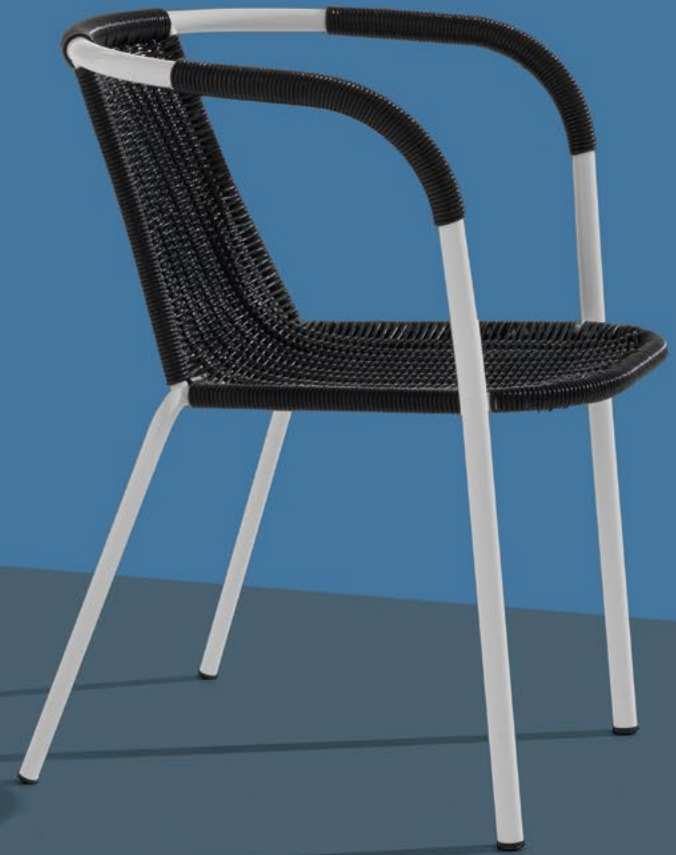


**et al.**

**Story of an icon without a name**



**la 001**

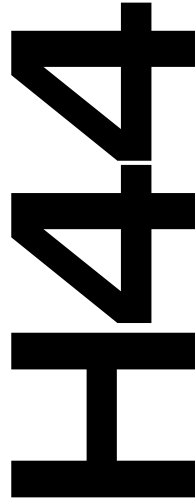
# Valle del Conca, Rimini 1956

This is a story with three protagonists: two furniture companies—**Metalmobil** and **Et al.**—and an outdoor chair identified by a number: 001. The setting is Emilia Romagna, a region that borders the northern Marche to the south and the Adriatic Riviera to the east, in the “Romagna in Bloom” of the lush Conca Valley.

In this area, rich in history, art, and vitality, some entrepreneurs in San Giovanni in Marignano (Rimini) founded a company producing seating for communities—schools, churches, taverns—crafted by blacksmiths practicing the ancient art of forging and welding metal. By the late 1950s, the region, having moved past the heavy effects of World War II, was opening up to development in various sectors—agricultural, industrial, social—with numerous small and medium-sized enterprises spreading across the territory, like Metalmobil. In this wave of change, the growing tourism along the Adriatic Riviera played a significant role, creating a continuous urban stretch more than forty kilometers long from Ravenna to the Rimini area along the Via Emilia. The Germans who had crossed the Gothic Line during the war, causing destruction and reprisals, had now become harmless vacationers enamored with the sun and hospitality of Romagna, along with Swiss and other residents from the cold regions of northern Europe. Thus, new structures and equipment were needed to “furnish” beaches and surrounding areas.

Chairs were needed for beaches and the new establishments catering to seaside tourism. Metalmobil designed a product specifically for this purpose—a chair that could be used outdoors in any environment and season, enduring the scorching summer sun without warping, immune to the salt air that solidifies on metal surfaces and corrodes them. It had to be “new,” indestructible, desirable. It had to evoke the scent of the sea and happiness.

It was 1956. The **001** was born.



