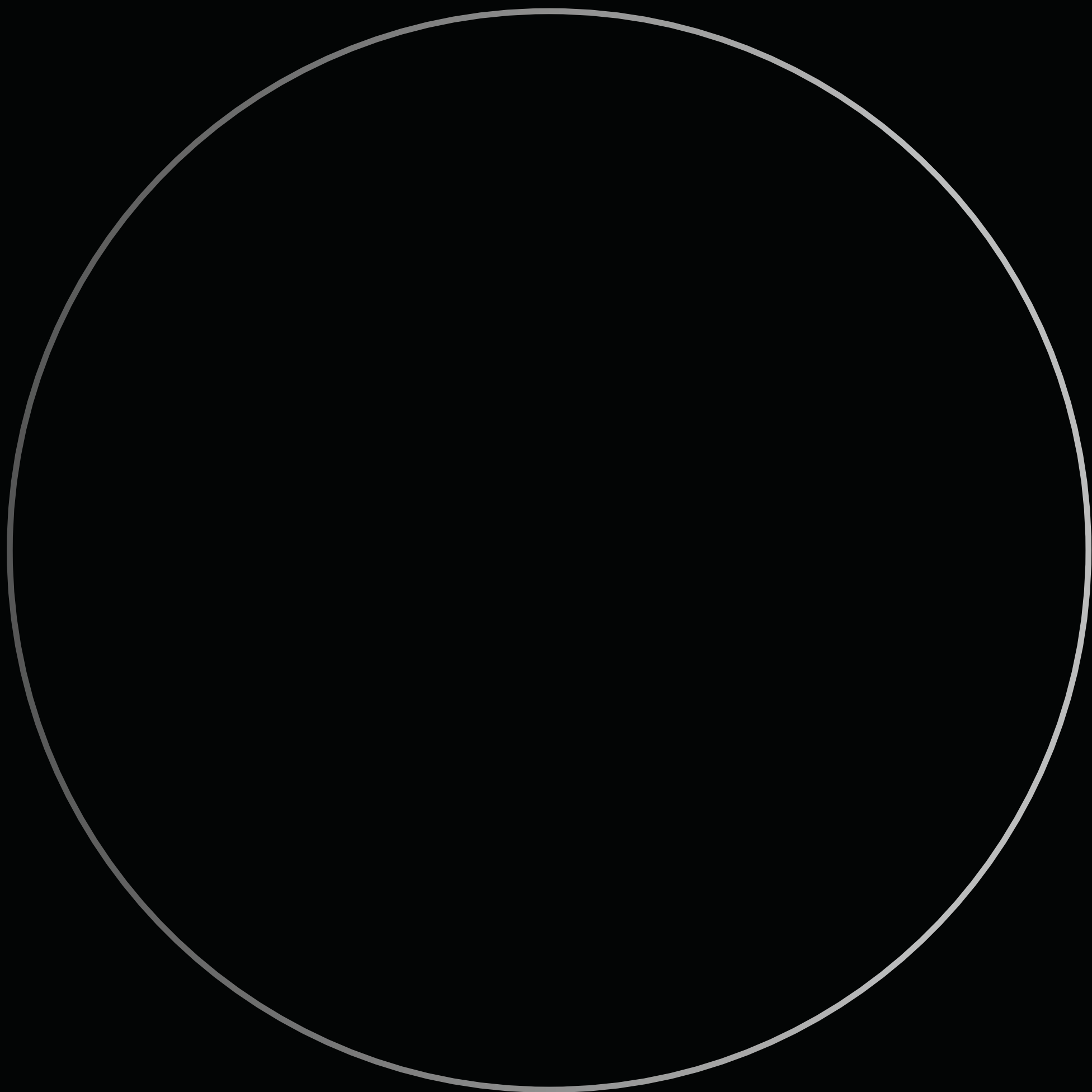


Stories
and
Matters

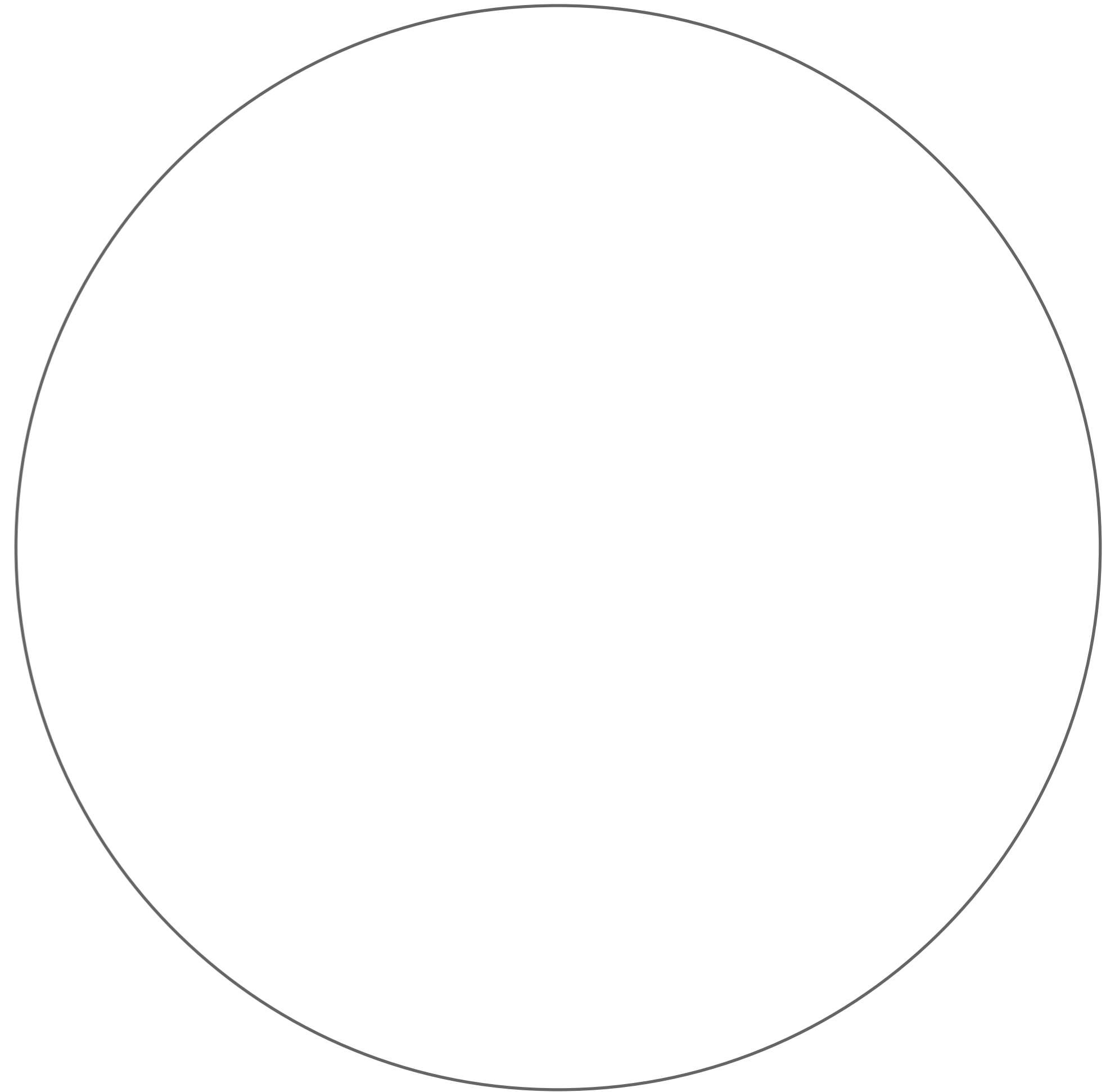
2018



Rimadesio

Stories
and
Matters

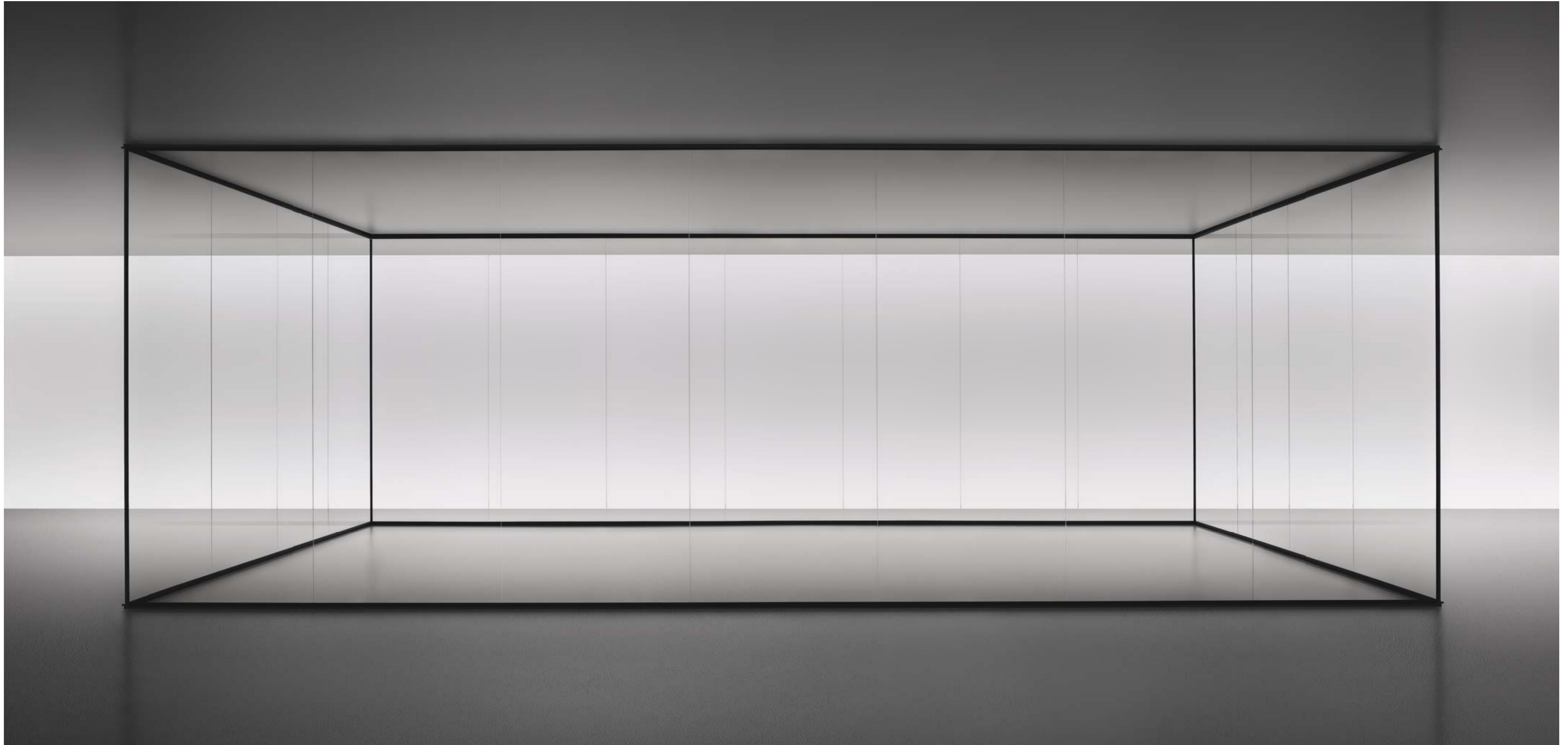
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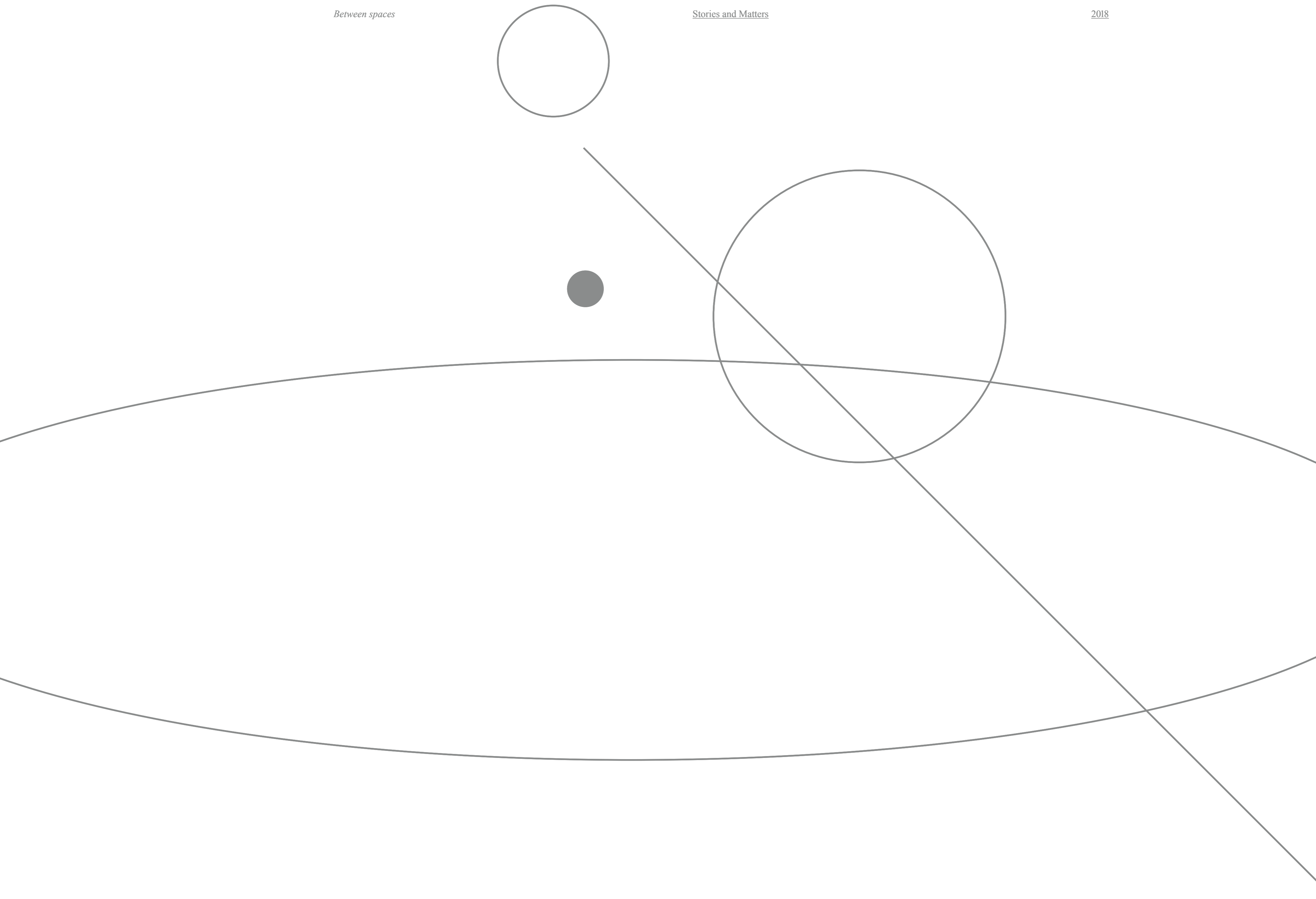


