

More than meets the eye



I'm going to propose something radical here. There are a lot of words for furniture that can change its shape or form – modular, transformative, adjustable, collapsible and so on – but I think we should all adopt the vernacular of the family-owned Italian design firm, Campeggi. They call their pieces “convertibles”. Which just sounds so much cooler.

“Campeggi is not about identity or luxury,” says Guglielmo Campeggi, the company’s creative director and third-generation steward, “it’s about essence. The essence of convertible design.”

We kind of take convertible furniture for granted these days. Walk into any luxury showroom and you’ll find sofas that become beds, beds that become lounge sets, lounge sets that split and divide – cell-like – into chairs, chairs that morph back into sofas. Flexibility is a core principle of modern design. But Campeggi were the pioneers and risk-taking frontrunners behind this trend. They were making multi-functional furniture before the industry even had a *name* for such things. If you’re sleeping on a sofa bed right now, it’s largely because of this family.

The brand was founded in 1959 by Luigi Campeggi, Guglielmo’s grandfather, in the Brianza region of Italy – right at the foot of the Alps, halfway between Milan and Lake Como. Already a renowned hub for high-end craftsmanship, in the 1950s Brianza and Milan became more or less the epicentre of post-war Italian furniture design, home to groundbreaking studios like Cassina, Arflex and Zanotta. But right from the start Campeggi carved out its own quirky, experimental niche, launching with a range of folding sofa beds – quite a commercial risk in the middle of the 20th century. You have to remember, this was a time when prawn cocktails were considered haute cuisine.

By the 1960s and 70s, the collection had expanded to include all types of multi-functional furniture: wardrobe-beds, table-beds, collapsible chairs, modular bookshelves, inflatable footstools. Objects that blurred the lines between hitherto unblurrable categories. This was also the time when Luigi’s son, Claudio Campeggi, Guglielmo’s father, started to re-shape the company, collaborating with renowned Italian designers like Vico Magistretti, Denis Santachiara, Giulio Manzoni and Giovanni Levanti, among others¹.



Left
Lazy Basketball (2013) designed by Emanuele Magini for Campeggi. Image: Efrem Raimondi.

Above and right
Archival image from Campeggi’s book *Tutto già c’è, è solo un po’ nascosto* (2025).

Above image courtesy Fondazione Vico Magistretti, right image courtesy of Campeggi archive.

¹ We don’t have the space or energy to list the dozens and dozens of Campeggi design collaborators here, but you can check out the full list at campeggidesign.it/en/designers.



With Claudio at the helm, Campeggi quickly developed a reputation as a “happy island for designers” – to borrow a phrase from Denis Santachiara. They were one of the first Italian labels, along with Cassina, Zanotta and B&B Italia, to make up-and-coming artists a central part of their brand identity (rather than anonymous contract stylists, labouring in the background). The big difference was that, with Campeggi, these collaborations felt less like a ‘furniture house’ churning out seasonal collections and more like an ongoing creative laboratory. Basically a mid-century R&D workshop. A zany, fold-out world where anything was possible.

Claudio actively sought out designers for their playful, even whimsical ideas, and his collaborative spirit was the thing that catapulted Campeggi onto the global stage. The brand’s unofficial ethos became: boring is the enemy.

