Archives and Processes

Francesca Zanella(✉) ⬡

Department of Engineering Enzo Ferrari,
University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Modena, Italy
`francesca.zanella@unimore.it`

Abstract. The discipline of design is today marked by a profound transformation of design processes and methods arising out of the comparison with scientific research methods (from biotechnologies to artificial intelligence), calling into question even the formal dimension of the object which has been the fundamental characteristic right from the origin of industrial product design. The conceptual and creative process benefits from this comparison, and also from an analysis of the system of objects and reference models. In this way, research, with the connection between different fields, and the relationship with the past, and therefore with the various repositories of artefacts and traces of experiences, represent two fundamental elements. As a result, it is important to enquire, both from a historical and operational perspective, into the role not only of collections but also of archives as tools, objects, spaces of collection, stratification and the exchange of traces, that is, of segments of the work of the designer, but also of the laboratory, and therefore closely connected with the process.

Within the conference processes section, therefore, it has been considered necessary to reflect on the role of the archive which, for the discipline of design, represents its origin, since, to different extents, it brings together and preserves the traces of processes and, thanks to the different structures and compositions of each archive, imposes a constant questioning of what is design; in this paper, such reflection will be made on a limited sample of specific 'Personal Archives' or 'Personal Papers', focusing on the 1970s, to highlight themes and methodological approaches.

Keywords: Processes and Archives · Enzo Mari · Bruno Munari · Alessandro Mendini · Design

1 Processes and Archives

What is the nature of a design archive and how does it help us to investigate the meaning of process, creativity, conception and of knowledge production and sharing?

These are two compelling and closely connected questions about which an increasingly heated debate is developing, even if fragmented within different disciplinary contexts, from the history of design to theory and project, to archival and information theory disciplines.

On the one hand, the archive is a representation of the contemporary dimension of renewed processes of knowledge sharing and production [1–3] which make new interpretations of the archive necessary, also with respect to the unavoidable lesson of Foucault [4] and Derrida [5]. On the other hand, the archive is a symbolic representation of contemporaneity, thanks to its centrality for certain visual research [6–10], and, by extension, to the new directions of design, a design which is an increasingly complex and extensive discipline and practice due to its relational and interdisciplinary dimension, whose flow between creation, research and production is well represented by the Krebs creativity diagram, as suggested by Paola Antonelli [11]. The designer, then, becomes a connector between areas of knowledge and practices, inside a new context of cultural and aesthetic artifacts-goods whose value derives from an evaluation of the power of the signs and symbols conveyed by media icons and physical artefacts [12]. He/she is a connector of different methods of production: not only that of robotics and industry 4.0, but also that which is handcrafted, still crucial, as Richard Sennet points out "What does the process of producing material things tell us about ourselves?" [13, 17].

There are numerous analytical approaches: those who work in the field, producing 'archives' and data repositories, those who organise and manage said repositories, and those who investigate them to analyse and reconstruct contexts and histories. The archive, in fact, has always been a place of historical research, but with respect to the long history of this activity, in this case, our point of reference is that defined by the lesson of the school of Annales [14, 15], and therefore by the structuralist turning point, from the foundational contribution of Foucault, to that of Derrida, to the post-Foucault reflection [16] and then the tradition of studies that from the end of the 1990s embraced a return to the archive in the context of artistic research, which has strongly influenced curatorial and museological practices and historical-critical studies, as well as the transformation imposed by the digital dimension [17].

In the more limited area of design archives and their role in historical research, it needs to be pointed out how a reflection on the nature of historical sources is still central: "If we consider humanistic disciplines as 'text-based disciplines', we have to ask ourselves: what is text for the history of design? How is the text established? That is, what do we classify, date, interpret, study, when we find ourselves before the project of a material or communicative artifact?" [18, 16]. These are the questions Dario Scodeller poses to define the specific scope of investigation of the histories of objects, projects and, therefore, processes. The system of sources in the context of design, as of the arts, is, in fact, extremely complex, being composed of a multitude of texts, but also of collections that are the result not only of dispersions, omissions and cancellations, but also of different constitutive processes. In contrast with the traditional archive, that on which the archivist discipline was initially based, design archives are analysed both as a product of the creative process, and as artwork in its own right, and it is precisely in this dual nature that the history of the gathering of archives, fonds and collections resides, and in which, precisely for the ambiguous nature of these documents, both the act of the selection of single segments on the basis of an evaluation of quality and aesthetic value, and the safeguarding of the series, are of primary importance.

