

“When a child has a little treehouse, it is their own house, the place where parents should not enter. It is something very private, like a vault with your most important things, secrets, your universe. My studio has a bit of that, with my objects and my books. When I enter it, I am in another world. That is why I need it.

**A
H**

Alfredo Häberli

**The artisan's
studio**

**Ideas can come to you
anywhere, but in the end,
I develop them in the
workplace, with a sketch
that can come from a trip
-I like to travel a lot- but
the development needs
to be done in the studio,
a place where I spend
more time than at home.”**

Alfredo Häberli

Zurich (Switzerland)

Rigor and poetry are two qualities that combine in the work of Alfredo Häberli (Buenos Aires, 1964), to which he adds a pinch of humor, a dash of emotion, and abundant rationalism. It is a difficult cocktail to balance. Only a designer such as he, with a wealth of experience, who works on each of his projects with the care of an artisan, can use those ingredients in the correct measure, without falling short of the mark or overdoing it. We are talking about a professional who absolutely dominates his trade, who is intimately familiar with the terrain on which he walks, never allowing himself to be lured by the easy stunts where the unwary so often perish.

Minimum gesture, maximum expression. Alfredo has a pulse as firm and precise as neurons. He does not draw wildly; he uses his pencil to think, to investigate an idea: he squeezes it, sets it down, submits it to scrutiny, and after giving it the third degree, he saves only those that make the cut. His respect for history and his curiosity for the world around him make his work the perfect vehicle for incorporating all the relevant innovations and putting tradition at the service of the 21st century.

As enthusiastic and passionate today he was before, he fiercely defends the search for the impossible, the need for freedom to dream as a means of finding something unexpected, surprising, and totally new.



“I decided to set up my studio in Zurich in the first place because I met my wife and started a family very early. I already knew the city and also had a bit of work here with the design museum. So I stayed, although always with the idea of being able to go to work in Milan, for Italian companies. Later I realized that Zurich has a huge advantage and that is it is very well situated, in the middle of Europe, which is very good logistically. We also have enough cultural life, which is always a good inspiration. The downside is that you have to be very careful not to enter into mediocrity, because the reality is that the country is so democratic that they don't like anyone to stand out. It's about equalizing everyone, so you can't be too good nor super talented because the Swiss see it as something suspicious.”



Words

You came to in Switzerland from Argentina as a teenager, and you must have found a world very different from the one you knew, culturally speaking. Do you conserve part of the two cultures? How do you combine the two things? Did it make you a little schizophrenic?

I turned fourteen the year I arrived here. The reason for coming was that my parents had a very famous restaurant and, in that period, after the death of Perón and with the country out of control, the intervention of the military, terrorism, etc., it became very dangerous. To go out, I had to go with bodyguards, and the restaurant suffered. My parents were afraid that their four children would be kidnapped or something like that. So, since we already had Swiss passports, because my father is Swiss, they decided to go to Switzerland for three years and come back when the mess was over. When that time passed, and the money ran out, we had to go back, but the four siblings said no. Even when I was little, from kindergarten, my house used to vote very democratically at the table. It's a very Swiss thing involving the children in all family decisions. So, we voted "no" because we were comfortable here; we no longer needed a driver to take us to school, we felt safer; it was a paradise for us. Since we were the majority, my father decided to sell the restaurant to some friends for a symbolic amount and started working in Switzerland.

How did you discover that you want to be a designer?

I started studying architecture, and there I realized that the profession of "designer" existed. It was thanks to Achille Castiglioni. It was a time when I suffered a lot because the Swiss did not understand my Latin temperament, I was very open, I said what I thought, and I had many clashes. So, I went to Milan a lot on the weekend train, and among Italians, I found a Latin-Argentinian link. There I discovered a series of objects that I liked, and Achille's face always appeared associated with them. I didn't know who he was then, but I understood that behind an object there was someone who designed it. Before I thought that objects were designed by those who produced them, the manufacturer, it never occurred to me that such a profession existed and that it could be studied in Zurich.

money

latin

And you went directly to study design?

I finished the four years of architecture first, and I went to take the entrance exams to enter design because in the Swiss school of that period of the one hundred and eighty students, only twelve could enter. And it turns out that I got the thirteenth place! I went to talk to them, and they told me that the problem was that I didn't speak German well. I went back the following year, and then I got in. They told me that they had admitted me because I was the only one who retook the test -the Swiss never try a second time- and they thought that that showed character, although I continued to speak German badly. I was offended that they found language so important, and I set out to prove that one could be a good designer despite everything. When I finished school, I was the best of all. And that's the reason: because that anger gave me a lot of drive.

character

And that's when you got in touch with Achille Castiglioni?

Yes, I called him on the phone to thank him for showing me the way. I asked him if I could have coffee with him and he said "yes, come the next day". I took the train, went to see him, and spent four hours there. In this way, a very interesting friendship began for me. Right there I asked him if I could work for him, but he said no, that his studio was too small, but that the most beautiful thing would be for me to open my own studio. It was something very hard, but it is the way one can work on his own projects.

friendship

Did you follow his advice?

Absolutely. I took the train back and opened my studio in 1991, a week after receiving my diploma. He said it so clearly that I didn't hesitate. In order not to put a burden on the family, I wanted to pay the costs of the studio myself, and for that, I began working as an architect, assembling exhibitions in the design museum.

train

World

But at that time, you already distinguished yourself from your Swiss colleagues...

