

For la Rinascente the Fifties were the time for a number of important initiatives that would consolidate relationships with the graphic arts, architecture and, primarily, design, which at that time had begun to take on cultural, professional and disciplinary coherence.

In 1950 Swiss graphic artist Max Huber had already created the new and iconic logo, a monogram formed by the first lower case letter of the article "la" followed by a capital R. Also in 1950, an Italian graphic artist, Albe Steiner, became the art director responsible for external and internal décor and also for advertisement graphics until 1955. They were the key contacts in the advertising and communication office, which in 1955 (under the direction of Gianni Bordoli and Amneris Latis, the first art director assisted by Lora Lamm as head of graphics) was called Rinascente Advertising Office, and in the years to come it surrounded itself with a mythical aura thanks to collaborations with the top professionals on the Milan scene and elsewhere.

The interior and furnishings of the new headquarters in Piazza Duomo, which were opened to the public on 4 December 1950, were designed by the architect, Carlo Pagani. The third floor of the store hosted the furniture department with furnishings displays divided into two types of product - one with settings according to style and the other with individual pieces of furniture. The following year saw the start of the Furnishing Advice Office's programmes which, under the supervision of Carlo Pagani, coined the slogan "Casa migliore, vita migliore" (better home, better life). At the IX Triennale of the same year, the furnishing compositions section of the Mostra dell'Arredamento e dei mobili isolati (Exhibition for interior design and items of furniture) presented a project for an apartment for four people in addition to a number of items of furniture designed by Franco Albini and Ezio Sgrelli and made by la Rinascente and Upim. They were years of huge vitality and exchange: in 1951 the la Rinascente buying office took part in an exhibition of Italian products set up in Macy's department store in New York, which displayed the best "Made in Italy" products that again were mainly artisanal.

From then onwards, exhibitions became a fundamental tool that la Rinascente used to spread a new culture of everyday use objects, their formal, technical and aesthetical quality, an aspect that formed the basis of the idea of establishing the Golden Compass award. During the convention promoted in Italy by Groupe Intercontinental des Grands Magasins in 1952, la Rinascente set up in its spaces in Piazza Duomo an exhibition entitled Saggio della qualità italiana, (a taste of Italian quality) with items selected by Carlo Pagani (they included chairs by Cassina, Breda rifles and Richard Ginori ceramics). But it was L'estetica del prodotto (product aesthetics) - the 1953 exhibition curated and staged by Carlo Pagani with Bruno Munari and Paolo Rosselli - that was the decisive step towards the establishment of the exhibition-award dedicated to industrial design in 1954. For the occasion, la Rinascente also organized a conference on the role of mass distribution in the spread of standard products; involving architects and designers, it was a sign of attention to the cultural and entrepreneurial ferment in a cosmopolitan and modern Milan.

The year 1954 was very important for the city. Crucial events for design were all concentrated in that year: the X Triennale, with the Industrial Design exhibition; the First International Conference on Industrial Design held at the Leonardo da Vinci Museum of Science and Technology; under the direction of Alberto Rosselli, the birth of the magazine Stile e Industria, the first one in Italy to be dedicated entirely to industrial design. It was in this climate of active construction of a contemporary culture of design that in 1954 la Rinascente established the Compasso d'Oro award. Based on an idea put forward by Gio Ponti and Alberto Rosselli and strongly supported by Aldo Borletti and Cesare Brustio (the latter on the jury with Ponti, Rosselli, Aldo Bassetti and Marco Zanuso at the first edition), the award was for the best results of industrial production.

The name of the award was coined by Albe Steiner and was



based on one of the working tools he used himself, whereas Rosselli and Marco Zanuso were given the task of designing the real compass for the award. The exhibition of products was held at the Press Club in Palazzo Serbelloni, Corso Venezia, and at the X Triennale of the same year an exhibition of the winners (from the Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter by Marcello Nizzoli to the Zizi foam rubber toys by Bruno Munari for Pirelli) was staged by Carlo Pagani and Giancarlo Ortelli. la Rinascente had strong relationships and cultural exchanges with the Triennale di Milano, where it presented some products in the Mostra dello "standard" (standard exhibition) section with the aim of raising customer awareness about standard products.

During the second edition of the Compasso d'Oro Award in 1955, a national and international Grand Prix was also set up, the former was awarded to Adriano Olivetti and the latter to designer Marcel Breuer. Rinascente dedicated a monograph to both of them (Breuer's was published in 1957 by Giulio Carlo Argan), thereby inaugurating a small series of books dedicated to the winners of the special awards.

The second edition of the Compasso d'Oro was a huge success: 1,300 objects were entered and, on the wave of the happy outcome of the initiative, an exhibition of the previous year's first edition of the Compasso d'Oro was held at the Fiera Campionaria.

The programming of a number of exhibitions (the "major events" that continued until 1964) began in 1955. They were dedicated to the customs and crafts of various countries all over the world, starting with Spain; in the same year, the Design Centre was opened (in the Marketing and Development office headed by Augusto Morello) and until the Seventies it hosted the biggest names in Italian and international design.

