***XEROXED* Edition 001- Against Boredom: Delirious Is Beautiful**

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Abstract

XEROXED: wearable pages, readable garments is a publishing platform that investigates the interplay between body, garment, and written publication through the reconfiguration of paper material into wearable garments.

For its *Edition 001- Against boredom: delirious is beautiful, XEROXED* collaborated with the Primo Moroni Archive in Milan, a non-institutional archive hosting one of the largest collections of Italian leftist underground materials, spanning from the late 1970s to present day.

This first edition was created with the intention of starting a process that would spread and transform Primo Moroni's material. It has been the generating root of new editorial contents that revisit the archive. Through the conceptual and material analysis of *XEROXED's Edition 001*, this study demonstrates how publishing through clothing allowed the Primo Moroni archival material to be reactivated, reaching a broader and more diverse audience, making it public via a form of embodied communication.

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Introduction: *XEROXED*, a garment publishing platform

The garment publishing platform *XEROXED: wearable pages, readable garments* originates from the urgency of putting back into circulation archive material that has been positioned in the margins, that is, outside of, or in opposition to the dominant capitalist modes of media cultural production. *XEROXED* seeks to accomplish this goal by the creation of wearable publications, namely book-like garments functioning as vehicles for the distribution and circulation of information. The material (re)published by *XEROXED* particularly includes flyers, fanzines, booklets, posters, and publications from the Italian leftist countercultural scene. Contents date back from the later half of the 1960s to the early 2000s, with most of the production occurring during the 1970s and 1980s, a time of significant activity within the Italian counterculture (**Fig. 1**).

Documents (re)published through the *XEROXED* wearable publications are selected according to their relevance in contemporary political discourses, with a focus on how they could possibly evoke reflection on themes such as cyberfeminism, cyberpunk, working-class struggle, squatting, and

body agency (Leary 1994). Through the juxtaposition, mixing, and reconfiguration of this archive material, new inputs are created on the *XEROXED* garments. These outfits become potential tools that can stimulate and encourage conversations, reflections, and debates among people who come across them in public spaces.

With *XEROXED,* wearing content makes it immediately public and circulates through the wearer's body. Indeed, the latter is not only consuming the published material but also contribute to its dissemination and interpretation (**Fig. 2**). The experimentation into the conceptual and material relationship between the garment and the publication, text and textile, paper and fabric, becomes pivotal.

For its *Edition 001 Against Boredom: Delirious is beautiful*, *XEROXED* collaborated with the Primo Moroni Archive located in Milan, a non-institutional archive that hosts one of the largest collections of Italian leftist underground materials, spanning from the late 1970s to the present day. It constitutes an incredibly fertile environment where the coexistence of countercultural archival materials and contemporary publications continuously generates new inputs, conversations, debates, and reflections.

Through the conceptual and material analysis of *XEROXED Edition 001*, this article highlights how publishing through clothing allows the Primo Moroni archival material to be reactivated, reaching a broader and more diverse audience, making it public via a form of embodied communication.

The following paragraphs will present the characteristics of the archival artistic research method employed for this study, the archival material selection process at the Primo Moroni Archive, and how it was employed within *Edition 001*.

Lastly, the article will focus on *XEROXED*'s positioning at the intersection of fashion and publishing, and highlight the differences between book publishing and garment publishing in terms of circulation, emphasising how the introduction of the body in the latter affects how the content is experienced, read, and disseminated.

Defining an archival artistic research method

In *XEROXED*, the research process not only encompasses designing the wearable publication but also involves consulting, selecting, and organising archival materials that will be printed on the garment. It is crucial to highlight that my approach to archival research is based on an artistic research methodology, which differs from traditional historical or academic research methods. Acknowledging this distinction is essential to illustrate *XEROXED*'s archival research methods.

In artistic research, the archive is particularly intended as a creative space (Pad.ma 2010) that is used for purposes other than historical or academic. Therefore, its use, and the selection criteria for the materials widely differ from traditional archival research.

To highlight these core differences in the use of archives between artistic and academic research, I would like to highlight a quote by Thomas Crombez extracted from the book *Archivoltage* (Crombez & Dockx 2021):

> *The artist has a more singular perspective on an archive than an academic researcher, who has to conform to all kinds of rules. Artistic research is literally the opposite. It becomes*

interesting when it does not conform. Otherwise, it turns into academic art, which is the worst scenario. […] If you take away the wilderness of artistic practice, you kill creativity.

