

Designed by: Lella Vignelli



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Acknowledgements

My most sincere appreciation to:

*Jan Conradi, with many thanks for
her patience and advice in reading
and correcting my English.*

*Mauro Sarri, who endured my
continuous changes of the layouts
and type to achieve this book design.*

New York, NY 2013

*This book is dedicated
to Lella Vignelli,
an inspiration to all
women designers who
forcefully stand on the
power of their merits.*

Massimo Vignelli

Introduction

For decades, the collaborative role of women as architects or designers working with their husbands or partners has been under appreciated. Fifty years ago, it was standard practice that the head of the office was the man and the woman partner had a subordinate role. At best, the woman's creative input and professional influence was only vaguely accepted; often her contributions were dismissed and sometimes even forgotten. Even some of the most famous partnerships: Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand, Alvar and Aino Aalto, Charles and Ray Eames, and many others were murmured about but not openly recognized as such.

Female architects have often been relegated—by assumptions, by the media, by ignorance or arrogance—to supporting roles, even when they shared the position of partners. In the last thirty years, some professional women have become celebrities on their own, but that phenomenon is still in its adolescence. In Italy, we have some grand dames of design—Gae Aulenti, Anna Castelli Ferreri, Cini Boeri—who have earned recognition on their own merits, but the list is quite short. Too short. In June 2013, Architectural Record, an American magazine, noted that even now, when forty percent of the architecture students in the United States are women, only seventeen percent of partners and principals of architectural firms are women.

New York's Museum of Modern Art opened an installation, "Designing Modern Women 1890–1990," in October 2013. It showcases a diverse range of works created by women, including some of Lella's work, and acknowledges that "modern design of the twentieth century was profoundly shaped and enhanced by the creativity of women." This book is a demonstration of the work of Lella Vignelli, a strong and successful professional woman, and I hope it provides

inspiration and incentive for young women who are shaping their careers. Times are changing...

The supporting role of the woman architect has often been created by macho attitudes of the male partner. Most of the glory went to the men (not accidentally) while the women, as partner architects, found that their role was dismissed or totally ignored. This was true even in Lella's family, where nearly everyone was an architect. Her brother, Gino Valle, was acknowledged for his architectural work, but the collaboration with his sister, Nani Valle—a talented and conscious professional in her own right, was often dismissed.

Lella and I were affected by these standing mores early in our careers. It is why we purposely built the notion of the two of us as a brand, but it took time for the others to see and understand this. The architectural and design press had a bad habit of crediting only the man, forgetting the woman partner. For many years, our Vignelli office sent photographs of projects—with proper credits—to the magazines, but too often we would see the published material crediting my name only. This created a constant scene of embarrassment and frustration, to the point that I threw publications away to avoid unpleasant confrontations with Lella. Eventually we became more known and then Lella's name began to appear properly credited, but it took a long time.

Most of the time, the issue of properly assigning credit is generated by a misunderstanding of the role of the partners in a collaboration. Collaboration between designers and architects exists when the partners share a common cultural, intellectual platform. It is not holding a pencil with four hands that makes a partnership; it is sharing the creative act and exercising creative criticism which is reflected in the end result. A partnership,

in life and in the profession, should be based on mutual respect and appreciation for each partner's talent, sensibility, and culture. No partnership can exist, or last, without this fundamental basis.

Lella and I have been partners, lovers, a married professional couple for more than half a century. From the beginning, our relationship has been bonded by our mutual passion for architecture and design. From the beginning, Lella had a strong visual sensibility and a precise understanding of our projects. When we first began, many of our projects were in graphic design and although that was never her focus, she had the invaluable capacity of understanding my interpretation of a project and an ability to quickly evaluate its merits or demerits. With a forceful lucidity she has always pinpointed what was right or wrong on all of our work, always explaining the reasons why. In a similar way, I would express my critique of her work, suggest variations, express my appreciation or disagree with her, but always we discussed how we could make the work better. That is what made it a partnership. We had complete trust in each other's judgment, even if sometimes the discussions were quite animated...

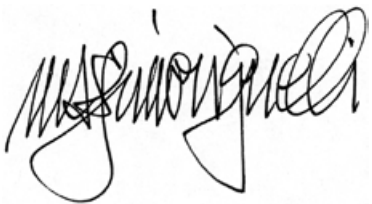
In nature's pairings, the males of a species can more freely come and go, while the females are committed through gestation, delivery, and raising the offspring until ready to be self-sufficient. Similarly, it should be no surprise that in a professional partnership, it is often the woman who carries the project through the multiple stages of development and implementation, assuring that every detail has been carried out according to the original intentions. I think that men tend to chase new projects and then reconvene with their partner to start the creative process once again. Our collaboration reflected this kind of structure, where we had complementary and stimulating roles. Many of the projects in this

book were completely Lella's, from beginning to end, and others were done by me in strict collaboration with Lella. Always, we were aware and involved in each other's work.

Lella often said, "Massimo is the dreamer, I am the realist. He flies high, and sometimes I have to pull him down..." In any case, the end products have always reflected our mutual way of understanding and approaching design problems. Both of us despise obsolescence in design; we consider it an irresponsible attitude toward the user and toward society. We detest a wasteful culture based on greed, we detest the exploitation of the consumer and of resources; we see this as an immoral attitude. We shared these principles from the beginning of our life together.

Lella's sensibility toward natural materials, textures, and colors is quite apparent on her work. Linen, wool, silk, woods, silver are often the foundation of her creative palette. Her clothing design also reflected the same approach, based on sober values and thoughtful intelligence. Lella's work, and her life, has been a fantastic blend of logic and playfulness, spirit and pragmatism, down-to-earth logic and idealistic vision.

There is no doubt that graphic design was the most visible side of our partnership, but our involvement across the whole field of design is what built our professional image. In that, Lella's role is significant. Our borders within design were often blurred, and we liked to keep it that way...



Biography: Lella Vignelli

Elena (Lella) Valle was born August 13, 1934, in Udine, the main city of the Friuli region, on the upper east side of Italy. This is a region of mountain people, used to long silences and few words; a region whose people have deeply rooted integrity values, remote from the urban frills of other areas. Lella was born in a family of architects. Her father, Provino Valle, built a main church on a side of the square where her brother Gino Valle would, many years later, build a terrific monument commemorating the Partisans War. Her sister, Nani Valle, was also an architect and a beloved professor at the School of Architecture in Venice. Nani and Gino were partners in the Valle Studio. A third sister, Mariolina, was the only one to follow a different career although her daughter Caterina is now a brilliant architect operating in New York. Gino's son is also an architect. Architecture, as you can see, runs very deeply in Lella's veins.

In school, Lella was always at the head of the class. At the university, she always had the highest points. She was beautiful, serious, intelligent, and sensible. She had a fascinating family background that was pragmatically grounded and culturally aware. She was different from the Milanese girls I had known. When we met (at an architectural convention), I immediately felt that she should be the woman of my life. We started a correspondence and eventually we both moved to the School of Architecture in Venice; me from Milano, she from Udine; so that we could be closer to each other.

When I was offered an opportunity to come to the USA, with a fellowship that would place me near Boston, we wanted to share the experience. To avoid conflict with her family, we decided it was time to get married so that we could travel together. Consequently, Gino helped Lella arrange a fellowship at the MIT so that she could

continue her architecture studies. We spent one year working and studying and then we took a trip across the USA.

On our way back, we stopped in Chicago to see some friends and they introduced me to Jay Doblin, then Director of the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology, who hired me to teach graphic design. Lella was introduced to architect Bruce Graham at the Chicago office of Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM), who hired her for the interiors department. So, we moved to Chicago. For the following two years, we became familiar with the local design and architecture scene. We met Mies van der Rohe, our great master, and several other great architects. Lella's talent and wisdom was quickly appreciated at SOM and she was involved with several important interior projects.

I was also working part time at the Design Lab of Container Corporation of America (CCA). It was a useful experience, but the best aspect was meeting Ralph Eckerstrom, then Vice President of Advertising for CCA. Lella and I met with Ralph almost every day for happy hours, discussing design issues and life. Two years passed quickly and when our visas expired, we had to return to Italy. We settled in Milano, where I already had a vast network of connections. Lella, then pregnant, completed her degree in architecture, and we were ready to start our professional life, and our family. We quickly set up our own office and from the beginning we worked across the whole field of design, doing graphics, furniture, products, exhibitions, and showroom interiors.

Some of the first interior assignments we received were showrooms and trade show exhibits for important companies: Pirelli, Rank Xerox, Olivetti, and several publishers. Lella was deeply involved in all of these projects. Being a woman architect in those times was not so easy, though Lella said it was better in Italy than it was in the USA.

Contractors often undervalued her position and undermined her authority, but in the end Lella made it quite clear who was in charge. This was blatant sex discrimination and all female architects were subjected to it. Only the brave could overcome it. Lella was one of them.

In 1965, Ralph Eckerstrom and I, along with a few other designers and businessmen, founded Unimark International to focus on design and marketing. The company initially had offices in Chicago, Milan, and New York, and within a few years it became the world's largest design corporation, with eleven offices around the world. Shortly after it began, Lella and I moved to New York so that I could manage that office (in Mies' Seagram building!) while I was directing design for the whole company. Our son Luca was 3 years old and a baby, daughter Valentina, would be born the following month.*

At that time in the USA, corporations often banned a husband and wife from working together within the company. Unimark also discouraged this and Lella was not happy about it. She was dedicated to raising our children for few years, but at the same time she served as a consultant to Unimark for any interior projects. Being relegated to a contractual position was really not sufficient involvement for a person like Lella. She started applying some pressure to establish our own office again, as we had in Milano. In 1971, I left Unimark and opened an office with Lella; Vignelli Associates was in business once again.

Initially we worked out of our home, but after a short time Unimark decided to close the New York office. They generously offered the space to us, so we were back in our office, though with a different name on the door... Some of the clients we'd worked with at Unimark decided to stay with us, which helped us start our new office. Knoll wanted

to continue our working relationship and commissioned a showroom and an important exhibition at the Louvre in Paris. It was a golden opportunity for us and we both gave our best in that project. The Minneapolis Museum of Fine Arts was a large project that followed the Louvre exhibition, then came the Saint Peter's Church project in New York, covering every design need from interiors to furniture, silverware, graphics, and even the organ!

From the beginning of our office, Lella was involved on the design side (except for graphic design as I mentioned before. I was mostly doing that, though she contributed a critical voice that I respected.) We came together in all three-dimensional projects, and she also managed the administrative side of the business. Of course she was also busy as a mother and at our home. Sometimes I was amazed that she could do all of this and do it so well.

Most of the projects in this book are organized in chronological sequence within categories. Not all of our projects are here; I omitted the graphic projects where Lella was not directly involved. Unfortunately, I could not include all of her work; there are several projects where we have no documentation since images were never taken or the photos have been lost. Even so, her vision becomes clear within these pages.

Lella's professional activities can be summarized in these categories: office interiors, showroom interiors, exhibitions, furniture design, product design, silverware, jewelry and clothing design. All of this work bears the mark of clarity and simplicity which is specific to her design approach. All of it shows a distinctive sense of pragmatism; there is no room for meaningless decoration or arbitrary exploits. Lella's work is solid, timeless, responsible, and—in its essence—extremely elegant. Her personality has made her a role model for all women who have

been in professional contact with her. Her generosity and spirit became a beacon for many young people; a beacon of clarity, dignity, and determination. Her achievements inspired them.

In the course of her career, Lella headed a team of designers who worked closely with her. Among them, I particularly acknowledge Michael Donovan, Henry Altchek, Michelle Kolb, Sharon Singer, Yoshimi Kono, Paolo Leggi, and above all, David Law.

The incipient loss of her memory and words, caused by the cruelty of Alzheimer's disease, forces the end of a most significant and fruitful collaboration. It is the end of one phase, perhaps the best of our lives, and the beginning of another based on sheer love and admiration—love for the marvelous woman who has deeply enriched my life in every possible way.

* For more information about the history of Unimark, read *Unimark International: The Design of Business and the Business of Design* by Jan Conradi, published in 2010 by Lars Müller.

In 1971, the Vignellis established Vignelli Associates, where Lella Vignelli was initially Executive Vice President, and then Chief Executive Officer. Seven years later, they formed Vignelli Designs, a company dedicated to product and furniture design, of which she is President.

Mrs. Vignelli's work is widely featured in design publications in the United States and abroad. Examples of her work have been included in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Montreal, and Die Neue Sammlung in Munich.

The Vignellis' work has been the subject of a documentary and two feature length television programs that have been televised worldwide.

A monographic exhibition of the Vignellis' work toured Europe between 1989 and 1993, and was featured in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Helsinki, London, Budapest, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Munich, Prague and Paris.

Lella Vignelli lectured in schools and Universities and was a frequent speaker and juror for national and international design organizations.

Mrs. Vignelli has been the recipient of many awards including:

1973 American Institute of Architects, Industrial Arts Medal
1983 AIGA Gold Medal
1988 Interior Design Hall of Fame
1991 National Arts Club Gold Medal for Design
1992 Interior Product Designers Fellowship of Excellence
1995 The Brooklyn Museum Design Award for Lifetime Achievement
2001 The Russel Wright Award for Design Excellence
2003 The National Design Museum Lifetime Achievement Award
2005 The Architectural Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

She is also the recipient of Honorary Doctorates from:
1982 The Parsons School of Design, New York
1994 The Corcoran School of Art, Washington D.C.

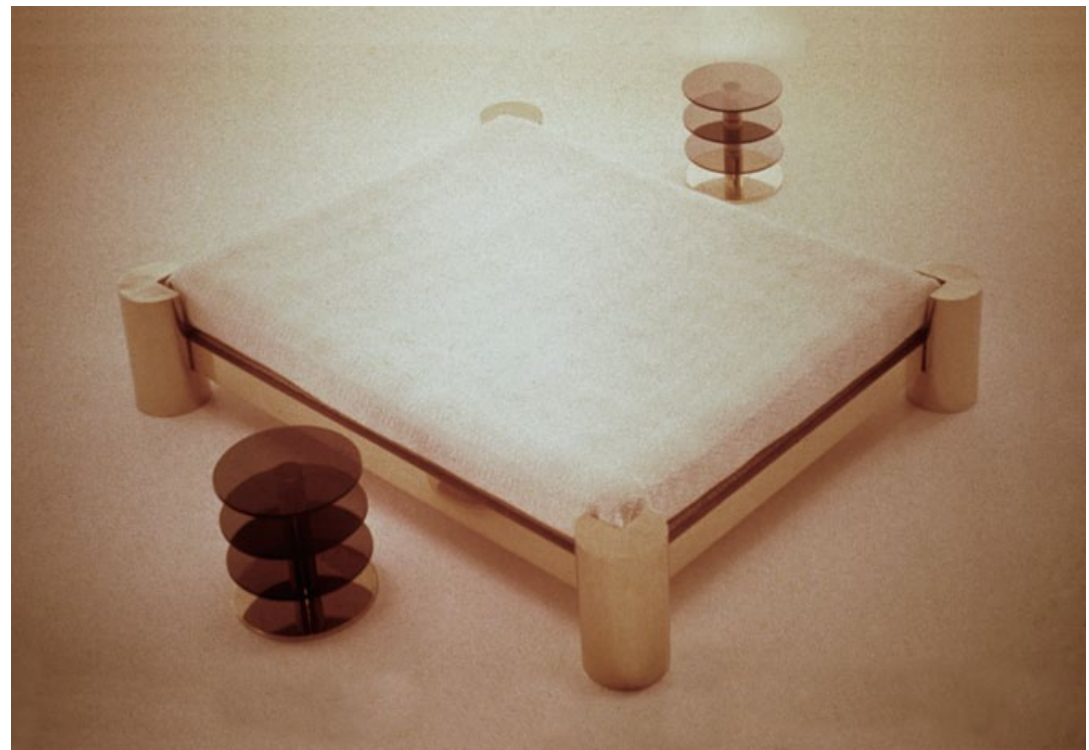
2002 The President Medal of the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY.

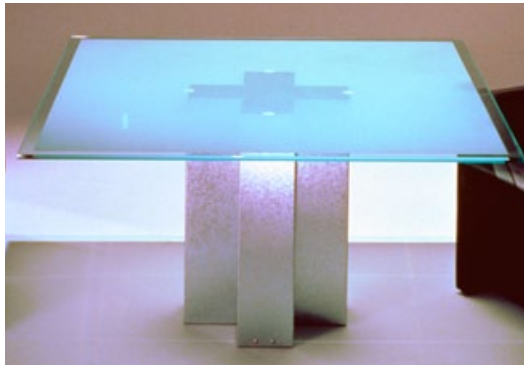
Poltronova, Saratoga line, Italy, 1964



Back in 1964, we were looking for a sofa and couldn't find what we had in mind. We wanted to have a thick, hard-edged lacquered box with soft pillows inside; a sofa to stand in the space, not against a wall. Luckily, at that same time we were asked by Poltronova to design a line of lounge seating, so the Saratoga line came to life (previous spread). We designed it with modular elements to allow different kinds of seating arrangements, adding a coffee table and cabinets with drawers or doors and a backlit top. The whole line was finished with black or white high gloss lacquer. Using the same forms for the head and footboards, beds were also added to the line. This Saratoga line became an icon of the times and it is still in production after 50 years! Eventually a dining table was added to the line, also finished in white or black lacquer. The four chairs roll under it to form a solid volume when they are not in use.

