

RIFUGIO DIGITALE

MARIO MAIOLI

From the project to the form of the possible

21.10 - 21.11.2026

From **October 21 to November 21, 2026**, Rifugio Digitale presents **Mario Maioli. *From the project to the form of the possible* (Dal progetto alle forme del possibile)**, a solo exhibition by architect, urban planner, designer, and painter Mario Maioli. **The opening** will take place on **Wednesday, October 21 at 6:30 PM**, preceded by an exclusive **press preview at 6:00 PM**.

Mario Maioli seamlessly combines the rigor of design culture with the freedom of artistic expression – two dimensions that have been constantly intertwined throughout his career. As responsible of the design coordination at Fiat Auto from the late 1970s until 1992, he played a key role in shaping the identity of the modern Italian automobile. It was precisely from this industrial experience that, in 1985, his painterly research was born. Today, his body of work exceeds 1,300 pieces, characterized by structured compositions, vibrant colors, and dynamic energy.

Curated by Isabella Patti, the exhibition is produced by **Rifugio Digitale** under the artistic direction of **Laura Andreini**, in collaboration with **Forma Edizioni**.

Mario Maioli. *From the project to the form of the possible* features a selection of the artist's works spanning over forty years of conceptual and formal exploration. The works are brought together in five problematic fields – *Constraint, Structure, Horizon, Trace, and Return* – which serve to build new connections between the works. Alongside these five fields are two transversal devices: *Migrations*, follow elements that reappear in works distant from one another in time and *Discontinuities*, focus attention on certain moments in which the relationships between form, space and matter change more sharply.

The exhibition highlights the value of design as a tool for creating the conditions under which form can emerge, engage with space, and continuously reinvent itself without ever being permanently defined.

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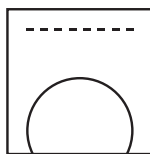


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RIFUGIO DIGITALE

Florence, via della Fornace 41

October 21, 2026

6.00 - 6.30 pm

Press preview with Artistic Director Laura Andreini and artist Mario Maioli at Rifugio Digitale.

Event by reservation writing to info@rifugiodigitale.it

6.30 pm

Opening at Rifugio Digitale Rifugio Digitale Firenze, via della Fornace 41

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From the project to the form of the possible

Mario Maioli

October 21 - November 21, 2026

mer.-ven. 11.00 - 19.00

Rifugio Digitale

via della Fornace, 41

50125 - Florence (FI)

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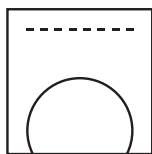


