



Research Alert  
on Mediterranean  
Urban Spaces  
and Cultural Heritage



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International, peer-reviewed,  
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via Festa del Perdono 1 – 20122 Milano – Italy  
via Roma 171 – 90133 Palermo – Italy  
info@padjournal.net – editors@padjournal.net

### **Publisher**

**Aiap Edizioni** – via A. Ponchielli 3 – 20129 Milano – Italy  
aiap@aiap.it – www.aiap.it

PAD © ISSN 1972-7887

#15, december 2018

[www.padjournal.net](http://www.padjournal.net)

## **PAD #15**

### **Research Alert on Mediterranean Urban Spaces and Cultural Heritage**

#### **O. EDITORIAL #15**

**Research Alert on Mediterranean Urban Spaces and Cultural Heritage**  
Marinella Ferrara & Chiara Lecce

**005**

#### **I. URBAN SPACE ALERT**

**Design Intervention: Understanding Cairo Informal Areas**  
Jomana G. Attia and Alaa El Anssary

**012**

**Industrial Waste Management in Egypt: a Sustainable Design System**  
Nariman G. Lotfi

**032**

**Kaleidoscopic Presence. A Study of Presence, Listening and Movement in Lisbon**  
Camila Soares de Barros

**051**

#### **II. CULTURAL HERITAGE ALERT**

**From Moving Image to Still Image: Feature Films as References for Preserving the Architectural Heritage**  
Ahmed Wahby & Nora Kahil

**070**

**Augmented Reality Implementation in Cultural Heritage for Emotional Experiences. The Case of CHEESE**  
Carla Langella

**091**

**Critical Design Approach to Understand the Current Public's Perception of Islamic Art and Design**  
Andreas Sicklinger, Alaa Baligh, Sherin Helmy

**117**

#### **III. SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGN**

**Post Disaster Rooftops**  
Gabriele Leo and Grazia Mappa (Plasticity Studio), Peppe Frisino, Gabriella Mastrangelo

**140**

#### **IV. BIOGRAPHIES**

**About the Authors**

**151**



# URBAN SPACE ALERT

# Kaleidoscopic Presence. A Study of Presence, Listening and Movement in Lisbon

Camila Soares de Barros, Independent artist and researcher, Brazil

## Keywords

BICHO, Dance, Creative Process, Lisbon, Kaleidoscopic Presence

## Abstract

BICHO was a dance created *in, about, and with* a specific place in Lisbon called Beco do Jasmim. This article intends to share the creative and investigative process of BICHO, bringing to surface questions such as: what is the technical bodily element that I have been calling “kaleidoscopic presence”? How could I elaborate this dance without hierarchizing it over the space and the local residents? How can I listen the birth of states of dance in the street? And, is it able to show me the path to a dance creation?; Is this process a micropolitics gesture? Lastly, dancing BICHO pointed to the experience of the animal’s daze and the act of noticing myself in this state of dance. Dazing as a work procedure may be the next step of this embodied investigation.



**Figure 1.** Investigation process of BICHO at Beco do Jasmim. Photo: Clara Bevilaqua and Thiago Righi.

## 1. The artist is implicated

B I C H O

Há uma delicadeza em farejar o fluxo do corpo.

Eu tenho um bicho

Um bicho que habita o relevo das coisas

bicho de canto, de chão, de quinas, bicho que não quer ser visto

O corpo entornado,

relevo que engole a si próprio.

Dançar é lamber as feridas

cá coisas para não esquecer.

This article intends to assemble considerations of an artistic process that took place at Beco do Jasmim – Lisbon, called BICHO. It is important to state that this text is not the result of a bodily creative process, but a weaving of the many materials that emerged from the bodily investigation. The physicality of the act of writing may also promote a critic actualization of the current work in progress, in order to launch new questions to future developments.

Here, the author and the artist coincide in the same figure: in this process there was no hierarchy between dancing and writing - the information that emerged from the body could be also expressed (and processed) in words, in order to return to the moving body as new questions to be danced, and so on. These concomitant roles and materials are a decisive information to understand that BICHO wasn't a dance choreography, but a synesthetic and aesthetic investigation that lead to a specific ethical posture of the moving body.



Figures 2-3. Investigation process of BICHO at Beco do Jasmim. Photo: Clara Bevilaqua and Thiago Righi.





