



## Nathalie Du Pasquier. BIG OBJECTS NOT ALWAYS SILENT 15/7 – 13/11 2016

*Luca Lo Pinto (LLP): Let's start at the beginning. I'm curious about where your adventure begins. You are self-taught. You never went to any school. You have learned by looking, observing, traveling. What was your first encounter with a work of art that stuck in your memory?*

Nathalie Du Pasquier (NDP): Though I never went to art school, my parents – especially my mother – always took me to see things. I can think of two moments that impressed me a lot. One was in Ravenna, when I was twelve years old.

*LLP: What was it?*

NDP: The mosaics of Galla Placidia and Sant'Apollinare in Classe. Incredible places. As a child I was deeply fascinated, but I guess that's understandable: they are very spectacular, ancient places, incredibly fresh because of the material. I was undoubtedly struck by the way these works function together with the architecture. It was a whole, not an individual painting or a work separated from its environment.

*LLP: And the second memory?*

NDP: The second was a bit later, in my city: Bordeaux. They took me to an exhibition of works by Wassily Kandinsky. I was amazed by the passage from figuration to abstraction. I really liked that show, and it was important for me. Though this does not mean that I was thinking about being an artist when I was 15! Nothing of the sort. I was fascinated by the possibility of starting from something that represented natural things, and moving elsewhere. This element is clear in Kandinsky. Even in the abstract works, you can actually see many things that are not abstract. This way of entering another world is very interesting.

*LLP: Lisa Ponti says that your good fortune was entirely based on encounters. You once told me, "the encounters come. You just have to know how not to disturb them." In your case, you had the luck to "encounter" Kandinsky and, once you got to Italy, to meet people who were fundamental for you. Like George (Sowden), for example.*

NDP: I came to Italy on my own, ignorant, trying to find my own path. And somehow, after some hesitations, I slowly understood what I wanted to do with my life. This happened thanks to the people I met: George, Ettore Sottsass, the various designers I met during the early years in Milan, the city itself. I needed to work, to make some money, so I jumped into the fray. Thanks to the designs I made for fabrics, I met special people, but I also understood what it meant to earn a living with your own work. This was great... I had always hoped it was possible, but I wasn't sure I could achieve it.

*LLP: Why?*

NDP: I'm French, and the French are incredibly tied to their institutions, academia, the court. This is something I have never liked, and it was one of the reasons I left France. I was lacking in so many things, I would never make it, I thought I would have to somehow manage in a different way.

*LLP: But?*

NDP: But instead the encounter with a person like Sottsass, the things he did and the movement in which I was involved – Memphis – the attitude of mixing different cultural levels, high with low, costly and humble materials, helped me to understand that my cultural background could have value. Thanks to Sottsass I understood that the culture and experiences I had put together, traveling outside the western world and admiring the non-academic things from the outskirts of the planet, had a value equal to that of people who had gone to university and studied the masters of western culture. That was great, and it gave me confidence.

*LLP: You had the good luck to meet people who welcomed you into a world, that of design, that corresponded to your way of looking at things. I'm surprised that this didn't happen in the art world, instead.*

NDP: When those encounters happened I was not in the art world at all, I didn't even think about it.

*LLP: When did you arrive in Milan?*

NDP: 1979.

*LLP: What is the first image, your first visual memory of Milan in 1979, when you arrived at the station?*

NDP: I arrived on the last day of the Festa dell'Unità, in September. I reached the Central Station and it was packed with people, with red flags, all very cheerful. That was my first view of Milan. Amazing! I immediately liked Milan, though obviously not just for that experience. I immediately found a little job. After having been in Rome, so beautiful, so Baroque, so everything, I liked being in a place like Milan that was rather ugly, but had a certain beauty in its ugliness. Maybe that was when I began to like my world a little more, in Milan, and to feel like I could take part in something that was happening.

*LLP: With respect to the anarchy of a city like Rome, you found a more structured city in Milan. Since you are a bit wild by nature, maybe you needed a more regular place where you wouldn't get totally lost, as might have happened in Rome.*

NDP: Exactly. I like to have barriers, because they oblige me to understand which point I want to choose to get past them. For me it is important to have a more structured city. Fellini said the same thing. Once I heard an interview in which he said just that.

