



*'Culture, for me represents the stratification of sensations and teachings handed down by my family: it forms the basis of my history, my identity, and gives my projects a certain dignity and intellectual honesty.'*

**This issue of DDN is dedicated to the Mediterranean, a theme dear to you. How much do roots count and how do they express themselves, in their broadest sense, in your way of designing?**

The mark of our roots is something that affects our present. The contrast with or the love for one's origins is a strong feeling, often used by artists and creative people as a stimulus for their work. A discipline like design, sometimes so close to everyone's needs and everyday life and sometimes so far from real life, allows me to navigate in a sea made of 'fantasy and concreteness'. The same fantasy and concreteness that my grandfather had many years ago, before having 6 children and creating a place for us made of flavors and memory. As for culture, for me it represents the stratification of sensations and teachings handed down by my family: it forms the basis of my history, my identity, and gives my projects a certain 'dignity' and 'intellectual honesty'.

**What role did your stratified and composite education, also made up of experiences abroad, and your encounter with a hyper-productive world like Milan play?**

Of course, when I was 18, my dream was to go as far away from home as possible... I said I wanted to go to Australia, for example, and I went there to study. The Milan Polytechnic and my various Erasmus trips to Scotland, Australia and Andalusia taught me a lot. Above all, I learned to see myself 'from outside' and 'from afar', to see the everyday life of my origins with a 'foreign' eye. This allows me to give an 'exotic' aspect to anything that for me should be 'normal', a certain something original that manages to surprise me and make me happy. Moreover, the hyper-productive world of Milan and my experience in companies like Bielelli - traveling to China, Taiwan and in general to industrial realities designed for mass production - have given me the strength to make increasingly extreme choices, such as my latest idea (in the making) to open my studio residence on the Ionian coast in the Strait of Messina, 15 minutes from where I was born and raised, Reggio Calabria.

**Your 'career' took off with the Back Home exhibition at the Fuori Salone. Can you tell us about your debut?**

Yes, I have a wonderful memory of it. In 2011 I decided to leave my prestigious collaborations in the world of Milanese design to go back home and figure out

what I wanted to do 'when I grow up'... Actually, I had been thinking about it for years. You know that moment when you think, "When am I going to start doing my own things?" This thought was always accompanied by the idea of involving my grandfather and my family because I have always thought they were gifted with an innate talent: the art of making things. It was precisely in reaction to the Milanese 'bla-bla' that I found the courage to make this choice. In those years there was a lot of talk about self-production and makers... But I arrived at Veniura Lambrate, surrounded by Dutch people, with a collection from Calabria, designed by me and made by my grandfather. I remember that the press, and in particular trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort, saw in this 'return to the taste of home' and to manual work a trend that, actually, in the last ten years, has exploded in an exaggerated way. I can say that, in contemporary design, the example of my story with my grandfather has inspired many young people and many two-person projects between design and craftsmanship, and this makes me happy.

**What projects, in particular, have marked your path?**

The projects that have marked my path are various: the Swan teapot-shaped watering can, first made by me in Milan for a course for ceramists, then replicated in a small series and exhibited in Berlin at DMY, still in the Seletti catalog, represents my official beginning. Definitely the Back Home Collection with the 'big' Dumba chair, made of solid beech with walnut stain. The Bugia candleholder designed for Seletti; the Taste of Wood project for the Italian Pavilion in 2013; a borosilicate glass set for tasting the same olive oil used to treat and protect olive wood furniture; the exquisite Calabrisella designed for Alessi and the Milan Expo in 2015... The 'Una Stanza' Collection, in collaboration with Editamateria and Delvis, presented in the Tunnels of Milan's Central Station, a project in which the most austere and simplest room archetype becomes the metaphor of the intimate place from which everything begins... The Madonna d'Oro prize designed with Designboom, representing the union of the Madonna of Milan with the ladder and the hammer held by the Madonna degli Artigiani of Milazzo... Mata and Grilo, in collaboration with Elena Salmistraro and Altroforma, inspired by the legend of Mata and Grilone typical of my hometown. The artistic direction of the Materia Festival in Catanzaro.



Da sinistra, in senso orario: sedia Parlantina per Pamono (foto A. Muscatello); tappeto Adriano per Moooi (foto A. Muscatello); grattugie Oldways, autoproduzione per Designboom MART (foto F. Zaminga); sedia A Signurina / Palermo per MYOP (foto F. Scibetta). Nella pagina accanto: il tappeto Arcadio per Moooi (foto A. Muscatello).

Clockwise from left: Parlantina chair for Pamono (ph: A. Muscatello); Adriano carpet for Moooi (ph: A. Muscatello); Oldways graters, self-production for Designboom MART (ph: F. Zaminga); A Signurina / Palermo chair for MYOP (ph: R. Scibetta). Opposite page, Arcadio carpet for Moooi (ph: A. Muscatello).





Da sinistra, in senso orario: Calabrisella in cartapesta, riproduzione della Calabrisella di ALESSI per Materia Design Festival; tappeto Theodora per Moooi (foto A. Muscatello), Madonna Viola per Materia Design Festival (foto A. Muscatello).

Clockwise from left: Calabrisella in papier-mâché, reproduction of ALESSI's Calabrisella for Materia Design Festival; Theodora carpet for Moooi (ph: A. Muscatello), Madonna Viola for Materia Design Festival (ph: A. Muscatello).