Since I was a student, I was already going to the Salone del Mobile in Milan every year, so I met other designers little by little. Mariscal, for example. I would come back from Salone and talk with my teachers about Shiro Kuramata or Cappellini. I also bought myself magazines; I was super informed about all the current trends, while in Switzerland, they were obsessed with Bauhaus, and the idea that “form follows function”. Then this Argentine arrived with a head full of these things, and they were astonished. My parents worked for Swissair, so I could get free tickets to go anywhere. So every weekend I would fly into Madrid or Barcelona, to visit Alfredo Arribas or go to Otto Zutz, to get to know all those clubs and restaurants that the magazines were talking about and see them in person. Also, London, where I had a friend who would tell me who would be speaking there: Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, Nigel Coates, Peter Crook, Robert Wilson, and so on, and I went there to listen to them.

magazines

It was the eighties, the Memphis moment, right?

Yes, of course. I met Sottsass too, but I have to say that Memphis didn't interest me that much, although it is true that it was a liberation from the Bauhaus dogma. It was something that needs to happen again because today everything has become very commercial. There is a lack of design critics, people who start those stimulating discussions that there were before with people like Koolhaas who would verbally spar with any minimalist architect.

commercial

For whom did you design your first pieces?

The first companies I worked for were Alias, Zanotta, and Driade. I went to see them in Milan, and I would introduce myself. In that period, everything was very personal, one had to talk to people to find out where the things to see were, you had to wake up and interact. Since I was young, everyone helped me. Magazines were very important at the time because they were not available everywhere; for example, in Barcelona, I bought ARDI; they were vital. They had great value.

talk

Another one that I loved back then was *The Face* with the design by Neville Brody. The fact is that five or six years passed before I got the first project. In the meantime we lived off the exhibitions and my wife's work, whom I had met while studying. Each Salone, I would list the ten most interesting companies because I wanted to work for them, for the most important, not for the second tier. It is what I dreamed of and, in fact, of those ten, today I work for eight of them and the other two are competitors and so I cannot. One has to dream and wait.

dream

But Castiglioni was not the only one you consider among your teachers; also Bruno Munari is a mentor for you, isn't he?

Yes, but I met him later... What was an obvious reference for me is my favorite car. The only thing I brought from Argentina was a box of Matchbox toy cars. My mother told us that since we were only going to be in Switzerland for three years, she would let us bring whatever would fit in a shoebox. And mine came full of cars. Already in Europe, I knew that all my favorite cars were created by the same man: Giorgetto Giugiaro, the most important designer the last hundred years, he designed the first Fiat Panda to the Golf.

car

From where does that fondness for cars come?

I lived near a racetrack, and as a young boy, I spent all my free time watching races. Because I was the son of the owner of the fashionable restaurant, where the drivers always went to eat, they gave us free rein to enter everywhere. So, alongside Achille is the figure of Giugiaro. They are the two people who taught me that design was an interesting thing.

race

Did you make your dream of designing a car reality?

The beginning of my collaboration in the automotive world was for Volvo, but it was not an automobile, but a children's car that can go down the mountain, without motor or brakes, as if it were a sled but with wheels. Later I did a car, but I can't talk about it because it is an internal project for BMW. In that sector, they are very wary about the competition. The contracts are very rigorous and everything is kept confidential, but it is something that is stipulated from the beginning. I assumed this was the case, therefore, I do not mind not being able to talk about it. And actually, in the end, they are making their car. They are using many of my ideas but, others have also disappeared. So finally, the Häberli car is going to be the BMW car, and that's it. That's the way it works: they use your ideas but incorporate them within their own project.

Is it true that they bought a year of your time?

Yes, I worked on it for a year, with a group of twelve people, engineers and designers, who were my team. With them, I made three prototypes. But the final decisions are made by the company's Board of Directors.

When you enter a project of this type, in a world that is not your specialty, do they see you as an intruder?

The truth is that my personality helps: I try to be very natural, very direct and very honest, I don't like being the "star designer", I'm not interested in that role. I like the proletariat. I like working and having everyone at the same level. I always treat the people in my studio on the same level as myself; I don't want to be the boss and they the employees. And that's how I always treat people; it runs in my family. That helps me. At first it impresses them because I am the best-known designer in Switzerland, but later they realize that I am as normal as they are. But I also ask a lot from engineers, from designers. I ask them to have knowledge of culture, that they know the history. I think that if one starts to make fashion, for example, you have to know a little about the history of fashion. If I go to Marrakesh to visit the Yves Saint-Laurent museum, I will have tried to read a book about his work first. I like to treat history with respect.

Words

competition

company

role



“In the Spheres project for BMW, they gave me total freedom. This is how I got into the automotive industry and analyzed the problems it has. The topic was the mobility of the future associated with luxury, which is one of their concerns, how cars are going to change when we stop driving them ourselves. I immersed myself in the way of thinking of that industry, but I treated it from a totally different point of view. I told them that they didn’t have to make a car but something that was a bit of a boat,

a bit of an airplane, or a house, an environment that maybe has only one wheel. The car is seen from the inside out because it is on the inside where we spend much of our time. I questioned many things concerning the future from the idea that we are going to have everything on electronic devices, to how houses will change cities and streets. And they liked that very much because not being a person from the sector, thinking differently, I managed to ask many questions, have a vision. That is what later led them to get me involved in the car project.

