

vitra.



CLASSICS IN THE OFFICE



What is a classic, and what does it stand for? Can a design that was conceived many years ago truly fulfil today's requirements?

A designer cannot consciously create a classic piece of furniture. The objects that have achieved the status of classics have remained relevant and popular for decades – including in offices. This is not only due to a timeless appearance but also to their extraordinary quality, which makes them extremely durable and thus more economical than most office furnishings. Such longevity allows Vitra, for example, to offer a 30-year guarantee on the Aluminium Group and Soft Pad Chairs.

In this current period of rapid change, offices are more heterogeneous than ever before, ranging from high-rises filled with shared desks in non-territorial layouts, to spacious open-plan interiors conceived for teamwork, to conventional group or individual offices with fixed desks – and some even suggest that the office has become obsolete. Yet there is one constant in this dynamic environment: the classics of furniture design. To make sure it stays that way, Vitra occasionally adapts its classics to new developments and requirements – always abiding by the dictates of authenticity and in close cooperation with the designer's heirs.

Consequently, the Eames Tables recently became available with new power and data options, as well as wireless charging capabilities. And in the new Black Version of the Aluminium and Soft Pad Groups, the iconic Eames chairs now appear in a fresh light – ready to serve the next generation of workers in the widest array of office environments.

The Vitra Campus near Basel
Charles-Eames-Strasse 2
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vitra.com

the vitra campus.

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CLASSICS TODAY
A statement by Raphael Gielgen

'We occasionally receive requests from our clients to furnish their working environments with Vitra classics. These products have emotional value and a timeless quality. And the rich variety of colours and materials makes them an essential part of our office concepts – whether for a bank, a law office, a creative agency or an engineering company.'

Vitra Workplace Consulting & Space Planning Team

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PROUVÉ'S DESIGNS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO G-STAR
Collaboration with G-Star



STUDIOILSE



Ilse Crawford is a designer, academic and creative director with a simple mission to put human needs and desires at the centre of all that she does. As founder of Studioilse, together with her multi-disciplinary London-based team, she brings her philosophy to life. This means creating environments where humans feel comfortable: public spaces that make people feel at home, and homes that are habitable and make sense for the people who live in them. It means designing furniture and products that support and enhance human behaviour and actions in everyday life. It means restoring the human balance in brands and businesses that have lost their way. As founder of the Department of Man and Wellbeing at the Design Academy Eindhoven, her mission extends to nurturing a new generation of students and urging them to always question why and how their work improves the reality of life.

‘Investing in a high-quality and human work environment shows your staff that they are invested in.’



How would you describe the ‘mood’ in Studioilse’s office? What kind of atmosphere did you want to create?

Our studio feels informal and domestic in atmosphere, while still allowing us to function as a creative studio. Not to mention being robust enough to survive approximately 20 of us cohabiting with our favourite lumps of stone and wood.

We used natural materials in the fundamentals – large oak desks, a wood floor, proper rugs, real furniture, largely loose-fit lighting and lots of plants – to create a lively space that engages the senses. As in many homes, the kitchen is the heart of our studio. We have consciously made it a proper domestic kitchen with a serious cooker and a large table, which we gather around daily.

The studio is our calling card. It’s a place where we can host clients and friends, where they can step inside and understand who we are – our ways of working and what we stand for.

Among other products, you have chosen the Eames Soft Pad Chairs. What was the reason behind this choice? What do you like most about the chairs?

The classics have stood the test of time. We chose the Eames Soft Pad Chairs because they are solid, comfortable, adjustable and well made. More like proper furniture than contract pieces, they feel good and look good. Although it’s important to remember that they were extremely progressive once. Many standard office furnishings today are tied up with

looking technological (without actually being so), and are more concerned with being easy to wipe down than giving any material pleasure.

We spend such a large percentage of our time at work that we believe it should be a place where people feel good, grounded and motivated. Investing in a high-quality and human work environment shows your staff that they, and their skills, are invested in.

Why are design classics still relevant today when planning an office? What are the advantages of a classic in your eyes?

The advantage of buying classics from good companies is that they will still hold their own in ten years’ time. They are not only well designed, but companies like Vitra take ongoing responsibility and care for their products going forward.

The Eames Soft Pad Chairs travelled with us from our old studio – our first major purchase in the very early days of Studioilse – and they still look as good as when we first bought them.

