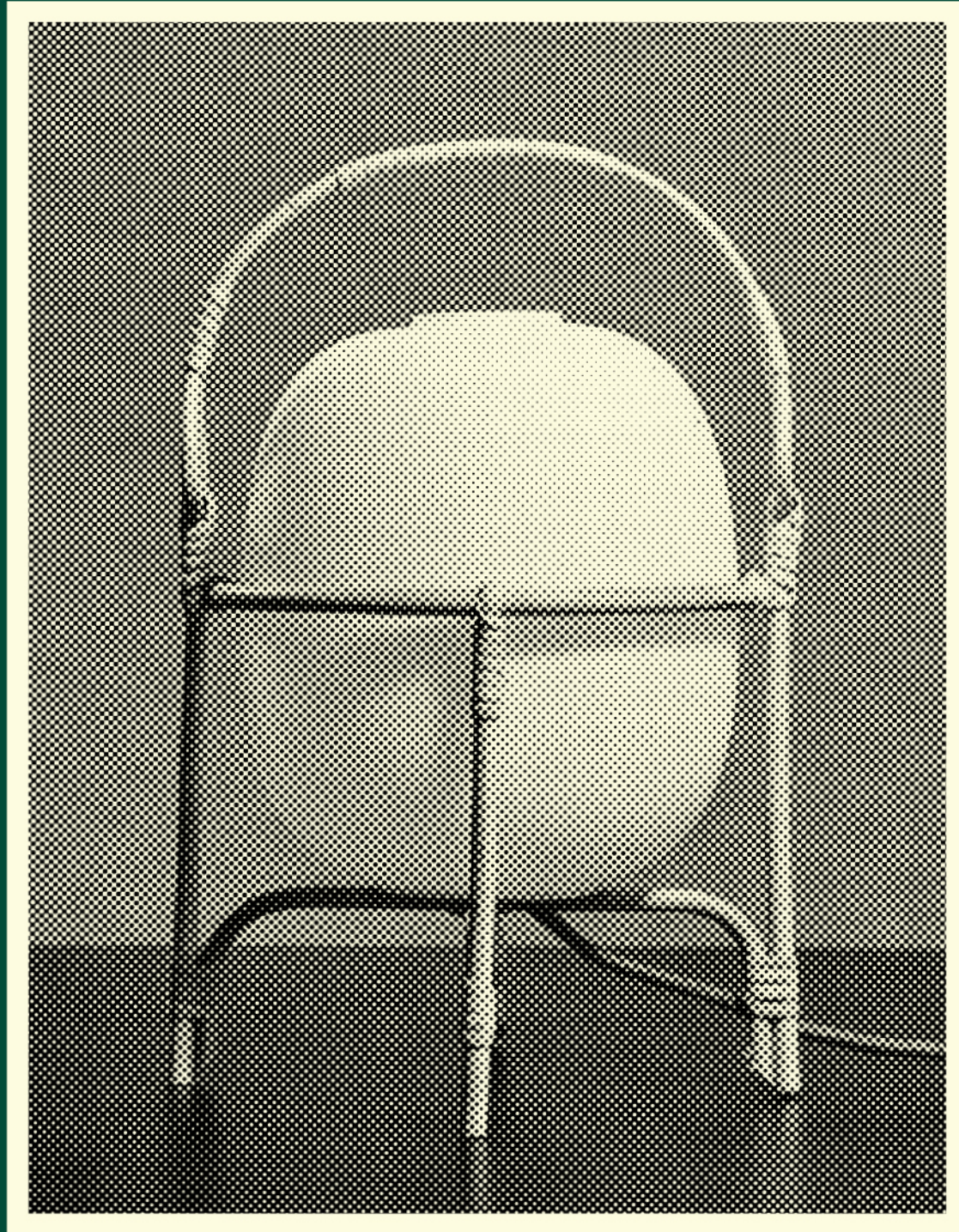


MIGUEL MILÁ A LIFE IN DESIGN



By Kiko Gaspar Quevedo
Introduction by Jasper Morrison

apartamento



Milá in 1972 with a radio he designed in the late '60s.