Some years later, Lella designed this bed with a brass cylinder on each corner, a detail that would become a recurrent motif in her designs. The glass side table complements the setting. This set was also for Poltronova.



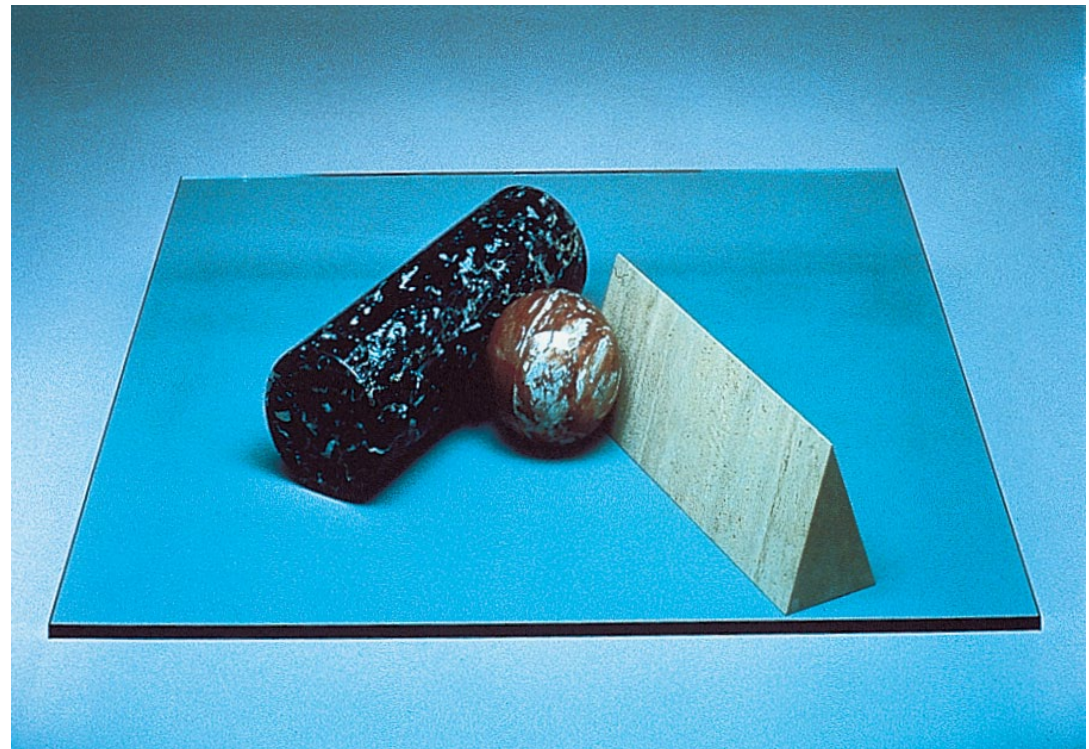
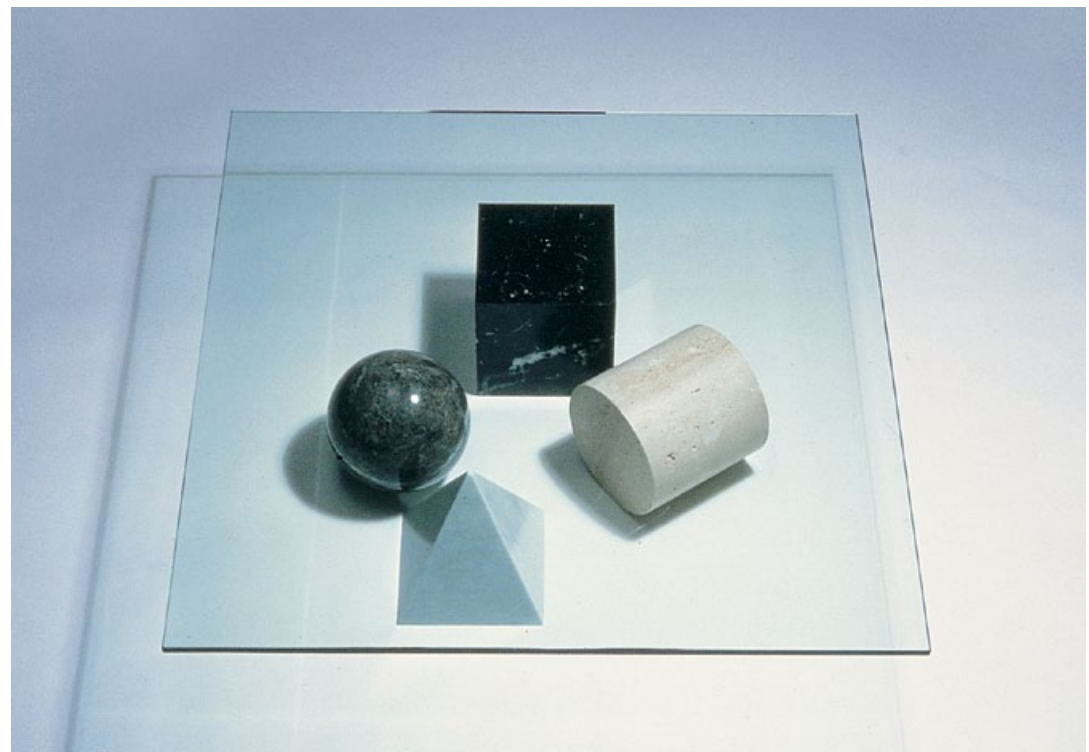


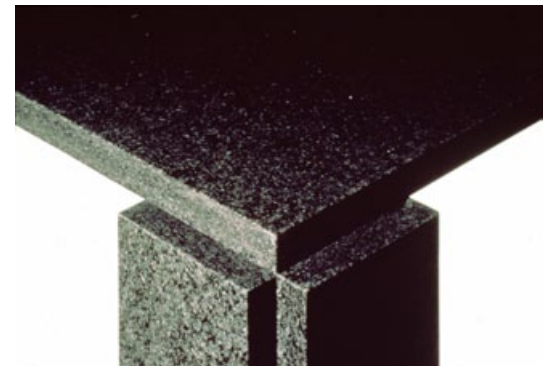
The Saratoga line was later extended with furniture for the executive office by adding a desk, side cabinets, and a credenza, all finished in high gloss lacquer. The Saratoga table to the left is similar in design to the lacquered one, but it has a galvanized steel central column and a frosted glass top.

Casigliani marble tables, Italy, 1979

The owner of this company near Carrara, Italy, had access to chunks of marble left over from the famous quarries. He asked if we could design something with them and the first piece was born: the four basic geometric shapes topped with glass. As simple as this seems, there was nothing like it in the market at that time. The design became very successful, putting the company in business. Many other designs were done in the following years. It took a long time to come out with a variation on the theme, as shown in the second image.

Lella designed the cube below. It is eighteen inches tall with different openings on each side. We playfully called it Mouse Palace. Over the years we designed an extensive line of furniture, graphics, and trade shows for Casigliani.





From left to right:
Ambiguità table. The top swivels changing the relationship among the parts.
Pisa table. The user can position the two elements the way he likes better...
Kono, coffee table. The gold leaf cone counteracts the severity of the marble slab.
Mesa table: A stone base and a granite top, with a cortene steel collar. A play on contrasts.
Power table. Designed by Lella to use just flat cut granite, joined to make stronger legs.

Sunar chairs, 1979

This easy chair and sofa, designed by Lella, are a response to the hard-edged Saratoga sofa designed many years before. Here, soft edges offer some of the visual comfort missing on the previous design.

The form of the Rotonda chair is generated by fabric stretched around a steel tube. Blown foam is used for the upholstery.

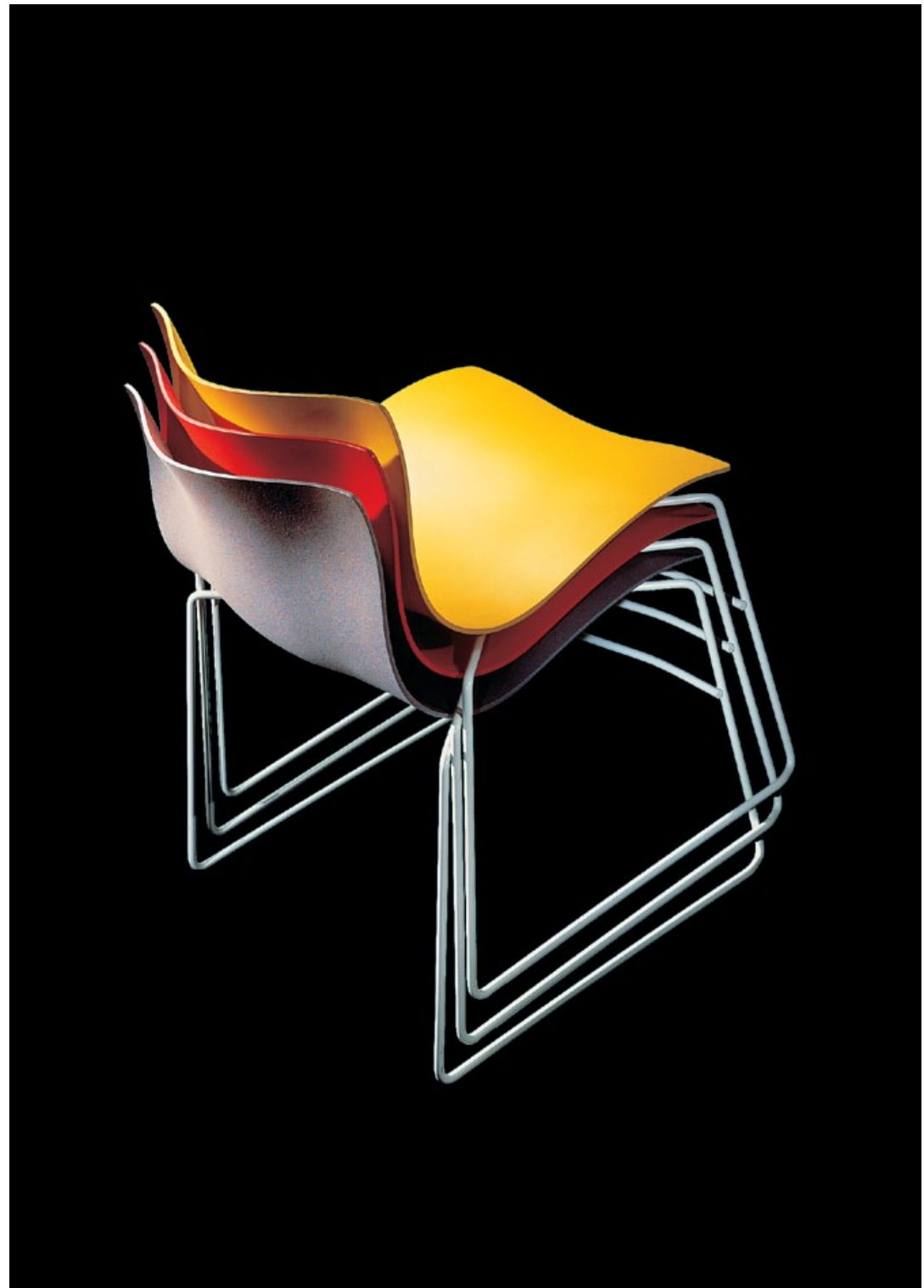
This chair was made in two sizes: a low one as a lounge chair and the other at normal seating height.

The Acorn chair was made by the master craftsman Pierluigi Ghianda in Italy, who devised a strong structural joint to make this simple design possible in wood. The seat was either canvas, leather, or upholstered.



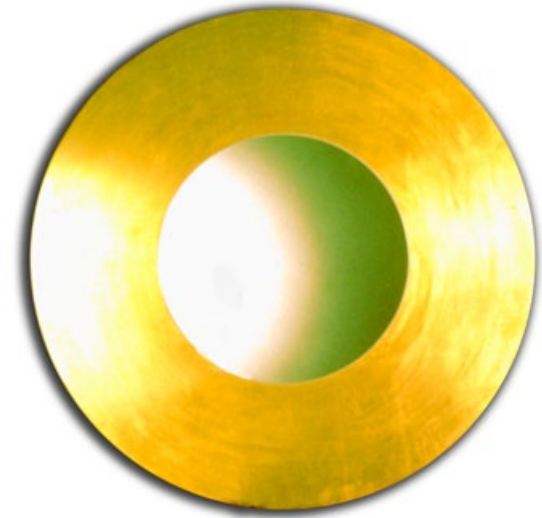
Knoll, Handkerchief Chair, 1982

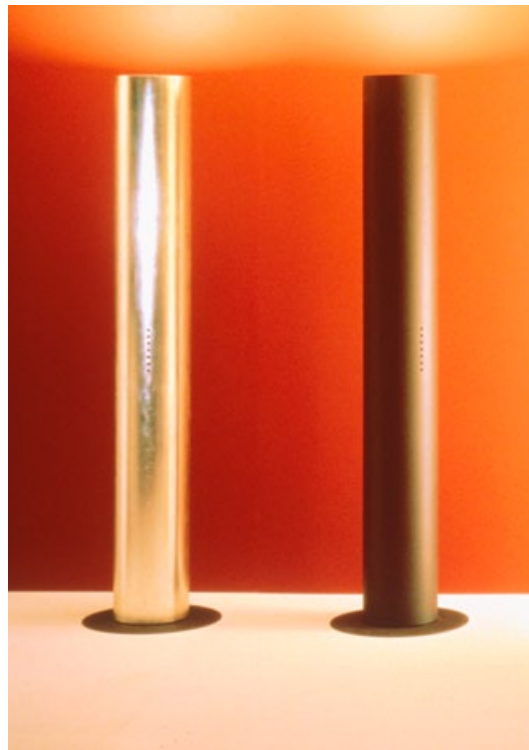
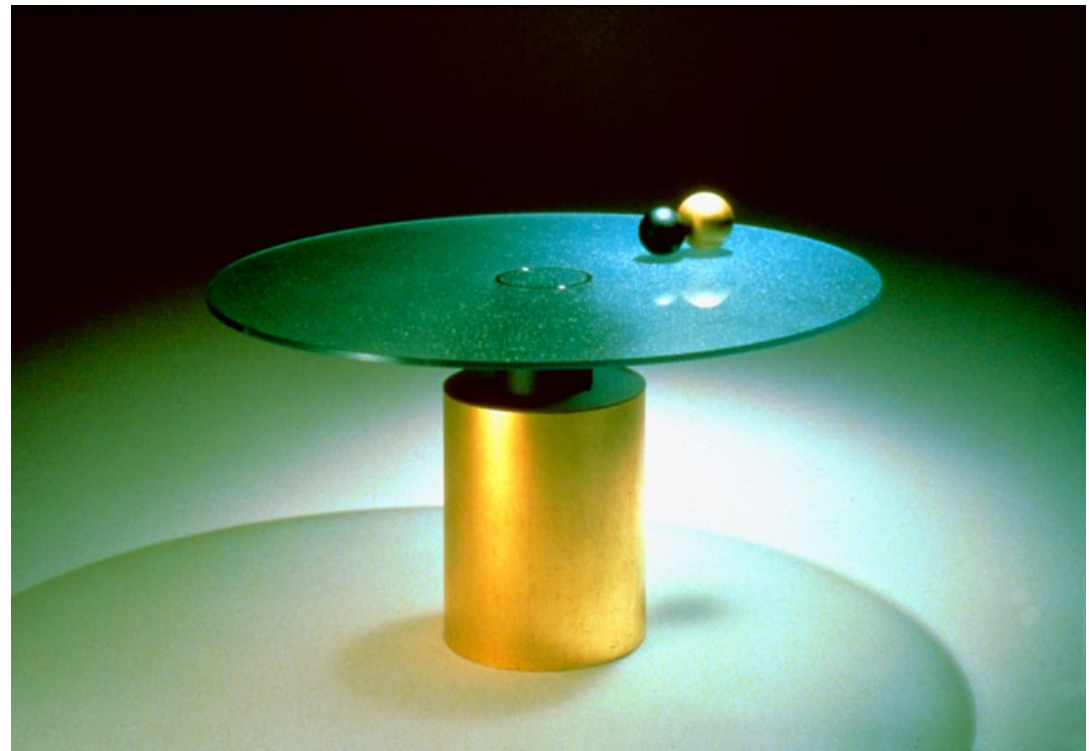
We first designed the handkerchief chair for the Hille Company in London, a representative of Knoll in UK. The original was meant to be stamped out of metal like a car fender. It turned out to be impossible since all presses available for that size were busy making cars. Then the manufacturing was shifted to Knoll USA who decided to make the shell in fiberglass. Finally, after a very long gestation, the chair was produced by Knoll USA and Knoll Italy in white, red, gray and black with the wire base either gray, black or chrome. The basic concept was to make a stacking chair with generous seat and a timeless style. It's still around. Some years later a table was added to the line.



