



PRESS RELEASE

Mumbai | March 2023

In Mumbai, Italian design meets Indian art with the exhibit **BINARY CODEX** by **ANDREA ANASTASIO**

The retrospective of the Italian designer is organized by Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Mumbai and promoted by the Embassy of Italy New Delhi in collaboration with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya.

The exhibition will also host works that have been conceived in jugalbandhi with Bhajju Shyam and with Avinash Veeraraghavan.

Opening Friday March 24 at 6.30pm. The show will run till May 7, in the Premchand Roychand gallery of CSMVS.

The exhibition, by the title of Binary Codex, is a retrospective of the works of Andrea Anastasio, an artist, designer and thinker who has been working between Italy and India for the last 40 years. The show, curated by senior curator of MAXXI Museum-Rome, Domitilla Dardi, relies on pieces borrowed from several museums, cultural institutions and private collections. Artworks are exhibited along with design projects that have been produced by internationally renowned Italian Design companies (Artemide, Danese, Foscarini), some of which have been realized in collaboration with Indian craftsmen and women.

Binary Codex was produced by the Italian Embassy in New Delhi on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the independence of India and has then been exhibited also at the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath in Bangalore.

The exhibition at the CSMVS is co-sponsored by Istituto Marangoni and Guna (An initiative by the KAASH Foundation). The showcasing includes works from collections of Giusti Stagetti, Luisa delle Piane, MAP (Museum of Art and Photography), Gatti 1928, Foscarini, Artemide, and SKE Gallery collection, together with new projects realized in collaboration with established Indian artists Avinash Veeraraghavan and Bhajju Shyam. During the six weeks exhibition time, there will be a series of collateral activities such as workshops and lectures for the general public and for students of several academic institutions operating in the city.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity to gather such a large collection at CSMVS, one of the most prestigious Indian museums” says Francesca Amendola, director of IIC Mumbai “to deepen the knowledge of Italian design and also to reflect on the close connections between Italian complex approach to design and Indian culture, between craftsmanship and art, industrial production and daily life: reflections developed by Andrea Anastasio all along his prolific and awarded career”.

“We are happy to collaborate with Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Mumbai for the unique exhibition” shared CSMVS’s Director General, Mr. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, and continued: “the showcasing of works by Italian artist, Andrea Anastasio will help our audience understand the artist’s perspective on everyday objects,

narratives of the dichotomy in design and philosophy alongside the artist's personal anecdotes. We hope this exhibition is the beginning of one of many such dialogues that the artist wishes to engage in".

Anastasio has a background in Eastern studies, holding a MA in Indian philosophy. He is a designer and self-taught artist, and has lived culturally and physically between Italy and India throughout his life. From the two countries, working in close partnership with craftsman communities, he has gathered a vast knowledge about production processes and their cultural implications, often integrating and mingling their linguistic codes.

"My approach to design is intertwined with my art practice – says the artist – as I am interested in generating linguistic short-circuits. Conceiving a chair or a vase to me it means investigating into the domestic world and into the different cultural meanings contained within the object. Form and function then become the tool to generate new narratives while encouraging the viewer/user to engage with her/his own understanding of space and daily existence".

The opening of the show will be from 6pm onwards on Friday March 24. The artist will be present at the inauguration and will conduct a guided tour of the exhibition. Other public guided tours by the artist have been scheduled as well, including a talk with students from design and architectural institutes.

More on Andrea Anastasio

After debuting with Memphis and Artemide in Milan, Anastasio came to India in 1992 to catalogue Islamic architecture for a UNESCO project while translating into Italian J. Krishnamurti books and A. Coomaraswamy essays on symbolism of religious classic art.

