

DESIGN: Origins & definitions

Nowadays, *Design* is often synonymous with luxury, élitism, complexity and artistic “posturing”, even to the point of absurdity. Despite this, however, it started out as a decidedly democratic venture. Indeed, the origins of design, which date back to the latter half of the 19th century, were based on a political initiative. The basic principle was to ensure that useful everyday objects were made widely available to the general public. The items should be of good quality and reasonably priced, as well as possessing a certain aesthetic appeal. The great idea conceived by the pioneers of design was therefore democratic in nature. This was a far cry from the notions of luxury and prestige that are automatically associated with design today. A discipline in its own right, design originated from the modern era and the Industrial Revolution. It is, in fact, inextricably linked to serial production and standardisation, two processes that emerged in Europe during the latter half of the 19th century. The invention of design should therefore not be confused with that of furniture, which has existed for centuries and was conceived by artisans.

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Incidentally, did you know that the early signs of the origins of design can be traced to the USA? During that same period, Catharine Beecher – whose sister was none other than Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* [1852] – wrote a domestic science manual specifically intended for American women [1869]. In this publication, she suggested a number of methods aimed at helping housewives to achieve greater economy of movement and efficiency in carrying out their household tasks. In other words, she proposed that women should reconsider their domestic space and utensils, adapting the systems used in factories to their own everyday lives. In this way, she was able to demonstrate that it was no longer necessary to keep household slaves, as the mechanisation of the domestic space and the use of small, attractive and affordably-priced functional objects could lead to the abolition of slavery. Indeed, this came to pass some fifteen years later. Therefore, as well as producing the aesthetically pleasing items that could be used on a daily basis, design was initially a genuinely political venture that helped transform society. ●

All men are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity. The planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design, to make it a thing-by-itself, works counter to the inherent value of design as the primary underlying matrix of life. Design is composing an epic poem, executing a mural, painting a masterpiece, writing a concerto. But design is also cleaning and reorganizing a desk drawer, pulling an impacted tooth, baking an apple pie, choosing sides for a back-lot baseball game, and educating a child. Design is the conscious effort to impose meaningful order.

VICTOR PAPANEK, *DESIGN FOR THE REAL WORLD*

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Design is a strategic problem-solving process that drives innovation, builds business success, and leads to a better quality of life through innovative products, systems, services and experiences.

ICSID - INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIETIES OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

PLASTIC: Definitions R. Thommeret

Plastic is one of the few materials named after an adjective that has now become a noun. The main characteristic of this family of materials, described by scientists as polymers, is the ability to adapt very easily to any shape they are given, thereby facilitating the mass production of objects. Such were the origins of plastics. If we were able to view plastic with the aid of a very powerful microscope, we would see bundles of very long, chain-like structures, similar to a plate of spaghetti. It would become evident that these “chains” are actually very evenly spaced groups of tens of thousands of identical basic units made up for the most part of carbon and hydrogen atoms formed from petroleum derivatives [4% of oil production is used for plastics]. Each plastic has a base unit, which gives it its name and specific properties: density, fusion point, rigidity or transparency.

In simpler terms, if the structure of the large molecules resembles long chains, this is a characteristic of the materials known as thermoplastics. Examples of these are PVC, as used for inflatable chairs, or PET, as used for plastic water bottles. These melt when heated [at temperatures ranging between 150 and 300°C] and may be repeatedly recycled. But if it resembles a three-dimensional network and is therefore more complex in structure, the materials in question are thermosetting plastics, such as Bakelite or polyester. Once these have been given their definitive form, they cannot then be altered, even through a heating process, and are therefore strongly resistant to high temperatures.

Inks, paints and varnish are generally thermosetting plastics that are applied in a thin layer to serve as a protection. This is the case with the museum objects made of GRP [glass-reinforced plastic], which have been lacquered in order to give them their desired colour and a highly polished surface finish. The success achieved by plastics is chiefly due to their lightness and their strong rigidity in relation to their weight. The most compelling evidence of these qualities is their use in the automobile and aeronautics industries. Constantly looking to reduce the weight of their planes and thereby improve fuel efficiency, the latter opt

for plastic as a replacement for metal. One example of this is the Airbus A350, 50% of which is made of plastic, in this case carbon fibre reinforced composites! In the latter half of the 20th century, the technological processes used in the transformation of plastics were gradually perfected. This, coupled with the rise in production capacity, very quickly led to a reduction in costs, paving the way for their widespread use. ●

