

Italy's super-salesmen come to Moma

It's been years since the Modern Museum has had the funds to mount a show like this new-generation "good design" exhibition designed by Curator Emilio Ambasz, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Italy, the Italian institute of Foreign Trade, and Gruppo ENI; with financial contributions from ENI companies, Fiat, Olivetti, Anonima Castelli, Alitalia, and Abet Print.



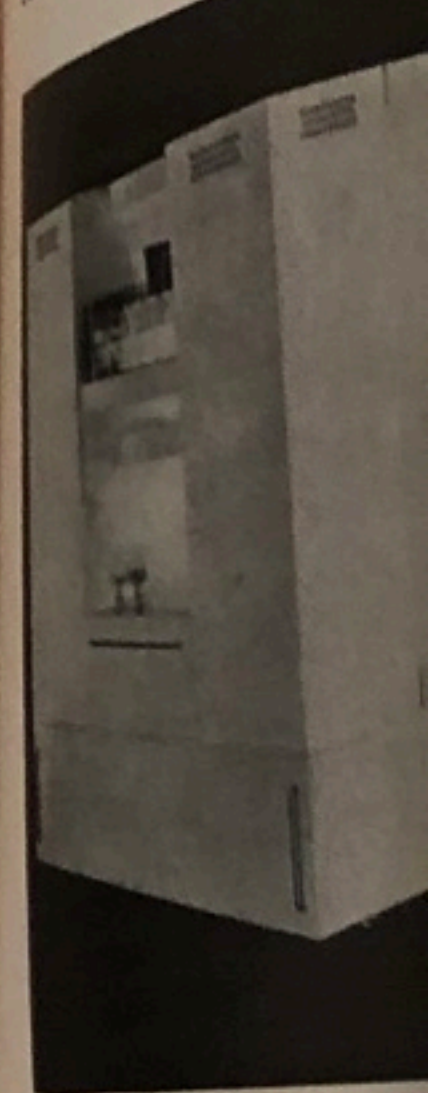
1 New York's Museum of Modern Art frankly describes ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE, on view in its gardens and several ground-floor galleries from May 26 through September 11, as "one of the most ambitious design exhibitions" it has ever undertaken. Definitely it is that—and in more ways than one. Displaying not merely 180-odd industrially manufactured objects for household use by about 100 different designers, but also eleven specially commissioned, specially designed, specially made life-size environments for living, it is accompanied by an introductory large-screen "orientation" color and sound film, by eleven TV color and sound films explaining the environments, by an audio-visual summation presented in a final "commentary" gallery, and by a 432-page book containing 520 illustrations (124 in color) edited by Emilio Ambasz, published by the Museum in collaboration with Centro Di, Florence, and selling for \$9.95 paperbound and \$15.00 clothbound. It includes a detailed catalog of the exhibition, a multi-authored history of Italy's modern design movement, quite a lot of literary philosophizing on what design is all about plus speculation on what the domestic landscape of humanity is becoming. The tome is uneven in literary quality (to put it mildly).

The exhibition as a whole is equally uneven and pretentious. Worse still, it is disturbingly ambiguous, as *The New York Times*' Ada Louise Huxtable commented in her slambang May 26th review.

Mobile utopia without cluttering possessions?

With so many collaborators, one could hardly ask for a uniform philosophy. After all the designers of the eleven environments were given a completely free hand. The disturbing ambiguity to which Mrs. Huxtable referred was not the result of the variety of viewpoints expressed but of a clear split between two contradictory points of view. In general the exhibition's verbalized philosophy and most of the environments, as well, expressed a lofty, anti-materialistic, anti-status attitude in

...become shopping
ABS stacking storage
by Anna Castelli Ferrieri
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1 Moma's terraces become shopping malls.

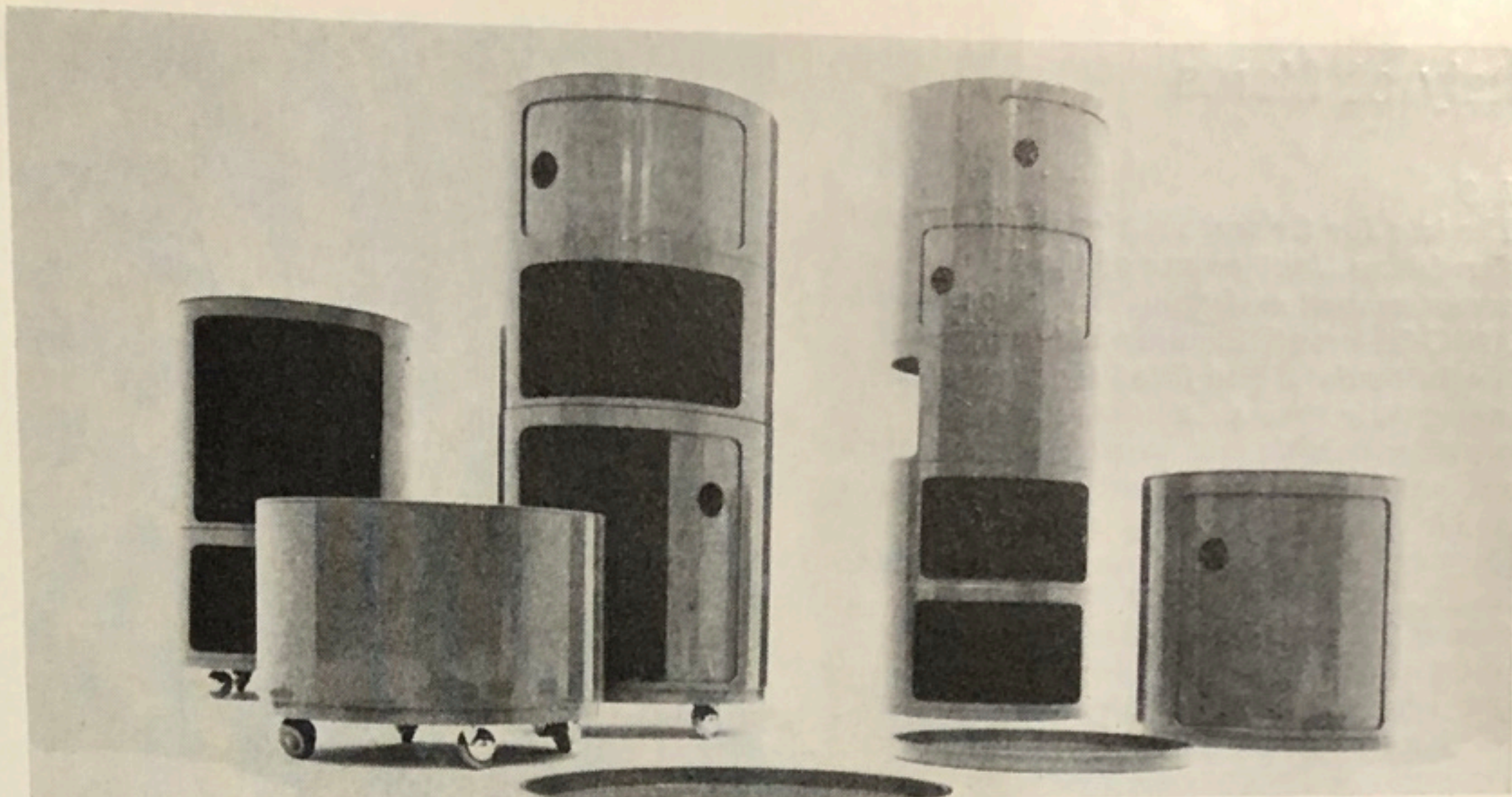
2 Kartell-made ABS stacking storage units designed by Anna Castelli Ferrieri.

3, 4 An "object" that makes any old tent or castle a home: Alberto Seassaro's "central block" folds out to reveal bed, table, wardrobe, toilet shelves.

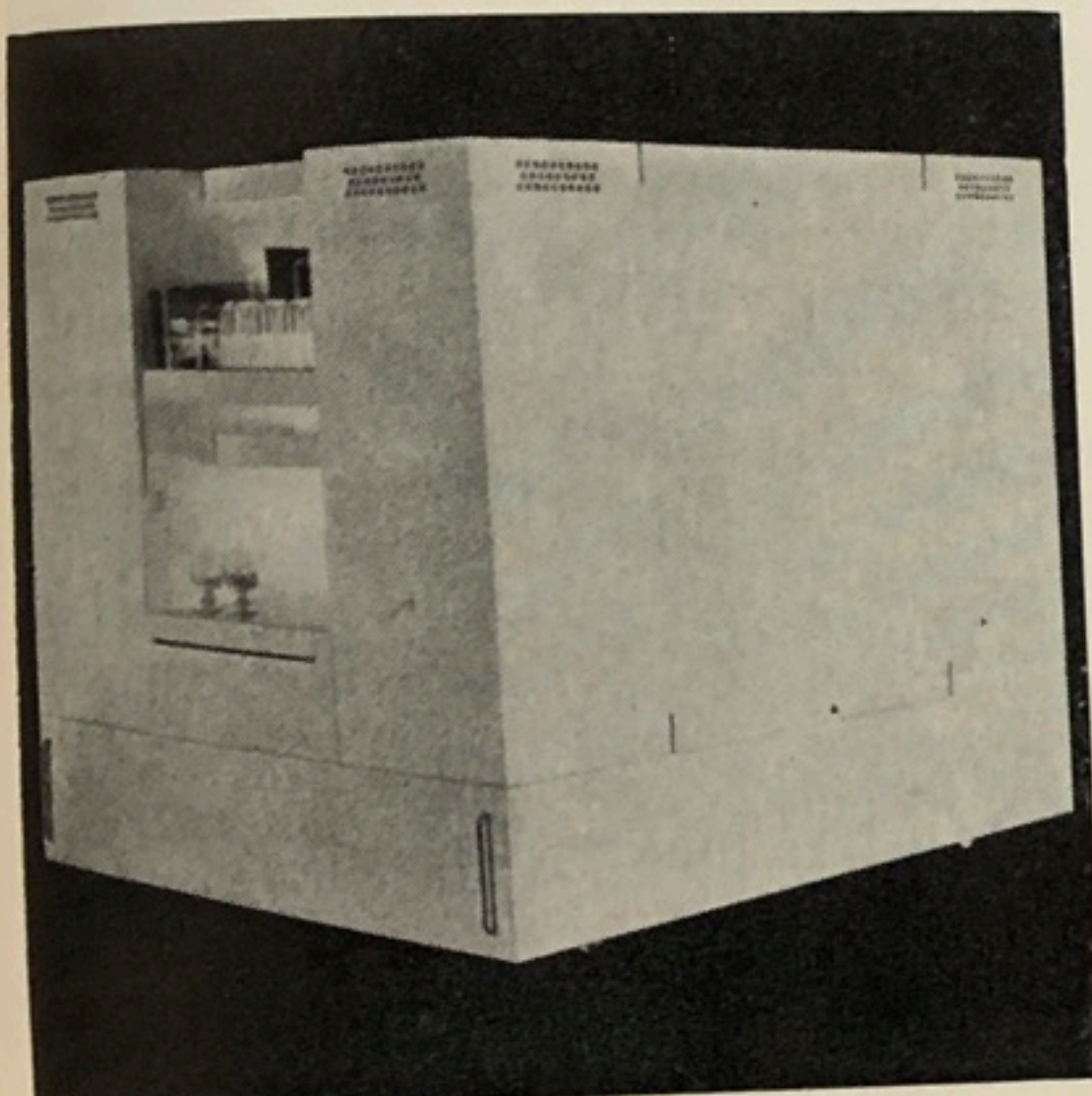
5 By Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper, a child's chair, polyethylene, from Kartell.