*LLP: Namely?*

NDP: ...that to be free you need a world that already has its own structure.

*LLP: During the years of your involvement in Memphis, you worked essentially on the creation of your now famous patterns, i.e. decorated surfaces. In the end, these are drawings that with respect to a work of art are not conceived as unique pieces, but are made to be reproduced, to decorate an object. Like open multiples with a function.*

NDP: Yes, they were made to cover anything.

*LLP: The difference lies in the purpose for which the drawings were created. Theoretically, you could have shown them in a gallery as works in their own right.*

NDP: It never occurred to me to do that. When I decided to focus on painting, I wanted to do something else.

*LLP: I say this to emphasize that with respect to other members of Memphis, you have never been a designer in the classic sense of the term. Basically, you made few objects, with an approach similar to that of a visual artist.*

NDP: Though one could assert that the design of a pattern is in any case the basis of design.

*LLP: In what sense?*

NDP: This very clear separation between art and design was strong in the 1980s. Now I think it is much less important.

*LLP: That's true, but on the level of distribution a division still exists.*

NDP: Yes. In the distribution, and as a consequence in the relationship with the world. Designers work for production, artists make one-offs. That is the only difference. The mental process that makes you do something is more or less the same.

*LLP: Nevertheless, you have always emphasized the difference between your work as a designer and your work as an artist.*

NDP: It is a boundary I have underlined because the whole art world looked at design as a commercial, somehow vulgar operation. Given the fact that in any case I no longer wanted to have a design studio, but to do something else, I felt the need to separate the two things.

*LLP: When in 1987 you left design and began to paint, you still conserved a similar language and imaginary. Only the support changed.*

NDP: The attitude was a bit different. In the 1980s the things I had done for Memphis had achieved a certain success, and I associated that fame with something from which I wanted to break away. I had reached age 30 and I didn't want to be labeled as "the one who makes patterns in a certain way," I didn't want to feel trapped. So I said to myself: "It's time to cross that off, and for the moment not to work on such things; instead I'll try to tell stories, to make paintings in a different way."

*LLP: My question was more metaphorical. To try to think of one of your rugs as a painting. Of a chair as a sculpture...*

NDP: ...a rug is a rug. It is not a painting!

*LLP: I know. It was a provocation, to underline the fact that in my view there is no gap between what you have produced as a designer and what you have done as an artist, just a natural evolution. I was curious to know if, a posteriori, you have a different awareness. For example, you have gone back to making drawings of the architecture or the interiors of the 1980s.*

NPD: What do you mean? I have no longer made drawings of architecture and interiors, but it is true that when I work on the installations I have gotten back towards those things, after having completely abandoned them for 25 years. The reconnection to the more abstract drawings or the ones that had to do with total environments happened after having worked on the book on the 1980s with Omar (Sosa), *Don't Take These Drawings Seriously*. I had forgotten them, but seeing them again I realized there was a connection with the works I was making now, that there were many threads I could pick up. I am convinced that my work changed in part after that book and the encounter with my first things, revealing greater peace regarding the relationship between art and design. Today this separation is much less important.

*LLP: Today we are seeing a return to the mixing of genres, languages, roles. With respect to when you began working, what differences do you notice?*

NPD: Today design no longer exists, because there is no longer production in Europe. This is a very big change. I don't know what a young person coming out of design school can do today. Can they make one-offs, works in the form of a chair, a table or a lamp, working in contact with engineers and a certain type of production? Things have really changed.

*LLP: For example, what do you think about the choice of some designers to do exhibitions and to flirt with other realities? Do you see it as positive, or does it reflect the need of a saturated market to reinvent itself? In the 1980s perhaps it was more a need for expression...*

NPD: Yes, probably both things are true. But maybe it has always been like that, in the sense that changes of attitude are always connected to economic changes. The society of human beings moves like that and economic needs give rise to different expressions.

