

100 Masterpieces from the Vitra Design Museum Collectio



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Exhibition

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein
July 10, 1995 - January 21, 1996
Tour of Europe, Israel, Japan, and the
United States
1996 through 2000

Concept

Peter Dunas in collaboration
with Mathias Schwartz-Clauss, Serge Mauduit,
and Petra Rhode

Organization

Mathias Schwartz-Clauss, Peter Dunas,
Matthias Kries

Design

Dieter Thiel in collaboration
with Thorsten Romanus

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Charlotte Perriand, Jean Prouvé, Gerrit T.
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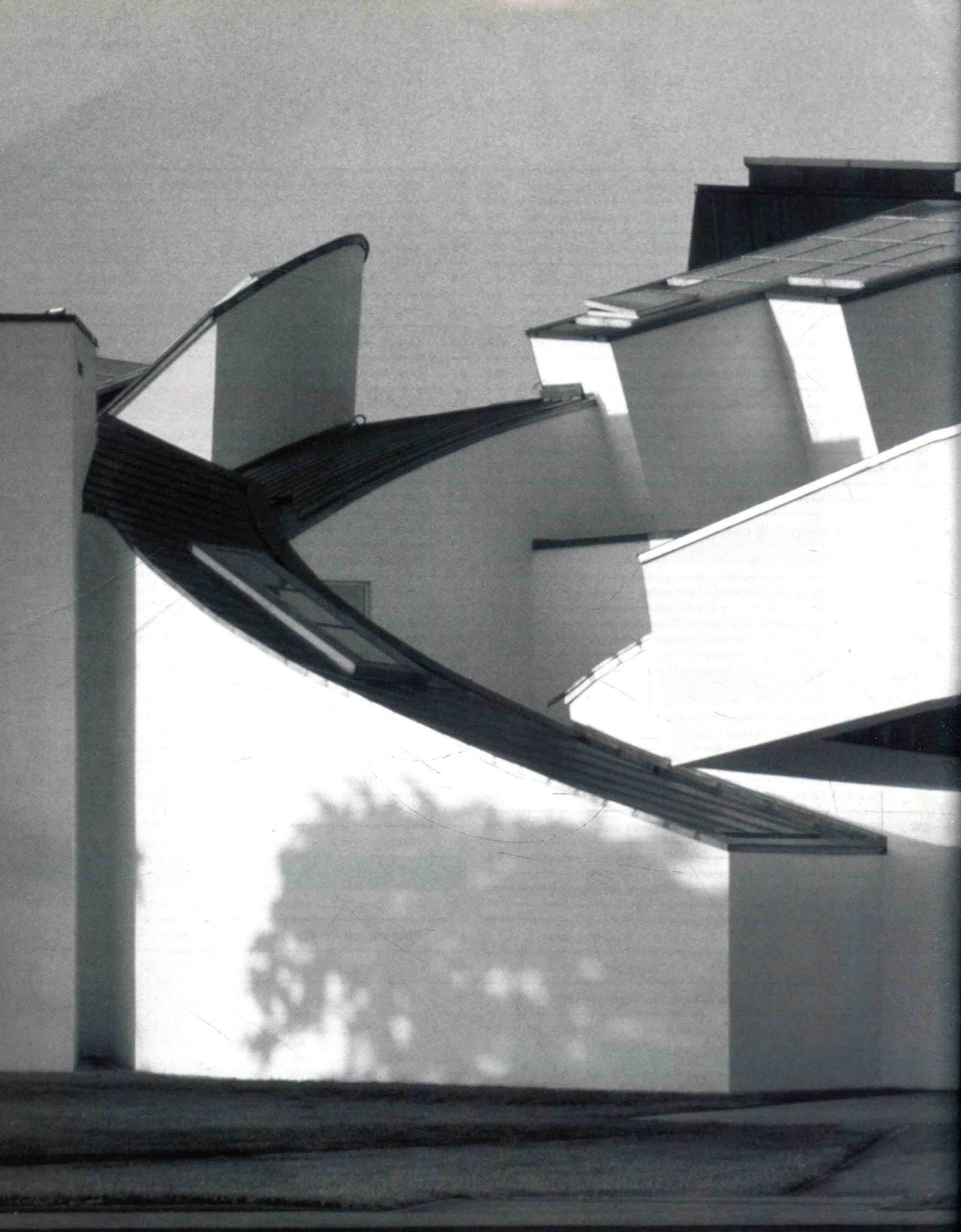
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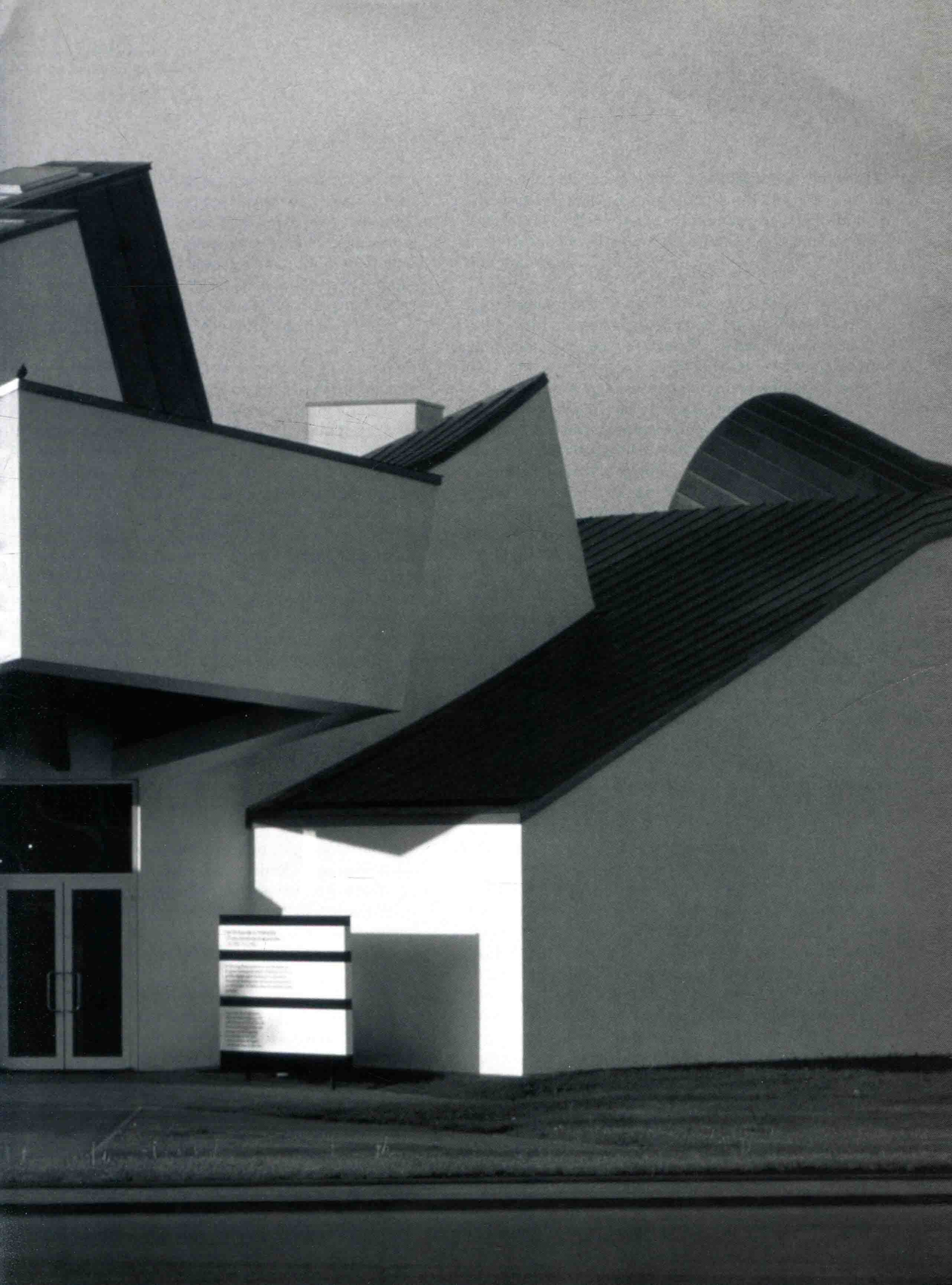
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< Frank O. Gehry, Vitra Design Museum, 1989