6 Also by Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper, the famous 2-part, hinged, portable, Brionvega-made ABS plastic radio.

7 RB is the manufacturer, Giancarlo Iliprandi the designer of "Arcipelago" (Archipelago) combinable 4-piece steel/aluminum kitchen.



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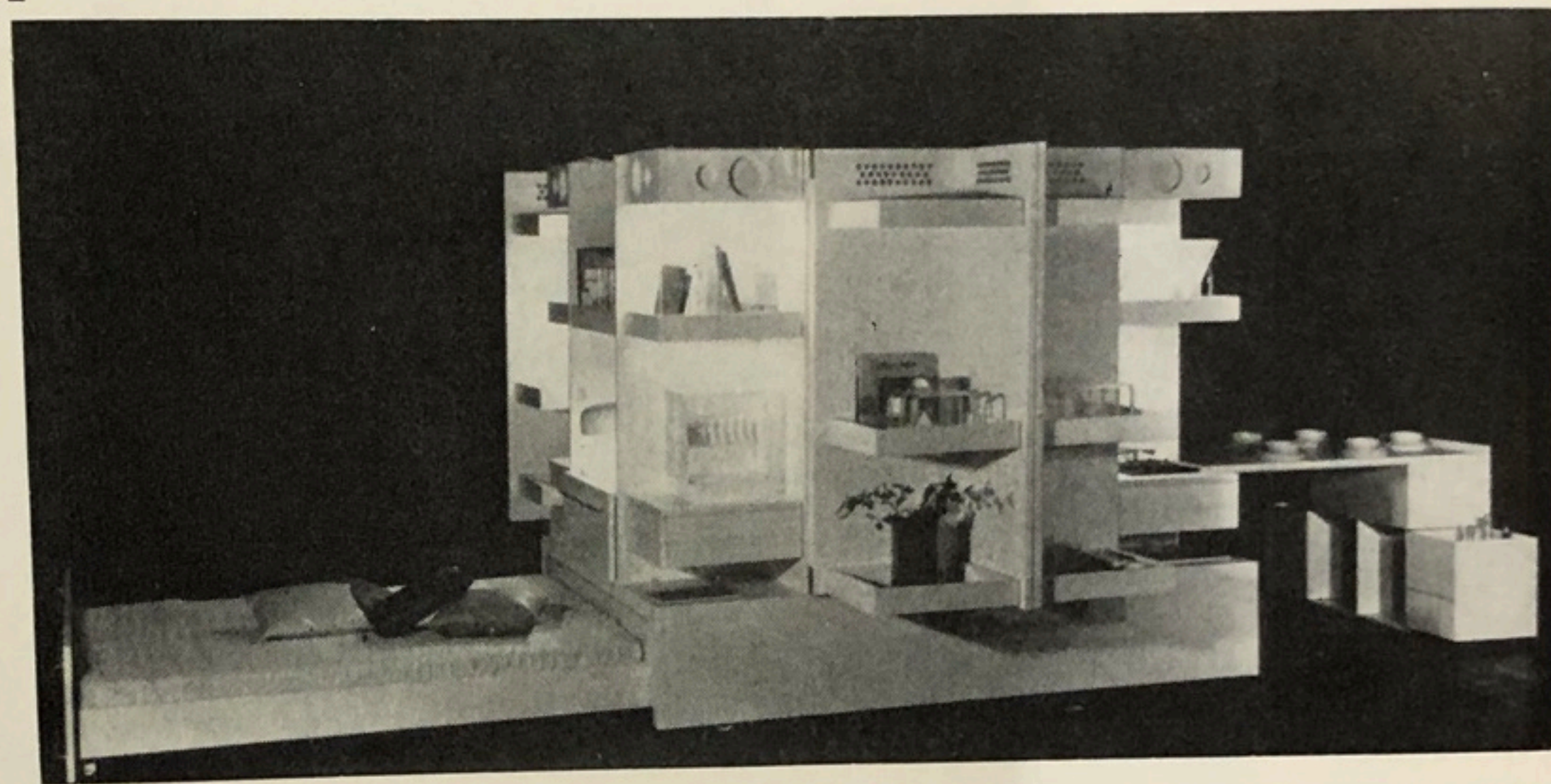
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keeping with a mobile, intellectual, egalitarian, environment-and-nature-preserving way of life.

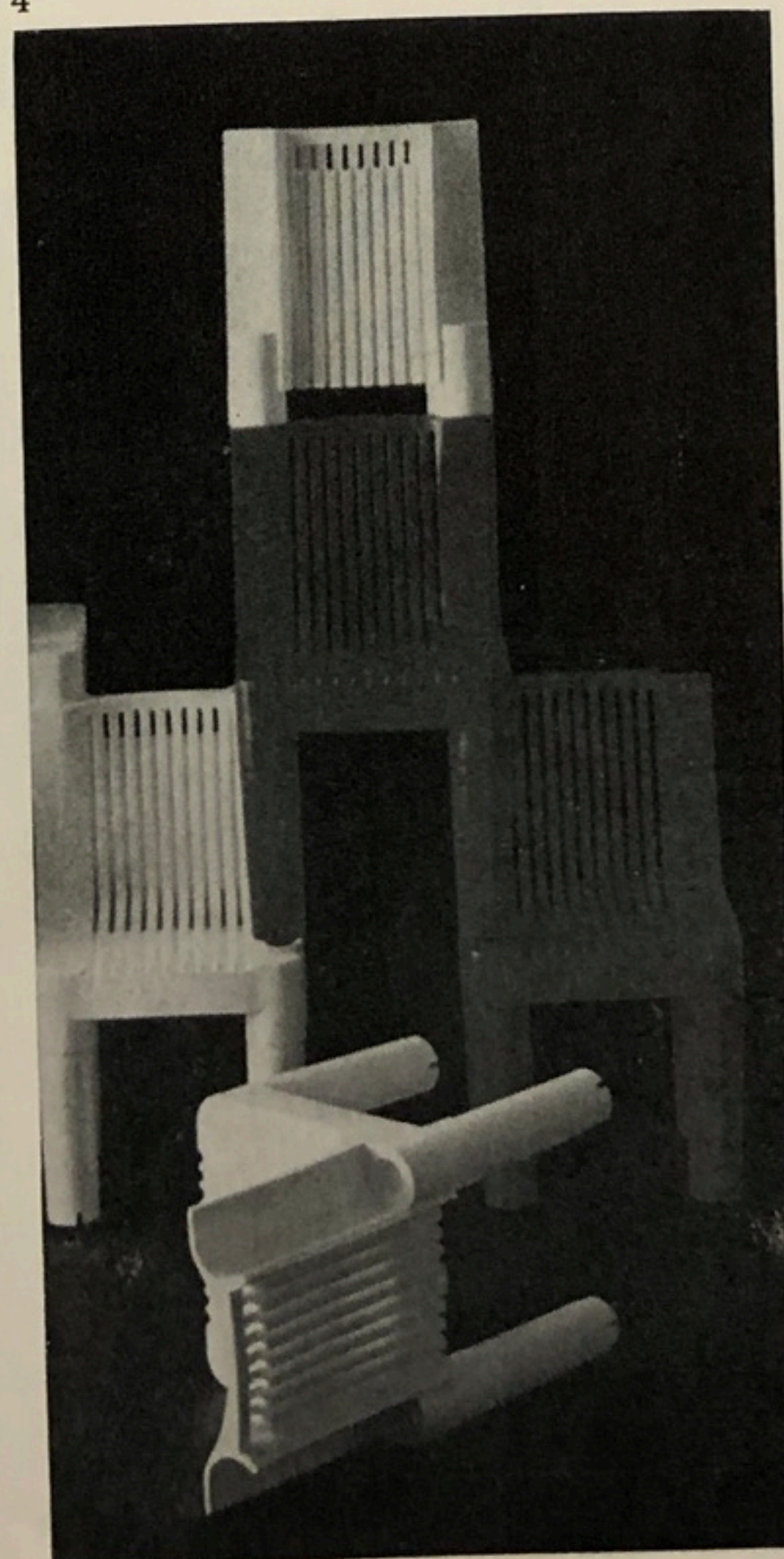
In spite of the fact that two of the environments were doomsday warnings of what might befall mankind if we continue in our sinfully high-consuming ways—and one of the environments was simply a spoof—most of the pleasant and feasible ones suggested that by the year 2000 (or name your date for a future by which significant and perceptible changes will be discernible in our domestic landscape), mankind will have done with lamps and chairs and rugs and tables and ash trays and book shelves and cabinets and dressers and ovens and sinks. Instead we will be using all-encompassing cores for environments where all storage and mechanical services, as well as seating, sleeping, and surface furniture, will be built in—to be pulled out and operated as needed.

Roomette cores to hook into caves or castles

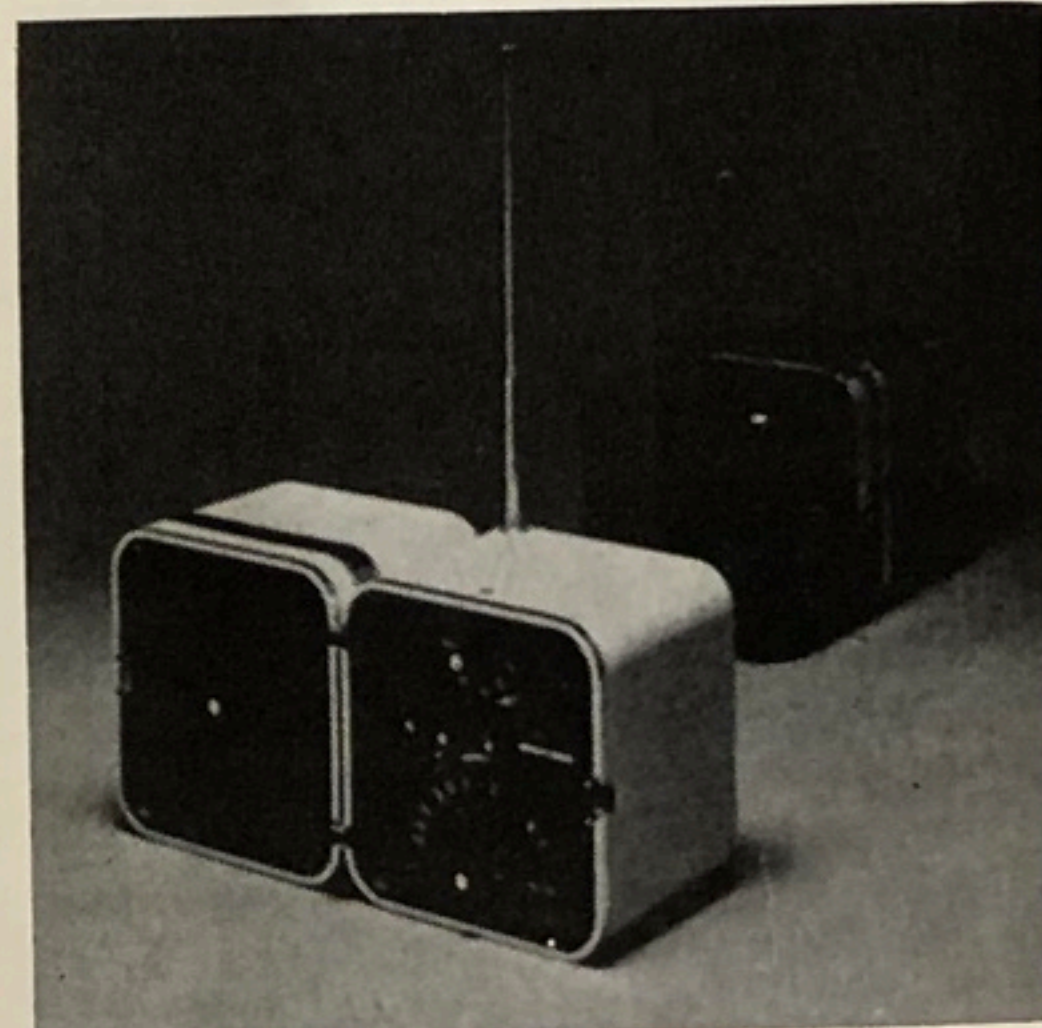
Some of these cores will include their own weather protection, serving as mobile homes to be lived in on a kind of rootless lifelong camping trip. Three of these environments include their own automotive support. Others—including neither shelter nor wheels—will nevertheless encourage a nomadic way of life because they will provide all mechanical amenities to whatever found shelter—be it warehouse, old apartment



