



the baroque spirit in a modern house

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CARLO MOLLINO



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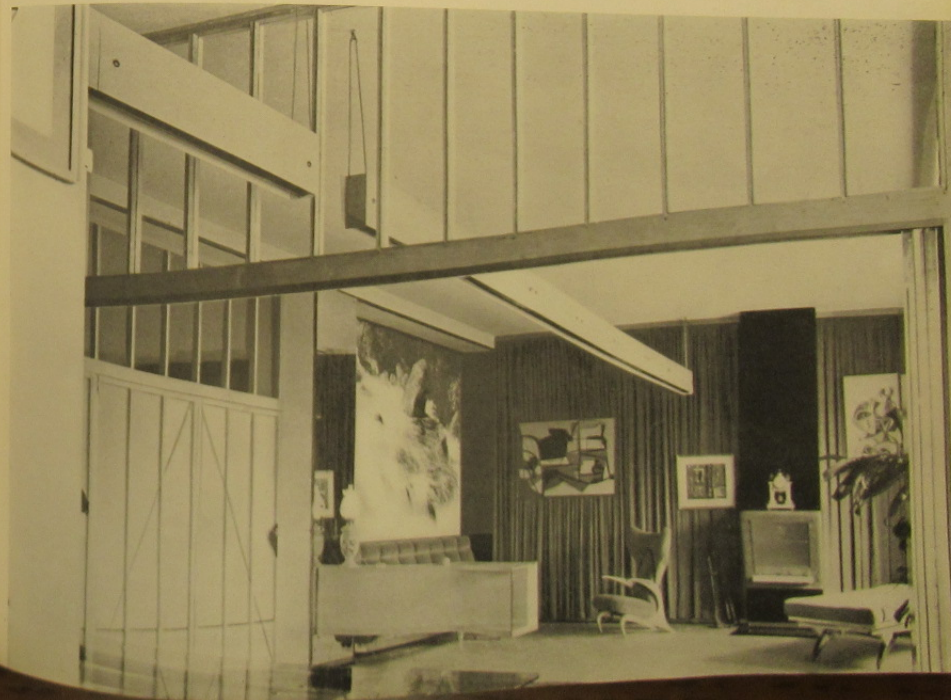
Baroque is the traditional style in the brisk, industrial city of Turin, and the baroque spirit still persists in the work of its untraditional architects, led by Carlo Mollino. Italy's other architects are sharply split on the subject of these modern manifestations of Turinese baroque. Some call it decadent. Others call it the style of the future, the answer to "international" architecture's outdated sterility. At first glance this proud hillside house by Mollino may seem eclectic rather than baroque, because although the furniture makes all the style's grandiloquently undulating gestures, the architectural frame around the interiors are strictly rectangular, with nary an arch, vault, or even one of those carved swags that identify cruder night club versions of *baroque moderne*.

The consistent method of the whole design lies in the spacious grandiosity of the volumes, in the way walls have been broken with curtains, screens, panels, and intersecting diaphragms to create large, dignified rhythms that control the eye and the physical movement of the occu-



Mollino uses all the arts. Entrance integrates red panels, gray door, large painting, marble shelf, fluorescent cone that rims the ceiling with light, black-enameled wood coat hooks (useful sculpture).

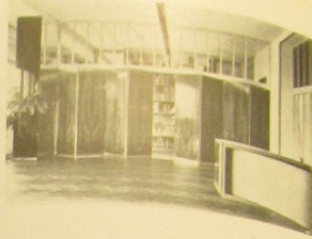
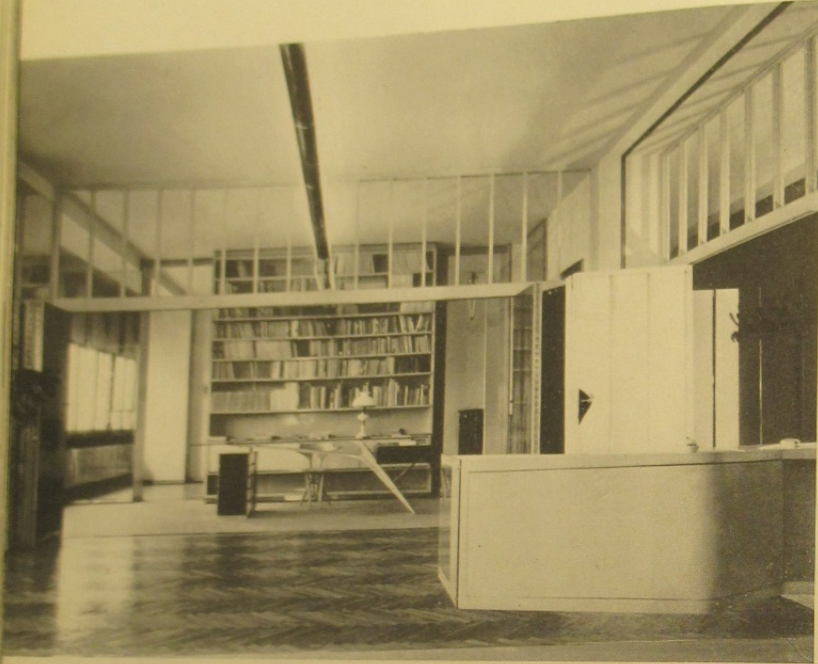
View from studio to living room shows the folding door (closed) of patented "Perkeo" plastic panels, with black glass and brass trim and yellow-painted wood framing. Yellow felt covers the parquet. Paintings by Cagli, Moreni, and Sironi hang before green velvet drapery. Red mosaic fireplace is cantilevered from black marble panel.



