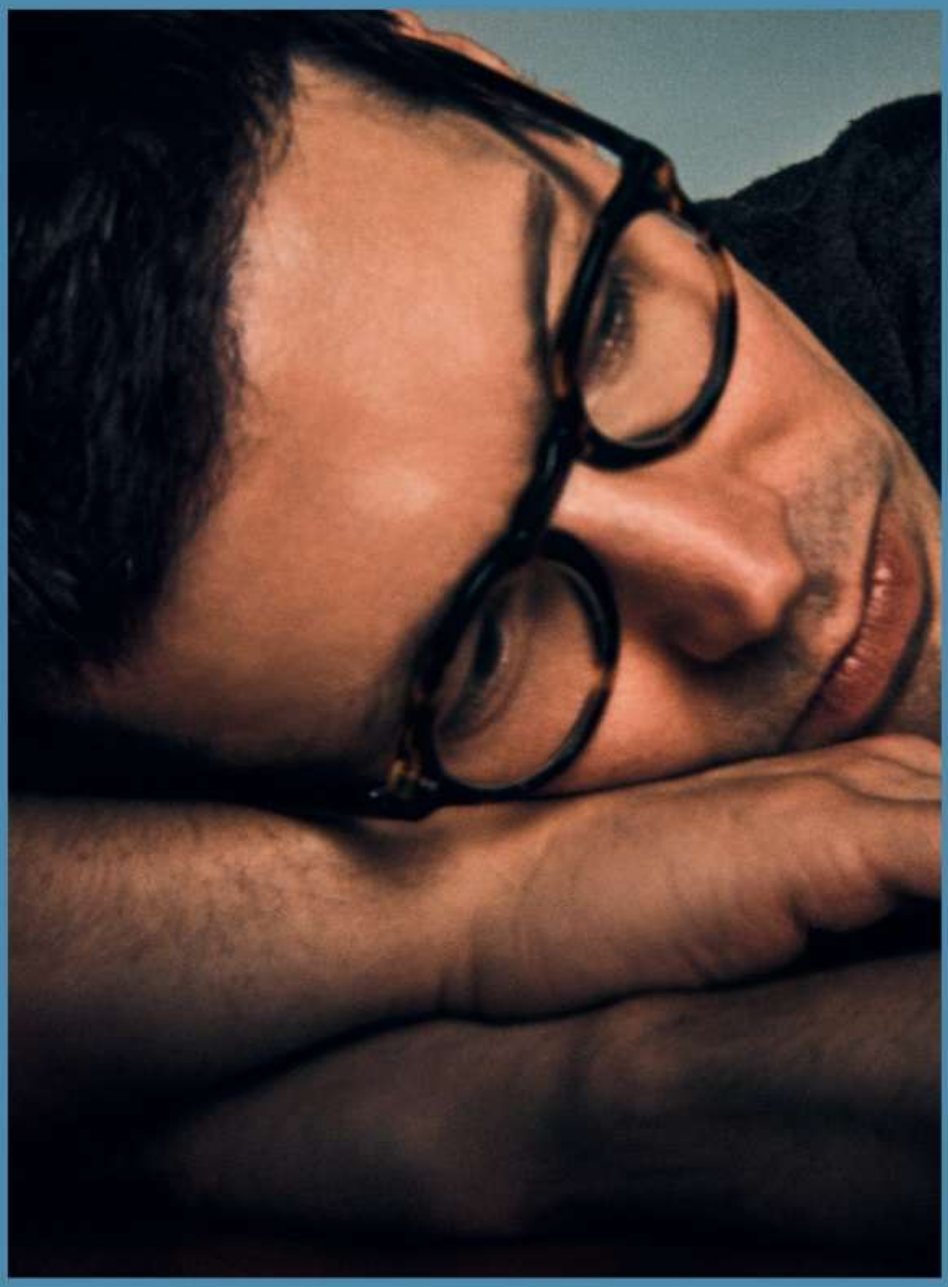
the Grand Tourist



Erdem Moralioglu

ISSUE ONE
BRAVE NEW WORLD


Archibald armchair designed by Jean-Marie Massaud
Handcrafted with love in Italy to last generations.
Since 1912.
poltronafrau.com
Poltrona
Frau
1912

LEFT

Gio Ponti drawing hands, circa 1970. Photo courtesy the Gio Ponti Archives.

BELOW

Works by Gio Ponti for Ginori 1735, including the Witch's Hand, 1935. Photo courtesy the Gio Ponti Archives.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT

The 60th-anniversary limited-edition Dezza armchair by Poltrona Frau. Photo courtesy Poltrona Frau.

CLAP YOUR HANDS

An elegant, streamlined icon from the 1960s by Gio Ponti is reimagined with a touch of brilliance.

by EMMA MOORE

There can't be many pieces of furniture design that have been in continuous production for 60 years, their star never fading over time. The Dezza armchair, by the inimitable postwar Italian designer-architect Gio Ponti, is one such piece. This year, Poltrona Frau—for whom the Dezza was designed in 1965—is set to mark its anniversary in style, with a striking edition of 60 that showcases a set of distinctive, newly uncovered drawings by Ponti.

