



TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

Miguel Milá. (Pre)industrial Designer

From 19 June to 28 September 2025 - Disseny Hub Barcelona



PRESS KIT



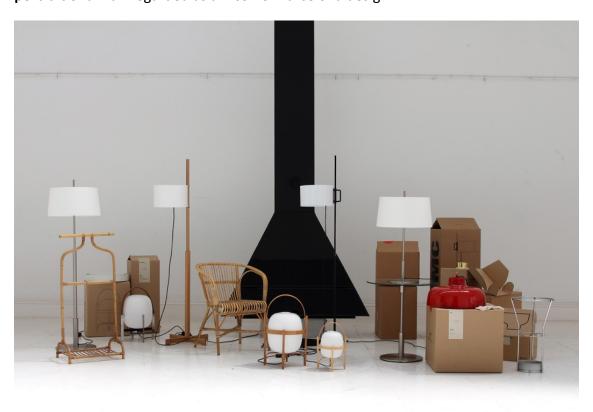


Miguel Milá. (Pre)industrial Designer

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INTRODUCTION

From 19 June to 28 September 2025, visitors to the Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHub) will be able to see *Miguel Milá*. (*Pre)industrial Designer*, the largest retrospective to date on this pioneer and harbinger of industrial design in Catalonia and Spain, who won some of the most important national and international design awards thanks to his functional, streamlined, timeless, elegant style. Curated by **Gonzalo Milá** and **Claudia Oliva**, the exhibition offers visitors a unique survey of Milá's career, which **links his personal life** with his work, both of which were closely connected. The outcome is a humanistic portrait of a man regarded as an icon of Barcelona design.



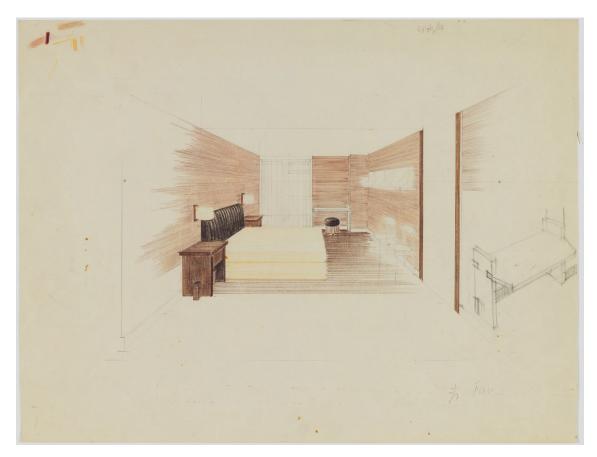
Selection of pieces by Miguel Milá. © Poldo Pomés

Miguel Milá. (Pre)industrial Designer, co-organised by DHub, La Fábrica and the Madrid Design Festival, brings together more than 150 pieces, including both recent designs and prototypes. In addition to the objects designed by Milá, this exhibition also adds a plethora of documentation which complements and contextualises the works displayed.





More than **270 documents**, including blueprints, original drawings and photos, magazines and sale catalogues, text documents and scale models, help to **flesh out the portrait of the person** and his family and social milieu and the way they are reflected in his work. **They also provide information on the objects designed by Milá and their life cycle**, not only their creation process but also the way they were manufactured, sold and projected to the public.



Bedroom design, 1966. Museu del Disseny-DHub. Miguel Milá Collection. © Miguel Milá Diseño

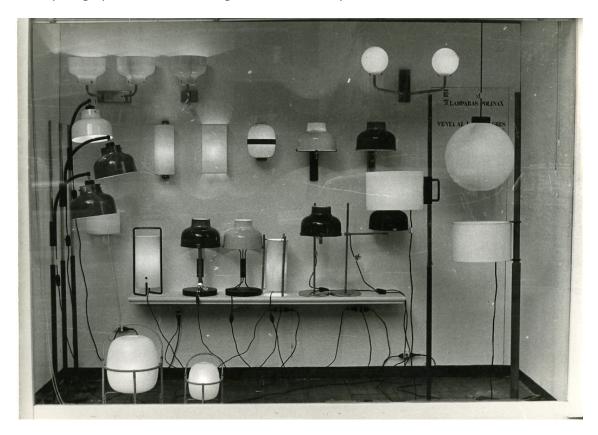
The route, which runs through eight rooms, starts with a sketch of Milá's family milieu, his beginnings as an interior designer and his foray into design, almost unwittingly, in the quest for objects that were lacking during those years of scarcity. This personal profile also helps to capture the inception of the discipline of industrial design, in which Milá played a crucial role. After that, the exhibition explores the Barcelona designer's principles and hallmarks. To do so, it highlights Milá's connection with the crafts and his idea of constant evolution, his constant quest for objects' optimisation, conservation and sustainability. It also highlights Milá's contributions to household design, which was always a constant source of inspiration for the designer, and his interventions in the urban space, where he strove to bring simple, ergonomic and economical solutions.





