

# FLOS

A man in a dark suit and glasses is holding a large, shiny, cylindrical object that looks like a lamp or a piece of art. The object is highly reflective and has a metallic finish. The man is looking directly at the camera. Above him, the word 'FLOS' is written in large, red, serif capital letters. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

stories

*Issue two: Changes — people, places, and things finding a new normal. Mario Bellini's Chiara, Vittoriano Viganò's Casa La Scala, Formafantasma's 'Cambio' exhibition, Patricia Urquiola's Flauta, Konstantin Grcic's Mayday, and Michael Anastassiades' Last Order, all in a moment of transition.*



# Mario Bellini's Chiara



In 1969, Italian architect MARIO BELLINI debuted CHIARA, a flat-packable floor lamp for Flos that wore a shiny cloak of stainless steel. Fifty years after its introduction, Flos is reissuing the icon in a range of sizes and finishes. To honour the occasion, Flos design curator Paolo Brambilla talks with the legend about what inspired Chiara, how design has changed since the '60s, and how it hasn't. Photography by Alessandro Furchino Capria.



PAOLO BRAMBILLA: How did Chiara come about?

MARIO BELLINI: One day in my studio it came to me that we could use light the way it manifests in our surroundings and our landscapes—never directly, but often through clouds or reflected off objects, walls, and surfaces. And so, instead of saying ‘let’s design a lamp’, I said, ‘let’s design an apparatus that can take light from an artificial source and send it back into our surroundings with a certain intelligence and grace’. Thinking about it was the easy bit, but then came the more difficult part: what do you do in a case like this? I took some scissors, a big piece of card, and I started to cut out something that could be made into a cylinder with a wide hat on top that, when joined on the right and left-hand side, would act as a reflector of the light source housed in the base. And that was it.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: The lamp is called Chiara, which means clear, but it actually refers to something completely different.

MARIO BELLINI: I always like to play around with words and their meanings. I am also a lover of etymology. Chiara means something clear, but the word clear is a word we use an awful lot in our language (‘let’s be clear’; ‘let’s clear this up’), and there are also certain Lombardy dialectal expressions for ‘to shed light’ that use the Italian word *chiaro*. Chiara is also the name of one of my daughters.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: When you created this lamp, I imagine you designed it with Sergio Gandini. How did this relationship with Flos start?

MARIO BELLINI: Back then, it was possible to make something and then ask for an appointment to show your project, as I did with the card cut-out I mentioned earlier. You spoke with a person who said they were willing to have a look and try it, and this is what happened. From that piece of card we moved on to a big sheet of stainless steel that was cut so it would wrap around into a cylinder, with three cuts on the bottom edge corresponding to three rings that acted as a lamp stand into which the bulb was screwed. On top there was a hat that extended beyond the edges, tilted at 45 degrees. This was the forerunner for what we are now restudying and putting back into production, even designing a family of different sizes and performance around it. It’s not just a simple re-edition; we are doing something that had never really worked out: the original Chiara had a decorative profile on the edge of the sheet steel which was a hazard for anyone touching it—it wouldn’t stay attached. Finally, we managed to make this edging so that it stays permanently fixed to the metal and, given the occasion, we have also had fun building a family of Chiaras: the classic Chiara with a few new details and differences, a medium-sized Chiara, and a small Chiara that is suitable for standing on a dressing table, a shelf, or a low piece of furniture. If you’re reading in bed, this Chiara will shine light on your newspaper or book without harming your eyes.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: Chiara, like many other objects you’ve designed, has become an icon. Those were the heroic years,

when everything was still waiting to be invented. How is the design landscape different today?

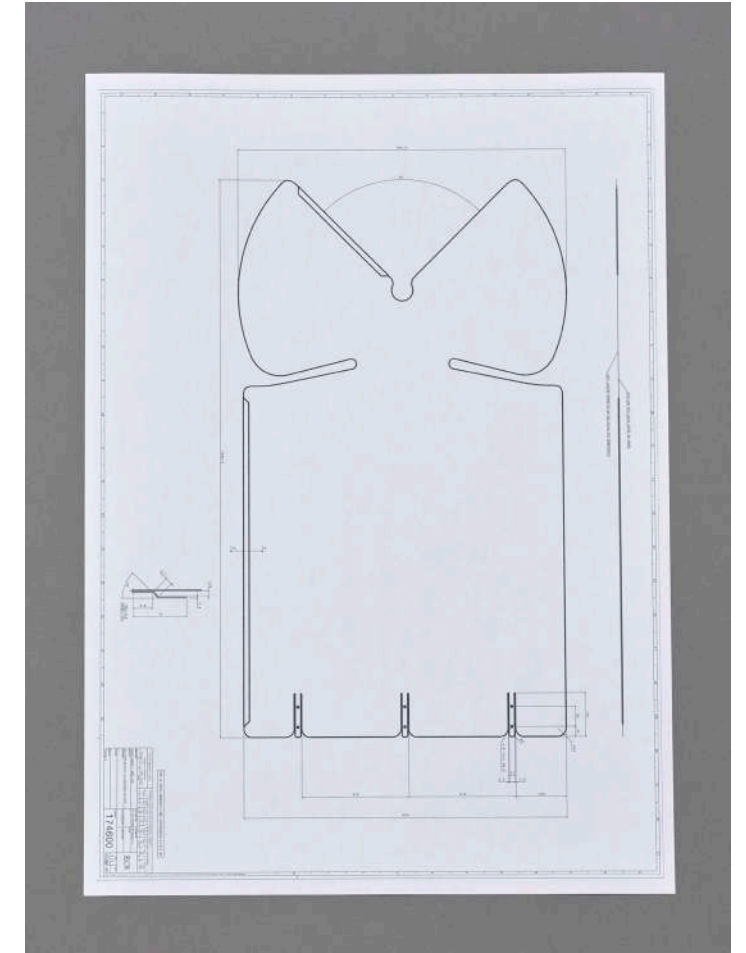
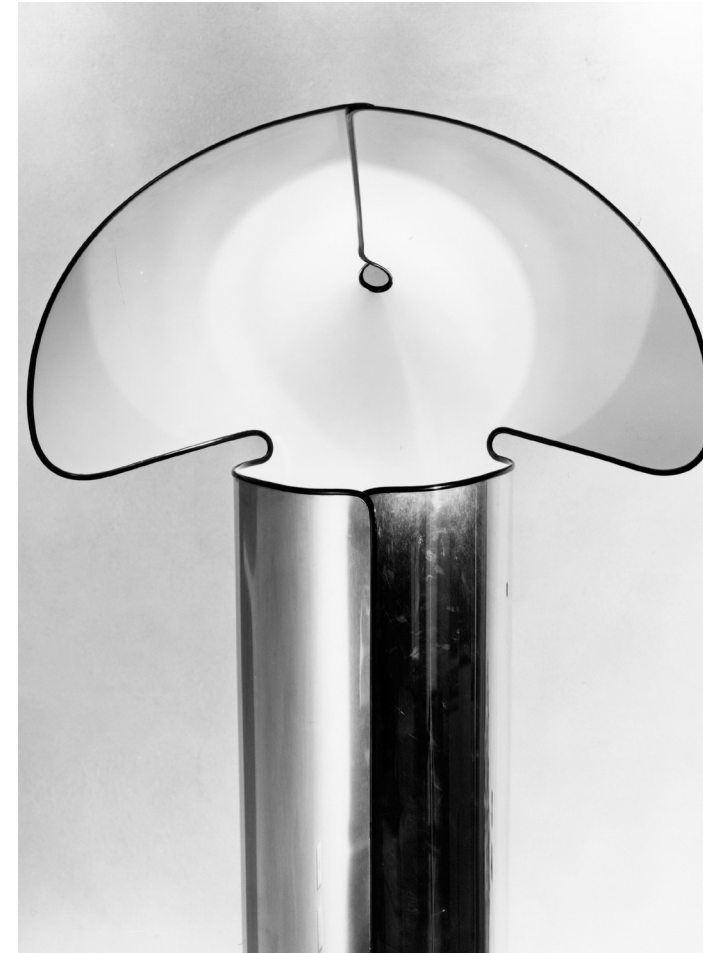
MARIO BELLINI: Today design has become a popular word. We say, ‘I see you’ve got yourself a design home’, and that makes me ask so many questions. What on earth does ‘design home’ mean? If design means project, having a designed home does not make sense. I actually forecast that the word design would end up meaning, not just the simple idea of a project, but the indicator of a style, like, for example, Art Deco. When we spoke of design in those years, we thought we were making a statement. Now, they say that the era of styles is over, that now form follows function. But form has almost always followed function, otherwise millennia ago we would have managed to design a chair on which not to sit. But form also follows emotion, meaning, and values. Take a lamp like Chiara—think in how many other ways you can deflect light and send it back in a certain direction. Instead, this little character that has become an icon over time not only reflects the light that is inside its cylindrical part, diffusing it gracefully into its surroundings, but it also has a gratifying look and presence. Chiara itself fills space and addresses your emotional capacity to interpret things.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: Will icons continue to exist? Where are we headed today?

MARIO BELLINI: The idea that the time has come when styles are finished is an idiotic one, without any historic, philosophical foundation or awareness. And I am pleased that this is the case and that design is a style. Those who are talented enough to design furnishings, objects, interiors, and homes, will continue to do so. Only projects designed by those using this talent will become icons. Things designed that represent our time and how it evolves, that lend meaning to our homes, our living spaces, and our offices, will gradually change and evolve. So when I say ‘design style’ I mean, somewhat controversially, that although this word was used to mark the end of styles, paradoxically it has actually ended up by becoming, quite rightly, the style of our times. And so it will be remembered in a hundred years’ time.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: How has design changed in private spaces in recent years? How has our way of living changed?

MARIO BELLINI: If the question is how and if our way of living has changed, I want to immediately distinguish: the way we live, our offices, and how we co-live in our homes has changed radically. I once did a lot of research into the phenomenon of office work. I even wrote a book entitled *Office Project*, in which I said that the importance of being in a workspace consists of realising that you spend eight hours in this space, sitting on this chair at this so-called desk, and so much more attention should be paid to these furnishings. At that time we used the expression ‘office landscape’, and this was seen as an extraordinary innovation, but often the only response to this intuition was to add another plant or an extra screen. The real solution is not adding greenery, but ensuring that your office is a space for your entire person, not just your job. Even when







you are in the office, you are living. Your chair must be comfortable. What you see around you as landscape must not be a functional abstraction. For example, I imagined that those who spent time in this space must be able to enjoy watching all those who walk past. Boring, maybe, but they must feel they are a part of a whole. Additionally, when someone comes to their workstation to have a chat, they normally find a barrier before them, invented by some genius to hide the secretary's legs. But it prevented anyone from sitting in front of you at your desk. As a result, anyone who came to talk to you at your desk had to sit at the corner with the point of the surface in their stomach. So I invented a round attachment to add to normal, rectangular desks that I christened Planet Office. Within a month this round attachment became the must-have accessory for all office systems then in production. Everyone adopted it. I didn't get angry because I said to myself, 'Perhaps I have invented something meaningful', and the meaning was that when you are an important person, those coming to see you are people, not robots, and therefore, if they want to sit and talk to you they sit around this attachment. You move a bit and your attention is focused on them. All of this was fundamental for the innovation of office space.

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: Even in our homes, the arrival of technology, especially over recent years, has changed our lifestyles, no?

MARIO BELLINI: I will pose a slightly controversial question: are we sure we are living in a different way from how the ancient Romans lived? I would say not. Go and see what excavation is revealing—they had courtyards, with covered walkways and columns, a pool of water, greenery, houses had two storeys with stairs, there were windows inside, corners where they cooked and, if they cooked, there were pans, fire, fish, etc.

And there were sofas to sit on, more like Trimalcione than nowadays, more comfortably seated. Most activities and things that they used then were the same as today, because while passing from the Roman era to today, we haven't changed, we still have two legs, two arms, two hands, two feet, two eyes, the same intelligence. Our culture is very similar to theirs—their philosophers and literati still form the basis for European and western culture. So we need to watch what we mean when we say evolution and changes. It is also clear that everything changes because we fly in planes, we take the underground, we drive around in cars. But, you know, before the car there was the horse, there were carriages, it was the same thing. Ladies would take their carriages to show off their clothes at tea time. There's this wonderful, really interesting novel by Marco Romano called *La Città Delle Donne* (*The City of Women*).

PAOLO BRAMBILLA: So if our home lifestyles are not changing what sense is there in re-editing a lamp from 50 years ago?

MARIO BELLINI: On this scale of values we are talking about, fifty years is five minutes. And, therefore, a lamp, an object, a piece of furniture, etc. from then and now look very alike, unless we refer to elements and plants that have undergone violent evolution. But 50 years ago, cars already existed and still exist. Perhaps there are no more carriages, but carriages were the mothers of cars; horses were the mothers of motor-bikes. Even I see that I almost exaggerate in considering the great permanence of how our civilisation lives. So let's look at it slowly and think that perhaps every 10 or 20 years all the valves flip and everything turns over. We still have jackets and shirts and ties etc. These are things that, luckily, have had and continue to have an extremely long existence.





Today's reedition of the iconic Chiara floor lamp.



Chiara, in its historical packaging.





Photographs of Chiara from the Fbs archive.

# FLOS STORIES

## ISSUE TWO: *CHANGES*

Things change—it's a fact of life. And over the last six months we've watched it happen nonstop, as the tectonic plates of daily life shift beneath our feet. Now we wear masks. We have meetings on Zoom or Skype. We keep a bit of space between ourselves and our neighbour. We cook, we work, and we learn from home. How amazingly fast we have adjusted and slipped into a new normal. For Flos Stories 2 we took the moment to embrace all these changes and to celebrate stories of adaptability. In this issue we'll reintroduce you to some classic Flos designs, reshaped for 2020—Mario Bellini's iconic Chiara, Konstantin Grcic's utilitarian Mayday, and Achille Castiglioni's flexible Diabolo, have all been revisited and reimaged with small design changes. We'll take you

to London, where Formafantasma's exhibition, 'Cambio', an exploration of the timber industry on display at the Serpentine Pavilion, feels strangely prescient. And we'll go on holiday to Lake Garda in Italy's Lombardy region, where Vittoriano Viganò's 1950s Brutalist Casa La Scala has been re-illuminated with a selection of Flos lamps. Of course there are some new products, too. We present Patricia Urquiola's slick, industrial Flauta lights, reinterpreted by artist Pablo Limón as hyper-detailed renderings. And we take you to the final, surreal moments of a dinner party, where Michael Anastassiades' new Last Order table light casts a dreamy glow. We think this ability to change—the willingness to—is where real beauty emerges in a person, a place, or even a lamp.



