

# FABRICA

Fabrica is Benetton's communication research centre, created in 1994 from Benetton's cultural heritage. With the completion of the vast architectural complex which houses it, just outside Treviso, restored and expanded by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, Fabrica is currently enjoying a period of flourishing activity, positioning itself as a multicultural, international entity.

Fabrica's challenge is both an innovative and international one. It is a way of marrying culture and industry, using communications which no longer rely only on the usual forms of advertising, but transmit "industrial culture" and the company's "intelligence" through other means: design, music, cinema, photography, publishing, the Internet. Fabrica has chosen to back the hidden creativity of young artists/researchers from all over the world. Following careful selection, they are invited to develop concrete communication projects, under the direction of some of the main players in these areas.

In its role as an applied creativity laboratory (its name comes from the Latin word meaning workshop), Fabrica experiments these new forms of communication, following two parallel guidelines: a hands-on approach to training (the young grant holders are invited to "learn by practice"); cross-fertilisation and interactivity, in terms of both the projects - which are developed through teamwork, involving different roles and disciplines working on a central idea - and cultural identity, whose plurality is guaranteed by the mix of young people from countries with different languages, cultures and attitudes.

F A B R I C A

Creativity and research of new forms of expression are also the focal point of Wanted Creativity, a cycle of seminars on visual culture promoted by Fabrica. Each month, they are attended by some of the most important and eccentric figures in the worlds of arts, culture and communication who are invited to Fabrica for a workshop, a conference or a special event.

## COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Fabrica's communication campaigns have involved many different partners, from non-profit organisations like FAO, UNO, UNHCR and SOS Racisme to cultural bodies and museums in various countries, earning critical praise and awards which have led it to be hailed as one of the most exciting and internationally acclaimed cultural hubs.

For the International Year of Volunteers, the celebrations of which culminated on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2001, Fabrica contributed to the creation of the Benetton institutional campaign *Volunteers in Colors* realised in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers, the UN programme that, for the past thirty years, has promoted volunteerism around the world. During the campaign's conception stage, Fabrica investigated various ways of being a volunteer in today's world, focusing on the more unusual aspects and showing that devoting one's time to others also leads to self-improvement and to achieving a better quality of life. A special issue of *Colors* published during the campaign focused on voluntary work and on December 4<sup>th</sup> Fabrica Musica presented, in the *Sala della Protomoteca in Campidoglio*, Rome, the world premiere of *Drops On A Hot Stone*, a multimedia musical event organised in collaboration with FIVOL and UNV.

In September 2002, Fabrica and Colors Magazine marked the first anniversary of the attack to the World Trade Centre with *Visions of Hope*, an exhibition of 28 photographic portraits of children, women and men from all over the world, taken while, eyes closed, they described their idea of hope for future. The exhibition was organised in collaboration with The New Yorker weekly magazine. It was held from 9<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September at the Italian Institute for Culture and, during the same period, in the lobby of Condé Nast Building in Times Square.

February 2003 saw the global communication campaign, co-developed by United Colors of Benetton and the World Food Programme, the United Nations frontline agency in the fight against global hunger. The images, taken by James Mollison, Fabrica's young photographer, in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Guinea and

Sierra Leone, give testimony to the close relationship between the problems of malnutrition and the various social aspects of survival. Food aid thus becomes “Food for peace”, “Food for work”, “Food to go home”, “Food for education” and “Food for protection”. The campaign is part of a wider communications project by Fabrica, which includes an edition of Colors magazine entirely dedicated to food, with a special supplement “Hunger”, which elaborates the themes of the campaign, and a book entitled 2398g, published by Electa.

Primates -gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos- feature in United Colors of Benetton’s new communication project, James and Other Apes, by James Mollison for Fabrica. The entire project, patronized by the renowned primatologist Jane Goodall, was presented at the Natural History Museum in London in October 2004 and it includes the book “James and Other Apes” (published by Boot) and an exhibition featuring James Mollison’s photographs at the Natural History Museum from May to September 2005.