Acerbis International, Italy, 1985

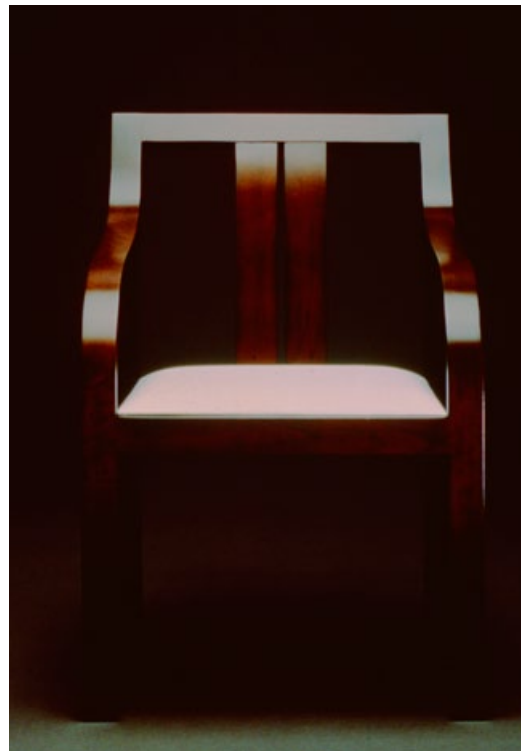
We designed several tables and other products for this contemporary furniture company, working in close collaboration with Lodovico Acerbis, the owner (and an architect himself). Our first line of tables, the Serenissimo, had a glass top resting on massive cylindrical legs and finished in different colors of “encausto,” a traditional Venetian technique from the eighteenth century. Twenty years later, a stainless steel version was made, giving the products a completely fresh look. The mirror has a large disc frame finished with gold leaf.





Hickory Business Furniture chairs, 1987

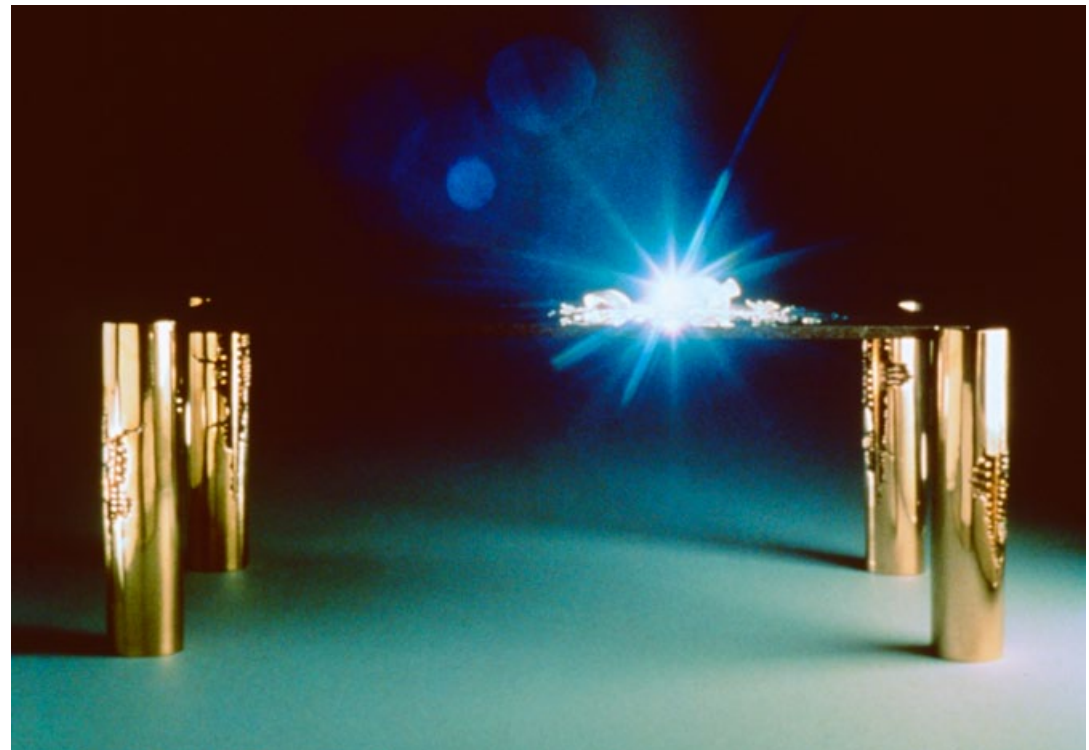
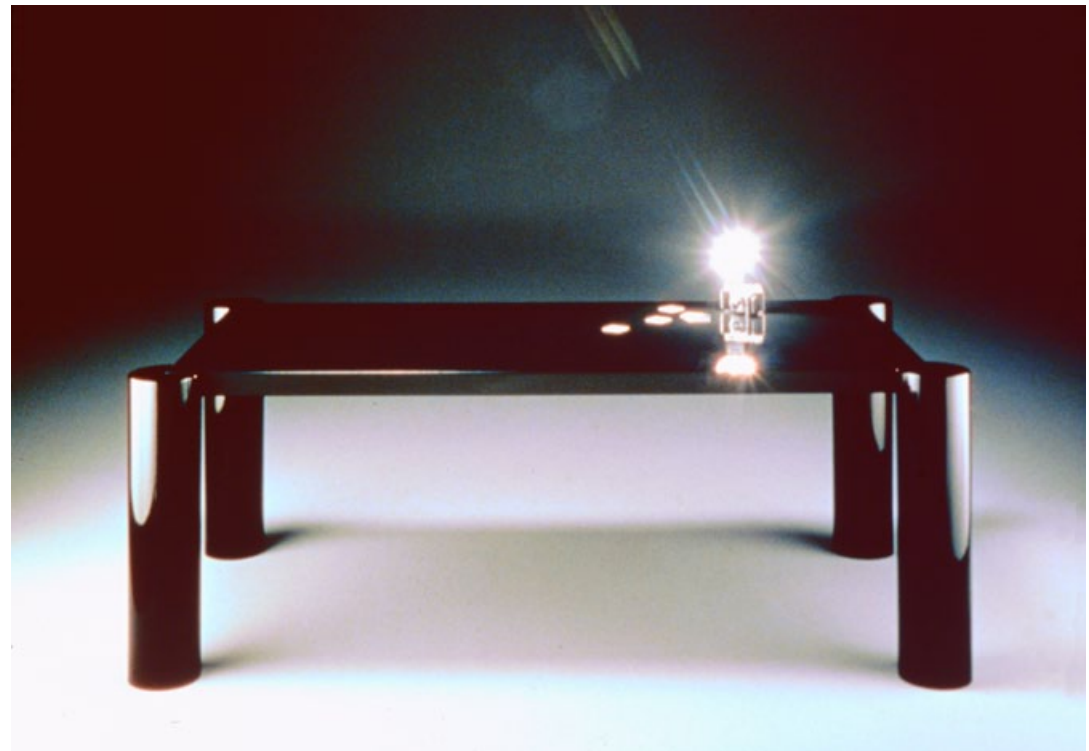
HBF line of furniture is both contemporary and conservative. We were asked to design chairs that could be used for lounge or hospitality seating, so we designed two different four-legged chairs, simultaneously traditional and timeless. The backs were either upholstered or with wood slats. Lella and our partner David Law collaborated on these designs, including the wood finishes and upholstery. Both chairs are still in production.





Rosenthal tables, 1988

Lella was asked by Rosenthal to design a dining table in two versions: one simple and one as an art piece. She chose her favorite motif of engaging the table top to a quarter of a cylindrical leg as a basic structure. The top and the cylinders are made of different materials: sometimes wood and leather, sometimes bronze and marble, as in the art version with the four bronze cylinders created by Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro. Philip Rosenthal liked the idea of furniture created with collaboration with artists and produced as a limited edition. We have respected Pomodoro's work for decades, so it was a perfect match.





The coffee table above is a lacquered version following the same structural system as the tables on the previous page.

The wood dining table, on the right page, can be extended to double its size by rotating and opening the top. Again massive cylindrical legs are attached to the frame of this table.

Lella's approach to table design favors powerful supports from the ground to the top.



Poltrona Frau, Intervista chair, 1988

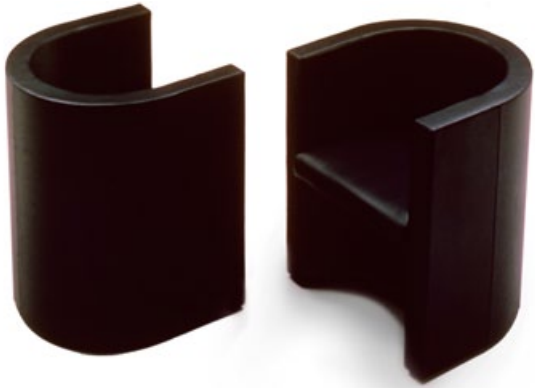
When we designed the whole image for the Italian television channel TG2, including graphics and stage design, we were also asked to designate a chair for use in interview segments. Since we could not find what we were looking for that purpose, we designed a special one and asked Poltrona Frau to manufacture it. By virtue of being exposed every day on TV, the chair became extremely popular. Typical of Frau, the quality details, including leather upholstery and an optional hidden swivel base, gave a level of refinement that made this chair an instant classic.



Poltrona Frau furniture for executive offices, 1988

Throughout her career, Lella designed diverse chairs and modular tables for executive offices and conference rooms.

The CEO executive furniture line, shown on the next spread, features a desk with a rotating cabinet beneath it, a credenza, a cabinet with book shelves, and a cabinet unit. The intention of this line of furniture was to be, as much as possible, free standing in the space; the open window creates visibility through the wall. The CEO line has been one of the most successful ones in its category.





Bernini furniture, Italy, 1990

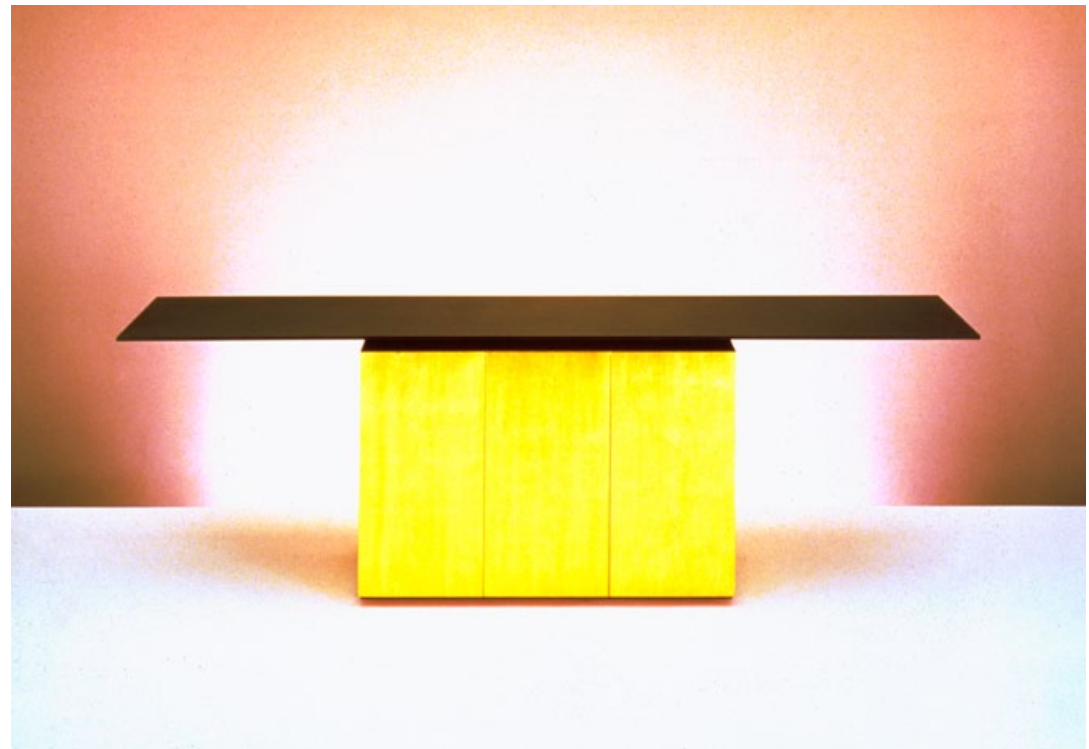
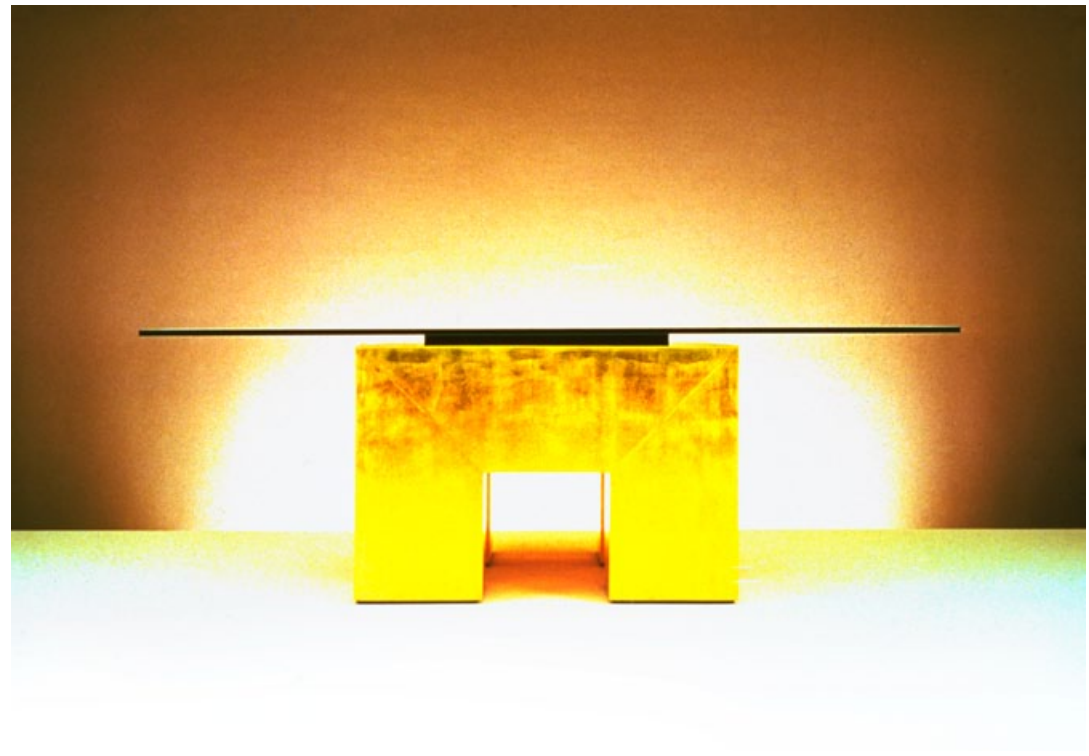
We always liked the contrast between massive volumes and thin cantilevered surfaces.

