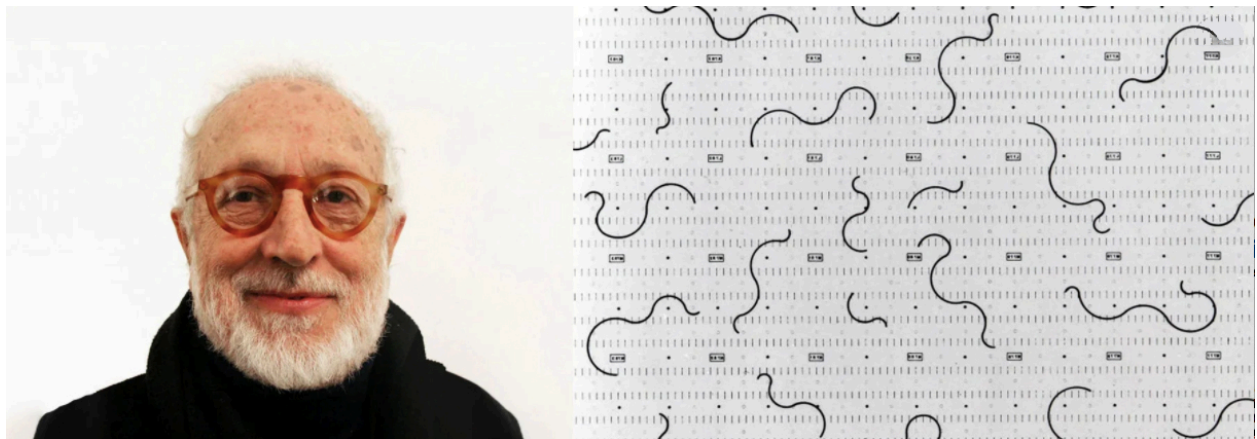


FRIEDMAN BENDA
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designboom

Andrea Branzi on his origins, ideas and influential career in 3-part video interview for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'

By Nina Azzarello
November 24, 2020



on april 1, 2020, new york gallery [friedman benda](#) initiated a series of online interviews aimed at connecting individuals across the world with leading voices in the creative field. [design in dialogue](#) is a conversational program hosted alternately by curator and historian [glenn adamson](#) and designer [stephen burks](#) that engages with designers, makers, critics, and curators as they reflect on their careers and creative processes. against the backdrop of [COVID-19](#) and global lockdowns, the conversations are held virtually on zoom for 1 hour for anyone in the world to tune in to, and include a participatory Q&A with the audience in attendance. friedman benda has since presented more than 40 episodes, and will continue with a lineup of future guests, each offering unparalleled insight into the sensibilities, musings, and memories of today's creative protagonists. [see our recent feature of thaddeus mosley on](#)

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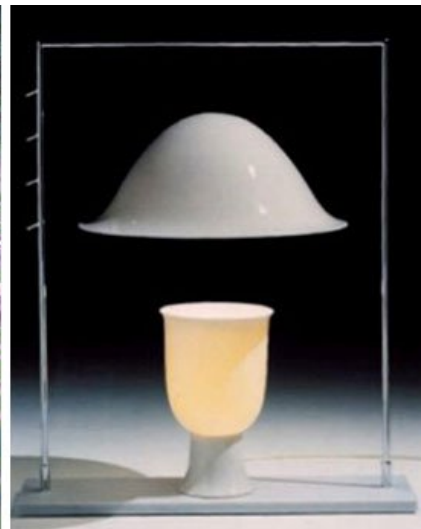
sculpting with the spontaneity of jazz, and paul cocksedge on object-making at all scales.

on november 2 2020, *design in dialogue* welcomed the great luminary of italian design and architecture, andrea branzi, who discussed his long and influential career. born in florence in 1938, branzi was a founding member of the experimental group **archizoom**, which envisioned the ‘no stop city’ among other projects. a key member of the studio **alchimia**, founded in 1976, he went on to associate with the **memphis** group in the 1980s. in a three part interview spanning several hours with dr. catharine rossi — a UK-based design historian, and associate professor at kingston university — branzi delved into his background and upbringing, his ideas about urbanism, and his roles as curator, writer, editor, and educator.

watch part I of the video interview at the top of the page, and parts II and III below. stay tuned as designboom continues to share *design in dialogue* features. see all past episodes — and RSVP for upcoming ones — [here](#).



