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curated by NO GA

edit

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The House Markelius Built

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Back in the early 20th century, Swedish architect Sven Markelius struggled to realise his radical ideas. Ninety years later, however, people are queuing up to move into his Collective House. Built in 1935, this revolutionary building embodied Markelius' and politician Alva Myrdals' visionary ideas about equality.







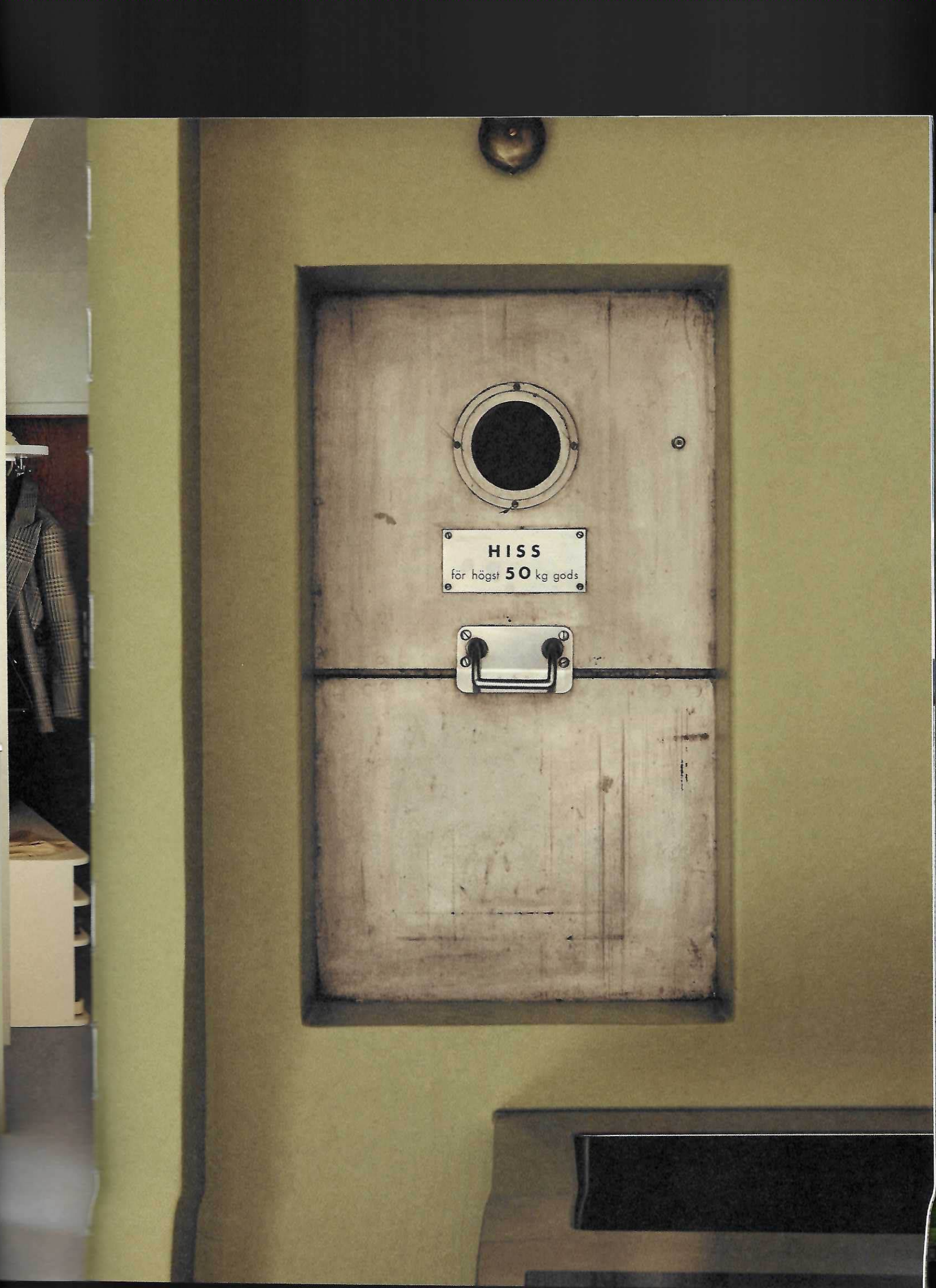
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The Collective House, built on the socio-political ideas of Swedish debater and politician Alva Myrdal and architect Sven Markelius, is a must visit for every student of architecture who comes to Sweden. Designed by Markelius and completed in 1935, the Collective House has become an icon in international architectural history, celebrated not only for its architecture, but also for the radical ideas that shaped it. The building has gained further renown for its residents throughout history, encompassing progressive writers, journalists, actors, and artists, as well as architects, social activists and politicians.

