

Clino Castelli

Clino T. Castelli lives and works in Milan. A designer, artist and design theorist, he is internationally known for his work of renewal of plastic languages, pursued through the concept of “No-Form.” As opposed to traditional compositional methods, Clino Castelli has focused on the design of the more intangible aspects of figuration, like color and material, light and sound. Since the early 1970s this has made him a pioneer in research on the emotional identity of products in the industrial sector, utilizing the tools of Design Primario. His vision, though forcefully oriented towards the future, has met with great acclaim from the outset, including two ADI Compasso d’Oro awards for works in 1973 and 1975.

Clino Castelli (Civitavecchia, 1944) started working at the Centro Stile Fiat in Torino in 1961, after having graduated in car design at the Scuola Centrale Allievi Fiat. In those very years he came in contact with certain exponents of the international art movement with whom he would maintain close working relationships. In 1964 he turned professional: through Ettore Sottsass, he went to Olivetti and ended up in its Milan studio. At the same time, he grew closer to the emerging Milanese world of fashion, where he would meet Nanni Strada, and, with Elio Fiorucci in 1967, would establish Intrapresa Design, a company dedicated to fashion design. From 1969 Castelli would return to Olivetti to coordinate their Corporate Identity program, producing up until 1973 the Red Books manuals for Identification Systems development. In 1972 he began collaborating with Abet Print in the field of new materials, including luminescents, which preceded Design Primario and the development of new principles of illumination. With Nanni Strada he realized some historic projects in the design for fashion, among which was the metaproject “Il Manto e la Pelle”, presented at the Triennale in 1974.

In 1974, with Andrea Branzi and Massimo Morozzi, Castelli founded CDM srl – Consulenti Design Milano, where Ettore Sottsass and Alessandro Mendini would also join for the years 1976-77. Those years would see the development of landscape design projects, urban furniture and signage for Fiumicino airport, as well as the corporate identity of Aeroporti di Roma. In 1977 he created the identification systems of the Italian Post Office. In 1973, with the same partners, he had already created Centro Design Montefibre, dedicated to the development of synthetic fibers for the environment, from which were born projects such as Fibermatching and Colordinamo, involving many leading companies of Italian design.

In 1978 Castelli founded and directed Colorterminal IVI in Milan. Equipped with the Graphicolor electronic simulator it was the first color research centre for design and architecture, allowing him to discover the chromatic potential of additive RGB synthesis.

The same year saw the beginning of his collaboration with Louis Vuitton, for whom Castelli would develop, among other things, the first non-military applications of DuPont's Kevlar for a new LV canvas, technology then applied to the sails of the America Cup. Also in 1978, Clino Castelli resumed his collaboration with Fiat Auto, introducing the Color Matrix into an industrial context and developing CMF (Colors, Materials, Finishes) plans for the entire range of vehicles, including the Panda. From 1984 to 1989 he created the Fiat Qualistic Center, the first laboratory dedicated to "perceived quality", ie the subjective perception of the quality of automotive components.

The "Consulenti Design" partnership ended with the seventies, becoming "Castelli Design". From 1980, the work of Clino Castelli expanded internationally through CMF design, Design Language strategies and Design Primario, themes that would be developed across Europe, The United States, Australia and Japan. In the same year he began a four-year collaboration with Rolf Fehlbaum of Vitra, which would lead him to work for seven years on the soft redesign of the large office systems of Herman Miller in the United States and on the design concept of the new Ethospace system. Also in 1980, he began a series of historic collaborations, including one with Konica and a twenty-year one with Mitsubishi Motors for automotive trends and the CMF planning of cars and trucks.

In 1979 Castelli was co-founder of the UNI SC 12 commission – Color in the Constructed Environment, and in 1980 he was a consultant on the City of Turin's Color Plan. In 1982 he created the Colorscape division, followed by an experimental color plan for the city of San Fiorano, leading to publication in the manual "I Piani del Colore", the first and most popular metaproject tool for urban color planning. In 1988, after the Three Miles Island accident, Castelli was asked by Enel-Trepi to redesign the color codes of the control panels and the acoustic upgrading of the Control Room of the Caorso nuclear power plant. In 1989, Clino Castelli, Isao Hosoe, Andrea Branzi and Tullio Zini designed the architectural concept of Tokyo City-X for Mitsubishi RE, the largest building complex of Tokyo Bay, a project acquired by the Archive of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. In 1990, on behalf of the Japanese group Matsuzato, he designed Osmic Gate, for access to and landscape of the historic English Golf Club of Fornham Park near Cambridge, a project characterized by the iconic driveway smell. In 2006 he was a consultant for Louis Vuitton for the Headquarter Terrace Competition in Paris. In 2009 he was appointed to the Commission for the Landscape of the City of Milan, of which he is vice president.

For the third time, from 1985 to 1982, he resumed working with Olivetti and Olivetti Synthesis on the Qualistic Compendium project, which covered the coordination of the CMF identity of products designed by Ettore Sottsass, Michele de Lucchi and Mario Bellini. From 1985 to 1987 he produced the CMF plan of the entire catalogue of Cassina, including The Masters collection, and also designed the Via Durini showroom.

In 1983 and 1986 Castelli Design produced, with IVI-PPG, the automotive CMF trend manuals Autocolortrend '87 and Autocolortrend '90, which were then purchased by major world-wide manufacturers in the industry, including Toyota, Suzuki, Mitsubishi and Ciba-Geigy.

Since 1990, Castelli Design has undertaken long-term partnerships with other important Japanese groups such as Toli (building materials), Itoki (office systems) and particularly Hitachi, with who, in twenty years, he has realized metaprojects and designs of a good three generations of large supercomputers and servers. Similarly, in Europe, in 1993 he started his collaboration with BTicino and then with its French parent company Legrand in the field of home automation. The success of the CMF project of the BTicino collection Living and Light represented, in 1995, the first example in the world of products conceived according to the qualistic principles of the varied series, theorized a decade earlier.

In 2000, the Qualistic Lab division was born for the development of new tools and qualistic research methods in the field of design. Derived from collaboration with Mitsubishi, Michelin, Unilever and Honda, it uses the Qualistic Diagram, a tool for the emotional positioning of images and products protected by five international patents. Since 2003, in the field of domotics, other than his work with BTicino and Legrand, he has worked with the French company Somfy on projects ranging from Strategic Design to CMF design, and product design to communication. Since 2006 the projects for these and other clients of the automotive sector have merged together in the activities of Domoscape.

Among the publications of Clino Castelli are the Colordinamo and Decorattivo manual series (Idea Book, 1975, 1976, 1977), Il Lingotto Primario (Arcadia, 1985), Autocolortrend (IVI / PPG, 1987, 1990), I piani del colore (Maggioli Editore, 1987), The Theory of the Pallor (Abet, 1993), Transitive Design (Editrice Electa, 1999), The Glamour System (Palgrave, 2006), Worldscape. The New Domotic Landscape (Nava, 2006). He collaborated extensively with major international design magazines, including Interni magazine, for which, from 1994 to 2004, he edited the Osservatorio column.

His work has won European, America and Japanese awards, beside the two ADI “Compasso d’Oro” awards, the “IBD Gold Award” in 1984, the “Intel Design Prize” in 1999, the “IF Product Design Gold Award 2007”, the “IF Product Design Award 2011” and the Grand Prize “Machine Design Awards” 2011. Alongside his activities of design and research Castelli has continued his work in education, teaching in many international design schools and universities including, since 1997, the Milan Politechnic. In 1983 he became one of the co-founders of Domus Academy, where he taught, with Ettore Sottsass and Mario Bellini, one of the first three master courses.