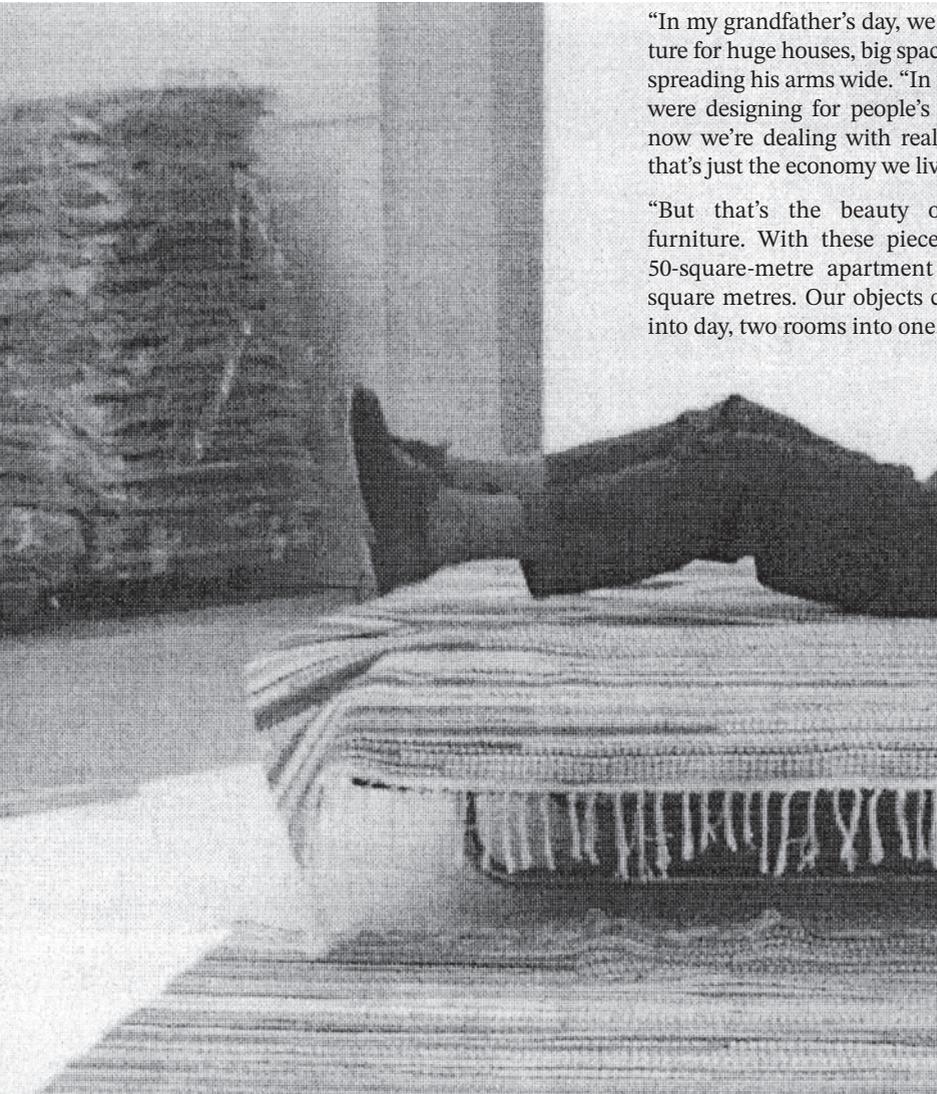
“He had talent,” says Marco Campeggi, Claudio’s brother and the company’s current CEO. “There is no piece of our company that was born without his contribution. Armrests that stretched, feet that shortened. Claudio sensed the needs of the public and anticipated them.”

“My father was the revolutionary man who really explored this idea of multi-functional objects,” Guglielmo says. “He basically reinvented the topology of the domestic space.”

Chatting to Guglielmo from his apartment in Milan, it’s interesting to learn how Campeggi’s design mission has changed over the years. As the trailblazers in convertible furniture, the brand’s inherent value tends to increase as living spaces decrease. The smaller people’s homes get, the more important every chair, every bed, every square inch and scrap of floor space becomes. The humble sofa bed suddenly seems quite compelling when you’re forced to choose between those two objects.

“In my grandfather’s day, we were making furniture for huge houses, big spaces,” Guglielmo says, spreading his arms wide. “In my father’s time, we were designing for people’s second homes. But now we’re dealing with really tiny spaces. And that’s just the economy we live in today.”

