

Arco Floor Lamp

A Way, Not a Style

Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni produced functional objects famous for their sculptural form — and often, their humor.

Their father was a classically trained sculptor. His three sons all went into industrial design. Livio (1911-1979) and Pier Giacomo (1913-1968) set up a design studio with another partner in 1938. When Achille (1918-2002) graduated from the Politecnico di Milano in 1944, he too joined the studio. He began a long-lasting collaboration with Pier Giacomo. Livio left to pursue a solo career in 1952.



The Castiglioni brothers sometimes applied Marcel Duchamp's theories about the artistic value of "found objects." When objects "found" in daily life are saved and used for a collage or a sculpture, they have built-in emotional or aesthetic associations for the viewer.



The Castiglioni's Mezzadro chair (1957) used a tractor seat. The Sella ("Saddle") stool, also designed in 1957, used a bicycle seat.

The Castiglioni's best-known lamp designs provided new purposes for what might be called "found technologies" or "found concepts." Their classic Luminator (1955) used a photographer's tungsten spotlight bulb for general home lighting. It was simple, elegant, cheap to produce, and a popular export item. Such products helped Italians rebuild after World War II. The Parentesi Lamp (1970), designed by Achille with Pio Manzù, used an automobile headlight, for a spotlight effect.

With the Arco Floor Lamp (1962), the inspiration was the street lamp. However, it was domesticated: no actual street lamp was used. The expressively named Arco casts light over a large area, some 2.5 meters from the base. Since it replaces a permanent ceiling fixture, furniture can be arranged more freely. Yet, unlike a typical floor lamp, it does not get in the way. The neck is made of three sections put together like a fishing rod or telescope. It can be adjusted to set the reflector at three different heights.

The Arco's design required a heavy counterweight. Achille said,

Luminator