(Pre)industrial design

Miguel Milá, who was born into a bourgeois family in post-war Barcelona and had a clear talent for drawing, initially studied architecture, but he left it and began working as an interior designer for the company owned by his brother Alfonso and the architect Federico Correa. Given the scarcity at the time, Milá discovered the need to create new objects that did not exist. Almost unwittingly, he had become an industrial designer. During those years, the architect Josep Antoni Coderch exerted a strong influence on Milá, who adopted his simple way of working which focused on function as the most important thing. Later, Milá turned to production by participating in business initiatives like Tramo, Gres and Polinax. He was also one of the driving forces behind associations that sprang up around the emergence of this discipline, like ADI-FAD.



Showcase in Miguel Milá's studio at Gres, 1964. Museu del Disseny-DHub. Miguel Milá Collection

Milá's career made him a key figure in Catalan and Spanish design. His creations —objects designed with care that are logical, functional and practical yet also elegant and streamlined— earned him accolades like the Delta Silver Award and the Delta Gold Award several times, the Special Delta Gold Award in 1986, the National Industrial Design Award in 1987, the Creu de Sant Jordi in 1993, the Award for Good Industrial Design in 1994, the Compasso d'Oro Internazionale in 2008 and the Gold Medal for Merit in Fine Arts in 2016. His works respect the materials and are timeless. In fact, several of his designs—some more than 60 years old— are still being produced. They





include pieces that have become design icons, like the TMM, TMC and Cesta lamps, the Salvador chair and the NeoRomántico bench.

Barcelona has been the crucial site of his career. The city, which served as Milá's cultural springboard, has become a **showcase of his work**. Barcelona's streets have served as an outdoor museum of objects like his benches, and city residents—often without even realising it— have enjoyed his works like the redesign of the metro cars. Plus, in the private sphere, the households of many Barcelona residents did and still do display his pieces, from lamps to shelves, tables and chairs.

So, the exhibition is also a **tribute from Barcelona and the city's design museum to a figure admired and respected in his field** who died in August 2024. This recognition is in addition to the City Gold Medal, which Barcelona City Council awarded to the designer's family last September.

Miguel Milá at the Museu del Disseny

Ever since it was founded in 2014, the Museu del Disseny-DHub has been a repository for Milá's legacy. The designer himself deposited his archive in the museum, and different private donations have filled the Collection with his pieces. Now, a vast trove of Milá's documents and objects that belong to the Museum's collection are on display in this exhibition.

Miguel Milá. (Pre)industrial Designer will display a substantial part of the Miguel Milá Collection for the first time, one of the most important collections conserved at the Museum's Library and Archive of Design. It contains 5,000 documents corresponding to 817 projects, 17 management files, five albums and seven scale models in one of the Museum's first donations. In 2014, Museum experts collected these items from Milá's house and started conservation work to ensure their preservation, a job which then continued with the digitalisation of the documents.

The 82 documents that the Library and Archive of Design has contributed to the exhibition include the designs for the TMC or TMM lamps—which reveal how these iconic pieces have evolved over their 60 years on the market, a notebook from when Miguel Milá studied architecture, the scale models of the A-14 fireplace and the spiral staircase and the interior design projects for Hospital Clínic and the Barcelona Metro cars. The exhibition also includes an interview with the designer that was recorded in 2018 as part of the Library and Archive of Design's oral memory project. This audiovisual complements the documentary on Miguel Milá that Poldo Pomés made in 2017, which will also be shown in the exhibition.





Likewise, **18 pieces from the** Disseny-DHub Museum's **Product Design Collection** will also be on display. They include the **A-14 fireplace**, which has been applauded for its sculptural monumentality, and the **M-57 spiral staircase**, a design celebrated for its logic, functionality and aesthetics. In addition to these pieces from the museum's Collection, the exhibition also includes items on loan from Miguel and Gonzalo Milá, Santa & Cole, urbidermis, Escofet, Mobles 114, Fenix Originals, Kendo, Kettal, TMB, Trenat, Isist Atelier, and Expormim.

