

FABRICA

PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH CENTRE

Fabrica is Benetton's communication research centre, created in 1994 from Benetton's cultural heritage. It is located in Italy, near Venice, in a complex which Tadao Ando restored and enlarged.

Fabrica's challenge is both an innovative and international one. It is a way of marrying culture and industry, using a form of communication which no longer relies only on the usual kinds of advertising, but conveys industrial culture and the company's intellect through other media: 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 presenting the *Fabrica: Les Yeux Ouverts* exhibition in autumn 2006, the Pompidou Centre, one of the world's foremost cultural bodies, expressed its respect and appreciation for Fabrica's work. The exhibition showcased Fabrica's many different "souls", demonstrating its documentary work through *COLORS* and photo reportages, and its more artistic, visionary and conceptual side through films and installations. Following the attention shown to this project by international media and the high number of visitors, the exhibition has become a wandering project, it was presented at the Triennale in Milan during summer 2007 and is resuming its travels next autumn in China, at the Shanghai Art Museum.

F A B R I C A

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

In this field, Fabrica has developed numerous campaigns for cultural bodies and non-profit organisations such as the UN, the FAO (the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation), the UNHCR (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), WHO (World Health Organisation), Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, SOS Racisme, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and Witness. Fabrica has created several communication projects for Benetton Group since 2000, often in partnership with humanitarian organisations. These projects include *James and Other Apes* (2004), with the support of primatologist Jane Goodall, and *Food for Life* (2003) in co-operation with the World Food Programme, the UN agency that leads the fight against hunger around the world.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Another field of Fabrica's research is photography, which creates the foundations of exhibitions like *Visions of Hope* (held to mark the first anniversary of 11 September and

organised in collaboration with *The New Yorker* weekly magazine), publishing projects like *Kosovars* (published by Leonardo Arte and produced in refugee camps in Kosovo) and *Lavoratori* ("Workers", published by Feltrinelli, about immigrant workers in north-eastern Italy) and the above-mentioned communication campaigns. Among the most interesting recent ventures is *I SEE* (2006) an exploration of the directions in which historical, cultural, artistic and socio-economic developments are going, seen through the eyes of six young photographers in the world's six main geographic areas (North America, South America, East, Far East, Africa, Europe). Two young Chinese photographers from the Photography area produced an entire issue of *COLORS* about Beijing, published in March 2007.

CINEMA

Fabrica has co-produced a number of films, that competed at the leading European film festivals, in order to support and encourage independent voices from the "rest of the world" (particularly Africa, the Arab world, Asia, Latin America). They include *No Man's Land* by Bosnian director Danis Tanovic (Best Screenplay award at Cannes 2001, Golden Globe for the Best Foreign Film and Academy Award for the Best Foreign Film 2002), *Secret Ballot* by Iranian director Babak Payami (Best Director award at Venice 2001) and Chinese director Zhang Yuan's *Seventeen Years* (Silver Lion for Best Director at the 1999 Venice Film Festival). Fabrica's last film project was *Tropical Malady*, by Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul, which won the Jury Prize at Cannes in 2004.

MUSIC

Music is another area in which Fabrica explores new forms of communication through the creativity of artists-experimenters from around the world. The world première of *Winners* took place in 2006. *Winners* is a multimedia joint venture in co-operation with the Brisbane Festival on the theme of the dialogue between winners and losers. The music is accompanied by performances, interactivities and audio and video link-ups. Fabrica designed the new multimedia production for *Surrogate Cities – Venezia*, by German composer Heiner Goebbels, which opened the Venice Music Biennale at La Fenice opera house in 2005. *CREDO*, created in 2004, is a multimedia work that addresses religious and ethnic conflict, funded by the European Community as part of the Culture 2000 project. After the première at Karlsruhe's Staatstheater, *CREDO* was presented in Rome for the 5th World Summit of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

DESIGN

Fabrica's young designers are working on innovative products, interior design and industrial design projects. Fabrica launched Fabrica Features in Bologna in September 2001. Fabrica Features are retail spaces that sell the brand's design articles and double as multiethnic and multimedia spaces where concerts, screenings, live performances and workshops offer major opportunities for people to meet. Today, Fabrica Features spaces are also in Lisbon, Hong Kong, Rotterdam and London. Fabrica has designed many different collections for leading international brands, such as Paola C. (two tableware collections, in 2002 and 2005), Metalarte (a range of Pyrex lamps, 2005) and Casamania by Frezza (a garden furnishing accessories collection presented at the Milan International Furniture Show in 2005).

NEW MEDIA

In addition to a number of international award-winning websites, Fabrica's new media projects include web design, video art, interactive games and multimedia events. One of its main current projects is UCB TV, the Benetton sales network's TV channel, designed to promote the brand's global philosophy, support retail operations and publicise entertainment and video art contents created by Fabrica.

Winner of the Grand Prize Award at the prestigious Japan Media Arts Festival, *FLIPBOOK!* (<http://www.fabrica.it/flipbook/>), an interactive animation project, enables anyone to draw an animated story, then upload it and share it online. In just a few months, the site had 15 million visitors and over 200,000 animations were uploaded.

From 3 March to 20 April 2007, Shanghai's Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) invited Fabrica to take part in the interactive and multimedia art exhibition, REMOTE/CONTROL, with its installation *Piacere, Fabrica*.

Furthermore, Fabrica is responsible for updating www.benettontalk.com, a blog open to everybody's ideas, where people can reflect, send comments or post their opinion on global issues: the environment, rights, diversity, local communities, development.

PUBLISHING

Its work in traditional media forms, like publishing, has generated a series of publications, for which Fabrica often creates the photography. These include *COLORS 1000 Extra-Ordinary Objects* (2000, chosen by the publishers Taschen as one of the publications with which to celebrate its 25th anniversary) and *COLORS 1000 Signs* (2004), both published by Taschen. *Fabrica 10 - From chaos to order and back* (Electa, 2004) gives a round-up of Fabrica's activities over its first ten years.

COLORS

Fabrica's publishing activities include *COLORS*, the magazine financed by Benetton Group. Starting from issue no. 72, *COLORS* becomes even more international than before: in addition to the three bilingual editions – English with Italian, French or Spanish – there will be also a Chinese edition, distributed in China as from November 2007.

The full series of *COLORS* issues was included in the 25/25 exhibition at the Design Museum, London (29 March-22 June 2007), which featured the 25 most influential design objects of the past 25 years.

The magazine has received media accolades from all over the world, such as for example *Good Magazine*, an American bi-monthly cultural and lifestyle publication, which included the first thirteen issues, under Tibor Kalman's editorship, in the ranking of the 51 best magazines of all times, or *La Vanguardia*, a Spanish daily which described it as one of the trendiest cultural magazines on the world scene.

COLORS is sold in over forty nations; it is published in three editions, four languages and on the Internet.

www.fabrica.it

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