Telling by images. Imagining with words. There is no message, which is fully explained by using a simple “icon”. It is always supported by the “verb” we use to fix, express, share the perceived emotions. On the other hand, writing, voice main expression, describes the power of a scenario either on the paper sheet – or smart phone. Communicative images and “imaginative” words. These are the essence of the physical and mental space, which the story of the company philosophy and therefore of the product can fully express itself in. Like any great narrative it is not a soliloquy – a single space – but a set

of voices, a succession of “places”. Stories and Matters is the editorial tools, to give them the geography, where to be: not just a container, but a score in which images of landscapes and free reflections are orchestrated; glimpses of interiors, literary quotations and author’s shots. In this space the story is not forced. Graphics, photographs, quotes live in complete freedom, following the infinite perspectives.

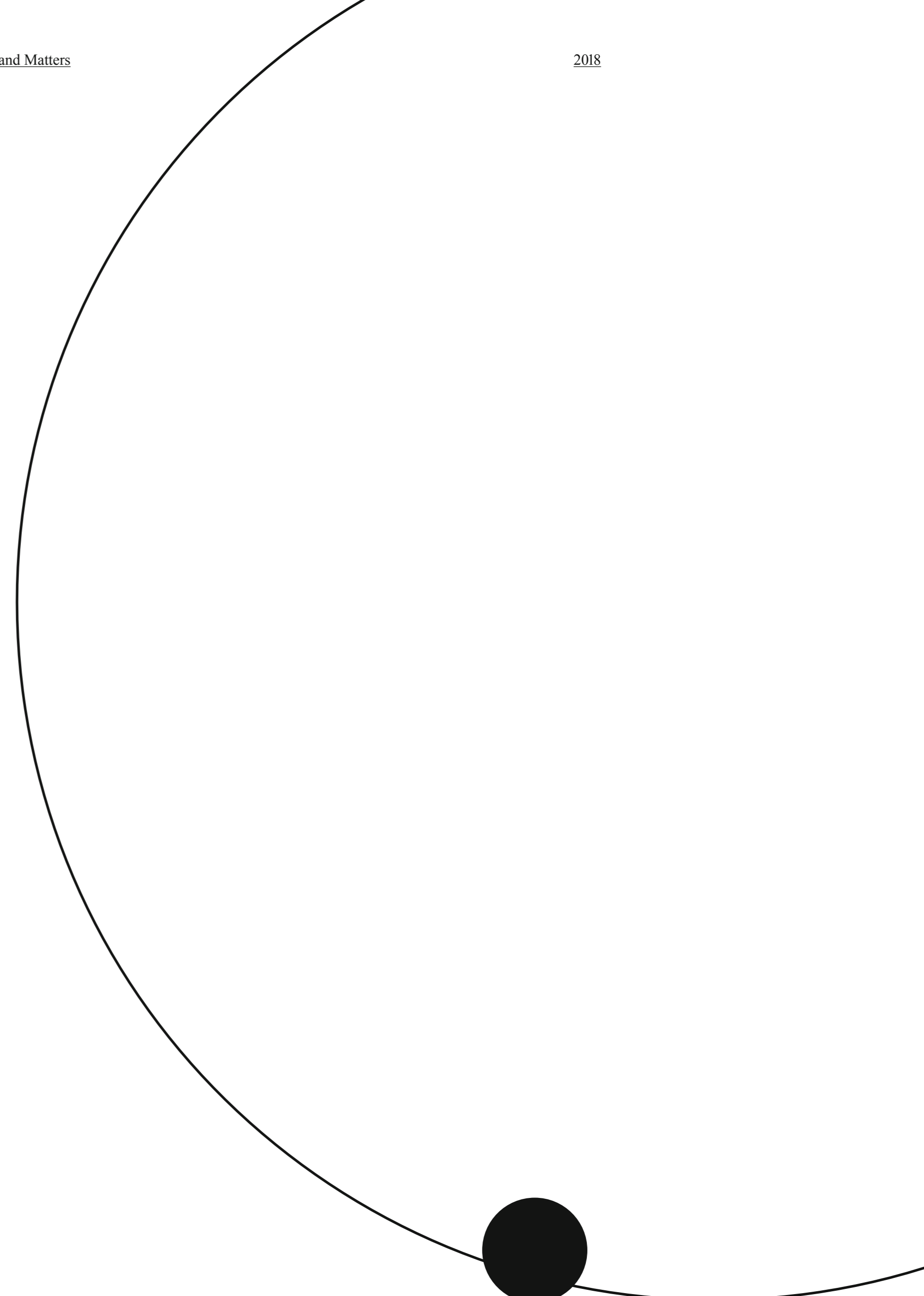






“E la Terra sentii nell’Universo.
Sentii fremendo ch’ è del cielo anch’ella,
e mi vidi quaggiù piccolo e sperso,
errare, tra le stelle, in una stella.”















Architecture, beyond formalism and community and sharing.

Curated by Rimadesio

Knowledge, ethics, common good quality and responsibility: these are the words that summarize the fundamental theme under discussion in *De Architectura*¹, written by Marco Vitruvio Pollione, and that ring true today, to describe the state of architecture and the role of the architect. If, indeed there is no doubt about the influence architecture and design have on our lives, at the same time it is clear how the architectural project should be more focussed on daily life, its dynamics, its rhythms and living habits.

The centre of the project represents a real need that can longer be put off, considering the demographic growth forecasts provided by the United Nations annual report: there will be 8 billion inhabitants in 2023, 8.6 billion in 2030; 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11 billion in 2100. We need however to add an observation to this statistic – and that is that this increase in the population will be concentrated only in nine countries: India, Nigeria, Repubblica Democratica del Congo, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, the United States, Uganda and Indonesia. India, a country that today has 1 billion, 300 million inhabitants (18% of the world's population), will become the most populated country, overtaking China (1 billion, 400 million), while the European countries will be the only ones in which a reduction will take place: between 2017 and 2030 going from 742 million to 739 million. Going beyond the numbers, it is far too predictable to affirm the necessity to design or redesign cities, roads, neighbourhoods, houses and furnishing systems. Something more has to be done: it is necessary to imagine alternative or complementary housing models, to redefine the living, working and free-time dynamics of those ever-increasingly crowded urban centres, to redesign the flows of people and objects in limited spaces, to regulate the integration between constantly evolving buildings and the natural environment that is constantly under attack and finally, if possible, to repair the rift that has been created between man and nature.

Today architecture is a hybrid of all these things, a mix of complexity and synthesis, a union between style and technology, between being and doing, between shape and function. But perhaps it has always been that way. One of the most successful definitions of architecture is provided by one of the pioneers of the Modern Movement Adolf Loos, who said in his famous *Ornament and Crime*², written in 1908: “If we find a mound of earth in a wood that is six foot by three... in the shape of a pyramid, we take it seriously and something tells

us: there is a body buried underneath. This is architecture”.

This sentence sums up the very meaning of architecture: starting from a well defined place, in this case a wood, a place that has unique and extraordinary characteristics, and consequently an environment able to stir up unique thoughts and emotions. Then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, an artifice appears, a construction, in this case a mound of earth, something that disrupts the balance with nature, triggering a new system of connections. Its presence generates a reaction, provokes a certain frame of mind to those who observe it: seriousness! Architecture, therefore, can, indeed, must generate an emotion, create an instinct to participate in an experience. But not only. Loos' definition also expresses the experience of building, or man's need to use tools and techniques to give shape to architecture, in this case a pyramid.

A volume with clear-cut geometries rules and dimensions, referring precisely to the human body (6 foot by × 3 foot), is always a benchmark for space (Le Corbusier strongly reaffirmed this, with his *Modulor*, approximately 50 years later). The rule therefore means awareness: whoever was in front of the pyramid in the forest would immediately understand, without needing to be an architect, that it was a tomb. Loos definition is therefore the best summary of the issues that revolve around architecture, but above all high-lights the complex nature of relations and connections between those who build, those who see and those who live architecture. While the iconic draw of architecture, remains intact, today, more than 100 years after Loosian style Vienna, we have to say that the dynamics and the processes connected to projects have changed enormously, mainly because they no longer involve only architects and interior designers, but clients and creators are increasingly more involved. In this “shifting and unstable” lifestyle of the new millennium roles often overlap, skills, while specific, become integrated, objectives are shared, processes are transformed and technologies evolve rapidly.

It is for this reason then that, on a local scale, the most recent successful projects have been those able to interpret the identity of a city or an urban area, enhancing it with interventions expressing modernity without abusing the spirit of the place: neighbourhoods and buildings able to integrate into their social and urban fabric, expressing contemporaneity without erasing the past. The large, former industrial areas of cities, and not only European ones, have been, and still are symbols of

extraordinary potential.

In London just as in Milan; in Paris just as in Berlin numerous projects have been able to fill a gap, to heal a wound to express positive energy, transforming problems into opportunities: from Battersea Park in London to Porta Nuova in Milan, from the port area Hafen City in Hamburg to the projects involving suburban Paris neighbourhoods. All of the projects are characterised by their attention to the use of resources. Vast abandoned areas that are bought back to life and play a strategic role in the transformation of the city, offering shared common spaces and new areas of sociality, in which the public and private aspects co-exist. The former industrial areas, enriched by covered squares intended as new agoras, they are in fact a driving force of attraction and development. But a vision characterised by a community vision does not solely refer to urban areas, the same attention can be given to lounge areas in hotels, no longer intended areas but as areas of relationships, meetings and business, life³. Similarly, one could see the phenomenon of inhabiting the exterior of a building as a natural extension of the interior rather than something stand alone.