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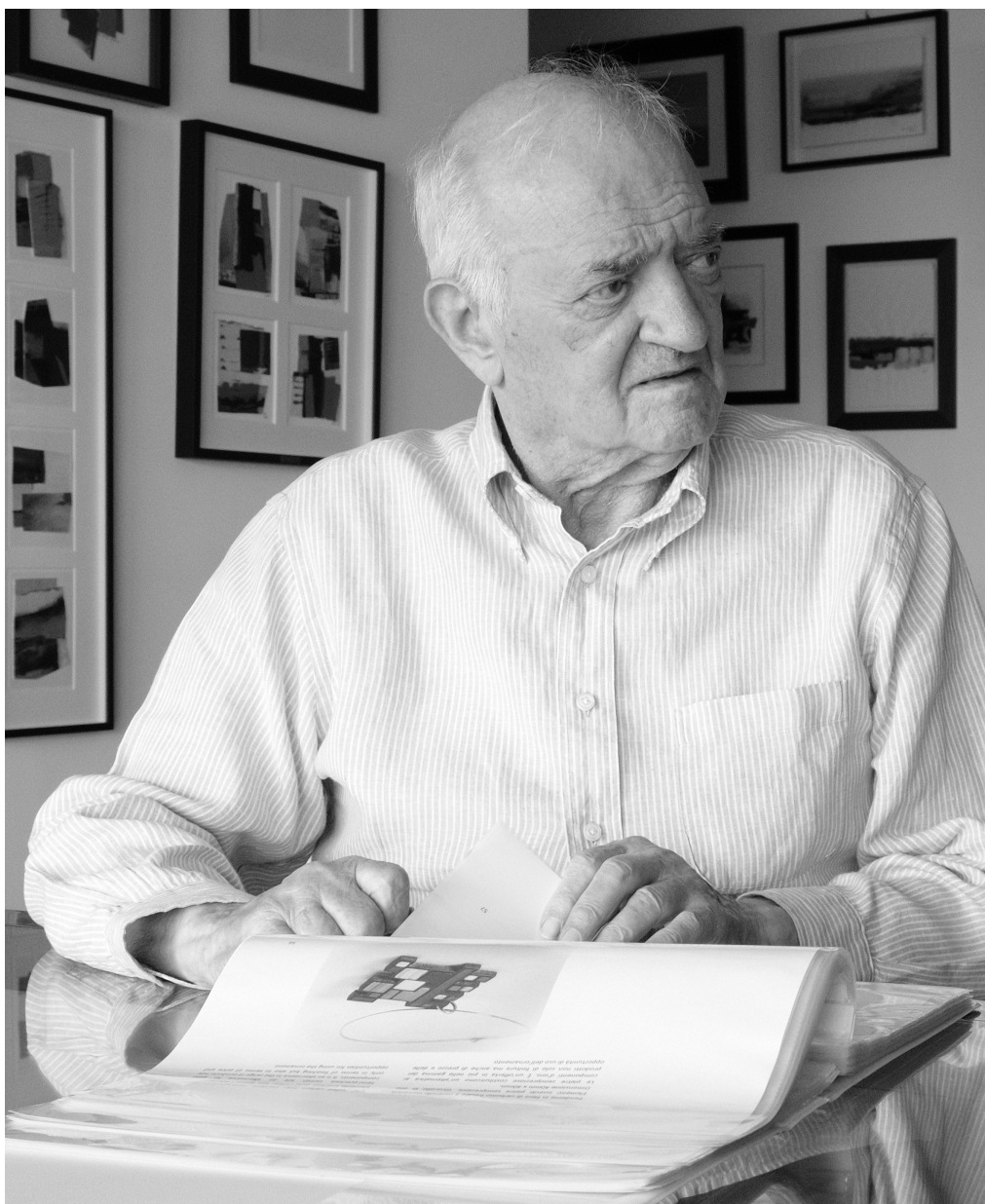
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Mario Maioli

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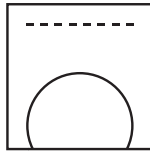


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Mario Maioli

An architect, urban planner, designer, and painter, Mario Maioli is a unique figure in Italian creativity, whose work represents an ongoing dialogue between design rigor, technology, imagination, and expressive freedom.

Born in Valenza in 1931 into a family of goldsmiths, he grew up immersed in the culture of materials and craftsmanship, an imprinting that would continuously resurface throughout his career. He graduated in 1956 from the Politecnico di Milano under the guidance of Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Gio Ponti, distinguishing himself early on through a broad, interdisciplinary approach to design.

Beginning in the 1960s, he moved fluidly across architecture, urban planning, and industrial design, collaborating with leading figures such as Pier Luigi Spadolini, Roberto and Giuliano Guiducci, Nello Renacco, Lucio Passarelli, Ludovico Quaroni, and Francesco Karrer. Parallel to his professional practice, he pursued academic roles: serving as a voluntary assistant in Florence (1961–68) and a lecturer at ISIA Florence (1964–68), later returning to teaching in the 1980s as an adjunct professor at the University of Florence.

From the late 1970s until 1992, he focused on the automotive sector, where he left a decisive mark. as responsible of the design coordination at Fiat Auto for Fiat, Lancia, Autobianchi, and Alfa Romeo, he played a key role in defining the identity of the modern Italian automobile, developing a strategy that combined brand characterization, product innovation, and production synergies.

