

Home Product Design



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editorial

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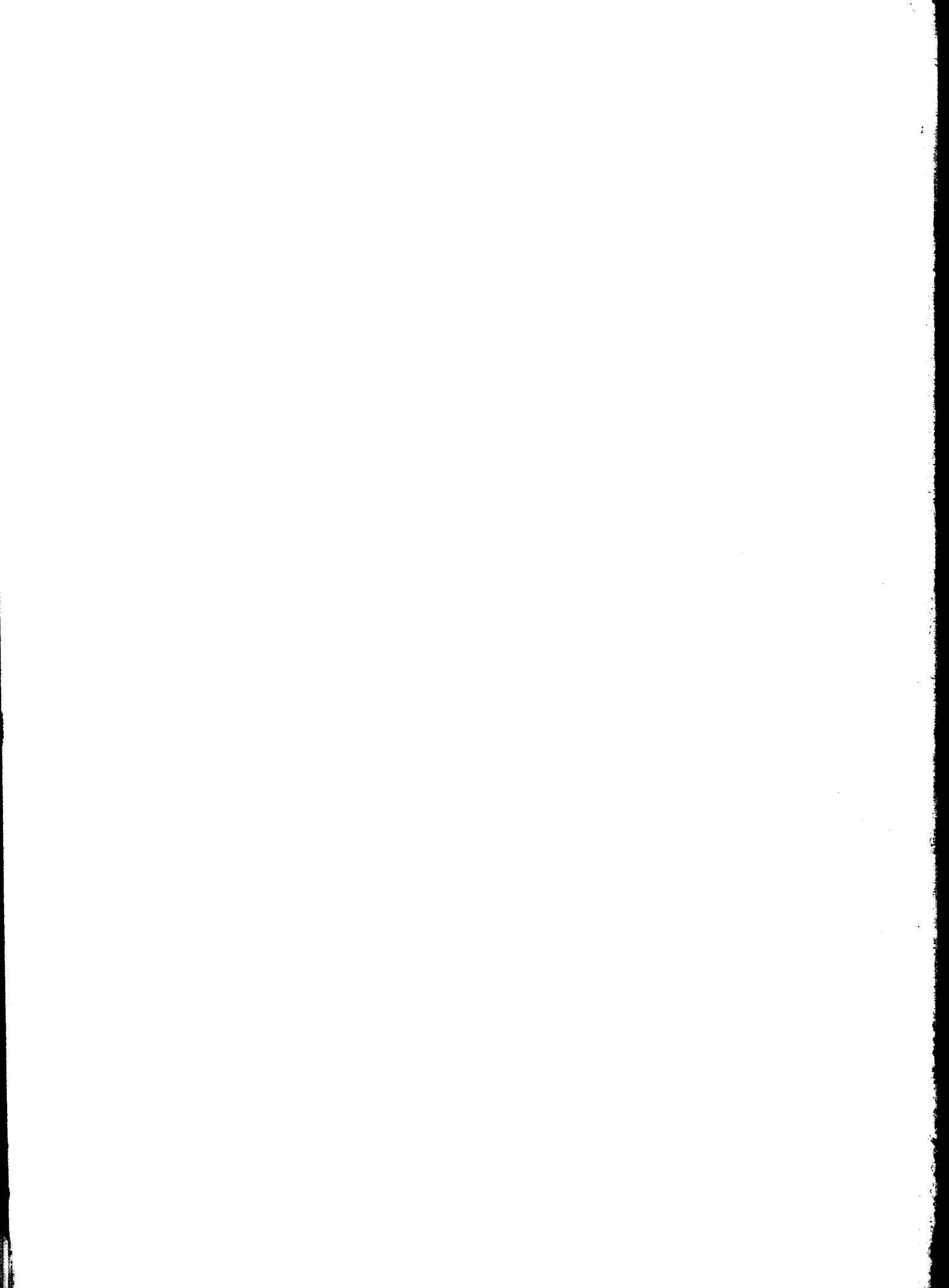
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Industrial design, like other artistic disciplines, has undergone variations during the course of time and has been the expression of different values at different times.

During the nineteenth century, design reflected the appreciation of the painstaking work of the craftsman and the value of manual skills. Later, with the industrial revolution, design became the expression of the new methods of production of a society trying to come to terms with a new way of doing things based on mass production and the profit motive. There have even been times during or after wars, when industrial design has been used as one more sign of national prestige or as a representative image of a certain ideology.

