

GLOBAL TOOLS

1973 - 1975

VALERIO BORGONUOVO

SILVIA FRANCESCHINI

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PREFACE

For the first time in the forty years that have passed since its formation, the experience of the Global Tools counter-school has been brought together in book form, uniting the images and archive documents that were produced over the few short years of its existence. We have compiled this volume to chronicle and evaluate the three years of seminar activity that took place between Florence, Milan and Naples in the early 1970s, bringing to a wider audience the story of this tentative attempt to realize an experimental dispersed educational program that would serve as an alternative to the university as an institutional model of reference.

In January 1973, a gathering took place in Milan at the editorial office of the magazine *Casabella*, involving, among others, the archi-

tects and designers Ettore Sottsass Jr., Alessandro Mendini, Andrea Branzi, Riccardo Dalisi, Remo Buti, Ugo La Pietra, Franco Raggi, Davide Mosconi, and members of the groups Archizoom, 9999, Superstudio, UFO and Zziggurat. Together with the conceptual artists and intellectuals Franco Vaccari, Giuseppe Chiari, Luciano Fabro and Germano Celant, these founded Global Tools - a system of workshops that would last until 1975.

The aim of *Global Tools 1973-1975* is to provide a tool for the understanding and reconstruction of this experience while simultaneously contextualizing it within a more complex network of references and connections. To perform this task, the critical perspectives offered by the contributions of experts and scholars are employed to shed light on those aspects of contemporary experience shared by this pedagogical utopia with the wider world.



In structuring the sequence of chapters and content of the present work we have taken the main themes of the research groups and work of Global Tools – Body, Communication, Construction, Survival and Theory.

Vital to the reconstruction of this experience in all its fragmented nature, one neglected for decades by critics and historians alike, have been the many and varied conversations enjoyed with those who took part in Global Tools.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who have taken part in this adventure.



FOREWORD

Beatriz Colomina

LEARNING FROM GLOBAL TOOLS

What does it mean for young architects and scholars to look so closely today at some short-lived experiments by young designers forty years ago? Is this a kind of nostalgia for an earlier phase of radicality? Or even nostalgia for an earlier phase of the global, when the very idea of resources and tools was redefined in the face of new technologies and a new awareness of planetary ecology? Are we in another phase of retooling the disciplines of design, a kind of echo of a too quickly forgotten historical moment? Is this book about the past or the future?

The expression “global tools” now refers to the technologies of the global marketplace: from smart phones to social media, networked travel, global tracking devices and ubiquitous surveillance. In a

sense, global tools today represent the very shape of the economy. Forty years ago it was a form of resistance, even a return to archaic technologies and practices. The radical act was to step out of the mechanized city in an anti-urban appeal to agrarian roots.

The word “radical” comes from the Latin *radix*, “root,” (“radice” in Italian), and there were many different forms of radicality in the 70s, many forms of return to the past, even incompatible ones. The Florentine groups around Global Tools energized themselves by opposing Aldo Rossi and therefore the return to a more primitive architectural language by other architects of the *Tendenza* teaching in the schools of Venice and Milan.¹ Global Tools wanted to go further back to an archaic form of wisdom, embracing nomadism and leaving the city itself behind.

Yet this anti-urban gesture was made by a thoroughly urban set of designers, using all the tech-



niques of mass communication to broadcast their message to a global audience. Their mouthpiece was *Casabella*, one of the most widely read international architectural magazines. Global Tools was first and foremost an experiment with alternative education, probably inspired by Ivan Illich's arguments in *Deschooling Society* of 1971, a reference for Superstudio and Andrea Branzi. In a remarkable anticipation of the present, Illich had argued for the use of advanced technology to support "learning webs" based on sharing: "educational webs which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring."² Global Tools called for "life as a permanent global education."

The argument was itself global, an echo of other experiments around the world like the *Whole Earth Catalog*, launched in 1968, and significantly subtitled *Access to Tools*. The legendary catalog promoted small scale, grass-roots, self-organizing, low-tech methods of operating with a lighter footprint guided by sensitivity to ecology. It reported on every small experiment it could find and every radical found a copy. Small became big. The call to disconnect from the city was matched by a call to connect to fellow radicals

all over the globe, with even the globe represented as the ultimate architectural project.

Global Tools took its inspiration from this new network. It was part of a mosaic of experiments in which the mosaic itself was the most radical experiment. There were enormous tensions within the network, with nodes directly criticizing other nodes and even defining themselves through this criticism. Just as Manfredo Tafuri criticized the Florentine radicals for not being radical at all, Global Tools dismissed the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* of Ulm as a "sort of myth to be debunked" or a "limitation to overcome" as Andrea Branzi put it.³ One part of the network might not even know about similar experiments in other nodes, as when the Body group of Global Tools seems unaware of the nomadic performances by the Valparaíso school in the Chilean countryside. Yet such seemingly disconnected experiments would effectively be connected by other nodes that knew them both. Paradoxically, disagreement and lack of awareness can actively contribute to collaborative production.

Taken together as a living interactive organism, all these experiments constituted an extraor-



dinary transformation of architectural pedagogy and a massive redefinition of architecture itself. Indeed, these pedagogical experiments can be understood as architectural projects in their own right. The ongoing “Radical Pedagogies” project I launched in 2010 set out to test this hypothesis by mapping the global output of experiments in the postwar years, with particular attention to its peak during the 1960s and 1970s. The map continues to expand and scholars worldwide have started to zoom in on specific cases with refreshing insights and ever more detailed documentation. The network itself is becoming palpable. The seemingly temporary discourse deliberately constructed in layers of little gestures and fragile documents is coming to the surface in all its complexity like the archaeological unveiling of a lost city. New kinds of reflection become possible.

This beautiful in-depth book on Global Tools allows a new generation to revisit and rethink one of the key experiments carried out at the very peak of the phenomenon. It positions Global Tools relative to the whole landscape of experiments, tracing the connections beyond architecture, to art, performance and philosophy. A galaxy of heterogeneous figures become vital nutrients to

the project even when their influence was not recognized as such at the time. They fed a unique ecology, an environment incubating new forms of production, even an unnamed but fertile school, or rather “anti-school.” Figures like Buckminster Fuller, Stewart Brand, Victor Papanek, Ivan Illich, Haus-Rucker-Co, Walter Pichler, etc. become de facto faculty. A group of people dispersed around the world that despised the idea of faculty, or even of a body of knowledge to be transmitted, had nevertheless backed into such a faculty and such a highly developed form of knowledge. It was not by chance that most of the young would-be rebels of Global Tools would become institutional figures, highly influential in the world of design, design theory, education and publication. Anti-School becomes School.

This is one of the fundamental paradoxes of “Radical Pedagogy”: the avant-garde assault on institutions invariably produces new institutions, new forms of dogma that have to be undermined by another avant-garde. Perhaps it is in this spirit that this investigative book has been produced. The aim is simply to “learn from” Global Tools, in the sense of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi’s polemical call to learn what is there,



not to repeat it, but to understand it and thereby invent something new from the old. The urgent issues we face today about ecology, globalization, technology, and social justice seem to closely echo the issues addressed by Global Tools. Yet the specific circumstances of the time were completely different. The real gift of a precise history of a historical avant-garde is that it can release new forms of avant-garde practices, new forms of radicality, making this book invaluable for both historians and designers—a global tool in its own right.

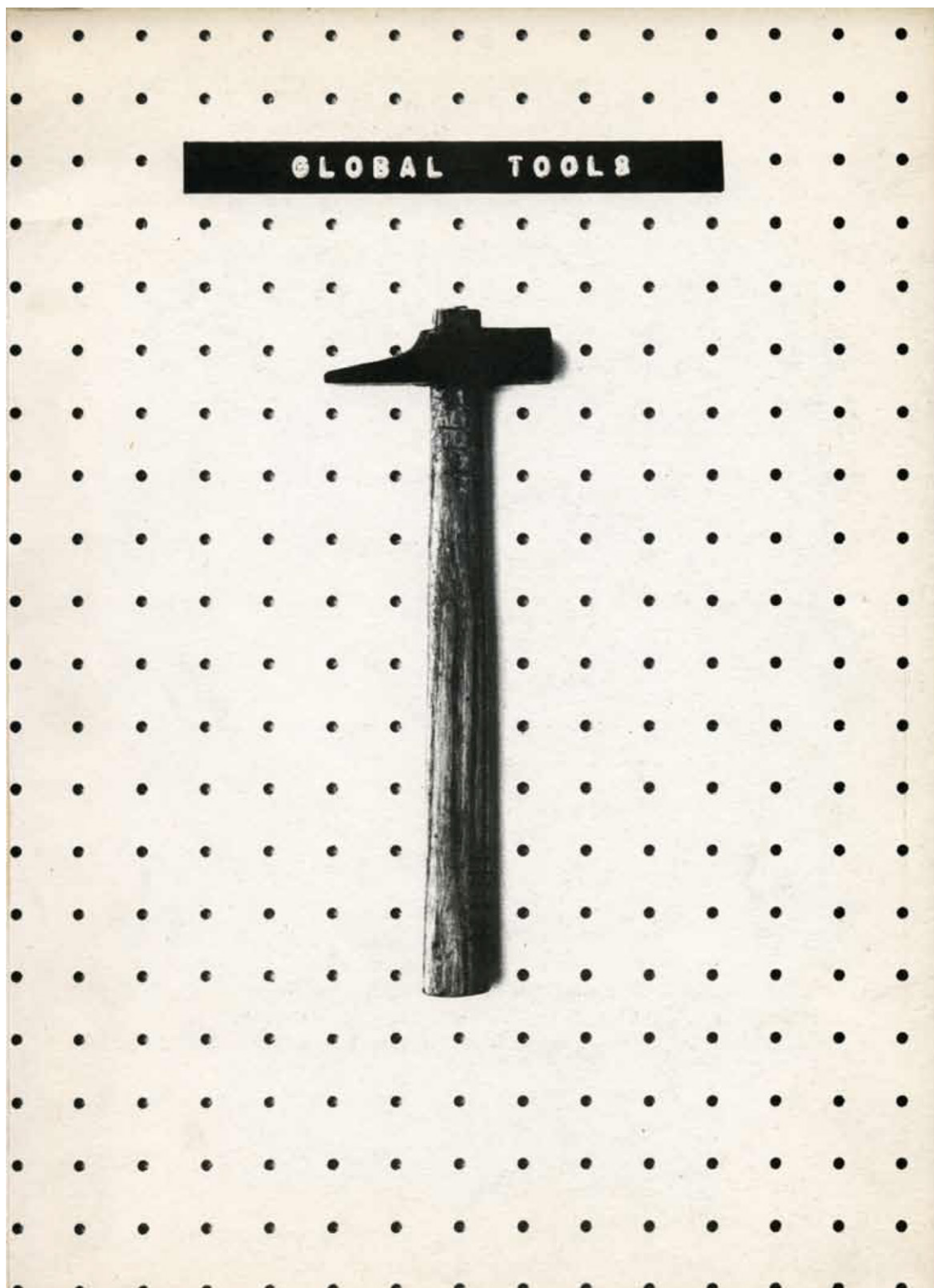
NOTES

1. Andrea Branzi, "Radical Notes," *Casabella* № 383, 1973, 10.
2. "The current search for new educational *funnels* must be reversed into the search for their institutional inverse: educational *webs* which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing." Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Introduction.
3. Andrea Branzi, quoted by Valerio Borgonuovo and Silvia Franceschini in the introduction to the present book.



GLOBAL TOOLS

1973-1975



Global Tools Bulletin №1, Edizioni L'uomo e l'arte, Milan, June 1974, Cover by Remo Buti

Valerio Borghonovo, Silvia Franceschini

WHEN EDUCATION COINCIDES WITH LIFE

THE FOUNDATION

“[...] THE CRUX OF THE DISCOURSE IS TO RE-PROPOSE THE DE-INTELLECTUALIZED MAN, IN THE SENSE OF HIS ARCHAIC POSSIBILITY OF WISDOM, WITH ALL THE ASSOCIATED CONSEQUENCES, PERHAPS EVEN WITH THE RECOVERY OF NOMADISM, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY. THE SCHOOL THEREFORE PROPOSES ENHANCEMENT OF THE CREATIVE FACULTIES IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEING, FACULTIES THAT ARE PRESENTLY STIFLED BY SPECIALIZATION AND THE FRENZY TO ACHIEVE EFFICIENCY. THE TERMINOLOGY, ASSUMPTIONS, METHODS AND STRUCTURES OF THE SCHOOL ARE CURIOUSLY SIMPLE: AS IF FORMULATED BY THOSE WHO INTEND TO BRIDGE THE ALIENATING GAP THAT HAS FORMED BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE HANDS AND THAT OF THE BRAIN.”

Bulletin No. 1 Global Tools, 1974

The idea of a “system of workshops in Florence for the propagation of the use of natural techniques

and materials, and related behaviors,” known under the name of Global Tools, emerged from a 1972-73 initiative of the most advanced area of Radical Architecture, taking form against the backdrop of the growing academic power oriented on the teachings of Aldo Rossi. The program to revamp the previous order inside the Schools of Architecture that had emerged in the years of maximum experimentation (1967-1968)¹ found fulfillment in 1973 with the 15th Milan Triennale, which, according to Paolo Deganello (Archizoom), sanctioned “the postwar of workers’ autonomy.”²

After the initial harsh criticisms,³ Radical design reached a theoretical maturity and perhaps its exhaustion following participation in the exhibition 1972: *Italy, The New Domestic Landscape*, curated by Emilio Ambasz at MoMA New York. The representatives of that phenomenon, as well as those of a second generation of architects and designers, then seemed to converge around the necessity – already underlined by Andrea Branzi (Archizoom) in the magazine *Casabella* in the col-





Global Tools, Editorial offices of *Casabella*, 12th January 1973. Photo by Carlo Bachi, Archive Casabella

umn “Radical Notes” – to formulate a long-term strategy that would come to terms with general themes and hypotheses, taking on a precise role and a precise destiny. These latter objectives, following the failure to achieve unity among the student movements, were undermined by the attempts of extra-parliamentary opposition groups to co-opt and distort the demands of the protest for renewal on the basis of cultural experiences, critical frontiers and a new social awareness that Branzi believed should have constituted the shared legacy of the avant-garde from which to start over again.⁴

But Global Tools did not take form to achieve an ideological project, nor did it attempt to outline any social or methodological model. It was conceived as moving inside an operative field free of formal programming, in which the results would not be judged in terms of models of reference, but acquired as acts of spontaneous communication.

Alessandro Mendini, then editor of the architecture magazine *Casabella*, became involved in the “Didactics of Crafts” due to a stimulus coming from the Florentine groups. This was seemingly part of a precise programmatic strategy that called

for the formation, starting with Florence, of a series of dispersed conceptual and experimental workshops whose results would then be brought into the public forum of the Milan-based magazines, and ultimately translated into industry as a moment of idea transfer. These intentions dovetailed with the interest of Franco Castelli, a Milanese patron and founder of the art gallery Galleria L’uomo e l’arte, who offered Global Tools the financial and logistical support to set up a Milan office to coordinate their activities. He also provided funds for the publication of the first two editions of the official bulletin.

It was *Casabella* that made the official announcement of the group’s constitution, on the 13th January 1973, in issue No 377, shortly thereafter beginning to periodically and informally publish its working documents and the results of the discussions in progress. The three notes for a didactic typology published in *Casabella* No. 379 detail the research, which, according to Superstudio, would call for “life as permanent global education” with particular reference to *Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illich, a text in which the Austrian pedagogist and philosopher states that the training of young people never happens

in the school context but elsewhere, in times and places beyond the control of the school. Along the same lines, Andrea Branzi writes: “From the school as from the prison, nothing good will ever be obtained: all those who believe that one day a school can exist that will teach how to make a revolution do not understand this truth. The same can be said of the city that functionally formalizes society at the point of its social transformation, immediately presenting itself as an autonomous, non-transformable cultural and figurative legacy: history has taught us that the city can never be a revolutionary instrument if not through its own failure (barricades).”⁵ Natalini, Pecchioli and Buti, on the other hand, contributed the idea that the

activity whose modes are being defined is not teaching but rather a cataloguing of self-educational possibilities. The definition of didactic typologies and the most appropriate relative forms would have to come from the comparison between all the components, with a particular focus on the contribution of the participants, emphasizing that “the principle of independent choice is valid, i.e. of a definition of groups based on declarations of willingness to take part in a certain work.” Analysis of conditioning therefore becomes the first step in a process of deconditioning and, finally, of appropriation-control of any conditioning. The dissolving of culture, the re-appropriation and successive transformation of its tools, thereby becomes the initial process for the total recovery and development of individual creative capacities. “A part of didactics (which we can call propaedeutic) thus operates on the technical destruction of culture. Based on this premise, it will be possible to attempt to make a first catalogue of tools for self-education.”



Gianni Pettena, *Io sono la spia*, 1973, Archive Gianni Pettena



EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

“THE TEACHING AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AROUND THEMES LIKE THE WORKING OF IRON AND WOOD, CERAMICS, TAILORING, MUSIC, GYMNASTICS, SINGING AND DANCE, GASTRONOMY, PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM, CAN CONSTITUTE AN APPROACH TO THE IDEAL POINT AT WHICH EDUCATION COINCIDES WITH LIFE ITSELF.”

Adolfo Natalini, a Global Tools document, 1973,

Global Tools was imagined as a school of arts and crafts and an anti-disciplinary attempt to establish a platform for the free exchange of different ideas and experiences: a place suited for the stimulation of individual creativity and the development of human potentialities. All within the more general perspective of continuing education, seen as “the only possible goal beyond the end of institutionalized education.” This initiative, intended to open up a period of experimentation among classes and students, was to have implemented a wide range of innovative processes in its functioning, from the viewpoint of both educational tools and also that of content. The educational tools would have to coincide with the direct experience of techniques and construction, the recording of original work

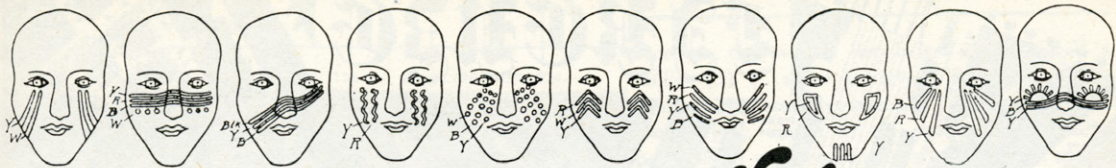
processes, and with direct frequentation of the places where such experiences might take place. “A school of formation, not of information.” The fundamental idea of Global Tools would thus be that of giving rise to experimentation capable of constituting an advanced laboratory for industry (into which innovative professional contributions would be brought, as well as the input of culture), and an example of new kind of education without students and without teachers. The “discontinuity” sought for here would emerge from the rupture dictated by the urgency of passing from an object to a behavior and vice versa, from one category of work (and therefore one scale of quality of work) to a tool that industry would not have been able to imagine, due to its constituting the expression of a liberation from the slavery of the non-object, and from disciplinary specificity.

The instant of learning is regarded here as a kind of group therapy that triggers a series of “reductive processes,” ranging from sensory deprivation to loss of culture. These processes include, for example, humble nutrition techniques, homemade cinema and books, adaptation of second-hand objects, and the idea of “doing without one more thing every day.”





Casabella № 377, May 1973, Cover design by Adolfo Natalini, Archive Casabella



Document-o No.1 "The-La-Co-n-stitu-z-t-ion-e"

Archizoom Associati, Remo Buti, Casabella, Riccardo Dalisi, Ugo La Pietra, 9999, Gaetano Pesce, Gianni Pettena, Rassegna, Ettore Sottsass jr., Superstudio, Ufo e Ziggurat, riuniti il 12 gennaio 1973 presso la redazione di Casabella, fondano la GLOBAL TOOLS, un sistema di laboratori a Firenze per la propagazione dell'uso di materie e tecniche naturali e relativi comportamenti.

La GLOBAL TOOLS si pone come obiettivo di stimolare il libero sviluppo della creatività individuale.

I corsi che si terranno forniranno le nozioni base necessarie all'uso degli attrezzi e degli strumenti esistenti nei laboratori, nonché informazioni su tecniche specifiche apprendibili in altri luoghi collegati in modi diversi alla GLOBAL TOOLS.

L'insegnamento avverrà intorno a temi quali: uso dei materiali naturali e artificiali, sviluppo delle attività creative individuali e di gruppo, uso e tecniche degli strumenti di informazione e comunicazione, strategie di sopravvivenza.

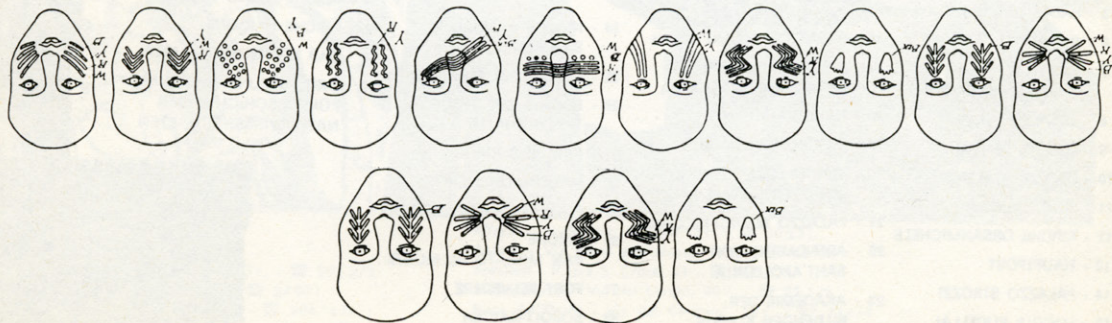
La GLOBAL TOOLS si organizza attraverso un comitato tecnico (formato dai rappresentanti dei firmatari del presente documento) che si occuperà della definizione della didattica e del programma funzionale. In successivi avvisi, che saranno pubblicati periodicamente su Casabella e Rassegna, verranno comunicati la tipologia didattica, l'arco delle ricerche, il calendario e l'organizzazione della scuola.

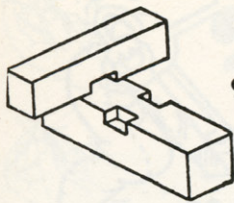
Archizoom Associati, Remo Buti, Casabella, Riccardo Dalisi, Ugo La Pietra, 9999, Gaetano Pesce, Gianni Pettena, Rassegna, Ettore Sottsass jr., Superstudio, UFO and Ziggurat, assembled in the offices of Casabella on the 12 January 1973 and founded GLOBAL TOOLS, a system of laboratories in Florence dedicated to promoting the study and use of natural technical materials and their relative behavioural characteristics. The objective of GLOBAL TOOLS is to stimulate the free development of individual creativity.

Courses will be held for communicating the basic information required for the proper use of our laboratory instruments and equipment; information will also be provided regarding specific techniques taught in other centres connected in various ways with GLOBAL TOOLS.

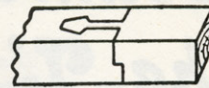
The teaching programme will deal with such subjects as: the use of natural and artificial materials, the development of individual and group creative activities, the use and techniques of information and communication media, and techniques of survival.

GLOBAL TOOLS is organized along the lines of a technical committee (consisting of the representatives of the signatories of the present document) which will be responsible for drawing up the teaching programme and the operational programme. From time to time Casabella and Rassegna will publish subsequent notices regarding the teaching programme, the range of research projects, the academic calendar and the school organization.





Document-o No.4 "The-Il-Program-ma"



IL PROGRAMMA PER IL PRIMO SEMINARIO,
SETTEMBRE 1974.

Le esperienze che si concretizzeranno all'interno di questo mese saranno tese allo sviluppo di quattro particolari tematiche riguardanti:

- il corpo
- la costruzione
- la comunicazione
- la sopravvivenza

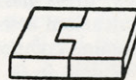
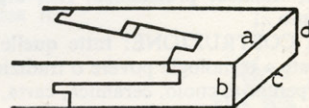
Attraverso l'indagine e l'approfondimento di questi settori, dell'"esperienza" individuale e collettiva, legati ad un recupero del comportamento creativo nei processi di riappropriazione dell'ambiente, si intende ricavare una serie di indicazioni e di dati indispensabili per la definizione dei programmi di lavoro da realizzarsi per tutto l'anno 1975.

PROGRAMME FOR THE FIRST SEMINAR,
SEPTEMBER 1974

The activities which will be arranged during this month will have the object of developing four particular themes regarding:

- the body
- construction
- communication
- survival

By carrying out research in depth into these themes and individual and collective experiences, linked to a revival of creative activity in the process of reconquering the environment, it is the aim to obtain a series of facts and figures for the setting up of work programmes for the whole of 1975.



Document-o No.5 "Groups-Activit-y-à-Dei Gruppi"

Ogni tematica sarà sviluppata da gruppi di "operatori" che definiranno i programmi e le modalità operative con la partecipazione degli "iscritti".

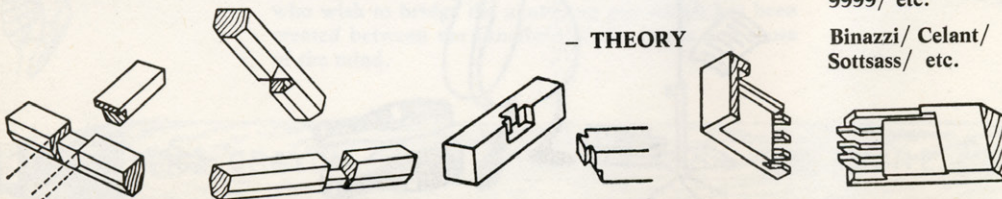
Lo sviluppo teorico e pratico di ogni tematica avrà una durata massima di otto giorni. Le tematiche saranno svolte una successivamente all'altra. All'interno di ogni "argomento" i vari operatori si collocheranno nel seguente ordine:

- CORPO: Natalini, Pesce, Chiari, Celant, eccetera.
- COSTRUZIONE: Dalisi, Sottsass, Branzi, Alison, Fabro, eccetera.
- COMUNICAZIONE: La Pietra, Pettena, Vaccari, Mendini, eccetera.
- SOPRAVVIVENZA: Superstudio, Ufo, Raggi, 9999, eccetera.
- TEORIA: Binazzi, Celant, Sottsass, eccetera.

Each theme will be developed by groups of "workers", who will devise the programmes and the way they are going to be carried out, and this will also involve a contribution from the "students".

The theoretical and practical development of each theme will not last more than eight days. The themes will be studied one after the other. For each of the various subjects the "workers" will take the following order:

- BODY: Natalini/ Pesce/ Chiari/ Celant/ etc.
- CONSTRUCTION: Dalisi/ Sottsass/ Branzi/ Alison/ Fabro/ etc.
- COMMUNICATION: La Pietra/ Pettena/ Vaccari/ Mendini/ etc.
- SURVIVAL: Superstudio/ Ufo/ Raggi/ 9999/ etc.
- THEORY: Binazzi/ Celant/ Sottsass/ etc.



LE VITE the lives

Oltre ai membri fondatori della Global Tools vengono qui elencati anche i primi collaboratori ai gruppi di lavoro (Corpo, Costruzione, Comunicazione, Sopravvivenza e Teoria).

FILIPPO ALISON, è nato a Torre Annunziata (Napoli) nel 1930.

Nel 1957 si è laureato in architettura. Dal 1970 è insegnante incaricato di arredamento alla facoltà di architettura di Napoli.

Ha svolto studi presso il Department of Fine Art dell'Università di Glasgow e presso la Scuola d'Arte di Glasgow sugli "ambienti" di C.R. Mackintosh, assumendo quale metodo di ricerca la ricostruzione degli oggetti realizzati con forme e dimensioni conformi all'originale. Oltre ad una costante attività progettuale di gruppo, ha sollecitato, con interventi a vari livelli di partecipazione, la ripresa dell'artigianato in varie zone del Sud, col proposito di riconsegnare alla "cultura" i valori che le appartengono. È tuttora interessato a sperimentare la necessità di attuare una sensibile convergenza dell'attività artigianale in organismi completamente industrializzati.

FILIPPO ALISON was born at Torre Annunziata, near Naples, in 1930. In 1957 he graduated in architecture. Since 1970 he has been teaching interior design at the Architecture Faculty in Naples.

He has conducted studies at the Department of Fine Art at Glasgow University and at Glasgow Art School on C.R. Mackintosh's "environments", using as a research technique the reconstruction of the objects with forms and dimensions which corresponded to the original.

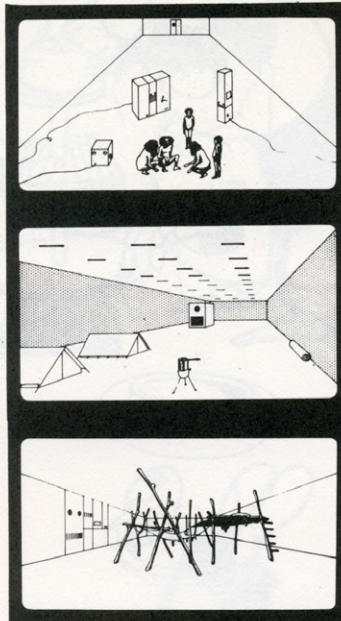
As well as continuous group planning activity, he has encouraged, with contributions at various levels, the revival of handicrafts in various areas of the South, with the objective of giving back to "culture" the values which are its right.

At present he is engaged in experimenting the need to bring together artisan activities into completely industrialized bodies.

ARCHIZOOM ASSOCIATI, è stato fondato a Firenze nel 1964 e ha sede a Milano.

Si occupa di tutti i processi riduttivi del design, dei sistemi do it yourself e del rapporto tra architettura e produzione intellettuale di massa.

Dal 1970 porta avanti una ricerca teorica e sperimentale sul dressing design: sui materiali di costruzione degli abiti, sui sistemi costruttivi e sulle strutture



ARCHIZOOM ASSOCIATES, founded in Florence in 1964, has its office in Milan. It is concerned with all the reductive processes of design, do-it-yourself systems and the relationship between architecture and mass intellectual output. Since 1970 it has been conducting a theoretical and experimental study of dress design—the materials for making clothes, systems of making them and the use structures of clothing.

REMO BUTI, nato in data sconosciuta a Livorno, laureato in architettura a Firenze, si occupa di design e lavorazione della ceramica, dressing design e comunicazioni visive.



Besides the founding members of Global Tools, the first collaborators to the groups The body, Construction, Communication, Survival and Theory are here mentioned.

REMO BUTI was born in Leghorn. He graduated in architecture in Florence, and is now concerned with pottery design and manufacturing, dressing design and visual communications.

CASABELLA, gloriosa rivista mensile di architettura e design fondata nel 1928, nata criticamente con Edoardo Persico. Come l'Araba Fenice, rinasce puntualmente dalle sue ceneri.