## CINEMA

Fabrica Cinema was created in 1998, continuing the systematic intervention in favour of the new independent voices of the cinema of the “rest of the world” (particularly Africa, the Arab world, Asia, Latin America) which has characterised the social communication policy of Benetton Group, already main sponsor and partner of the Montecinemaverità Foundation in Switzerland, together with the Division of International Cooperation of the Swiss Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Fabrica Cinema’s activities include the co-production, under the supervision of Marco Müller, director of the Venice International Film Festival, of a series of important films which have taken part in the major European film festivals. The first film of the 2000-2001 collection, *Blackboards*, by the young Iranian director Samira Makhmalbaf, won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes 2000, followed by *No Man’s Land* by the Bosnian director Danis Tanovic (awarded the Best Screenplay at Cannes in 2001 and in 2002 Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film and Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film), and by *Secret Ballot* by Babak Payami (Iran), Best Director Award at Venice 2001. Other award-winning films are Turkish director Yesim Ustaoglu’s *Journey to the Sun* (Blue Angel Prize for best European film and Peace Prize at the 1999 Berlin Film Festival); *Moloch*, by Russian director Alexander Sokurov (Best Screenplay Prize at Cannes 1999); and *Seventeen Years* by the young Chinese director Zhang Yuan (Silver Lion for best director at the 1999 Venice Film Festival). In addition to these are the awards received through the Montecinemaverità Foundation, including the highly prestigious Golden Lion at Venice 2000 for the film *The Circle* by Jafar Panahi, protagonist of the Iranian nouvelle vague of the past decade.

*The Angel on the Right Shoulder (Farishtay Kitfi Rost)*, by Djamshed Usmonov (Tadjikistan), in the official selection of Cannes Film Festival 2002, “un certain regard” section, has also obtained prestigious awards from many international film festivals, such as the FIPRESCI Prize at London Film Festival 2003, the Special Jury Prize at Tokyo FILEX 2003 and the Silver Screen Awards, Best Director at Singapore International Film Festival 2003. Also in 2003 *Mud*, by Turkish-Cypriot director Dervis Zaim, ran in the “controcorrente” section at the Venice Film Festival, winning the UNESCO Prize.

The latest project realized by Fabrica Cinema is *Tropical Malady*, directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand), in competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2004, which won the Jury Prize.

## MUSIC

Fabrica Musica was created with the idea of exploring new forms of communication in music through the creativity of artist-experimenters from around the world. With the arrival in 2000 of Andrea Molino, director of Nuremberg's Pocket Opera, Fabrica Musica's activities engendered a new approach. The official debut took place at the Roma-Europa Festival in October 2000 with the multimedia concert *Voices* guest-starring David Moss, the acclaimed American vocalist. On December 4<sup>th</sup> 2001, in Rome's Campidoglio, it was the turn of *Drops On A Hot Stone*, a project created in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers. Among more recent productions are Koichi Makigami's *Paradise From Vocalbox*, presented at the Klangspuren Festival and the TransArt Festival in September 2002; *CREDO*, a multimedia opera which

addresses religious and ethnic conflict (co-produced with the Staatstheater Karlsruhe and the Klangforum, Vienna, for the European Days of Culture 2004) and *East aka West* by Riccardo Nova, co-produced with, amongst others, *Musik der Jahrhunderte* of Stuttgart and the Zagreb Biennale.

## DESIGN

Fabrica's young designers are working on innovative projects regarding product, fashion, interiors and industrial design. One of these avant-garde projects is Nomad, an interior furnishing system for people on the move who need simple, temporary furniture.

During the Milan International Furniture Show in April 2001, Fabrica's designers successfully held XYZ IDEAS ON FURNITURE, a series of multi-sensory installations exploring new directions in design. Again at the Milan International Furniture Show – this time April 2002 – Fabrica presented a tableware collection exclusively designed for Paola C. brand.

In September 2001, the first Fabrica Features opened in Bologna: a space devoted to culture and communications where concerts, videos, artists' performances, conferences, personal exhibitions and workshops become opportunities to gather and meet. Inside Fabrica Features there are also different cultural "products" which define modern life: CDs, books, videos, design objects and clothes created by Fabrica or selected across the world. These products constitute an ideal contemporary art gallery open to visitors. Fabrica Features is open in Bologna, Grado, Mantova, Modena, Lisbon and Hong Kong.

