

Kathleen Buckley

Art-making (the domain occupied by artists) and art studies (the domain occupied by art historians) tend to be mutually exclusive in terms of their respective day-to-day practices. However, while artists spend their time learning about different techniques, about storytelling through visual media and about capturing the essence of our time, art historians reflect on these same subjects but in the context of historical and stylistic developments. With these similarities in mind, we may start to see art-making and art studies as complementary instead of merely sequential (art-makers make art which art historians then study). When we think of these

Binazzi became interested in the study of signs and symbols, he co-founded the RADICAL DESIGN collective UFO and in 1967 began creating objects that "mixed up the signifier and the signified". Alongside other RADICAL ARCHITECTURE groups such as Archizoom, Gianni Pettierna, 9999, Superstudio, and Zwigurrato, UFO played an important role in the rise of RADICAL DESIGN in Italy. The RADICAL ARCHITECTURE movement, of which RADICAL DESIGN is a component, was a response to the nation's political and economic state in the late 1960s and sought to "operate outside the logic of industrial design". UFO worked to create a vision of a social utopia while critiquing social and economic orders such as consumerism and imperialism.

The works created by UFO proposed alternatives to the norm using humor,

Lapo Binazzi's interest in semantics and critiquing contemporary social values are integral to his design objects. Three of his lamps in particular demonstrate the humorous way in which Binazzi approaches these themes, specifically in response to Hollywood and the idea of the American Dream: "Dollaro", a table lamp with a dollar sign stem, was created by UFO for the Sherwood Restaurant interior design project and alludes to the world of comic book cartoons, specifically Uncle Scrooge and the celebration of the money; "Paramount", a table lamp with a mountain as its base and an umbrella (*parasole* or *parapioggia* in Italian) as its lamp shade; and "MGM", a table lamp that mimics the shape of the logo of American media company Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. Binazzi's light fixtures are some of the few tangible works that remain from the RADICAL DESIGN era.

John Taylor

1. Why do we use a plaster mold for reproducing clay sculptures?

When a piece of sculpture is created in clay, it can be fired in a kiln to produce a finished terracotta piece, but if multiples are required, then a plaster press mold must be made so that we can press wet clay into the negative plaster form and pull out as many clay copies of the piece as we need. Plaster is used because when dry it sucks out the moisture from the surface of the clay and thus releases the clay model from the mold.

2. How to avoid undercut and make a more compact/organic sculptural form.

It is always a good idea to create the original clay model with the plaster mold

Lisa Nocentini

The SACI Ceramics classes of Spring, Late Spring and Fall 2019 have participated in the creation of a prototype for a lamp for the 'roasted chicken' project and in the production of three actual pieces that are exhibited in Lapo Binazzi's show at the SACI Gallery in October 2019.

After a presentation by Lapo on his work and his career, the Spring semester ceramics students modelled the clay prototype in the actual size (approximately 45 cm in height). The prototype roasted chicken was modelled from a solid piece of clay (using approximately 50 kg of clay) under the supervision of Lapo himself and following his preparatory sketches.

Špela Zidar

1. The Chicken as a Symbol

What seems to be in our times one of the most diffused white meats, adaptable to any kind of dish because of its neutral flavour, the chicken is nowadays staffed and abused in vast farms to satisfy the mass production for both meat and eggs. In the past, the chicken was a wild, exotic animal that was cherished especially for its power and courage. These attributes were recognized long ago by ancient Romans who observed cockfights. In fact, the domestication of *Gallus Gallus*, originating from the Indian forest, occurred with the original intent of organizing such events.

be interpreted as the roasted chicken meaning wealth and its distribution. The example Jean-Jacques Rousseau used when describing the inequality of distribution within the economic system including the roasted chicken: when two men have one roasted chicken and only one of them eats it, statistically they have both eaten a half, though one is satiated and the other hungry.

