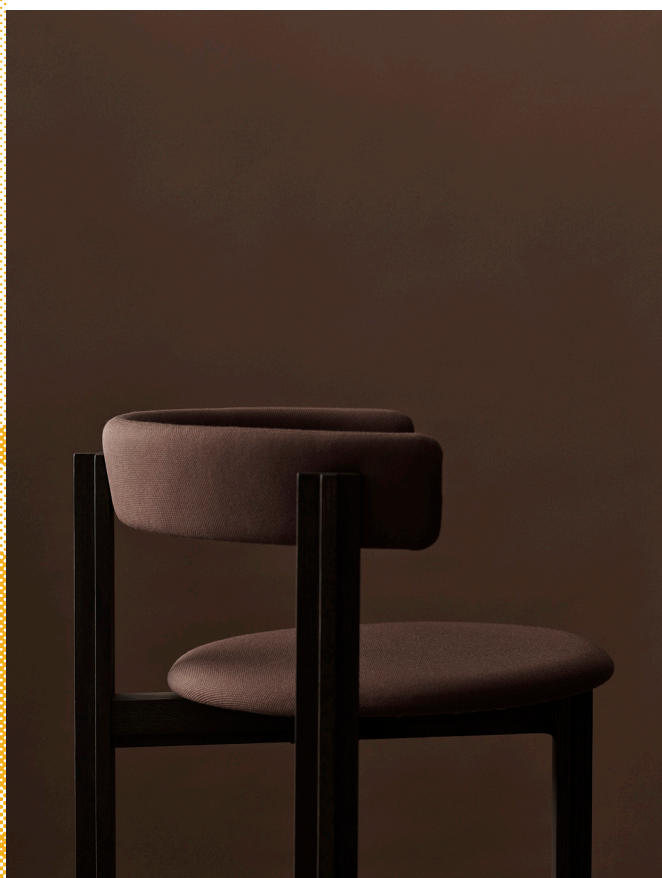


Issue N.2 2024

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Angelo Mangiarotti, Aldo Bakker, Achille and Giovanna Castiglioni, Tobia Scarpa,  
Bodil Kjær, Mikal Harrsen, Mikkel Hess, Karin Carlander, Michael Anastassiades

# Conversations



**Karakter**

The growing disconnect between digital versions of people's lives and a genuine physical presence has struck me many times in recent years. It often seems that our physical environment holds diminishing importance, as if the notions of home, location and community have lost their significance in favour of something projected that might or might not be real. This realisation serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of surrounding ourselves with well-made objects that bring true quality into our lives. Great designers strive to instil their creations with elements that elevate daily life, whether through functionality, aesthetics or durability. They aspire to create pieces that resonate deeply with the individuals who use them.

As I gather my thoughts for this second edition of *Conversations*, I return to a given: our surroundings hold immense power in shaping our experiences and connections. In a world where digital representations get more bandwidth, the essence of great design lies in its ability to enhance our existence and enrich our lives, and serves as a reminder of the importance of nurturing our physical environments.

By prioritising durability and longevity, and by making sure we are nurturing the small details of the things that surround us every day, we can contribute to a more sustainable future that allows for a much more personal and fulfilling existence.

This contemplation forms the backdrop for this issue. As we delve into the rich tapestry of creativity, innovation and cultural significance within the realm of design, we're reminded of the enduring importance of surrounding ourselves with pieces that resonate deeply with our being.

This sentiment echoes through the work of design greats Afra and Tobia Scarpa, to whom we pay homage for their enduring legacy, as represented in two of their most iconic creations: the 121 dining chair and 925 lounge chair. These pieces serve as a bridge between past and present, embodying the elegance and craftsmanship that define our brand while honouring Afra and Tobia Scarpa's innovative spirits.

A great piece of design is timeless. It might have telltales of the period in which it was conceived, but it nevertheless manages to bridge the gap between eras effortlessly. Re-editions can encourage people to adopt alternatives to fast furniture trends instead of only focusing on the latest designs. Carefully selected re-edited pieces that are built to last reduce the need for frequent replacements.

In that regard we are thrilled to introduce you to the brilliance of the Angelo Mangiarotti lighting collection. Mangiarotti's unparalleled mastery of form and materials shines through in every piece, reminding us of the power of design to transcend time and space. Through our homage to Mangiarotti, we celebrate not only his artistic vision but also his profound impact on the world of lighting design.

At Karakter, we believe in honouring the legacies of design pioneers while also embracing the spirit of innovation and experimentation. This ethos is reflected in our collaboration with the visionary designer Aldo Bakker, whose bold and imaginative creations push the boundaries of conventional design. Bakker's ability to merge artistry with functionality resonates deeply with our brand philosophy, reminding us that great design outlasts trends and leaves a lasting impression on our hearts and minds.

In this second edition of *Conversations*, we want to celebrate the inherent beauty and potential within our homes, and the profound impact that quality design can have on our daily lives.

From the iconic classics of yesteryear to the groundbreaking designs of today, each piece tells a story of passion, craftsmanship and the timeless pursuit of excellence.



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# Mangiarotti

## & Light

Through conceptual rigour and a deep understanding of materials, Angelo Mangiarotti designed sculptural lamps informed by architecture and art.

By JENI PORTER



What is drawing for you?  
 "Everything. If I speak I draw,  
 if I draw I speak."

As an architect, designer and sculptor Angelo Mangiarotti played with shape and scale in a profound and yet playful way. A sketch of the entrance to the Armitalia compound in Cinisello Balsamo from 1968, could be a working drawing of the Lari lamp, produced ten years later. A 50-metre high water tower designed in 1961 in the form of a truncated cone or mushroom shape was echoed in the Saffo and Lesbo lamps, Secticon clocks and alabaster containers.