Today, like other artistic forms, design is not at the service of any particular ideology, but rather has become the

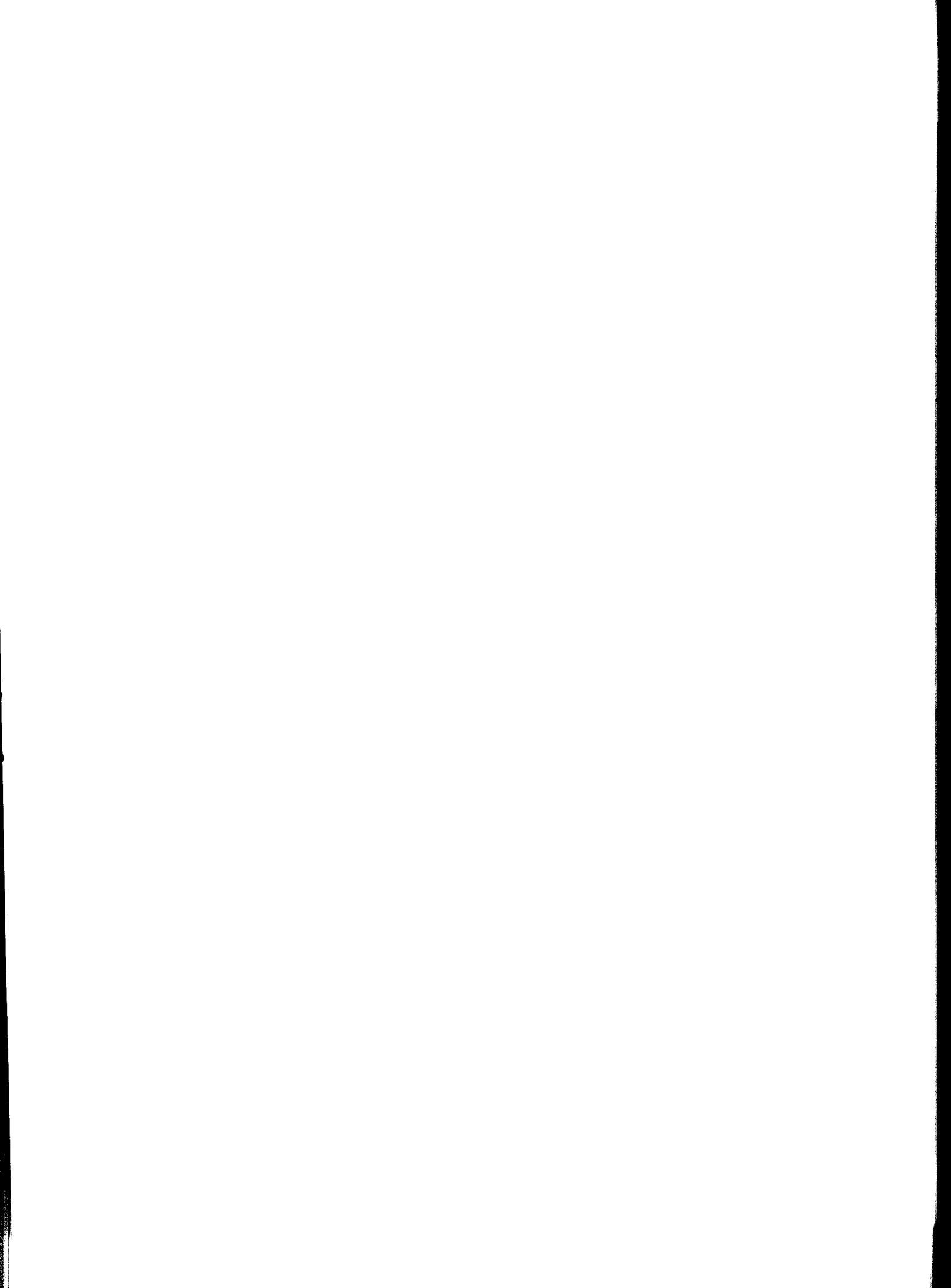
expression of the individuality of the artist and a reflection of the new materials and methods of production that have become available. Design is now treated as an added value and applied according to market demand. This means that the relationship between creator and producer is ever more crucial. The objects we see in the shops have to pass through the unforgiving filter of the producing firms and the final result depends on their talent.