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LAST

ORDER

Artist Laila Gohar and photographer Zhi Wei conjure one of those surreal moments at the end of the night when the lines around things start to dissolve. Friends linger amid crumpled table linens and nearly-eaten desserts. LAST ORDER, a new lamp by MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES, bathes the ephemeral scene in a warm glow.

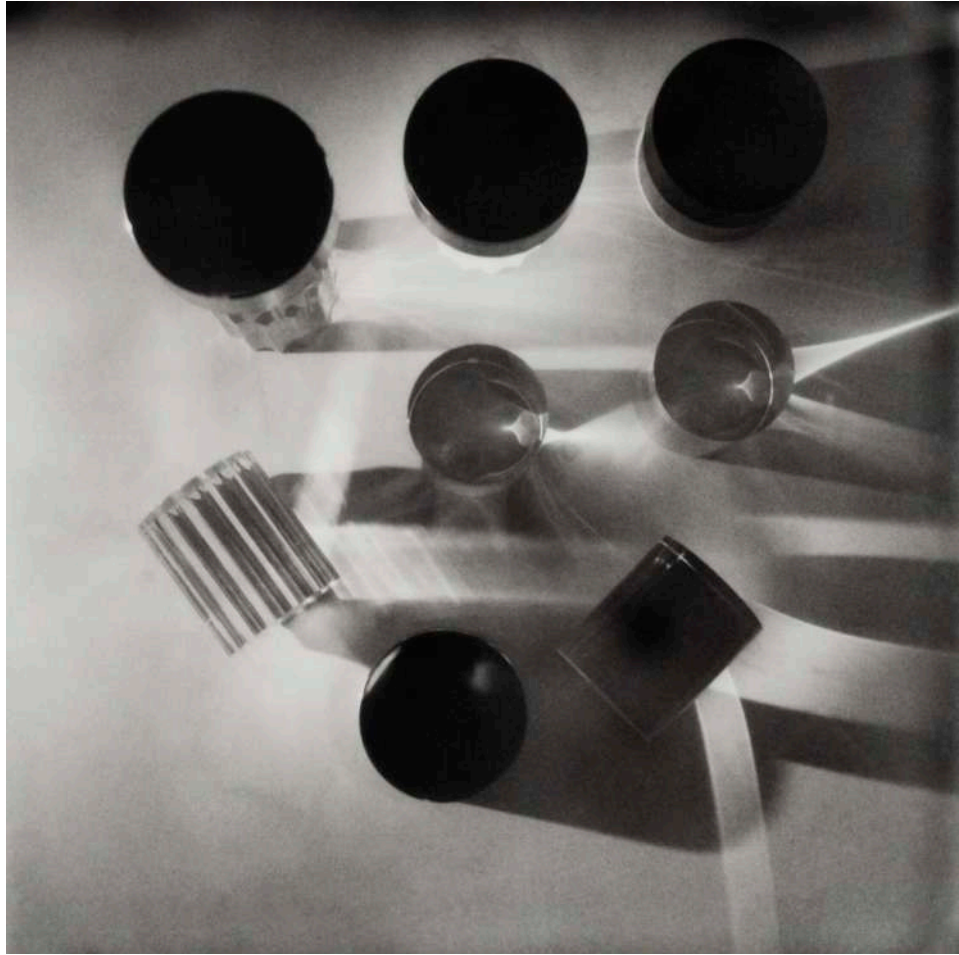




















Pages 16-17: Last Order, fluted, in polished stainless steel. Page 18: Last Order, clear and fluted, both in satin copper. Page 20-21: Last Order, fluted, in polished brass. Page 23: Last Order, fluted, in polished stainless steel. Page 24-25: Last Order, fluted, in satin copper. Page 26: Last Order, clear, in polished brass. All models by Michael Anastassiades.



# Vittoriano Viganò's Casa La Scala

Nestled on the shore of Lake Garda, in Italy's Lombardy region, a Brutalist, concrete structure stands in stark contrast to the verdant landscape. It's the erstwhile home of French sculptor and publisher André Bloc, built in the 1950s by his friend, the Italian architect Vittoriano Viganò. A simple holiday house for three, it was designed for recharging, making art, and drinking in the lakeside vistas.

'The coast of the lake in this area (near Portese) is beautiful, and still very little inhabited and built,' *Domus* wrote in 1959. 'The point where the house stands (above the Baia del Vento) is completely isolated. It is a rough terrain, with grass and olive trees, from which a plateau drops sheer to the water with a rocky cliff and a small beach.'

It's that sheer drop that gave the house its name, *La Scala*, or the staircase. For the shimmering lake below is only accessible

by a forty-metre-long ladder-bridge made from a reinforced concrete beam and one hundred sheet iron steps. The walkway juts down from the house, across the rocky terrain, and ends in a skinny pier, hovering above blue water.

The cantilevered home, in which two slices of concrete form floor and ceiling, is oriented around the landscape, with a free flowing floorplan that seems to anticipate the current fashion for open, flexible spaces. Glass windows are removable, or can be curtained with Venetian blinds. And there are only three isolated rooms: the kitchen, the bathroom, and the guest bedroom. (Beneath the residential quarters is an artist studio where Bloc could work overlooking the lake.) Aside from that, the place was—and is—accommodating, adaptable, and—as proven by Flos' illuminating intervention—open to interpretation.

Photography by FEDERICO TORRA











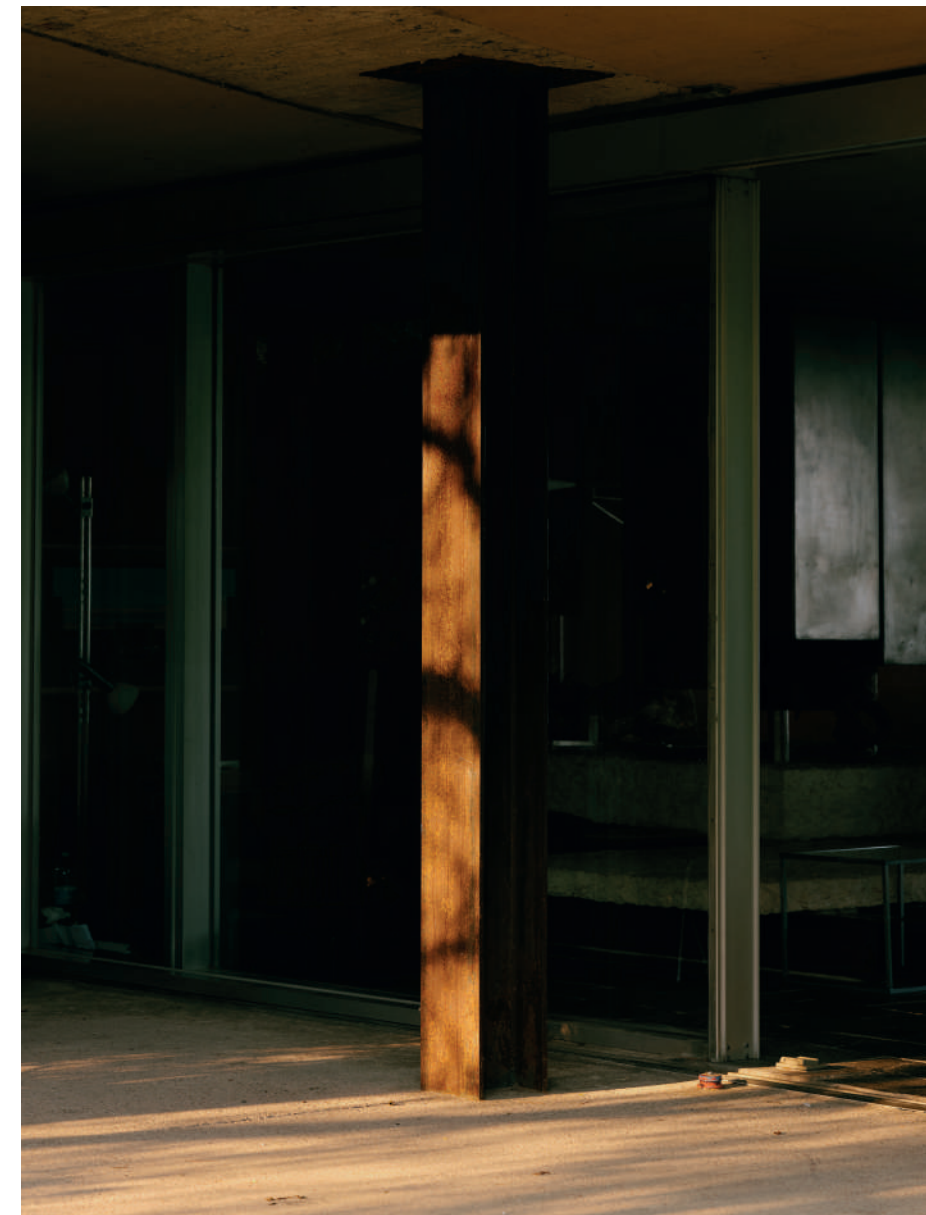




















Pages 30-31: Chiara reedition floor lamp and new table lamp, in stainless steel, by Mario Bellini. Page 32: Oblique, in white, brown, and rust, by Vincent Van Duysen. Page 34-35: Diabolo reedition, in cherry red (left) and beaver brown (right), by Achille Castiglioni. Page 36-37: Belt, in natural leather, by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec. Page 38: Flauta wall lamps, in anodized copper, by Patricia Urquiola. Page 40: Infra-Structure Episode 2, in matt black, by Vincent Van Duysen. Page 43: Flauta wall lamp, in anodized ruby red, by Patricia Urquiola.





# FORMAFANTASMA on 'Cambio'

In conversation with Gea Politi  
and Cristiano Seganfredo



Formafantasma is not an ordinary design firm. The brainchild of two Amsterdam-based Italians, Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin, the research-driven practice interrogates what we think we know about design. They analyse the way humans do things. They look into the past to find new paths forward. They propose change. Or else. And change—Cambio—is the subject of their solo exhibition at London’s Serpentine Galleries, which reopens on September 29. In it, they explore the global timber industry, examining how wood is grown, sourced, and used worldwide, and showing viewers that in these times, ‘there are many things we can work on’. Here, we excerpt a conversation between Formafantasma and Gea Politi and Cristiano Seganfredo of Italian publishing group CGPS, originally printed (on certified paper that doesn’t use protected tree species) in *Flash Art*.

*Excerpt from ‘L’indissolubile interconnessione tra le Specie: Formafantasma’, originally published in Flash Art no. 348 March–April 2020, Courtesy Flash Art.*

CGPS: Let’s start with a question posed by Hans Ulrich Obrist in his preface to the *Cambio* exhibition catalogue, which was published for your project at the Serpentine. How can design be sustainable? How can we use it to change the general attitude that has led to this semi-irreversible situation of climate change — which certainly implies devastating effects for the future?

FORMAFANTASMA: Let’s start by assuming the current economic, financial, and production system is not sustainable. We aren’t even certain that humans are. Having said that, there are many things we can work on. The first thing that comes to mind is trying to make design less human-centred. As you can imagine, it is a paradox, considering that the definition of design itself implies a desire and human instinct to shape the environment that surrounds us to meet our needs and wants. On the other hand, an ecological mindset can only be developed if we understand just how much the interconnection among the various species on the planet is essential and enduring. Therefore we cannot think that design deals exclusively with well-being and human de-

sires. If our survival is equal to the survival of all the other species with whom we share the Earth, design can no longer be centred on humans. De-anthropizing human activity is obviously a utopian ideal, but the attempt to do so is what may save us, because it will make us see what exists not as a resource to penetrate and extract, but to love and uphold. So design can intervene on different scales. There are very short-term solutions. The most obvious is choosing more sustainable materials and production processes, thinking about the deterioration of products and their possible recycling. Then there are medium-term, systematic solutions. Here design should work more holistically, not looking just at product design, but observing and renovating the whole production chain, from the extraction of raw materials to the distribution, repair, and recycling phases. Finally, there are long-term solutions, philosophical and experimental solutions to help us imagine different ways of living, manufacturing, travelling, loving, and experiencing empathy that go beyond a primarily capitalist vision.