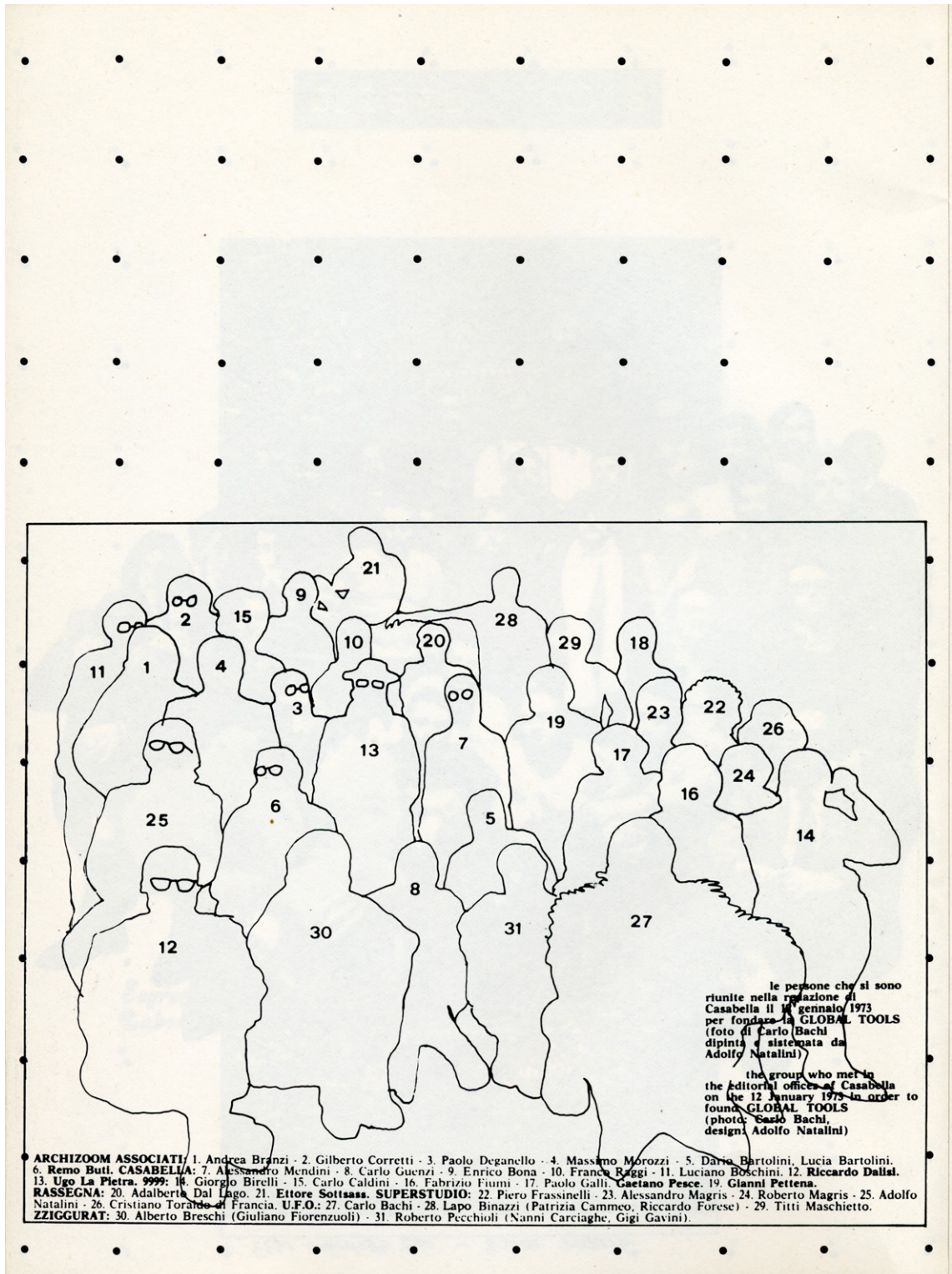
Con lenta e faticosa trasformazione è diventata il contraddittorio ma indispensabile veicolo dell'avanguardia radicale in architettura.

Per la Global Tools svolge funzione di informazione e di supporto ideologico specialmente attraverso l'opera del suo direttore e di uno oscuro redattore.



CASABELLA, a glorious monthly architecture and design magazine founded in 1928. Its critical importance began with Edoardo Persico.

Phoenix-like it was reborn from its own ashes. Through a slow and tiring process of transformation it has become the contradictory but essential voice of the radical architectural avantgarde. For Global Tools it provides an information function and gives ideological support, especially through the work of the editor and an obscure member of the staff



Working with pre-school children to learn new behavioral and project models is another important possibility for a return to a zero degree of culture. The main sources of inspiration for Global Tools did in fact include the experience of the Neapolitan architect Riccardo Dalisi in the work he had been engaged in for several years with the children of Rione Traiano, a satellite town in the Naples area, built in the postwar era and threatened by serious problems of urban decay and organized crime.

“Riccardo Dalisi conducted spontaneous group education experiments, offering structures for the *scugnizzi* [Neapolitan slang for ‘street urchins’] to manipulate, grouped to create objects and environments. In a certain sense, his work was not just another attempt to create a teaching method based on spontaneity, but a probing of unexplored depths of energy.”⁶ “One less culture” would therefore be the imperative towards which the new radical avant-garde would advance, the destruction of technique and the directing of every action towards the corrosion of traditional design values from the inside.

An important role was played by the rediscovery of folk culture, with its simple craftwork tech-

niques, its domestic and rural traditions, seen as fundamental for a renewed relationship between man and technique, and, more generally, between culture and the spontaneous creativity of the individual. For the founders of Global Tools, such experiences and traditions represented precious evidence of a different way of making culture, seen as an asset produced and consumed by the whole society, not just by a specialized sector; culture seen as an asset directly linked to biological and economic life, not as a separate channel of aesthetic experience. “The handicrafts and artisanal (or humble) technologies that Global Tools promotes are absolutely not approached as an alternative to industrial production, which would plunge us back into the useless arguments of sixty years ago; if anything, they serve to produce a different definition of the area of production itself, no longer seen as a mechanism of reproduction of the entire phenomenology of objects and functions that surround us, but as a specific and limited sector that serves to stimulate a non-provisional space set aside for individual creativity and spontaneous communication.”⁷ Seminars were then held, close in nature to “happenings,” along with explorations of specific themes, and operations of simplification calling for the use of humble mate-



rials as opposed to such artificial materials as the plastics employed by the Italian “Bel Design” of Zanuso, Magistretti and others. The year was 1973 and Italy, like all other oil importing countries, was in the midst of an energy crisis mainly caused by the sudden and unexpected interruption of the supply of petroleum from the OPEC nations.

Inside Global Tools, Ugo La Pietra promoted discussion on the complementary relationship between (industrial) design and the applied arts, which he defined as “all that often experimental constructive activity not destined for industrial production (but often upstream from it) possessed of very high technical and expressive quality.”

According to La Pietra, the artist in search of his most incisive function has to rediscover “manual making” as an immediate possibility of expression; while, at the same time, the crisis of consumption imposes the search for permanent products. The use of simple techniques constitutes an important tool for the recovery, on a social level, of the creative faculties of the individual; faculties that are inborn but which have atrophied due to a destiny bound to production. The liberation from the moral and cultural constraints

imposed by tradition could, instead, lead to personal realization through the production of an individual cultural identity, created through the direct construction of the objects around us, and through the ordering of a private cultural habitat.

RESEARCH AND WORK GROUPS

The premises of Global Tools, then, remained those of a “school but non-school,” absolutely anti-didactic and abstract, and based on the



Global Tools visual identity, Remo Buti
1973-1974, Archive Remo Buti

idea of rediscovering a direct relationship between a craft and an object made without passing through the conceptualization of a design. Five work groups were formed (Communication, Body, Construction, Survival, and Theory), not belonging to any pre-set disciplinary sphere, or one existing or even “imaginable” at the time. The groups would function in an autonomous but tightly interconnected and interdisciplinary way. The fine subdivision of fields of knowledge and action in disciplinary spheres was seen as the basis for a repressive system tending to channel



Global Tools identity, Remo Buti, 1973-1974, Archive Remo Buti

individual creative abilities into pre-set models referring to current concepts of qualification and classification. “It is our intention to no longer comply with the logic of disciplinary involutions and structures, but simply to act with means that are more congenial to us, not inside an abstract reality (the reality of the disciplines), but in direct relation to a more vast, shared reality.”⁸

In the manifesto of the Construction Group (signed by Andrea Branzi, Riccardo Dalisi and Superstudio), Branzi defined simple technology as “the back-to-zero of any technological filter, any instrumental, cultural, methodological or techno-practical medium, any already given material.” Dalisi brought to the group his research on the general theory he termed *tecnologia povera* [poor, or humble, technology] : “it began with the premise that by removing from technology, even temporarily, the logical code of its internal relationships, the chasm of constructive energies would be opened up; getting beyond the limits of security of techniques, free access would be permitted to the constructive and creative processes of entire strata of the population previously excluded from the *ars aedificandi*.” The idea of a “generative technique” comes from the research

of the American linguist Noam Chomsky, who several years previously had demonstrated the impact on language of human creativity, theorizing the idea of a generative grammar.

The Construction Group also suggested tracking down the emotional charge connected with the force of material not yet organized, and to provoke all the cognitive value of the improper use of that material. Among the various techniques evaluat-



Global Tools identity, Remo Buti, 1973-1974, Archive Remo Buti

ed, the “techniques of deconstruction” stand out most; a procedure balanced between the possibility of destruction and the alteration of the cognitive process. The workshops of this group also called for all those constructive activities connected with humble and traditional technologies: woodworking, carpentry, leather, ceramics, paper, glass, plastic, papier maché, weaving, and spinning.

The Construction Group left behind nothing “constructed,” but just the memory of a failed attempt on the part of Andrea Branzi, Ettore Sottsass Jr. and Masanori Umeda to build a raft out of polystyrene, which they launched on the Ticino River. The results of the Body Group, on the other hand, left us with documentation on various workshops and performances exploring the limits of the body, which approach the experiences of Body Art and the experimentation of certain German and Austrian groups. “I was closely connected to the Viennese, Haus-Rucker-Co., Walter Pichler, Max Peintner, Coop Himmelb(l)au; it was the moment in which this sense of drama was compelling us to reflect upon survival. The word ecology did not yet exist, and the reasoning was on the idea of “elementary survival.””⁹ The Survival Group conveys the most apocalyptic and accurate image of the

period of the Cold War, Middle Eastern conflict and the Energy Crisis, having various connections (or influences) with the American post-atomic and neo-ecological experiences, including the books on social design by Victor Papanek, the Shelter publications by Lloyd Kahn, the *Whole Earth Catalog* of Stewart Brand, the geodesic domes of Buckminster Fuller and his experience as a teacher together with Ant Farm and Zomeworks in the totally anarchic project of the Pacific High School in California. This was the atmosphere around the construction of a reversed arch in the Bobolino Gardens on Via della Pace in Florence, home to Paolo Galli of 9999, and scene to the building of several subsequent “arks,” though no documentation has survived. The group – composed of Superstudio and 9999 – organized, from the 1st to 4th November 1974, as an initial “survival experiment,” the first seasonal workshop of all the Global Tools groups. This was held at the country home of Roberto Magris at Sambuca, in the province of Florence, with the aim of creating an extra-urban situation of cultural deconditioning, as a premise to organize the works of the nascent school, while simultaneously testing the conditions prior to the start of the courses slated for the spring of the following year. This group therapy, a true collective session

of auto-anthropology, included real-time actions of organization of transportation and communication, cooking and coexistence, as well as other manual activities like renovation and work with the earth, in parallel with discussions and debates.

Global Tools thus marked a transition from the city (which had been so central to Radical Architecture) to nature, and then to the object, with all the limits of the body this implies, from dress to survival, to organize reflections on the habitat.

The Communication Group focused instead on analysis of the tools of communication and the deviating effects caused by their use, working towards a possible rediscovery of spontaneous communication. Their work aimed to eliminate the tools of mediation and the deforming “filter” which the “tool” can create between the individual and reality. The idea was to widen exchanges with a view to the participation of all persons in the dynamic of communications (overcoming the passive-active relationship between the spectator and the actor), and for greater awareness of the environment in which we live and work, through the messages each person wants to communicate. To test the “experience of acquisition of posses-



sion of instruments of communication” the group formed by Guido Arra, Ugo La Pietra, Gianni Pettena and Franco Vaccari decided to take a trip along the Rhine in the September of 1974 – from Dusseldorf to Basel – on a boat named the *France*, selected as the most homogeneous and stable collective space possible for a relatively long duration, without risk of interruption. Through this experiment, the group sought an obsessive-coercing situation where emotional phenomena and psychic automatisms would be amplified, free of distractions. They remained for a number of days on the boat, experimenting with the results of a spontaneous communication that can emerge from the situation of boredom, isolation and the visual monotony of the surrounding landscape.

From the work of the Theory Group, a significant report remains, prepared by Lapo Binazzi and focusing on the definition of theory as pure creativity to be attained by means of discontinuity.

ANTI-PROJECT AND ABOLITION OF LABOR

Global Tools sets out to divulge a different purpose of creativity itself, namely that of achieving a “non-productive” outcome, evaluated as a hypoth-

esis of the abolition of labor. “In the hypothesis of a workless society, creativity corresponds to the unleashing of a liberating energy as an end in itself (in the sense that it does not produce value), something therapeutic and free of encoded meanings. The conditions for a work-free society are developing due to the pressure of two vectors (apparently with opposing signs): the refusal to work and the automation of production. The experiences



Riccardo Dalisi, Portrait, Sambuca, 1974
Archive Adolfo Natalini

of Global Tools, like those of the entire avant-garde, thus move in the direction of a technical destruction of culture with the goal of liberalizing its use.”¹⁰

Manfredo Tafuri, in the book published in 1973 *Progetto e Utopia*, also focused on the problem of labor. “The intellectual avant-gardes now have to occupy an area from which they have remained extremely distant up to this point: that of labor. As it is no longer possible to maintain the distance from productive labor that had ensured the sacred character of intellectual research in the past, all that remains is to voluntarily take a step that implies, however, the destruction of the classic roles. Benjamin’s ‘decline of the aura’ is not only induced by the general spread of the new means of production, but is also the result of a conscious choice: inside it we find all the will of survival contained in the disoriented anti-institutional battle undertaken by ‘negative thought.’”¹¹ In the idea of rejection of work and a methodology constructed on negative thought, concepts derived more or less explicitly from the contemporary post-workerist philosophical currents of Tronti and Negri, perhaps the most experimental and pertinent avant-garde content Global Tools sought to formulate takes on telling complexity,

that of an anti-rhetoric of design that consisted in its complete erasure. Andrea Branzi would later define this attitude as anti-project: “the entire 20th century has been crossed by the hidden path of a minority, that of the anti-project. It is a path that has attempted to undermine the most naive points of modernity, including the optimism of the Bauhaus and its faith in a future of order and rationality. I speak of optimism in the sense of a thought that resolves and mediates an antinomy intrinsic to the industrial dimension, which on the one hand can be a devastating reality, and on the other can generate a hedonistic civilization.”¹²

This period marks the beginning of the end of classic industrial culture and the birth of post-industrial culture characterized simultaneously by widespread creativity and the resultant emergence of niche markets; design culture shifted its center of gravity from the pure industrial logic of rationalism to the larger social context. Branzi continues, in an article critiquing the educational model of the Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung: “The points of reference of a modernity that had hitherto developed along the lines of a major semantic reduction are modified to take on the complexity of the real as a new linguistic heritage.



Ulm becomes a sort of myth to be debunked, a limitation to be overcome; its Calvinist reformism seems unsuitable to stand up to the overwhelming wave of new needs, its *Gestaltung* proves to be too thin with respect to the new mass languages. Italian design has developed on premises that are the opposite of those hypothesized by the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* of Ulm, in the pres-



Alessandro Mendini, Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

ence of a 'weak' didactic culture, of an eccentric design methodology and an industrial structure that is not programmed and strong."¹³ Global Tools should thus be reinterpreted as the first harbinger of the project in the era of globalization.

STRUCTURING AND DISSOLVING OF GLOBAL TOOLS

In the anticipation of increasingly global scenarios, the program of a school could not help but take the form of a mobile platform, connected on an international level. The program of Global Tools called, in fact, for the formation of connections with similar schools and institutes in other countries, with exchanges of students and study grants, likewise with foreign universities and design institutes, and the integration of other programs with specialized courses. The program also envisioned a foundation dedicated to the documentation of simple, artisanal or alternative techniques from all over the world. Finally, the school would publish a bulletin on the technical details of work and news about programs and research projects, distributed through the magazine *Casabella* (as effectively happened for two issues in 1974 and 1976) and also incorporated

OPPOSITIONS

A Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture

Editors

Peter Eisenman
Kenneth Frampton
Mario Gandelsonas

Executive Editor

David Morton

30 MARCH 74.

CARLO SARAGRO :

ENCLOSED OPPOSITIONS 2

HOUSE III W/ TEXT

OPPOSITIONS 3 IN PRODUCTIONS
GLOBAL TOOLS TRANSLATED
READY FOR 4.

CIAO

PETER .

in other international publications like the New York magazine *Opposition* of Peter Eisenman, a collaboration which never came to fruition.

When the time came to give structure to the courses and classes, the school and its attempt at interdisciplinary programming collapsed, running aground and then coming to a full halt due to positions of dissent regarding what for some of the founders or participants was becoming an excessively ambitious or time-consuming opportunity plagued by far too many points of disagreement. Others sensed a drift away from the original idea towards a concentration of organizational echelons towards Milan, and above all, at a time of global change, Italy was then entering that painful, traumatic shadow zone represented by the period of terrorism.

This experience should therefore be seen in context, in all its uniqueness, as a phase of transition – a weak link of a “threshold” movement (between the historical avant-gardes and a new era) that marked a passage of scale, of “infiltrations” in a new period in which the avant-garde would no longer be a minority, but would involve the whole of society, in which normality would

be the only true exception, and in which the only design methodology would be that of the avant-garde itself. But the legacy left behind would be much more important and precious than has been understood, investigated and outlined thus far, given the fact that from this experience, from this climate, such cases of production of radically transgressive objects have emerged as: the lamps and picnic gear made by the *Laboratorio di Nuovo Artigianato Casa Anas* founded in Florence by UFO in 1975, which continued its activity until 1985; the interpretation of “dressing design” by Lucia Bartolini with Archizoom Associati in terms of “modifications of the use of second-hand objects and garments”; the relationship between design and art objects in which to insert certain production segments like that of furniture, with the long-lasting initiative *Abitare il Tempo* of Ugo La Pietra; or the work with pre-school children (Global Village) conducted by the *Cooperativa dei ragazzi* founded in Florence by Giovanni Pecchioli, Lucia Pecchioli, Gilberto Corretti, Dario Bartolini and Lucia Bartolini, based on participation of volunteers and the invention of new pedagogical paths. The activity of the Cooperative (operating until 1996) consisted in organizing creative workshops for young children, operating



in various school facilities, inventing and selling books, educational aids and toys. Mention should also be made of the in-depth study on *Cultura Materiale Extraurbana* (Extraurban Material Culture) elaborated by Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia with illustrations by Michele De Lucchi, after the proposals made in Global Tools on the theme of “Auto-Anthropology”; the reflections on territories and their decay, and on the peripheries of cities, with the *Architettura Eventuale* of Almerico De Angelis and the *Arte nel Sociale*, in which many previous radical personalities and experiences converged, including Riccardo Dalisi, Ugo La Pietra, and the Neapolitans Ugo Marano and Eduardo Alamaro. Finally, there are the reflections on speculation around abandoned quarries and the lack of revitalization of the landscape by the Padua-based group CAVART.

Among those who took part in this “expansion” and then metamorphosis of (Radical) architecture, some in particular – perceiving a historic transformation underway in design, towards the post-industrial society (marked by the advent of “intelligent objects”), and then above all towards that enormous structural phenomenon of the frag-

mentation of markets – felt the need for a similar formal updating of objects, for a change in their identity that would be capable of attracting the attention of consumers constantly distracted by the chaos of the metropolis. Andrea Branzi began to call what was emerging “new Italian design.” In this context, Studio Alchimia was founded in 1975-77 by Alessandro Guerriero, who managed to



Davide Mosconi, Portrait
Sambuca 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

produce an initial collection, dated 1978-79, under the title ALCHIMIA. Studio Alchimia was the first agency to produce prototypes working without any clientele, and thus represented a quite highly evolved phase, closely approximating later tendencies in the field of design. While Ettore Sottsass Jr., Paola Navone, Franco Raggi, Andrea Branzi, Daniela Puppa and others still were involved, the key figure to emerge from this experience was that of Alessandro Mendini, who, in 1979 – following a short stint as editor of the magazine *Modo*, starting in 1976 – had become the editor of *Domus*, and who, with Alchimia, would be the creator, among other things, of *Architettura ermafrodita*: an environment that has clear echoes of the attempts and experiments of Global Tools on the theme of the body. This situation was matched by another generated by Ettore Sottsass Jr., who quickly emerged from the Alchimia initiative to found the Memphis group in Milan in 1981 (at the age of 64), together with Barbara Radice and thanks to the particular support of the lighting company Artemide, an experience that continued until 1988.

An intense, complex evolution thus took place from Radical Architecture (its birth), pass-

ing through the “overall experiences” of design (*design primario*), then Studio Alchimia and Memphis, leading to a territory presumably capable of taking on wider responsibilities, plausibly expressed by the idea of a small international graduate school, as represented by the Domus Academy in Milan, founded among others by Andrea Branzi in 1985, with the goal of providing preparation to come to terms with the scenarios of the nascent post-industrial society. Domus Academy had enormous international appeal, symptomatic of a very strong demand for change, in which Italy had led the way by developing the theoretical side. Shortly after its founding, the school had 34 students from as many as 29 different countries, and formed a partnership with the Mitsubishi Corporation as a consulting company for the Japanese government, the Domus Design Agency. With the Domus Academy, in a more specifically technical and realistic approach, many of the aspects of Global Tools seemed to feasibly (for better or worse) crystallize into form, particularly its distinct, prophetic way of questioning the project of education.



NOTES

1. Experimentation stimulated in the School of Architecture of Florence by figures such as Leonardo Savioli and his 1966-67 course "Spazio di coinvolgimento," Leonardo Ricci, who had proposed the abolition of the urban plan in favor of a "creative plan," and the course in Semiotics taught by Umberto Eco at the same school.
2. "[...] in tune with the progressive development of a historic compromise, a new opposition, a social truce pursued to adapt salaries to the productivity of work, to recover profit margins that would justify the resumption of investments, to subject the labor market to the needs of growth; government, unions, reformist political organizations committed to freeze worker autonomy and rejection of work and study, inside the straightjacket of the truce." Paolo Deganello, "1968 - XIV Triennale, della contestazione 1973 - XV Triennale, della restaurazione," *Casabella* № 383, November 1973, 30-31.
3. In particular, those of the Italian critic and theorist Manfredo Tafuri.
4. "It is unthinkable to introduce this legacy in the present world of industrial design, which comes from a culture that began in 1920 and has never been radically renewed; just as it is unthinkable that this legacy can be developed inside the present university structures," Andrea Branzi, "Global Tools," in "Radical Notes," *Casabella* № 377, May 1973.
5. Andrea Branzi, "L'abolizione della scuola" ("The abolition of school"), in "Radical Notes," *Casabella* № 373, January 1973.
6. Andrea Branzi, "La creatività di massa," in Andrea Branzi, ed., *La Casa Calda. Esperienze del Nuovo Design Italiano* (Milan: Idea Books, 1984), 80-84.
7. Andrea Branzi, "Global Tools" in "Radical Notes," *Casabella* № 377, May 1973.
8. Riccardo Dalisi, "The strategic role of humble technique in creative teaching," in Riccardo Dalisi, *Reproicità e Creatività*, a Global Tools document, 1973, previously unpublished materials.
9. From an unpublished conversation between Alessandro Mendini, Silvia Franceschini and Valerie Guillaume, Studio Mendini, Milan, September 27, 2012.
10. Archizoom Associati, Archive Adolfo Natalini, 1973.
11. Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia: architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* (Rome/Bari: Saggi Tascabili Laterza, 1973).
12. Andrea Branzi, Armin Linke, and Alessandro Rabottini, *Gli strumenti non esistono. La dimensione antropologica del design* (Monza: Johan & Levi editore, 2013).
13. Andrea Branzi, "Quei monaci sulla collina," *Pomeriggi alla media-industria - Design e Seconda Modernità* (Milan: Idea Books, 1988).



First hypothesis for the founding of a School of Popular Arts and Techniques
(no date)

Two different concepts exist of the term "popular culture."

One conception sees popular culture as a set of relics to conserve in a museum: a complex of extinct technologies and habits that can somehow be documented to transmit their memory to future generations, just as the techniques and customs of ancient Egypt or the Romans are documented as an educational complement to the history taught in schools.

This conception is fundamentally "conservative," purely ethnological, and has no impact on today's culture.

Then there is another conception of popular culture; this conception starts with the pursuit of a different relationship between man and techniques, and, more generally, between culture and the spontaneous creativity of the individual. Popular cultures, i.e. the simple techniques of crafts or of domestic or rural traditions, suggest a way of moving beyond aesthetic models and technological taboos, often to propose a "simple and private" mode of artistic doing, not viewed as a universal experience but as a creative and constructive act connected with the necessities of the moment or the creative drive of a group or an individual.

This type of experience and tradition offers precious evidence of a different way of making culture, seen as an asset produced and consumed by the whole society and not by a sector specializing in such work; culture seen as an asset directly linked to biological and economic life, and not as a separate channel of aesthetic experiences.

This is what interests us about the popular culture of yesterday and today.

The entire history of industry and design has distanced the use of crafts techniques from the home and from cultural production in general. Mass production has replaced the artifact, the one-of-a-kind piece or, in any case, the maker's prototype almost everywhere.

This distancing, while on the one hand favoring the spread of an average level of taste in society, has on the other made the so-called "applied arts" disappear, namely all those constructive and often experimental activities not aimed at industrial production (though often upstream from it), endowed with a very high level of technical and expressive quality.

Today a new space is opening up for this type of activity: the artist, in search of a more incisive role, rediscovers in "manual making" an immediate possibility of expression; at the same time, the crisis of consumerism imposes the pursuit of permanent products.

The "applied arts" are not in an impossible competition with design and with the function of industry; they are their necessary complement.

But there is also something else.

A School of Popular Arts and Techniques

The use of simple techniques can constitute an important tool for the recovery of the creative faculties of the individual on a social level. These faculties are innate, but have atrophied due to a fate linked to production.

Recovery of these creative faculties is a political and social right, and an important factor of a process of liberation of the individual. Liberation from the moral and cultural constraints imposed by tradition, which represent a very serious impediment to freedom of self-fulfillment.

This fulfillment happens through full exercise of our civil rights, but also through the production of our own cultural identity, achieved through the direct construction of the objects around us, as a way of bringing quality to a private cultural habitat.

These considerations and the desire to inscribe in an initiative an entire set of phenomena that have happened in these years (from the rediscovery of creativity to the avant-garde design movements) prompt us to imagine a new type of school, or more generally a new type of organization, which we can provisionally call the "International School of Popular Arts and Techniques."

In its functioning, this school should implement a wide range of innovative processes, from the standpoint of educational processes and that of cultural content.

A school in which all those simple techniques aimed at the development in the individual of the use of their creative faculties are learned, recorded and achieved. In this sense the school does not transmit a culture to be learned, but instead triggers a cultural process.

The didactic tools coincide with the direct exercise of technical and constructive experiences, the formulation of original work processes, and the direct frequentation of places where certain experiences happen.

A school of formation, not of information.

The program of workshops

The school should have different levels of functioning.

1) It should provide courses of study for persons who want to engage on an artistic level in specific artisanal techniques; with courses lasting from six to eight months, combining suitable technical preparation and direct practice in the workshops.

2) Short courses, from two months to fifteen days, designed to teach very simple working techniques to persons with no particular preparation who are interested in finding out about simple techniques and gaining information about handicrafts for private use. There could be different forms of subscription for multiple courses.

3) The school should publish a newsletter on particular working techniques, with information on programs and research projects.

4) Recording, in a special foundation, of documentation on simple artisanal or alternative techniques from all over the world.

There should be close ties with similar schools and institutes in other countries, exchanges of students and recipients of study grants, also with foreign universities and design institutes, to round out other programs with specialized courses.

The subjects that could be taught:

CERAMICS

PERFORMING ARTS

WOODWORKING

TAILORING

FOOD

The courses could deal with:

WOODWORKING the making of objects and spaces in wood, wooden architecture, spatial structures, floating spaces, special applications, instruments.

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METALWORKING jewelry, silverware, embossed metals, light structures, useful objects, containers, use of recycled materials.

CERAMICS crockery, terracotta, shapeable materials, plaster casts, useful objects, fantasy objects, coverings, domestic monuments.

FABRICS AND TAILORING fabric design, weaving, dress design, garment systems, physical ornamentation, maquillage, reuse and transformation of garments.

MUSIC AND DANCE how to play everything, modern dance, gymnastics, eurhythmics, psychomotor activities, breathing, meditation, techniques of bodily communication.

INFORMATION TECHNIQUE techniques of communication and alternative circuits, printing-publishing, video recorders, techniques of live shooting, animation, film design.

NUTRITION raw and cooked foods, diet, psychology and rituals of nutrition, creative nutrition, humble nutrition.

SURVIVAL survival techniques, humble technology, primitive architecture, temporary shelters, use of water and fire, alternative urban behaviors.

Archive Ugo La Pietra

(no title, no date)

A school of arts and crafts in Florence represents an anti-disciplinary attempt to establish a place of free exchange of different ideas and experiences, a place suited for the simulation of individual creativity and bringing out human potentialities.

This all comes under the more general perspective of continuing education which remains the only possible objective beyond the completion of institutionalized education.

The teaching and exchanges of experiences around themes like the working of iron and wood, tailoring, ceramics, music, gymnastics, singing and dance, gastronomy, photography and film can constitute an approach to the ideal moment in which education coincides with life itself.

GLOBAL TOOLS

Foreword

(18th December 1973)

The stimulus to implement a pedagogy of crafts is the result of the interest – on the part of the founders of Global Tools – in a correct solution to the long-term problems of environmental formalization, which is often the opposite of their resolution seen only over the short term. The focus of the discussion is the return to a de-intellectualized human being, seen in terms of the archaic possibility of wisdom, with all the consequences that may result, even to the point of the recovery of nomadism and the destruction of the city. The school therefore proposes to nurture the creative faculties of every single human being, still overwhelmed by specialization and the frenzy of efficiency.

The terminology, assumptions, methods and structures of the school are curiously simple: as they are for those who set out to bridge the alienating gap that has taken form between the work of the hands and that of the brain. Here is the foundation document of GLOBAL TOOLS, as it was published in issue 377 (May 1973) of the magazine *Casabella*:

"Archizoom Associati, Remo Buti, Casabella, Riccardo Dalisi, Ugo La Pietra, 9999, Gaetano Pesce, Gianni Pettena, Rassegna, Ettore Sottsass Jr., Superstudio, U.F.O. and Ziggurat, gathered on 12th January 1973 at the editorial offices of *Casabella*, found GLOBAL TOOLS, a system of workshops in Florence for the propagation of the use of natural technical materials and related behaviors. The objective of GLOBAL TOOLS is to stimulate free growth of individual creativity. The courses will supply the

GLOBAL TOOLS

basic notions needed for the use of equipment and existing tools in the workshops, as well as information on specific techniques that can be learned in other places connected in different ways to GLOBAL TOOLS. The teaching will focus on themes like: the use of natural and artificial materials, development of individual or group creative activities, the use and techniques of tools of information and communication, survival strategies."