AN HOMAGE TO CATALONIA

Jasper Morrison

Home of good cooks, great architects, writers, artists, and a stubborn but endearing human character. My earliest experience of it was over the summer of 1976, a year after the death of General Franco, arriving early morning in Barcelona with a Eurorail pass and a friend, Paul Kasmin, whose art dealer father was unusually well connected. Our first lodgings were with the sculptor Xavier Corberó in the exotic suburb of Esplugues de Llobregat. We stayed a couple of days there in the house before he had turned it into an architectural sculpture. There were signs of a determined and specific Catalan independence of mind in the tunnel he had made under the road to connect the two halves of his property. He drove us back to town in an open-top Morgan sports car and we moved into the Hotel Oriente, with its famous modernista dining room interior, wooden phone boxes in the lobby, and soaring internal courtyard onto which the rooms look. We visited Gaudí's park and basilica. A while later I discovered Fernando Amat's Vinçon store, the architecture of Sert, Coderch, Bonet, and Moragas, Salvador Dalí's autobiography, Cal Pep and Bar Mundial, Martí Guixé, and, significantly, because it explains so well the Catalan attitude to life, *The Grey Notebook* of Josep Pla, and the list could go on.

All this came before my full awareness of Miguel Milá's design, a more recent piece of the puzzle, but a central one which fits so well with the others. It wasn't until I came across the Salvador chair in Marc Morro's Barcelona store, *Altres Coses* (Other Things), that I fully discovered Milá's work. Of course I knew already the Cesta lights and their ability to light up a room both literally and atmospherically, but what struck me when I discovered more of his work was the careful balance between straight lines and curves. The more intelligent designers among us know the impor-

including the MM bookshelf, made from wood and leather, the TMM lamp, and the Nogal wall lamps, which were later produced by Gres.

From businessman to designer

In 1963, Milá chose to leave his company Tramo to dedicate himself entirely to industrial and interior design projects. When Gres opened its new shop, which Miguel also designed, he opened his studio in the same building, on Carrer Juan Sebastián Bach, Barcelona. At the same time, Gres also pivoted as a company, from selling products by different manufacturers to creating and selling a range of pieces under its own name. Milá's experience in designing furniture at Tramo meant that he took a central role as the company began its new phase in production. The relationship grew closer still, and Milá was made a partner when the new business entity, Gres S.A., was established.

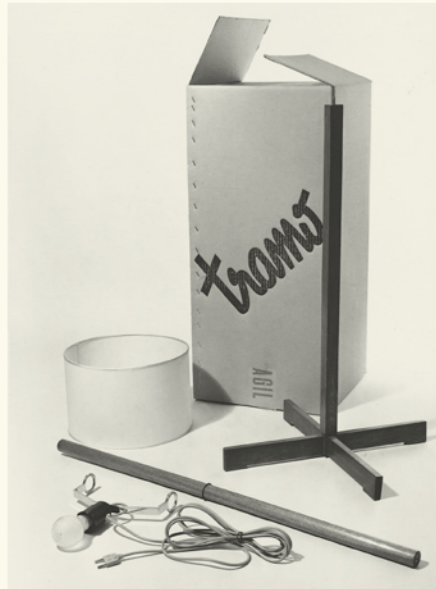
More broadly, the start of the '60s brought new collaborations that would have long-lasting effects on Milá's career. Also in 1963, through his brother Leopoldo's company Polinax, he was invited to design lamps for the new Hotel de Mar in Mallorca, which his friend Coderch was building. Milá responded by designing a complete series of floor, ceiling, table, and wall lamps that later became known as the M64 series. They were among the first of his pieces to be industrially manufactured and also among the first in the history of Spanish design to be made using plastic injection. Since then, Milá has often recalled the pride it brought him to know that Coderch valued his work so highly as to use it systematically throughout his own projects. Even today, 60 years later, it's surprising to see the large number of homes and antique shops that still have some of these pieces.

During the first years of Polinax, the company produced designs that Miguel had initially made for Tramo, and they

were soon joined by new creations. Throughout the '60s and early '70s, he designed everything from lamps to beds, fireplaces, and street furniture for the Polinax catalogue. Some of the designs that were industrially produced were also used in a multitude of urban projects across the country, and the BM street lamp designed by Milá in 1967 in collaboration with Pep Bonet, for example, still functions in many public squares and housing developments.

Following the breakup of Polinax at the end of the '80s, most of the pieces designed for the company were produced and sold by DAE (Diseño Ahorro Energético, or Energy-Saving Design), a company founded by the brothers Miguel, Leopoldo, and Luis María. Initially, DAE focused on the design and development of solar-energy installations, but in 1988 they also started producing street furniture and outdoor lighting designed by both Leopoldo and Miguel. Then, from the '90s onwards, as well as absorbing part of the Polinax catalogue, DAE started creating Miguel's newer designs. These pieces include some of his most iconic works, like the Montserrat bench, which he designed in 1990 with Carlos Marzábal, and the Anella ceiling light, which he designed ahead of the 1992 Barcelona Games for the Olympic Stadium, whose renovation was led by Alfonso Milá and Federico Correa.