Also an added bonus is that they are a smart investment. Should the time ever come when I need to move them on, they should still hold much of their value and easily be able to find new homes. In this respect they are rather sustainable. However, more than 15 years down the line, the studio consensus remains that they are not going anywhere anytime soon.



CLASSICS

Classics create an office environment shaped by the superior quality, longevity and identity of originals – a workspace that remains relevant despite passing fashions and changing workstyles.

1950



FAUTEUIL DIRECTION PIVOTANT, JEAN PROUVÉ, 1951
This chair exemplifies the constructive aesthetic for which Prouvé is so well known. Its backward tilt mechanism can be adjusted to the user's weight.

Image: © Archive Patrick Seguin



SWAGED-LEG DESK, HERMAN MILLER, GEORGE NELSON, 1958
The small desk was originally conceived for 'ladies of the house' who needed a workplace to manage household affairs.



DAT (DESK HEIGHT ARMCHAIR TILT BASE) ALSO KNOWN AS EAMES TILTING ARMCHAIR, CHARLES & RAY EAMES, 1953-59

The fibreglass chair without armrests (S-shell) was created for the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design in 1948. The A-shell with a swivel base was also introduced in an upholstered version, offering great comfort and a tilt mechanism for freedom of movement.



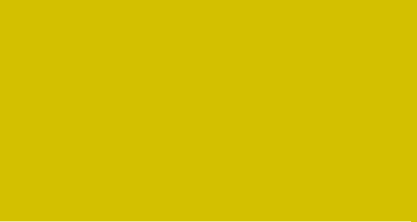
EAMES ALUMINIUM GROUP, CHARLES & RAY EAMES, 1958
First conceived as outdoor furniture for the Miller House (E. Saarinen & A. Girard), these designs were later adapted for other uses and gained iconic status as office chairs.

1960
ACTION OFFICE



EAMES LOBBY CHAIR, CHARLES & RAY EAMES, 1960

The armchair was originally conceived to furnish lobby areas in New York's Time-Life Building. Different versions were created in the years that followed; one was the ES 104 office swivel chair.



ACTION OFFICE I, GEORGE NELSON & ROBERT PROBST, 1964

This revolutionary office system offered a range of furniture that could be freely positioned in an open-plan interior. Work surfaces of differing heights encouraged movement and alternating postures.



ACTION OFFICE II, ROBERT PROBST, 1968

The visionary achievement of this sub-architectural system was to make use of vertical space with display boards and shelving units that screened off workers and demarcated separate areas. It introduced the cubicle into the open-plan office.



1970
DYNAMIC SEATING



EAMES SOFT PAD GROUP, CHARLES & RAY EAMES, 1969

Ten years after the launch of the Eames Aluminium Chairs, this group of padded chairs followed in the line of the Eames Lobby Chair and Intermediate Desk Chair. The upholstery was originally available in black leather only.

OFFICE CHAIRS

Office chairs by Vitra respond to essential human needs with innovative technology. They combine ergonomic features with attractive aesthetics in the form of an 'office machine for sitting'.



VITRAMAT, WOLFGANG MÜLLER-DEISIG, 1976

As Vitra's first internally developed office product, this chair featured an innovative integrated mechanism for synchronised movement and dynamic sitting.

1980
HUMAN OFFICE



PERSONA & FIGURA CHAIRS, MARIO BELLINI, 1984

Bellini brought a home touch into the technological office setting. Persona was the first chair to offer the extra comfort of automatic weight adjustment. Figura was fitted with upholstery, which evoked a casual feeling and created a contrast to the technical work environment.



METROPOL, MARIO BELLINI, 1989

Metropol was an architectural desk system based on columns. It paired high-tech functionality with more relaxed, familiar characteristics. Various work configurations made it adaptable to the constantly changing office environment.

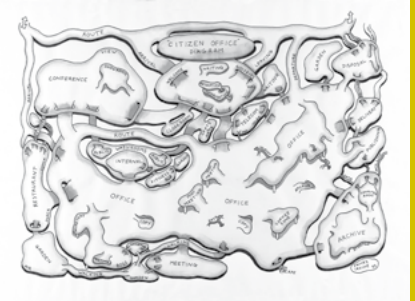


WORKSPIRIT #1, ORGATEC, 1988

This was the first in an ongoing series of influential publications dedicated to the evolving culture of the workplace and Vitra's office products.



