

**What have I been doing? What you, I, and all  
the other do—some good, some bad—and nothing.**

Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*

**Sexy chairs, sexy chairs...** Here we face one last attempt to once again reinvent the meaning of something, pretending it is new! Could this exhibition be meant to highlight how this very mechanics – finding new meanings by fetching them up from the bottom of the lake – is the mechanics of our being in the world? A commendable intent; however, there was no need to flaunt it in some fair's exhibition, whether inside or outside. Or, are we *seriously* to be convinced that chairs are sexy? Oh, what more can we come up with? And authoritative names are brought in to support the thesis, calling in Isabella Lobkowitz, Maurizio Minoggio, Guido Scarabottolo; all respectable people – or so I thought – who lend themselves to this debatable quasi-cultural intent. We are risking the holding (or is it scraping the bottom, how do you say?). Would that really be what design is? Do we necessarily have to see something in something else just because some other person is winking at the fact that it is hidden in there? And he winks and winks again, with that shady look that comes with winking, like grandmother telling a lie in front of your parents – something like her not buying you ice cream. But in fact, the more she winks, the more she is telling the opposite – if you know what I mean.

In disbelief and a little doubtful, I therefore question Guido Scarabottolo in an attempt to understand a bit more, to come to the bottom of the matter. I approach the master with due caution, in the hope that his word will open up for me new horizons of meaning. And he, you won't believe it, sits me down – on a chair, I would say a rather ordinary one – and candidly informs me that the title of the exhibition – about which I have been puzzling for days – is nothing more than a mispronunciation of 'Sexy Sadie', a rather unremarkable Beatles song that he has always, stubbornly, understood as Sexy Sedie (chairs, in Italian). Only to realise later, years later, in a quite ordinary after dinner, that this was not what the song was about. Faced with this revelation – I remember it like it was yesterday, and maybe it was yesterday – I don't even have the strength to contradict him, to argue something back. My astonished face speaks for me. Perhaps understanding my total bewilderment, he then starts to elaborate a whole argument according to which, whatever the case, he actually sees something sexy in chairs, and that there must be a reason if the history of design passes through the chair. How many designers have lost sleep over this object, like an erotic relationship and blah blah...

Fact is, I went home, much more puzzled than before, clinging to the salvific idea of rereading overnight Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*. To be fair,

I said to myself, I too found some chairs sexy. It happened – yes, it happened – that some chairs, perhaps in a moment of weakness... However – and here comes the crux of my argument, the centre of my reflection that I can no longer hide from you –, the sexiness of the chair is nothing compared to the sexiness of the bench. The bench is truly, truly sexy. And that is what has resoundingly eluded the artists in the exhibition. And so, it is up to me to embroider it (or emphasise it?). I can think of a few, truly seductive, sinuous, free ones. As alive as the most vivid dream one has ever had when asleep and dreaming of living.

At the end of the Grottammare promenade, not yet in San Benedetto, there is one, for example, I can't even describe. Or at the back of Villa Litta, in Affori, under the large sycamore tree, or the one at the top of Isole Curzolane – I mean the street, in the far heart of northern Rome – where no one sees you, just you and your sweetheart. And that one under the ancient walls of Populonia, between the wild fennel and facing the sea? And I say no more, because I would risk to get sexy-emotional.

The sexy benches, now, that would deserve attention!

I do believe that the artists in this exhibition – authoritative names, I repeat – have been misled by the designers (and they are hardly the first to do so). The chairs, the chairs... The designers, those slackers, have been fussing over chairs (on chairs, at once place and subject) for years, but I'll tell you why: to work as little as possible. If it were up to them, they would only deal with stools. Hey, here's one less piece! Génial, magnifique! If it weren't for the fact that their very beauty – of the stools, I mean – is indeed that they have one piece less, which is just how much they need to rest their backs on while they ponder over it, poignantly (on the stool, place and subject). So, the game is not worth the candle – a designer candle, of course. And so, a little reluctantly, they put the backrest back, back to the good old chair. Are you following me? That's what happened, in a nutshell. And everyone followed, Lobkowitz, Minoggio, Scarabottolo. And us with them, here talking about it, inconclusive and admiring, like one of those human, mysterious, fascinating things; and yet, somehow, always the same.

*Oh, sexy Sadie, what have you done? You made a fool of everyone. [...]*  
We, we gave her everything we owned just to sit at her table: we gave you everything just so we could sit at your table. Yes, the table, right. But we'll talk about that another time.

*Valentino Ronchi*