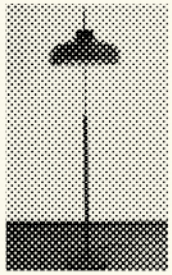
While Gres and Polinax were the most important companies in the first few decades of Milá's career, the Barcelona-based 'editor' of design-products Santa & Cole has undoubtedly become his most influential client over the past decades. Santa & Cole was founded in 1985 by Gabriel Ordeig and Nina Masó, who came from the world of design, and Javier Nieto, who'd held senior roles in the world of book publishing, in houses like Ariel, Seix Barral, Planeta, and Bruguera. Together, they wanted to apply concepts typical of the literary publishing world to the design industry, like the relationship that exists between editor and author and the provision of royalties. Santa & Cole was born with an innovative idea of production, or rather



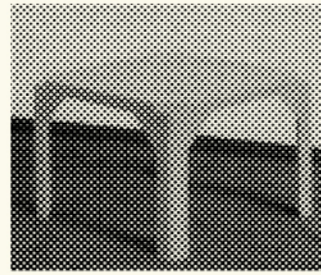
Above: The TMM floor lamp, disassembled with its Tramo packaging, 1962. Below: The window display of Milá's studio on Carrer Juan Sebastián Bach, c. 1963.



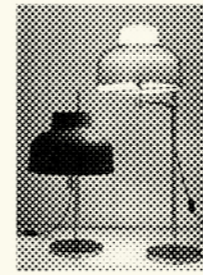
The Anella light and Tram benches at the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, 1992.



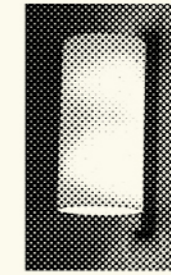
WP FLOOR LAMP
Produced by Polinax
1963



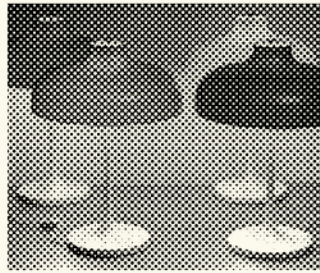
MMS / STACKABLE SIDE TABLE
Produced by Gres,
Mobles 114
1963



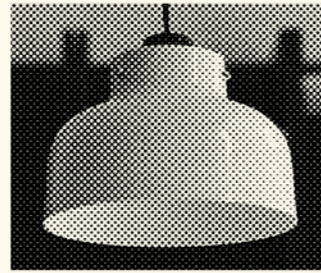
MB64 / AMERICANA
ADJUSTABLE-HEIGHT
TABLE LAMPS
Produced by Polinax,
Santa & Cole
1964



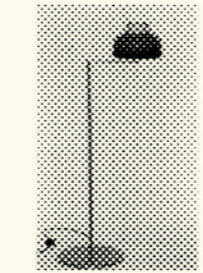
C-105 WALL LAMP
Produced by Polinax,
Gres
1965



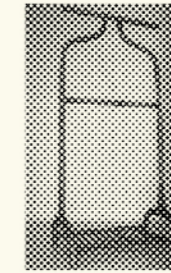
WS TABLE LAMP
Produced by Polinax
1963



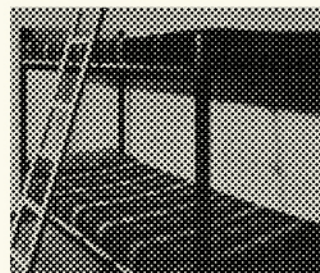
M64 HANGING LAMP
Produced by Polinax,
Santa & Cole
1964



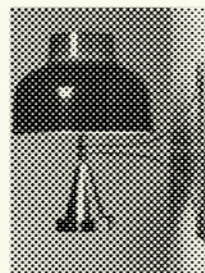
MB64 / AMERICANA
ADJUSTABLE-HEIGHT
FLOOR LAMP
Produced by Polinax,
Santa & Cole
1964



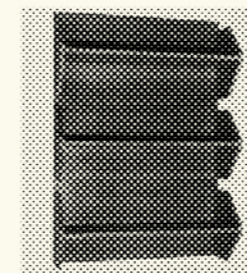
MANILA CLOTHES STAND
Produced by Gres, Trenat
1965