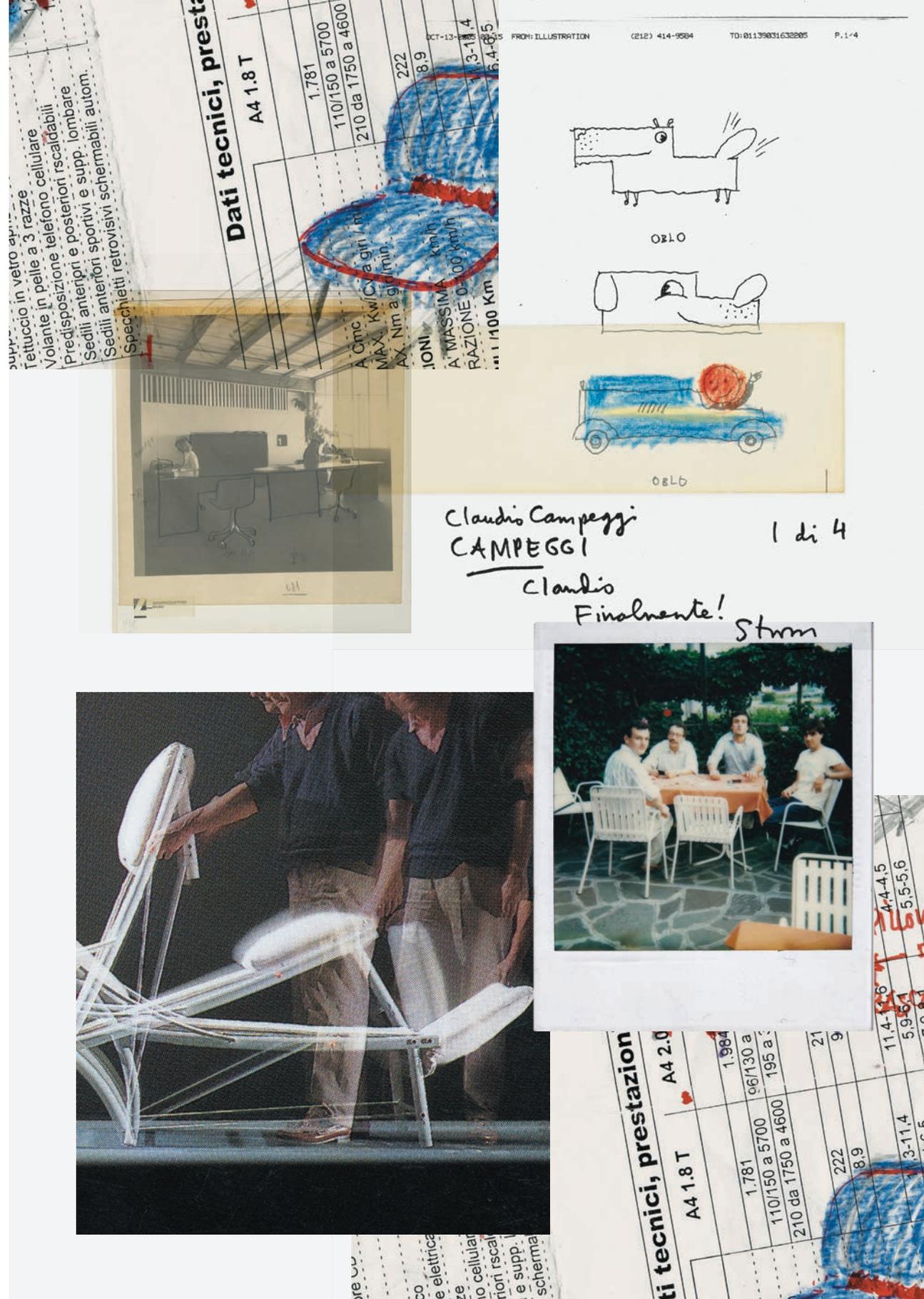
“But that’s the beauty of multi-functional furniture. With these pieces, we can make a 50-square-metre apartment feel more like 80 square metres. Our objects can transform night into day, two rooms into one.”



Right + left
Images and
sketches from
Campeggi’s book
*Tutto già c’è,
è solo un po’
nascosto* (2025).

Portrait image
pictures Claudio
Campeggi and his
brother Marco and
the photographer
Isidoro Romano
during a lunch at
the ristorante dal
Peder in Lurago.

All images
courtesy
of Campeggi
archive excepting
image at top
right courtesy of
Fondazione Vico
Magistretti.





Below
 Archival image from Campeggi's book *Tutto già c'è, è solo un po' nascosto* (2025).
 Image courtesy of Campeggi archive.

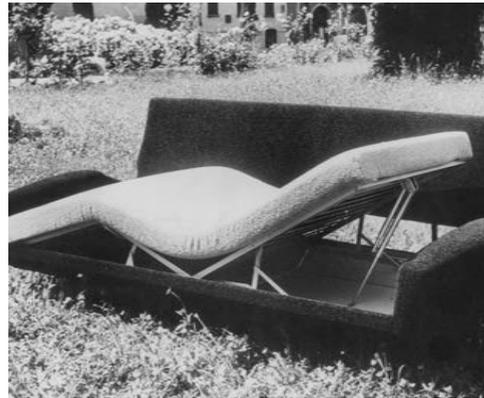


Image courtesy of Campeggi archive.



Far top left
 The old Campeggi factory in Giussano, Italy.

Far bottom left
 Archival image from Campeggi's book *Tutto già c'è, è solo un po' nascosto* (2025).
 Image courtesy of Campeggi archive.