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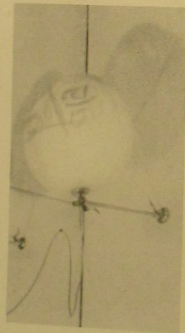


Folding window panels separate studio from living room. Like the living room doors they do not reach the ceiling, never completely cut up the big space. An athletic maple leg and a drawer unit support the desk's glass top.



These sliding planes do not destroy, but emphasize the sense of a unified space, and they focus attention inward, unlike the sweeping, almost invisible walls that turn consciousness outward in true "glass house" architecture.

In order to make the most of the space Mollino has used few pieces of furniture, cantilevering many from the walls. But each piece has the important baroque scale. Moreover every object in the interior plays an integral part in the architectural composition. You could not move the antique clock in front of the marble panel over the living room fireplace without destroying an essential focal point. The long, suspended lighting troughs are in the same scale as the trellis partitions and serve as architectural elements. In fact all the components of the interior—paintings, the photographic mural, furniture, lamps, plants—have been mobilized to achieve an integrated effect, a basic baroque habit. The sum of these luxurious, precious, and flamboyant elements is an effect of repose. This single body, firmly bound by continuous elements which belong to the construction itself, is a composition to live in without any need for change.—O.G.



View from living room to entrance shows folding doors open, round red marble shelf cantilevered from mirrored wall. (Small photographs are Empire brass door handle and brass-supported light globe.) Beside the completely cantilevered, green velvet sofa a mirrored column supports a completely cantilevered glass and maple commode. Framing of the space is emphasized by paint lines and the inset construction itself.

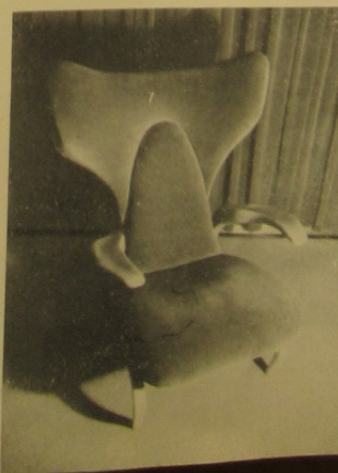
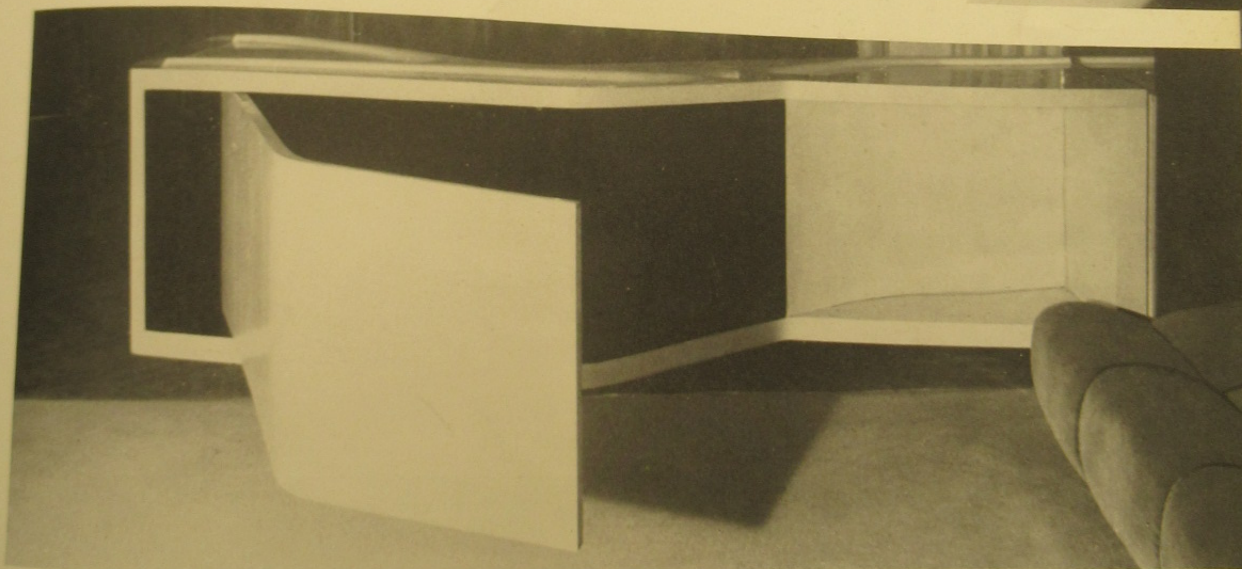


Above: The chair is maple trimmed. The fact that being comfortable is remarkably little its demand to support the sculpture, where



Above: The chair at the studio desk is natural-finished maple trimmed with its own exposed brass pins and bolts. The fact that it performs its practical function ably—being comfortable and ingeniously braced, and taking up remarkably little actual and visual space—does not alter its demand to be regarded as an objet d'art. For evidence to support the current theory that chairs are becoming sculpture, where could we find a better example?

The object below ("cabinet"? "commode"? "table"? "case") is completely cantilevered from a mirrored column, but that is not the only extraordinary thing about it. Its sculpturesque form and unboxy organization make it one of the few cabinets that could not possibly be called a "case" piece. The top emphasizes the organization of the inside. Yet, in spite of all this esoteric play, the object makes itself useful.



A plumper kind of sculpture: sleek green velvet foam rubber upholstery, is supported by a racy, attenuated frame.