For all these reasons, it is the story of making the archive, all archives, and therefore also that of design, that must be considered; this is the central question for Beatriz

Colomina [19] who, starting from two extreme cases, Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, decodes the nature of each archive considered as an expression of a precise idea of personal memory which inevitably conditions the historical investigation. This awareness is even more necessary when we try to understand what the processes of design in different historical phases are. To support this hypothesis we can refer to the reflections of Giorgio Agamben in his archaeology of the work of art, in which he affirms the need to interpret the past as a "shadow cast on a question addressed to the present" [20, 9], and in which the nature of contemporary art is investigated, indicating as a path of research in the context of post-Duchampian art, the drawing "from scratch of the map of the space in which modernity has placed the subject and their capacities" [20, 27]; this subject, the artist, "in constantly practicing their art, seeks to establish their life as a form of life itself" [20, 28].

In order to verify such an affirmation, we have set out to analyse a number of cases of 'Personal Archives' or 'Personal Papers', limiting our attention to a historical period of transformation of the discipline of design, practices and critical reflection, particularly significant for the role assigned to the archive: that is, the brief period of time between the end of the 1960s and the following decade of the 20th century during which there was a change of direction within both visual and design research, due to the need for a definitive overcoming of modernist aesthetics and ideology that is based also on an idea of process linked to new practices and a new idea of design.

The 1970s were years in which the artwork was referred to as a process in which the performance dimension cited by Agamben is fully evident, leading to a reflection on what is the boundary between work and document [21].

In the context of the field of design, it is in this decade that the awareness of the need to propose alternative paths to the myth of design as it had been constructed in the sphere of the Modern Movement, founded on the language of abstraction as a formalization of the myth of the machine, on the one hand, and on the utopia of design as a rational tool of action on reality, on the other hand, fully matured. Composition began to be refused; the reference model was no longer that of methods and industrial processes. Investigative methodologies and field work were borrowed from other disciplines, and academic exchange extended to scientific and artistic research. All this also affected the production of 'artifacts', the design process, communication languages and therefore, philosophical and critical debate in the sphere of which new perspectives started to arise with respect to the reflection that, for example, Giulio Carlo Argan had proposed in the 1950s. In the writings of this decade, Argan had developed a reflection on design as a field in which to verify the analysis of the making of the work starting from the phenomenology [22], to identify the social transformation element of the project, establishing "the point of entry of art into design, and the place where to verify its social function, not in the final appearance of the product, but in the process" [23, 32]. With respect to this viewpoint, new critical hypotheses were appearing already in the 1960s. One of these is that of Filiberto Menna who, according to Maria Giovanna Mancini, gradually moves away from Argan's theses, both in seeing design "as a vehicle of social changes" [24, 22], and in the subsequent acknowledgement of a crisis in design and in contemporary culture as a crisis of the link between design and society in which the process is replaced by planning [24]. Filiberto Menna, instead, in his *La Regola e il caso* (The rule and chance) (1970),

puts at the centre the individual and the dynamics of play and the dimension of eros in response to the failure of design: "The interest for design is instrumental to the much wider interest for the subject" [24, 28]; this is a position that finds a clear demonstration, for example, in the analysis of the work of Bruno Munari, and in particular, his *Sculture da viaggio* (Travel sculptures) [25].

The debate which is, obviously, not polarised by these two voices, evolved, arriving at the exhibition organised by Emilio Ambasz for MoMA *Italy the New Domestic Landscape* (1972), that junction which today is recognized as an important turning point, a show with which a change in the way of considering the product and the dynamics of its creation was confirmed.

The essays published in the catalogue by Argan [26], Menna [27], Alessandro Mendini [28] and Germano Celant [29], called on to reflect on the specific Italian situation, portray a critical picture undergoing change, implying, even though not stated explicitly, a transformation of practices and therefore a change in the nature of archives, which are no longer only witnesses of design processes as a means of mediation between the demands of those who produce and those who use: it is no longer only the drawing, the model and the photographic documentation that transmit the creation of a project, from conception to production. The Counter Design section states this with clarity. Celant's interpretation clearly reveals the sharing with artistic practice of a new way of considering the relationship between the final object and all the elements that lead to the work, in some cases replacing it. It is a critical position strongly linked to the culture of the neo-avantgardes, shared by a number of exponents of Italian and also international design. The critical contributions of the paper, complementary to the thesis of the exhibition, lead us to ask a number of questions which we will try to answer through the cases analysed below, that is: What traces does the process and performance dimension, that prevails over the artwork, but also over the product, which during the 1960s and 1970s took on an aesthetic value, leave in the archive? What is the nature and the function of the archive in this phase in which the modern industrial model, with its almost 'authoritarian' structure, is under question, a situation countered by, on the one hand, a different meaning of goods [30], and on the other hand, a return to the individual dimension?