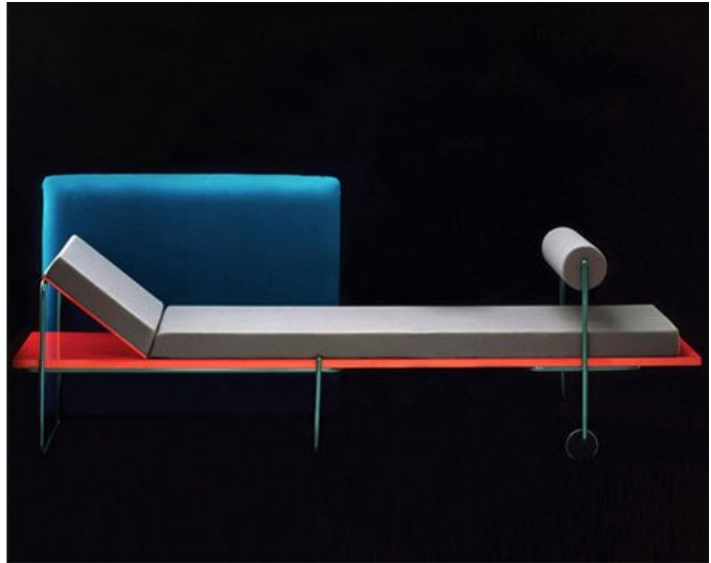
left: ‘weak urbanization’ for eindhoven city project for philips, 2000



right: ‘passaggi’ lamp, manufactured by design gallery milano, 1998

in part 1 of the series (see video at the top of the page), andrea branzi introduced his origins, early career, and involvement with radical design collectives such as **archizoom**, **global tools**, and **alchimia**. he spoke about the social, political and cultural context of this time, graduating from the university of florence in 1966, and there being ‘*a tide of transformation that was obvious to see.*’ it was against this backdrop that he and fellow students massimo morozzi, gilberto corretti, and paolo deganello — who would go on to form **archizoom associati** — presented their graduation thesis that was ‘*already explicitly a clear product of radical design, of innovation, of experimentation...*’

soon after, branzi began to notice a large number of small avant-garde groups in florence emerging, and a dynamic scene of radical design groups representing a **break with tradition**. *'some of [the groups] had elements that were more political, others more artistic, others more professional or more philosophical. each group had its own logic, a different way of working. in fact, in a certain sense we remained very different from each other, even after many years. nevertheless, our involvement in the radical design movement created a bond between us, that in a certain sense lasted forever. we think of each other like fellow soldiers in a war.'*



left: 'foglie' lamp, manufactured by memphis, 1988
right: 'century', chaise lounge, 1982