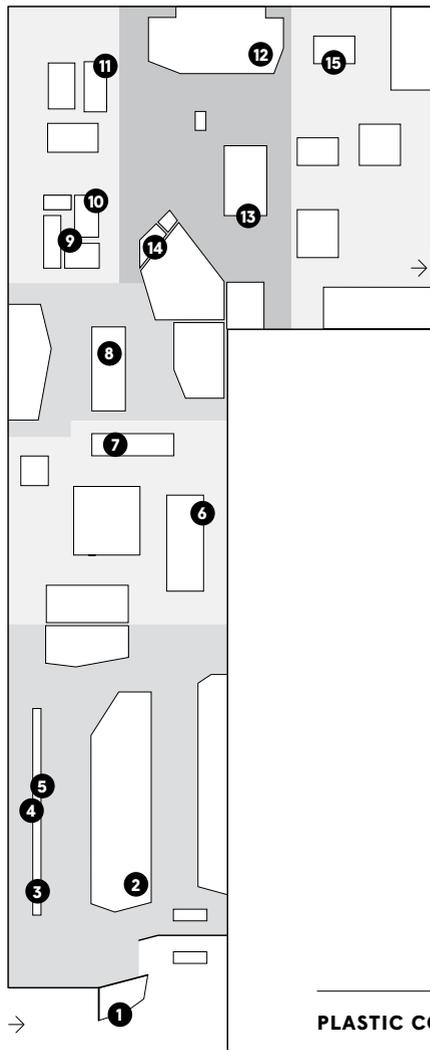
R. THOMMERET: a chemical engineer by training and a former researcher into polymeric materials, Richard Thommeret is Professor of Polymer Technology at ENSAV-La Cambre [the Free University of Brussels], where he teaches the Masters degree course in Industrial Design and Interior Architecture. An international lecturer and author of the book *Plastiques et Design*, published by Éditions Eyrolles [2013] he is now Director of Communication at Solvay’s Research and Innovation department.

The museum visit through 15 essential objects

This collection of fifteen essential items brings together classic pieces and lesser-known objects, from various periods and representing a variety of techniques. Throughout this tour, visitors will be given simple and concise explanations as to how

and why an object is as much a part of its creator's personal story as that of the history of society, art and techniques. •

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Universale | Joe Colombo ¹

1st ed. 1967-1971, ABS, Kartell, ITA

2nd ed. 1971-1975, PA, Kartell, ITA

3rd ed. 1975-present, PP, Kartell, ITA

Joe Colombo's *Universale* chair [1967] has an iconic status in the history of design. Firstly, it was the very first plastic chair to be injection-moulded in a single piece, made entirely of ABS. This kept production costs down, so that it could be sold

more cheaply. In addition, it is modular. You can add to it, to suit your tastes or needs; it can be transformed into a barstool with the addition of extensions to its legs, and its feet are also detachable, making a lower chair for a child. Different coloured legs can be added to customise the chair. In opting to name the chair *Universale*, Joe Colombo was referencing modernist notions of standards and norms. Versatile and easily manoeuvrable, it is a crowning example of the industrially-orientated attitude to plastic furniture production that prevailed in the "Golden Sixties". This chair was originally intended to be made of aluminium, but Joe Colombo opted for ABS plastic as

Born in Milan in 1930, **JOE COLOMBO** initially studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Brera. He went on to study architecture at the Polytechnic University in Milan from 1949 to 1954. He pursued his interest in painting until 1959, when he was obliged to take over the family business following his father's death. In 1962, he left his position there in order to open his own design agency in Milan. He and his brother Gianni collaborated with important design companies such as Kartell. His work was based on everyday, modular items. Before his untimely death in 1971, Joe Colombo was one of the leading figures in the anti-design movement in the late 1960s.

a means of keeping costs low. Once the mould was completed in the autumn of 1967, the Italian design company Kartell launched the production process. In 1971, ABS was replaced by polyamide [PA], which is less smooth but more resistant to scratches and almost unbreakable. The current models have been made of polypropylene since 1975. •

PLASTIC CODES

ABS	acrylonitrile - butadiène - styrène
ASA	butyl acrylate styrene acrylonitrile
GRP	glass reinforced polyester
PA	polyamide
PBT	polybutylene terephthalate
PC	polycarbonate
PE	polyethylene
PMMA	poly [methyl methacrylate]
PP	polypropylene
PS	polystyrene
PUR	polyurethane
PVC	polyvinyl chloride

COUNTRY CODES

BEL	Belgium
CHE	Switzerland
DEU	Germany
DNK	Denmark
FIN	Finland
FRA	France
GBR	United Kingdom
ITA	Italy
JPN	Japan
NLD	Netherlands
SGP	Singapore
SWE	Sweden
USA	United States