CGPS: ‘I’ve taken it as a rule to always proceed from what is known to what is unknown, and to never make a deduction that doesn’t follow directly from experiments and observation.’ Your work progresses through experimentation, a bit like seven-



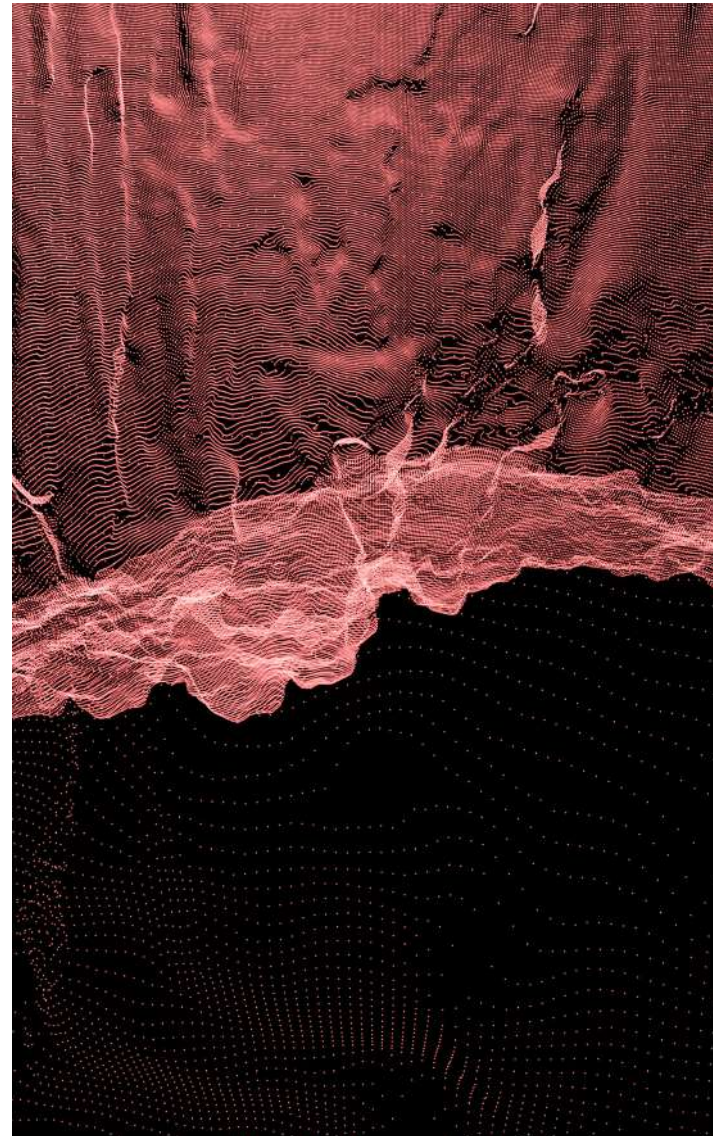
Page 44: Still from *Cambio: Visual Essay*, 2020. Green screen in Bosco del Chignolo, Montemerlo, Italy. Photo by C41, courtesy of Formafantasma. Above: Trees felled by hurricane Vaia, Ziano, Italy. Stills from video, 2019. Photo by C41, courtesy of Formafantasma.





Previous page and above: Stills from *Cambio: Visual Essay*, 2020. Green screen in Bosco del Chignolo, Montemerlo, Italy. Photo by C41, courtesy of Formafantasma.





Above: Stills from *Quercus*, 2020, a film produced by manipulating a Lidar scan of an oak forest in Virginia. Courtesy of Formafantasma.

teenth-century scientists in search of new truths that are both hidden and evident in nature, a way of learning by producing results that develop from an initial idea. Tell us about your experimental method and how it has developed in the last ten years of research.

FORMAFANTASMA: When we began, our approach was more intuitive and less programmatic. Our first works were the most introspective. We tried to identify what interested us the most within design, understand its clichés, and where we could expand our vision. The topics that interest us were already all there, as was our observation of the dynamics of doing a project in the most holistic way. Recently with our less commercial works such as *Ore Streams* (2017–2019) and *Cambio* (2020), we have tried to be more radical.

CGPS: Let's talk about *Cambio*. The project is also the title of the exhibition at the Serpentine, and it is in Italian. Why did you decide to keep it like that? Is it tied to your mother tongue or are there other reasons behind this choice? The word *cambio* implies a clear action: change. In the installation presented at the Serpentine is change perceived?

FORMAFANTASMA: *Cambio* has a dual meaning. In Italian, *cambio* (from the Latin cam-

bium) is a tissue layer in trees found between the bark and the internal body. This very thin layer is fundamental because, in addition to other tasks, it is responsible for communication between the interior and exterior of the tree. When plants emerged from the water, after creating the atmosphere millions of years ago, they experienced different stresses due to climate change and needed some protection to survive. The cambium facilitated this process of transformation and helped them become trees, producing a true biological armour: wood. We preferred to use the Italian term rather than the Latin one because we didn't want to suggest the immediate connection with the scientific world, but rather orient ourselves on a more humanistic level, which suggests just that, a moment of transition and change, which is what we hope for.

CGPS: A project like *Cambio* certainly entails a team of researchers and designers. Was it one of the first projects to be organized like this?

FORMAFANTASMA: When we met with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rebecca Lewin about doing a show at the Serpentine, what seemed most interesting to us was that the request was not to think about a retrospective, but to show — as Kostantin Grcic and Martino Gamper did — a way of viewing design,

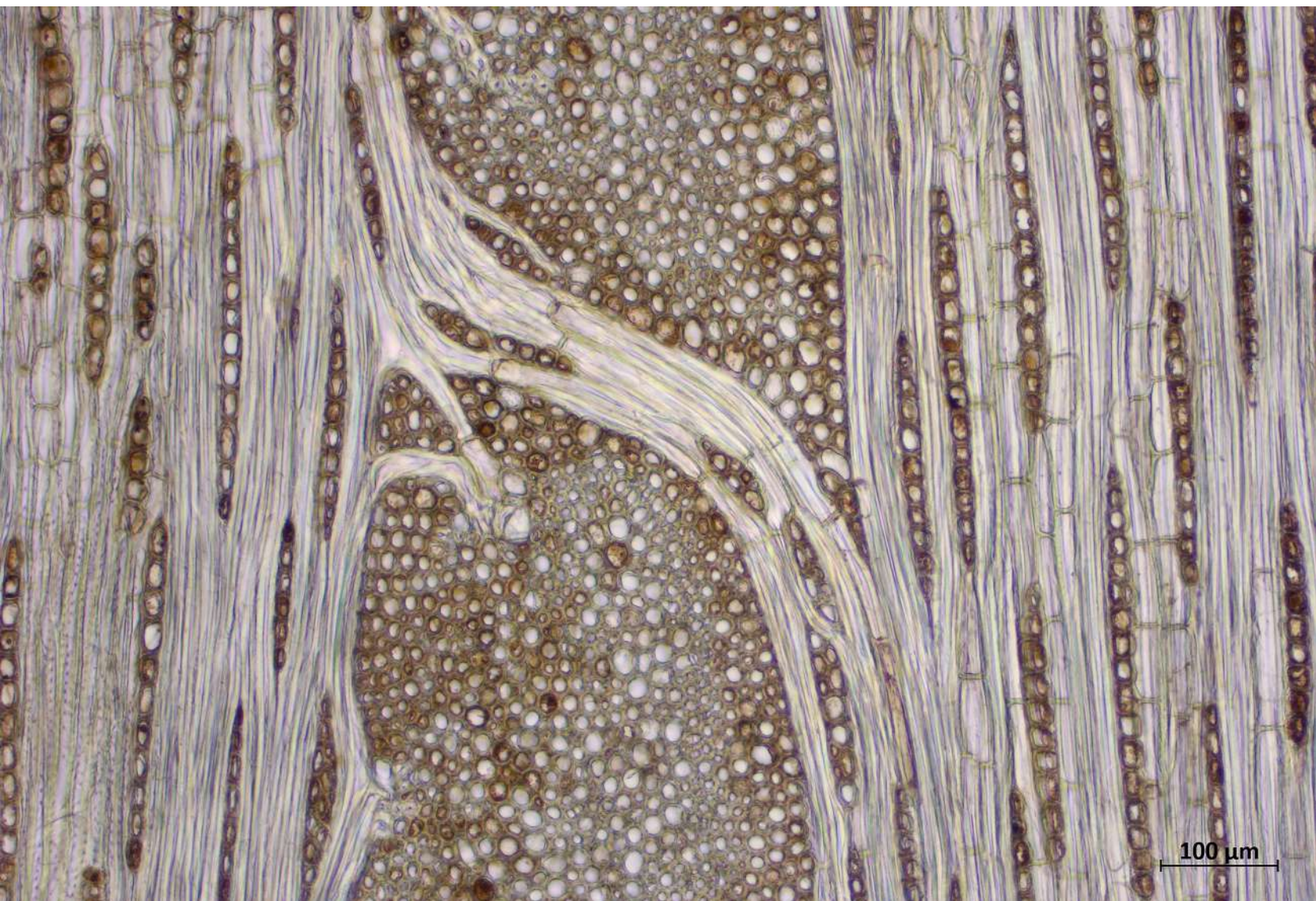
like a sort of manifesto. Product design in this sense is not fundamental. Starting with these assumptions, we understood the exhibition not like the final phase of a path, but rather like its beginning. So we were interested in focusing on the research phase, in this case a hyper-object like the wood and logging industry. In reality, the structure is similar to what we used with *Ore Streams* (which was commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne). The basic difference is that in that case we had limits, or rather a more specific commission. We were asked to design furniture related to the recycling of electronic waste. This was because the museum had begun a collection tied to the design of mobile phones and wanted to ensure that our work responded to that need. An institution like the Serpentine, which works more like a Kunsthalle, in the sense that it doesn't have a permanent collection, allowed us to go beyond the product itself. The exhibition tries to expand the usual circle of conversations about design, so the project includes research by different professionals dealing with the discipline, such as dendroclimatology, wood anatomy, conservation, philosophy, activism, and governance policies. So in reality we are the only designers, but many other people helped us build a more holistic vision of design and the knowledge necessary to develop ecologically responsible strategies.





Previous page and above: Wood samples sourced from the Economic Botany Collection in Kew Gardens. Photo by Gregorio Gonella.





Above: Microscopic analysis of a red oak sample by the Thünen Centre of Competence on the Origin of Timber, Hamburg, Germany. Courtesy of Formafantasma.

CGPS: The exhibition is a trip through a process to raise awareness about how urgent it is today to change the way our society operates. How much do the critical part and finding a solution influence your path?

FORMAFANTASMA: The critical part is certainly present and fundamental. More or less explicitly, though, the exhibition offers points for reflection and questions that suggest possible, more transformative paths. For example, with *Cambio* we are dealing with the complex link between the acceleration of production, the natural time it takes trees to grow, and the cycle of CO<sub>2</sub> absorption. These considerations can offer interesting but radical starting points, proposals, or considerations about the life cycle of products as well as the need for greater transparency in the supply and production process.

CGPS: You have reflected at length about how to proceed in terms of the exhibition's production, from the book to the realization of each room, to impacting the environment as little as possible, to generating awareness about the costly means of designing exhibitions in the past. Do you think you have been successful in this? How have you managed to avoid unnecessary waste?

FORMAFANTASMA: Yes, the exhibition also works on a meta-level. First of all, we lim-

ited ourselves to leaving the gallery walls white and not building any added partition that wasn't strictly necessary. For example, we had to build a wall at the entrance to limit the light entering so we could project a video. All the supports we designed to exhibit the various content were also not pedestals, but real objects like tables and shelves. We didn't want the design to suggest an idea of temporariness, as if they were worthless elements left over from an exhibition. The pieces are clearly designed to have a life beyond this one. We also wanted the wood used to somehow be meaningful, so we chose to work with Norway spruce from the Val di Fiemme. About a year ago, due to climate change, a storm destroyed 13,000,000 trees there. The risk is that the rest of the forest becomes contaminated with bacteria from the trees, which will inevitably rot if not collected. Spruce wood is not a material adapted to furniture construction because it is very soft and catches fire easily. So we treated it with a finish similar to what is used for musical instruments, which makes the surface more resistant. While the scale is laughable, choices like this hold a precise value for us in our process, which distances itself from exclusively formal choices. The same is true for the catalogue, which is obviously made with certified paper that doesn't contain traces of protected tree species.

CGPS: Your actions seem to proceed with systematic willpower. You use cross-disciplinary, authoritative, and unexpected sources and research, like an always in-progress catalogue, that reflects the variety of ideas and skills, to create what you define a 'conceptual umbrella'. *Cambio* is the beginning of another phase of investigation. Where does this continuous change take you now?

FORMAFANTASMA: Some of the content in *Cambio* will continue on the educational level within the master's degree that we are going to teach starting in September 2020 at Design Academy Eindhoven. If *Cambio* now looks at the macro dynamics that govern the wood industry, the next step will be to focus on more specific case studies. We will shift from the macro scale to the micro scale. We would like, for example, not only to transform part of the content developed into a compendium for the master's degree, but also work with a furniture or semifinished products company.

CGPS: You love to work with, and on, apparently marginal aspects, marginal given both the topic and latitude. You fly to different parts of the world to find communities and practices that have settled over time which are often unknown and forgotten. Tell us a bit about the unexpected encounters of this change in your inquiries.



FORMAFANTASMA: To tell the truth, we have flown as little as possible. Simon, for example, who works with us, is from Colombia. He managed the contacts with the Gaia Amazonas Foundation, which helps indigenous Colombians trace out their territory to provide data that can be translated into legal action to ensure that the part of the Amazon where they live is not deforested. Simon flew only once to Colombia. All the other conversations were held via Skype or WhatsApp, both regarding this part of the exhibition and for everything else. For the exhibition, we worked with the Thünen Institute in Germany, Kew Gardens, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the European Investigative Agency of London, a scholar of wood evolution, and people involved in the construction of governance tied to natural elements such as forests. It's a very long list. More than unexpected, all these encounters were strongly desired and sought out. The most intense part of the exhibition was this: interweaving relationships.

CGPS: Even the large financial funds talk about ESG—Environmental, Social, and Governance—for their investments today. Are these just trends or true changes in climate?

FORMAFANTASMA: Design has a political role and this is inevitable, because it is often

used as a tool of economic expansion. Giving shape to the world also and especially means choosing the policies.

'Cambio', the solo exhibition by Formafantasma, is showing at the Serpentine Galleries in London from 29 September 2020.

Gea Politi is Publisher and Editor in Chief of Flash Art. Cristiano Seganfredo is Publisher of Flash Art.



Above: Microscopic analysis of paper samples by Thünen Centre of Competence on the Origin of Timber, Hamburg, Germany. Courtesy of Formafantasma.



# Diabolo by Achille Castiglioni

From a conversation with GIOVANNA CASTIGLIONI

‘My father was a really, really good Diabolo player’, says Giovanna Castiglioni, daughter of legendary Italian designer Achille Castiglioni. She’s discussing one of his favorite pastimes—the juggling game, derived from a Chinese yo-yo, in which an hourglass-shaped object is spun back and forth on a string between two sticks. In 1998 the age-old balancing act served as inspiration for Achille’s final collaboration with Flos—an adjustable pendant lamp with the same name.