"Frankly his buildings seem like industrial products, and his industrial designs and furniture resemble buildings," says Uyeda Makoto, a Japanese editor who produced a book on Mangiarotti in the 1960s. "If a building by him were reduced in scale to a size that would fit on top of a desk, it would become not an architectural model, but an industrial design. One can also imagine the reverse."

Complex, hard to classify and unorthodox, Mangiarotti created a body of work encompassing buildings, product design, furniture, lighting and sculpture. "He may not have liked being called a maestro and yet such was the conceptual rigour and intensity of his design practice – covering the widest themes, technologies and materials – that he was indeed a true maestro," says Andrea Campioli, who worked alongside Mangiarotti when he taught at the school of architecture, urban planning and construction engineering at the Politecnico di Milano.

Born in Milan in 1921, Mangiarotti graduated in architecture in 1948, just after the end of the second world war. He worked in the US in the early 1950s coming under the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Konrad Wachsmann. On his return to Milan, he opened an architectural firm and 20 years later founded an office based in Tokyo.

An avowed proponent of anonymous design, Mangiarotti believed in making objects that "last longer than us", to that end espousing "simple principles, elementary concepts and primary materials". The fundamental starting point of any object was its usefulness, he said, but there were many more strands at play than mere function. The materiality, the shape, and above all the process, a conceptual way of thinking that applied to any or all projects irrespective of size or purpose.

"For Mangiarotti the key aspect was not the scale at which he designed for a specific context – architectural or objects for use – but the process by which he arrived at the final outcome," says Francesca Albani, a professor at the Politecnico. "He applied the same methodological approach, whether he was designing a residential building or a vase, a water tank or a glass, a stadium or a storage unit."

The hidden quality of his product design was to favour a single headline material – alabaster, wood, marble, glass – looking for the sense of the material. "I am religious in my own way and I say: 'In the beginning

there was matter', to say that material exists with its reasons and must be faced with humility," Mangiarotti once said. "You need to know it, feel it, know what it can do and what you can make it do, without distorting it. Look for its limits. This applies to architecture, to design, to sculpture."

All his projects whether small- or large-scale, for serial or limited production, or one of a kind, are the product of a dense and humanistic vision, says architect and curator Giampiero Bosoni, arguing their origins were in their essence: "Art with a capital A". It is a theme taken up by Triennale Milano in the 2023 exhibition *When Structures Take Shape*, exploring Mangiarotti's 60-year career. "His work contains a creative vein of great plastic and sculptural power, which places it in the domain of art as well as in that of architecture and design," writes curator Fulvio Irace in a book of essays published alongside the exhibition. ●

**Left**  
 Saffo, photo by Peter Vinter  
 Lari lamp by Angelo Mangiarotti, GB Lounge  
 by Gijs Bakker, TriAngle by Aldo Bakker,  
 photo by Heidi Lerkenfeldt



# Glass Act



To make his mouth-blown glass lamps Angelo Mangiarotti worked with the best of the best Venetian glassmakers, an ethos honoured by Karakter in its Mangiarotti Collection.

By JENI PORTER  
Photography ALONA VIBE

## Mangiarotti Collection by Karakter

Plexi 1962

Saffo 1967

Alola 1967

Sfera 1968

Lari 1978

Accelsa 1985

Aida 1988

Lari mini 2023



Making lamps in Venice in the late 1960s after a period of high modernism, afforded Angelo Mangiarotti an opportunity to explore classic forms with his unique architectural eye. He worked with the best of the best Venetian glassmakers, pushing them to manipulate techniques and explore their ancient craft. The Saffo lamp from 1967 with its grey glass sphere suspended in an outer skin that fades from translucent white to transparent, is especially challenging to make.

Layers of clear, white and dark grey glass are placed by hand. The master glassmaker must inhale as well as blow. A tiny intake of breath – too strong and the grey glass expands too much, too little and it becomes elliptical. It is demanding and difficult. Many pieces are discarded. The glassmakers must balance the individual nature of each piece against striving for an artisanal uniformity.

In deciding to launch the Mangiarotti Collection of lights, including four in mouth-blown glass – Sfera, Accelsa, Saffo and Lari – Karakter understood these demands. There were no shortcuts. Few companies can produce them. Those that can are in an industry which is essentially linear and hyper-local. Made in Italy with expertise passed on from generation to generation by companies often located within a few kilometres of where the original lights were made.

“You should honour a designer and give him credit,” says Karakter co-founder and chief executive Christian Elving, of the ethos behind the Mangiarotti Collection. “With mouth-blown glass lamps Mangiarotti did something that no one else had done and could do, and this we must honour.”

Mangiarotti always looked for the sense of the material; with mouth-blown glass its transparency and translucency, its potential for architectural rigour and delicate sculptural curves. He considered air an assembly material, his lamps in glass capturing that

almost invisible matter. When he presented the Saffo and Lesbo lamps made at the Vistosi glassworks in Murano in 1967, the influential Italian magazine *Domus* enthused about how the Milanese architect and Venetian artisans had achieved results that other hands and other materials would not allow. “A beautiful example of how an ancient and rare ‘craft’ like that of Muranese masters can be employed for thoroughly modern expressions,” *Domus* wrote.

Little has changed. The glass factory in Veneto where Karakter is making the new mouth-blown glass editions of Saffo, Sfera and Accelsa is elemental and industrial. Furnaces blast out intense heat, master glassmakers work in some sort of synchronicity. Calm and focussed, with an innate understanding of the moment between melting and solidifying, the moment of transformation when the molten glass can be shaped and moulded.