Thirty-eight objects Milá designed have joined the collection thanks to donations from the designer himself and from manufacturing companies like Gres, Expormim, DAE, Supergrif and Santa & Cole.



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Miguel Milá © Paola de Grenet





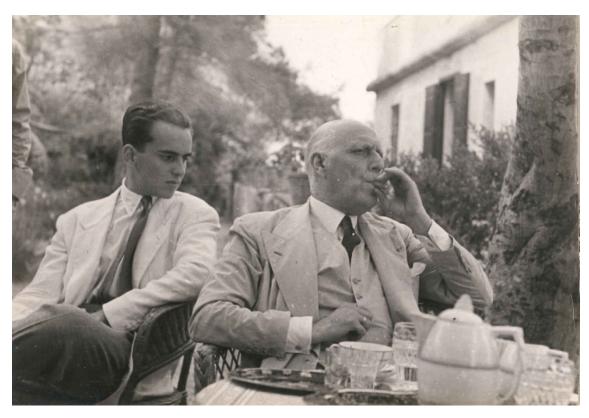
EXHIBITION SECTIONS

Room 1: The house: a universe to create

'If you're useful, you'll be used'

This maxim seems a little severe and might even be a bit frightening if it were said to you by the gentlemen smoking a cigar who appears in the fifth photograph, especially if you were his son. But it's actually a great piece of advice: it is stripped of all presumption, and if understood properly, it embodies a civic responsibility towards others. They are actually words that Miguel Milá assimilated as a commitment to communal well-being. And they are even more valuable because they are like a secular credo —functional yet flexible— from 1950s Spain, between rules written in stone and 'every man for himself'.

Mr José María Milá i Camps, Miguel's father, was a patrician in inter-war Barcelona; he was pro-monarchy and a handsome *bon vivant*. Mrs Montserrat Sagnier Costa, his mother, was the epitome of the Catalan housewife, austere and allergic to ostentation, emanating serene authority. The combination of sobriety and refinement that his parents embodied is, perhaps, the source of the sober elegance that Miguel Milá ended up synthesising in both his design and his way of seeing his profession and the world.

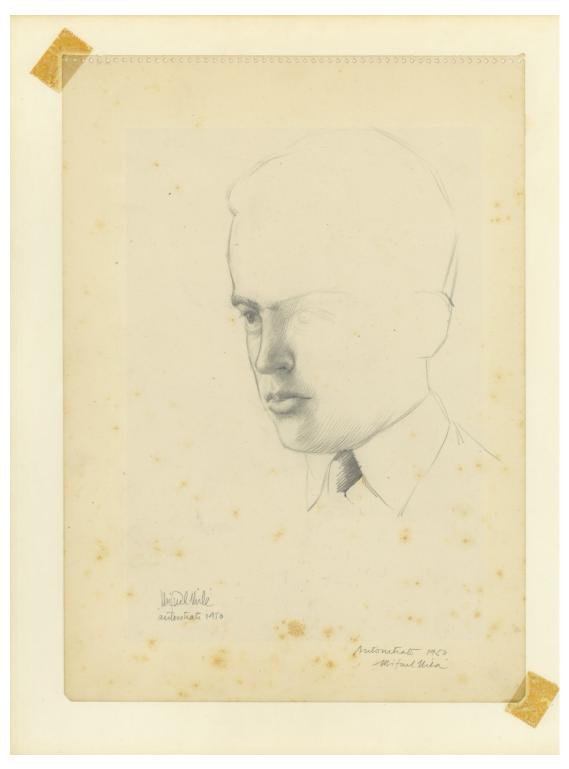


Miguel Milá with his father





And it all began with a tool box: 'In my boyhood, I had a wooden box with tools to do some annoying jobs. The Three Wise Men had brought it for the three younger brothers. [Our mother] had had Cintet, our carpenter, make it. He was one of the first teachers I had.' And Milá adds: 'The scarcity in the war and post-war years were a school of ingenuity. We all learned how to fix, conserve, sew and even knit.'







