

MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2024



HEIDE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS MAJOR SURVEY EXHIBITION OF ICONIC TWENTIETH-CENTURY ITALIAN DESIGN

MOLTO BELLO: ICONS OF MODERN ITALIAN DESIGN



Heide Museum of Modern Art has today announced a new exhibition showcasing many of the most significant achievements in the history of twentieth-century Italian design, presented by Webuild and supported by the Italian Australian Foundation and John and Rose Downer Foundation. On display from **26 October 2024 to 23 March 2025**, ***Molto Bello: Icons of Modern Italian Design*** tells the remarkable story of how, through the marriage of Italy's rich craft tradition, technological advances and a capacity for creativity, experimentation and invention, Italian design became admired throughout the world.

Molto Bello: Icons of Modern Italian Design brings together more than **170 objects** spanning the sixty year period from the first Milan Design Triennale in the 1930s to the Memphis Group of the 1980s. Held across Heide's Main Galleries and Heide Modern, the exhibition celebrates key figures in the industry and their enduring contribution to global culture. From the dynamic early work of architect-designers such as **Gio Ponti** and **Carlo Mollino**, through the ingenious and stylish creations of **Gae Aulenti**, **Joe Colombo**, and the **Castiglioni brothers**, to the quirky and provocative Radical Design movement, Memphis Milano, prominent design figures **Ettore Sottsass**, **Nanda Vigo**, **Gaetano Pesce**, and more.

In the Main Galleries, the exhibition design by Melbourne-based practice **Studio Peter King** draws inspiration from Italian architecture and classic interior design motifs, guiding the audience through the trajectory of modern Italian design and its enduring impact. In Heide Modern, furniture from the 1960s and 1970s will be arranged in the living spaces, speaking to the function of each room and reflecting the period in which the former residence was built.

Drawn from public and private collections and leading design brands, the objects in the exhibition include vintage and re-edited classic chairs and furniture, lighting, espresso machines, typewriters and examples of landmark transport

MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2024



designs. Through recognisable and rare pieces, the exhibition explores the breadth of materials and manufacturers, and diverse approaches to form and function adopted by Italian designers in a rapidly evolving social and industrial landscape. Highlights include Gio Ponti's ground-breaking *Superleggera* chair, a Vespa GS 150 and 1957 Fiat Nuova 500, Joe Colombo's futuristic *Elda* chair of 1963, a gallery dedicated to work of the recently deceased visionary designer Gaetano Pesce, and an array of playful postmodern creations by Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis group.

Heide Museum of Modern Art Head Curator Kendrah Morgan said: *"We are delighted to be showcasing so many pieces from one of the most compelling and influential periods of design innovation, and which reflect significant shifts in Italy's social, cultural and political landscape. The exhibition is the result of extensive research and close collaboration with design experts. The objects have been sourced entirely from within Australia, thanks to the assistance of generous individual collectors and design enthusiasts."*

Alongside the exhibition, Heide will host ***Molto Italiano!***, a two-day community festival celebrating Italian culture, supported by the Italian Australian Foundation. Activating the whole of the Heide site from **Saturday 30 November to Sunday 1 December 2024**, the festival will have activities for all ages, from lawn bocce (overseen by members of the nearby Veneto Club), to Fornasetti-inspired art workshops, exhibition talks in Italian and English, and an Italian-themed 'Design Roadshow' where visitors can bring a design object from home for expert assessment. Italian food and drink will be on offer throughout, as well as music performed by Bella Ciao and the Veneto Club choir.

Molto Bello: Icons of Modern Italian Design will be accompanied by a catalogue publication with an introductory essay by Head Curator Kendrah Morgan with Associate Curator Laura Lantieri, an historical overview of the period by Professor Flavia Marcello, and an essay presenting new research on the influence of Italian design on Australian design by historians and collectors Dean Keep and Jeromie Maver.

Ends

MEDIA CONTACT: For further information or interview requests, please contact Isabel Wright, isabel@articulatepr.com.au, 0400 359 485, or Claire Martin, claire@articulatepr.com.au, 0414 437 588

IMAGE CAPTIONS (L-R): Piero Fornasetti, *Tema e Variazioni no.130* 1950s, porcelain; Gaetano Pesce for Cassina, *Sunset in New York* sofa 1980, synthetic materials, wood, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, gift of Cassina, 1985, photograph Ryan Hernandez; Corradino D'Ascanio for Piaggio, *Vespa 150 GS* 1958–61, painted steel and metal frame, rubber, leather, and plastic, 108 x 71.8 x 170.8 cm.

IMAGES available [HERE](#)

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

Molto Bello: Icons of Modern Italian Design

MEDIA RELEASE

12 August 2024



26 October 2024 - 23 March 2025

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen Victoria 3105

<https://www.heide.com.au/exhibitions/italian-design/>

ABOUT HEIDE

Set on sixteen acres of parkland along the Birrarung / Yarra River, Heide Museum of Modern Art, or Heide as it is affectionately known, is one of Australia's most important cultural institutions. Once a significant Wurundjeri gathering place, the property was later a dairy farm before becoming known as a hub for Australian modernist art and writing after it was purchased by art patrons John and Sunday Reed in 1934.

The Reeds opened their home to the most progressive artists of their era, including Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval, Charles Blackman and Danila Vassilieff. Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series (1946–47) was painted in the dining room of the Heide farmhouse.

Continuing this spirited legacy, today Heide works to inspire creative talent, collaborating with emerging and mid-career artists as well as celebrating those who have made major contributions to Australian and international art.