“I want to create an homage to Mangiarotti,” says Elving of a collection that also includes some of the more technical, modern lamps that Mangiarotti developed as a second typology. The Alola floor lamp from 1967, Plexi suspended lights from 1962 and Aida lamp from 1988.

“I think they sit perfectly together because in his lamps you see what Karakter is about, both our design ethos and our dedication to quality and execution.” The Mangiarotti Collection represents the lighting designs of the architect designer in the round, showing his unique approach to shape and scale as well as technical expertise. Each with their own distinctive character but bound by certain qualities, emotional and physical along with rational and functional. ●

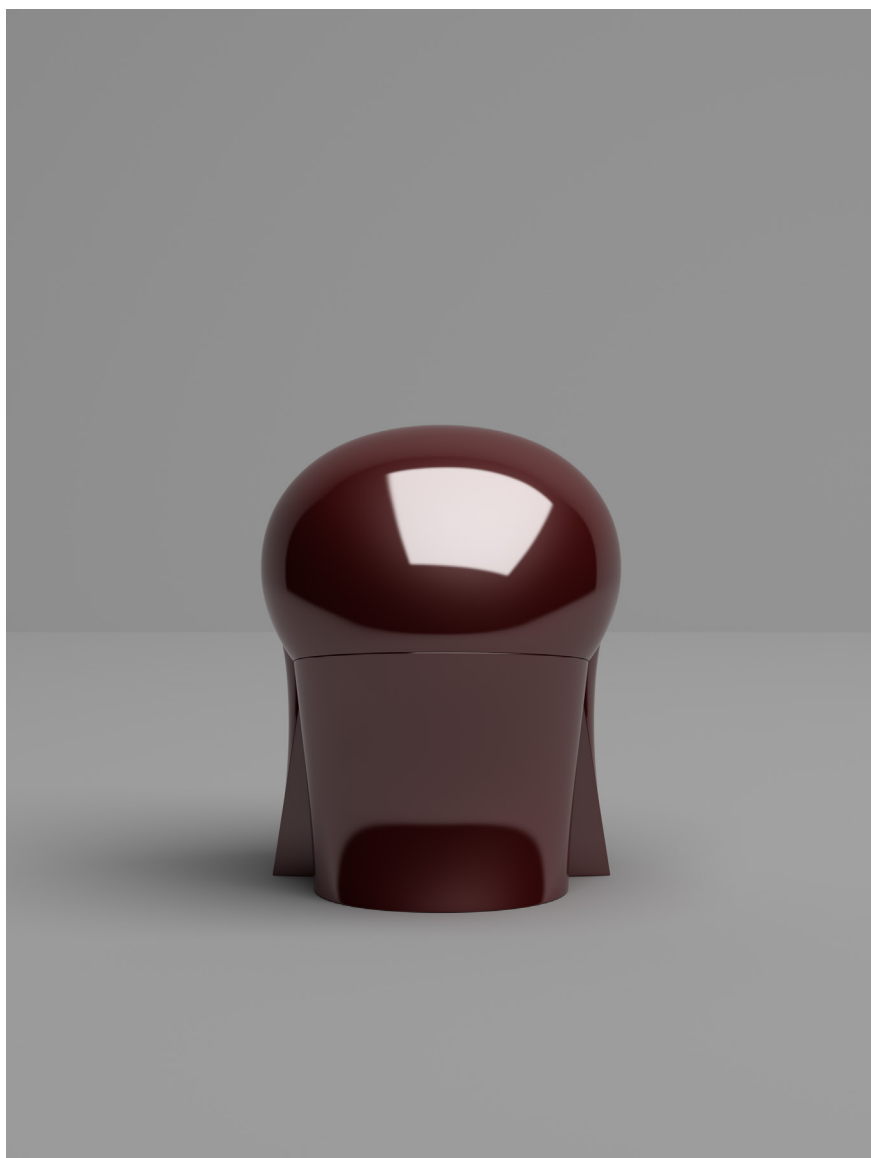


# Aldo Bakker

A fascination for gestures – a line, a form, a combination – lies at the heart of the Dutch design-auteur's practice. Functionality may or may not come later.

By JENI PORTER

## & Gesture



Triad,  
Console Table

Renders by  
Stefan Tervoort

How hard is it to design an incense burner? For Aldo Bakker it's been an object of provocation for some years and he doesn't even burn incense. The Dutch designer artist is interested in the primal, the everyday, and how a deeply considered, beautifully made object can alter the experience of that ritual. Designing an incense burner to add to a family of ritual objects is, however, more of an interlude in an artistic process that can require years of painstaking refinement to settle on a form and a finish. But he got stuck. "It is almost with shame I would say that I have been busy working with that stupid thing for a couple of years," says Bakker from his Amsterdam studio. It wasn't really about the incense burner per se, rather the challenge to make sense of the ritual. "To find the right approach in material, in size, in execution, in colour. How much does it need? It almost doesn't need anything?"

Whatever he came up with was always too much, not in balance with the subject. Recently, though, he cracked it. "Big news," he declares. His incense burner, a sheet of metal in a simple drop shape that evolves into a spoon, has the pure elegance and character of everything he does. Most importantly it involves a gesture. The gesture in balance with its function.

