

GKK 100 – Giovanni Klaus Koenig in the Twentieth Century Design Culture

International Symposium, 4-5 July 2024, Florence

Scientific Supervisors

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In the context of the Italian design culture of the second half of the 20th century, Giovanni Klaus Koenig (1924-1989) emerges as a highly original figure of theorist, historian and critic of architecture and design, semiologist, esteemed lecturer and author of buildings and vehicles. Driven by an endless curiosity, his work bears witness to the broad spectrum of topics related to design culture that he dealt with: from the creative process to the notion of language, the political and social value of architecture and design, the dialectic between experimentation and standardisation, etc. The study of particular designers, movements, theories, styles or historiographical junctures are often excusing through which Koenig moves broader critiques of the social value of architecture and design.

One hundred years after his birth, the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence aims to celebrate Giovanni Klaus Koenig by promoting an international symposium that discusses his figure and work through original contributions by scholars belonging to different disciplines, at whatever stage of their careers. The participation of young scholars in particular is welcome.

Proposals may include, but are not limited to, the following research directions:

- 1) GKK and the history and criticism of architecture. What were the themes, architects and works that Koenig selected as architectural historian and critic? What linguistic and lexical registers did he employ? What were the exchanges with other figures in the design and theoretical debate of his time?

- 2) GKK designer. Which clients and typologies did Koenig prefer? What dialogues did he have with other brilliant designers of his time, first and foremost Leonardo Ricci? What were the connections and exchanges between Koenig's professional activity and the contemporary historical researches?
- 3) GKK and the industrial design. What themes, criticisms, debates did Koenig opened and developed in this field? Which were the relationships and connections with the industrial designers, and the historians and critics of the industrial design of his time? Which predicted scenarios are still relevant today?
- 4) GKK semiologist of the project. Which was the Koenig's role in the development of the semiological debate applied to the disciplines of architecture and industrial design? How did his studies on language reverberate in the contemporary activity as a theorist and critic of architecture and design?
- 5) GKK and the Waldensian Church. What role did Waldensian faith and ethics play in Koenig's thought and work?
- 6) GKK and magazines. What themes and architects he promoted and discussed as co-editor of "Casabella" or through the participation in other magazines such as "Ottagono"? Which linguistic, lexical and disciplinary registers did he adopt?
- 7) GKK and the teaching activity. What were the themes around which Koenig has woven his long-standing teaching activities in universities and other research institutes? And what were the exchanges between the teaching activities and his other interests?
- 8) GKK and cinema. How much have films and other figurative languages influenced his critical and theoretical activity in the fields of architecture and industrial design? What are the exchanges between the suggestions proposed by the films he loved and the spatial research as an architect?

Interested contributors should send an abstract (300 words) and a short bibliography with institutional affiliation (100 words) to gkk.cento@gmail.com by 31 January 2024. The proposals will be selected through a preliminary evaluation by the scientific committee and a double-blind peer-review process. Developed versions of selected contributions are intended to be included in an international peer-review publication.

Additional Information

Venue: University of Florence, Department of Architecture

Dates: 4-5 July 2024

Accepted Languages: Italian and English

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