



Aldo Rossi's designs for a pair of residential buildings in Berlin.

HIGHLIGHT

Seeing the World Through Rossi-Colored Glasses

Over the course of the 20th century, the Italian designer and architect Aldo Rossi left his mark on everything from coffeepots to Venice's La Fenice opera house. His catalogue raisonné pays homage to a postmodern visionary

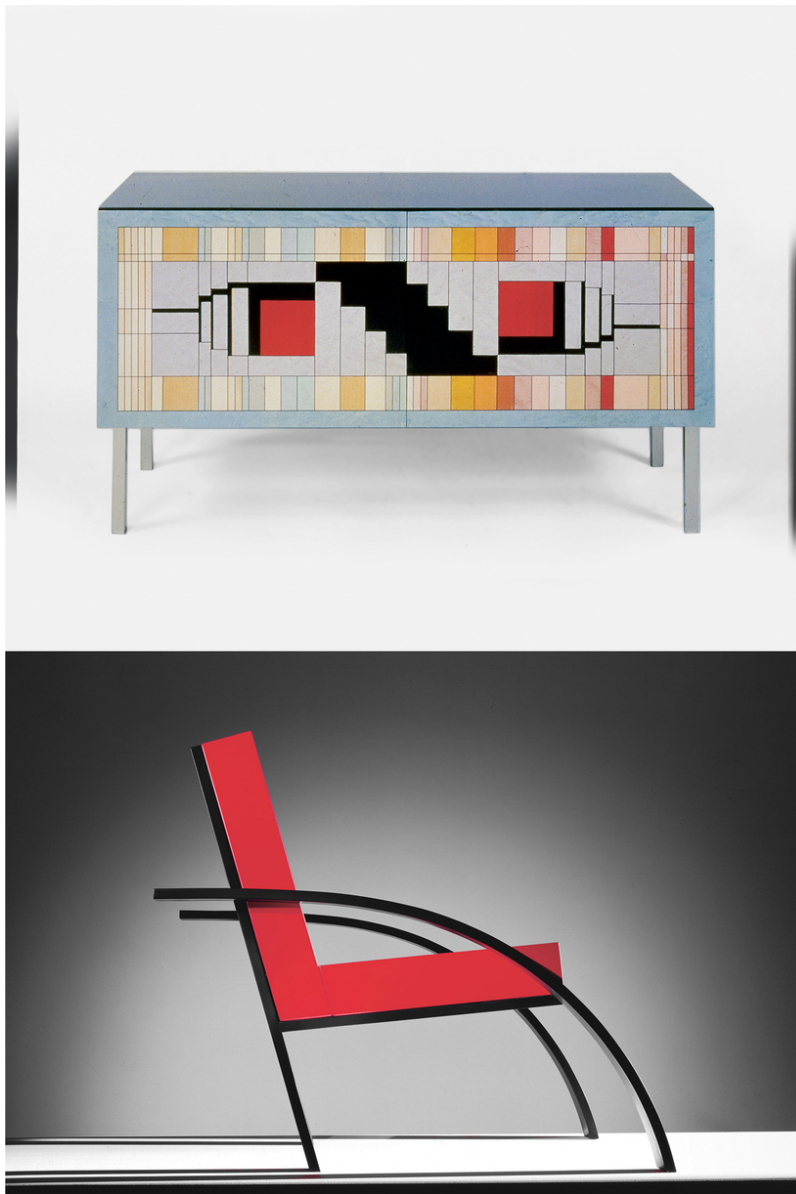
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During the 1980 Venice Biennale, a cuboid building topped with an octagonal tower sat ominously on the water in front of the Punta della Dogana. The wooden structure, called *Teatro del Mondo* (Theater of the World), had been positioned on a barge by cranes. Two hundred and fifty people could fit into the interior of the floating theater, which drifted past the city's monuments.



Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo* on its way to its spot at the 1980 Venice Biennale.

A modernist mirage of similar structures afloat in 18th-century Venice, this masterpiece came to be Aldo Rossi's defining work. It elegantly merged his gifts in three disciplines: critical theory, architecture, and design.



Top, a credenza designed by Rossi in 1997 for Bruno Longoni Atelier; *above*, Rossi's Parigi armchair, designed to look rigid but feel soft.

Rossi's early life wasn't grand. He was born in Milan in 1931. His father made bicycles, an occupation that spurred Rossi's early interest in machinery and aesthetics. As a teen, he drew pots and pans after school. "These fantastical geometric forms summed up my [sense] of beauty for a long time," Rossi once explained. "In them, I envisaged domes, towers, minarets, and other constructions."



A building designed by Rossi in Berlin in the mid-90s.

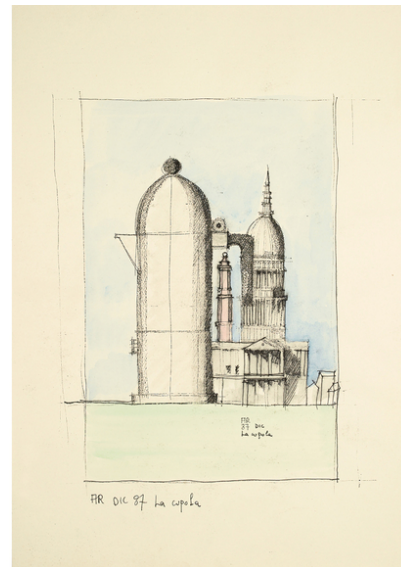
He turned 20 during the postwar era, when both austerity and rebirth formed the dynamic in the streets. Farmers left their land and flocked to the city, and industrial design came to the forefront of Italy's cultural conversation. In 1955, Rossi started writing for the publication *Casabella-Continuità*, sharing his ideas about architecture, design, and their roles in urban consciousness.



LOUIS VUITTON
Yayoi Kusama

Creating infinity

In 1960, two years after graduating from the Polytechnic University of Milan, Rossi produced his first pieces of furniture for Scarpini, collaborating with Leonardo Ferrari. Whether he was working on a pan or a building, it was functionality, geometry, and primary shapes that interested him. For example, his wardrobe series, Cabina dell'Elba, was inspired by wooden constructions on the coasts of Italy and Maine.



Architecture and object design always went hand in hand for Rossi, whose sketch, *right*, and final design for his 1980 coffeepot for Alessi are pictured here. "Even today, I like to design these large coffeepots," Rossi wrote years later. "I imagine that they are

composed of bricks and that their interiors can be walked through."

The same year his *Teatro del Mondo* floated around Venice, Rossi started collaborating with the firms Alessi, Artemide, Molteni&C, UniFor, and Richard Ginori. The designs he drafted channeled something of Giorgio de Chirico's Surrealism, and were as graceful as the architecture that won him the Pritzker Prize, in 1990.



A chair in polyester resin and fiberglass, designed by Rossi with Giovanni da Pozzo Arte in 1993.

Aldo Rossi: Design 1960–1997, his catalogue raisonné, is now being published to follow a recent retrospective at the Museo del Novecento, in Milan. Before his death, in 1997 at age 66, Rossi had created more than 70 furnishings and objects, many of which are still in production today. Highlights include his housewares—teakettles, dishes, clocks, lamps—as well as his architectural drawings for various theaters. Most impressive is

Rossi's "Tea & Coffee Piazza" series, reminiscent of the castles and minarets he'd envisioned as a child. —*Elena Clavarino*



[Aldo Rossi: Design 1960–1997](#), the complete catalogue raisonné, is out now from Silvana Editoriale

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