# The 1960s

Meanwhile, the years marched toward better seasons. The region became a producer of work and prosperity thanks to modernized agriculture and a continually expanding industry, supported by widespread cooperative structures. By the end of the decade, like the rest of Italy, Romagna was ready to join the wave of a happy new era: the “economic miracle.” A true industrial revolution swept the country, creating a genuine national market on a massive scale. Its impact on the lives and habits of Italians, especially the provincial middle class, spread widely. The American lifestyle model became an irresistible goal, with an explosion of desire to experience “well-being” according to bourgeois paradigms identified in new consumer goods: television, appliances, cars, and other status symbols promoted by increasingly enticing and seductive advertising.

New cultural models and youth consumption emerged: the thrill of freedom with the Vespa and Lambretta, rock ‘n’ roll and jukeboxes, miniskirts and Coca-Cola, dancing and summer vacations. Domestic tourism revived, and beach holidays prospered on the Romagna Riviera, a space for new hedonisms, a showcase of enticing fashions, an intelligent mix of hospitality at affordable prices, and family-friendly accommodations. Above all, it became an industry of entertainment for young people seeking a stage to socialize and share their imaginations.

Rimini, Riccione, Cattolica: the poles of an innovative “emotional” tourism industry were close to San Giovanni in Marignano, where Metalmobil continued to produce the 001, the forerunner of outdoor seating, which became more beautiful, colorful, and desirable over time. Demand for it grew exponentially. Trucks loaded with iron frames—the “metal skeleton” of the 001—and colored spools of Xiloplast wire traveled daily to deliver the weaving work to hundreds of families. In the summer landscape of Romagna and other Italian shores, the 001 became a widespread presence, providing sensory satisfaction and total relaxation for the body and mind, and a robust commercial success for its manufacturer.

001



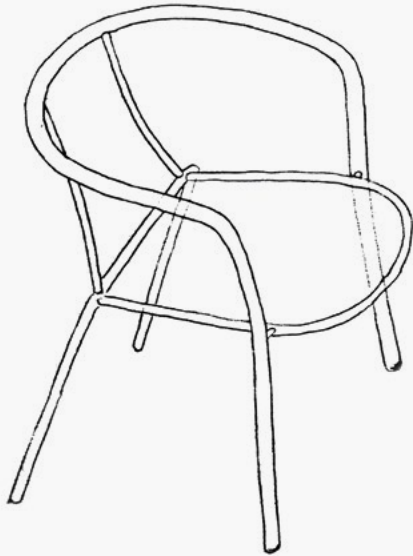
↑ The 001 “historical” and current ↓



# Restyling

By 1975, the chair had solidified its status as a symbol of Italian leisure, furnishing bars, restaurants, hotels, and other public places by the sea and in the hills, in big cities and historic towns throughout the country. It was time for a makeover, and to stay current, it received the touch of a design great: Enzo Mari. His intervention involved some tweaks that updated its image.

The frame and armrests were reinforced, increasing their diameter from 22 to 25 millimeters. The backrest was narrowed and lowered, forming a welcoming curve that integrated with the frame and armrests. The legs were slightly more splayed. The 001 now had the look and qualities to conquer the world.



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QUESTO DISEGNO ANNULLA IL C 1				
METAL MOBIL				
MODIFICA SEDIA BR. 23				
ENZO MARI PIAZZALE BARACCA 10 20123 MILANO TELEFONO 4883651				
<small>Tutti i diritti sono riservati all'autore. La riproduzione e l'uso, anche parziale di questo disegno sono vietati. È fatta eccezione invece per la realizzazione di uguali sedili.</small>				
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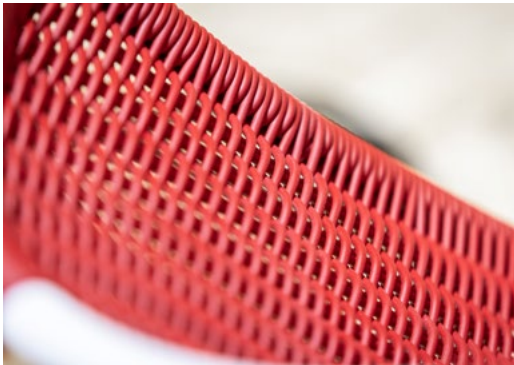


# A global best seller

From its entry into the national market, the chair drew interest from competing companies in the sector, leading to numerous imitations lacking the harmonious balance of the original. Over time, Metalmobil had to protect its product with an “industrial patent,” but the competition did not dim its growing commercial success in Italy and worldwide. Metalmobil’s most important customer in Europe became the German company Habit, which, according to the export manager of the time, “fell in love with our chairs and ordered 50,000.” The scale of the request was enormous compared to the production capacity at the time, which Metalmobil soon expanded. Another key German customer was H. May KG of Hannover, a large-scale furniture wholesaler, purchasing 100,000 chairs a year. In France, the multinational Pernod Ricard, specializing in wines and spirits, ordered 1,000-2,000 annually. In the UK, Sandler showcased it as a novelty at Harrods in London.

