

# Cassina

## **Ico Parisi, a prominent figure of Italian design, becomes part of the Cassina I Maestri Collection with three iconic reissues**

Ico Parisi returns to Cassina with a collection of furniture reissued from both the company's historical archive as well as from private commissions of models never serially produced before. Thanks to a **painstaking philological process of research and development** carried out in collaboration with Roberta Lietti, curator of the Ico Parisi Design Archives, Cassina rediscovers **the roots of the mid-century culture of living.**

Following Franco Albini and Marco Zanuso, Ico Parisi becomes the third Italian architect to be part of the company's anthology devoted to the reissues of the great masters of 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture.

### **A central figure of the artistic panorama of the post-war period**

Ico Parisi, Sicilian by origin, architect, designer, graphic designer, photographer, film director, set designer and painter, led his life and career between Como and Milan. At a very young age, he worked at Giuseppe Terragni's architecture practice where the architectural and artistic avant-garde of the area gathered.

In the 1950s Parisi began a long-standing collaboration with Cesare Cassina: his debut dates back to 1954 with the 813 model, the armchair that went down in history as "*the egg-shaped armchair*" due to its enveloping shape and curvilinear motifs.

**Parisi was not only one of Cassina's top designers, but he was also entrusted with the design of the company's showrooms in Meda and Rome in addition to the curation of its catalogue.**

### **A personal and multifaceted style of furniture design**

In the 1950s and 1960s, Ico Parisi's furniture already stood out for its modernity. A supporter of free expression, his creations were initially handcrafted in the Como area to guarantee **truly excellent results with high-quality materials.** From complex furniture to small furnishing accessories full of creativity and eclecticism, all of Parisi's products, often provocative and ironic, were the expression of his natural flair which was defined by Gio Ponti in Domus magazine as "*troubled, never left in peace by fantasy*".

A lover of contrasts, he often found himself making tables and console tables with heavy tops reinforced by slender supports to challenge the typical traditions in force in the design world.

### **Reissuing: a meticulous and authentic process**

Today Cassina brings this furniture back to life to cover all areas of the home, from the living room to the dining area. This mid-century furniture characterised by high quality materials, skilful curved lines and a strong aesthetic impact, is **today reissued by Cassina with the same valued methodology, know-how and the most advanced technologies, always in full respect of the original project.**

The company has in fact carried out important philological work by studying original documents, prototypes and existing models to put into production a collection that **combines traditional carpentry workmanship with advanced industrial and technical solutions.**

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As a sign of authenticity, the entire collection bears the logo and signature of Ico Parisi as well as the progressive number that corresponds to the identity card that accompanies each piece.

## The 875 armchair returns from the Cassina archives

The 875 armchair was designed by Ico Parisi in 1960 for Cassina (at the time Figli di Amedeo Cassina). **Cosy, rigorous and elegant**, its body is fixed to unusual arched supports that accentuate its defined profile. Characterised by an ample seat and armrests that encourage support, the 875 is a comfortable and functional armchair destined for any room of the house.

Its author's typical experimentation has led to the creation of an armchair that is classic and modern at the same time. Its solemn appearance is reduced by **the contrast of the materials used and, despite having classic features, it is eclectic, innovative and adaptable to any context.**

The 875 armchair was initially padded with foam rubber cut into sharp edges, today it has been reissued with expanded polyurethane padding in order to maintain its linear shape. Both the backrest and the seat are upholstered in fabric from the Cassina collections, just like its removable cushions. The arched supports are available in brushed nickel, polished chrome, polished gold chrome, polished gunmetal or painted matt black.



875 by Ico Parisi – Cassina I Maestri Collection

### Materials:

metal seat and back frame with elastic straps and wooden armrests;  
padding in expanded polyurethane foam and polyester wadding;  
seat and back cushions padded with different density polyurethane foam and polyester wadding;  
curved steel plate in brushed nickel, polished chrome, polished gold chrome, polished gunmetal or painted matt black;  
removable upholstery in fabrics or leathers from the Cassina collections.