There is also a more contemporary example of the roasted chicken representing economy, linked to Florence and to the movement of Radical Architecture founded in the late 1960s and 1970s of which Lapo Binazzi was an active member. At the time, a group of artists and architects active in Florence called Archizoom were depicting the Economy as a marble roasted chicken: an abundance of the goods that we are unable to consume

lives has its function and its form. These two components, according to Lloyd Wright, should be joined in a spiritual union in order to achieve a good design. Through the years, designers kept questioning the relationship between these concepts: form or function, form and function, more form less function, less form more function. These two concepts determine design and the way we understand and experience our world; the reason why design impacts our life in an omnipresent, albeit very subtle, way. Design answers the needs of our contemporary society by producing useful objects that are sold and distributed in the economic system. To quote Yves Behar: "the work of a designer is really at the intersection of commerce and culture." The commercialisation of art is a topic that is very much questioned during the period of neo avant-garde movements

interpretation of the existing objects.

As Joseph Kosuth shows in his conceptual artwork 'One and Three Chairs' (which consists of three 'chairs' in a row: the first is a chair, the second is a photograph of the chair, and the third is the dictionary definition of the word "chair"), there are many levels of representation and we can visualize the words and ideas in many different ways. Nonetheless, we see the world accordingly to our notions and experiences which we have much difficulty moving away from, to think outside the box. The Radical Architecture and design movement gives us this possibility by creating objects that cannot be used in a logical way that their form would suggest. Either they appear to be something else or they have their symbolism or semiotic meanings altered. For example, ceramic

ordinary bird and the more elegant and elaborate lamp shade.

The red lamp with a shade in the form of an aureole is dedicated to Saint Apollonia. The form of a chicken here is inspired by the play on words since the word *pollo* meaning chicken in Italian language is included in the name of Sant'Apollonia, the saint protector of the dental care. A lot of Lapo Binazzi's previous works have been built on the literal visualization of word meanings, such as the famous Paramount Lamp/Sculpture produced for the first time by Lapo Binazzi/UFO in 1969, where the famous film corporation has its logo revisited literally. The lamp's base is in the shape of a mountain that is protected by an umbrella, *parasole* or *parapioggia* in Italian, as *parare* means "to protect from". Together, the base and the lampshade create "Para-mount".

SACI Students' Re-visitation of Lapo Binazzi's "The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken": Notes on Art Education

two fields as part of a reciprocal relationship we can start to see the ways in which knowledge of one can benefit our understanding of the other. In the process of preparing for this exhibition, SACI students had the unique opportunity to work within this relationship; they participated in both the domain of art study and the domain of art-making in order to create the works we see here today.

One of the objectives of the art historian is to understand the social and artistic environment in which art is made in order to interpret its meaning and identify its influences. We often ask ourselves: Why did the artist create

irony, and parody, and through mediums that wed art, architecture, and technology. Binazzi's works in particular consisted of a variety of mediums including fashion, film, performance, and interior design. These artworks/design objects could be described as a combination of conceptual and pop art with influences from the Dadaists of the early 20th century. Much of Binazzi's work, and works by UFO in general, were ephemeral and meant to be temporary provocations. The series *urboeffimeri* consisted of folded inflatable tubes marked with anti-capitalist slogans that were carried around Florence during protests and performances, invading and disturbing the public space. These inflatable objects were intended to be adaptable architecture that would disturb the existing architectural order, though considering and respecting its surroundings, and

Binazzi's series of lamps titled "The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken", revisited in this exhibition by SACI students, was influenced by the first RADICAL ARCHITECTURE happening in San Giovanni Valdarno in 1968. At this event the roasted chicken served as a symbol of consumer culture and the contemporary food economy. Binazzi appropriates this symbol, employs humorous uses of the word *pollo* (chicken), and creates playful juxtapositions between the chicken-shaped lamp bases and their elaborate lamp shades to make us think about our world and our society in a new way. With this information in mind, SACI students were able to begin their contribution to "The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken" with an awareness of the historical, political, and social environment in which this work was first created.

The three lamps displayed in

Making the Plaster Press Mold for the Roasted Chicken

in mind, because a one piece press mold can be easily made from a simple object but anything more complicated will not come out of a mold if it is undercut and will therefore involve making many plaster sections. A way to avoid this is to actually make the original clay model have less protruding parts, so that it becomes more organic. It also makes the artist have to think about moving form around in space, and as Michelangelo said 'a good sculpture should be able to roll down a hill and not break off any pieces'.