Componibili | Anna Castelli-Ferrieri ²

1967–present, ABS, Kartell, ITA

Bestselling pieces produced by the Italian design company, Kartell, the *Componibili*, a name that means modular, or stackable, bring to mind the notion of interobjectivity. Composed of individual, cylindrical storage units, they can be arranged in a variety of different ways. For example, they

ANNA CASTELLI-FERRIERI [1918-2006] was an Italian architect and designer. In 1943, she became the first woman to graduate in architecture from the Polytechnic University of Milan. She was part of a group of designers who were keen to transform the world of design through the use of technology and new materials, particularly plastics. With this aim in mind, she founded the design company Kartell in 1949, together with her husband Giulio Castelli, a chemist. As the firm's Artistic Director [1976-1987], she produced an extensive range of easily affordable everyday objects. Indeed, a Kartell piece may be found in almost every Italian home.

might be used as a bedside table, a low cabinet, or stacked to form a column. In addition, the units come in an assortment of colours, so that users can arrange them as they choose, either combining different shades or keeping to one colour scheme. One of the great selling points of this item is its ability to “adapt itself to individual wishes and needs” in this way, in any part of the home. This versatility is a key to its commercial success. ●

Portavia | Roger Tallon ³

1966, ABS, metal, electronic system, Télévia, FRA

In 1963, just as televisions were becoming part of the everyday domestic landscape, Roger Tallon decided to give them a makeover. Until then, the sole preoccupation had been with their technical performance, and those sets in

Born in Paris, **ROGER TALLON** [1929-2011] is regarded as the father of French industrial design. After graduating with a degree in engineering at the age of 21, he joined Technès [a design office specialising in technical and aesthetic research] in 1953. He developed his career within the firm, becoming its Director in 1959. Known for his 25-year collaboration with French railway company the SNCF, Roger Tallon championed the use of plastics. In his opinion, they gave objects a more homogenous, better appearance, and enabled them to be produced in greater numbers. In 1957, he also began teaching at the School of Applied Arts in Paris. In addition, he was involved in creating the Department of industrial design at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1963.

their solid-looking wooden units, typically bourgeois in style, were anathema to him. Roger Tallon invented a compact, portable model, with an anti-UV screen filter. Attractive to look at, it was aimed at a young, modern clientele. Its base resembled a neck – an idea suggested by the French artist César – and its tinted screen merged harmoniously with the whole set. The *Portavia P111* was presented to the public with the accompanying slogan “aesthetics are important too”. ●

Valentine | Ettore Sottsass and Perry King ⁴

1969, ABS injection-moulded, ferrous and non-ferrous metal, Olivetti, ITA

In 1969, Ettore Sottsass [1917-2007] created the *Valentine*, a portable typewriter, together with British designer Perry A. King [b.1938]. It was made of ABS plastic, a material prized for its rigidity, its lightness, and the fact that it lends itself easily to injection-moulding. The *Valentine's* appearance contrasted strongly with that of previous typewriters. Bright red in colour, it was compact in design and its mechanism was visible. Only the caps of its twin ribbon spools were yellow, a detail often interpreted as a robot's eyes. Featuring a handle at the back, it could be carried with or without its case, which could also serve as a stand. The *Valentine's* design evokes the 1960s, when the aesthetics and playful nature of Pop Art were enjoying huge popularity. This was also a time when people hankered after a free, adventurous lifestyle, while taking full advantage of new technology, particularly plastics. ●

Born in Austria of an Italian father and an Austrian mother, **ETTORE SOTTASS** studied architecture at the Polytechnic University of Turin. Interested in designing objects, he founded his own agency in Milan. In 1956, he met the Director of Olivetti, Adriano Olivetti [1901-1960], and became the firm's design consultant, a position he held until 1980. He began to design computers, electronic typewriters, calculators and office furniture. A theoretician as well as a practitioner, Sottsass was a leading figure in the world of 20th century design. He was an active member of radical Anti-Design movements, firstly through Studio Alchimia, and later through the **Memphis** Group and the “Sottsass Associati”, which he established in 1981.