After concluding his industrial experience, Maioli returned to his roots, reinterpreting his acquired technological expertise through an artistic lens. Between 1985 and 2000, he created ornaments and jewelry, blending goldsmithing tradition with automotive techniques. In parallel, beginning in 1985, he developed an intense acrylic painting practice, giving rise to a visual language defined by structured compositions, vibrant colors, and dynamic energy. His body of work exceeds 1,300 pieces, exhibited in Italy and abroad with the support of the Italian Cultural Institute and the Sartirana Arte Foundation.

His path is a continuous balance between design rigor and artistic freedom. As he himself states, design must “respond to society’s needs and promote the innovative aspects of design without indulging in easy aesthetics.” Now ninety-five years old, Maioli embodies a constant exercise in reinvention: from architecture to the automobile, arriving at full creative freedom.

www.mariomaioli.com

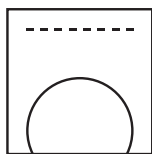
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Mario Maioli, *Crushing*, Acrylic paint on Paper, 36 x 26 cm, Inv #: 2025.008, 2025

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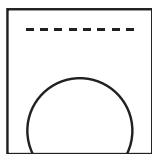


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Mario Maioli, *Red stains*, Acrylic paint on Paper, 36 x 26 cm, Inv #: 2021.063, 2021

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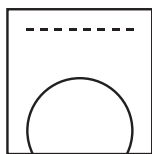


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Mario Maioli, *Verso l'ignoto*, Acrylic paint on Paper, 31 x 23 cm, Inv #: 1996.001, 1996

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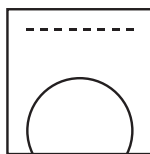


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Isabella Patti

Is an Associate Professor of Design in the Department of Architecture at the University of Florence. She is a design historian and critic whose research centers on Italian design culture in the twentieth century and its contemporary transformations, examining its key figures, institutions, practices, and modes of transmission. A core aspect of her work explores the relationships among history, criticism, and design practice, alongside developing historiographical tools that interpret design beyond linear timelines, traditional periodization, and established disciplinary boundaries.

Within this framework, she has concentrated particularly on Italian design culture in the latter half of the twentieth century, focusing on the figure and critical thought of Giovanni Klaus Koenig, about whom she authored the monograph *Giovanni Klaus Koenig nella cultura progettuale del Novecento* (Quodlibet, 2024). Her recent research extends into conceptual design, investigating the use of genealogy, mapping, and critical visualization as tools to interrogate and represent design history.

She has additionally explored the rhetoric of games and video games, along with their design and communication implications, subjects she developed in her volume *Serious Game Design* (FrancoAngeli, 2018). She has gained experience in research and exhibition curation, notably through her scholarly collaboration on the exhibition *1927. Il ritorno in Italia. Salvatore Ferragamo e la cultura visiva del Novecento* (Salvatore Ferragamo Museum, 2017), where she contributed to the creation of texts and the selection of visual materials for the video installations.

Her current research investigates the potential for constructing historical and critical interpretations of design through relationships, discontinuities, and genealogies.

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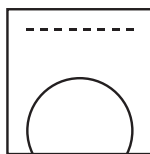


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Associazione Rifugio Digitale E.T.S.

IN COLLABORATION WITH
Forma Edizioni

ART DIRECTION
Laura Andreini

CURATED BY
Isabella Patti

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATION
Beatrice Papucci
Ester Menichelli

EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Irene Borsotti

EXHIBITION TEXTS
Isabella Patti
Mario Maioli

TRANSLATIONS
Lisa Maioli

PHOTOS
Mario Maioli Archive

PRESS OFFICE AND COMMUNICATION
Associazione Rifugio Digitale E.T.S.
Giulia Guasti
Eugenio Pincelli

GRAPHIC AND SET-UP PROJECT
Veronica Paoli
Vitoria Muzi
Mattia Gerardi

VIDEO INSTALLATION
Associazione Rifugio Digitale E.T.S.