*LLP: The exhibition concludes, intentionally, with your first painting: Viva Pertini. It is a work from 1985, two years before you abandoned design. I am curious to know something more about this painting. What is the story behind it? Why Viva Pertini? In a certain sense it is a work of passage.*

NPD: I call it the first painting because it was the first thing of that kind that was shown. Nevertheless, in certain drawings of interiors – one of them is in this show – you can see decorative panels with figures and patterns. *Viva Pertini* was made for an exhibition in Humlebæk, Denmark, at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. It was absolutely not planned. George and I had been invited to take part in an exhibition on decoration entitled *Homo Decorans* and we had built a tower, inserting drawings of architecture, carpets, objects, etc. At the entrance to the show, on one side there was Keith Haring who was painting a wall with his very dense decorations, while the other side was empty. The curator of the museum said it would be nice if that wall too was decorated, so in two minutes we decided I would decorate that whole corner. I just did it, without thinking. I made it in two days. It was improvised, and I liked that very much.

*LLP: It was an exhibition in which you participated, with George, as designers?*

NPD: Yes, totally. As a result, that panel too was produced as a designer.

*LLP: You didn't want something a bit more hybrid?*

NPD: I wasn't thinking about anything in particular. I just plunged in with a theme that interested me, on which I had already done some things. I had even designed

shoeboxes for Camper, where one of the designs I proposed was a guy running with a monster chasing him, and with his Camper shoes he obviously ran faster. I liked the image of that beast that chases you and you have to run faster.

*LLP: And the title?*

NPD: They asked me what it was called and said we had to have a title. In those years Pertini was the president of Italy. I rather liked that little man who came from the Resistance, with his character, so I named it for him. It was a tribute to Italy. Given the fact that I was in Denmark, I thought I could give it an Italian name, because Italy is where I really developed.

*LLP: Were the first drawings showing interiors, which you mentioned before, conceived to be feasible sets?*

NPD: Yes, they were design projects.

*LLP: In Viva Pertini it is as if you had extrapolated and translated into three dimensions some of the elements included in those drawings...*

NPD: Actually I was influenced by the fact that Keith (Haring) was on the other side, working with that improvisation of someone painting on a wall, because a wall is not a painting, but something different. In that case there were panels, because it was more convenient. The people from the museum were so nice, they were supposed to destroy everything but instead they shipped the panels to Milan.

*LLP: Looking back on all the works you have produced, I see a split between those made up until 1997 and those that came after. In the first paintings, though they depict objects, nature is the protagonist. From 2000 onward the paintings become more geometric...*

NPD: That is because I changed my studio. In 1997 I moved into the place where I still work today. Before that I had a much smaller studio, with less light, and I think that influenced the work. In any case the paintings with characters, animals and nature vanish quite early on. Almost immediately, I concentrated on the themes that have always interested me: the relationships between things, the spaces in which objects are installed, objects as presences.

*LLP: Apart from the subjects, I was referring to the style of painting, the harder edges.*

NPD: I can see better in this studio. There is lots of light. The paintings are less colorful, there is much more white, which wasn't there before, because it was dark, so I made more brightly colored backgrounds to light things up.

*LLP: The period when you began to paint coincides with a historical moment in which there was a return – particularly in Italy with the Transavanguardia – to painting, after the conceptual language had become mannered. Did you go to shows in those days? Were there artists that interested you?*

NPD: I was not very well informed, but I did go often to the gallery of Franco Toselli, where you could see Paladino, De Maria. I was interested in the Transavanguardia because it prompted me to look at things those artists too probably looked at, i.e. the painting of the end of the Roman Empire, Byzantine painting, which I studied in depth when I began painting.

*LLP: So it was like a bridge to look elsewhere.*

NPD: Yes. Obviously I was also fascinated by Piero della Francesca and the great masters of the Italian Renaissance. This is a marvelous thing about painting. It is an adventure... when you start to look at it you come into contact with fabulous things, lots of them, like the French painting of the 1500s, for example, all the Provençal painters.