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Memphis

Founded in 1981 and dissolved in 1988, the Memphis Group brought together designers and architects. They were united in their opposition to the design aesthetic of the 1970s, which they saw as conventional in its colours, textures and forms. Inspired by various movements – from Art Deco to Pop Art via classical art and Futurism – they created decorative objects.

iMAC | Apple Design Team ⁵

1998-2003, PC - electronic system, Apple, USA

With the *iMac*, Apple's aim was to create a functional, user-friendly computer, while at the same time redefining the prevailing aesthetic by producing it in a range of fashionable colours. Therefore, rather than creating a square, box-shaped item, Jonathan Ive conceived a model

British designer **JONATHAN IVE** [b. 1967] was appointed Head of the Apple Design team in 1996. In his view, the form of an object should be based entirely on its intended purpose. He is a firm believer in the principle of functionalism, whereby precedence is given to function over form, as nothing should be allowed to impede the efficacy of a particular product. It is therefore only natural that he should apply this to the domain of home computers, which have become increasingly popular since the 1970s.

with a curved body. Grey or beige acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene [ABS] was replaced by transparent polycarbonate [PC], in blue, red, orange, purple or green. The attention to detail was meticulous. The ensemble was compact in design and the amount of electric cables used was kept to a strict minimum. The *iMac* was designed to blend harmoniously into both the work and the home environment. ●

Man Chair | Ruth Francken ⁶

1st ed. 1970, GRP, stainless steel, Galerie Éric et Xiane Germain, FRA

2nd ed. 1985, GRP, stainless steel, Galerie X +, BEL

Through this male figure, which is headless and faceless, the masculine body is presented as a functional, mass-market product. Being easily adaptable, plastic has facilitated the creation of anthropomorphic objects in the worlds of art and design. These display great diversity in their forms, and the techniques used reflect their creators' many and varied intentions. The seat section was directly

Born in Prague, **RUTH FRANCKEN** [1924-2006] lived in Vienna and Paris, then moved to Britain when France entered the Second World War in 1939. She met the painter Arthur Segal in Oxford, where she attended his classes for a few months. She soon emigrated to America and lived in New York from 1940 to 1950, obtaining American nationality during this period. In 1952 she returned to Paris and settled there. She took up sculpture during a stay in Berlin in the mid-1960s, introducing an industrial element through her use of metal. In this way, she created works that blurred the boundaries between painting and sculpture. Indeed, Ruth Francken's work reflects her desire to do away with stylistic barriers and categorisation in the domain of artistic creative activity.

cast on a model, using a synthetic, industrial material. In this way, the sculpture immediately raises the question of the relationship between artisanal crafts and manufactured products. ●

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The Galerie Éric and Xiane Germain, which was situated on the rue Guénégaud in Paris, welcomed and supported young artists in the period between 1970 and 1980. It produced twenty of Ruth Francken's chairs. In 1985, it was decided that the Galerie X + in Brussels would issue a new edition of the items. According to the initial plan, the gallery would produce 300 of the chairs, in black and white, each one numbered and signed. This project was never fully realised, due to a disagreement between the artist and the gallery. It seems that the re-edited collection comprised just thirty chairs.

Panton | Verner Panton ⁷

1st ed. 1960-1970, PUR, Herman Miller – Vitra, CHE

2nd ed. 1970-1999, ASA, Herman Miller – Vitra, CHE

3rd ed. 1999-present, PP, Herman Miller – Vitra, CHE

Cantilevered chairs have existed since 1926, having been created by the Dutch architect, urban planner and designer Mart Stam. However, thanks to technological advances and the malleable qualities of plastic, the concept could be

Danish designer **VERNER PANTON** [1926-1998] is regarded as one of the leading figures of 20th century design. His career was characterised by his creation of innovative, avant-garde objects that continue to make their mark on design history. From 1950 to 1952, he collaborated with another key figure in the world of design, Arne Jacobsen. Then, in 1955, he established his own design practice in Switzerland. In the late 1950s, Verner Panton's chairs became increasingly unconventional: the feet disappeared altogether and the backs receded.

reinvented and fully developed. The cantilevered *Panton Chair* was an immediate success from its very first edition in 1969. This triumph was due as much to its form as to the technique used in its manufacture. It was only the second plastic chair – after the *Universale* created by Joe Colombo [1967] – to be injection-moulded as a single piece. In this way, the traditional parts of a chair, its base, seat and back, were indivisibly merged. The material initially chosen for the item was polyurethane [PUR]. Then, in 1970, the manufacturers opted to use the acrylate butyl-styrene-acrylonitrile [ASA], a fluid, rigid and scratch-resistant thermoplastic. Nowadays, the *Panton* is made of polypropylene [PP], with a mineral filler. ●

