

Vignelli. Simple Design for a Comfortable Life

Letizia Airos Soria (May 27, 2009)



New York. A life together dedicated to design. Massimo Vignelli and Elena Valle received the decoration of commendatore nell'ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana from the Consul General Francesco Maria Tarlò and the director of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York Renato Miracco

He wore a suit with a black tunic. She was next to him, dressed in black and white with one discreet but striking jewel that offset her outfit. Last week Massimo Vignelli and Elena Valle, excited as children, received the honor of commendatore nell'ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana from the Italian Consul General Francesco Maria Talò and from Renato Miracco, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

Those who saw them receive the honor could have possibly not known anything about them, about their life intimately linked to the history of design. But in the way they carried themselves and presented their message, one thing was clear: simplicity speaks. Their work is eloquent simplicity and pure design.

Their distinguished physical figures continue to stand out as they are enveloped in the environment



that surrounds them. They resemble their elegant work a bit, but they are never detached from the world around them.

Their work is the product of passion and perseverance, but also of a gaze that seeks simplicity. “One needs to know how to design everything today. From ordinary objects to cities of the future, even the most mundane, everyday objects can inspire.”

They are designers by profession. The Vignellis have created the most important graphic images for practically every industry, from conceptualizing objects to product packaging, from interior environments to road signs. Their mission: “To make people’s lives comfortable.” They have accomplished that first and foremost by living and interacting with people.

Moving to America in the late ‘60s, Massimo and Elena, partners in life and work, founded Vignelli Associates in 1971.

Among other things, they have designed the New York City subway map, logos for American Airlines, Ducati, Bloomingdale’s, Xerox, Lancia, Cinzano, Ford Motors, Benetton, the Museum of Fine Arts, the graphic image for TG2 RAI, as well as everyday objects such as armchairs that are now part of design history. They have dictated the law in the world of contemporary typography and graphic design, leaving an immediately recognizable impression on their products.

Massimo Vignelli, with fun-loving class, after receiving the honor reminded us of an imaginary Italian commendatore or a middle-aged man with a potbelly.

The unmistakable cross pinned to his black outfit, he announced: “I’ll bring it to bed!” He said this during a dinner hosted by Director Renato Miracco at his home. There was a sweet smile on Elena’s lips as she removed the pin from her outfit. Can we guess? While it was perfect for her husband’s suit, the cross didn’t go well with her long, silver jewel. She will carry the cross in her heart. We’re sure of it.

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