*LLP: The last time I saw you, you showed me a beautiful book...*

NPD: Yes, it was an illuminated manuscript: *Livre du Cœur d'Amour épris*. Being French in Italy, I am sensitive to this painting that straddles north and south. One aspect of painting that has always enchanted me is this voyage through a marvelous history of images, contacts, hybrids between different things. Afterwards came the encounter with the entire Italian Novecento, including Giorgio De Chirico, Alberto Savinio. The first things I looked at when I began to paint were not the artists of the Transavanguardia, but they helped me to study what I imagined they too had observed.

*LLP: You organized your very first exhibition precisely in the courtyard of the building that contains your studio. You told me you used adhesive tape to make the frames. What year was that?*

NPD: March, 1987. There were no oils, just works on paper, very large paintings made with ink and acrylic, attached to the wall with wide black adhesive tape. It was really fun. All my friends from the world of design came, they bought paintings, and I thought: "That's it... now I'm a painter!"

*LLP: Almost all the subjects of your paintings are man-made objects, while nature rarely appears...*

NPD: That is probably connected with my taste for design, for making, for objects. I like to represent the complexity of things, like motors. They are extremely complex objects, made of many parts that have to work together.

*LLP: In the paintings the objects are always represented larger than life. Are you faithful to the "original" colors?*

NPD: Absolutely.

*LLP: So you change the scale but the color remains the same?*

NPD: Yes. And if I don't have something of the color I want to use in the painting, I paint the model that specific color. This is how all the constructions I have made came about, because at the start they were pieces of wood I had painted in the color I wanted to have in the painting. The most recent paintings are no longer made starting with models, but directly on canvas. It took almost thirty years to return to the possibility of making a painting that did not represent something, and this is strange.

*LLP: It seems to me that in your way of working you need to always have something in front of you.*

NPD: Yes. The work happens in two parts. The construction of what will be in the image I will produce and then the moment of total abandon, where I get lost in the pleasure of painting.

*LLP: Let's get back to the idea that to be free you have to have rules, that to stimulate the imagination you have to start with something that already exists. It is a rather animistic attitude, like children who make objects talk.*

*NPD: Yes, precisely. To represent them in their essence, I have to stop thinking about how to install them, and just look at them.*

*LLP: You use them as stimuli to go elsewhere, creating a narrative by making objects speak. De Chirico also made his still lifes starting with plastic objects he had in his studio. In your paintings there are various objects that appear frequently.*

*NPD: Yes, like the basket, the stones or the tools. Things lying around my studio.*

*LLP: So the sets you build ideally have the function of a preparatory drawing?*

*NPD: Yes. I create the theme in all its details, because there is nothing more detailed than the real setting.*

*LLP: This makes me think, in particular, of the work of Thomas Demand. Many of his works are photographs of models built in a hyper-precise and hyper-realistic way, which are then destroyed. A way of operating similar to yours, the difference being that you use painting instead of photography.*

*NPD: Yes, I too was struck by this. When I saw the first exhibition by Thomas Demand, quite a few years ago, I was amazed and I thought: "It is exactly that." Except for the fact that he always destroys his models, while at times when I have created my models I have fallen in love with them and kept them, or I used them to develop a three-dimensional form that remained as a construction, not just as a model.*

*LLP: The fact that you always start from something in front of you, something real, is fascinating.*

*NPD: But no longer true.*

*LLP: In any case, though, most of the works you have made to date were created starting with an existing model. Which is fascinating because it goes against the romantic idea of inspiration, of painting from an inner image. It reflects your character. You are a person full of imagination, but it is triggered more easily with respect to something you see before you, a glass for example. In this sense it is a very subjective vision.*

*NPD: Well, the story I construct starting with the glass is simply the representation of the glass, an object that is completely magical on its own. If you observe how water works inside a glass, it is amazing.*

*LLP: You mentioned that the compositions initially functioned as models for the still lifes, but later became works in their own right. How did that shift take place?*

*NPD: Many models were destroyed or recycled. For example, I often break the pieces of wood with which I create the compositions, arranging them in a different way, or I paint the compositions in a single color and break them up again. It is all raw material I can use as I wish.*

*LLP: I wanted to get back to the question of scale. Is the painting of objects larger than their original size a way of obtaining an abstract effect?*

NPD: It makes them abstract and it forces the eye that sees the phenomena to translate them into larger things. It is a transformation. It is something that has always fascinated me. When I was a kid I had a microscope, I looked at things and then I made drawings of what I was examining.