2 Through the 1970s

2.1 Bruno Munari. The Rule and Chance

"Theoretically, designing a chair should not require more mental effort than using it. In Munari's strongly reductive methodology, conception and fruition coincide, while remaining distinct moments. This, I believe, is the most original aspect of his research" [31, n.p.].

That is how Giulio Carlo Argan presented the catalogue of Bruno Munari's donation to the University of Parma, highlighting the visual and optical nature of Munari's work for which "the object is born as an object in the instant in which it considers the subject in a parallel and symmetrical way" [31, n.p.]

In effect, from *Artista e designer* (Artist and designer) (1971), to *Da cosa nasce cosa* (One thing leads to another) (1981), to museum education, to the films of Monte Olimpino, to 'didactic drawings', we can trace a constant attention to the problem of

use, an attention transmitted through different media. In the dictionary dedicated to Bruno Munari [32], Marco Sammicheli inserts the entry "Collectionsim", with which he describes the map of "a number of Italian paths" for research on Munari, and to define the character of the "precious repositories" [32, 86] distributed in the territory that provide resources for studies and curatorial projects. If carefully analysed, the mapping reveals the nature of Munari's work, on the one hand, and the mechanisms of aggregation and dispersion of his works (whether objects, books, notes, drawings…), on the other hand.

There are private collections born out of passions and obsessions, or those which reflect the dynamics of the market as, for example, the Sonia and Massimo Cirulli or the Giancarlo Baccoli collections; corporate archives that bear witness to work and collaboration relationships, starting from Jacqueline Vodoz and Bruno Danese's collection; public archives and collections that direct the attention towards certain specific segments of interest, and which should be investigated also as evidence of critical attention, and sensitivity to heritage and also to cultural fads. At this point, we could mention the CSAC of the University of Parma, the collections in the Museo del Novecento in Milan and the Museo del Novecento in Florence and MART in Rovereto, among many others.

The "Collectionism" entry, therefore, is much more than an inventory of sources; in facts, it leads us to ask ourselves what is the origin of these heritages in which the timeframes and practices of work, creation and production coexist with those of the subsequent lives of the works. To what extent do these timeframes, which are the timeframes of the archive, affect the "written history"?

In the case of Munari, we can do so starting from one of the first collections – that intended for the department of Design at the University of Parma and the result of a dialogue between the designer and his interlocutor, Arturo Carlo Quintavalle. The 'construction' of that nucleus is characterised by an exchange between the 'design intention', becoming a sort of manifesto, a work among the works of Munari, and a logic of collectionism, that of the historian. The nucleus of materials used to document the present, is strongly linked to a moment of critical reflection on design and the relationship with art, particularly crucial for Munari. The collection, in fact, starts from the donation of a drawing for a *Useless Machine* (Macchina inutile) of 1947, followed by the acquisition over two years of design objects and materials that reveal all the aspects of Munari's research, from *Travel sculptures* to *Negatives-positives*, xerographs, illustrations, books and graphic design, games, industrial design, whose design process is not documented systematically, but through exempla, thereby putting to the test the historian who is forced to understand the reasons for the ideational processes, the ways of investigating problems and their formal solution.

2.2   Enzo Mari Design and Archive

In contrast with "the rule and chance" that informs the network of deposits and collections linked to Munari's activities and the construction of the archive, also in the stories of its structured "fragmentation", among which we can mention, for example, also that of the different deposits and collections of Ettore Sottsass jr. [33, 34], there is the "Aesthetic Research" archive of Enzo Mari which not only restores, but is also a research, project and communication tool.

To understand how and why the archive for Enzo Mari is part of the research process and is not only a product and witness, we cannot fail to take into consideration the first important occasion of the systemisation and communication of his work method, the *Funzione della ricerca estetica* (Function of aesthetic research) volume edited by Edizioni di Comunità during the monographic exhibition in Verona at the Castelvecchio Museum in 1970.

"At 37 years of age, I find myself having either hypothesized or planned or created certain 'artifacts' in the light of needs considered primary from time to time. Today I consider it a priority to communicate the development of this work and its reasons (my work, unusually, can be defined making use, at the same time, of the terms artist and designer, which are already in themselves abstract and adulterated)" [35, 5].

This is how Mari presents the reasons for the book in the introductory notes, starting from the way he views research, an "analytical process that through exemplifications and models, tends towards the clarification of language and its ends, cannot do without a working methodology: this is a constant need of design" [35, 52]. Research is, therefore, an autonomous and founding process, inside of which the artwork is a research tool that requires continuous verification through the project as a "series of operations performed to implement what is considered useful in the light of priority needs" [35, 10].

