



DO YOU READ JOE COLOMBO?

A young Italian iconoclast delights in stirring up the old controversy between form and function

In Italy a 36-year-old industrial designer, Joseph Cesare Colombo, is stirring up quite a controversy. Nothing could please him more, for a lack of understanding is the crux of what he is trying to prove. People are confused, he feels, because intellectually they embrace the world of science and modern technology in which they live, but emotionally they still insist on surrounding themselves with familiar objects which have outgrown both time and function. Colombo, who interrupted his architectural studies to temporarily take over the management of his family's business—the manufacturing of wiring for electrical appliances—believes Le Corbusier's famous dictum that "the home is a machine for living"—but goes one step further than Corbu to state that "the objects in it are tools to be used." He feels that it is his duty as a scientific designer to create objects that are transitional—objects that have some familiarity without meeting our preconceived standards of form. They should be made of materials that relate to the latest advances in machine technology. He also feels that furnishings have been too static, and he injects into his designs what he calls a fourth dimension—mobility. His storage units, for instance, not only can be moved about from room to room at will, they are also made up of interchangeable and movable parts—each for a specific rather than a general purpose: books; records; electronic equipment; bar; small or large objects to be hidden; and built-in lighting. Each unit is fitted one on top of the other over a central upright post—the relationship

of each being up to the individual. The whole is on a roll-around base. Colombo also relates his idea to the kitchen. Here a roll-around unit for indoors or outdoors is equipped with the cook-top, refrigerator, chopping block, and various cutlery and dishes, shelves and drawers.

The function of seating is comfort and support, and these are the only common denominators visible in Colombo's various types of seating units. Each is the result of a specific technical solution or manufacturing process: single injection fiber glass shell molding; formed modular sections to be fitted together for a one-, two-, or three-seat unit; contoured or bent plywood laminated sections to be assembled at the factory or shipped KD.

Lighting is perhaps the most automotive looking of the Colombo designs. Since the Dutch firm Phillips developed a light bulb with built-in diffuser which acts as the shade, fixtures need only a reflector—this for the direction of the light beam, and Colombo's fixtures are generally metal with hand dials which rotate the reflector, act as dimmers, or turn light on and off.