*LLP: Nevertheless, the sculptures are already on a larger scale...*

NPD: Not always, at times they are small, and the ones I represent are the small ones.

*LLP: Yes, but in that case the dimension is not in relation to something other than itself.*

NPD: Representing things in large format is a way of adding time to the painting. When I work I am very concentrated and I often notice that time seems to be passing quickly. When I depict objects on a different scale it forces me to analyze what stands before me in a different way, and to use more time to paint it. Time is an essential element in still lifes.

*LLP: Your still lifes depict systems of relations between real or imaginary objects, yet the result is abstract. Would you accept the definition of portraits?*

NPD: For me the idea of the portrait is to represent one thing only. In my work, on the other hand, I tend for the most part to depict the relationships among the various components of the thing, so it seems a bit different. Of course one might say that they are also portraits of objects, because in any case they are ways of looking at the creatures in a non-superficial manner.

*LLP: When you invent the sculptures, what is your way of operating? Do you start with a drawing?*

NPD: No. It is very random.

*LLP: A process of association?*

NPD: It is a way of putting existing elements together, using them as raw material. Collages of pieces of wood. Usually I go to a carpenter who has a big pile of pieces of wood he tosses into the stove. Before he burns them, I take them, bring them to the studio and put them together. I do not sculpt, I don't have a form in mind, which I then make. My constructions are assemblages of existing pieces.

*LLP: The cabins have a more architectural connotation...*

NPD: The first cabins were display devices. The very first one happened because I realized that in group shows it was impossible to see the works properly, because they were exposed to works that had nothing in common with each other, and were very disturbing.

*LLP: So it was a sort of space inside a space?*

NPD: Exactly. The first cabins were small rooms in which to look at something. The first installation was at the gallery of Antonio Colombo; it was a box completely empty on the outside, not even painted, with a shelf displaying a painting on the back wall inside, some smaller paintings on the sides, some of the objects represented in the paintings and a small rug on the floor, not made by me. Small rooms in which to look at something in a more intimate way, without all the noise outside.

*LLP: How many have you made?*

NPD: I have two boxes I constantly recycle. I have made about 16 versions in all. The “noisiest” are the ones made for an exhibition at Assab One in 2006, which contained lots of constructions inside, with paintings on the outside. They were like machines. They were really strong!

*LLP: In 2001 you began to make three-dimensional ceramic still lifes.*

NPD: This was the work with which I returned to the third dimension. After the Memphis period, I had completely abandoned three-dimensional things, with the exception of a series of terracotta garden sculptures in 1991.

*LLP: What was the occasion for which you made the ceramics?*

NPD: In 2001 I was invited to Limoges, to a center called Craft, directed by a very congenial person, Nestor Perkal. He had created this research center for the arts of fire and clay, inviting artists and designers to make projects. There was a very nice porcelain workshop and a couple of good technicians.

*LLP: Didn't we put them in the show?*

NPD: We have two of them, near the room with the drawings.

*LLP: Another deviation away from painting per se can be seen in the series of paper cut-outs you often associate with three-dimensional objects. How did they begin?*

NPD: The cut-out forms are a simpler way to create objects, with respect to three-dimensional constructions. They were the result of a moment of economic crisis! They intrigue me a lot. They are false objects, flat things.

*LLP: In what year did you start making them?*

NPD: In 2013, a moment of total doldrums, when I began to make paintings that were no longer representational, an approach I then abandoned to go back to representation. Nevertheless, the idea of the trompe-l'œil, false perspectives, objects that were actually impossible, was already there in certain things in the 1980s. For example, the table I designed for Memphis is a sort of hole, and there are similar elements in some of the surfaces I made in those years. So these works also come from a part of my brain in which I took a stroll.

