

PRESS RELEASE

Groninger Museum to host exhibition curated by Alessandro Mendini

The Groninger Museum building turns 25 this year. In honour of its chief architect, Alessandro Mendini, the museum will mount a major exhibition the famous Italian designer put together and designed shortly before he passed away. *Mondo Mendini – The World of Alessandro Mendini* features not only Mendini's own work but also that of artists with whom he felt a kinship. Encompassing visual arts as well as architecture and design, the show boasts a richly varied selection of more than 200 objects. *Mondo Mendini* exudes the exceptional creativity and humour of the designer who gave Groningen an internationally celebrated landmark.

The exhibition

More than two years ago, the museum gave Alessandro Mendini (1931–2019) free rein to compile an exhibition of his work. He was enthusiastic about putting together a major exhibition for 'his' museum. In *Mondo Mendini*, Mendini showcases among others his most famous works, including a three-metre-high version of *Poltrona di Proust*, the kitschy armchair covered with coloured dots (collection Fondation Cartier). Also present is *Anna G*, the dancer-shaped corkscrew that became a bestseller for Alessi. The exhibition contains a wide selection of works from Mendini's diverse oeuvre, from jewellery to architectural models, household objects to large sculptures. Rejecting hierarchical divisions between architecture, autonomous art and design – between 'high' and 'low' art – he became one of postmodernism's most distinctive designers. His designs are often colourful, decorative and surprising in form: imagination takes precedence over functionality. About the rich expressiveness of his oeuvre, Mendini said: "My work is like a novel in which seriousness, pain, comedy and poetry exist side by side. And my objects are the tragicomic characters."

Entirely in keeping with his artistic ideas, Mendini chose to showcase not just his own work in the exhibition but also that of great artists and designers of the past and present who inspired him. He always generously acknowledged the influence of others. For *Mondo Mendini*, he selected, among many more, works by classic modern artists Paul Signac, Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Matisse and Oskar Schlemmer, architectural designs by Theo van Doesburg and Gerrit Rietveld, objects by Italian designers like Gio Ponti, Michele De Lucchi and Gaetano Pesce, and recent paintings by the American artist Peter Halley.

Mondo Mendini will be on show from 12 October 2019 through 5 May 2020 at the Groninger Museum.

Alessandro Mendini

After earning a degree in architecture in 1959, Alessandro Mendini went to work for the Milan design and architecture office Nizzoli Associati. Following a decade of practical experience, he decided to immerse himself in the theoretical side of architecture and design, influenced in part by the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s. From 1970 to 1976, he served as editor in chief of the magazine *Casabella*, which became a mouthpiece for a new generation of socially critical, avant-garde Italian architects and designers. He later edited the architecture and design magazines *Modo* (1977–1981) and *Domus* (1980–1985 and 2010–2011).

Mendini began doing more and more design work. He became extremely influential thanks to his groundbreaking projects with the Alchimia design group, including 1981's *Il mobile infinito* (Infinite Furniture), in which designers and visual artists collaborated on experimental

furnishings with changeable decorations. Since 1980s, he acted as an advisor for the Alessi company, initiating high-profile collaborative projects that blurred the boundary between architecture and design. He also created designs for the watchmaker Swatch, the electronics company Philips, and numerous design firms. With his younger brother Francesco, he designed colourful buildings in Europe and Asia, of which the Groninger Museum is the most famous. He continued to expand his staggeringly varied oeuvre of imaginative, contrary, humorous and poetic objects until late in life.

Anniversary year

Its building's 25th anniversary takes centre stage in the Groninger Museum's programme this year. Along with *Mondo Mendini – The World of Alessandro Mendini*, the exhibitions *Pronkjewails – Design from Past and Present* and *From Swip Stolk to Rudo Menge – 25 Years of Posters for the Groninger Museum* also honour this special occasion. October, the museum's birthday month, will boast plenty of festivities, including a party weekend with free admission and an extensive schedule of activities on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October.

For more information, see groningermuseum.nl/en.

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Note to the editor

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