

FEDERAZIONE MONDIALE DEI CLUB E CENTRI UNESCO (WFUCA)

Consiglio Esecutivo e Convegno Internazionale

“Il Linguaggio Universale della Musica e dell’Arte per un’Etica Globale”

Lucca e Firenze, 8-13 marzo 2013

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Artistic handicraft in the third millennium

Ethic values within the third millennium

Florence, 11 March 2013

Over the last twenty years, the world has changed profoundly. Industrial society, which reached its peak in the western world in the last century and has brought about widespread wellbeing across most social strata, is now starting to show its limits.

New environmental challenges are looming, first of which are pollution and climatic change. However, there are also economic challenges ahead, caused by the financial crisis and the reduction of family income, as well as political challenges resulting from the elevated cost of managing democracies, which is at the base of state deficit, and finally geopolitical challenges, like having to cope with different cultures and histories in consequence of the phenomenon of migration.

In this context, intellectuals and researchers are increasingly advocating the urgency of an analysis which should lay the basis for a new economic, ethical, social and technological structure of our society.

Among the numerous questions we often increasingly ask ourselves in order to understand what the future of the new generations may be, some are connected with human creativity, an indispensable aspect of human nature that has been fundamental to our progress through the ages.

Moreover, this is not a new problem. It had already been posed at the end of the 19th century by movements like that of William Morris, at a time when rising industrialization was giving birth to the apportionment and the repetitiveness of work among broad masses of workers.

This problem was tackled again in the early 20th century by Walter Gropius who set up the *Bauhausschool*, in Weimar, Germany, and who laid the bases for the transfer of creative aspects to design which, from then on, was applied to objects of industrial production, from cars and architecture to fashion and furnishings.

The use of design, the creation of specific professional competencies and the foundation of large industrial and commercial groups characterized by a recognizable brand name spread by mass

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media is the practical consequence of the philosophical reflection carried out at the beginning of the last century by the Bauhaus.

Side by side to the development of industrial mass production, human creativity has mainly turned to technological innovation tied to scientific research. Numerous models of behaviour have adapted to these trends, fashion being an example of this with its substituting aesthetic values - deriving from having a certain social status, or belonging to a professional, ethnic or other category - with functionality and low prices.

The consequence of this cultural process, which began in the 19th century and reached its height in industrialized western countries during the last century, is a kind of widespread flattening, corresponding to what in biology it would be called the loss of biodiversity. And if, in the last few years, we have so insisted on the fact that the loss of biodiversity represents an impoverishment of the universe we inhabit, likewise, the loss of our cultural biodiversity is actually a grievous loss which results in a grey, uniform world.

In short, the weak points of the last century’s production organization can be seen in the following: the loss of a product’s uniqueness, the lack of a specific character linked to local history, the scant attention paid to materials, quality, and production techniques which generally aim to reduce costs rather than increase quality, the impossibility for the customer to decide together with the producer the aesthetics, form and function of the product.

In brief, paradoxically, in a world whose political motto draws inspiration from the principles of freedom, the methods of production and consumption are coercive; in other words, the consumer is only free to choose from the products imposed by advertising, mass media, commercial trends and producers’ interests. On the other hand, this need for personalization which disappeared with mass production has been highlighted since the 1960s with the rise of countercultural youth movements. Such groups, like hippies, punks, skinheads and, more recently, heavy metal freaks, hardcore warriors, and emos, tend to create a fashion that makes their group recognizable and distinguishable from the mass.

From that moment on, the debate has been open and even more important and incisive is what we are doing today for artistic handicraft. Once the handicraft linked to everyday life was substituted with industrial mass production, the values mentioned above, which are overlooked in