The approach to a design piece is personal, both on the part of the creator and the user. Unlike a cooking recipe which guarantees good results, there are no dogmas or parameters to guide us as to what is good and what is bad. What we can do is try to recognise the emotive aspect of the object and the capacity it has for dialogue with the materials, its use and its user.

A dialogue in which all the parties implicated - designer, object and user -

have the same importance and must have an active approach, as in spite of its apparent simplicity, it is fragile and easily frustrated during any part of the process if there is no interest.

Perhaps these ideas may serve as an orientation with respect to the diversity of approaches to design which exist today, and of which this book attempts to present a sample.



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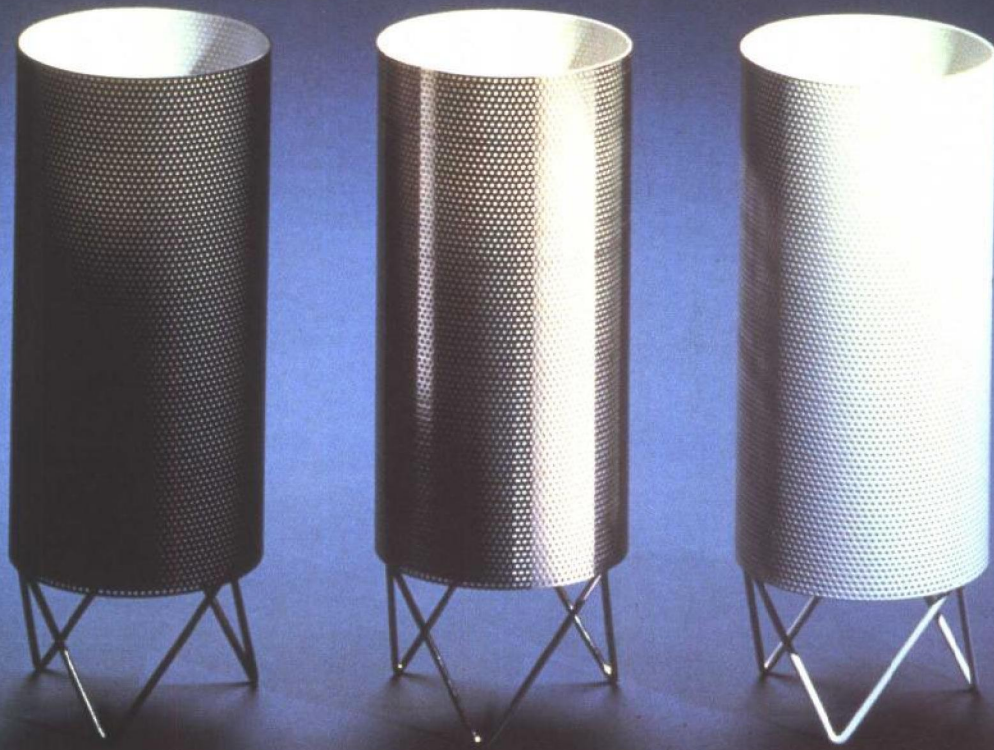
Free-standing lamp.

F.J. Barba Corsini

The collection of furniture shown here was designed and produced in response to a commission received by the architect F.J. Barba Corsini at the beginning of the 50's to remodel the attic floor of the building known as La Pedrera (Arch. A. Gaudí). The property company which owned La Pedrera in 1955, wished to profit from the empty spaces of the highest floor of the building, which from the beginning had been used for storage and laundry. Thus it was decided to transform the space into small apartments for rent, each one having access to a small private terrace. The idea seemed to have every chance of success, as at the time this

type of housing, the urban "apartment" was thought to be fashionable.