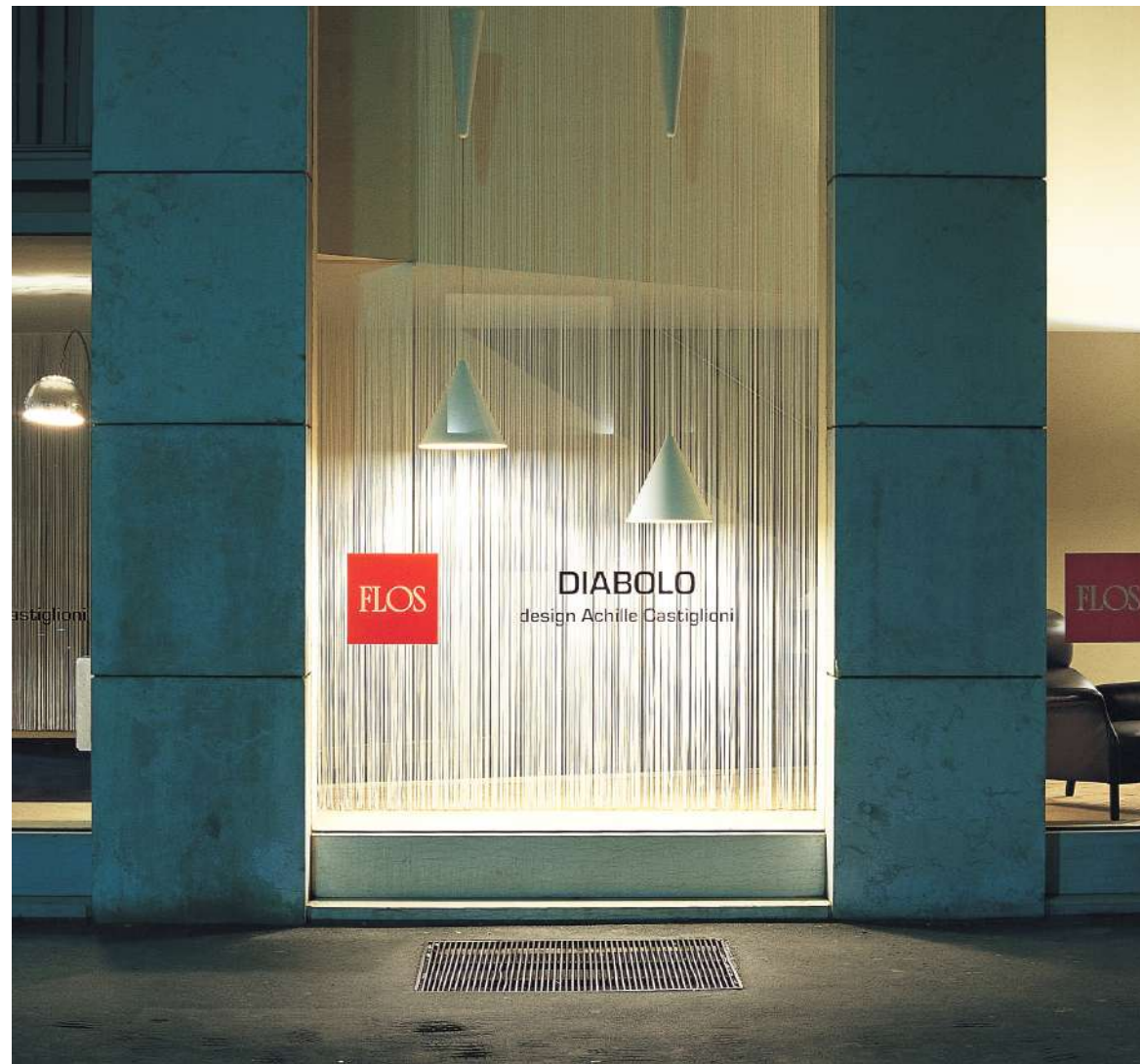
‘It’s a very simple design’, Giovanna explains of the light, originally modeled in paper, then cardboard, before being realised in white, powder coated aluminum. ‘A hanging lamp composed of two cones—one contains the light source; the other, fixed to the ceiling, conceals a spool mechanism’. Much like the game that inspired its name, Achille imagined a light that could move up and down via pulley system, so that the user could adjust its height to their preference by extending or shortening the distance between the two cones. Some originals still hang in the Castiglioni studio today.

Achille didn’t elaborate much on his inspiration, but the ideas embedded in Diabolo had been in the Castiglioni vocabulary for decades. When Achille and his brother Pier Giacomo started designing together in the 1950s, an anonymous cone-shaped task lamp used for scenography hung in their work room. (In 1962 they moved it to the meeting room in what is now the Achille Castiglioni Foundation). Giovanna traces the conical shapes of Diabolo back to this inspiration, explaining the brothers’ interest in such functional, anonymous designs.



Castiglioni, photographed in his studio in 1998 by Hugh Findletar.





Above: Photo by Santi Caleca.  
Previous page: Storefront image.  
Bottom photo by Ramak Fazel.

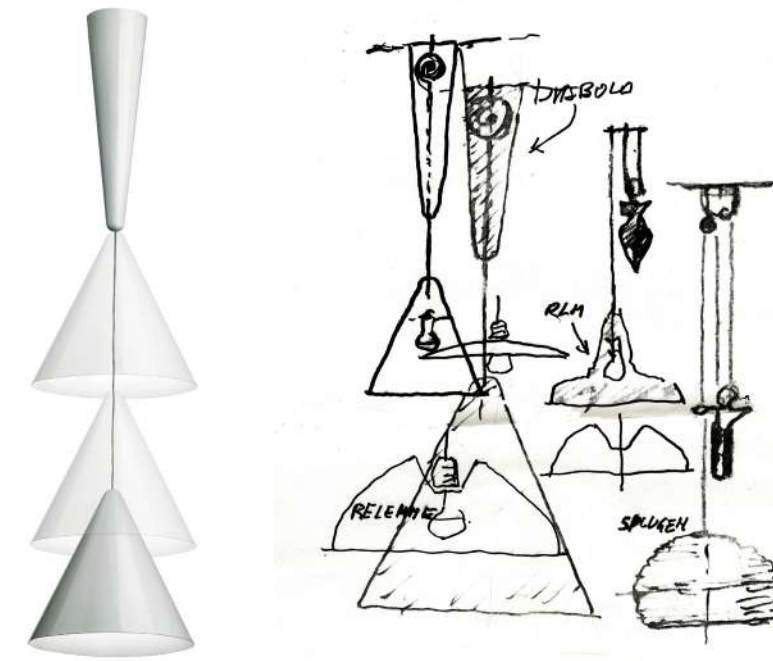


The pulley was also something Achille and Pier Giacomo had explored in depth—hoping to create pulley systems for other pendant lamps like the 1962-designed RLM and the 1961-designed Splügen Brau. Both are shown with pulleys, alongside Diabolo, in the sketch shown here.

‘They liked to group a lot of lamps together and find different lines; different levels’, explains Giovanna. ‘Achille wanted to hide the pulley but to give you the invitation to move the light up and down; to choose the height you want’.



Photo by Hugh Findletar.



The public response to the 1998 debut was positive: ‘As usual, one is surprised by the light ‘Castiglioni’ touch’, Domus reported that year. ‘With a sure hand, he methodically demonstrates the inexhaustible resources of what is right in front of our noses’. But after just five years on the market, technical difficulties with the pulley system, caused production to stop.



But now, more than twenty years after its introduction, Diabolo returns, with the mechanical kinks worked out and in two new colours—cherry red, and beaver brown—hues Achille used in some of his pottery. The design has been ever-so-slightly changed (all the tweaks are internal), while leaving that ‘light Castiglioni touch’ totally intact.

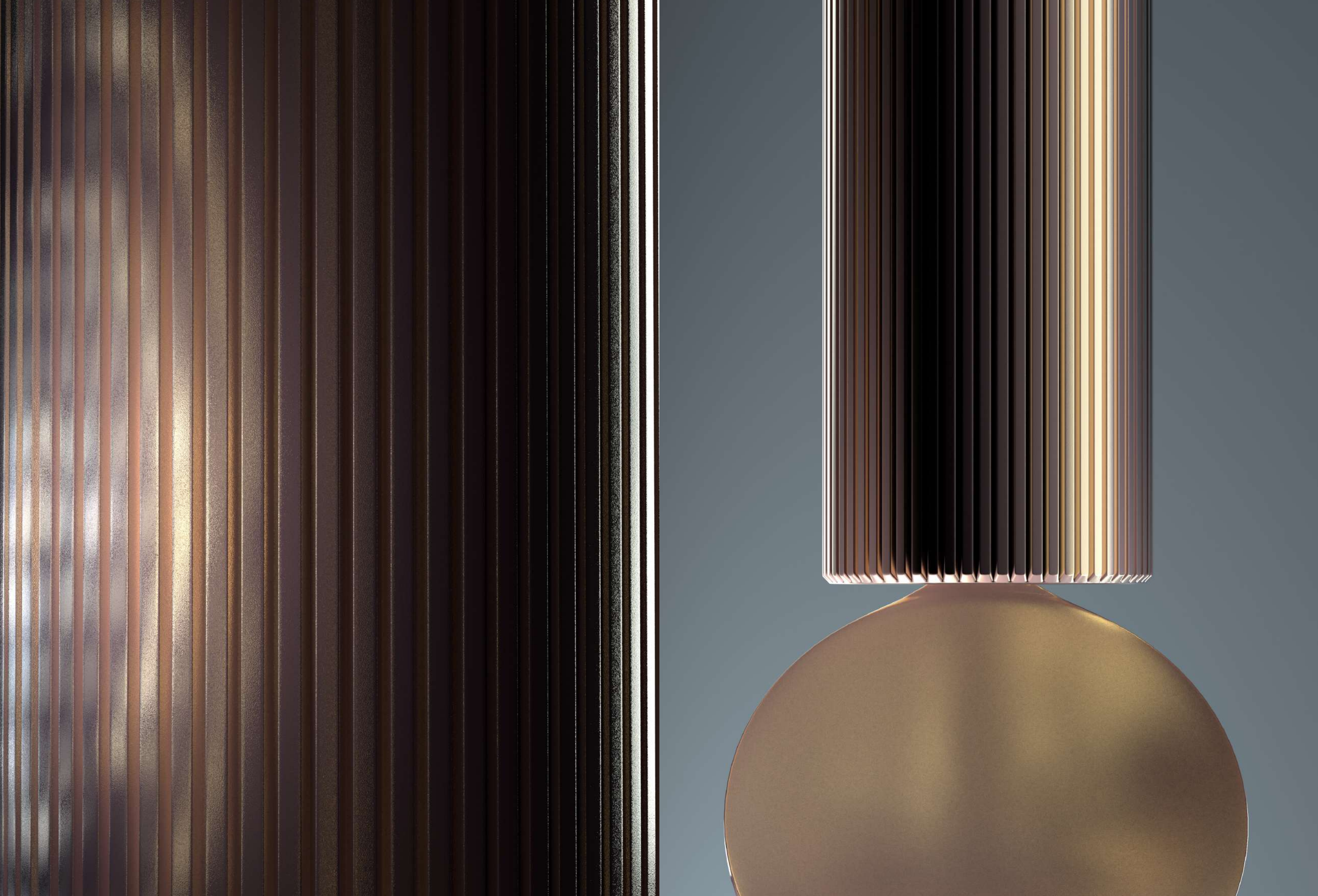




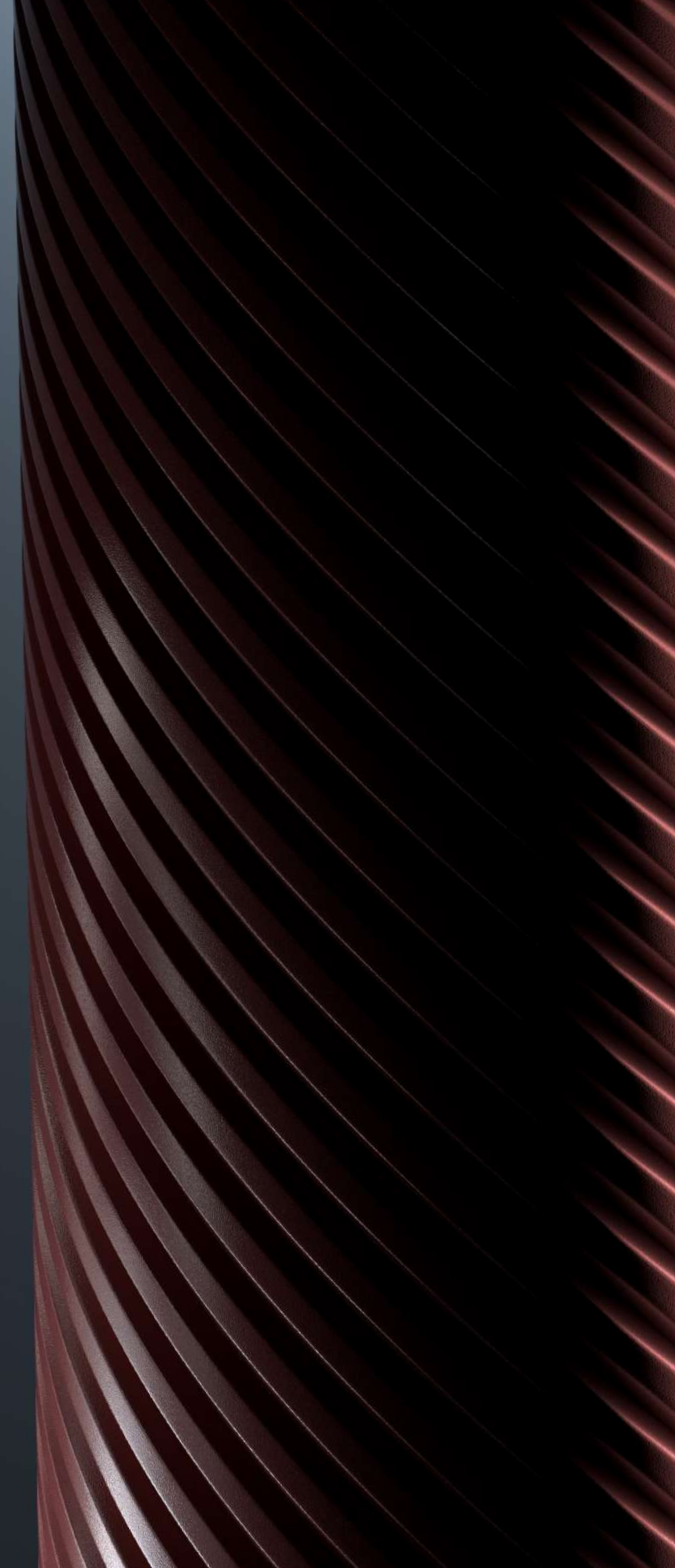
## INTO THE GROOVE

Patricia Urquiola's Flauta wall lamps—inspired by organ pipes and fluted architectural details—are a study in texture and simplicity. Artist Pablo Limón captures their industrial beauty with a series of high-definition renderings.