Dondolo | Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi ⁸

1st ed. 1967-1969, GRP, Bernini, ITA

2nd ed. 1969, GRP, Elco, ITA

The *dondolo* – the name means “rocking chair” in Italian – was designed in 1968 by the Italian duo Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi. In its own way, it is a total work of art. Its decidedly futuristic appearance is a perfect illustration of how space travel influenced the ways in which shapes were conceived during the 1960s. The *Dondolo* was being produced at the same time as man first set foot on the moon. The use of fibreglass enabled the item to be moulded as a single piece. An example of sculptural perfection, the chair forms a loop, conveying and serving its purpose in a spirit of elegant abstraction. The fluting – the grooves moulded into the material – provides a very high strength-to-weight ratio, while the interplay between the hollow and solid areas, and between light and

Italian architect and designer **CESARE LEONARDI** [b. 1935] became interested in design during the second year of his course at the School of Architecture in Florence. The key elements that characterise his work became apparent from the very first year of his studies, as he sought to optimise the performance of the material he used, and to achieve a synthesis between structure and form. With these aims in view, he developed a partnership with **FRANCA STAGI** [b.1937] at a very early stage in his career. Together, they conceived the Ribbon CL9 armchair in 1961. It comprises a continuous band of fiberglass [GRP], supported on a tubular metal base. An example of this model is also held in the ADAM.

shade, produce an extraordinary impression of movement and fluidity. The seat and back seem to “float” in the air, suggesting something of the weightlessness of space travel. ●

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Available in three colours [white, grey and blue], the *Dondolo* was one of the main pieces presented in “Italy: The New Domestic Landscape” [MoMA, 1972], an exhibition that celebrated Italian design.

Miss Blanche | Shiro Kuramata ⁹

1st ed. 1988, PMMA - artificial flowers - aluminium, Ishimaru Co., JPN

The name of this chair, *Miss Blanche*, pays tribute to the dress worn by the actress Vivien Leigh [1913-1967] in her role as Blanche DuBois in the film *A Streetcar Named Desire*, [1951]. This had been adapted from the theatre play of the same

SHIRO KURAMATA [1934-1991] was a Japanese designer based in Tokyo. In 1981, he began participating in the activities of the Memphis Group. These ventures, in addition to his collaborations with Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake [b.1938] brought him fame in Europe. His quest centered on simplicity and purity, even on achieving a type of absolute. One of the ways in which this manifests itself is through a semblance of eliminating gravity. He accomplished this by piercing his creations so that light filtered through them, or by using transparent materials. At a technical level, Shiro Kuramata combined Japanese tradition with Western influences and new technology. Rather than using bamboo, wood, lacquer or steel, he chose acrylic for the optical effects it produces. As a result, his meticulously detailed pieces have a poetic quality.

name, written by American playwright Tennessee Williams [1947]. Born into the aristocracy of the American Deep South, Blanche DuBois is a tragic character. Due to her family’s financial misadventures, she finds herself thrust into the working-class environment inhabited by her sister. Although totally at odds with these new surroundings, she strives to retain her idealism, purity and innocence. Refusing to see herself as she really is, she creates an illusory, idealised version of reality. This is perfectly illustrated by Kuramata’s chair. The chair is formed from a block of acrylic [PMMA], which had been poured into a mould. The artificial flowers embedded into it appear to float, suspended in space. By choosing this material, Shiro Kuramata sought to disregard the constraints of gravity and density. It seems

as if his aim was to conceptualise the object in some way, by suggesting it rather than showing it. Through this piece, Shiro Kuramata implies that a transparent, light, even ethereal element is capable of supporting or even mobilising our bodies. It is therefore suggested that this invisible element may play a weightier and more important role than any visible section. This investigation is illustrated here by the finesse of the metal legs that support the 70-kilo PMMA structure. ●

The Marie | Philippe Starck ¹⁰

1999-present, PC, Kartell, ITA

In addition to its excellent abrasion and weather resistance, polycarbonate [PC] also exhibits a fine transparent quality. For these reasons, designers are gradually using it for their creations in preference to polymethyl methacrylate [PMMA], which breaks more easily and is susceptible to scratching. Philippe Starck used PC in his design for the *Marie* chair, the first transparent chair to be moulded in a single piece. From then on, Starck declared his intention of no longer producing signed objects, but creating archetypes instead. The *Marie* is an expression of this mission, as its design corresponds to the basic idea of what is meant by the word “chair” : four legs, a seat and a back. With a touch of humour, he gave it the female name Marie, equally archetypal in its way. Kartell, which produces this item, provided crucial backing. Claudio Luti, former Managing Director of Gianni Versace and Castelli’s son-in-law, took over Kartell in 1988. From then on, the company supported designers like Philippe Starck and Ron Arad [b.1958] in their projects.