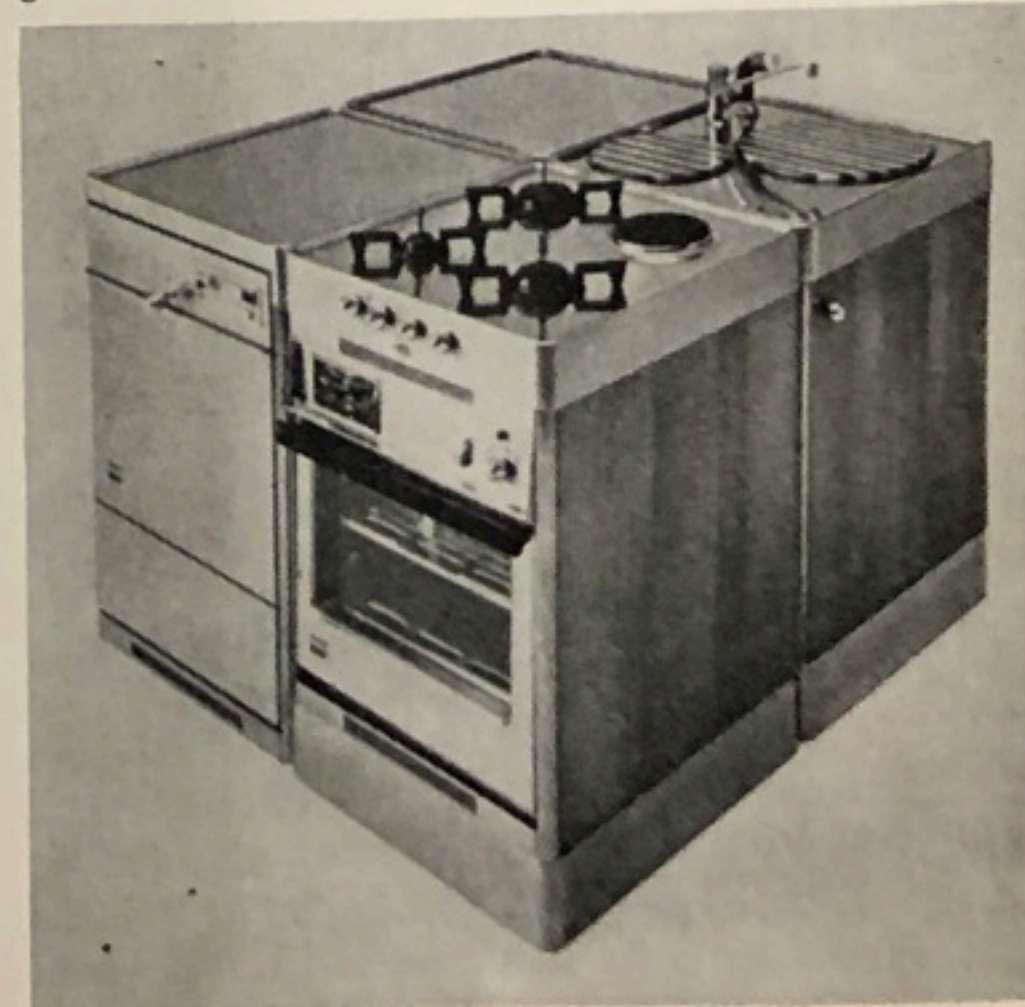
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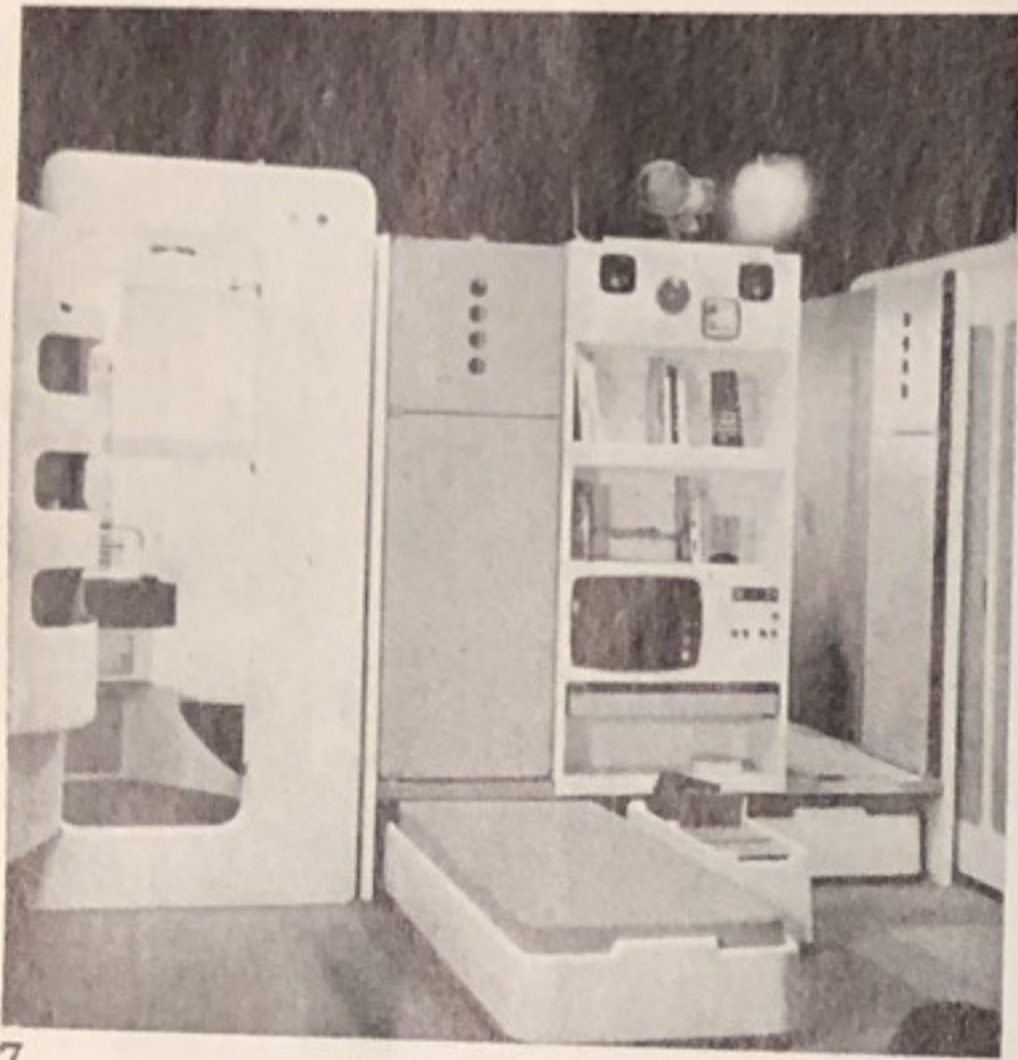
Italy at Moma

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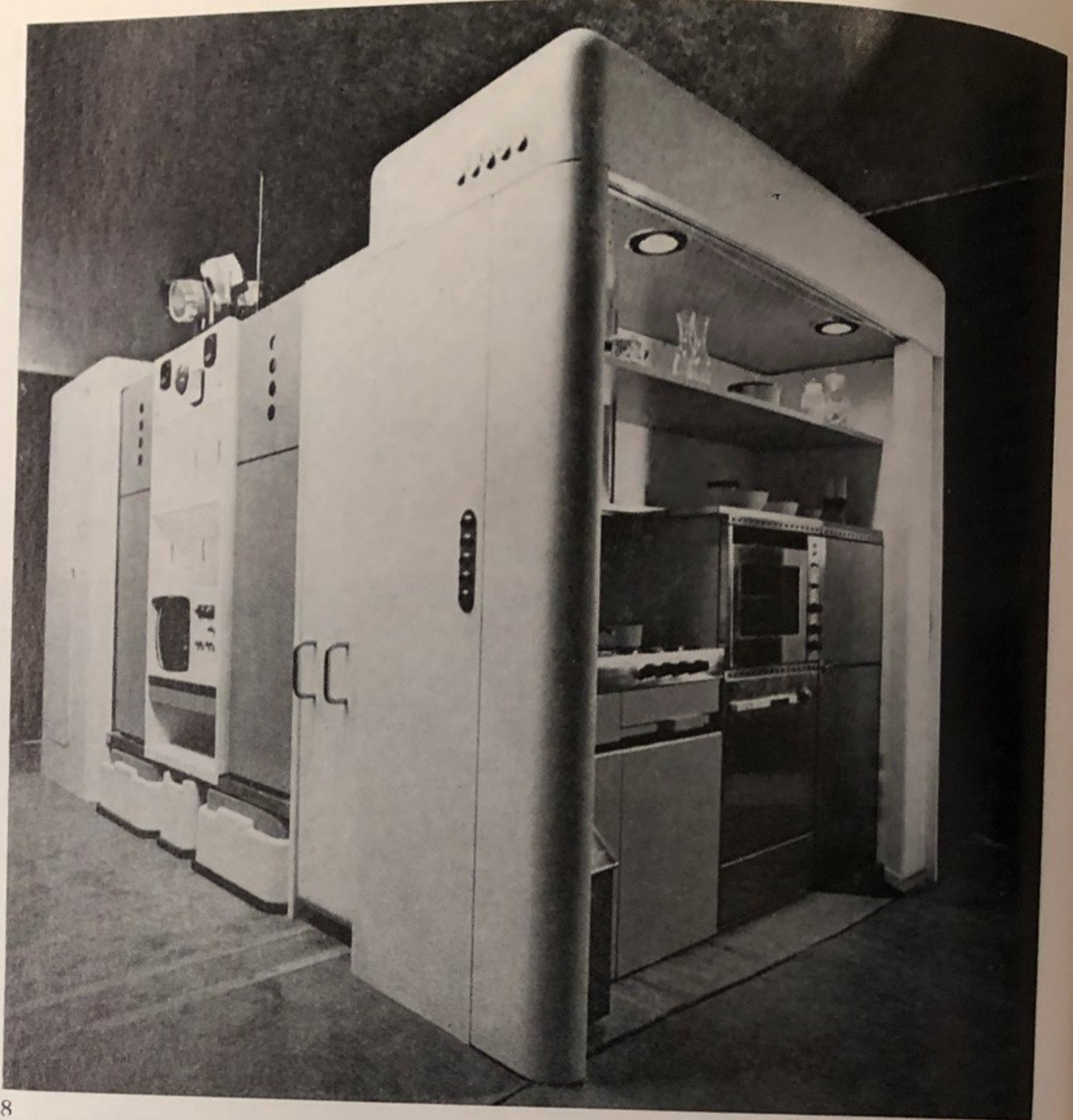
The late Joe Colombo designed this "Total Furnishing Unit" as one of the 11 commissioned environments. Sponsored by ANIC-Lanerossi, Elco-FIARM, Boffi, and Ideal Standard, and fitted together more ingeniously than a Chinese puzzle, it provides flexible and sometimes overlapping use kitchen, bathroom, cupboard, wardrobe, and bed-privacy facilities. Put it in a warehouse space and you have a home.