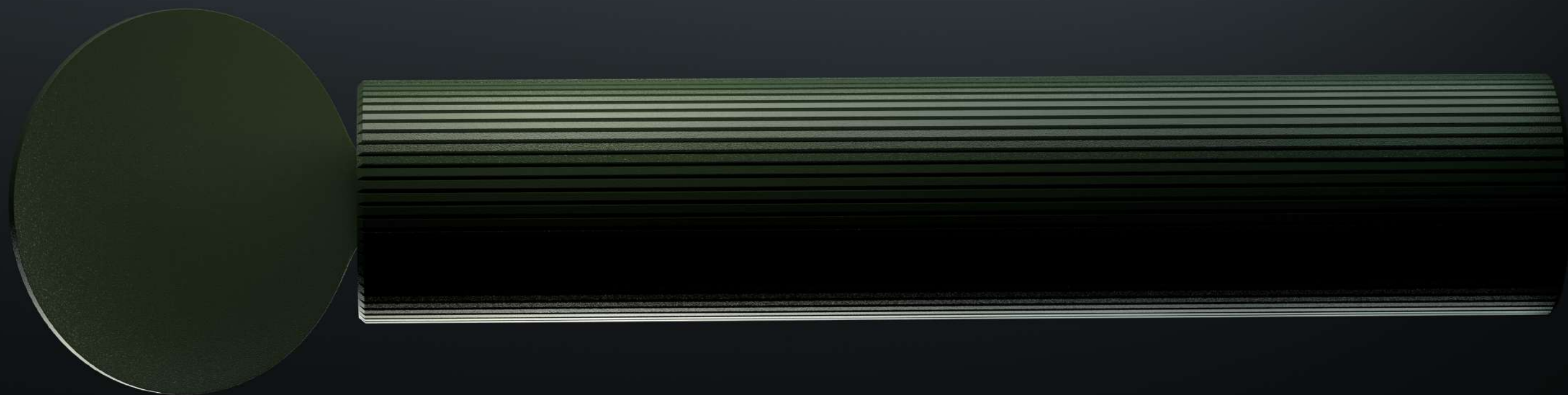
















Page 64-65: Flauta Riga indoor, in anodized blue steel. Page 66-67: Flauta Riga indoor, in anodized copper. Page 68-69: Flauta Spiga indoor, in anodized ruby red. Page 70-71: Flauta Riga outdoor, in forest green. Page 72-73: Flauta Spiga indoor, in anodized blue steel. All models by Patricia Urquiola.



# Living with LAMPADINA

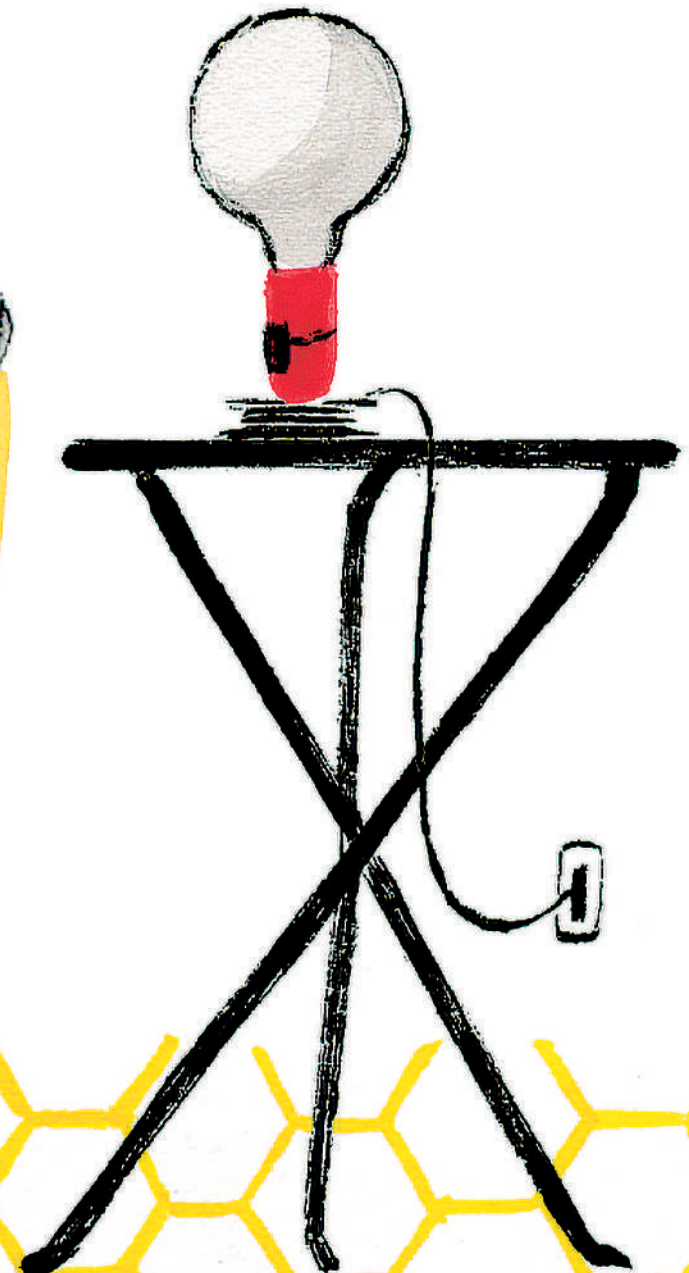
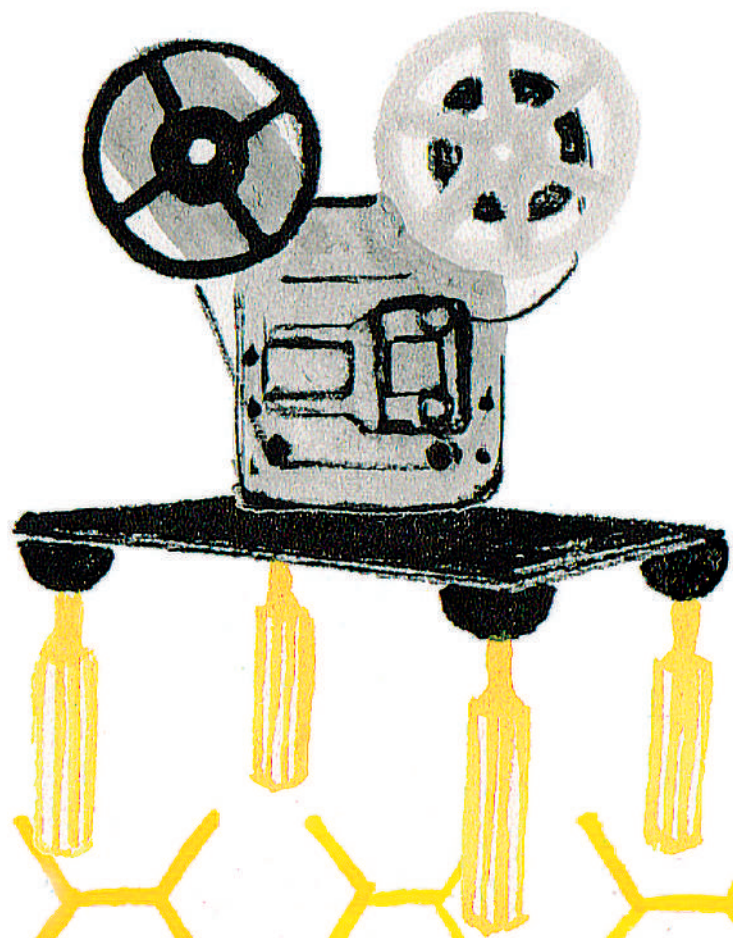
Illustrations

by

SARA

VIVAN

Giovanna Castiglioni, daughter of Italian legend Achille Castiglioni, has found a fun new medium for sharing stories about her father's popular industrial designs: a flip-book. In *Castiglioni in 2 sec* you'll find Sara Vivan's charming illustrations (two, excerpted here) of Lampadina, a friendly light designed by Achille for Flos in 1971 and relaunched this year in a range of new colours.







Inside these pages, we meet Lampadina the wall lamp, the table light, and the torch. 'I have been asked several times to write a book on the stories surrounding my father, Achille's designs, including anecdotes and episodes related to my family sphere', Giovanna explains. 'In this first project, I wanted to offer, in two seconds, one story of industrial design'.

Discover Lampadina's new colours on page 99.







PROFILE

# KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ revisits *MAYDAY*, an endlessly adaptable lamp, on its 20th anniversary

Interview by Hannah Martin. Photography by Bastian Achard.





Mayday is the ultimate task lamp. Created by German designer Konstantin Grcic in 1999, the cone-shaped reflector attached to the cone-shaped reflector attached to a handle, a hook, and a wind-up cord, can be hung from a bed post, draped above a kitchen table, or used like a flashlight to find something you lost under the couch. At Grcic's own Berlin studio, you might find the loveabe lamp hooked to a heating pipe, perched on a bookshelf, or illuminating the designer's desk as he sketches. To mark more than twenty successful years on the market, Flos introduces an anniversary edition of the lamp in sleek, die cast aluminum. As for the icon's simple, timeless construction? They left everything exactly the same.





HANNAH MARTIN: So tell me the story of Mayday. What inspired this piece?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: Mayday was really a self-initiated brief. It was a lamp I wanted to have for myself—a lamp that I felt should be something like a tool. A tool is an object that fulfills a function—a very concrete function—and normally its form explains the function. That's what makes a tool so beautiful. You see it and you understand what it is and how to use it. I also wanted a lamp that had no fixed destination. It's neither a pendant lamp above a table or a bedside lamp or a garage lamp. It's none of that but all of it at the same time. It's a very versatile lamp. In the office I have the first mock-up I made at the time. It looks very different from the final lamp, but it still has certain features—the hook, the spikes for winding up a long cable. The long cable was something that was so clear to me. Today you would simply eliminate the cable and have a rechargeable battery but twenty years ago that was unthinkable.

HANNAH MARTIN: How did you imagine it being used?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: There was a drawing I made which shows a floor, two walls, and a ceiling. You can use the lamp in any of these orientations. You can hang it from the ceiling, you can hang it on the wall, you can put it on the floor. And in all of these applications, there is more than one way to use it. By giving the lamp something like a handle, I also saw it like a torch. Even though it was hanging on a cable it was long enough that you could use it that way. Over the years, I would see people using it on social media; I would go into someone's house and see a Mayday lamp. People would tell me about theirs and what they do with it. Everyone has their own story with it. That's really the success of it. It's a lamp that, even though it is quite specific, is more like an offering. It offers possibilities and people use it their own way.

HANNAH MARTIN: On your website there's a guy using it to fix his car.

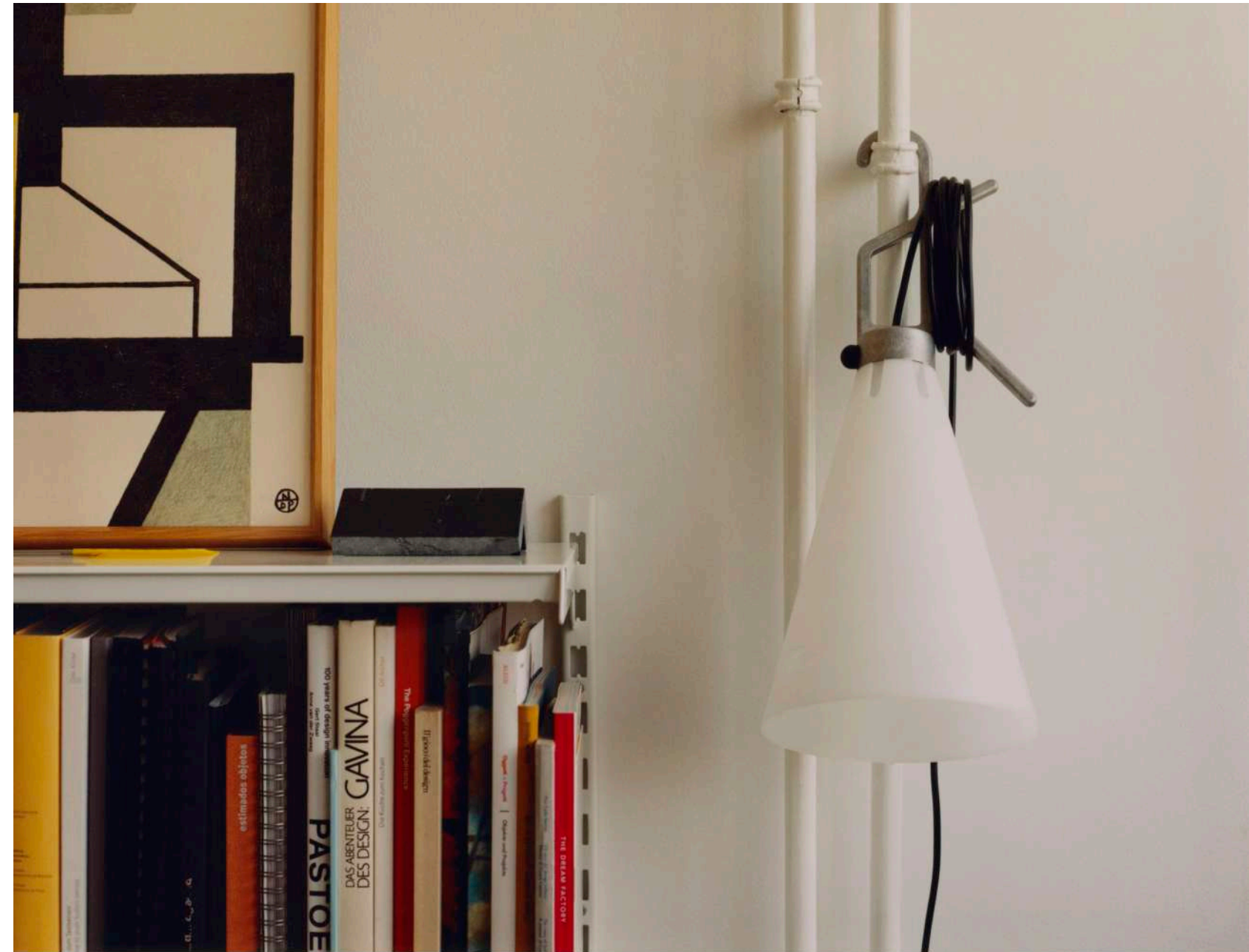
KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: A friend of mine took that picture somewhere in New York. Even though I probably claim that Mayday created its own typology, of course there were some lamps that I was looking at as references—lamps that I liked and that inspired me. Car mechanics prop up the car and they have a lamp with a hook that they attach to the underside of the car. Or people going on expeditions. I was looking at these very specific lamps and I liked their aesthetic or language or expression, being really purpose-built. That also implies they're a piece of hardware. They're there to be used. Even if they fall down they don't break. That's why we took this picture in the garage.