As pointed out by Crombez, the singular perspective is an important aspect of archival artistic research. The discipline's methodological openness (Serig 2012) allows artists to develop their own methodology, and no form of validation comes into action, if not the confrontation with their ecology of interest. By contrast, archival academic research comes with a set of rules and scientific criteria that need to be followed for the research to be validated and accepted by the academic sphere.

In archival artistic research, the singular perspective and the methodological pluralism trigger different uses of the archive, which is not treated as a 'fortress of knowledge' (Pad.ma 2010) but rather as a space where an 'active recollection' (Ricoeur 2004) of the past events is put into action. The 'active recollection' refers to a different kind of memory, a present memory, which enables the individual to reshape the events based on their current interpretation of the archived materials. In artistic research, it means that the archival material is not merely used for history writing but is often reread, reelaborated, and reworked, as if to 'disturb the archive' (Pad.ma 2010).

Focusing on the archival research method used in *XEROXED*, serendipity played a major role in the selection process, as the Primo Moroni Archive is lacking a cataloguing system. When digging in the archive, I often found myself opening unlabelled boxes and folders and browsing through piles and piles of ephemeral material. This is to emphasise that a bibliographically driven type of research would not have been effective (**Fig. 3**).

However, despite this serendipitous approach, I was able to follow some selection criteria to guide these research sessions in the archive, primarily based on the material characteristics of the publications and highly influenced by the strong interest in printing techniques I nurtured for the past few years.

The main criteria used to navigate from one object to another in order to build a coherent selection of publications connected by material features rather than content similarities, are listed below.

- **Printing technique**: I usually look for particular printing techniques while selecting archival materials. I am mainly interested in mimeographed, eliographed, silkscreened, and Xerox material because of the tactile and material characteristics those techniques confer on the paper. They are oftentimes tactile, grainy, and inky, and most of them are made by employing analogue tools.

- **Binding**: The binding of the publications is also an aspect I consider while selecting archival materials. In particular, I often search for homemade, rough binding techniques, such as staples, three-hole punches, book rings, binder clips, and rubber bands.

- **Flaws and printing errors**: Flaws, printing errors, and ink stains are common when looking through self-published materials. That is a feature of self-published paper content that particularly fascinates me since it allows you to virtually connect with the making process of the printed objects. Also, those traces highlight that those materials are not mass-produced with professional equipment but are often homemade and, therefore, involve human errors.

- **Analogue layout**: I often search for material realised by using analogue tools or where the printer is used in an unconventional manner. An example of this can be found in Xerox art and scanner art, where layouts are created by manually sliding, shaking, flipping, and moving visual and textual contents on the scanner plate.

Finding content similarities was part of a second phase, where I proceeded to group the material into different categories: manifestos, flyers, zines, and publications. After sorting them, I mapped them all out and tried to find common themes between them. The nodes of this extensive mapping were then selected based on their potential relevancy with contemporary political discourse. Finally, some of these nodes were further developed to create a *XEROXED* wearable publication (**Fig. 4**).

Before delving deeper into the use of the Primo Moroni archival material in *XEROXED Edition 001*, it is important to briefly discuss its history and evolution.

Historical context of the Primo Moroni Archive

The Primo Moroni Archive was created to preserve the history and materials of a long period of squatting, self-organisation, and politics that started in Milan in the 70s and that is continuing today. In 1976, a group of people squatted in two buildings located in the Ticinese quarter, in via Conchetta 18 and 19 and in via Torricelli. The one in Conchetta 18 and 19 was named 'Cox 18' and hosts the archive today.

The squatting of these places has not been a smooth process: since '76, the occupants have been repeatedly threatened and moved away. The squatted areas were inhabited by activists, youth cultures, immigrants, and families, and functioned as gathering spots where people could discuss politics, support minorities, and have fun. Besides the political and cultural events hosted there, something very important happened on 8 February 1992: the highly politicised Calusca City Lights library, founded in 1971 and already located in the Ticinese quarter, moved into the Cox 18 building.