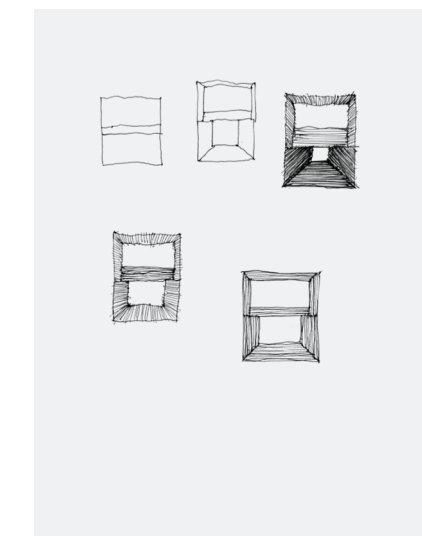
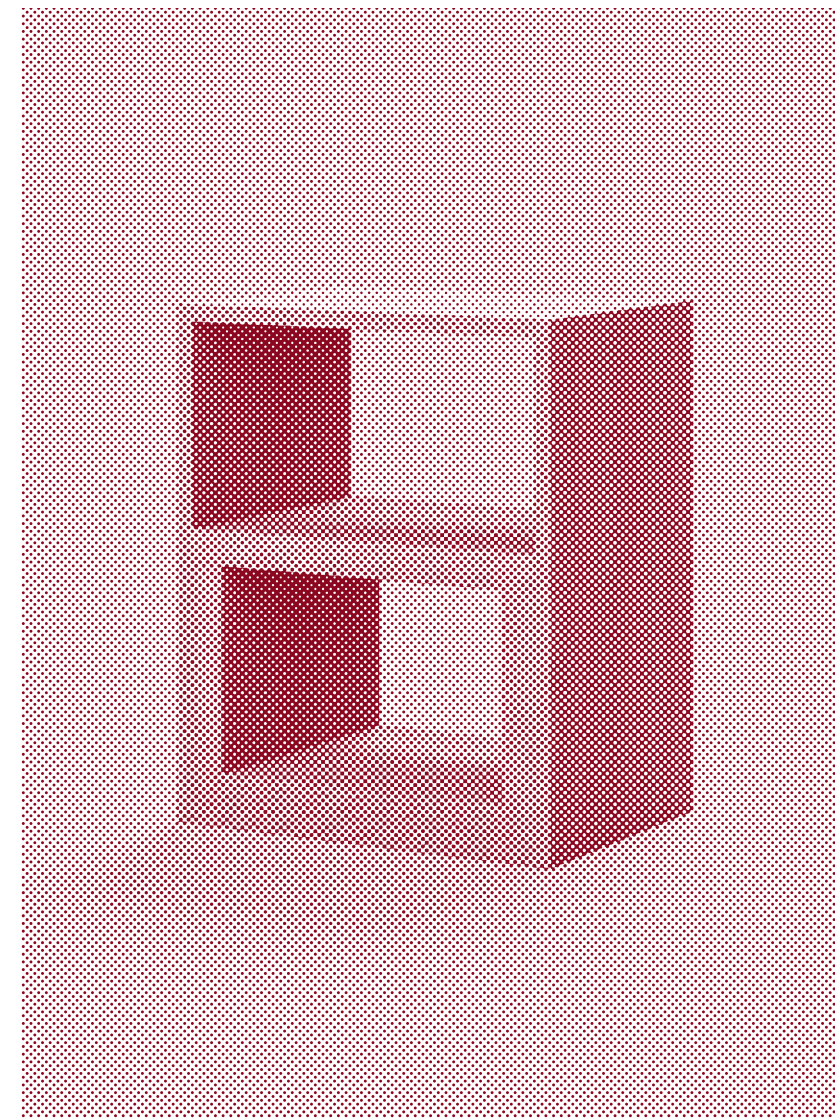
"My objects always come out of a fascination for gestures – a line, a form, a combination of things, how they touch each other or how they fall into each other, how they are stacked or puzzled, that's where it starts. The outcome I permit myself to leave open. Sometimes it's a glass or a piece of furniture, sometimes it's a sculpture or even a pavilion."



Bakker works largely alone in his studio on a canal, an intentionally neutral space full of prototypes for everyday objects that defy perceptions with names like Nose that are functional but sometimes seem too precious to use, and monumental one-off or limited-edition gallery pieces in marble or urushi lacquer. At the same time as trying to crack the code of the incense burner he's been planning a self-initiated sculpture project for Bad Ischl, in Austria, one of three European Capitals of Culture in 2024. Bakker is exploring new forms he's named Triad and Head, in bronze, Belgian black stone or kiln-cast glass. He's also investigating the potential of scaling up B, a gallery piece, to the size of a horse. Autonomous still, although you could climb or even sit on it, muses Bakker holding up a small version of B, "We called this a stool for a while."

Even with his furniture he never sets out to make something practical. "I often try that but then something else happens," he says. Cabinet, his latest furniture piece for Karakter, has been in his sketchbook for years but he put it aside because he thought the shape wasn't sufficiently interesting. Then he started thinking about pedestals like the ones Brancusi made as part of his sculptural work, "annoying intriguing" objects that are made to sit something more complex on top.

Cabinet is about as prosaic as Bakker gets, unadorned spruce and clearly functional. He showed the prototype in his solo exhibition at Licht Gallery in Tokyo last May. Sitting on a dais of concrete slabs, alongside Support, a Bakker classic object in tin, Cabinet held its own in the gallery space. It could equally become part of a household system in various configurations. "Perhaps not," suggests Bakker, ever the contrarian, that could be "too predictable". It's a classic declaration of a design-auteur, who treats their work as a medium of self-expression. ●



## Do the Maths

Easy to survey and executed mercilessly, Cabinet is a beautiful sum of its parts.

In one reading Cabinet is a straightforward functional piece of furniture that can be used beside a chair or bed for a glass or a book. Made of seven planks of plain spruce in three thicknesses – 1.5 cm, 3 cm and 4.5 cm – joined together as a closed frame times two, it is as honest and simple as anything Aldo Bakker has produced. "A clean cut, a sharp line and that's it," he says. And yet, it unravels a beauty within.

