

Methods of analysis and techniques of exhibiting furniture in fairs and exhibitions in Italy

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The title of the degree thesis contains the two fundamental terms from which this analysis starts: exhibitions and furniture.

These two realities are particularly complicated and it is difficult to limit them into clearly separated realities.

Nevertheless, they are two worlds that meet, have an influence, can find an expression, a meaning through each other.

Exhibiting furniture becomes a chance to create new and unusual solutions, to use in a surprising way some exhibition techniques for the creation of an interior which can be a sort of game through which the visitor can be transported into another reality.

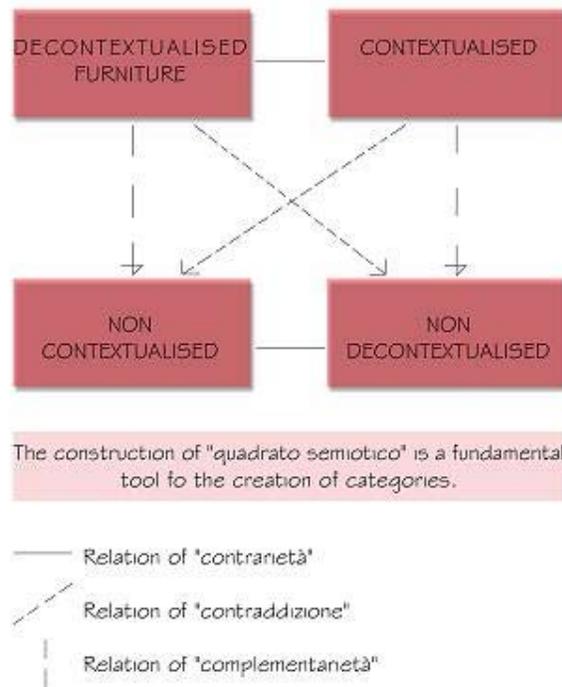


Photo 1: This is an example of furniture decontextualised.

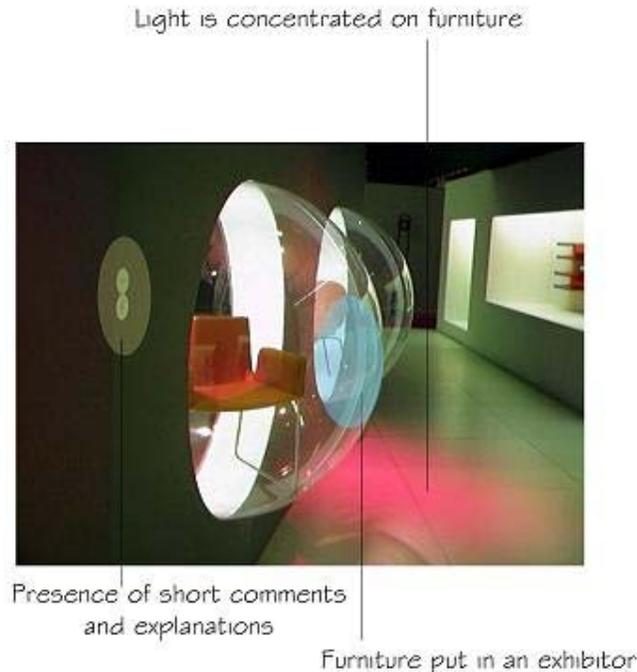
At the same time, furniture is "not very mobile" and is linked, in the common imagination, to a precise context.

The use that a consumer can make of furniture is connected to the function and the space that it fills in the mental model that all of us expect.

Thus, it is interesting to observe the instruments, the techniques that can be used to exhibit furniture.

This observation brings our attention to some examples which we shall dwell upon with more attention.

Hence, the first part of the discussion is dedicated to the analysis of some Italian exhibition realities. We recall the origin of the "Fiera Campionaria di Milano" in 1920, the inauguration of "Mostra Internazionale delle arti decorative", that took place in Monza from 1921 to 1930, the growth and the changes of the "Triennali" that, in 1933, moved from Monza to Milan, where it continues until today.



This is an example of an house's reconstruction only in part

We also recall another interesting initiative: the "Eurodomus", a biennial exhibition, that at every edition, from 1966 to 1972, changed site, from Genoa to Turin, to Milan and at last to Turin again.

Nevertheless, diversity teaches us to observe, to notice the most important elements of every case.

Exhibitions and fairs are characterized as deeply different realities: they address different types of visitors, they want to communicate different situations, to they achieve, at last, different objectives.

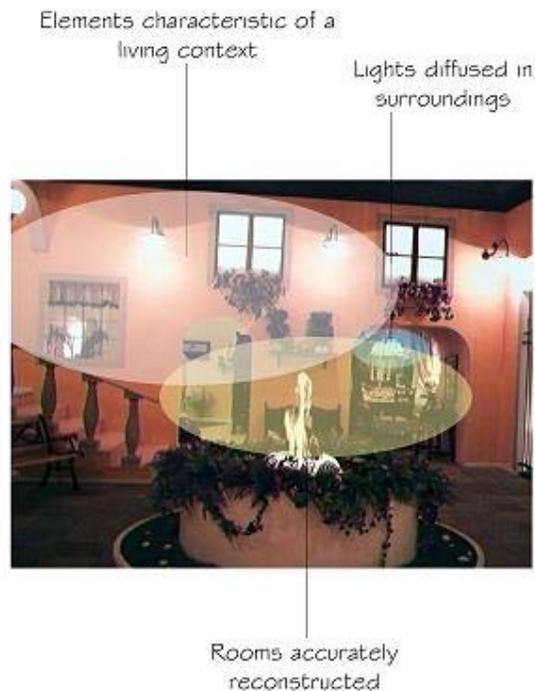
Through the analysis of these exhibitions, we can find a series of recurrent situations in which furniture can be inserted.

Obviously the number of exhibition solutions are almost infinite, but they can be grouped into some groups.

Furniture can be inserted into real house reconstructions, put inside an exhibition space that would suggest an interior surrounding that is reconstructed only in part, or furniture can be decontextualised.

Behind each of these possible surroundings, there are different intentions and different presuppositions.

Nevertheless, if we observe a quite long period of time -from 1920 until today- these surroundings remain constant. We can also find them this year, in the "Salone Internazionale del Mobile di Milano".



This is an example of an real house's reconstruction

In this way, begins -or better continues- the second part of the discussion. The fair becomes a chance to observe in a proactive way: it would suggest a method of analysis for the present surroundings.

As it seemed better to leave out the context and focus on a text, that was understandable and easy to analyze, we have chosen thirty stand from the "Salone" -chosen at random- and the analysis was developed on them. The analysis concerns other ranges of interest and other disciplines: the "semiotica" through A. J. Greimas and J.-M. Floch's works- gave the tools to create categories and to look through the results in a clear and systematic way. The psychology of communication -through the theory of mental models, a P. Johnson-Laird's research- suggested some possible interpretations on the results.

From the proposal of a method, we proceeded to discover some possible keys of reading.

If the context is created, it could correspond to a residential space, or could be anything else, but however furniture inserted in it will suggest its use (e.g. a chair will suggest the use of sitting).

Instead, in an opposite situation, abstractness will win.

In this case, the visitor won't immediately link the object to the surroundings in which it is inserted and won't associate the two entities with the idea of a living space.

Then, the furniture can be transported to any scenery or mental model that the visitor might to conceive.

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