This aversion to waste, which was both innate in him and a product of the times, jibed perfectly with Milá's proneness to fix household problems from a young age. So, he launched a home repair company: 'I called it TRAMO, an acronym for TRAbajos MOlestos [Annoying Jobs], the kind of jobs nobody wants to do: fill the lighter, go buy stamps, clean shoes... I offered to allow my older brothers to do these services in exchange for a few coins.' The desire to serve as a means of subsistence was a trait shared by much of that generation. In Milá's case, it was joined by strong powers of observation to detect flaws and shortcomings in everyday objects, as well as the technical expertise needed to solve them.

Room 2: Designing for modernity

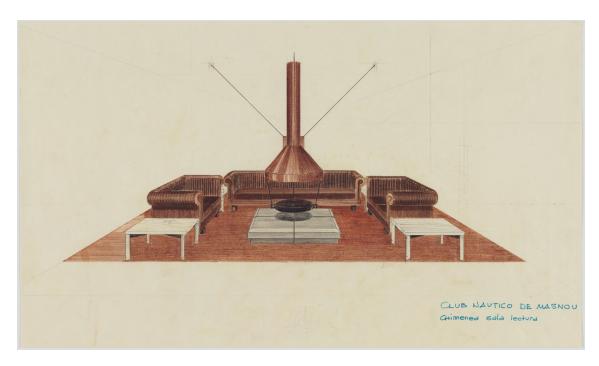
In 1950, he began to work as an interior designer in the office of the architects Federico Correa and Alfonso Milá, his brother. One year later, he left the Faculty of Architecture, fed up with maths. This is how failure in his studies led him to his own professional journey. His years at the faculty had introduced him to an entire generation of Barcelona architects who subscribed to the doctrine of the Modern Movement, which would feed his perspective on what was needed and what was superfluous in the spaces he had to decorate.

'Of all the architects, the one I've admired the most is José Antonio Coderch. He taught me how to pay attention to function, to simplify, but not to be afraid of disruption, a curve, a solution that throws the design off but makes it more human.'

The architects Federico Correa and Alfonso Milá, like their mentor José Antonio Coderch, kept an approach that modulated the vernacular by choosing clearly functional solutions dictated by specific needs. All of this fit perfectly with Milá's spirit: not to mess with whatever works, and to (re)invent what does not exist or does not work properly. However, at that time, the job of choosing furniture that met these criteria could be thankless, because everything available 'was very tacky'.







Design for the reading room at the Club Nàutic El Masnou, 1967. Museu del Disseny-DHub. Miguel Milá Collection © Miguel Milá Diseño

Miguel Milá explains: 'For years I earned a living in interior design. I designed minimalist spaces out of necessity, because you couldn't do anything else. There were no catalogues where you could choose furniture, and people didn't have a lot of money to spend. So those interiors were rather essentialist; by that I mean they only had the furniture they needed.' So, a new more active phase was needed, which in the middle term ended up introducing interior design to Spain.







Interior of the Club Nàutic El Masnou designed by Miguel Milá, 1967. Museu del Disseny-DHub. Miguel Milá Collection. Author: Francesc Català-Roca

Room 3: (Pre)industrial design

'When I got my start, everything had to be designed from scratch'

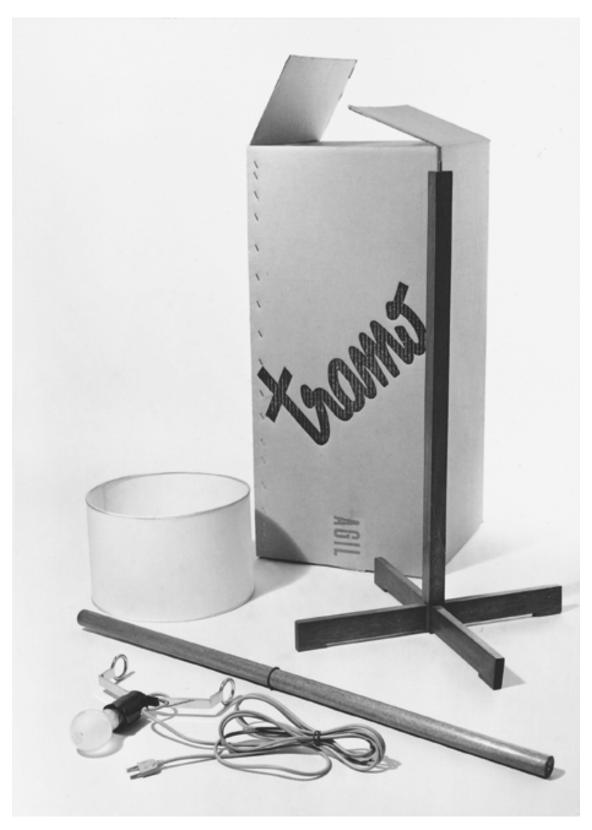
In the 1950s, there was hardly any modern furniture in Spain to arrange a house, but that had not always been the case. During the Republic (1931-39), architects like Luis Feduchi in Madrid (Capitol building) and the members of GATCPAC in Barcelona had created objects that reflected the doctrines of Germany's Bauhaus movement.