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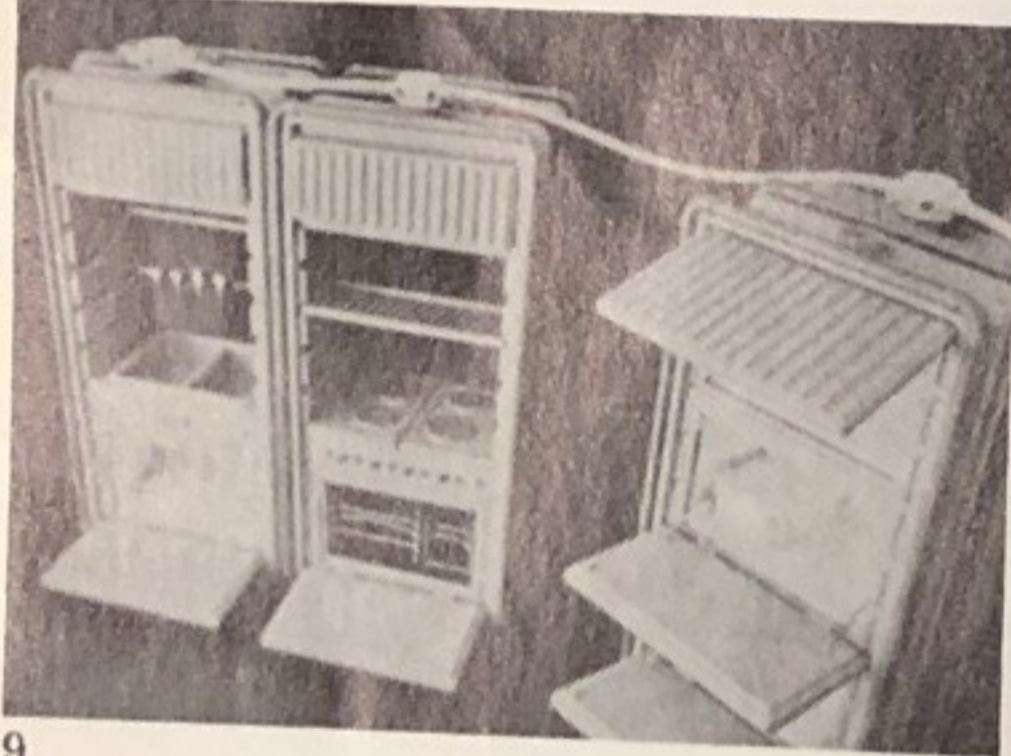
Ettore Sottsass designed mechanical units whose tube-like frames fit together and whose innards provide every kind of mechanized amenity for sheltered habitations.



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house, cave, inflated structure, unimproved castle—the owner finds it convenient to use on a permanent or temporary basis. In any case, being as self-contained, shipshape, complete, and tight for space as pullman roomettes, these environments will clearly not allow for a cluttered, possession-obsessed way of life. Goodbye bric-a-brac! Begone objects of art and fashion and elegance! Farewell impulse shopping! Adieu pretty things—even well-designed objects!

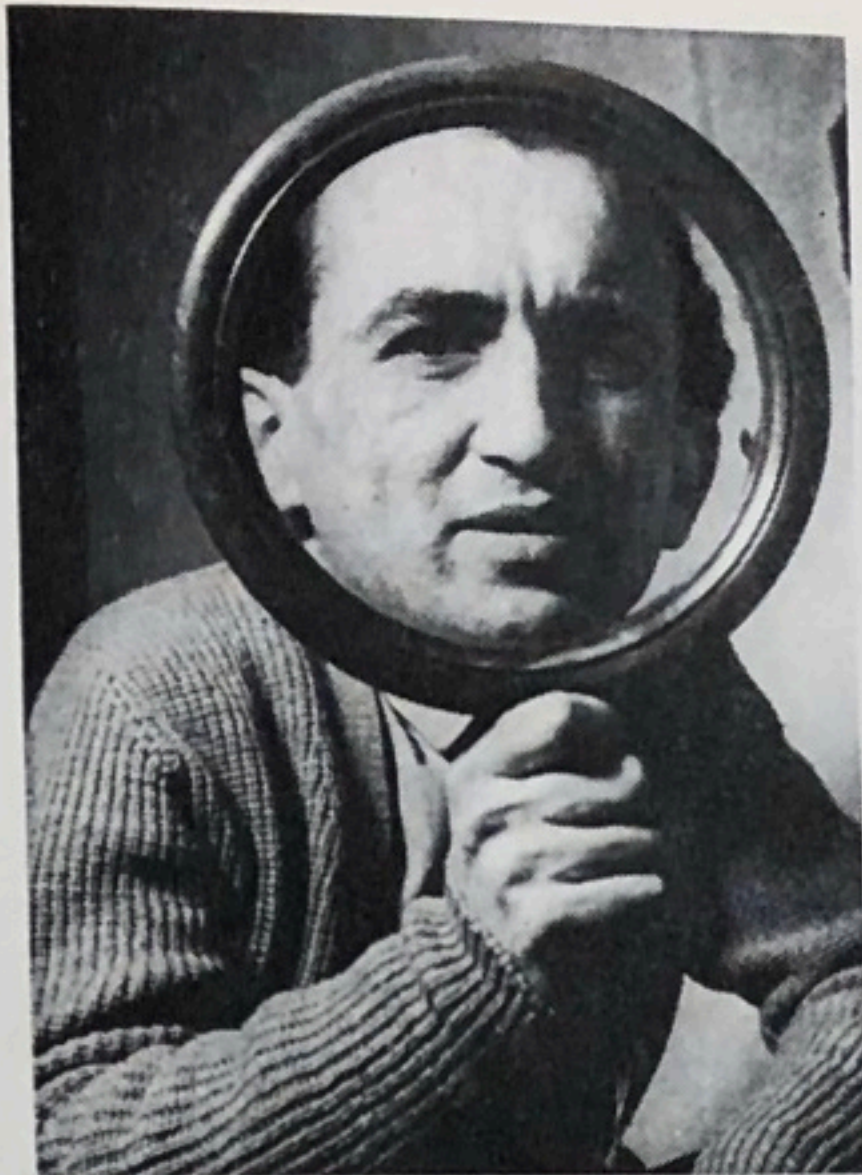
Shopping orgy in the sun vs. black purgatory

The big joke on the public is that objects are the most successful part of this exhibition—most successful inherently, and most successful in presentation—so that the final impact of the show is to lure the observer into the shopping orgy of all time. The objects

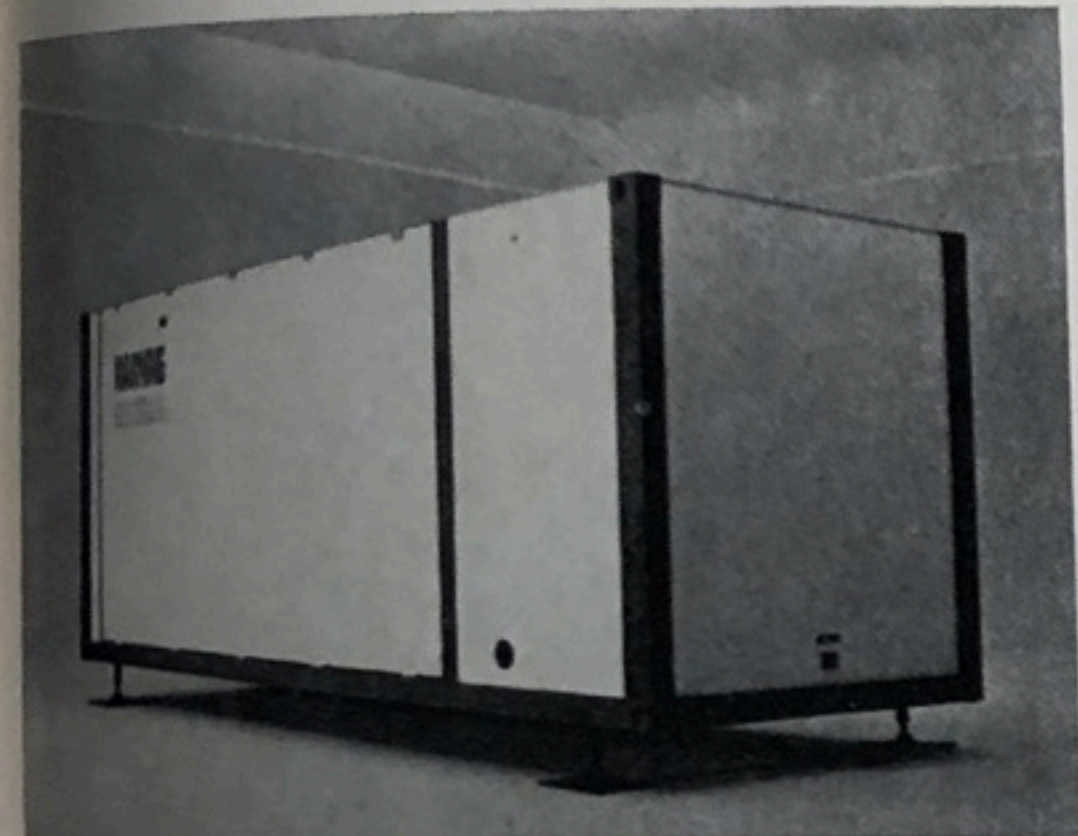
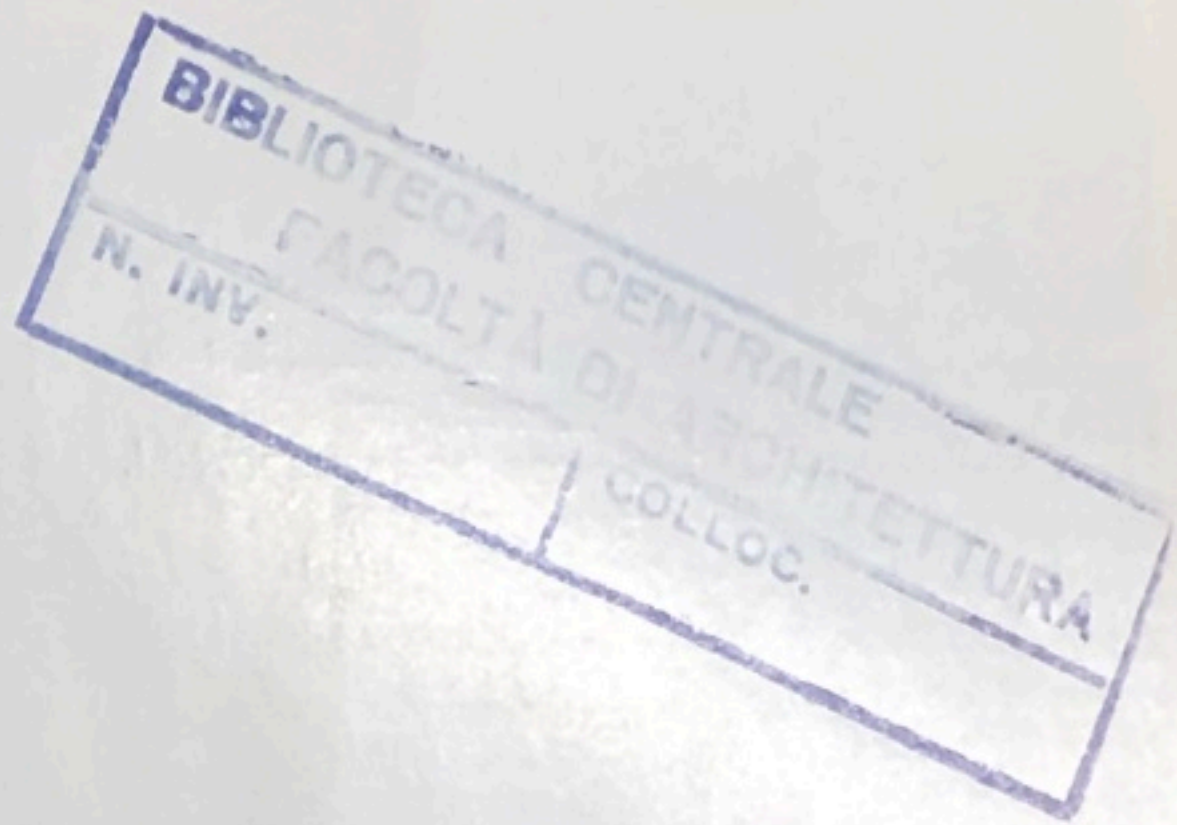