The jewel cushions for Luisa Via Roma; in 2020, my first collaboration with a Calabrian company, the I Tonnaroti Collection for Callipo; in 2021, my first collaboration with an international company, Moooi, with the Bisante collection, also inspired by stories from my culture and presented from an imaginary place (in Reggio Calabria) during the Design Week in Milan. I also collaborate on many other projects with the Barilla Group. Biscotazza and Caffettiera Mattutina, for example, are objects that I have designed in collaboration with Mulino Bianco Marketing department.

**Craftsmanship vs big industry, function vs narrative: how do your projects come about? What connects (or differentiates) them?**

The essence of my research lies precisely in this 'vs'. Craftsmanship versus industry, genuine and peasant reality versus glamorous world, rush versus slowness, stereotype versus originality, imagination versus concreteness, storytelling versus immediacy: these oxymorons represent the ingredient that stimulates and amuses me the most in my way of working. It could be summed up in one word: contradiction... Yes, a healthy contradiction that generates the spark of my creative process.

**What are you working on right now?**

I'm working on two big collections related to the themes we have just talked about... But I can't say more!

**What do you think designers should be working on today?**

Designers should work on what makes them feel most honest and authentic. It's okay to follow trends, to imitate and, why not, to 'copy', but personally I believe that originality and freedom of expression should come first. Moreover, I have always preferred not only honest thought but also honest materials, the real ones... Old-time materials.



In questa pagina, in senso orario: Set Degustazione Olio con tavolo e sedia TASTE OF WOOD, autoproduzione (foto F. Zaminga); tavolo Caltagirone per MYOP (foto R. Scibetta); Latta I Tonnaroti per Callipo (foto A. Muscatello); Mata, Riproduzione in Polistirolo per Materia Design Festival / Altiforme (foto A. Muscatello).

This page, clockwise: TASTE OF WOOD olive oil tasting kit with table and chair, self-production (ph: F. Zaminga); Caltagirone table for MYOP (ph: R. Scibetta); I Tonnaroti tin box for Callipo (ph: A. Muscatello); Mata, polystyrene reproduction for Materia Design Festival / Altiforme (ph: A. Muscatello).







## ANTONIO ARICÒ: TRA FANTASIA E CONCRETEZZA

*BETWEEN FANTASY AND CONCRETENESS*

Nel mondo (reale e immaginario) di Antonio Aricò. Designer mediterraneo per antonomasia. Che ha fatto del "ritorno a casa", inteso come possibilità di recupero delle proprie radici, un'autentica filosofia di progetto. In cui il passato innerva di sé presente e futuro.

*In the (real and imaginary) world of Antonio Aricò, Mediterranean designer par excellence who has made the 'return to home', understood as the possibility of recovering one's roots, an authentic design philosophy in which the present and future are imbued with the past.*

di Francesca De Ponti



Antonio Aricò nasce nel 1983 a Reggio Calabria, nel cuore del Mediterraneo, in una famiglia di falegnami larga e unita. Dopo gli studi in diversi settori del design - tra cui Design della Moda e del Prodotto a Milano, del Gioiello in Scozia, Filosofia del Design in Australia e Arredamento in Andalusia, e dopo le prime esperienze in realtà progettuali milanesi - apre il suo studio nel 2011. La sua carriera spicca il volo con la mostra Back Home al Fuorisalone del 2012, che include una collezione in edizione limitata di mobili e oggetti in legno intagliato a mano, prodotti con l'aiuto di suo nonno e suo zio, che rivela un approccio unico, in cui fantasia e memoria sono l'anello di congiunzione tra passato e presente, artigianalità e industria. Da allora disegna per maggiori marchi italiani e internazionali, tra cui Barilla Group, Callipo, Alessi, Seletti, Bitossi, Editamateria, Altreforme, Noberasco, Texturae, Mooi. La sua storia e i suoi lavori sono stati presentati alla Triennale di Milano, al Museo di Holon di Tel Aviv, all'NGV di Melbourne, nella sede dell'Ambasciata Italiana a Copenaghen e presso il Palazzo delle Esposizioni di Roma. [antonioarico.com](http://antonioarico.com)

Antonio Aricò was born in 1983 in Reggio Calabria, in the heart of the Mediterranean, in a large and united family of carpenters. After studies in different design fields - including Fashion and Product Design in Milan, Jewelry Design in Scotland, Philosophy of Design in Australia and Furniture Design in Andalusia, and after the first experiences in design firms in Milan - he started his own studio in 2011. His career took off with the Back Home exhibition at the Fuorisalone 2012, which included a limited-edition collection of furniture and objects in hand-carved wood, produced with the help of his grandfather and his uncle, revealing a unique approach in which imagination and memory were the link between past and present, craftsmanship and industry. Since then, he has designed for major Italian and international brands, including Barilla Group, Callipo, Alessi, Seletti, Bitossi, Editamateria, Altreforme, Noberasco, Texturae, Mooi. His history and works have been presented at Triennale Milano, the Holon Museum in Tel Aviv, the NGV in Melbourne, the Italian Ambassador's office in Copenhagen and at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. [antonioarico.com](http://antonioarico.com)