When he designed the Collective House, Markelius hoped that his 57-unit apartment building would help to emancipate women, as well as give full-time working couples with children and single professionals greater support with their everyday tasks through a series of collective amenities – hence the building's motto, "Individual culture through collective services". The house offered communal services such as a day-care centre, a restaurant equipped with dumbwaiters to the apartments, an intercom system for the restaurant, and laundry facilities. The building also had a grocery store and dairy. The apartments were small and the common areas for the restaurant, central kitchen and daycare area were placed on the ground floor. When it was completed, it was Sweden's first complete example of collective housing.

Markelius designed a number of different buildings in Sweden, most notably the world-famous Concert Hall in Helsingborg, which is considered one of the finest examples of modernist architecture

in Scandinavia. Completed in 1932, it showcases the principles of functionalism that Markelius and his contemporaries championed during the early 20th century. Markelius designed the Concert Hall's architecture, but also its furniture, including the Orchestra chair, which is said to be the first stackable chair produced in Sweden. In total, 40 Orchestra chairs can be stacked on top of each other, and Markelius even designed a dedicated trolley for this purpose. The architect had been influenced by the 1929 611 birch stacking chair designed by his friends Alvar Aalto and Otto Korhonen in Finland, who subsequently gave Markelius permission to use their design as inspiration. The Orchestra Chair was manufactured and produced by the Bodafors factory in Sweden for more than 30 years. Due to the many copies on the market, however, and in order to compete on price, Bodafors offered four different versions, which they produced simultaneously in different price categories – a modern way to deal with copies and still make the chair available to a broad audience. Because of this, there are some differences between the various chairs still found at auction houses today. Today the chair is produced by NO GA in collaboration with Markelius family

Markelius moved to the Collective House on John Ericssonsgatan in 1935 and lived there for a few years, before eventually moving to a villa in Stockholm's Danderyd suburb, where he lived until his death in 1972. Today, the Collective House is known internationally for its social values as much as for its architecture, and for its influence on women's emancipation and the childcare system in Sweden. And while the food lifts may no longer be in use, they are still a key feature in every apartment. ■

The Orchestra chair was originally designed for the Concert Hall in Helsingborg, Sweden, and is now in production with NO GA.

Previous spread: The dumbwaiter is characteristic of the Collective House.



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SHAPING FURNITURE HISTORY

B&B Italia has been a pioneer in furniture design since it was founded in 1966. Now it has unveiled a new chapter in which it will unveil original designs that trace the values and features of its past creations.

What once started with a rubber duck introduced a completely new way of producing sofas. A true pioneer, the founder Piero Ambrogio Busnelli was at the centre of his company's material development processes. One of his pioneering moments had occurred back in 1966, when he visited the Interplast trade fair in London. For the first time, he discovered rubber ducks made from polyurethane, a material he wasn't familiar with. More specifically, he learned how cold-pressed polyurethane reacted when injected into moulds. The material hardened and perfectly took on the shape of its mould – a rubber duck. Could this be applied to sofas too?

While many traditional Italian furniture manufacturers at that time focused on artisanal craftsmanship, Busnelli's realisation meant that he could introduce a more industrial approach, incorporating advanced technology into the production process. For instance, wooden sofa frames could be replaced with metal, and by using furniture moulds the production time of a sofa could be reduced from 30 days to 30 minutes. In the mid-1960s, this strategy was revolutionary; the impact that it had on furniture production can be compared to the impact of cement on architecture and construction in the 20th century.

The decision to collaborate with some of the world's most renowned designers – throughout its history, B&B Italia has worked with luminaries such as Mario Bellini, Antonio Citterio, Patricia Urquiola, and Gaetano Pesce – helped the brand push the boundaries of what a furniture company can be. Being hands-on and actively involved in the production process, Busnelli became an ambassador for "Made in Italy", which is still highly regarded worldwide.

