

Take A Seat – Publikation

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Take A Seat – Visual Communication  
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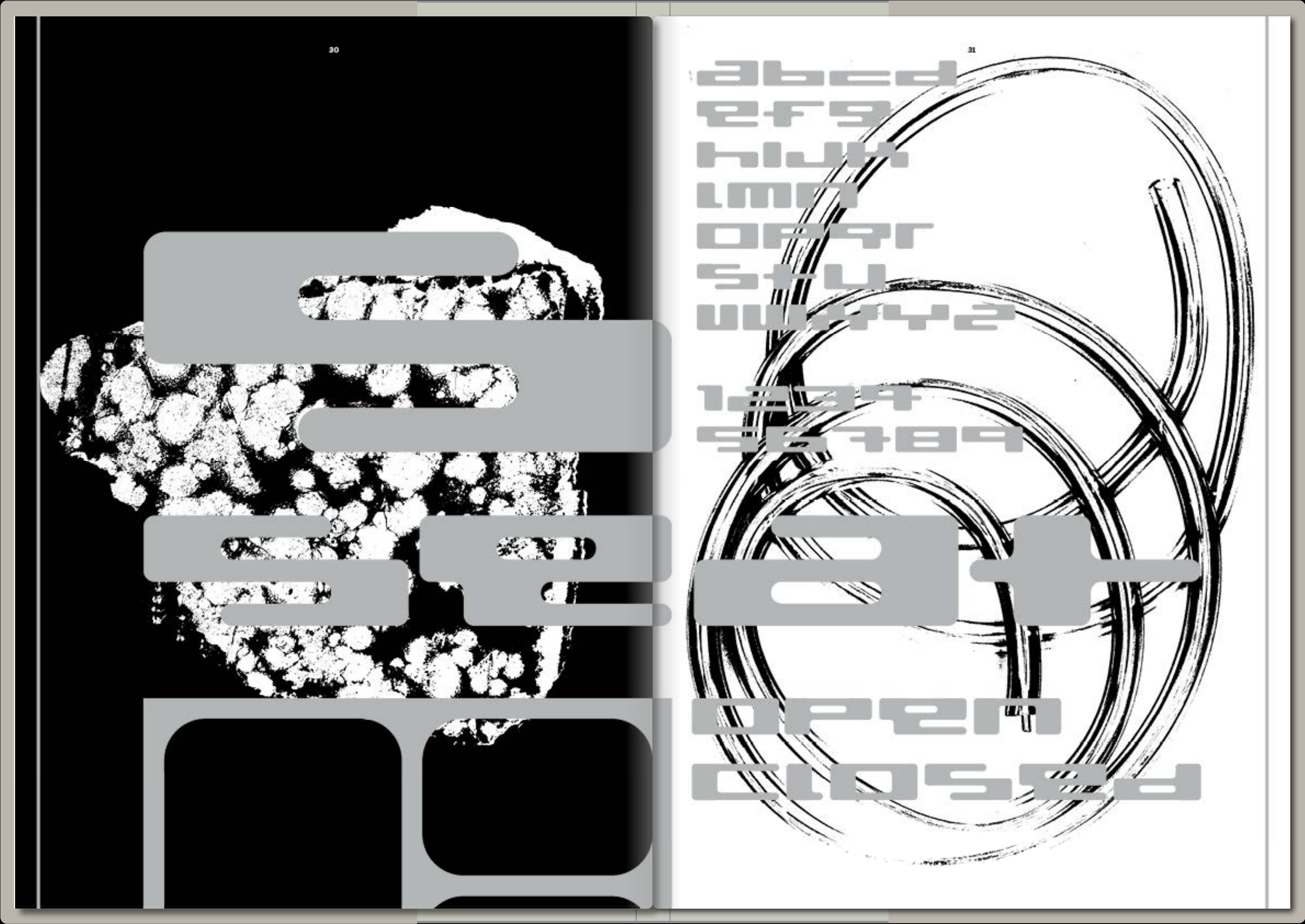
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A chair has a shape. This shape possesses charisma, personality and thus identity. This identity, in turn, is based not only on the distinctiveness of the design but equally on an interactive process along with the sum of all perceptions and experiences that we associate with the specific object. Through a systematic examination, in which the object is dissected using predefined questions, criteria are to be recorded and subsequently ordered. The recorded criteria form together a differentiating identity profile and thus the content basis for the further process of the targeted development of the brand identity.