A comparable development operation is underway even within infrastructure. In a world constantly on the move, airports, stations and even bridges and roads become opportunities to redefine an area, re-weave a social or urban fabric, redevelop a piece of a city or give back some lifeblood to a suburb. The highly successful High Line in New York is an excellent model and there are numerous projects nowadays aimed at redeveloping disused railways, skyways or elevated roads and other infrastructures by giving them a new lease of life, new uses, integrating green areas and cycle paths (Milan must find a clear and effective model amongst these examples for its former rail yards, areas that undoubtedly represent an excellent opportunity for any future development of the city). The role of planning these urban changes is not only then the prerogative of technicians, architects, town planners and designers, but is shared between the local communities who, more frequently, play an important role in the decision process. Other evident examples of this awareness can be found in the new forms of social housing or co-housing, in start-up incubators just as in co-working spaces, through to bike sharing on a micro scale. At the same time, the reduction of available space in cities and urban areas that is

currently underway and will be even more evident in the future – the OECD foresees that in 2030, two thirds of the world's population will be living in urban centres⁴ –, has fostered the concentration of buildings and their vertical development. The architectural project has therefore transformed, in the most expert cases, into an opportunity of technological experimentation, redefinition of type and reorganization of the social and urban fabric. Not to mention the new skyscrapers, that are changing the face of our cities, they are designed down to the slightest detail, almost like precious objects. Architects take advantage of their isolated position to transform them into icons, recognizable, both physically and metaphorically “from afar”. A similar development can also be seen within homes. We see the most prestigious furniture in the living space and the kitchen area, that are conceived as self expressive, micro pieces of architecture, able to communicate through full and empty correlations and tricks of light and shade. Leaving aside the common and banal single material, design is enhanced by combinations of finishes, materials and different colours. Because nowadays the projects reasoning and the formal imagination are similar, whether we are talking about architecture or interior design. In both cases, the proportional and dimensional balances between volumes, the correlation between natural and artificial light, colours and the evaluation of the performance of materials all matter and carry their own weight. In one word: the involvement of all the senses in the use of a space or in the use of an object.

As we said, architecture and interior design merge together and there are no longer formal and conceptual divisions between internal spaces and external ones. Consequently the division of the architect's role, that had led to them being considered as disinterested in interior design and furnishings has been avoided. On the contrary, today a new organically uniform thought is being proposed again, quoting the beginnings of Modernism, able to guide choices and to define both the functional and aesthetic aspects from the early concept stages.

The spirit of the past leaves room for open structures in which “the inside and the outside” interpenetrate, leaving no solution of continuity, an osmosis of surfaces and materials that are increasingly more performing and include the outdoor sector. That is why it is then easy to hypothesize, infact it is now possible to verify, a city in which roads and buildings no longer exist, in their place there is an

interpenetration, an osmosis of entities, with private spaces that integrate public uses and public areas that host their own, different private activities.

Marking a significant, potential variation on the vision of interior design, following the enthused buzz around open space⁵ and lofts, the most current trends try to redevelop the right balance between the public and private sectors, between sharing and privacy, between homogenisation and personalization of space. And this happens, regardless of form or style, thanks to research and envelopment on the matter, and at the same time to the rediscovery of materials from the past and to the experimentation of new feasible high performance surfaces, characterized by sophisticated textures, combinations and innovative colour associations. The project then, on any scale, is experiencing a redefining of its rules and regulations, a transition phase from formalism to greater consistency and awareness of the need of going beyond fads and trends. Architects and interior designers can no longer overlook the importance of a transversal and in-depth knowledge of the most innovative materials, technologies and systems on the market, as well as the ability to develop economic strategies, manage timing, formulate hypotheses for re-use and transformation. Also in this sense the role of the architect or designer has changed dramatically. Although the architect has always known, albeit with the necessary distinctions for every era, how to combine in the best possible way their technical skills with artistic talent, it must be said that today there are new innovative design methods and new forms of representation that are able to substitute or flank some of the architects tasks: for example parametric design or generative design at the initial phases of a project. However, it is clear that such tools are no substitute for ideation and creativity but it is necessary to know them even if only to make the most of them. So then, also for architecture the essential question of knowledge arises and therefore, levels of training, the role of universities, or rather the ability of educational institutions to educate and train the designers of the future come under discussion. Degree courses in Architecture and Design have, over time, become fragmented into declinations and broken down into specializations. An example of this is the growing attention to sustainability and the ability to design consciously and the wide range of courses that analyse energy efficiency, awareness and respect of the territory

and the awareness of the impact human actions have on the environment. In the best architecture faculties⁶, increasing importance is given to green buildings and their design as some recent University statistics confirm: from the *University of Hong Kong* to the *University of Carolina*, from the course on Sustainable Architecture at the *Norwegian University of Science and Technology*, to the course on Environmental Architecture at the *Polytechnic of Milan* to the offerings from the numerous Anglo Saxon universities such as *The University of Sheffield* or *The Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning*. But knowledge is not created only at school: nowadays the architectural project or the industrial product project involve a great number of professionals. It is therefore necessary that a virtuous relationship between the designer and a technical support team equipped with such sophisticated specialization necessary to be inside the actual companies producing materials, solutions or finished products. At the same time this complexity has made some architecture firms acquire in-house skills and know-how on innovative design technologies, modelling, materials, sustainable technologies, without however, undermining the fact that knowledge can be found elsewhere, for example in artisan workshops, in material transformation laboratories, with whom the firm must have an open and constructive working relationship. From Aecom to Gensler from Nikken Sekkei to Hok or from OMA founded by Rem Koolhaas to Foster + Partners, from Zaha Hadid Architects to Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the big firms have been able to create parallel work teams, often dedicated to interior design, through the transferral of a method, coming from the architectural field, interior design or product design. However, even in the current condition of a globalised “architecture system” that has transformed the firms into progressive and fully developed ones (there are over 50 companies in the world with more than 200 professionals, 20 with 500 resources, 5 exceed 1000 employees⁷), distinguished by the presence of different skill-sets, there is a phenomenon that is the collaboration of designers located in different continents who dialogue in real time on a common platform. The most diverse experiences and professionals are now integrated within an architectural project, but it is not yet enough as this project will have to measure itself increasingly more against other expressions of creativity: from the figurative arts to music, from social science to psychology. That is why, then, precisely in the age

of unlimited specialization and hyper segmentation of know-how, we want to believe that the challenging but stimulating task of looking beyond will be left to the architect. In conclusion, we hope that the designer can, in the near future, not only express the ability to give the correct form, but also drive and stoke transformations and processes of development capable to positively influence our lives.

1. *De architectura* (On Architecture) is an essay in Latin by the Roman architect and engineer Marco Vitruvio Pollione written around 30 and 15 BC. It is the only text on architecture to survive from antiquity and is regarded as the first book on architectural theory since the Renaissance.

2. *Ornament and Crime* (original title *Ornament und Verbrechen*) is a short essay, written by the modernist architect Adolf Loos in 1908. It was published in German in 1962, later translated into Italian in 1972 by Adelphi and entitled *Parole nel vuoto*.

3. Originating from the Anglo Saxon noun *contract*, that literally means “contract-tender-agreement”, the word contract has very quickly become one of the leading sectors in design. In this context it means a complete “turn-key” provision of existing products and/or designed ad-hoc and mainly for hotel and hospitality sector.

4. The Oxfordshire Economic Observatory predicts a 70% increase in growth in the building and construction market from 2017 to 2025.

5. The term *open space* originally indicated a lay-out of work spaces that were not fragmented into smaller offices or working environments. This system, widely used from the mid fifties onwards has been questioned for a while. At the same time, however, the term has found a new use in interior design and indicates a layout in which the traditional subdivisions are no longer conformed to.

6. According to the latest QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings, 2017, the top 10 universities in the world include: *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (MIT); *The Bartlett School of Architecture* (UCL University College London); *Delft University of Technology Netherlands*; *University of California, Berkeley* (UCB); *ETH Zurich* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology); *Manchester School of Architecture*; *Harvard University United States*; *University of Cambridge*; *National University of Singapore* (NUS); *University of Hong Kong* (HKU).

7. Architectural firms with over 1,000 employees: Aecom USA, 1,370 architects employed; Gensler USA, 1,346; IBI Group Canada, 1,129; Nikken Sekkei Japan, 1,109; Aedas, China/ UK, 1,078.

New growth paths. From the industrial Revolution to the ecological Renaissance.

Curated by Rimadesio

Leonia¹ is one of Italo Calvino's invisible cities, it is a city that refashions itself every day: it produces, accumulates and discards. The result is that "each year the city expands, and the street cleaners have to fall farther back. The bulk of the outflow increases and the piles rise higher, become stratified, extend over a wider perimeter. [...] A fortress of indestructible leftovers surround Leonia dominating it on every side, like a chain of mountains. [...] The greater its height grows, the more the danger of a landslide looms: a tin can, an old tyre, an unravelled wine flask, if it rolls towards Leonia, is enough to bring with it an avalanche of unmatched shoes, calendars from bygone years, withered flowers, submerging the city in its own past which it had tried in vain to reject, mingling with the past of the neighbouring cities, finally clean. A cataclysm will flatten the sordid mountain range, cancelling every trace of the metropolis always dressed in new clothes". It is almost a model or symbol city that Calvino takes to extremes in order to reveal the potential contradictory and catastrophic elements. But it is not just a grim prophecy: on the 20th of December 2015 in Shenzhen, in Southern China, a 100 metre hill-like pile of rubbish collapsed under heavy rain, devastating tens of buildings and burying at least 85 people. That hill-like pile had been there for two years and it was forever getting bigger: the debris produced by the building boom were heaped up there. Italo Calvino wrote about Leonia in 1972, in the years when the concern for the consequences that our model of economic and consumer development began to shift, even amongst the general public, overturning and transforming the very notion of ecology. The scientist Ernst Haeckel coined the word in 1866, defining it as "the study of the relationship of organisms with their environment". The idea that the "outside world" or the environment can be transformed on a large scale by man is not such a recent one. In 1695 the English naturalist John Woodward Williamson, claimed that deforestation and cultivation by colonists in North America led to an improvement in air quality. With time, it was common belief that the milder winters and the cooler summers were some of the benefits of deforestation. The medieval idea of the animal world and of nature, as something mysterious, something different to us, dominated by irrational and uncontrollable magical or religious forces, gave way to the insight that mankind could, with the help of science and technology, dominate, command and transform to its liking its

surroundings and that this was for the good of the "extraordinary and progressive fate" of man. It was only in the 20th century that the judgment on the impact of mankind began to change direction, stoking the fear that the ecosystem could be irreparably disturbed reaching a point of no return. In 1938 the engineer Guy Stewart Callendar analysed the concurrent rise in temperature and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air, hypothesizing a connection between the causes. It was one of the first "registrations" on environmental change. In the following decades, despite the debates on the connection between causes, the empirical findings on the environmental impact of man developed to such an extent as to fuel the suspicion that this impact was becoming disruptive, so much so as to challenge the forces of nature. In 2000 the Nobel prize winner of Chemistry Paul Crutzen, and the biologist Eugene F. Stoermer, put forward the idea of adopting the word Anthropocene²: to describe a new geological era, separate to the Holocene era, in which human actions had drastic effects on the environment. The endorsement of Anthropocene as a new geological era is now under close examination by the International Union of Geological Sciences, and regardless of the outcome, the idea that mankind has been able to irreparably change the climate, the evolution of the species and even the geological eras has been a scientific and political breakthrough.