Milá recalls: 'There was hardly any industry in Spain when I began to work and design in the 1950s. So, when I was told that what I was doing was design, I knew it couldn't be industrial.' Perhaps it was not at first, but it soon did become industrial design. In 1956, one of Miguel's aunts, Nuria Sagnier, commissioned him to furnish her studio. One of the standout solutions he came up with was a lamp 'that could provide both direct and indirect light, illuminate the space and provide light for reading and turn into many lights if it was lowered and the lampshade was raised'. That was the TN lamp, the embryo of the TMC and the TMM, both from 1961, the first major milestone in Milá's career, and a brief compendium of knowledge applied to industrial design. The popularity of the TN





among his friends led to the first serial production and a later improvement in the product, which crystallised in the Previa model.

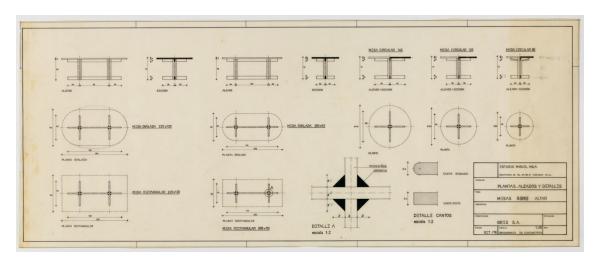


TMM floor lamp, 1962. Museu del Disseny-DHub. ADI-FAD Collection





In 1957, Milá launched the adult version of his company, Tramo, so he could produce his own creations, pieces designed to fill the gaps he found as an interior designer. He also began to participate in pioneering business initiatives, like Polinax, founded by his brother Leopoldo, and the furniture shop and maker GRES, which was opened by the entrepreneurs Montserrat Tayà, Montserrat Tort and Maria Rosa Ventós in 1958. During those years, Milá designed some of the lasting icons of Spanish industrial design, like the Cesta lamp (1962), the stackable MMS table (1963), ice tongs (1965) and the A14 fireplace (1977).



Blueprint of the different versions of the Altar table, 1978. Museu del Disseny-DHub. Miguel Milá Collection © Miguel Milá Diseño

Room 4: Occupation as profession

'If I could solve a design without the complication of moulds, so much the better. A mould is ultimately a form of slavery. Plus, industry doesn't always solve economic problems.'

Parallel to his architectural learning associated with a certain aesthetic view of shapes, volumes and materials, Miguel Milá also developed solid technical and mechanical skills alongside woodworking and blacksmithing craftsmen. In addition to Cintet, his family's carpenter, he also enlisted the skills of the blacksmith Cutié when designing the TN lamp: 'We would spend the afternoon filing and talking, and that's how I learned so much from him'.



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Miguel Milá in his workshop © Poldo Pomés

His fondness of this artisan phase of the process is one of Milá's hallmarks. The workshop has roots in a humanistic vocation sensitive to the dignity of work that creates, modifies, shapes, recrafts and finishes, always aware of the match between purposes and means, and subject to an inevitable economy of resources.



Water pitcher designed by Miguel Milá





'The ultimate purpose of my defence of craftsmanship and the entire artisan process in general at this time in which we live is to defend people's right to participate in the processes of things'.

