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**FRIEDMAN BENDA GALLERY PRESENTS *ARCHETYPES*,
AN EXHIBITION OF RARE AND LIMITED-EDITION WORK BY
ETTORE SOTTASS**

*Exhibition Features Work by Sottsass Never Before Seen in U.S. that Demonstrates his
Interest in the ways that Forms, Patterns, Structures Can Convey Universal Ideas*

NEW YORK – Friedman Benda gallery presents *Archetypes*, the second in a cycle of exhibitions devoted to the investigation of the limited edition and rare work of Ettore Sottsass (1917-2007) in all its complexity and historical relevance. *Archetypes* features glass, marble, and furniture made from 1965-1995. Many of the works will be on view for the first time outside European Museums, and many have never been seen in a commercial context before. The exhibition will be on view May 1 – June 21st at Friedman Benda, 515 West 26th Street, NYC. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, May 1 from 6:00-8:00pm.

This exhibition will reflect Sottsass' broad-based investigation of the essential attributes, or archetypal forms, patterns and structures that convey universal ideas and explore the rituals of daily life. This quest underlies the myriad of domestic objects, volumes of photography, and architectural projects Sottsass created throughout his extensive working life.

The exhibition will include a number of iconic and metaphorical works including the well-known *Neferititi desk* (1968), first shown in the 1972 MoMA exhibition, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, a *Superbox cabinet* (1968) and the rare *Flying Carpet Armchair* (1972). Experimental works from the later 1970s, including *Le Strulture Tremano side table* (1979) which he created for Studio Alchimia, will be on view and for the first time in America, a group of bookcases and rarely seen glass sculptures from the early 1990s will be shown in the context of the earlier work.

For Sottsass, creating a lexicon of design that incorporated emotive, sensorial and humanist concerns was a rebellion against post-war rationalist architecture that valued function over form, and left human nature out of the architectural equation. He was moved by the subjective gesture of American abstract expressionist painting and the direct resonance of pop art. He also looked to ancient eastern cultures for examples of how to create a spiritual connection between form and meaning. The nature of his research varies from pieces to piece, at times social or psychological,

often balancing popular images with esoteric, evoking Jungian memories or looking to provoke primordial reactions. Always counterintuitive and built on complex thought-patterns, the notion that a functional object could communicate an abstract idea was groundbreaking and has emboldened legions of designers today.

Expressing this idea in 1972 while preparing a group of work for what was to become a seminal exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Sottsass wrote “the aim of the project was not to achieve a product, but to state and provoke ideas. I wasn’t in the least concerned with making furniture, or an elegant, ‘cute,’ sweet, or amusing environment, and still less was I concerned with designing within this psychic and cultural status quo.”

The works included in *Archetypes*, are visceral and rife with contradiction, and reflect the mind that created them. Ultimately, the exhibition is about moments—not the culminating public moments of the *Valentine* typewriter or the Memphis design movement, but moments represented by works that express the ideology and language that guided Sottsass during his 60-year career. As R. Craig Miller, Curator of Design Arts at the Indianapolis Museum of Art has written, “To be fair, artists of Sottsass’ magnitude can never be defined. Each generation – and succeeding century – will find yet another aspect that resonates anew.”

About Ettore Sottsass:

One of the most significant counter-forces to modernism in the history of design, Ettore Sottsass made monumental artistic contributions to every decade since his life in design began in Italy in 1945. His remarkable career produced a provocative body of work, including architecture, furniture, industrial design, glass, ceramics, painting, photography and a wealth of writings.

Sottsass intellectually and aesthetically challenged the conventional wisdom of forms and proportions throughout his 60-plus year career, driven by what Penny Sparke aptly described in her essay for LACMA’s 2006 Sottsass retrospective as “a personal search for a new language of modern design.” His rigorous pursuit has led to the creation of such groundbreaking movements as radical design, anti-design and post-modernist architecture, which led to his founding Memphis in the early 1980s.

A central concern of much of Sottsass’ work is the social, cultural and technical implications of architecture and design on the way people live and interact. New materials and technologies were of particular interest to him and exploring these elements led him to apply both new and historical materials in non-traditional ways. Color and form are of equal importance in Sottsass’ work and he embraced them with a similarly radical approach. Throughout the entirety of his career, from early paintings of the 1930s to later works of architecture during the 1980s, Sottsass used color to determine shapes within a composition and the relationship of exterior surface to interior function.

Sottsass’ remarkable career produced a diverse array of commissions that have transformed architecture and design. Iconic built architectural works include Wolf House (1989) in Colorado and

Milan's Malpensa Airport (2000). Objects he designed for Alessi and electronic products for Olivetti, including his iconic *Valentine* typewriter, changed the landscape of industrial design. The Memphis movement, for which he is most popularly known, set the style for an entire decade. Ettore Sottsass died December 31, 2007, just three months after his 90th birthday. His work continues to be produced through Sottsass Associati, the architecture and design practice he founded in Milan in 1985.

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