1990
CITIZEN OFFICE



CITIZEN OFFICE EXHIBITION, VITRA DESIGN MUSEUM, ANDREA BRANZI, MICHELE DE LUCCHI & ETTORE SOTTASS, 1993

Subtitled 'Ideas and Notes on a New Office Environment', this exhibition foreshadowed many developments that took place in the coming decades: the impact of changing office technologies, the emergence of varied work environments, and the increasingly collaborative nature of work. The exhibition later spawned what is known today as the Citizen Office.

NETWORK OFFICE



AD HOC & T-CHAIR, ANTONIO CITTERIO, 1994

Ad Hoc is a versatile office system designed to adapt to changing workplace needs. T-Chair was the first of many influential chairs created by Citterio for Vitra.



AC 1, ANTONIO CITTERIO, 1994

While other office chairs became more luxurious, colourful and decorative, the AC series set a new trend toward reduction by adhering to simple geometric forms and visible technical features.



NEW OFFICE, SEVIL PEACH, 1999

A 'Breathing Office' – clearly embodied in the bright and airy open-plan workplace in Weil am Rhein, with carefully chosen functional elements that structure and modulate the space, rather than just providing aesthetic touches.



MEDA CHAIR, ALBERTO MEDA, 1996

The task chair is liberated from the machine, with a new aesthetic that combines lightness, transparency and readily discernible functional features with optimal ergonomics.

OFFICE CONCEPTS

Not only the office chair, but the whole interior of office spaces reflect the corporate identity, culture and processes. Vitra reflects and redefines this modes of working and its organizational form continuously – from human, to product to space.

2000
NET'N'NEST



YPSILON, MARIO & CLAUDIO BELLINI, 2001
Ypsilon's most prominent feature is its innovative seat design. It adapts to the sitter's body and provides support without constricting movement.

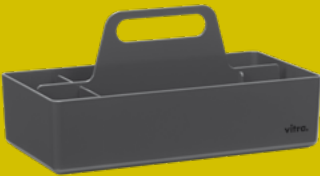


JOYN, RONAN & ERWAN BOUROULLEC, 2002
This influential office system was part of Vitra's Net'n'Nest concept, which envisioned the workplace as a shared environment where teamwork and privacy could coexist in a 'landscape'. The Joyn table can be adapted throughout the day – as a work surface divided with screens or left open for shared use.



ALCOVE, RONAN & ERWAN BOUROULLEC, 2006
As another important contribution to Vitra's Net'n'Nest concept, this sofa blurred the boundary between home and office, creating privacy in open spaces.

2010
MEET AND RETREAT



TOOLBOX, ARIK LEVY, 2010
The grab-and-go storage caddy provides easy access to work utensils.



PHYSIX, ALBERTO MEDA, 2012
Continuing in the tradition of the Eames Aluminium Chair, Physix offers a new, dynamic sitting experience – achieved with a flexible frame construction, an elastic knitted cover and a stabilising seat mechanism.



G-STAR RAW EDITION, JEAN PROUVÉ, 2014
The new headquarters merged brand identity with office design, combining a dark concrete shell with updates of Prouvé furniture jointly developed by G-Star RAW and Vitra.



CYL, RONAN & ERWAN BOUROULLEC, 2016
As a rather uncommon material in office settings, solid wood conveys a handcrafted, natural aesthetic and infuses a touch of emotion into the look and feel of the workplace. CYL comprises an intentionally 'analogue' system of tables and sofas in different sizes.

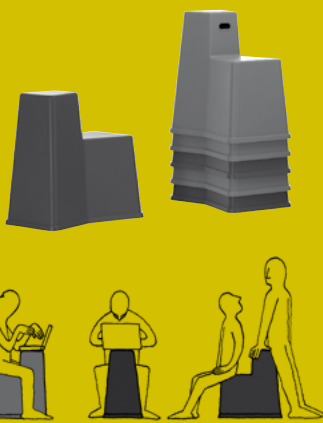
2010
GARAGE OFFICE



ID CHAIR CONCEPT, ANTONIO CITTERIO, 2010/2016
The ID Chair Concept offers countless customisation options to suit individual users.