"The principle is very simple. It's a sum of numbers and this difference in size when you put them on top of each other creates the space for the horizontal plank." The plank in turn makes a squared joint in contrast to mitred corners.

"It's just equal steps. It's not so much about the mathematics as it is about being true to the concept. Even if you did not calculate it but did it only by eye, you would still get there and the gesture would be more or less the same." It is imperative that there are no superfluous details like rounded edges to distract the eye.

"Cabinet is easy to survey, the execution therefore merciless," says Bakker of the piece which is being made in Austria where spruce is widely used. To preserve its colour and tactility, the wood is left untreated to age with grace and honesty.

"I have made furniture myself in the past and when you make something like this you have to have the right mindset, where everything is clean and ordered, then you find a rhythm or cadence, and when you are done, that's it. Stay away. Don't touch it anymore." ●

Technical 2D/sketches  
by Aldo Bakker

By JENI PORTER  
Photography ALONA VIBE



# Fondazione Achille Castiglioni

There are many ways to uphold a design legacy. For Giovanna Castiglioni, daughter of Achille (1918–2002), one of the giants of 20th-century Italian design, it goes beyond archives and history to making her father relevant in the modern world. She does this in diverse ways, running Fondazione Achille Castiglioni with brother Carlo, and being the “voice” of his studio museum, a storyteller keeping Achille’s ideas alive and fresh.

Although educated as a geologist, Giovanna’s role is a natural progression for someone who grew up steeped in Castiglioni’s design practice. His was a personal cosmos that came home, a world in which the whole family participated, testing designs and ideas. “He experimented on our life, he was really curious about gesture and the way of doing things,” she says of her upbringing with mother Irma and siblings. “I’m here in the studio because I grew up in a very nice environment.”

Curiosity and playfulness are two character traits inherited from Achille, a maestro of the everyday and the exceptional. “Achille was a very playful man, always smiling and with a high sense of humour. He was a normal man but at the same time a genius.”

After he died in 2002, the family set about preserving his studio workshop on Piazza Castello in the centre of Milan as a living testament to his spirit and his genius, leaving intact a receptacle for almost 60 years of creativity, first with brother Pier Giacomo and then from 1968 alone, and mounting exhibitions that give his work a contemporary resonance.

Since it was opened to the public in 2006, the museum has played host to more than 85,000 people. A museum unlike others where you can sit on the chairs, read Castiglioni’s vast collection of magazines and books and assess the thousands of anonymous objects collected to inform his brilliant designs many of which, like the Arco lamp and Comodo cabinet, are in situ.

“You have to feel that you are in a normal house with a lot of objects around, you can try everything, you can touch all things,” says Giovanna. She wants people to look around and find their own path but also acts as a guide, “because through my voice you can learn. I hear stories every day, because there are a lot of designers today who are very linked to Achille.” And he to them, a point Giovanna makes frequently.

“I think Achille is relevant because nowadays there are a lot of objects that are still in production, evergreen and timeless, so he designed a lot of objects for functionality, not for shape or fashion or for the marketing. This is probably why people love these ideas and these projects, because they are so clear and through them you can learn and understand.”

Giovanna and Carlo are also judiciously re-editing various furniture pieces and objects designed by Achille and Pier Giacomo, building on longstanding relationships with manufacturers or teaming up with a new partner, such as Karakter, for an infusion of new ideas

**Achille’s Method** Start from scratch. Stick to common sense. Know your goals and means. Try to find a Principal Design Component and build upon it. Try to suggest different behaviours. What you need is a constant and consistent way of designing, not a style.



and approaches. “We have to re-edit to keep alive the memory and also adopt a fresh perspective, and we use the royalties to support the activity of the foundation so it is a good cycle,” she says.

Through 2023 Giovanna dealt with an existential threat to the museum, because its rented space in a handsome 19th century palazzo opposite Parco Sempione, is prime real estate. Architects, designers and curators worldwide have campaigned for it to remain on that site, arguing it is an important tangible record of Italian design history and broader cultural heritage, but the outcome is uncertain beyond 2024. Irrespective of location she will keep delving into Castiglioni’s world and sharing stories.

“We would like to keep alive the everyday agenda, retain the legacy in our foundation if it’s possible or if we have to find another place,” she says. ●

**Giovanna on Achille**  
If I have to choose one word about Achille – curiosity. I grew up with a man who was very, very playful. Curiosity is linked to toys, curiosity is linked to other people, other countries, other mentalities. If you are curious you can remain young.

# Achille's Milan



Achille Castiglioni was fiercely proud of one thing: his city. Much more Milan-centric than his peers, he loved travelling but always cherished his Milanese origins. "Design demands observation," he would say, and all around him was a city that never ceased to arouse his curiosity and wonder.

Illustration  
SAINTE MARIA



**Life**

- 1 Born here in 1918  
*Corso di Porta Nuova 40*
- 2 Family home from 1968  
*Viale Misurata 47*
- 3 Street named after the brothers  
*Via Fratelli Castiglioni*

**Where He Worked**

- 4 Studio 1945-62  
*Corso di Porta Nuova 54*
- 5 Studio until 2002, now Achille Castiglioni Foundation  
*Piazza Castello 27*

**Special Sites**

- 6 Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio  
*Piazza Sant'Ambrogio 15*
- 7 Fontana di San Francesco  
*Piazza Sant'Angelo 2*
- 8 San Cristoforo sul Naviglio  
*Via S. Cristoforo*
- 9 Triennale di Milano  
*Viale Alemagna 6*
- 10 Cà Brutta  
*angolo via Turati*
- 11 La Villa Reale  
*Via Palestro 16*
- 12 L'Orecchio di Vildt  
*Casa Sola-Busca*
- 13 Pinacoteca di Brera  
*Via Brera 28*
- 14 Villa Invernizzi  
*Via dei Capuccini 4*
- 15 Santuario di San Bernardino alle Ossa  
*Piazza Santo Stefano*
- 16 Santa Maria delle Grazie  
*Piazza di Santa Maria delle Grazie*