Figures 4-5. Investigation process of BICHO at Beco do Jasmim. Photo: Clara Bevilaqua and Thiago Righi.

The following describes the experience of the creative process of BICHO as a consequence of being in the international collective of artists in the formation course called *The Risk of Dancing at c.e.m – centro em movimento*, which is an investigation structure in the studies of body and movement dedicated in practicing art as a form of knowledge, located in the heart of Lisbon. During the work at the studio of *c.e.m*, I felt that my body demanded being in the city, at the street. At this point the body research embraced the possibility of developing a flow between investigating the body at the dance studio and investigating the state of dance at the street, more precisely at Beco do Jasmim, at Mouraria neighborhood.

This article intends to discuss some questions regarding to a dance that emerged from bodily states suggested by the relationship with a specific location. BICHO is a work that integrated Pedras'18 Festival's program in July 2018, and the current text comes from the windstorm that this dance work has brought to surface. It is from this bodily experience that I intend to share questions such as: What is the technical bodily element that I have been calling "*kaleidoscopic presence*"? How could I elaborate this dance without hierarchizing it over the space and the local residents? How can I listen the birth of states of dance in the street? And, is it able to show me the path to a dance creation? Is this process a micropolitics gesture? Is it possible to consider the investigation process in dance and movement as a work itself, open, porous, alive?

Bodily practices demand listening. Bodily practices with the city demand adding another layer of listening. Being with a location means to open the skin pores to listen and receive

what the city reveals us – the sounds, the words in the air, the flow of the neighbors’ daily routine, the movement of opening and closing the restaurants, the tourists passing through with their roller suitcases, the light incidence changing through the space as the day goes by, the humidity of the rocks in the ground, the peculiar landform that suggested another way of moving with that ground, the many view perspectives that the eyes could reach: all this elements shapes the body state when it is moving. For this “in state of dance” investigation there are some words that pops in my mind, such as *remain*, *listening*, *presence* and *move-with* (c.e.m, 2010). The methodology had to be created during the process – each step defined the next one – the body invites what kind of material needs to be brought to the process, whether it is a text, a sound, a moment of writing, or a moment of dancing. Listening the stages of dance development in interaction with the city’s movement was the key to elaborate the creative process step by step, in real time. Therefore, the process is considered a piece of art itself, alive, mutant.

*Cai por terra a ideia da obra entregue ao público como a sacralização da perfeição. Tudo, a qualquer momento, é perfectível. A obra está sempre em estado de provável mutação, assim como há possíveis obras nas metamorfoses que os documentos preservam.*  
(Salles, 2006, p.26)

This artistic practice research was based on a tripod: (1) *Klauss Vianna Technique*<sup>1</sup>; (2) the experience of being part

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1. Klauss Vianna (1928-1992) was a Brazilian artist and researcher who started a relevant work

of *The Risk of Dancing at c.e.m* in Lisbon-PT, 2017-2018; (3) *Biopolitics* (Agamben, 2007, 2016; Barros, 2014, 2017). These three main bodily references, lead me to think the body movement as an opportunity to practice a profane politic action against the many power apparatuses that try to constrict the body, life and death (Barros, 2017). In addition, some of the main guidelines of the work BICHO were to defy the property over the body and to inhabit fissures (in the city, in the system). These guidelines are considered here as a micropolitics gestures, not by fighting against normativity, but by existing as a different, as an element that integrates the space – this dance is about co-existence and not about confrontation. Dancing BICHO was also a micropolitics practice.

## 2. Embody the Beco do Jasmim. The exercise of listening the space and its residents

For this entire process there was an effort in avoiding formulas or pre-designed procedures. The methodology was entirely based on the physicality of the meeting with Beco do Jasmim. There is a specificity of each meeting of the body with a location, in the words of c.e.m's staff:

*A relação que cada um estabelece com o contexto é muito singular, não existe à partida uma fórmula a seguir ou um objetivo fixo a atingir, cada um se reserva o espaço de estar-com, de escutar atenta-*

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in dance and theater in Brazil. The bodily work started by him is nowadays placed in the scope of Somatics, and is known as *Klauss Vianna Technique*, named after his death by some of his apprentices who continued the research and developed the systematization of the knowledge. The technique was didactically systematized in three stages: Ludic Process, Vector Process, and Creative Process (Miller, 2007).

