



Are you sitting comfortably?

Nature-inspired design: Frank Gehry's Cross Check 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.