The processes of decolonization and industrialization of the so-called third world countries accelerated and highlighted the growth limits of industrial civilisation. As the Indian writer Amitav Ghosh affirms, paradoxically the geopolitical predominance of a handful of European powers, based on the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of a small share of the planet's inhabitants, has delayed the advent of a climate crisis. Pursuing industrialization or the "Great Acceleration", undermined the sustainability of the post industrial revolution economic model, and that now risks to drag with it its promise of growth. The growing global energy requirement has intensified with the increase in population growth: today 7.3 billion people consume approximately the equivalent of 14 billion tonnes of petroleum. According to the forecasts in the BP Energy Outlook 2017, the global GDP will double by 2015, for 25% as a consequence of the increase in world population growth (+1.5 billion), for 75% for economic growth. The demand for energy will increase

by 30%. To keep the Earth in its balanced state, the amount of absorbed energy must be balanced by an equal amount of energy emitted from the Earth's surface and from the atmosphere as radiation. If you don't want to give up the level of well-being achieved by the numerically speaking minority of the world's population and you want others to aspire to reach that level of well-being, the only way to make growth more sustainable is to find a new model based on clean, renewable energy sources and at the same time endorse a lifestyle that requires less resource consumption. According to the report Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2017³, drawn up by the UNEP, the resources allocated to renewables in 2016 covered 58% of the total investments in the energy sector. Energy sources are defined renewable and clean in comparison to fossil fuels (eg gas, petroleum and coal): they are considered renewable as they are inexhaustible and clean as they do not release polluting substances into the air. In order to use the sun, the wind and water as energy sources, technology research and development are required which would lead to their use on a large scale at competitive costs of production. Between 2015 and 2016 the capacity of installed renewable energy increased by 14%, from 127.5 to 138.5 GW, making up 55,3% of the increase in the global energy production capacity. If, in 2011, the renewable sources covered 6.9% of electricity production, in 2015 this percentage rose to 10.3% and in 2016 to 11.3%, thus hindering 1.7 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide being released in the atmosphere. In recent years its production has been stable despite an increase in energy consumption, set against an annual average rate of +2,2%, as registered in the preceding decade. All this in light of shrinking investments in renewable by 23% between 2015 and 2016, shown by the reduction in production costs. According to Erik Solheim, a senior manager for UNEP, "Clean technologies have never been so economical: for investors this means a real opportunity to obtain more with less. This is exactly the type of situation in which the interests of people coincide with profit making which allows you to hope for a better world for everyone". Today solar, wind, water, geothermal and biomass power are considered mainstream and marketable at competitive prices. Then there are sources which offer huge potential and are to this day still undergoing testing. The most appealing is probably marine energy, that refers to the use of energy carried by oceans taking advantage of tides, currents, ocean waves, salinity and even ocean temperature dif-

ferences. The potential of waves alone, in theory, is huge: according to a group of scientists in 2010 it was estimated to be 32 PW per year, meaning almost double the amount of energy produced in 2008. The tides, caused by gravitational forces that are produced by the movement of the Earth, the Moon and the Sun, consist of an excursion between the highest and the lowest sea level, which can then be used to produce electricity through turbines.

The tides have the advantage that they are regular and predictable. MeyGen⁴ is the largest tidal stream project in the world. It was presented in 2007, with the aim to develop a tidal stream project of up to 398 MW, through the use of 269 subsea turbines in an offshore site in the Orkney strait in Scotland. The energy produced will be enough to power 175,000 homes. The first phase of the project (Phase 1A) was completed in August 2017 with the deployment of 4 turbines, setting a world record for a monthly production capacity of 700 MWh. In November 2009 the world's first osmotic plant was opened in Tofte, Norway on the Oslofjord inlet. The prototype is by Statkraft, one of Norway's leading grid companies and it is aiming to produce renewable energy from the physical interaction of salt water and freshwater. If these clean and renewable sources are a reality, creating a sustainable economic model that allows an ever-growing number of people to aspire to affluence, means thinking about entire flows and complex and interdependent processes, in which only fuel able to integrate with environments and processes is being used. The UN publication "World Urbanization Prospects 2014"⁵ forecasts that by 2050 66% of the world's population will live in urban areas, compared to 30% in 1950 and 54% in 2014. Rebuilding a balance between man and the planet cannot help but focus on that artificial environment par excellence: the city. Is it feasible to think about and to subsequently design complex artificial systems, cities or even megalopolis that have a low environmental impact? As the architect, William McDonough, in *LeScienze* the September 2017 issue, writes, "the way they will reconsider and redesign the urban landscape will affect the future of life itself". Cities generate up to 70% of the global carbon dioxide emissions, using large amounts of water and producing mountains of waste and rubbish. All artificial processes, that is to say, the work of man, have been conceived since the dawn of the industrial revolution, as processes based on a model of consumption: first there is the extraction of

raw materials, these are then transformed with workmanship and energy, the product then goes onto another phase, ending its journey with the end-user, who discard it when it is no longer of use. Leonia and our cities work in exactly the same way: they are developed by products that come from external sources (food, cement, water...), that are used and then discarded. Natural systems work differently, in a circular way, where there is no waste because the cycles of birth and decomposition mean that the nutrients constantly flow in regenerative cycles. Can artificial systems be redesigned as circular systems? With its first volume released in 2012 *Towards circular economy*, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, started to propose winning business strategies to companies aimed at accelerating the shift towards a circular economy, in which the wastage of resources in the transformation and circulation processes is reduced, product-life is lengthened and any discards are recycled as raw materials for other processes. Cities play a fundamental role: they are centres of innovation, creativity and produce wealth. Moreover, they are complex systems in which flows of goods, people and services, processes triggered by different causes and for diverse functions, inevitably intersect and affect one another in a growing entanglement and with increasing complexity. The city, then, is the best disposed social environment for fostering a circular economy and a re-birth of ecology. The flows of material that enhance the circular city are reintegrated in the biosphere (biological flows) or are revalued (technical flows). In Vancouver the 200,000 tonnes of organic waste collected every year are used to produce methane and soil conditioners used as fertiliser for farmland. In Oslo things happen at an even earlier stage, on the dissipated energy along the flows: the suburb of Sandvika has heat pumps running along its sewers that capture heat and, depending on the season, use it to heat or cool homes. In Stockholm the biogas produced by sewage water runs 36% of the city's buses. A steelwork factory based in Brescia has been using the heat from its industrial electric oven to heat 2,500 homes since October 2016. In the natural world rubbish doesn't exist, at the end of the life cycle the organisms become nutrients. In cities, too, the rubbish can be transformed and recycled. According to the Engineer Michael Webber, Professor at the University of Austin "in simple words rubbish is what we have when our creativity and imagination have run out". Kalunborg Symbiosis is an industrial park in Denmark where com-

panies co-ordinate the energy, water and material flows. The secondary products and the waste from any process (eg wastewater, ethanol) are transformed into materials for other processes. A connection of tubes, cables and conductors that bring steam, gas, electricity and water back and forth. In the circular city urban planning plays an important role: there is no longer the need to divide activities and housing dictated by concerns for pollutants and health hazardous production sites: so workplaces and centres for processing waste into energy may rise up in residential neighbourhoods, next to schools, public buildings and delicatessens. The neighbourhoods would be real organisms living in harmony with others. There would also be less need to move, therefore reducing the energy required and the time wasted in doing so. Today architects are able to design buildings that have a low environmental impact and are independent from an energy point of view, using eco sustainable, long-lasting materials, organizing the size, the structure, the positioning and the interiors so as to take full advantage of natural sunlight and ventilation. The buildings in a circular city, says William McDonough⁵, "work rather like trees: they capture carbon, produce oxygen, distil water, offer a habitat to thousands of species and use solar power for their own electrical and thermal requirements".

In addition to technology and design, a narrative is also needed in order to story-tell the new lifestyles in circular cities, to imagine them and describe their spaces, the architecture, the objects, the furniture, to create models of consumption and relations, ways of movement and attractive and fulfilling lifestyles; a story able to outline the transition to a new artificial environment, so that Leonis can be kept away in books, as a warning to remind us of a city that could have been, but that we have decided to build differently.

1. Leonia is part of Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, published by Einaudi in 1972.

2. Anthropocene is a term coined in the 1980s by biologist Eugene Stoermer, was adopted by the Nobel Prize in Chemistry Paul Crutzen in the book *Welcome to Anthropocene. Man has changed the climate, Earth enters a new era*, Mondadori, 2005.

3. *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2017*, was published on April 6th by UN Environment, the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre, and Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

4. MeyGen (full name MeyGen tidal energy project) is the world's largest tidal energy plant which is currently in construction. The project uses four 1.5 MW turbines with 16 m rotor diameter turbines submerged on the seabed. The project is owned and run by Tidal Power Scotland Limited and Scottish Enterprise.

5. William McDonough is an American designer, advisor, author, and thought leader. Between his many activities, is the co-author with Michael Braungart of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, North Point Press Publisher, 2003, and *The Upcycle: Beyond Sustainability Designing for Abundance*, North Point Press Publisher, 2013.

Exponential innovation: imagining the present.

Curated by Rimadesio

“I have the feeling that the world outside is calling me. Whispering that there is something more”, confides Dolores Abernathy, the caring, archetypal rancher’s daughter in the American Wild west of the 19th century. Dolores is also a 3D printed android and equipped with artificial intelligence. She and her colleagues have become the “unwitting” attractions of *Westworld*¹, an amusement park where nothing is off-limits in keeping with the spirit of an authentic western experience. “We are already experiencing a situation of artificial intelligence” reflects Lisa Joy, co-creator of the television series *Westworld* (2016) “it is just that we don’t see robots, we see smartphones. We think ‘well, that is a small step’. But if we look at it as a whole, we realize we are moving towards a world in which our lives and our thoughts are loaded onto the web. We are already living and experiencing artificial intelligence”. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and artificial consciousness (AC), additive manufacturing (AM), the internet of things (IoT) and the internet of everything (IoE), are just some of the technological frontiers that the television series enacts, combining them in a present time frame. The technologies of the original film, *annus domini* 1973, seem to belong to another era. It was written and directed by Michael Crichton and showed humanoid robots, similar to D-3BO in *Star Wars*, in 1977 or to *Terminator*, in 1984, in the near future (1983).

Science fiction came about as a literary genre in England in the 19th century, where the technological development that was driving the rampant industrial revolution triggered a series of profound social transformations, arousing feelings of both hope and fear, a rich imagination was brought to life, focussing on the possible outcomes of scientific discoveries and technological applications. In the first science fiction novel, written by the eighteen year old Mary Shelley in 1816, the main character is a young medical student who, traumatized by his mother’s death, conceives the idea of creating the perfect, strong and untouchable being. Frankenstein creates his creature by sewing together different parts of corpses and brings him to life with electricity. At that time there was widespread trafficking of corpses fuelled by medical schools and their need to practice dissection and at the same time groundbreaking studies on electric current (Hans Christian Ørsted, 1820 Michael Faraday, 1821 André-Marie Ampère, 1826 Georg Ohm, 1827) were laying the groundwork for the invention of electric motors and the second industrial revolution.

The novel, *Jurassic Park*, written by Michael Crichton in 1990, imagined that the development of genetic engineering would have allowed to bring prehistoric giants back to life using the fossilized DNA of dinosaurs. On the 30th of July 2003 a team of French and Spanish scientists succeeded in bringing the *bucardo* (a recently extinct Spanish mountain wild goat) back to life for just a few minutes. In 2012, in San Francisco, the project *Revive&Restore* was launched with the aim to rescue extinct animals by implanting their embryos in the most genetically suitable species. In *Jurassic Park* the genetic code extracted from mosquitoes was read by super computers, able to reduce the length of a two-year operation down to just a few minutes. When the novel was written the *Human Genome Project*² was in its early days. It required a 2,7 billion dollar investment and was declared complete in 2003. By 2015 the human genome could be sequenced in a few hours at the cost of 1,000 dollars. We are therefore witnessing a short-circuit: the time frontiers imagined by science fiction are broken down and the periods of time are becoming increasingly short.

The appearance of the *communicator* in *Star Trek* in 1966 inspired the invention of the mobile phone. Martin Cooper, head of a research team for Motorola, developed a prototype in 90 days that was then presented to the press in New York, on the 3rd of April in 1973. The first mobile phone was marketed in 1983, at \$3,995 (\$9,300 in today’s prices). Technology fuels both hope and concern, it is the engine for human creativity, which in turn accompanies and traces the future: generating a short-circuit. The boundaries between the present and the future, between imagination and reality, are worm thin: it is in fact science fiction itself that inspires and drives the technological evolution. Speed is undoubtedly key: first of all in the development of technologies but also in their diffusion and use in different sectors and geographical areas. Added to the fact that the web already connects every corner of the earth and makes the sharing of any invention even more rampant: because they can spread in practically almost no time at all and there is an increasing number of people who, getting to know about them, can help to enhance and improve them.

On the other hand, emerging technologies have a high improvement rate after the prototype phase and when they start to be applied. Before James Watt came about, steam engines harnessed

approximately 1% of the energy released by steam combustion. Between 1765 and 1776 Watt enhanced this performance three-fold. From the first 4,4 kW model, Watt went on to build a 7,5 kW model in 1781. In 1876 a 1.000 kW steam engine was produced, in 1900 a 2.200 kW one. Gradually, however, as technology reaches a certain maturity, increasingly intense efforts can lead to increasingly modest results: the physical levels of improvement have been reached. The difference is given by the rhythm and rate of improvement and by its duration. The historian Ian Morris wrote: “even if the (steam) revolution took several decades to develop, it was, in any case, the biggest and fastest transformation in the entire history of the world”.