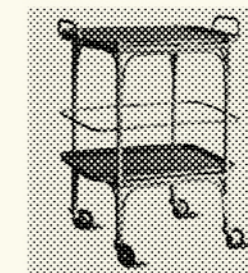
BUNK BED
Produced by Gres
1963



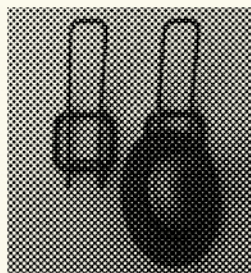
MB64 / AMERICANA
WALL LAMP
Produced by Polinax,
Santa & Cole
1964



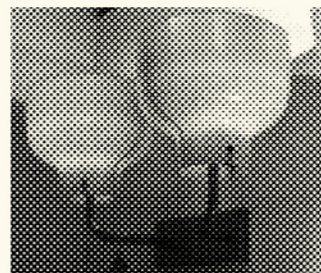
STACKABLE SHELVES
Produced by Gres
1964



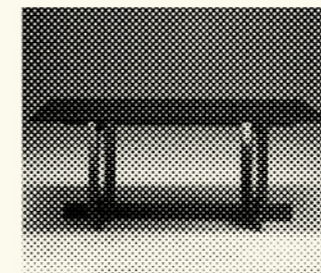
MANILA TRAY TROLLEY
Produced by Gres, Trenat
1965



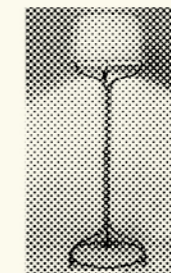
MANILA COAT HANGER
Produced by Gres, Trenat
1963



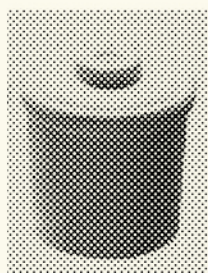
INVERTED MB64 WALL
LAMP
Produced by Polinax
Lamp
1964



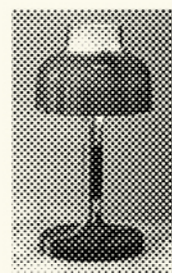
ALTAR TABLE
Produced by Gres, Kettal
1964



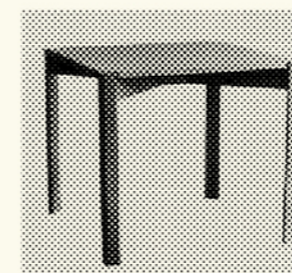
MANILA FLOOR LAMP
Produced by Gres
1965



ICE BUCKET
Produced by Gres
1963



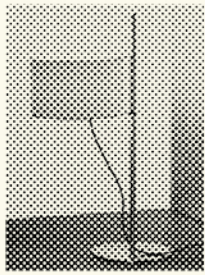
MB64 TABLE LAMP
Produced by Polinax
Lamp
1964



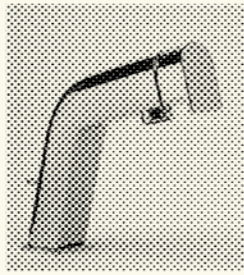
GAMES TABLE / MM
Produced by Gres,
Santa & Cole
1964



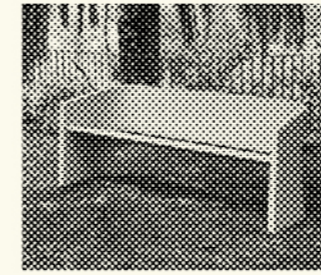
MANILA STOOL
Produced by Gres,
Expormim
1965



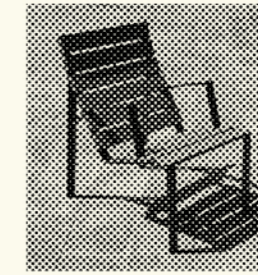
TMD TABLE LAMP
Produced by Santa & Cole
1996



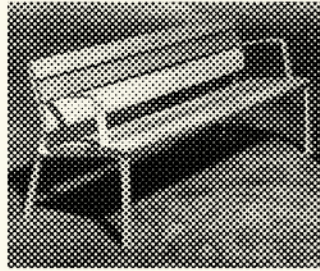
SERIE MILÁ FAUCET
Produced by Supergrif
2004