**Food and Drinks**

- 17 Rigolo  
*Via Solferino 11*
- 18 Trattoria Aurora  
*Via Savona 23*
- 19 Bar Basso  
*Via Plinio 39*
- 20 Antica Trattoria della Pesa  
*Viale Pasubio, 10*
- 21 Trattoria Torre di Pisa  
*Via Fiori Chiari 21*
- 22 La Brisa  
*Via Brisa 15*

**Shops**

- 23 Brigatti  
*Corso Venezia*
- 24 Showroom Danese  
*Piazza San Fedele*
- 25 Comoretto  
*Corso Como 11*
- 26 Arform  
*Via della Moscova 22*
- 27 HighTech  
*Piazza San Fedele*
- 28 Ravizza 1871  
*Via U. Hoepli 3*



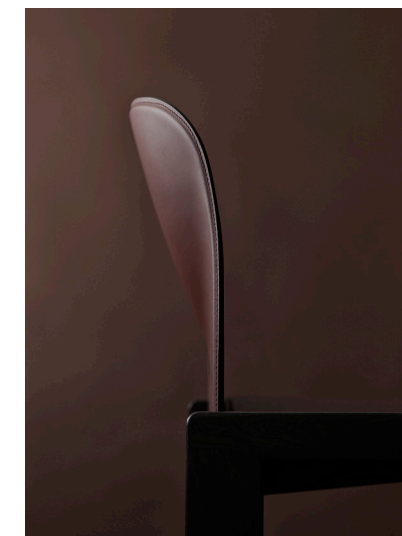
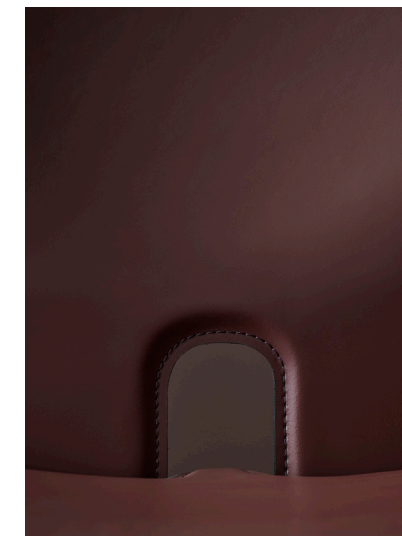
Created by Afra and Tobia Scarpa in the heyday of Italian mid-century design, the Scarpa 121 and Scarpa 925 chairs express elegance and comfort in the purest aesthetic form.

Designed by Afra and Tobia Scarpa for Cassina  
Reintroduced by Karakter in 2023

Photography ANDERS SCHONNEMANN

1965  
Scarpa 121  
dining chair

In mocha stained ash with  
London saddle leather



1966  
Scarpa 925  
lounge chair

In natural ash with  
Naturale saddle leather



**History** 1960s Italy was a time of great change, of hope and evolving ways of living that underpinned a burst of creativity and visionary thinking. Afra and Tobia Scarpa were at the forefront, conceiving furniture and lighting with the minds of architects and the perspectives of designers with a vision for comfort, elegance and function. The 121 and 925 chairs were recognised immediately as game changers.

**Museum Icon** The 925 was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art and exhibited in New York in 1967. MoMA's architecture and design director, Arthur Drexler set two criteria. One was design quality that embodied formal ideas of beauty, and the other was historical significance, objects which may or may not be beautiful but which contributed to the development of design. The 925 chair has both beauty and significance.

**Concept** The composition is unexpected: the block of the base, square and solid, and the thin curve of the backrest in moulded plywood and stitched leather. A cube and a petal, as Tobia Scarpa says. "I thought that the elegance of a petal could become the back of a chair. Then you would need a structure to support it and this structure became a cube to indicate the solidity of the article." The 121 came first as a dining chair for the 778 table and the 925 lounge chair derived from that.

**Beauty** The Scarpas had already done chairs with a similar typology and pure aesthetic. With the 121 and 925 they elevate the honest expression by the meticulous craftsmanship on the saddle leather. The chairs still look simple – you can see a line from Tobia's architect father Carlo – but the way they are made takes them to a higher level.

**Comfort** Comfort is not sacrificed for aesthetics. They follow the contour of the body, even a 1.9 m tall one, so they are really comfortable. The curve of the backrest with its small cut-out to assist the shaping of the plywood and relieve stress on the spine, is just perfect.

**Know-How** The quality of the leather and its detailing are akin to the best handbag. It is like you are sitting on an Hermès bag. The chairs showcase Italian know-how, the mastery of the leathers and how they are stitched. More elegant and detailed than what was being done in the 1950s in Scandinavia where leather was usually one piece and buckled.

**Materials** Tobia Scarpa chose ash for the contemporary versions. It speaks to the time and is honest. The grain has flames that are beautiful when stained and precisely matched when natural. Natural, black and red leather repeat the palette of the originals. Mocha and cognac play beautifully with or complement the mocha stained ash. ●

By JENI PORTER  
Photography ALONA VIBE

# Tobia Scarpa & Thought



The studio of Tobia Scarpa in Treviso is on the banks of the Sile River that runs through the medieval town and flows into the Venetian lagoon. With clean white-painted walls, neat worktables and overflowing shelves, the studio is authentic and calm, in tune with its surroundings, viewed through windows framing the luminescent green of the nature outside. Scarpa has always had an affinity with water, likening the flow of water across the stones of a riverbed to the imagination and rigour of a creative process. In the rambling garden below the studio he keeps a wooden boat that he built for himself. When Christian Elving the co-founder of Karakter visits in early winter, Scarpa takes him down to the riverside to show him the boat, which is upended, its glorious glossy red-painted hull visible.