At the third edition of the award (the exhibition was again held in Palazzo Serbelloni), the national and international Grand Prix went to Gio Ponti, a long-time collaborator and consultant of la Rinascente, and MoMA of New York, respectively.

In 1957, the fourth edition of the award was held at the XI Triennale with an exhibition staged by Bruno Munari and Giancarlo Ortelli and was also the last to be managed directly by la Rinascente.

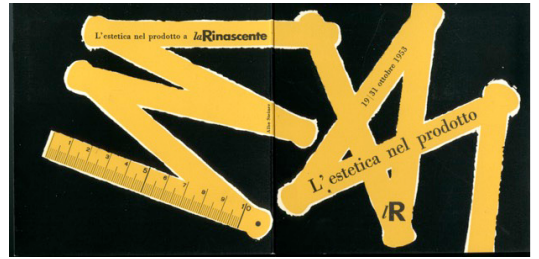
In 1958 the only national and international Grand Prix went to Franco Albini (designer of the department store's headquarters in Rome that were built between 1957 and 1961) and the Den Permanente department store in Copenhagen, respectively. It was followed in 1959 by the handover from la Rinascente to ADI, the Association for the Industrial Design set up in 1956, during a ceremony at the Museum of Science and Technology.

The relationship between la Rinascente and ADI continued for six more years, after which the organization of the award passed definitively to the Association for the Industrial Design, which still manages it to this day.





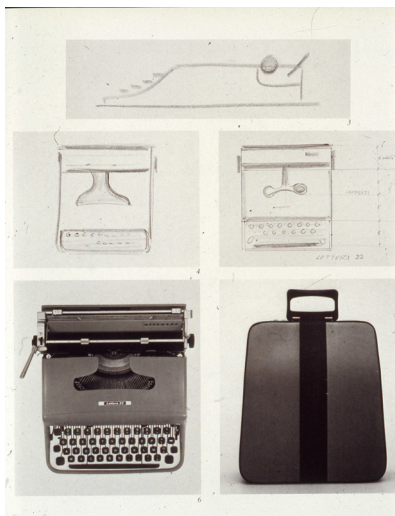
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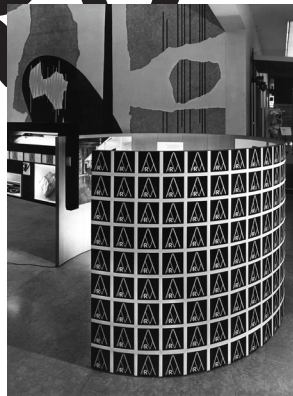
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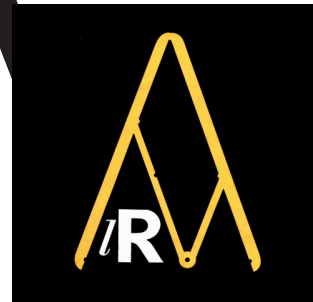
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Arredamenti di Franco Albini e Ezio Sgrelli, prodotti da Rinascente e Upim, nella sezione *Arredamenti composti della mostra Arredamento e mobili isolati*. IX Triennale, 1951. Milano, Fondazione La Triennale di Milano, Biblioteca del progetto e Archivio Storico.

02
Albe Steiner, pieghevole per la mostra *L'estetica nel prodotto*, 1953. Milano, Archivio Albe e Lica Steiner, ASBA - Archivi Storici, Politecnico di Milano.

03
Albe Steiner, pieghevole per la mostra *L'estetica nel prodotto*, 1953. Milano, Archivio Albe e Lica Steiner, ASBA - Archivi Storici, Politecnico di Milano.

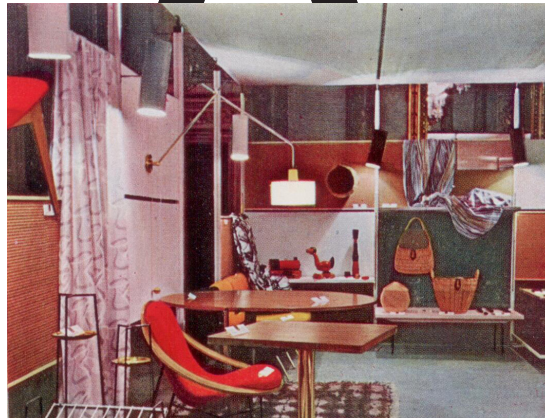
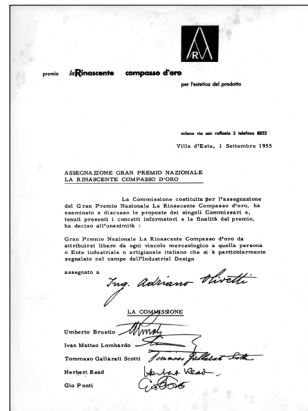
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Carlo Pagani, Giancarlo Ortelli, mostra del primo Compasso d'Oro alla X Triennale. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

05
Albe Steiner, copertina del catalogo relativo al premio, 1954. Milano, Archivio Albe e Lica Steiner, ASBA - Archivi Storici, Politecnico di Milano.