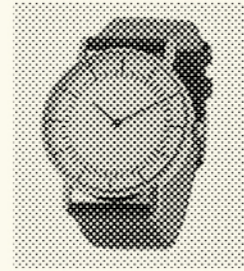
BRUNO BENCH
Co-authored by Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Escofet
2011



HARPO ARMCHAIR
Co-authored by Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2017



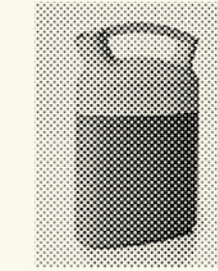
NEOROMÁNTICO LIVIANO
BENCH
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2000



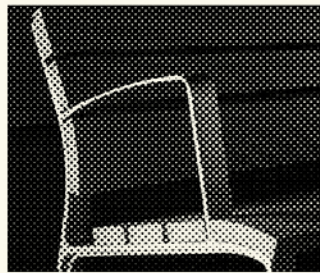
PUNTUAL WATCH
Produced by Watchcelona
2006



PERCHERÓN COAT RACK
Self-produced and
distributed by Mise
en Scène
2012



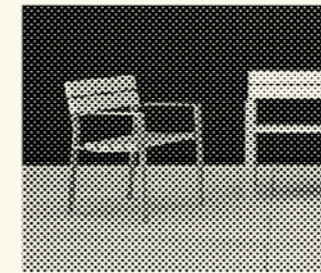
PITCHER
Produced by Museu del Càntir
2019



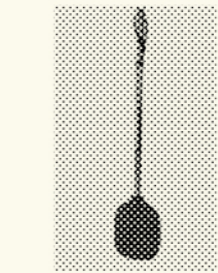
NEOLINEAL BENCH
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2002



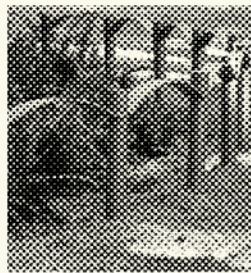
LAUREL & HARDY BIN
Co-authored by Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Escofet
2008



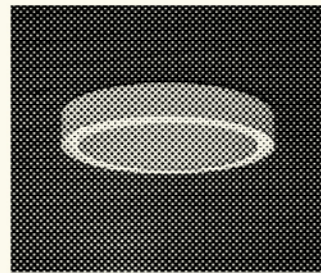
HARPO BENCH
Co-authored by Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2014



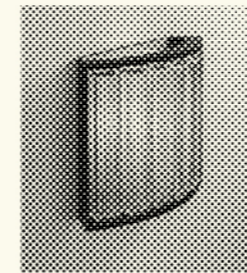
FLY SWATTER
Produced by Isist Atelier
2020



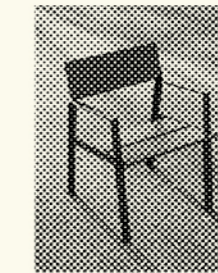
ROBERT GARDEN BORDER
Produced by Santa & Cole
2003



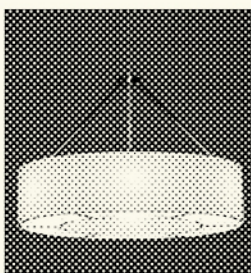
AMIGO CEILING LAMP
Co-authored by Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Santa & Cole
2009



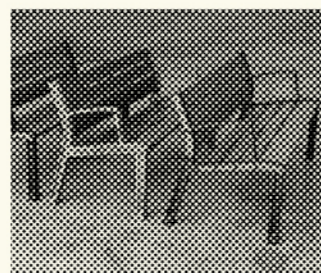
ESTADIO WALL LAMP
Produced by Santa & Cole
2015



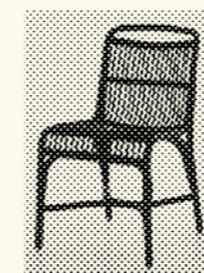
BASIC BENCH
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2021



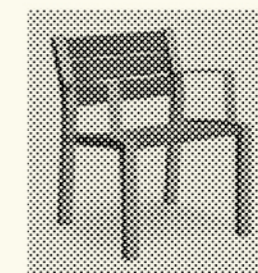
SEXTA CEILING LAMP
Produced by Santa & Cole
2003



SUSTAINABLE
NEOROMÁNTICO BENCH
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2009



GATA CHAIR
Co-authored by
Gonzalo Milá
Produced by Expormim
2017



INNER BENCH
Produced by Urbidermis
(Santa & Cole)
2021

apartamento