



## Are you sitting comfortably?

*Semantics and form: Tom Dixon's Crown Chair*

### **THEO:**

Since the late Sixties, a lot of designers start looking at forms in relation to meaning, in relation to association, the connotations that these form can create. And I think this exhibition is quite interesting, to me, because we can see designs referring to other objects, to other natural or man-made objects. So can you give us two examples?

### **GEMMA CURTIN:**

This is the Crown Chair by Tom Dixon, made in 1988. And this is the Soft Heart Chair by Ron Arad, from 1990.

They're both chairs that perhaps react against wanting to produce a chair that's purely functional. I see them both as having quite a strong narrative - a strong sense of the designer at work.

Tom Dixon dropped out of art school, did other things, and then taught himself to weld. And he started to experiment in quite a rough, trendy, punky way with sheets of metal. The welding is not at all finished. It's quite rough. You can see all the welding marks. You can see how it's been done quite quickly, and I think that's - it's got an energy to this chair as if it's not being considered - this rawness, and this youth, and this reaction. To quote from Tom Dixon, he said that if you think it's a comfortable chair, then he's a designer. But if you just think it's a piece of scrap metal, then he's an artist. And he has described these works from this period as being on the fine line between design and art.

Likewise, when you look at the Soft Heart Chair, you can't immediately see that it's a functional chair. There is an indentation here for sitting in. The form of the heart, the colour. It's warm. It's friendly. It's quite endearing. But both pieces are very sculptural. They don't follow at all the archetype of what a chair should look like. And I think it's designers looking at the possibilities of what a chair can be - that it can be a piece of sculpture. It can be something that expresses more than the function.

### **THEO:**

For some designers, this is not necessarily the most appropriate way to deal with form. Some designers will prefer to deal with the complexity of form without necessarily creating any

explicit narrative, any explicit association. A lot of designers rather create form in an abstract way. And I think this is quite interesting to see these two different poles.