

Gio Ponti

Italian modernist architect Gio Ponti is considered one of the most influential designers of the mid-20th century. He helped establish Italy as a global design center, and his diverse career included notable work in architecture, industrial design, furniture design, art and publishing. The Denver Art Museum's North Building was designed by Ponti and is his only completed design in North America.

Throughout his successful career, Ponti earned international fame and numerous awards, among them the Art Prize from The Accademia d'Italia, a gold medal from the Paris Academie d'Architecture, the prestigious title of Commander from Sweden's Royal Order of Vasa and an honorary doctorate from the London Royal College of Art.

Ponti was born in Milan, Italy, in 1891. He earned a degree in architecture from the Politecnico di Milano University in 1921, and entered into a partnership with architects Emilio Lancia and Mino Fiocchi in 1923. During this time, his early architectural accomplishments included the house on Via Randaccio in Milan (1925) and the Bouilhet villa in Garches, Paris (1926). For seven years after 1927, he partnered with Lancia at Studio Ponti e Lancia PL, and his work was heavily influenced by the neo-classical Novecento Italiano movement.

After leaving the partnership with Lancia, Ponti began working with engineers Eugenio Soncini and Antonio Fornaroli and his career shifted toward industrial design. Their Studio Ponti-Fornaroli-Soncini designed Fiat's offices and worked on numerous projects for universities, including the *Palazzo del Liviano* at the University of Padua, for which Ponti himself painted the frescos.

Some of the architect's most notable Italian landmarks include Pirelli Tower in Milan, the Hotel della Citta et de la Ville in Forli and the Centro Studi Fondazione Livio e Maria Garzanti. Ponti also worked on numerous projects internationally; he was involved in the design of structures in 13 different countries in collaboration with more than 100 different companies.

Ponti's diverse career also included serving as the artistic director for the centuries-old porcelain manufacturer Richard-Ginori in Milan; designing furnishings under the name Domus Nova (the *Superleggera* and *Distex* are among his famous chair designs); teaching as a professor of architecture at his alma mater from 1936 to 1961; and contributions to the publishing world. In 1928, Ponti established *Domus* magazine, which he dedicated to architecture, art and design; the publication became one of the world's leading architecture and design magazines and is still published today. In 1941, he helped create *Stile* magazine and served as its editor for six years.