Speed and duration are relative concepts: information technology has taken us to a new dimension. In 1965 Gordon Moore³, the co-founder of *Intel*, observed that the number of transistors contained within an integrated circuit increased two-fold every year: there were only ten components in the first chip that was assembled in 1958. He ventured that in the short-term their rate of growth would have been steady. Moore’s Law proved to be accurate for over 50 years: the number of transistors in a chip doubled every 18 months. In June 2017 IBM, Samsung and Globalfoundries announced a new industrial process that would allow for the development of chips containing 30 billion transistors. The speed and energy efficiency of the super-computers, the speed of downloading, the efficiency of the hard drive, and other numerous innovations in the digital and information technology fields reflect Moore’s Law. In 1996 the American government developed ACSI Red: it cost 55 million dollars, took up a surface area of 200 square meters and consumed 800 kW an hour. It was the first supercomputer to exceed 1.8 teraflops in speed. In 2006, however, a new computer was built able to perform at the same speed: it cost 500 dollars, took up much less than a square meter in space and used 200 W an hour. It was the play station 3.

Growth takes place at an unprecedented exponential rate and prolonged over time puts us in front of things, that in terms of size and magnitude go beyond our ability of understanding. Terms of scale we are actually “not equipped for”.

Sustainability of exponential growth over time sure enough takes on a whole new meaning. When it comes to steam engines, airplane speed, the production of

electricity, the weight of automobiles, the physical limits are tangible. The digital world and information technology present us instead with a different set of problems. The limitations are much more relative: “They concern the number of electrons per second that can be made to pass through a channel in an integrated circuit, or how fast the rays of light can pass through a fiber optic cable”. Brynjólfsson and McAfee, researchers at the MIT and the authors of *The Second Machine Age*⁴ (2014), observe that the exponential speed leads us to ideas of such magnitude that they seem abstract, or rather “in an era in which what arrived first is no longer a particularly reliable guide for what will follow: science fiction continues to become reality”. Human beings are not the only ones who exchange information: machines “chat” increasingly more. The M2M devices (machine to machine), they literally communicate between devices, and not by users, using any communication channel represented 34% of all internet connected devices in 2016. The remaining 66% was made up of personal computers, tablets, desk tops, televisions and smartphones. According to CISCO, they forecast that, by 2021, the number of M2M devices, including cars, industrial robots, medical equipment and fitness sensors will, at 51%, overtake the traditional online devices. The neologism *Internet of Things* was used for the first time in 1999 to describe objects able to the react to their surroundings, collecting and transmitting data, drawing on and using information. The objects communicate between themselves and with their surroundings by means of chips and sensors. Today, the physical world can be (almost) entirely digitalized, and this itself is one the most important innovations to have taken place over recent years.

Digitalizing means transforming a physical phenomenon into the language of computers, in a sequence of numbers expressed in a binary format, or in other words into information that can be archived, modified and re-used. The economic implication is huge: digital information has a marginal cost of reproduction that is next to nothing, and it doesn’t run out when used, indeed its value increases with the increase of users who use it. Data is produced, in real time and on a large scale, from sensors, audio and video devices, networks, transactional applications, log files, internet and social media. Ninety percent of the data that was available in 2013 had been created in the two years leading up to it. This data, after all, continues to increase, not only in volume

but also in type and in speed. The need to analyse and process tonnes of heterogeneous data in increasingly shorter time scales is driving the development of analysis techniques that go under the name of *Big Data*⁵.

Potentially such information can be processed and used in real time in order to make choices and take decisions, but the ever increasing volumes and speed with which this data is produced mean that new storage technologies are required (like blockchain) and the development of technologies that make it possible to take full advantage of the computing power of the machines to perform ever increasingly complex operations. In The new division of labour, written in 2014, the authors Frank Levy and Richard Mumane predicted a labour market in which the professional skills required would be found only within the limits of computers and information technology. The former are, in fact, able to perform all sorts of symbolic operations, from mathematics to logic, through to language, and therefore can already replace any human activity that can be described using algorithms. The exclusively human ability to examine the information and to recognize models or patterns would be preserved. The example that is usually given is that of driving in traffic: “A truck driver has a windscreen and so is able to recognise what is ahead. Articulating this knowledge and inserting it into an IT program for every situation [...] is an extremely difficult task at the moment. Computers cannot substitute human beings so easily”. In 2004 the *Grand Challenge failed*.

This was a challenge open to completely autonomous vehicles, sponsored by the DARPA, the US Defense Advanced Research projects Agency. The aim was to complete, in the shortest time possible, a 200 kilometer track in the Californian desert. The car that went the furthest covered just 5% of the track and then went off the road on a tight bend. Shortly afterwards, on the 9th of October 2010, Google announced its success on 140,000 miles of tarmac: “our automated cars use video cameras, radar sensors and a telemeter radar in order to “see” traffic, just as our detailed maps do. All of this is made possible by our data processing centres that process huge amounts of data from our cars while they are mapping the terrain”.

The conversion of data, that is miscellaneous in origin and content, into a standard language, the binary one, means that information from different fields,

can, at a surprisingly fast rate, be connected. Digital technologies coupled with the exponential rate of improvement in information technologies allow for the simultaneous development and recombination of innovations in different sectors: new materials, additive manufacturing, DNA sequencing, nanotechnology, renewable energies, advanced robotics and quantum information technology. According to Klaus Schwab, founder of the *World Economic Forum*, “the combination of these new technologies and their interaction through physical, digital and biological domains make the industrial revolution different to the previous ones”. First there was the steam and the mechanization of work carried out by humans or animals, then, there was electricity, the assembly line process and mass production. The third industrial era came later with the advent of computers and automation, when robots began replacing human beings in the assembly line. Now we are entering into the fourth industrial revolution, in which computers and automation will blend innovatively together, where robots will be controlled through systems of Artificial Intelligence⁶, able to assimilate and operate without any human intervention.

The biggest limit to the full deployment of technology’s potential is actually the speed with which we change our habits, intuitively and systematically exploit the potential of innovations and conceive new ways of designing processes, organize work and combine information. For example, only 0.5% of the available data is used today in decisional processes. It should, after all, be remembered that the transition from steam engines to electric motors didn’t bring about an immediate improvement in production. The historian Paul David noted that technicians and managers at that time limited themselves to replacing technologies, without changing, for example, the layout and the organisation of the factories. It was only the next generation who were able to fully exploit the potential of electric engines. Steam required only one source of energy and machinery that required greater power was positioned closer to the energy source. On the other hand, with electricity, every machine can be powered by a single engine, therefore, the layout of factories and manufacturing plants started to be designed on the basis of work flows and materials.

Getting back to the present, on a global scale the number of projects that favour and drive the breakthrough that will

allow us to exploit the potential of new technologies has grown. The US *Advanced Manufacturing Partnership*, the *Industrie 4.0*⁷ a project adopted by the German government, the strategic plan Made in China 2025 are examples of national strategies aimed at stimulating and directing the application of technological innovations, to determine the outcomes of the fourth industrial revolution. But the range of transformation will be much greater and will go well beyond the industrial scope. The companies based in Silicon Valley including Uber, Airbnb, LinkedIn, Facebook, Amazon, Google, Netflix, Twitter have already created a “break” with the past by changing, potentially everywhere and for good, our way of travelling, of moving, of buying, of looking for jobs, of communicating, of using multimedia content and so on.

In March 2017, at the CeBIT in Hannover – the most important IT trade fair – Japan presented its government programme *Society 5.0* with the intention to lead the transformation of social structures that will accompany the new revolution of machines. Even if we are not yet able to accurately outline the results of this transformation, to use the words of McAfee and Brynjólfsson, it will surely “be characterized by numerous examples of intelligence of machines and by billions of brains that will be interconnected and work together”. The outcome will depend on our ability to imagine and build the future-present that awaits us.

1. *Westworld* is a science fiction television series. Season 1 was shown in the USA in 2016 by HBO.

2. *Human Genome Project* was an international research program whose goal was the complete mapping and understanding of all the genes of human beings.

3. “Integrated circuits will lead to such wonders as home computer – or at least terminals connected to a central computers – automatic controls for automobiles, and personal portable communications equipment. The electronic wrist-watch needs only a display to be feasible today.” Gordon E. Moore, *Cramming more components*, Electronics, Volume 38, Number 8, April 19, 1965.

4. Erik Brynjólfsson, Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*, W. W. Norton & Co Inc, New York, 2014.

5. Data that is unstructured or time sensitive or simply very large cannot be processed by relational database engines. This type of data requires a different processing approach called *Big Data*.

6. Artificial intelligence is an area of computer science that emphasizes the creation of intelligent machines that work and react like humans.

7. Zukunftsprojekt Industrie 4.0 (I40) is a national strategic initiative from the German government. It is pursued over a 10-15-year period and is based on the German government’s High Tech 2020 Strategy. The initiative was launched in 2011, allocating € 200 million in funding.

The evolution of style: the research, the design, the cultural experience.

Curated by Rimadesio

Gio Ponti described style as a “a highly demanding word”¹. And he should know as it was his continuous, magnificent obsession throughout his entire working life.

It was 1941: almost 80 years have gone by since then and those who have reached the same number in age, today are still called “young”; and yet considering the history of design, the forties are another era: those intensely dense decades flew by, they are part of a history celebrated in manuals. This is just to highlight that “demanding” sounds rather like an elegant euphemism, given that this subject has always been up for debate, at times blatant and conspicuous at others hidden and underground, depending on the period and therefore, as yet, has not given any definitive answers. Style is most probably the *vexata quaestio* par excellence, generating discussions and disputes in which artists, architects, critics, theorists, philosophers even politicians took part in – lets say from Periclean Athens times, but can actually be traced back even further – discussing everything that related to the arts and aesthetics, the definition of beauty, its perception and how it influences daily life. From Vitruvio to Gottfried Semper, and in the twentieth century everybody did – in Italy idealist and post idealist philosophers such as Croce and his brilliant counterparts such as Dino Formaggio, and architects such as Ettore Sottsass in primis, the list of those who wished to define what Treccani describes as “the complex of specific natures and ways, responding to a particular aesthetic type, a piece of clothing, a piece of furniture, an object and similar”, is endless. As is the concept of “similar”. So “style” really is a difficult word, because it is uncontainable and malleable, able to go through time, leave its imprint and then take leave. Its malleability has allowed it to forge the most diverse labels with equal enthusiasm: so, to give just two examples – here it is young and lively, endorsing the liberty style with that floral and avantgarde tone, fragrant of Art Nouveau and Arts& Crafts; then some years later, it dries out and while still being young and avantgarde transforms itself into geometric, orthogonal austere De Stijl. In the twentieth century it has appeared in tandem with “modern” a sort of locomotive that has dragged numerous wagons of all shapes and sizes to thousands of destinations.

However, there seems to be a common feature from the dawn of time until today. For the Greek pottery workshop artisan and for Praxiteles, for the architect

of the Gothic cathedral and for the stone-er of a remote parish church, for the Renaissance genius and for his smeared canvas, for the baroque virtuoso’s gouging and for a local town carpenter, the idea of creating a style – or even imitating one – has been and still is, something that is deeply connected to identity, something that has to do with telling their story to others, building the present and the imprint it will leave for the future.

Style is therefore connected to the many aspects of time passing because in every era different ones can co-exist. The search for a particular style and its statement is in fact the interpretation of a certain historical period- the best interpretation is hoped for but that has not always been the case. And moreover, style must go beyond that moment in time to excel *hic et nunc* (here and now) and to last: that is an essential point. Speaking of production, style, well, its part of their DNA, that particular that has been formed and developed thanks to processes shared with other companies, as well as experimenting individual and original paths. It is a genetic patrimony that, just as any other, must continue to progress to avoid any risk of extinction. There is something Darwinian in this discussion between originality and evolution: these two words are also “demanding” and as qualifying adjectives – original and advanced – give each style their own magic or wanting to bring the distinguished Walter Benjamin² into the discussion, aura. Changing without transforming: it is not “superficiality”, but for industry it means constantly being aware of its objectives, knowing how to be modern with a dual and contemporary vision: with an eye to the future and its feet deeply rooted in its history. It seems a simple formula but actually requires daily attention. The proud statement of their own roots and a clear vision of today that immediately becomes tomorrow, or rather an “active” style (that have the imprint of time, are able to master it and manage any contrasts or unforeseen events) is the basis on which the most important brands, regardless of their size, are founded. And this is true in every sector. Just look at the different, classic examples in the automotive industry; Porsche is the only one who has produced what substantially is the same car since 1931, perfecting its line and continuously updating its technical mechanics. Audi is a case study to reflect on. The historic manufacturer, known for its reliable yet aesthetically anonymous cars, knew how to develop and evolve technically (think about its innovation as a

four wheel drive) and aesthetically (redefining its aesthetic “limits” and transforming them into refined understatement) speaking at an outstanding level: an operation that has enabled the brand to be visionary and to capture and above all to bridge a gap at the high-end of the automotive sector. Another classic example is Alfa Romeo³, that has always been a racing brand par excellence, and has reconfirmed its sporting style by returning to Formula 1: a clear, appealing message for the brand’s loyal appraisers, a way to enhance the loyalty of the older followers as well as to find new ones. All of this against a backdrop of an automotive industry trying to rise up to the epoch-making challenges of the progressive popularity of electrically driven vehicles. A technological issue the big car brands have long been working on, redefining the stylistic codes of the car body design as well as the complex system of symbols and language that regulate the processes of communication. But that is not all. The probable use of assisted driving on a large scale, which is now in the advanced testing phase, (just like the concept of dealing with smart cities that are totally interconnected) will have a number of consequences on the nature of the vehicle itself as we know it: from the inevitable reduction in speed and therefore to the sportslike aspect of the car, to the shape and function of their insides, increasingly less car-like and increasingly more similar to an extension of our living spaces or offices. Considering the speed of the technological evolution, it is essential to define the necessary strategies: how to reinvent yourself and with what style you continue to be the leader.