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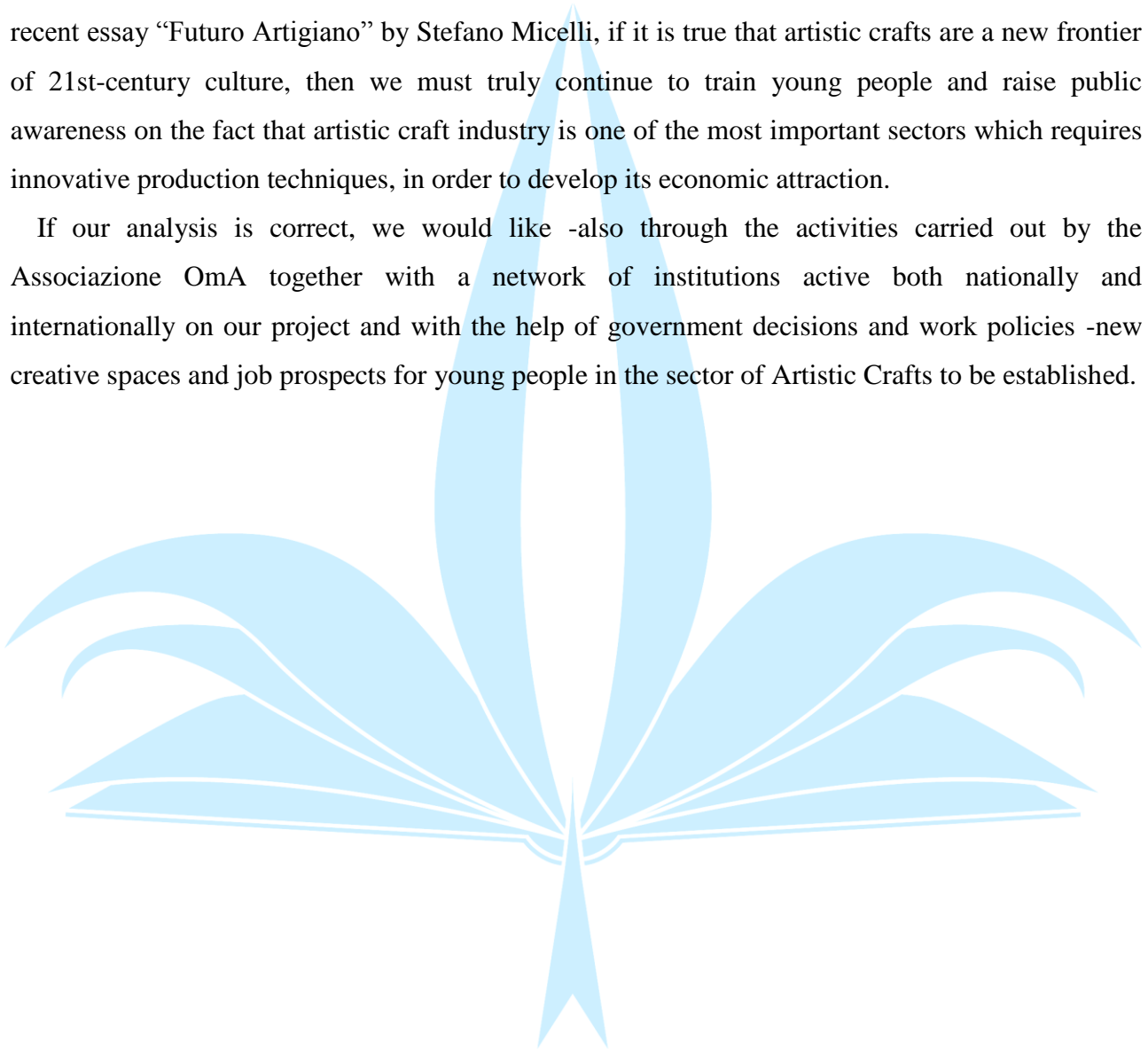
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the current production system, can only be transmitted by a strong commitment to promote artistic crafts whose products can be easily identified as they are personalized and contain references to the history of the place of production, the techniques adopted and the materials used to guarantee quality and durability. As also attested by Richard Sennet in his “The Craft Man”, and in the more recent essay “Futuro Artigiano” by Stefano Micelli, if it is true that artistic crafts are a new frontier of 21st-century culture, then we must truly continue to train young people and raise public awareness on the fact that artistic craft industry is one of the most important sectors which requires innovative production techniques, in order to develop its economic attraction.

If our analysis is correct, we would like -also through the activities carried out by the Associazione Oma together with a network of institutions active both nationally and internationally on our project and with the help of government decisions and work policies -new creative spaces and job prospects for young people in the sector of Artistic Crafts to be established.



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