Scarpa, who turned 89 on January 1, is an enigmatic figure, a designer of the highest order whose chairs, sofas and lights are amongst the best of the mid-20th century, who has studiously avoided any sort of limelight. An architect who deflects praise by suggesting he stole everything from his father Carlo, the famed Venetian architect. A deep thinker who believes materials have a

vocation and are tools that he applies to a thought.

“What I do is the mundane job of taking – half an idea, a pencil, a half drawing – see if a whole thing comes out. And this is where the ability, the professionalism of those who do this job is played out,” he tells Elving.

The relationship with Karakter is recent, the Danish company collaborated with Scarpa to re-edit the 121 and 925 chairs designed with wife Afra in 1965 and 1966, releasing them in 2023. But for Elving the admiration for Scarpa goes way back, to his early fascination with Italian design of 1960s and 70s. For him Scarpa is an amazing designer who downplays his own legacy.

“I’ve heard him claim so many times that he just tried to copy his father. That’s absolutely not true, maybe he jump-started from that but he is a brilliant designer in his own right.”

Having the chance to spend a day with Scarpa in his own domain is something to be treasured. They speak through an interpreter but communicate in other ways that are true to the Italian’s sensibilities.

“When you have him for a whole day you get a really good sense of how he is. His studio is really an

expression of him. Lots of prototypes. You could see his affinity with wood and how he had worked with glass and steel. He’s clearly someone who has worked with very honest materials in a very honest way.”

For his part Scarpa is expressive and funny. He has a discursive way of talking about his practice and beliefs. When asked what is the starting point of a design he talks about the thought behind the gesture. “Most of the time a drawing is created using a tool – a pencil or other means – but it is generated by a thought, and a thought is not a physicality. It is much more flexible, it can go back, forward, change. Within a thought, one can end up seeing things differently from how they began.”

He demonstrates how he can draw or write with both hands simultaneously, writing a letter to Elving with a pen in each hand, the text on the left mirroring that on the right. “He had two pens going at the same time doing the exact same but mirrored,” says Elving, admiring the performative side of Scarpa’s personality.

Elving believes that Scarpa’s pieces are truly timeless, essential simple designs that endure. “He is detached from trends, maintains an elegant eye all the time. He’s not doing a lot of products that seem completely irrelevant. I think these chairs, the 121 and 925, are the best that came out of him playing with this typology and aesthetic.” ●

# Bodil Kjær & Principal

Rigorous,  
expressive  
and so comfortable.



Designed as a series of furniture elements in 1961, the Principal collection has a modern appeal. Your eyes are drawn to its lines: delicate and strong at the same time, with a mathematical precision that stems not from a desire for a form but rather from a robust investigation of structure and strength. The Principal dining chair is open, its round backrest comforting and enveloping but with a sure pure line. The distinctive cross-shaped joints repeated across the collection provide strength and act as the only adornment.

Architect Bodil Kjær, then aged 29, designed Principal for a furniture competition held in Denmark, imagining a series for a young couple's first home. Hers was a precocious talent that transcended the borders of Denmark where she was raised and educated towards a more European expression. "I chose to make the upstanding parts of the structure cross-shaped to provide strength of wooden parts. It offers a three-dimensional form rather than the conventional flat or smooth form of much furniture," says Kjær, 92 and still active in architecture, planning and education. "Young people today seem to like the pieces. Maybe because they can so easily understand how they are constructed, how easily they may be taken apart for repair and maybe they like the idea of a landscape of furniture rather than the individual furniture objects they grew up with."

The Principal collection, is named in honour of Kjær's leadership in ideas and as a woman in a mostly male world, as well as for its strong design and construction principles. The collection comprises a dining chair, dining table, bar stool, counter stool and bar chair. ●

**Top left**  
Principal chair in natural oak upholstered with Sørensen Terra Silt leather, photo by Anders Schønnemann

**Top right**  
Principal chair in smoked oak upholstered with Kvadrat Steelcut 365, photo by Anders Schønnemann

**Bottom left**  
Principal chair and dining table, Bon by Aldo Bakker, Mangiarotti Marble by Angelo Mangiarotti, photo by Heidi Lerkenfeldt

**Right**  
Principal chair and dining table, Sferico glass by Joe Colombo, Mangiarotti Marble by Angelo Mangiarotti, photo by Heidi Lerkenfeldt



Cross-cultural influences and friendship intertwine in this round table.

# Mikal Harrsen & the Hess



Before Mikal Harrsen designed a new dining table for his friends, Mikkel Hess and Nira Kehar, he enjoyed an exceptional meal that Kehar, a chef and artist, had prepared for her partner's birthday. "We were enjoying a parade of extravagant dishes like deep-fried lamb brain and other exotic surprises, seated on the floor during the entire dinner," says Harrsen, who recalls thinking, "Surely there was the need for a table in the Hess household."

His friends concurred. Exchanging late night messages, Hess, a Danish composer and drummer, sought advice on a table for their Copenhagen apartment, something really special. It spurred the Milan-based Harrsen to revisit a sketch of a three-legged table structure. "Spinning that around Mikkel's universe of drums, which are very mechanically structured and require a steady grip on the floor, kind of nailed it," says Harrsen. "The idea of exposing the inner technical parts of the table structure came about and became a significant feature."

