

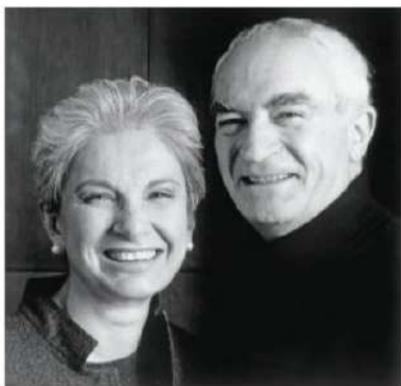
The rule of emptiness

“White space provides the silence,” said Lella and Massimo Vignelli. For the famous couple of Italian designers transplanted in New York, white was not just that of the page. It was a mental and methodological principle required to grant order, coherence and intellectual elegance to their work. In graphics and product design

article Domitilla Dardi



The Mesa table designed in 1985 by Lella and Massimo Vignelli for Poltrona Frau is composed of two simple geometric forms: the circle and the cone. It has a top in hewn slate supported by a lower shelf in burnished steel; the support column is in stone.



Portrait of Lella (1934-2016) and Massimo Vignelli (1931-2014). Both architects, in 1971 they founded Vignelli Associates, based in New York. Photo Luca Vignelli.



The Intervista chair produced by Poltrona Frau and designed by Lella and Massimo Vignelli was initially developed for the set of the TG2 news broadcast, after the two designer were commissioned by RAI in 1988. Courtesy of Poltrona Frau and Vignelli Center for Design Studies.

IF AMERICANS KNOW ABOUT ITALIAN DESIGN it is because Lella and Massimo Vignelli imported it to the USA. That might seem like too sweeping a statement, but it is absolutely true. In the 1960s the two Italian architects decided to move to the city that more than any other embodied the hopes and dreams of progress of a world that was emerging from a World War, mutilated but also ready to reconstruct everything, bigger and better than it was before. In 50 years of career their portfolio became a very long list of clients, representing a history of the great American corporations; no field, no type of product was neglected in the work of the studio located on 10th Avenue, on the West Side of Manhattan, which would become the emblem of perfect elegance.

For them, graphic design was the field par excellence, as they turned out logos, brand identities and corporate images that literally made history. From the success of the American multinationals (American Airlines, Knoll International, Heller, just to mention a few) they soon achieved such fame that we might say they “returned,” summoned back to Italy by many of that country’s leading brands, from

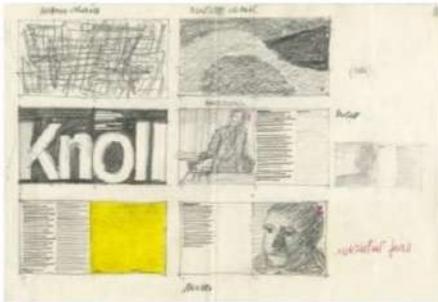
Poltrona Frau to Ducati, Perugia to Benetton. Not to mention the identity of the Salone del Mobile, which is like saying Italian design itself, presented to the world as a system, where the Vignellis stood out for having widened their horizons on the other side of the ocean. Apart from the individual success stories, what was so special about their work as a whole? They had both been trained to have a solid knowledge of rationalism in Italian architecture school, matched by great familiarity with the arts, a typical trait of Italians. In fact, we cannot understand their Canon – that ‘magic formula’ of graphic design – if we do not consider the compositional geometry of the Renaissance altarpieces of Piero della Francesca, or the spatial arrangement of the piazzas of Francesco di Giorgio Martini.