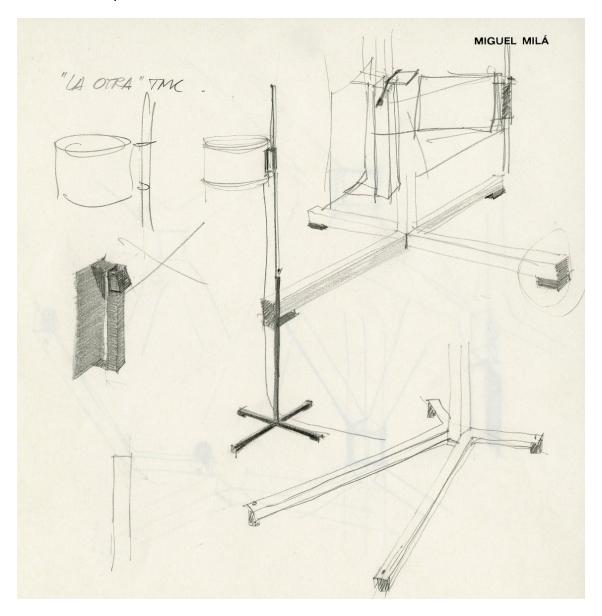
The workshop is the site of the fullest participation in these processes, where the idea takes shape in close conjunction with materials and tools and their manipulation. Randomness, too, can also play an important role. One example is Cesta, a lamp that originated from finding an oval-shaped glass globe that the designer decided to attach to a little rattan basket made for that purpose. So, the taste for the workshop, the 'tool shortage' that Milá admits to, shaped the first technological link in the process and animated a propitiatory rite in which the idea gradually gels in the guise of a prototype.





Room 5: Function, ingenuity and technology

'The concept is to find the right technology, neither too much nor too little, but just what is needed every time'



Sketches for modifications of the TMC floor lamp, 1971-1984

The 'Milá lamp' is not only a master class in functionalism but also a lesson in balance and nuances in the illumination and mere occupation of household space. None of this comes by chance: from the early TN to the subsequent Previa, until reaching the ideal measure with the TMC and the TMM, the lamps' efficacy was gradually calibrated through successive adjustments until they reached their final shape. Milá says: 'The former is wearing a tux; the TMM has jeans on'. In addition to the materials, the most striking part of that garment change may be the mechanism used to move the lamp: in the TMC, it is a handle integrated into the shaft which can be set at different heights





using holes where it can be locked in; in the TMM, this function is performed by a sliding rubber joint. Thus, the TMM is an example of versatility and multiple uses with DIY technology. The Cesta is another paradigmatic example: after the first model was adjusted for industrial reproduction —by replacing the rattan with wood— it has evolved through different versions and taken on different nuances without ever losing the light look that makes it one of the most delicate and harmonious lamps around. Therefore, it encapsulates the 'evolutionary' nature that Miguel Milá confers on his pieces, beyond any desire to be cutting-edge.

Quim Larrea and Juli Capella, designers and design theoreticians, say: 'Miguel doesn't turn his back on technology but instead seeks the right technology for each need. Behind its simple appearance, the TMC conceals a vast number of ingenious resources that make it a masterpiece.'

Actually both ingenuity and common-sense observation come into play here, the preliminary factors in making Milá's designs 'presentable', even beautiful. His designs lack complications, affectations and garishness. Therefore, the functional premise becomes an aesthetic requirement that is often revealed after the fact, as if beauty was the least common denominator in the quest for the essential. In this quest, technology seems to be camouflaged in an eerily natural way: 'For me, updating means seeking simpler unions'.

In 1961, when ADI-FAD (Industrial Design Association) had just been founded, Miguel Milá joined it along with such prominent designers as Antoni Moragas, André Ricard, Manuel Cases, Maria Rosa Ventós, Joaquim Belsa, Jordi Galí and Rafael Marquina. After that, the first design awards and exhibitions began in Spain, as well as participation in international conferences like the ICSID (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design), where they met influential designers like Gio Ponti, Achille Castiglioni, Gillo Dorfles, Alvar Aalto, Ilmari Tapiovaara and Vico Magistretti. Miguel defined this period as 'an organic process of collective interest. We spoke, shared ideas, became interested in what was being done elsewhere. It was a time of vibrancy when everything was yet to be done —building a world that reflected our generation.' That same year, Miguel began to teach at Elisava design school, where he remained until 1970; he also started teaching classes at Eina design school in 1967. Milá had been associated with Eina since it was founded: he was a lecturer and design teacher in Furniture and Projects and an instructor in the post-graduate programme on Interiors until early 2000, among other collaborations. In 1987, Miguel Milá was named a Friend of Eina because of his involvement with the school from the very start.



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Room 6: Household comfort

'Objects are always around us, even when they're not used. A lamp spends more time turned off than turned on. And when it's turned off, the least it can do is not be bothersome. And the most is to bring joy to life. Keeping us company is the midpoint.'