The Dezza has become something of an emblem for the Italian furniture brand. Conceived for the new Poltrona Frau HQ in Tolentino when Ponti was 74, it takes its name from the address of a building he had designed and was living in on Via Dezza in Milan. Ponti never liked to be styled as a Modernist, and he certainly didn't believe that form follows function, but the Dezza's refined silhouette—from the boxy structure to the gently curved armrests and tapered legs—was unmistakably modern and pioneering, as was the consideration toward its efficient manufacturing.

"It summarizes some of Ponti's most important design principles," says Poltrona Frau CEO Nicola Coropulis, "both from a formal perspective, as seen in the characteristic tapered triangular leg, and from a methodological standpoint." The Dezza, it seems, streamlined production by limiting the number of parts required, simplifying assembly.

The armchair's celebratory new clothing is suitably arresting. The upholstery is a powerful blue shade of leather, called Iris, and is used across the armrests and color-matched in the lacquer that coats the legs. The seat, meanwhile, is covered in Panna leather, digitally printed with Ponti's as-yet-unseen drawings of hands.

The colors of the upholstery were chosen to conjure the sunny Mediterranean tones that Ponti used in his design of the Hotel Parco dei Principi in Sorrento, and the quirky hand drawings, which were acquired at auction by a collector known to the heirs of Gio Ponti, who run the archive, were chosen to shine a light on Ponte's figurative artwork, as a change from his more familiar geometric motifs.

The illustration features 26 stylized hands, each carrying its own guise and name, from the Gloved Hand to the Flowery Hand and Rotating Hand. They recall the famed ceramic objects (modeled on glove molds) with which Ponti revived the Ginori 1735 brand when appointed creative director in the 1920s. There's no doubt that hands were a significant, repeated theme throughout Ponti's career. "With our re-editions, we always try to deepen the cultural significance of the original design," says Coropulis. "This collaboration honors the legacy of Ponti, but also enriches the narrative surrounding this icon." *poltronafrau.com*

OPPOSITE Photographer and designer Roberto Palomba. *palombaserafini.com*

"I chose these people not as a designer, but as a photographer," says the Sardinian-born architect Roberto Palomba, one of Milan's leading talents. He founded his firm, Palomba Serafini Associati, 30 years ago with his lifelong partner, Ludovica Serafini. Together, they've conquered the worlds of interiors, products, and creative direction for brands such as Kartell, Poltrona Frau, Artemide, Lema, and Zanotta, resulting in a reputation as experts in the broader culture of everything one finds in a home.

In recent years, he's added photographer to his résumé, inspired by all the greats, such as Bruce Weber, Jean-Baptiste Mondino, Annie Leibovitz, and especially Richard Avedon, whose iconic *Dovima with Elephants* is his absolute favorite, admired for its harmonious interplay of shapes, shadows, and volumes, all centered around the grace of the model and the elephants. "Photography is another language through which I express myself," Palomba says. "It's more intimate and personal, and just a few people know this about me, but it represents a part of me and is one of my greatest passions."

For this first issue, Palomba was invited to capture some of his favorite people in the world of Milanese design, art, and creativity, a snapshot of today's dynamic times where various worlds constantly collide. "Through these images, I narrate creativity and Milan's current scene, choosing people who embody professions and stories," he says. I met with Palomba and his subjects across the city, watching him capturing moments least expected, stealing a portrait, a smile, a spontaneous gesture. He even took a self-portrait. "I don't like to be photographed," admits Palomba, "but I made an exception."

Why choose Milan as your muse?
It's one of the world's main creative hubs, a place where innovation can fully express itself. Milan, at the end of the day, is a city like many others, a place where life is good. But what makes it unique and so vibrant is the interplay among three key pillars: entrepreneurship, creativity, and communication. It's no coincidence that I chose people who represent these worlds: Claudio Luti, the entrepreneur; Rossana Orlandi, the gallerist; Ludovica Serafini, the architect; Alice Zicchedu, the beauty creative; Tamu McPherson, the fashion communicator; and Tommaso Sacchi, the deputy mayor for culture. All these figures live and breathe these three elements, and Milan's ability to shine on the global stage is embodied through them. The intent of this work is to bring together some facets of Milanese identity, often hidden but fascinating. I didn't feel the need to overly reveal the city itself because what interests me are the people—their characters and contributions.

You were born and raised in Cagliari, moved to Rome to study architecture at La Sapienza University, and now you run the studio with Ludovica in Milan. But what first drew you to photography?
I picked up a camera many years ago and immediately realized that what fascinated me most as a photographer was people. I'm drawn to portrait photography because it allows me to explore personalities, uncovering unconventional and hidden aspects. For me, the camera is almost like a psychoanalytical tool. It lets me investigate and represent what people often conceal or don't fully express in their everyday lives. The snapshot freezes an image, makes it eternal, and in that suspension, it tells a story.

You seem quite fascinated by the concept of a portrait.
This, ultimately, is the historical function of portraiture, whether photographic or painted: to freeze time, immortalize an age, a status, or a social condition. Photography can go even further. I'm not simply interested in faces, expressions, beauty, or photogenic qualities. What I seek is the person's essence, his inner components, consistencies and inconsistencies, which I try to bring out and crystallize and make visible in a single shot.