Leaving aside the programmatic introduction, albeit important because it confirms Mari's understanding of the need to define a communication tool, after years of activities in the sphere of the visual arts and industrial design, we are interested in analysing the structure of the volume, the heart, in effect, of the 'visual' treatment conducted through works and design materials.

Drawing a grid that runs through the over 100 pages of the catalogue, Mari restores his work, distinguishing between research as verification and research as project, demonstrating through the works produced from 1954 to the end of the 1960s, what are the themes identified by him in the context of aesthetic investigation, tackling the relationship between artwork and design, from modular programming applied in multiples to mass production. This founding text for understanding Mari's work has a series of problems that deserve a wider analysis that takes account of his theoretical references at this time, and its position inside a heated debate on the ideological dimension of design and artistic practice: from the objections that the same Licisco Magagnato, director of the Castelvecchio museum, makes in the preface on the theses sustained by Mari on the nature of the relationship between artist and client which cannot be of a paternalistic nature [36]; to the verification of the consequences of Mari's positions with respect to the market in those years; to the evaluation of the opinion of Alessio Fransoni who claims that the distinction between research as verification and research as design hides the usual division between art and design [23, 9]; to the continuity with respect to his individual design researches with which he participated at the Compasso d'Oro award in 1967; finally, to the contextualization of this 'treatise' within the experience of *Nouvelles Tendances* with respect to work themes: "A work which we consider as founded on a certain structural methodology and on the will of conscious enquiry, for which we believe it is possible and useful to verify our intentions, especially in specifically technical terms; in the variation, in the programming, in the forms in which we structure them, and in all those aspects of our research that affect aspects and problems belonging

to that vast panorama in which, […] we want to participate as directly and collectively as possible" [37].

The archive can be understood as the counterparty of this visual treatise. A counter-party because the archive is closely connected with work, and is an expression of it and an integral part of the space of the work; it's not a communication tool, and therefore, belongs to the private sphere, according to Colomina's definition [19]. The archive, in its rigorous construction and nurturing, is a tool for recording the network of relationships and processes; it is itself a process; it is an exemplum to draw on as the basis of aesthetic research.

Mari adopts the canonical tools of the archivist: the inventory, the large books that contain the recording of the works and are the index of access to the materials; a model descriptive sheet of each individual project traced back to the categories of intervention. The archive is also a pedagogic tool of which it's important to maintain its integrity, safeguarding its architecture. For this reason, upon the delivery of the documentation to the CSAC of University of Parma, he draws up a catalogue card of each project. Mari integrates the by now codified information (title, client, contributors, dates and description, and then also illustrative materials and the means for assembly and transport) with fields that are used for describing the phases of the project: besides the description of the process, he records an analysis of the request and the context, the interlocutory position of the designer, and therefore the development phase of the study on the basis of the analysis carried out and the hypotheses chosen [38], followed by the recording of the executive phase.

The archive, therefore, is an integral component of the research process; it documents the project which, in all events, as affirmed even more clearly in the *Italy the new domestic landscape* exhibition in its *Proposal for behaviour* intended for the Counter Design section, without communication it remains a dead letter:

"the only correct undertaking for 'artists' is that of language research—that is, critical examination of the communications systems now in use, and critical acts affecting the ways in which man's primary needs (rather than ideologies as such) are conveyed—and almost always manipulated. For this reason, 'artists,' and those connected with their work, must not confine themselves to experimenting and devising new modes of expression but must show a fundamental concern for the manner in which the substance and implications of their research are communicated and received; and especially they must question who the interlocutors are." [39, 264]. For this reason, it's necessary to define a system for communication "it is not a question of simply making abstract pronouncements […] but of constantly bringing one's work (especially one's critical work) into relation with one's contingent reality, one's own will to make statements and clarify them, and one's own free, ideological choice, which alone can explain the motivations." [39, 264]

Communication, therefore, is a constituent part of the work of the designer. We could say that it is an integral part of the research and design process; it is a moment of exteriorization of the archive, through display and documentation.