It was owned by Primo Moroni, one of the most influential figures of the Italian underground scene. He was the glue between politics, squatters, youth cultures, and books. The library was one of the few places in Milan that, besides selling highly politicised books, hosted fanzines, self-published 'grey material', and independent magazines that people would bring there to be distributed. Concerts, debates, workshops, and study sessions began to flourish at Cox 18 as soon as the library moved there. To this day, the location remains a significant monument for everyone who feels a part of the Milanese countercultural scene.

Primo Moroni died in 1998. After his death, people associated with the Cox 18 decided to create the Primo Moroni Archive to honour his figure, protect his collection, and preserve the printed history of the Italian countercultural movement. The Archive officially opened in 2002 and holds 15,000 books, pamphlets, and official and informal editions; 1,500 periodical titles; 150 works, documents, and articles by Primo Moroni himself; as well as 69 boxes of grey material. The library still exists within its walls and functions as a distribution point for contemporary underground press (**Fig. 5**).

The people that gravitate around the archive share similar attitudes, political ideas, and lifestyles. The community grows its own paper garden, making everything possible to not make it wither in dust and lapse. In this sense, the archive is active, dynamic, and proliferating: new publications coming from the Cox 18 community, but also from other similar realities, are constantly published and hosted in the space.

It is important to highlight that the archive has never accessed any form of external financing, as it is not ideologically or financially tied to any public or private institution. Its existence relies on the voluntary and supportive contributions of those who take care of it, alternating, according to the moments and needs, free work and self-financing initiatives. This organisation has a significant impact on its management but denotes a type of commitment that goes beyond money, motivated by passion, love, and a personal drive toward openly radical ideologies.

XEROXED Edition 001 - Against Boredom: Delirious is beautiful was born out of the urgency of enhancing and reactivating the Primo Moroni archival materials, but also to give value to the immaterial work keeping the archive alive and proliferating. *XEROXED*'s statement is that it is their collective responsibility to protect such spaces, as they store precious bits of Italian culture.

Because of this, the *XEROXED Edition 001* also served as a tool for raising money to support the archive's ongoing expansion and counterculture dissemination. The money raised from the distribution of this edition was used to cover the production costs of materials, and the remaining funds have been entirely donated to the Primo Moroni Archive.

XEROXED Edition 001: spread and mutation of the Primo Moroni Archive

The archival materials used for the creation of the *XEROXED Edition 001* were selected with the attentive help of Primo Moroni Archive volunteers and have constituted a baseline to launch an open call with the idea that everyone could reinterpret, rework, and 'active[ly] recollect' (Ricoeur, 2014) the materials shared online under the overarching theme: *Against Boredom: Delirious is beautiful*.

By choosing this title, *XEROXED* attempted to reflect the contents of the selected publications, which cover a time span that goes from 1971 to 1977: an incredibly fertile period for Italian counterculture. The publications comprehended titles such as *Puzz*, *Cannibale*, and *Oask*, which addressed important political issues through many different media (**Fig. 6**). Comics, illustrations, poetry, and creative writing exploded onto the mimeographed pages in a colourful and playful manner. The idea that divergent strategies of thought, like irony, dementia, and cheekiness, can be at once tools of destructive creation and tools of transformative power to generate new ways of being together as well as a new culture constituted the common thread uniting these publications.

With the same cheekiness, in *XEROXED Edition 001*, the archive is not approached as a fortress of memory but as a creative space and a pool for reflection. For *XEROXED*, the real potential of the archive unfolds when it is used as a reservoir where to cultivate new thoughts and perspectives and to question and debate history.

In this new understanding of the archive, the material is used as a starting point for the development of fresh, modern viewpoints on it, rather than being left intact and untouched. With *XEROXED*, the archive was used as a catalyst for the development of new universes of meaning in order to eradicate the slightest layer of dust. The contributions triggered by the open call reread the archive through diverse languages, approaches, and media. The contents span from poetry, free translation, sound design, illustration, and comics, providing new interpretations and insights into the archival material (**Fig. 7**).

These contributions were printed on a garment, functioning as a platform to foster connections among like-minded individuals. By weaving together contributions on the printed fabric, new narratives emerged, turning it into a collective, wearable layout (**Fig. 8**).

