

National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Design

Department of Industrial Design

**LIGHTING DESIGN BY MICHELE DE LUCCHI:
IMAGINATION, INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE**

BY



KARL MEDCALF

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and
Design and Complementary Studies

In candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of
Design in Industrial Design

1999



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANKS TO:

My tutor,
Dr. Paul Caffrey,
for his advice and support.

The staff of the NCAD library,
for their help and assistance.

Table of Contents	Page
List of Illustrations	iv
Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1	
1970s: Reflection to revival, the formative years;	
Florence and Gruppo Cavart	5
Alchimia	6
“Spaziale”	9
“Sinvola”	10
“Sinerpica”	11
CHAPTER 2	
1980s: Looking forward to going back;	
Memphis	14
“Oceanic”	17
Machine as Poet	19
“Tender”	21
“Meccanica”	22
“Tolomeo”	24
CHAPTER 3	
1990s: New directions in lighting design;	
Produzione Privata	27
“Macchine Minima n.7”	30
“Telemaco”	33
“Minimal lamps”	38
Responsible Design	43
“Treforchette”	45
Conclusion	51
Bibliography	53

List of illustrations

Fig.		Page
1	"Spaziale" lamps, Michele De Lucchi, 1978, Alchimia.	1
2	"Sinvola" table lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1978, Alchimia.	1
3	"Sinerpica" table lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1978, Alchimia.	1
4	"Oceanic" table lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1981, Memphis.	1
5	"Tahiti" table/desk lamp, Ettore Sottsass Jnr., 1981, Memphis.	1
6	"Tender" desk lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1984, Bieffeplast.	1
7	"Meccanica" lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1985, Belux.	1
8	"Tolomeo" lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1986, Artemide.	1
9	"Tolomeo" base plate, Michele De Lucchi, 1998, Artemide.	1
10	"Macchina Minima n.7" ceiling lamp, Michele De Lucchi, 1991, Produzione Privata.	1
11	"Metamorfosi" 12 preset colour 'Atmospheres', 1997, Artemide.	1
12		1
13.	"Telemaco" lamp, 1997, Artemide.	
14	"Minimal lamps", Michele De Lucchi, 1997, Artemide.	1
15	"Minimal lamps", Michele De Lucchi, 1997, Artemide.	1
16	"Buckminster lamps", Oz Design, 1998.	1
17	"Treforchette" table lamp, Produzione Privata, 1997.	1
18		1
19		1
20		1
21		1
22		1
23		1
24		1

Introduction

The design of lighting has always seemed to be the *métier* of the Italian designer, many lamps which have had the 'classic' label bestowed upon them are of Italian heritage.

Michele De Lucchi, an Italian Architect/ Designer from Padua , has seen his profile increase consistently since he began designing lights in 1978, he has been and still is at the epicentre of Italian design theory and practice and it has been deemed necessary to look at just how he has remained so consistently successful over the years.

The aim of this study is to detail Michele De Lucchi's work within the field of lighting, examining key factors in the development of his visual language, the culture that supported and still supports his work and the social changes which have influenced his designs since he began designing lamps in 1978.

"Light does not simply illuminate, it tells a story. Light gives meanings, draws metaphors and fashions a stage for the comedy of life."(Börnsen-Holtmann, 1994, p.99)
Ettore Sottsass's sentiments reflect the importance placed on lighting design in Italy, Italian lamps have enjoyed a long period of success, selling all over the world .

Michele de Lucchi, like Ettore Sottsass has managed to work within mainstream and avant- garde design circles with great success.

In 1990 he drew this analogy between design and chemistry, saying,

There are two types of designer, just as there are two types of chemist: the research chemist, dealing with abstract concepts; and the pharmacist who makes medicines for sale. Neither can exist in isolation. I move from one to the other, while I prefer the first it is important to know both, because it is not easy to do pure research and it is very important for the designer to love industry. The designer who does not love industry is not a designer. It is very important to do research, to be crazy, but also to be always conscious that what you are doing has to pass through industry and has to be used by people. (*Design*, no.493,p43)

It has been this flexibility which has enabled De Lucchi to experiment in the designing of a huge range of different products succeed, fail, experience, learn from two different but inter-related and dependant facets of the designers role.

This thesis will centre around the work of Michele De Lucchi in the field of his lighting from his first lamps produced for Alchimia in 1978 to a range of Prototypes for lamps designed for Artemide in 1998.

Therefore this study aims to specifically deal with the work of De Lucchi, while at the same time look beyond the man himself in order to view the wider points of reference which have to greater or lesser extent influenced his thinking and objective.

In 1998, I spent studying in the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy. This period opened my mind to the rich visual language Italian design speaks, my time was spent listening to students and tutors debate for hours about aspects of Italian design in terms of it's, past, present and future. While there it was impossible not to think about the broader contexts of Design and one got the feeling design was an integral part of this cities life. The Milanese showrooms invited the opportunity to view the finest of Italian post-war design, the sheer diversity and ingenuity found in lighting design was especially captivating.

Michele De Lucchi has a certain something which enables him to create a lamp guaranteed to be provocative, not in a negative way, however, rather a friendly 'look what is possible' way,

While studying in the Faculty of Architecture and Industrial design, offered a real opportunity to understand the manner in which Architecture and Design is taught in Italy, the focus is very much on the

My interest in Michele De Lucchi work was sparked after visiting the numerous lighting showrooms which exhibit his work.

The Artemide showroom, was of particular importance, De Lucchi has designed very successful lamps for this company, all of which were on display.

CHAPTER 1.....

1970s : Reflection to revival, the formative years;

Florence and Gruppo Cavart

The 1970s represented one of the most prolific periods in the history of Italian design, despite or perhaps because of the intense political debates which raged throughout this decade.

During this period the design profession formed two camps, the first comprised of those considered conformist and on the other side the socially critical radicals.

Young architects and designers like De Lucchi grew up in an atmosphere which saw many in the profession look to take on a social responsibility, they did not simply want to become enslaved to industry.

De Lucchi trained as an architect at the University of Florence (1969-1975) at the height of experimentation by the Radical Design movement, which had held many architectural students in its sway since the mid-Sixties. Studios such as Superstudio, Archizoom, Gruppo Strum and UFO had set out to challenge the architectural status quo, through a series of experimental projects they questioned the socio-cultural foundations of modern architecture and city planning.

Serious-minded but often humourous in approach, Radical design sought to explore new paths, taking in the exhilarating atmosphere of the new 'pop culture'.

Under the guidance of Adolfo Natalini, a founder member of the aforementioned 1960s radical design group Superstudio, De Lucchi felt drawn to architectural debate and project work which moved outside the mainstream.

In Padua in 1973 he formed Gruppo Cavart, his own Radical group, composed of students from his faculty, they organised performance events, workshops and lively debates on architecture and design.

Cavart held a series of novel events, making a name for itself and De Lucchi within the Radical design circles of the early seventies.

In 1976 De Lucchi set up his own studio, *Architetture e Altri Piaceri*, (Architecture and other pleasures)

Alchimia

De Lucchi acquired a variety of experience soon after his arrival in Milan, he worked first for the furniture firm Centrokappa, then Sottsass's studio and finally with Olivetti, with who, like Sottsass himself has enjoyed a long and productive career.

The first lamps De Lucchi designed were created under the auspices of Studio Alchimia, founded in Milan in 1976 by Alessandro and Adriana Guerriero.

The were exhibited in Alchimia's first exhibition of objects ironically entitled Bau-haus I.

The aim of Alchimia was to make material the non- existent object, doing things that others may feel impossible, read (improbable)

The studio's diverse activities included exhibitions, seminars, objects, books, clothing, videos, experimental theatre sets, happenings, decoration and architectural projects.

The use of decoration, frowned upon by the prevailing Modernist ethos since the end of World War II, was re-used by Alchimia for ideological ends.

It took on a new found symbolism, in that it represented the desire of the Radicals to provoke and subvert the meaning of objects,

The members of Alchimia set about reviving images and tracing formulas, they set about reviving styles and modules which were in their own right were justified, but which gained little distinction in their own time due mainly to the overpowering presence of the Modern Movement. This train of thought was largely coloured by the studio's most out-spoken and cynical member, Allesandro Mendini, Mendini cited the figuration of the time in which Alcimia existed as "pop."

The dominant international design movement of the 1970s and 1980s was coined as "Postmodernism", in general terms it describes any style which runs counter to "Modernist", ideologies, in particular the modernist tenet, "form follows function". Postmodernist design and architecture orientated itself around 'symbolism' rather than 'substance'.

The term had been used in Architectural theory since the 1970s, but Charles Jencks, in his book "The language of Post-modern Architecture" brought it into the wider public sphere for the first time.

The roots of Postmodernism came about in the 1960s, when the first seeds of doubt began to germinate in the people's minds, and the continuing viability of Modernism was called into question. The values associated with the youth-oriented Pop revolution- fun, expendability and individualism, these priorities further highlighted the need to move on from the high-minded, high cultural ideals of the early part of the century.

In 1966 the American architect Robert Venturi's seminal text "*Complexity and contradiction in architecture*", pointed out the inadequacies of Modernism in the new multi-faceted culture which had begun to emerge in that decade. Debates raged in the 70s and 80s as to whether Post-modernism was an evolution of or a reaction against Modernism.

Bel-Design, or Good- Design, emerged in Italy and the rest of Northern Europe after World War II. Advocators of Bel- Design based their concept on that of the Functionalists.

The Functionalists insisted the existence of a product wholly depended on whether it carried out a particular function, rejecting popular taste and ornamentation.

Designers, feeling exploited by manufacturers and limited in their creativity revolted against the 'establishment'. The Anti-Design movement came into being.

The 60s and 70s saw the establishment of many such groups, their uniting aim was that of the designer becoming mediator between Italian culture and industry.

The designers aimed through the provocative use of ornament and the iconography of low-design, or bad-taste to fire a direct hit at the prevailing design rhetoric, consumerism, society in general and social hierarchies.

Pop-Art became the main inspiration, painters like Andy Warhol became influential figures.

1977, De Lucchi helped the designer Andrea Branzi organise an exhibition of 1950s Italian design, entitled "Design Italiano negli anni '50." The exposure

De Lucchi experienced to design from the 'Golden period' of Italian design, can be seen in his first lamp designs.

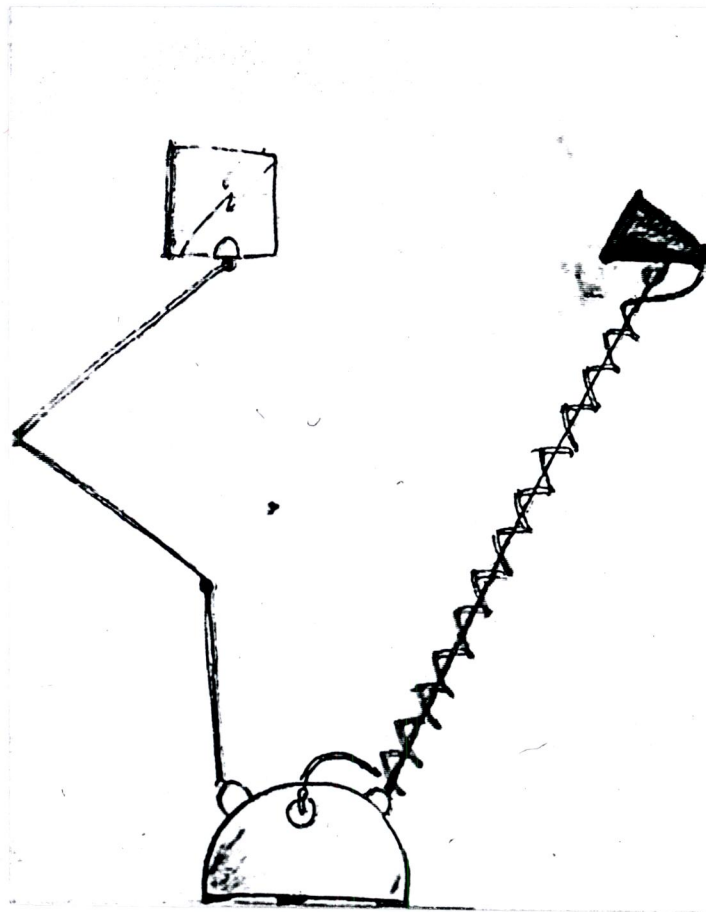
Clearly influenced by the research he conducted in compiling the exhibition, these lamps attest to De Lucchi's first attempt to apply ideas which he had touched upon in earlier architectural endeavours on the stage of industrial design and to combine them with a search for a pictorial language suited to the expression of ideas which preoccupied him.