*LLP: It is interesting to note that in photographs it is nearly impossible to distinguish the cut-outs from the three-dimensional objects...*

NPD: Delfino Sisto Legnani photographed them very well. In effect, thanks to the strong shadows projected by the real objects, they get confused. I like this ambiguity very much.

*LLP: ...even for a distracted observer, it is even clearer that you are interested in creating relationships among elements rather than depicting a group of objects. Another series of works has to do with the representation of overlying grids. Again in this case, they exist both in paintings and as sculptures on their own.*

NPD: Yes. They are part of the first complex constructions, which I made in 2008.

*LLP: So you consider them autonomous sculptures?*

NPD: Yes, I like them but they are very fragile.

*LLP: You have never shown them before?*

NPD: A few times. They are like three-dimensional drawings.

*LLP: One characteristic of your paintings is that they are all made with a frontal view. Why this choice?*

NPD: It is a way to make my life easier. I'm not capable of doing scientific perspective. I can do an isometric or a front view. Even when I photograph the constructions, it is always a frontal view.

*LLP: Another interesting aspect in this continuous floating between different elements is that in certain paintings you can see details of the constructions. As if you were zooming in on a detail of something, that can then be seen again in another work. A circular movement that will be striking in this exhibition.*

NPD: Yes, also because the rooms are not organized by theme. We have intentionally combined different things in the various rooms.

*LLP: A visitor might see a detail of an object in one painting, and then find the entire object in another. On the level of perception, another characteristic is that in photographs your works seem to have very precise contours. But when you look closely you realize they are not, you see that the forms are less definite. Metaphorically speaking, this reflects your dual spirit: the rational, geometric side and the wilder side. In the exhibition there will be constructions made of different shelves. What appeals to you in these structures? Do you think of them as viewing devices?*

NPD: The constructions have planes, like apartments. The shelf lets you have all the objects on the same canvas but without having to put them on the same plane. The shelves also interest me because they give you the possibility to line things up.

*LLP: Another apparently marginal element, but very important for you, especially in recent years, is the frame. In your latest works, in fact, the frame is not a neutral element, but an integral, signifying part of the work. How did you start thinking about this?*

NPD: The painting is a view but it is also an object and the frame makes it even more like an object. It is not conceived only as the representation of a slice of life, but as an independent object.

*LLP: Paintings are objects, just as objects are paintings. You create a sort of mise en abyme. The frame is an object that contains a painting of other objects. You combine reality with its representation.*

NPD: I have had the frames I use made based on the same model for many years. They are built like boxes and painted with the same materials and colors as my sets.

*LLP: Were we to go on a flashback through everything you have done in 35 years, we would include, in scattered order: the cabins, the constructions with shelves, the ceramic sculptures, the paintings from a set of real objects, the paintings from abstract compositions, the cut-outs, the cut-outs with three-dimensional objects, the paintings with frames of your own making, and the first paintings, namely the "loose ends." Is anything missing?*

NPD: That's more or less everything, except for the very first, rather Byzantine paintings, which I have not even put on the website. What is really interesting, the heart of the work, lies in the objects, the things.

*LLP: Another purpose of this exercise of compilation is to try to trace back to the works of passage, i.e. the works that represent the start of a new series.*

NPD: We have put some of them into the show. In 1997, the year in which I moved to this studio, I got my first computer. I bought it because I wanted to make books, to photograph my things and see them reproduced. I made a book, in which I put a very large section of everything I had painted to date, in chronological order. If you leap from the first work to the last one, you can't believe they were done by the same person; but if you look at the gradually, one after the other, the changes are imperceptible. It is interesting. When I arrived here, as I was saying, there was a big change, represented by light. I began to make very large things, to use white, to see the things I was painting more clearly, because there too it is a problem of perception. When I made the book I was a bit frightened, because I thought: "And now what will I do?" To concentrate on this exhibition, for example, I have interrupted my usual working rhythm quite a lot. Usually I work every day, at least six hours in front of the easel. So the changes are not the result of thinking, of a plan. Working every day, there is a sort of chain of things that link up, one to the next.