All this often comes to the surface in their oeuvre, sometimes also in unexpected ways, but never as an academic reference or a way of showing off. It was something deeply rooted in their vision, born in a natural way. The key identified by Massimo, also in his writings, is thus that of the Canon described as an ordering and generative grid, from which everything departs and to which everything returns. →

DESIGN

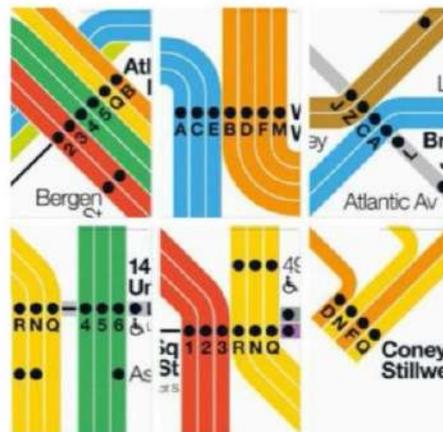


In 1967 Massimo and Lella Vignelli were hired to create a new program of graphics for Knoll International. Relying on their famous grid, the two designers produced a series of drawings that formed the basis for all the communication of the American brand. The visual identity began with the use of the famous "K" designed by Herbert Matter in 1947. Courtesy of Knoll and Vignelli Center for Design Studies.



Drafts for the catalogue of the exhibition "Knoll au Musée" presented in 1972 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, with exhibit design by Lella Vignelli and Massimo Vignelli. Courtesy of Knoll and Vignelli Center for Design Studies.

→ A perfect way to proceed in taxonomic terms, even where the world expected disorder, which was mental and moral at the same time. But that grid is not simply a system of order, a way to add rhythm to the page, alternating full and empty zones. "In a world where everybody screams," the architect reminds us, "silence is noticeable. White space provides the silence. That is the essence of our typography." The Vignelli emptiness is not just the "whiteness" of the page. It can also be the designed absence of a component, as in the case of the Intervista chair for Poltrona Frau, where the designers decided to avoid armrests, incorporating their function in the single curve of the back, and thus making a seat created for television become a way to be on view and on camera. The void is also a mental space of ambiguity, an extremely positive factor, in their view, because it implies a plurality of meanings, that complexity that prevents complication but multiplies interpretation. For the Vignellis the emptiness, more than anything else, is the grid that "helps to organize the content, it provides consistency, it gives an orderly look and it projects a level of intellectual elegance that we like to express." The intellectual elegance of which they speak has nothing to do with fashion, anything but. A good design has the duty to last in time, and therefore to transcend what is in vogue at the



The limited-edition poster features the renowned map of the New York Subway designed by Massimo Vignelli in 1972, in an updated edition for 2012, signed by Massimo Vignelli, Beatriz Cifuentes and Yoshiki Waterhouse. Photo by Waterhouse Cifuentes Design. Courtesy of SuperWarmRed Designs.

During NYCxDDesign, Interni Big Italy returns to New York with a calendar crammed with events. On 14 May at the ITA townhouse the talk "Casa Italiana. Where Design meets History", and the presentation of the exhibition design by Paola Navone – Studio Otto. On the 16th, with the ICFF Night Out, Big Italy NY celebrates the circuit of Italian design stores in Madison and NoMad and on the 17th in Soho. Finally, on 18 May, at ICFF at the Javits Center, the talk "Cre-Action", with Massimo Iosa Ghini of Iosa Ghini Associati and Francesca Portesine of SOM – Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