There are similar examples to be found in fashion, offering a wide range of extremely varied examples and stories. If the great founders of some of the iconic brands of the fifties are no longer with us, and if their vision seems not to have left any trace in the collections of new designers, they do however remain a strong point of reference for the public. Here too, the sophisticated strategies necessary to preserve style are stimulated and sped up by technological innovation. In this sector they are represented by the popularity of digital technologies. On-line shopping is in fact transforming the distribution system making the showrooms functional places that are necessary for enhancing the value of the brand, places where you live “the experience” of style, while the more physical process of buying is carried out in more comfortable surroundings and in handier

ways. An extraordinary example is that of Steve Jobs, who many people consider to be “the” maverick; who, defining the aesthetic standards for consumer electronic goods made them a must-have for everyone, everywhere. The small i – iPad, iMac, iPhone – is a sign of belonging to a style that simply has no equals, no offence to their Asian competitors... “Fashion changes, Style endures”, Coco Chanel once said. “Fashion reflects the times we live in, even if, when the times are dull we prefer to forget about it”. There are different and equally significant examples of brands active in specific sectors of fashion who then branched out into the clothing sector with enormous success⁴. Marketing activities that have been able to tap into new sectors successfully “exporting” if you were, their reputation for the original excellence of materials and workmanship. Reflecting on style and production you inevitably end up talking about the market. The fourth industrial revolution is close at hand; the production norms are in continuous development as are, consequently, commercial relations. The big names previously mentioned remind us that capitalism reveals itself with new dynamics, new forms of aggregation and for any company the knowledge of being original, today, more than ever before, has to do with its brand identity and the storytelling of the brand and its products. Or rather the telling of stories because the design industries (fashion, furniture and technologies) channel within theirs, next to their own, numerous others that they must make their own or in one way or another cannot not consider. Stories about people who reflect the company and vice versa, the so-called testimonials, or others that inspirit the key growth stages, consistent interpreters of a style.

The production houses that, considering the current complex and competitive market conditions need to retain their clients, having been won over and having enhanced their loyalty thanks to a well defined style, need to acquire new market share (export and contract clients play an essential part in their turnover) without however shaking up their image or the style they have chosen. At the same time immobility is lethal. “It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop” Confucio⁵ said. Taking time, on the other hand, today, is undoubtedly a luxury, but it is indispensable in order to fully create a style that is not simply a passing fad, but a well thought out, evolutionary step. A requirement urgently required by a culturally elusive target, the one that refers to the so-called new markets,

where it is necessary to define new languages and different forms of communication.

If the fashion system, with its incredibly fast-paced rhythms, almost seems not to have the time to be afraid, in other sectors the story is different: producing a new product requires time and testing, in other words big investments. This is the reason why the evolution in style takes longer, while the contest on details and materials seems more evident. A challenge, that means in any case, research. And that is something that gives style its dynamism. Research and innovation are not clichés. It is team work that makes a company grow and excel. The design industries are productive and highly technological industries. Research and the use of new materials, just as the ability to lend new performance to traditional ones, are fundamental conditions for the evolution of styles, to enhance them and to make the aesthetic invariants of every industry more attractive. Speaking about the style of a product actually means speaking about the company’s production style, how it has been able to organize its production processes, in short therefore, the environment, sustainability, recycling. Three difficult words that even the less knowledgeable members of the public have become sensitive to. Today we can affirm that certificates, traceability, limited energy consumption for production, low environmental impact, staff health and safety all affect the definition of style for a company and consequently the approval of its products.

The style of production actually determines a new relationship between the company and the client. It is no longer simply a commercial relationship, one that is smart or friendly, call it what you will, but it is one of real esteem and affection. If the client is informed about the company’s awareness on matters like the environment and the well-being of its staff, they are naturally more inclined to become loyal. The “style of production” is therefore another important message that is conveyed. Clients purchase because they share certain company ethical values. Taking this idea to extremes, the client becomes, in a certain way, a new member of the family, company. The general public are a mysterious lot: multilayered, difficult, fickle, absent-minded, international; their bio-economic clock is tachycardic and beats to the upbeat rhythm of trends⁶, which, says Deyan Sudjic, Director of the Design Museum in London “is the most developed form of planned obsolescence” and so, the so-called public, once their attention has been captured,

can just as easily get bored. Because, as Alberto Bassi, essayist and teacher at the IUAV in Venice, points out “along with the main reasons that have long been the basis of our choices, namely the functional, technical and performance qualities on one hand and aesthetics, on the other, there is now also the need to show off a status symbol-testifying a certain social-economic condition or a style symbol showing a particular cultural and existential condition”. What style then do we decide to communicate a new product with? If style is connected to the storytelling of the product and the company, it is imperative nowadays to know how to choose what way or ways to operate: that is to say determine the style that describes that identity in the best possible way. The creation and the diffusion of the current large network of new media on a global scale means that companies have to reflect on a new, different type of communication of their style. It is a new challenge because the web structure itself, being a spurious relative of the television, the radio and the written word, compel companies to invent new forms, where it is not often easy to adopt a new style. The web is, without doubt, fast and superficial, it is to be watched. Words live on but images are prevalent.

In order to “communicate style” a “new style of communication is required”, or rather, the current existing one needs to be updated, integrated and adapted. Because style in its essence is always present, a set of physical and immaterial factors, its form and vision, the life of an object and the hype or aura that surrounds it is what often makes it desirable. Today it is no longer enough just to describe an object, to show every slight detail. It is said that everyone wants to live an experience, and a unique one at that. The two dimensional and immobile world of photos, even the more artistic ones, has become small and in order to get themselves known and be experienced, products of design must find other places, other worlds or at least images of other worlds, to position themselves in.

The direction of cultural experience is a desirable choice of style for communication as a medium/ long term investment. In order to have significant results there is, however, from the outset, a discriminating factor, that is to say, that that experience must merge into the company’s stylistic DNA, into a pre-existing wealth of authentic experiences and visions. An essential condition so that the activities of cultural promotion can then

be a starting point for reflection and a further incentive. Only time will enable us to recognise its concrete effects. So it seems increasingly clear that style today is more than ever a distinctive imprint of cultural tradition.

1. “Under the aegis of an extremely demanding word, ‘Style’, begins an indication of architectural works and furnishings, as well as drawings, paintings and sculptures”. That is how Gio Ponti, in January 1941, presented the first issue of *Lo Stile nella casa e nell’arredamento*, the monthly publication “on ideas, on life, on the future and above all on art”. The publication that he created and managed until 1947.

2. The German philosopher Walter Benjamin reflected on the aura of a work of art being devalued by mechanical reproduction, such as photography in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Nuovo Politecnico, Einaudi 1966.

3. Sergio Marchionne announced the partnership between Alfa Romeo and the Swiss Formula One team Sauber in December, formalising the return of the automotive brand to car racing after over 30 years.

4. Illuminating examples from the luxury leather goods industry: Louis Vuitton, Prada, Fendi, Trussardi.

5. Confucio (551 a.C.–479 a.C.), there are no texts written directly by him, his renowned phrases and aphorisms have been put together in *The Dialogues*, analects by his disciples who collected fragments of dialogues.

6. Fashion. We are entering a wide ranging area of discussion: if we accept the literal translation of design as “project” then we have to say that the entire system of objects and symbols in which we live are elements of design, because they have all been “designed” to do certain tasks. But is it only that? And is it enough to describe fashion as a dominant and passing trend that influences the lives and habits of a certain period? Paraphrasing Dino Formaggio who said “Art is everything that man calls art”, raises the question is fashion all that man calls fashion? not wanting to solve the question with a joke, but rather emphasize that fashion, just like art and design is closely related to the historical periods in which it lives, develops, and eventually dies out, to then comes back differently but at the same time the same.

Models

Photos by Tommaso Sartori

#1

rovere nero, vetro grigio trasparente,
cuoio rigenerato argilla, vetro rete inox, alluminio nero lucido,
marmo nero marquina



#2



vetro acidato extrachiaro, melaminico olmo, vetro
maglia gold, gres crema, tessuto lux segale, palladio

#3

vetro moro lucido, vetro bronzo trasparente,
marmo noir saint laurent, noce, cuoio rigenerato castoro,
vetro cacao reflex



#4



melaminico rovere grigio, vetro rete alluminio, marmo cristal gray,
vetro nero reflex, tessuto lux acciaio, platino

#5



vetro platino lucido, vetro bianco latte opaco, vetro trasparente
extrachiaro, tessuto lux salvia, marmo calacatta, specchio

#6



rame spazzolato, marmo rosso lepanto,
vetro amaranto lucido, rovere termotrattato,
vetro rete bronzo, tessuto lux, rosso cotto

Tommaso Sartori Swiss/Italian photographer born 1967. After finishing his studies in visual communications he dedicates himself to architectural and design photography. That leads him to work with the main prestigious international magazines and the major companies related to those specific fields realising on ordered commission a wide series of works. At the same time he dedicates himself to a continuous and ongoing project of a personal work research and experimentation under the name of Tomas Womb. Currently lives in Paris.

Tommaso Sartori fotografo svizzero/italiano, nato nel 1967. Dopo gli studi in comunicazioni visive inizia a dedicarsi alla fotografia di architettura e di design. Collabora con le principali riviste internazionali e le maggiori aziende di riferimento del settore realizzando, su commissione, un'ampia serie di lavori. Parallelamente si dedica ad un continuo lavoro di ricerca personale sotto il nome di Tomas Womb. Vive attualmente a Parigi.

L’evoluzione dello stile: la ricerca, il progetto, l’esperienza culturale.

A cura di Rimadesio

“Una parola altamente impegnativa”¹: così Gio Ponti, che per tutta la sua lunghissima esistenza lavorativa ne fece una continua, magnifica ossessione, definiva lo “stile”.

Era il 1941: sono passati quasi 80 anni e chi oggi ha raggiunto quella medesima età viene definito “ancora giovane”; eppure, dal punto di vista della storia del design, gli anni ‘40 sono un’altra era: quei decenni densissimi sono volati, fanno parte ormai della storia celebrata nei manuali. Tutto questo per notare che “impegnativa” suona come un elegante eufemismo, dato che sul tema è in corso da sempre un dibattito, ora eclatante, ora sotterraneo, comunque mai giunto a soluzione definitiva. Quella sullo stile è, con ogni probabilità, la *vexata quaestio* per eccellenza, la genitrice di una considerevole parte delle diatribe in cui si sono cimentati artisti, architetti, critici, teorici, filosofi, finanche politici nell’affrontare ciò che riguarda le arti e l’estetica, la definizione di bellezza, della sua percezione e di come essa influenza l’umana quotidianità. Da Vitruvio a Gottfried Semper, e nel Novecento, per rimanere in Italia, dai filosofi idealisti e post idealisti a quanti fecero loro da contraltare, come Dino Formaggio, fino agli architetti, Ettore Sottsass in primis, infinito è l’elenco di quanti si sono lambiccati a definire, per dirla con la Treccani, il “complesso dei caratteri specifici, rispondenti a un particolare tipo estetico, di un abito, un mobile, un oggetto e sim.”. Dove quel “sim(ili)” prefigura orizzonti di cosmica vertigine. Vocabolo difficile dunque “stile”, perché incoercibile e plastico, capace di attraversare le epoche e segnarle, per poi andarsene. La sua elasticità gli ha permesso di forgiare, con eguale entusiasmo, le più diverse etichette: così eccele giovane e frizzante aderire allo Jugendstil con quel tono floreale e avantgarde, profumato di *Art Nouveau* e di *Arts&Crafts*; per poi, pochi anni dopo, asciugarsi e, sempre all’avanguardia, trasformarsi nel geometrico, ortogonale, ascetico *De Stijl*. Per poi ancora, in ambito novecentesco, comparire in tandem con “moderno”, una sorta di locomotiva che ha trascinato infinità di vagoni dalle mille fogge e destinazioni.