And this happens in all industries. They become paralyzed because they know so much, they need someone from outside with a different perspective to start asking questions. In the end, we made a book and an exhibition called *Spheres. Perspectives in Precision and Poetry*, where I emphasize that you have to have a vision, even if you don’t know yet how you will find the solution. For example, when I see those two-wheelers that tourists drive standing up, I still don’t understand how they work, and I’m sure the guy who invented

them was told that it was impossible, but he had the idea and he did all the brainwork necessary to develop it. The vision is very important. Do not give up dreaming. It was a lovely project that I worked on together with Adrian van Hooydonk, Design Director at BMW. We became friends and got to participate together in the Mille Miglia vintage car rally. He asked me to design our jackets. He liked them so much that we made them for the twelve cars in the group the following year.”





Do you prefer that type of project where you are not in your usual medium?

That is something that I like very much, doing projects that are very different from each other and entering other diverse fields. Now, I have just been asked for “the kitchen of the future” for the next fair in Cologne. For that, I look at things like the fact that people in my studio cook here, but they don’t do it at home. And they all cook very well, by the way. There is a lot of talk about food in my studio; it’s something that interests me a lot. In addition, we use the terrace for eating in good weather or having coffee in the morning or at the afternoon break. We have sunshades and plants to make it pleasant, and we enjoy it whenever we can. For example, if we have a work meeting, many times we’ll have it outside since to have a long discussion on a topic, with paper and pencil, that’s enough.

Returning to Achille, what was it that interested you about his products, why did they catch your attention?

What surprised me most about his designs were those that used the “ready-made” theme, such as the Mezzadro for Zanotta, the Sella or the Toio for Flos that use a tractor seat, a bicycle saddle or a fishing rod. I saw them and thought it was something I could do, too. And he also had “spark”, there was something playful about him, which gave an idea that he was a person who did not take everything too seriously. Think that I was in a Swiss school where everything was super serious and gray, with almost no colors, red was used to indicate danger, and that was all. So, I really missed that Latin part.

In fact, Munari, who is another of your mentors, also shares that ironic side...

Yes, of course, I met him later, when I took charge of his exhibition and his book in 1995. On my table I have “La Pennellessa”, a painter’s brush with braids turned into a ballerina, whose name comes from *belleza* (beauty) and *pennello* (brush). Something so simple! I learned a lot from him, but above all, to be very humble, at work, in ideas. His “*sculture da viaggio*” are made of cardboard.

Words

food

playful

simple



Words

Munari believed that sculptures did not have to be made of heavy and rich materials; to show off their value, a sculpture can also be made of cardboard and if it can also be folded, you can carry it in your pocket and put it in the hotel, personalizing your room. He explained everything like that in a very clear and straightforward way.

straightforward

He also created many children's books.

Yes, people said that children could not read, but he said that of course they could, you just had to offer them the materials and they would make up the stories, you just have to ask them what they see. And they see so many things! He cooked up everything in his essential way; he is like Achille, who knew how to tell stories very well, in an effortless way. That appealed to me, especially because I speak six languages, but none perfectly, so I got used to saying simple sentences, not talking so much, and having a clear message with few words.

essential

Have you ever heard it said that when an Italian says "che bello" about something, that they have say it all and that nothing more needs to be said?

But deep down, isn't that a somewhat superficial view?

This is not how an Italian perceives it. That expression on the lips of someone like Riccardo Sarfatti, Italo Lupi or Enrico Astori, is more than the superficial appearance, it is a form of recognition for a job well done. And it also has to do with the background of the person who says it; a cultured person uses it that way.

superficial

There is yet another teacher for you...

Of course, Enzo Mari! When I was working designing exhibitions, I began to giving concept proposals to the museum director. An exhibition on Mari was one of those ideas, and he asked me if I wanted to be the curator, too. I suggested adding Bruno Munari with all the history of Danese. But Mari said no because he was always considered Munari's "son", something that hurt him a bit. After all, his work was very different. So, he asked me to do the Munari show first and then his.

I went to visit Enzo Mari in his studio every two weeks or so until I realized that if I kept talking to him, I would never become a designer. Despite this, I love him very much. I made him smile. And for me, it is one of the most important things that have ever existed.

smile

Why?

For everything he has invented, for the impressive lucidity of his projects, such as the "puzzle" of sixteen animals or the books he wrote. He is a super-intelligent person, who understands the complexities of politics, industry, the economy; they are things that he puts in relation to others. His ideas are very complex, he is almost like a Leonardo da Vinci, a true researcher, very deep, and that is difficult to communicate today in magazines. But Mari was not satisfied; when I visited him as a student, he wanted me to understand him. The first thing he said to me was: "You, so young, do you have the courage to say that you are a designer?" It fascinated me because I saw that he was right, but at the same time, it scared me. When my son was born, he gave me a silkscreen with the hammer and sickle. And he said: "Alfredo, you who understands nothing about politics, why don't you hang this painting in front of your son's crib, so at least there will be one person in your family who understands". I did not dare hang it up and I only gave it to my son last year, now that he is an adult. Funnily enough, he is very left-wing! Zanotta also gave me Achille's tractor seat for him. And from littala, the birds of Oiva Toikka. Incredibly, today my son is a gardener; he has alpacas and chickens. All this is my past, that's why I'm not very fast at my work either. I'm interested in history. Young people do not even realize that history exists, what the past is. They begin copying Memphis and do not even realize what they are doing, what attracts them is its formal appearance, they see it as a style.

copy

Drawing, is that how you start your projects?