*LLP: I realize that for you it is not so easy to recognize the turning points.*

NPD: I can notice them, to some extent. There are encounters that trigger new things. I forgot to mention an important anecdote. In 1986, for a few months, I had a Korean assistant who showed me reproduction of Korean still lifes. I was deeply struck by them. Going to see a very beautiful exhibition of Korean art in Paris a few months ago, I realized that there is a certain affinity with my work. Somehow those images remained slumbering in my memory, but they did not disappear. They are constructions made of objects, at times of natural things, assembled in such a way as to form a whole. I can identify with this. All the elements have a precise meaning, since they contain concepts of Confucianism, ancestral precepts. I don't know a lot about these traditions, but I have the impression that the Koreans are different from the Japanese and the Chinese.

*LLP: In what way?*

NPD: They are more animistic, and they are also quite cheerful, with a sense of humor regarding all "high" things, which I like very much. It seems to me that in oriental cultures the object-painting does not have only a cultural value, but also one of propitiation. For example, I worked for 20 years with a dealer from Hong Kong, Polam Lau, and there were paintings I could not sell in China because they contained items that were considered negative. A collector who bought many of my pieces consulted a Feng Shui expert to choose the paintings he would purchase. It was strange, but also nice. I had the good fortune to work with Polam from 1989 until 2009. The criteria of judgment were very different from those of occidental art.

*LLP: Speaking of influences and suggestions, you have spoken several times about the influence of the Wiener Werkstätte. I remember when we went to the MAK, and how thrilled you and George were when we entered the room displaying the fabrics. It was your first time in that museum and from a distance you looked like kids meeting their ancestors for the first time...*

NPD: Vienna represents an extremely interesting culture, it is not just any place.

*LLP: Getting back to the show, it is important to emphasize that the idea was not to develop a linear itinerary, but more one of association. An exhibition that is more anti-logical than anthological, as Mario Diacono would say.*

NPD: A nice turn of phrase.

*LLP: Moreover, the exhibition itself is conceived as a monumental still life. I was amazed to see how you worked in an experimental way on the exhibition format.*

NPD: All this happened because you were very open to my initial ideas... so when I saw the doors opening, I went overboard.

*LLP: Some of the few things we have not included are two videos made in the 1980s that you showed me the first time I came to the studio.*

NPD: They were experiments using tools that were quite advanced at the time, to which I had access thanks to a photographer friend, Ilvio Gallo. We amused myself using the programs he had, based on my drawings. We felt so modern!

*LLP: Speaking of the 1980s, I wanted you to tell me something about the project on which you collaborated with George, entitled Objects for the Electronic Age.*

NPD: George worked at Olivetti and he had had a visionary intuition, namely that electronics was taking the place of mechanics. It was no longer necessary for an object to be born around a mechanical device, because electronic things were tiny, and as a result objects could have any form. A telephone could be produced with the form of a banana, a shoe, a Greek temple. This awareness emerged during the Memphis years, where the obligation to follow the rules no longer existed. It was Post-Modern. We could decide ourselves about the form to give to the things we made.

*LLP: Also in those years, you created an apparel collection.*

NPD: A friend of mine had a shop that sold children's clothing, next to my house, and we decided to do a women's collection. We did a fashion show.

*LLP: In what did it consist?*

NPD: The first one was not a runway show, the garments were shown on mannequins. In the second the collection was called Good Day for Dogs, because together with another woman we had made clothing for dogs and women. Actually we only had a few pieces: a raincoat, Lycra dresses, some skirts. So the show was very quick, like five minutes. The four models just kept going back and forth, with barking dogs wearing the outfits.

*LLP: Where was this?*

NPD: In the courtyard, here, downstairs from the studio. Our photographer friend let us use the space. It was lots of fun, but that was the end of the story.

*LLP: I'd like to end our conversation with a quote from Giorgio Morandi, which I think is apt regarding your way of seeing things: "For me nothing is abstract, and I believe there is nothing that is more surreal and abstract than reality." Do you agree?*

NPD: Completely. It is rather like what we were talking about before, expressed better.