It was these themes which helped describe and form the essence of a vernacular still in its infancy but already drawing on a number of themes, namely; ideas from the projects he undertook in which nomadic architecture formed the focus, expressed now through the use of bright, somewhat garish colours, similar to those found in the realm of the 'toy', a use of form carrying anthropomorphic undertones and stylistic references to the Fifties, pointing to a distinct interest in the value of the modest and banal objects of popular culture, which are devised to solely portray a function, avoiding the employment of any other form of pictorial language. His use of Italian iconography from the Fifties can be understood as symbolic of his emerging predilection with the period in recent history within which there existed a democracy in design, an era free from the stifling presence of elitism, which permeated the objects of later periods.

“Spaziale”

The lamp, “Spaziale” exhibits a fanciful linearity akin to a child’s construction game, it is angular and disjointed made up a number of different parts.

The lamp recalls associations with creatures from outer space, robots and UFOs, it is hardly the last word in elegant design, with the cable wrapping itself nichalently around the stem of the lamp, there is a distinct lack of formal unity. De Lucchi seems to have wanted to completely obliterate any trace of an existing aesthetic standard, as if to sat, ‘I’m beginning from scratch’, much in the manner of a child.

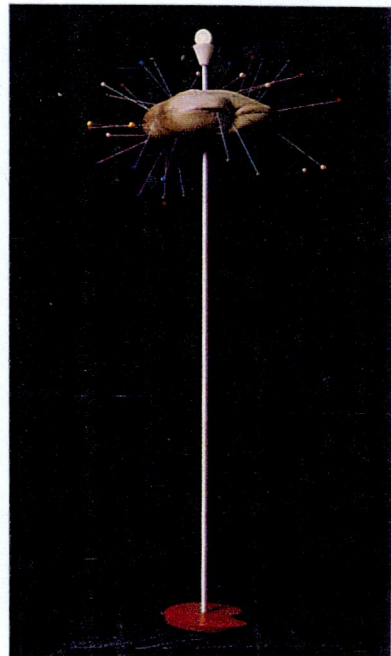


**“Spaciale” lamp
Alchimia, 1978.**

“Sinvola”

The “Sinvola” lamp made in ceiling, floor-standing and table variations, shows the influence of the fifties exhibition De Lucchi helped to organise.

The 50s influence is clearly apparent, from the use of the ‘kidney’ shaped base, a popular and frequently used form in fifties furniture, the organic form of the ‘pin cushion’ below the bulb, complete with spherical pin-heads, likeable to atomic particle models which inspired many fifties designs from clocks to hat-stands.



**“Sinvola” lamp
Alchimia 1978.**

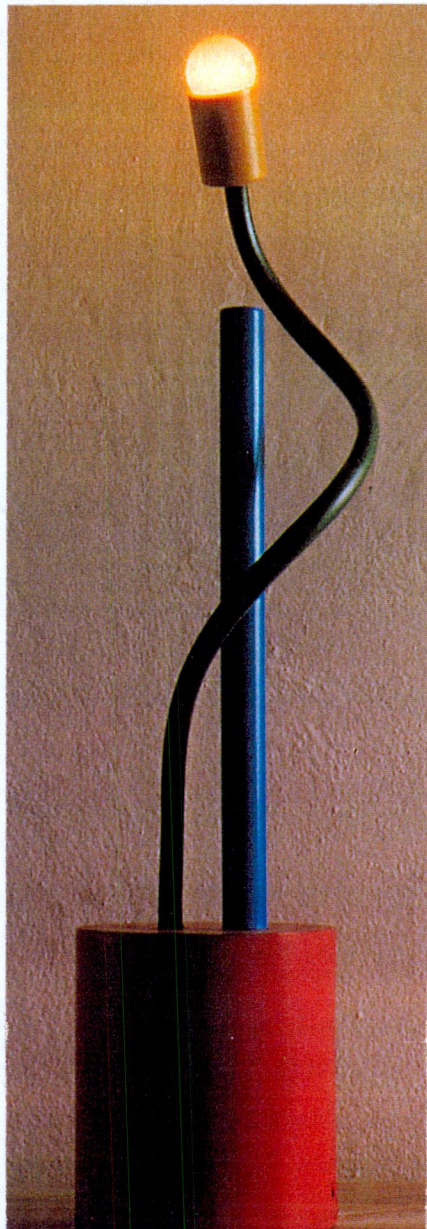
“Sinerpica”

“Sinerpica” the final lamp making up the trio De Lucchi designed for Alchimia, is the first design that saw De Lucchi use four colours which would become synonymous with him during this period, blue, green, yellow and pastel pink.

The use of pastel shades, until this time were unheard of within furniture design, however during the 80s they would prove immensely popular, regrettably they would become over-used.

“Sinerpica” uses the basic metaphor of a plant growing in a pot, the ‘flower’, a bare yellow light bulb seems to signify light’s central importance to the growth of life.

In “Sinerpica” De Lucchi appears to have used a technique taken from mass culture, a technique traditionally described as kitsch, in that the outer appearance of the object does not correspond with the objects function, i.e. a lamp that looks like a pot plant.



**“Sinerpica” lamp
Alchimia, 1978.**

CHAPTER 2.....

1980s: Looking forward to going back;

Memphis

Memphis originated from the same type of mentality as Alchimia, both having the same roots in radical Italian design, namely, a rekindled desire for experimentation, shifting boundaries, and generally re-opening the design debate. However Memphis differed in some important respects, firstly Memphis was very much a commercially oriented exercise, Alchimia was less well organised in that respect, it preferred instead to produce more in the way of conceptual art, debating in philosophical manner. By way of environments and one of pieces, Alchimia attempted to go beyond the object, attempting to question the fundamental relationship between man and his environment.

Despite their differences in strategy and concepts, both Alchimia and Memphis were looking to explore new trails in design. Based upon the fact there could never be one methodology and that reason cannot solve all problems, these groups aimed to broaden the boundaries which existed in design at that time. The loss of cultural pluriformity and the unsubstantiated belief in welfare for all meant the proponents of 'nuovo design' turned away from the Modern Movement and Bel design.

The quest for the absolute gave way to relativistic attitudes. Refusing to believe in certainty, accepting instead uncertainty.

Fearing Alchimia was becoming bogged down in dogma, Sottsass and De Lucchi ended their association, the pair, along with other Italian and non-national designers were looking to create through a channel. A channel that offered the chance for more discourse with and more leeway for the user. What they seemed to have in mind from the out-set was a sense of playfulness and personal responsibility for the consumer.

The Milan based group, Memphis, created in 1981 by Sottsass with the backing of the industrialist, designer, and president of the lighting manufacturer Artemide, Ernesto Gismondi, would help to affirm De Lucchi as a designer of International repute, he spent seven years designing for the group's exhibitions, and his designs proved to be amongst the most striking and the most instantly recognisable as 'Memphis' creations over these years.

The name 'Memphis', said to have been inspired by an evening of discussion during which the Bob Dylan song; "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again," it is hard to believe total whimsy effected its selection and one must feel it was more programmatic evoking as it does both Memphis, Tennessee, and Memphis, the ancient Egyptian city.

Memphis proposed a style based on a provocative figurative language tending to give priority to the spectacular element, or the image over functionality. The output characterised by cheap materials, loud colours and surface decoration, renunciation of industrial production (since this would have anyway been impossible) and shocking prices (Albera & Monti, 1989, p.38)

In short Memphis attempted to create a new dialogue between object and user-taking this one step further Memphis was aiming to create a new domestic culture.

Plastic laminate: The trump material in the Memphis hands, the group used this material normally associated with the lower classes, a symbol of run-down suburbia, from ice-cream parlour and café to bathroom cabinet and kitchen table, the value of this material, through its use in sitting room furniture was turned on its head, a new importance was attained, irreverence for accepted values, material status in this case led Memphis designers to nonchalantly place marble and other established 'high-class' materials like hardwoods alongside garishly coloured laminates.

The free and easy, anarchic and unrestrained use of materials perceived as wholly incompatible, materials, colours, forms, and textures was a deliberate attempt to wreak havoc on the accepted hierarchy of materials.

Decoration: De Lucchi commented in 1981,

"Today the tendency is to see the design not so much as a unit but as a sum of parts. We have almost come to study the cells that make up objects more than the objects themselves. Materials and decoration are cells of objects, and they are part of the process".(Radice, 1985, p.87)

With this shift in thinking and values, the question was how subverted the epistemology of design would become. The questions asked no longer revolved around

formal innovation, design the hypothesis, possible solution as opposed to definite solution.

The decoration used in Memphis pieces exhibited a number of influences, from the repetitiveness of Op-art to the

Colour

Memphis took out the paint-box dusted it off, put on the overalls and went mad. Memphis treated colour as intrinsic element, rather than a last-minute addition, working as a mass, specific colours related to specific form or volume.

Flat and literal, suggesting nothing, showing everything, garish, childish and humorous.

Memphis basically represented as other movements through history have done, a reaction against the conditioning effect of a dominant force, in this case “good design”.

Prior to Memphis, little use had been made of colour in furniture, with a few exceptions from the 1960s.

The idea of colour in Memphis was that it need not be added at the last minute , but rather as with decoration it is born within the design, forming an integral part of the structure, De Lucchi said of colour in Memphis;

“there are no dominant colours or background colours” (Radice, 1985,p121)

As with much of what Memphis was about, colour was used in a fresh and new way, aiming to shake off the conditioned routine, recovering a lost energy which had been sucked out of design.

Memphis looked at new possibilities, whether in hindsight they were right or wrong is not really relevant.

“Oceanic”

This lamp designed by De Lucchi, and presented as part of the 1981 Memphis collection, physically embodies many of the ideas already discussed, to which the group adhered to during this period.

Aptly named “Oceanic”, this metal table lamp echoes the form of a mythical sea-serpent, it consists of three angled metal tubes that rise out of a rectangular base block.

The bulb housing is another rectangular element which protrudes from the longest tube.

In fact each metal tube acts as a supporting structure, one for the electrical cable, one for the power switch and one for the lamp housing.

The use of flat colour on the surfaces of the base and lamp housing, acts as a backdrop for the strongly linear, black and white design on the surface of the three cylindrical tubes.

The relationship between forms and colours in Memphis designs is complex, reflecting the wide range of references, all of which are deeply rooted in mass culture, suburban coffee shops, advertising, Op-art, comic strips, computer graphics, toys, etc.

“Oceanic” exhibits a strong sculptural power, present in many Memphis designs, which make use of totemistic forms

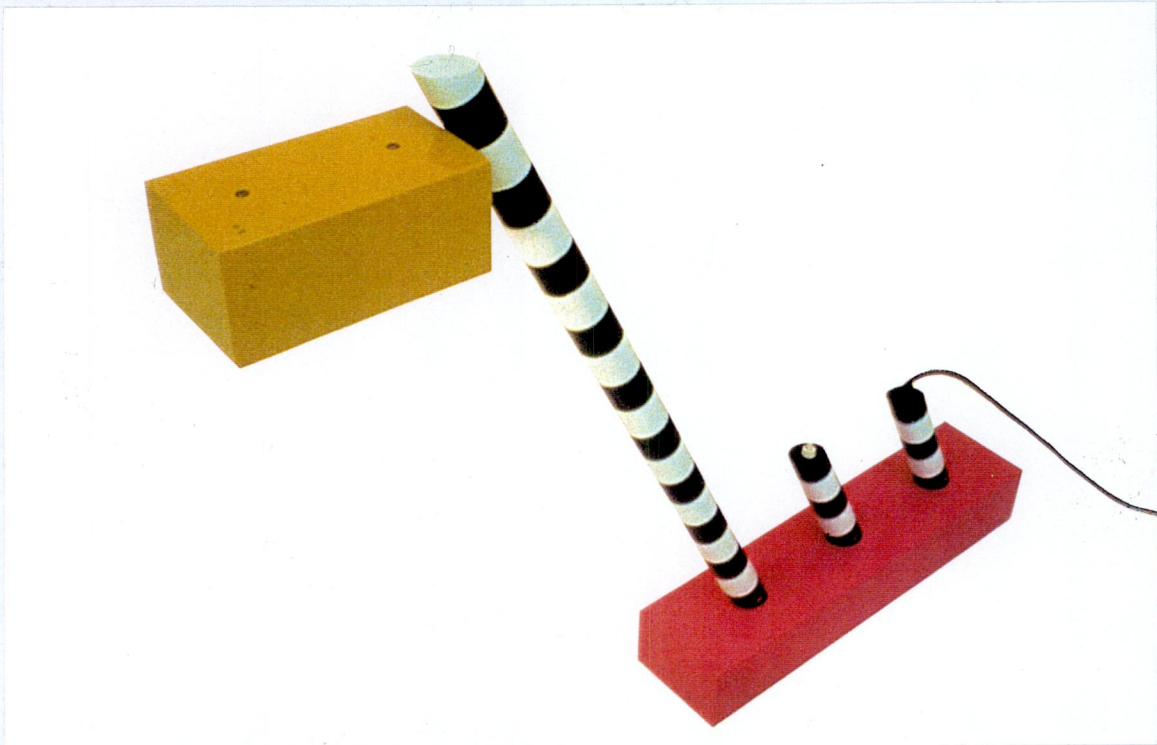
On a trip to London, De Lucchi is said to have found the face paint worn by the ‘Punks’ there inspiring.