Yes, I draw a lot. My Swiss grandfather, was an athlete and artist. When my parents went out dancing on weekends, we stayed at his house, and he made us draw. For example, spirals, leaves, and spiral leaves.

draw

Words

I realized that it served to put my mind in a blank state. After that, we went out to draw, and we hardly spoke. Those are for me some of the most beautiful moments of my childhood. That's why I always say that observing is the most beautiful way of thinking. Drawing well wasn't important, all that mattered was to try. For me, drawing is a way of meditating. I do not just draw to have an idea for a chair, but if I'm in Sardinia, and I start drawing plants, without looking at them. It's something I like very much.

childhood

You also have some books of collages.

Yes, I have two or three books where I cut out colors from fashion magazines and combined them again in different ways. That is something I will use later when I have to make things like a textile for Kvadrat, for example, and I want to look for associations that interest me.

look for

Have you ever been tempted to become an artist?

When I was young, I went to Mallorca for a few months because I wanted to be an artist. I took two suitcases, one with clothes and the other with brushes, notebooks, etc. I never opened that second suitcase. I fell in love with the people who lived on the island, and I spent my time playing tennis with them and having fun. Later I realized that if I hadn't opened that suitcase, it was pretty clear that I wasn't going to be an artist.

artist

You have been called "the playboy of design", is that something you like or does it bother you?

It was when they gave me an award in the magazine *Arkitetur und Wohnen*. For the exhibition they did, I had the models of my Matchbox cars photographed, and I sent them to be printed in life-size, something that was the most surreal. A lamp, sofa, or whatever piece was placed in front of the photo, and it was explained how the car had been the inspiration for that piece, sometimes a color or a curve. I suppose that in looking for similarities, the director of the magazine, Barbara Friedrich, had the idea of likening me to a George Clooney-style playboy. I have not been the only one. Others say that if I am the George Clooney of design, Konstantin Grcic is the Woody Allen, for the glasses, and Ross Lovegrove is the Sean Connery...

surreal

Morrison and Grcic seem very close to you and your work...

How is your relationship, do you consult with them on things?

Well, especially in the beginning. Jasper opened about three years before us, so he had more experience negotiating, for example, and when we started signing our first contracts, we asked him how much he charged for one thing or another. Back then, we visited each other more in the studios, we told each other about the projects, we had more time, now it is impossible.

negotiate

What type of relationship you establish with clients?

My clients are no longer clients; for me, they are colleagues, friends, that's why I always say that I only work for people I like. Because in the end, you spend a lot of time with these people, you go to lunch and dinner together; you have to trust them. I am very honest, I sign contracts, but that is not important. I tell you that I will deliver my work on a certain day, you will have it that day. I like that way of being very correct.

honest

It is said about you that if you present a project to a company and they reject it, you would never take it to another.

That's why I liked Achille's model, he made lamps for Flos, furniture for Zanotta, kitchen accessories for Alessi, but never the same for everyone. I like that concept; it is a way not to confuse competitors. But that is no longer the case because today everyone wants to work with everyone. Above all, I try not to copy myself, not to make similar products for different companies. When I made the Segesta chair, other companies immediately came to ask me for a similar one. I told them, no, I will make you a bed, but not another chair like that one. I see it continuously in other designers, and I don't like it. From point of view, I find it unintelligent. It is a matter of respect, and in that sense, I prefer to act like a gentleman. I make fabrics for Kvadrat, for example, but I wouldn't make them for Marimekko as well. It's a bit old fashioned, but I like it that way, and it has worked well for me. It is also true that I like to do different projects because maybe I would not have so many ideas for different types of chairs, and in the end, I would have to repeat myself.

respect

Words

Your studio has a terrace and is in a quiet area.

It is an area of Zurich called Seefeld, which means lake/field. Only twenty years ago it was a red-light district and now it is very bourgeois, inhabited by young couples without children and with a good standard of living. A residential area very close to the lake where you can go to eat or swim, with many trees.

residential

How long have you been here in this space?

About fifteen years or so. I chose this place because I live nearby, on this side of the lake. Before, it was in the industrial part of the city, in a very nice space, but it was demolished to make apartments. This current studio was previously a laboratory that performed quality controls on all sorts of electronic devices. It is something that was done throughout this area. The area was renovated, and apartments were built, but there is a nice mix because there are also offices, so at night it is not deserted, and there is always life. And the studio is a renovation project that we did ourselves.

lake

What will workplaces be like after COVID-19?

In recent years, many new visions of the work area have emerged, from open spaces to the living room-office, which will now have to adapt to the current context. At the moment, they are temporary, manipulated, and born of necessity. The main questions will be: How will the home office be established in the next five to ten years? Have the advantages and disadvantages already been recognized? Will we work in groups spread over days or weeks? Will workplaces be constantly reassigned, depending on the type of work and the time spent in the office? How much will the employer pay for the home office? How will the issue of workplace ergonomics be resolved when working from home for several days? How important is this? What influence does isolation have on the human soul when personal interaction is essential? How little or how much personal contact is helpful? There are still endless questions and many unknowns.

unknowns

Will there be essential changes?

I think a lot about the changes that await us. As a designer, I have high hopes, and I firmly believe that the jobs and the places to develop them will be even more important. By this, I mean that companies must offer a workplace that is comprehensively "safe", for the benefit of the entire workforce and society. At the same time, the employee must be more flexible and must get used to working off-peak hours and from home. I still don't know what this new formula will be like in detail. But I am convinced that thanks to a deceleration that has been forced upon us, there is the possibility of creating a more balanced and, therefore, healthier society. And design will be hugely important in this process.

hope

Your work table is a Carlo Mollino design, why did you choose it?

