



Are you sitting comfortably?

Protest, provocation and social responsibility: Gerrit Rietveld's Crate Chair

GEMMA CURTIN:

This is the Crate Chair by Gerrit Rietveld, who was one of the key members of the Dutch Modernist Movement, De Stijl. He designed this in 1934. It was originally sold as a DIY kit, as pre-cut timber, and it really is a response to the bitter economic climate of the 1930s.

The aesthetic is incredibly severe, and pared down, and really quite brutal. You could see it as a protest, but it's also a practical piece of furniture.

The Cork Stool, by Jasper Morrison, designed in 2004, is his response to the crisis in the cork industry. People are no longer using corks to plug their wine bottles, and are using plastic or screw-on tops, and he felt there was a need to create some designs that used cork.

So he set about designing this stool and actually a family of products. Cork is an incredible material, it's both waterproof and also rot-resistant. So this is a designer taking a stance of social responsibility, pushing forward not only the debate but also design in a new material.

The RCP2 Child's Chair was designed by Jane Atfield in 1994. She also developed the material. It's made of recycled plastic. All our old bottles and containers and things we use every day. And, by heating and pressing the plastic chips, they bond to form a single sheet of material.

The children's chair is an offcut of the same design she's done for an adult chair and is an attempt to reduce the use of materials, and also recycle materials that would otherwise go into land waste. This chair is her response of our need to protect the environment - an example of sustainable design.