
Barbara Banas (National Museum in Wrocław) / The moon in a cupboard. A few reflections on the design of the 1960s and 1970s

The impulse to create this article was a fragment of Stanislaw Lem's correspondence with his American translator Michael Kandel. The author mentioned there a visit of Scandinavian enthusiasts of his creative works, who bestowed on him a set of glass dishes named "Solaris". The following set was designed by a remarkable Finnish designer Tapio Wirkkala. What decided about its originality was an intriguing pattern embossed on molten glass – concentric, layered structures, which, on the one hand, triggered in the recipients the tactile sense, a willingness to have a direct contact with a texture of the dish, and on the other hand, visual associations that refer to the world of a different provenance of biomorphic organic forms. The belief in an imminent possibility to colonise space was fueled by absorbing visions and stories created, among others, by Lem in his novels and it exerted influence on the designers of utilitarian objects. Their projects were characterised by a "New Look" style, which was dominant at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, and one of their distinctive features was organic treatment of form. Soft profiles, elliptical lines, roundness, protuberance, umbilicus, form of a sphere that could be shaped in a flexible way are the most commonly used elements for those objects dedicated to extraterrestrial future. The author recalls some objects that are characteristic to this trend and that have their place in history, among others a desk lamp designed in 1965 by Yonel Lebovic, which consisted of a spherical metal corpus with a light bulb hidden inside and which was surrounded by rings cut in plexiglass, a Polish design, slightly later, Z 312 watch from 1975 produced by "Predom-Metron" in Torun; spherical seats made of plastic and a futuristic design of a kitchen-sphere by Luigi Colani. Fascination with scientific inventions, new possibilities that arise from observation of both macro and micro-worlds, so far unavailable to the eye, was presented in a catalogue of decorations and new ornaments. The glass that was similar to Wirkkala's design was also created by a prominent Polish designer Jan Sylwester Drost. He prepared sets "Asteroid" and "Radiant", which were inspired by space, for the pressed glassworks "Ząbkowice" in Dabrowa Gornicza. The increased activities in space did not exert a direct influence on an iconosphere of home interior; it was influenced, however, by dynamic processes of technological changes in the area of production and design of consumer products, especially the popularisation of plastic.