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THE DESIGN OF VENUES AND ACCESSORIES BECOMES “SOCIAL”:

HOMI and Host launch the new mission for designers and architects in the post lockdown era, presenting concepts to make the “new normal” more pleasurable and proposing Design as a new “therapy” for everyday living.

Milan, 26 May 2020. In the last few months, we have witnessed a **paradigm shift in the spaces we occupy in our lives which has slowly re-educated everyone’s use of them**, even at home. Now that we can finally leave those homes, we find ourselves in a complex situation, following a series of rules that haven’t really been tried and tested yet, with new habits, personal attention and public requirements. In the centre of all this are the places we have most access too, first and foremost our homes, but also places like bars, restaurants, hotels and other closed spaces which have a big impact on our everyday health.

When the services offered cannot be fully used on a remote basis, physical space is fundamental. In this context, **designers and architects are extremely important**. Those we usually consider as the people behind “beauty”, ambassadors of “style” and creators of original forms, destined in many cases to become iconic expressions of the history of costume and art, are **now busy combining anti-contagion actions and social distancing with the need to ensure that we still feel comfortable with the normality that we are going to be living from now on** in settings that are safe while also being welcoming and pleasant.

Two Fiera Milano events which have always been focused on the evolution of design are **HOMI** and **Host**. **HOMI**, dedicated to home accessories, is due to take place from **19 to 22 September 2020** with the Home&Dehors edition, while **Host**, the International Hospitality Exhibition, will be held **from 22 to 26 October 2021**. During this moment of transformation, they have become observatories of the world as it changes, as it is redesigned, thanks to the expertise of the creators of spaces and accessories.

The two events are currently providing **platforms for the exchange of ideas by communities of professionals, called upon to practically design the new normal**: sharing the tips and tangible successes of the designers is essential for the drivers of knowledge represented by the exhibitions, particularly now, at a time when making useful contributions to the progress of every sector is necessary to overcome the stagnation caused by the emergency.

The criteria of sustainability which we were already familiar with and were observing, like the choice of natural materials or the reuse of recycled materials in furnishing spaces or creating accessories, attention to the production process, the possibility to dispose of the product at the end of its useful life, **are now joined by others relating to attention to the anti-contagion rules**, which require the respect of the needs of users and a reduction of risk.

This is a new renaissance for design and the Vitruvian Man, which has always been the symbol of man’s centrality in the cosmic order, now becomes an icon of the dimension of beauty and harmony with respect for others, in the name of a new **humanism of the “right distance”** which is all just waiting to be written (and designed).



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THE HOME CHANGES SO THAT WE CAN STAY THE SAME

Entrances redesigned to be functional areas where we can take off our clothes as soon as we walk through the door, hybrid spaces in which to live and work, new organisation of accessories to make everything easy to sanitise, not just surfaces but fabrics too, made with innovative materials capable of rejecting dust or conceived to cope with contact with ammonia-based detergents without being ruined.

Our homes are changing: transformed by the stable presence of their inhabitants during lockdown, they will never go back to the way they were before. Part school, part office, part shelter in which to decontaminate. They are the first places that reacted to the changes in progress, transforming the use of indoor spaces and rediscovering outdoor spaces as "oases" and open-air rooms.

Home designers are now focusing on functionality and versatility, obviously accompanied by safety, achieved thanks to the ability of our living spaces to change quickly, meeting the needs of those required to spend much more time at home, offering solutions to fulfil every need. Homes that are increasingly practical but no less beautiful.

It is essential that design be centred around the person who lives in these spaces and uses the objects within them. The temptation to standardise in order to guarantee enhanced safety must not overwhelm the voice of creativity, which can actually be strengthened by our new requirements, offering original responses at this difficult time. Multifunctional spaces and hygienically safe accessories, which can be disposable for example, but always designed with respect for the environment, represent the challenges of the moment and the possible solutions on which to reflect.

The contribution of **research into materials continues to be essential, to guarantee objects that are really useful, sustainable and safe.** And **new materials, or those we are already familiar with but used in a new way,** also appeal to design to make the most of their characteristics, **adding sanitisation and safety to the circular "production – use – recycle or reuse" concept.**

The home of tomorrow might not be bigger but it will definitely have more space: for our tranquillity, for our needs, both old and new, and for our safety. And **it will offer more space to designers and architects who really want to change the world** and not just accept the changing world.

THE NEW VALUE OF RENEWED HOSPITALITY

Rediscover the real satisfaction of meeting up again, albeit at the right distance. Holidays, travel or dinner with friends seem even further away, especially now that we can leave our homes: **spontaneous gestures** which have now become a problem and are limited in terms of time and space, **but which we cannot and must not give up, even if we find it hard to get used to the new regulations.**

Design is responsible for helping us all to take advantage of the opportunities of the situation rather than focusing on its limits and helping restaurateurs and hotel managers to save the culture of hospitality, in Italy and in the world, writing a new chapter, in the name of innovation.

Rediscovering a coffee outside a bar can become a great new habit, like waiting at the counter inside that bar for your first espresso of the day, the way we did before. But the machine for this new activity could have different features to its predecessor, so that it can be easily installed outside, for example.

Hotel receptions can be redesigned too, to better cope with the queues that people have to stand in, allowing guests to wait safely in comfortable waiting areas, or to offer preferential lines for the sanitisation of luggage. It is important to



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make paths as direct as possible, to prevent stress and mistakes, making the well-being of guests the top priority at all times.

Rooms require the unison of beauty and easy sanitisation, maximising enjoyability and ensuring quick, easy and effective cleaning: materials and shapes of furniture can help but, in this case again, **standardisation must not eliminate the possibility for each hotel to choose its own style**.

In big hotels, but soon in smaller ones too, **physical solutions will be joined by technological ones**, like cameras and flow control systems which, thanks to artificial intelligence, make it possible to prevent gatherings. But **technology is useless if the spaces aren't redesigned to make it really effective** and allow the best possible management of the situations flagged up by "electronic brains".

If transparent dividers between places at tables in restaurants have become a symbol of measures to allow them to reopen, the desire to respond to a limit with an idea, such as **customising tables and tableware**, can, for example, become an opportunity to innovate with style, adding personality to a measure to prevent contagion. It isn't just a matter of guaranteeing safety without sacrificing the conviviality and hospitality of the past, but of **completely rewriting hotel hospitality and the Out-of-Home sector**, which, of course, involves venues, spaces, objects and serving instruments, reinventing and redesigning them for use in a new way.

THE DESIGN "THERAPY" OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The work that designers and architects are called upon to do right now involves more than mere adjustments, rearrangements and emergency operations. They have to **convey dignity and second the individuality of the people** who live and move in every setting and who are entitled to their space and their safety.

Until healthcare solutions are found to the problems of this crisis, design can become an authentic "life therapy": the ability to evolve towards projects that combine safety and well-being will allow us to change social culture together, learning how to tackle the current situation without sacrificing the aesthetic expression of the places in which we live and the pleasure with which we do so.

Thanks to design, we can continue to absorb beauty, without being afraid of being contaminated by the environments and locations of good living.

For innovation, interaction between communities and professionals, and to gain new awareness of the role of design, come to HOMI Outdoor HOME&DEHORS at Fiera Milano from 19 to 22 September 2020, and Host, the International Hospitality Exhibition, at Fiera Milano from 22 to 26 October 2021.