edited by Patrizia Catalano

Big Italy



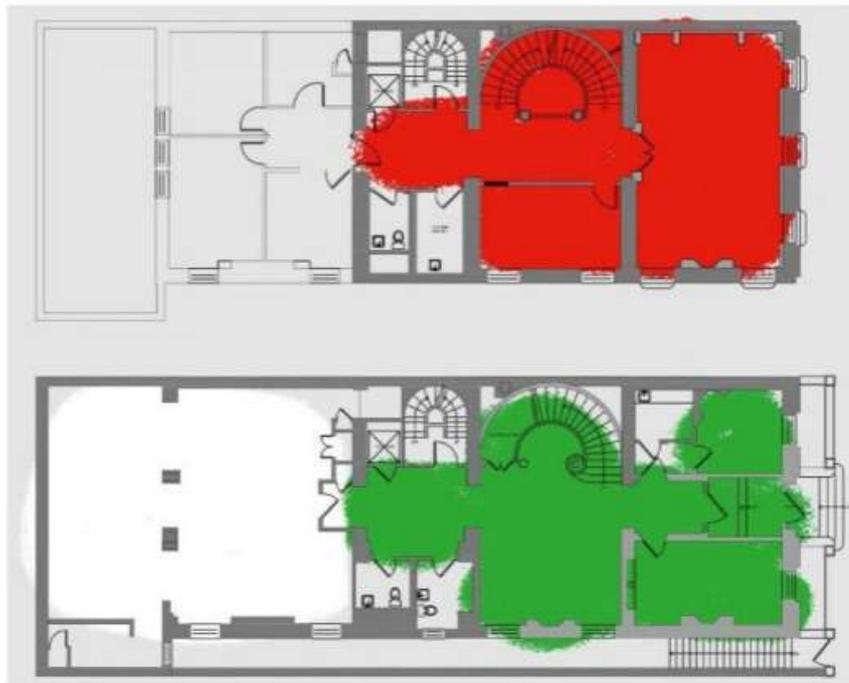
- 1 Arclinea
- 2 Armani/Casa
- 3 Arper
- 4 Artemide
- 5 Baxter
- 6 B&B Italia
- 7 Bisazza
- 8 Boffi/De Padova
- 9 Café Ginori
- 10 Calligaris
- 11 Cappellini
- 12 Casa Gessi
- 13 Cassina
- 14 Davide Groppi
- 15 Eataly
- 16 Fantini
- 17 Flexform
- 18 Florim
- 19/20 Flos
- 21 Foscarini
- 22 Gervasoni
- 23 Giorgetti
- 24 iGuzzini
- 25 Iris Ceramica
- 26 Kartell
- 27 Listone Giordano
- 28 Living Divani
- 29 Loro Piana Interiors
- 30 Luxury Living
- 31 Maxalto
- 32 Meridiani
- 33 Minotti
- 34 Missoni Boutique
- 35 Molteni&C
- 36 Moroso
- 37 Natuzzi
- 38 Pianca & Partners
- 39/40 Poliform
- 41 Poltrona Frau
- 42 Porada
- 43 Porro
- 44 Rimadesio
- 45 Rizzoli New York
- 46 Salvatori
- 47 Scavolini
- 48 Sisis
- 49 Smeg
- 50 Society Limonta
- 51 St. Ambroeus
- 52 Technogym
- 53 Viabizzuno
- 54 Zafferano



A Tricolour Project



Paola Navone tells us how she conceived “Casa Italiana”, as the exhibition opens its doors on May 13 at the headquarters of the Italian Trade Agency in New York



THE IDEA GREW OUT OF A REQUEST FROM GILDA, who called me a few months ago telling me that she'd had a meeting with the director of the ITA (Italian Trade Agency), Erica Di Giovancarolo, who had been in Manhattan for just over a year. Erica had expressed her wish to create something different and innovative for New York Design Week. She had thought of “transforming” ITA into a large installation devoted to Made in Italy. Unfortunately or fortunately both thought of me. Of course, I'm accustomed to making installations, but here it was a matter of imagining something capable of subverting a style expressive of Italian taste, true, but very far from design as we understand it today.

So I imagined working on an expressive simplification by playing on the three colors of our flag to create three macro areas. On the ground floor, the green furnishings are in the reception area and the white ones in the spaces devoted to meetings and show-cooking. On the first floor, in the most private area, there is red. But it involves much more than just the furnishings. The featured color invades everything: the floors, the walls, the furniture and even the accessories. Carpets, lamps, art objects and even kitchen items catch the eye, all the way to those food products that have a very original and colorful packaging in the shades of the flag. In short, “Casa Italiana” is a full immersion in the Italian flag. This is why I also wanted to explore the dialogue between craftsmanship and design. We have iconic pieces of design that are well known even in America, but we boast a tradition of craftsmanship that continues today and of which we are proud, yet it is very often little known outside our borders. You see, I always like the idea of mixing. So I put together the big and noble design brands with the small craft-based and manufacturing firms in Italy that need to be supported. Otherwise, what is the ITA for?