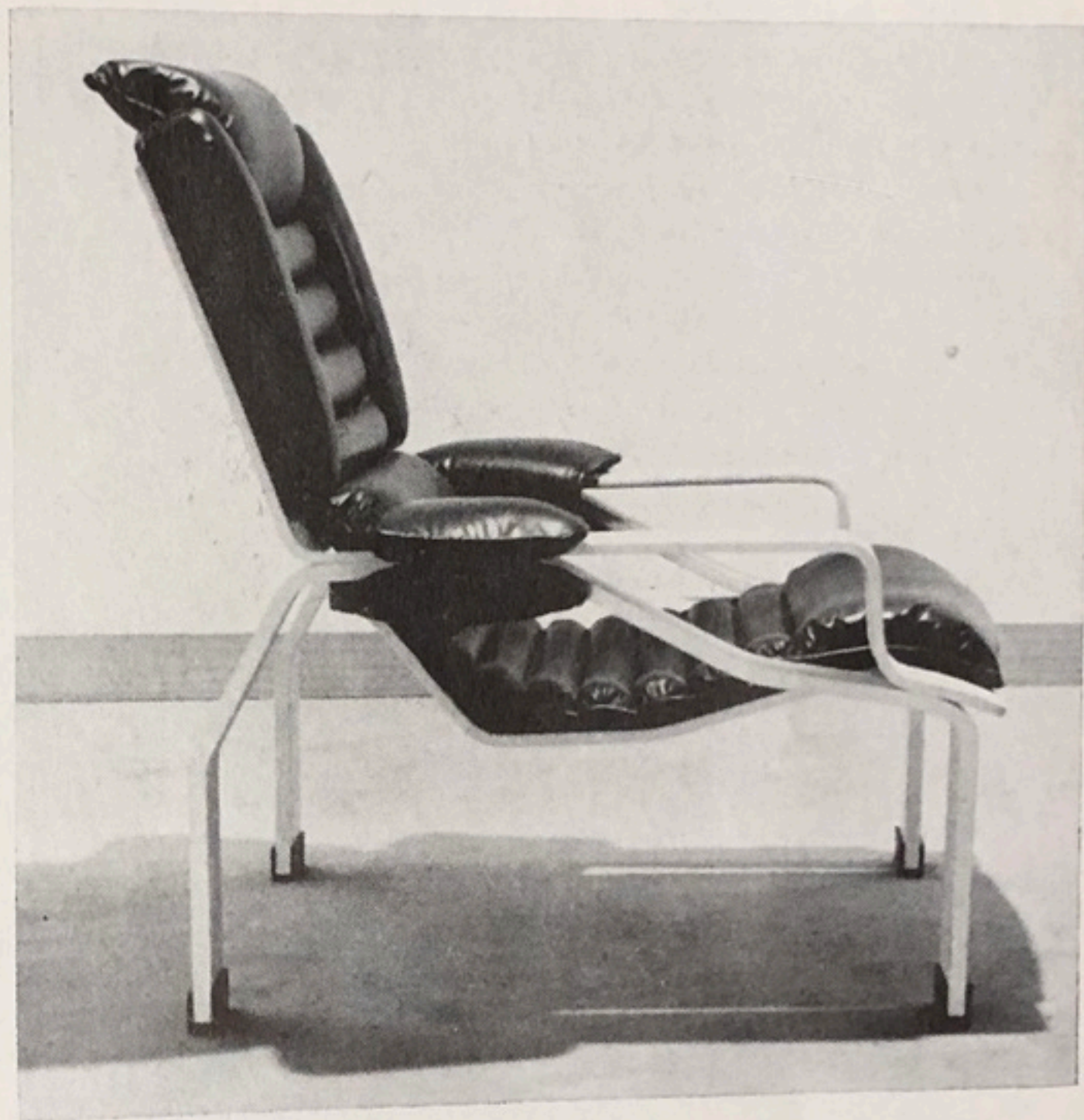
Colombo has not been without rewards during the four years he has been designing. In 1964 his mobile kitchen won a Triennale award, and late last fall both his mobile kitchen and his KD contoured laminate chair were selected for the permanent collection of industrial design by New York's Museum of Modern Art. Colombo designs are available in the United States at the Boston, New York and San Francisco Design Research shops.—J.W.