HANNAH MARTIN: And why did you choose this name—Mayday?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: This was 1999. In Europe we had rave music and there was this famous festival, the Mayday Festival, which was on the first of May. I think I had that in mind. But of course also the emergency call—Mayday! Mayday!—which apparently comes from the French saying 'help me!' or 'm'aider!'. But Mayday, even though it's an emergency call, it sounds really beautiful as well. It's a day in May. A sunny day, something very positive and light. It sounded good. Finding names is always so difficult. People very quickly started using the name, which doesn't always happen.

HANNAH MARTIN: Let's travel back to 1999 when you created this design. What was the world like? What questions were you asking and addressing with your work?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: I was 20 years younger than I am now. My life was 20 years younger. Nothing was settled. Life had to be quite simple out of necessity. But that was also nice. It created an independence, a freedom. The lamp, as well as other things I designed at that time, were done in that spirit. Mayday is the most successful one because it's actually a really affordable product. People see it, they think it's interesting, they like it, then they look at the price tag and think 'Oh yeah, I can afford it and this is a fair price', and that's actually hard to achieve. We always try to make things affordable but very often the simple things turn out to be quite complicated and not affordable. With Mayday it came out really perfect, the technology that was used, the simplicity which, 20 years ago, was kind of standard. Nowadays you would say it's quite a primitive lamp. It's a reflector, a bit of a handle, and a bulb-holder inside with a screw fitting and you screw your lightbulb in. It's quite low-tech. And that helped make it affordable. I think it's still part of what makes the lamp interesting today. Today we have LEDs and electronics and even a simple lamp has become so much more sophisticated. But a lamp like Mayday still has its place. You can even fix it if it breaks. The lamp is from an old system, an old world, but it still has a place in today's world. Its simplicity, its consistency, its transparency—you really understand it.







HANNAH MARTIN: It is what it is.

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: There's something good about it. For 10 years we discussed whether to do an update, fitting it with LED technology and so on. We tried but it was never convincing so we kept it as it is.

HANNAH MARTIN: What are the changes that were made for the anniversary edition?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: We changed the material. The anniversary edition is not a development of the Mayday lamp, it's just a celebration of the lamp. We dressed it in a slightly more expensive dress. The top part of the lamp is usually made of injection molded plastic and the anniversary edition is made of die cast aluminum. It's more sturdy, heavier. It fits the original reference of the tool and therefore it's an interesting variation or edition now but it doesn't replace the original one.

HANNAH MARTIN: I like this idea of the design object as a tool. And it seems like a lot of your early work took that approach. You were re-imagining these hyper-practical objects—a laundry basket, a dish rack, a bucket—what makes these utilitarian subjects so intriguing?

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: Well, to me, they were the design objects I loved. The references of these things are, a lot of the time, anonymous products. Products that were designed by someone but not as a design statement, just to make a good product, to build something carefully with the appropriate material. I felt, at the time very strongly, that the design of the '90s was overdone. There was too much. Too much expression. Too much material. There was so much you could pare down. That's why I was looking at these essential things—everyday life things, practical things. But also, speaking of my own process of designing, the fact that these objects were so utilitarian helped me in the design process. The process became less indulgent and more objective. It helped me to keep a distance from them. Mayday, like I said, was a very personal project. But the reference I was looking at was a very utilitarian lamp.

HANNAH MARTIN: Your work is often described as simple. I think it's really fitting but I also think it's interesting how you're able to make something simple, but in a very unexpected shape. I'm thinking of your Es Shelf—it's not a straight-lined thing—but it is, in fact, an extremely simple design.

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: It's something I consider a lot. Simplicity is something I strive for while knowing that simplicity is never simple. It's actually quite complicated. I never liked the formalistic path in simplicity where it's something simple therefore it has to be all straight lines. I don't believe that. Coming back to a tool. A tool is perfectly simple but it is quite intriguing in shape and detailing. A simple reference is never something I would copy, without questioning. I would always try to find an even simpler version of simple or to change the idea of simple in the first place. Jasper Morrison, for example—a designer I admire, who has been a great mentor—has a different approach to simplicity. He'd take things that exist and rework them in a very close way. Change them just slightly, giving them his magic touch. I like to turn things upside down and discover that, what we consider simple, can also be done completely differently.

HANNAH MARTIN: Your Miura barstool sort of does that.

KONSTANTIN GRČIĆ: This is a very good example—it's a perfectly simple stool, now. The process was not at all simple—the way it's designed, the geometry of it, the way it's molded. But when you see it, I think it reads as simple. There's a clear function and reason why it is the way it is.



HANNAH MARTIN: You know where your feet go. You know how to interact with it. But if you told someone to visualise a simple barstool, this is probably not what would come to mind.

KONSTANTIN GRICIC: Exactly, it'd be a round seat and three straight legs.

HANNAH MARTIN: I read that you always model everything in paper before you make it. Is that part of how you arrive at these unusual forms?

KONSTANTIN GRICIC: It's not quite true anymore. But there was definitely a period in my career when model making was so important to developing the product. I used paper, scissors, sellotape, a piece of wire—very simple materials. My intention was never that these simple cardboard models would resemble the final product. I just needed these basic models in order to understand the physicality of the object. But then, quite often, I have realised that actually this model—because I had to simplify the geometry; because cardboard or wire can only do certain things—had an aesthetic value. These basic models had a directness; something quite fresh, simple—stretching this word a bit too much now, ha! Over the last decade, software has developed so fast that we are using sophisticated modeling tools on the computer. You can 3d print a model straight from the computer which, 20 years ago, wasn't possible. My process, and consequently, the results, have changed a bit with the technology. I have no nostalgia about the old process, but I remember how it was and I liked it. It was a conscious decision, in some instances, to go with this aesthetic of a primitive model rather than making it very sophisticated.

HANNAH MARTIN: Tell me about your quarantine. I'm interested in how staying home—sometimes in a small, fixed space—has affected designers. Did it change your relationship to the objects you live with?

KONSTANTIN GRICIC: We were quarantined in Berlin but we were, at all times, able to move, unlike people in other countries who weren't allowed to leave the house for two or three months. That wasn't the case here.

HANNAH MARTIN: So perhaps it didn't have so much of an effect on you?

KONSTANTIN GRICIC: Well one effect of this quarantine was that my office was in lockdown and remote mode. My assistants were at home. We couldn't spend the day together in the office. I really missed that. I'm glad that this phase is over for now and my assistants are back and we're spending time together working. The design process is very dynamic, it's very interactive. During the lockdown we'd have Zoom sessions in the morning to discuss what each of the designers should be doing and they'd send me results in the evening but I found that very frustrating. Not because they didn't do a good job but because I was missing the process. I always felt that, had we had the chance to work on this together, this afternoon, we could have done it differently. I could have intervened more quickly. I don't find my process lends itself to a remote practice.

HANNAH MARTIN: How many people do you work with?

KONSTANTIN GRICIC: There are just five of us.

HANNAH MARTIN: I was thinking about May-day in relation to the times. In a way it's such a great object for this moment because it can have so many different purposes. Everything we live with has to be more flexible these days.

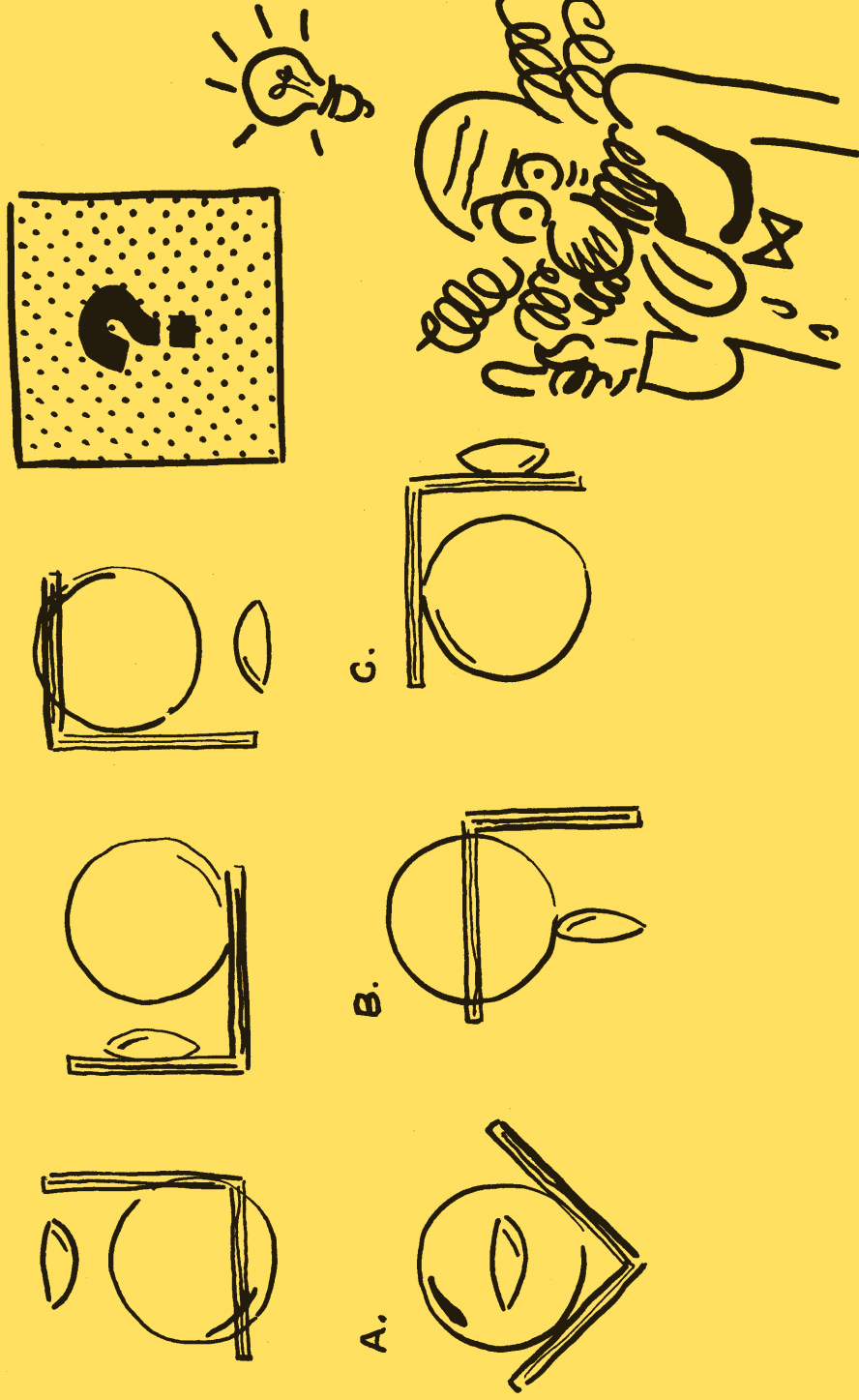
KONSTANTIN GRICIC: For sure. I think life, in general, is changing at an increasing pace and we have to keep up with changes, whether it's jobs or family status or flats or countries. And I like this. It requires objects that are adaptable and versatile and flexible and kind of the opposite of conservative, static, or settled. Furniture gets back to the root of the German word—*möbel*—which implies a certain mobility.





