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Memphis Design Meets the Digital Age

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The radical eye-popping furnishings of Memphis, a loosely formed consortium of designers led by Ettore Sottsass, burst upon the world in 1981 during the Salone del Mobile in Milan. If you are too young to remember, it may be hard to grasp the avalanche of publicity that followed. Pundits predicted Memphis would have an enduring relevance to design. It didn't, although it did inspire countless treatises, several museum shows and a lasting mystique.

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Mr. Sottsass dismantled the group in 1988, and the brand was then acquired by Ernesto Gismondi, owner of Artemide, and later Alberto Bianchi Albrici, who bought it in 1996 because, he said, "I was young and stupid and an incurable optimist."

This May, Mr. Albrici put Memphis back in the spotlight, by creating an online store to sell about 100 of the pieces, including Michele De Lucchi's tubular steel First chair (\$1,147), right. All the pieces have been in continuous production.

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The designers will all receive royalties, and Mr. Albrici said that he has their enthusiastic support. "They are satisfied," he said. "Not for the royalties, but because Memphis is still alive." Information: memphis-milano.it.

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