WORKBAYS, RONAN & ERWAN BOUROULLEC, 2014
In various configurations – Focus, Meeting, Space and more – Workbays is a micro-architectural system that redefines the working environment and breaks with the rigid structure of typical offices.



STOOL-TOOL, KONSTANTIN GRIC, 2016
With its step-like platforms, Stool-Tool unites chair and table in a single object. It is a versatile, multifunctional office furnishing that adds value to any workspace.

SUPERFLEXIBLE OFFICE



TIP TON, EDWARD BARBER & JAY OSGERBY, 2011
Tip Ton defines a whole new chair typology: the solid plastic chair with forward-tilt action.



HACK & ALLSTAR, KONSTANTIN GRIC, 2014
Inspired by Gric's tour of Silicon Valley workplaces, this desk system and task chair enable employees to spontaneously 'hack' their office environment. The height of Hack's work surface can be easily adjusted for standing, sitting or lounging – and Allstar combines a relaxed, home-like feel with high functional performance.



DANCING WALL, STEPHAN HÜRLEMANN, 2018
The basic function of Dancing Wall is that of a mobile partition that can be used to flexibly divide offices into zones, while simultaneously providing vertical storage and work surfaces.



TYDE, RONAN & ERWAN BOUROULLEC, 2012
This height-adjustable desk set new standards for sit-stand working – as part of a product family with single workstations, clusters and conference tables.



PACIFIC CHAIR, EDWARD BARBER & JAY OSGERBY, 2016
The intuitive office chair offers all the functions necessary for ergonomic seating, while demonstrating expressive clarity and exceptional precision.



SOFT WORK, EDWARD BARBER & JAY OSGERBY, 2018
The seating system Soft Work rethinks office work practices: it forms the new heart of the office, developed according to users' needs when working in public spaces.

HOW CAN A CHAIR OFFER A 30-YEAR GUARANTEE?



Image page 12 Aluminium Chairs EA 103, Charles & Ray Eames, 1958. Eames portrait Photography © Eames Office, LLC. 2 Aluminium Chair EA 117, Charles & Ray Eames, 1958.



Charles and Ray Eames are revered as seminal figures in the history of mid-century modern design. Their work spans the fields of furniture design, filmmaking, photography and exhibition design. Vitra is the sole authorised manufacturer of Eames products for Europe and the Middle East. When you own an Eames product made by Vitra, you know it is an original.



The Eames Aluminium Chair and kindred Eames Soft Pad Chair rank among the most significant furniture designs of the twentieth century. For the construction of these chairs, Charles and Ray Eames departed from the principle of the seat shell, instead stretching a panel of fabric or leather between two aluminium side members to create a taut but elastic seat. The Soft Pad Chairs are softer and more voluptuous than the chairs in the Aluminium Group, but without losing the clean clarity of their common silhouette. All the chairs have a light, elegant appearance, and for decades their iconic shape has been a hallmark of many tastefully appointed apartments, homes, offices and conference rooms.

Vitra has produced Aluminium and Soft Pad Group chairs in the same superior quality for decades and still uses virtually the same manufacturing and assembly process that was originally developed by the Eames Office - with the exception of a few adaptations to today's technical specifications. This experience allows us to offer a 30-year guarantee on all of the chair models in the Aluminium and Soft Pad Groups. Thanks to the wide range of different chair models, a variety of aluminium bases with a polished, chrome-plated or black powder-coated finish, and a large selection of colours for fabric or leather upholstery, the perfect Aluminium or Soft Pad Chair can be found for every environment.

WHAT IS A CLASSIC?

‘A CLASSIC IS NOT A CLASSIC FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. IT STARTS BY BREAKING THE MOULD. IT DOESN'T BECOME A CLASSIC BY CONFORMING TO ESTABLISHED NORMS; INSTEAD, IT QUESTIONS THESE ESTABLISHED NORMS. A CLASSIC BECOMES A CLASSIC BECAUSE IT WINS THE BATTLE: FIRST AGAINST THE PRODUCTS THAT ALREADY EXIST AND THEN AGAINST ALL OF THE NEW PRODUCTS THAT IT MUST BEAT OUT. A CLASSIC COMES FROM A DIFFERENT ERA AND YET IS CONTEMPORARY AND CURRENT. IT IS ICONIC WITHOUT TRYING TO BE ICONIC. IT HAS THE QUALITIES OF A PIECE OF ART WITHOUT TRYING TO BE ART. IT IS FOREVER FRESH. WHEN IT WAS PRESENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME, IT WAS NEW — AND IT WILL STAY NEW UNTIL ANOTHER PRODUCT BREAKS THE MOULD AND CHALLENGES IT AND QUESTIONS THE ESTABLISHED NORMS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO VITRA TO PRODUCE THESE OUTSTANDING PRODUCTS FROM THE PAST UNTIL THEY ARE NO LONGER RELEVANT. AT THE SAME TIME, WE DEVELOP PRODUCTS TOGETHER WITH THE MOST TALENTED PEOPLE OF OUR AGE — IN THE HOPE THAT ONE OF THEM WILL ONE DAY BECOME A CLASSIC.’

