

navy and white matt
ey, a clutch of bright
coats to wear over
flon slips, and fringed
idered red and black
ts, all sold well. Two

Prices range from £158 for the
diagonal banded dress pictured
here and £225 for a plain jacket to
£296 for a sequinned top and £368
for a beaded slip dress.

Mr de Lisi's assistant, Maryann

the UK, as well as designers cul-
ture to enable him to invest in
cloth, manufacture his collections,
invoice and distribute them.

Mr de Lisi feels removed from
the "fairy airhead" image he be-
lieves many British designers cul-

de Lisi sunglasses," he says.

● Ben de Lisi clothes sell in his shop
at 8 Silver Place W1 as well as
Harrods, Harvey Nichols, Liberty
and House of Fraser stores, A La
Mode and Joseph in London, and the
Whistles chain.

A new book applauds one of Italy's enduring designers

Magistretti magic

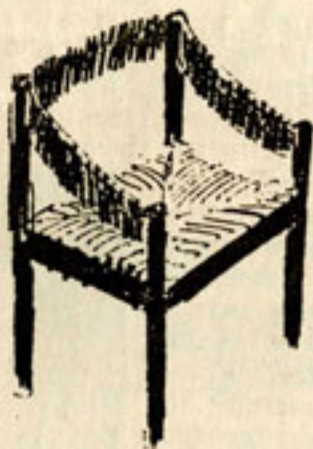
Designers come and go, but Vico Magistretti — 70 years old and still productive — has demonstrated a staying power unusual in the rarefied world of domestic design.

Signor Magistretti has been at the forefront of Italian creativity through four vital decades. In Britain he is still best known for that enduring icon of the Sixties, the Carimate chair, the chunky, shiny red update of a farmhouse side-chair with a raffia seat, but a new book displays a superb array of his products. Here are the chairs and side-tables one might expect, but also lighting, and some simple and effective forays into an area seldom touched by fashionable designers — bookcases and storage.

Of 120 Magistretti designs from the Fifties to date, more than 80 remain in production, and 12 have a permanent place in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Signor Magistretti was born in Milan in 1920, the son of an architect. In 1945 he, too, qualified in architecture, but a year later, together with contemporaries such as Zan-

uso and Castiglioni, he began designing purpose-built and one-off pieces of furniture. He did not seriously consider becoming a designer of mass-produced furniture until he was approached in 1960 by Cesare Cassina, the head of the Milan-based furniture company, who was impressed by the red, rush-seated chair that Signor Magistretti had designed for the Carimate golf club in Italy (hence the name of the chair).



The Carimate chair

bookcase of 1977, and Signor Magistretti's favourite piece, the Sinbad chair — a thick horse blanket bound in a contrasting colour, thrown loosely over a black wooden frame. The original did not sell well, but copies flooded the market.

Signor Magistretti remains philosophical, still designing, eschewing garish blips of fashion such as the Memphis

movement of the Eighties or post-modernism ("futuristic is a word I loathe"). He is appreciated best by those to whom the word "designer" is anathema. "I want", he says, "to design things that don't look strange."

JOSEPH CONNOLLY

● Vico Magistretti: Elegance and Innovation in Post-War Italian Design, by Vanni Pasca, is published on July 1 by Thames & Hudson (£22.50)

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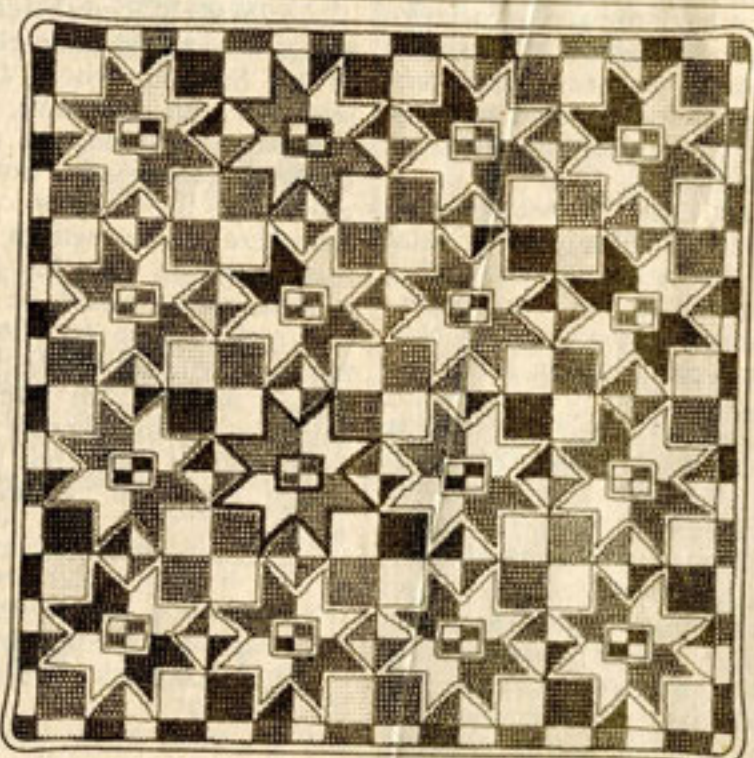
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