archizoom was one of the main protagonists of the “Radical Architecture” movement of the 1960s, which opposed the modernist architectural ideology. They proposed the design concept of “function above all.” Instead, they use imaginative storyboards, collage images, visual materials, etc. to add an emotional dimension to the design. By doing so, they proposed an innovative and pioneering design for city, building, landscape, furniture, and clothing. Their creation is an open criticism to the capitalistic mode of production, mass consumerism, and the anarchism of their period [3]. Like many other radical architects and designers from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the group’s design philosophy was greatly influenced by the “Cold War” period’s political turmoil and anti-cultural spirit. Any new innovative ideas characterized this subversive as “Anti-Design”. By using new materials, new techniques, and new forms, they challenged the traditional aesthetics and the mainstream ideologies. After the disbanding of the group, their rebellious, radical spirit was inherited by the later Alchimia group and the Memphis group, making their influence lasting until today.

3. Sarcasm and subversion: Design practice of Archizoom Associati

Pop Art has deeply influenced Archizoom, the members of the group were still full of provocative and innovative ideas. Through the use of waves, curves, spots, stripes, and discarding colors, they reorganized and subverted established daily habits (Figure 1). In 1968, Archizoom participated in the 14th edition of Milan Triennial with a series of revolutionary works such as “Centro di Cospirazione Eclettica”. In 1972, they participated in the exhibition “Italy: the New Domestic Landscape” [7] at MoMA, New York, a milestone in the development of Italian design of those years; In 1973, alongside other key representatives of radical design movement, they created the “Global Tools” teaching workshops. From 1966 to 1973, they designed all sorts of provocative and satirical furniture for the “Poltronova” brand, which has two classic examples: the first piece is the Safari chair (Figure 1), which is covered with skins from exotic animals, whose impactful color scheme and shapes challenged the mainstream middle-class common sense of “Good Tastes”; the second piece is the Mies van der Rohe armchair, named after the famous architect (Figure 2), in which they combine Mies’
signature chrome tubes with Le Corbusier’s leather pillow materials: a design that was used as a mockery, a form of a protest against the 20th century society, and an extreme criticism of the functionalism design approach of “less is more”. In 1968, they created the Gazebo series, published in the first issue of Ettore Sottsass’s “Pianeta Fresco” magazine, in which their pop sensibility was abandoned in order to allow space for “elementary compositional operations” thus initiating an essentially theoretical process of rethinking architecture as a discipline and also in terms of its cultural role in relation to reality[8]; In 1970 the studies of Archizoom reached its peak, carrying out the study on the “No-stop city”, wherein taking into consideration the state of decline of the modern cities, they considered the design as the basic tool to improve people’s life quality and the planning of the urban space. From 1971 to 1973 their main focus was on “Dressing Design”, covering the full process from the element to the finished garment, and expanding that concept to the surrounding environment (from the design of the furniture or to the large-scale city planning) that matched their garment design. In 1974 the group disbanded, but most of its members still worked with other radical design organizations, passing down the design ideas and passions of this singular generation of Italian design radicalists. They believe that the liberation of unconstrained architecture and design is a fearless cultural concept and lifestyle, a way of moving towards rebellion and freedom[9].

4. Utopia Magician: Andrea Branzi with the No-stop city
Andrea Branzi, with his unique reflection on more than 50 years of Italian architecture and design was considered a great witness to his peers [10]. He graduated from the School of Architecture of the University of Florence in 1966; Between 1964 and 1974, he was one of the founding members of
Archizoom; In 1976, he was a leading member of the Alchimia design group; In 1980, he became a principal member of the Memphis design group; In 1982, he founded the first international design graduate school, Domus Academy; Until 2017, he held the role of full professor and director of interior design program at the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano, which is the best design university in Italy. In 1979, 1987 and 1995, as an individual and taking part of a team, he awarded the Compasso d’Oro Award for with the highest honor in Italian design. In 2008, he was appointed honorary royal designer in the UK; In 2018, he won the Rolf Schock Prize in the Visual Arts category, from the Royal Swedish Academy of Arts. In his long designer career, he reached the peak of his experimental design during the period when with his colleagues in Archizoom Associati, expanded his research fields through urban, environmental and popular culture design, culminating in the conception of the utopian project of “No-Stop City” [11] [12].

In 1970, the Italian magazine Casabella published an article entitled “City, assembly line of social issues, ideology, and theory of the metropolis,” in which the “No-Stop City” project was presented to the public for the first time: it is a model of utopic global urbanization [13], in the form of and radical project-on-paper (Figure 4). Like any other radical architectural groups of the 1960s, they opposed the pragmatism of modernist architecture and advocated the dilution of practical, imaginative, science fiction-like creative methods[3]. They rejected the traditional approach of scales, functions, materials, or needs as essential criteria to start the architectural design. Instead, under the influence of the pop culture, they made extensive use of paintings and collage paper schemes, using emotion as a medium to emphasize their critics to the society and the material reality, re-affirming of the autonomy of architecture.

