

press release
KUNSTHAL
ROTTERDAM

Ettore Sottsass
Enamels 1958

12 February to 1 May 2011

Kunsthal Rotterdam presents Ettore Sottsass' enamels from 1958 which together constitute a quintessential phase within the career of this Italian designer and architect. In the late Fifties Sottsass built up an oeuvre of works in geometrical forms of which colour is the key element. By means of lines and circles he experimented with colourful enamel on vases and on plates. Over one hundred objects and drawings by Sottsass, who is generally considered to be one of the leading members of the Memphis group, are at the basis of the revolutionary designs that became his claim to fame later on.

Enamel

The years in between 1957 and 1961 are crucial to Sottsass' career. He was educated at the Polytechnic University of Turin and, fully in line with his rationalist education, started to build up an oeuvre consisting of simple geometrical patterns. In 1958 he investigated the complex technical process of enamelling and explored its artistic possibilities. The vitreous nature of enamel gives a physical thickness to surfaces, irregular yet smooth and shiny, and offers the possibility to use pure and extraordinarily vivid colours. Sottsass was clearly enchanted by the material quality of enamel and attached it to wooden vases and metal plates. In the vases he designs the enamel is exalted by contrast with the natural warmth of the wooden bases. The exhibition sheds light on this highly productive designing period in Sottsass' career and provides a valuable insight into the development of his oeuvre. Sottsass' is best known for designing the iconic red plastic Olivetti *Valentin* typewriter (1969) and the expressive *Carlton* bookcase (1981).

Ettore Sottsass

Ettore Sottsass (Innsbruck 1917-Milan 2007) is one of the most renowned protagonists of Italian design. He grew up in Milan where he was educated to become an architect. Sottsass designed many houses and office buildings but became particularly famous as an industrial designer. His work consists of furniture, kitchen utensils, jewellery, glass objects, lighting and office equipment. His views on design caused him to become considered as one biggest innovators in design after the Second World War. He considered the functionality of products to be inferior to their symbolic meaning. His body of work is astonishingly varied. Some of his designs are poetic whereas others are much more radical. Moreover, while some of his designs are confronting, others can safely be called frisky. Humour, however, is an important aspect which is present in all of his work.

Publication

At Adarte Publishers a book of the same name has appeared (ISBN 9788-88-89082-30-0).

This exhibition is organised in cooperation with the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein.

For additional press information and/or photographs, please contact the Communications Department of the Kunsthal Rotterdam: Mariëtte Maaskant, tel: +31 (0)10 4400323, +31 (0)6 14437789; Willemijn van Drunen, tel: +31 (0)10 4400321; +31 (0)6 22157563, fax: +31 (0) 10 4367152, email: communicatie@kunsthal.nl
Please include our telephone number and website in your publication: **info + 31 (0) 10 4400301**, www.kunsthal.nl Opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm, Sundays and public holidays 11am - 5pm