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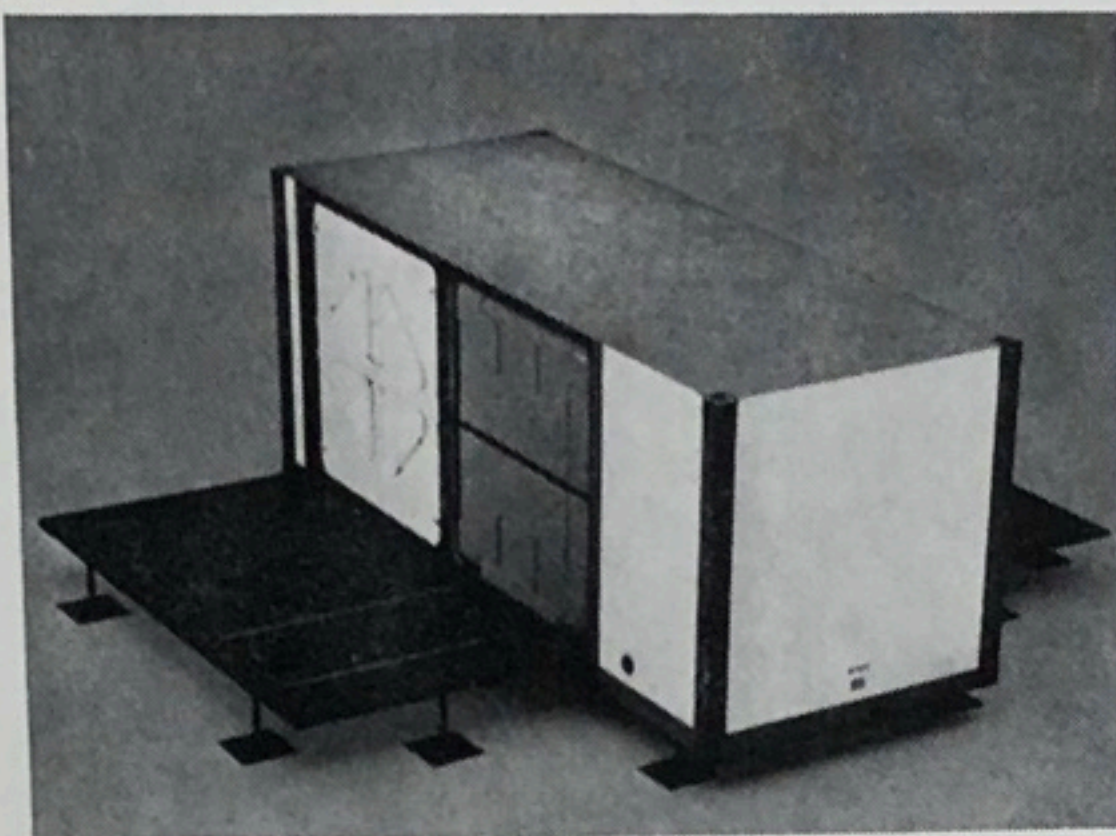
11 Marco Zanuso (from a photo in INTERIORS in 1954), emerged as the giant of the exhibition. An architect/designer/urbanist who figured prominently in the Triennales of 1948, 1951, and 1954, and a major figure in Italian architecture, Zanuso, now working in partnership with Richard Sapper, designed not only many of the best manufactured objects in the Italian show, but the most rational, appealing "environment".



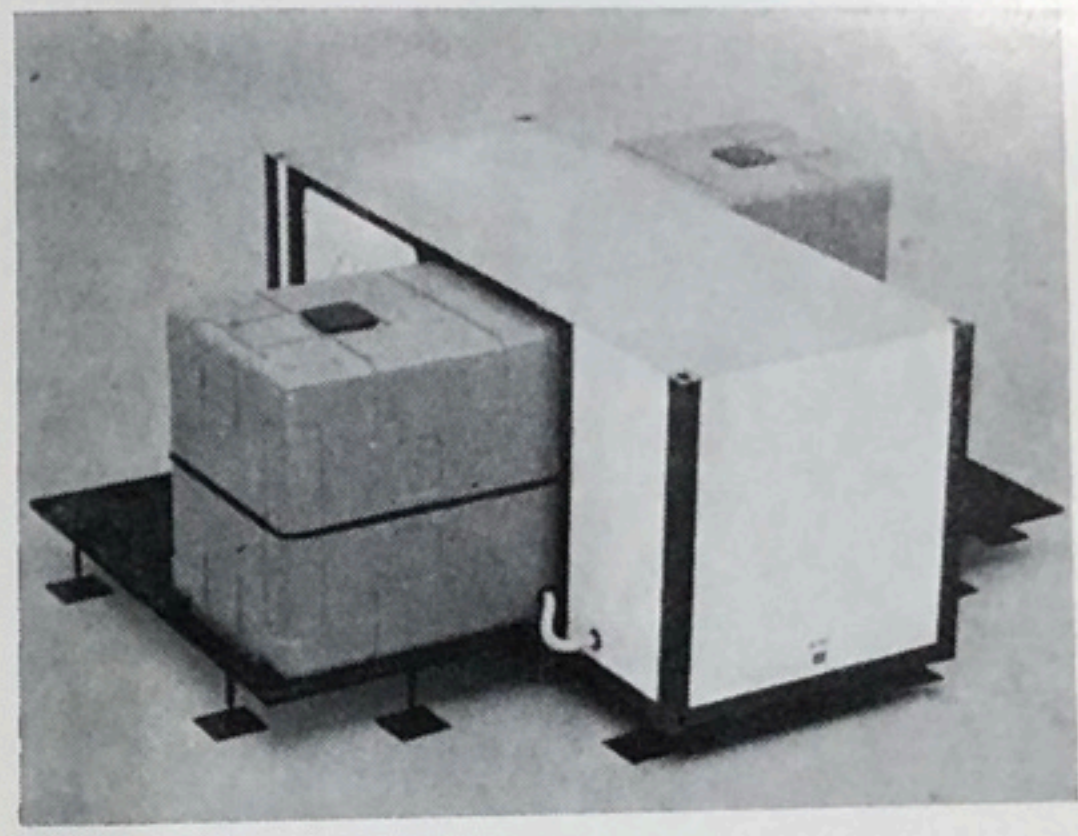
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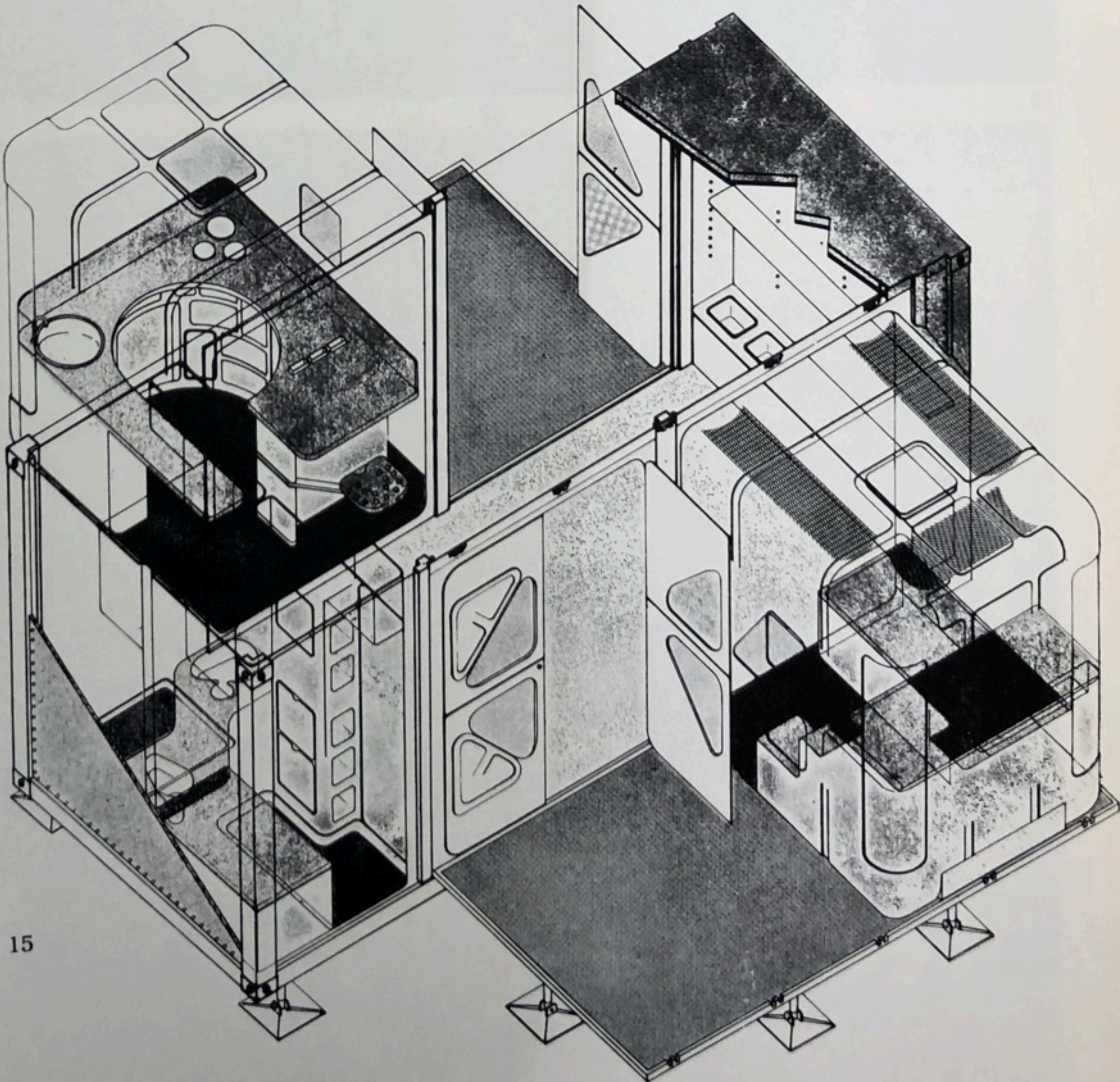
are not merely functional but elegant, endearing, visually refreshing and "with-it". Even Philip Johnson admitted that "this is . . . the first major movement that makes Mies's Barcelona chair look not exactly dated, but like what it is—a classic."