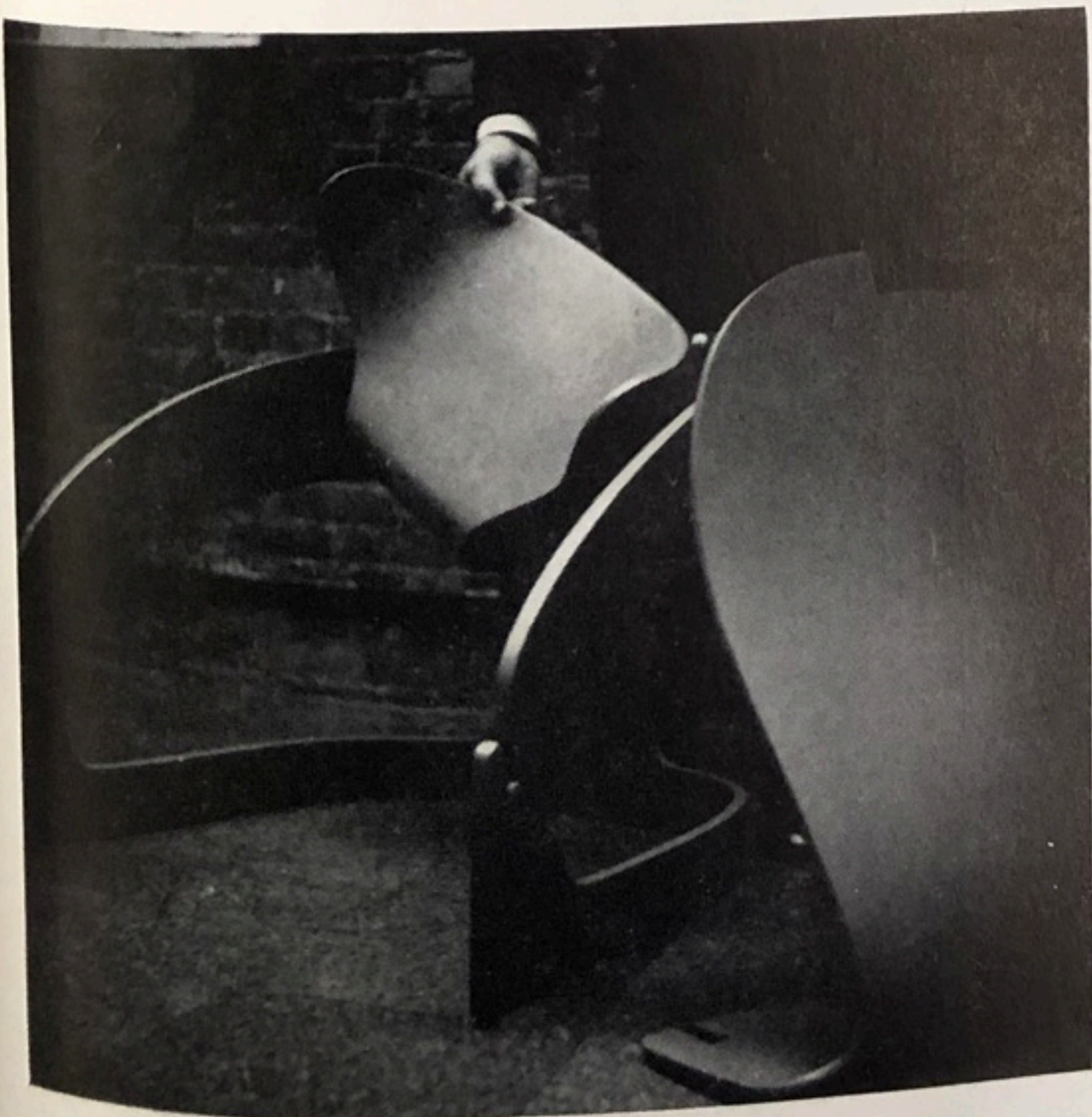
RIGHT: "Golf Club" chair (has two- and three-seat sofa versions) consists of wooden frame boxes and separate-cushions of padded wool. Black leather upholstery is pulled to center of cushion in diaper style and "anchored" with wooden button. Frames are lacquered red, black, or white. The chair rolls around on casters.

BELOW: Three-piece KD chair of pre-stamped interlocking contoured sections of laminated plywood. Finished in either green or black paint. This chair was chosen by the Museum of Modern Art in New York for its permanent collections of industrial art.