It was actually a gift from someone to compensate me for a job. That is the table on which I draw. I only use the computer to look at email, and I don't keep it there. I keep the computer off the table so that I am not aware of it. So, I focus on my drawings and the search for ideas. That table surprised me because I have always been against glass tables, I saw them as cold. But working on it, I have realized that I like it, it has an element of floating; the drawings placed on it seem to float. One thing I always do is give the people who work in the studio a big table. I go from one table to another to comment on the projects they are working on, almost like a teacher. I follow the projects very closely and constantly. Each one of them has a project in hand, and I go behind with the pencil to correct anything that is not right.

float

Does your wife work with you?

She did it for years, but now she has her own graphic design studio, so now she works on her own projects, although sometimes we collaborate together, on the 25hours hotel design, for example.

OWN

Words

How many people work with you?

Four or five. I could grow, but I'm not interested, because with this size of studio I do what I really want to do. I no longer have an obligation to work. Let's say that I have been fortunate with the compensation, I'm doing well, and if I wanted to, I could stop working. But I wouldn't to have to take on projects to be able to pay employees. I do projects that appeal to me, for a fee, of course, but if they don't interest me, I don't do them.

compensation

And how long do assistants usually last in your studio?

Years! I almost have to throw them out! (laughs) Theo has been with me for nearly eighteen years now; he is the one who has been here the longest. The others have also been around for a few years, like Sebastian and Dominic, but they come and go, start out as students, go to other cities, come back. I always keep in touch with those who are good and if the opportunity arises for them to rejoin the studio, this is how it is done.

contact

How do you choose them? Does it interest you that they complement what you do or that they look like you?

At first, when I opened the studio, I thought they had to be like a carbon copy of me, but I later realized that what you have to do is the opposite, choose them for things one does not have. For example, with the ones I have now, there is one who knows a great deal about colors or textures, another is the genius with computers, animations, that kind of thing, and the third is very good with models. Each one plays their role and has their qualities. But in general; they all have to be able to do everything, they have to be multi-talented in different sectors because the projects are very diverse, and one has to know how to adapt. Of course, I contribute with my experience, entering into completely new industries, or doing things that are more theoretical than practical, which are not a product in themselves. In that sense, I play the role of conductor and they are part of the orchestra, but each one plays their instrument.

multi-talented

With such a small studio, how many projects are you capable of developing per year?

And what do you do with a large project like the 25hours Hotel Zürich West, how do you adapt the studio to that increased workload?

More or less, there are about twenty projects per year. In the same period, twelve or thirteen projects usually coincide in parallel. When I have to do something big like the hotel, I turn to the people I know, for example, ex-assistants who may not have as much work and I organize a new group with them. Sometimes they join the studio if there is room, but they may also be in their own spaces, and I am the one who visits them, like an external office. For example, with the hotel, I worked with three external architects who had their own studio where I went to see them.

external

In a project like this, can the passion for the job be maintained the same as the first day?

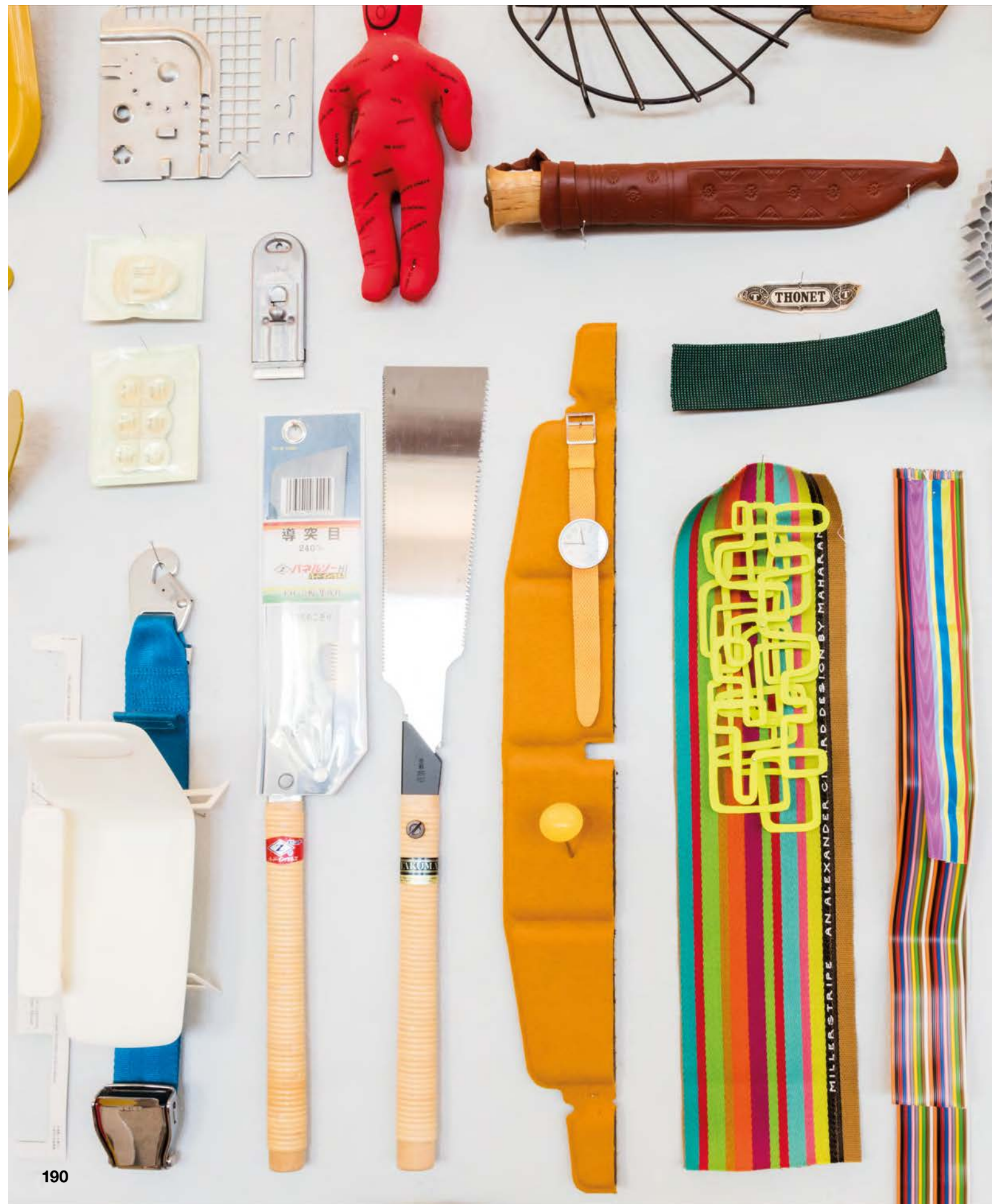
Yes, but when I finished it, I was very exhausted. When I saw Gio Ponti's or Arne Jacobsen's hotels in Copenhagen, I thought that if these "old men" could do all the work, I could too. So, I designed everything from the doorknobs to the paintings, and of course, it was a tremendous job. Six floors and one hundred and sixty rooms. In addition to doing the interior design, I developed eighty new designs just for the hotel and all this in three years.