The “Oceanic” lamp has a “Lego” look about it, each modular component looks like it could be used in a number of different ways.

“If something is designed by Memphis it is not only meant to provide light or a place to rest or to support something. One also attempts to visualise something and to design it formally in such a way that design becomes an expressive semiotic system whose contents are partially cultural”, Designer Andrea Branzi describing the movement’s image of itself. (Börnsen-Holtmann, 1994, p.112.)

There is a pervading feeling of imbalance present in this light, this aims to emphasise the lamps strange equilibrium, the resulting form is somewhat freakish.

It is as if the lamp was undergoing a state of flux and suddenly it froze in one position, as if trembling one moment before it was conceived, it is now crystallised, conveying a sensation of nervousness.



**Fig.7 “Oceanic”, table lamp
Memphis, 1981.**

After the success of Memphis, De Lucchi found his client list expanding rapidly, to include among others, lighting companies such as Artemide and Fontana Arte.

The exuberance and liberated Eclecticism of an overtly decorated decade had to eventually begin to wind down, pluralism was becoming less and less rich and resonant and more and more weak and fragmented.

The way in which De Lucchi moved on from Memphis, was more in keeping with professional practice, in that that his lamp designs strive to put functionality first, allowing the form to grow from the methods employed to address the functional requirements.

De Lucchi was among a group of younger designers who realised design was gradually drifting away from its responsibilities, neglecting in many ways the problems of technology and manufacturing.

A more pragmatic approach to these problems was necessary, De Lucchi while continuing to design for Memphis, realised early on his career, namely with his appointment to work for Olivetti in 1979, the importance of designing, unconditioned by any ideological manifesto.

Machine as Poet

As the 1980s progressed, De Lucchi continued designing pieces for Memphis, including the “First” chair. This chair would become one of the best selling pieces of Memphis furniture.

His role as consultant designer at Olivetti continued, as did projects for his growing list of clientele from Italy, Germany and Japan.

In 1984, a more mature De Lucchi, five years after his first lamp designs for Alchimia, began investigating a new visual language.

He was looking for a avenue that would lead from Memphis in a new, different and no less important manner to something new.

The design world had duly sat up and noticed Memphis, the point had been made. It was no longer necessary to shout about what he was doing. No longer necessary to continually fight conventional taste and design ideas, the time was right for him to display his ability to design ‘serious’ products within Industry, collaborating with the expertise within the Italian manufacturing Industry in order to create and produce well-made, useful and refined objects, which would show more regard to the user by way of their functionality, while retaining an element of charm. A more intimate approach was called for, less ostentatious, more refined.

Since time immemorial man has harnessed the Laws of Physics regarding weights and levers, and the various manners in which the equilibrium of a closed system could be attained. From ancient irrigation systems and building cranes to watch mechanisms, mankind has devised an innumerable amount of devises capable of transmitting energy from one source to another.

These small devices such as pulleys, springs and cog systems, while largely anonymous, have never ceased to amaze and enthrall.

Complexity is not always synonymous with appeal however, the term ‘too busy’ is often used when we are met with an object or work of art which is attempting to do too much at one time, and losing site of the original goal in the process.

Simple lever and pulley systems, counter-balances and gear mechanisms have an irrepressible beauty and ethereal purity of line and form which can become lost as the level of complexity increases.

De Lucchi began to use these devices, their functional prowess instigating their use, quickly, though he began to appreciate the aesthetic inherent to these devices, The resulting lamps seem both familiar and new at the same time.

The field of lighting lends itself perfectly to these mechanisms, they enhance the lamps functional characteristics through flexibility coupled with precision.

The employment of tenuous mechanical systems has become a personal hallmark for De Lucchi and they can be found not only in his light designs but also in adjustable furniture projects.

The following lamps, “Tender”, “Meccanica” and “Tolomeo”, show how De Lucchi experimented with a range of alternative mechanisms to create the desired functionality of the lamps.

It is this innovative use of mechanisms which mark these lamps out from the plethora of others on the market that do not exhibit the same level of ingenuity.

“Tender”

This metal table lamp was designed in 1984 for the Italian company Bieffeplast. It consists of a cylindrical base (which houses the transformer required for the low-voltage halogen bulb used.) on top of which a central arm provides support the bulb and bulb housing which is also cylindrical in form. A smaller arm runs perpendicular to the larger one near the base, from the end of this bar two counter-springs angle to meet at a point close to the top of the central arm, these springs allow “Tender” to move freely, enabling its height to be adjusted.

Although his first and least refined attempt to harness the capabilities of spring mechanisms, “Tender” contained a new dynamism which his previous lamps did not possess.

At rest the lamps silhouette describes a symmetrical triangle, symmetry is replaced with asymmetry as the lamp housing descends towards the surface of the table, the triangular form becoming more pronounced and aggressively pointed with this movement. “Tender” is the first of the household objects and lamps which would become known as “Macchine Minima” (Minimal Machines).

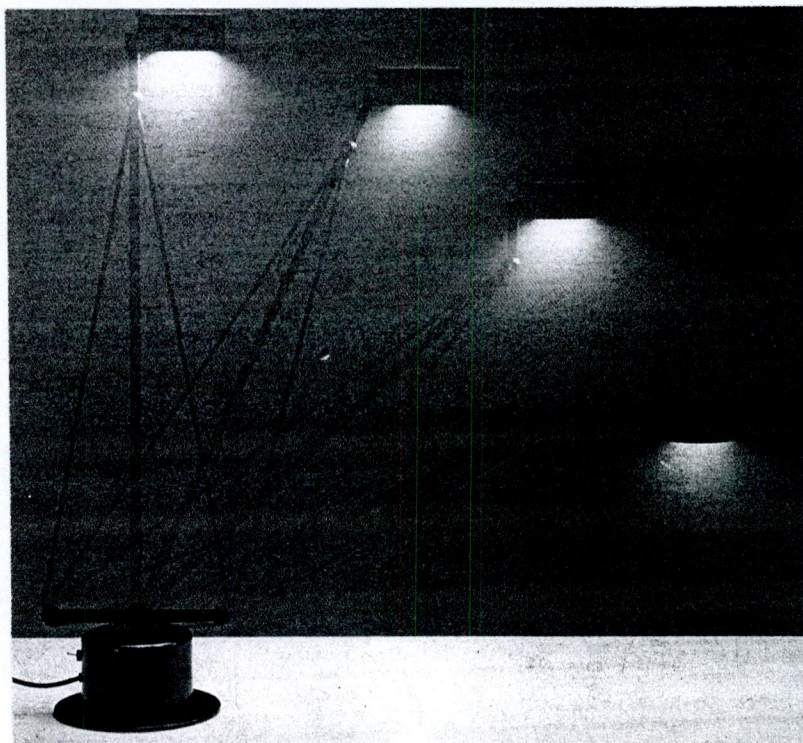


Fig.8 “Tender” lamp for Bieffeplast, 1984

“Meccanica”

Following on from the “Tender” lamp, 1985 saw De Lucchi design “Meccanica” for Belux, a Milan based lighting firm.

“Meccanica” an Aluminium table lamp, both unfinished and sprayed, this lamp's main formal and functional feature, the cog system, made up of two synchronised aluminium cogs, conjure images of old clothes mangers or duplicators.

The two cogs are bolted to two ‘sixty-thirty’ aluminium triangles, this triangle in its ruler form is used by Architects and Designers around the world to draw an isometric view of a building or product, the said ruler can be seen next to the lamp in the figure, along with other drawing apparatus, namely a compass and a circle template.

In fact the photograph, acts as a visual explanation of the design, the mechanisms and drawing implements which inspired the design being illuminated by the light cast from the lamp.

This lamp is very definitely a draftsman's lamp, it is as if De Lucchi looked up from a technical drawing to see a lamp which did not fully relate to or satisfy the needs of the task he was undertaking at his desk, immediately moving to a fresh page to draw up a lamp design, drawing circles with his compass and circle template, overlaying his 60°/30° set square and drawing around it to produce the base of the lamp.

One feels an analogy can be ‘drawn’ here with regard to colour and non-colour, the three finishes, and hence colours found on this lamp are; sprayed (black), natural finish (aluminium) and polished (chrome). The chrome base mirrors the triangular forms (formal elements) which are highly finished, whereas the cogs (functional element) are black, highlighting the fact that mechanisms such as cogs etc. are viewed as ‘ugly’ in comparison to the ‘beauty’ associated with their external casings. The perceived feeling is that De Lucchi is trying to highlight some of the problems associated with the design of lighting for a specific function, the cogs, or functional elements have been dramatically oversized, in order to highlight their functional as well as aesthetic ‘beauty’ thus enabling them overcome their usual place as passive partner to the belligerent nature of their formal stable-mate, in this case the range of forms used to create the other formal elements found within the design.

The advent of Computer Aided Design (CAD) has rendered manual drafting skills almost obsolete, however the simplicity of this design, conceived using a minimum amount of different geometric forms, have managed to preserve its integrity, in this respect it has not dated to the extent one may otherwise have expected, given the fact the task which inspired it no longer takes the form it did in 1985.

As will be discussed in detail in **Responsible Design** (p.43) De Lucchi, lets purely functional components found within society, in this case gearing cogs, take centre stage, whereas usually they would be covered up, De Lucchi highlights their value as an aesthetic element by incorporating them within an area traditionally renowned for its high formal excellence, the light fixture.

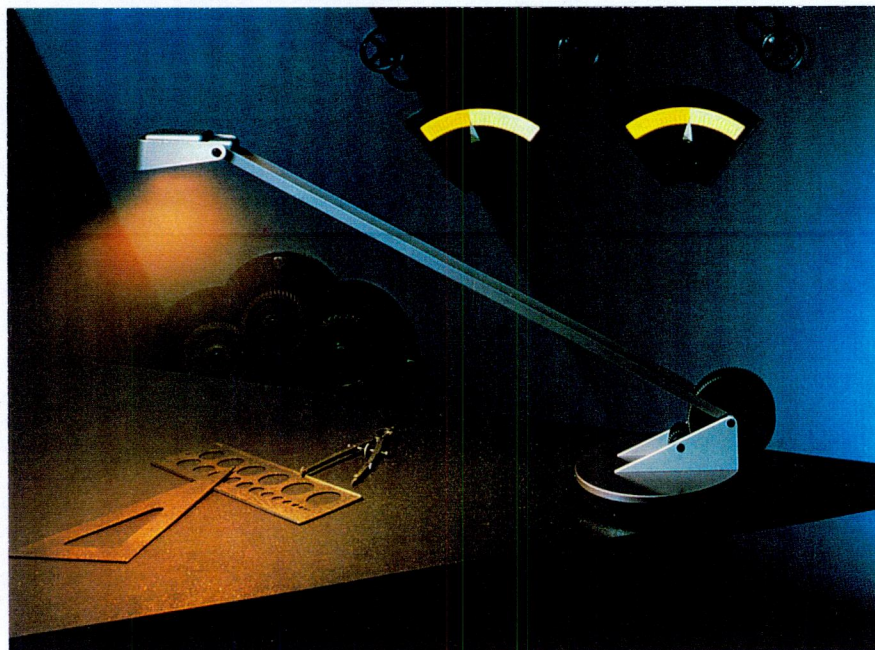
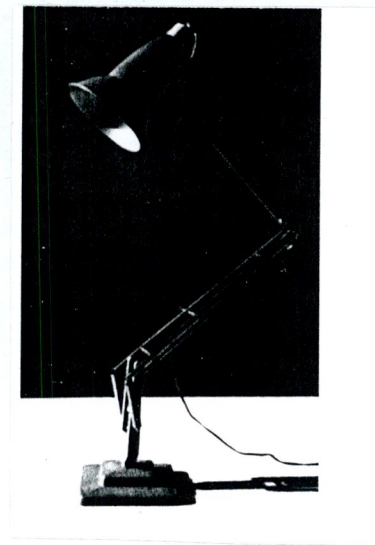


Fig.9“Meccanica” lamp, 1985, Belux.