From the start, B&B Italia's furniture pieces revolutionised the market. The Coronado project, designed by Afra and Tobia Scarpa in 1966, was the first to combine a metal frame with the revolutionary technology of cold-moulded polyurethane foam.

Three years later, in 1969, Gaetano Pesce created the Serie Up. The most famous piece from this collection, the UP5_6 armchair with ottoman, was revolutionary not only for its polyurethane foam form, but also for its innovative packaging. It was compressed down through vacuum-packing and only expanded into shape upon being opened – a first in furniture design.

In 1972, Mario Bellini introduced Le Bambole, a series of sofas, armchairs, and beds with voluptuous, soft forms, which won the prestigious Compasso d'Oro in 1979 – the most important award in Italian industrial design.

Other iconic pieces include the Diesis sofa in 1979 by Antonio Citterio and Paolo Nava, which perfectly combined metal with leather upholstery, and the Charles sofa system (named after Charles Eames) in 1997 by Antonio Citterio, which has become one of B&B Italia's most popular pieces.

The popularity of these iconic pieces remains strong and B&B Italia recently introduced a new chapter in which it will unveil original designs that trace the values and features of its past creations. The first results of this venture include Piero Lissoni's Dambodue sofa system, Isos and Assiale tables; Monica Armani's Allure O' Dot tables and coffee tables; Naoto Fukasawa's Omoi armchair, as well as the Narinari armchair by Tiziano Guardini and Luigi Ciuffreda. In other words, it is a future that will be shaped by both the company's history and present.



**ROBERT RABENSTEINER:
ON OBSERVING**

"I am not a businessman, I am a beauty-man," says legendary fashion maestro Robert Rabensteiner. With work spanning from fashion editorials for *L'Uomo Vogue*, to campaigns for brands such as Monclair and Trussardi, Rabensteiner has dedicated his life to observing.

To Robert Rabensteiner, observing is a way of life. He is constantly scanning his surroundings – the person he passes on the street, the fork in the restaurant, the detailing on the jacket of the uniform worn by the man in the flower shop. Nothing escapes his eye. With a background in art history, Rabensteiner spent 28 years working as *L'Uomo Vogue's* fashion director and editor-at-large. He has also worked with a number of other magazines, such as *Vogue Italia*, *Purple* and *T*, the New York Times Style Magazine. Meanwhile, his role as a creative consultant has seen him develop campaigns for brands such as Moncler and Trussardi. "I come from a family with deaf parents, where your eyes are more important than your words. My childhood was about observing, and this is what I still do," Rabensteiner says. "Inspiration can come from a building, or the elegance of a woman, or a simple tree. It can be the opera or the ballet, or the decoration of a set design. My eyes are my biggest gift."

Growing up in a small mountain town in a forest in the north of Italy, South Tyrol, Rabensteiner holds an Italian passport, although his first language

is German. "Before World War II, South Tyrol was Austrian, but then it became a part of Italy, so I'm a mix. I feel Austrian, but I'm also Italian."

Today, he divides his time between work – which consists of constant travelling to different cities – and his remote house in the Austrian mountains, which is where he keeps his books and where he recharges in nature.

"My work is very much about connection to different people," he says. "You meet people and you create something together. I never get bored of this. But you also have to refill your library."

Do you feel you have to compromise your vision to balance the commercial side?

When you do a story you have to combine art and commerce, and I think I'm good at putting those together. I love to visualise and imagine things. I'm not a businessman. I am a beauty-man. But businesspeople need me to bring them beauty. That's the balance of life.

Where do you think your clarity of vision comes from?

Everything is connected to my private life: where I come from, the movies I saw

when I grew up, the books I was reading. I grew up in the forest, with mountains and with nature. I think it's important to be connected to many things and to be interested in many things. I've never seen myself in fashion; I'm in style.

How has your upbringing influenced what you do?

I grew up with deaf parents, really strong parents, so my childhood related less to words and more to emotions – looking into people's eyes. My mother was really sophisticated, really elegant and she dressed up really well. I also spent a lot of time dreaming, and that is still important.

How would you describe your style?

My style is about combining the old or traditional with something modern. When I go to India, I love to go to the tailor and have him make me a special piece. I love to go to the tailor in general. I love traditional things. When I go to Austria I wear lederhosen with my Tyrollean jacket.

Robert Rabensteiner made the still life L'Art Brut on page 32 in this Issue.

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