After graduating from the Camondo School in Paris, **PHILIPPE STARCK** [b.1949] began his career by designing inflatable furniture for Quasar. He then worked as Art Director for Pierre Cardin. He established his own firm, Starck Products, in 1980, and subsequently produced designs for major manufacturers such as Flos, Driade and Kartell. It was also during this period that he made a name for himself. In 1981, he was one of eight designers chosen to refurbish the apartments at the Élysée Palace. In 1983, he was commissioned to refurbish the private apartments used by French President François Mitterrand [1916-1996]. From the very beginning of his career, Philippe Starck has always regarded aesthetic appeal as an essential aspect of furniture design. To this end, he mixes French historical references with futuristic touches.

This was a financial godsend for designers

and provided Kartell with a new lease of life, prompting a number of commentators to speak of the family firm’s “re-birth”. Indeed, Luti was keen to update the company’s vision, but without losing the soul of the brand. He understood the vital importance of changing the image of plastic products which, in the early 1980s, were condemned as outdated and environmentally unfriendly. Luti emphasised the personalities of his designers, drew attention to recyclable plastics, and changed the names of the products, moving from numbers to evocative titles. Philippe Starck continued working with transparent material, creating the Louis Ghost and Victoria Ghost chairs in 2002 and 2005 respectively. These models, both also produced by Kartell, have enjoyed huge commercial success. ●

Aerospace | Quasar Khanh ¹¹

1968, PVC - metal, Quasar, FRA

Inflatable items are primarily the result of a technique. They are made of PVC, a supple and transparent material which was developed in 1926. However, it only became a marketable commodity with the arrival of high-frequency electric welding in the early 1960s. There is also a socially-orientated aspect to the use of inflatable products. Inventive and anticonformist, they embody a notion of freedom.

NGUYEN MANH KHANH [b.1934], known as Quasar, made his first transparent PVC seat for his car. He then created a pouffe that could be transformed into an armchair, as well as a set of lamps. PVC, a much-beloved material during the Pop Art period, enabled Quasar to breathe fresh life into interior décors, as with his Aerospace series. As its name suggests, he was inspired by science fiction.

More generally, they also reflect the ideals of the May '68 generation, who sought to restore and revive a sense of playfulness, the unexpected, spontaneity, emotion and surprise. In terms of design and form, the right angle was frowned upon as a constraining element, an

approach to style associated with reactionary influences. The curve, in contrast, was endowed with all the qualities that suggested freedom. Quasar conceived his totally inflatable environment within the spirit of this trend. It included walls, chairs, tables and even lamps, which functioned by means of an aeration system and low-voltage light bulbs. •

Capitello | Studio 65 ¹²

1st ed. 1971, expanding PUR foam, Gufram, ITA

2nd ed. 1986, expanding PUR foam, Gufram, ITA

STUDIO 65 — Franco Aulenti [b.1934] founded Studio 65 in Turin in 1968, when he was still a student of architecture and painting. Studio 65 was one of the groups that spearheaded the radical "Contro-Design" movement, which likewise adopted a critical attitude to the society of the day. It brought together a group of young artists, Roberta Garosci, Enzo Bertone, Paul Morello and Paolo Rondelli. The creation of Studio 65 therefore constituted a declaration of war on dogma and the status quo, aiming to unmask and demolish its underlying ideological values. The group offered fresh experiences through its innovative forms, which succeeded in interpreting the yearning for a new beginning that gripped the younger generation in the late 1960s.

This chair, made in the form of the capitals that were set on top of Ionic columns, clearly recalls the decline and disappearance of the great civilisations of ancient times. In this way, it reflects the critical gaze that the champions of "Contro-Design" cast on the society of their day. It is part of a set named *Colonna*, which was designed in the form of a classical column and features three separate pieces: an occasional table [*Antica TL*], and two chairs [*Antica* and *Capitello*]. This piece, much discussed by the specialist press at the time, heralded the arrival of the Postmodernist movement of the 1980s. *Capitello* was re-edited in 1986, when 500 items were produced.



The group's logo is enough in itself to illustrate its ironic and irreverent vision. Firstly, the letters used are a deformed version of classic typewriter font, this being the standard, most conventional lettering of the day. Moreover, rather than following a horizontal line, the letters are jumbled together in a carefree mess. In addition to this, the number 65 is written partly as letters [sessanta / 60] and partly as a digit [5]. Finally, as a last mocking gesture to convention, the hyphen marking the split in the word "sessanta" is incorrectly placed and divided in two.