This is a clear diagnosis of comfort in the words of an expert on the matter. The designer himself points to a revelatory detail when he says that the TMM 'looks ugly' if the lampshade is placed at the top of the shaft. Indeed, way up there the balance among the parts is lost and its structural harmony is compromised. The volume of the cylindrical paper or methacrylate body seems to puff out and lose gracefulness. The understanding or intuition of this type of harmonious aggregation of the parts, almost a cadence, is a basic factor in a comfortable home.



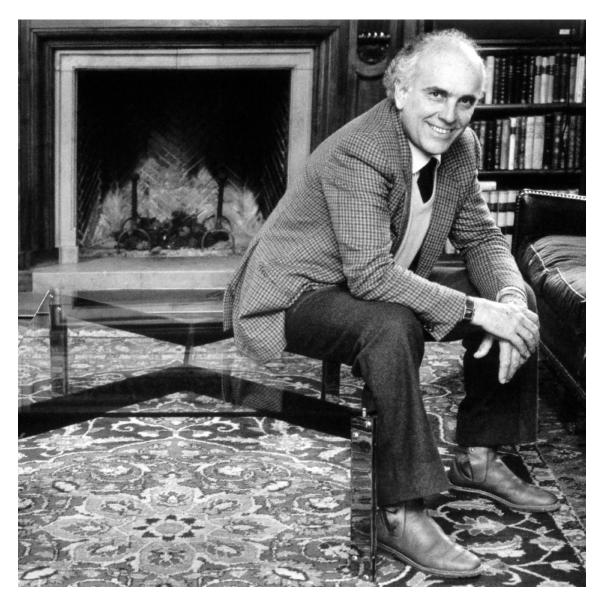
Set of Constanza chairs

And this ineffable balance in Milá's designs can largely be explained because they often originated in his private life: the objects tended to spring from a private or family functional need, like a multi-purpose light source for Aunt Nuria or a 'presentable' fly whisk for his wife. They are what the designer calls 'self-commissions', which arise when an immediate shortcoming in his environment is detected. And that was the inspiration for the María, a glass table that does not hinder views of the rug under it; the Percherón,





a bookshelf that solves the chaos of motorcycle helmets and backpacks at a home's entrance; and the Salvador chair, which Milá made in order to have decent chairs without overspending the family budget soon after he married. All these items have been industrially produced and enjoyed by users; they have fulfilled their function with solutions that technology was able to standardise because their utility had been proven at home.



Miguel Milá seated on one of his tables

Room 7: Urban comfort

'One day on the street, I saw an elderly man having problems getting up from a bench that was too low. I made a mental note and designed one so that senior citizens can stand up with dignity.'



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The NeoRomántico bench, which can be found on many streets in cities like Barcelona





The NeoRomántico bench is an essential piece of Spanish urban furniture design that is found not only in the streets and squares of many cities in this country but also in urban spaces around Europe and North America that were redesigned based on this piece. Its success is not a coincidence but reflects Milá's attentive reflection 'on the use, function, need and habits' of people in their interactions with street furniture, and this furniture as a vehicle of communal life: 'I believe strongly in benches as elements of communication. When you sit on a bench, you have to say "hello".'

As is common in Milá's pieces, this is a later version of the Romántico bench that he had designed in the 1980s. In turn, the synthesis that came about with the first NeoRomántico (1995) was subjected to subsequent streamlining in the NeoRomántico Liviano, which replaced wood with aluminium to lower the weight and costs.



Interior of the Barcelona Metro cars, series 2000, designed by Miguel Milá, 1986





Beyond his prolific work designing urban furniture, the renovation of Barcelona's Hospital Clínic (1980) is one of the public facilities he designed that has garnered the most praise. The redesign focused on basic actions aimed at functional improvements for both the medical staff and especially the patients. However, the redesign of the interior of the Barcelona Metro cars (1986) is Milá's project that has benefited society the most. Whoever remembers the cars from the 1970s and 1980s, with their dull, yellowish tones and the coldness of their design, knows that they felt a bit hostile. A very specific project focused on the colour white, better placement of the vertical poles, 'seients de misericòrdia' [mercy seats] —that allowed people standing to lean on backrests— and basic yet ergonomic seats made commutes much more comfortable and pleasant.

Room 8: Timeless design

'It's better to see a broken pitcher than an abandoned plastic bottle'



Lamps and fly whisks by Miguel Milá

The writer Fran Lebowitz once said: 'I hate money but I love things'. The things she was referring to were just attractive objects, and there is something in the way she put it that perfectly captures Miguel Milá and everything that came from the way he approached his profession and his trade: an aversion towards anything that reeks of ostentation, and especially care to ensure that the objects he designed ended up





attractive by stripping them of everything superfluous. In his case, they were attractive because they were useful and even obliging, friendly.