The Hess table was born. With its round marble top and geometric metal base it has echoes of Scandinavia but also something more outspoken that challenges the rationalist and pure tradition. In that sense as well as honouring his good friend Hess, it reflects Harrsen's journey from Denmark, where the architect and industrial designer was born and educated, to Italy where he moved in 2017.

"This type of structural and minimalist approach dates back to my last years in Copenhagen, so there is definitely that influence going on. Picking up on these

sketches and finishing them years later, being in Italy, and having been exposed to a more expressive and extroverted design culture, I felt like adding a bit of that – with the exaggerated feet and suggested tops in glass and stone."

Kehar and Hess love how the table "lives" in the centre of their apartment, large enough to seat nine or more and yet still feeling light because of the void created by the base, its cross-cultural currents aligning with theirs. "We have a lot of older Danish furniture from my family and the table plays in great harmony with those pieces yet it also speaks with a more undefined international accent and seems to connect just as well with some of the very old pieces that Nira brought from India." The family, now with baby Issa, eats every meal at the table from cosy breakfast trio to band dinners with a full crew of jazz musicians. "Somehow the table is always the right size," says Hess.

And the right shape. Harrsen has one in his country home in Piemonte and is enjoying the effect of a round table after years with rectangular ones. "Besides the obvious geometrical difference, I think the round table suggests a quite different social idea, equality and a more open type of conversation, themes that will engage everyone, which – our current times considered – is probably not such a bad idea."

Hess is a transition piece, says Harrsen that could lead to others in the style, maybe even something with a post-modern edge of a coloured frame. ●



**Top**  
Hess table with Chair 300 by Joe Colombo and Plexi by Angelo Mangiarotti, photo by Heidi Lerkenfeldt

**Bottom**  
Hess table in the home of Mikkel Hess and Nira Kehar, photo by Elizabeth Heltoft



The Danish weaver and textile artist strives for the sublime while enhancing the everyday.

By ALISA LARSEN  
Photography DORTE KROGH, TOMAS BERTELSEN

Weaving is an intellectual craft for Karin Carlander. Every project starts in black and white, eliminating the noise of colour as the Danish weaver and textile artist works on the old wooden handlooms in her studio north of Copenhagen. "It enables me to see the structure and the possibilities within it," she says. "I search for the spontaneous in the repetitive act of weaving by experimenting freely. There is a logic to it that I have spent a lifetime trying to disturb."

When she finds that structure, she knows what she wants to say. A distinct rhythm forms and colour seeps into the threads of her loom. While some find complexity and control in jacquard weaving, with its endless opportunities, she prefers to find it in the most analogue and elemental processes. Intricacy in the so-called simple.

Her practice centres on functional textiles for the home, believing that the objects we handle in connection with everyday chores and activities should hold artistic value. Linen is her medium of choice but working with Karakter on a rug and a throw enabled her to experiment with two other distinct materials: alpaca and paper.

"Creating a rug in paper yarn is a bit mad. It is a crisp and delicate material that is infamously difficult to tame both by hand and machine." While designing the

Karin Carlander

"That level of sublimity can be hard to get across, but it is what I strive for."

rug was straightforward, finding someone who could make it the way it is intended to be, was not. The journey took them from Nepal to Finland, a mere hundreds of metres from where the yarn is produced and dyed.

"Finding those people enables you to get to the core of things much quicker. It is about craft and tacit knowledge, not engineering," she explains. The Shuttle Rug combines her know-how of colour and material with an innate understanding of movement and rhythm. The pattern vibrates, moves. (Carlander leans on classical music terms to explain her textiles, a language introduced by her husband, a Finnish musician, as a way of putting words around her practice.)

At the same time, the rug feels connected to the Japanese tatami, as natural to sit on as stand on. You want to get close. That has to do with the honesty of Carlander's work. If you follow the thread, you are able to understand the way it is constructed. It is a gesture, an invitation to the beholder.

Her Heddles throw for Karakter leaves a delicate fringe exposed, showing exactly how the warp and weft are working together. "The way threads and colours perform is new and unexpected with each material. Even after so many years, the craft continues to surprise me." Made from baby alpaca sourced from a traditional producer in the Andes, the throw is a result of local expertise and material knowledge. Alpaca is a hollow fibre and like linen keeps you warm when it is cold, and vice versa, the direct result of the high altitudes where the animal grazes.

"I chose alpaca because it is a luscious material. I am a material nerd at heart. I need to know how things are made and where they come from, something I have taken to the extreme in my practice," she says. The thin, glossy alpaca fibres make a light textile with a sensuous lustre, the result of its soft, fluttering pattern. "So many people compromise on material quality in our industry. That level of sublimity can be hard to get across, but it is what I strive for." ●

# Michael Anastassiades' Mood

From nature to his native Cyprus, a fertile set of references – both personal and profound – inhabits the designer's work.



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- 1 Kastellorizo harbour, Greece, 1930s, photograph, *National Geographic* archives
- 2 Coffee Mill, 2017, brass, Michael Anastassiades and Carl Auböck
- 3 *Gold Spiral*, late Bronze Age, Cypriot gold, image: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 4 Found stone, Pissouri Beach, Cyprus
- 5 Found stone, Zygi Beach, Cyprus
- 6 *Cock*, white sandstone, Kostas Argyrou
- 7 *Europa and the Sacred Bull*, 2021, Simone Fattal
- 8 *Burning with many colours*, 2022-23, oil on canvas, Polys Peslikas
- 9 The living room of Neoptolemos Michaelides' private residence, Nicosia, Cyprus, Colour C-Print photograph, Helene Binet



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