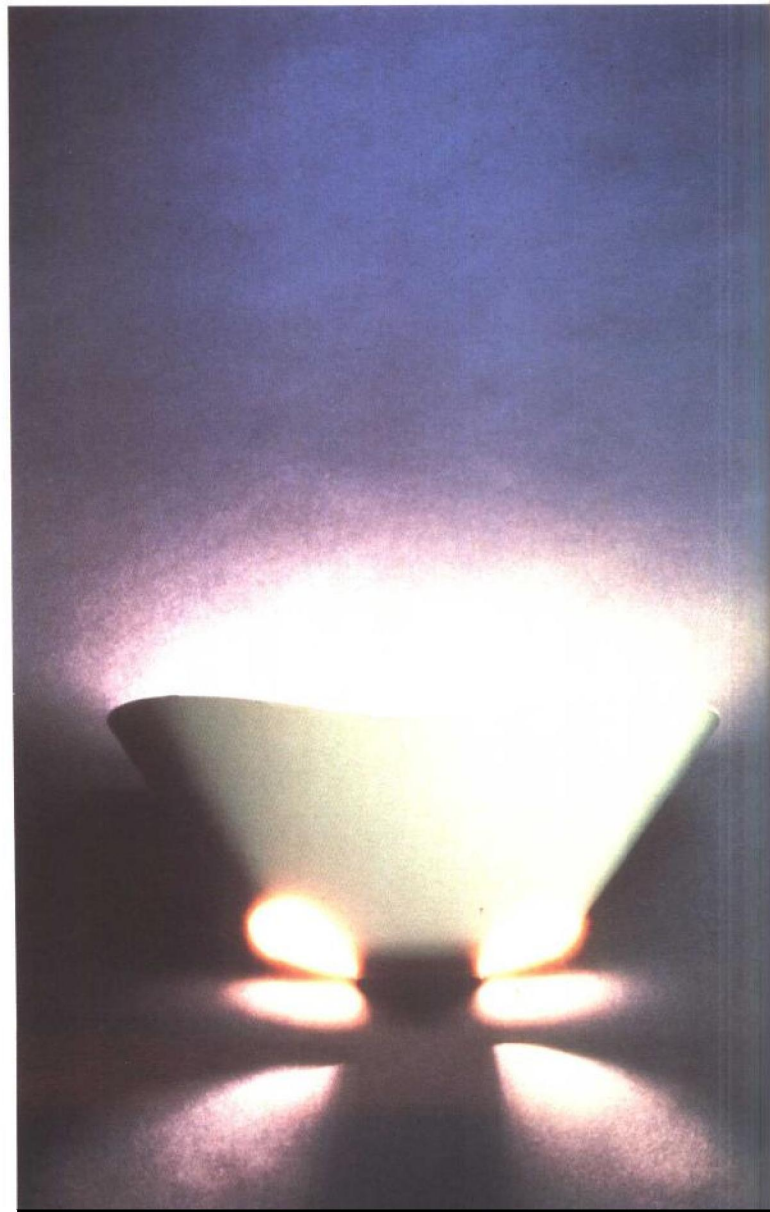
The project consisted of thirteen apartments (although numbered 1 to 14 for reasons of superstition), located on the one floor of this Barcelona landmark, with fabulous views of the city. The renovation was not limited solely to the design of the architectural spaces, but also included the creation of a whole series of exclusive pieces of furniture. The plan in its entirety defined not just the distribution and spacial relation between the pieces, but also the image and the form of use imposed by this special furniture.



Barba Corsini's design for the project used an original constructive solution based on parabolic partition arches which allowed the rising height of the space to be fully utilized by the incorporation of platforms. The architect's identification with the building was especially intense and he did not decide upon the use of any material, shape or distribution without testing his ideas *in situ*. Models were reproduced in brick; samples of materials were tested in the spaces they would occupy, and even full-scale models were made of the stairs in wire and the chairs in cardboard.

Any renovation of a building with the personality and almost symbolic meaning of "La Pedrera" is not an easy task. However, in this case, the plan, both architecturally and in the design of the furnishings, showed a clear autonomy with respect to the work of Gaudí, with no trace of imitation. An article published in the newspaper "Diario de Barcelona" on the 17th July 1955, clearly expresses this idea:

"Any alterations in a house designed by Gaudí are always a delicate matter. This original and bold architect was an innovator of genius, and has



Lamp formed by a cylinder of perforated sheet iron with a Y-shaped strut which reinforces the cylinder and supports the electrical components. The rounded feet are also soldered to the strut.

Wall-lamp in the form of a flattened and inverted cone laterally fixed to a cylindrical band which attaches to the wall. The electrical components are inside the lamp.