Categories of research and application of some of the main activities of GLOBAL TOOLS:

BODY: all the psycho-motor and aesthetic activities connected with the body and its most immediate stimuli: dance, music, cosmetics, tattoos, gymnastics, dress design, hair design, ornaments, jewelry, somatic communications, mimicry, proxemics, rituals, ergonomics, behavior.

CONSTRUCTION: all those activities linked to humble or traditional technologies: carpentry, woodworking, leatherworking, pottery, paper, glass, plastic, papier-mâché, weaving, spinning.

COMMUNICATION: all the activities connected with the tools and techniques of communication: photography, lithography, typography, cinema, videotape, theater, music.

SURVIVAL: activities involved in physical and psychic survival: agriculture, hydroponics, exploration, camping, gastronomy, meditation, contemplation, astronomy.

THEORY: meditative or totally theoretical activities: religion, meditation, contemplation, fasting, rituals, ideology, cosmic theories, reductive processes, prayer.

Other activities of research or action can be identified and proposed over time, giving rise to temporary, provisional or definitive experiences.

PROGRAM

for the first "workshop" to be done in the month of September 1974

The experiences that will happen in this workshop will address four particular themes:

- the body
- construction
- communication
- survival

Through in-depth investigation of these areas of individual and collective "experience" connected with recovery of creative behavior in processes of re-appropriation of the environment, we hope to obtain a series of indispensable indications and data for the definition of the work programs to be implemented throughout 1975.

Groups of "operators" will be organized within each thematic area to outline the programs and modes of operation, also developed in relation to the contributions of the "enrolled" participants.

The theoretical and practical investigation of each theme will last no more than eight days.

Inside each "subject" the various operators will be organized as follows:

BODY	<u>Superstudio</u> (Natalini) / <u>Pesce</u> / Chiari / Mosconi / Celant.
CONSTRUCTION	<u>Dalisi</u> / <u>Sottsass</u> / <u>Archizoom</u> (Branzi) / Alison.
COMMUNICATION	<u>La Pietra</u> / <u>Pettina</u> / Vaccari.
SURVIVAL	<u>Superstudio</u> / <u>UFO</u> .

Riccardo Dalisi

Reciprocity and creativity

Creativity as the possibility of an ambivalent, reciprocal condition in the counterpart, who is in turn induced to re-create rather than to consume.

The creative person rediscovers the structures of the materiality of the object (the medium), as necessary in their natural character, in their originality.

Strategic role of humble technique in creative teaching.

Just as science has its roots and first explanations in magic, so too does high technology have its origins in humble technology. We have to go back to this, to rediscover the lost meaning of the object, technique, art, at the limit of technological progress. Humble technique is critically opposed to pure technique. The humble technique is typically "mixed" and open, hence its opposition to the apolitical myth of pure technology.

Humble technique is the result of a creativity adherent to the world, to primal objectuality. Humble technique on the borderline between manual creativity and technicized creativity (manualization of technique). Humble technique is against the technologization of creativity.

In the past, "perfection," the liberation from manual labor, the most extreme automatism, belonged to the sphere of myth. Today, naturalness and authenticity have become a myth, and the battle is for authenticity.

GLOBAL TOOLS

Without urging useless and impossible returns to the past, the struggle is not against exactness and "perfection" transformed into technology, but against the myth of the pure, the perfect, the advanced; against the spread of that halo of myth around the authentic, the immediate, the primal material, the original state of the creative act. Therefore we want to support the creativity of the authentic as opposed to the rampant creativity of the exact.

The problem, the objective, is to get beyond antithesis: fear of advanced technology – and fear of the return to the ancient adherence to the natural world. "The antithesis is not included in the creation," Karl Kraus asserts, and creativity is the identification and overcoming of antithesis.

Individualism has made art, which was an expression of wonder regarding the miracle of creation, an expression of pride and dominion, and pride is the spirit of falsehood. To re-attain the spirit of truth we have to renounce individualism and return to the "morality" of the primitives, to collaboration, to the "community of artists" (Argan, 1951).

NOTES FOR A DIDACTIC TYPOLOGY

USE OF THE TERRITORY

1) ELEMENTS OF TERRITORIAL PROXEMICS

explanation

- recording of spontaneous behaviors of territory;
- variations of entropy related to daily and seasonal migrations;
- emigration: nomadism of the territory and the work force;
- territorial autonomies: forms of self-organization;
- opposition between formal parameters and proletarian creativity;
- small territorial economies;
- transplants, grafts, wounds, replacements of territory;
- depressions of subproletarian territory;
- subtractions of territory: closed spaces, private spaces, secret spaces.

2) HYPOTHESES (strategies) OF SURVIVAL

explanation

- appropriation of energy sources, central services, cabins and physical plant;
- analysis of structural networks;
- conquest, fixed and mobile outposts.

3) ALTERNATIVE URBAN BEHAVIORS

- bicycle;
- climbing;
- diving;
- launching;
- dog training;
- chess.

4) USE OF TECHNIQUES

history of action

- physical activities;
- workshop;
- constructions (design of the global tool).

DIDACTIC TYPOLOGY

NOTE 3.

A catalog of tools for creative self-education
(published in Casabella No. 382)

Global Tools takes form as a place, a repository of resources and a catalyst. The various elements of which it is composed (natural, urban and human) constitute the various tools to use for the education process.

A) NATURAL ELEMENTS

1. Use of climate;
2. Use of landscape;
3. Use of the river Arno, greenery, hills, countryside;
4. Use of natural elements as catalysts;
5. Analysis of taxonomies: scientific classifications (the swindle of Linnaeus) and the ecology fraud;
6. From the interiorized landscape to the separated landscape.

B) URBAN ELEMENTS

1. Reappropriation of the city;
2. Map of educational resources in Florence: public institutions, schools, associations, neighborhood centers, libraries, institutes, museums, cinemas, theaters, empty spaces, abandoned monuments, crafts workshops, small factories, information centers, bookstores;
3. A map of transport;
4. A map of means of communication;
5. A list of available materials.

C) HUMAN ELEMENTS

1. Proxemics of learning: spaces, conditions, interpersonal distances as a didactic tool;
2. Analysis of the critical sizes of groups;
3. Various situations of experimentation; teacher and group; self-taught group; inter-group work;
4. Deconditioning processes (abolition of divisions, hierarchies, values, competition and, in general, dominant divisions);
5. Upgrading of mnemonic abilities and transmission at a distance as an extension of human potential;

GLOBAL TOOLS

6. Playful and random processing of information;
7. Alternative means of processing of information;
8. Use of the body as an educational tool;
9. Recycling of ideas;
10. Techniques of creativity (brainstorming, synectics, checklists).

BODY

BODY



Elastic garments to trigger involuntary synergies in nearby persons, Alessandro Mendini, Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

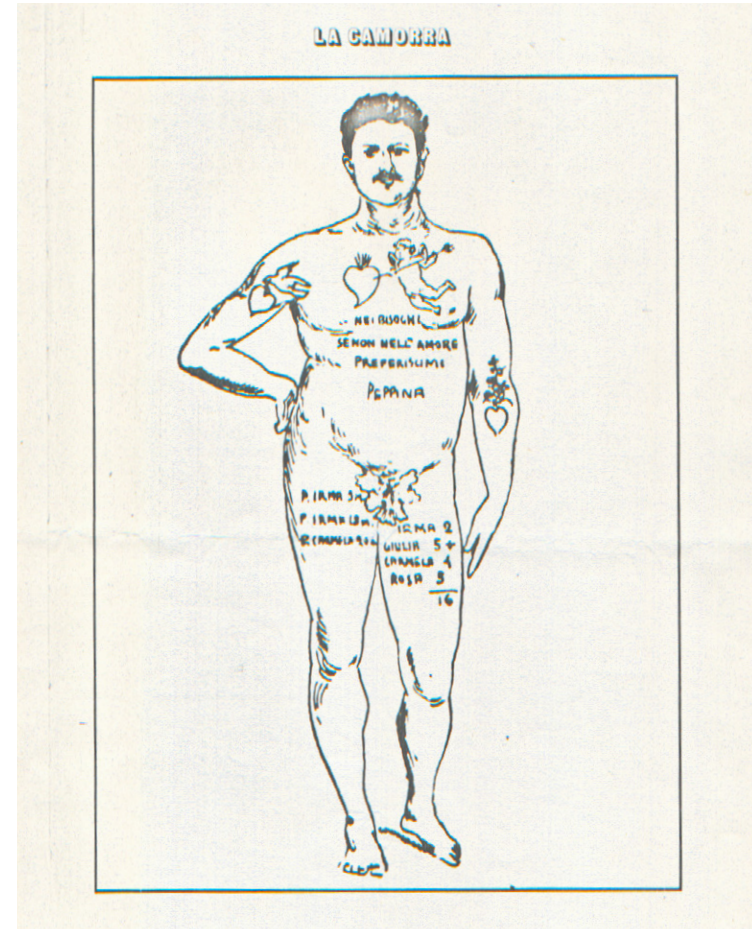


Franco Raggi

DYSFUNCTIONAL OBJECTS FOR A HERETICAL “INVERSE ERGONOMICS”

Notes on the Global Tools workshop
“The body and constraints,” Milan, 1975

In June 1975, a number of architects, designers and artists gathered in Milan¹ to work on the design and construction of improbable, inconvenient, and inexorably ephemeral objects. This was the first workshop of the Body Group of Global Tools, a therapeutic design school without a location. The theme of the workshop: “The body and constraints.” As opposed to the established and accepted practice of a technological, comfortable, useful and functional design, the intent was to posit a nomadic practice for an archaic, dysfunctional design. The logical and procedural short-circuit can generate apparently useless and challenging objects through which to think about design certainties and the need to nurture a dialogue between art and design, between the body



La camorra, Body Group research material,
Archive Davide Mosconi

as a primary utensil and objects as propaedeutic prostheses, aimed at a theoretical and creative reformulation of the idea of the form/function relationship.

Global Tools was the last act of the creative trajectory traced by the avant-gardes of Radical Architecture, which began halfway through the 1960s with the lucid, disorienting and visionary experiments of the groups Archizoom Associati, Superstudio and UFO from Florence, and then spread in collective and variegated research from Turin to Naples, Padua to Milan, coagulating



Leg constraints, Alessandro Mendini
Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

in terms of media around the magazines *Casabella* and *In*. In the wake of the 1972 exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, held at MoMA in New York, in which recognition was given the theoretical, cultural and aesthetic depth of these avant-gardes in the lively yet conformist panorama of Italian design, it became clear to some that consecration in museums and magazines limited the revolutionary thrust of the “radical architects” inside a conventional, self-referential combustion chamber, despite the gratifying and commercially glossy tones. The idea was proposed by the Florentine groups of getting away from the individual personalities of the groups and testing the basic tenets of the radical proposals in a wider operative dimension with respect to the anaesthetizing procedures of design culture, and took concrete form in an unprecedented guise, that of the Cooperative, whose purpose was to promote individual creativity as a form of liberation of the person from the dominant cultural structures. A program of educational workshops, open to all, was formulated in which it would be possible to theorize and practice closely interconnected manual activities, without disciplinary rankings, but with a particular focus on the basic and natural forms of construction and design.

The division into thematic groups of research and work was a significant factor in the Global Tools program: Communication, Body, Construction, Survival, Theory. These choices were ahead of their time regarding ecological and environmental themes that attempted to redefine the role of design inside the delicate and increasingly unstable balance between man and his habitat, the widespread civilization of consumption and the context inside which, and against which, it operated.

At the end of 1973, in the same year as the founding of Global Tools, the shock caused by the Petroleum Crisis put the entire Western world face to face with the intrinsic fragility of the prevailing development model, built on the certainty of an endless supply of energy and resources. The “magnificent and progressive fate” of a certain economic and cultural but also aesthetic and philosophical model was suddenly disrupted and erased. In the abrupt rise of the unexpected, cities were enlivened by entertaining and exorcising events, unwitting demonstrations of the fact that an era was over, and that new survival strategies needed to be developed. The activity of Global Tools and the Body Group takes its place inside a context of review and rejection of the conventional

development models that held quality of life, environment and work as unachievable without models of continuous and exponential growth, as well as models of conflictual, alienating production.

Starting in the 1960s, the work of artists, architects and designers in Europe and the rest of the world produced reflections, projects and visions that challenged the relationship between intellectuals and society in a transverse, symbolic and theoretical way, including art, architecture and design among the higher forms of intellectual



Finger constraints, Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

endeavor. The character of this attitude of “negative thought” is thus a practical and theoretical resetting to zero the forms of language and a deep reassessment of the expressive tools capable of describing a condition of crisis. With different tools and results, Art, Architecture and Design set forth on this path of “reduction” and re-appropriation that originates the destabilizing proposals of Arte Povera, Body Art, Video Art and Conceptual Art. Proposals in which the “zeroing out” of the canonical codes and roles of artistic language achieve unprecedented levels of poetic awareness. In the field of architecture, this phenomenon challenged

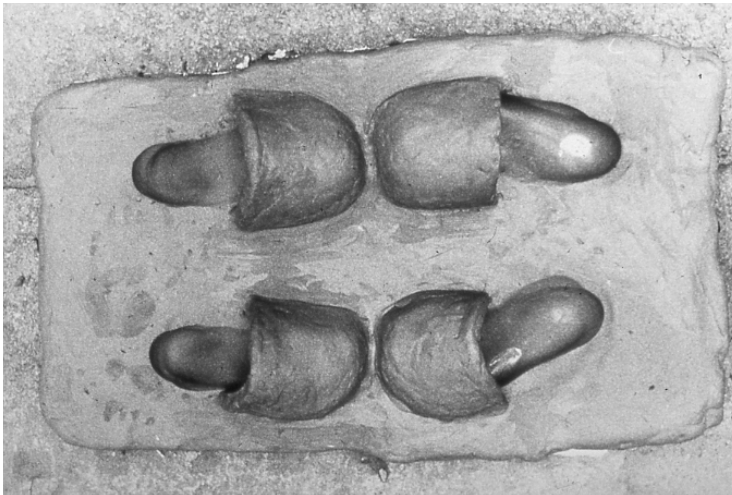
the interpretative and constructive models of the very concept of the city, viewing the metropolis as the real field of representation and identification of the dominant development model.

Architecture broke free of the modernist and rationalist embrace that had proven unable to redesign, as it had intended, either the environment or society itself. In the technological euphoria of Archigram – who redesigned the urban model under the guise of a liberating and instant city/organism in motion – to the cynical and implacable *No-Stop City* of Archizoom Associati, who



Clogs to remain immobile going uphill or downhill, Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

renounced any reassuring formal evolution of the city and decreed, through it, its formal future as total and real, homogeneous and artificial, neutral and meaningless space. On a different material and design scale, reflections and symbolic challenges about the present and future of the urban condition intertwined. UFO in Italy, and Coop Himmelb(l)au and Haus-Rucker-Co in Austria undertook disruptive, provocative actions in the living body of the city, with temporary objects that ironically and metaphorically pointed to a future of catastrophes, imbalances, pollution and alienation, already operative factors.



Constraining shoes for stable and obligatory frontal juxtaposition, Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

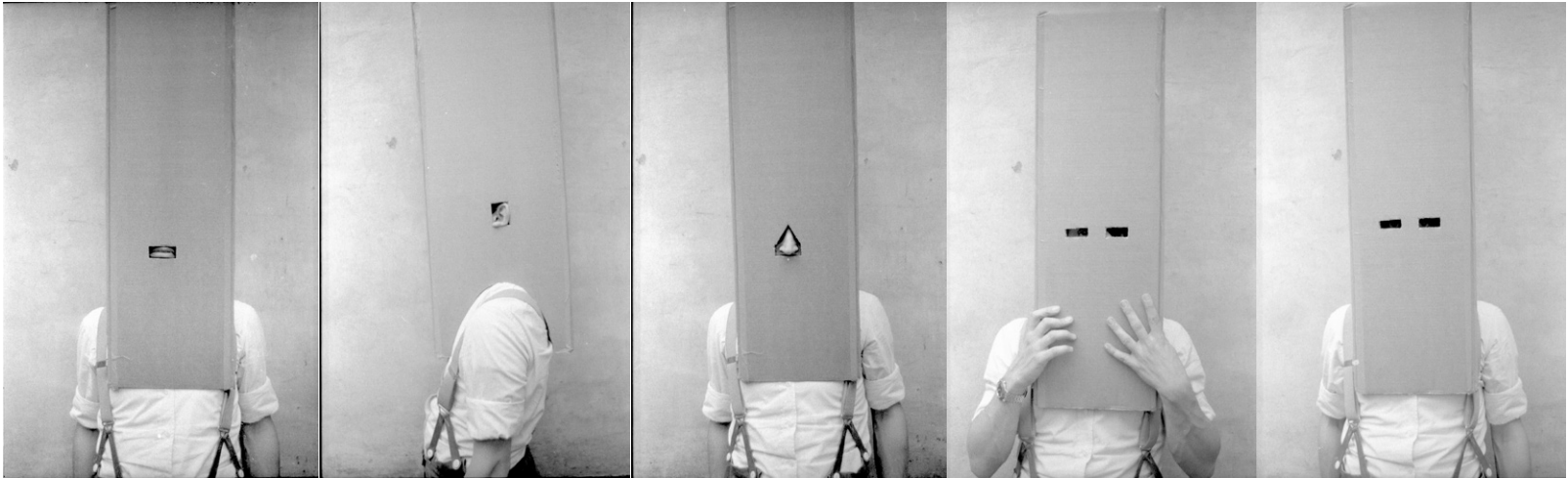


Constraining shoes for stable and obligatory frontal juxtaposition, Franco Raggi and Ettore Sottsass Jr. Milan, 1975, Archive Casabella

Raimund Abraham, Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler developed machinist and monumental urban visions in Vienna, together with scathing objectual metaphors that foreshadowed solitary physical and mental survival. The value of the body as primal, ancestral cockpit and the actions that involve it as object/subject were inserted into a more general process of symbolic erasure and rebirth, in which the “disinterments” of František Lesák and the body in tension of Dennis Oppenheim find their rightful place. But body and object are also progressively and systematically denied, wounded, constrained and deformed in events and constructions with strong ritual, sur-

real and symbolic content. The same is seen in the bodily prostheses of Rebecca Horn who, starting with her own body, expanded its sensorial range and image, constructing prosthetic techniques to diversify spatial perception both within and outside the self.

Hybrids, dissections, destructions, deformations and mutations, then, were the main tools to lead the design impulse back to its purist, primitive condition. The nature of negative thinking in these forms of “proto-design” is the simultaneously explorative and projectual critical option capable of challenging the rational positivism



Blindfold masks to display a mouth, a nose, an ear, Franco Raggi, Milan, 1975, Archive Davide Mosconi

underlying the rationalist project of the inhabited environment and its objects. Alessandro Mendini, commenting on the founding of Global Tools, writes: “...the positivist and rationalist ideological matrix is used up, the institutional approach has become sterile...”² In the intentions of Global Tools this process of revision, “zeroing out” and starting from scratch follows and precedes these experiences between art and design, but stands out for its forceful ideological, programmatic and anti-artistic aspects. The experiments and proposals of the workshop “The body and constraints” do not set out to produce disorientation through aesthetic and metaphorical objects, but attempt



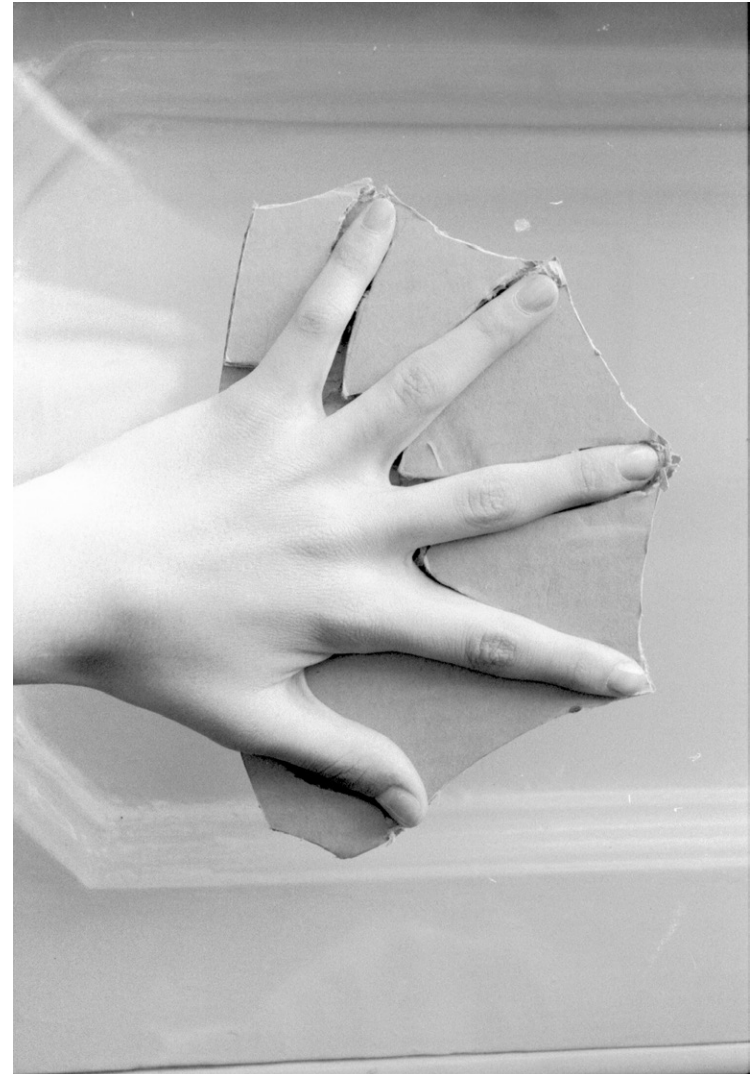
Blindfold masks to display a mouth, a nose, an ear
Franco Raggi, Milan, 1975, Archive Davide Mosconi

instead to focus on method, the procedure, and the concept. The overall result is a non-ranked set of proposals that mingle and overlap in a sort of creative Brownian motion, interwoven and open. The rediscovery of the body as a primary utensil emerges through a rigorous yet arbitrary “inventory” of its parts, movements, positions, constrictions; the pursuit of unexpected relationships between bodies and objects; the free documentation and cataloging of every possible experience connected with the body; and the final breakdown of the physical products of the “workshop” (not one of the objects produced has been conserved). The humble, temporary character of the materials and the variety of the subjects bear witness to an “eventual,” almost therapeutic approach in the individual and collective sense, handled according to a model we might define as organized anarchy.

A “detection room” for bodily actions was also made, inspired by the scientific, neutral approach with which the American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, at the start of the 20th century, had set up a black wall subdivided into segments with white lines to make sequential shots of human bodies in motion. Inside the room, photographic

sequences were made depicting normal actions isolated by the abstract, geometric and modular form of the space, involving (among others) Marina Spreafico, Dario Sereni, and Paolo Ingillieri of the Teatro Arsenale in Milan, and closely resembling the first performances of Trisha Brown. The pictures taken by Davide Mosconi have unfortunately been lost (at least for now).

Global Tools pursued a “non-didactic” goal in the sense of not seeking to teach knowledge and ways of doing, but attempting instead to trigger individual creative and cognitive processes through the use of natural and simple techniques and materials; they sought the re-appropriation of one’s own creative individuality through manual acts leading to eccentric but enlightening results. The theme of the Body appeared from the outset as one of the most fertile in stimulating alternative investigations and proposals. The program of activities studied at length did not lead to any specific and “efficient” organization of the initiatives, leaving the task of producing a remarkable number of artifacts to free aggregations of persons, thoughts and materials. The methodological and operative input of the seminar “The body and constraints” was actually quite elementary in its subversive



Constraint for the open palm
Milan, 1975, Archive Davide Mosconi



La Stanza Global [Global Room], Milan, 1975, Archive Davide Mosconi

simplicity: to conceive and make, in an instantaneous way, objects with limited functions, or even dysfunctional items, starting with one's own body and its possible relations with other bodies. Objects that, by constraining, concealing or subverting the usual relationship of utility, could reveal something else, and by impeding one type of use could unpredictably generate another. Objects capable of putting parts of the body or persons into a surprising relationship. Objects conceived as utensils for an eccentric anthropology of design. Or, more precisely, for a heretical "inverse ergonomics."

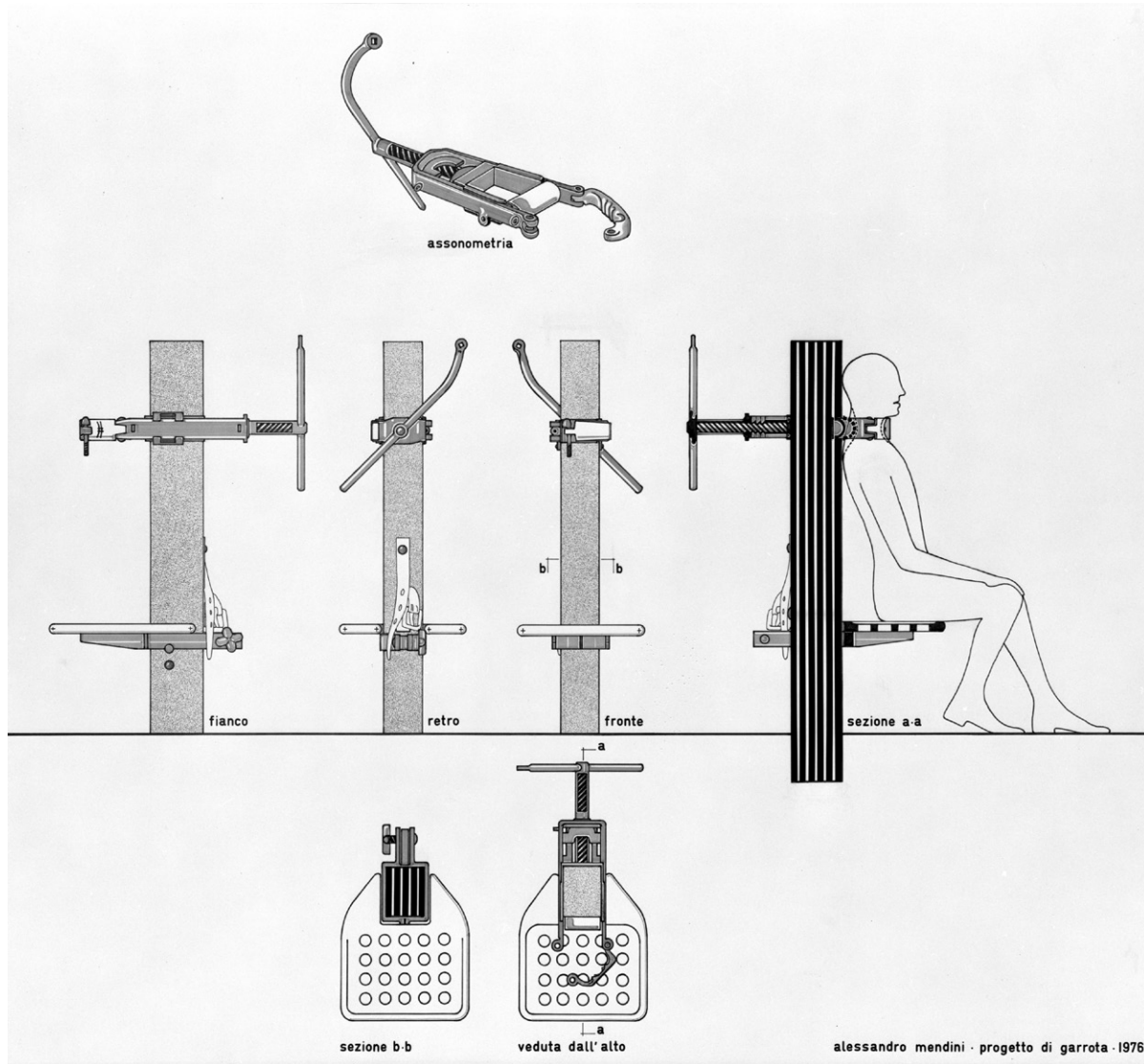
The products of the seminar included: *Tube eyeglasses to look "only" into the eyes; Arm constraints; Blindfold masks to display a mouth, a nose, an ear; Clogs to remain immobile going uphill or downhill; Elastic garments to trigger involuntary synergies in nearby persons* and *Constraining shoes for stable and obligatory frontal juxtaposition*. The latter, made experimentally in clay and replicated in 2006 in stoneware, were composed of the frontal casting of two different pairs of shoes, making it impossible to walk and forcing wearers into an unavoidable but regulated promiscuousness, especially of the gaze. Like many of the experiments of those years, these opera-

tions opted for action, behavior and conceptual reflection, paying more attention to the fate of ideas than to that of objects. As such, today, forty years later, they seem to conserve a remarkable consistency of method and assert an autonomy of the creative process seen as a possible form of knowledge released from linguistic and cultural superstructures. They also take the cognitive procedure of design back to a primary, didactic, propaedeutic form, while reassessing the anthropological nature of the project as a tool of physical and mental survival.



Untitled performance, Body Group workshop
Milan, 1976, Archive Alessandro Mendini

BODY



Alessandro Mendini, *Progetto di Garrota* [Project of a Garrote], 1976, Archive Alessandro Mendini



NOTES

1. The workshop was held in June 1975 inside the courtyard and the home of Davide Mosconi in via dell'Orso, Milan, with the participation of Almerigo De Angelis, Siana Futacchi, Ines Klok, Andrea Mascardi, Alessandro Mendini, Davide Mendini, Paola Navone, Nazareno Noja, Pini Pisani, Lidia Prandi, Franco Raggi, and Tareneh Yaida.

2. In the editorial "Didattica dei mestieri," *Casabella* № 377, May 1973.



GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS — BODY group

Report by: Andrea Branzi, Gaetano Pesce, Alessandro Mendini, Franco Raggi, Ettore Sottsass Jr.

8 October 1974

The body

The human body analyzed prior to the definition of functional ends, prior to the action of cultural filters, prior to constraint inside the rigidity of systems.

The body as primary tool. In conventional learning processes (ways through which to systematize experience through notions), the body is seen as an impediment or in any case as a factor that can be overlooked, whose awareness of use can be neglected. The body in religion is experienced as a fault, while freeing ourselves of its physical nature becomes a goal.

In the process of de-intellectualized actions we can see the body as a tool, apart from a specific culture of the body, simulating and retracing the process that leads progressively from discovery to recognition, to purposed and non-purposed use of one's body.

The cognitive result is not predictable, but can be determined a posteriori, after the operations; for example, cognitive processes of greater awareness can be triggered regarding the use and the purposed possibilities of one's body, through a negative use of that body.

Hypothesis of primary operative analysis.

