

Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore  
13 December 2018

## The Ettore Sottsass Archive at the Fondazione Cini

*Ettore Sottsass's wife, Barbara Radice has signed a deed donating the personal archive of the great Italian architect and designer to the Fondazione Cini*

*Over 100,000 documents, mainly letters, designs and sketches, will be digitised over a period of two years in the new ARCHiVe digitalisation centre*

Venice, 13 December 2018. – The Ettore Sottsass Archive has been officially presented to the Fondazione Giorgio Cini by means of a deed signed by Barbara Radice, the wife of the great Italian architect, artist and industrial designer, whose centenary was celebrated in 2017. The archive consists of **over 100,000 items**, including his personal writings, designs for architecture, exhibits, interiors and industrial objects, his publishing projects, drawings, tracings, photographs and printed matter, magazine designs, Memphis Group documents, and correspondence. Always in the forefront for its excellent work in the conservation and development of archives, the Fondazione Cini recently opened a new centre called ARCHiVe (Analysis and Recording of Cultural Heritage in Venice). Thanks to the latest tools and digital technology, ARCHiVe will gradually digitally record the cultural heritage on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore and then make it publicly accessible online. The Sottsass donation will be the first archive to be entirely digitally recorded by ARCHiVe.

*"The Fondazione Giorgio Cini is well-known for its very responsible approach not only to preserving and studying its archives, but also to promoting them through publications, conferences and exhibitions" – explains Ettore Sottsass's wife, Barbara Radice – "but what really convinced me to donate to the Foundation so much of Ettore's material still in my possession was the ARCHiVe project. I find it admirable that a historic institution like the Cini is pioneering experimentation aimed at the digitisation of cultural heritage. Moreover, I fully agree with the aim: to make digitised documents accessible to scholars."*



An estimated two years' work will be required to complete the digitisation of the Sottsass Archive, now only just underway. Sottsass himself kept the archive logically ordered by dividing items according to year and type. The documents will be digitised by a **Replica 360**, a special type of rotary scanner that can simultaneously record both sides of a single-page document in smaller formats. To record large formats, a camera on a stand will be used, while a suction worktop will open the sheets by means of air flow. This is useful for documents, such as technical drawings on tracing paper, which have been folded and unopened for many years. The archive also contains private documents and reports concerning his professional activities.

Once the documents have been digitised, they will be made accessible and available to the scholarly community online through the **Fondazione Cini website**.

Other sections of the Sottsass Archive were previously donated by the architect himself to the Kandinsky Library at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (books, photographs, notebooks, graphic works and posters) and the Centre for Communications Studies and Archives (CSAC) at the University of Parma (14,000 sketches, drawings and designs, and 24 sculptures).

#### **Ettore Sottsass Jr (1917-2007)**

Ettore Sottsass was born in Innsbruck and spent his childhood in Trentino. After training in the Turin of the 1930s, following in the footsteps of his architect father, Ettore Sottsass Senior (1892-1954), he graduated from the Turin Polytechnic (1939) while cultivating his dream of becoming a painter in Luigi Spazzapan's art studio. In 1946, he moved to Milan, where he worked as an architect and collaborated with the Triennale, curating the installations of the crafts section. Three years later he married Fernanda Pivano, who introduced him to modern American writers, and especially the leading figures of the Beat Generation. In 1967, with Allen Ginsberg, he founded the underground magazine *Pianeta Fresco*. Sottsass continued his career as an architect in parallel with that of industrial designer, which brought him prestigious awards, such as the Compasso d'oro for the electronic calculator Elea 9003 (1959) and for Valentine, the first portable typewriter (1970), both produced by Olivetti. In 1961, a serious kidney infection led to his being hospitalised in Palo Alto, California, where he was saved in extremis thanks to the use of cortisone-based drugs, which coloured his memories of those weeks. A tireless traveller, he widely visited Europe, America and the East: his trips were a source of inspiration and provided the subjects of numerous conceptual-type photographs. In 1976, the Venice Biennale held a large retrospective Sottsass exhibition under visual arts director Vittorio Gregotti. This was where he met Barbara Radice, his future wife, who was also actively involved in founding the Memphis group (1981) and the magazine *Terrazzo*, published from 1988 to 1996. In the last years of his life, he held numerous exhibitions and collaborated with leading industrial designers and renowned art galleries. Ettore Sottsass died in Milan on New Year's Eve 2007.

#### **ARCHiVe - Analysis and Recording of Cultural Heritage in Venice**

Convinced that digitisation is a ground-breaking innovation with major consequences for research, education and conservation in the field of cultural heritage, **the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation and the Digital Humanities Laboratory at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de**



**Lausanne** (EPFL-DHLAB) have set up a new centre dedicated to digital technology and the preservation of the cultural heritage on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore. The partners share the belief that digital recording will have a big impact on humanistic research and education. ARCHiVe thus also aims to raise awareness about the importance of digital technology for the conservation of cultural heritage in the 21st century. It will be a key resource for academic and cultural institutions wishing to apply and develop new technologies and advanced computer vision software. The goal is to put together an enormous archive of digital data to be securely stored on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore (and elsewhere) for future generations. **The Helen Hamlyn Trust** is a supporting founder of ARCHiVe.

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