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(REBEKKA BRANDES)

WHAT EFFECT DOES THE CHAIR HAVE ON YOU?

Since it looks as if you could sit on it from two sides, the chair seems quite practical. At the same time, it has many edges and grooves that make it look rather uncomfortable and uninviting for a proper rest. As I myself like to sit on chairs in somewhat odd or inverted positions, I have a certain liking for this chair.

MANUFACTURED BY METALLWERKE BUCHS  
(W × H × D) 71 × 71 × 74 CM, ARCHIVE NO. – 1993-0026; POLYESTER

EXPO-STUHL  
DESIGNED BY PIERRE CHARLES ZOELLY IN 1963

(ARMANDO GUETG)

WHAT IS THE OVERARCHING DESIGN IDEA BEHIND THE CONCEPT?

WHAT DESIGN PRINCIPLES WERE APPLIED?

The intention with the Aluflex was to design a chair that could be used in a multi-purpose room, quickly set up and put away again.

100 chairs stacked horizontally take up only 4.5 metres of floor space.

In terms of design principles, «good form» was adhered to and «form follows function» was considered.

MANUFACTURED BY KWM WEISSHAAR GMBH  
(W × H × D) 75 × 48 × 50,3 CM, ARCHIVE NO. – 2003-0101-0002; BEECH PLYWOOD, ALUMINIUM

(1) Lynx

(2) ALU-FLEX

(3) Mountain biking

(4) Tissot



(5) Functional underwear

(6) Lada

(1) Bengal cat

(2) Braun AW 10

(3) Chess

(4) Hotel Chevalier



(5) Structured A-line Dress

(6) Jaguar

TAKE A SEAT – IDENTITY CONCEPTS INSPIRED BY CHAIRS – ZHDK  
BA VISUAL COMMUNICATION / BRAND & IDENTITY / LECTURER: THOMAS WOLFRAM / ASSISTANT: SILVAN POSSA

1/1

ANALYSIS (PHASE 1)

HISTORY

Who designed the chair and who manufactured it?  
In what context was the chair designed?  
For what purpose/function was the chair designed?

DESIGN LANGUAGE

What period do you think the design language belongs to?  
How would you describe the formal language in your own words?  
Which design language is your chair most likely to exhibit?

☐ SQUARE ☐ ROUND ☐ HARD ☐ SOFT ☐ SYMMETRICAL ☐ ASYMMETRICAL

What structure has the construction of the chair?  
How were the single parts assembled?  
What is the overarching design idea behind the concept?

EFFECT

What effect does the chair have on you?  
In what building would such a chair most likely be found?  
How does the chair work in a room?

SHORT QUESTIONS

What animal would your chair be?  
What watch brand would your chair be?  
What car brand would your chair be?  
What human trait applies best to your chair?  
What piece of clothing would be your chair?  
What sport would your chair be?  
What film would your chair be?

MATERIALITY

What materials is your chair made of?  
What do they suggest and what effect do they produce?

DRAW YOUR CHAIR FROM FOUR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

– Frontal perspective (from the front)

– Three-quarter view (open viewing angle)

– Side view (profile)