First phase: acquisition.

Recognition, analysis of one's body as a constructed fact, as a list of parts, of possibilities of use in relation to space (elementary movements), to things. Survey of physical

areas of influence in keeping with the five senses.

Hypothesis: experiments of purposed and non-purposed activities, in combined absence of the various senses.

Second phase: use.

Use referring to elementary, primary needs: eating, sleeping. Use referred to complex needs. Use purposed for situations outside the body. The body as basic equipment in relation to a non-primary purpose.

Third phase: exercise.

Exercise as a means to accustom the equipment, to refine it, conserve it, prepare it.

Non-purposed use.

Magical use, not directly purposed. The use of the body to penetrate reality outside the body, outside of causality. Inverse use; the body used to increase the distance between self and objects, the body as container of the mind, as diaphragm, threshold.

The various phases are connected with technical research instrumentation that uses cognitive fields decontextualized as much as possible with respect to the culture of origin: mime, gymnastics, dance, dress, make-up.

GLOBAL | TOOLS

INVENTORY OF FIELDS OF INVESTIGATION

The body and construction

- The body as tool
- The reaction of the body to construction techniques
- The anthropology of simple techniques
- The elementary use of the hand (manipulation)
- Utensils, materials
- Constructive gymnastics
- Construction as non-functional labor
- Construction as factual phenomenon (as experience)
- The ritual of procedure (corporal value of labor)
- Morphology, survey, anatomy of the body
- The hand as tool purposed to touch things

The body and theory

- The body as container of the mind
- Knowledge by means of the body
- Techniques of thought, concentration, meditation (hypnosis, yoga...)
- Isolated behavior and collective behavior
- Religion and reason/ritual/habit/prayer
- Parapsychological conditions (drugs, magic, astrology, ecstasy...)
- The body as theory. Theory as pure creativity
- Intellectual gymnastics
- Mental exercises (shock, discontinuity, randomness, emotion...)
- Techniques of imagination
- Physical bulk and spiritual bulk. Reincarnation
- Silence

The body and survival

- The body as energy
- Relationship of body/elements, body/space
- Man alone, man together
- Physical relationship (man/man, man/woman, man/animal, man/nature, man/object...)
- Birth
- Shelter
- Dress (fabrics...)
- Food
- Place (nature, city...)

GLOBAL | TOOLS

- Movement, stillness (still body, body in motion)
- The body and tools, the body and crafts, the "flesh" material
- Physical health (hygiene, massage, sauna, medicine...)
- Mental health. Joy
- Reproduction
- Defense. Instinct
- Rest
- Pain/illness/perversion/sadism/torture/suicide/selfmutilation/flight/corpse/death/war
- Absolute survival
- The body without protection/body with protection
- Liberating techniques
- Instinct
- Gymnastics as exercises of refinement of the body/tool
- Mimetics
- Balance and gravity
- Manipulation (elementary use of the hand)
- The wild life

The body and communication

- The body as transmitter and receiver
- Senses and sensations
- The five senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell)
- The races
- The body as representation, self-representation, contemplation and object
- The body as language
- Sacrifice and desecration of the body
- The body of the bourgeois, the proletarian, the primitive
- Dress. The clothed body, the nude body
- Transformations of the body and the face
Dance/mime/camouflage/mask/acting/rhythm/makeup/grimace/gesture/speech/song/musical instruments/play/disguise/exhibitionism/ ...
- Voyage
- Walking
- Sex/eroticism
- Tools of multiplication of the body (video, photography, casting...)
- Negotiation, conversation, relation...
- Awareness of one's own movements
- Symbolism of the body and its parts.

COMMUNICATION



Letter from Superstudio to Global Tools, Archive Adolfo Natalini

Simon Sadler

THE HAMMER AND THE GARROTE: A PARABLE OF “TOOL GLOBALISM”

TOOL GLOBALISM

Compare the cover of Italy’s *Global Tools*, first published in 1973, with that of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which had been published in California since 1968.

Both are iconic, and both are enigmatic. One shows us a hammer suspended on a pegboard: a tool on neutral ground awaiting an infinite range of applications. The other shows us planet Earth suspended in space, as the putatively neutral field for the hammer’s deployment. As one is to the hand, the other is to the mind.

Then compare the founding statements of the *Catalog* and *Global Tools*. “The objective of GLOBAL TOOLS is to stimulate the free develop-



Making of, Global Tools Bulletin № 1, cover
1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

ment of individual creativity,”¹ declared the Italian publication, echoing *Whole Earth Catalog* founding editor Stewart Brand, who announced on the first page of its first edition that “A realm of intimate, personal power is developing—power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the *Whole Earth Catalog*.”² The periodicals’ missions were summarized by their combining of the global and the tool: the title *Global Tools* was anglicized and read as a contraction of the *Whole Earth Catalog* with its cover strapline “Access to Tools.” Separately, and combined, the titles and covers of these two periodicals expressed the latent potential of “designing the world.” The publications represented an interregnum between modernist reformism and postmodern commodification, an holistic design outlook approaching the world as a single interconnected and changing entity that I here call “tool globalism.” Tool globalism promoted humans as a creative force with a practically infinite array of means at their disposal, individually and collectively changing the world bottom up and inside out. It was a pragmatist dream that we can

still detect lodged inside design ideology today, as it ranges from urban farming to business schools.

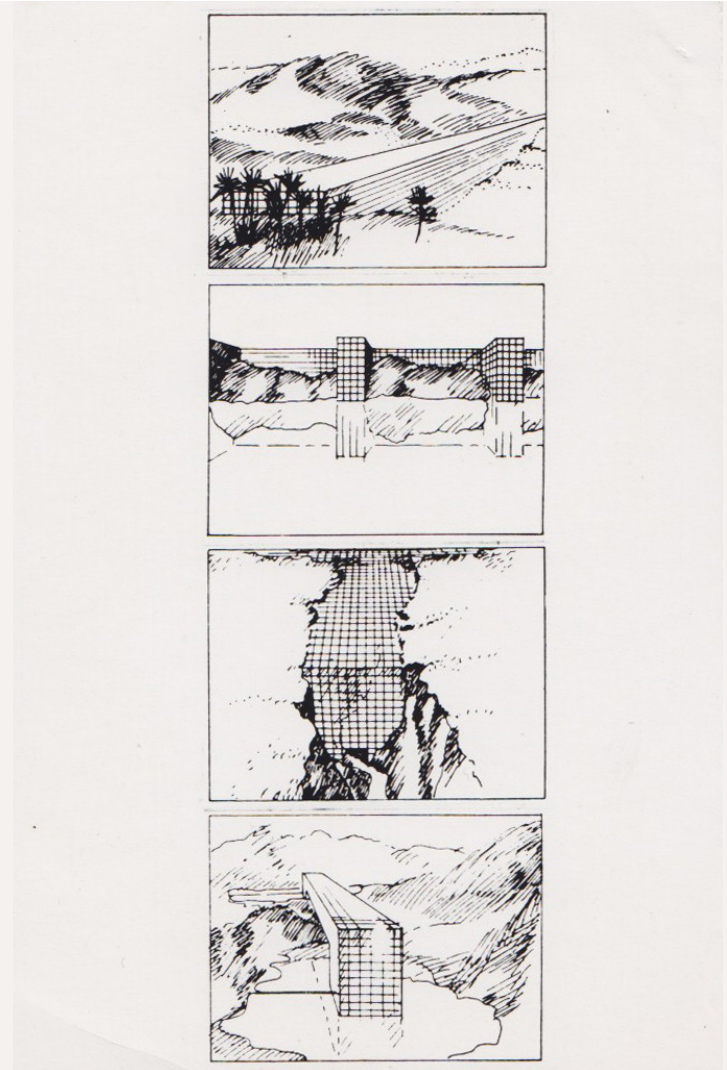
But the grand certainty of the iconic covers – here’s the tool, here’s the world, now go make it a better place – led readers of *Global Tools* and the *Whole Earth Catalog* into labyrinths. Even by the traditions of Italian intellectual writing, the articles in *Global Tools* were hard to grasp. The *Catalog*, meanwhile, contained hundreds of entries recommending “tools” – from books to bulldozers – assembled without a clear path, pedagogy, or outcome, its downhome American wit avoiding any clear program (there were entries in the *Catalog* on mysticism, childbirth, butchery, and money.) What would tool globalism look like when it was finished, then? Would it ever be finished?

Was it even design? *Global Tools* collective member Andrea Branzi explained that his architect-led group and its publication intended “to achieve a new and more advanced psychosomatic equilibrium and, consequently, a new degree of freedom and open-mindedness in design,”³ whereas the *Catalog* left its design culture implicit, because its scope was beyond any particular discipline or practice, its editors drawn from





Making of, Global Tools Bulletin №1, *Casabella*, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



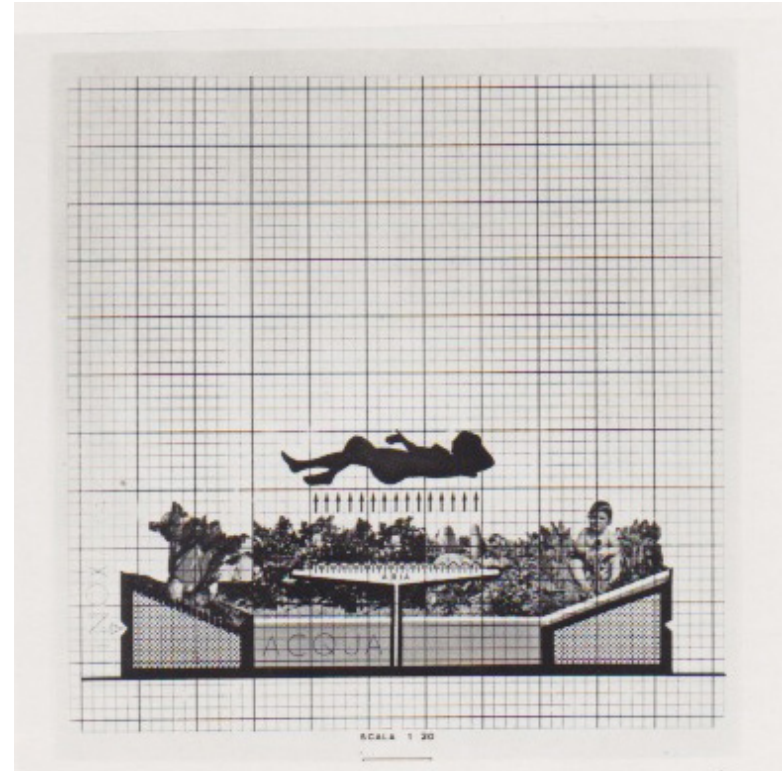
Making of, Global Tools Bulletin №1
Superstudio, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

many disciplines and backgrounds. We would today describe this holistic design outlook as eco-ontological, I think, for several reasons.⁴ One reason is that tool globalism was ecologically-oriented in the manner established by the Appropriate Technology movement, which was being brought to widespread attention in 1973 by E. F. Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful*. But in Alessandro Mendini's recollection, "In some ways these 'poor' techniques even looked like a dangerous revival of the virtue of poverty," and his associates "wanted to avoid an asceticism appropriate to 'the growing energy and cultural crises that assailed the western world in those very years.'"⁵ The urgency of elementary survival was being promoted from several quarters—the "culture wars" of the United States encouraged a survivalism to which the *Catalog* could cater, while terrorism in Italy nurtured a sense of mortality during the so-called Years of Lead. Mendini recalls that "The word 'ecology' did not yet exist, and we were mulling over the notion of 'elementary survival.'"⁶

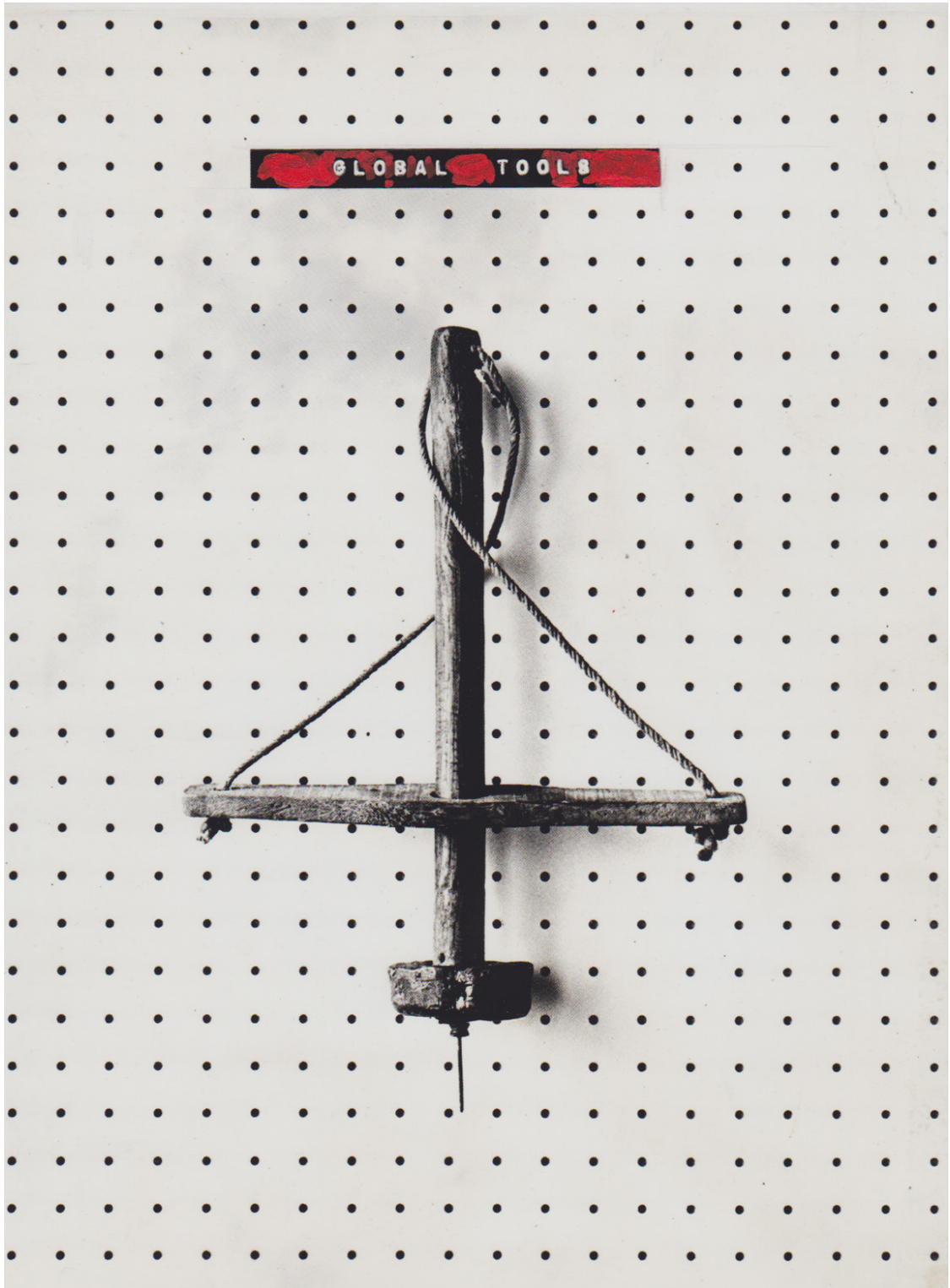
But more than mere survival, a burgeoning sense of consumer and industrial artifice was also prompting an ontological enquiry into what is



Making of, Global Tools Bulletin №1
Franco Vaccari, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



Making of, Global Tools Bulletin №1, 9999
1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



Making of, Global Tools Bulletin №1, back cover, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

natural, what is real, of what it is for a human to exist. This is the more profound eco-ontological sensibility that interests me in tool globalism, of the sort promoting “that more general perspective of life-long learning, which is the only possible objective beyond the end of institutionalized education,” as one internal Global Tools document put it,⁷ inspired by the direct democracy movements of European and American universities and expanded to wider constituencies in communes and cooperatives. Tool globalism was eco-ontological



Viaggio sul Reno [A trip on the Rhine], documentation, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

because it looked for the potential of new assemblies, objects and epistemologies.

Tool globalism was also heuristic, “hands-on,” mapping paths of knowledge about the world through interactions with it. Tool globalism’s moment came to be theorized retroactively in such mediations as post-structuralist Félix Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies* (1989)⁸, and its resonance can be detected again in what curator Britt Salvesen recently labeled the “artisanal avant-garde.”⁹ And so the concerns of the *Whole Earth Catalog* and *Global Tools*, published in the wake of the counterculture, furnish a prehistory to the concerns of creative workers today, faced again with the puzzle of acting in a world at once becoming whole in its social and environmental challenges, in its networks of information and resources, and yet fractured by the weakening of civic and political society. Global Tools assembled the sort of life-world for design demanded by Ettore Sottsass Jr. in *Casabella* in 1973, when he announced he simply wanted to “find a place where, together, people could try to make things,”¹⁰ *Casabella*, then under the editorship of Mendini, simultaneously announced the launch of the Global Tools collective, effectively reconvening the vanguard of



Global Tour stamp, Franco Vaccari, 1974, Archive Franco Vaccari

Italy's Radical Architecture movement around an educational project with a Californian flavor: *Global Tools* was intended as "a yellow pages for culture ... based" (without initial acknowledgement, which came a decade later in Andrea Branzi's classic account of Italian design, *The Hot House*) on the "neo-encyclopaedists" of [the] *Whole Earth Catalog*."¹¹

Viewed alongside one another, *Global Tools* and the *Whole Earth Catalog* recall advanced ideas in design when the foundations of modernist culture in industry and cheap energy were being eroded by shifts in the economies of the US and western Europe toward the "post-industrial," founded on services, information, experience,

consumption, education, health and leisure. The two periodicals both attached great importance to work, in particular craftwork, as a means to recover skills being lost to post-industrialization. The legacy of William Morris was obvious, though the immediate historical context was the widespread debates about skill in western societies and economies under the duress of managerialism, automation, and high unemployment following the Oil Shock of 1973.¹² *Global Tools* and the *Whole Earth Catalog* studied the technologies of post-industrial society – the *Catalog* featured computers and hobbies, and *Global Tools* featured education and experience – and they both featured the technologies of pre-industrial society, foremost craft, parading strange and forgotten



Viaggio sul Reno [A trip on the Rhine], documentation, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



tools and techniques from before the Industrial Revolution. The effect was trans-historical—at once pre-modern, modern, and post-modern.

EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

Global Tools and the *Whole Earth Catalog* recognized however that sudden eruptive change of the scale and intensity promised in the sixties had passed with the cresting of counterculture after 1968. With tool globalism, change would be gradual, piecemeal, pragmatic, practically without a plan, whether supplied by social democracy, or altered consciousness, or nature. This broad, post-countercultural ethos was one of revolutionary-become-evolutionary change. Design culture assimilated counterculture at its waning, such that design itself became the substitute for “change,” even for “politics”—the “nudge from within.” Why, after the cresting of the counterculture at the end of the nineteen-sixties, did such optimism for change persist? Because in this holistic view, the world’s potential remained largely untapped—divided by partisanship, geopolitics, the carbon economy, hierarchical power, and reliance on standard meanings and techniques. In *Global Tools* and the *Catalog* the world opened up

again as a vast contiguous frontier: little surprise, then, that coherence was not the obvious quality of these publications.

They instead reconsidered the potential of three main resources: nature (the study of natural self-organization, for instance); the “second nature” of technology (from primitive technologies to the grid of modern infrastructure); and their recombination into a hybrid third nature (typified by that quintessential Hippie experience of heading out into the wilderness on LSD). The creative worker needed to find the tools for leverage over



Viaggio sul Reno [A trip on the Rhine], documentation 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



Viaggio sul Reno [A trip on the Rhine], documentation
1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

this largely untapped “Body Without Organs,” as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari later termed the whole reality in which we subsist. To today’s audience attuned to post-structuralism, *Global Tools* and the *Catalog* evoke the rhizome—that delightful metaphor for an organization of thought, action and history as an open work, inclusive and global, beyond judgment of true or false. “Global Tools was not founded with the purpose of carrying out any particular ideological scheme,” Branzi noted, “or of elaborating any particular social and methodological model; in fact it moves within the limits of an operational field lacking any formal programming, a field in which the results are not compared with reference models but absorbed as acts of spontaneous communication.”¹³

Politics was therefore sublimated in these publications by practices of life and thought. The political landscape was, after all, bleak in the US and Italy alike. The Energy Crisis undermined progressive politics founded upon a post-war boom; the left was splintered, with Communism in Italy opposed by extra-parliamentary and anarchist groups on the one hand, far-right groups on the other, confusion sown by a terrorism which was “making a clean sweep of any critical stand as

sophisticated and basically defenseless as ours was,” as Branzi tried later to explain.¹⁴ A monetarist and morally conservative New Right was waiting to fill the vacuum. Class, too, was sublimated in these publications: in the same way that the designer is a creative worker, then she or he can and should be able to assemble with other workers across production and without division between theory and practice. In this praxis any distinction between left and right is much less pressing than change and evolution for its own sake. The Goliaths of capitalism and government which project themselves as a perfected whole would face momentary vanguard ruptures foretelling another version of globalism: of lives of existential plenitude opened up by equality and access to resources.

Global Tools downplayed the rhetoric of class conflict; political discussion was banished from the pages of the *Whole Earth Catalog* by founder editor Stewart Brand. But the notion of a value-neutral creativity immune from existing coalitions of power was of course fanciful. While *Global Tools* remained editorially rather aimless, the *Catalog*’s crowd-sourced content was manipulated by the relentless and brilliant editorship of



Viaggio sul Reno [A trip on the Rhine], documentation
1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

Brand and his circle. Brand smuggled back in an anti-Marxist, libertarian outlook, surreptitiously reconsidering capitalism as a tool, culminating in the *Catalog*'s habilitation of Ayn Rand.¹⁵ For the *Catalog*, capitalism was an impressive manifestation of a cybernetic system, integrating the whole through monetary circulation and feedback, comparable to any other ecosystem.

DIVERGENCES

And with this we find *Global Tools* and the *Catalog* diverging around at least three problems. The first problem was the role of systems. The *Catalog* opened with a section on Whole Systems, grand organizations of information, materials and energies which it was the *Catalog*'s ambition to reprogram outside of the military-industrial complex. Global Tools showed a near immunity to such aspirations inherited from Richard Buckminster Fuller and from cybernetics. Sure, the Global Tools collective promised a "system of laboratories."¹⁶ But this implied that information, materials and energies would be organized not by machinic systematization but through recourse to the traditional conversation and debate of Italian design in its workshops, its *officinas*, its disciplinarity,

its journals (like *Casabella*). If the achievement of the Bauhaus was to reconcile art and science, then the *Catalog* tried to escape the Bauhaus legacy by rejecting its aestheticism, and Global Tools tried to escape the Bauhaus legacy by rejecting its scientism. "We did not want to tread the same path as the Bauhaus," Branzi recalled, "which revived and regenerated the destructive force of the historical avant-garde as analytical and rational energy ... The solution to this contradiction seemed to be a rejection of systematization."¹⁷

Which led to the second problem of tool globalism: whether holism was better domiciled within condensed urban culture or dispersed across rural and suburban culture. The Global Tools collective was located initially in Florence, whose legacy as a center of western design, science, art and commerce was peerless, whereas the *Catalog*, edited out of light-industrial and retail spaces in the Bay Area's suburban sprawl, was founded in part to support the new communes of the 1960s and 1970s lodged in redwood forests and high desert.¹⁸ The events associated with the *Catalog*, like the 1969 Alloy Design Conference, had the quality of tribal gatherings in idiosyncratic and remote places. The Americans celebrated deracination.





Ugo La Pietra, *Viaggio sul Reno* [A trip on the Rhine], 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



COMMUNICATION



Ugo La Pietra, *Viaggio sul Reno* [A trip on the Rhine], 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra



Western America's frontier traditions, as deeply appealing as they were to visiting Europeans – captured in the parody of Superstudio's collages of nomadic hippies wandering a desert grid, living without possessions but with access to services – were nonetheless geographically inconceivable operating in the Old World of Europe.

The divergence between a tool globalism founded upon a return to the land or a return to the city begins to explain the third problem, which was the tension between conservative and radical



Franco Vaccari, *Viaggio sul Reno Settembre 1974*
Archive Franco Vaccari

cultural politics. The European dream of autonomous culture might be traced back to socialist and anarchist dreams of collectivity.¹⁹ Contrast this with the dream of autonomy expressed in the *Whole Earth Catalog* by its editor Fred Richardson, as he inverted Marx and Engels' call for workers to unite: "workers of the world, disperse."²⁰ The *Catalog* was a restatement of American Pragmatism and of American Transcendentalism, with their promised escape from historical and human fate through a fundamental trust in the goodness of nature, technology and enterprise. Pragmatism and Transcendentalism were remote to European intellectuals, even in their Oedipal engagement at the time with Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist traditions.²¹ As he looked back on the founding of Global Tools, Branzi recalled that for all its qualities the *Catalog* "still looked ... to the most observant of us, like a theft of information, a narrowing of the possibilities promised by an alternative use of capitalism."²²

True, the aspiration to "autonomy" on both sides of the Atlantic shared a suspicion of government, corporations, political parties, trade unions, and of all forms of hierarchical social and political organization from which to gain autonomy. But

Global Tools' autonomy recalled a left libertarianism of fraternity; *Catalog* autonomy gestured toward a conservative libertarianism of personal, spiritual and economic freedom. While tool globalism continues to resonate with the tradition of social centers and collectives, the *Catalog* further contributed genes to the neoliberal techno-utopianism notoriously prevalent in California's Silicon Valley²³, bringing us to the final question of legacy.

PARABLES OF TOOL GLOBALISM

Tool globalism's holistic combination of tradition and futurism remains appealing. Tool globalism seems quite suddenly to matter again, now that we are in the throes of palpable global interconnection and ecological threat. Tool globalism reminds us of something prior to globalization as it is experienced today, dominated as it is by economic conceptions of the global. It takes us back to a globalism founded on beliefs in a common culture of human survival and evolution serving a "global commons" imagined as an "open work" rather than owned resource. If tool globalism in some ways anticipated the ascent of the neoliberal economy (in its emphasis on politically unaligned creative enterprise), it also imagined

itself dissolving the economic and security interests that now drive risk-averse globalization. Tool globalism boldly drifted around the Body Without Organs, between the left, right, natural, urban, primitivist, and technological.

Tool globalism was perhaps all too eco-ontological, though, all too contingent on other prevailing forces through which it found fissures or fits. Within a few years, in fact, many of the contributors to Global Tools, like Sottsass, Branzi and Mendini, would accept the postmodern *Zeitgeist* of form, symbol, and consumption at the *officine*



Franco Vaccari, *Viaggio sul Reno Settembre 1974*
Archive Franco Vaccari

of Memphis and Alessi, Italy's long consumer revolution finally foregrounded with the passing of the Years of Lead in the early 1980s. The editors of the *Catalog* were meanwhile forming increasingly determinate alliances with US business interests, happy to mentor business leaders

on navigating the “new spirit” of capitalism, as capitalism transitioned from bureaucratic hierarchies to networks, teams, and creativity, pursuing the symbolic importance of brand and consumer experience in transnational economies.



Franco Vaccari, *Viaggio sul Reno Settembre 1974*, Archive Franco Vaccari



The sly self-critique of tool globalism was preternatural, though. Between their emblematic recto/verso covers, both publications had confounded their readers with smart, often funny discussions about the difficulty of doing the right thing. The depictions of the whole earth on the front covers of the *Catalogs* were usually accompanied on their back covers by epigrammatic commencement speeches dispatching overwhelmed readers back out into the world—“Stay Young. Stay Foolish” was perhaps the most famous of the *Catalog*’s parting shots (one later quoted in an actual commencement speech by tech mogul Steve Jobs).²⁴ On the back cover of the first bulletin of *Global Tools*, in shocking disparity, was an ancient tool not better identified which recalls a tool of torture, like the garrote deployed to kill prisoners in fascist Spain carefully designed by Alessandro Mendini in a work of 1976, and on which Silvia Franceschini and Valerio Borghonovo report, “as if he would design a normal chair.”²⁵ Mendini explains that at this time he was lecturing at the Tel Aviv faculty of architecture, whose student designers were also soldiers, prompting him to recall the role of war in architecture and design.

The garrote of destruction was paired with the hammer on the front cover – the hammer of construction, and of the hammer and sickle – so that tool globalism blithely conjoined the fascist and the communist and everything in between. On another cover of *Global Tools*, the holes in the blank matrix of the pegboard were connected by Adolfo Natalini into the hammer and sickle: the very ground upon which design practice hangs was visibly shape-shifting. To the same degree that the *Whole Earth Catalog*’s tool globalism was wryly optimistic, *Global Tools*’ tool globalism was wryly circumspect. The *Catalog* imagined that the tools of the military-industrial complex, that driving force of Cold War economy, technology and design, could be ever-more diverted to the common good. And in so many areas of privileged civilian life this became demonstrably the case (witness, as did a delighted *Catalog* editorial team in subsequent decades, the civilian use of the Internet as a global tool).

But the obverse of this Hobbesian pursuit of the summum bonum, of the greatest good, was – as Thomas Hobbes himself warned in *The Leviathan* (1651) – the summum malum of the



natural state of man, “continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”²⁶ The hammer and the garrote: summum bonum and summum malum. This is a parable of design, is it not? Tool globalism alone could not ultimately reconcile the two, *Global Tools*’ enigmatic pairing seemed to warn, and efforts to project the lifeworld of creativity as an autonomous space of reconciliation was also something of an expression of despair at any collective capacity for political reasoning. “In fact,” Branzi admitted in 1984, “the contradictions of the system in which we live were being directly reflected in our work.”²⁷ That realization, largely absent in the euphoric pages of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, makes *Global Tools* the more convincing eco-ontology.