The accentuation of the *objects*—available on the market here and now (happy, happy AI, George Beylerian, ICF, Knoll, Kreuger, Harvey Propper, Stendig!—to name a few of the importers of Italian furniture, and the importers of Italian lamps and accessories are too numerous to mention) is obvious in the organization of the exhibition and the display techniques.

The objects are shown outdoors on two levels of the Museum terraces in wooden shipping crates which—as folded out for display—stand two stories high. Laid out in rows, the tall crates make delightful streets—psychologically shopping streets.

The shipping/display crates, of ruddy unfinished vertical wood planks (with glass fronts) were designed by the exhibition's over-all director, Emilio Ambasz, in collaboration with Thomas Czarnowski and technical consultants Giancarlo Piretti (the architect whose AID-award-winning folding, plastic-seated "Piretti" chair is in the show and exclusive with Kreuger in the states) and Justin Henshell. The patron (provider of wherewithal) was Anonima Castelli of Bologna, manufacturers of wood, metal, and plastic furniture.

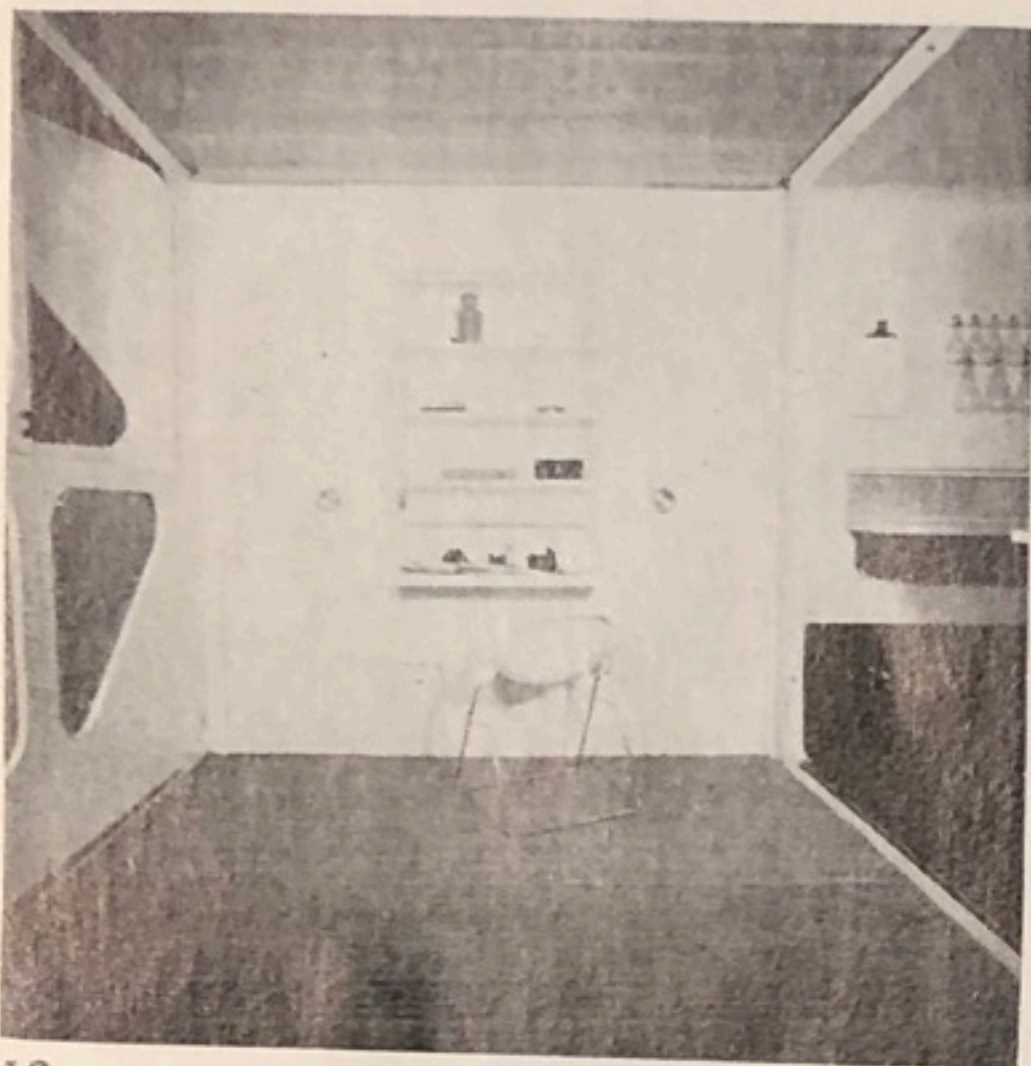
The double-layering of the crates was predicated on the need for protection in shipping, while the doubling of their height in display position was ration-



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Italy at Moma

Studio Zanuso's shipping-container "environment" provides its own weather shelter and can be set down in groupings so as to make instant communities anywhere the containers can be transported. The two long walls of the container are in part hinged and may be folded down to form terraces. Two large plastic capsules, one containing the bed, the other the kitchen, slide out from the interior of the capsule onto the terraces during normal use. Two further plastic capsules contain toilet and wardrobe. Containers can also be stacked. Container white, capsules yellow.



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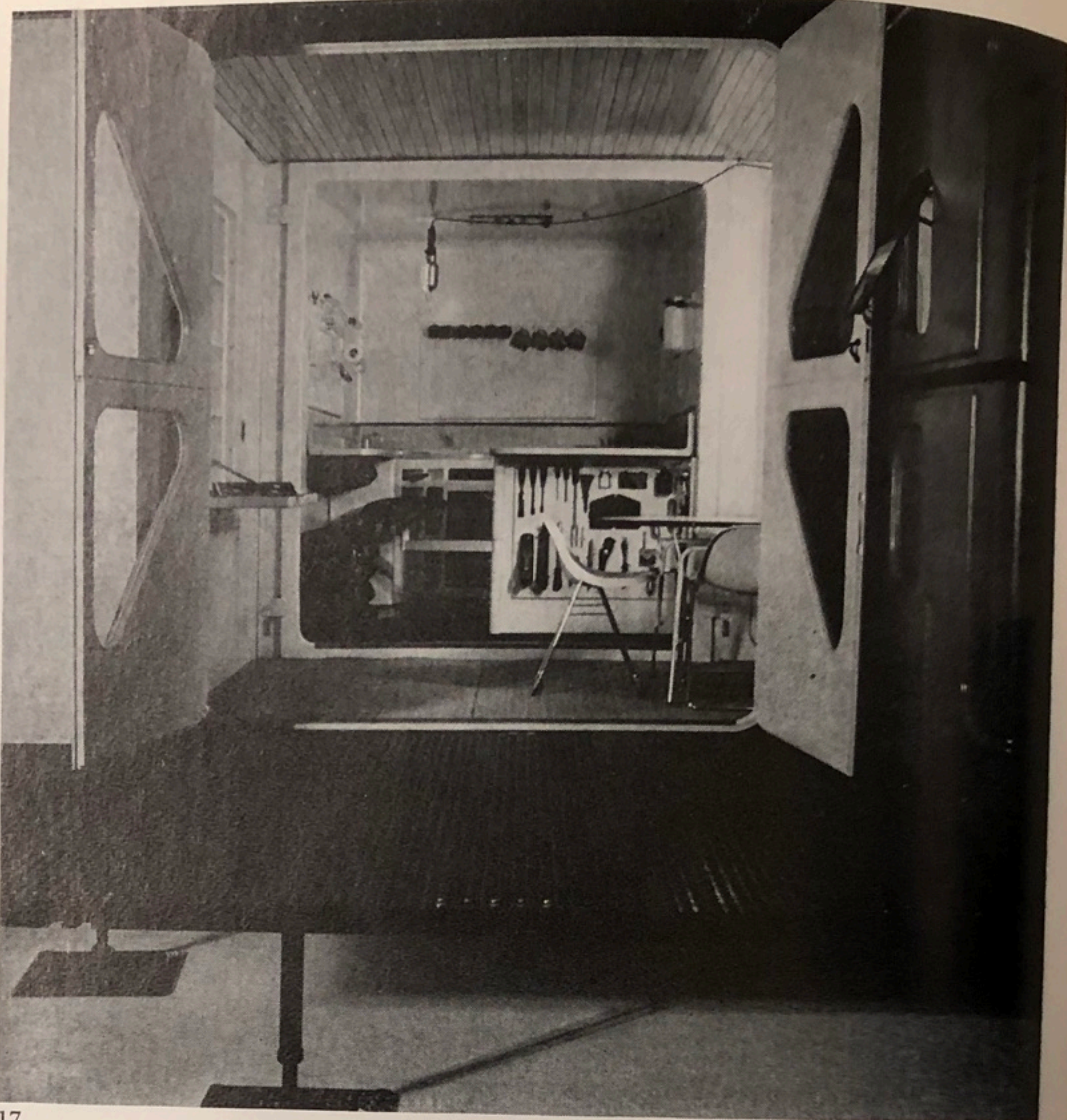
alized as a way of projecting a shadow to fight sun glare. In fact the sun glare often triumphs—at certain hours one must press one's nose to the glass to see the objects. The point is that one does. One can't resist exploring. What these high crates really succeed in creating is an architectural milieu giving importance to small and medium-sized objects which would be lost in conventional open display spaces.