Pratt | Gaetano Pesce ¹³

1983, PUR, Pratt Institute, USA

In the early 1980s, the Pratt Institute, a private institution of higher education based in New York, asked Gaetano Pesce to experiment with new industrial materials to use for furniture designs. This request was honoured by the Italian

GAETANO PESCE [b.1939] is one of the key figures in the Italian Anti-Design movement. He studied architecture in Venice and graduated in 1965, having also attended courses at the Institute of Industrial Design. Pesce explores the possibilities presented by the new polyurethane foam [PUR], the result of experimental work by Italian furniture company C&B [Cassina & Buselli]. The fluid quality of this material allows the designer to create anthropomorphic forms. Gaetano Pesce is opposed to the notion of standardised production. He therefore introduces disruptive elements into various stages of the manufacturing process, in order to make each object unique.

designer, who produced a series of nine chairs, all featuring different qualities. However, only the eighth prototype in the set achieved perfect balance, being comfortable as well as very solid structurally. Pesce's artistic vision, which is both playful and sensitive, is expressed through the iconography used in this collection. It includes smiling faces, playing cards, geometric forms, a series of dots illustrating the Pythagorean theorem and a bunch of grapes, all of which were pressed into the mould's surface. The top of the chair features a hollowed-out impression of hands, indicating where it may be picked up and moved. •

The Painter | Evelyne Axell ¹⁴

1970, PMMA - enamel paint, BEL

Evelyne Axell established her style as early as 1966, through the portrayal of women's bodies, primarily her own. The outlines of these nude forms and the poses chosen for them by the painter produce the immediate impression of a free woman, unhampered by complexes, sure of herself and of her femininity. Her self-portrait, *The Painter*, may be viewed as a manifesto of her artistic vision: Evelyne Axell depicts herself nude, brandishing her paint brush as a symbolic object. •

A graduate of the Namur Academy of Fine Arts and of the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, **EVELYNE AXELL** pursued a career as an actress from 1955 to 1962. After living in Paris for a short while, she returned to Brussels, devoting her life to painting from 1963 until her premature death in a car accident in 1972. The

secrets of oil painting were to be revealed to her by the Surrealist artist René Magritte [1898-1967]. Evelyne Axell began to establish herself as a visual artist during the period dominated by Pop Art, when members of the New Realism movement were also consolidating their position. She then abandoned oil painting in order to explore the range of plastic resins, which she coloured with enamel paint. During this period, synthetic plastics were being developed and perfected. She was sometimes obliged to abandon a material, as it was no longer available to buy.