Bottom left
 Archival image from Campeggi's book *Tutto già c'è, è solo un po' nascosto* (2025).
 Image courtesy of Campeggi archive.

Right
Commedia sofa bed (2025) designed by Julie Richoz for Campeggi. Image: Luca Caizzi.

Guglielmo knows all this first-hand. As a child, he and his brother used to visit the Campeggi factory after-hours, or on weekends, when all the workers had gone home. His toys were tools, or experimental furniture prototypes. He learned that design and play were more or less the same thing, which is a philosophy that practically leaps off the modern-day Campeggi catalogue. As a young adult he studied architecture, before being absorbed (like most Campeggis) into the family business. And for over 10 years, he lived in a cramped, 30-square-metre Milanese apartment. And he didn't live alone.

"I lived in this tiny room with my brother," he laughs. "Can you imagine that? Two guys and only 30 square metres. We did that for more than a decade."

To make this situation work, the brothers filled the apartment with Campeggi's signature convertible pieces, boosting the square-footage through sheer invention. Their home became a testing lab for new prototypes, as well as a constant source of design inspiration. For Guglielmo, the best designs usually start not with a shape or an idea, but with a problem. If he was struggling with some aspect of tiny living, chances were good he wasn't the only one.

"I basically slept on a Campeggi sofa bed for 10 years," he says. "I learned from my father that you should never judge something before understanding it deeply. He taught me that in order to evaluate a design or anything, really you need to know its foundations, its logic, and its context. Only by taking the time to truly study and understand an object can you draw meaningful conclusions about it."

"This mindset has stayed with me and shaped the way I approach both design and life."

These days, Guglielmo lives in a (practically palatial) 50-square-metre apartment with his girlfriend, but he still uses the space to test out new designs. His current favourite is Brando – produced by Campeggi and designed by the award-winning Giuseppe Arezzi – a collapsible camp bed that resembles a giant, upholstered centipede. Part chair, part recliner, part pouf. Brando looks like it's about to crawl out the living room door. "It's really useful because you have so many functions in one," Guglielmo says. "I use it to eat, or for guests, but I can also stretch it out on the balcony and read a book."





Left
Tango sofa bed from day to night (2024) designed by Giulio Manzoni for Campeggi. Image: Giovanni Emilio Galanello.

Below
Armadio bed (circa 1960) designed by Salvati Tresoldi for Campeggi.

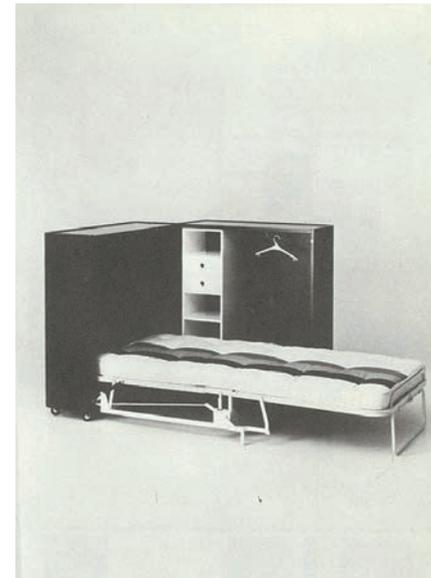
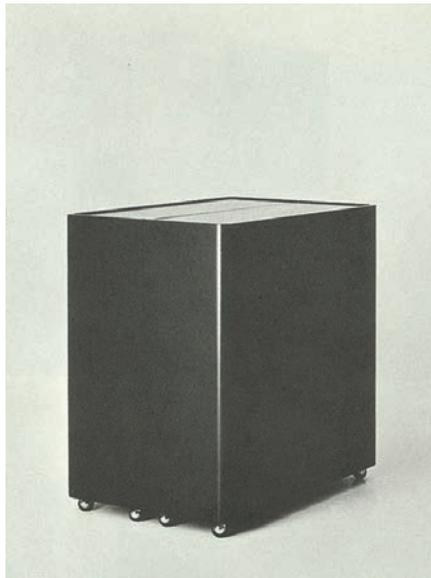
As unorthodox and straight-up weird as it looks, Brando is arguably one of Campeggi's more conservative designs. In 2013, the brand unveiled the Lazy Basketball Chair, devised by Emanuele Magini, which was literally a high-backed metal chair topped with a basketball net (ball not included). In 2015, there was Matali Crasset's Self-Made Seat: a sofa made from individual cushion modules, each of which could be carried like a suitcase, or rearranged into a series of chairs. Or how about Foresta, a tent-like sofa bed from Sakura Adachi that zips the sleeper into a private elastic cocoon. Campeggi doesn't do 'collections' in the traditional sense, but there are certain things that unite all their pieces. And the two most obvious ones, the ones that seem fundamentally Campeggi-ish, are movement and playfulness.