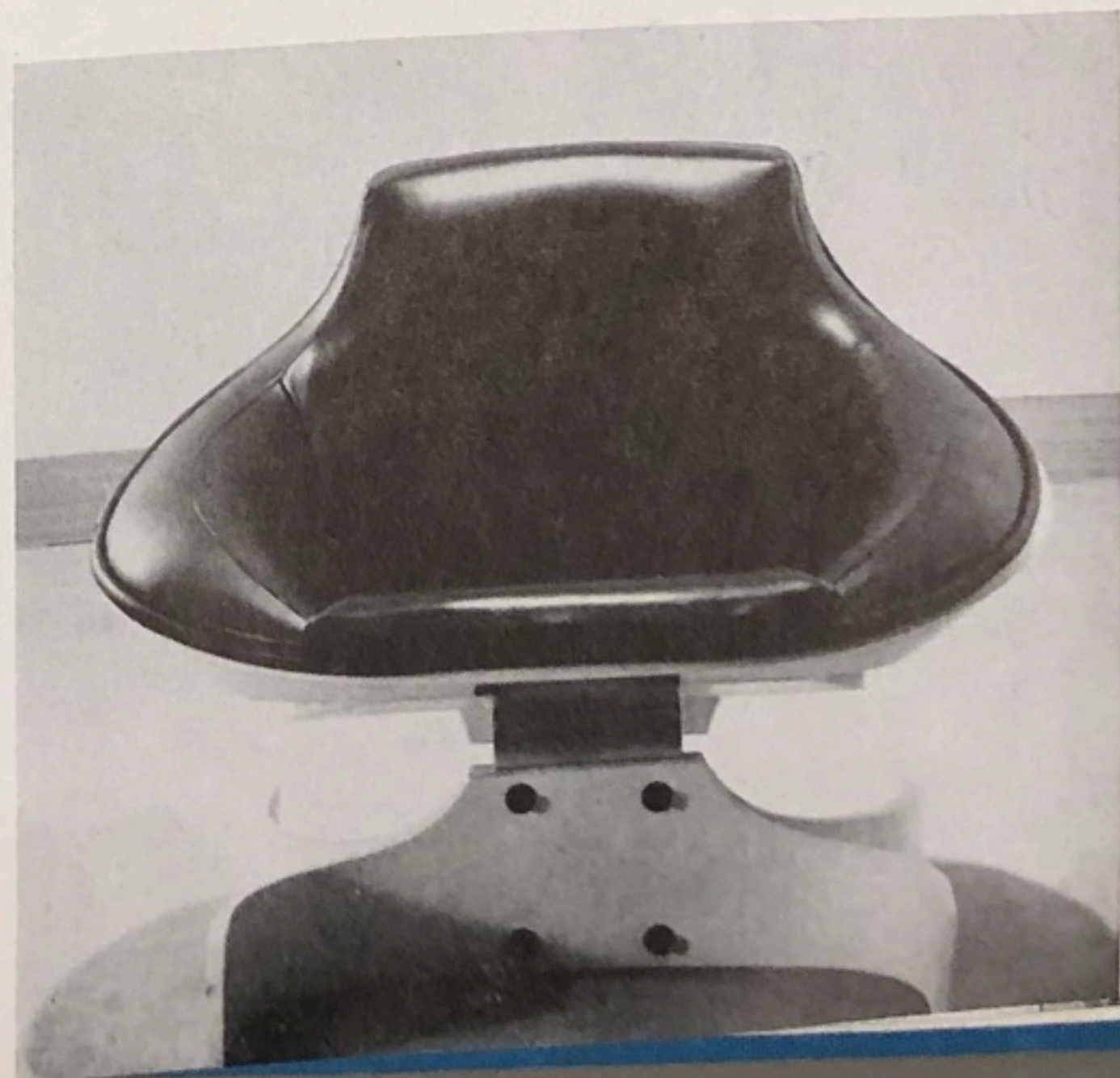


ABOVE: "Supercomfort" bent plywood frame chair. Cushions with heat-sealed padding are removable. Tension springs beneath upholstery may be relaxed or tightened to individual preference.

BELOW: "Stella" pre-formed and bent plywood chair with attached black leather upholstery. Built-in spring between seat and base allows seat to tilt with body weight.