exhausted

The studio is full of found objects that can be seen both on the walls and the shelves.

They are *objets trouvés*, things that catch my attention for different reasons. In this element, for example, I see a mask, but it's actually a device for hanging shoes, although it took me years to discover what it was for. Here I have a sewing tape measure for the blind, which means that the blind know how to sew, incredible. I like finding things that have ingenuity. I also have a lot of Enzo Mari products. They are all historical things that are interesting to me as a way to learn or to explain things to my assistants. For example, the facemask of an American football helmet I bought in New York in the '80s that became the idea for a chair called "Alambre"; or a glove I bought in Spain the inspired a series of fabrics.

ingenuity



“My studio, as Goethe said, is a cabinet of curiosities. It is something that stayed with me since I first visited Achille Castiglioni’s studio, which was similar, that idea of discovering things in your own studio, seeing them with your own eyes but in a different way. So, I began to collect objects that many times I did not know what they were used for but that somehow inspired me, and maybe many years later, they will be transferred to a chair or an idea for something else. It is like a battery full of energy that you have there at your disposal.”

Hanging from the ceiling is a fifty-year-old canoe made here, on the other side of the lake, built entirely of wood and fifteen meters long. Here I have a funnel from Berlin, a product of the chemical industry. I found it interesting, I thought it might be something else, and it later became the kettle I made for George Jensen. And look, here is the Iso Grifo car, turquoise blue, designed by Giugiaro, its grille inspired the back of the Segesta chair.

There are also objects designed by you but that are not so well known.

Yes, because we also make complicated industrial things, like this device that serves to beat the egg white and the yolk stays on top, or you can change the paddles and make mayonnaise, for example. These are things that are not published as much because magazines are less interested in them. My mother collected plates and used these gadgets to hang them; from them I later made a lamp using the same system; this was the inspiration. And here, I have the first plastic object from the 1950s for shaving, which has a special mechanism. This is the type of object that interests me; when I did the Segesta, it was the first time that same plastic was used on a chair. Studying these kinds of objects helps us invent something new.

When you leave here at night, do you still work at home?

Do you have a second studio there?

Yes, but I work in a different way, I look for ideas, draw more, am freer. Here I have my assistants who I have to follow, correct, adjust to deadlines, etc. At home, that takes on a more hobby-like nuance. It is another way of making, freer; things that come to mind and have nothing to do with what I am working on. On Friday, I went skiing with my daughter, and now realize that it is also good to disconnect; it is something that I have been achieving over time and of which I am very happy, not to be so possessive with the design. I have so many interests, so many interesting things to see and friends to talk with, that I no longer see myself with that obligation to do more and more and more.

