

Atlas of Furniture Design

A new encyclopedic publication on 200 years of furniture design

Available from German booksellers as of 1 November 2019

This publication can be previewed during the Frankfurt Book Fair exclusively at D.A.P. artbooks, Hall 4.1, Stand G99, and at Thames & Hudson, Hall 6.1, Stand B126.

In November 2019, Vitra Design Museum will publish the »Atlas of Furniture Design«, a new comprehensive overview on the history of modern furniture design. With more than 1,000 pages, the »Atlas« will be the most extensive book ever to be published on the topic. It documents 1,740 objects by over 540 designers, and features more than 2,800 illustrations, from object photographs to design sketches and interiors as well as patents, brochures, art, architecture, and portraits of the designers. The Vitra Design Museum collection, which counts among the world's largest of its kind with upwards of 20,000 objects, including over 7,000 pieces of furniture, serves as the basis for »Atlas of Furniture Design«. The publication includes works by the most significant designers of the past 230 years and documents all important stages of design history. This includes 19th century furniture made out of bentwood and metal, Art Nouveau and Secession style designs, iconic designs by protagonists of modernism such as Le Corbusier, Gerrit Rietveld, Charlotte Perriand, Marcel Breuer, and Eileen Gray, but also post-war, post-modern, and contemporary furniture by designers such as Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, Gae Aulenti, Finn Juhl, Ettore Sottsass, Philippe Starck, Hella Jongerius, Jasper Morrison, and Konstantin Grcic.

The »Atlas of Furniture Design« is the product of over 20 years of research at Vitra Design Museum and was compiled by a team of more than 70 authors. It contains comprehensive essays on the socio-cultural and design-historical contexts of furniture design, over 550 detailed texts on pioneering objects, and numerous information graphics that provide new visual insights into the history of furniture design. Furthermore, the book contains a complete appendix that includes designer biographies, bibliographies, a glossary of producers and materials, as well as a keyword index. These features make this publication an encyclopedic reference guide and indispensable resource for collectors, scholars, and experts, and without a doubt a book to be treasured by design lovers all over the world.

»The Atlas of Furniture Design is a treasure trove that offers not only definitive information about beloved staples of design history, but also new, fresh and often unexpected perspectives, all presented in a generous format that captures the breadth and depth of this important subject.«

Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art

Mateo Kries, director of the Vitra Design Museum and co-editor of the publication, explains: »The Atlas paints a portrait of our entire collection while simultaneously providing an unprecedented overview of the history of modern furniture. The publication is set up to provide a new comprehensive outline for scholars of furniture design by considering the latest academic research, questioning extant knowledge, and giving top experts a platform to share their ideas.

The book touches on a range of subjects spanning the beginnings of industrialization to digitalization, which is becoming increasingly influential in contemporary furniture design. Whether as a selection of iconic designs or as a history of styles, a chronicle of evolution or of revolution, a history of objects or of images, or a narrative of domestic habits or of individual designers, this book can be read in a vast range of ways. But the »Atlas of Furniture Design« can also be enjoyed by readers who prefer to dispense with complex theories and just want to concentrate on each single object.«

Vitra Design Museum

Founded in 1989, the Vitra Design Museum is today regarded as one of the leading design museums worldwide. Located on the Vitra Campus in Weil am Rhein, it hosts some eight to ten exhibitions annually at venues around the site. Large retrospectives and major exhibitions are shown in the museum's iconic building, designed by Frank Gehry, while experimental and contemporary projects are presented in the Vitra Design Museum Gallery. From its very beginnings, the Vitra Design Museum never considered itself a corporate museum, because it selects all its exhibition themes and acquisitions for the collections according to independent criteria, just like any major public institution. Many of its shows are presented as travelling exhibitions in other leading museums worldwide, which in recent years have included the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, and the Hong Kong Design Institute.

The Collection

While the exhibitions of the Vitra Design Museum cover a wide range of themes relating to design and architecture, its own collection is focussed on the domestic interior, in particular, furniture design. Today, the collection numbers some 20,000 objects, such as furniture, lamps, textiles, electrical appliances, cutlery, and architectural models. There is also an archive boasting some 100,000 items, including photographs, brochures, patents, and numerous other documents. The core holding is the furniture collection, which comprises over 7,000 objects and is regarded as one of the most important of its kind worldwide.

In 2016, the Vitra Design Museum opened a new building dedicated solely to presenting its collection: the Vitra Schaudapot, designed by Basel-based architects Herzog & de Meuron. The main hall of the Schaudapot showcases a selection of 430 key works from the collection, while the lower level houses a materials library and offers views into the nonpublic storage space. A digital catalogue provides texts and background information on the exhibited pieces and forms the basis of the collection's freely accessible online database. As a permanent exhibition space, research centre, and 'open storage' rolled into one, the Schaudapot is a place where the history of design can be experienced and studied in many different ways – via the collection itself and the digital catalogue, and also by viewing the ongoing work in the conservation lab or by consulting the vast library, which is open to researchers and students upon request. The exhibitions and presentations in the Schaudapot are complemented by an extensive educational programme, including talks and discussions, workshops, and guided tours.

Fact Sheet

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