ROLF FEHLBAUM, VITRA CHAIRMAN EMERITUS



1 The larger version of the Lounge Chair is visually almost indistinguishable from the model with classic dimensions, while offering the luxurious comfort Charles and Ray Eames aspired to even for taller body types. 2 Since 1988, the Vitra Design Museum's holdings include a significant part of the Eames estate. This is a rich source of inspiration for re-editions such as the Aluminium Chairs EA 101-104 or the recently launched Black Versions.

3 Over the last 70 years, average human height has increased worldwide by nearly 10 centimetres. The base of the Eames Plastic Chairs and Fiberglass Chairs is now 20 mm higher and the seat geometry has been adapted to offer augmented comfort for contemporary users. 4 Equipped with new power and data solutions as well as wireless charging technology, the revised Eames Tables meet the requirements of today's offices and public spaces.



UPDATING CLASSICS



2



3

Image page 19 Eames Plastic Armchair, Charles & Ray Eames, 1950 / Guéridon, Jean Prouvé, 1944 / Standard, Jean Prouvé, 1934/1950 / Table Solvay, Jean Prouvé, 1941. 2 Wire Chair, Charles & Ray Eames, 1951 / Dining Table, Isamu Noguchi, 1954/1957. Photography © Christoph Duepper.



GRÜNHOF

ARCHITECTURE: OAI HALLER ARCHITEKTEN
INTERIOR DESIGN: GRÜNHOF / VITRA / PARTNER AG

For about five years, Grünhof has operated a coworking space in the Freiburg area that serves as an incubator and home base for startups, creatives and sustainability initiatives in the region. Their search for a larger space led to a 110-year-old railway hall, which was formerly used as a locomotive shed. The client wanted to preserve and emphasise the industrial character of this historic landmark in its new plans for the interior. At the same time, they sought to create a memorable location with distinctive furnishings.

The first contact with Vitra, which focused on its diverse product portfolio, quickly developed into a partnership for planning and furnishing the expansive structure. Sea freight containers were integrated in the

hall to create a spatial layout with coworking areas, team spaces, pop-up team spaces, meeting rooms, a café, a plaza and an open area for events. Furniture classics by Vitra, including the Eames Plastic Chairs, Eames Wire Chairs, Standard Chairs by Jean Prouvé, Noguchi Dining Tables and many others, form a contrast with the industrial ambience of the interior and simultaneously function as a defining element, due to their long-lasting quality. The unique identity of the newly designed hall has such a strong energy and charisma that the coworking spaces were fully booked on the very first day.

vitra.com/gruenhof

WHEN STRUCTURE DETERMINES DESIGN. NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND



Image page 20 The Standard chair (1934/50) by Jean Prouvé, which illustrates the flow of forces in the shape and construction of its legs, comes in a classic version with seat and back in wood or in the models Standard SP with seat and back in robust plastic and Standard SR with upholstery. **2** Jean Prouvé at home in Nancy, around 1955. © Centre Pompidou, MNAM, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Jean Prouvé. **3** Standard, Jean Prouvé, 1934/1950 - Guéridon, Jean Prouvé, 1949/1950 - Eames Elephant, Charles & Ray Eames, 1945.



Jean Prouvé, who regarded himself as an engineer throughout his lifetime, was both the designer and manufacturer of his product ideas. His unique oeuvre, ranging from a letter opener to door and window fittings, from lighting and furniture to prefabricated houses and modular building systems, encompasses almost anything that is suited to industrial production and construction.



The French designer, architect and engineer Jean Prouvé created the Standard Chair in 1934. This design exemplifies a fundamental aspect of Prouvé's numerous furniture designs and architectural works: his unwavering focus on structural requirements.