– Bird's eye view

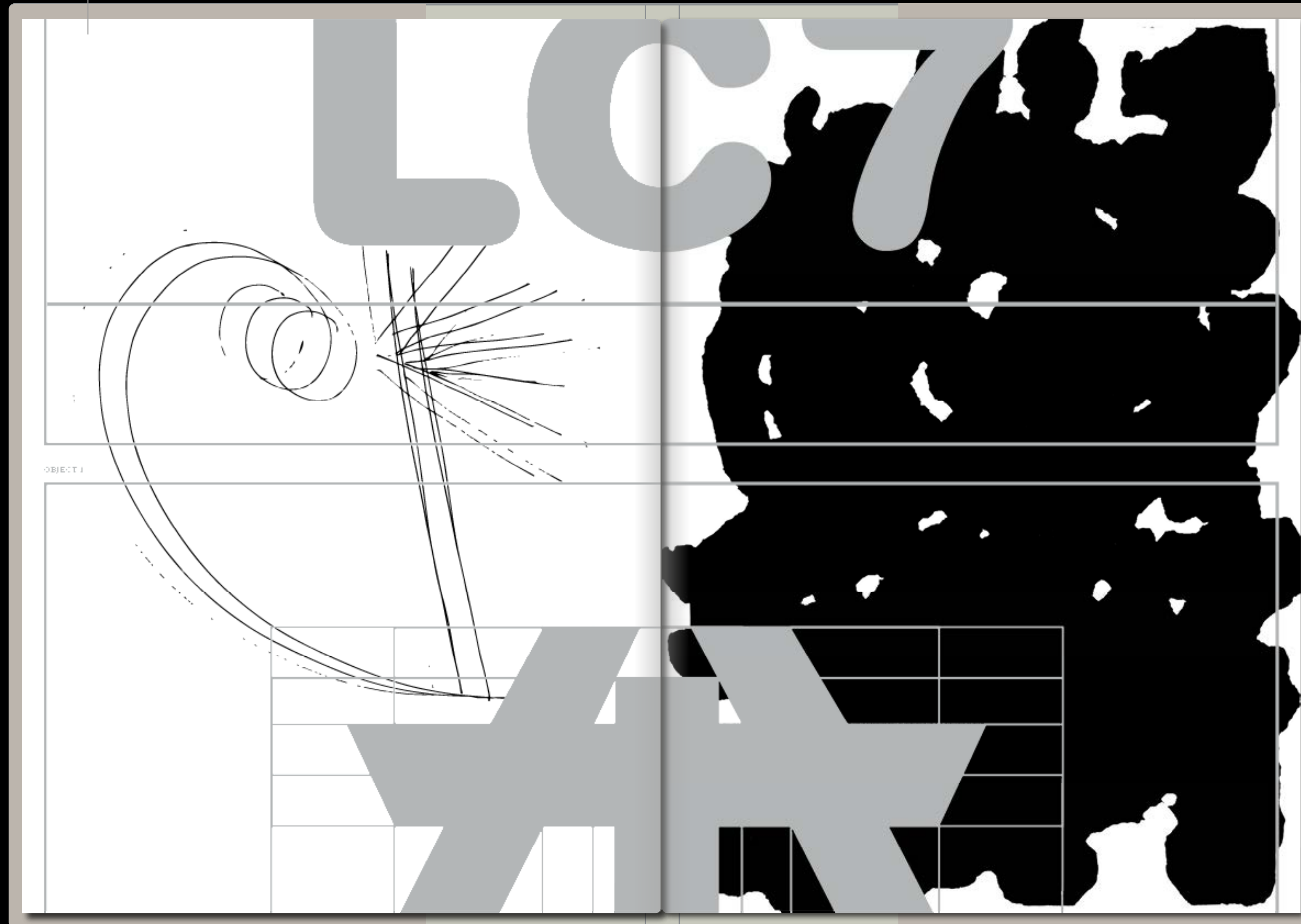
SUMMARY

Describe the main findings about your chair in a coherent text (approx. 1000 characters) and try to summarise the essence of the chair in one sentence.

88 S. > Zwei Papierformate, abwechselndes Material; 2 Blatt Material A / 2 Blatt Material B / 2 Blatt Material A / usw. (8er Lagen)

A 48 S. > 4/4 CMYK, Maxigloss 115g/m2 (ohne sichtbare Rasterung)

B 40 S. > 1/1 Tiefschwarz + 1 Sonderfarbe (Pantone 877 U), Tiefschwarz und Silber vollflächig ohne sichtbare Rasterung > Nass-in-Nass-Verfahren, Munken Print White 1.8 115g/m2



THE BLACK LAYER SHOWS THE RESULTS OF EXPERIMENTS WITH DIFFERENT ANALOGUE TECHNIQUES. ON THE SMALL FORMAT PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE 3D OBJECTS CREATED ARE SHOWN. THE SILVER LAYER SHOWS EXCERPTS FROM THE FINAL RESULTS.

