



Are you sitting comfortably?

Vorsprung durch Technik: Michael Breuer's B33

GEMMA CURTIN:

The B33, by the architect, designer and teacher Marcel Breuer, designed in 1926 to 1927, is a great example of machine-inspired design.

Marcel Breuer studied and taught at the very influential Bauhaus School in the 1920s in Germany. One of the principles of the School was to design for mass production. So, while some of these pieces weren't originally produced in vast numbers, the intention was to design chairs with a minimum amount of materials, a minimum amount of components, and a simplicity of form - a reduced, a pared-down form.

This chair is something that is almost a prototype for that way of designing. This is made from tubular steel and was inspired by the manufacturer of the Adler bicycle. It's looking forward. It's one of the very early examples of a cantilevered type of chair. It hardly seems to have any means of visual support. It looks as if the chair is almost floating, and it was really radical at the time.

This inspired future generations of designers, from, in the 1950s, Verner Panton, who experimented with plastic. Responding to this new material, he was able to create much more sculptural, soft, flowing forms, and also to use bold colours.

The Myto chair uses a new type of plastic. It's an injection-moulded, mono-block chair, stackable. Konstantin Grcic worked with BASF, who have produced a new type of incredibly fluid plastic. It can form in the mould and can be adjusted to be both very strong, but also very fine. And you get this beautiful net perforation. So this is a machine-produced chair but, like the Breuer chair, it also looks like a machine-produced chair. The aesthetic - one of angles, very lean - it's a chair for today's mass production.

The Breuer chair - the B33 - and the Myto chair here are both examples of designers being inspired by technology, and using technology to push design a little bit further.