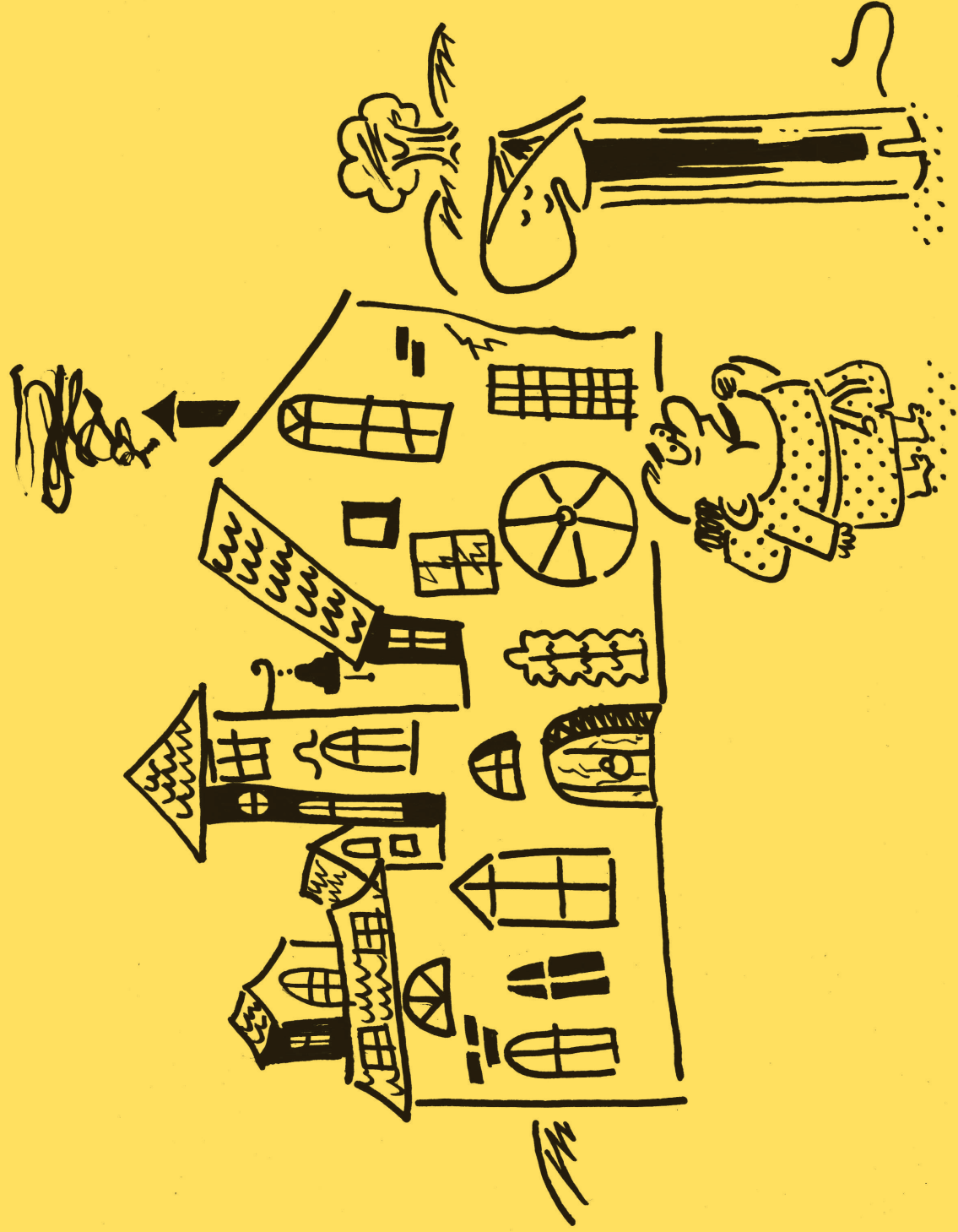
# Some Light Entertainment

Illustrations by Sany



Which alternative completes the sequence?

IC by Michael Anastassiades



Help Henricus to guide Chiara to her chamber!

Chiara by Mario Bellini



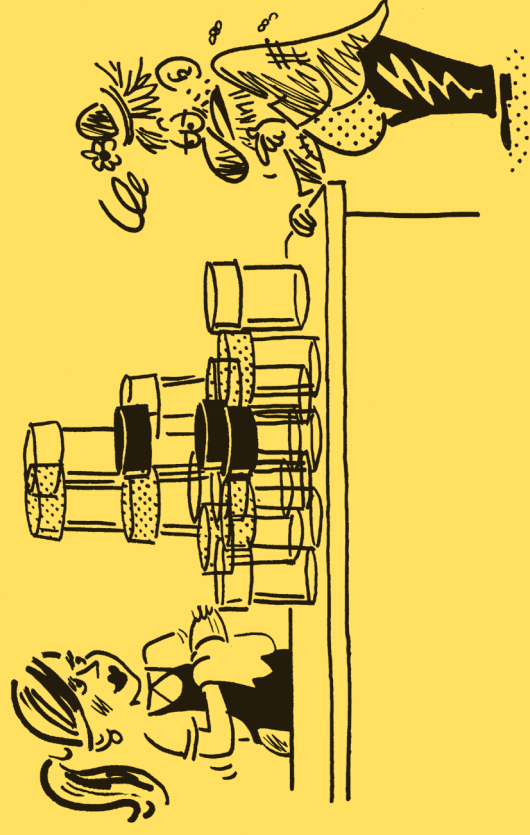
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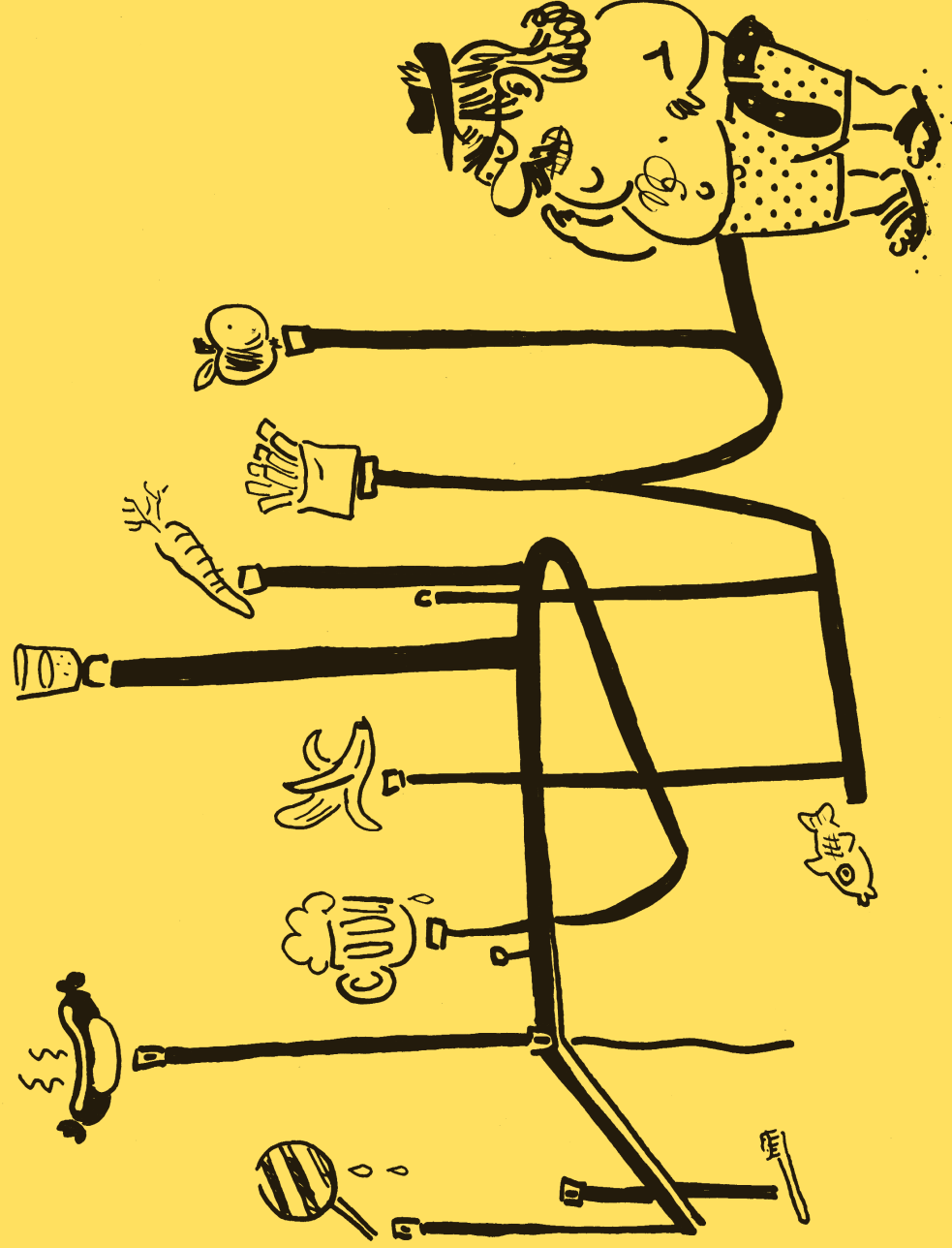


Follow the dots!

Arco by Achille & Pier Giacomo Castiglioni

How many last orders are there on the bar?

Last Order by Michael Anastassiades





QUESTIONNAIRE

# Nendo



The Japanese word Nendo translates to clay, in English. And it's a fitting moniker for the shapeshifting firm—founded by industrial designer Oki Sato and based between Tokyo and Milan—which endlessly reinvents everyday objects. A bird house. A tissue box. A fishing boat. A pen. And, of course, a handful of lights for Flos. We asked the prolific designer and consummate collaborator to fill out this short questionnaire. Much like his designs, his answers are simple, funny, and, we imagine, fueled by lots of coffee. Photography by DSL Studio.

What do you wish you could change?

THE AMOUNT OF TIME.



Tell us something you've never done.

MOST OF THE THINGS  
OTHER THAN DESIGN.

Name your favourite tool.



Something that has changed your life.



ITALY.

What did you eat for breakfast?

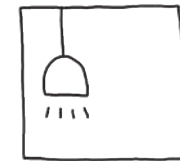


COFFEE.

Describe your new normal in three words.

1. DRINKING
2. MORE
3. COFFEE

What's on your nightstand?



Do you collect anything?



Draw your favourite design object.



INCISA BY VICO MAGISTRETTI.

Describe the last thing you made.



COFFEE.



## Contributors

Bastian Achard is a photographer based between Berlin and New York. For Flos Stories he captured the Berlin studio—and beloved Mayday light—of German industrial designer Konstantin Grcic (p. 78).

Paolo Brambilla is a design curator at Flos and one half of the Milanese architecture firm Calvi Brambilla, which he runs with Fabio Calvi. For this issue he interviewed Italian design legend Mario Bellini about his iconic Chiara lamp, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary (p. 1).

For the aforementioned story, photographer Alessandro Furchino Capria—based between London and Milan—tuned his lens on Bellini and his iconic lamp (p. 1).

New York-based Laila Gohar creates events, experiences, and artworks with food. For ‘Last Order’ (p. 16) she and photographer Zhi Wei conjured a dreamy, end-of-the-night tablescape, illuminated by Michael Anastassiades’ latest lamps.

For Flos Stories 2, artist and furniture designer Pablo Limón reimagined Patricia Urquiola’s Flauta lights as slick, hyper-focused renderings (p. 64).

Gea Politi and Cristiano Seganfredo are the founders of Milan-based publishing group CGPS. Their conversation with design firm Formafantasma, which originally ran in Flash Art, is excerpted in this issue (p. 44).

Illustrator and artist Sany, aka Samuel Nyholm is based in Stockholm. For Flos Stories 2, we asked him to come up with some fun and games featuring the latest Flos lamps (p. 88).

Federico Torra, an interiors and architecture photographer based in Milan, captured Vittoriano Viganò’s 1950s Casa La Scala in a new light (p. 28).

Milan-based Sara Vivan illustrated the many moods of Lampadina, Achille Castiglioni’s multi-purpose 1971-designed light, for the new flip-book, *Castiglioni in 2 sec*, excerpted on p. 74.

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# FLOS

## NEW PRODUCTS

Autumn Winter 2020



Decorative Collection

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Diabolo Re Edition.....	Achille Castiglioni .....	1998/2020 .....	page .....	97
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Last Order .....	Michael Anastassiades.....	2020 .....	page .....	98
Lampadina.....	Achille Castiglioni .....	1972 .....	page .....	99
Mayday Anniversary.....	Konstantin Grcic .....	2000/2020 .....	page .....	99

Outdoor Collection

Flauta Outdoor .....	Patricia Urquiola .....	2020 .....	page .....	100
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Architectural Collection

Infra Structure Episode .....	Vincent Van Duysen .....	2020 .....	page .....	101
Oblique.....	Vincent Van Duysen .....	2020 .....	page .....	101
Belt .....	Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec..	2019 .....	page .....	102

Chiara

Mario Bellini, 1969/2020

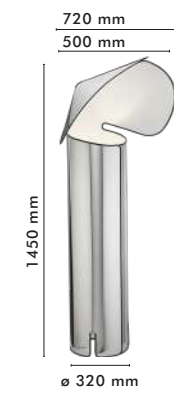
Materials: Aluminum, rubber, stainless steel

Voltage: 220 - 240V

Light Source Floor version: LED 15W E27 2000lm 2700K DIMMABLE

Light Source Table version: LED 10W E14 800lm 2700K DIMMABLE / LED 8W E14 700lm 2700-3000K

Finishes: stainless steel with black edge



Chiara F

● F1590056

New model: Chiara T

New Finish: aluminum with anthracite edge, dark grey with olive green edge, pink gold with oxide red edge