3. How do we actually do it?

The larger than life size 'roasted chicken' was modeled in a solid piece of clay and left to dry a little until the

Making The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken

Once this phase was completed the big and heavy solid clay chicken was handed over to the Sculpture department where a plaster cast was made.

Back in the Ceramics department, the plaster mold was used to create three hollow chicken forms. Local Montelupo earthenware clay slabs were pressed into the two-part plaster mold and left to stiffen to leather-hard (a stage in the drying of a clay object at which the clay is still damp but has dried enough to be able to be handled). At this point the now hollow clay form was taken out of the mold, cleaned up, refined, and a hole for the central shaft was made. A colored clay slip was then painted over the whole surface. When

The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken

In some ancient cultures the chicken was used to predict the future. The happy chicken that had eaten ensured victory in battle while the nervous chicken, without appetite, usually meant defeat. The chicken was – and is sometimes still – used to communicate with the gods through sacrifice in some Caribbean beliefs linked to voodoo. In ancient Egypt the chicken egg was put in temples to symbolise the perfection of the Universe, The Cosmic Egg – the birth of our Universe. Only later was the chicken domesticated and used for meat and eggs, a relatively easy task considering its inability to fly.

Though early Christians regarded

and is therefore useless.

Another Radical Design group called UFO – co-founded by Lapo Binazzi – used the roasted chicken in the first Radical Architecture 'happening' "Chicken Circus Circulation" presented in occasion of Premio Masaccio in San Giovanni Valdarno on the day of the patron saint of the city, June 24 in 1968. Roasted chickens were trade goods between the inhabitants of San Giovanni Valdarno and the performers who were aliens that landed there from Venus. Valdarno is actually famous for its roasted chicken and Venusians were eager to try it and to exchange it for their giant papier-mâché roasted chicken.

This 'happening' echoed for some days later in the city of San Giovanni Valdarno, triggering an animated debate between the population, institutions,

of which Radical Architecture is a part. Italian Radical Design sought to propose alternatives to the norm and to critique commercialism. Operating borderline and mostly outside the market, they could deal with concepts and ideas which left the artists/designers more freedom to experiment with both the form and the function/meaning of the design object. In the end the design object will be realised in a most appropriate manner for its place in society or it may remain unrealised.

Furthermore, design develops and changes within our society along with our needs and expectations and, as a consequence, is a reflection of our culture. Therefore, design is also a cultural artefact, combining the necessities of our contemporary life with technology, form, usefulness and aesthetics. It is rather impossible to view

books that cannot be read, knives that don't cut but light up, furniture molds that can be adapted to different spaces, literal visualisation of concepts, models for impossible projects, etc. These design objects create a gap in our mind that make us question our certainties of perception, the nature of our actual needs and our ability to freely interpret the world around us.

At this point we should also take into consideration the concept of dematerialization. From the 1970s onward Lapo Binazzi researched the concept of "Non Design" which refers to design not only with objects, but also with specific behaviour, processes and techniques, a kind of storytelling through gestures, combining forms and objects. In the late seventies Lapo collaborated with the project Alchimia with the aim to introduce postmodernity into Italian

Lapo also uses a play on words for the yellow chicken by choosing to add a lampshade in a form of bicorne, the army hat that was very popular in Europe during the 18th and 19th century with which Napoleon was often depicted wearing. Therefore the third roasted chicken sculpture is called Napoleon, named after the French emperor that phonetically includes the word *pollo*: chicken. Considering the roasted chicken is the symbol of ordinary masses and cowardliness in Western culture, this colorful, out of proportion artwork contrasts the elegance of a hat, the symbol of military and political power.

t.c. translator's commen

this work? What was going on at the time and the place in which the artist was working? What led to this stylistic development? Lapo Binazzi, the artist himself, met with the SACI Sculpture and Ceramics students to discuss these very questions before they began their contribution to this project. The artist explained his work, research, and teaching experience while also

describing the social, political, and historical context of his artworks.