The extraordinary exhibition *Gonzaga. La celeste Galeria. Il museo dei Duchi di Mantova* opened in the prestigious Palazzo Te in Mantua in September 2002. Fabrica created the installation. One year later, on 7 September 2003, the concert by Lucio Dalla and Fabrica Musica opened the multimedia installation "Nuvolari, tra la terra e il cielo", completely conceived and realized by Fabrica, again at Palazzo Te. Fabrica also handled the display-design and communication project for Canova, the first major anthological exhibition devoted to the great Italian sculptor, which opened in November 2003 at the Museo Civico in Bassano del Grappa and at the Gipsoteca Canoviana in Possagno.

"1994-2003 From Chaos to Order and Back" is the name of two exhibitions held in March and May 2003 in Osaka and Tokyo, at the ggg gallery and the ddd gallery, respectively, two exhibitions venues that give prominence to the best international graphics and visual communication. The same retrospective was recently shown in the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Los Angeles.

*Mail Me* is a multidisciplinary project which evolved during the research for the design of a new mailbox, which the Spanish company Bd Ediciones de Diseño commissioned from Fabrica. The results of this work are featured in a book published by Electa and in an exhibition running from 1 to 17 April 2004 at the headquarters of FAD (Foment de les Arts Decoratives) in Barcelona.

## INTERACTIVE

The exploration of the new opportunities offered by interactive media - from online-shopping to experimental artistic installations - is the focal point of the work of Fabrica's young Web designers. Apart from the development of Internet sites that have won many international awards, New Media projects also address Web design, video art, interactive games and multimedia events. Fabrica Interactive is currently working on the United People project, a video-mail system that will link Benetton stores via the Internet and MMS. Interactive video units have already been installed in the Benetton megastores in Athens, Barcelona, Bombay, Ferrara, Hong Kong, Kyoto, Tokyo, Osaka, London, Milan, Rome, Paris, Seoul and Shanghai. In 2002 the Interactive team published the INOUT CD-ROM exploring sound interactivity and it won the Flashforward award for the best online story for the Colorsmagazine.com website. Projects for 2003 include, amongst others, a vast installation in the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York, a video installation at the Venice Biennale d'Arte and a CD-ROM about food.

Launched November 2004, the website 10x10 ([www.tenbyten.org](http://www.tenbyten.org)) has quickly become a global phenomenon: a new piece of Internet art that automatically

collects the top 100 words and pictures in the world, every hour, based on what's happening in the news.

## **PUBLISHING**

Activity in traditional media forms, like publishing, has produced a major series of publications, for which Fabrica often handles the photography. Examples include *Preghiera* (a collection of modern prayers, distributed in 11 countries), *1000 Extra/Ordinary Objects* (the craziest objects of the twentieth century, collected during *Colors'* ten years of activity), *Lavoratori* (black and white photo report on immigrant, non-EU factory workers in north-eastern Italy) and *Kosovars* (portraits of Kosovan refugees in Albanian camps). For the fiftieth anniversary of UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), celebrated in December 2000, photographer/researcher James Mollison prepared for Fabrica a report on refugee camps all over the world. *Fabrica Files*, the first book of a new series, was published by Electa in February 2003. These books, published twice a year, explore the creativity of the young artists who come from the four corners of the earth to work at Fabrica. Electa also published *2398 g* (a book and a CD-ROM about food) and *Mail Me*, realised by young designers, photographers and writers together with leading, successful figures in the arts and design worlds. In June 2004 Taschen published *Colors 1000 Signs*, a collection of road signs collected by photographers in over 90 countries world-wide.

*Fabrica 10 – From chaos to order and back* (Electa, November 2004) is not just a book published by Fabrica or about Fabrica, it's the result of an extraordinary and unique vision of the world, ten years of ideas, projects, personalities, events and experimentation, through a gallery of images, videos, interaction and music that tell a contemporary story.

Fabrica's publishing activities also include *Colors*, the magazine financed by the Benetton Group, sold in over thirty countries - in three editions, four languages and present on the Internet.