“Tolomeo”

In 1934 the English designer George Cowardine working for the firm of Herbert Terry and Sons of Redditch, England, created a particular form of adjustable desk lamp which would become known as the ‘Anglepoise’. The movability of this lamps ‘arm’ is based on the same principle of leverage that is found in the human arm. In the latter half of the 1930s, the Norwegian Jacob Jacobson, purchased the patent rights of the Anglepoise for Scandinavia. He slightly modified and improved upon the original design, marketing the lamp under the name Luxo (1937), it was an instant success and it continued to sell into the 1960s.

**Fig. 10 George Cowardine (Eng.)
Angle-Poise lamp,
Herbert Terry & Sons.
Redditch. 1934.**



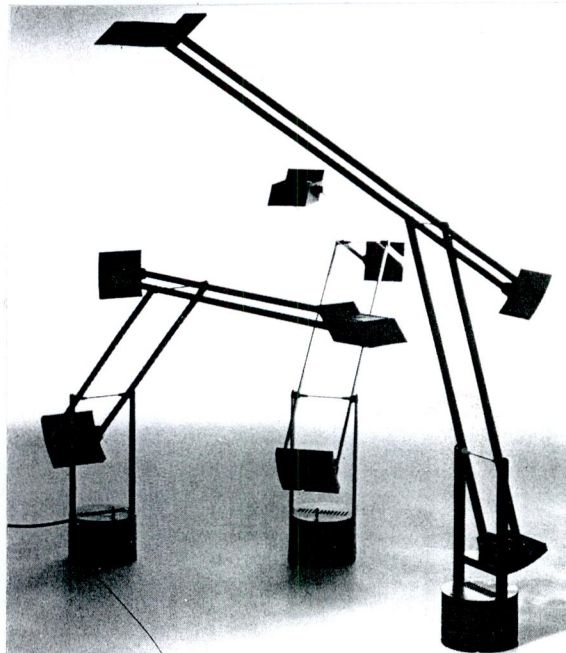
**Fig.11 Jacob Jacobson (Nor.)
“Luxo” Desk lamp
Luxo, 1937.**



The “Tizio” lamp, designed in 1972 by the German Richard Sapper for Artemide, using the double-balance-arm principle, strays from the accepted archetype.

The form is reminiscent of a building crane, the power supply for the halogen lamp is based through the body of the lamp at a low voltage doing away with the need for a cable. This lamp no doubt inspired De Lucchi to explore the possibilities available through the use of different counter balancing techniques.

The “Macchine Minima” lamp by De Lucchi, discussed in Chapter 3, shows a similar system being employed to create an adjustable ceiling lamp.



**Fig.12 “Tizio” table lamp
Richard Sapper (Ger.) 1972, Artemide.**

In 1986 Artemide launched a new desk lamp by De Lucchi, called “Tolomeo”. This aluminium ‘angle-poise’ lamp is the only one De Lucchi has undertaken which follows the classic archetype first produced in 1934.

The form still follows that of the original, however De Lucchi reference to the classic archetype shows improvements in many areas.

Through the use of thin steel cables instead of coiled springs ‘Tolomeo’, possesses a greater dynamism, the bulkier coiled springs having been replaced with strong, thin steel cables that ensure a cleaner and more modernised appearance.

The angle-poise, by its very nature, demands a remittance of extraneous detailing, De Lucchi therefore concentrated on resolving the functional requirements of this task lamp in such a manner as to create interest.

A sense of unity is achieved by the predominance of one material, namely Aluminium, and the minimal use of disparate components.

The angled ‘arms’ of the “Tolomeo” are both exactly the same, thus creating a strong visual continuity. They have been cleverly resolved to incorporate the electric cable within their cross-section.

The same style of repetition is used in the design of the castings which connect the bottom arm to the base and also the two arms to one another.

The use of Aluminium, chrome-plated copper and steel give ‘Tolomeo’ a ‘high-tech’ look, a style whose zenith of popularity coincided with the creation of “Tolomeo”. Aluminium, a material popular in the Aeronautics and Space industries, had up until this point remained on the ‘no-go’ list of materials for domestication. De Lucchi, however through the subtle use of different finishes, from the satinised reflector to the polished castings and natural finished arms brings out the intrinsic quality of this material as well as adding a sense of harmony to the design.

The Tolomeo lamp has remained a constant best-seller for Artemide since its inception in 1986, the 1998 company catalogue sees a new twin base unit being presented, allowing the use of two lamps side by side, this continuous presence acts as an affirmation of its quality. In 1997, Artemide celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of “Tizio” by releasing a limited edition “Silver Tizio”, 2011 should see a similar celebratory gesture befall “Tolomeo”.

Fig.13 “Tolomeo”, desk lamp, 1986, Artemide.

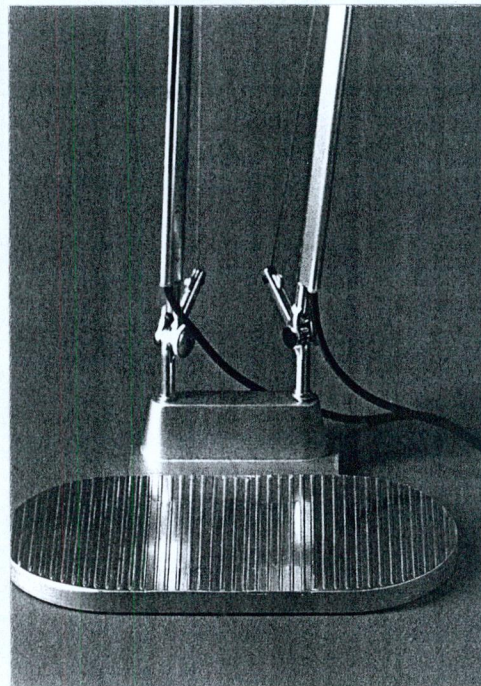


Fig. 14 “Tolomeo” Double base plate, 1998, Artemide.

CHAPTER 3.....

1990s: New Directions in lighting design;

Produzione Privata

Alongside his work with big industry, with whom it was necessary to develop increasingly sophisticated strategies for the many different kinds of design project that his studio undertook, De Lucchi felt the need to re-open an area for experimentation on his terms, this need to free himself from the highly specialised and restrictive nature of mass production, led in 1990 to the establishment of 'Produzione Privata' (Private Production), the formation of his own micro-company gave him the chance to work on a more personal, innovative level.

In a sense, Produzione Privata represents for De Lucchi a new atmosphere in which his personal predilections and artistic experiments can evolve uninterrupted and unrestrained by the time and market-led manufacturing constraints industry imposes.

He was looking to create objects of a serene nature, friendly and useful, capable of entering into a dialogue with their user and thus offer themselves as a means of communication, lamps with a precisely determined function became manifest, saying something about their designer and the time of their conception.

De Lucchi says; "The design culture must be nourished through a continual discussion, particularly through personal experiments, through exhibitions, through provocation." (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.47.)

With this in mind "Produzione Privata", exists, projects are free to undergo extended periods of gestation and reappraisal, liberated from the production and marketing strategies imposed by industrial logic.

I very much like the idea of design, although industrial, being created and developed outside industry. I consider it important to express and explain this idea many times, because it also partially accounts for the success of Italian design abroad. In Italy, design is in fact understood as something substantially more than a simple service rendered to industry. It is a cultural, humanist and artistic discipline, even if the declared objective is always to lend quality to industrial products.

This statement echoes a similar sentiment made by Ettore Sottsass during the development of Memphis: "With Memphis we are no longer at the service of industry, we have instead put industry into our service." (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.47)

Due to its profit oriented perspective, industrial logic does not tolerate error, therefore losses, this leads to the sterility we have all become accustomed and tolerant of, one alternative open to designers, in Italy especially, is therefore self-production, using resources obtained from their own pocket, giving them the scope to make the inevitable mistakes, De Lucchi and Italian designers in general are fortunate, in that, there exists within the country a proliferation of excellent craftspeople, who are well versed in the language of design, proof being the continuous ability for workshops to become small industrial companies.

It was within this realm of the workshop that a lot of the Memphis work was produced, De Lucchi has upheld this link by forming his own place of experimentation, using small firms who are capable of producing high quality goods in small quantities.

A great gulf seems to exist between the intimate practice of the 'design' of an object and the Philistine nature of product consumption and subsequent destruction.

In projects of a similar nature to De Lucchi's, the designer comes closer to being a craftsman, in that the method of production is a combination of 'creation' and 'realisation' at its most fundamental level.

"Produzione Privata", rekindles images of an Artists workshop during the Renaissance, however far from regressing back to the past to fulfil an artistic desire, De Lucchi has said; "I have come to feel closer to the real world of industry, for their problems have suddenly become mine." (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.53).

For much of the eighties Memphis represented the main influence in Italian and international design, its ideas permeated the design field and its legacy remains unquestionably important, like many things in life the cutting-edge Memphis represented, has changed considerably and if anything the cutting edge of nineties design lies at the other end of the spectrum from Memphis.

Memphis used provocative means, namely exciting, colourful, sharp design, sharp edges and strong colours, its importance lay in the fact it proved design's capabilities, amongst which were its power to provoke and communicate many different things, the design language used today while it still communicates- design will always communicate, it does not provoke in the same manner as Memphis- the provocative element lies dormant, silence reigns supreme, quietness and intimacy have become the

nineties buzzwords. If the eighties represented a playground for the extrovert, the nineties represents a secret garden for the introvert.

The global issues regarding war, disease, man-made, or at least man-helped natural disasters, and growing concerns regarding the environment have meant, provocation, through design or otherwise is not on the agenda.

Design is part and parcel of this chaos, as a discipline it now must play a mature role in the development of human society, offering perception and know-how, instead of contributing to the discomfiture and confusion.

As a new millennium approaches the call is for a design which comforts, breeding confidence and trust, a natural reaction against a world which many find difficult to understand.

As will be appreciated from this chapter, De Lucchi has attempted to tap into the present collective psyche, offering designs which impart a feeling of tranquillity and serenity. Lamps of 'lasting' or 'timeless' beauty, whereas the Memphis era saw 'beauty' per se take a back seat.

The introverted nature of this decade calls for a minimalist approach, we can see it all around us, bare floorboards with simple rugs made from sisal or wool, plain, unadorned walls, paper lamp-shades, wooden furniture, plain glass, rustic eating utensils.... another central theme is materiality- materiality brings with it a sense of reality, and a sense of safety, minimalism and materiality are directly related because minimalism brings out the richest side of a material.

Bearing this in mind, De Lucchi's lamp designs in the nineties employ more natural materials and colours, engendering a more balanced composition of shapes.

It is within this atmosphere De Lucchi's latest works have been conceived and created, their designs reflect the present pervading attitude, they are calm objects, they aim to please the senses, through their visual and tactile quality, at no point do they wish to overpower, they offer the desired refuge.

“Macchina Minima”

Macchine Minima n.7. (Minimal Machine no.7) a ceiling lamp designed in 1991, is an example of how capable De Lucchi's is in creating functional and refined lamps which still exhibit his inherent desire to continually play with form and volume.

The lamp consists of a translucent parchment shade attached via a chrome plated metal bar to a web of steel wires, the lamp remains in the desired position through the employment of a central counterweight. This lamp gives credence to De Lucchi's by now well established interest in using the functional and aesthetic qualities exhibited by small devices, that are capable of producing mechanical movement.