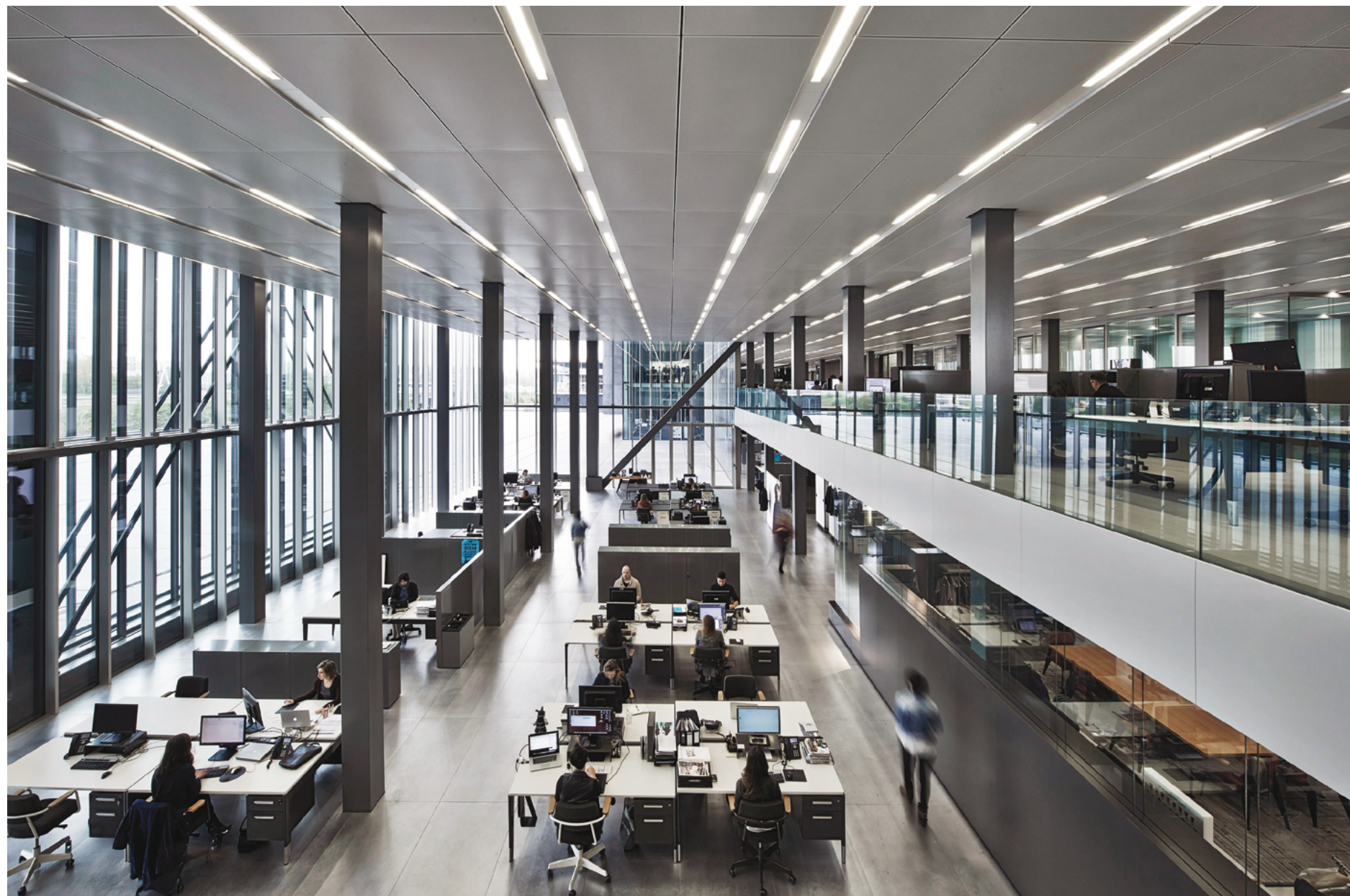
The load on the back legs of a chair, where it supports the weight of the sitter's upper body, is greater than on the front legs. This is hardly a surprising discovery, but no other seating design demonstrates this principle as clearly as the Standard Chair: while tubular steel suffices for the front legs, which bear a relatively light load, the back legs are made of voluminous hollow sections that transfer the primary stress to the floor. The profile of the back legs, formed from thin bent sheet steel, resembles an aircraft wing, with the widest measurement at the point where the leg meets the seat frame – that is, where the stress is greatest. The tapered shape of the hollow section from the seat surface upwards simultaneously defines the angle and position of the backrest.