NOTES

1. Anon., "Document-o № 1., 'The-La-Co-n-stitu-z-tion-e'", in *Global Tools* (Milan: Laboratori Didattici per La Creatività Individuale, 1973), n.p.
2. Stewart Brand, "Purpose," *Whole Earth Catalog* (Menlo Park: Portola Institute), Fall 1968, 1.
3. Andrea Branzi, "Con-versa-z-t-ion-e fra Binazzi Branzi Celant La Pietra Mendini Natalini Raggi Sottsass Jr.," in *Global Tools* (Milan: Laboratori Didattici per La Creatività Individuale, 1973), n.p.
4. For the developing field of eco-ontology, I draw on Adrian Ivakhiv, "On Matters of Concern: Ontological Politics, Ecology, and the Anthro(s)cene," (paper delivered to the UC Davis Environments and Societies cluster, April 2014).
5. Andrea Branzi, "Mass Creativity," in *The Hot House: Italian New Wave Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 80-85, 84.
6. Alessandro Mendini, in conversation with Silvia Franceschini and Valerie Guillaume, Studio Mendini, Milan, September 27, 2012.
7. Unpublished Global Tools document, Adolfo Natalini Archive, quoted in Valerio Borghuovo and Silvia Franceschini, *Global Tools 1973-1975: Towards an Ecology of Design* (unpublished prospectus, 2012).
8. Félix Guattari, "The Three Ecologies," trans. Chris Turner, *New Formations*, 8, Summer 1989, 131-147.
9. Britt Salvesen, "The Artisanal Avant-Garde," in Julie Joyce, ed., *Labor and Wait* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art/RAM, 2013), 45-53.
10. Ettore Sottsass, "C'è un posto dove provare?" ("Can It Be Tried Somewhere?"), *Casabella* № 377, May 1973.
11. Andrea Branzi, "Mass Creativity", *ibid*, 84. The other inspiration Andrea Branzi cites is the *Domebooks*, edited by *Whole Earth Catalog* editor Lloyd Kahn.
12. For an analysis of this context see Salvesen, "The Artisanal Avant-Garde."
13. Branzi, in "Con-versa-z-t-ion-e," n.p. Also in Andrea Branzi, "Global Tools" in "Radical Notes," *Casabella* № 377, May 1973.
14. Andrea Branzi, "Mass Creativity", 85.
15. See for instance Stewart Brand, "Capitalism," in Stewart Brand, ed., *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* (Santa Cruz: Portola Institute, 1971, and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 344.
16. Anon., "Document-o № 1., 'The-La-Co-n-stitu-z-tion-e,'" n.p. Global Tools participants from Superstudio explicitly claimed no proficiency in systems design.
17. Andrea Branzi, "Mass Creativity," 84.
18. By 1975 Global Tools was proposing uniting "a new league of free cities: Vienna, Berlin, New York, Toronto, San Francisco, Bergamo, Forli, etc." Anon., "The Chronicle," *Global Tools 1*, (Milan: Laboratori Didattici Per La Creatività Individuale, 1975), n.p.
19. See for instance Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," in *Italy: Autonomia, Post-Political Politics* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1980).
20. Richardson's quote, dated 1970, is the epigram for "Industry: Alloy Report," in *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 111-117, 111. Compare with "Workers of the world, unite!" (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848).
21. While sections of the second edition of *Global Tools* in 1975 come close to Californian spiritualism, it also repeatedly invoked dialecticism.
22. Andrea Branzi, "Mass Creativity," 84.



23. On the ancestry of Silicon Valley techno-utopianism, see Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

24. “Stay Young. Stay Foolish,” back cover of the Whole Earth Epilog, 1974, quoted by Steve Jobs in his Commencement Speech at Stanford University, 2005.

25. E-mail to the author, April 20, 2014.

26. “Of The Natural Condition Of Mankind, As Concerning Their Felicity, And Misery,” in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, accessed December 8, 2014, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3207/3207-h/3207-h.htm>

27. Andrea Branzi, “Mass Creativity,” 84.



GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS - COMMUNICATION Group

Report by: Guido Arra, Ugo La Pietra, Gianni Pettena,
Franco Vaccari

11 October 1974

Foreword

The audiovisual tools technology has been perfecting for some time grant each of us the chance to expand our physical structure, quantitatively developing the possibilities of emitting and, above all, of receiving information. Nevertheless, the relationship that exists between the individual and the outside world is increasingly set up through information (developed by others) that we all receive, or to which we are all "subjected."

The most evident attack on the possibility of authentic communication is the one launched by the Power that holds the monopoly over the communications, media distorting messages on a macroscopic scale, but above all perverting those media by using only a part of their potential, like a modern version of the blinding and castration of slaves.

The mass media fulfill the role of great exciters and/or tranquillizers that, through simultaneous action large numbers of people, bring about effects that could be compared to those of lasers, namely of EXALTATION OF CONSENSUS THROUGH FORCED SIMULTANEOUS STIMULATION of what could be called the "social crystal."

It is true that McLuhan has explained to us, in an almost convincing way, that the media have an inner logic that should subtract them from any bridling, allowing them — like the damsel in distress in dime-store novels — to get free of all dangers; but to us this seems like the new disguise of the *Deus ex machina*.

In the meantime, as we were saying, the System is in possession of an almost infallible technique for keeping control over a medium and preventing its "escape." This is the technique of "maiming" it, in the sense of intentionally overlooking some of its possible functions and, in particular, those that might allow the receiver

Categories to analyze

1. Collective spaces where a hierarchic separation of roles exists (barracks, schools, factories)
2. Collective spaces where an institutional separation exists between those who act (who emit messages) and those who receive them. Environments in which the specific role of the actor is clearly separated from the role of the spectator (theater, cinema, stadium, church).
3. Collective spaces where no separation of specific roles exists, but that in any case, for lack of a basic will (social conditioning), due to the very structure of the place in relation to the activities that take place there and to the external context, block an effective development of the creative capacity in communication (bars, leisure-time facilities).
4. Collective spaces in which it is possible to develop creative activities and to communicate with other individuals, i.e. all those places in which the separations of "roles" are eliminated and where no conditions appear related to NORMS and RULES in the relationship between individuals.

Analysis:

- of the physical environment
- of the functional logic
- of the relationship of the environment with the outside world
- of the cultural superstructures
- of the elements of rupture
- of the degrees of freedom

through:

- Techniques of DETECTION (recording and revealing of the "deep structure")

Inside every phenomenon analyzed we believe it is indispensable to separate a phase aimed at perception of its "surface structure" (physical and functional appearance) from one concerned with the rediscovery of a "deep structure"; i.e. through a process of decoding

of the environment to discover the behavioral and mental connections and relationships that link together persons and things.

- Techniques of PROVOCATION and the recording and interpretation of effects

The technique of provocation can be another method to know and study the INDIVIDUAL-ENVIRONMENT relationship for the liberation and enrichment of the exchanges between individuals in a particular environment and, therefore, their "communication"; it is undoubtedly a method that introduces a high level of the "unexpected" and of "risk" in the research.

- Techniques of ENGAGEMENT

Through the engagement of individuals, through our direct participation or the use of specific tools, we believe it is possible to bring out, in us and the persons we intend to involve, an undoubtedly higher level of suggestion and awareness of the two previous models of techniques of analysis indicated above.

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COMMUNICATION GROUP

first outline of the subject matter for the Education Summer Session 1975

list of topics:

- 1st COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE BODY
- 2nd COMMUNICATION THROUGH IMAGES
- 3rd COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOUND MESSAGES
- 4th COMMUNICATION THROUGH WRITTEN MESSAGES
- 5th COMMUNICATION THROUGH OBJECTS

The courses last about one month and provide students with certain PARAMETERS OF INTERPRETATION through which to explore the problem of COMMUNICATION in a journey or a particular environment through the body / images / sound messages / written messages / objects

Note: these analyses will be recorded by the students with audiovisual media (photography, video tape, film, audio recordings) and with any other recording system.

After this first phase of surveying of the situation taken as a sample, an operation of decoding of the resulting material and of the use of the tool the student has chosen for this survey will be conducted inside the work group, revealing the unconscious operative postulates that have been at work, unbeknownst to the students themselves.

After this phase, the experience of analysis is repeated to test the acquisition of the tools of communication.

of the message to take part in the flow of communication. Another method is that of transforming possible multidirectional communicative relations into "noise". And, finally, there is the technique of using a new medium as an emphatic exaggeration of an old medium: just consider radio and television news broadcasts.

But this is not so much what corrodes our faith in the possibility of spontaneous communication. In the end, though they are unbearable, these techniques of control are at least transparent; they let themselves be interpreted, they clearly indicate in what direction it might be possible to act to obtain a least a slender margin of livability.

What limits our faith and eats away at it like a cavity is the awareness that any communication, even if it is wrested from control, channels not only the intended messages, but also an extraordinary and often prioritized quantity of parasitical messages.

On the decisive, hidden influence of the media, which act as true technological a priori categories of our existence, we can again refer the analysis to McLuhan, as summed up in the slogan THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE. But even if we liberate communication from any media filters, reducing it to direct relations limited to our physical presence, i.e. operating only "in the presence" of flesh-and-blood interlocutors, the fact of being unwitting vehicles of messages destroys any possibility of abandon.

By limiting our focus to the more direct forms of communication, we have not set out to implicitly make a negative judgment regarding tools of communication, as if they were by nature a source of mystification and alienation, but simply to limit the number of parameters called into play.

There is also the conviction that no tool permits achievement of the degree of synergy that is possible using only the body. Usually there is a certain confusion between information and communication; perhaps greater clarity could be achieved were we to make a distinction between tools of information and of formation, thus underscoring the fact that the true function of the media is to form experience, as operative channels. It may

thus be possible to get out of the position of stalemate in which we have been put by the awareness of being continuously acted upon. But for this operation to work, we have to stop favoring communication, which instead should be seen only as a particular and circumstantiated case of mediation that does not deserve the privilege we tend to grant it along the lines of philosophical models of a neo-positivist mold.

In fact, with the term *communication* and, in particular, that of *discourse*, which is the aspect of communication preferred by man, the idea is peddled of a confrontation between compact egos, capable of organizing around their solid nucleus all the material of experience; whereas the concept of *mediation* puts the accent on the process, without favoring or implying the persistence of the identity.

The basic hypothesis on which we intend to develop our research is that of taking communication between individuals into consideration, liberating it by and large from the deviating effects that result from the use of what are commonly considered the "tools" applicable to connect individuals, and which emit information to individuals that gather it.

We believe, that is, that an action should be conducted that at least initially tends to eliminate the tools of mediation (i.e. to eliminate or in any case reduce as far as possible the deforming "filter" which the "tool" creates between us and reality, considering the tool as a conveyor of culture, ideology and practice), surpassing them, training our own minds to awareness and developing our creative attitude also in keeping with a subjective vision of reality.

It should be added that it is our desire to get beyond the position of those who destroy and completely reject the use of tools of information and communication, having identified them as the "instrument" of power, symbols of the "system" that represses the freedom of human beings.

In our working proposal, instead, there is the desire to use media of information and communication, though keeping them "under control," namely knowing how to distinguish which of them can be used for an effective development

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of the communication of individuals, and how; defining communication as a widening and a multiplication of exchanges between individuals, for the participation of each in the dynamic of communication (beyond the passive spectator/active actor relationship), and for greater knowledge of the environment in which we live and operate, through the messages each person desires to communicate.

This premise brings us to the definition of certain moments of work we will separate for the sake of convenience. We are in any case aware that this separation is just an operative, practical form of order, valid only as a basis for the initial phases of the experimentation. We also believe it is indispensable, in our work, to continuously make these categories interact.

INDIVIDUAL-INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP

(use of primary bodily tools of communication: voice, gestures, touch, odors)

INDIVIDUAL-TOOL RELATIONSHIP

(use of objects and materials external to the body for communication)

INDIVIDUAL-ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIP

(use of collective environments for communication)

INDIVIDUAL-INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP

We are interested in triggering a process of zeroing regarding the tools of communication, in order to test or rethink the abilities and possibilities our physical nature still has of being itself a "vehicle" and thus a tool of communication capable of making a distinction between the individual that "communicates" and the individual that simply accumulates information, or sends messages of imposition (commands).

In this sense, we believe we can state that those who use their own experiences, "risking" – running the risk, that is, of losing their own identity, of emptying themselves slowly and progressively, making themselves available to be looked at, and in short to lose or exchange something of themselves with others – can be individuals who tend towards "communication."

Instead, those who through a series of experiences, accumulate information and get clogged up with notions, always protecting and augmenting the image they have of themselves, always conserving intact their own identity and exploiting these experiences to increase their prestige in the group or the society in which they live and operate, can be said to certainly not be in a position of openness to communication and to an effective exchange of experience with others.

Categories to analyze

1. Forced relationships of hierarchic separation of roles (manager/worker; teacher/disciple)
2. Forced relationships of institutional separation between those who act and emit messages and those who receive them (actor/spectator)
3. Relationships in which there is no separation of specific roles, but in which, due to a certain type of social conditioning, "communication" between individuals (individual of one social group/individual of another social group) still does not happen
4. Relationship liberated from social and cultural conditioning.

Analysis:

- of the individual as aware or unaware bearer of messages;
- of the functional logic of the message (through the gesture, the voice, touch, odor);
- of the conditioning cultural superstructures (proxemics);
- of the elements of rupture;
- of the degrees of freedom through:
- Technique of detection and revealing of the "deep structure"

Inside every phenomenon analyzed we believe it is indispensable to separate a phase aimed at perception of its "surface structure" (physical and functional appearance) from one addressed to the rediscovery of a "deep structure"; i.e. through a process of decoding, to discover the behavioral and mental connections and relationships that link together the individual and the messages he emits, or for which he is the vehicle.

- Technique of PROVOCATION (with recording and interpretation of effects)

The technique of provocation can be another method to know and study the relationship of the individual with the message they want to communicate; it is undoubtedly a method that introduces a high level of the "unexpected" and of "risk" inside the operation of analysis.

- Technique of ENGAGEMENT

Through the engagement of the individual, through our direct participation, we believe it is possible to bring out, in us and the persons approached or involved, a higher level of suggestion and awareness with respect to what can be achieved in the two previous models of technique of analysis indicated above.

INDIVIDUAL-TOOL RELATIONSHIP

The "system," through a series of inter-related multiple channels, manages to convey such an enormous and compact quantity of messages that it constitutes a concrete and global "space" of information in which the individual no longer has any possibility of discrimination and participation, and often, more and more, absorbs the transmitted impulses on an unconscious level.

Illustrated magazines, radio, ambient broadcasting, transistor radios, televisions both portable and non-portable, record players and tape players, cinema, signage, posters, billboards and banners for advertising, video cassettes, cable and satellite television, banking terminals, and information terminals with computers, all constitute a massive, continuous, incisive system in the hands of a few power centers.

In this situation of absolute passivity of the individual with respect to the "tools" of communication, we intend to rediscover the necessary elements for a correct relationship between the individual and the tool, simply taking that tool back to its function as a stimulus and enhancement of communication between individuals.

Of course we are aware of the fact that tools can seem "uncharged" and open to correct use, but in effect every tool has always embodied, in its very structure, a certain degree of "ideology" (that is, it is a "medium" that contains a series of cultural references that can falsify the operation of communication), and therefore the positivity or negativity of a tool does not depend only on the way it is utilized. Keeping in mind that only through awareness of this "ideology" is it possible to empty the tool of all its cultural and environmental superstructures, only in this case can we utilize it in its effective availability for the widening of our coefficient of communication.

Thus the pursuit of a critical, conscious stance with respect to the tools of communication will lead in us to a way of operating, meaning that even the prints we leave on objects and in various places will become important.

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Categories to analyze

1. Tools with one direction only of message transmission (clothing, make-up, press, advertising)
2. Tools of forced limitation of degrees of freedom in social and environmental conditions that prevent two-way use that would otherwise be granted by the medium (mythography, iconography, audiovisual tools and related counter-information)
3. Two-way tools, freed of the conditioning of the system.

Analysis:

- of the physical nature of the tool
- of its functional logic
- of the scale and intensity of engagement
- of the cultural superstructures
- of the elements of rupture
- of the degrees of freedom
- of the timing of reading of the message
- of the interpretation of the message (credibility)

through:

- Techniques of DECODING

Elimination of all the improper components, of the cultural and environmental superstructures; destruction of the so-called "habit" derived from a particular continued use of a single direction of development of the tool.

- Techniques of DECOMPOSITION and RECOMPOSITION

Breakdown of the structural and superstructural components of the object and its "reinvention" according to programs to implement, case by case, in an experimental and completely random way.

INDIVIDUAL-ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIP

The particular moral authority our society manages to exercise over the population through tools of information and through the imposition of an urban physicality that leaves no degree of freedom and of intervention for its own definition and transformation force us into an activity in which an (individual and collective) creative behavior capable of determining a process of effective "communication" between individuals is lacking.

The "bureaucratic" society tends, and has tended for some time, to take possession of space in an exclusive way: "URBANISM" asserts itself precisely as the means for this appropriation.

The fundamental aim of this discipline is to isolate individuals in the family cell and thus to reduce their possibilities of communicating and acting, within a pre-set number of behaviors, while integrating them in pseudo-communities like the factory, the mega-house, leisure time settlements (villages, ships, hotels).

Our research strives to reveal, besides the reasons that prevent "collective" use of the environment, those elements that are needed in order to rediscover places capable of effectively determining "intense vital engagement" through structures that can stimulate the freest possible behaviors, through places that do not reduce but increase the possibility of choice on the part of individuals, facilitating their contact and therefore communication.

Achievement of these objectives can only be pursued if we realize that the places in which we live are continuously imposed on us, and that actually the space in which we operate can exist only as a "mental model" that is continuously modified by experience, thus reaching the awareness that IT IS NECESSARY TO SEEK THE FORM THAT SPRINGS FROM OUR EXPERIENCES INSTEAD OF FROM IMPOSED SCHEMES, and that it is necessary to always keep in mind that the relationship between the individual and the environment in which they live has to be considered a unitary fact: "an organic unit."

CONSTRUCTION



Superstudio, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

Manola Antonioli, Alessandro Vicari

GLOBAL TOOLS AS A “WAR MACHINE” FOR AN ECOLOGY OF MIND

“THERE IS MUCH TO LEARN FROM ARCHITECTURE BEFORE IT BECAME AN EXPERT’S ART. THE UNTUTORED BUILDERS IN SPACE AND TIME – THE PROTAGONISTS OF THIS SHOW – DEMONSTRATE AN ADMIRABLE TALENT FOR FITTING THEIR BUILDINGS INTO THE NATURAL SURROUNDINGS.”

Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without architects*

“COURSES WHICH OFFERED SHORT-TERM ADVANTAGE HAVE BEEN ADOPTED, HAVE BECOME RIGIDLY PROGRAMMED, AND HAVE BEGUN TO PROVE DISASTROUS OVER LONGER TIME. THIS IS THE PARADIGM FOR EXTINCTION BY WAY OF LOSS OF FLEXIBILITY. AND THIS PARADIGM IS MORE SURELY LETHAL WHEN THE COURSES OF ACTION ARE CHOSEN IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE SINGLE VARIABLES.”

Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

In *Document No. 2* of the first *bollettino* (bulletin) published by Global Tools¹, “Global Tools” is

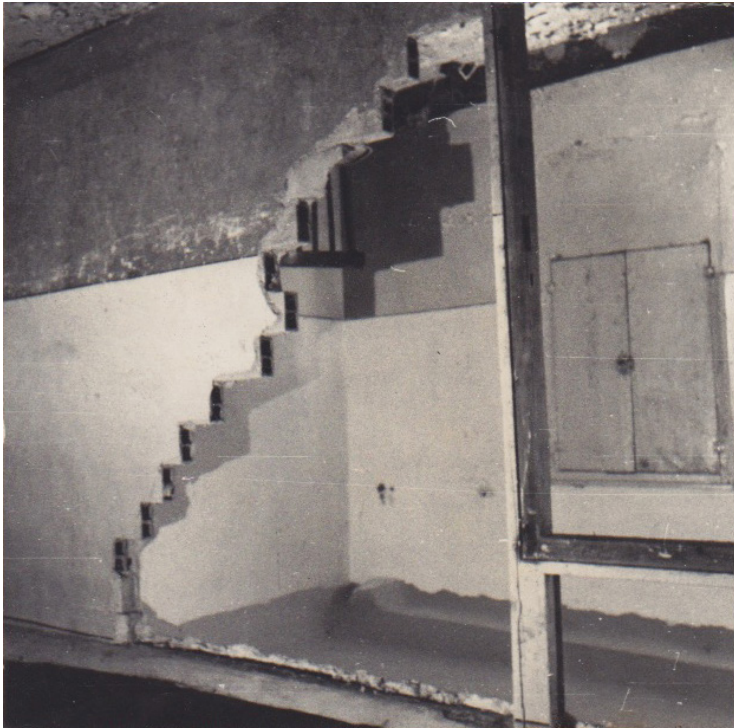
described as “a system of laboratories for the diffusion of the use of natural materials and techniques and associated behaviors.”² The pedagogy which the project initiators wanted to promote was aimed at “solving the long-term problems of environmental formalization, an approach which is often focused only on resolving problems in the short term.”³

From the beginning, the group’s members were therefore identified with the “global” perspective, just as its name suggests. “Globally” rethinking the training of architects and designers does not mean simply introducing them to “the use of materials and techniques” but also “to associated behaviors,” behaviors and gestures whose mere memory risks being erased by the logic of specialization, speed, and economic efficiency which characterize advanced capitalism and have established an “alienating distance between the work of the hand and that of the brain.” This logic is systematically written in the short term of profitability, whereas what should be learned is the long-term resolution of complex problems



in the design, manufacture and construction of community spaces.

It is for this reason that the two “bulletins” published by Global Tools systematically refer to the hand and the work of the hand, and the different steps of gestures traditionally associated with technical activity. As a direct extension of



Construction session, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

radical Italian architectural experiments in the 1960s-1970s, it is possible to find in the work of Superstudio⁴ in 1972⁵ an approach to architecture and design which we could define today as “socio-ecological,” an approach particularly visible in the work *Cultura materiale extraurbana*.⁶ This research was motivated by the authors’ concerns vis-à-vis the contradictions produced by the urban expansion of Italian cities and the loss of forms of knowledge and creativity that had come as a result of an over-rapid and out of control transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy. The objects cataloged here are the result of a synthesis, of a “creative” understanding of nature and the environment, the translation of a collective tradition, and the expression of a work experiment and its tools shared by the culture and society as a whole.

Document No. 3 of the same bulletin lists the theoretical categories and practices in which the members of Global Tools intended to think about and act upon; categories which include construction (a construction privileging “poor” and “traditional” techniques), the aesthetic and psychomotor dimensions of the body, as well as communication, theory, and (more surprisingly) “physical and psy-

chological survival,” associated with activities as diverse as agriculture, camping, gastronomy and meditation, a list which evokes Borges’ classification. This program can thus be read as a kind of manifesto for a new “ecology of mind,” theorized several years ago by Gregory Bateson as a new branch of the theory of knowledge aimed at studying the “mind” as an entity composed of aggregates of ideas structured around a system which never separates the subject from its environment.⁷ Global Tools did not therefore aspire to become a “school”, but a system of open workshops devoted to the discovery-rediscovery of manual activities that can restore creative powers traditionally associated with artisanal craftsmanship which have been atrophied by industrial society and its compartmentalized conception of work.

In the second and last bulletin published by Global Tools⁸, the presentation of the “Communication” aspect (deeply influenced by reading McLuhan’s work) clearly shows that the desire to rediscover techniques and ancestral know-how in no way implies a rejection of contemporary technology, but rather a critical stance towards it, and one rooted in a rejection of the power of uniformity of ideas and behavior propagated by

the media and tools of mass communication. The authors also critique the widespread confusion between “information” and “training” (note that in Italian, these words are very similar: *informazione* and *formazione*): the role of the mass media (including all of today’s new information and communication technologies as well) should not, or no longer include the transmission of “con-



Construction session, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

tent” to recipients produced by diffuse centers of media, economic and political power, but should train and enrich each person’s experience. The privilege given to the idea of communication leads us dangerously to a transmission between individuals, which passes through language as a key channel; the members of Global Tools preferred to study all forms of mediation (of which communication forms only a part) while emphasizing the processes rather than the identity-based dimensions.⁹ An “ecology of mind” equally requires an “ecological re-composition of communication” and a “virtual ecology” is needed to bring the media and new tools of information communication to a new social, ethical, political, and aesthetic level.¹⁰

Experiments on the body are written from the same global and “de-intellectualized” perspective: the declared ambition is to analyze the body as a “primary instrument,” untamed by cultural conventions, destined to survive, construct, communicate and think, therefore associated with each of the collective’s research areas. They also use all critical and aesthetic resources of interaction between the body, materials, and techniques to approach artistic expressions such

as body art. Activities linked to construction are likewise recorded in a new ecology of techniques and materials, where the choice of materials is essential. It may be material in its natural state (earth, stone, water, etc.), but also that of recovered industrial material, reused, re-worked, or used in an “inappropriate” fashion, not in the way intended by industry. Deconstruction is not just



Riccardo Dalisi, Workshop with children in Rione Traiano
Naples, 1971-1975, Archive Riccardo Dalisi



Riccardo Dalisi, Workshop with children in Rione Traiano, Naples, 1971-1975, Archive Riccardo Dalisi

about materials, but also techniques, in which the creative potential of an object emerges by removing it from routine or predetermined processes. At the crossroads of the reflection on construction and creativity, we also find references in the Global Tools research groups' notes to the work



Riccardo Dalisi, Workshop with children in Rione Traiano
Naples, 1971-1975, Archive Riccardo Dalisi

of Riccardo Dalisi who, in the early 1970s, carried out experiments on the “spontaneous pedagogy of groups” while working with the children of “Rione Traiano,” a very poor neighborhood in Naples. In 1972, Dalisi published an article based on this experiment in *Casabella*¹¹ called “Tecnica povera in rivolta”¹², reviewed by Andrea Branzi¹³ in the same journal. Global Tools opposed both the “poor technique” theorized by Riccardo Dalisi and the myth of “pure technology” which dominates advanced industrial societies. This opposition was clearly indebted to a careful reading of the famous pages of Levi-Strauss on “bricolage” in traditional societies.¹⁴ The “poor” technique adopts a hybrid approach, open to the world, in which the project is always born out of a process which uses collective creativity (such as, for example, that of the children of Rione Traiano in the case of Riccardo Dalisi). In a later article, Alessandro Mendini would write that what characterizes this technique is an “approximative precision which renders each successive passage unpredictable.”¹⁵ If “pure technology” claims to be apolitical (while at the same time dependent upon the powers that be), poor technology is still openly engaged in the political process, constantly engaged in open rebellion against the establishment; this “minor” technique



Clay session, Remo Buti, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Clay session, Remo Buti, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

is situated on the frontier between manual creativity and technical creativity and is opposed to any technological standardization of creativity.

The experiments on material and techniques reveal a questioning of the artificialization of the world, where the possibilities of material are only just multiplying through the invention of new materials and technologies, often passively accepted, without any criticism, the sort of questioning which anticipates the “ecology of the artificial environment” later to be developed by Ezio Manzini.

“Let us try to consider artifacts not as machines for which our first objective is complete automation and minimal handling, but as if they were plants in our garden. Try to imagine objects which are as beautiful and useful as a fruit tree: objects which last and have their own lives, objects which, like a tree, are appreciated for what they are as much as what they do, objects which give a service and demand care. Taking this path supposes a radical change in attitude from what we normally expect from a product. This implies a reversal in the relationship that develops between object and subject, in other words, a new ecological sensitivity: taking care of objects can be a way to take care of this larger ‘object’ which is our planet.”¹⁶

Global Tools had failed to become a “school” per se, given its short-lived existence; however, the influence of this experiment of creation and education would prove sustainable. We can thus consider that institutional failure paradoxically constitutes success for the collective as a “war machine.” In their *Nomadology: The War Machine*,¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari theorize about the “war machine” using several different models. From a political perspective, the war machine is irreducible to an apparatus of the State, outside its sovereignty (the State, they write, uses police and jailers rather than warriors); from a game theory perspective, the war machine would be modeled on Go rather than chess: while the pieces in a chess game and their movements are coded, Go pieces (stones) do not have intrinsic properties, but are elements of a singular situation. Chess follows the rules of a war of the State (institutionalized, coded, and ordered), while the war of Go is nothing but pure strategy. In the case of chess, it is played in a closed space, in which one tries to control a maximum number of spaces with minimum pieces, while Go is played out on a more open space, and one tries to maintain the potential for a surge at any point.



Clay session, Remo Buti, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

The war machine exists only in its own metamorphoses, and in domains as diverse as industrial or technological innovation, a literary or artistic trend, and religious, philosophical, or political movements. The externality of the war machine can also be understood through an epistemological model, setting “minor” or “nomad” science up against any “major” science. This is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, a kind of science, or perhaps a treatment of science characterized (like any war machine) by its speed, secrecy, affect, singularity, and variation; a science which is not simply reducible to a set of “techniques” but



Clay session, Remo Buti, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

which does not proceed by “theorems” either. It prefers to deploy through unique projects always focusing on “problems-events.” The last model used in *A thousand plateaus* is that of “noologie”—a moving story of forms of thought, which systematically collides with counter-ideas, to the discontinuous appearances of philosophical war machines. In terms of thinking about space and architecture, “the problem of the war machine is that of relaying, even with modest means, not that of the architectonic model or the monument. An ambulant people of relayers, rather than a model society.”¹⁸

The search for this kind of war machine is probably what animates the conception of the Global Tools theory, defined as a global reaction vis-à-vis reality which simultaneously expresses itself through actions, behaviors, techniques, and ideas. The project refuses to move beyond the scope of sketch and rough draft in order to remain unpredictable, unexpected, accepting the fact that it will leave no lasting trace (renouncing monumental dimensions), where life and environment have become “global terms in which we verify instruments, techniques, and theories.”¹⁹ By trying to elaborate a “counter-idea” or a “nomad

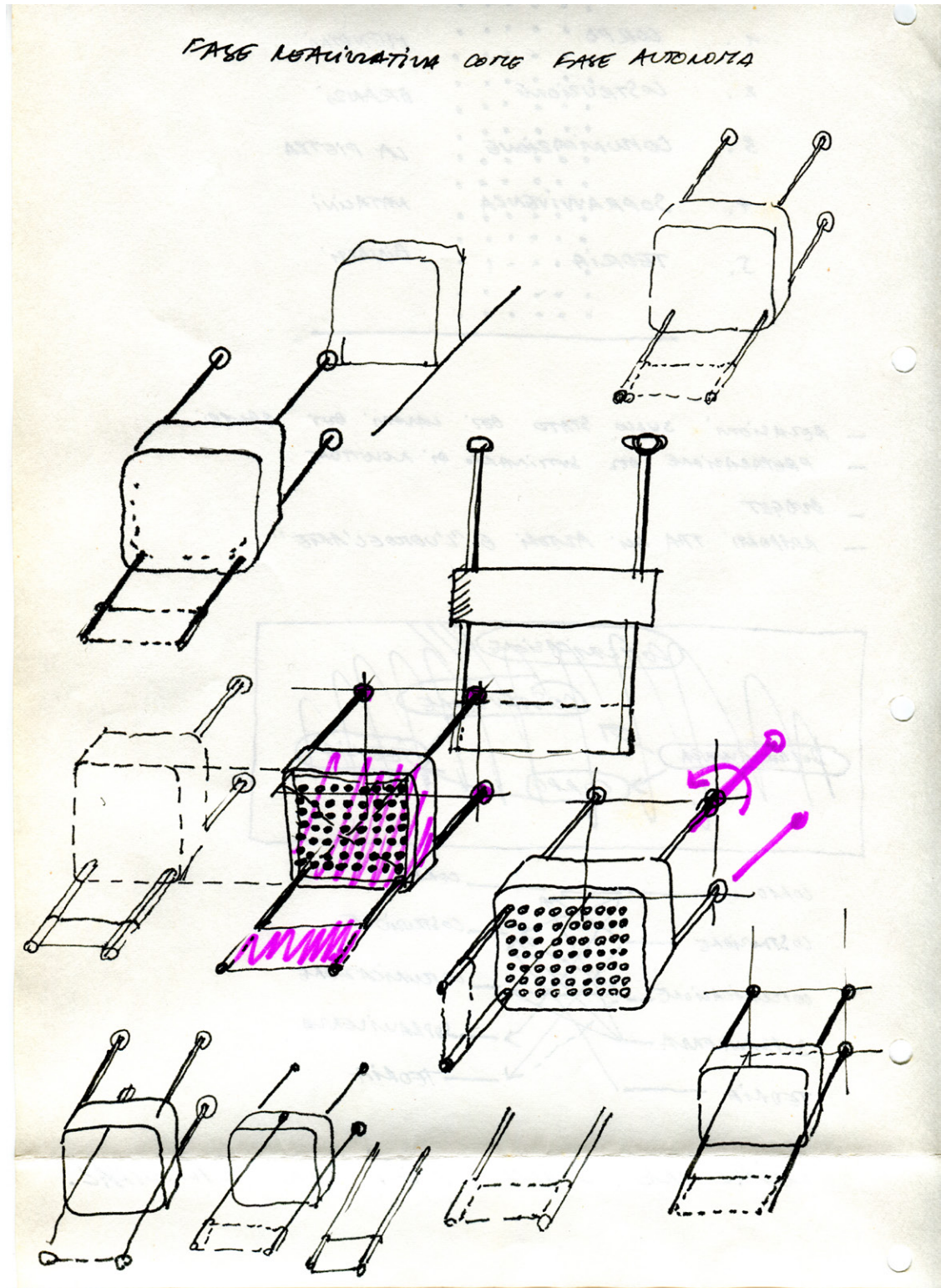
science” of architecture and design, Global Tools acts as a war machine of the “ecology of mind” whose requirements (radical and quite current) consist of totally rethinking the relationships between humanity and nature, nature and culture, theories and techniques, the hand, the machine, and the brain.