The used materials played with transparency: the content was layered and interacted with the light, almost transparent fabric. The wearer/reader was invited to engage with the published objects, to touch and read in the folds of the fabric, in the seams, by turning, stretching, and compressing the textile as the text moved on the body.

The garment as a wearable publication

The reason why *XEROXED* chose the wearable publication as its primary publishing medium was that its used and material properties allowed the published content to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

Compared to a book, a wearable publication introduces two important elements: the body and the fabric. These elements create a significant difference in how the object is read, used, and shared and how the published content circulates. It is an interactive form of reading and engagement and, therefore, requires the body to allow the content fully express its publishing potential. By involving the body in the communication process, it becomes a form of embodied communication.

While a book is typically read in private or within a specific community of readers, wearable publications are mostly meant to be worn and shown in public spaces. This creates a shared experience of the content, where the garment becomes a conversation starter, a way to connect and engage with the others. By wearing a wearable publication, the wearer is not only consuming the published content but also contributing to its dissemination and interpretation. A wearable publication is therefore a form of social practice (Shukaitis & Figiel 2019), a shared experience, as it thrives on the constant engagement and co-production of meaning between the wearer and the readers.

Wearable publications have the potential to create a sense of community and identity among wearers and readers, who recognise each other by reading visual codes made of printed symbols, values, and ideas.

To dress, and to publish, is therefore not an individual practice: a wearable publication can serve as a mean of identification and recognition among people, creating a sense of belonging and shared values.

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For more about the Primo Moroni Archive : https://www.inventati.org/apm/index.php

For more about *XEROXED* : https://xeroxed.net/ and https://www.instagram.com/xero.xed/
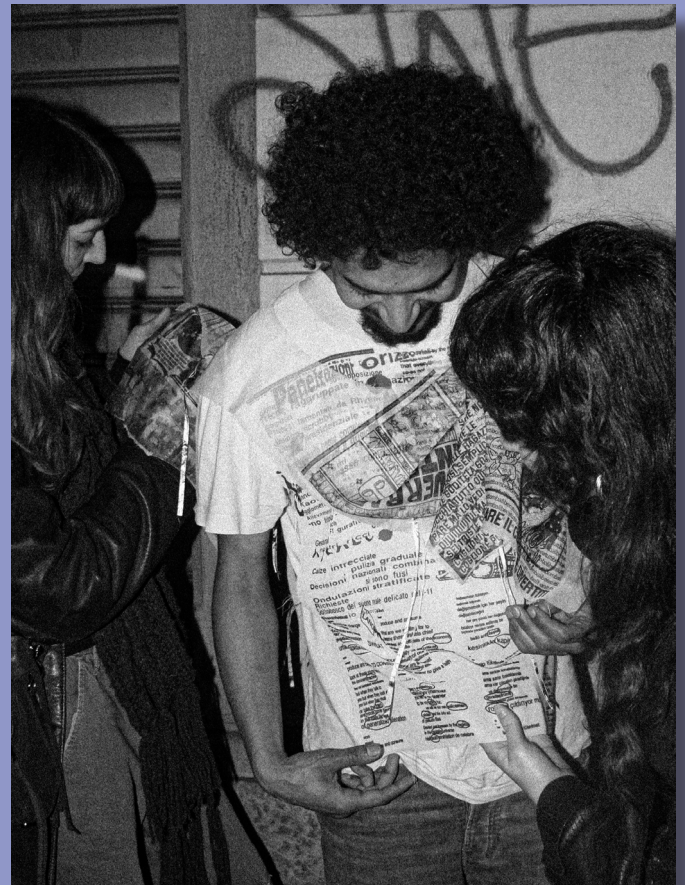
Fig. 3

Primo Moroni Archive consultation rooms,
Milan, February 2023.

Fig. 4

Primo Moroni Archive consultation rooms,
Milan, February 2023.

Fig. 5

Calusca library at Primo Moroni Archive,
Milan, May 2023.

Fig. 6

XEROXED Edition 001, underground paper archival material extracted from the Primo Moroni's Collection.

Fig. 7

Selected contributions for XEROXED Edition 001 Open Call 'Against boredom: delirious is beautiful.'

Fig. 8

XEROXED Edition 001, Sublimation print on discarded polyester, 2024.