From a purely functional stand-point this lamp is extremely versatile, and in formal terms its construction is disarmingly simple, it follows the minimal ethos of reducing elements to the absolute essential requirement, it exhibits a very frugal use of material, and there is a complete lack of any extraneous detailing. Michele says of the range of household objects which includes clothes horses, candle-sticks and lamps,

The minimal machines, are machines because they work like small machines; they move,
they shift, they lift, they lower,
they solve problems and respond to needs
The minimal machines are minimal
because they consist of nothing more than
is necessary for good and sustained functioning,
because it is easier to recognise the quality of the forms
and of the materials in the minimal,
because the minimal refers to an idea in art,
because art is man. (Buck, Vogt 1993, p.43)

There is a strong linear directness present in this lamp describing an asymmetrical triangular volume. Iso Tutino Vercelloni speaks of Michele's possession of...

A certain desire to please, the true charm of a country lad who has never lost his joy of playing in order to create not only poetry but also objects which can claim to be very serious, practical, ready for use and even 'functional'. This is possibly the reason why the workings of his mechanical objects are never machine-like but simply brilliant (Buck, Vogt 1993, p.43).

The form used for the brass counterweight, likeable to that of a 'plumb line', and the use of a pulley system echoing the mechanism found in a 'Grandfather' clock, give the lamp, though it looks fragile, a sense of precision and unerring proficiency.

The feeling one gets from De Lucchi's designs for Produzione Privata is one of maturity, in some way, the less restrained atmosphere within which this lamp developed, has been transferred into the design, it has evolved in a manner removed from the pressures of corporate deadlines, outside the parameters which mass produced lamps

must abide, therefore it possesses a level of refinement rarely seen in fixtures which have to be designed under tight time frames.

“Macchine Minima” extols the virtues of the ‘simple’, one could say it is a lamp that is; simple but beautiful. A statement heard many times when discussing an object with an ‘essential’ look about it. And one realises this can cause complication. Looking at something simple it is easy to think you could do it yourself.

The ‘beautiful’ aspect of this lamp dictates the complexity as it were, that element which one could not imitate oneself, so the lamp is deemed beautiful even if it looks ‘simple’.

The simple is confused with the easy, mainly by people who cannot imagine all the work that goes into ‘simplifying’, in order to achieve essential forms.

In effect the ‘work’ De Lucchi has undertaken in creating this lamp is not obvious from the final result. His job revolved around ‘removal’ rather than ‘addition’.

Whereas adding is an easy task; putting in everything that comes into your mind, the consistent reduction of the variables involved is where the battle is won or lost, and in this aspect De Lucchi triumphs.

The simple and neat workings of this lamp make it dynamic and unrestrained, they breath life into it, as De Lucchi himself says; “Sometimes one extra little cog is enough to make something come to life” (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.43.)

Fig. 15 “Macchina Minima n.7” 1991, Produzione Privata.

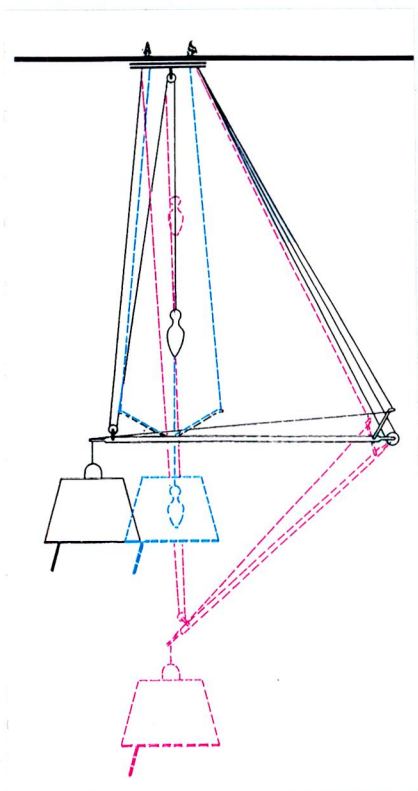
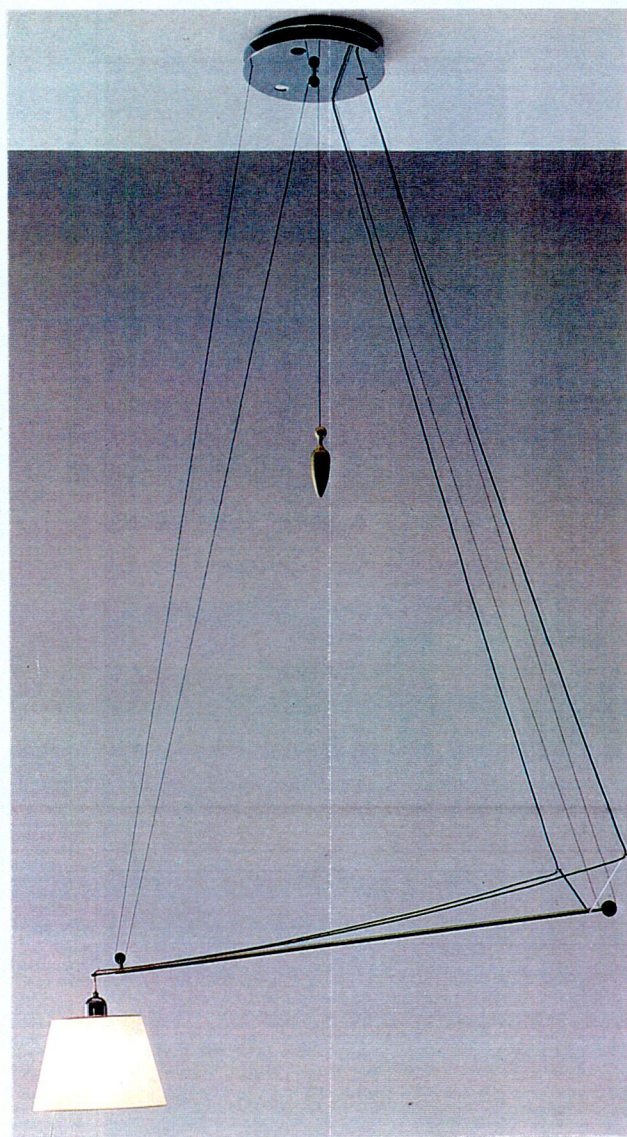


Fig. 16 Three possible positions for the lamp.

“Telemaco”

The laws of Physics have helped man better understand light and its effects on people, in its simplest terms natural light from the sun represents to us life itself, the energy from the sun, in heat and light form, nourishes our planet and sustains life on earth.

White light is a mixture of the luminous components found in the seven colours of the rainbow, one of nature's 'tricks' which continues to amaze young and old alike. Light is an indispensable element for man's psycho-physiological equilibrium.

Visual perception derives from electrical impulses that travel from the retina to the brain, where they are then elaborated in conjunction with other elements such as memory and imagination. Consequently, light can be considered as a subjective entity.(Artemide,1997 #2 p.15).

Colour alters and influences man's sensory perception, memory, behaviour and emotions. Man's intimate relationship with light and colour is reflected in the biological and social basis of our behaviour. Throughout life, we must make innumerable decisions regarding colour, whether it be through fashion, interior or product design. The colours which we tend to class our 'favourites', become specific to us, personal choices, which become inextricably linked to our persona. Colour can take on such a profound significance that it has been linked to our physical well-being.

The job of a designer mostly involves giving a new 'face' to an existing product, however as new discoveries are made with regard to technology, the designer is given the opportunity to design an object which makes this technology saleable, throughout the history of lighting, there have been a number of breakthroughs with regard to the efficiency, physical size and performance of the light source, the latest being a new means through which coloured light can be used within the home.

In 1997, Artemide commissioned nine designers to design a lamp which incorporated this new technology.

The name given to the range was 'Metamorfosi', (Metamorphosis), while each lamp within the range is also named, the slogan which accompanies the range; "La luce che cambia la luce", (The light that changes light), (Artemide,1997, p.3) is a grandiose yet rather puerile statement, white light is filtered so that its constituent

colours become visible, however one must accept, “The light that changes colour”, does not command the same level of sensationalism.

With Metamorfosi, Artemide restores to light its truest essence: food for the body and for the mind, the protagonist of dreams and reality, the decisive element of emotions and, at the same time, of rationality. With Metamorfosi, Artemide gives back to light the meaning of colours, with all their symbolic and beneficial capacities (Artemide,1997, p.5).

Parabolic reflectors project the light produced by three 100W halogen lamps through three dichroic glass filters coloured red, blue and green, the effect produced consists of a beam of monochromatic light contoured by coloured haloes. The sum of the three colours produces white light. By varying the intensity of light emitted through the coloured filters, it is technically possible to create 12 million different colours. There is also a fourth bulb with a clear dichroic filter, this is needed to correct the coloured light obtained and also to allow the lamp to produce white light when coloured light is not required.

The projectors are controlled separately or simultaneously by a microprocessor enclosed in the luminaire, a remote-control is used to adjust the lighting effect or to access one of the twelve pre-programmed ‘atmospheres’;

(Volcano, Borealis, Oasis, Sideral, Dawn, Sunset, Sahara, Nile, Archipelago, Ruby, Mediterranean, Ireland).



Fig.17 The twelve pre-set ‘Atmospheres’, built into the memory of the micro-processor housed within the lamps which make up the “Metamorfosi” range.

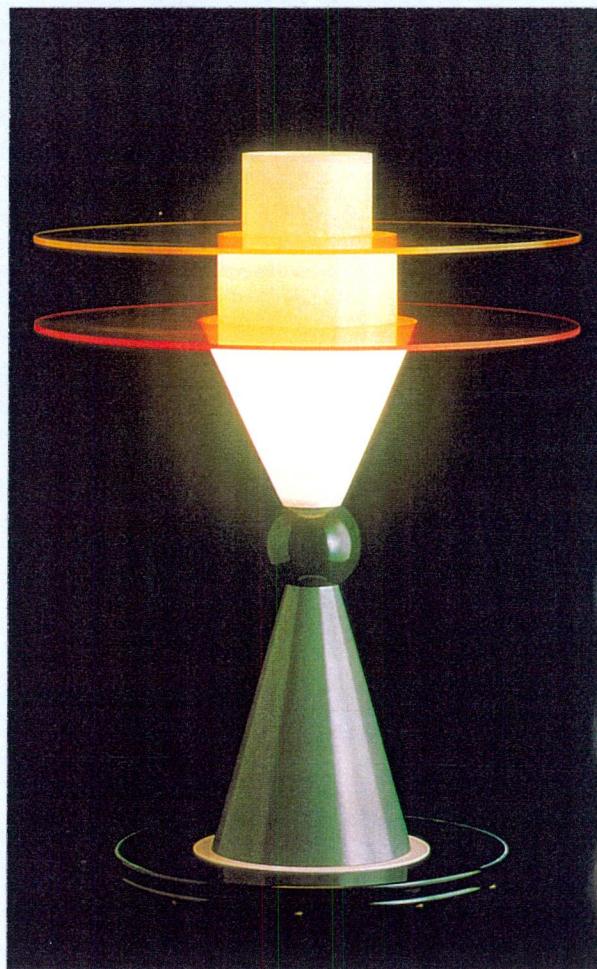
This technology makes it possible for the instantaneous injection of a coloured hue into the domestic interior. The Italians have always been liberal applicators of colour in their furniture and product design , and the field of lighting has been no exception, they value the beauty of coloured glass and the important role which colour plays in creating a certain mood within the built environment. In a sense this range represents a natural progression led through technology, from coloured glass and plastics.

The glass-makers of Venice are famed for their creations in coloured glass, the Venini workshop based on the island of Murano, has commissioned artists and architects to design for them since 1923, producing a huge variety of objects in coloured and decorated glass every year.



Fig.18 Coloured Murano Glass Chandelier
Design Giò Ponti, 1946, Venini.

Fig. 19



With the “Metamorfosi” range, the object acts as carrier, the protagonist being the light itself, the interior space thus becomes a canvas onto which the desired effect can be applied.

In his design De Lucchi embraces, and indeed subtly exploits the unique number and configuration of the four light sources used to create the coloured light effects.

The “Telemaco” lamp is by no means ground breaking in the forms it adopts for the base and pillar, the general form reminiscent of a thousand other floor-standing lamps through the years, however the top section which houses the four aligned lighting cannons is resolved in a very simple yet effective manner which creates an extra element of interest.

The form of the top section follows the four cylindrical elements housed within its confines, this creates an undulating facade. When the lamp is on these undulations cast a shadow across the breath of this section, the line created echoes that of a sinusoidal wave, this line, relating as it does to the wave nature of light is a small but eloquent touch which creates a strong visual metaphor, in these terms the light produced takes centre stage, rending aesthetic importance away from the fixture, which is subordinated. De Lucchi couples the importance of the light to the improvement in the perceived form of the holder for the bulbs.