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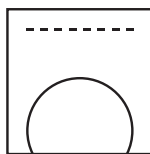


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Forma Edizioni

It is an publishing initiative developed to promote and share pathways across the worlds of art, architecture, and photography, as well as to highlight cutting-edge research in production and technology that reflects changing contemporary lifestyles and ways of living. Since its founding in 2010, the catalog has expanded by approximately twenty titles per year, giving “shape” to the expressive currents animating today’s cultural debate – deepening well-known fields of knowledge while exploring artistic expressions that reveal new perspectives on reality. A common feature of every project is the high quality of the final product, its imagery, and printing processes, complemented by targeted distribution in specialized bookstores, museum shops, and exhibition spaces. This ensures that beyond online availability, the publications maintain a crucial physical presence where informed opinions and critical assessments are formed.

The publications range from major monographs on contemporary architectural works, such as Cantina Antinori. Chronology of the Construction of a New Landscape, to academic research and catalogs for major exhibitions. These include *EST. Italian Stories of Travels, Cities, and Architecture* hosted at the Cini Foundation in Venice, and the retrospective *Gio Ponti. Loving Architecture* at the MAXXI Museum in Rome.

Exhibitions and events expand the cultural enhancement process that Forma Edizioni offers to a refined and attentive audience. The publishing house is actively involved in producing volumes for exhibitions held at Florence’s Forte di Belvedere and the Stefano Bardini Museum, as well as for private gallery shows dedicated to master artists such as Alighiero Boetti, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Lucio Fontana, and Alberto Burri. The catalog also features photography and design titles, including the monograph on Karim Rashid and the overview *The Design City. Milan Laboratory City*. Currently in development is *On the Road City*, a series of architectural guides focused on contemporary works designed to offer a critical reading of the world’s most significant cities. The publishing house has collaborated with prominent intellectual figures, including Adolfo Natalini, Bruno Corà, Luca Massimo Barbero, Sergio Risaliti, and Luca Molinari.

Forma Edizioni

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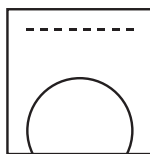


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Is an exhibition space in a former bomb shelter tunnel repurposed as a site devoted to the promotion of digital art, where architecture, design, photography, cinema, literature and all the other multiple forms of art and visual expression find their dimension and interact with one another. It was built on the foundations of an old anti-aircraft tunnel that served from 1943 as a bomb shelter in World War II. It was known as the *Rifugio della Fornace* a safe haven during the tragedy of the war, and now it has been rechristened as the *Rifugio Digitale*, a place of rebirth, where technology meets art, offering a contemporary space where people can explore creativity through the modern language of technology.

The requalification project, handled by Archea Associati, will house digital expressions of every kind, with an eye always on the future and on the new vanguards. In collaboration with the publisher **Forma Edizioni**, it will house exhibitions, but also events and performances related to art, architecture, photography, literature, cinema and other initiatives linked to the digital world. It will show original views and more on the 16 screens positioned along the 33 meters of the tunnel, a new idea for Florence where the connection between art, people and technology generates an intense visual experience, unexpected and interactive. It is a space designed for constant change, always dynamic, with a new and exciting speed that distinguishes it from a traditional art gallery.

Rifugio Digitale occupies an area of 165 square meters and is a versatile structure ideal for organizing exhibitions, events, presentation, but also debates, lectures and simple discussions. It is expected to appeal to a vast public desirous of indulging their interest in ideas and novel cultural experiences right in the heart of Florence.

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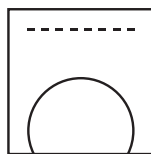
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Archea Associati, Rifugio Digitale, Florence, 2022
ph. Pietro Savorelli e Associati

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