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Fish chandelier for Craxi & Baroni
(OPPOSITE) LC 93 lamp for Letti & Co.

In 1973, you graduated from the Polytechnic University of Turin, where you studied architecture. Was your initial approach to design through architecture?

Well, at the time, there were no design schools. I was very curious, always looking for what was going to happen next. I discovered that there were, all over the world, architects who were producing something other than what I was learning in the classroom—not real buildings or cities, but utopian ones. These were firms like Archigram in London or Superstudio in Florence. Or others doing more extreme things, like body art in a gallery in Austria, or the UFO group, which was performing design theater in the streets of Florence. I started to run after these architects—physically. I was going to London, to Austria, to Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti in America, to see what the possibilities were

besides the traditional education I was getting. I was treasure hunting.

Eventually, I decided to use all this information in a thesis. It was very unusual. After that, I went to Africa to travel. I met someone in a bar who was going to Africa, and I said, "Okay, I'm coming with you."

You later went on to work alongside Alessandro Mendini, Ettore Sottsass, and Andrea Branzi in the Alchimia group. How did that opportunity come about?

When I came back from Africa, Alessandro Mendini called me and asked me to work for his magazine, *Domus*, for one year, to realize my thesis in a less scholastic way. He published a little book called *Architettura Radicale* with me and Bruno Zevi, my friend and fellow treasure hunter.

What happened next?

There was this guy in Milano, Alessandro Guerriero, who was this energetic free-thinker. He put together all these people in a funny way and pushed us all to invent a new direction in design. We made a crazy, beautiful, totally noncommercial collection—and during Salone del Mobile there was a huge party for it. The experience was very important for me because all of the other architects were older than me. I discovered then that design was a possible career, so I started to work in it, and I'm still here!

In general, what has been your approach to your career?

My life has always been an unplanned trip. Everything has happened by accident. If I have nothing to do, I go to the beach, I go to the movie theater—I don't design a chair. I need to have a reason to work. Work is not a need of my mine. And thank God it's a job that always has a little percent of fun. I also try to keep this fun for the people who work for me. We don't need to suffer in life. We already have enough problems.

Was there a breakthrough moment or project that put you on the map?

Yes, I won a competition from Abet Laminati, which is like Formica in America. It's the most important high-pressure laminate producer in Europe. They asked several people to design laminates, and I found this so intriguing that instead of sending one design, I sent 50. They asked me, "You like this job?" I said yes. My first job was with them. This was Invoice No. 1. I worked for them for 30 years until a few years ago.

You lived in Asia from the early '80s until 2000. How did your experience there evolve your practice as a designer?

I learned a lot. Over there, I was working more on craft, because the factories in

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