*mente a textura daquilo e daquele que encontra, criar laços, aproximar-se, deixar que se aproxime, esperar, descobrir, integrar, ouvir histórias, detectar linhas de movimento ou de ausência dele.*

*É neste sentido que o acompanhamento dos profissionais do c.e.m se torna precioso, tanto no permanente tecer dos movimentos singulares no sentido da criação de um organismo multifacetado como no estabelecimento da matéria de criação/acção e evidenciar uma outra escala do mapa que cada indivíduo se implica.*

*Todos os processos de criação englobam momentos mais solitários e momentos em que a partilha de pontos de vista e questões emergentes da prática se torna incontornável. Sabemos que aquilo que nos propomos a fazer é pertinente a nível de desenvolvimento humano e da reoxigenação do espaço urbano, sabemos que trabalhamos com pessoas e que, indo ao encontro de quem elas são levando conosco quem somos, estamos a abrir espaços de afecto sensíveis e frágeis, mas também, a nosso ver, urgentes. (c.e.m., 2010, pp.6-7)*

I've noticed that in this bodily investigation I was entering, the body revealed itself in a specific movement texture, combined with the unbalances and spine curves, caused by the daily coexistence with the wrinkled and rocky landform. The eyes of BICHO found the possibility of traveling through many planes and landscapes that the place offered: when I was in the top of the landform I could see places of the city that I couldn't reach with my eyes when I was dancing down the small hill at Beco do Jasmim. The reach of the eyes produced changes of the kind of movement in the entire body, changing the way that the creature BICHO was looking and interacting to the space, resulting in a vicious circle. Marie Bardet (2014) discusses the relationship between dance and

space supported by Schopenhauer's writings about architecture. She points that "the aesthetic experience of the gravity to go out of the opposition between heavy and light is what Schopenhauer observes in an art that, *a priori*, does not have to do with dance, the architectural art" (Bardet, 2014, p.59), and that some elements that architecture deals with, as well as in dance practices, are: weight, coherence, resistance, fluidity, the light reflection, among other elements (Bardet, 2014). Bardet brings Schopenhauer to discussion to point to a much more complex relationship of the moving body in a constant dialogue with the space information and the architecture that surrounds the dancer.

In a creative process is inevitable to invite and coexist with technical body memories in a creative process, so, working on BICHO allowed me to study the behavior of *Global Axis* and the *Bone Vectors*, both are topics of *Klauss Vianna Technique* (Miller, 2007) that were recruited in order to deal with the landform of the chosen location. Opening myself to this process lead me to re-elaborate the old statements of a dancing body and also meant updating what I understand as a bodily technique. It must be able to embrace questioning, updating, mashing, and reviewing movements.

The investigation path followed the scent of the body, and this is something revolutionary, when leads us to question the power apparatus of the established and rigid knowledge that may want to dictate and tell the body what to do before letting it be whatever it wants to be. The creative process of BICHO wasn't planned with predetermined procedures: as long as I



experienced the daily routine of being at Beco do Jasmim in state of dance, the body itself revealed the procedures to be tried out. The questions were made from the whole body to the whole body, and not from the mind to the rest of the body. This listening approach is decisive when one of the main concerns is to *move-with* the space, and not over it, resulting in a very specific experience that is not only aesthetic, but ethic and therefore, political.



**Figures 6.** Investigation process of BICHO at Beco do Jasmim: footwork in the landform. Photo: Thiago Righi.

With the side by side support of the teachers and colleagues of c.e.m, I could align the daily work routine at Beco do Jasmim, dedicating hours to just stay there, sitting, observing, writing and experimenting the flow of the words dancing on the paper, listening to the space, getting to know the routine

of the residents, to finally listen and follow the birth of the movement that one day would become a dance. The “choreography” was precisely the state of dance that this experience provided me. The practices with c.e.m were absolutely decisive to this and the future investigations.

### 3. Kaleidoscopic presence

In the field of bodily arts, *presence* is an important matter to be considered. The artists need to work out on their attention to be able to not only be aware of the context, but also be capable of communicating through their art (Barros, 2017; Viana & Carvalho, 2005).