Words

inspiration

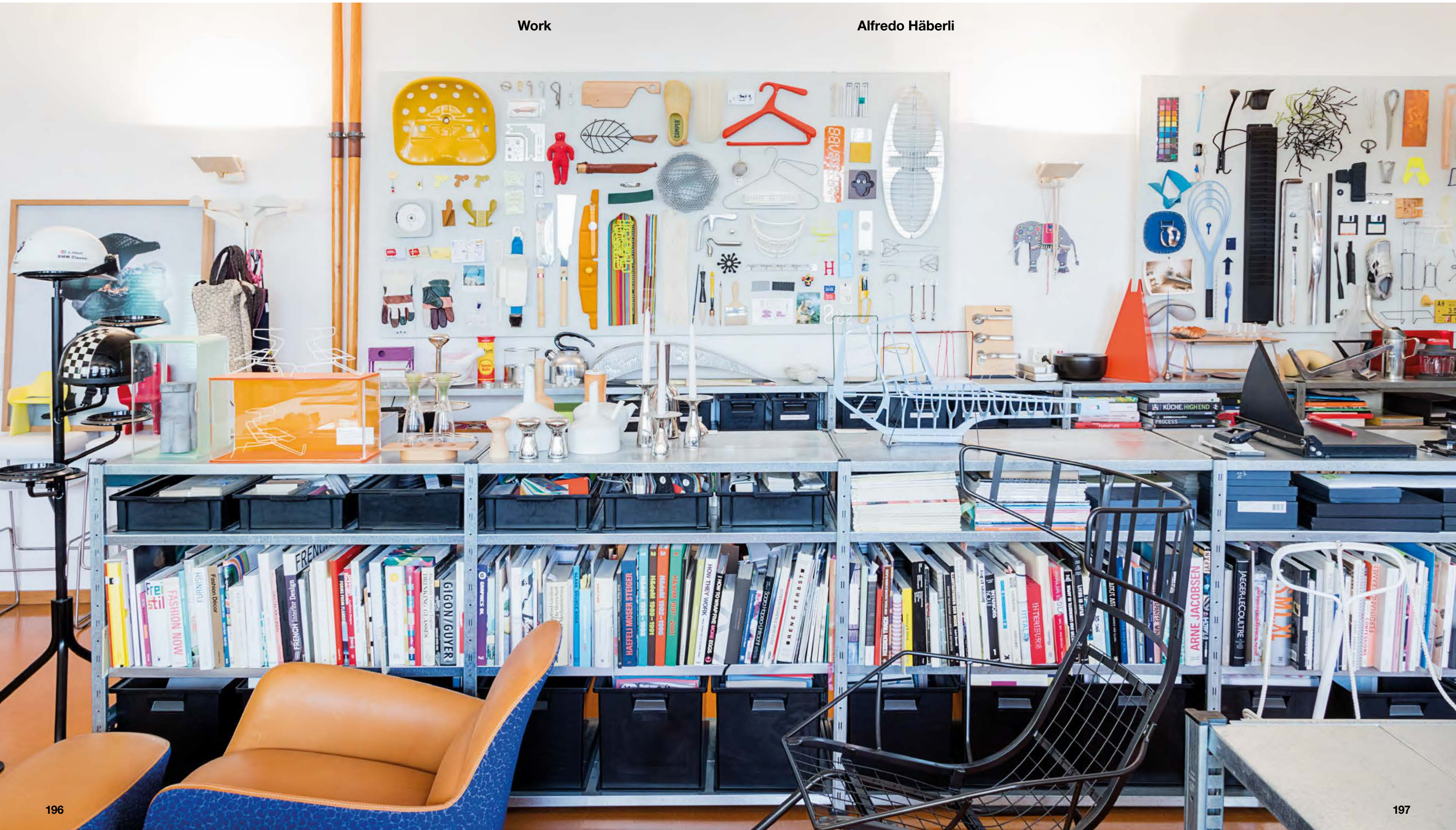
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Work