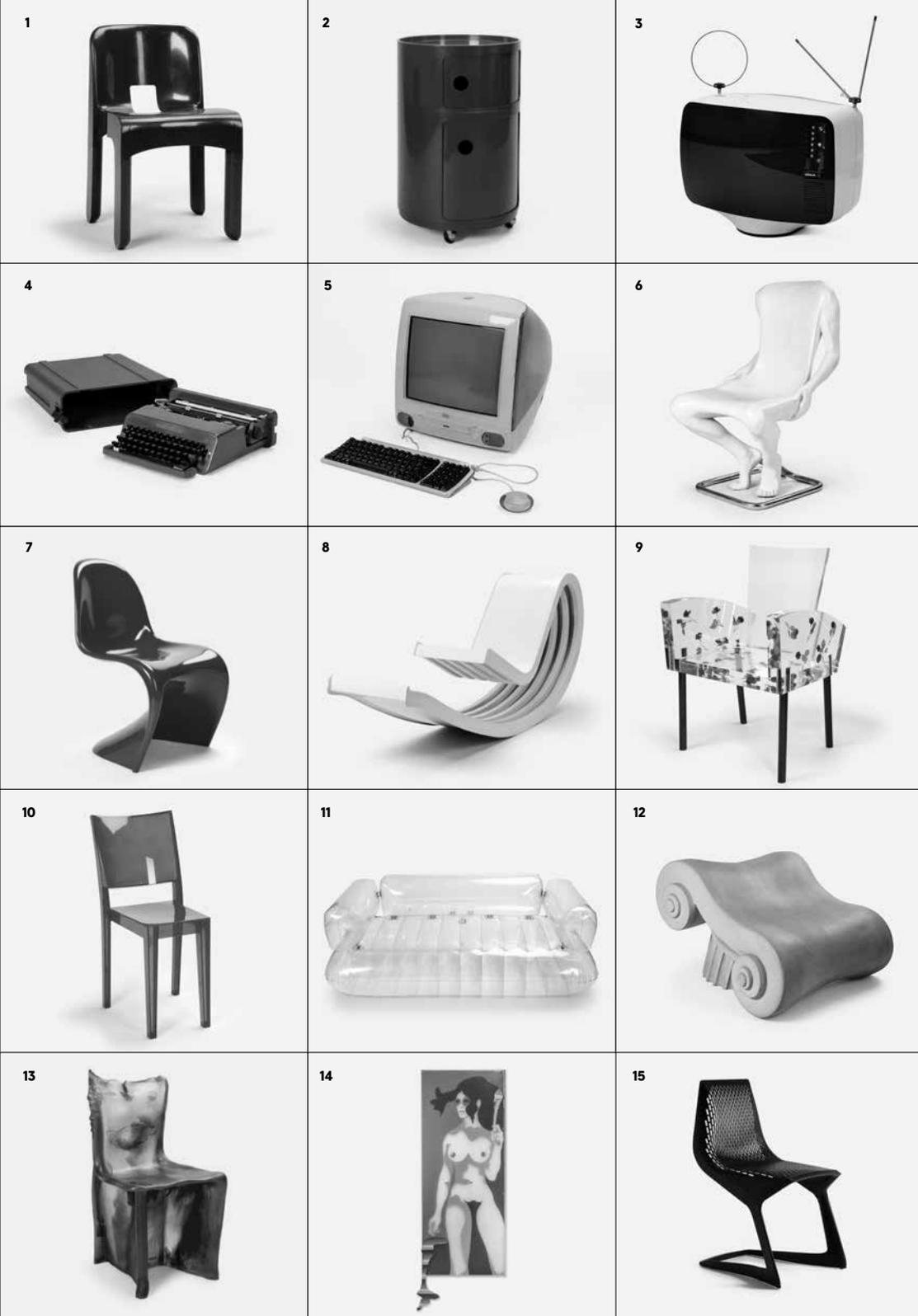
Myto | Konstantin Grcic ¹⁵

1st ed. 2008-present, PBT, Plank, ITA

This chair is the fruit of an unprecedented collaboration between a furniture manufacturer [Plank], a plastics company [BASF] and a designer [Konstantin Grcic]. Together, they aimed to create a stackable cantilever chair made of plastic. It was very easy to make using the injection-moulding process, enabling the chair's slightest details to be accentuated. While the cantilever chairs conceived in the early 20th century by Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe exhibit a studied elegance, and Verner Panton's curved model [1968] evokes a fluid style of futurism, the *Myto* chair, seen as the third version of the concept, is characterised by its rugged, explicitly industrial aspect. As for the material used, the petrochemical company BASF invited Konstantin Grcic to work with its most recent product, an ultra

Born in Munich in 1965, **Konstantin Grcic** trained as a cabinet-maker before studying design at the Royal College of Art in London, graduating in 1990. He was a student of the designers Jasper Morrison and Vico Magistretti, who have been constant influences throughout his career. After his studies he joined Jasper Morrison's studio, and later established his own practice in Munich, Konstantin Grcic Industrial Design [KGID]. Since then, he has worked for a variety of designer furniture companies and industrial enterprises. His pieces are characterised by their simple, minimalistic aesthetic.

fluid plastic named Ultradur® High speed [PBT]. Until then, it had generally been used by the car industry on account of its structural qualities. The name *Myto* is a reference to the sports motor cycle *Cagiva Mito* [1989]. The chair won the IF Product Design Award in 2009 and the *Compasso D'Oro* in 2011. •



The ADAM [Brussels Design Museum] is a space dedicated to design from the 20th and 21st centuries. It was established after the Atomium's acquisition of the Plasticarium collection. The ADAM offers an innovative and surprising insight on plastic design from the fifties to the present [permanent exhibition / Plasticarium] and on other forms of design through other periods, expressions, materials and themes [temporary exhibitions]. The ADAM, it is also an auditorium for about 400 people and an educational and cultural service with activities designed for children, teens and school groups. Lectures and screenings, in connection with the themes that are explored, enrich the museum's program of activities.

ADAM [BRUSSELS DESIGN MUSEUM]

Place de Belgique / Belgiëplein - 1020 BRUSSELS - +32 [0]2 669 49 29 - info@adamuseum.be

OPENING HOURS

Every day from 10am to 6pm [the ticket office closes at 5.30pm]

ACCESS [150M FROM THE ATOMIUM AND HEYSEL'S PALAIS 5]

Underground : line 6 - Heysel / Heizel station

Tourist buses [City Sightseeing Brussels]: red bus stops, located 150m away [at the foot of the Atomium]

Villo: station 281, located 30m away [on the Boulevard du Centenaire]

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