2.3   Alessandro Mendini. The Vertigo of the List and the Theory of Fragment

"You're only interested in the drawn design as an arrow to be shot against the illogical logic of the productive mechanism, as a theorem for demonstrating the incongruencies of the system. You are interested in the design of the project, if not the planning of the design of the project. That is, you look, propose and meditate only on the "project of the man"" [40]. Thus writes Alessandro Mendini to Enzo Mari, one of the recipients of the epistolary with which he introduces the "Domus" issues in 1980, at a time when he was reflecting on the crisis of the project, architecture and design, in the "physical definition of the relationship between man, his environment and his objects" [41, 583]. It's a crisis of the project for which Mendini is searching to give a response also through an overcoming of its canonical codes. The definition of the relationships thus considered as a "design meditation through images" (41, 584) can be achieved with illustration (comics, screenplays, cartoons), because in this way it's possible to highlight the contradictions, the myths, the violences of contemporary culture: "An introverted kind of research, a project that reflects on itself, by non-professionals, freeing up a series of energies according to unpredictable practices and forms." [41, 584]

In this sense, Mendini talks of the "drawn design" as a way to overcome the rational dimension of design of which Mari is an exponent, offering us the opportunity to continue our analysis starting from this dichotomy. In the "drawn design" and in the "planning of the design of the project", we can identify two different processes and therefore two ways of imagining the archive. One archive that is an accumulation of images (Mendini), and another which is the systemisation of visual research (Mari): two ways for which the first can be understood as an auto-narration, and therefore an expression of an existential vision; the second, instead, as an investigative tool and dialectical and political action.

With respect to the question here identified of analysing the meaning of the term 'process' in the context of design and the role of the archive, Mari and Mendini represent two opposite visions. It's a distance/difference that is revealed precisely during the course of this decade, after both of them had carried out research on the themes of building prefabrication at the end of the 1960s, which Mari considered as a development of programmed research [42], while Mendini carried out this research between 1968 and 1969 inside Studio Nizzoli Associati, seeing in the meta-project a means for overcoming the concept of composition [43–46].

From this common territory of experimentation, a progressive divergence occurs, which for Mendini coincides with his exit from Studio Nizzoli Associati (1970) and his direction of "Casabella"; a divergence that finds evidence also in the way of understanding the design process and the way to lay the traces of one's own path. From a theoretical point of view, an important milestone is the already-mentioned New York exhibition at MoMA in 1972, in whose catalogue Mendini was called upon to contribute as the director of "Casabella". His essay [28] is complex, an attempt to combine the start of a reflection on Italian design founded on the evaluation of the relationship between design, production, and economic context, with the emergence of new requirements. Affirming the centrality of education for the design renewal process, he reveals the elements that are beginning to characterise his "other" status within contemporary debate. Foreshadowing the Global Tools laboratory founded in 1974 [47, 48], Mendini wishes for the logic of rational culture to be overcome by recovering imagination and

creativity. In this 'detached' and programmatic analysis of the Italian scenario, Mendini, however, reduces the space to the existential dimension that informed a previous article, *Architettura per l'uomo dimenticato* (Architecture for the forgotten man) [49], in which he affirmed: "design is the process through which humanity should achieve conscious formalisations of the surface of the globe, to create environmental surroundings which are symbolic and functional to giving a meaning to life" [49, 493]. Within a collective dimension, the designer must tackle underlying problems, taking on board the needs of the "key character in the design drama", the actor that represents nothingness, the forgotten man, diminished, posing the problem of the responsibility of the designer with respect to the underlying problems of the moment. The difference with an idea of design as a tool of social interaction, as per Argan, then developed by Mari, but also by Tomàs Maldonado [50, 51], lies in an existential-type interpretation, whose "existential scouts" are Kirkegaard, Nolde, Dreyer, Beckett and Bergman, which leads, for example, to replace the tools of town planning, based on zoning, measurements and statistics, with an approach to the transformation of the "crust of the earth", that is, to geological eras and stratification and perhaps a reference to the lesson of the geographer Pierre George [52].

Mendini's attention during the early 1970s shifted from the architectural meta-design scale to that of the object, a journey shared with other exponents of the radical avant-gardes: "Objects, drawings, ideas, are a translation of my own life in iconographic form, because my nature tells me to operate through images because it's the only way that suits me"; the points of reference are "my subjective and aberrated reaction, not the logic of the facts in themselves" [53, 515]. It's a subjective reaction that passes through the physical dimension, in which the body is experience and a system of instruments: "If the body is the primitive and irreplaceable system of objects and rites available to man, the task of guaranteeing this critical conscience falls to design. It is up to it to discover an archaic and coordinated criterion of survival, movement, speed, phonetics, representation, the intensive use of the senses, biological self-control, sound and elementary rhythm, invention of his own body as a signal, meditation, relaxation…" [54, 538].

An awareness that leads to testing areas and methods with which design practices are called into question, therefore not only the products, but also all the outcomes of the design process, the documents, when in the project a creative intention is coupled with the execution of the artefact, adding a piece to the vision of the process as a form: "The pencil is also included in the general impasse of architecture, that is, that means, that tool that best summarizes the process of the project. But what is there beyond the pencil […] there is not the evanescence of film, there's instead the hand of man, the recovery of the anthropological physicality of design. Because only in this way or in the dialectic between these extremes, is it possible to create a true blank slate, the possible terrain to tackle the problems of the project from scratch" [55, 569].