All the Vitra Design Museum's activities focus on documenting and interpreting the history of industrial furniture design. Drawing on the Museum's own collection and extensive archives, we assemble changing exhibitions which, after being held here, go on tour internationally. At the same time, we publish catalogues to accompany these exhibitions and, independently, present discussions of various aspects of furniture design.

In the past six years, we have succeeded in setting up a museum that generates the lion's share of its finances. Aside from a basic sum contributed by our sponsors, the Vitra companies, the Vitra Design Museum receives no funding from the private or public sectors, but by means of its own activities meets its annual budget for program and staff. The fact that this experiment has worked has to do, on the one hand, with our international team of young and highly motivated staff members and, on the other, with growing interest in the domain of everyday life. Besides clothes and automobiles, no objects accompany us so closely through life as do pieces of furniture on which we sit or sleep, or work, or in which we keep our possessions. Many facets of our culture's development, even the most short-lived fashions, have an impact on the construction, the materials, and the design of furniture. In this context the chair, as an impression of our body with legs, seat, backs, and arms, occupies a special place. No item of furniture has been subject to so many different influences, and architects and furniture designers have constantly been challenged to design chairs optimally to meet the consequent demands.

The Museum's public are also the users of furniture. Each of them is an expert, as each of them uses chairs every day. So people do not shy away from entering our Museum; and our exhibitions as well as our workshops, organized almost every summer together with select designers on diverse subjects, repeatedly encounter great interest.

Naturally, the attractiveness of our theme must be seen in connection with the architecture surrounding us. Alongside our own building designed by Frank O. Gehry,

the pavilion by Tadao Ando, the factories by Nicholas Grimshaw, Frank O. Gehry, and Alvaro Siza, above all the fire station by Zaha Hadid is impressive – it will soon be used by the Vitra Design Museum as additional exhibition premises.

Looking back on our museum work to date, it seemed obvious to present key items from our collection in the light of insights gained over the years. Therefore the museum curators responsible endeavored to go beyond merely exhibiting twenty to thirty undisputed masterpieces, and additionally to forge thematic links to show the hundred most representative model types in due context. The allocation of the objects to groups underlines their essential significance and thus makes it easier for viewers to approach them. But primarily the presentation is intended to encourage viewers to create their own links between the objects, as many pieces of furniture can clearly be allocated to several groups.

Research work for the exhibition and catalogue was part of our publication project of compiling an *Atlas of Modern Furniture Design*. This reference book will appear in sections over the next few years and is meant to provide comprehensive and reliable statements about each piece of furniture that has had significant influence on industrial furniture production. A CD-ROM, being made in cooperation with the Karlsruhe Center for Art and Media Technology, will hold information that goes beyond the bounds of a book, such as interviews and film documentation.

The work on the *Atlas of Modern Furniture Design* began five years ago when I met the expert Bernard Monestier in Paris, and we agreed to cooperate on such a project. I wish to offer him my heartfelt thanks for his unflagging support. In addition, I am deeply grateful to Christopher Wilk, Curator of the Furniture and Woodwork Collection in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, who found the time to enrich our project with his continued advice and also with his Introduction to this volume. Within the Vitra Design Museum, I would like especially to thank Peter Dunas, who was in charge of the furniture atlas

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□ Zaha M. Hadid, Vitra Fire Station, 1993
 ^ "African Seats" exhibition, 1994
 < "African Seats" summer workshop, 1994
 > "Czech Cubism" exhibition, 1991