Alfredo Häberli







Dominic Plüer
Designer

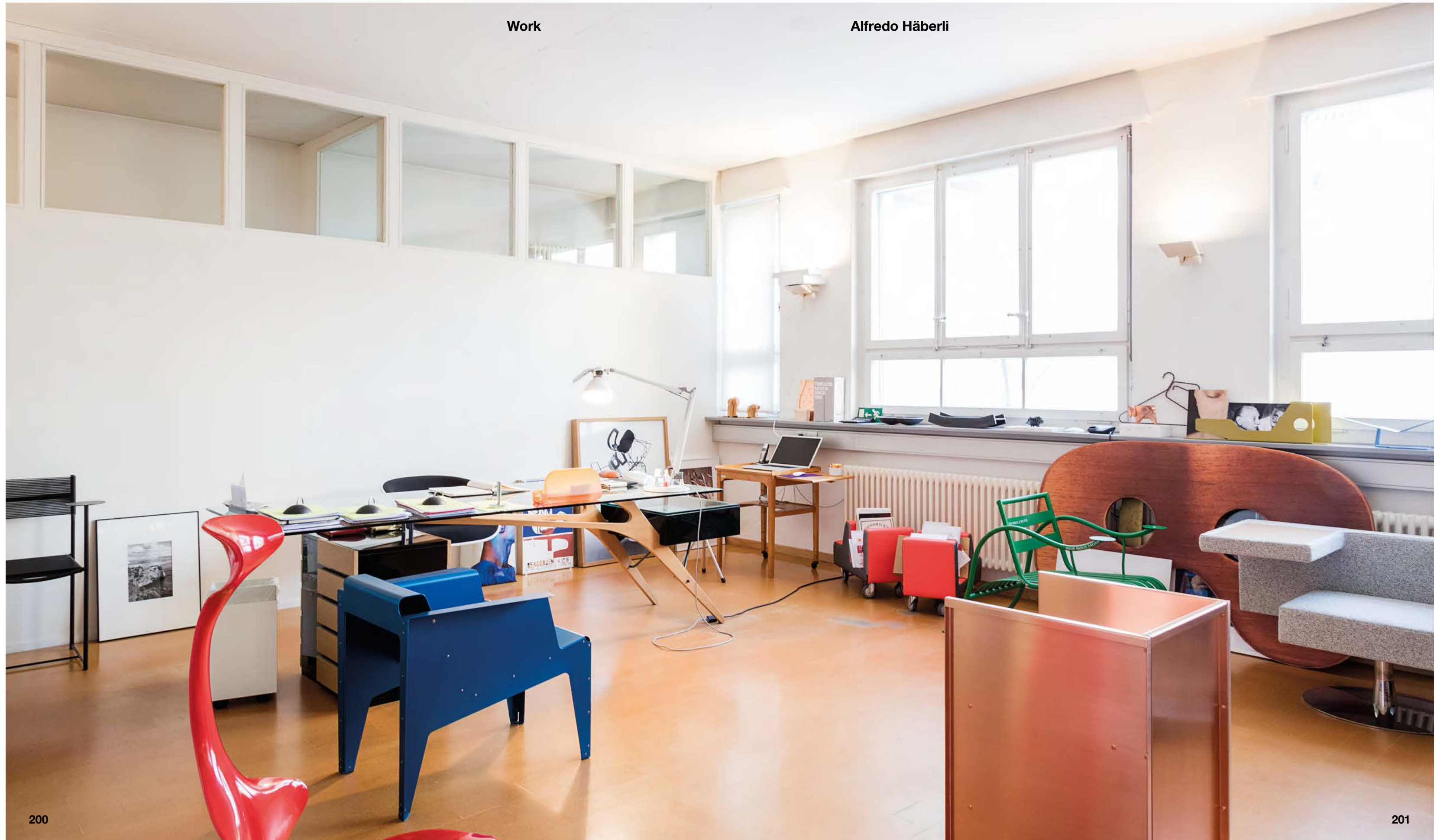


Theo Gschwind
Designer



Work

Alfredo Häberli



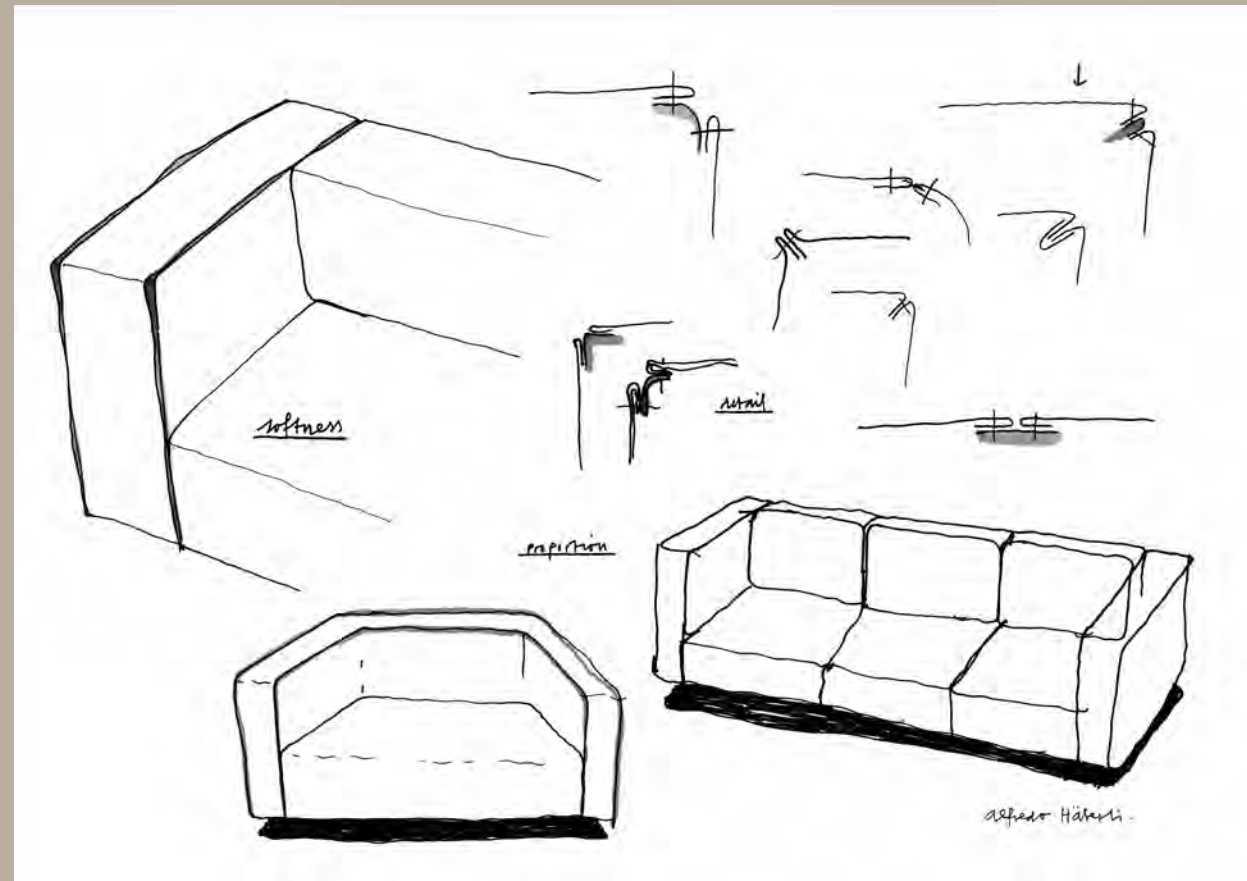


Work

Alfredo Häberli

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“For Andreu World, I have designed a modular sofa that can be configured in different ways; it is almost a ‘no-design’. The interesting detail of the design emerges at the edges, the place where two planes meet. It looks like a serious cube, but because it is soft, when you sit down the fabric opens and a color comes out at the angle from inside the seam. It is intended to be used in public places but in some way, a little more welcoming and comfortable, as if you were at home.”

For a few years now, this trend has been seen that, by having electronic objects we can continue working from home. In fact, a few years ago, there were companies that tried telecommuting, and it did not always work because the motivation generated at the offices among colleagues is also needed. You have to be very disciplined because if not, it is impossible to work from home where you have a thousand distractions. People also missed co-workers, interaction with others, so that didn’t work out so well.”