Design is no longer made up of radical messages and revolutions, and not even a passage through which to create something definitive, valid for eternity "Because change in things is perhaps more important than stability, indeterminacy more than certainty and, a sense of the romantic more than rationality" [56, 518]

To understand in what terms it is possible to talk of archive, for Mendini we have to focus on the intensification, in 1974, of interventions characterised by an interpretation that contributes to reinforcing a 'different' approach to design: the list is one of the literary forms he took to circumvent the logical construction of the approach (we can refer to *Inventario* (Inventory), which introduces *Objects for spiritual use* in "Casabella" no. 392/393, *Accumulo di parole e dizioni che oggi mi piacciono* (Accumulation of words and phrases that I like today) in "Casabella" no. 385. How can we not refer to what Umberto Eco writes about Achille's shield in the Iliad being "the epiphany of Form, of the way in which art manages to construct harmonious representations in which an order, a hierarchy, a figure-background relationship between the things represented is established" [57, 12]. The shield introduces sequences of texts and pictorial representations selected by Eco to give examples of another narrative form, that of the list to which authors over time have turned to represent the *present* infinity, made of objects that may be countable but which we fail to number" [57, 15]. For Eco, the list is a narrative form to represent the indescribable, and the list is a rhetorical form, a reading that is well suited to the modalities that Mendini uses to develop his thinking, but also in the definition of his archive that he identifies as a part of himself,: "and which we can link to a widespread method in recent years in the field of artistic research, notes Cristina Baldacci, citing Rosalind Krauss's fundamental essay [58] "you yourself – more than your work – constitute the 'document'. Houses, things, signals, ideas, constitute your life in iconographic form, because nature and fate lead you to work by images, the only way that suits you. Here the story starts all over again, because the life-document is true and false, useful and useless, and always only a shadow of what could be" [59, 507].

In these reflections and in the *Teoria del frammento* (Theory of fragment), we retrace the elements that help us to decode the meaning of the collection of materials left to CSAC by Mendini: "It is good to disperse one's physiognomy, to falsify one's tracks […] I have an enormous 'dead archive', but woe if it leaves my house; goodbye to my reputation. Debris, residues, accumulations, fragments of projects and memories, mountains of cultural dung […] Almost everything is in a state of non-expression compared to the little I can show: as if it was the tip of an iceberg. Almost everything is slag with respect to the poor quality: as happens to gold seekers […] The project is an infectious disease that leaves you full of scabs, which stabilizes, cemeterizes, anticipates live the 'package' that I will be when dead. 'History' perhaps would mean slipping out of oneself. Instead, the things and the ideas that we have not the ability to detach from the contingency of our person are those that interest us most, in that they are authentic documents and relics of the man, not monuments of the superman […] It is necessary to introduce the maximum number of errors in one's biography; much weakness has much value." (60, 528–529)

These thoughts decode the series of materials donated in 1982 to the CSAC of the University of Parma: a flow of traces from 1956, of thoughts noted, of lists, of sketches, of satirical drawings constitutes a cloud of floating objects, abstracts from the flow of the design process, from the unity, from the logical and inseparable links typical of the project, but at the same time precious references to the many connections between the different media that Mendini used to carry out his reflection on design.

3   Conclusions

The aim of this contribution has been to verify whether, and in what terms, the process and performance dimension, which prevails over the artwork, but also over the product design, which during the 1960s and 1970s took on an aesthetic value, leaves a trace in the archive. Secondly, we question the nature and the function of the archive during the two decades considered in our analysis and whether the archive changes as much as the debate on design changes.

To investigate these questions, three very different cases have been considered, both for the nature of the design research of the three authors, and in the archives 'produced' by them: the multiplicity of Munari's archives and collections exemplifies how different collecting processes sometimes hinder the idea of an archive as a unique witness of the process, highlighting, at the same time, the 'ambiguous' nature of the design documents, especially for authors who, like Munari, don't separate artistic research from that of industrial design. With Mari and Mendini, we have two radically distinct ideas of the archive, the fruit of a precise debate on the idea of process and which must be interpreted in the light of this context.

In all three cases what should have emerged is how different conceptions of design process correspond to different methods of sedimentation of the traces of the work, which can sometimes be disjointed or autonomous with respect to the object, and therefore the possible different forms that an archive assumes in the end. Such an investigation is the starting point for a wider analysis that should be constructed through the complex system of design, in the transformations that occur over time, verifying the different roles of the various parties and therefore the different processes in the construction of archives. Historical research, if carried out with this awareness, can offer stimulating ideas and bring to light the relevance of archives as precious sources that exemplify investigative strategies, creative processes, means of exchange, and therefore exemplary heritage.