What I have been elaborating in my practices is something that exceeds the act of “being present”. It is something that is more than the event of the present body. It’s a state of presence that transforms itself in every change of the body or of the environment. It is something such as a kaleidoscope, in which we may have a completely change of image even if a single small element changes its place inside the device – *one* can change the *whole*. Seeing the transformation of one image to another may invite other sensations, other understandings about what is been seen. The *kaleidoscopic presence* is about the same process: there is a specific tonus, a temperature, a smell, a desire, a speed, a distance that constellated in a certain way leads the body to move according to it. To each constellation of these elements there is a specific way of moving (or pausing) the body in space. I feel the *kaleidoscopic presence* as a nude presence, unpretentious, alert, honest – it is about the trust in letting myself to the flow, and assuming this



process as an art investigation that expands itself to the daily life practices. To do it so, a certain detachment from what I think I want to do is required, so I can be able to exercise the movement of listening. The birth of every movement must come from this subtle act of listening.

Presence is the first topic of the first part (Ludic Process) of *Klauss Vianna Technique*. And, not by chance, presence is the subject that accompanied me during all the way through my history in dance studies. This means that I consider presence as a resource that we may expand and develop, and for me this has the same importance as developing any virtuous physical skills.

Specially after being in touch with the dynamics of c.e.m (working with people and places) I started to investigate and to observe how *presence* is recruited as one of the most important foundation of an artist's practice. Presence is not only to master your acting, but it is mostly about listening, about being open to the space and to the other people around us. It is about building a non-hermetic life, and, therefore, a non-hermetic dance – and this was the most important thing I've learned about dancing BICHO at Beco do Jasmim. Not an easy way of working, but for sure a long-lasting experience that changed my whole conception of moving and dancing.

At the course called *The risk of dancing*, at c.e.m – centro em movimento, I was defied to inhabit/dance/be in places on the streets of Lisbon. During my bodily practices at the studio, I had already been listening a specific body state that was fre-

quent in my movements: a curved and tipped over body, wrinkled, wild, with a high tonus. It was during the orientation sessions with Mariana Lemos, Paula Petreca, Sofia Neuparth, Margarida Agostinho, Peter Michael Dietz, and Valentina Parraviccini that I've found ways to experience this quality of movement at Beco do Jasmim.

In methodological terms, I would like to share some questions and guidelines that has emerged during the process of being in state of dance at Beco do Jasmim: entering into the routine of that space was, for me, such as asking for permission to become part of that space. Therefore, it was necessary to not impose myself neither to the place nor to the people, and that was an achievement of the daily insistence of the work. I've learned that the presence at the dance studio shouldn't be bigger or better than the presence on the streets, so I couldn't hierarchize the situations, the places and the actions - this means that being in a conversation with someone deserved the same attention as dancing, and also the same attention as writing, as cooking and singing, or even flowing through one situation to another. It is the same body. It seems important to me to learn how to travel from one situation to another without losing myself, without getting in the "automatic" mode and stop noticing the surroundings. It is also important to allow me to have no control over a situation. The deep listening that this presence requires is a listening by the pores, with the whole body, tridimensional - that is what I call a *kaleidoscopic presence*. Kaleidoscopic because when I am related to myself and the environment (360 degrees), in real time, I am able to produce new landscapes, new designs of movement,

new responses and proposals every moment. Being in state of kaleidoscopic presence means to be available and flexible, means to co-create with the ambiance.

#### 4. A scent of what may be BICHO – Looking backwards, looking forward.

*Não é sobre o que faço, mas como faço e quem sou quando faço.  
Quem vou sendo enquanto faço.* (Neuparth, 2010, p.13)<sup>2</sup>

Being at Beco do Jasmim with the conditions described above has produced a specific quality of relationship with people and space. BICHO was part of Beco do Jasmim and *vice versa* – inhabit that place was also inhabiting relationships that were beside the power apparatus, beside the normativity (I was dancing in a non-usual space for dance, but as the time passed by, I started to become part of that landscape, turning that place into a place of dance as much as a space for life). Therefore, the creative process also focused on creating other kinds of relationship between the dancing body and the residents: free relations, aired, unpretentious, in which we hardly exerted power over each other. The potency was exactly at the gathering, at the unpretentious side by side that interlaced us. The coexistence let us to know each other. If the Biopolitics points to the desire of control over life and death of the bodies, the profanation points to the potency of the body to slip out of the power apparatus shackles creating, this way, another existence