He has extensively travelled in India and resided in Chennai, as well as Bengaluru throughout the '90s, where he has tutored visual art and design. He collaborated with TARA Books, conceiving two books for the Chennai based publishing house while witnessing the rise of a dynamic generation in contemporary art. He has designed Cinnamon in 1999, the first concept store with art gallery in India while working with Rahul Mehrotra to design few private houses in the South. He had two solo shows and few group shows with GallerySke in Bengaluru and New Delhi and at JNKK in Jaipur. With Aradhna Seth he conceived "Space Mates" at the Italian Culture Centre in Delhi for the India Art Fair in 2013. In occasion of the exhibition at KCP in Bengaluru, Anastasio has engaged in two jugalbandhis. With Avinash Veeraraghavan, Bangalorean artist, former student of his, he has made two paper works: Extinctions-2022 and Breach on Untitled (a juxtaposition of Breach 2006 and Untitled 2021). The other collaboration has been coordinated by Biraj Patnaik, executive director of NFI (National Foundation for India) with the Gond artist, recipient of the Padma Shri, Bhajju Shyam with whom Anastasio had already engaged in the past. The works conceived in the occasion of Binary Codex are: Sinopie (a juxtaposition of Anastasio's Sinopie - 2006 and a painting inspired by Sinopie, by Bhajju in 2022) and Jungle Mall, where the back of consumer goods paper packaging lined with fake fur by Anastasio in 2006 have been painted by Bhajju in 2022. The work addresses issues related to consumer good society and mishandling of nature, as well as the vulnerability of minorities' cultures.

Anastasio's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows in Italian and International main museums as: Grand Palais, Paris - MAXXI, Rome - ISGM, Boston - Yuz Museum, Shanghai - Musee des Beaux Arts, Montreal - MANN, Napoli - Hangar Bicocca, Milano - Darat al Funun, Amman - MART, Rovereto - Palazzo Reale, Milano.

He won the Italian Council in 2020, the Best Light project at Eurolight in 2017 and best light project Design Magazine USA 2017. He has been artist in residence at ISGM in Boston.

"A retrospective is a rare opportunity for the author and for the viewer to see many years of research put together. At the same time it is a venture for the author, since single pieces are extracted from different bodies of works that have been individually conceived. The emphasis is on the thread that links all researches together rather than showing the methodology behind the researches that have been generated through the years".

"Unfortunately the word design is used and often misused in many occasions. My approach to design is mainly anthropological, investigating into the ritualistic processes that are hidden behind our daily unfolding of

existence. I also conceive most of my projects in relationship with crafts communities from different cultural backgrounds”.

"In Western culture, modernity has generated a compartmentalization of disciplines, separating craftsmanship from art, from design and from architecture. Although I see and understand the different takes into reality that these fields do imply, I feel that art is not made just by nonfunctional works, as well handcraft is not defined just by skill, and design by functionality. What it is stated through these different languages do matter, rather than reading them through the fixed codes of compartmentalized disciplines that are often organized in a hierarchical way”.

More on Bhajju Shyam (born 1971 in Patangarh, Central India, full name: Bhajju Singh Shyam) is an Indian artist, belonging to the Gond-Pardhaan community of Madhya Pradesh. He was awarded India's fourth highest civilian award the Padma Shri in 2018 and was a contemporary of the celebrated Pardhaan artist Jangarh Singh Shyam. He began his artistic career from Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. The artist has recently received international recognition for his book *The London Jungle Book* (Published by Tara Books in 2004), with which he made known throughout the world the Pardhaan Folk Art.

More on Avinash Veeraraghavan is an Indian artist who creates graphic books, layered prints, and multichannel video installations based on popular culture. Veeraraghavan uses images from photographs, patterns in print and textiles, and wallpaper patterns. He has created images artwork using digital images that are layered and juxtaposed. In 2011, Veeraraghavan's work was part of a two-person show titled *Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman* at Galerie Krinzinger in Vienna. His work was shown at the Prague Biennale in 2011 in a section titled, *Crossroads: India Escalate*. In 2009, Veeraraghavan received the Illy Sustain Art prize at Arco, Madrid.

Notes to the Editor

About the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS)

The CSMVS Museum, is a premier museum and cultural institution of India. It is a not-for-profit organisation opened to the public in 1922 and is governed by a Board of Trustees. Designed by George Wittet, a British architect in 1909, the museum building is a Grade I Heritage Structure and is a fine example of the Indo Saracenic style of architecture. The Museum houses a 70,000-strong multicultural collection of artefacts from Asia and Europe.