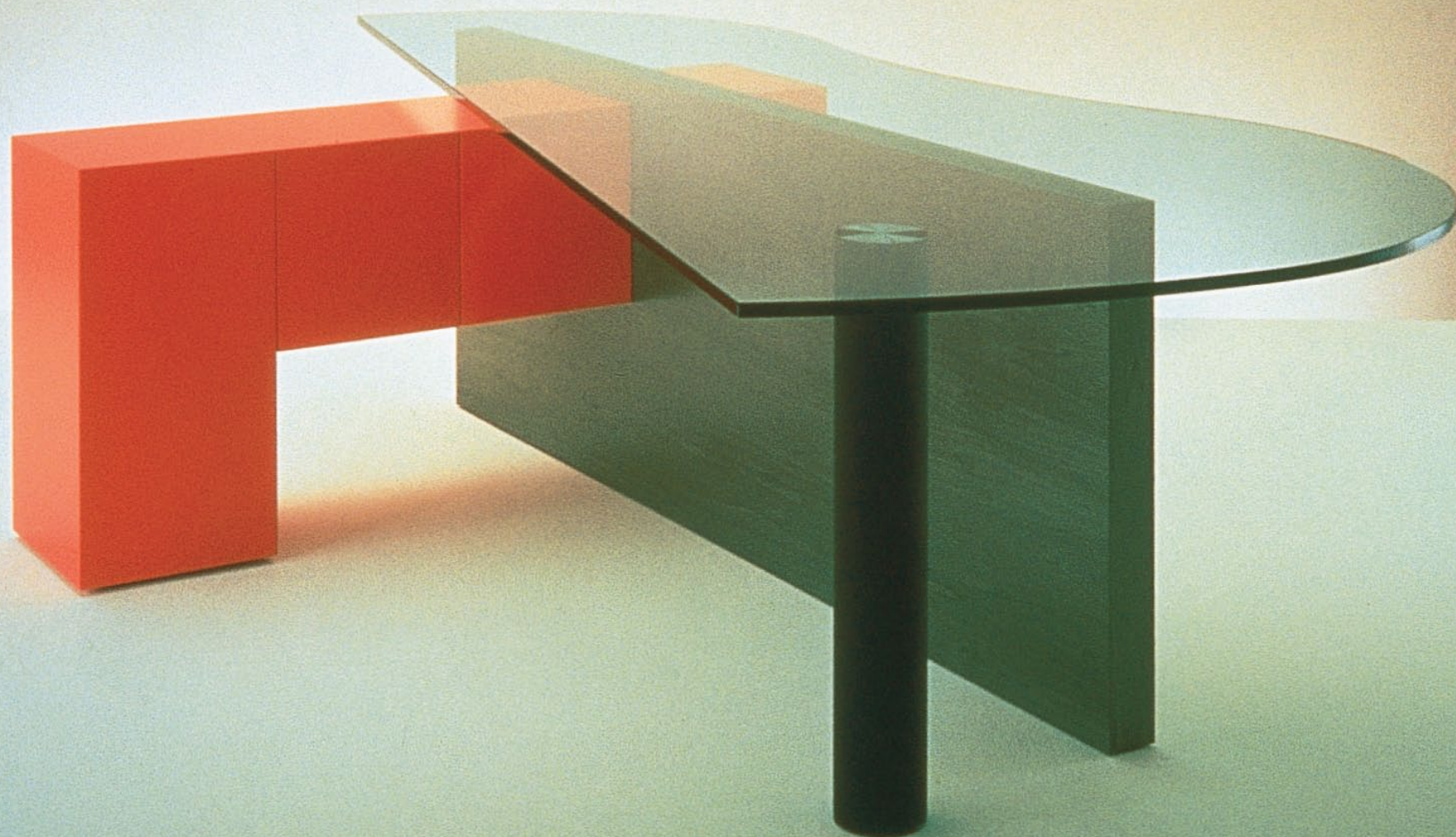
The Forte table has a base covered with gold leaf and a top of frosted glass with a clear square at its center. The Forte credenza is the matching companion for the table, with a top of raw steel. The choice of materials and the proportions add gravitas to this design. This plywood arm chair is upholstered and is meant to be used around corporate tables...

Following spread:

A most interesting piece designed for Bernini is the Grand Piano executive desk.

The piano-shaped glass top rests on the thin edge of a wooden slab and a steel column. The slab, stained gray, is perforated by a bright red L-shaped cabinet with doors on both the user and the guest sides. Lella and I argued about this design. Lella considered it to be too trendy (and perhaps she was right), but eventually we went ahead with it. I was too much in love with it and she generously gave up...





Fidia office, New York, 1991

This New York office is used by all company representatives when they are in the city. It can be used as a conference room, board room, dining room, and working area, according to the needs of the day. A separate executive office is dedicated to more private meetings, but the main space is adaptable in assuming the most appropriate configuration for the planned activities. Of particular interest is the design of the work stations, open when needed and otherwise hidden in the cabinet walls which are covered in natural linen.

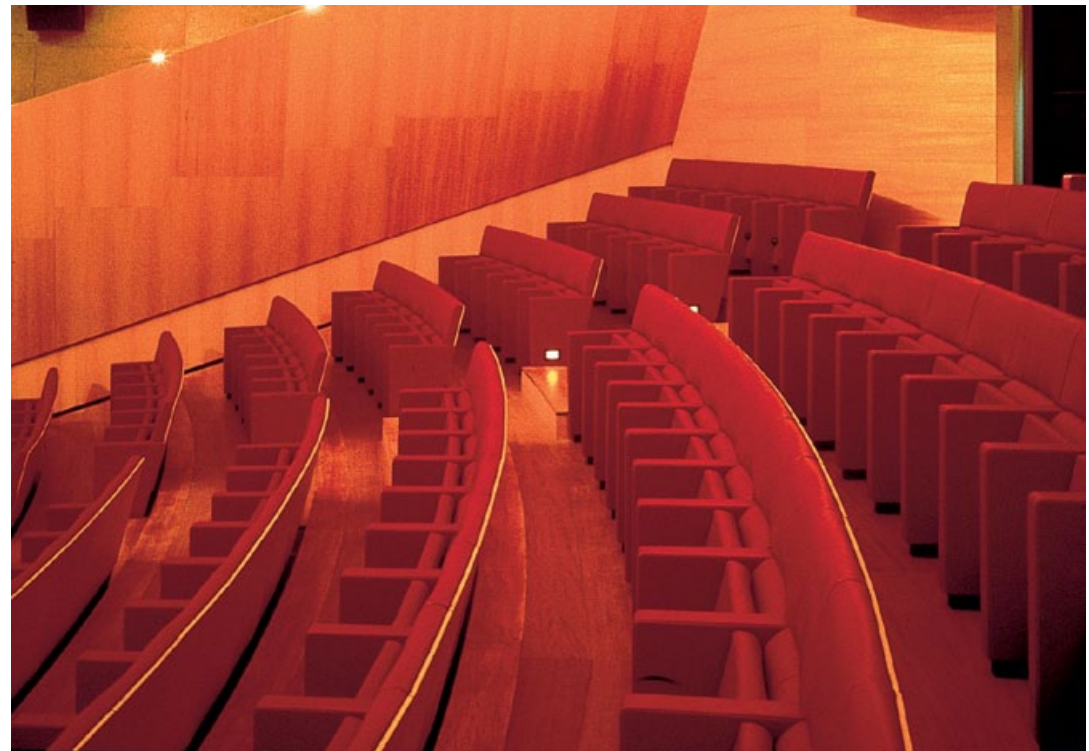
All furniture is designed by us and currently in production.

Office desk by Acerbis International. Seatings by Poltrona Frau. Handkerchief chairs, by Knoll International.



Poltrona Frau
Pitagora theater seating, 1997

Architect Frank Gehry choose the Poltrona Frau Pitagora leather seating, designed by Lella, for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The back of this chair forms a clean, continuous plane, avoiding the visual scalloping of the usual theater seating.





**Poltrona Frau
Onda airport seating system, 1998**

Lella and David Law named this chair Onda (wave) for its sinuous contours. The modular seating line is intended for airports and waiting rooms. It can assume several configurations depending on the floorplan and it includes optional side tables in granite.



Interior, Exhibition and Showroom Design

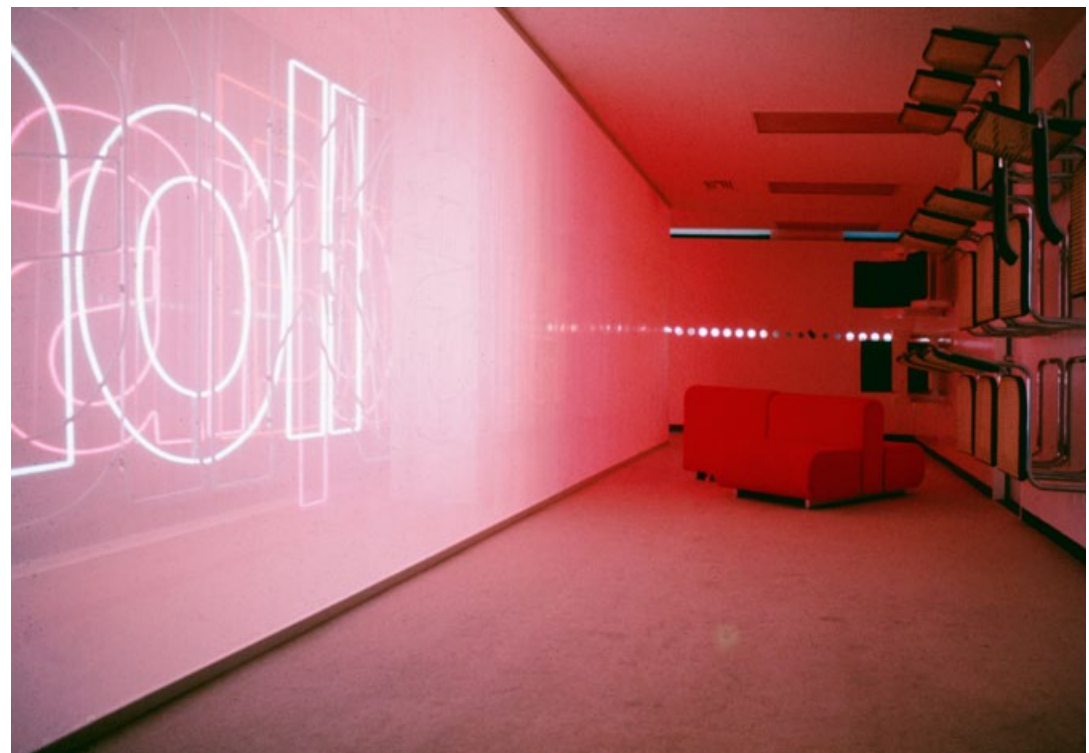
Rank Xerox showroom, Milano, Italy, 1964

We designed two showrooms to be used as demonstration and learning places for Rank Xerox in Milano. It was the beginning of xerography and Xerox wanted to assure that this new office equipment, and new information device, was here to stay. We designed the showrooms using stone and raw steel to convey strength and durability. Didactic panels explained the concept of xerography. It was one of our first examples of collaboration where Lella showed her management strengths, assuring that every detail was done to our specifications. She believed in the importance of showing the highest level of professionalism to clients and contractors; this has been her trademark throughout her professional life. For the same client, we designed more showrooms and trade shows in Italy and in the United States.



Knoll/Gavina showroom, New York, 1967

When Knoll acquired the Gavina Collection, we designed a temporary showroom within the Knoll premises. We bisected the space with supergraphic neon signs showing the designer's names in different colors, sandwiched between two walls of sheer fabric. We then hung the classic furniture on the walls, therefore reversing the hierarchy of planes to provide a different perception of the classic products, while the new Gavina furniture remained on the floor. The walls and the floor were white, illuminated only by the color of the neon lights. This was one of several installations we designed by using neon as a source of color within a neutral space. It is a simple, but dramatic, device.



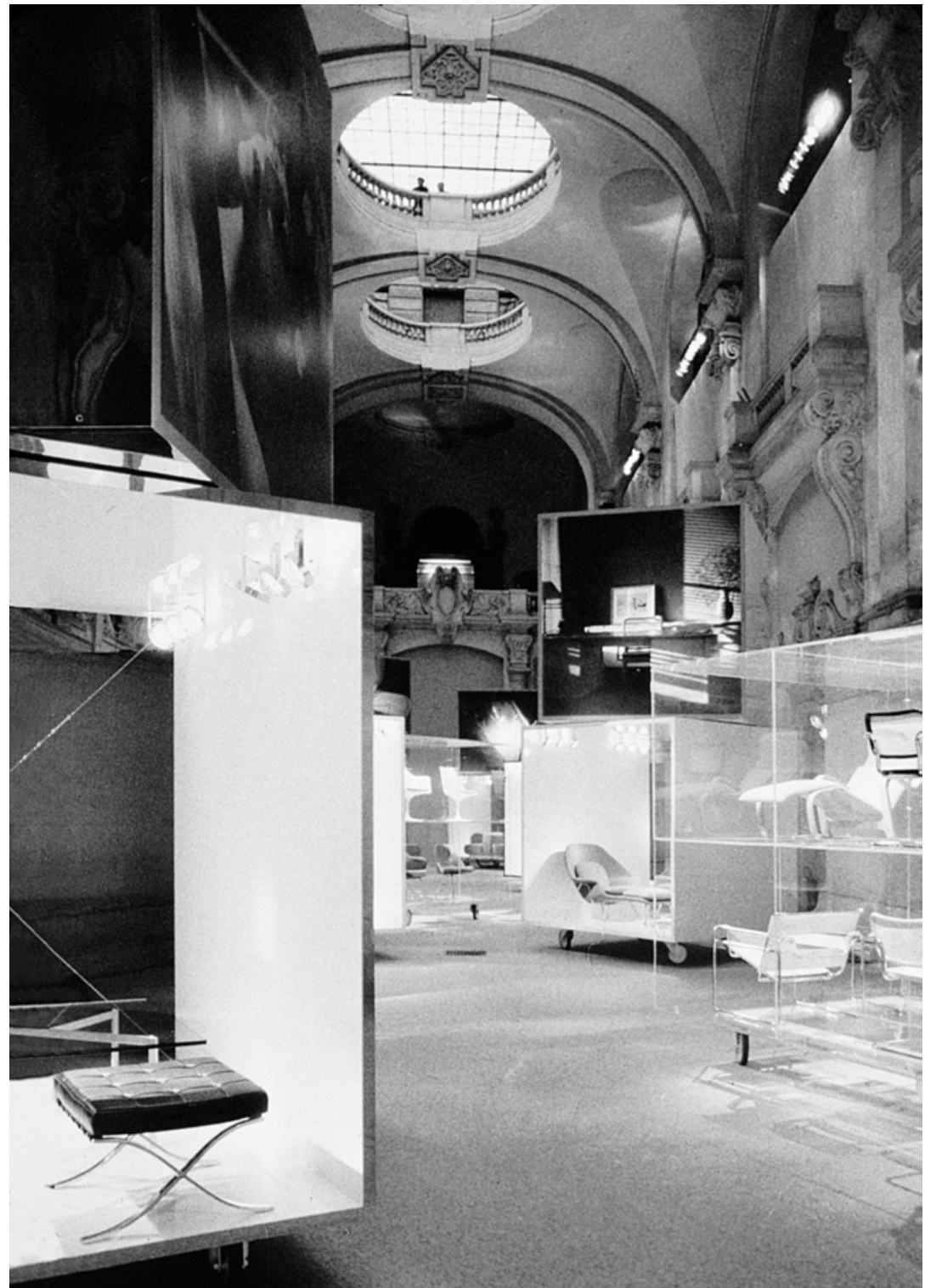
Knoll au Louvre, Paris, 1972

This large exhibition of Knoll International at the Louvre Museum of Decorative Arts required a complete restructuring and restoration of the exhibition space which had been abused by previous installations.

We divided the exhibition in two areas.

The main hall was a large, tall space where we placed eight-foot cubes, open on two sides, to display the pieces. Some of the cubes were laminated in white formica or stainless steel while others were made of clear plexiglass. The cubes focused attention on the furniture by defining a scale that related to the furniture size.

In the second area, we built a series of spaces of funnelled walls/ceiling and inclined floors that angled in to the large windows facing the garden. This made a forced perspective, again making spaces more in tune with the furniture. In the large hall, to mediate its enormous height, we sometimes placed a second cube displaying rear-projected images on top of other cubes. The bottom cubes had casters to facilitate the positioning them in different places, since this exhibition was designed to be a traveling exhibition as well. Visitors entered the exhibition through the arch of the oversized letter 'n' in the word Knoll.



Driade, Italy, 1973

For this young entrepreneurial furniture manufacturer, we designed a collection based on panels of ramin wood slats. There was a dining table with high-back chairs inspired by Mackintosh, coffee tables, a freestanding sofa with a roof and loose pillows as seating, and a bed. Our idea was to create a wall around the table to define its own space. This line had a short life, but it has always been one of our favorites.



