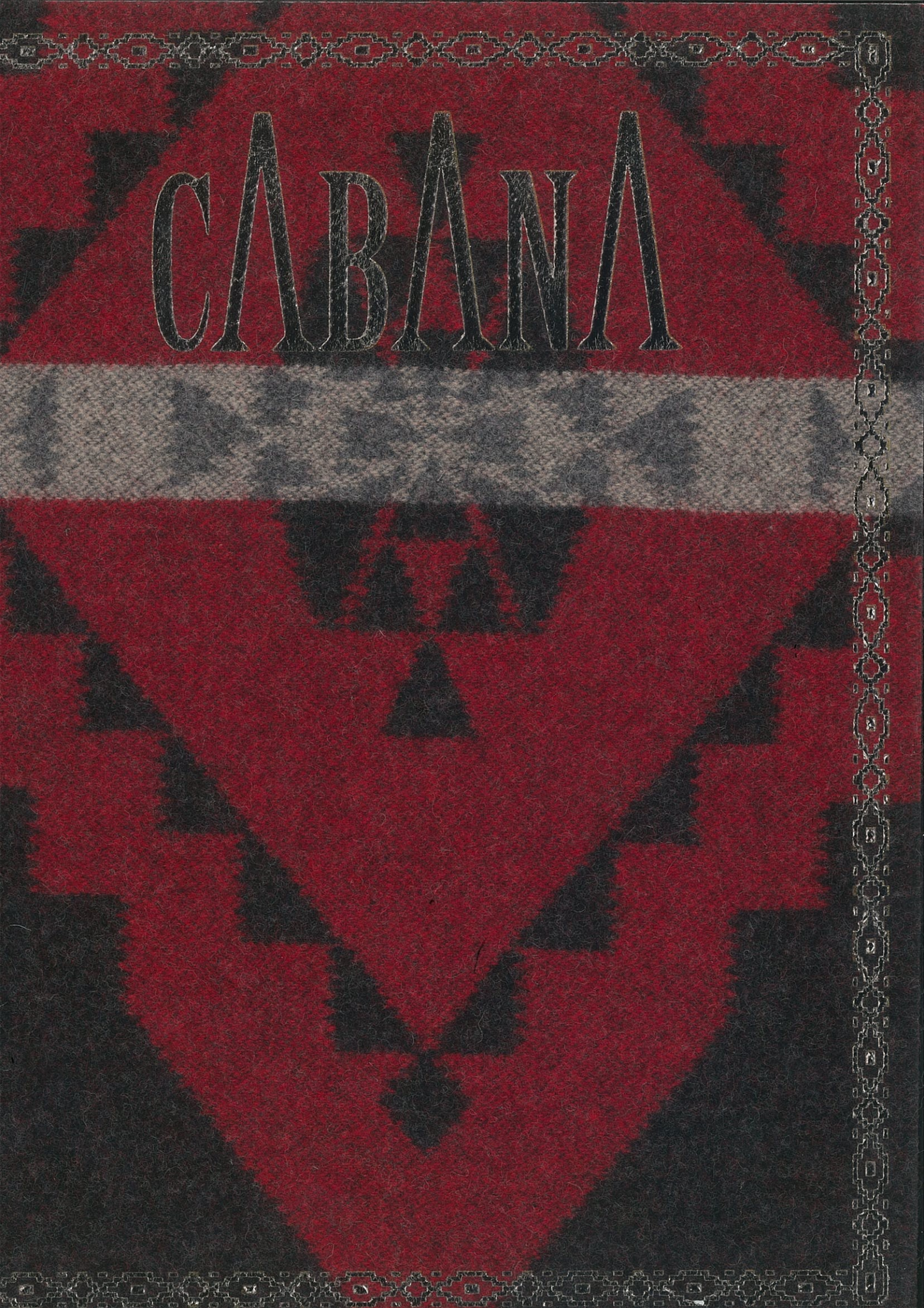


САВАНА





**Matteo Thun**  
*talks to Christoph Radl*  
**About Decoration**

In 1981 Matteo Thun, together with Ettore Sottsass, was one of the co-founders of Memphis, the last major movement in the world of design of the 20th century, which reintroduced decoration with vivid colors in the contemporary design of that period.

*CR: Should we talk about decoration?*

*MT:* The most obvious, most evident thing that comes to mind is that decoration is part of humankind, part of the human genetic makeup of every culture, every generation, like food or the idea of beauty. For one of our latest projects, the Waldhotel Healthy Living in Bürgenstock at Lake Lucerne, which offers healthy treatments based on mixtures of herbs, we developed the entire

decor by starting with watercolors of aromatic herbs, like rosemary and sage. The watercolors were then digitally processed to transform them into non-stop patterns. So we took a step beyond the Memphis decorations, which were formed by abstract signs, mechanically repeated and industrially produced, while these new decorations emphasize figurative representation, fully conserving the “handmade” effect.

*CR:* Do you mean that we are witnessing a rebirth of decoration in the world of occidental design and architecture?

*MT:* The sensorial approach of Sottsass through his patterns and strong colors began to replace the Bauhaus, where everything was gray or white, and where everything had an industrial appearance. In the 1950s and 1960s Frederick Kiesler, a utopian theorist of Austrian origin residing in New York, built on Form Follows Function, the leitmotif of Modernist architecture and

drawings by Matteo Thun

industrial design, to formulate his guiding principle: *Function Follows Vision, Vision Follows Reality*. Which seems more timely than ever today. If we think about the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, with the fascination for mechanical things, with artists like Kandinsky, Lissitzky, Albers and their elimination of the brushstroke, in the 1980s along comes Sottsass with his non-stop industrially produced decorations, and in the 2020s, 40 years later, there will be digitalized decoration.

*CR:* I have the sensation that we are going through a moment of great creative crisis today, the digital revolution that has disrupted the old world over the span of just a few years, but has not produced any aesthetic code of its own. So we try to fish the best things out of the past and to reassemble them in a contemporary way. Might the rebirth of decoration also be explained like this?

*MT:* In the world of interior design today, decoration is not limited to the mere application of patterns, but is also expressed in the choice of materials, the finish of the materials used. A wooden floor radically changes its appearance depending on whether it is glossy or brushed; the treatment makes it sensorial and develops a certain eroticism of the surface. Today people look for materials that have the ability to age; the patina is a decoration in continuous evolution. I am thinking, for example, about the bricks in Venice, which continue to erode in the salt air and become very beautiful. Reinforced concrete ages very badly, and today it is certainly out of favor. The amazing architectural works of Aldo Rossi, like the Gallarate district or the cemetery of Parma, are just ugly ruins today. I think the era of fair-face concrete is over.

I believe that the trend towards perfection of all surfaces is about to end; even cosmetic surgery is heading for its demise, as women return to being happy to live with their wrinkles.