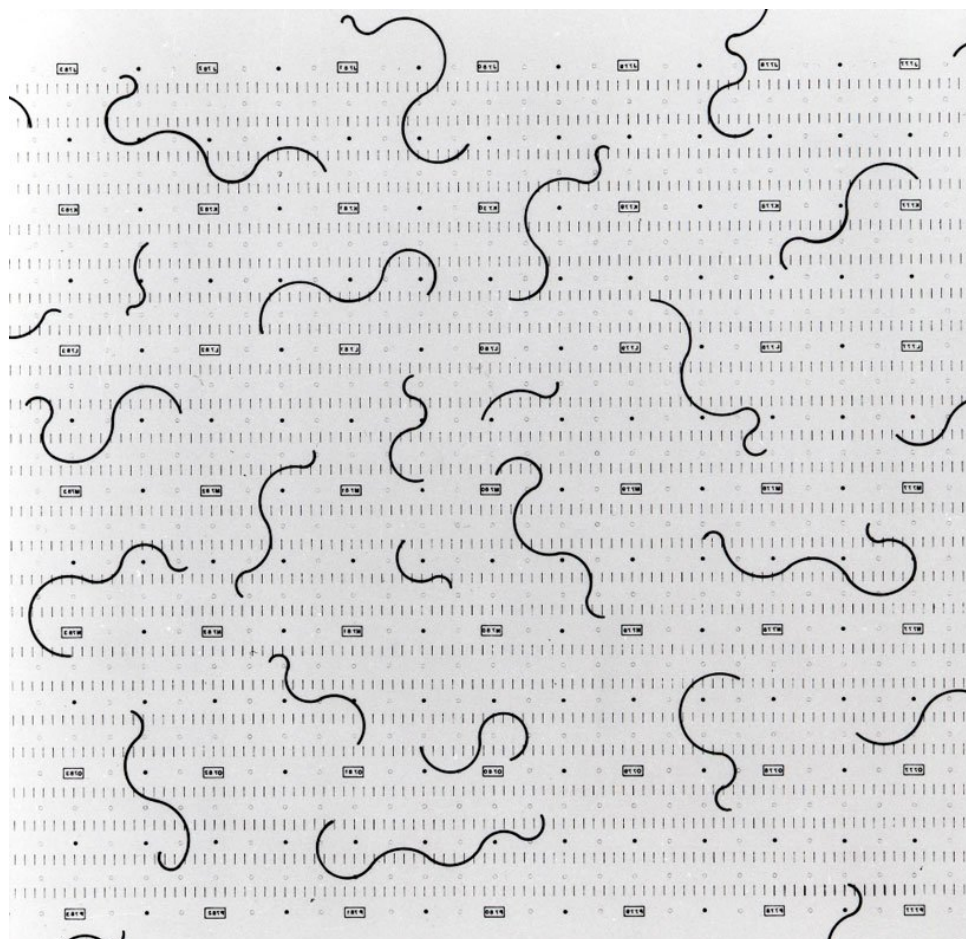
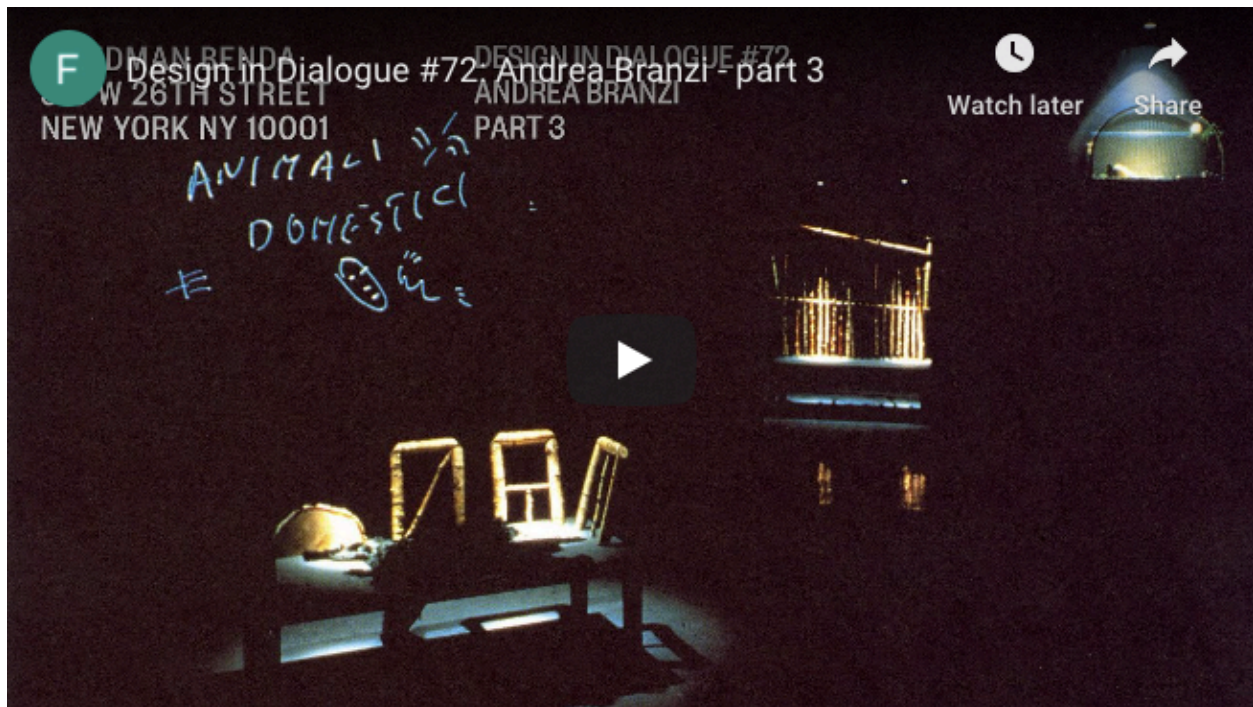
in part II (below), branzi presents his ideas about urbanism and the history of utopia, taking one of his most well-known projects — **no stop city** from 1969 — as its **departure point**. *'no stop city'* is a theoretical project — a model for global urbanization based on the idea that advanced technology could eliminate the need for a centralized modern city. branzi describes it as *'a kind of developmental vision of design, no longer tied to a perimeter, to a defined space, but rather as an idea in continuous development in continuous transformation.'*