Lapo Binazzi studied architecture at the University of Florence and was particularly influenced by semiotics professor Umberto Eco, a well-known Italian author and literary critic. As

could be activated when needed. Other inflatable works created by UFO, referred to as *effimeri urbani* (urban ephemera), include, among others,

an inflatable version of Brunelleschi's dome of Florence's cathedral and an inflatable A.N.A.S. house (A.N.A.S. is an Italian government-owned company responsible for roadway maintenance). With *effimeri urbani* UFO sought to change our perceptions of these familiar pieces of architecture. The inflatable dome is movable and therefore, when installed elsewhere, offers a new perspective of one of the most famous touristic views. The A.N.A.S. house, a non-spectacular government building used to store road material and maintenance equipment, acquired symbolic importance due to its size; the inflatable A.N.A.S. house measured six meters in height, larger than most of the real A.N.A.S. houses.

this exhibition are the result of a collaboration between people and an intermingling of fields of study. A critical aspect of this project is that the process of creating "The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken" integrated technical knowledge of sculpture and ceramics with the contextual knowledge of art history. This unique approach provides students with a well-rounded education and encourages them to bridge the gap between art-making and art studies.



surface was leather hard. The clay model must be solid because the plaster sections have to be thick and heavy in a press mold in order to resist the force of pressing clay into every detail. Divisions were then marked on the surface of the model in order to be able to make separate plaster sections that can be easily removed.

The sections were then cast in plaster using liquid clay slip as a separator, when the plaster was set the mold was opened, the clay model removed, and the pieces left to dry to eventually be pieced and tied back together on their own to form the negative press mold.

the form had totally dried, the colored raw clay chicken were fired to 1000° C. A clear glaze was then sprayed over the surface and the chicken was re-fired to 940° C. The light fixtures and shade were then applied.

The Ceramics students have enjoyed being part of such an unusual and challenging project and have definitely benefited from participating in all the various stages of taking the project from its initial concept to its completion.

the chicken as a noble animal, defeater of the devil, the Catholic religion later on showed almost a complete disinterest in the animal. It is for this reason that in Western culture the chicken is mostly linked to food and the food economy. The term 'chicken' also suggests offensive implications such as cowardliness.

When it comes to the symbology of the roasted chicken in particular, it is usually linked to opulence or femininity/fertility; dreaming about eating a roasted chicken represents good fortune in some Eastern cultures, while in some Islamic cultures it represents a lady of the house – a woman who takes care of the children – which could also

organizers and some important scholars as Umberto Eco, Furio Colombo, Claudio Popovich and Giuseppe Chiari.

Tommaso Trini describes this series of events in *Domus*, n. 466, September 1968: "Between the Great Alchemist on the tower (of the Municipality Building built by Arnolfo di Cambio t.c.), the virgins and the technicians continued with the complicated maneuvers on the theme of the roasted chicken (a renowned local product), for the population witnessed a rise and fall of real (roasted t.c.) chickens and large papier-mâché chickens along the transparent plastic tubes, resulting in a final appropriation – theft of the roasted chicken – real ones-perpetrated by the children."

2. The Chicken as a Design Object

Everything that surrounds us in our

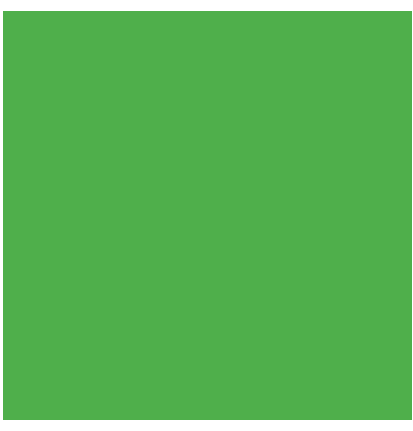
the design object merely regarding its aesthetics, form, or usefulness. To grasp it completely we need to experience it. And experience, mental or physical, is another very important component of Radical Design. Experience is also possible within design when an artefact remains in the form of an idea and does not get produced in physical form. Thus, it is possible to experience mutable, ephemeral objects and also experience concepts and ideas, which is particularly true for Radical Design.