References

1. Appadurai, A.: Archive and Aspiration. In: Information is Alive, pp. 14–25. Nai, Rotterdam (2003)
2. Nancy, J.-L.: Où cela s'est-il passé? (entretiens avec Nathalie Léger). In: Le Lieu del'archive, suppl. La Lettre de l'Imec, Paris-Caen (2011)
3. Latour, B.: Ces réseaux que la raison ignore - laboratoires, bibliothèques, collections. In: Jacob, C., Baratin M. (eds.) Le pouvoir des bibliothèques. La mémoire des livres dans la culture occidentale, pp. 23–46. Éditions Albin Michel, Paris (1996)
4. Foucault, M.: L'archeologie du Savoir. Galimard, Paris (1969)
5. Derrida, J.: Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne. Editions Galilée, Paris (1995)
6. Foster, H.: Archival impulse **114**, 3–22 (2004)
7. Ewenzor, O.: Archive fever: photography between the history and the monument. In: Enwezor, O. (ed.) Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art, catalogue of the exhibition held at the International Center of Photography, New York, 18 January–4 May 2008, pp. 11–51. International Center of Photography, New York (2008)
8. Baldacci, C.: Archivi Impossibili. Johan & Levi, Milano (2016)
9. Merewether, C. (ed.): The Archive. MIT Press, London, Boston, Whitechapel Gallery (2006)

10. Mancini, M.G.: Archivi sovraesposti. Storia dell'arte e dell'autorialità. In: Mancini, M.G., Maiorino, M., Zanella F. (eds.) Archivi esposti. Teorie e pratiche dell'arte contemporanea, pp. 15–24. Quodilibet, Macerata (2022)
11. Antonelli, P., Tannir, A. (eds.): Broken nature. 22. Triennale di Milano. La Triennale di Milano, Milano (2019)
12. Bassi, A.: Nuovi contesti e condizioni per il design contemporaneo. In: Bassi, A., Bulegato, F. (eds.) Le ragioni del design, progetto, ricerca, università, pp. 17–23. San Marino University Press, San Marino (2014)
13. Sennet, R.: The Craftman. Penguin Book, London (2009)
14. Le Goff, J., Nora, P.: Faire de l'histoire, vol. 3. Gallimard, Paris (1974)
15. Le Goff, J.: Documento/monumento. In: Enciclopedia Einaudi, vol. V, pp. 38–43. Einaudi, Torino (1978)
16. DeLanda, M.: The archive before and after Foucault. In: Information is Alive, pp. 8–13. Nai, Rotterdam (2003)
17. Manovich, L.: The Language of New Media. The MIT Press, Boston (2001)
18. Scodeller, D.: Archivi digitali e fonti documentali del design: nuove prospettive storiche e storiografiche sul design? I casi Gio Ponti Vinicio Vianello e Vico Magistretti. AIS/Des. J./Storia e Ricerche **5**(10), 1–27 (2017)
19. Colomina, B.: Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media. Mit Press, Boston (1994)
20. Agamben, G.: Creazione e anarchia. L'opera nell'età della religione capitalista. Neri Pozza, Vicenza (2017)
21. Lippard, L.: Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972. University of California Press, Oakland (1997)
22. Gamba, C.: Saggio introduttivo. In: Argan, G.C. (ed.) Progetto e oggetto. Scritti sul design, pp. 11–30. Medusa, Milano (2003)
23. Fransoni, A.: Enzo Mari o della qualità politica dell'oggetto (1953–1973). Postmedia books, Milano (2019)
24. Mancini, M.G.: Design come comportamento. Gli scritti di Menna e la lezione di Argan. Piano b **3**(1), 20–37 (2018)
25. Menna, F.: Munari o la coincidenza degli opposti. La botte e il violino (3), 11–18 (1966)
26. Argan, G.C.: Ideological development in the thought and imagery of Italian design. In: Ambasz, E. (ed.) Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Achievements and Problems of Italian Design, pp. 358–369. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1972)
27. Menna, F.: A design for new behaviors. In: Ambasz, E. (ed.) Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Achievements and Problems of Italian Design, pp. 405–414. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1972)
28. Mendini, A.: The land of good design. In: Ambasz, E. (ed.) Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Achievements and Problems of Italian Design, pp. 370–379. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1972)
29. Celant, G.: Radical architecture. In: Ambasz, E. (ed.) Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Achievements and Problems of Italian Design, pp. 380–387. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1972)
30. Aureli, P.V.: Il progetto dell'autonomia, Quodlibet, Macerata (2016)
31. Argan, G.C.: Introduzione. In: Bruno Munari. Università di Parma, Parma, p. 12 (1979)
32. Sammicheli, M.: Collezionismo. In: Sammicheli, M., Rubino, G., (eds.) Munari politecnico: fare dell'arte con qualunque mezzo. Nomos, Busto Arsizio, pp. 86–87 (2015)
33. Bulegato, F., Scotti, M.: Animare un archivio. L'inventario e il regesto digitale dell'attività sulla grafica e il design di Ettore Sottsass jr. della Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Design per connettere. In: Assemblea SID POST2020, 25 e 26 febbraio 2021, on-line - Università degli Studi di Palermo, pp. 418–429 (2022)