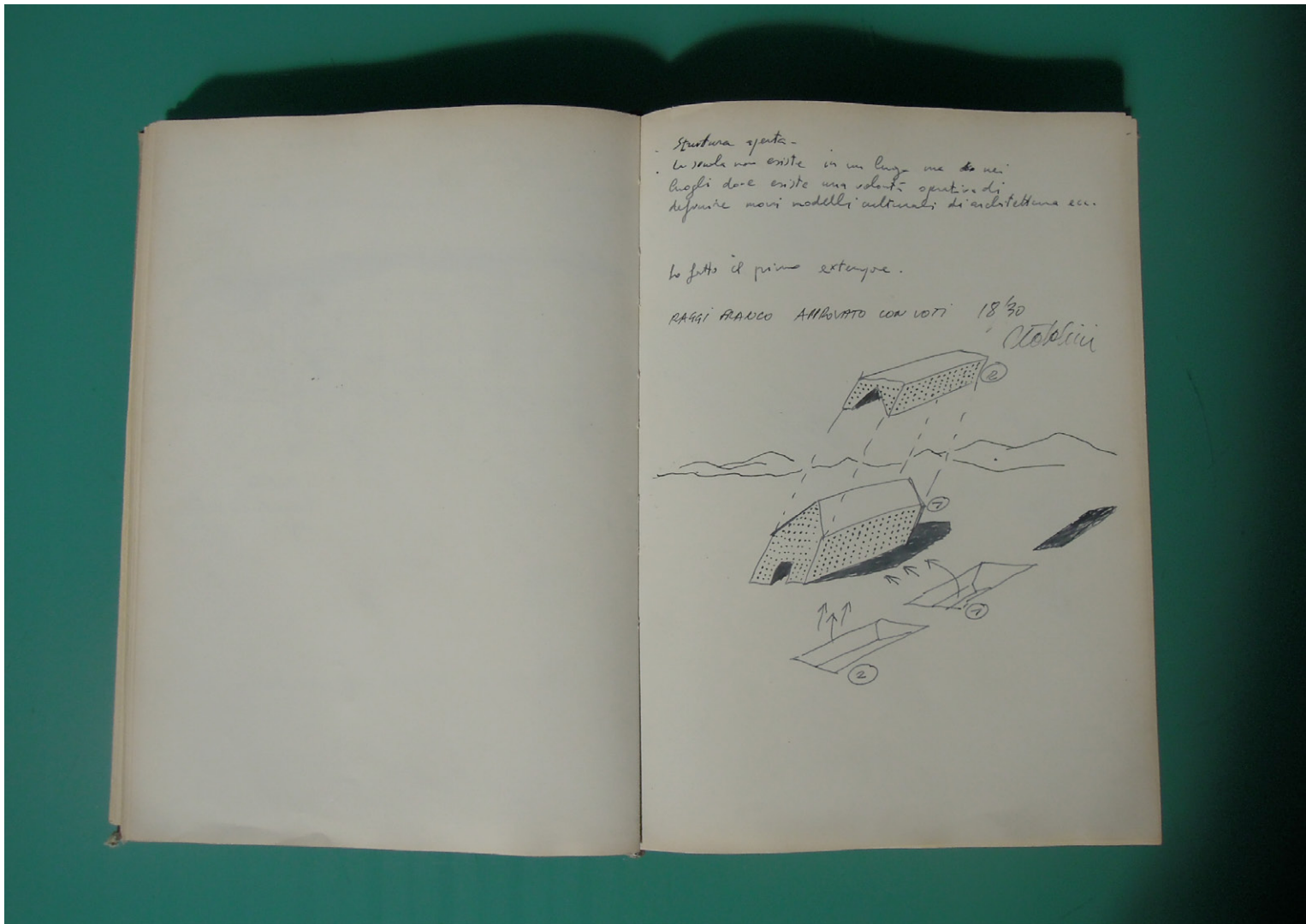
NOTES

1. Milan, Edizioni L'uomo e l'arte, June 1974, n.p.
2. "La Global Tools è una scuola intesa quale sistema di laboratori per la propagazione dell'uso di materie e tecniche naturali e relativi comportamenti."
3. "Lo stimolo alla realizzazione di una didattica dei mestieri è frutto dell'interesse – da parte dei fondatori della Global Tools – per una corretta risoluzione dei problemi a lungo termine della formalizzazione ambientale, che spesso è opposta alla loro risoluzione intesa solo a breve termine."
4. An architectural firm founded in Florence in 1966 by Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, with Roberto Magris, Alessandro Magris, Giampiero Frassinelli and, subsequently, Alessandro Poli.
5. In 1972, MoMA, New York, held the exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. For radical Italian architects, this exhibit marks the high point and at the same time the end of their movement.
6. Adolfo Natalini, Lorenzo Netti, Alessandro Poli, and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, *Cultura materiale extraurbana* (Florence: Alinea, 1983), from the course book for Plastica ornamentale held from 1974 to 1977 by the authors at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Florence.
7. See Gregory Bateson, *Vers une écologie de l'esprit* [1972], t.1 (Paris: Seuil, 1977) and t. 2 (Paris: Seuil, 1980), and in particular the foreword and Introduction of t.1 as well as the sixth section ("Crise dans l'écologie de l'esprit"/Crisis in the Ecology of Mind) of t. 2. Steps to an Ecology of Mind is available in English at: <http://www.edtechpost.ca/readings/Gregory%20Bateson%20-%20Ecology%20of%20Mind.pdf>
8. *Global Tools 1*, (Milan: Laboratori Didattici Per La Creatività Individuale, 1975).
9. In September 1974, the "Communication" group, composed of Guido Arra, Ugo La Pietra, Gianni Pettena and Franco Vaccari, took a boat cruise along the Rhine, from Düsseldorf to Bale, to observe communication mechanisms at work in a homogenous and restrictive collective space (see Global Tools/ Gruppo Comunicazione, "Viaggio sul Reno," in Ugo La Pietra, *Itinerari* (Milan: Ca' di Fra', 2013), 4-11.
10. See also Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que l'écophilosophie?, textes présentés par Stéphane Nadaud* (Paris: Lignes/IMEC, 2013), in particular, the following two texts: "Vers une autopoïétique de la communication," 131-148, and "L'écologie du virtuel," 443-444.
11. A famous magazine that accompanied the theoretical debate about radical architecture, under the direction of Alessandro Mendini, between 1970 and 1976.
12. Riccardo Dalisi, "Tecnica povera in rivolta," *Casabella* № 365, 1972. See also Riccardo Dalisi, "Tecnica povera. La funzione del pressappoco nell'universo della precisione," *Casabella* № 386, 1974.
13. Andrea Branzi, Radical Notes: Tecnica povera, *Casabella* № 386, 1974.
14. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), chap. I "La science du concret"; see especially pages 21-47.
15. "Una precisione approssimata che rende imprevedibile il proliferare di ogni successivo passaggio", quote from Alessandro Mendini, "La caffettiera Pulcinella, Alessi", online archives of Alessandro Mendini, article available online at http://www.ateliermendini.it/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,print,0&cntnt01articleid=194&cntnt01showtemplate=false&cntnt01lang=en_US&cntnt01returnid=183.
16. Ezio Manzini, *Artefacts. Vers une nouvelle écologie de l'environnement artificiel*, (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1990), 246-247. Translated here from French to English.
17. Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, "plateau 12" in *Mille plateaux* (Paris, Minuit, 1980), 434-527. English translation: <http://projectlamar.com/media/A-Thousand-Plateaus.pdf>
18. Ibid., 468.
19. "T-h-e-o-r-y-i-a" in *Global Tools Bulletin* № 2, Edizioni L'uomo e l'arte, Milan, January 1975 (pages unnumbered).





Adolfo Natalini, Implementation phase as autonomous phase, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Franco Raggi, *China Travel Notebook*, 1973-1974, Archive Franco Raggi



GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS — CONSTRUCTION group
Report by Andrea Branzi

18 September 1974

The research calls for a transition from so-called "humble technique" to a true "simple technology." By simple technology we intend to go beyond the realm of the idea, the rough draft, the attempt, the unpredictable act that is pioneering only in itself, without leaving a consistent, lasting impact behind it.

We have only a collection of notes on theories and practices; now we need rigorously aware elaborations. Technique has to be closely connected to theoretical effort, and while previously it could contain, in its taste and its results, all of its anti-value, therefore its theory (because it was humble technique), the relationship now needs to be overturned: technique is only the chapter of a simple technology.

Simple technology, or the back-to-zero of any technological filter, any instrumental, cultural, methodological or techno-practical medium, any already given material.

1. of any material already artificially manipulated and qualitatively predetermined;
2. of any instrumental medium of encoded elaboration (graphic, factual), no matter how advanced or how backward it may be (the tool can erroneously appear neutral);
3. of any method of design, tested or not, obsolete or updated, consecrated by time or not;
4. of any technique, even if it is established and ensures results;
5. of any theoretical-cultural givens;
6. of any socio-political content.

1) Cognition of "back to zero" (from T. S. Eliot). Experience on and through the material. What does it mean to zero out artificially manipulated and qualitatively predetermined material? Maybe it means zeroing out any cultural (aestheticizing) "preconception". To track down the emotional charge, connected with the force of the material, not yet shaped into organized form.

A) Choice of the material.

A material can be chosen in its natural state, with very little working or none at all: earth, shrubs, stone, or water. Materials with a high level of processing, but already organized, composed and consumed, deconstructed by use and social consumption: newspapers, discarded objects, furniture, "antiques" (forcing their cultural composition).

Materials to destructure, forcing their objective, physical, chemical composition. Materials to use "improperly." To provoke all the cognitive value of improper use (plastic materials can be a part of this). A piece of red laminate is more a theory of red (repeated by each beat of the machine) than a true material of elaboration. The materials already supplied by industry have this psychological "hardness." It is as if they were located past a certain perceptive, emotional and intellectual threshold; in this way, they engage the observer so little as to be lacking in any erotic impact. The use implies such a particular effort that they must be positioned, though without banning them (we do not nurture technological taboos) in last place.

2) Operation on and through tools. A tool can seem neutral while being instead, on a par with the material, an extremely influential cultural vehicle. This is true of tools of representation, as well as those of elaboration of objects selected, constructed, deconstructed, improperly used (invented). In a more evolved phase it is possible to "invent" new materials and new tools. In wider sense, materials and tools can be interchanged. In an even wider perspective, our senses, our perception, our body (see Body Art) can also be "added" to the materials and tools. This "concept" and this image are fundamental, and it is not stretching a point to re-emphasize the same procedures of choice for them (to clearly distinguish which and up to what point they can be used and reconstructed), i.e. to take them to an original and highly selected state (to destructure them), also using them improperly (listening to see, seeing to perceive...).

3) Systems of observation, analysis, recording, evaluation; extension of evaluation is a basic objective of the method. In the drawings presented by Viktor Lowenfeld in "The Nature of Creative Activity" we see a symptomatic emphasis on the limb that grasps an object, with respect to the other limb, which remains still. These forms of accentuation demonstrate openness towards the world, towards the object. The arm that reaches towards something is a going out of one's precise physical boundaries; in the drawings of blind people it is the means through which to activate a relationship with the outside world, and this is why it becomes much larger and more jointed, as if it were a normal arm that has been enhanced by a technical instrument. The hand that grasps is something more than a hand in a resting position.

4) Destructuring of techniques. Techniques are also a predetermined cultural vehicle. The free use of technique is achieved through a process of careful meticulous analysis, experimentation, and the pursuit of new roles it can assume, not just with respect to the objective result, but also with respect to the critical and theoretical awareness to be reached. Few are aware, for example, that driving a nail into a piece of wood is something that varies, depending on the nature of the surface on which the work is done, and that the support can cancel itself out.

The result is the same (the grip on the material can imperceptibly change), but what radically change are the "experience" and the degree of freedom with respect to the practical procedure. This can also have an influence on imagination.

Critical awareness should be very alert, continuously alternating with praxis; in fact, technique can be weighed down by declining into pure working "routine" or by rising (as can be imagined) to the status of a true ritual of procedure. Wrestling, for the Japanese, is identified with dance. At even higher levels, it borders on cognitive practices of a mystical order. To drive a nail, absorbing the blows of the hammer in the hands, means assimilating the hand to the tool-support and granting the entire body, including the objects, an awareness of subject-object function.

Here the education of the body comes into play, and a whole series of extensions predictable in order of value,

considered prior to and apart from the object. A point of contact with Body Art and acting is inevitable.

Regarding what has been said about materials, techniques of study and study of techniques, there are also those (techniques) of analytical deconstructing of materials: the systems of choices, and those that prepare eventual developments of the constructed: images, objects, spaces, "resonances," "intervals."

A) Techniques of deconstructing.

These apparently have an opposite sign with respect to that of construction (and such terms). Deconstructing is not demolition, in the passive sense. To dissolve a structure means making one or more other structures emerge. The procedure is progressive, in "hanging" between perilous balances. A path on always-different structures during which if the procedure is not done watchfully, it can destroy itself, or alter all of the cognitive potential.

B) Structuring techniques.

These are normally seen as "augmentative," i.e. the result becomes increasingly well configured as the work proceeds. Obviously this is a preconceived notion. In any case an experience worth doing, experimenting with it in its own right, is to configure by detraction, by starting with complicated, jumbled, overloaded, obsolete, depleted structures, and to proceed towards simple results. It is clear that the expression "humble technique" remains tied to the fact that these experiences are not necessarily bound to costly materials and preparations. In fact, the more elementary and immediate they are, the closer one gets to the basic intentions of the humble technique.

C) Intermediate techniques.

Speaking of "resonances," of intervals, we mean that the object can change when it is seen in the system of voids, or of shadows, rather than directly in the positive. Structuring always refers to the positive. If it addresses the negative can it still be defined as such, or should we talk about deconstructing?

(Let's imagine a "structure of voids," a structure of shadows, of pauses, of resonances).

Is the void a pause between fullnesses, the interior of enclosures, or an intersection between structures? Evidently (with respect to the meaning of the dialectic) every thing contains a quota of its opposite; the full always contains the empty. Now is it possible to think about a technique whose object is the negative? Were it possible, how would it be differentiated from that of the positive?

A number of indications come from psycho-pedagogical experiments using drawings. Marion Milner (in "On Not Being Able to Paint") extensively analyzes her own drawings; she distinguishes between the intentional aspect of her drawings (eg. a landscape) and the totally different results (namely: a figure of an utterly different type, that for example closely resembles an animal). Is it possible to talk about an intentional structure as distinct from an effective structure, in this case? Or is the structure only the latter? In any case, the technique to apply has somehow shifted from a fictional objective to something real, truer, more profound. And if this is true, how can we control this process? In these examples there is always an accent on getting beyond the "fear of error" i.e. the effort to get free of any cultural burdens.

Do the intermediate techniques have to do with space? While it helps to clarify, this definition runs the risk of blurring the issue, providing an already given solution. Milner herself writes: "In my books, it was written somewhere that painting should express the emotions provoked by space ... when I began to feel that (not just to think about it) it seemed as if the very foundations of sensory perception of the world, as it is conceived by common sense, were in danger."

D) Broken-down techniques.

Children left with plenty of freedom to draw attempt very strange techniques after a certain period of time. If they have many markers available, they take them all at once, striking them in different ways on the paper, leading to highly varied results. In such cases, the objective is the technique itself, the destruction of the habits established in prolonged use of a single way of doing things. These acts appear to be acts of rebellion and destruction of the technique, though instead they are true techniques in their own right

SURVIVALAL



Food and gun, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Alison J. Clarke

THE INDIGENOUS AND THE AUTOCHTHON

In 1973, the Italian edition of design critic Victor J. Papanek's polemic *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* was released under the title *Progettare per il mondo reale: il design: come è e come potrebbe essere*. In January that same year, the seminal Milanese design magazine *Casabella* launched (in its own editorial offices) a radical open-ended pedagogic experiment dubbed "Global Tools", featuring leading figures of Italian radical design and architecture, from Archizoom Associati, Riccardo Dalisi, Gaetano Pesce, Ugo La Pietra, Ettore Sottsass Jr. through to Superstudio and UFO. The group espoused an exploratory, multi-disciplinary didactic series of workshops premised on generating an alternative culture of design, untethered from the legacy of Fordist industrial relations and conformist design-school traditions. Just as Papanek's book

lambasted the failure of contemporary design education for its emphasis on profits and "clients" rather than an engagement with social needs, the Global Tools initiative revolved around a multi-sited "anti-school" for design. Makers would be re-encharmed through engagement with pre-industrial craft-based genres, the sensorial process of design becoming a political strategy within itself.

Most importantly, *Design for the Real World* (DFRW) and Global Tools (GT) shared an agenda to re-affirm the social purpose of design beyond the rubric of modernism, offering fervent critiques of late-industrial society's role in fostering widespread alienation and the destruction of local resources, indigenous creativity, cultures and skills. While Papanek's examples of autochthon were mainly found in "developing" countries and communities (including Indonesia, Bali, and Greenland), the members of the Global Tools collective turned to the eroding peasant cultures of Italy, and more specifically Tuscany. Both Papanek and the radical Italian collective advocated

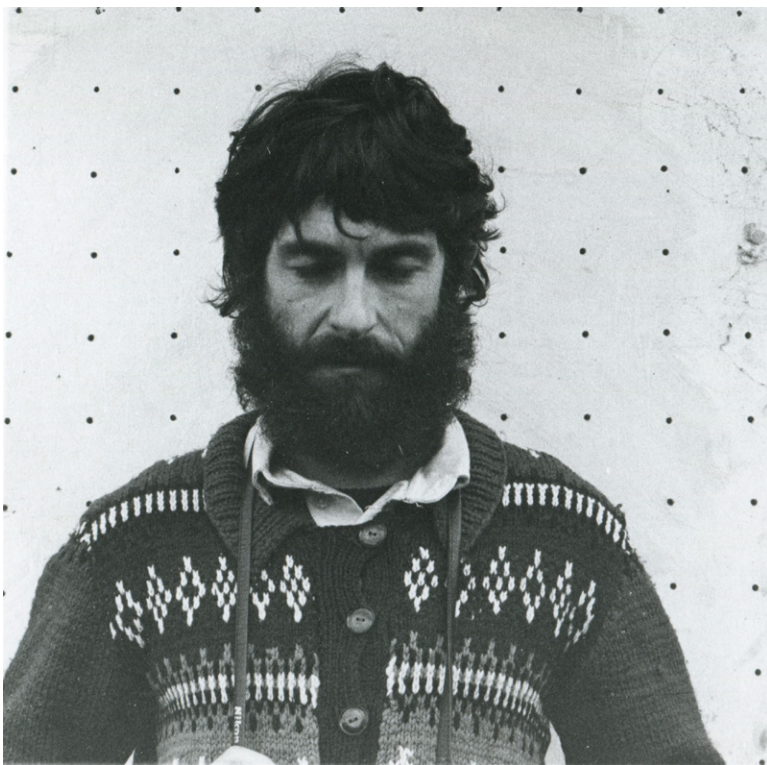


multi-disciplinary, experimental and non-hierarchical models of pedagogy and the dismantling of contemporary design conventions in favor of alternative economics of value. Using rhetoric that would strike a chord with designers in the late 21st century, they envisaged a devolved “maker culture” rising from the ashes of the post-industrial, crisis ridden late-capitalism, that would empower localized groups, individuals and society. The original GT member Franco Raggi described the project thus; “as opposed to the established and accepted practice of technological, comfortable, useful and functional design, the intent is to posit a nomadic practice for an archaic, dysfunctional design.”¹ Anthropologically inspired ideas around material culture, ritual meaning, and emphasis on users and co-design underpinned their newly forged design philosophies.

DFRW took an equally enthusiastic approach to the anthropological, in its use of quasi-ethnographic explanation and research, as well as the comparative representation of authentic indigenous tools and artifacts as a means of illustrating the extent of the inanity, depravity and alienation wrought by popular capitalist consumer culture.



Remo and Elena Buti, Global Tools visual identity, Sambuca 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Cristiano Toraldo di Francia (Superstudio), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Adolfo Natalini (Superstudio), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Andrea Branzi (Archizoom), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Lapo Binazzi (UFO), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

Inuit fishhooks and African carved masks were juxtaposed with the flotsam of Western consumer culture Papanek collected as ethnographic evidence of the state of contemporary design; diapers for parakeets, a “Human Washing Machine” developed by Osaka’s Sanyo Electric Co., and a plastic inflatable sex doll available in a multitude of skin textures including “python.”²

Under a chapter heading “Do It Yourself Murder,” Papanek took the designer to task head-on, complaining that: “[N]ever before in history have grown men sat down and seriously designed electric toothbrushes, rhinestone-covered shoe horns, and mink carpeting for bathrooms, and then drawn up elaborate plans to make and sell these gadgets to millions of people.”

It had been in 1971, three years after the ransacking of the Milano Triennale by Italian students protesting at the mass consumptive spectacle of the international design fair, that Austrian-American émigré Victor Papanek had first launched his polemic *Design for the Real World* in English. Pithy, wry and sensationalist, he posited design as a form of social activism, and the designer as the harbinger of liberal political change. Industrial

design was construed as a reckless profession that had lost sight of its duty to the end-user. “In the ‘good old days’ if a person liked killing people,” taunted Papanek tabloid-style, “he had to become a General, purchase a coal mine, or else study nuclear physics. Today, industrial design has put mass murder on a mass-production basis.”

An ersatz manifesto for socially responsible design, Papanek’s clarion call was manifestly mainstream in comparison to the Radical Italians, and took its place beside an English-speaking genre of critique exposing the environmental and social hazards of advanced industrial society that included such alternative culture classics as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), E.F Schumacher’s, *Small is Beautiful* (1973) and Alvin Toffler’s *Future Shock* (1970). Rather than “creating whole new species of permanent garbage to clutter up the landscape,” designers were called upon to apply their creativity to tackling the social inequalities of the “real world.” On a practical level, Papanek advocated the development of an alternative economy of design in which at least 10% of a designer’s time must be dedicated to resolving the problems of the vulnerable and the under-represented, including children, the elderly, and the disabled.

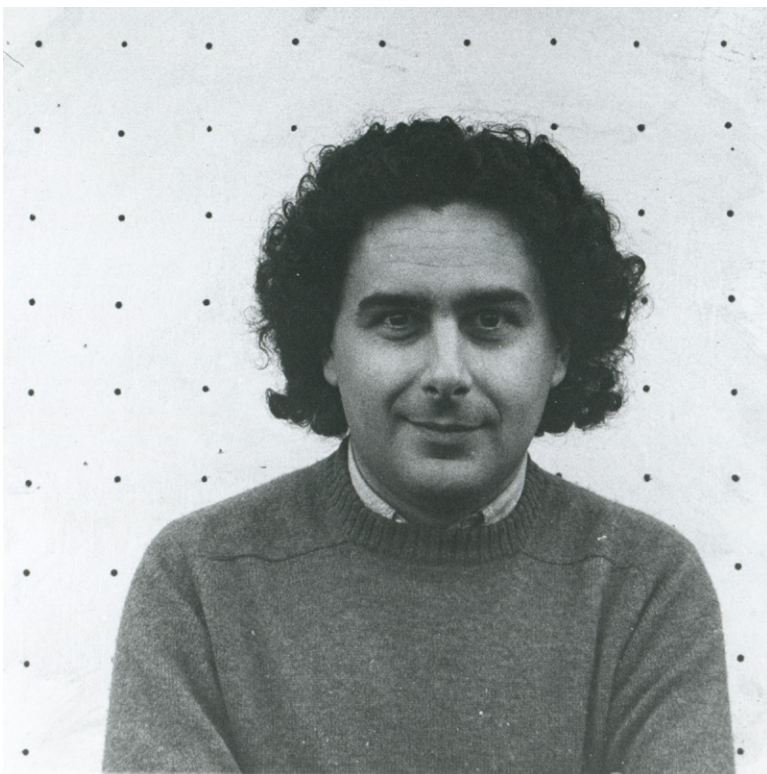




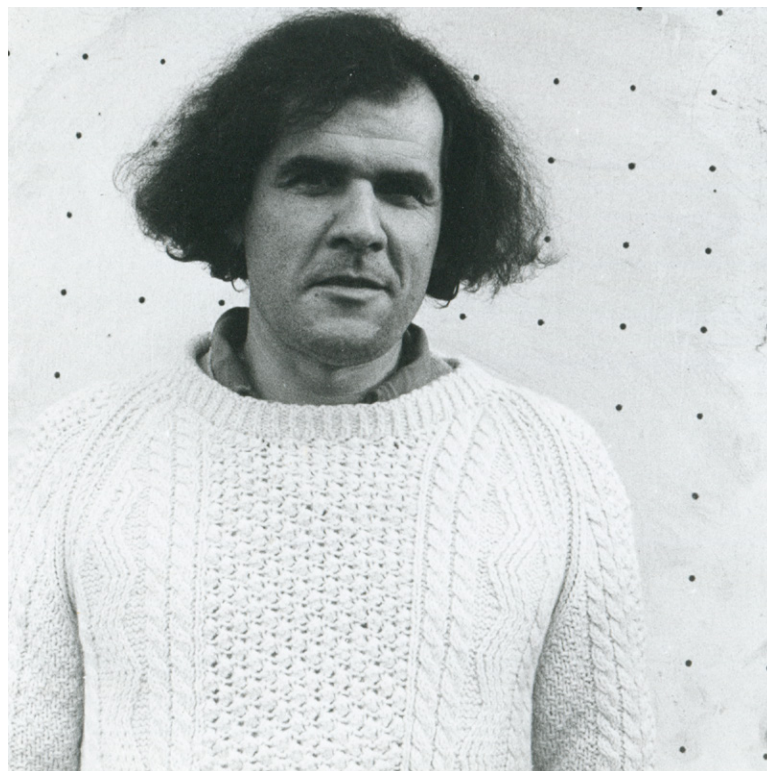
Titti Maschietto (UF0), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



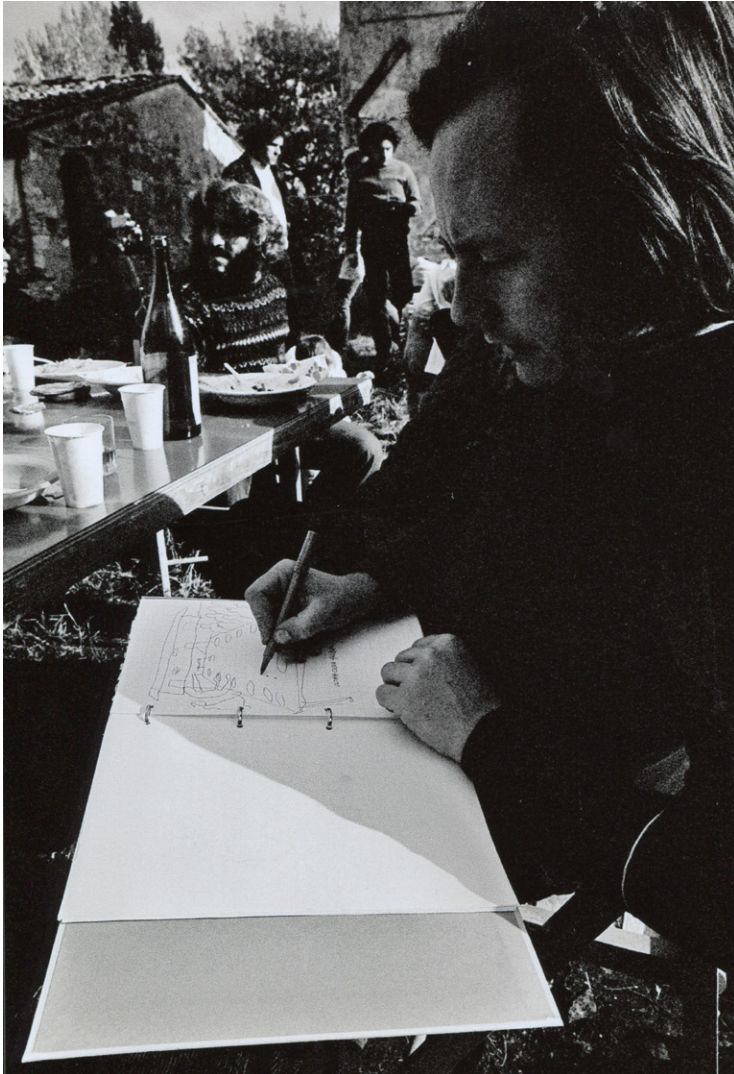
Fabrizio Fiumi (9999), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Gian Piero Frassinelli (Superstudio), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Paolo Galli (9999), Portrait
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Drawing session, Adolfo Natalini
Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

The populist appeal of the book (translated into multiple languages and embraced by designers from South America to Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union) was tied to the rising cohort of disaffected designers critical of the failed utopianism of modernism and the homogenizing effects of global capitalism. *DFRW* stood for the collective conscience of a new design generation and became a pedagogical design-bible cited in art and design schools across Europe and the United States, inspiring student demonstrations, design curricular upheaval, and placing humanitarian design on the agenda.

The book coined a new brand of social design defined by sensitivity to the local and vernacular, the rejection of formalism, and a quasi-anthropological holism that sought to empower users, refocusing the political consciousness of design practice as a whole.

