



'Dry' chair by Massimo Morozzi for Giorgetti, 1987

'Meet Design' exhibition, Rome

Interiors

By J.J. Martin

Retrospectives of Italian design are nothing new. But in the freshly opened Rome show 'Meet Design' at [Mercati di Traiano](#), which offers a look at the country's key design moments from the 1940s to the present, curator [Marco Romanelli](#) has made sure visitors come away with more than the usual Ponti-Pesce-Castiglioni-Colombo- re-runs. 'Why do we always talk about the same people?' Romanelli, a respected journalist, teacher, and architect, inquired. 'It's always the exact same pieces that are shown as indicative of Italian design and it's a shame!'



[See more of the works in the Meet Design exhibition](#)

Combing through the last 70 years of his country's design output, Romanelli unearthed buried jewels of two typologies: designers who were overlooked by the history books, or overlooked designs by designers who are famous for other, over-exposed creations. In the former category, Carlo de Carli's '683 chair' for Cassina (1953), Ugo La Pietra's 'Globo Tissurato' lamp (1967) and Sambonet's 'Longilinea' 1957 silverware, are all examples of silent icons that deserve a bigger spotlight. On the other hand, there are obscure pieces like Magistretti's 'Monet' lamp for O Luce. 'Everyone calls to mind the "Atollo" when they think of Magistretti, also designed for O Luce,' Romanelli observes. 'But no one has seen this design.'

In addition to highlighting contemporary young(ish), not famous Italians, like Paolo Ulian or Matteo Ragni, the exhibition also revealed some diverting design trivia. Joe Colombo's 1965 'Elda' chair, for example, was inspired by the advent of the first home sound system. Gio Ponti's 1953 'Distex' armchair, designed in the dawn of the cocktail hour, was specifically calibrated to allow for a man to lean up against it with a drink in hand. Meanwhile, Luigi Caccia Dominioni's own noble roots inspired the regal thrown look of his Catilina chair for Azucena (1958). Best tidbit of all? The present €200,000 insurance value placed on Gio Ponti's 1954 toilet designed for Ideal Standard. 'No one conserves toilets,' Romanelli remarks. 'It's really hard to find these things.'

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