

Art World

Explore the Genius of Design Pioneer Ettore Sottsass in His Breathtaking Retrospective

The Met Breuer presents "Ettore Sottsass: Design Radical," bringing together a vast array of works from the artist's six-decade career.

Terence Trouillot, July 24, 2017



Ettore Sottsass and Perry King, Valentine portable typewriter (designed in 1969, acquired in 2014)/ Estimate £300-£500. Photo ©Sotheby's.

Exhibitions documenting the life and work of Ettore Sottsass (1917–2007) abound this year as galleries and museums—such as The Met and Le Stanze del Vetro—celebrate what would have been the influential Austro-Italian designer's 100th birthday. One of the latest surveys comes courtesy of furniture manufacturing megalith Vitra, which recently opened 'Ettore Sottsass – Rebel and Poet' at its Basel campus in Switzerland.

Located in the new Herzog & de Meuron-designed Schaudapot space, the exhibition sees the family-owned brand draw from its own archives to form a showcase of approximately 30 of Sottsass' furniture designs, consumer products, as well as numerous photographs and writings. The exhibition, Vitra says, 'pays tribute to an extraordinary designer who did not regard form and function as constraints, but rather viewed design as an opportunity to explore the nature of human existence'.

A man who lived a full life of wonderful achievements and great hardships—he was once a prisoner of war in the Balkans during the WWII—the artist's methodology and significance continue to endure, and his legacy is all the more discernible.

Trouillot, Terence. "Explore the Genius of Design Pioneer Ettore Sottsass in His Breathtaking Retrospective," *Artnet News*, July 24, 2017.

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