The environments, on the other hand, are displayed in purgatory-like interior blackness. Ostensibly this destroys the reality of the familiar here and now, and aids one's perception of the TV films. Actually it gives even the most attractive of the environments a rather ominous aspect and a stuffy smell to boot. Voices from the TV films send a confusing cacophony from all sides. One can't wait to get out, back to the fresh air, sunshine, and that fascinating bazaar.

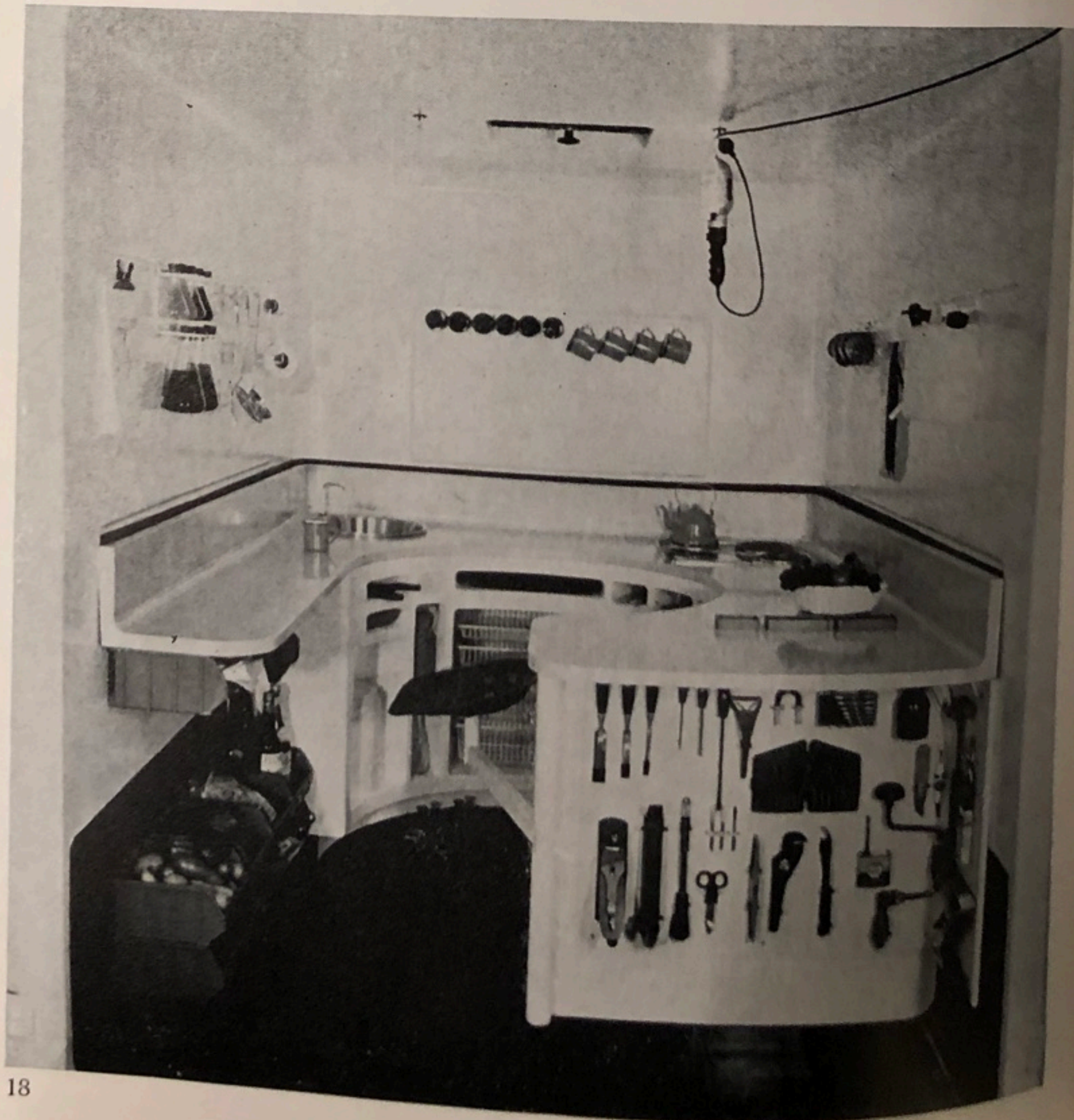
An export Triennale

A glance through the historical chapters in the exhibition book reinforces the recognition one feels on reading the names of the participating designers. Though we are living in an age of plastics now—of flowing molded forms unattainable in the fifties—we have seen this kind of elegance before. The exquisite plywood baroque of Carlo Molino's desk and chair in the book (and shown in INTERIORS in 1948) is in a

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More on Zanuso's
16. Built-in storage is
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Note that there is
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Washing machine
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More on Zanuso's containerized capsules:

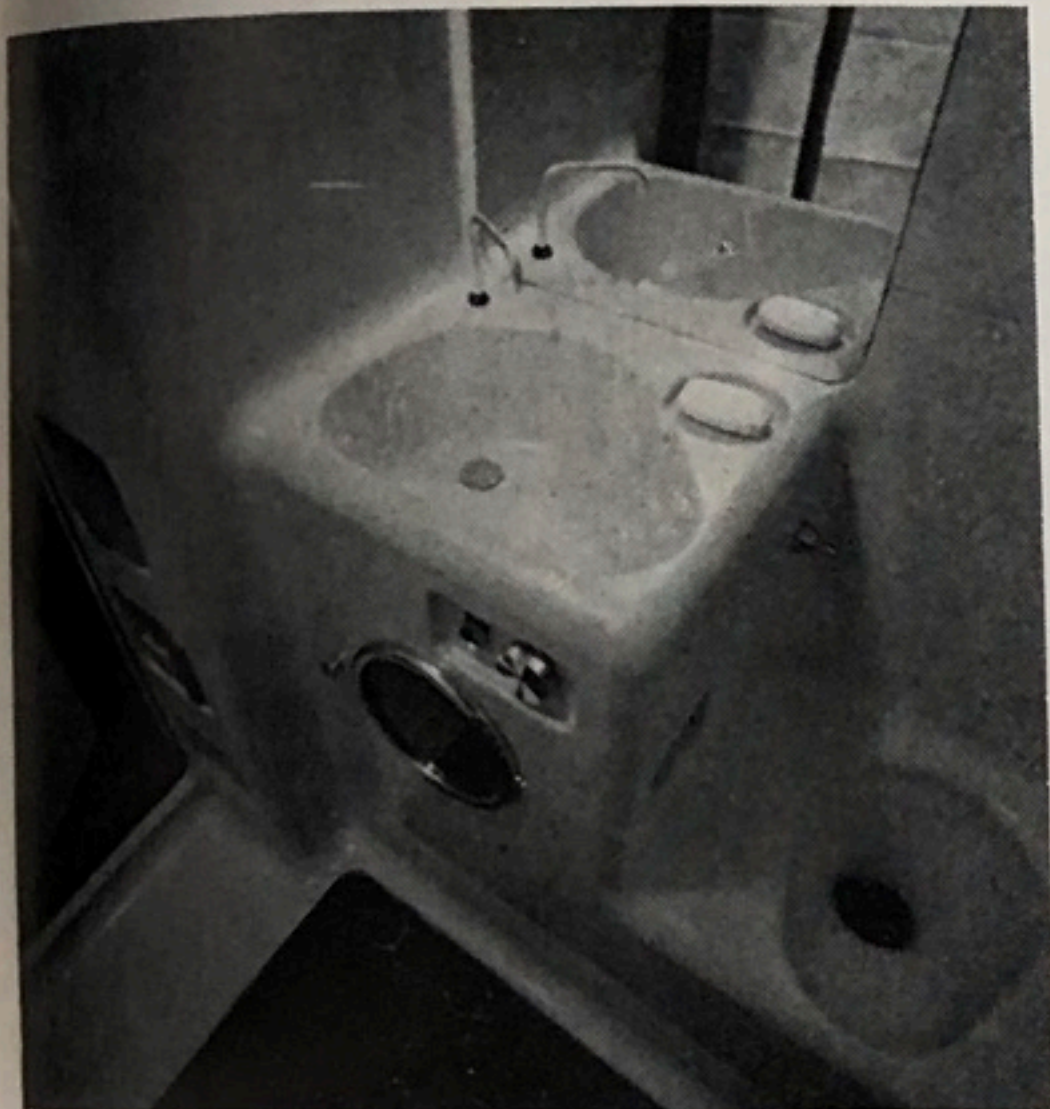
16 Built-in storage is part of the convenience. Doors admit daylight even when closed.

17, 18 Note that there is the warmth of wood to be enjoyed, and a place for hobbies.

19 Washing machine and storage are recessed into molded plastic bathroom shell.

20, 21 Foam mattresses, foam seating slabs, and storage containers stack accommodatingly. The skeleton is steel with fiber-reinforced plastic panels.

Patrons were ANIC and FIAT. Producers were FIAT, Rio, Cartell, with the participation of Boffi and Ideal Standard.



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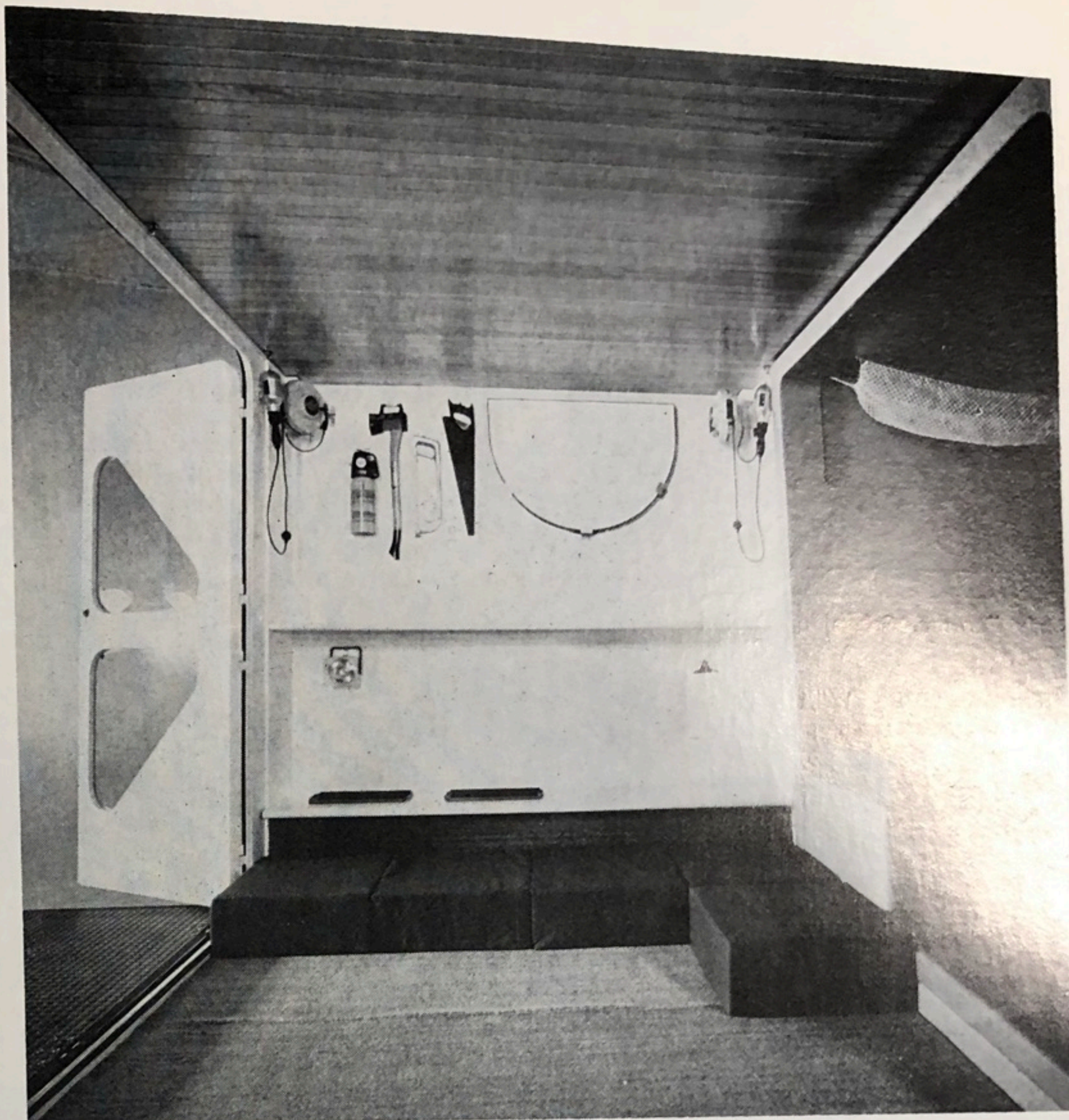
familiar tradition. Ideological broadcast harangues characterized the 1960 Triennale of Milan. Government-sponsored, industry-supported design exhibitions have been generating interest in Italian products since World War II.