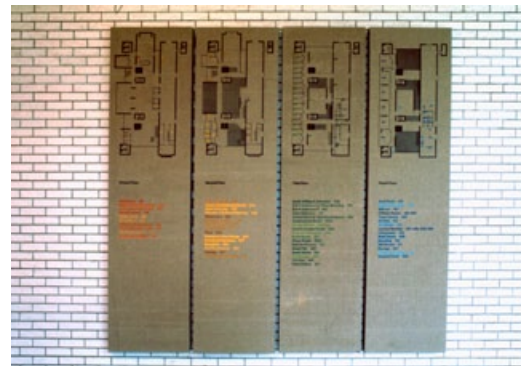
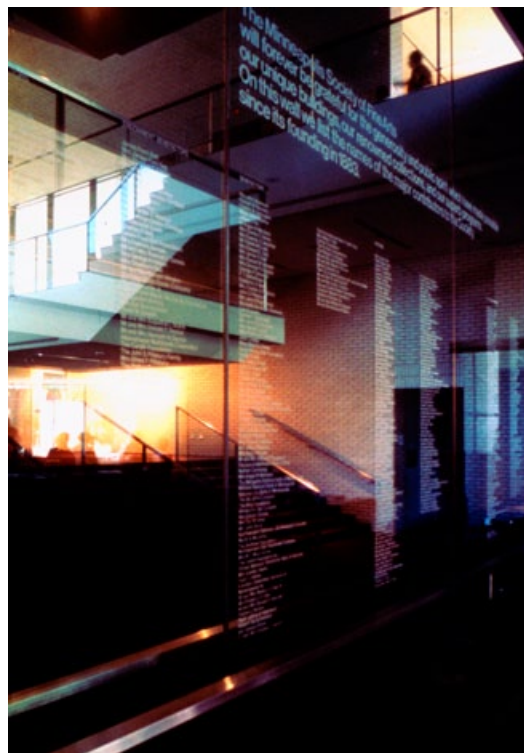
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1974

Japanese architect Kenzo Tange renovated the old Minneapolis Museum of Arts and added the Children's Theatre Building and The College of Art and Design. We were asked to design the interiors for the three organizations. For the museum, our basic concept was to use unobtrusive display fixtures and mobile wall partitions to articulate exhibitions in different ways. The wall display cases shown in these pages demonstrate how we achieved our aims throughout the building. Once again, plexiglass display cases were designed to call attention to the exhibited objects rather than the furniture housing them; always an important notion for our display design. We also designed the entire graphic program for the complex, including exterior and interior signage. Lella's involvement on this project was fundamental from concept through the implementation phases.





This page shows examples of signage designed for the museum and the college. In the museum lobby, donor's names are printed directly on a glass partition. Floor directories are printed on a glass panel. Gallery identification is printed on a frosted plexiglass box that contains description cards about the artworks. Signs for conference rooms were done on slate panels so that events could be written with chalk. This offered flexibility and restraint. Building signs were stainless steel letters applied directly over the brick surface. In the College of Art and Design, the directory was printed in colors over canvas panels. Supergraphic signs became identifiers for particular areas. Casual bleachers were modular, to be used in different configurations according to events. In an effort to achieve maximum stylistic consistency throughout the entire complex, every detail for the interiors and signs was designed by us and approved by the museum and Kenzo Tange's office.



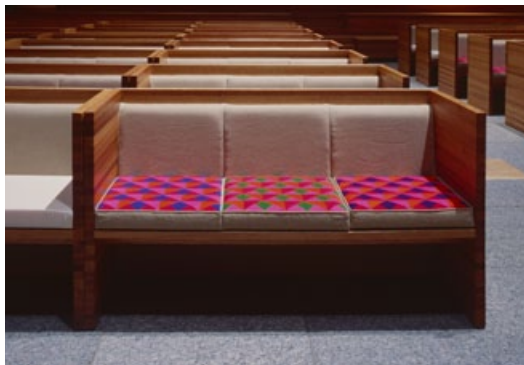
Brueton showroom, New York, 1975

At the time we were asked to design the Brueton showroom, the company specialized in the production of stainless steel furniture. Due to the colorless nature of the material and its high level of reflectivity, we designed a completely white environment bisected by sliding panels of magenta, yellow, and blue plexiglass—an idea inspired by the 4-color printing process. The overlapping combinations of panels provided all the color we needed in the showroom. We were asked to design some of the furniture as well, so Lella and I did tables, coffee tables, desks, and a tent-bed. It was fun and appropriate for the times...



Saint Peter's Church, New York, 1977

At the base of Citigroup Center in Manhattan, architect Hugh Stubbins designed the church: a granite cube split in two halves to let light in. We designed the interior and the furnishings: the organ, pews, cushions, and all the silver items used for religious services. First, we oriented the interior plan according to the light shaft. We created a series of steps that become seating when opened, providing modesty panels for people seating in the next row. We positioned pews in the center of the space; they are able to be arranged in various configurations according to changing needs. We also designed the Cross, symbolizing the Church at the intersection, and the graphic program to cover all printed matter, including a newsletter. It was the most comprehensive project we've done. Lella spent considerable amount of time working on every detail to assure long-lasting life. One of the walls houses a columbarium; there our ashes will find their resting place. This Church has been extremely well-kept since its opening day in 1977. Our initial concept for this very flexible space was to be a moral space rather than an exclusively religious space, because it hosts a variety of events ranging from weddings, funerals, and christenings, to jazz concerts and community meetings. Quite dramatically, the space becomes a Church every time the processional Cross is planted on the altar platform at the beginning of a religious service.



In this spread:

The pulpit for the sermon can be engaged with the steps in multiple positions to be appropriate for any given plan.

The lectern for lectures differs from the pulpit. A holder for votive candles was shaped by crossing crosses.

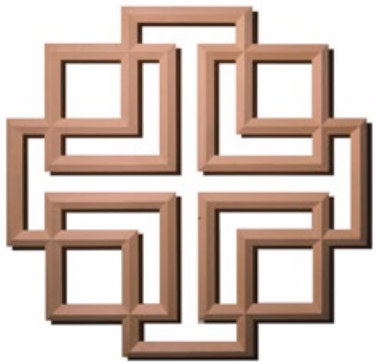
The seating and kneeler for the clergy is made with a tubular structure covered in linen to form the seat and back.

The opening at the back of the seat provides a space for the pastor's ceremonial vestments when seated.

Lella's design of the cushions for the pews.

In the following spread:

The baptismal font, like the floor and steps leading to it, is all in granite. It was designed for christening by total or partial immersion and it symbolizes the mountain descending to the Jordan River.





We designed this set of silver pieces as implements for the liturgical service at Saint Peter's Church. Some of the silver pieces have stems engraved with grooves to trap the light, while the upper part is polished to reflect the light. The pieces were made by San Lorenzo, in Italy, and have been used everyday since 1975.

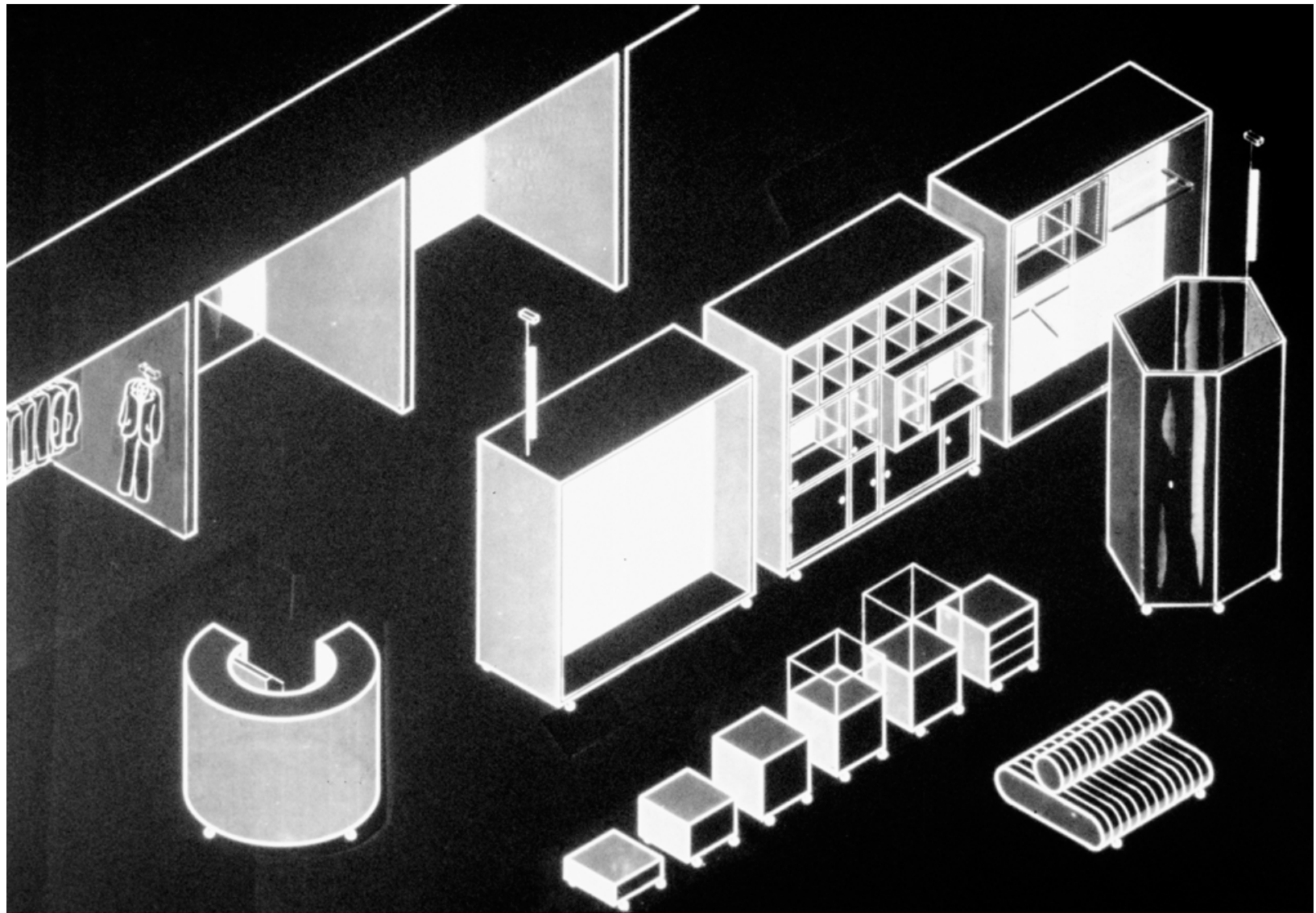


Joseph Magnin Specialty Stores, California, 1978

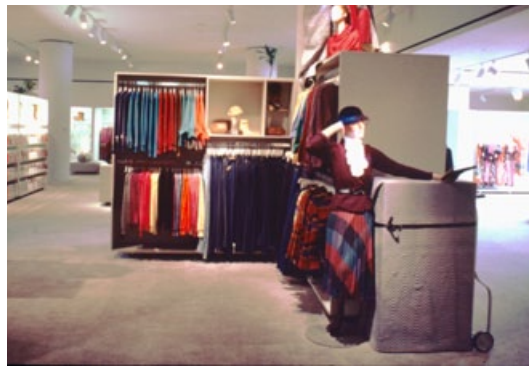
Most stores install relatively permanent floorplans and if it doesn't work, it is expensive to change. We followed a theory of the guy with a hot dog cart: if goods do not sell on one corner, he will try another one. So, we designed a plan allowing extreme flexibility of configurations, easily changed to suit the most effective selling configuration. The stores had fins along the peripheral walls that could be combined with a series of mobile fixtures on casters to define individual boutiques.

Lella and our partner David Law were fundamentally involved in the design and implementation of several Magnin stores, from the very inception of the idea to its application at different sites. Every fixture was custom designed within our general modular concept so that every piece could be combined with other components to form cohesive entities. Working with a few fixtures: cabinets, cashier unit (red so you could find it); dressing unit (all mirrors so you could see yourself on all sides); and seating made it possible to arrange an infinite variety of display areas for showing and selling merchandise. Furthermore, the configuration of a selling area could be changed in a few minutes.

Lella's direction in the choice of colors, materials, and lighting gave smart identity to the stores and made Joseph Magnin an instant success story. Extreme flexibility, designed to look permanent; no more retail temple concept, but others are still doing it. Retail management is often conservative, so this advanced concept of retailing is not widely applied.







Barney's, New York. 1979/1986

We designed all the interiors, one floor at the time, for the Barney's Men's Store on Seventh Avenue in New York. Lella was in charge of this project from the beginning and as usual, her input was apparent in the choice and finishes of materials. She specified a great amount of Belgian linen on the walls to let the merchandize emerge from the neutral background. Everything was custom made for the store, with exception of the Sunar seating, which she also designed. On the more recently designed floors, the use of brushed stainless steel reflects a fresher, less traditional sensibility to materials, contrasting with the wood and linen of the previous floors.

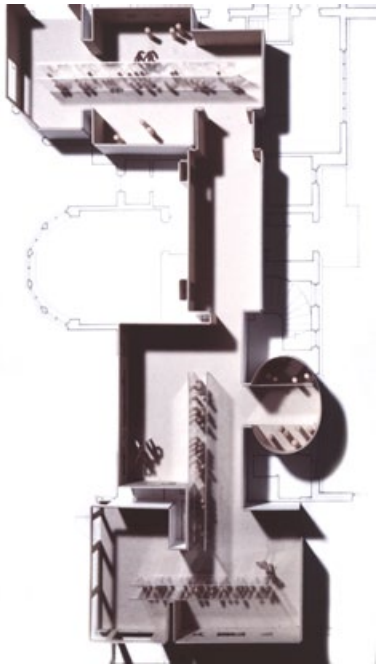






**The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum,
Wasau, Wisconsin, 1980**

This little museum was designed to house a precious collection of porcelain birds. The basic concept was to create unobtrusive plexiglass display cases, letting the birds be the real protagonists of the exhibition. Lella covered all the walls in linen. She used that surface to print photographs and captions, where needed, next to vitrines recessed in the walls. In another room, a backlight wall with shelves in front of it silhouetted the shapes of the sculptures on display. It was a delicate installation for a delicate subject.



**Kroin main office,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981**

The Kroin company distributes architectural implements ranging from well-designed faucets to outdoor seating. We designed their identification program using the color yellow as chromotype identifier. Everything was yellow, from the price list to the advertising. Naturally the office had to be yellow too. All walls in the main corridor were yellow. Offices had gray walls, gray furniture and yellow pencils... according to the company color identifier. The entrance had a large tridimensional logo, on a yellow background, naturally...



**Shearman Sterling LLP dining room,
New York, 1987**

For this prestigious legal office, Lella designed a large dining room with a series of alcoves, one for each window, for more private meetings. The upper part of the room is paneled in wood. The ceiling is acoustical panels covered in steel mesh. Indirect light is provided by high sconces extending from the walls. The intent was to create a grand but serene dining room, using Mies van der Rohe's Brno tubular dining chairs as a final touch.



Xoil office, New York, 1981

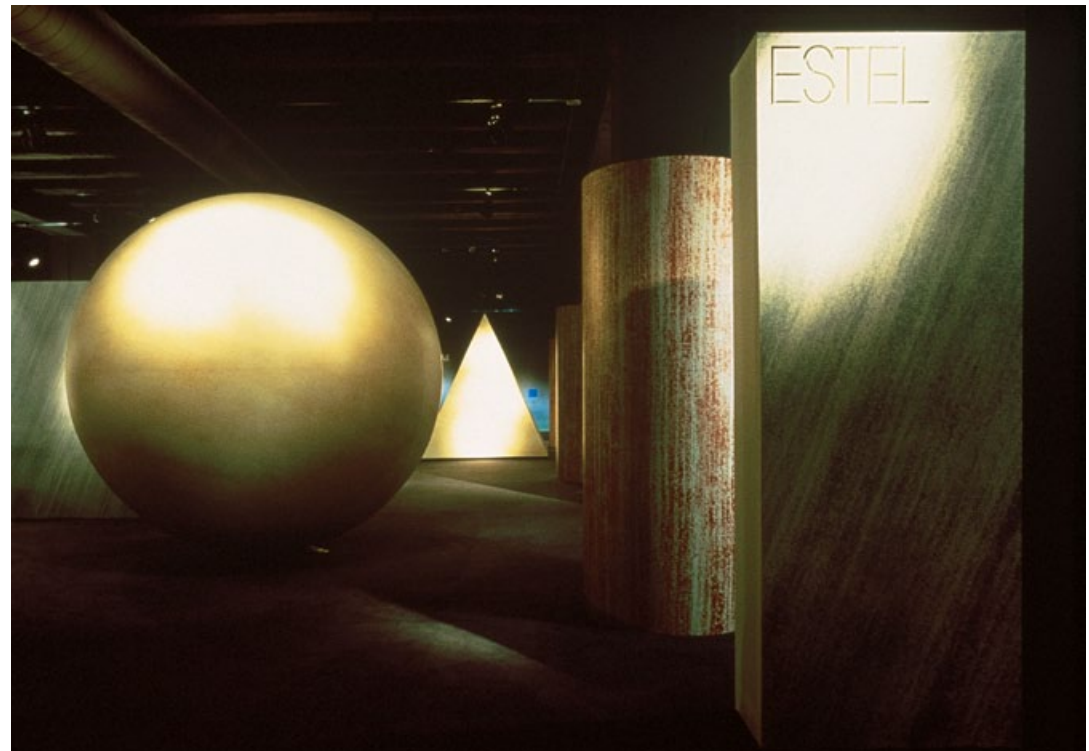
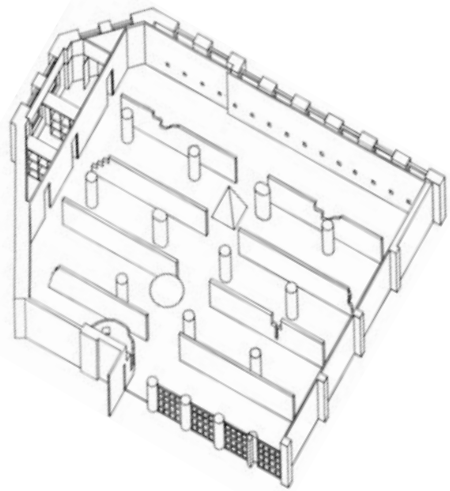
Lella designed a suite of rooms covered in natural linen, with wool carpets, lacquered furniture, and upholstered seating to create a warm business environment for the company's executive offices. Occasionally, the conference room doubles as a business lunch room, so she designed hidden cupboards in the wall.