34. Bulegato, F., Scotti, M.: L'Archivio di Ettore Sottsass Jr. Ricostruire mondi. Magazén **3**(1), [re]constructions, 39–60 (2022)
35. Mari, E.: Funzione della ricerca estetica. Edizioni di Comunità, Milano (1970)
36. Magagnato, L.: Prefazione. In: Mari, E. (ed.) Funzione della ricerca estetica, p. 4. Edizioni di Comunità, Milano (1970)
37. Gruppo, N., Gruppo, T., Mari, E.: Arte e libertà. Il Verri **12**, 133–135 (1963)
38. Ghiraldini, A: Archivi del design. Nuove forme creative e di narrazione per la condivisione della memoria. Il caso Enzo Mari. Ph.D. thesis, Università degli Studi di Parma. Dipartimento di Discipline umanistiche, sociali e delle imprese culturali (2022)
39. Mari, E.: Proposal for behaviour. In: Ambasz, E. (ed.) Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Achievements and Problems of Italian Design, p. 265. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1972)
40. Mendini, A.: Caro Enzo Mari. Domus **607** (1980). Mendini, A.: Scritti, p. 619. Skira, Milano (2004)
41. Mendini, A.: Visione come progetto. Modo **26** (1980). Mendini, A.: Scritti, p. 583 (2004)
42. Vinca Masini, L.: Arte programmata e prefabbricazione. Una proposta di Bruno Morassutti e di Enzo Mari. Domus **428**, 13–15 (1965)
43. Oliveri, G.M.: Prefabbricazione o metaprogetto edilizio. Etas Kompass, Milano (1968)
44. Mendini, A.: 'Metaprogetto sì e no' (The problem of building metadesign). Casabella **333** (1969)
45. Mendini, A.: Possibilità per il metaprogetto in edilizia. Casabella **325**, 38 (1968)
46. Mendini, A.: Dallo stile al metaprogetto (1968). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 37–43 (2004)
47. Galimberti, J., Catenacci, S.: De-schooling, manual labour and emancipation. Global tools' architecture and design (1973-1975). In: Brown, M., Fisher, M. (dir.) Collaborations and their Discontents: Collaboration in Contemporary Art & Architecture, pp. 99–121. Courtauld Books, London (2018)
48. Borgonuovo, V., Franceschini, S. (eds.): Global Tools (1973-1975). Quando l'educazione coinciderà con la vita. Nero, Milano (2018)
49. Mendini, A.: Architettura per l'uomo dimenticato. Casabella **349** (1979). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 493–495 (2004)
50. Maldonado, T.: La speranza progettuale. Ambiente e società, Einaudi, Torino (1970)
51. Maldonado, T.: Avanguardia e razionalità. Articoli, saggi, pamphlets 1946–1974, Einaudi, Torino (1974)
52. Perre, G.: L'ère des techniques (1974), trans. it. La geografia nella società industriale (1976)
53. Mendini, A.: Non violenza. Casabella **374** (1973). Mendini, A.: Scritti, p. 514–515 (2004)
54. Mendini, A.: Il corpo oggetto naturale: Robot sentimentale. Casabella **399** (1975). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 537–538 (2004)
55. Mendini, A.: La mano oltre la matita. Modo **15** (1978). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 569–570 (2004)
56. Mendini, A.: Nuovo design. Casabella **383** (1974). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 537–539 (2004)
57. Eco, U.: La vertigine della lista. Bompiani, Milano (2009)
58. Baldacci, C.: Archivi impossibili. Un'ossessione dell'arte contemporanea. Johan & Levi, Milano (2016)
59. Mendini, A.: Tutto normale. Casabella **362** (1972). Mendini, A.: Scritti, pp. 506–507 (2004)
60. Mendini, A.: Teoria del frammento. Casabella **394**, 528–529 (1974)