in questioning the character of existing cities, the proposal presents a metropolis with repetitive patterns and multiple hubs, within which individuals would have a large degree of freedom to build within a regulated system. the site is imagined to extended infinitely through the addition of homogeneous elements adapted to a variety of uses. *'it doesn't belong to the past or the future, but to a continuous present,'* branzi says. *'it's something that is not precisely articulated. rather it belongs to another kind of intellectual process that is still a part of me in a certain sense, regardless of how long ago it was, and how different it is from the subject of my recent work.'*



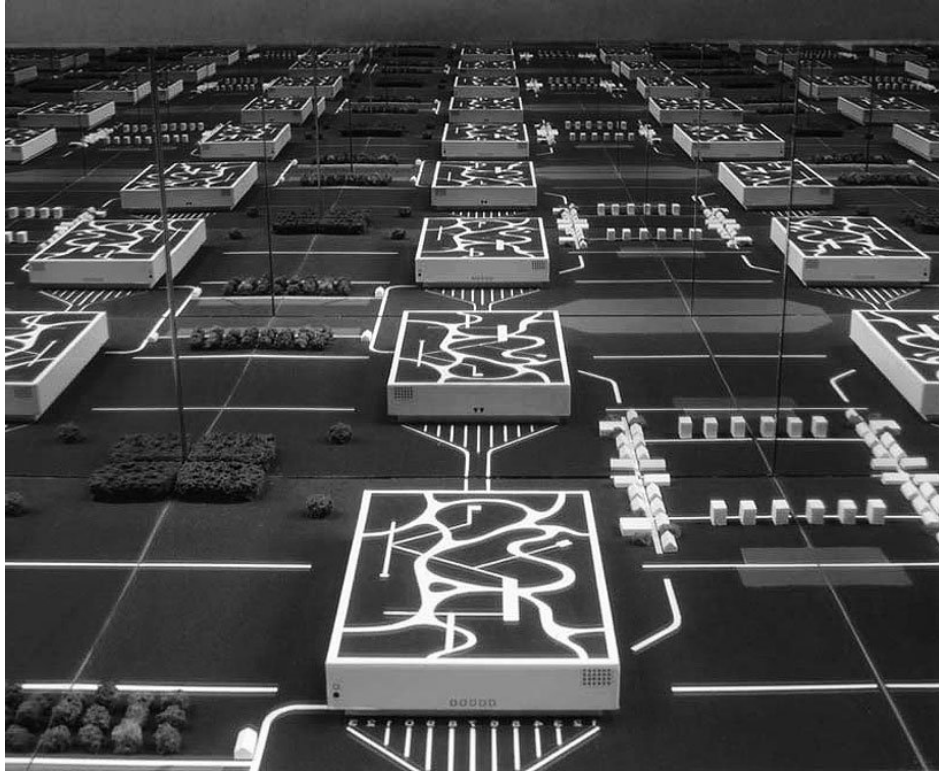
part III (below) concluded with a conversation about broader understandings of design culture, taking in the full scope of branzi's expansive practice, including his roles as a curator, writer, editor, and educator. branzi approached the term *cultura del progetto*, or *design culture*, and what it means within a social, cultural, or political context, saying that it's not easy to define. for him, professional design activities have always been immediately interconnected with his personal life. *'in reality my mode of working, and that shared as well by others whom I've known in the environment in which I gathered my experience, was never of the truly professional kind,'* he says. *'I'd say it's more like a domestic scenario, a very full house, bursting with inter-familial connections, including both people and animals. my work is not separate from my private life. rather, the two are closely integrated.'*