This freedom to imagine gives us another perspective on society and invites us to search for possible directions of its development. Understanding/accepting these 'utopian' projects may alter our way of life and our needs and therefore contribute to the physical realization of the non-realized ideas or a different

design. Some of these concepts and 're-interpretations' are also present in the series of large ceramic lamp sculptures that Lapo Binazzi produced in collaboration with SACI – Studio Arts College International.

The three designer lamps with bases in the form of roasted chickens glazed green, red, and yellow are from the series produced with SACI Students "The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken". These design objects are artefacts that transform reality in their scale, colors and usage and, with the addition of different lamp shades, perform a transfer on the symbolic and semiotic level. By adding a designer lamp shade that Lapo Binazzi bought in Venice, the green chicken is transformed into an elegant designer lamp, creating a contrast between a base in a form of a poor and





Steven Brittan - SACI President



Introduction



SACI – Studio Arts College International provides our students with a 360° experience in Florence, encouraging them to be inspired by the culturally rich talent and history that surrounds them. This is why we embraced with great pleasure this collaboration between SACI’s ceramic and sculpture students, and Lapo Binazzi, a Florentine radical architect, who is one of the most important neo avant-garde artists from the 1960’s and 1970’s in Italy.

Radical Architecture and Radical Design, being both dynamic and indeterminate, permitted radical architects to operate outside the

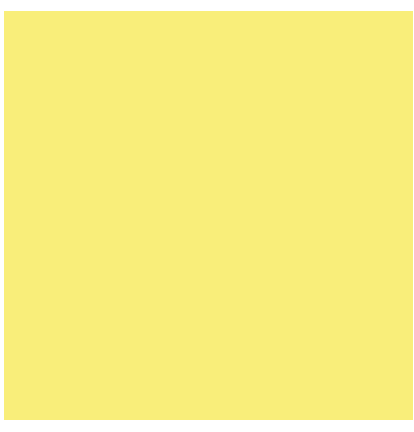
box, criticizing modern society and its economic systems, using their imagination to predict future needs and to help forecast better worlds. Being able to add a critical point of view to existing conditions is key to being an artist in contemporary society.

SACI students from Spring, Late Spring and Fall 2019 semesters were given the opportunity to experience this modality of artistic creation working with Lapo Binazzi. Lapo developed three design lamps, and SACI Students produced the ceramic sculptures and Florentine artisans produced lamp shades. In this way the students were able to learn first-

hand about the Italian and Florentine avant-garde art movement. Students also learned the techniques of large-scale ceramic sculpture production, clay model, plaster molds and ceramic sculpture, and they were able to see all stages of the development of a design work, collaborating closely with their instructors, the artists and artisans.



Lapo Binazzi (UFO)



The Philosophy of Design



Design has become one of the greatest systems for understanding the world. The revolution or utopia, imagined fifty years ago by radical architects has been realized. I’ve recently discovered that I’ve invented and always been using Instagram. That is, since I was collecting the images of my work in a classifier with transparent inserts, each containing up to four random prints, often randomly rotated, forcing the viewer to move his head from top to bottom, from right to left. There were no writings or explanations, and the images spoke for themselves. There was no real chronology, other than the collecting the material itself, carried out also on the basis of “sentimental” criteria invented

in that certain moment. One could feel that this “random” method would have a future. And indeed it inspired subsequent publications and later served to design my website.

On the website, however, the images can be consulted individually, but I still keep prints of the computer’s video screen, which shows them all together next to each other. This was a first representation that varied over time, although I still don’t know exactly for what reason. The transformation has definitely been accomplished with Instagram, where the pages referring to my work vary over time, depending on who posts and when. It is true that there

is still no criterion of image rotations, or overturns, but there is that of repetitions and redundancies, which create unexpected and extremely captivating effects. However, we will witness the future developments of this aspect.

I remember thinking that a man is all other men (and women of course) and that the same thoughts can be transmitted immediately by the mind itself, at the speed of the mind. And I also remember having thought about in what way a thought, possibly not even expressed or communicated to someone, formulated only in one’s mind can affect the world. Now I know that is the statistical and temporal result of

the mind activity of the human brain. It’s nice to think about the science and technology that have been able to define the algorithms that define these results, and about these new and wonderful methodologies, putting us in a position to be able to communicate instantly with people like us and also with ourselves.