On the floor, antique rugs add to the richness of the rooms. There was a mix of custom furniture designed by Lella, plus lacquered desks, cabinets, and sofas by Poltronova, and seating by Sunar. All of it was Lella's design.



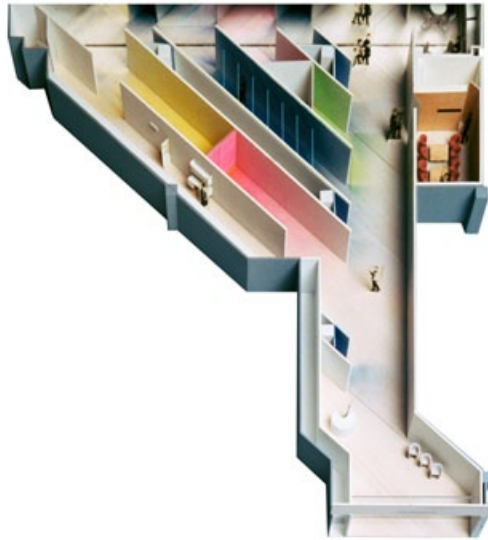
Italcenter showroom, Chicago, 1982

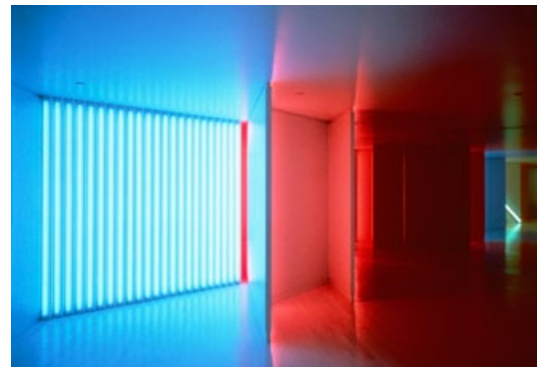
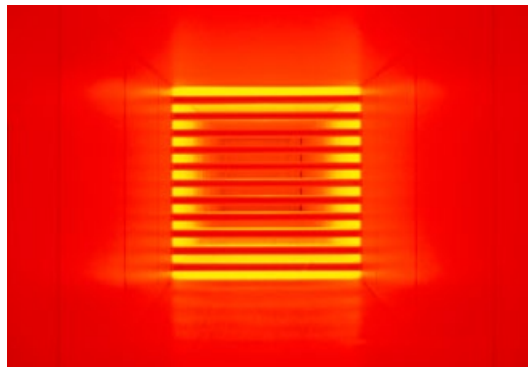
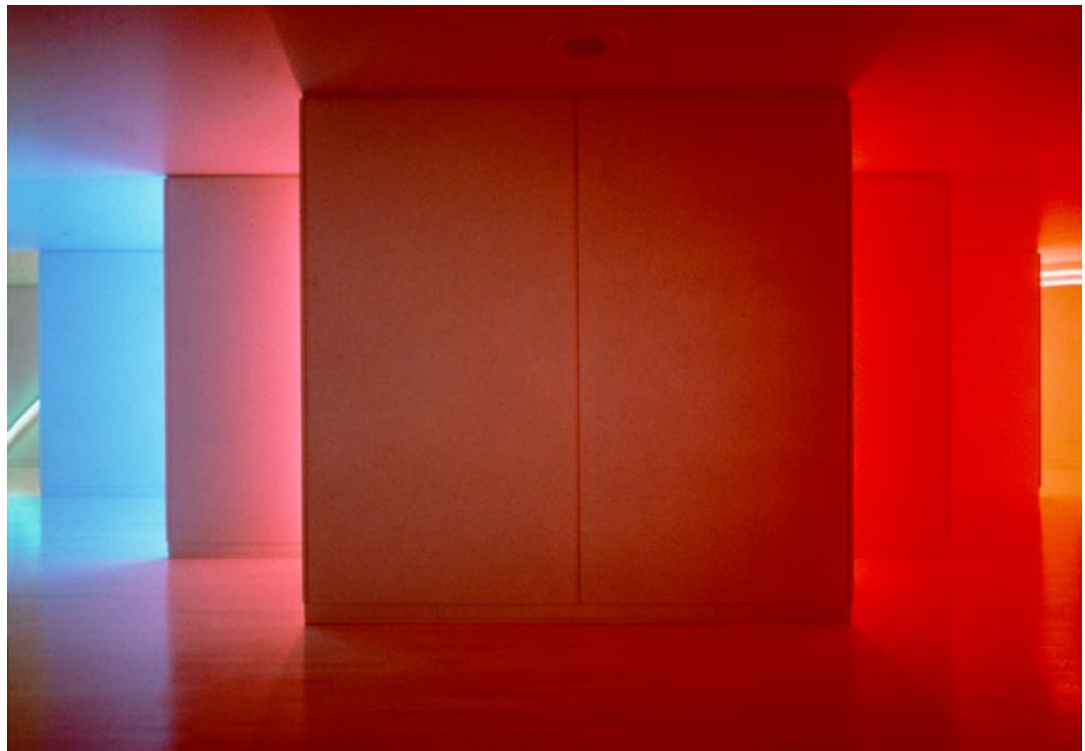
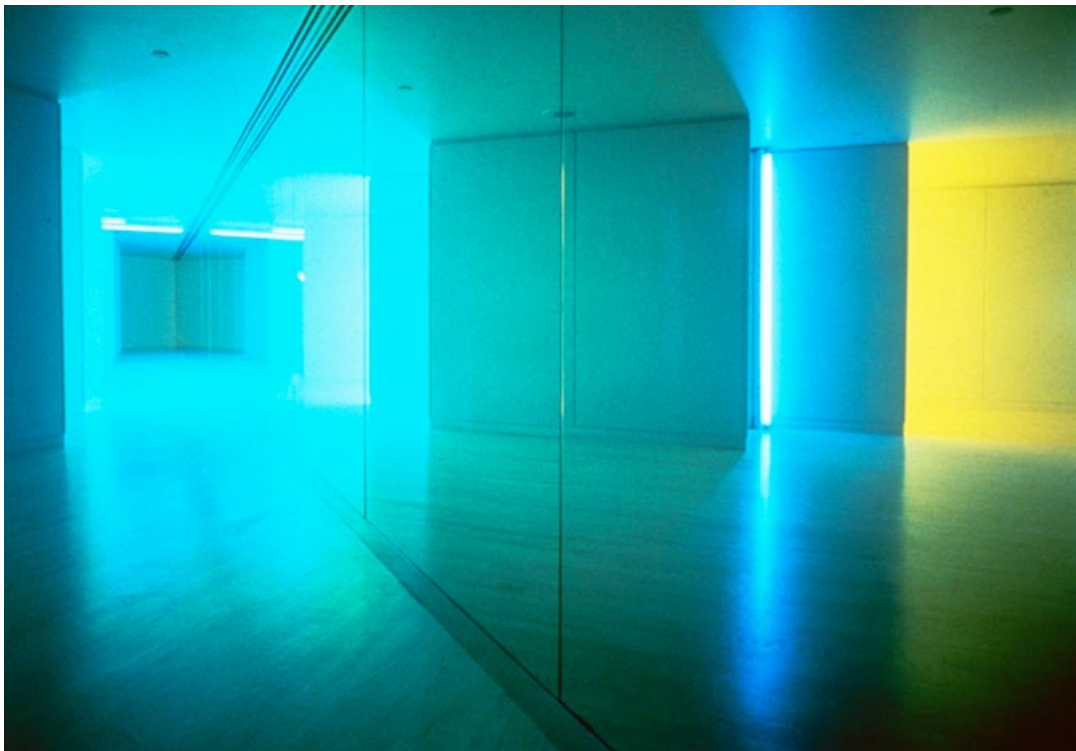
Several Italian furniture manufacturers were showing their products at the NEOCON fair, so we divided the overall area in a sequence of parallel spaces, bisected by a central corridor. In that corridor we positioned two very strong icons: a sphere and a pyramid covered in gold leaf; these gave the showroom an immediate memorable identity. Each dividing wall was treated in a unique way to give a specific identity to each individual exhibitor, but we maintained a uniform eight-foot height for the walls to give continuity to the space above them. We devised a special roller to paint the interior walls, obtaining a particular pattern that was inspired by the texture of graphite pencil. The ceiling, with all the mechanical equipment, was painted black.



Hauserman showroom, Los Angeles, 1982

The Hauserman company manufactures office partitions and modular office furniture. To display the different kinds of partitions, we made a series of corridors and asked minimalist artist Dan Flavin to create a light installation on each one. That, by itself, was a masterpiece! The back wall was mirrored, which extended the lighting effects. Although furniture samples were also displayed, we kept the floors as empty as possible to dramatize the installation. Toward the back, a room was set aside for presentations, furnished with chairs designed by us. It was unveiled during design week and became the talk of town. It continues to be one of our favorite projects because of the collaboration with Dan Flavin.





Puritan executive offices, New York, 1984

Lella's interiors of the executive offices for Puritan follow her typical palette of warm colored carpets, linen walls, and leather laminated cabinets. All furniture, except seating, was designed by her to achieve great consistency of style. Rows of window openings were obliterated by a continuous sheer curtain, eliminating fragmentation as much as possible to establish a serene environment. All wood furniture was custom made with rich, deep-colored veneers and leather.



**Poltrona Frau showrooms
New York, 1985/1987**

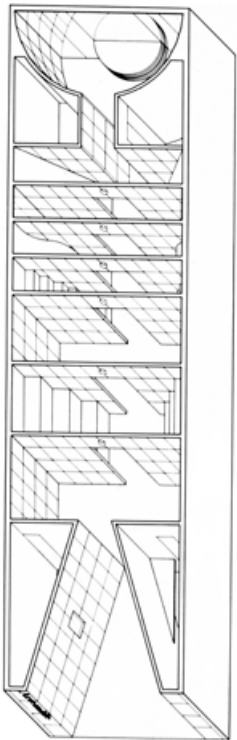
During our long collaboration with this company we have designed a great number of showrooms and trade shows, particularly in Italy, but also in the USA. These three installations were in New York.

On this page, the first two images are from the Soho showroom; the third is from an exhibition at the IDCNY, where galvanized steel panels, with photos of palatial installations, were suspended from tracks. The pictures on the facing page are from a small showroom in midtown Manhattan, where mobile columns were used to frame the space and display the products against a backlighting curtain.



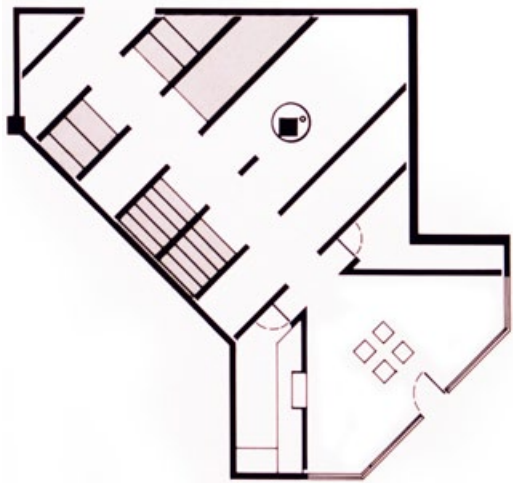
Artemide showroom, Dallas, 1984

The space for the Dallas showroom was long and narrow so the basic concept was to funnel visitors through a series of spaces, each one dedicated to a family of lighting fixtures displayed on steps or varied display fixtures. At the end of this sequence, we designed a semicircular room that was reflected by a mirror wall to create the illusion of a circular space. This showroom plan provided an efficient way to display the products and focus the viewer's attention on them. We covered all walls and fixtures with high-density particle board. It is a material that we like very much for its non-directional texture that resembles limestone.



Artemide showroom, Miami, 1985

Following the Dallas showroom experience, we designed the Miami space with a similar concept of funneling visitors through a sequence of parallel spaces, each one dedicated to a family of products. While the Dallas showroom had a monochromatic plan inspired by the colors of the great plains, the Miami showroom reflected its context with exuberant colors, as you can see on the facing pictures. Once again, each space had different display devices, designed to show a specific family of products.

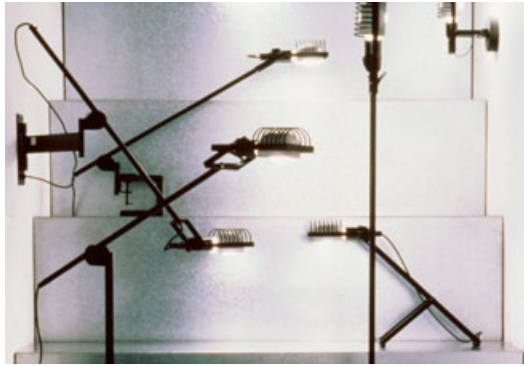


**Artemide showroom, IDCNY,
New York, 1987**

Through the years we designed many showrooms for Artemide, a lighting company from Milano.

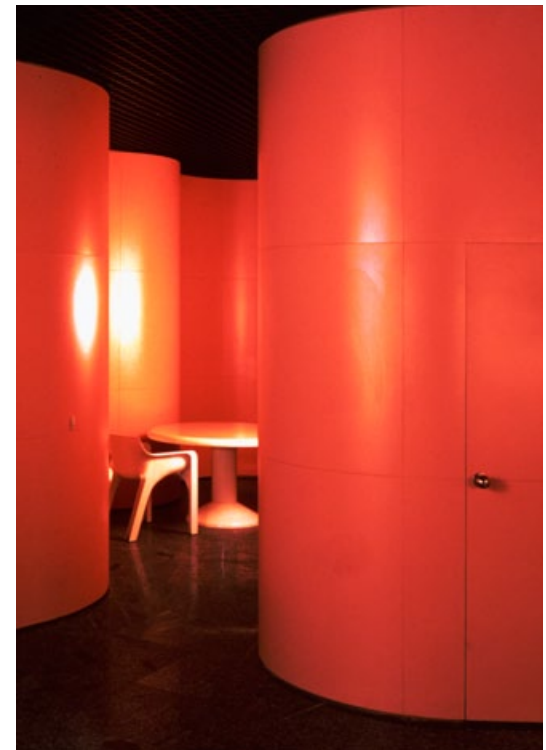
This one, at the IDCNY in New York, was in an industrial space. The original structure and ceiling had to be preserved, therefore, all walls were designed as freestanding partitions with a square doorway opening in the center. All furniture and display fixtures were designed by us. Again, the basic notion was to present every line of light fixtures in a dedicated space to avoid the typical clutter of lighting showrooms. This made it possible to appreciate see and appreciate the details of each design line.

We valued the experience of this particular showroom and extended this concept—of keeping the existing structure and inseting our display environment—to all Artemide showrooms that we designed thereafter. Our focus on classical structure with minimal materials remained constant.



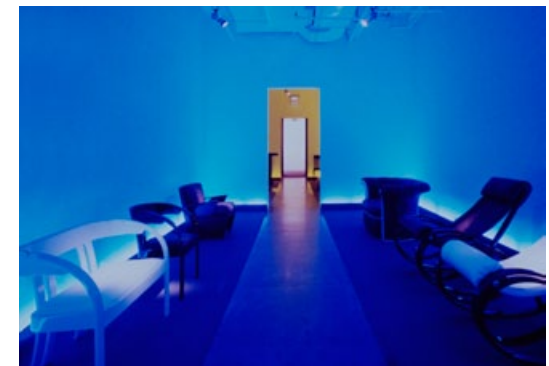
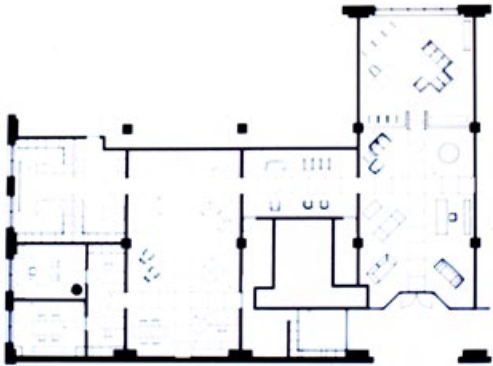
Artemide showroom, Milan, Italy, 1987

Once again, the main showroom in Milano reiterates the basic display concept of pedestals at the entrance, presenting products as art pieces. Then a sequence of fins laminated in subtle colors, along a central axis, created spaces for the display of product families. At the end of this procession, a space of red undulating walls housed meeting rooms and a small office. A black square honeycomb ceiling concealed all mechanical equipment, visually obliterating the ceiling from the inset walls.