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2. It is not about what I do, but how I do and who I am while I am doing. who I am being while I do.” (translated from Neuparth, 2010, p. 13)

(even if temporary). I understand profanation as a movement, as a way of living and being a moving body in the world. In this case of the work in Lisbon, the profanation might be considered as the act of inhabiting Beco do Jasmim and “letting me become Beco do Jasmim”. It also may embrace the power of the body that was sitting there “for nothing”, to dance, to listen all the potency that the meeting might have revealed. “The importance falls in the maintenance of the movement, in keeping alive and potent the chance to profane. Thus, we keep also alive the political potency of the subjects”<sup>3</sup> in favor of a *micropolitics of the profane body* (Barros, 2017, p.97).

Beyond these micropolitics optic, dancing BICHO allowed me to experience the animal’s daze when BICHO faces itself as a life potency (Agamben, 2013). Lastly, this article opens the doors to a future discussion that this dancing creature brought about the dazing<sup>4</sup> of this state of dance - for now, this is the expression that best communicates the feeling of this “in state of dance creature” - but this stage is still in course and put in words here would constrict the experience. In these seven months of investigation in Lisbon I could taste a bit of the animal’s life potency, embodied in the experience of BICHO. This is a bet and probably one of the next steps of the investigation that follows - much more as a question to be danced than a final response. The possibility of the dazing as an investigation procedure is what interests for the next experiences.

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3. *A importância recai na manutenção do movimento, em manter viva e potente a chance de profanar. Dessa forma, mantemos vivo também o potencial político dos sujeitos.* (Barros, 2017, p. 97)

4. In Portuguese *aturdimento*.

Lastly, I believe that these questions and micropolitics practices of the body in the city are important matters to think not only the artistic creative process itself, but also the reverberation of this movement in the context that the process is included. Beco do Jasmim remained with this dance's trail on it, and BICHO persists in investigation, now with the territory of Beco do Jasmim embodied as a quality of movement – "(...) o movimento criativo é a convivência de mundos possíveis" (Salles, 2006, p.26).

Composing BICHO was never a goal to achieve, because it always showed itself as a consequence of the physicality that was created with the daily practice at the studio of c.e.m and at Beco do Jasmim. The body invents itself in the contact with others. This will always a matter to pursue.



**Figures 7.** Dancing BICHO at *Festival Pedras'18 - Em que mundo queremos viver?*, july-2018, Beco do Jasmim - Lisbon-PT. Photo: Clara Bevilaqua.

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Lotfi is an instructor at the German University in Cairo where she was awarded a Master's degree in Product Design in 2014 focusing on Design and Bionics. She has focused on research in the fields of Product design, Biomimicry, and Sustainability which she presented in workshops and talks including a TEDx talk at Zewail City University in 2017. She was awarded the Grand Prize by the Biomimicry Institute for an irrigation solution for Fayoum's agriculture in 2013. She is currently working on her PhD degree focused on 4D printing and the future of the industrial design scene in Egypt.

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MA in Interior Design (Politecnico di Milano), she studied illustration at Central Saint Martins and worked at Cinimod Studio (interior and interaction design) in London. Her work is focused on creating spaces for relations, experiences and participation through urban installations and hands-on workshops. In 2011 she started "Make People Do Lab" a research project on crafts and participatory design practices, based in the Apulian region. In 2014 she joined Entropika, a multidisciplinary design lab based in Athens, operating at the intersection of art, architecture and technology. In 2016 she co-founded Bordo, an interior and visual design practice based in Taranto. Since January 2018 she is part of the Open Design School in Matera, Italy, designing urban infrastructures for public spaces for Matera European Capital of Culture 2019.

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**Plasticity Studio**

Art and research project established in 2017 by Grazia Mappa e Gabriele Leo in an attempt to investigate the natural and political implications of western design culture. Our multimedia work finds itself at the intersection of contemporary art, and design sociological investigation.

Currently we live and work between Taranto and Milan.