What we are seeing, in other words, is an improved version of an old ploy. Eurodomus, the Milan Furniture Exposition, and other fairs have taken the place of the Triennale (temporarily or permanently scuttled by student vandalism and policy squabbles). But the Triennale is international. Why not send a 100% Italian package to the U.S. market? What better way to spend one's advertising lire than in a dazzling, amusing, intellectual, and oh so uncommercial museum exhibition that everybody who is anybody will flock to?

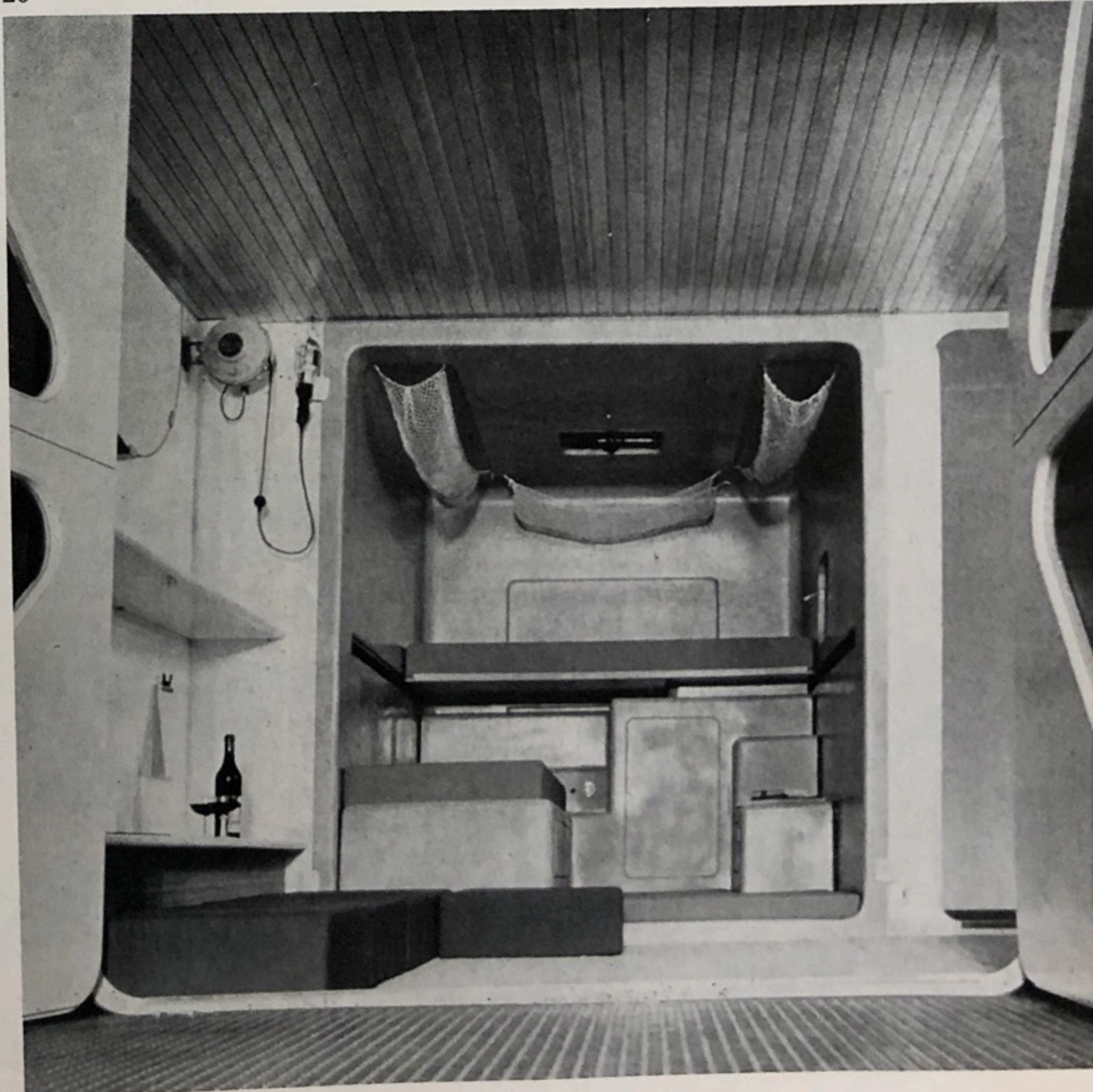
Elegance, Originality, Inventiveness

The objects are in general extremely beautiful examples of what Italy's enlightened manufacturers can turn out, using an advanced technology which makes our giant corporations look clumsy, and taking gambles on Italy's gifted designers which show that they know when to gamble.

One can quibble; obviously there was no single controlling point of view. Pop Art furniture and lamps, super-luxurious objects of massive size and little function, and an assortment of things meant to shock or amuse (continued page 92)



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SUPERLATIVE METHODS OF SPOTTING CARPETS ARE AVAILABLE TO YOUR CLIENTS

Any salesman or maintenance expert who tells you a floor machine cleans deeply . . . then tells you you have to pre-spot and that you can remove most spots with the same solution by using clean white cloths, hasn't much respect for your intelligence. But that is about all you hear.

Spots are what your clients are most concerned about and methods of spotting that require selection of spotters and working on the floor with eye droppers and spatulas went out for our customers 18 years ago. The first airline that bought Argosheen then, still maintains they've never found a spot it will not take up.

Spotting, as a separate operation, has never been successful. Among the other problems involved, besides time and failure, is trying to bring the surrounding carpet up to the super-clean condition of the spot with methods that leave the dirty solution in the carpet.

That's why our customers have been cleaning their whole carpets with mops. We've recently learned how to mop with a floor machine, which solves problems of soil-release found in some of the new carpets, and enables us to dry synthetic carpets as quickly as wool.

You just spray the spots with an ARGOSHEEN solution and remove them with absorbent cotton pads attached to the brush of a rotary machine. More pads wet with plain water do the rising and dry pads do the drying . . . for immediate use.

If the whole carpet is soiled just keep going. It takes no longer to get dirt up than to try to hide it.

Like to see what it's all about? \$12 and your letter-head will bring you enough to clean several rooms . . . and to see why so many Interior Designers and carpet stores are carrying ARGOSHEEN for their clients (even giving it) . . . because it cuts down on complaints so drastically.



ARGOSHEEN
Argo & Company, Inc.,
Dept. 1-7
P.O. Dr. 2747
182 Ezell St.,
Spartanburg, S. C. 29302



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Textbooks (Continued from page 84)

usable standard textbook for the beginner, while the advanced student will learn much by dipping into the discursive dialogues in the Friedmann-Pile-Wilson work. It is worth its \$14.00 for Wilson's 80-page section alone.

Students who have acquired a taste for Forrest Wilson's lucid, hilarious, illustrated analysis of interior construction will be happy to learn that his section in the Friedmann-Pile-Wilson textbook is not all he has between covers. He is turning out a series of small books for Van Nostrand Reinhold on architecture. All are subtitled A BOOK OF PROJECTS FOR YOUNG ADULTS because each principle explained is accompanied by an exercise for the reader to carry out. So far we have seen the volumes titled ARCHITECTURE and (listed on page 84), ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT.

All are jewels; don't fall for that "young adult" bit. Mr. Wilson is a genius at clarifying both principles and mechanisms in very few words and drawings, and this aging child, for one, is finding his books highly educational.—O.G.

Italy's Super-Salesmen (Continued from page 85)

were included among absolutely elegant exercises in rational functionalism.

Leaving aside the matter of visual art and fine Italian workmanship, rational functionalism was most intriguing in products to serve as mechanical "centers" for the home. In this category belong those foldout island kitchens and furniture blocks containing beds, desks, conversation pits, lamps, and storage. The late Joe Colombo became identified with this kind of unit. Not only Italy but all Europe is ahead of the U.S. in fulfilling this need. Our one face-saving hope is our mobile homes industry.

The eleven "environments" go from politically oriented copouts such as the Archizoom group's fluorescent-lit square white unfurnished room . . . through doom-warnings such as Gaetano Pesce's subterranean dwelling for a "period of the Great Contaminations" (the TV film on the life of the naked, semi-savage, bored-silly inhabitants was as much fun as the cramped life-size, underground Aztec-style, polyethylene-lined dwelling . . . through an assemblage of multi-purpose red-plastic components by Gae Aulenti . . . through Mario Bellini's Kar-a-Sutra, a large, slow auto in which to play a grand piano, fornicate, or otherwise enjoy on the road . . . through two shelter centers with kitchen and bathroom utilities and storage, sitting, and sleeping furniture by Joe Colombo and Ettore Sottsass . . . to two mobile homes by Alberto Rosselli and Studio Marco Zanuso.

The two centers are fascinating pullman roomettes. Joe Colombo's (page 80) achieves luxuriousness through enticing design and fine workmanship) while Ettore Sottsass' (page 80) is extraordinary for the ingeniousness with which its tube framing system would allow the manufacturing of interchangeable parts providing energy for many utilities.

The two mobile homes are great. Alberto Rosselli's rectangular capsule enlarges by telescoping outward into spaces adequate for vacations, and combinable with other capsules too (not illustrated).

The masterpiece of the show is Studio Zanuso's mobile home in a standard shipping container (pages 81-83). Beautifully detailed, it would serve right now not only as a saleable and produceable product but as the unit for an instant city.

Studio Zanuso (Marco Zanuso and Richard Sapper) were of course the designers of some of the best items in the Italian Exhibition's product section. And Marco Zanuso, like Sottsass and Bellini, is one of those older-generation architects identified with the great Triennales of the forties and fifties. What the Moma show is all about is the capability of these architects—and the shrewdness of Italian industry in betting on them.—O.G.

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