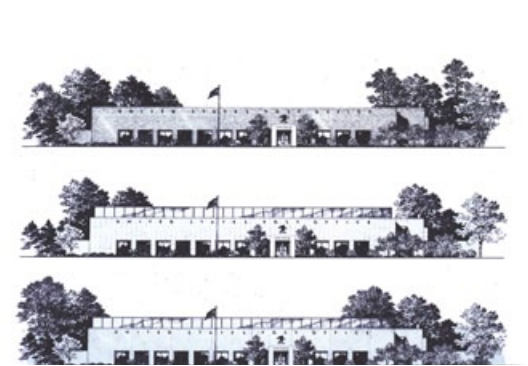
Poltrona showroom, New York, 1987

Again playing with light, we designed a sequence of three rooms: the first black, the second blue, and the third yellow; with light rising from the floor and shining down from spots above to highlight the furniture. The Poltrona office line designed by Lella, consisting of desk, cabinets, and seating, was displayed in the first space of this showroom.



United States Post Offices, 1987

USA post offices usually have two distinct areas: the factory in back where mail is sorted, and the front part for the interface with the public. We were asked to design the architectural front—the public area—of the post office. We designed a flexible system for different sizes of post offices and for different regional areas of the country. Our design consisted of a skylighted gallery connecting the areas for public contact: mail boxes, vending machines, and transactions counters. The outside facade was punctuated by a variable series of openings, according to the front length. In the center front, a self-standing portal signified the entrance. The surface material changed according to context: bricks for the eastern region, limestone for the central regions, and stucco for the southern regions. The aim was to achieve identity and diversity through an appropriate use of form and materials. In the photos: a post office built in Maryland.



Artemide showroom, Chicago, 1988

We decided to emphasize the industrial look of this space by leaving it quite bare, simply adding common industrial materials like galvanized steel for the outside wall or white corrugated steel for an undulating interior wall. Inside, a series of fins separate families of products. At the entrance, the new products are featured on pedestals, like art objects.

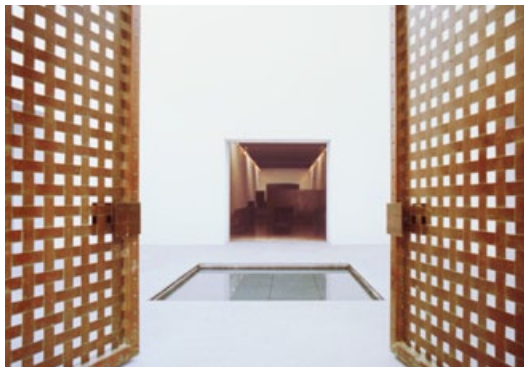
The entire space was painted dark gray, while all furniture and displays were in contrasting white.



**Poltrona Frau showroom, Tolentino,
Italy, 1988**

Instead of the usual roadside showroom, we asked Poltrona Frau to allow us to transform a section of their factory into a hospitality center. We included an auditorium, a foyer, a patio, and a showroom to display their recent products and some of their historic ones.

The patio was a perfect cube open to the sky and the patterns of passing clouds. A square opening on each side was matched by a reflecting pool in the center of the space. One opening led to the large showroom space where we began with old original Poltrona Frau chairs as an historical reference. Further on were displays of new products for home, office, and transportation uses. On the left side of the patio, the other square opening led to the foyer of the auditorium which had walls and ceiling covered with acoustical perforated sheet. Theater seating was by Poltrona Frau, naturally...



**Poltrona Frau showrooms,
Rome, Perugia, Modena, 1988, 1989**

These showrooms were part of the initial program of showroom identity, designed by Lella, where a consistent use of accent steel walls, stone floors, white walls, and stretched white veils established a level of visual continuity from store to store.



Artemide showroom, Los Angeles, 1989

The device of fins to separate product lines became the main visual element of this showroom, along with the undulating and colorful counter.

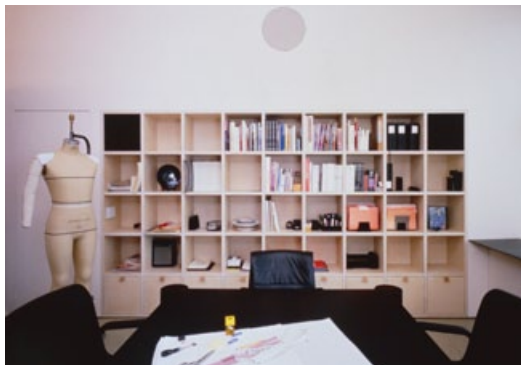


Cecilia Metheny atelier, New York, 1989

In the mid-eighties, we designed the office-atelier for the fashion house of Cecilia Metheny in New York.

The entrance door was covered with lead sheets, with the upper part displaying the logo in three-dimensional aluminum letters. The lacquered furniture in the executive office is part of the Saratoga office line designed by Lella for Poltronova; and the seating, also by Lella, is by Sunar. In the conference room is Lella's table by Rosenthal and in the atelier, cabinets and furniture were also designed by Lella.

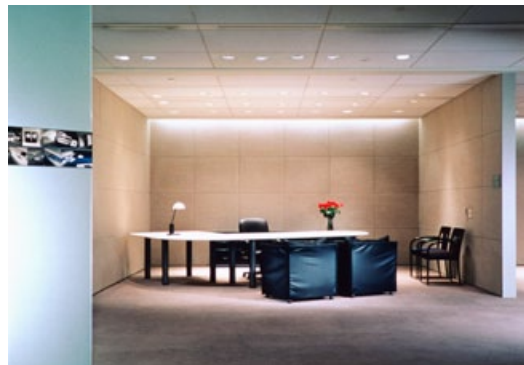
As happens most of the time in our interior designs, we select and place the furniture. Often it is designed by us, sometimes it is site specific.



Steelcase showroom, Grand Rapids, 1993

This large showroom was designed for the furniture brands of the Steelcase Design Partnership.

Spaces were allocated to each brand, avoiding fragmentation and creating a choral voice for the divisions. At the entrance, a series of sanded glass panels presented each brand and a long black backlit wall presented all categories of products. Thereafter, a series of spaces were dedicated to brands or products through a variety of display designs using perforated metal, black steel panels, and linen walls.



**The World Trade Center at
Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam,
Netherlands, 1996**

We were asked to design all the Center's public space interiors including retail, public, and restaurant areas. Unfortunately, we have very few images to document the whole project. We asked glass artist Dale Chihuly to do a series of large glass balls to float on a reflecting pool separating parts of the building. It was a beautiful installation. We also designed the signage program and logo for the complex. This was a project completely designed and controlled by Lella and her staff.



GNER, corporate identity and interiors, London, 1997

This total identity for a British Railway engaged every department of our office as we designed everything from logo to stationery; from train livery to train interiors; from timetables to posters. Lella was in charge of all three-dimensional design, including interiors for the first and tourist classes, and I was in charge of all the graphics. It was an extensive, interesting project which required a lot of Lella's time and supervision at the railway's yards in England. Riding a train with our livery, our interiors, and our graphics was an exhilarating experience rarely matched by other projects.

In this page: the logo, with particular emphasis on the letters NE (North Eastern). The same logo in gold letters against the dark blue of the train locomotive. The train livery, a very dark blue with a red stripe; all information related to the car is contained in the red stripe. At the center of the car is an interpretation of the traditional Railway seal, also redesigned by us.

On the following spread:

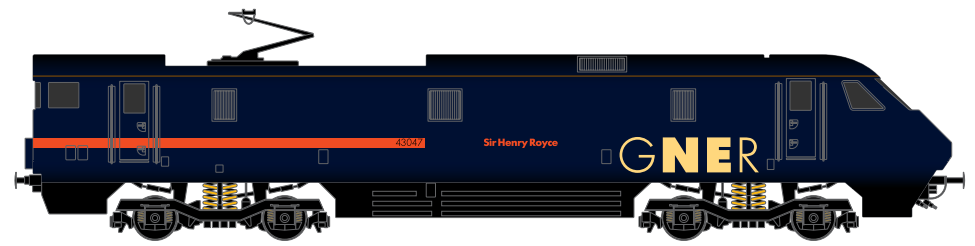
On the left: interior design of the First Class compartment.

On the right: interior design of the Tourist Class. In both classes every detail from upholstery material and pattern, to carpet pattern, to wall surfaces was designed by Lella and her team.

We designed uniforms for all GNER personnel in different capacities; these were manufactured in Ireland.

In the background is the locomotive of the train in the York Station.

When she finished this project, Lella was asked to design livery and interiors for the Peruvian Railway that goes to Machu Picchu. Unfortunately we do not have any documentation available for that project.



GNER



**Poltrona Frau showroom,
Milano, Italy, 2000**

Beginning in the year 2000, Poltrona Frau started a new series of showrooms, in Italy and the USA, entirely designed by Lella. In this Milano showroom, Lella articulated a language of materials to provide a neutral but interesting background to the furniture. The use of white walls interacting with surfaces of sand blasted mirrors provided a luminescent environment complementing the sense of quality of the exhibited furniture. On the ground floor, lighting is recessed on ceiling coves while (on the following spread) for the basement level, a luminescent ceiling provides light and a sense of infinite space.







**Poltrona Frau showrooms,
Verona and Andria, 2002**

In these showrooms, Lella used panels of sandblasted mirror glass on large surfaces, giving great elegance and a strong visual accent to the space.



**Poltrona Frau, Salone del Mobile,
Milano, 2002**

For several years, we designed the stands for Poltrona Frau at the Salone del Mobile in Milano.

Every year we developed a distinct plan by hanging curtains from a structure on the ceiling and projecting colored lights or images onto them. Sometimes the images related to the products, other times they were related to a promotional theme, and some years we stressed technology. One year we used large details from Piero della Francesca frescoes to convey the timeless values of Italian Art. Lella's involvement with Poltrona Frau covered almost every aspect of the company's public presence, from product design to showrooms, from communications to trade shows. Though sometimes we designed together, more often these were distinctly her projects.



Poltrona Frau showroom, Miami, 2003

By keeping most of the existing structure of a previous garage, and by introducing few new elements for lighting and display, Lella transformed this low budget construction into a showroom for Poltrona Frau in Miami using polished cement floors, sleek bands of ceiling lights, and careful attention to structural forms. A series of virtual niches highlights new models and a gridded wall of glass separates the office from the display area.



**Marennà restaurant at the
Feudi di San Gregorio winery,
Sorbo Serpico, Italy, 2004**

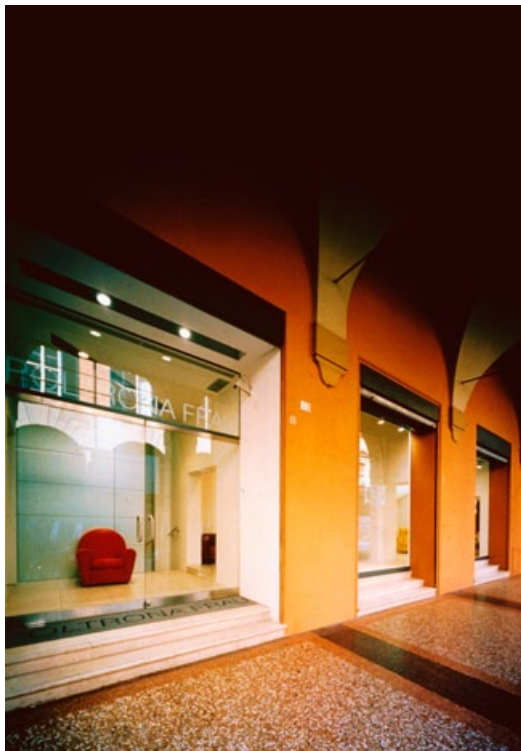
The restaurant and bar facilities at this winery in Italy's Campania region must accommodate a variety of guests and groups of varying sizes. We designed an open flexible plan where distinct areas can easily be devised by moving service stations to separate one area from the other. The service stations have drawers for cutlery and linen, plus cabinets for china. They are on casters so that each can be arranged according to need. The bar counter is made of backlit frosted glass to become a luminous slab, silhouetting the people in front of it.

Once again Lella's involvement with materials, planning, and implementation was essential on this project.



Poltrona Frau showroom, Bologna, 2004

The Bologna showroom for Poltrona Frau is located on a centuries-old palace, with original frescoes on the walls, vaulted ceilings, and period details throughout the space. Lella's plan acknowledges the historical constrictions imposed by the location with dramatic results, highlighting some of the features and using others for dual purposes to frame furniture displays or support lighting fixtures.



**Poltrona Frau showrooms,
Salerno, Lecce, 2005**

The Salerno showroom is articulated on three levels, all visible from the street, providing great exposure to the furniture. The space has a very luminous and airy atmosphere.

The Lecce showroom is located in an ancient building, at street and basement level. The basement level original structure, made of local stone, has been restored to preserve its dignity. Special stone sconces were designed for the lighting to preserve the integrity of the space.



Product Design: Glass, China, Silver

Heller glass bakeware, 1970

Following the success of the plasticware, Heller decided to expand its offerings to the marketplace with a line of glass bakeware. Lella's knowledge of cooking was critical in deciding which products to be designed and how they should develop. Lella noted that food is usually more beautiful from a top view and less in section, therefore, she decided to have the sides of the casseroles and pans incised with a groove pattern that hides the food and enhances the container. Instead of the usual handles on the ends, she designed a flat ring that wraps all around the container so that it can be easily and securely removed from a hot oven. The casserole's lid doubles as a pan, so buyers get two pieces in one! This line of products is another example of Lella's pragmatism applied to design.

These pieces, considered a classic of design, are no longer in production, but they are often available as collectors items on eBay.



Sasaki tableware, Japan, 1985/86/87

Once again, we were playing with the nature of light. The basic concept of the Anello china set was the play between matte and glossy surfaces on the same piece. While the center food area is glossy, the border is a contrasting ring of a matte texture.

In the Classico line of glassware, contrary to the norm, all the goblets have the same height. Each distinction of use: red or white wine, or water, is defined only by the diameter of the goblet. This approach gives a more orderly presence to the table setting. For the Colorstone line of tableware, the vessels are dipped in a color glaze, then only the beveled edges are wiped to reveal the underlying material. Therefore, decoration is achieved by subtraction rather than addition, as tableware is typically made. Subtraction is an essential part of our design, and here we have one more demonstration of how to achieve it.



Silver objects, 1975

Silver is a marvelous material to work with. Its surface, if polished, reflects the light; if engraved, it traps the light inside.

If hammered, it portrays the human touch, revealing its malleability at any bend. Deep incisions trap dirt and darken, transforming them into lines or patterns. The whole flair of playing with silver evolves from the way one articulates those finishes.

A noble material, silver shines in the light and becomes dark and sinister when it oxidizes. Silver is a material of deep emotions, trapping history on its surface.

Throughout our career, we enjoyed many opportunities to work with silver for companies dedicated to functional and beautiful objects using this metal.

Lella has designed flatware, hollowware, and silver jewelry, which she has been wearing for most of her life. This spread shows a set of barware tools and several hollowware, including an ice bucket, a shaker, and a pitcher. All of the vertical surfaces are engraved with irregular lines to trap the light and the horizontal surfaces are polished to reflect the light.



CIGA Hotels silverware, 1979

When we designed the identity program for the CIGA Hotels, the most luxurious chain of hotels in Italy, we also designed all the tableware, from silver, to china, to glass. Some of the items are shown on this page, from top to bottom:

Parmesan cheese grater and cheese container. Grape scissors and a nutcracker. On the right page at the top: the basic table flatware silver. Below left, finger bowl, egg holder, and ice-cream cup. To the right: a tray for oil and vinegar, and salt and pepper shakers.

