Perhaps nothing says Italian contemporary design more characteristically than streamlined, low-slung sectional seating. The Italians, after all, have perfected the art of leisurely lounging. Milanese architect Rodolfo Dordoni created the outdoor collection for Minotti, blurring the lines between casual and formal, indoor and out. The coated metal structure resists corrosion, and the upholstery, available in four neutral hues with eco-leather piping, is easily removable. Feet and arm supports are made of inlaid wood. Multiple geometric shapes allow for creative configurations. Cordon also designed the companion Ca' Rezzonico coffee table with weather-friendly metal and a Pietra di Carrara brushed-stone top, which naturally resists the rigors of the alfresco environment and encourages al fresco style, U-shaped sofa, from $21,950; coffee table, $5,184; minotti.com

Antonio Canova's Pasifila Borghese as Venus Victrix from Rame's Galatia Borghese.
FLAWLESSLY CHISELED FORMS

Italy’s top designers of fine furnishings share with their country’s greatest painters and sculptors a passion for timeless beauty and perfection of form. Neither Leonardo nor Michelangelo likely gave much thought to comfort when wielding paintbrush and chisel; however, these modern masters render 10 masterpieces that marry artistic splendor with flawless function.

By JORGE S. ARANGO

Italians have always been at the vanguard of the visual arts. Romans of classical antiquity did not merely mimic the finest Greek and Hellenistic sculpture; they strove instead for more realistic—rather than idealized—representations and assimilated influences from the East to arrive at their own distinct aesthetic. In architecture, these ancient engineers pioneered the construction of arches and aqueducts and made inventive use of concrete, while the Italian Renaissance gave us oil painting and one-point perspective. The somewhat democratic creative spirit that pervades the Italian culture—in combination with the national preference for playfulness at home—accounts for the near-universal appeal of the country’s lifestyle. The Italian design sensibility is at once sophisticated and down-to-earth, often transcendent with respect to shape, color, and materials. This characteristic blend of traits is clearly present in the selection of classic and newly conceived pieces offered here.
DRIVEN DESIGN

Cockpit chair by Poltrona Frau
in collaboration with Ferrari

Florentin-based Poltrona Frau has up-vested the interiors of Ferrari cars with its famously sleek and graceful look for years. In recognition of the automaker's 70th anniversary, Ferrari's head of design, Paolo Marinoni, who oversees the design of the LaFerrari Aperta, 488 Pista, and 812 Superfast models, teamed up with the company on the Cockpit chair. Featuring the style and ergonomics common to competitive racing seats, the chair comes in the high-back President and low-back Executive models. The swivel base is made of polished powder-coated aluminum, tilt wars the design and mechanical elements of the steering wheel, and a contrasting stitch down the spine simulates racing stress. Colors and materials can be customized. $30,000-$80,000. poltronafrau.com

A detail from Baccio Bandinelli’s Hercules and Cacus in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence.

SEPTEMBER 2017
GLASS ACT
Layers shelving by Glas Italia

Glass Italia’s theme at this year’s Milan furniture fair was fixation. To that end, the brand commissioned designers to utilize mirrored, colored, and resistant glass to create unusual optical effects. Venice–the Venice company led by chief designer Olly Smith–created Layers, a freestanding bookcase whose overhanging, movable panels of colored glass are suspended from a track in front of and behind the shelves. These panels can then be positioned to conjure varying chromatic imagery. The piece comes in two color schemes: warm tones (orange, red, and brown) and cool tones (blue, gray, and violet, $7,000). Available through dsdny.co.com.

FLAWLESSLY CHISELED FORMS

A HAPPY MARRIAGE
Edward chair by Armani/Casa

A modern interpretation of a classic chair designed by Giorgio Armani for his yacht. A light wood frame supports a comfortable seat that can be upholstered in various fabric options for a variety of interior spaces. Fabrics can be removed for dry cleaning, ensuring the seat and backrest remain pristine. (94.039/€1,520) armanicasa.com

Left: Generously from the entrance to the Palacio Nacional da Ajuda in Lisbon, Portugal: tight. Beechus.
PAN-ITALIANISM

Lilo chaise by Moroso

The Lilo chaise longue exemplifies the way Italy reimagines various global ideas through its particular aesthetic prism, balancing elegance of form with comfort. Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola conceived the Lilo longue as a homage to Scandinavian design and modernist ideas of the 1960s. The chaise’s materials speak to this. However, the chunky volume of its base was influenced by Achille Castiglioni, while the segmented, slightly thicker (and more generously upholstered than Scandinavian seating and less overstuffed than the Brazilian version) backrest evokes Gaetano Sciolari. The chaise is an amalgamation of old and new, from here and there, but ultimately it fits in the sum of its parts. Image: $3,200 moroso.com

L'architettura by Gambone from the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence.
LAKE LIVING

Chairs sofa by Achille Salvagni

At its most essential, the work of Rome-based architect追赶Tokyo location, to box viewers—
leading live affair with his native country—from
its myriad historic locations to its centers of
fashion and design. The sensuality of 1940s and
50s furniture by such masters as (Sao Paolo, Lio
Penet, and Dividio) Bonacina are a particularly
rare vein of inspiration, which Salvagni mines with a
contemporary twist. Gaddi—named after one of
the great leaps of fashion—also offers a sofa pro-
duced in a limited edition of six, boasting a luxuri-
ously long 718-inch, lacquered wood structure with
engraved, bronze-detailed feet. Like a sea-scape,
body of water, it bends gracefully at one end. (From
$685,000) Available through milaougerard.com

Tactile from outside the Austrian
Parliament Building in Vienna.