Modernism and its functionalist advocates stood as the nemesis of a progressive, non-ethnocentric design culture that sought to oppose rational and formalistic functionalism; a position most acutely represented by the famed modernist bastion of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* (HfG),

Ulm, Germany. For the purposes of dramatic illustration, Papanek oft recalled an anecdote that perfectly encapsulated this perceived antagonism between the design camps: An anecdote that would later form the basis of a biting critique of Papanek's position in the pages of *Casabella* under the instruction of key Global Tools instigator Alessandro Mendini himself.

In the pages of the *DFRW*, Papanek recounted how he took the opportunity of unveiling one of his first prototypes for humanitarian design during a guest lecture at the revered Ulm School in the 1960s. Designed for distribution among an illiterate indigenous Indonesian population by UNESCO, the recycled 9 cent tin-can radio receiver relied on power generated by dried cow dung and paraffin wax. The basic workings of this deliberately crude “tool” adhered to an appropriate technology discourse, taking into account local resources and cultural tropes; in a gesture to co-design, Papanek revealed how the design allowed the “indigenous user” to apply vernacular decoration in the form of detailed embroidered appliqué and seashells. The “ugliness” of the object's “ad hocism” apparently appalled the Ulm cognoscenti and the institute's design professors

quit Papanek's lecture in disgust, recommending without irony that the design be “saved” with the application of a “neutral gray paint.”³

This primitive dung-powered object shared more in common with the conceptual ecological artworks and installations of Joseph Beuys than the pared-down modernist simplicity of the Ulm design school. Indeed, despite the pragmatic rhetoric of the socially responsible design movement, Papanek's humanitarian designs rarely made it into production. As agitprop creations though, rather than functional design solutions with ‘real’ applications in developing countries, they efficiently communicated a ground-swell in design thinking. In this respect, they were not so far removed from the Global Tools agenda, or Raggi's description of “a nomadic practice for an archaic, dysfunction design,” than may at first seem evident.

Certainly, the design activists of 1970s US and Europe occupied separate socio-political and culture spheres and contrasting historiographies of practice.

In the 1970s, two major cutting-edge exhibitions, MoMA's *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*



(1972) and the later Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum's *ManTransForms* (1976) that featured future and former figures of the Global Tools collective, introduced a North American audience to European avant-gardist design. Revealingly, neither exhibit made mention of Papanek or his ideas despite (or because of) the popularity of his best-selling book; DFRW received widespread international coverage in an array of contemporary media from the US *Time* magazine to the leading professional industrial design press but it operated outside the curatorial Academe.

The disjunction of Italian design avant-gardism and the design pragmatism Papanek came to represent, is reiterated by the reflective words of Franco Raggi:

“I would say though that Papanek was less ideological and more practical, more pragmatic and didactic than the theoretical (abstract) assumptions of Global Tools. Among other things, the goal of Papanek was almost missionary, trying to spread a design idea of the ‘decolonized’ and an autochthon low-tech, as well as an elementary maintenance.”⁴



Drawing session, Ettore Sottsass Jr.

Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

SURVIVAL



Survival, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Franco Raggi, Performance, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



However, Raggi continues, “There was of course some influence of Papanek on a theoretical and research level with his elementary anthropology of design as a form of clever and balanced use of autochthon resources (today we would say ‘zero kilometers’). But it is clear that his mode of design activism was deemed de-intellectualised, even tokenistic.”

Global Tools relied upon the intellectual avant-gardism of conceptual art, *Arte* and *Technica povera*, new media arts and the openly leftwing post-Marxist discourse of European counter culture. Papanek’s work was seen as part of a US tradition of corporate exposé (exemplified by the post-war writings for instance of Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, 1955, and Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, 1967). The basic thrust of *Design for the Real World*’s adoption of the vernacular also shared similarities with Bernhard Rudofsky’s challenge to formal architecture in *Architecture Without Architects* (1964) with whose author Papanek shared an émigré background. Papanek’s populism was consciously pitted against high-theory, and he critiqued his more radical European students as “bourgeois romantics” whose opinions were more oppressive

than their enemies.⁵ This overtly populist tone, made him an ambivalent ally for the Global Tools project.

In 1974, Alessandro Mendini, co-founder of Global Tools and editor of *Casabella* invited Guy Bonsiepe, an alumnus of the Ulm *Hochschule für Gestaltung* and leading theorist on design for the “peripheral countries,” to review *Progettare per il mondo reale*. Under the title *Design and Underdevelopment*, Bonsiepe, who one might otherwise have assumed to be a natural ally of Papanek, condemned the polemic as a “pallid crusade of the petit bourgeois.” Accordingly, Bonsiepe wrote that “[T]he designer [Papanek] constitutes a social danger of the first degree, one of the main culprits in the abuse of the environment and the squandering of resources, a layabout who has discovered a good ‘set-up’ in wasting his time and energy on creating a carnival of foolishness to lure individuals, [themselves] the easy prey of consumerism.”⁶

While radical Italian design discourse of the period drew on the writings of post-Marxist political philosophers such as Antonio Negri, Bonsiepe scornfully accused Papanek of ignorance in failing to acknowledge the role of productive forces, and “especially that of the working class



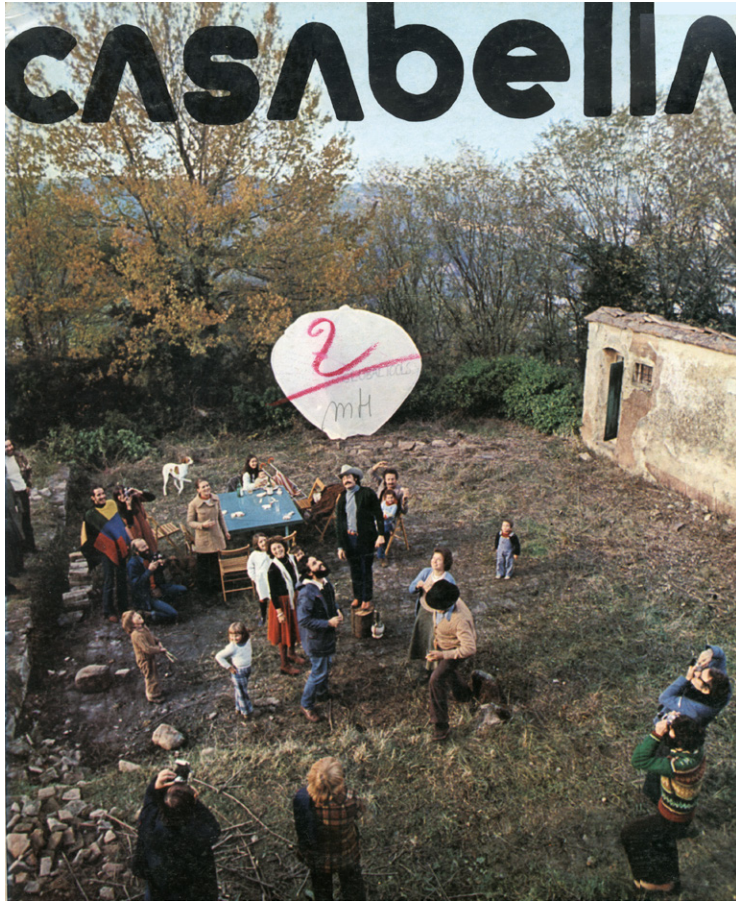
Franco Raggi, Performance, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

whose participation constitutes an indispensable premise for any change of design praxis.” His “hatchet-job” did not stop there. As an alumnus of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* Bonsiepe fiercely mocked Papanek’s criticism of the humanist agenda of modernism, commenting that “flying the flag for ‘human and emotive values’ had always been the banner principle of the ‘anti-enlightenment.’” Mocking the much vaunted “tin-can radio” design, Bonsiepe accused it of insulting the intelligence of the Ulm School, who would never be “so impudent as to offer a paternalistic design – covered by humanitarian coating...doused in the ideology of the noble savage.”⁷

Most shockingly, especially considering that in his homeland Papanek had been ousted from the industrial design profession’s public body as a political dissenter, Bonsiepe accused Papanek of complicity with the American military suggesting the controversial “tin-can radio” constituted “an instrument of ideological penetration and control.” Papanek responded concisely, accusing Bonsiepe of “fantasy making” and skewing his words, but his political credentials were undoubtedly undermined.



Ettore Sottsass Jr., Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Casabella № 397, January 1975, Archive Casabella

Albeit well-documented, the Global Tools project was ultimately a fleeting and failed pedagogical project; yet its experimental avant-gardism and the fame of its main protagonists has

ensured its place in the annals of 20th century art and design history. Ironically, despite being cast out of the upper echelons of design activism by Mendini and his ilk, Papanek achieved what the Global Tools initiative, for all its bourgeois idealism, could never manage; his book genuinely popularized the social agenda for design and transformed design pedagogy. For all of its intellectual inadequacies, *DFRW* remains the best-selling design book on record, having never fallen out of print since its first edition. Its legacy is perhaps the ever greater proliferation of transdisciplinary design from design anthropology, through design culture, to social design, and beyond. Despite their differences, Global Tools and *DFRW* were both influenced (explicitly and tacitly) by the theories of phenomenology through the notion of the vernacular, the indigenous and the experiential, as applied to contemporary anthropology and architecture of the period; an engagement historians have identified as bridging the way from radicalism to post-modernism in design and architecture.⁸ Perhaps in this respect Global Tools and Papanek's *Design for the Real World* may finally be understood to belong to the same design historical canon.



Gianni Pettena, *Attenzione Pericolo* (Attention Danger), Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

NOTES

1. Franco Raggi, "Dysfunctional objects for a heretical 'inverse ergonomics,'" (notes of the Global Tools seminar, "The Body and Constraints," Milan, 1975).
2. See Alison J. Clarke, "The Anthropological Object in Design: From Superstudio to Victor Papanek," in Alison J. Clarke, ed., *Design Anthropology: Object Culture in the 21st Century* (Springer: Vienna/New York 2013).
3. See *Design for the Real World* (Pantheon edition, 1971), 164.
4. From a conversation between Valerio Borghuovo, Silvia Franceschini and Franco Raggi.
5. Malin Lindgren, "Professoren måtte selv lave ungdomsoprør" ("The professor had to make his own youth uprising"), *Berlingske Weekendavisen*, December 20, 1972, 12.
6. *Casabella* № 385, January, 43.
7. Ibid.
8. See Jorge Otero-Palios, *Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2010).



GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS — SURVIVAL group

Report by Superstudio and 9999

20 September 1974

Our group is moving forward with the work proposed in the program presented on 22 September.

The encounters with the other components of Global Tools and our thinking about its difficult developments (from autumn of 1972 to the present) have convinced us of the need to create opportunities for work and exchange beyond theoretical/conference/specialized practice.

In other words, only by triggering energetic group therapy can we hope to bring about a cultural deconditioning and hence a possible serene future of work.

An opportunity not to be missed: the November seminar.

We propose moving the site of the seminar from the Space Electronic to a country house between Florence and Siena, in the town of Sambuca, that can lend itself to the organization of an encounter that keeps everyone in close contact.

The organization of transportation and communications, cooking and cleaning, becomes real time action, and together with various other "manual" activities (like construction and working with the earth), these activities constitute, with the reports and the discussions, the object/subject of the days of the seminar.

GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS - SURVIVAL group

Utensils

Superstudio

21, 22, 23 June - Sambuca

Man has always used his brain, hands and objects to survive on the earth.

For long periods the hands (and the whole body) were the main means of survival. Then the brain introduced objects as an extension of the body. As the artifacts (utensils and objects) gradually grew in number, conscious use of the mind increased and the importance of the body as a means diminished.

We are now at the 29th day (Nicholson): one more day and the algae (the objects) that double their area every day will have covered the pond (the earth).

It becomes logical to hypothesize a different process: the development of the capacities of the mind and the hand and the reduction of the number of objects. Of course priorities exist in this reduction: the list of the "objects to save" is no longer a personal or allegorical matter, but responds to economic parameters (material and mental economy, we should emphasize).

Utensils, objects conceived to produce other objects but above all designed as means of survival, undoubtedly constitute a large part of the list.

The work we propose is of a cognitive and practical nature.

The work consists in the study of utensils from different times and cultures through a structural interpretation, and of deriving from this analysis the elements for the creation, recycling or appropriation of utensils.

GLOBAL TOOLS

Prehistoric utensils (Paleolithic)

Australian utensils

Peasant tools (Tuscany - Burgenland)

Tools we-don't-use-but-that-would-come-in-handy...

The work takes place in three days and three nights at Sambuca, moving forward with a more general discourse on survival already evaluated in the seminar in November. Utensils for simple operations or in any case utensils for survival will be constructed. This work will then be continued in the early days of July (3, 4, 5, 6).

GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS — SURVIVAL group

Report by Superstudio and 9999

20 September 1974

In nature, the survival of the species is connected with the capacity to adapt to environmental conditions: mutations, camouflage, atrophy of organs and development of limbs, learning, are all parts of a single strategy.

Let's take learning, specific to the human species: the capacity to make mistakes, to remember hopes and deaths, to let ourselves be modified by the environment (but more often to modify it) have allowed us to remain on planet Earth, also perhaps beyond the limits of our biological destiny.

To conserve our mind, today we have to reject the rules of consumption. This means accepting the body and life as fragile, precious elements, making them available to us and others without the filters of culture.

This is the survival that interests us, and it is also the one that is most threatened and maybe almost lost.

Accepting our present conditions as a starting point (as intellectuals living in Florence and Milan, as people born in the country or on the verge of going there, who stubbornly believe in the possibilities of communicating wherever there are people — in schools, for example — having made boats, books and drawings, having planted vegetable gardens, vineyards, having walked, taken a streetcar or a bicycle, or hitchhiked, having worked a lot — also at night — have been involved in architecture and design because they were ways of "making" with the hands and the head), we would like to investigate the ways in which we survive, in pursuit of better, more effective means to that end: the liberation of the need for and free use of our human potential.

What we would like to do is to make it possible to transmit one year of life. Two experimental stations (one

GLOBAL TOOLS

in the city, the other in the country) utilized by two groups of persons in an interchangeable way.

The experiment will cover different aspects of survival:

1. food: how it is produced (agriculture), how it is processed, or how it is purchased (the economic expenditure)...
2. clothing: how it is made, how it is recycled...
3. objects, utensils, tools: construction, use and reduction...
4. communications, the mind — information (exchange and management), reduction of information to a minimum, resistance to manipulation, mental gymnastics, liberating techniques, psychosynthesis...
5. the home: how to make it for yourself, how to find it, how to manage it...
6. transportation, travel, trade...
7. work — how to find it, how to abolish it, how to reinvent it...
8. absolute survival — technology "of the bare hands" in normal and extreme environments (desert, darkness, limited space, lack of water, air, cold, hot...).
9. decoding and deritualization — awareness of the rituals involved in the above points, reflection and self-analysis...

The starting conditions will be outlined, along with the means and methods of the experiment and the results (in terms of augmentation or reduction of abilities, comprehension, goods).

GLOBAL TOOLS

A PROGRAM OF AUTO-ANTHROPOLOGY

A. Documentation of the starting condition — inventories, statement of modes and purposes of the experience.

B. Implementation of the experience (three months, six months, one year).

C. Accounting (economic, energetic, emotional, bodily balance sheets). Reporting results.

The levels of operation can be individuals, microgroups (family, nuclei), group (Global Tools), supergroup (generated by Global Tools as a school)...

GLOBAL TOOLS

SURVIVAL — first Survival Group Workshop: Sambuca Val di Pesa (Florence)

November 1974

Superstudio & 9999

Our group is moving forward with the work proposed in the program presented on 22 September.

The encounters with the other components of Global Tools and our thinking about its difficult developments (from the autumn of 1972 to the present) and its problematic future prospects have convinced us of the need to create opportunities for work and exchange beyond theoretical/conference/specialized practice.

In other words, only by triggering energetic group therapy can we hope to bring about a cultural deconditioning and hence a possible serene future of work.

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The organization of transportation and communications, cooking, cleaning and sleeping, becomes real time action, and together with various other "manual" activities (like construction and working with the earth), these activities constitute, with the reports and the discussions, the object/subject of the days of the workshop.

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Duration of the workshop: about three days

1 November - Friday

morning: arrival in Florence, trip to Sambuca

potluck lunch

afternoon: discussion on working method and dinner program

2 November - Saturday

morning: CONSTRUCTION, BODY, COMMUNICATION

lunch

afternoon: discussion resumes

dinner

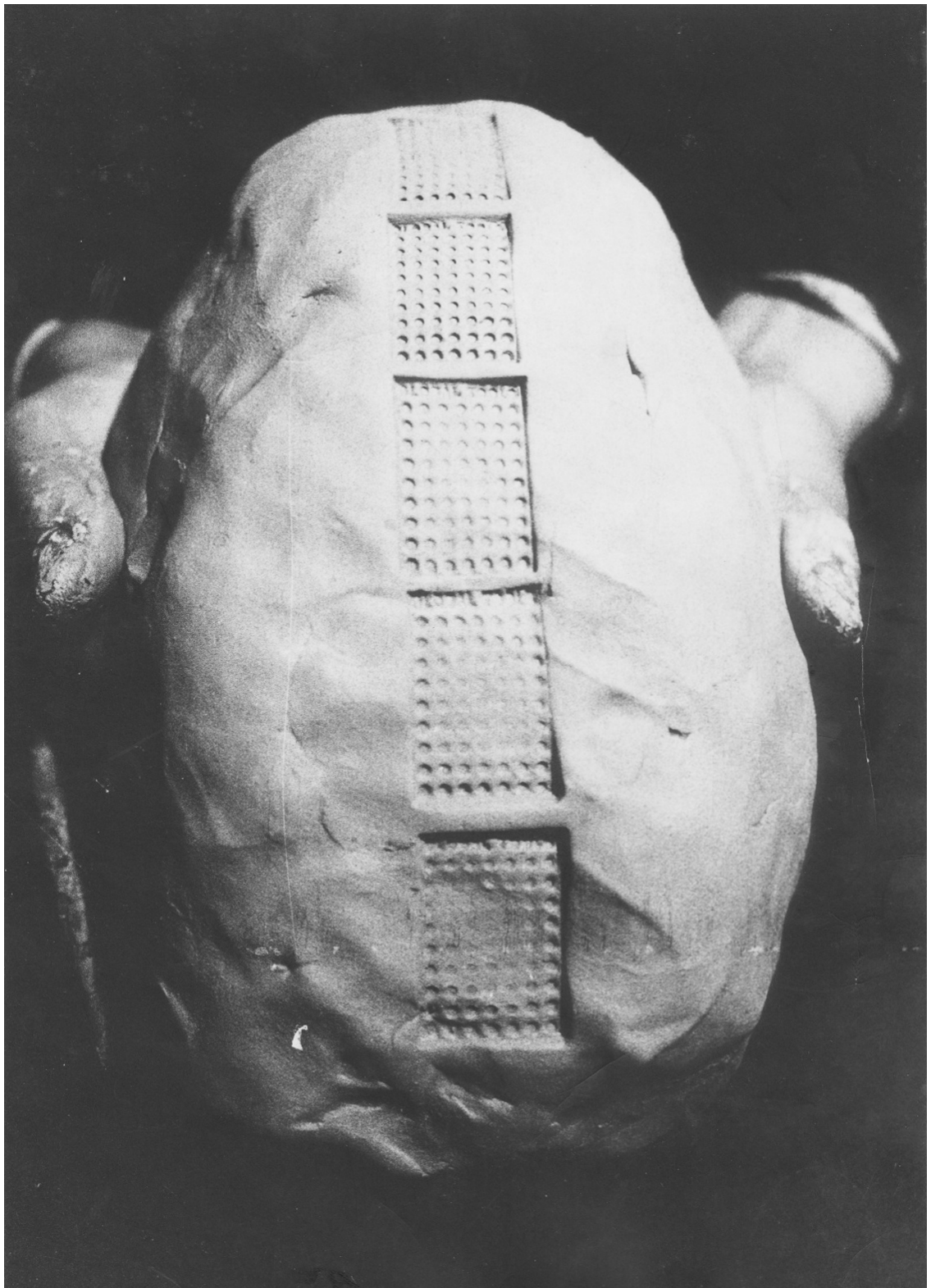
3 November - Sunday

morning: THEORY, SURVIVAL, supplements and connections

lunch

afternoon: discussion resumes

THEORY



Clay session, Remo Buti, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

Maurizio Lazzarato

THE CONDITIONS OF A RADICAL PROJECT: REFUSAL OF WORK AS A REFUSAL OF CULTURE

The refusal of work – the most important political category of Italian workerism (*operaismo*), referring to the practices of Fordist workers' fight against large factories whose assembly lines represented the exploitation of industrial capitalism – was considered by the founding members of Global Tools as the “greatest discovery of the century” and “the fundamental law of all social dynamics”¹ such that “the only progress is that which eliminates work”² (Archizoom Associati).

Global Tools introduces a radical innovation in understanding the relationship between capital and society. While for workerism, society was supposed to be invaded by the logic and methods of the factory, those involved in the development of Global Tools turn this thinking on its head: “for capital it is not society which must become like a factory, but the factory which must resemble society.”³

This is a particularly appropriate method for studying capitalism at the end of the 1970s, a period in which consumerism played a central role and tended to reduce creative activity to a purely consumer activity (such that we can speak not only about the work force but also of the consumer force). Another essential innovation particular to this group: the refusal of work also implies the refusal of culture. The former includes all of society's moral, religious, and aesthetic meanings and values. Culture has a specific role, particularly important in capitalist society, because “a producer of role models is a part of the productive organization of society.”⁴



Group discussions, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

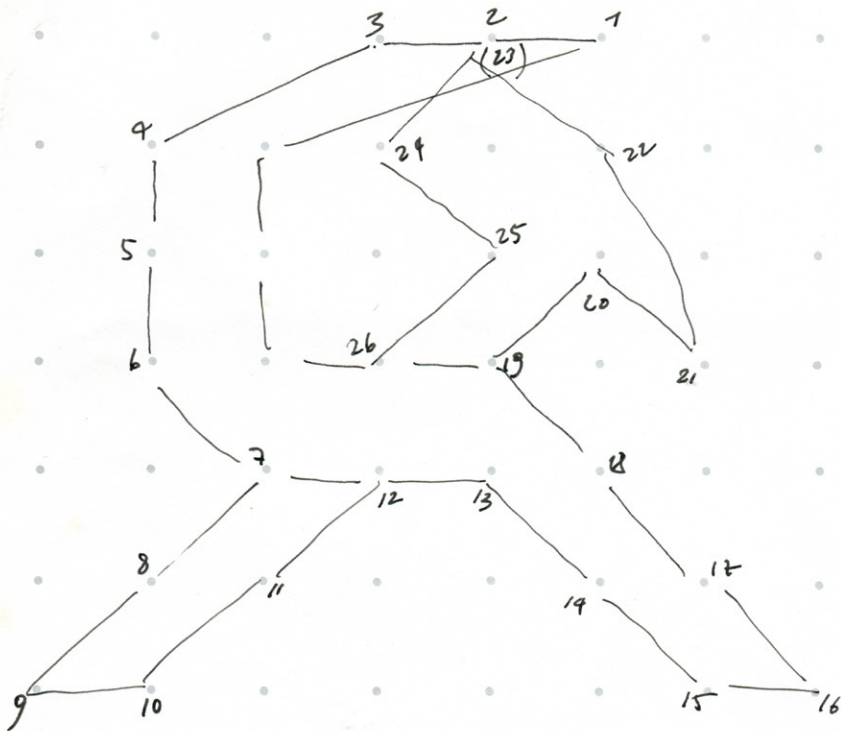


Group discussions, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini



Group discussions, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

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laboratori: 50123 Firenze, via Palazzuolo 37, telefono 055/293082

22.9.74
MATAINI

Adolfo Natalini, The hammer and the sickle, 1974, Archive Adolfo Natalini

The aesthetical-political problem then becomes one of “freeing man from culture and art,” which means liberating him from models of behavior produced by culture that have become even more invasive with the advent of consumer society. These practices of refusal which had affected the world of salaried work as well as the domains of art or culture, also anticipated the critique of “creativity” because, at the end of the 1970s, and



Group discussions, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Casabella

the beginning of the 1980s, it would submit, like all other activities, to a process of control, normalization, and homogenization.

The “creatives” have since become publicists who create “concepts.”

Culture (and notably design) must accentuate the value of consumer objects by creating transitory models of behavior and pretending to provide the user a culture and a set of choices which he or she does not possess and has never made. It stimulates the action of the user inside a modular reality, that is to say a system which “ensures that the creative process must happen inside a perimeter of already predetermined combinations.”⁵

This brief review of the conditions of a radical project seems once more vital and relevant today. So why is it that they have disappeared from “artistic and cultural projects” and why were these positions abandoned by speaking of the “end of the age of revolutions” and the need for a “radical reformism”?

Once the avant garde, the age of politics and that of revolution had exhausted their strength,

the possibility opened up for a “reformist civilization,” of a “radical reformism.” The model of “weak organization” and “soft” technology (electronic and digital), make a “reformist culture” possible, one that manifests itself in “continuous change” and a “perpetual transformation.” It is this thesis, born in the 1980s and ‘90s, which has not weathered the financial crisis. Continuous change and perpetual transformation collide with



Group discussions, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Casabella

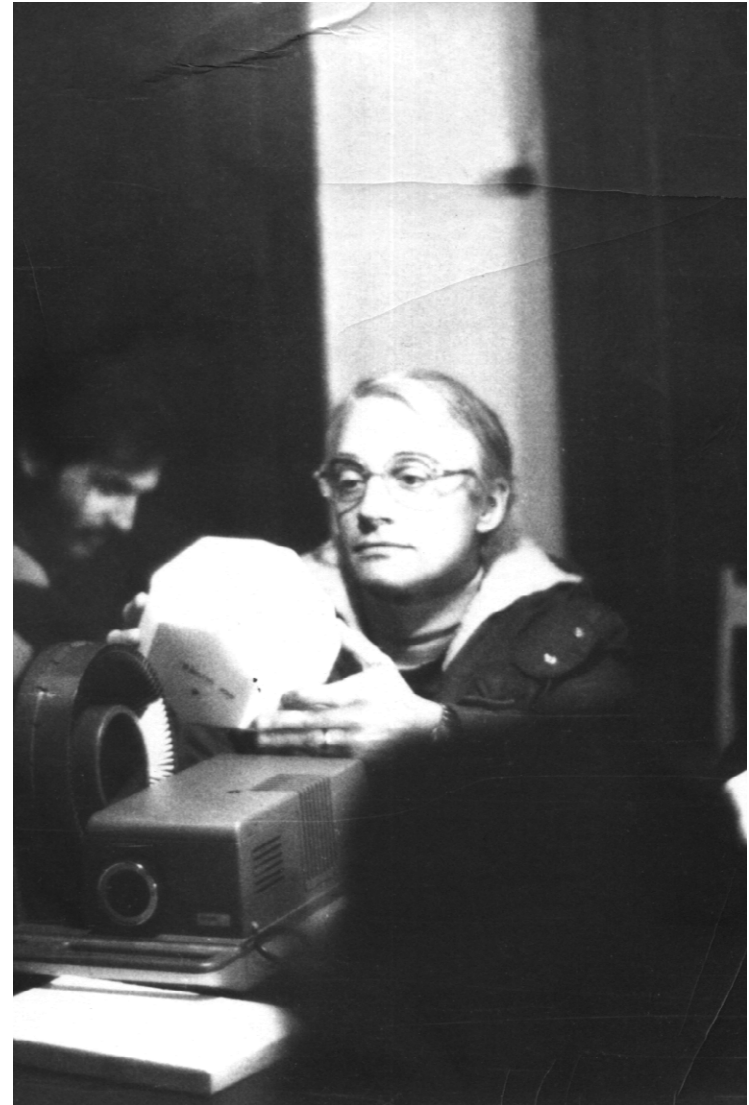
limits and give way, as in the current financial crisis, to an economic and cultural stagnation.

In these conditions, reformism has become impossible, if it even existed during neo-liberalism. There is no more room for social progress and mobility. The United States, which had been the mythological home of “destructive creation,” and the realization of the “self-made man,” is the most rigidly stratified society in the world. Creative destruction turns into full-on destruction and the future no longer holds the promise of wealth, happiness, and self-fulfillment. Growth, which must fulfill its promises, is not forthcoming and, in any case, it would be a kind of growth which deepens inequalities, which distributes money and employment like a society of rentiers.

Reformism is impossible because the single largest reformism practiced by capitalism to get out of the stock market crash of 1929 (the New Deal), presupposed neutralizing “finance,” or what John Maynard Keynes called the “euthanasia of the rentier.”⁶ In a “financialized” society like ours, neutralizing finance means neutralizing capital. This is why regressive policies are being adopted to get out of the current crisis; these are

not short-term but structural policies which turn democracy towards authoritarianism. The crisis is not only economic, it is also a crisis of our model of civilization, it touches on and refers to livelihoods, not only that of humans, but also of non-humans (the environmental crisis).

The need for a critique, a break, a refusal becomes a prerequisite not only in politics, but also in aesthetics because the assertion made by Archizoom Associati in the 1970s is still relevant: “It is impossible to give a different definition of creativity without imagining a different social reality, in other words, without supposing a non-productive end to creativity.”⁷ Weak organization, soft technologies, and radical reformism are precisely the techniques, which put creativity to work for the valorization of capital. The condition of creativity is still, however, a society without work where salaried work is abolished. In these new conditions, the refusal of work is not a “dialectical” expedient, quite the opposite. Among the multiplicity of reasons which push us to retain and redefine the concepts of refusal of work and refusal of culture, let us examine two: the impossibility of reformism in post-financial crisis capitalism and the possibility of practicing



Alessandro Mendini, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Piero Brombin

THEORY



Negatives, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra

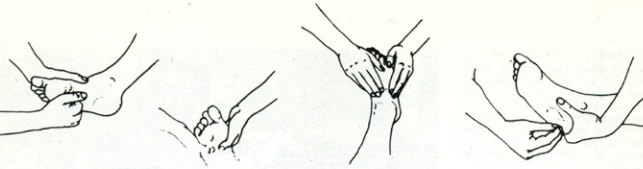


THEORY



Negatives, Sambuca, 1974, Archive Ugo La Pietra





Body Corpo

R. DALISI, A. MENDINI,
D. MOSCONI, F. RAGGI, G. PESCE

Il corpo umano analizzato prima della definizione di fini funzionali, prima dell'azione dei filtri della cultura, prima della costruzione dentro la rigidità dei sistemi. Il corpo come strumento primario. Nell'azione convenzionale, il corpo è considerato un impedimento o comunque un fattore trascurabile, della cui consapevolezza d'uso non ci si cura; in certe religioni il corpo è vissuto come una colpa, liberarsi della sua fisicità è un traguardo.

In un processo di azioni deintellettualizzate si può pensare ad una indagine del corpo inteso come strumento, prescindendo da culture specifiche, simulando e ripercorrendo il processo che va, progressivamente, dalla scoperta, all'uso finalizzato e non del proprio corpo. L'esito conoscitivo non è prevedibile, ma sarà determinabile via via a posteriori delle operazioni. Si potranno allora innescare processi di maggiore consapevolezza sull'uso e sulle possibilità strumentali del proprio corpo.