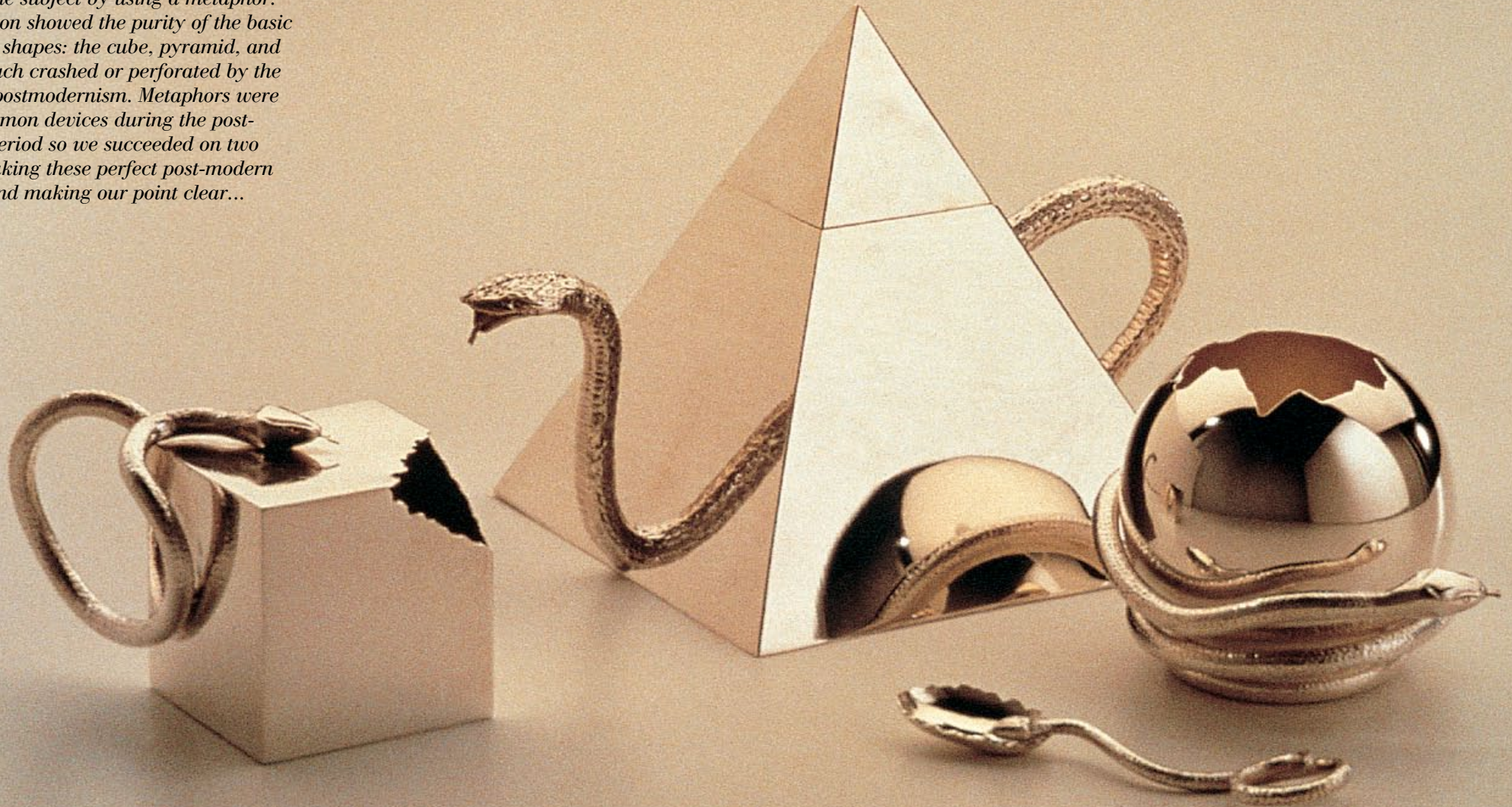
To the bottom left: a napkin holder and to the right: a tea strainer.

Numerous other pieces of hollowware were designed to cover every need, from serving pieces to trays. It was a most comprehensive program of its kind.



Silver tea set for Cleto Munari, Italy, 1984

Lella's role for this project was more at the critical level than the design level, but the project story is quite intriguing. We were asked by Cleto Munari, an Italian manufacturer of silver design objects, to design a tea set in a post-modern way. Since we never liked post-modern design, we took this opportunity for expressing our point of view on the subject by using a metaphor. Our solution showed the purity of the basic Euclidian shapes: the cube, pyramid, and sphere; each crashed or perforated by the snake of postmodernism. Metaphors were quite common devices during the post-modern period so we succeeded on two levels: making these perfect post-modern objects, and making our point clear...





Silverware for Palio Restaurant, NY, 1987

The basic flatware, rightly called “Basic,” is purposefully and absolutely plain to stress timeless and functional form. The coffee set was created by using existing molds for the bottoms and adding new dome tops, spurs and handles. The same approach, our economical way of giving a new look to the pieces, was used for the grated cheese container and the salt and pepper shakers.



**Tisanière for Faraone Silver,
Italy, 1996**

This tisanière was designed to keep the tisane, (a special herbal tea) warm for a longer time. The silver spherical pot has a bottom indentation so it rests upon the cast aluminum hemisphere to complete a seamless sphere. The cast aluminum base retains heat, keeping the pot warm for a longer time. The ebony handle is split in two parts: the top is attached to the silver pot and the bottom to the cast aluminum base. Inside, a perforated removable cylindrical container holds the tisane. This object, completely designed by Lella, reflects her particular approach to design: pragmatic attention to function, sensibility to materials, and rejection of trends; all qualities which give a sense of timelessness to her work.



Silverware items, 1985/2005

Over the years, we designed several objects in silver. Most of these were designed by Lella. On this spread, from left to right we see a piggy bank in the shape of a house, designed to commemorate the new Euros, a goblet, a martini glass, a jewelry box, a drinking tumbler, a pitcher, and a carafe. These are all in silver and mostly produced in Italy by San Lorenzo.



**Silver for the Jewish Museum,
New York, 2006**

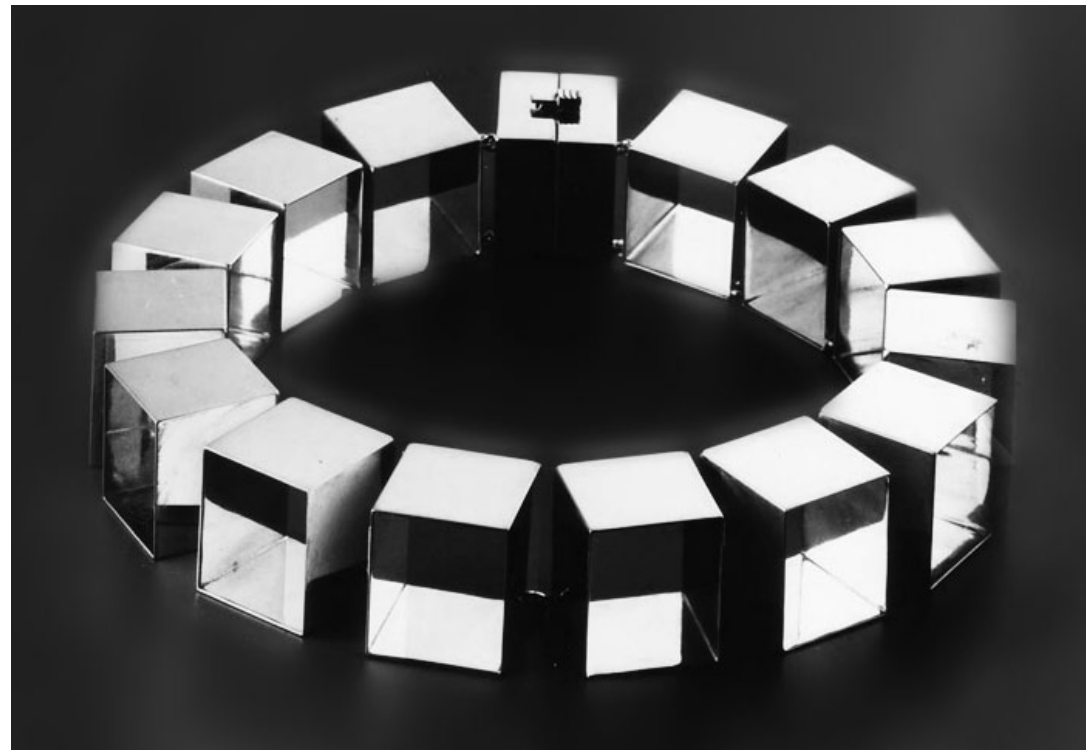
Lella designed a series of objects linked to Jewish religious ceremonies for the Jewish Museum in New York.

The candleholder on the far right was designed for San Lorenzo silversmiths in Milan, Italy. The branches rotate around the central axis, allowing it be used for different occasions.



Silver jewelry for San Lorenzo, 1972/75

Lella loves to design silver jewelry. The numbers on this page are for commemorative years. On the right, the silver rings are in the shapes of numbers. The necklace below them is made from sections of square tubing. The polished faces of the resulting cubes create intriguing reflections, making the necklace quite lively.



The intriguing feature of this necklace, designed by Lella and made by San Lorenzo, is the possibility of creating many different configurations. There are several more beyond those shown here, each suiting a different occasion and varying dress requirements. It is a fluid and charming piece, now included in several Museum collections.

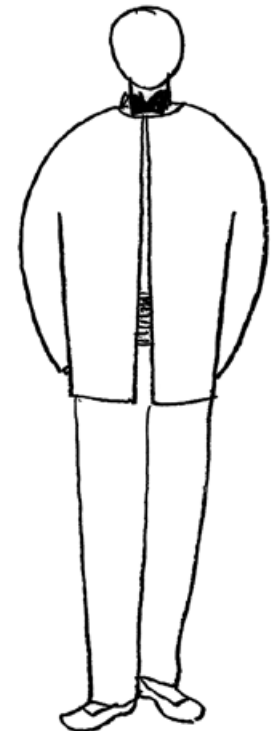
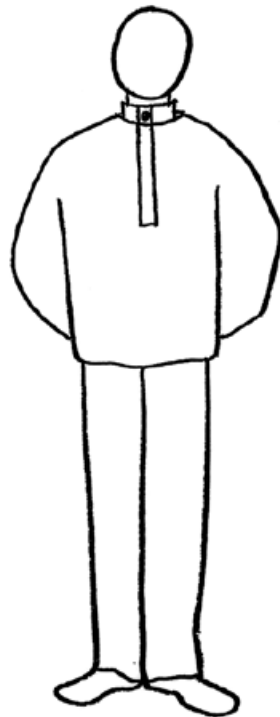
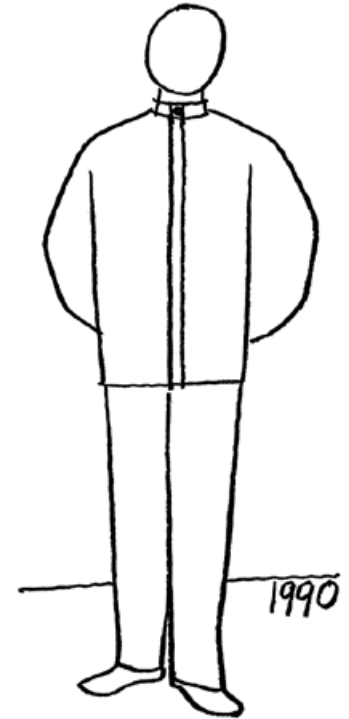
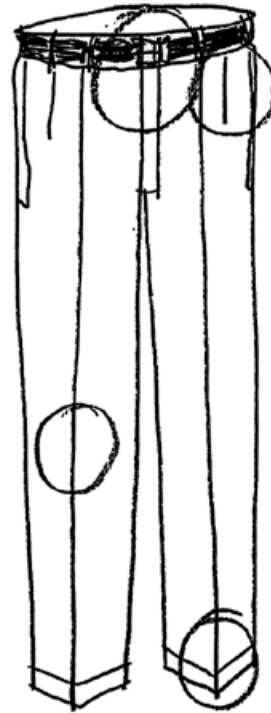
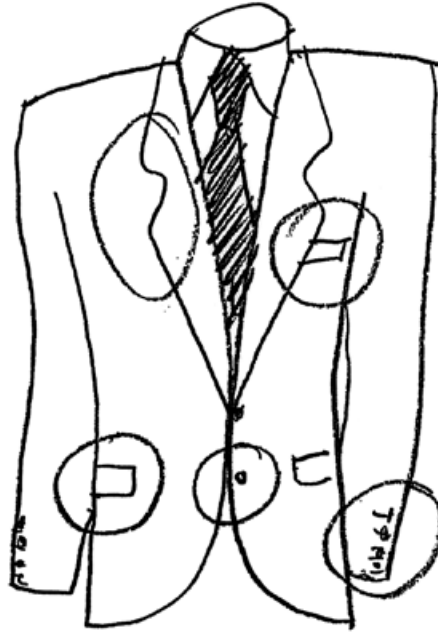


Design Vignelli, clothing line for men and women, 1992

Tired of being a fashion victim penalized by having lapels, shoulders, and waist continuously changing in their proportions and lengths, I began to look for alternatives, but I could not find anything in the marketplace. Therefore, according to our motto, "if you cannot find it, design it," I started to design a line of clothing that would follow the body rather than focusing on fashion trends.

A normal men's jacket is full of details that make no sense at all. The lapel's original function has been erased; pockets have a little roof (to prevent water from raining in?) The breast pocket has no real function either, and buttons on the sleeves have outlived their original purpose. Shoulders expand or contract according to the whims of fashion designers. Pants have pleats, which are difficult to iron; a crease in the center, continuously pushed out by the knee; and often a cuff at the bottom as a perfect receptacle for dust and other trash. They have a front fly and therefore require a belt to adjust sizes.

I eliminated all this nonsense by taking a more rational approach, reducing the construction of the jacket from 54 pieces to 10. Placing the pockets on front and back seams, eliminating lapels and all visible buttons, eliminating the fly and the crease in the pants and replacing a belt with an elastic waist; this clothing responds to body needs rather than constricting them. I designed a sweater, made with same fabric of the suit rather than knitted wool so that when worn with the pants it becomes an informal suit. Varying the jacket and the fabric provided alternatives for different functions from business attire to formal attire. The black tie version is in black velvet with a cummerbund and a regular black tie. Lella's role at first was in the selection of fabrics and in design criticism.





Eventually Lella got more involved and she designed the women's side of the collection in linen, silk, and wool crepe.

We were lucky to have a couple of designers in the office who had experience in cutting dresses, so the first prototypes were made by them until a professional cutter and seamstresses were hired to implement the line.

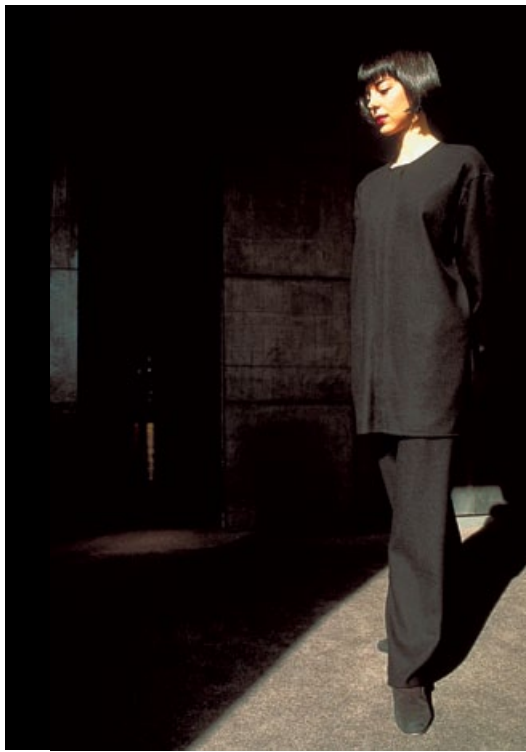
Because of her management skills, Lella eventually took over the direction of the operation and her involvement grew along with the collection.

On the following pages are some of the models for men and women. We had a few runway shows in our office and a terrific response on the press. However, this was not our main line of work and therefore we did not apply 100% of our time to it; a fundamental condition for the success of a commercial operation.

Both of us, after so many years, still wear the same clothing—a living demonstration of its timelessness. However, a lack of entrepreneurial know-how unfortunately limited our benefit from the designs of this collection. A good lesson for everyone...







Lella has long admired the fabulous ruff collars worn in the 1600s.

With San Lorenzo, they found the way to translate the attributes of those collars in to a silver piece of outstanding luminosity. The way the necklace enlightens and highlights the face is the remarkable feature of this piece of jewelry. Here, Lella is modeling her necklace.

We have often said that the problem with some designers is that they play with the appearance of things rather than getting at the essence. Lella has been consistent throughout her career: she is unfailingly intelligent; rigorous, not arbitrary; timeless, not trendy.

She is an inspiration.