● F1595004



● F1595023



● F1595034

Diabolo Re-Edition

Achille Castiglioni, 1998/2020

Materials: Aluminum

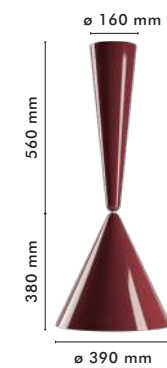
Power: 70W , 21W LED

Voltage: 220-240V

Light Source excluded: LED 70W E27 2452lm 2700K CRI80

New Finish: beaver brown, cherry red

Also available in: white



● F2121035A



● F2121026A



○ F2121009A



### Flauta

Patricia Urquiola, 2020

Materials: Aluminum

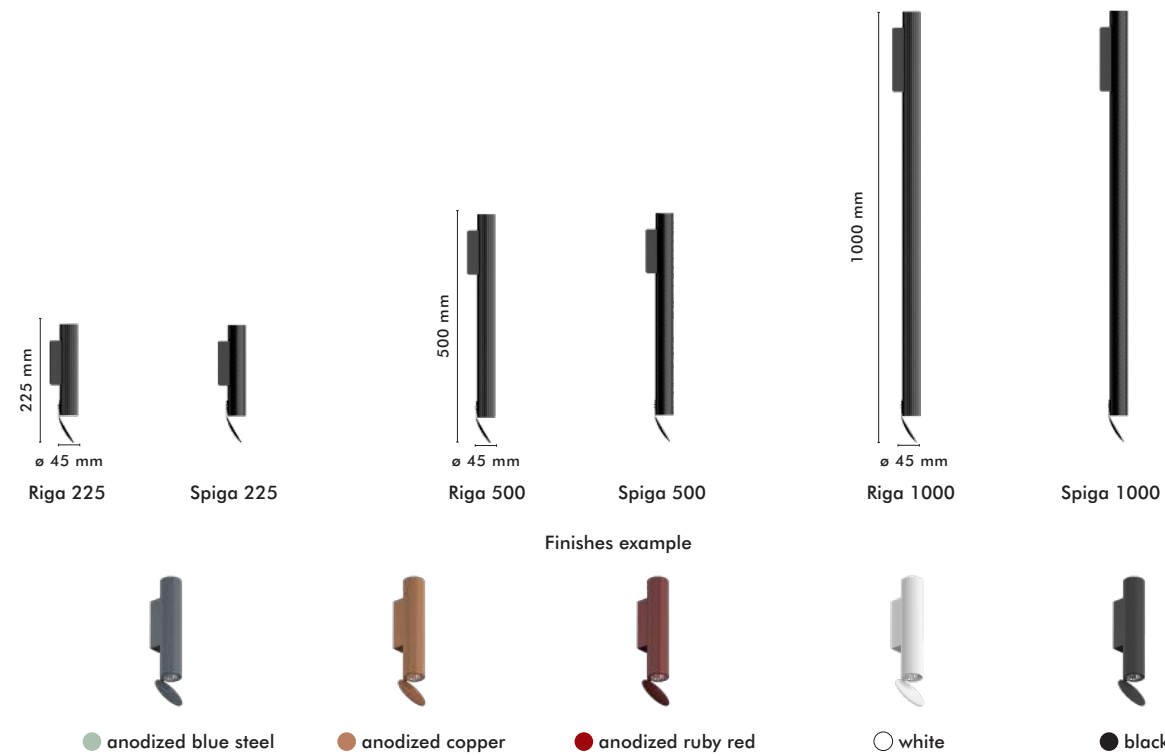
Power: 12W

Voltage: 220-240V

Light Source included: 2 LED 12W 600lm 2700K CRI95

New Finishes: anodized blue steel, anodized copper, anodized ruby red, black, white

New Model Flauta Riga, Flauta Spiga



### Last Order

Michael Anastassiades, 2020

Materials: Crystal, brass, polycarbonate

Voltage: IN 5V

Light Source: LED included 2,5W 200lm 2700K CRI90

Finishes: satin copper, brass, matt green, polished inox



### Mayday Anniversary

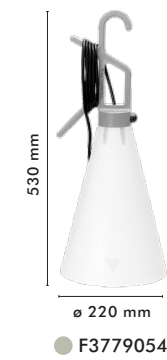
Konstantin Grcic, 2000/2020

Materials: Polypropylene, aluminum

Voltage: 220-250V

Light Source: 1xLED E27 8,5W 965lm 2000-2700K DIMMABLE

New Finish: aluminium light grey



### Lampadina

Achille Castiglioni, 1972

Materials: aluminum

Voltage: 230V

Light Source included: LED 2W E27 200lm 2700K

Finishes: black, orange, white, green, turquoise, lilac





## Flauta Outdoor

Patricia Urquiola, 2020

Materials: Aluminum

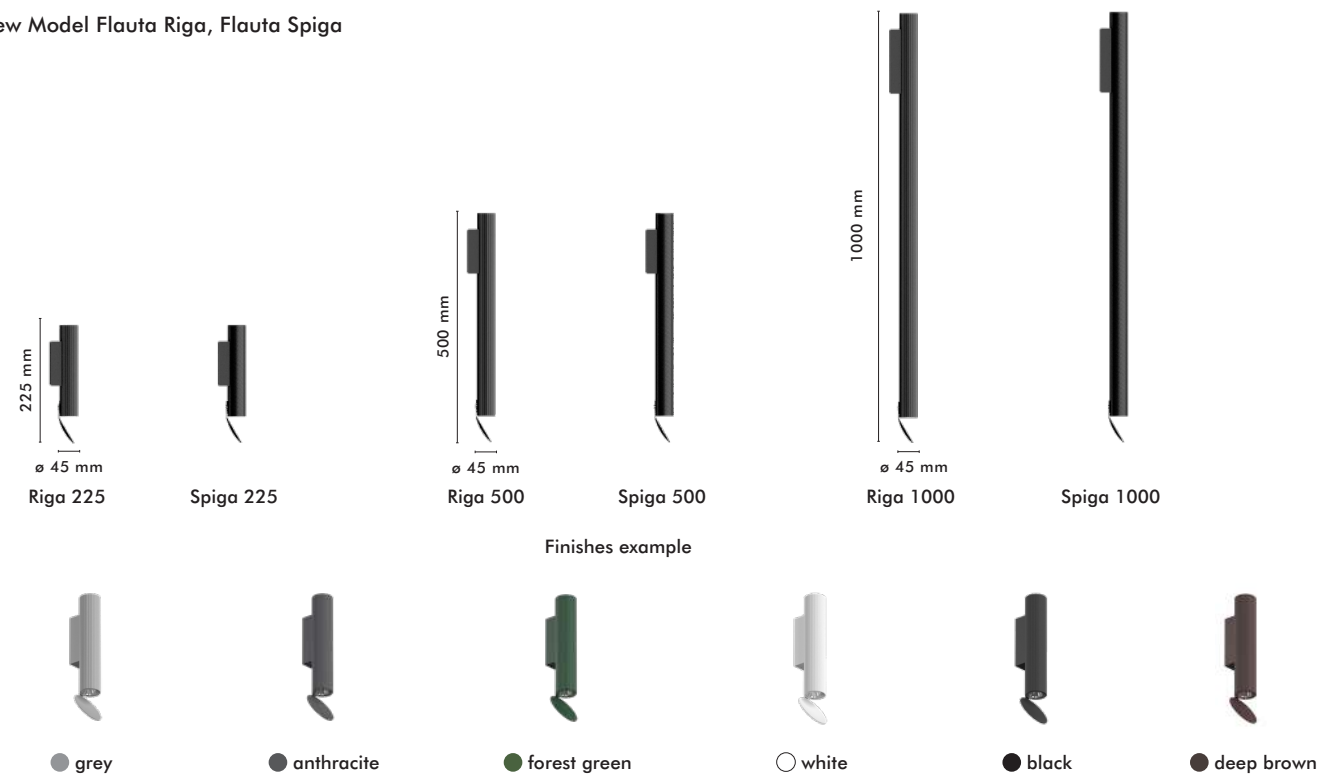
Power: 12W

Voltage: 220-240V

Light Source included: LED 12W 2x555lm 2700K / LED 12W 2x597lm 3000K / LED 12W 2x638lm 4000K CR180

New Finishes: grey, anthracite, forest green, black, white

New Model Flauta Riga, Flauta Spiga



## Infra-Structure Episode 2

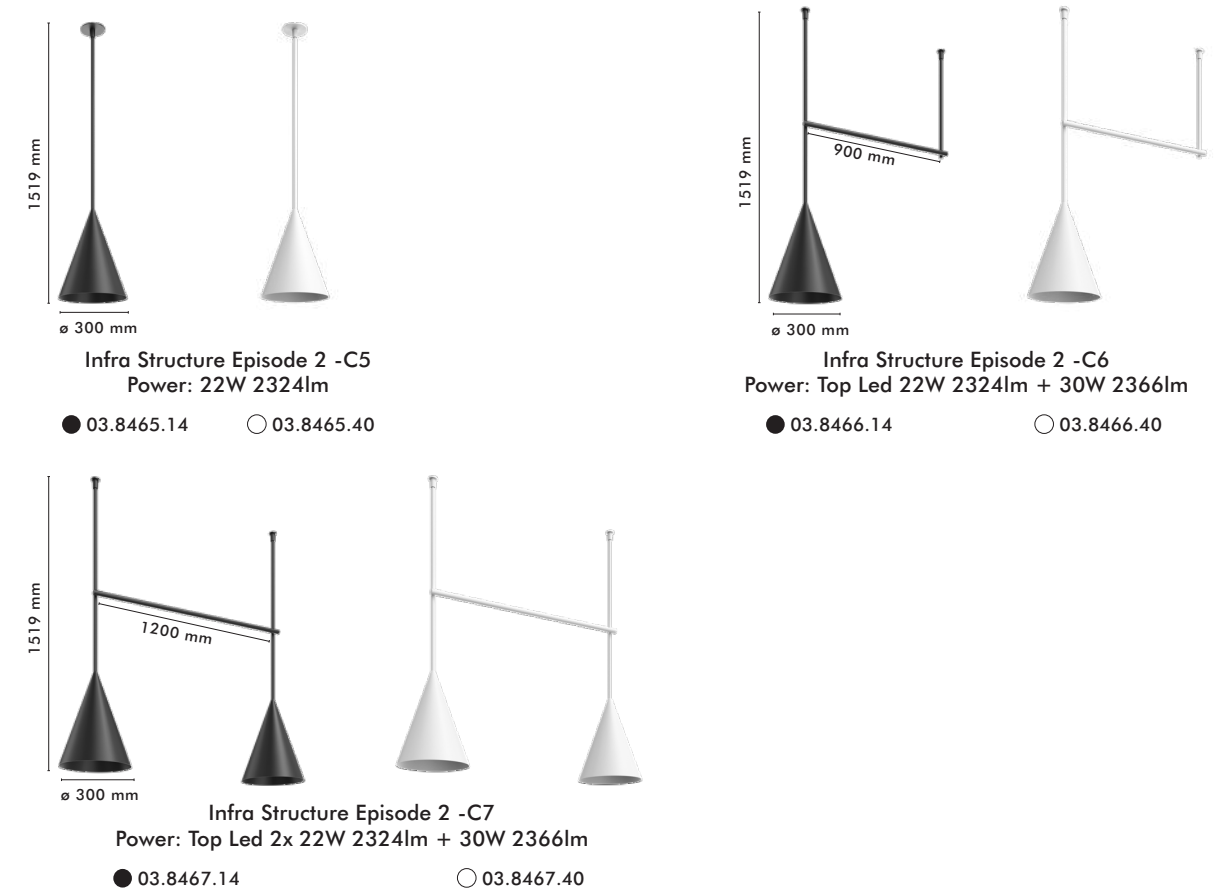
Vincent Van Duysen, 2020

Materials: Extruded and spin-formed aluminum, opal polycarbonate extruded

Voltage: 48V

Light Source integrated: Power LED 2700K CRI90 / DIMMER INCLUDED

Finishes: matt black, white



## Oblique

Vincent Van Duysen, 2020

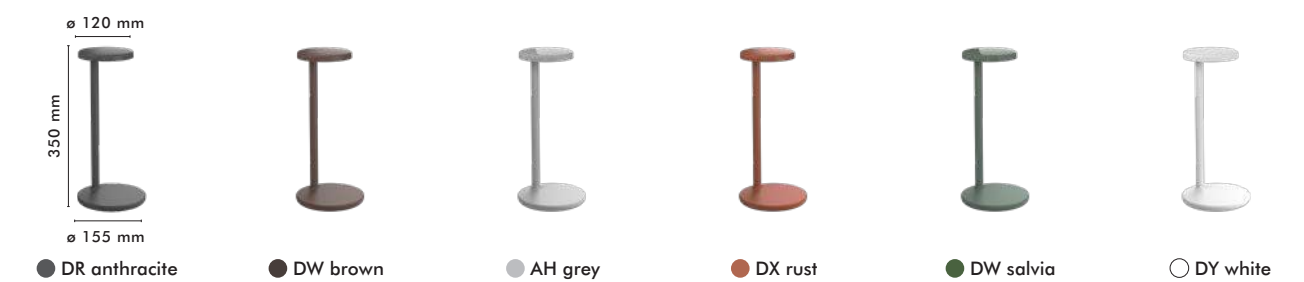
Materials: Die cast aluminum, methacrylate

Voltage: 24V

Light Source included: Power LED 8W 750lm 2700K - 800lm 3000K - 850lm 4000K CRI90

USB-C connection integrated

Finishes: anthracite, brown, grey, rust, salvia, white





## Belt

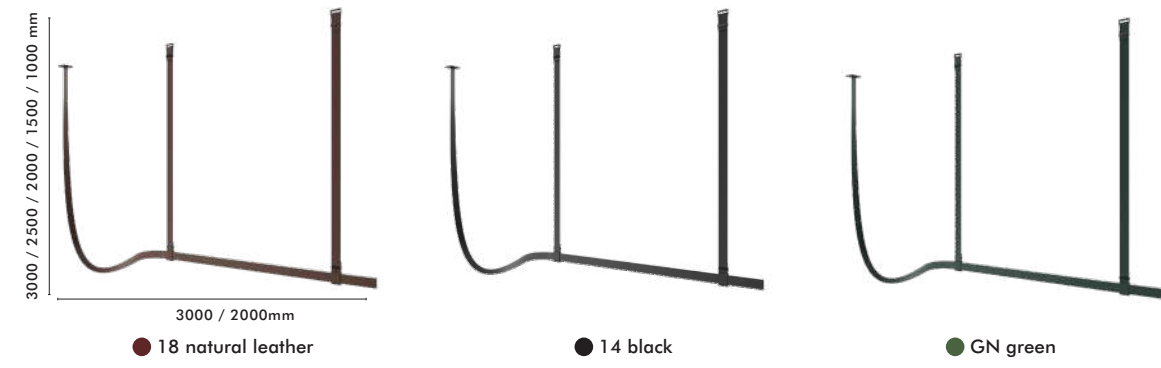
Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec, 2020

Materials: Leather, aluminum

Voltage: 48V

Light Source: Top LED 29W 1010 lm UP - 2350 lm DOWN 2700K CRI 95 / 29W 1050 lm UP - 2450 lm DOWN 3000K CRI 95

Finishes: natural leather, black, green



For more information please visit [flos.com](https://www.flos.com)