Tuttavia un tratto comune sembra esserci dalla notte dei tempi a oggi: per il vasaio greco e per Prassitele, per l’architetto della cattedrale gotica e per lo scarpellino nella remota pieve, per il genio rinascimentale e per l’imbratta tele, per il virtuoso barocco della sgorbia e per il falegname di paese, creare uno stile – o anche solo imitarlo – è stato, più o meno consciamente, qualcosa di profondamente legato alla propria identità come autore ed esecutore,

qualcosa che aveva a che fare con il raccontarsi agli altri, con la costruzione del presente a propria futura memoria.

Lo stile è quindi legato ai molti aspetti dello scorrere del tempo, ne è espressione, benché in ogni epoca ne possano convivere diversi. La ricerca di uno stile rappresenta infatti la proposta di una interpretazione per un dato periodo storico, la migliore si spera, ma non è sempre così automatico. E inoltre lo stile deve anche “andare oltre il momento” sia per eccellere *hic et nunc* che per sopravvivere cioè durare: una questione fondamentale.

Parlando di produzione, lo stile ne è il DNA, quel particolare genoma i cui cromosomi si sono formati e sviluppati sia grazie a processi condivisi con altre aziende, sia sperimentando percorsi autonomi e originali. È un patrimonio genetico che, come qualsiasi altro, deve comunque continuare a progredire nel tempo, pena l’estinzione. C’è un che di darwiniano in questo dialogo tra originalità ed evoluzione: due vocaboli anch’essi “impegnativi” che in forma di attributo – originale ed evoluto – conferiscono a ogni stile la sua “magia” o, se vogliamo, scomodando con i doverosi distinguo Walter Benjamin, l’aura². Cambiare senza mutare: non è “gattopardismo”, ma per l’industria è avere costantemente coscienza di sé e dei proprio obiettivi, sapere essere nel tempo, avere una visione precisa, duplice e contemporanea: lo sguardo nel domani, i piedi nella propria storia. Formula semplice a parole, ma che nei fatti richiede quotidiana attenzione. L’affermazione – orgogliosa – delle proprie radici e di una lucida visione dell’oggi subito domani, cioè di uno stile “attivo” (che impronta di sé il tempo, ne è padrone, non lo subisce) è la base su cui si fondano i brand più rilevanti – non importa se grandi o piccoli. E questo in ogni campo. Basta guardare per esempio ai diversi ed emblematici casi del mondo delle quattro ruote; se unico rimane quello della Porsche che dal 1931 produce in sostanza la stessa auto, limandone la linea e aggiornandola di continuo nella parte nascosta (tecnico-meccanica), da meditare è quello di Audi che, da storica produttrice nota per le sue vetture affidabili quanto esteticamente “anonime”, ha saputo evolve-re sia tecnicamente a livelli di assoluta eccellenza (vedi l’identificazione con l’innovazione delle 4 ruote motrici) sia esteticamente, ridefinendo i suoi “limiti” estetici per tradurli in una raffinata affermazione di understatement; operazione questa che le ha permesso in modo lungimirante di cogliere e soprattutto di

colmare un “vuoto” di mercato nella fascia alta del panorama automobilistico. Emblematico è poi il caso di Alfa Romeo³, da sempre marchio corsaiolo per antonomasia, che riafferma la propria natura sportiva ritornando alla Formula: un chiaro, allettante messaggio per gli estimatori del brand, un modo per fidelizzare gli storici e insieme cercare nuovi adepti. Tutto questo mentre l’intero settore automobilistico si trova ad affrontare un cambio epocale determinato dalla progressiva diffusione della propulsione elettrica.

Una questione tecnologica che sta impegnando già da tempo i grandi marchi dell’auto a ridefinire i codici stilistici sia del disegno delle carrozzerie, sia del complesso sistema di simbologie e di linguaggi che regolano i processi di comunicazione. Ma non solo. La probabile applicazione su larga scala della guida assistita, oggi in fase di sperimentazione avanzata, (così come, lo si accenna soltanto, al concetto di *smart city*, totalmente interconnessa) avrà diverse conseguenze sulla natura stessa del veicolo, così come lo abbiamo finora conosciuto: dalla riduzione inevitabile delle velocità e dunque della componente sportiva dei veicoli, alla forma e funzione stessa degli abitacoli, sempre meno auto stricto sensu e sempre più estensiono del salotto e dell’ufficio. Considerata la velocità dell’evoluzione tecnologica appare fin da ora fondamentale per le grandi case definire le necessarie strategie: come reinventarsi, con quale stile continuare a essere *leader*.

Analoghi gli esempi nella moda, con un panorama di casi e storie estremamente vario. Se i grandi fondatori dei mitici marchi degli anni cinquanta non ci sono più, e se la loro visione non sembra rintracciabile nelle collezioni dei nuovi designer delle griffe, essa rimane comunque fortissima come memoria, aura e dunque come segnale di riferimento per il pubblico. Anche qui le sofisticate dinamiche necessarie a preservare lo stile sono sollecitate dall’innovazione tecnologica, in questo ambito rappresentata dalla diffusione del digitale. Lo shop-online sta infatti trasformando il sistema di distribuzione rendendo gli *showroom* un luogo funzionale alla necessaria valorizzazione del brand, dove vivere “l’esperienza” dello stile, mentre il processo fisico della vendita avviene attraverso più comode modalità. Caso straordinario infine quello di Steve Jobs, per molti “il” visionario in assoluto, il quale, definendo i canoni di bellezza dell’elettronica di consumo, l’ha resa un must have mondiale. La i minuscola – *iPad*, *iMac*, *iPhone* – è un segno di

appartenenza a uno stile che, con buona pace dei competitor orientali, non ha uguali. “La moda passa, lo stile resta”, diceva Coco Chanel. “La moda riflette i tempi in cui si vive, anche se, quando i tempi sono banali, preferiamo dimenticarlo”. Diversi e altrettanto significativi i casi di *brand* che, attivi in precisi settori della moda, hanno allargato il loro campo d’azione all’abbigliamento, ottenendo enormi successi⁴. Operazioni di marketing che, nel segno di uno stile inconfondibile, hanno saputo entrare e vincere in nuovi settori, “esportandovi” l’originaria eccellenza dei materiali e delle lavorazioni.

Riflettendo su stile e produzione si finisce a rgiocoforza a parlare di mercato. La quarta rivoluzione industriale è prossima: le forme della produzione sono in continua evoluzione, così come, di conseguenza, i rapporti commerciali. I grandi nomi citati ci ricordano che il capitalismo si manifesta con nuove dinamiche, nuove forme di aggregazione e che, per qualsiasi azienda, il saper essere originali, oggi più che mai, ha a che fare con l’identità e la narrazione di sé e dei propri prodotti. Storie che spesso riguardano personaggi in cui si identificano le aziende stesse, i cosiddetti testimonial, o altri che ne animano le tappe di crescita fondamentali, interpreti coerenti di uno stile. Le case produttrici, nel panorama odierno estremamente complicato e segnato da una forte competitività, hanno l’esigenza sia di mantenere la propria clientela, conquistata e fidelizzata grazie a uno stile ben preciso, sia di acquisire nuove quote di mercato (*l’export* e il *contract* sono parti fondamentali dei loro fatturati) senza tuttavia stravolgere né la loro immagine né lo stile che hanno scelto. L’immobilità, per contro, è letale: “Non importa se vai avanti piano, l’importante è che non ti fermi”, sentenziava Confucio⁵. La lentezza viceversa è certamente un lusso, ma è indispensabile per elaborare compiutamente uno stile che non appresenti un exploit del momento, ma un ponderato passo evolutivo. Esigenza oltremodo sollecitata da un target culturalmente sfuggente, quello riconducibile ai cosiddetti nuovi mercati, rispetto al quale occorre definire linguaggi e forme di comunicazione di differenti. Se il sistema moda, con i suoi ritmi rapidissimi, sembra non fare in tempo ad avere paura, per altri ambiti la questione è differente: la produzione di un nuovo prodotto richiede tempo e sperimentazione, ovvero grossi investimenti. Questa la ragione per cui l’evoluzione di uno stile si presenta con tempi lenti, mentre risulta più evidente la battaglia giocata sul dettaglio, sui materiali. Una

sfida che vuole comunque dire ricerca: altra voce che dà allo stile una importante dinamicità. Fare ricerca, innovare non è un luogo comune. È un lavoro di squadra che fa crescere l’azienda. Le industrie del design sono strutture produttive ad alto contenuto tecnologico. La ricerca e l’impiego di materiali inediti, così come l’abilità nel conferire nuove performance ai materiali tradizionali, sono condizioni fondamentali per poter parlare di evoluzione degli stili, per migliorare e rendere maggiormente attraenti le invarianti estetiche di ciascuna industria. Parlare dello stile di un prodotto significa in realtà infatti parlare dello stile di produzione di una certa azienda, di come essa ha saputo organizzare i processi di realizzazione, quindi, sintetizzando, ambiente, sostenibilità, riciclo. Altri tre vocaboli difficili cui però anche il pubblico meno preparato è oramai particolarmente sensibile. Oggi possiamo sostenere che certificazioni, tracciabilità delle materie, limitati consumi energetici per la produzione, basso impatto ambientale, cura della salute dei dipendenti, siano tutti elementi che influiscono sulla definizione dello stile di un’impresa e di conseguenza sul consenso per i suoi prodotti. La “stile della produzione” determina infatti un nuovo rapporto tra azienda e cliente. Non si tratta più unicamente di un rapporto commerciale, smart o friendly che dir si voglia, ma di stima e affetto reali. Se il cliente è informato sull’attenzione dell’azienda per l’ambiente e per i suoi dipendenti, è naturalmente portato a concederle la propria fiducia. Lo “stile di produzione” è dunque un altro importante messaggio che il significativo prodotto veicola: si acquista perché si condividono determinati valori etici. Estremizzando, il cliente diventa, in certo senso, un nuovo membro della “famiglia azienda”.

Entità misteriosa il pubblico: pluristratificato, difficile, volubile, distratto, internazionale. Il suo orologio bio-economico è tachicardico, batte al ritmo della moda⁶ che, dice Deyan Sudjic, direttore del *Design Museum* di Londra “è la forma più sviluppata di obsolescenza programmata”. Dunque il suddetto pubblico, una volta catturatane l’attenzione, non è detto che, altrettanto rapidamente, non possa stancarsi. Perché, come precisa Alberto Bassi, saggista e docente allo IUAV di Venezia, “alle principali ragioni che sono state per lungo tempo alla base delle nostre scelte, e cioè da una parte l’efficacia funzionale, tecnica e di rendimento, dall’altra la qualità estetica e realizzatavi dei prodotti, si è affiancata l’esigenza di dimostrare l’acquisizione di *status symbol* attestanti

una condizione economico-sociale, o di *style symbol*, a prova di una particolare condizione culturale ed esistenziale”.

Con quale stile dunque decideremo di comunicare un nuovo prodotto? Se lo stile ha a che fare con la narrazione della identità aziendale e di prodotto, oggi è fondamentale sapere scegliere come, in quale/i modo/i operare: determinare cioè quale sarà lo stile più adatto a veicolare efficacemente quella specifica identità. La nascita e il diffondersi a livello planetario della grande rete-ragnatela dei nuovi media impone alle aziende una diversa riflessione sulla comunicazione del proprio stile. Si tratta di una nuova sfida in quanto la struttura stessa del web, il suo essere un parente spurio della televisione, della radio e della parola scritta costringe a inventare nuove forme/*format* nei quali spesso adottare un nuovo stile non è semplice. Certo, la rete è veloce, superficiale: è da guardare. La parola sopravvive, ma l’immagine è predominante.