The identity-conveying aspects of the objects under investigation are discussed through formal exploration. Object structure, mechanics, material composition and their effects are translated into new, three-dimensional objects using experimental working techniques. A bridge is thus built between rational knowledge (aura) and formal aesthetic stimuli (form). The visual exploration includes complex as well as arbitrary interactions that create new and surprising approaches to the object. A variety of constraints imposed through predefined working techniques create a framework for investigating the relationship between object and identity.

P. 1–48 SQUARES THAT REPRESENT THEIR IDENTITIES CORE VISUALS  
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3 Bigla-R 141	Joël Roth	2012-0030	P. 7, 8	P. 29, 30, 31, 42, 46, 58, 68, 88
4 Aluminium-Stuhl	Nicola Canziani	2010-0132	P. 9, 10	P. 42, 46, 55, 74, 77
5 Maui	Jill Sandona	2009-0014	P. 11, 12	P. 3, 12, 35, 42, 46
6 Aulastuhl	Tonja Wüthrich	2012-0551	P. 13, 14	P. 20, 23, 42, 45, 80
7 LC 7	Elia Geiger	2013-0531	P. 15, 16	P. 15, 25, 36, 40, 42, 46, 56, 73
8 Tripp Trapp	Elisa Jauch Gonzalez	2001-0102	P. 17, 18	P. 6, 24, 42, 46, 64
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10 Bold Chair	Tanja Vogt	CH-2008-1013	P. 21, 22	P. 13, 42, 46, 72, 78, 85
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14 Nauer & Knöpfel-Stuhl	Vera Oberholzer	2015-0084	P. 29, 30	P. 22, 32, 43, 47, 83
15 Panton Chair	Moritz Furger	1993-0552	P. 31, 32	P. 37, 43, 47, 53, 81
16 Ameise	Christina Birrer	1991-0966	P. 33, 34	P. 9, 17, 43, 47, 51
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18 Klappstuhl	Severin Weber	1993-0472	P. 37, 38	P. 2, 18, 21, 34, 43, 47
19 Seconda	Laura Schwarz	1987-0272	P. 39, 40	P. 43, 47, 50, 65, 76
20 Landi-Stuhl	Ladina Dörig	2013-0507	P. 41, 42	P. 14, 19, 26, 27, 33, 43, 47, 63, 86

(ALL CHAIRS ARE PART OF THE DESIGN COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM FÜR GESTALTUNG ZÜRICH)





12 S. > 4/4 CMYK > Maxigloss 135 g/m2 (ohne sichtbare Rasterung)



REFLECTION BY SOFT BAROQUE (PHASE 3)

(1) TAN BENCHES, 2020



(2) CORPORATE MARBLE, 2017



(3) BLACK NICKEL & FLOWERS, 2017



by Soft Baroque

NATURAL ORDER  
AND VIOLENT HOBBIES

Nicholas Gardner and Saša Štucin work simultaneously in object design and art. Their practice focuses on creating work with conflicting functions and imagery, without abandoning beauty or consumer logic. They are keen to blur the boundaries between acceptable furniture typologies and conceptual representative objects. Their work has been exhibited at V&A in London, Etage Projects in Copenhagen, Museum für Gestaltung in Zürich, Swiss Institute and Friedman Benda in New York, Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, Design Miami in Basel and Miami.

NATURAL ORDER

Despite the prophecies of software and technology replacing the hard world, we are still an extremely object-oriented species. There is satisfaction in owning things; satisfaction that feels embedded in our bodies to the extent that the objects start to own us. Of course, the idea of ownership is learnt, but in the timeline of the human species, it is a relatively recent invention. Instead, a shared cultivation and stewardship of objects was commonplace in small groups. Now we must have our own version of whatever niche product and pseudo-function is presented to us in the marketing streams, otherwise it feels inauthentic.

Modern attempts to work around this urge – for example, the sharing economy or linking people to eliminate 'excess objects' – have largely failed. Loaning or sharing would theoretically maximise the use of a particular item. Ironically, this would work for objects that have an obsolescent nature: most software-based technology becomes redundant after a few years, so it makes sense to share the harvest while it is fresh.