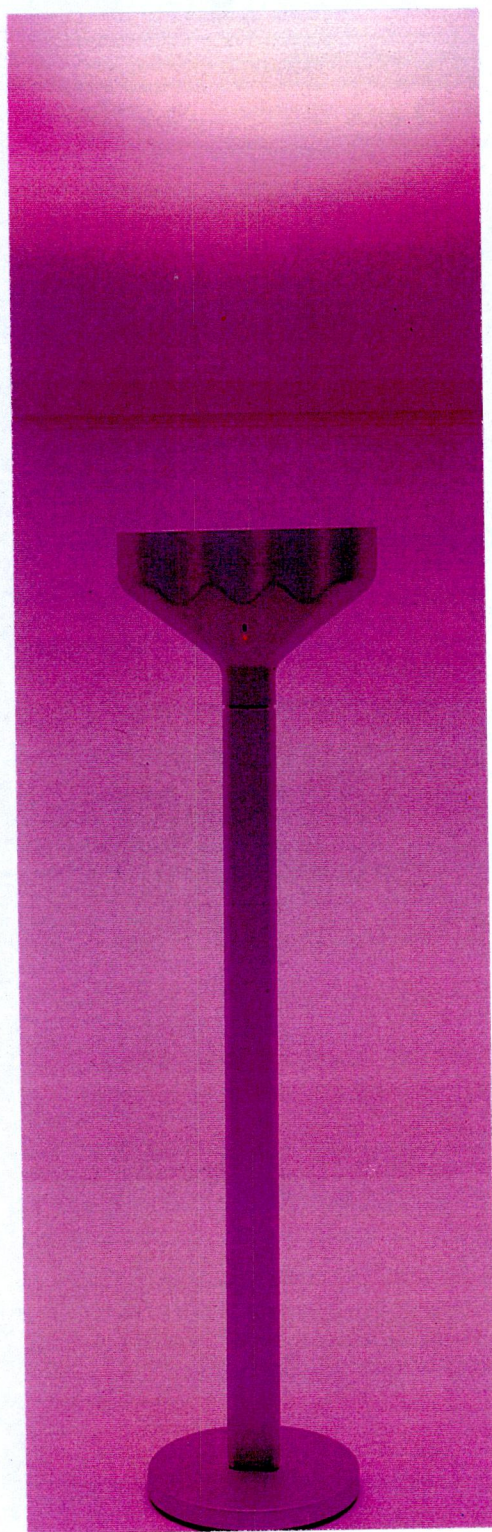


Fig. 20 “Telemaco” lamp for “Metamorfosi”, 1997, Artemide.

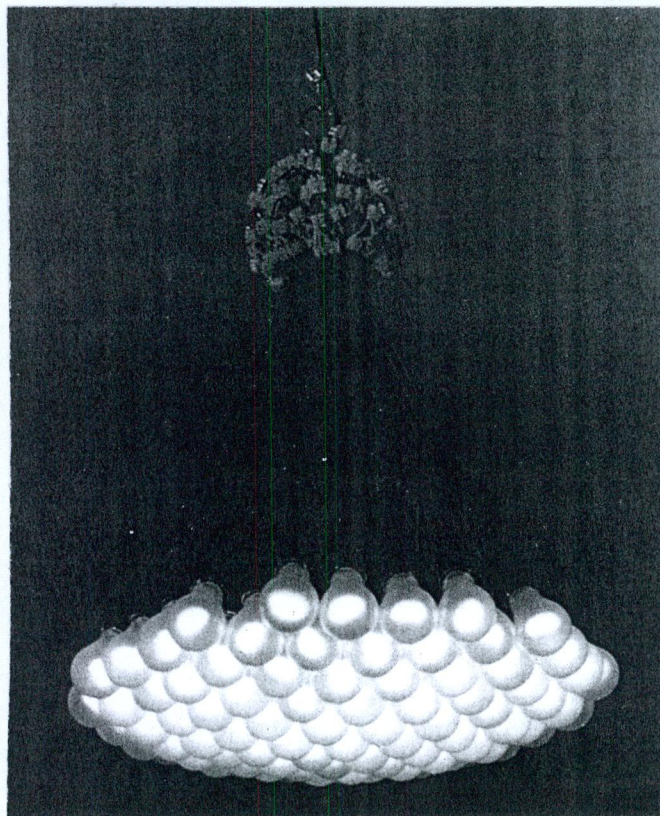
“Minimal lamps”

De Lucchi's most recent lamp designs, designed in 1997 for Artemide are as yet unavailable on the market, remaining for the time being at the prototype stage.

The series of lamps have been created by De Lucchi, using light bulbs from Philips/Osram. The bulbs themselves have been assembled so that the resulting images can be recognised as those of a dog, a puppet, a star and a face.

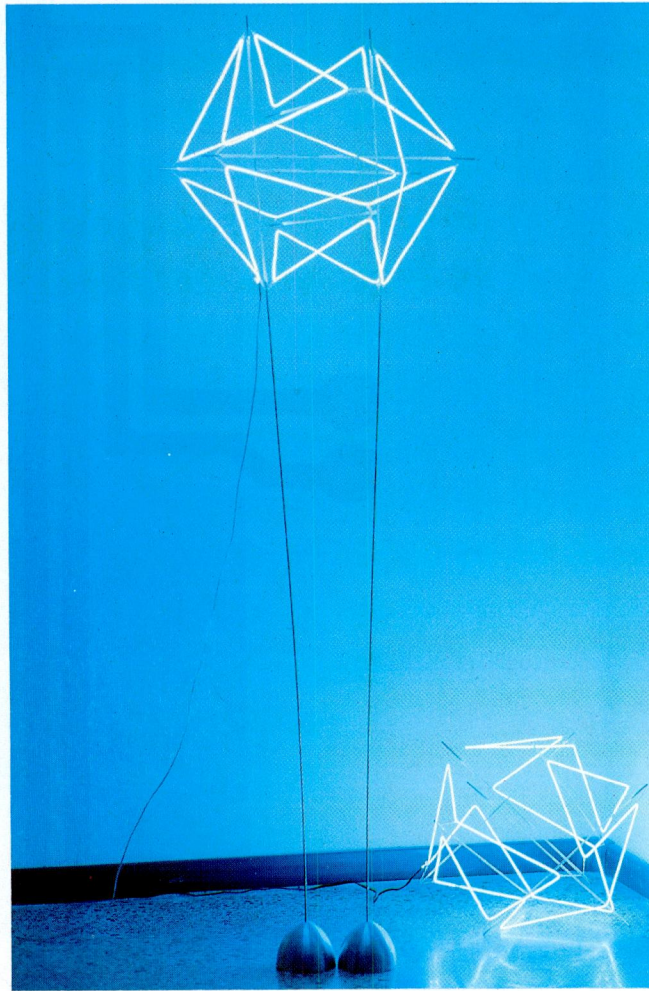
It is obvious from these lamps that De Lucchi is still striving to constantly explore new, and subvert existing figurative norms within the field of lighting, playful as ever, these most recent examples espouse his playful character with great virtuosity.

These light designs follow in the footsteps of many before, in that they exploit the form of the light bulb itself, the two contemporary designs shown below show how the light bulb, or fibre optic tubing can be used to create interesting and arresting designs.



**Fig.21 Rody Graumans,(Neth.) 85 ‘bulb’ chandelier.
DMD (Development Manufacturing Distribution), 1993.**

**Fig. 22 Oz Design, Buckminster lamp.
Oz Design, 1998.**



The “Minimal lamps” De Lucchi has created employ only the light source also but in a different manner, namely they are figurative works alluding to long held associations and subliminal archetypes.

The historical models from which the majority of contemporary lighting takes its cue, i.e. lamps which use the light source as a means through which the form of the lights structure is codified and ultimately acknowledged as ‘beautiful’ or not, as the case may be, becomes redundant when one discusses the design of lamps such as these, which use the light source itself to create expression.

Since its inception, the electric light bulb has been derided as an object d’art in its own right. Designers strive to create something which instead of harnessing and

exploiting the bulbs fundamental beauty endeavour through stylistic means to 'add' something to the already perfect equation.

The historical predilection for the camouflage of the light source is laid bare by designs of this ilk. Set against a backdrop, characterised by the proliferation of 'image' as opposed to 'truth', these lamps are in line with a need to formulate future solutions, today.

The object (light-bulb) from which the light emanates is given a new figurative language, playing on the sculptural aspects of the energy efficient light bulb, its rectilinear form is simple yet striking, De Lucchi also uses tungsten filament bulbs for the 'head' of the puppet, the 'tail' of the dog and the 'eyes' of the face. The difference in the colour of the light between the incandescent and fluorescent bulbs helps to add visual interest.

De Lucchi, seems to be exploring the possibilities which exist for changing the perception of an object simply by designing it into something which amounts to 'more than the sum of its parts', which although taken at its most basic, is nothing more than 'arrangement', it also represents an objective which strives to use the minimum in such a way as to create a maximum.

The push to simplify form and purify line as we have seen has been a central desire for De Lucchi for more than a decade, by doing so De Lucchi does not look to run counter to contemporary design theory, but rather his latest creations represent a desire to return to the field of experimentation, aiming through a renewed humility for the fundamentals, disconnecting somewhat from the nihilistic approach which seems to pervade the world of design.

His concern now revolves around progression through simplification.

The expressive and functional elements of these lamps co-exist, indeed, are inextricably linked, fused together to form an impregnable shell onto which even the smallest embellishment cannot find purchase. These lamps exist beyond the limits of transience, endowed with their own inherent, unique and provocative personality.

By designing in this manner the object is denuded of the years spent under the (pen)-knife, and instead a new appreciation is proposed by the semanticization of the 'everyday object'. The lamps utilise the one 'material' of central importance to any lamp; light.

‘everyday object’. The lamps utilise the one ‘material’ of central importance to any lamp; light.

Awareness of the environment and the importance of conserving energy spurred on by the 1973 Oil crisis led to the introduction of energy-efficient lamp.

The first lamps were rather bulky and it was not until 1982 that Philips introduced the PL lamp, its simple form and reduced size added to the fact it does not have a built in ballast made them far more useful to lighting designers.

De Lucchi took advantage of these new bulbs more compact forms and reduced amount of wiring, the connecting wires, rather than being hidden away become an integral part of the design, incorporated to complete and determine the formal balance.

“The focus shifts from the illuminating object to the object illuminated”

(*Domus*, 1997, p.82)

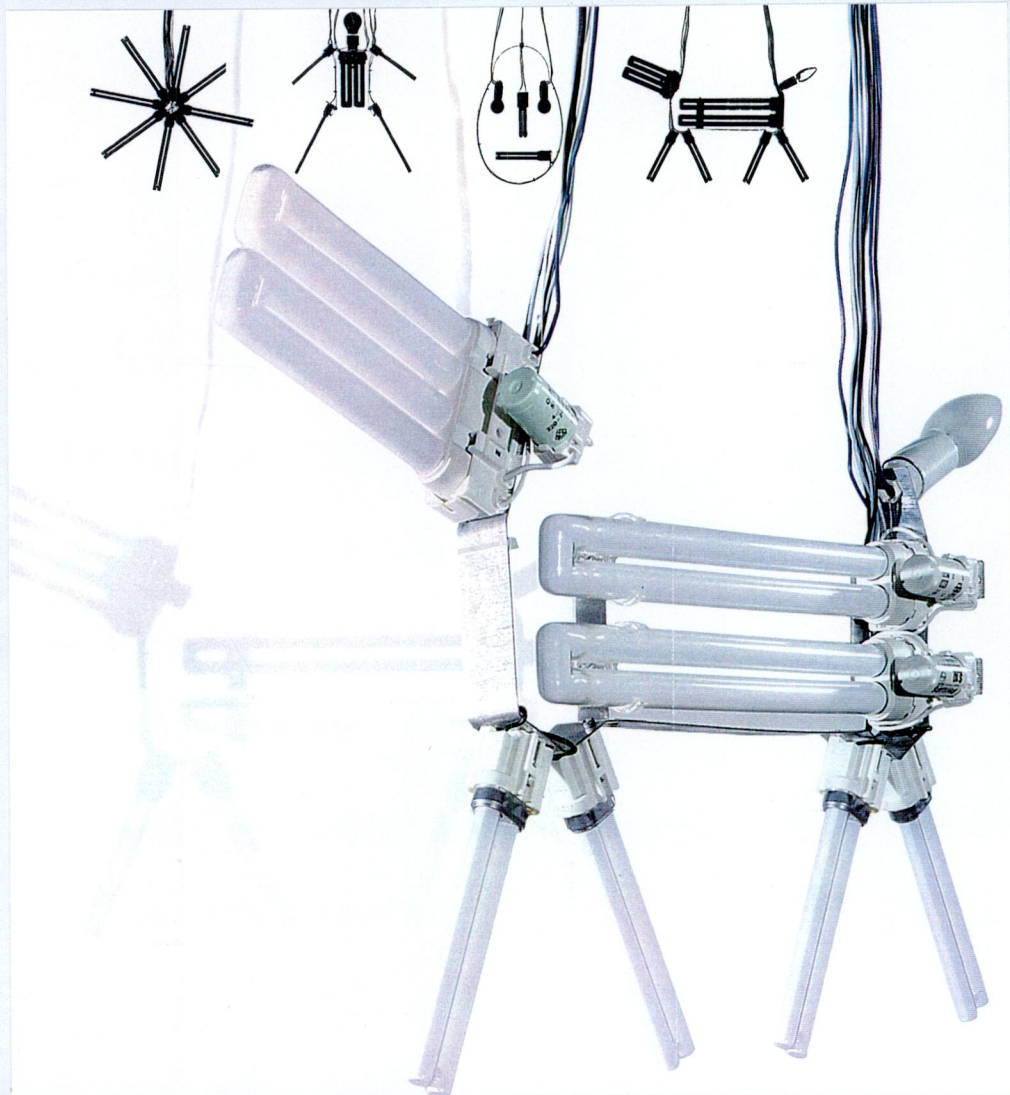


Fig. 23 “Dog”, Minimal light Prototype, 1997, Artemide.