[plasticity-studio.tumblr.com](https://plasticity-studio.tumblr.com)

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**Camila Soares de Barros**

Dance and movement artist and researcher interested in biopolitics, education, creative processes, and in art as power of life. Brazilian, Bachelor of Dance (UNICAMP- Brazil), Specialist in Técnica Klauss Vianna (PUC-SP, Brazil) and Master in Education (UNIFESP- Brazil). In 2017-2018 she integrated the international collective of artists "O Risco da Dança" at c.e.m - centro em movimento and presented her latest dance work BICHO in Festival Pedras'18, in Lisbon-PT. Back to Brazil since August 2018, she keeps investigating BICHO and its developments and potencies in different territories.

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**Ahmed Wahby**

Graduated in 1992 with a degree in Architecture from Ain Shams University, Cairo Egypt. In 2000 he obtained an MA degree in Islamic Art and Architecture from the American University in Cairo, AUC where he had worked as a research assistant for almost 4 years. In 2008 he was awarded his Ph. D degree in Islamic Art, Architecture and Archaeology from the Oriental Department of the Otto-Friedrich University, School of Human Sciences, Art and Culture, in Bamberg, Germany. Dr. Wahby has been teaching since 2008 at the German University in Cairo GUC, the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts in the Design Theory Department. He has also served as the Faculty's Vice Dean for 8 years. He has numerous publications in local and international journals.

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*Progetto grafico* is an international graphic design magazine founded in 2003 and published by Aiap, the Italian association of visual communication design. A point of reference for such design in Italy from its start, it has also been fully translated into English since 2012. • In December 2017, Jonathan Pierini and Gianluca Camillini became the current editors. • The new *Progetto grafico* offers a critical look at graphics and visuals through a narrative broken up into fragments. Its aim is to offer articles connected in different ways so as to foster a series of transdisciplinary, historical and contemporary considerations. This multiple viewpoint, ranging from very distant to very close, seeks to look at the real both in the broadest terms as well as in a more specialist context. Our belief is that observation, whether of artifacts or representations, as well as production of visuals or graphics can add to today's cultural debate. • Contributions can include visual material, essays and interviews. Each issue intends to explore the storytelling opportunities of the journal.



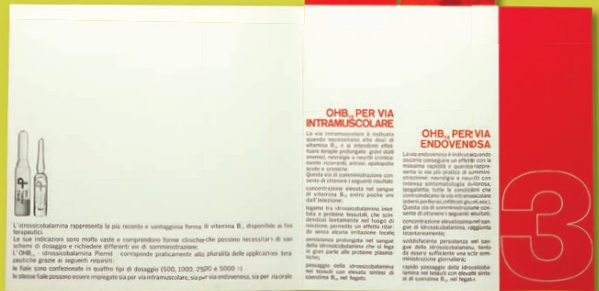
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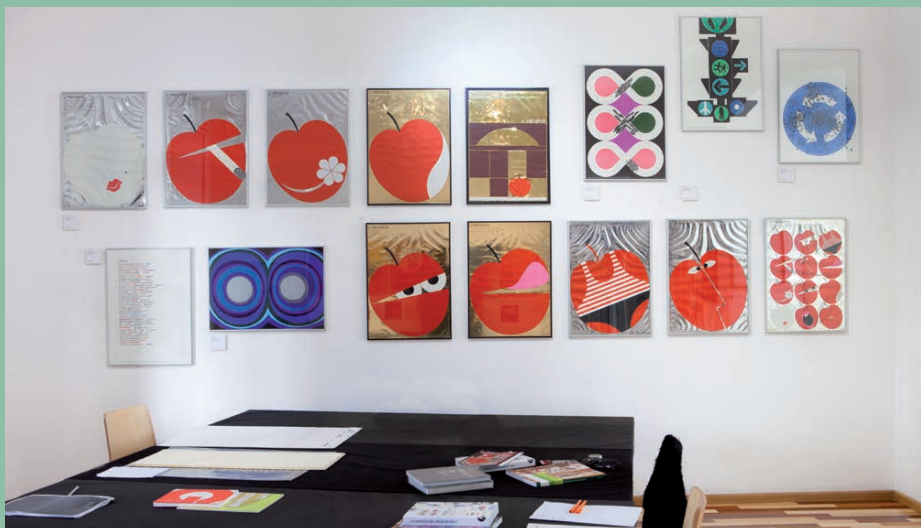
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**PAD. Pages on a and Design**

International, peer-reviewed,  
open access journal  
ISSN 1972-7887

#15, december 2018

[www.padjournal.net](http://www.padjournal.net)