06
Lettera 22, Olivetti nel catalogo del primo Compasso d'Oro, grafica di Albe Steiner. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.



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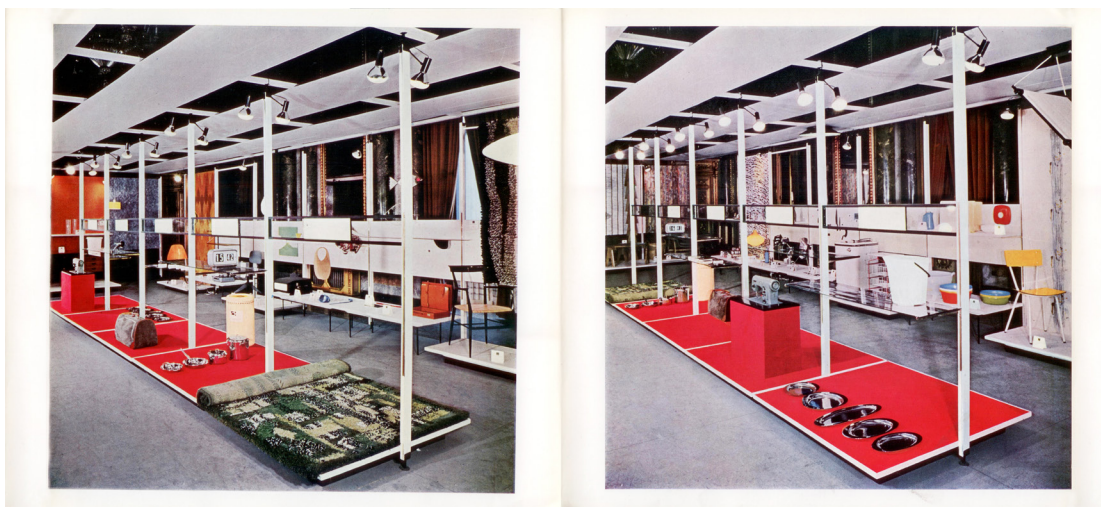
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Adriano Olivetti riceve il primo Gran Premio Nazionale nel 1955. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

02
Allestimento del II Compasso d'Oro presso il Circolo della Stampa, Palazzo Serbelloni a Milano, 1955. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

03
Allestimento del II Compasso d'Oro presso il Circolo della Stampa, Palazzo Serbelloni a Milano, 1955. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

04
Max Huber e Amneris Latis, manifesto per la Moda Estate 1954. Foto Gerard. Milano, Archivio Rinascente.

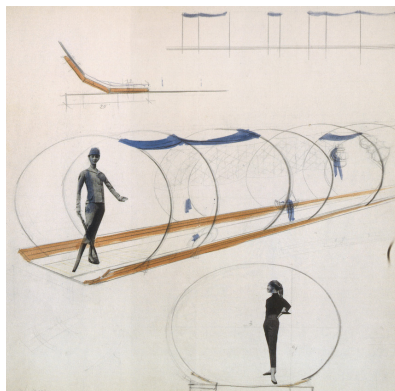
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Dettaglio dell'allestimento del III Compasso d'Oro presso il Circolo della Stampa, Palazzo Serbelloni a Milano, 1956. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.



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Allestimento del III Compasso d' Oro presso il Circolo della Stampa, Palazzo Serbelloni a Milano, 1956. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

02
Lora Lamm, manifesto per la Moda Estate 1960. Milano, Archivio Rinascente.

03
Roberto Sambonet, bozzetti per allestimento, 1955. Milano, Archivio Italo Lupi.



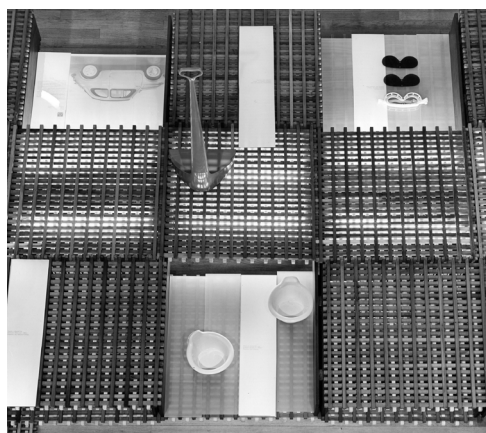
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Allestimento del III Compasso d'Oro presso il Circolo della Stampa, Palazzo Serbelloni a Milano, 1956. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

02

Bruno Munari e Giancarlo Piretti, allestimento della IV edizione all'XI Triennale, 1957. Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

03

Mostra del Compasso d'Oro alla fiera mondiale di New York, allestimento Franco Albini, 1957. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.

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Architetti Monti G.P.A., dettaglio dell'allestimento del V Compasso d'Oro alla Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Milano, 1959. Milano, Fondazione ADI Collezione Compasso d'Oro.