



DISCOVERIES



BRING IT BACK

Karma Chameleon

B&B Italia gives architect *Mario Bellini's* beloved Camaleonda seating system an eco-friendly reboot

1. MARIO BELLINI'S CAMALEONDA SOFA, SHOWN IN A 1971 B&B ITALIA ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN. 2. THE SYSTEM IN MIKE D'S L.A. HOME, DESIGNED BY BARBARA BESTOR (AD, MARCH 2017). 3. B&B ITALIA'S NEW ECO-FRIENDLY MODEL.



According to Mario Bellini, most of the sofas that were being designed in the early 1970s fell firmly into two categories.

"There were variants on historical typologies or radical, provocative, elitist forays into the future," says the Italian architect, now 85 and still designing. Neither earnest throwbacks nor sci-fi follies, he thought at the time, responded appropriately to the world's rapidly evolving living habits. So he filled the void, designing the 1970 Camaleonda seating system—now poised to make a comeback thanks to B&B Italia.

Explaining his choice of name, Bellini recalls, "I crossed two words: *camaleonte*, or chameleon, an extraordinary animal capable of adapting to its environment, and *onda*, or wave." Created for B&B Italia, the system certainly lived up to both. Bulbous modules of fabric-covered polyurethane hooked together using simple, integrated carabiners to create endless configurations, from sectionals and armchairs to ottomans and daybeds. After appearing in the Museum of Modern Art's landmark 1972 exhibition "Italy: The New Domestic Landscape," the innovative system became a star.

Since production ceased in 1979, collectors have competed every time a Camaleonda comes to auction. (Versions have landed in the homes of Beastie Boy Mike D, tastemaker Athena Calderone, and artist Daniel Arsham, to name a few.) But now B&B is putting the system back into production, this time using all recycled or else recyclable materials. Today, like the 1970s, marks a moment of dramatic change, as the pandemic calls for flexible design solutions and climate change demands immediate action. Referring to the Swedish activist, Bellini muses, "I hope Greta would be proud." *beitalia.com* —HANNAH MARTIN

1. COURTESY OF B&B ITALIA; 2. TREVOR TONDRO; 3. FALCHI & SALVADOR