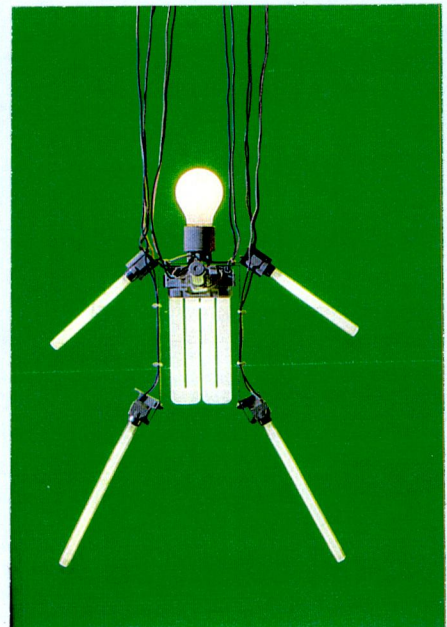
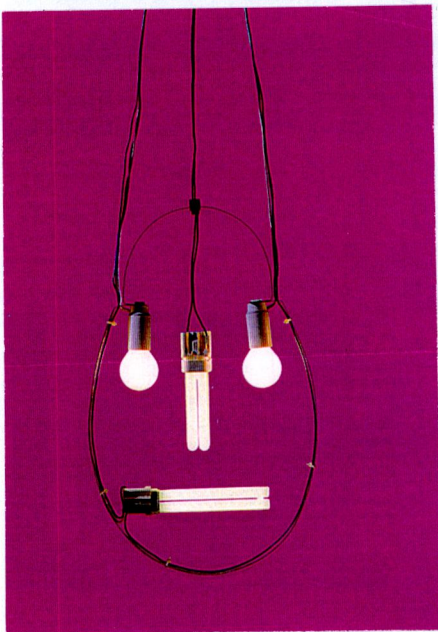
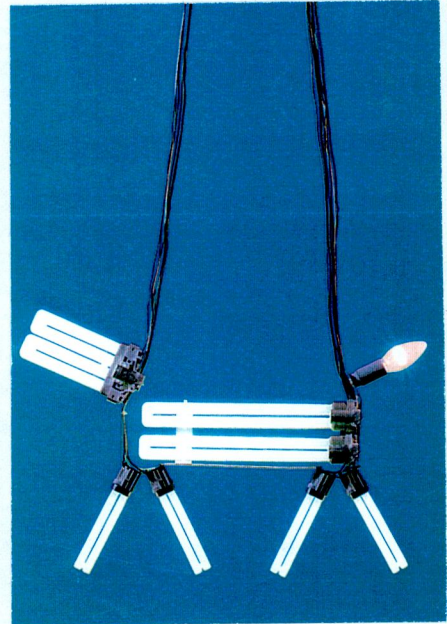
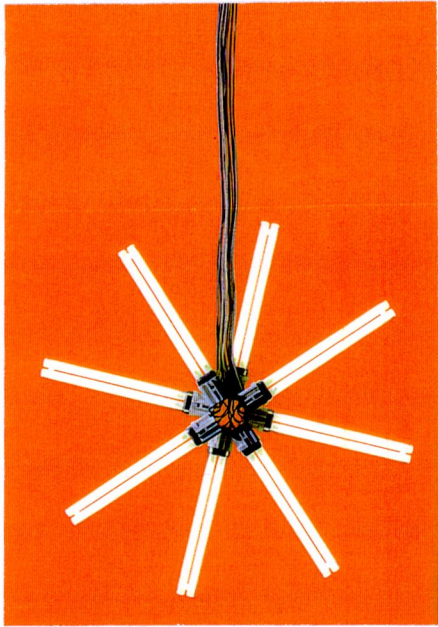


Fig. 24 The four lamp prototypes clockwise from top-left; “Star”, “Dog”, “Puppet”, “Face”

The result of this exercise; four lamps imbued with a child-like simplicity and cartoon-like frugality of line, they hang like X-rayed images which echo archetypes impregnated within the collective consciousness.

Responsible Design

Design in the nineties, looks to carry on the work laid down over the past number of years in the field of 'Responsible Design'. Growing concerns for the environment have forced designers to view design as an integral part of wider ecological problems, these concerns have led to the adoption of methodologies ranging from a deeper consideration of human needs to a more sophisticated application of technology.

To many, the adoption and application of these environmental design proposals amounts to nothing less than ensuring the survival of the planet.

In June 1972, at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the United Nations authorised a program to co-ordinate environmental activities across the globe. Following the conference an editorial published in the British periodical *Architectural Review* put forward the sentiment;

“as uniquely qualified individuals in the struggle to improve man's surroundings, architects and designers must seize the opportunities offered by the ecological movement” (Kircherer, 1993, p.249)

The American designer and environmental activist, Victor Papanek, who vociferously took the aforementioned professions to task in his 1972 book, *Design for the Real World*, vehemently attacking the “twin concepts of ‘designed aesthetics’ and ‘designed obsolescence’ on which the American ‘annual model change’ is based”(Kircherer, 1993, p.249).

The annual changes in surface finish, exterior detailing, interface design, colour and texture which Papanek opposed still take place, in fact sadly ‘yearly’ has become ‘monthly’, the next ‘big thing’ seems to become ‘yesterday’s news’ within a frighteningly short space of time, the ‘30 day money-back guarantee’ offered by most retail outlets has become the ‘30 day obsolescence guarantee’ Bizarrely if one ventured to stay in touch with stylistic change these guarantees would need to undergo continuous abuse, purposefully inflicting subtle yet detrimental damage on day 29, could be passed off as a mechanical fault ensuring the ownership of an ‘improved model’ on day 31.

Papanek wanted to see a shift from this ‘quantitative’ approach to a more ‘qualitative’ one, which would represent a more harmonious link with people and their basic needs.

Championing the idea of a dedication to nature's principle of least effort, Papanek called for "minimum inventory for maximum diversity" (Kircherer, 1993, p.250) finding means through which consumption can be reduced, i.e. extended use, recycling etc. leading to a 'more for less' scenario.

While viewed as 'utopian', Papanek's faith in alternative processes which possess the ability to reshape the environment and transform society, by concentrating on practical fundamentals was realised by a number of designers, producing vernacular, anonymous "anti-" designs bereft of any individualistic aesthetic intentions.

“Treforchette”

De Lucchi, by designing new and attractive objects from old and obsolete ones is aiming to drive home the importance of realising the great amount of useful and indeed beautiful objects which, while still being perfectly useful and fit for the purpose for which they were intended, find themselves on the scrap heap.

‘Fashion-led’, decisions, constantly forced upon us by advertising lead to the exceptionally short life-spans some products face. Fashion trends survive for a very short period of time nowadays, this leads to accelerated consumption, therefore greater amounts of waste are produced, built-in obsolescence etc. means the time a product spends within an endearing relationship with its owner has become frighteningly low, the pressures placed on the consumer to conform to the latest style of jeans, shoes, hi-fi equipment, mobile phones etc. potent and alluring advertisement campaigns make it impossible for all but the most exceptional material goods to become cherished objects which have the quality to resist the constant stylistic upheavals which occur within the field of design.

That is not to say constant change is unhealthy, progressive endeavours are always welcome, but the mindless production of imitative designs smacks of regression, while it will always remain a human trait for people to take their lead off the thinkers and innovators in this world, it will also remain true that it is these very thinkers and innovators, like Michele De Lucchi have the talent and intelligence to offer alternatives and new ideas enabling us to make more progress than regress.

In designing this lamp, De Lucchi champions the cause of the ‘forgotten’ or ‘silent’ object, he physically ‘illuminates’ two members of the ‘forgotten family’ of objects. Autonomous and anonymous, used everyday, these objects, the fork and the pasta-dish are on the whole taken for granted. Constant with previous work, De Lucchi, by creating ‘Treforchette’, challenges the ‘object hierarchy’ which exists.

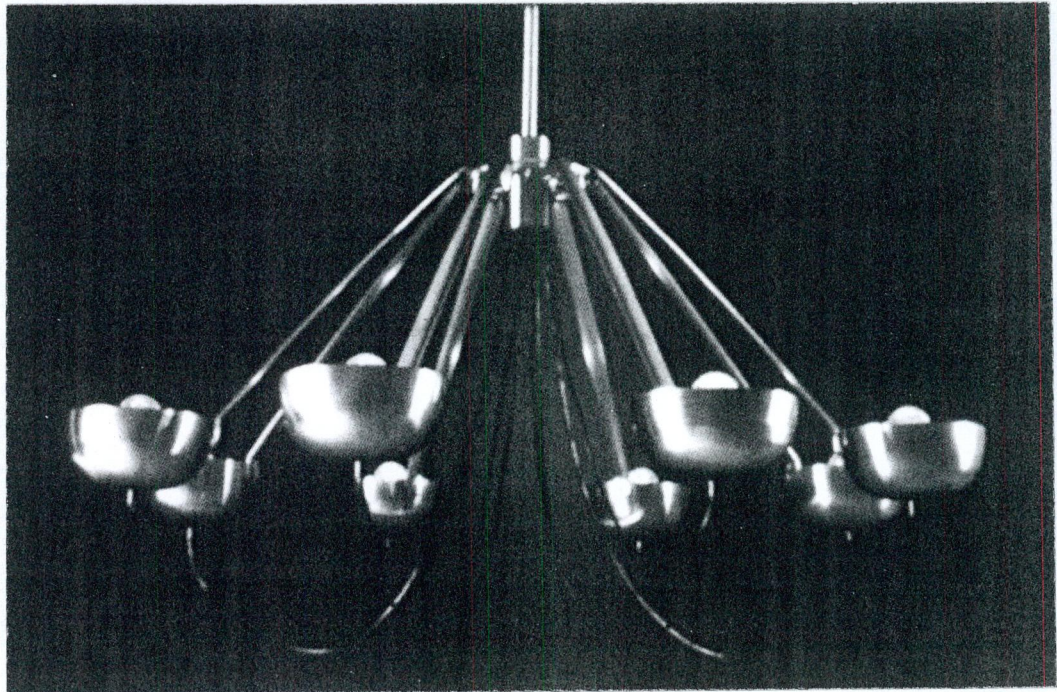
By using three forks and a small white glazed dish as the main components of a simple and stylish light, he succeeds in highlighting the huge potential which exists for the exploration into the everyday object.

The three ‘ready-made’ forks De Lucchi uses in this lamp are of a style with which the majority can readily associate, for many they represent the archetypal fork.

This style of fork, millions of which exist, represents in a way the common denominator within the object world. Identical or very similar forks to those used in the lamp are found in cutlery drawers the world over, they are also representative of the 'institutional', being found in school canteens and hospitals the world over.