In 1995, Starbucks Coffee opened a branch in Canada, ordering an initial 10,000 pieces made in a special “Starbucks green.” Other significant markets included Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria, and the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland). In the Mediterranean area, Spain, Malta, Greece, and Saudi Arabia. In Japan, Metalmobil’s client was the renowned Seiko. In the USA, Beyleran purchased it to furnish cruise ships. This order initiated the production of chairs with stainless steel frames instead of the original iron, which corroded on long sea voyages. Finally, in 1990, the Texas-based customer Vecta exhibited it at the famous Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California. The 001 had become a universal furniture icon.

# 001



# The design

Like Metalmobil's first products, the chair had a frame and armrests made of iron, but coated in PVC, providing maximum resistance to weather conditions, UV radiation, humidity, temperature fluctuations, wear, and abrasion. The seat and backrest were made of Xiloplast wire with a flexible metal core, forming a manually woven surface. The armrests connected to the seat and backrest, also wrapped in PVC wire. The iron legs were slightly splayed. The initial design had some rigidity, but its innovative aesthetics, high-quality materials, and variety of weave patterns and colors made it an intriguing exception among the conventional, anonymous, low-value seating of the time.

However, the OO1's modernity coexisted with ancient roots. Its success owed much to the appeal of that malleable, colored wire, woven into the chair by hand, skills inherited from a not-too-distant past when Romagna's rural areas produced mats, baskets, hats, and other useful objects using wicker fibers. That wire could be used anywhere, freely, without technology, with just hands. The work could be done by third parties, even at home. Often, it was the man of the house who, after a day's work, set up the circular structure of the seat.

# LO53



# Rebranding

## Metalmobil becomes Et al.

The perfect outdoor relaxation chair traversed the century in which it was born, evolving through subsequent transformations to the final metamorphosis we know today. No longer produced by Metalmobil but by its successor, Et al., which derived its new brand name from the heart of the generating company: M (etal) mobil.

Certainly, times have changed. The OO1 lost the revenue of large volumes when Italian competition imitating it in numerous versions was replaced by low-cost competition from emerging countries in the era of globalization. However, its long life cycle from the 1960s onwards, its resilience, its handmade quality, and above all, its status as a symbol of innovation that doesn't fade with time, became values to preserve.

The challenge was identified and embraced with great commitment by Gianfranco Tonti, president of the Ifl Group, who acquired Metalmobil in 1990. In 2019, he revitalized it by transforming it into Et al., placing the OO1, with all it represented, as the cornerstone of the new project. Tonti saw the potential for repositioning Metalmobil in the market and adapting it to contemporary times, aiming—with its transformation into Et al.—to reach a much higher target through the promotion of design and contemporary qualitative excellence. It was “a challenge to win,” an “irresistible duty” for the well-being of all actors in the new enterprise: management, workers, employees, and sales force.

This transformation took place with an awareness of the original company's value, which had created—according to the entrepreneur—a highly innovative product in not-so-easy times, evolving it with consistency and foresight. Credit goes to those who created and led Metalmobil for many years. Tonti also understood that one of the elements leading to the OO1's success was its connection to the territory and culture in which it was born. “A company is like a tree,” he says. “The passion with which it is managed are its roots; if they are not solid and respected, it has no future.”



# A story that continues

When Gianfranco Tonti talks about it, you can sense pride and sincere respect for the 001 in his words. Its entry into Et al. was inevitable. And so it was, entering its new life with the same design as always, today dressed in a sober and authoritative chromaticism, in the options of black and white that give it an aristocratic allure like the rest of the brand's collections. So, best wishes for a good and long life to an icon that remained nameless, because it didn't need one.

A number was and is enough: the number 1.

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