L'indagine può cominciare con un « inventario del corpo umano », dove il corpo umano è considerato come strumento per sopravvivere, per costruire, per comunicare, per teorizzare. Si pensa ad una classificazione generale sulle caratteristiche, sull'uso e sulle attività del corpo, tramite un catalogo visivo, un rilevamento senza fine dell'attività fisica diretta del corpo stesso. L'inventario del corpo umano può portare ad una presa di coscienza del corpo come oggetto, nella sua duplice realtà fisica e mentale. Una sequenza base di schede campione può dare avvio ad una griglia continua, sempre più dettagliata e complessa.

IPOTESI PER UN INVENTARIO DEL CORPO UMANO RILEVAMENTO DEL CORPO

— Elenco delle parti. — Morfologia, rilievo, anatomia del corpo. — Il corpo come oggetto costruito. — I materiali del corpo: carne, peli, capelli, unghie... — Il corpo come strumento. — Il corpo come energia (come macchina). — Età. — Il feto. — L'invecchiamento. — Il cadavere. — Le razze. — L'evoluzione. — I cinque sensi (vista, udito, gusto, tatto, olfatto). — Patologia del corpo. — Il corpo deformato. — La rappresentazione del corpo. — Bellezza.



The human body analyzed before defining its functional goals, before culture has already maimed its functions, before its having been forced to subdue to stiff social systems.

The body as a primary tool. The human body is conventionally regarded as a hindrance or anyhow, as a factor of little or no importance, the conscious use of which we take in little regard; in some religions people live their bodily functions as they were faults, so that getting rid of its characteristics appears to be a goal.

Within a process of actions, deprived of their intellectual side, you can think of enquiring about the body, seen as an instrument, without taking into account specific cultural worlds, simulating and running again through the process, progressively from the discovery to the finalized use or not of our body.

We cannot foresee the results, but we can determine them, gradually after our operations. So doing, we shall be able to develop more conscious processes about the use and the instrumental faculties of our body.

The enquiry can start with an "inventory of human body" whereas human body is regarded as a tool for surviving, building, communicating, and formulating theories. We think of a generalized classification about characteristics, use and activities of human body, through a visual catalogue and a constant survey of the direct physical activities of the body itself.

By making an inventory we are easily brought to realize that the body is an object endowed with both a physical and mental reality. A basic sequence of sample-cards can be the starting-point of a constant refinement, more and more complicated and detailed.

AN HYPOTHESIS FOR AN INVENTORY OF THE HUMAN BODY A SURVEY OF THE BODY

— A list of its various parts. — Morphology, anatomy, relief map of the body. — The body as a built object. — Its various components: flesh, hair, nails... — The body as a tool. — The body as energy (as a machine). — Age. — The fetus. — Ageing. — The corpse. — Races. — Evolution. — The five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling). — Pathology of the body. — The deformed body. — The body structure. — Beauty.

“refusal” (of work) in previously unseen forms, in other words, that they must apply also, and especially, to “creative,” “artistic,” and cultural work.

We have the possibility to make it effective again, not only because the influence of capital on our lives has not ceased to grow, but also and especially because we have not exhausted all of the resources which refusal holds. While simultaneously opposing, critiquing, and fighting the capitalist organization of society, refusal is also, and especially, a form of self-expression, and an expression of new forms of subjectivity and new values.

The workers' movement only existed because the workers' strike was simultaneously a refusal, a non-movement, a radical form of idleness, and inaction; a work stoppage which suspended the roles, functions, and hierarchies of the division of work in the factory.

Problematising only one aspect of the struggle, the dimension of the movement, was a major handicap which turned the trade union movement into an accelerator of productivity and industrialization, the champion of labor.

IL CORPO E LA COSTRUZIONE

— Il corpo e le tecniche costruttive.
— L'uso della mano per costruire. — Uten-
sili. — Materiali. — Ginnastiche costrut-
tive. — Costruzione come lavoro non fun-
zionale. — Costruzione come fenomeno fat-
tuale (come esperienza). — Il rituale del
procedimento (valore corporale del lavoro).
— Rapporto corpo/cose. — Rapporto ma-
no/cose.

IL CORPO E LA TEORIA

— Il corpo come contenitore della mente.
— La conoscenza per mezzo del corpo.
— Tecniche di pensiero, di concentrazione,
di meditazione (ipnosi, massaggio, yoga...),
— Comportamento isolato, comportamento
collettivo. — Religione, ragione, rito, pre-
ghiera. — Abitudine. — Condizioni para-
psicologiche (droga, magia, astrologia, esta-
si...). — Il corpo come teoria. — Ginnas-
tiche intellettuali. — Il piacere. — Eser-
cizi mentali (choc, discontinuità, casualità,
emozione...). — Tecniche di immaginazio-
ne. — Ingombro fisico, ingombro spirituale.
— Reincarnazione. — Il virtuosismo
(giocoliere, prestigiatore, fachiro, di giuocato-
re...). — Il corpo dell'alienato mentale.

IL CORPO E LA SOPRAVVIVENZA

— Rapporto corpo/elementi. — Rapporto
corpo/spazio. — Uomo da solo, uomo as-
sieme. — L'accoppiamento. — La procre-
zione. — La nascita. — Il gruppo. — La
famiglia. — I bambini. — Il rifugio. — Il
vestito. — Il cibo. — La fame. — Caldo
e freddo / stagioni. — Spostamento, stazio-
narietà. — Corpo fermo, corpo in movi-
mento. — Il corpo come strumento per la
vita. — Il corpo e gli attrezzi. — Il cor-
po e i mestieri. — Medicina. — La salute
fisica (igiene, pulizia e sporcizia, massag-
gio, sauna...). — La salute mentale. — La
dittesa. — L'istinto. — Il riposo. — Il son-
no. — Dolore, malattie, ferite. — Per-
versione, sadismo, mutilazione, tortura.
— Vecchiaia. — Morte. — Uccisione.
— Suicidio. — Guerra. — Fuga. — So-
pravvivenza assoluta. — Corpo senza pro-
tezione / corpo con protezione. — Il cor-
po fuori del pianeta terra. — Tecniche li-
beratorie. — Corpo in città, in campagna,
nella natura. — Ginnastiche come esercizi
di affinamento del corpo. — Atletica.
— Sport. — Mimetismo. — Equilibrio e
gravità. — La vita selvaggia.

IL CORPO E LA COMUNICAZIONE

— Il corpo come emittente e ricevente.
— Sensazioni. — Sentimenti. — Il corpo
come linguaggio, rappresentazione, auto-
rappresentazione, contemplazione. — Il
corpo come oggetto. — Sacrificio e dissa-
crazione del corpo. — Il corpo del borghese,
del proletario, del primitivo... — Il
corpo vestito, il corpo nudo. — Trasforma-
zioni del corpo e del volto. — Danza, mi-
mica, maschera, trucco, smorfia, gesto,
ritmo. — Recitazione, canto, parola, ver-
bo. — Travestimento, esibizionismo, camu-
famento. — Il gioco. — Il viaggio. — Cam-
minare. — Il sesso, l'eroticismo. — Rap-
porto fisico (uomo/oggetto, uomo/uomo,
uomo/donna, donna/donna, uomo/animale,
uomo/natura...). — Strumenti di mol-
tiplicazione del corpo (video, foto, cal-
co...). — La conversazione. — La con-
trattazione. — La relazione. — Simbologia
del corpo e delle sue parti.



THE BODY AND ITS BUILDING

WORK
— The body and the building techniques.
— Using hands to build. — Tools.
— Materials. — Building activities.
— Building activity as an unfunctional
work. — Building activity as experience.
— The ritual of the process (bodily value
of work). — Relationship between body
and things. — Relationship between hands
and things.

THE BODY AND THE THEORY

— The body as brain container. — The
knowledge acquired by the body. —
Thought, concentration and meditation
techniques (hypnosis, massage, yoga).
— Individual behaviour or group behav-
iour. — Religion, reason, rite, prayer.
— Habit. — Parapsychological conditions
(drug, magic, astrology, ecstasy). — The
body as a theory. — Intellectual exercises.
— Pleasure. — Mental exercises (shock,
discontinuity, causality, emotion). — Im-
agination techniques. — Physical and men-
tal degree of importance or influence.
— Reincarnation. — Virtuosity (juggler,
conjurer, fakir, man devoted to fasting).
— The body of a madman.

THE BODY AND ITS SURVIVAL

— The relationship between body-
elements. — The relationship between body
and space. — Man, isolated or associated
with other people. — Coupling. — Re-
production. — Birth. — Group. — Fam-
ily. — Children. — Shelter. — Cloth-
ing. — Food. — Hunger. — Warmth
and coldness / the seasons. — Moving
and settlement. — A still body and a
moving one. — The body as a tool for
work. — The body and its tools. — The
body and jobs. — Medicine. — Health
(hygiene, cleanliness, dirt, massage, sauna).
— Mental health. — Defence. — In-
stinct. — Rest. — Sleep. — Pain, illness,
wounds. — Perversion, sadism, mutilation,
torture. — Old age. — Death. — Mur-
der. — Suicide. — War. — Escape.
— Absolute survival. — The protected
and unprotected body. — The body out-
side the Earth. — Releasing methods.
— The body in the country, in town and
in contact with nature. — Physical train-
ings which make our bodies thinner.
— Athletics. — Sports. — Mimicry.
— Wild life.

THE BODY AND THE

COMMUNICATION
— The body as input and output. — Sen-
sations. — Feelings. — The body as lan-
guage, representation, self-representation,
contemplation. — The body as an object.
— Body sacrifice and desecration. — The
body of the bourgeois, the proletarian, the
primitive man. — The dressed body and
the naked body. — Transformations of
the body and of the face. — Mimic dance,
masque, make-up, grimace, gesture, rhythm.
— Acting, singing, speaking, and writ-
ing verses. — Disguise, exhibitionism.
— Playing. — Travelling. — Walking.
— Sex, eroticism. — Physical relationship
(man/man, man/woman, woman/woman,
man/animal, man/nature). — Duplication
instruments of the body (video, pictures,
close copy). — Speech. — Dealing.
— Relationship. — Symbolology of the
body and its own parts.

Sopravvivenza

SUPERSTUDIO, 9999

In natura la sopravvivenza della specie è
legata alla capacità di adattamento alle
condizioni ambientali: mutazioni, mimet-
ismo, atrofia di organi e sviluppo di arti,
apprendimento... sono tutte parti di un'unica
strategia.
L'apprendimento è stata la strategia speci-
fica della specie umana. La capacità di fare
errori, di ricordare le speranze e le morti,
di lasciarsi modificare dall'ambiente (ma
più spesso quella di modificarlo) ci hanno
fatto restare sul pianeta forse anche al di
là del nostro destino biologico.

Conservare la nostra mente per viverci in-
sieme vuol dire oggi rifiutare le regole del
consumo degli uomini. Vuol dire accettare
il corpo e la vita come elementi fragili e
preziosi: vuol dire renderli disponibili a
noi e agli altri senza i filtri della cultura.
Questa è la sopravvivenza che ci interessa,
ed è quella più minacciata e forse ormai
quasi perduta.
Accettando come partenza le condizioni
esistenti (essere degli intellettuali sull'asse
Firenze-Milano, essere nati in campagna o
stareci ora o in procinto di andarci, credere
testardamente nelle possibilità di comuni-
care ovunque ci siano persone — nella
scuola per esempio — aver fatto barche,
libri, disegni, pastasciutte; aver piantato
orti, vigneti, andare a piedi e in tram e in
bicicletta e in autostop, aver lavorato mol-

to — anche di notte — aver ascoltato mu-
sica — anche di giorno — aver avuto a
che fare con l'architettura e il design per-
ché erano modi di « fare » con le mani e
la testa eccetera eccetera eccetera), vorrem-
mo indagare i MODI in cui sopravviviamo
alla ricerca di modi migliori, cioè più effi-
caci rispetto allo scopo: la liberazione dal
bisogno e il libero uso del nostro poten-
ziale umano.

Quello che vorremmo fare è rendere tra-
smissibile un anno di vita. Due stazioni
sperimentali (una in città e una in campag-
na) possono essere usate da due gruppi
di persone che riescono a scambiarsi,
muovendosi liberamente dall'una all'altra.
L'esperimento riguarderà diversi aspetti del-
la sopravvivenza:

1. Il cibo — come si produce, come si
compra, come lo si tratta... agricoltura, la
spesa economica, ricette di cucina...
2. I vestiti — come si fanno, come si re-
cilano...
3. Gli oggetti, gli utensili, gli strumenti —
loro costruzione, loro uso e consumo, loro
riduzione.
4. Le comunicazioni, la mente — informa-
zioni (loro scambio e gestione), riduzione
al minimo delle informazioni, resistenza al-
la manipolazione, ginnastica mentale, tec-
niche liberatorie, psicosinesi...
5. La casa — come farcela, come trovarla,

Survival

come gestirla...

6. I trasporti, i viaggi, gli scambi...

7. Il lavoro — come trovarlo, come aboli-
lo, come reinventarlo...

8. La sopravvivenza assoluta — tecnologia
« delle mani nude » in ambienti normali ed
in ambienti limite (deserto, oscurità, spazio
ristretto, carenza d'acqua, d'aria, freddo,
caldo...).

9. Decodificazione e deritualizzazione —
presa di coscienza dei rituali impiegati ai
punti precedenti, riflessione e autoanalisi...
Saranno rese note le condizioni di parten-
za, i mezzi e i modi dell'esperimento e i
risultati (in termini di accrescimento o ri-
duzione di capacità, comprensione, beni
ecc.).

UN PROGRAMMA

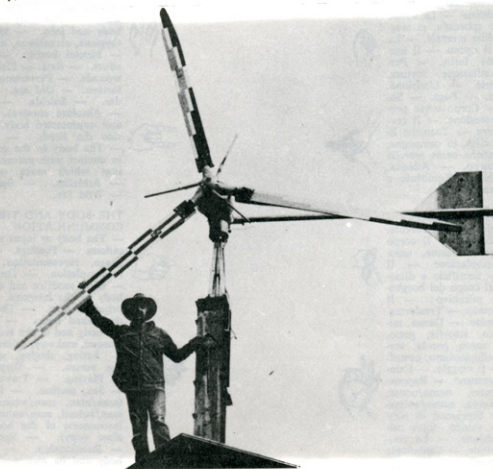
DI AUTANTROPOLOGIA

A. Documentazione dello stato di parten-
za — inventari, dichiarazioni dei modi e
degli scopi dell'esperienza.

B. Effettuazione dell'esperienza (tre mesi,
sei mesi, un anno).

C. Bilanci (bilancio economico, energetico,
sentimentale, corporale). Comunicazione dei
risultati.

I livelli dell'operazione possono essere: in-
dividuali, microgruppo (famiglia, nuclei),
gruppo (Global Tools), supergruppo (gene-
rato dalla Global Tools come scuola)...





Global Tools Bulletin №2, *Survival Sopravvivenza*, Edizioni L'uomo e l'arte, Milan, January 1975

The other dimension of the struggle involving the “refusal of work,” the non-movement, or demobilization has been neglected or is not a priority issue in neo-liberalism.

Even the members of Global Tools have an analysis that avoids confronting the power of “demobilization,” of non-movement, of non-productivist temporalities of the refusal of work and the refusal of culture. The result of these practices is, on the one hand, that the refusal of work forces capital towards automation and the creation of more free time. On the other hand, the claims related to the refusal of work (higher salary and fewer work hours) destroy the economic logic of capital.

Workers’ refusal of work always refers, in this regard, to something other than itself. It refers to politics, to the party or the State, where it refers to new conditions of production and consumption patterns (automation and free time). But if, instead of referring to something else, one looks at the refusal itself, at the non-movement, at the demobilization it contains, if one works to deploy and experience all that the action of refusal of productivist logic makes possible, one can convert

subjectivity, invent new techniques of being and a new way of living in time. The feminist movements, after their refusal to perform the functions (and work) of “women,” seem to have followed this strategy, rather than the classic political option.

The anthropology of worker refusal remains however an anthropology of work, the subjectification of class is still a subjectification of “producers,” and of workers. The action of refusal is open to any other anthropology and to all other ethics. By eroding the foundations of ‘work’, it undermines not only the identity of the “producers” but also their sexual assignments. What is at stake here is the anthropology of modernity: the subject, the individual, freedom and universality all combined in the masculine.



T-h-e-o-r-y-i-a

L. BINAZZI (UFO), A. BRESCHI
R. PECCHIOLI (ZZIGURRAT),
R. BUTI

Si ritiene necessario operare una ridefinizione del concetto di **TEORIA** come **CREATIVITÀ PURA**.

Per questo mezzo la teoria può essere espressa dall'uomo che reagisce globalmente alla realtà preferibilmente con azioni, comportamenti, ecc. ... semplici e tecniche, pensieri, ecc. ... elementari.

Il processo di identificazione istantanea di teoria e prassi capovolge copernicamente qualsiasi definizione della teoria come strumento per costruire oggetti mentali, modelli di cultura e società. La distruzione di queste mediazioni disciplinari e accademiche attraverso progressive riduzioni è invece ciò che interessa.

In questo senso la teoria come viene intesa comunemente non esiste. Esiste al contrario il processo inarrestabile di autolibrazione dell'uomo da ogni condizionamento, per la completa espressione della sua creatività.

Con la nascita dell'informazione nasce il problema della **DISCONTINUITÀ**. Ogni cosa può essere pensata, definita, divulgata istantaneamente. Per far **CAMBIARE CORSO ALLA STORIA** bastano poche parole, o pensieri. Si può addirittura ipotizzare cosa cambia in seguito a pensieri non espressi ma solo formulati come energia pura allo stato di creatività.

Nasce la possibilità di pensare una cosa e il suo contrario simultaneamente. È il problema del codice dei codici e della liberazione anche da questo. In pratica il pensiero, che può contare su una serie collaudata di sistemi di pensiero, è ormai in grado di realizzare differenti sistemi di grado più elevato e di negarli al suo interno con verifiche di segno opposto.

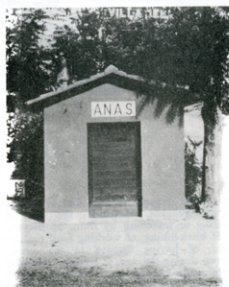
Si tratta di definire una serie di strumenti semplici che facciano funzionare il meccanismo.

Le idee sono costruzioni di oggetti che equivalgono alla costruzione dei modelli di potere come struttura della società. La riduzione opera come procedimento una prima destrutturazione.

La pura creatività si propone la deintellettualizzazione non solo dei prodotti ma anche dei metodi.

Discontinuità e sconnessioni diventano gli elementi distanziatori semplici di qualsiasi ricomposizione.

Si rendono possibili esercizi semplici come pensare due o più cose contemporaneamente, fare due o più cose contemporaneamente. Mettere a confronto elementi sempre



più lontani fra loro, originare sistemi volutamente imperfetti ecc. ...

Applicare a campi reali la ricognizione pura di questi procedimenti come il problema dell'amplificazione del « segno » (artistico) come corpo-nero assorbente l'energia in eccesso dell'immaginario collettivo, che restituirebbe una unica radiazione semplice, secondo la direzione anti-persuasione inventore riduzione.

La crescita in progressione geometrica della velocità del pensiero pone problemi di adattamento e di sfruttamento delle proprie capacità, fino ad un radicale mutamento delle azioni, dei comportamenti delle teorie e delle tecniche.

La vita, l'ambiente sono i termini globali in cui si verificano strumenti, tecniche, teorie.

Proponiamo una serie di operazioni elementari per evidenziare la fissione di teoria e prassi.

Sembra necessario che ad una fase di analisi segua una di interventi.

Il rapporto con gli altri gruppi sarà indispensabile per non ricreare specifici disciplinari, o quanto meno una confidenza diretta all'interno del gruppo della teoria con i settori del corpo della comunicazione costruzione, sopravvivenza che ridimensioni il campo di interessi della Global Tools. L'originalità del procedimento potrà anche rivolgersi a una suddivisione strumentale della teoria in: politica, religione, meditazione, storia, tecnica ecc. ... per proporre temi particolari di indagine su cui si può accentrare di volta in volta l'interesse della Global Tools.

Per l'apertura dei seminari di novembre proponiamo tre possibili temi di discussione:

1) Rapporti fra architettura e magia. Studio dei rapporti critici ai più alti livelli dell'organizzazione professionale. Piramide del potere. Oggetti magici. Problema della scienza ...

2) Analogia sportiva. Rapporto fra creatività collettiva come terapia di gruppo e squadre di calcio, di pallavolo, di rugby, di attività all'aria aperta come scottismo, pic-nic ...

3) Creatività pura. ... se io dico che farsi sparare da un cannone, per esempio, è un esercizio di meditazione, si rende necessario costruire il cannone e in una certa maniera perché ciò sia possibile ... devo riuscire a farmi sparare in luoghi più diversi tutte le volte che voglio.

Ciò che noi dovremmo davvero rendere permanente è la discontinuità del pensiero e della realtà, rifiutando al progetto di superare la dimensione dello spunto, dell'abborso, del tentativo, dell'atto imprevedibile, dirompente solo in se stesso, senza traccia duratura.

Oggi disponiamo di un brogliaccio di teorie e di pratiche; se iniziamo elaborazioni rigorosamente coscienti legando la tecnica allo sforzo teorico, chi ci garantisce dal pericolo di trasformare la furia in « nuova poetica »?

Tante volte abbiamo detto, e sempre ci ripetiamo, che ruolo dell'avanguardia è la distruzione tecnica della cultura, come operazione non terroristica ma liberatoria, come rimozione di tutte le morali, le estetiche, i codici che inibiscono la libera espressione della creatività individuale e collettiva. La nostra azione affianca, come lenta ma inesorabile corrosione degli specifici disciplinari, la grande distruzione storica della cultura, operata meccanicamente dalla crescita economica delle grandi masse lavoratrici, le quali imitano i modelli culturali borghesi, recependoli come traguardi di censo, distruggendo gli equilibri economici sui quali si basano, demolendo inesorabilmente la piattaforma morale e culturale, fatta di valori e significati universali, sulla quale la borghesia ha sempre basato il suo diritto morale alla progettazione del mondo.

Se le avanguardie, nel momento della loro presa di coscienza, operano una trasformazione della propria spinta in un « sistema » di messaggi e di nuove dimensioni progettuali, recuperando al loro charlottesco operare, sempre per negativo, la dignità di un nuovo campionario formale, ancora una volta — come tanti anni fa, all'inizio degli anni '20 — daremo nuovo ossigeno e nuovo movimento a quella « cultura » che vogliamo eliminare. Allora il nostro vero dilemma è di rendere permanente il « non significato », la grande scoperta del « prius di valore », l'esserne discontinuità della realtà che viviamo. L'aver capito e dimostrato che l'arte non è che uno sfruttamento produttivo della creatività, che l'intellettuale professionista non opera che un furto al diritto inalienabile di tutti a produrre e consumare la propria cultura privata, che la società aliena attraverso la divisione del lavoro, tutte le facoltà creative, e quindi anche politiche dell'uomo.



What we should really make permanent is discontinuity of thought and reality, preventing the project from going beyond a suggestion, a sketch, an attempt, or an unpredictable act, an end in itself without anything durable or consistent to back it up.

Now we have a day-book of theories and practices; if we should work out severe and highly conscientious plans, joining technology and theory, who would guarantee that this fury would not be transformed into a « new aesthetic »?

We cannot repeat it too often that the role of the avant-garde is the technical destruction of culture, and this is seen not as an act of terrorism but as a liberation, as a removal of all the moral considerations, aesthetic creeds and codes which hamper the free expression of individual and collective expression. Our action, as a slow but inexorable corrosion of specific disciplines, goes hand in hand with the great historic destruction of culture mechanically effected by the economic growth of the working masses. These masses imitate bourgeois cultural models, assimilating them as income goals, while destroying the economic balances on which they rest and while demolishing their moral and cultural platform, a foundation of universal values and meaning on which the middle-class has always based its moral right to plan the world.

If the avant-garde, in their moment of doubt, should effect the transformation of their thrust into a « system » of messages and new scales of projects, reclaiming for their Chaplinesque behaviour the dignity of a new formal range, it would mean that once again — as we did in the early '20s — we would be giving a new lease on life to the very culture that we want to eliminate. Our real dilemma, then, is to make « non-meaning » permanent, the great discovery of « worthlessness », and the exasperating discontinuity of the reality in which we live. For what is really important is to have understood and demonstrated that art is only the productive exploitation of creativity, that the professional intellectual only robs us of the inalienable right we all have to produce and consume our own private culture, and that society, through the division of labour, alienates all of man's creative faculties, including the political ones.

NOTES

1. Andrea Branzi, "La Gioconda senza Baffi," in *MODERNO POSTMODERNO MILLENARIO* (Gruppo Editoriale Forma, 1980).
2. Archizoom Associati, Typescript from Archizoom Archive, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Paris.
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It is not possible to provide a different definition of creativity without positing a different social reality; without, that is, presupposing a non-productive purpose of creativity itself.

This hypothesis is that of the ABOLITION OF LABOR.

On this "frame of reference" we can hypothesize creativity as individual energy not destined to feed the aesthetic and cultural structures of society. A creativity, that is, that does not present itself as an individual, spontaneous contribution inside the pre-set channels of the aesthetic categories, but instead as free individual communication without "allegorical meanings" and entirely aimed at the realization of the personality of the individual.

The conditions for a meta-historical activity of creativity lie precisely in the most general possibility of performance in society: as long as the creative faculties are exercised by a limited functional segment of society, creativity will always be channeled inside "universal meanings," i.e. towards "values" in which the entire great non-creative masses of the society can recognize themselves and simulate the use of their own atrophied faculties. In such conditions creativity is forced to express itself in "messages."

In the hypothesis of a society without labor, creativity corresponds to the unleashing of a liberating energy as an end in itself (in the sense that it does not produce values), as something therapeutic, and without encoded meanings.

The conditions for a society free of labor are taking form due to the pressure of two vectors (which are apparently opposites): the rejection of work and the automation of production. The experiences of Global Tools, like those of the whole avant-garde, are therefore positioned in the direction of a technical destruction of culture to free up its use.

GLOBAL TOOLS

GLOBAL TOOLS — THEORY group

Report by Lapo Binazzi

10 October 1974

We feel it is necessary to redefine the concept of THEORY as PURE CREATIVITY. By this means, theory can be expressed by the human being that globally reacts to reality, preferably with actions, simple and technical behaviors, and elementary thoughts.

The process of instantaneous identification of theory and practice makes a Copernican reversal of any definition of theory as a tool to construct mental objects, models of culture and society. The destruction of these disciplinary and academic mediations through progressive reductions, instead, is what interests us.

In this sense, theory as it is commonly understood does not exist. On the other hand, the unstoppable process of self-liberation of man from any conditioning, for the complete expression of his creativity, does exist.

The birth of information leads to the problem of DISCONTINUITY. Everything can be thought, defined, divulged instantaneously. To CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY just a few words or thoughts will suffice. One can even hypothesize what changes in the wake of thoughts not expressed but only formulated as pure energy in the state of creativity.

The possibility arises of simultaneously thinking a thing and its opposite. It is the problem of the code of codes, of liberation also from this. Thought, in practice, that can rely on a proven series of systems of thought, is by now capable of achieving different systems of a higher degree and negating them inside itself with verifications of the opposite sign.

What is involved is a series of simple tools that make the mechanism work.

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Ideas are constructions of objects that are the equivalent of the construction of models of power, as the structure of the society.

Reduction operates an initial deconstruction as its procedure.

Pure creativity sets out to deintellectualize not just products but also methods.

Discontinuity and disconnections becoming the simple distancing elements of any recomposition.

Simple exercises become possible, like thinking or doing two or more things simultaneously. Comparing elements that are more and more distant from each other, giving rise to intentionally imperfect systems.

Applying to real fields the pure recognition of these procedures, like the problem of the amplification of the (artistic) "sign" as a black-body absorbing the excess energy of the collective imaginary, returning a simple radiation, in keeping with the direction anti-persuasion reduction inversion.

Geometric growth in the speed of thought raises issues of adaptation and utilization of one's own abilities, all the way to a radical change of actions, behaviors, theories and techniques.

Life and the environment are global terms in which to test tools, techniques, theories.

We propose a series of elementary operations to reveal the fission of theory and practice.

It seems necessary for a phase of analysis to follow a phase of interventions.

To kick off the seminars in November we propose three possible themes of discussion:

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- 1) Relations between architecture and magic.
Study of the cryptic relationships at the highest levels
of professional organization. Pyramid of power. Magical
objects. The problem of science.
- 2) Sports analogy.
- 3) Pure creativity.

GLOBAL TOOLS

Seminar 1-11-74 Theory Group

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Based on what was already contained in the report of the Theory Group on the seminar of 10th October 1974, we feel we can specify several themes whose development permits concrete verification of the basic concepts of the research: that of DISCONTINUITY in the phases of creation and that of coincidence between simple action and reduced theory.

For each theme, still indicative but complete physical operations are envisioned, whose enactment constitutes the development of the research and for which a more detailed program can be separately specified.

1) RESEARCH AS EXPLORATION

Analytical research on the relationships between theory and production of the environment, limited for illustrative (or didactic) purposes to the aspect of inversion of semantic references and conducted as an EXPLORATION of "presumably known" environments in order to recognize their extraneous character (exploration from the known to the unknown).

Documentation of the inversion of the signifying function of:

- organization-disorganization
- interior-exterior
- destruction-creation
- architecture-nature

OPERATIONS: photographic-film exploration of the former Convent of Sant'Orsola / storerooms of the Fortezza da Basso / Museo Bandini

2) EVOCATION AND PROPHECY as design of the future
Analysis of the relationship of mutual influence between reality and representation (the latter seen as a minimum component of theory), discontinuity between reality and representation, and coincidence of representation and project – the prophetic and evocative character of images.

OPERATIONS: production of images and visions through elementary techniques.

3) SPONTANEOUS PRODUCTION

Given the existence of a relationship of reciprocal production between theory (seen as minimum gesture, act of meditation, ritual act) and object-spaces, we can identify the possibility of producing:

a) mental, logical and perceptive conditionings and/or stimuli, and in general states of consciousness starting from physical object-spaces.

b) vice versa.

We consider this type of production a particular case of formalist production (see report on production methodology).

OPERATIONS: creation of archaeological-experimental spaces through their "discover" in the "subsoil" on the basis of speculative, philosophical, erotic, prophetic, and defensive procedures.

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Editors: Valerio Borgonuovo, Silvia Franceschini

Authors: Manola Antonioli, Valerio Borgonuovo, Alison J. Clarke,

Beatriz Colomina, Silvia Franceschini, Maurizio Lazzarato, Franco Raggi,

Simon Sadler, Alessandro Vicari

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Artwork: Özgür Şahin

Send us your comments and suggestions:

eyayin@saltonline.org

SALT

Bankalar Caddesi 11

Karaköy 34420 İstanbul

saltonline.org

