



## Are you sitting comfortably?

*Less is more: Jasper Morrison's Air-Chair*

### **GEMMA CURTIN:**

This is the Cross Check Chair, by the architect and designer Frank Gehry, designed in 1992. It's made of bent and laminated wood - in this case maple - which has been woven together to form a basket-like structure that supports the sitter and also wraps around the back of the sitter. Both in terms of material and structure, it was inspired by a crate of apples.

In contrast to chairs that have an obvious machine aesthetic, that look as if they've been mass produced, this chair has a fluidity of form, a lightness of touch, the softness of the contour that makes it feel very natural, as if it's just been very effortlessly put together.

Earlier art movements, such as art nouveau, used organic material in a more narrative, in a more literal way. So they might take from nature elements like leaves, and flowers, and forms. Here, Frank Gehry has done it in a more abstract way, taking the essence of those forms, the essence of that movement. He has also been inspired by the structural strength of nature.

His approach to designing furniture is very much similar to his approach to architecture, in the sense that he uses it to test - to push - the structure and the properties of a particular material. The chair is deceptively light to look at. And yet, because of the complex woven bentwood, it is actually quite a strong chair. This chair is by the British designer Jasper Morrison, born in 1959. It's called the Air-Chair and it's made of gas-injection polypropylene. It represents 'less is more' - a term that was coined by the German architect Mies van der Rohe, who is one of the fathers of modernism.

He was a director of the Bauhaus School, that very influential design school in Germany. And it applies to the notion of reducing both materials and form. Paring down, making things simpler. And I think the Air-Chair is a very good example of that.

Jasper Morrison is a designer that tries to take a chair that he likes very much - and it will be a simple chair, a sort of basic, an almost archetype form - and he tries to create a better design, certainly in terms of comfort, and in terms of practicality.

He doesn't set out to create a radically different chair, but actually makes it relevant for today's age. So, in this case, he's angled the back rest to make it more comfortable.

He's also made it in a very contemporary material - plastic - so that it's functional both in the home but also outdoors. There's that simple hole in the middle obviously for outdoor use to let the water run through.

It's also a stacking chair, so suitable in a cafe, a school, or in a church. It's mass produced and, as a consequence, it's actually an inexpensive chair. Nitrogen is used in the process of the injection moulding of the plastic, in order to pump air to create a much thinner layer of plastic. So it means that you can use less plastic and it makes the chair much more economical to produce.

Jasper Morrison, here, his approach to design is one of paring down. Stylistically, it is a very reduced chair. But also, by using this method of manufacture, it's almost a 'less is more' chair for today.