

## Franco Audrito

(Balangero, Turin, 1943)

In a Turin shaken by workers' demonstrations, Studio65 was founded in 1965 by a group of young painters and students from the Faculty of Architecture. The original nucleus, which includes Enzo Bertone, Roberta Garosci, Paolo Morello and Paolo Rondelli, revolved around the figure of Franco Audrito, the driving force behind the project and who still today supports its name and activity. The group's explicit political stance is motivated by the initial participation of its members in the editorial staff of *Classe operaia*, the newspaper founded by Asor Rosa. Over the following years, the collective commitment would flow into the student movement of the Politecnico, with the occupation of the building and the management of a popular atelier in charge of producing graphic materials for the protests.

The Studio65 logo designed by Audrito soon became the disruptive manifesto of the whole operation. The typewriter characters, which immediately tie in with the duplicated flyers distributed outside factories and universities, are accompanied by a disconnected layout, with the number of the year of foundation written half in letters and half in numerals, and a new line after the double 'S' (Sess/anta5). Both critical of the values of the status quo and calling for common renewal, according to Audrito the logo became "a declaration of war on the structure of consolidated language." It is with this in mind that we should read the thesis that the group, in the meantime enriched with new members, presented in 1969 before Carlo Mollino. The dissertation, which *Sic Transit Scientia Mundi* bears witness to, has an expressly anti-institutional value if we consider the unusual form of the collective university degree and the provocative way in which the drawings are presented, hung out on a string with clothes pegs. The project is an example of 'architecture against everything and everyone' expressed through the parody of an authoritarian and nepotistic university system in which only students willing to obey and renounce critical thinking are finally rewarded with a degree in slavery.

In the first years of its professional activity, Studio65's projects were expressed through the creation of furnishing objects and in the interior design of homes, discos and wellness centres. Within a short time, products destined to become true icons of radical Italian design took shape, such as the *Leonardo* sofa, which demystified the Stars and Stripes flag during the years of the Vietnam War, the Surrealist *Bocca* ('Mouth') inspired by Marilyn Monroe's lips, and the *Capitello* armchair, which bust the myth of classicism through the softness of polyurethane foam. Audrito's move to Saudi Arabia in 1975 changed the outlook of the firm for good, linking it to the architectural field and ushering in a period of intense public and private planning of villas and monumental buildings.

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