The plain, unadorned white pasta-dish conjures up images of associated with the tradition of cooking, and the 'anonymity' of the vast majority of useful cooking utensils and vessels.

The lamp below shows how another designer, Rob Eckhardt, has used another ubiquitous kitchen utensil, the soup ladle, to create a Chandelier.



**Fig. 25 Rob Eckhardt (Neth.), Loving Spoonful Chandelier.
Eckhardt & Leeuwenstein, 1993.**

The objects used to create “Treforchette” are also representative of the trend in the 1990’s for a return to the clean lined and undecorated, the forks and dish imbue the lamp with a built-in timelessness, for the objects themselves have proven to be consistent with no particular epoch.

De Lucchi explores in an innovative and subtle manner the concerns for alternative or re-use. Concerns which have come to the fore over the past decade in the light of scientific research into the depletion of finite fossil fuels, ores and minerals, and the general degradation of our natural environment and atmosphere.

Through the simple adaptation of ubiquitous items, De Lucchi demonstrates how a functional and attractive new product can be created.

The ability to look for new uses and new meanings for objects already in existence has and will become a more important aspect of the modern designer practice.

Products of this nature help to establish a lively dialogue between tradition and modernity in the home, this lamp is an exemplar of a design approach which aims to exploit elements from within industrial manufacture, elements already part of the material culture of objects, reassembling them into new combinations suitable for mass production and consumption: similar in conception to a Dadaist montage, an avenue through which their formal simplicity or even ‘poetry’ can be exploited. This use of the ready-made is not entirely free of ironic or demythologising intentions, in a way it re-focuses attention on the capabilities of the ‘found’, hence ‘used’ or ‘unwanted’, in a way questioning the fundamentals of the design process, off-putting values that sometimes become associated with the activity of a designer.

In 1980, Achille Castiglioni, said, “Design...simply means project...the importance does not lie so much in who has made a particular object...what is essential is that it can become an object in common use accessible to everyone.” (Pirovano, 1991, p. 214).

With ‘Treforchetta’, De Lucchi has created a lamp which represents a perfect example for Castiglioni’s statement.

Indeed the Castiglioni brothers, Achille and Pier Giacomo, have achieved almost mythical status, through their uncompromising approach towards design, their rigour and originality has earned them the respect of the international design community.

In 1957, the brothers exhibited a stool called “Mezzadro”, using a tractor seat mounted on a steel and wood base, such examples have no doubt inspired De Lucchi.



Fig. 26 “Mezzadro” seat, 1957
Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni.

De Lucchi’s own inimitable style is still recognisable in this lamp, purporting as it does to intelligent and witty ‘re-use’ of material. It communicates a wider message through readily recognisable domestic artefacts, honest and friendly items, used in a manner which propagates curiosity, amusement and affection on the part of the user.

This lamp in a way directly helps us to remember and appreciate the ‘everyday object’, in a number of ways.

The items used to make the base and support for this table lamp, i.e. three stainless steel forks, and a plain white glazed pasta dish, belong to industries with a rich heritage, and both objects enjoy long, important ties with the home, before the introduction of

mechanisation there existed a rich craft tradition and a high level of artistic excellence in the cutlery and pottery workshops.

The visual simplicity of the 'anonymous' objects is respected in the use of a completely plain circular white PVC shade, its form being pleasantly disfigured by its passing through the three forks.

De Lucchi, aims to rediscover the symbolic power of these objects by their re-use in the construction of a 'new' object.

This lamp, like all the other objects De Lucchi has created thus far for Produzione Privata have been produced in limited numbers, each piece comes with a,

"Certificate of Authenticity" which lists the producer, the date of production, the size of the production run, the number of the items within the run, and states that the item was designed by Michele De Lucchi." (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.53)

This personal identity card is the modern day equivalent to the craftsman's hallmark or the painter's signature.

In this respect, the practice of issuing in a limited series is significant, it imposes a rarity where there might as easily have been proliferation. It therefore restores to the multiple the integrity it possessed before its worth was so as to render it commonplace and therefore undermine its significance. The artistic value of both the items used is its construction become the most important aspect of the design

De Lucchi and his innovative moment of play have allowed for an excellent new use to be presented for two common objects whose inherent beauty is largely overlooked, he enables them to regain integrity by displaying in an unprepossessing way their versatility and usefulness.

Each item within these ranges is enclosed a case made from bookbinder's board, tied with a velvet or silk cord, it is through these means De Lucchi aims to create a personal bond between object and owner, it can be looked upon as a re-usable means of transport for the object, it has become all too common to find a significant amount of lamps in the bin because they become damaged when their owners move, De Lucchi looks to offer this customised case to establish a worth and ensure the lamp remains in good condition even when moved around, much in the same way a canteen of cutlery or a dinner service becomes a cherished family heirloom, on a smaller and more intimate scale De Lucchi believes the success of an object depends on its ability to subvert the sobering world of product consumption and step-by-step destruction.

When De Lucchi originally founded his company in 1990 he wrote,

I would like to bestow a value on the products again that is more deeply steeped in emotions and in order to do this , the indifference of standardised mass products would have to be eliminated. I should be happy if I were to succeed in producing objects the appeal of which is not exhausted during the different stages of first contact, distribution, sale, use and rejection (Buck, Vogt, 1993, p.50).



Fig 27. “Treforchetta” Table lamp, 1997, Produzione Privata.

Conclusion

This study has concentrated on the lighting designs of Michele De Lucchi, it has outlined the main factors which have effected the way in which De Lucchi, designs, subsequently the discussions of the lamps themselves aimed to highlight and account for these forces.

De Lucchi's career, while not unique, is interesting in that he has been influenced by over twenty years debate on the pros and cons of Bel-Design or No-design a debate De Lucchi has consistently contributed.

1978, when Michele De Lucchi embarked on his career as a designer, it looked as if he intended to produce avowedly playful objects. His early lights showed us his penchant for play from the outset.

De Lucchi's designs represented the entertaining component of the Italian radical utopians, the highly politicised camp, extolled by designers in the late seventies, was replaced by the playful naiveté and ironic slant of De Lucchi.

Endowed with the experienced he garnered from the renowned artists he came into contact with in Milan, the eighties saw De Lucchi play a central role in the Memphis group. While at the forefront of avant-garde design, De Lucchi also began to design for the masses, De Lucchi encountered big industry for the first time, amusement was called upon to measure itself with the rules of mass manufacture, and the restraints of the market and corporate imagery.

These tasks could have crushed his aspirations but on the contrary, De Lucchi courted the Industrial giants, accepting the challenge he aimed to imbue the earnest world of modern manufacturing with light irony, in return the ethically admirable values of the market entered his own creative universe.

De Lucchi consistent work for major firms such as Olivetti, Artemide, Bieffeplast and Kartell shows how without forsaking his playful ethos he has successfully managed to create a happy balance.

The nineties has seen De Lucchi re-affirm his predilection for honest, friendly design, his founding of Produzione Privata, enables him to produce lamps and other domestic objects which are part poetic manifestos and part domestic artefacts.

His use of small mechanisms which breath life into his lamp designs, hark back in a roundabout manner to the playful approach he has shown in the past.

Since 1995, De Lucchi has been Head of Olivetti's design department, one of the most influential design posts in Italian industry.

Michele De Lucchi, a Architect by profession, he is one of many Italian architect/ designers who feel equally at home designing office buildings, office desks or office desk lamps.

His journey from obscurity to international renown is underpinned by an open approach to his projects now matter how diverse, he begins with an open mind, and through drawing and model-making forms a product which offers an insight not only into the wider issues of the cultural, economic and social climate, but a direct link into the mind of a man in possession of such a fertile imagination.

This journey, beginning over twenty-five years ago in Florence, has seen continuous changes in direction, from his involvement in Alchimia, he would meet others like Ettore Sottsass, Allesandro Mendini and Andrea Branzi, who would influence him in many ways, Memphis represented a period of artistic freedom, the time when even though designing within the confines of a 'group' project his own inimitable style could be seen surfacing in an astute manner.

Like Sottsass, De Lucchi has enjoyed involvement in avant-garde activity as well as more straight-laced activities for large Multi-national industry.

De Lucchi has embraced technology and industrial manufacture through-out his career, he has none the less been able to create successful designs without compromising his integrity as a designer.

He has combined the artistic and scientific elements of the design process in a very astute manner.

In the words of Huizinga, nothing can be more serious than play,

Bibliography

Books

- ALBERA**, Giovanni,
MONTI, Nicolas,
Italian Modern; A Design Heritage,
New York, Rizzoli Publications, 1989.
- ALDERSEY-WILLIAMS**, Hugh,
World Design; Nationalism and Globalism
in Design, New York, Rizzoli
International, 1992.
- AMBASZ**, Emilio, (Ed.)
Italy: The new domestic Landscape,
New York, MOMA, 1972.
- BÖRNSEN-HOLTMANN**, Nina,
Italian Design, Köln, Taschen, 1994.
- BRANZI**, Andrea,
The Hot House- Italian new wave
design, London, Thames & Hudson,
1984.
- BUCK**, Alex,
VOGT, Matthias,
Michele De Lucchi; Designer
Monographs 1, Köln, Taschen, 1993.
- BYERS**, Mel,
Design Encyclopaedia, Laurence King
Publishing, Spain, 1994.
- COLLINS**, Michael,
Post-Modern Design, London, Academy
Editions, 1989.
- DE NOBLET**, Jocelyn, (Ed.),
Industrial Design; Reflection of a Century,
New York, Flammarion, 1993.
- DORMER**, Peter,
Design Since 1945, London, Thames &
Hudson, 1993.
- DORMER**, Peter,
The Meanings of Modern Design; Towards
the Twenty- First Century, London,
Thames & Hudson, 1990.
- EIDELBERG**, Martin,
Designed for Delight; Alternative
aspects of twentieth-century decorative
arts, New York, Flammarion, 1997.
- FISCHER**, Volker (Ed.),
Design Now; Industry or Art, Munich
Prestel-Verlag, 1989.

Books contd.

- FORTY**, Adrian, Objects of Desire, London, Thames & Hudson, 1990.
- HEISINGER**, Kathryn B,
MARKUS, George H, Landmarks of Twentieth Century Design, London, Abbeville Press, 1993.
- HESKETT**, John, Industrial Design, London, Thames & Hudson, 1980
- HORN**, Richard, Memphis; Objects, Furniture and Patterns, London, Columbus Books, 1986.
- HUFNAGL**, Florian, A Century of Design; Insights, on Outlook a Museum of Tomorrow, New York, Arnoldsche, 1996.
- JULIER**, Guy The Thames & Hudson Encyclopaedia of 20th Century Design & Designers, London, Thames & Hudson, 1993
- KIRCHERER**, Sibylle, Michele De Lucchi, Milan, Edizioni L'Achivolto, 1992.
- KOCH**, André Struck by Lighting, Rotterdam, Uitgeverij De Hef, 1994.
- McDERMOTT**, Catherine (ed.) Design Museum; Twentieth Century Design, London, Carlton Books, 1997.
- PIROVANO**, Carlo, History of Industrial Design 1919-1990; The Dominion of Design, Electa, Milan, 1991.
- RADICE**, Barbara, Memphis; Research, Experiences, Results, Failures and Successes of New Design, London, Thames & Hudson, 1985
- SPARKE**, Penny, Design in Context, London, Bloomsbury, 1991.
- SPARKE**, Penny, A Century of Design; Design Pioneers of the Twentieth Century, London, Mitchell Beazley, 1998.

Books contd.

- SPARKE, Penny,** Italian Design, London, Thames & Hudson, 1988.
- VAN KESTER, Peter,** Michele De Lucchi; A friendly image for the Electronic age, Tilburg, Komplement, 1985
- WOODHAM, Jonathan M.,** Twentieth Century Design, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Journals

- DE LUCCHI, Michele** "Colour that's there and is not" Domus, No. 775, October 1995, pp.107-108
- JONES, Mike,** "Image of the nineties; Michele De Lucchi." Design, No. 493, January 1990, pp.42-43
- MORTEO, Enrico,** "Michele De Lucchi, Macchina Minima n.7." Domus, No.744 December 1992, pp.6-7
- TALARICO, Lita,** "Michele De Lucchi, Architect of Objects", Graphis, No. 284, March/April 1993, pp.21-33

Promotional Literature

- Artemide "Human Light" Catalogue 1997.
- Artemide "Metamorfosi" Catalogue 1997.
- Artemide "Novita' 1998" Product range catalogue 1998.