"Playfulness is an important characteristic," Guglielmo says, "but it's always a consequence of the *function*. A multi-functional object is an object that's made to transform, and transformation is movement.

"All the designers that collaborate with us, they have a sort of *carte blanche*. Because we know the result will reflect the essence of Campeggi, which is change. We continue to change – due to necessity, or spacing problems – but we are always ourselves."

The secondary benefit, when it comes to convertible furniture, is that it's inherently portable. And thus inherently sustainable. Campeggi's pieces are designed by some of the brightest creative minds in Europe, fashioned from high-quality materials, and engineered to last a lifetime. No matter how often you fold and unfold them. This means that when you move house you can take your furniture with you. Downsizing? No problem. Your Underdog bed transforms into a small trolley with wheels. You could take it out to dinner (if that was your idea of a good time). Constantly moving rentals? No worries. Your Mehari safari chair folds completely flat, so you can hang it on the wall, or store it in a cupboard.

It doesn't matter where you go, your Campeggi furniture will follow you, and for Guglielmo, that's becoming a core user feature. Right up there with multi-functional design.



Below
Brando (2024) designed by Giuseppe Arezzi for Campeggi. Images: Giovanni Emilio Galanello.



Above left
Self Made Seat (2015) designed by Matali Crasset for Campeggi. Image: Ezio Prandini.

Above
Foresta (2015) designed by Sakura Adachi for Campeggi. Image: Ezio Prandini.

Left
Mehari (2025) designed by Davide Biancucci for Campeggi. Image: Vincenzo Caccia.





o Symphony con letto
diatore di velocità
ema Bose Sound
oportio lombare elettrico
tuccio in pelle a 3 razze
piante in pelle a 3 razze
redispensione telefono cellulare
sedili anteriori e posteriori riscaldabili
sedili anteriori sportivi e supp. lombare
Specchietti retrovisivi schermabili autom.

Dati tecnici, prestazioni, consumi

	A4 1.8 T	A4 2.0	A4 1.9TDI
Cmc	1.781	1.984	1.996
X. Kw/Cv/giri/min	110/150 a 5700	66/130 a 5700	96/130 a 4000
X. Nm a giri/min	210 da 1750 a 4600	195 a 3300	285 da 1750 a 2500
INL	222	212	207
MPASSIMP km/h	8,9	9,9	9,9
		11,4-13,6	7,4-7,5
			4-4,4-5



"I think that real sustainability is the durability of an object," he says. "You buy an object and you have to take care of this object until the end of its life."

"A concept my father had was: the space is not the architecture, the object is the architecture. So we work with this kind of white cube, and we put objects inside it. And when we leave the cube, we can bring our furniture with us."

I ask Guglielmo what the future of Campeggi looks like, and he thinks for a while before answering. It's a tricky question when you've been raised in a business, holding a fragile, 60-year-old family legacy in your hands, brought up to follow in the footsteps of visionaries like Claudio Campeggi. The Campeggi brand has built its reputation on invention and collaboration and testing the boundaries of furniture design. But when you look past all that, what it's really done is adapt – just like its sofas – to the problems and living conditions of each new generation. That's the true genius of multi-functional design, and the true test of a design-led business: can you transform ... and then keep on transforming.

"I think that we are here now, and I really hope we are here in 10 years," Guglielmo says. "I think the result of Campeggi will be the consequence of society, of problem-solving. Things will always change, so we need to be ready to solve the next problem, and the next one after that."

"When we want to make something new, the first question we ask is always: what do we need *now*?"



Above
Air Table (2009) designed by Lorenzo Damiani for Campeggi.
Image: Giovanni Emilio Galanello.

Top left
Illustrations by Steven Guarnaccia for Campeggi – one of the brand's long-standing collaborations. Image courtesy of Campeggi archive.

Facing page
Archival images from Campeggi's book *Tutto già c'è, è solo un po' nascosto* (2025). Above image courtesy of Fondazione Vico Magistretti and image below courtesy of Campeggi archive.