— and with a career encompassing hundreds of projects over the course of several decades, branzi cities a 'continual joy' throughout his professional and personal endeavors. *'all the projects that we did, at least the most important ones, were always accompanied by a great deal of laughter. we shared immense joy in living and learning.'*



'no stop city' design archizoom associati, 1970

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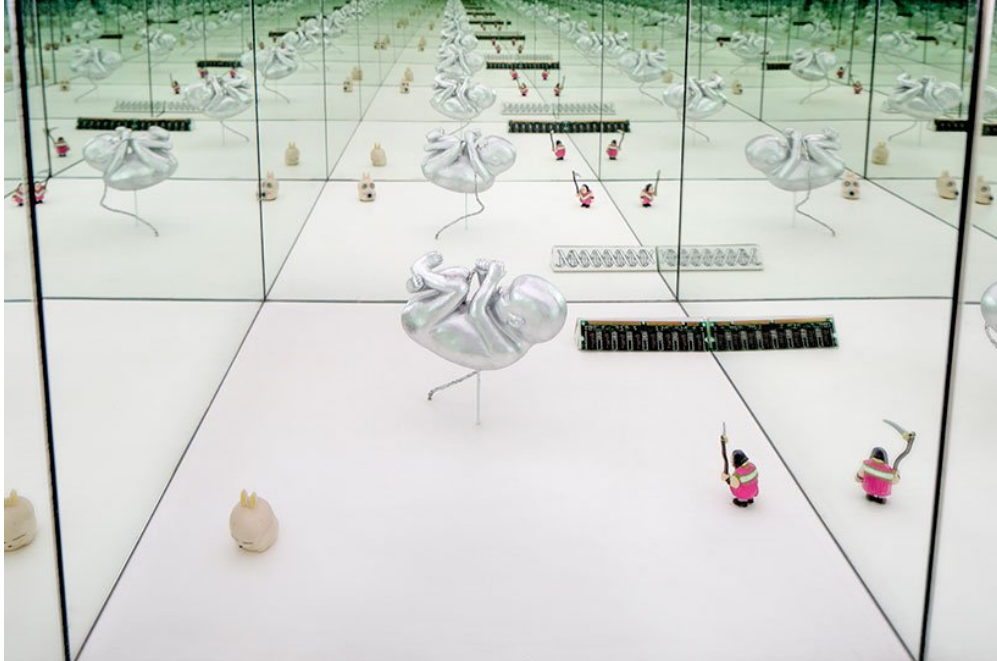


'no stop city' design archizoom associati, 1970



andrea branzi: *trees & stones* exhibition at friedman benda / september 11 – october 13, 2012.
photo by erik and petra hesmerg, courtesy of friedman benda

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at design miami/ basel 2019, friedman benda presented andrea branzi's *territories*, an ongoing research into the relationship between humans, societies, and constructed landscapes. see more on designboom [here](#)



portrait of andrea branzi © designboom, [from our interview in 2003](#)

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design in dialogue is a series of online interviews presented by new york-based gallery [friedman benda](#) that highlights leading voices from the field — designers, makers, critics, and curators — as they discuss their work and ideas. hosted alternately by curator and historian glenn adamson and designer stephen burks, the conversations are held on zoom for 1 hour and include a participatory Q&A.

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