Up until the early 2000s, the work of Jean Prouvé was known outside of France to just a small circle of architects and collectors. Although re-editions of his furniture existed, his designs did not find the attention and distribution they deserve.

Vitra regards Prouvé as one of the twentieth century's great designer-engineers, alongside such figures as Charles and Ray Eames. His furniture comprises an important part of the collection of the Vitra Design Museum, which mounted a major retrospective of his work in 2006. Since 2002, Vitra has produced Jean Prouvé's most significant furniture designs in close cooperation with his daughter, Catherine Prouvé. These products are based on the extensive Prouvé collection in the Vitra Design Museum, as well as plans and drawings in the holdings of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Fonds Jean Prouvé des Archives Départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle.

vitra.com/originalstandard

PROUVÉ'S DESIGNS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO G-STAR



Where does G-Star's love for Jean Prouvé stem from?

Prouvé's no-nonsense designs, created with a focus on functionality, as well as his choice of materials and colours, have always been an inspiration to G-Star. Our mindsets are similar in that our goals are based on creating products with a long life expectancy – both functionally and aesthetically. G-Star, Jean Prouvé and Vitra share common values when it comes to democratic design, craftsmanship, quality, functionality, aesthetics, innovation and technology. The crossover project Prouvé RAW Office Edition allowed us to carry out a unique design experiment, blending our design DNA with that of two industry icons whom we admire.

There must have been discussions about using historic task chairs instead of fully functional office chairs covering all aspects of modern ergonomics. What made you take the former approach, and are you and your staff happy with this decision?

From the beginning, our approach to the collaboration was to remain as close as possible to the original designs and to not make any concessions in the quality of materials. With the first RAW-Prouvé Crossover being a home collection, there were minimal obstacles to this approach. However, with an office collection, because of the regulations and modern needs of an office environment, this was more challenging – how can we integrate height adjustability, a cable channel, or a five-star base into Prouvé's mode of thinking? Using new production techniques, we reconsidered the ergonomic aspects of the designs. This led to modifications in chair size, particularly to make them more suitable for the modern (taller) man or woman. Looking at the entire G-Star headquarters project, both the interior and exterior, we expected the office chairs to be the most problematic for our employees. We tested the prototypes with response groups and used their feedback to improve the chair ergonomically, and to generate an understanding of our ideas. The office chair doesn't have the endless number of features and functions that many contemporary office chairs possess – but it does comply with all of the guidelines required by European law – and that is exactly what we wanted. We stripped the chair to its essential

functions – and did this really well. We didn't touch the rest. The result: no complaints, and an affordable, beautiful chair.

Are your staff happy with this decision?

Yes. In addition to the excellent comfort of the chairs and desks, their aesthetics are highly appreciated.

You also integrated a specially made piece of furniture – a nearly 1-km-long interpretation of Vitra's Silent Wall by Arik Levy – to preserve the character of the architectural space and provide storage for work materials. How did this come about?

In our previous buildings we displayed our own products, sample collections, inspirational materials and prints, which had a strong visual impact. We wanted the new interior to function in a similar way without becoming the centre of attention, hence the monochrome colour scheme. The existing wall systems that were available on the market didn't have this type of reserved aesthetic. We wanted a wall system and nothing more. The cabinets are merely a thicker wall with doors on them, so the wall system needed to have two thicknesses: 10–15 cm for simple walls, and 40 cm for walls with a storage function. The system by Arik Levy is good as a wall system, but the cabinets are separate units. We opted to integrate the storage into the wall. We added connecting units to maximise the freedom of placement. The outer panels were redesigned to correspond to our design vocabulary and the building's colour scheme.

Would you encourage other companies to include classic pieces in their office environments?

At G-Star we are firm believers in staying true to your own DNA. If your working environment breathes what you stand for as a brand, it will serve as a constant source of inspiration for your entire team. The Prouvé RAW range does this for us. Our philosophy is 'Just the Product', so the democratic purpose and usefulness of Prouvé's designs match that of jeans. Prouvé's furniture develops character with age – as does denim.