Figure 4. Project drawings of No-stop City

These series of drawings which were made of an infinitely extending horizontal and vertical grid are taken as symbols of the infinite human habitation in space. The horizontal and vertical lines represent the artificial walls, merely interrupted by natural landscapes such as mountains and rivers. The whole city is not made of buildings, but pieces of furniture, tents, household appliances, motorcycles, and more, symbolizing human desires and their needs. These furniture spots on the maps seem like breeding microorganisms that spread infinitely through urban space. In this free and uncharacteristic fantasy space, people live in tent-like campers, in a purely natural environment, where all their necessities are met by just adding more furniture into the map, resulting in a continuous urban space expansion[10]. In this fantasy city without centers and suburbs, people can choose where they want to live. A satire to the nowadays urban living: ultra-modern cities filled with desires and needs, and at the same time transpiring despair, decadence, and tragedy. As Branzi said: “The mass-production has generated the infinite spreading of the urban art. The city gives us this blank, uncharacteristic identity that allows us to be anyone anywhere [6].”

Branzi jokingly defined himself as a child who betrayed rationalism. Through the “No-Stop City” project, he aimed at mocking and criticizing the future of urban factories that capitalism helped to develop, and the ideology of the modernist architecture[9][10]. In his utopia, there are no boundaries between the natural and the artificial, no difference between the city and the countryside; the development of the city will be completely industry orientated, to satisfy the needs of the consumers. In this way, the world will become a “capital of desire”[6][11][14]. Instead of the ability to provide viable solutions, this project aims to change the world with the power of criticism, or at least awaken
the backward mindset of people who are so deeply immersed in this world, that they have lost perception of it.

5. Legacy of the rebellion: Branzi’s design teachings

In the last period of his teaching at the Politecnico di Milano (2011-2017), Andrea Branzi alongside with Michele De Lucchi (Co-founder of Memphis) and Francesca Balena Arista, has carried out a research/teaching activity within the first-year design studio at Master level. Following anthropological studies, the design studio adopts topic-oriented “keywords” as a guide to project development. The outcomes of the design research are usually divided into two parts: the first one part includes analysis and interpretation of a theme, after which students are asked to make a short video expressing their understanding of the topic. The second part, is about the designing and making a smaller scale model of an interior based upon their research. During the lessons, students are committed to three main tasks: exploring bibliographic resources to research for the keyword; making use of video language to explain the meaning of this keyword, and finally, employing the space as mean to express the purpose and the meaning of the keyword in reality. The significant of the studio is “Transformation”: From the “Keyword” to the “Space”; From the “Artistic thinking” to the “Design language”: From the “Understanding” to the “Expression”.

One of the authors of this article had the chance to participate in 2015-2016 master’s interior design course, with the assigned keyword “Chaos”. The author’s group took contemporary “Hikikomori” [14] (From Japanese, meaning reclusive adolescents or adults who withdraw from society and seek extreme degrees of isolation and confinement) and their living environment as a model. This problem exists in Japan, Hong Kong China, as well as in Italy. The living environment of the “Hikikomori” is a chaotic and messy one, mostly because those people refuse to communicate with the outside world. To prevent the outside world entering in their life, they lock themselves in their rooms, and, at the same time, make themselves prisoners of their own space. “Abyss” is the name of the space project; it shows the contradictions and conflicts of this inhabited environment. The viewer can have a view of the “Hikikomori” living space through a hole on the top (Figure 5). The computer, the only bright object in the room, is the daily tool inhabitant most frequently work with. The only physical connection of this space to the outside is a ladder on the wall. Inevitably, the project makes us think about: where does the “Hikikomori” come from? Where are they headed? Have their lives always been like this? Will our society keep ignoring them? Are they willing to climb out of this abyss?

Figure 5. The project “Abyss”, completed by the author and directed by Andrea Branzi (This project was selected in the Polimi Design X Designer in Milan Design Week 2017)

6. Conclusion

The intelligence of Archizoom Associati design studio lies in their ability to awe the world with a revolutionary new approach to criticism. Paying tribute to the Beatles, winking an eye at Pop artists, bowing in solution to Karl Marx, they pushed the life to ultimate aesthetical freedom[4][15]. As once in the Italian magazine Domus wrote: “We want to introduce to you everything that remains out of the
door: the fabricated banality, intentional vulgarity, urban furniture, voracious dogs. We prefer a postcard-like horizon complete with rainbow. We also want to say: we can't be found where you are looking for us, don’t trust the way we greet you. And then, the air smells of dead roses, a smell which we don’t like that much[16]”. As a rebel, Branzi is not only a designer, an architect, a theoretician, an educator, is also a philosopher, he criticized modernism without hesitation by “No-stop city”, which challenged the functionalist mythology and popular aesthetic in Italy, with the striking manifesto of “Anti-Design” and actively participated in activism activities between the 1960s and 1970s. During the span of his career over 50 years, he has been proceeding with architecture, design, and craftwork projects that provide important significance and lessons for post-modernism design.

Wang Shu, the first person with a Chinese nationality who was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize, has always been known as a “Rebellious Architect”. He even named his studio “Amateur” in order to resist and satirize the contemporary Chinese urbanization buildings, which he described “junk”. In his work, he uses a lot of historical materials and Chinese traditional construction techniques to revive the Chinese traditional literati spirit in contemporary architecture. Obviously, Wang’s construction method is incompatible with this era: Compared with technology, he prefers the craftsmanship; Compared with architecture, he prefers to build the house; Compared with the architect, he believes he is a literati first[17]. It could be said that this is why the Pritzker nominated Wang Shu - for the critical rebellious thinking, especially in China, where mediocre buildings are mass-produced during rapid urbanization.

Therefore, both Italian and Chinese architects or designers, can spot signs of “Rebellion”, which represents a strong, unconventional and an initiative spirit, which is often mandatory for our contemporary practice and research.

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