Top left, Paola Navone, architect, art director and designer, founder of Studio Otto. Photo Enrico Conti. Above, plan of the Italian Trade Agency townhouse in Manhattan where Paola Navone - Studio

Otto have created the exhibition “Casa Italiana” in conjunction with *Interni* and ITA. Three macro areas in the colors of the Italian flag furnished with iconic pieces Made in Italy.

A house under the aegis of the Tricolour, with the finest of design Made in Italy: this is the project by Paola Navone - Studio Otto created in collaboration with *Interni*, for Italy on Madison, the ITA event devoted to lifestyle (13-15 May). Participants in the exhibition: **Arper, Artemide, B&B Italia, Baxter, Boffi I De Padova, Cappellini, Carpet Edition, Cassina, Corsi Design, Davide Groppi, Flos, Foscari, Frette, Gervasoni, G.T.Design, Gufram, iGuzzini, Illulian, Ingo Maurer, Karpeta, Kartell, Living Divani, Magis, Lucia Massari, Miho, Molteni&C, Moroso, Natuzzi, Ovo Design, Paola Paronetto, Pianca & Partners, Poltrona Frau, Porro, Alessandra Roveda, Saba, Seletti, One Mario Sirtori, Smeg, Society Limonta, Zafferano.**

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| <h1>1919</h1> | <h2>Renzo Frau</h2> | <h2>Poltrona Frau</h2> |
| <p>Poltrona Frau and Fornasetti continue their collaboration, presenting a special reissue of the iconic Poltrona 1919, covered in Pelle Frau® ColorSphere® Impact Less, printed with the evocative <i>Ultime Notizie</i> motif from the Fornasetti archive. The bergère, covered by hand with exceptional workmanship, which can be seen in the pleated spirals of the arms and the capitonné effect on the back, takes on a new guise thanks to the</p> | <p>drawing made in 1950 by Piero Fornasetti for a silk fabric. <i>Ultime Notizie</i> has been reformulated, modified and revived by Piero's son Barnaba, for the furnishings of the kitchen in Casa Fornasetti, the historic family residence, in 2003. It is composed of multicolored butterflies that hover on a background of newspaper clippings, showing news about Fornasetti from around the world.</p> |  |
| <h1>1969</h1> | <h2>Gianni Pareschi & Ezio Didone</h2> | <h2>Busnelli</h2> |
|  | | <p>The Baffo chair designed in 1969 by Gianni Pareschi and Ezio Didone is now produced by Busnelli in a novel outdoor version. The nautical inspiration is clear in the sartorial details: rigging, eyelets and technical features from the world of sailing are reinterpreted in a decorative object that creates a new concept of nautical tailoring applied to design. The seat in Dacron sailcloth is suspended on the structure in satin-finish stainless steel.</p> |



Spazio Cappellini New York is located in the Poltrona Frau showroom on Madison Avenue. It is divided into two areas, one facing the street and the other on the floor below. Defined areas for the living, dining and sleeping quarters, present the concept of Casa Cappellini to the public with a range of products with a simple and elegant image and pieces with a strong personality. The interiors feature neutral floors and

walls to better bring out the vibrant color palette of the brand's furnishings. There are novelties and classic icons from the Cappellini catalogue, objects designed by the great protagonists of contemporary design, from Jasper Morrison to Nendo and Patricia Urquiola to Marc Newson. Lacquered woods, metals, plastics and fabrics are the materials used to create the collection.

11 Cappellini

181 Madison Avenue (btw. E 33rd & E 34th Sts.)





Poltrona Frau left its Soho showroom to open its flagship store on Madison Avenue in 2024. This is a three-level space designed by the Milanese studio AMDL Circle with the artistic direction of architect Michele De Lucchi. It is housed in a fine building from the early twentieth century, one of the most celebrated examples of Art Deco architecture in Midtown Manhattan. It

was devised by creating different settings ranging from the more contemporary taste of Cappellini to the refined and artisanal style of Ceccotti Collezioni, up to the elegant kitchens of Officine Gullo. All in a harmonious dialogue with the Poltrona Frau collections, from solutions for the home and office to public spaces and signature projects.

41

Poltrona Frau

181 Madison Avenue (btw. E 33rd & E 34th Sts.)