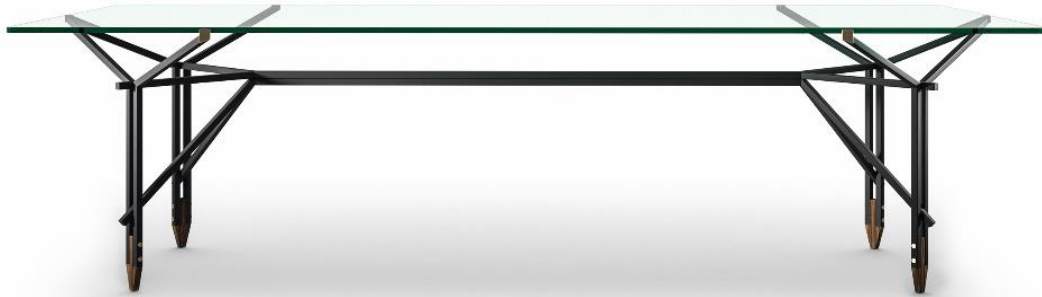
Measurements: 79x84xh.76cm.

## The Olimpino table: from a private villa to the Cassina reissue

This table was designed by Parisi in 1955 for a villa near Como. **The Cassina Research and Development Centre has conducted a careful study of the original model to bring this unique project into serial production.**

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The slender metal tubular structure of the *Olimpino* table holds a rectangular monolithic sheet of glass that allows the articulated metal structure below to be admired. The two pairs of upright legs, characterised by a typical Y-shape, have internal upper arms that converge to join under the top while the external arms diverge to hold and elegantly support it; a double crossbar gives strength to the legs and divides close to the edge to form a double V shape. Its uniqueness is further defined by elegant arrow-shaped wooden feet that nicely contrast with the metal of its legs and crossbar. **Expertly designed, it has a bold appearance making it highly recognisable.**



*Olimpino* by Ico Parisi – Cassina I Maestri Collection

Materials:

tubular steel frame with a 20x20mm square section painted matt black;  
15mm thick top in tempered transparent float glass or lacquered underneath in taupe or petroleum;  
12mm thick top in tempered smoked glass for the 240x105cm version only;  
support in micro-cast brass with a brushed matt finish, brushed matt chrome or painted matt black;  
metal parts in satin matt brass, satin matt chrome or painted matt black;  
feet in solid Canaletto walnut or stained black ash wood in a low gloss finish.

Measurements: 240x105x74cm, 270x105xh.74cm.

## **PA '1947, a geometric and elegant shaped console table, testimony of Cassina's craftsmanship**

This solid wood console table was designed in 1947 and used in numerous projects including Ico Parisi's own home.

The name of the reissue is also a tribute to Parisi's nickname, PA', that is the beginning of his surname together with an accent resulting in a diminutive form of the word 'father' in recognition of his role in leading the modern movement in Como.

The design idea was born from a few lines drawn on a sheet of paper: a straight horizontal line and two oblique ones to define **a harmonious and tense structure with almost perfect proportions and an organic appearance**. An image that could be compared to a foal ready to spring into action expressing the strength and tension of its tapered legs.

Its rectangular top has four straight slots near the ends on the two main sides into which, like real joints, the tips of the upper arms of its slender and characteristic divergent Y-shaped legs are inserted and fixed in pairs by means of a small crossbar. Its balance is strengthened thanks to two oblique solid blocks turned to create an organic form which, diagonally joined to the small crossbar, perfectly fit under the top.

**The parts come together and dialogue in a fluid and continuous way** to create a refined and balanced console table, immediately recognisable and perfect for all rooms of the home.

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**Cassina has respected and enhanced the origins of this project by applying the company's typical carpentry craftsmanship and industrial know-how, the same that Parisi had entrusted.**



*PA '1947* by Ico Parisi – Cassina I Maestri Collection

## Materials:

solid stained black ash wood or Canaletto walnut frame with a low gloss finish, panelled top with solid edges and veneered in the same wood essence as the frame;  
metal parts in brass, painted matt black (only in combination with the stained black ash frame), brushed brass or brushed chrome.

Measurements: 151x40xh.74cm, 4cm thick table-top.

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## Ico Parisi (1916-1996)

Domenico (Ico) Parisi was born in Palermo on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1916. His parents were Sicilian but resided in the Piedmont region of northern Italy. In 1925 the Parisi family moved to Como where Ico obtained a technical diploma in construction in 1936. Following his studies, he went on to be an apprentice at the Terragni architectural practice. This placement gave him the chance to meet important figures in Italian architecture, art and culture including Cattaneo, Lingeri, Radice, Rho, Bontempelli, Bardi, Persico and Sartoris. A true enthusiast of cinema and photography, on request of Giuseppe Terragni, he produced the images of the Casa del Fascio that were published in the *Quadrante* magazine whose 35<sup>th</sup> edition was completely devoted to this building. Subsequent to his involvement in the set-up of the exhibition “*Mostra Coloniale*” (at Villa Olmo, Como, in 1937), Parisi established a design group called *Studio Tecnico Artistico Alta Quota*, with his architect friends Fulvio Cappelletti, Giovanni Galfetti and Silvio Longhi. From this period, other than a number of projects that in great part failed to come to fruition, two documentaries were filmed together with Costamagna and Galfetti called “*Como+Como+Como*” and “*Risanamento edilizio della città di Como*”, (Reconstruction of the city of Como), produced for the City of Como.