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Cesta lamp

One of the most cutting-edge European industrial designers today, Jasper Morrison, speaks eloquently on this point: 'What struck me when I discovered his work was the





meticulous balance between straight lines and curves. The most intelligent designers are aware of the importance of this balance. There is no need to lean one way or the other [...] because this middle ground is where the object gains the right tension. Milá is a repository of the recipe for the naturalness of objects since he first picked up a pencil.' That recipe is actually called intuition. According to André Ricard, Milá's designs stand out because of 'a *je ne sais quoi* between elegant and evident'. The concept that summarises the enigma that Ricard is referring to may be the naturalness that Morrison mentioned, facilitated by technological moderation that brings a sense of calmness. Functionally speaking, intuition and naturalness reveal the beauty of the useful object which, in Milá's case, has always been sustainable.

Still working at age 92, Milá released one of his last masterpieces, a pitcher, in 2019. After more than sixty years of work and exposure to the utmost sophistication, the master worked with earthenware for the first time, and with the pairing of this material and his perennial ingenuity, he met one of our most basic and pleasurable needs: to drink water. In a fresh, natural, clean way.





THE CURATORS

GONZALO MILÁ:

Born in Barcelona in 1967, Gonzalo Milá started his education in architecture, but his early collaboration with Miguel Milá in 1988 ended up shaping his vocation. The experience of working on smaller-scale projects where he could control the entire creative and productive process sparked his interest in industrial design, a discipline he further studied at Elisava design school.

This inclination for tangible, accessible design led him and Juan Carlos Inés to co-found the Inés-Milá studio in 1994. Using that as a platform, he designed and produced pieces like the Tutombas Pranha lounger, the Sillarga outdoor loungers and the Sicurtà chair for Escofet, the Teula bottle holder and the unique Balensiya rocking stool.

His career later reconverged with his family when he joined the Milá design studio along with Miguel and Micaela Milá. His most noteworthy projects from this period include the interior design of the floor open for tourist visits in Casa Milà and the celebrated Rama lamp post, which won the Delta Silver Award from ADI-FAD.

In 1999, Gonzalo Milá became the manager of the urban division at Santa & Cole Ediciones de Diseño, where he focused on developing new products for urban spaces. Since 2001, he has run his own studio, where he applies his experience in urban furniture, indoor and outdoor lighting and accessory projects. Throughout his career, he has partnered with renowned companies like Santa & Cole, Urbidermis, Escofet, Bover, Lorena Canals and Kettal, among others.

Defined by a rigorous essentialism, Gonzalo Milá designs from an accessible, human perspective in which functionality is not merely a requirement but also a mainstay of each design.

CLAUDIA OLIVA:

A psychologist and jeweller by training, her area of interest is the human dimension of design, in which she focuses on its anthropological side and the emotional connection that objects can convey.

This interest and her analytical approach have been crucial in her role as the director of the design studio of Jaime Hayon, one of the most internationally renowned Spanish designers for twenty years. Her ability to understand emotional connections and cultural archetypes is essential in materialising and communicating projects.





She is the partner of Gonzalo Milá, a fellow designer and the son of Miguel Milá. They have both worked to build the Miguel Milá family archive.



Gonzalo Milá and Claudia Oliva © Paola de Grenet



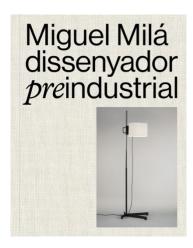
Miguel Milá's family © Nacho Alegre





EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

On the occasion of this exhibition, Barcelona City Council and La Fábrica have published 'Miguel Milá. *Pre*industrial Designer'



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Press contact:

Paula Mateu

dhubpremsa@bcn.cat

Miguel Milá. (Pre)industrial Designer

From 19 June to 28 September 2025. Disseny Hub Barcelona

Official opening: 18 June at 6.30 pm

Prices

General admission: €6 Discounted admission: €4

Combined general admission for temporary exhibitions: €8 Combined discounted admission for temporary exhibitions: €5

Combined general admission: €9.20 (includes admission to the permanent exhibitions and all

other temporary exhibitions)

Combined discounted admission: €6.20 (includes admission to the permanent exhibitions and

all other temporary exhibitions)