Another thought that I have always had was: “Nature (x) facit saltus” where (x) represents the unknown, the reason that that jump really happens. It does not matter if the jump occurs in the half-sleep as in the case of Finnegans by J. Joyce, while sleeping, in the shower or with eyes open, or in the most varied situations. Just as it doesn’t matter if we are in a forest or at the sea or in the mountains. The important thing is to understand what is happening. I understood it through design.

Florence, December 14, 2018



Exhibition

Lapo Binazzi
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ROASTED CHICKEN

Curated by

Spela Zidar

SACI Gallery

Via Sant’Antonino 11
Opening: October 24, at 6 pm
On view: October 24 – December 7, 2019

Published in conjunction with the exhibition THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ROASTED CHICKEN by Lapo Binazzi at SACI Gallery. The exhibition is a presentation of works by Lapo Binazzi, especially the three ceramic sculptures from the series “The Philosophy of the Roasted Chicken” produced with SACI ceramic and sculpture students that worked with the artist during Spring, Late Spring and Fall 2019 semesters.

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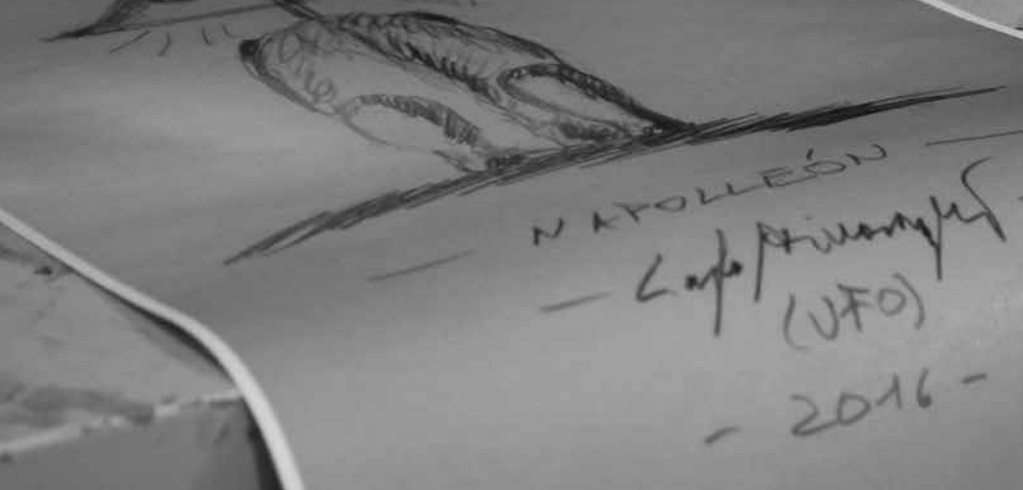
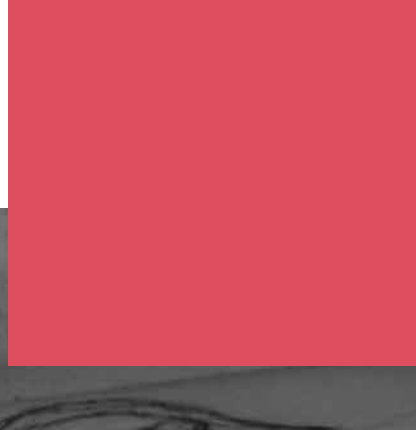
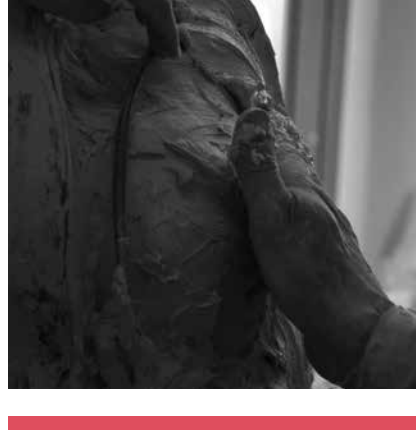
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