When Italy entered the second world war, Parisi enlisted with the rank of second lieutenant in the ninth Battalion Pontieri, operating on the Russian front. Deeply involved in this experience, he documented all that he saw through drawings and, in particular, through the lens of his camera. In 1943 he was discharged from the forces and returned to Como where he resumed his design activities where he mainly worked on individual pieces of furniture, exhibition projects and architectural interiors in collaboration with Luisa Aiani, the young war widow of Giovanni Galfetti. In 1947 Ico married Luisa and in 1948 they opened their first furniture studio which took the name of *La Ruota*, the wheel, which became a hub for design and also art, exhibitions and cultural events. In 1952, following the advice of his friend Sartoris, he graduated in architecture at the Athenaeum Institute in Lausanne.

From the early nineteen fifties Parisi's work became even more productive. Parisi took on a methodological approach, already seen in the works of Carlo Belli and Alberto Sartoris, that saw the ‘integration of the arts’, involving only painters and sculptors in the design process to pave the way for a new way of conceiving architecture. At the same time, he designed unique pieces of furniture made by craftsmen in Brianza for exclusive projects and, subsequently, for industrial production with companies such as Cassina, De Baggis, MIM. In particular, his experience with Figli di Amedeo Cassina, for who he also designed the showrooms in Meda and Rome as well as the graphics of the company's first catalogue in 1958, gave rise to masterpieces such as the 813 armchair, commonly known as the ‘egg chair’, the 839 curved plywood armchair, designated a Compasso d'Oro, and the 865 sofa. The decorative arts also attracted his interest: this is how the Murano glass-sculptures were born, first with Barovier e Toso and subsequently made by Lino Signoretto, and ceramics and pottery made by Zanolli and Sebellin di Nove or, handcrafted at the Ibis Furnaces in Cunardo by Parisi himself.

The late nineteen sixties marked a turning point for Parisi's experimentation in the world of design. The *Contentoriumani* (human containers) project carried out in collaboration with the sculptor Francesco Somaini and presented for the first at the *Salone del Mobile* in Milan in September 1968, marked a new direction for Parisi, while not completely abandoning the designing of buildings and furniture, he sought to define a new Utopian existential idea of living. This research, carried out in collaboration with a group of artists, resulted in the design project “*Ipotesi per una casa esistenziale*”, or an idea for an existential

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house, in 1972-73 and presented for the first time in 1974 in Paris. This was followed by the “*Arcevia Operation*” from 1974 to 1976, this was the culmination of Parisi’s existential quest, approached in a combined, interdisciplinary mode through the involvement of art critics, artists, poets, filmmakers, musicians and sociologists as part of a work group that aimed to design an entire community. The project was presented at the 76<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale and subsequently exhibited at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome in 1979. From this socio-urban Utopic experience, derived the graphic works dubbed by Parisi as ‘plates of provocation’ entitled “*Utopia realizzabile*”, “*Apocalisse gentile*”, “*Crolli edificanti*” (Creatable Utopia, Gentle apocalypse and Edifying collapse), as well as the performance “*Libertà è uscire dalla scatola*” (Freedom is getting out of the box) and the urban installations “*Seals and Tower of Babel*”. These works have been the subject of numerous personal and group exhibitions (including the Venice Biennial in 1978, In/Arch in Rome in 1979, the Museum of Ixelles Brussels in 1980, Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara in 1981, the Italian Cultural Institute in Paris and the ADP Cultural Centre of Lille, both in 1984). In 1986, the first retrospective of Ico Parisi’s works was held at the Pavilion of Contemporary Art in Milan.

In 1990, Luisa, his partner in life and inexhaustible source of creative energy, suddenly died. Though deeply shocked, Parisi continued his design work and exhibitions and unveiled a major retrospective at the Palazzina dei Giardini in Modena, followed by numerous other personal exhibitions in Como and Modena. In 1992 he inaugurated his last provocative architectural project, “*Bobadilla*”, a multipurpose building designed in collaboration with Angelo Cassi.

Ico Parisi died in Como on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1996.