Per “comunicare lo stile” ci vuole insomma un “nuovo stile di comunicazione”, o meglio, l’esistente va aggiornato, integrato, adattato al mondo nuovo. Perché lo stile nella sua essenza è sempre lì, insieme di fattori fisici e immateriali, forma e visione, la pelle di un oggetto e l’aura che lo circonda e che spesso lo rende desiderabile. Oggi non basta più descrivere un oggetto, farlo vedere in ogni particolare. Ciò che tutti desiderano, si è detto, è vivere un’esperienza, meglio se unica. Il mondo bidimensionale e immobile della foto, anche di quella “d’autore”, è diventato piccolo e il prodotto di design per farsi conoscere, esperire, deve trovare altri luoghi, altri mondi, o quantomeno immagini di mondi, in cui posizionarsi. La strada dell’esperienza culturale è una auspicabile scelta di stile nella comunicazione, da prefigurare come un investimento a medio/lungo termine. Per avere risultati significativi esiste tuttavia una discriminante a monte ovvero che tale esperienza affondi nel DNA stilistico dell’azienda, in un patrimonio preesistente di esperienze e visioni autentiche. Condizione fondamentale perché le attività di promozione culturale possano poi rivelarsi spunto di riflessione e motivo di stimolo. Solo il tempo aiuterà a riconoscerne gli effetti concreti.

^[1] “Sotto l’egida d’una parola altamente impegnativa, ‘Stile’, si inizia una indicazione di opere d’architettura e d’arredamento, e anche di disegni, e di opere di pittura e di scultura”. Così Gio Ponti, nel gennaio 1941, presentava il primo numero di “Lo Stile nella casa e nell’arredamento”, il mensile “di idee, di vita, d’avvenire, e soprattutto d’arte” da lui creato e diretto fino al 1947.

^[2] È stato il filosofo tedesco Walter Benjamin a riflettere sull’aura, intesa come unicità dell’opera d’arte, e sulla sua scomparsa dovuta alla diffusione della riproduzione meccanica che dell’opera stessa si può avere grazie alla fotografia. Nel suo celebre saggio “L’opera d’arte nell’epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica”, Nuovo Politecnico, Einaudi 1966.

^[3] È stata annunciata a dicembre direttamente da Sergio Marchionne la partnership tra Alfa Romeo e il team elvetico di Formula Uno Sauber che di fatto sancisce il ritorno del marchio automobilistico alle competizioni dopo oltre 30 anni.

^[4] Esempi illuminanti, provenienti tutti dalla alta pelletteria: Louis Vuitton, Prada, Fendi, Trussardi.

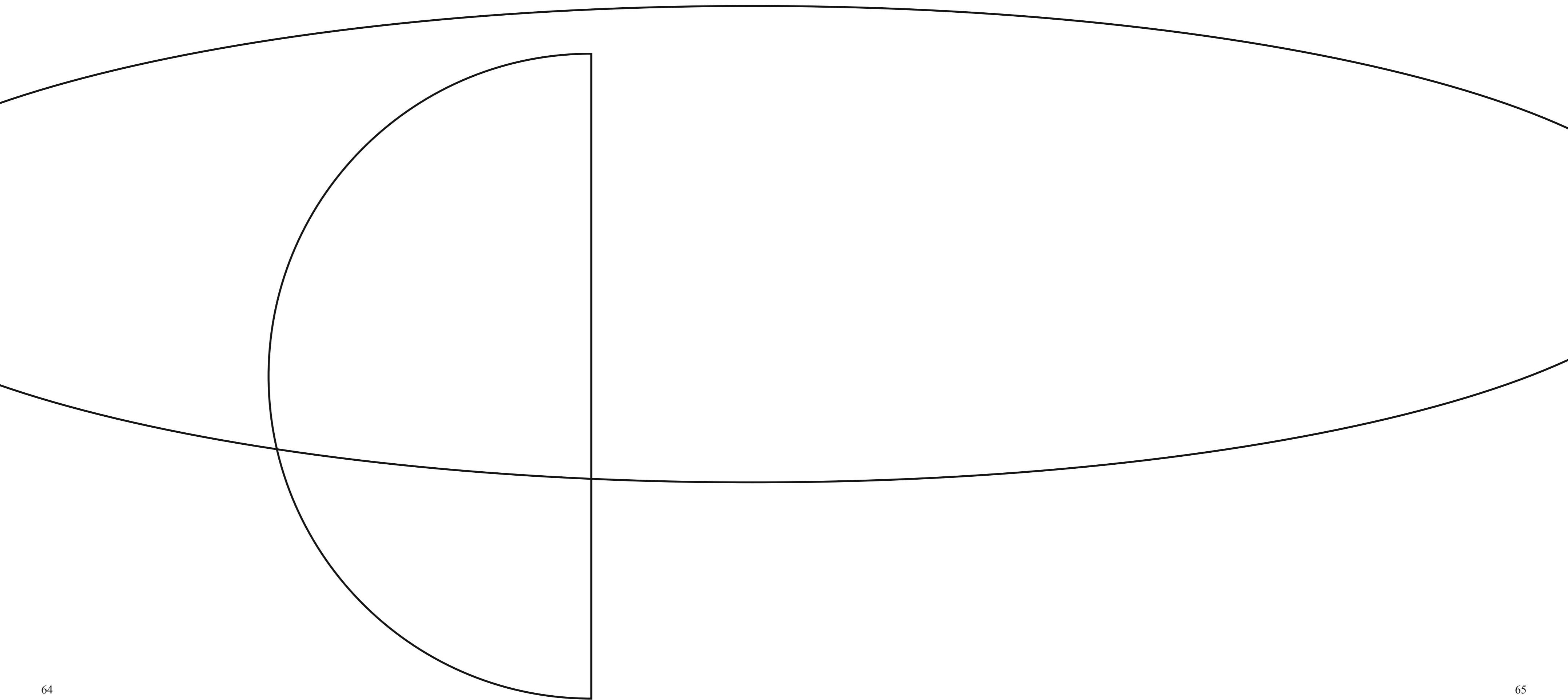
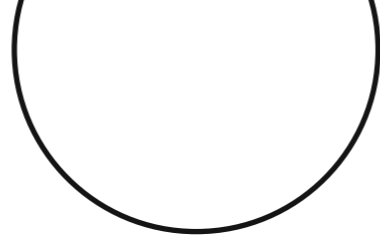
^[5] Confucio (551 a.C.–479 a.C.), non esistono testi da lui direttamente scritti. Le sue celebri frasi e gli aforismi sono stati organizzati in un testo – I Dialoghi – dagli allievi che li avevano raccolti oralmente dal maestro.

^[6] Moda. Entriamo in un campo di discussione davvero ampio: se di design accettiamo la traduzione letterale, cioè “progetto”, allora dobbiamo accettare che tutto il sistema di oggetti e simboli in cui viviamo sia “design”, perché, senza dubbio alcuno, ogni cosa è stata pensata (progettata) per assolvere a determinati compiti. Ma il design è solo questo? E la moda ci basta definirla come tendenza dominante e passeggera che influenza il modo di vita e le abitudini di un certo periodo storico? Parfrasando Dino Formaggio che diceva “Arte è tutto ciò che gli uomini chiamano arte”, viene da chiedersi se “Moda” non sia tutto ciò che gli uomini chiamano moda; non volendo così risolvere la questione con una battuta, ma semplicemente sottolineare che la moda, come l’arte e in fondo il design, è strettamente correlata ai periodi storici in cui nasce, si sviluppa, decade per poi tornare diversa e uguale.











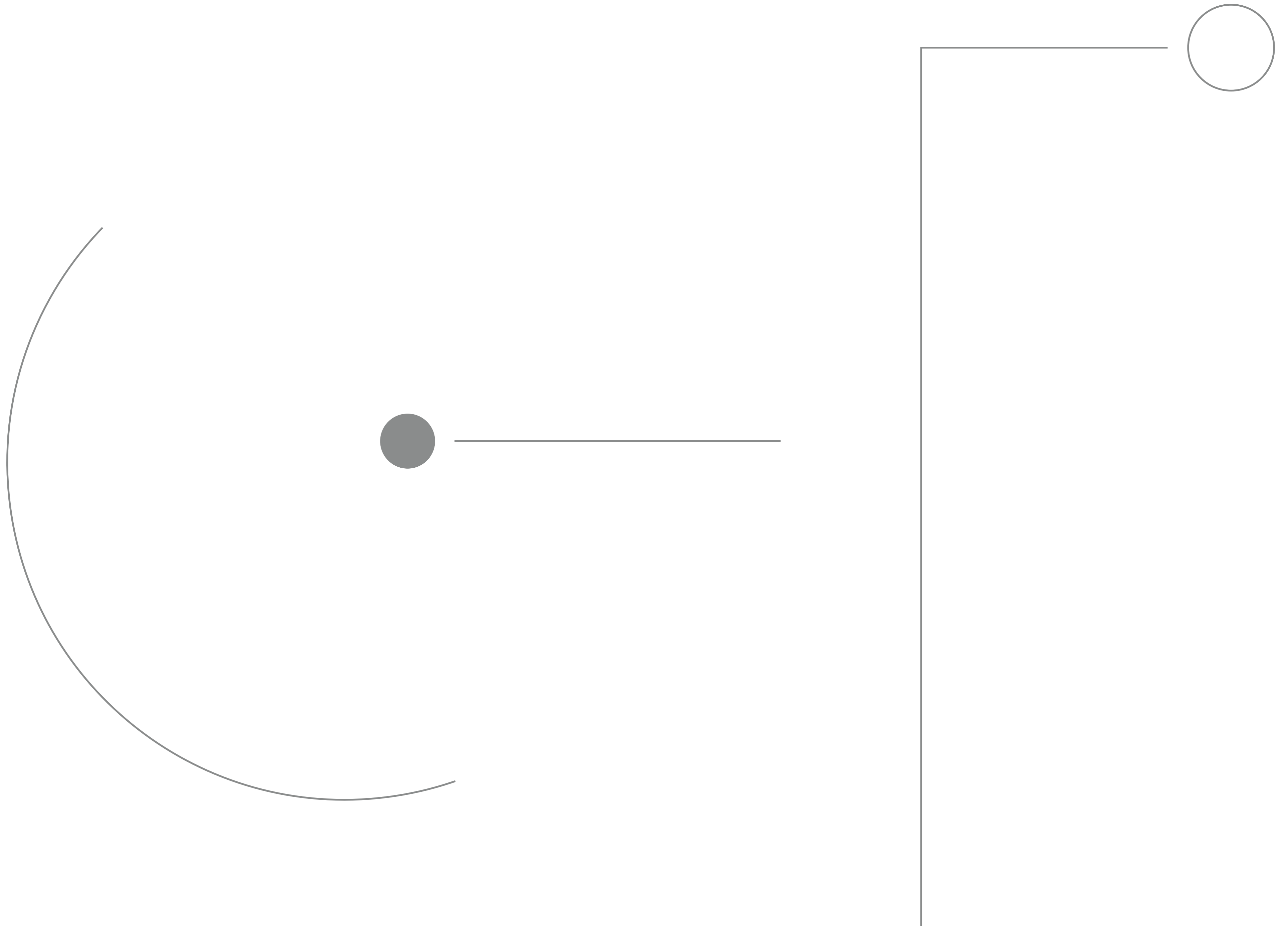








“We had the sky up there,
all speckled with stars,
and we used to lay on our backs
and look up at them, and discuss
about whether they was made
or only just happened.
Jim he allowed they was made,
but I allowed they happened;
I judged it would have took too long
to make so many.”



Between spaces

Raccontare per immagini. Immaginare con le parole. Non c'è messaggio che si spieghi compiutamente nella sola "icona". A essa si affianca sempre il "verbo" cui ricorriamo per fissare, esprimere, condividere le emozioni che suscita in noi. E, dall'altro canto, è la scrittura, che della voce è il segno, a descrivere sullo spazio del foglio – o dello smartphone – la potenza di uno scenario. Immagini parlanti e parole "immagianti". Sono queste l'essenza dello Spazio fisico e mentale in cui il racconto della filosofia aziendale e dunque del prodotto può pienamente esprimersi. Come ogni grande narrazione non è un soliloquio – un unico spazio - ma un insieme di voci, un succedersi di "luoghi". A dare loro la geografia in cui essere è la veste editoriale di Stories and Matters: non un semplice contenitore, ma uno spartito in cui sono orchestrate immagini di paesaggi e libere riflessioni; scorci di interni, citazioni letterarie e scatti d'autore. In questo Spazio il racconto non è costretto a forza. Grafica, fotografie, citazioni lo abitano in piena libertà seguendone le infinite prospettive.

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