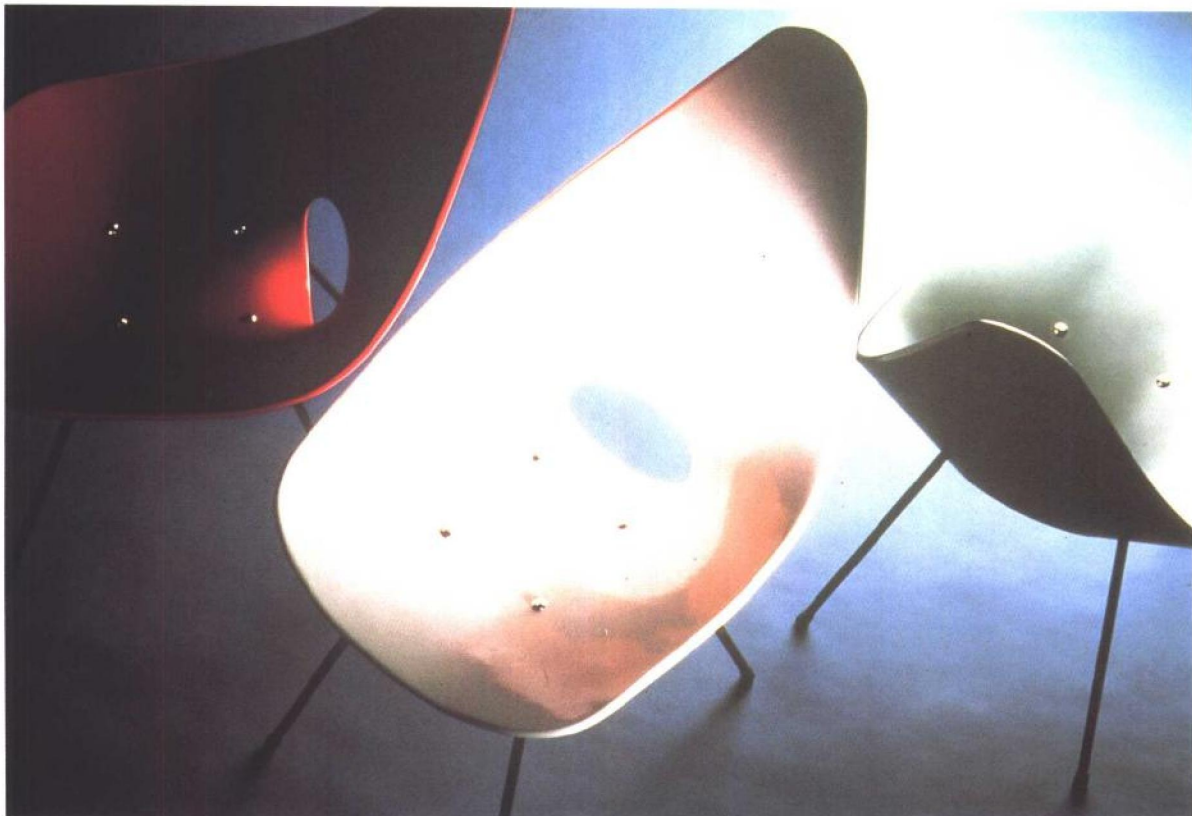
Chair constructed of an oval seat-back rest in one piece, supported by two inverted U-shape tubes, which incline sharply outwards to the floor.

a legion of followers who are extremely conservative and cry to the heavens as soon as they get a whiff of any idea to move even one brick of the houses built by their idol.

“La Pedrera” has avoided the problem by leaving the exterior untouched. Within the building, two worlds live together. The twisted and tormented world of Gaudí and the clear, straight, clean world of functionalism. The spirit of Gaudí blends harmoniously with that of Barba Corsini, the architect who authored the transformation. The undulating floor, the partition arches of the house, his decorative extravagances and his structural oddities seem to be conceived precisely for this almost cinematographic atmosphere”.

Barba Corsini understood this project in terms of “Interior Architecture” which means working freely in the three dimensions of the space, as opposed to the idea of “interior design” which lends itself to the decoration of two flat dimensions.

It was within the context of this plan that the furniture shown on these pages was conceived.



S-shaped bench whose seat is formed by a series of circular shaped pieces of wood in different tones, supported by an horizontal L-shaped structure of iron, which follows the shape of the bench, and is attached to the vertical tubular feet.

The character of the spaces for which the furniture was to be used did not hinder Barba Corsini in designing pieces with their own presence. The pieces were produced by Galeria H2O in 1995, forty years after they were originally designed in 1955, but have not lost any of their immediacy.

The furniture is capable of generating a determined atmosphere around it, independent of



where it is placed, as rather than imposing their materiality, they have a somewhat indefinable appeal. They speak of the quality of the light, of smooth undulating lines that are sensitive to the user, of the delicacy with which the contact points between the object and the supporting structure are constructed, of a manner of seeking support from the floor by vertices that almost flee from the horizontal plane. *

Table with a glass surface composed of contoured arched pieces, supported by the upper vertices of the tubular V-shaped understructure.