3



5



4



6

TIMELESSLY BEAUTIFUL



SUSTAINABLY USABLE



PROF. DR. GÖTZ E. REHN
FOUNDER AND CEO, ALNATURA

Being able to use something over a long period of time is a much more sustainable approach than repeatedly buying something new. In the case of furniture, a timeless design paired with top quality ensures a lengthy product lifespan – and thus a sustainable use of resources. This is what motivated Alnatura to choose Vitra products when the company was furnishing its first office spaces. Now Alnatura is relocating its headquarters to a new campus in Darmstadt and taking the Vitra furniture – some over 30 years old – along with it, for continued use in the years ahead.

What are the fundamental values of Alnatura, and how have you taken them into account in the design of your new headquarters?

Our vision is expressed in the motto ‘Meaningful for Men and Nature’ – dating back to the company’s founding 35 years ago. Everything we do is subject to the question of ‘why’ and whether it has ‘meaning’: the quality of Alnatura products, the design of our organic markets, the way we manage our business and work together. When we built our distribution centre in 2010 and the adjacent high-bay warehouse in 2012, it was already clear to us that we would have to take a completely new approach if we were going to consistently implement sustainable and meaningful principles. As a result, the world’s largest wooden high-bay warehouse is built from indigenous timber – with almost all renewable materials and an innovative energy solution that requires neither heating nor artificial cooling.

For our new headquarters in Darmstadt, we have gone a step further and erected a climate-neutral building with a rammed-earth façade. You can’t get more sustainable than that.

What roles do the working environment and the design of workspaces play for employees today? Have you noticed any new developments over the past years?

The world of work is becoming more flexible, and this requires new organisational models. People no longer work ‘nine to five’ behind the closed door of an office. Thanks to digital networks, it’s possible to work anywhere, and many colleagues take advantage of the opportunity to work from home. So during the times when you are in the office, it’s

even more important that personal interaction takes place, and that communication is not restricted to email and telephones. Today’s business world is more networked and agile, often based on small project teams with people from different departments. While planning our new working environment, it was important to us that the interior spaces should provide optimal support for our forms of networking and collaboration. We promote an exchange of ideas by providing numerous settings where people can interact, such as seating niches, alcoves, kitchenettes, sofa corners, and meeting areas – depending on what is needed in the respective workspace.

Moreover, we observe that an aesthetically pleasing and well-functioning work environment makes a major contribution to employee satisfaction.

Why did you originally choose Vitra, and why have you made the same decision once again?

When someone wants to live according to sustainable principles, as we do, they quickly realise that excellent quality is a good long-term investment in every respect. It is always more sustainable and ecological to keep on using something than to make a new purchase! Some of our Vitra chairs have been in active use for over 25 years. They are still in such good condition that we were able to have them reupholstered and moved to our new location. Experience has shown that Vitra furniture is well designed and highly functional. And last but not least, we have high aesthetic standards for everything we create. The timeless design of Vitra furniture was another factor that convinced us.

CLASSICS

‘When we look around, we see a world that is forcing us to adapt the way we work to the impacts of digitalisation and constant change. We are challenged by new technologies and their influence on human interaction, culture, architecture, design, and workplace furnishings.

Yet at the same time this reality is liberating, for it brings us back to the essentials: the physical world and its manifestation in everyday objects – like classic furniture designs. After all, we live and work in physical spaces and surround ourselves with physical objects, material things that are strongly linked to our memories.

In this age of uncertainty and complexity, there is an ever greater desire for stability. Classics play an active role in the here and now, yet they also provide guidance, orientation, and a connection to the past. They are universal companions that have stood the test of time – indeed, they are timeless. We associate them with powerful sensations and feelings. That is how we learn, understand, and explore the world.’

Raphael Gielgen, a trained carpenter and businessman, has engaged with social, technological and design issues related to the world of work for more than 20 years. He travels around the globe some 200 days a year, looking over people’s shoulders in companies like Apple, Airbnb and Google, and sticking his nose into the laboratories of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He is the trend scout for the ‘Future of Work’ at Vitra.



Image page 28 Eames Segmented Meeting Tables, Charles & Ray Eames, 1964 / Soft Pad Chairs EA 208, Charles & Ray Eames, 1969. Photography © Irina Boersma.

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