

SIDE GALLERY

FRANCO ALBINI



Pair of storage cabinets model "MB15"

Manufactured by Poggi
Italy, 1957

Solid and veneered stained wood

Measurements (each cabinet)

122 x 47 x 77h cm
48 x 18,5 x 30,3h in

Provenance

Private collection

Literature

Domus, no. 373, December 1960, p. 20
Giuliana Gramigna, Repertorio del design italiano
1950–2000 per l'arredamento domestico, Allemandi,
2003, p. 53

Biography

Franco Albini (b. 1905, Robbiate – d. 1977, Milan) was one of the most significant and intellectually rigorous figures of 20th-century Italian architecture and design. A master of Rationalist principles, Albini's work is renowned for its structural clarity, formal restraint, and the seamless integration of modernist ideals with traditional Italian craftsmanship. His approach to both furniture and architecture was driven by a relentless pursuit of essentiality, stripping away superfluous ornamentation to reveal the inherent beauty of materials and construction.

Albini graduated from the Politecnico di Milano in 1929 and began his career in the studio of architect Gio Ponti. He quickly became a central figure in the Italian Rationalist movement of the 1930s, contributing to major exhibitions and architectural competitions that promoted a new, modernist language in Italy. His architectural works, such as the Museo del Tesoro della Cattedrale di San Lorenzo in Genoa (1952–56) and the design of Milan's Line 1 subway stations in the 1960s, are considered masterclasses in spatial purity and functional rigor.

In the field of furniture design, Albini created some of the most iconic and timeless pieces of the 20th century. His collaboration with Poggi, one of the leading Italian manufacturers of the period, was particularly fruitful. Among his most celebrated furniture designs is the "Margherita" chair (1951), crafted from curved cane and rattan, which blends radical modernity with artisanal weaving techniques. This chair, along with the "Gala" chair, was exhibited at the IX Triennale di Milano and is now part of the permanent collection at MoMA, New York.

Another cornerstone of his work is the "Infinito" shelving system (1956), developed for Poggi, which exemplifies Albini's architectural approach to furniture: a light, modular structure composed of vertical uprights and floating shelves, adjustable to different spatial configurations. The system remains a benchmark in modern shelving design and reflects Albini's mastery of proportion and balance.

His storage cabinets model MB15 (ca. 1957), manufactured by Poggi, illustrate Albini's ability to distill a storage unit to its purest form, using clean geometries and finely crafted wood to create objects that are both functional and aesthetically rigorous. These pieces, featured in Domus in 1960, are now recognized as quintessential examples of Albini's understated yet profoundly architectural design language.