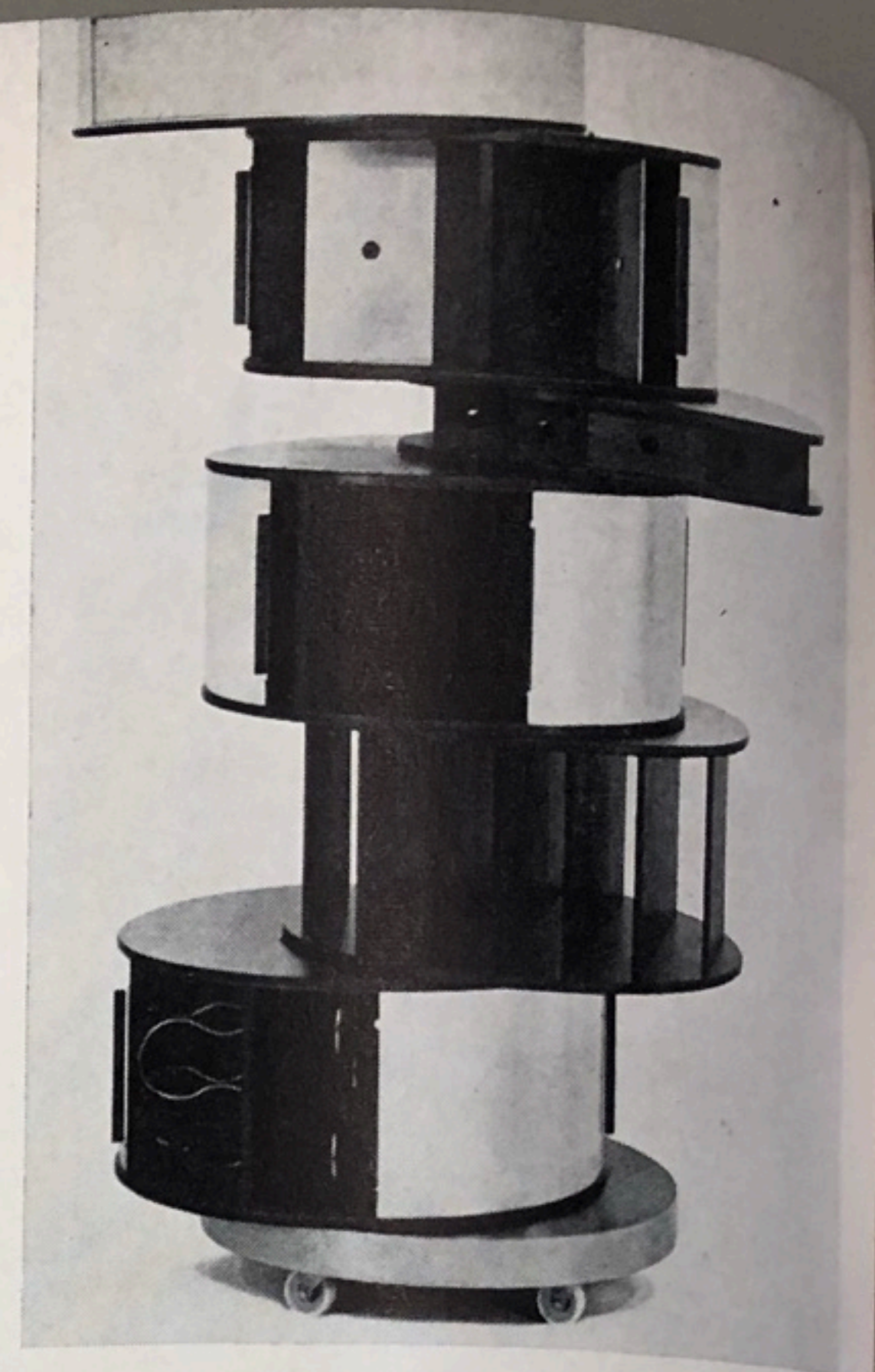
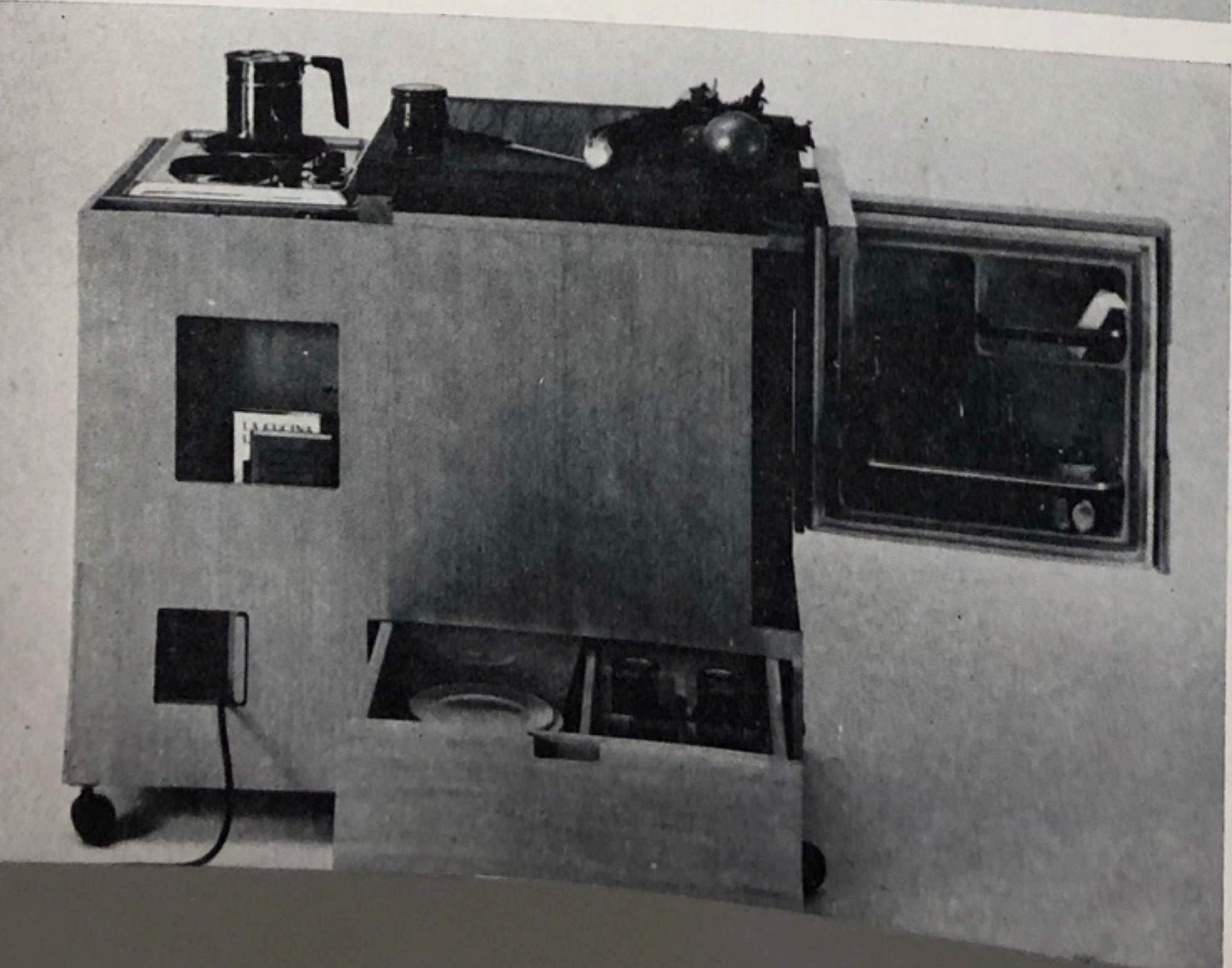
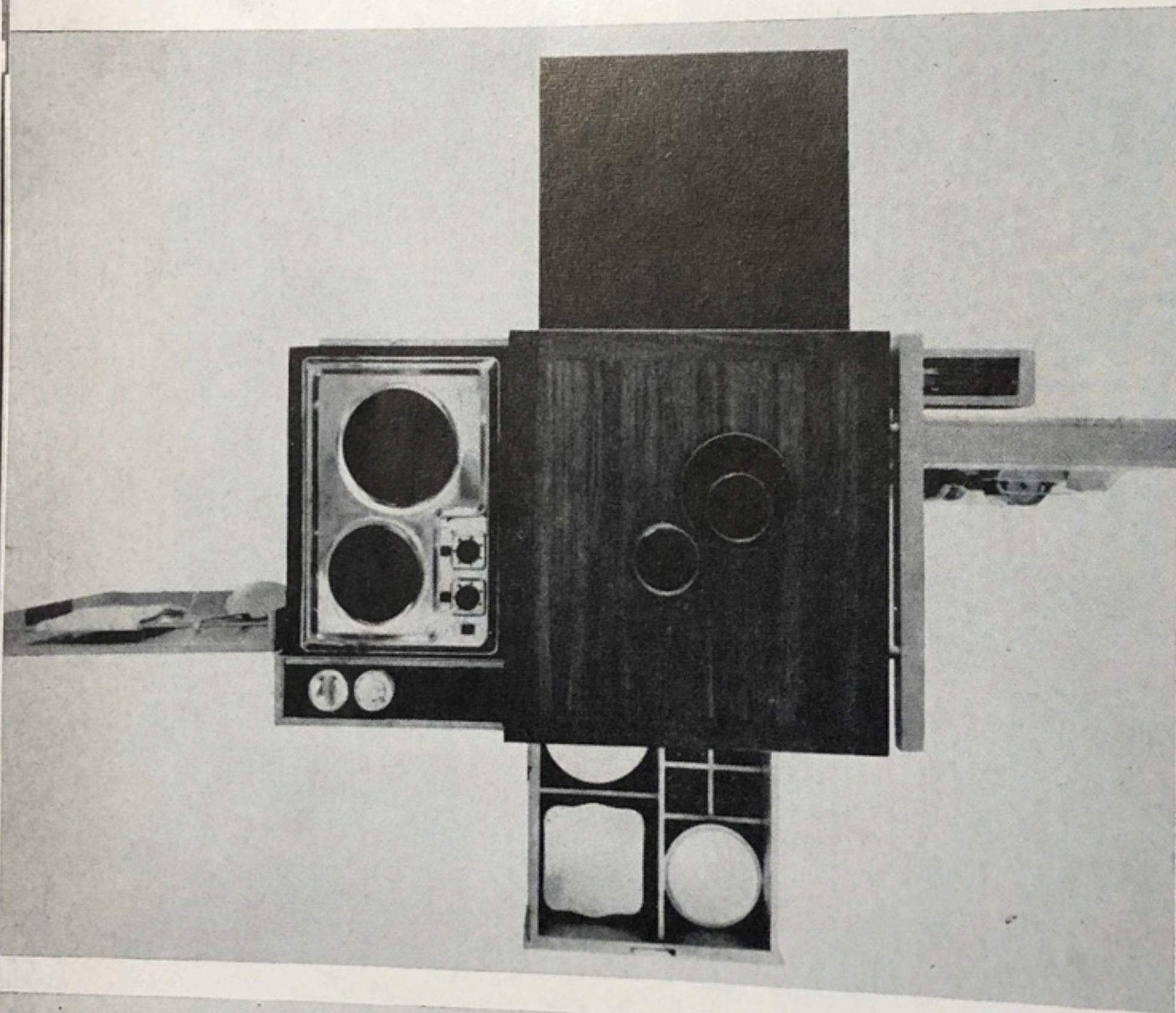
OPPOSITE PAGE: "Elda" single mold fiber glass chair comfortably upholstered in black leather over thick wool padding. High shell-shaped back provides acoustic insulation.





RIGHT: Circular storage tower provides space for a variety of needs (shelves for books, records, bar, drawers for small items, cabinets for electronic equipment, and built-in lighting). Lighting is housed in compartment at top of tower with an encircling light-diffusing plastic. Units are in oiled walnut with painted metal tambour doors. Arrangements of the units are up to the individual. The units are stacked on a roll-around base.

BELOW: Roll-around kitchen for use in any room indoors or outdoors is equipped with two-burner stove; chopping block top; refrigerator; storage drawers and shelves for china, glassware, cutlery, pots and pans, and cook book. Comes in oiled walnut. Electrical unit with cord is built in.



BELOW: "Spider lamp," with chrome rod and matte-finish painted metal reflector, comes in three versions (wall hung, standing, and with shelf attachment as shown). Close-up shows dial for rotating reflector and the switch.