Mediated through phone apps, the corporate versions of car-, bike- or scooter-sharing systems have, for example, only become widely successful when one entity owned all of the objects and had a near-monopoly on a city or area. The community-driven versions of the object-sharing economy never really took off. Platforms for photo equipment rental, power-tools, luxury clothes or cars have been categorised as optimistic tech fever-dreams of the 2010s or have been bought up and squashed by the giants. Perhaps it was futile anyway: the forces that connect ownership and authenticity are ingrained in the capitalist system, and they feel as natural in the West as breathing, eating and fucking.

There is an evolutionary metaphor that often gets applied to consumer items and capitalism in general. The market has organically created environment for an object to exist, and because it can exist, it has every right 'to be'. A kind of sympathy that we have for unusual creatures in the natural world: creatures that have evolved to survive in niche or codependent circumstances. Supply and demand are compared to species' population explosions or extinctions. Innovations and disruptive products are successful mutations in the wild. Regulations and unnatural government or market interventions that disturb the natural flow of commerce are akin to an animal or environment being subject to a man-made harmful intervention, such as geo-engineering projects or logging. Maintaining the comparison, unforeseen and unavoidable catastrophic market events and the risk of doing business are synonymous with the volcanos and meteor impacts in the wild and other such acts of god (although in the natural world the insurance companies won't cover the damage, the taxpayer bails out the same catastrophic events in the market). It is all a story that validates the idea that the endless sea of products and technology, mass production and growth are part of the natural order. In the organic sphere we are encouraged to have sympathy for what exists, in the commercial system it is a commandment to have the same sympathy for whatever market supports, no product kink shaming. As a result, we are constantly entertained by surreal poems and the muddled aesthetic faux pas that are being passed off as lifestyle innovations. These weird creatures in the evolutionary tree are the deformations of a relentless search for new markets.

There are problems with equating the majesty of the natural world with that of man-made innovation and manufacturing. We shouldn't fall into the trap that validates the pure existence of any object and function. There are a few key differences between the Amazon jungle and the Amazon warehouse. The evolution and gestation of our items are reflexive and rapid, a timescale far faster than that of natural processes: mutations can therefore be more deformed and violent. The force that is required for these items to come to the market on such a short timescale, low price point and high volume, leaves social and environmental damage: a collateral impact that is often absorbed by the bodies of people in low-income countries. We would no longer be the dominant species on Earth if other organisms could metamorphose at the same rate as our desires. Another difference is that the number of individual items designed, manufactured and sold is on the rise, this being the opposite in the 'products' of the natural world, where extinctions are increasing. This is an inversely proportional equation that is never mentioned in pitch meetings or launches: which endangered beetle will the new iPhone replace?

Unlike the natural world, what we want, need and buy is subject to an omnipresent force recording and influencing our desires. Algorithms and feedback loops control online marketing streams, constantly refreshing themselves: a god program. It feels like we are all dancing freely in the West, but we are subtly under the influence of a digital pantheist cloud. We have completely accepted personal data collection as a compulsory sacrifice to this deity. Any pretence of this being used as a tool for supply chain optimisation or marketing efficiency (you only see what you would actually like!) has dissolved. By agreeing to terms and conditions, we are baptised into this new faith.

Despite the pitfalls of equating the ecologic and economic systems, imparting a pseudo-consciousness onto inanimate objects can help us think more critically about what we consume and design. We as Soft Baroque are often anthropomorphising the items we make, referring to pieces of furniture as characters or pets. 'Dancing furniture' is a continuous series of pieces with a mechanism that makes them rotate and gyrate: trippy gimmick meets modernist purity. The naive attraction of a dynamic or moving inanimate object is an attempt to suggest that the the piece itself can enjoy something as uninhibited as dancing – a very human form of expression. We made them originally to be visually stimulating, but after creating the prototype, we found it therapeutic and calming to sit on and 'dance' with the chair. Other motifs in our work, like rounding a classic wood finger joint into fat sausages resembling actual fingers, are a kind of pun but also something people say it is satisfying to look at – perhaps closer to the warm feeling of intertwining fingers with someone else. We have sympathy for most living things: by viewing items as having a soul and charisma, we can transfer this into an important reverence for the lost empathy in current consumer culture. Perhaps objects should be viewed as living with you rather than being owned by you. If you own something, you're empowered to dispose of it; conversely, we can think of them as roommates or of ourselves as being their stewards for a long and varied life.