



## Press release

Essen, 24 October 2019

### **"Simplicity as a design principle"**

**New special exhibition at the Red Dot Design Museum in Essen, Germany**

26 November 2019 until 8 March 2020

From 26 November 2019 to 8 March 2020, the Red Dot Design Museum in Essen, Germany, shows the special exhibition "Simplicity" which is all about the principle of simplicity in design. The exhibition uses historical as well as present-day design objects to highlight the fact that there are many facets to simplicity, with economic, functional and emotional components running alongside aesthetics. This is because simplicity in design means not only a minimalist appearance, but in many cases also a de facto simplification of the products that reduces their complexity and improves the user experience as a result. In this way, the exhibition demonstrates what Leonardo da Vinci meant when he said: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

### **Simplicity is a timeless principle**

It wasn't until the beginning of industrialisation at the end of the 18th century that the idea of simplicity in product design gained ground. After the introduction of mechanical production, more and more products had to be designed in such a way that they could be manufactured efficiently using industrial mass production methods. The bottom line was that simplicity was a means to an end and became the key principle of modernism.

The principle of simplicity in design is still as relevant and current today as it ever was. "Simplicity is an important approach for mastering the complex challenges of the future. It ensures that high-tech products remain manageable", says Professor Dr Peter Zec, founder and CEO of Red Dot.

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## Brilliant examples of simplicity in design

### Thonet No. 14 – simplicity is innovative

The Thonet No. 14 chair was ground-breaking in terms of simplicity in design with its new, simple and understated form. These qualities made it the “chair of chairs” and an iconic work of simplicity in industrial and product design. This chair, designed in 1859, was based on the technique perfected by Michael Thonet of bending solid wood, which allowed for huge stability despite the reduced use of material. The chair thus heralded an era of fundamental change in design. Disassembled into its six individual parts, it could be sent all over the world in a space-saving manner and assembled in situ. The Thonet No. 14 chair is still the world's most-produced chair.

### Red and Blue Chair – simplicity is modern

Dutch architect and designer Gerrit Thomas Rietveld assisted the breakthrough of modernism with the concept and the design of an impressively streamlined, strictly geometrical seat, the Red and Blue Chair. The revolutionary aspect was that Rietveld made his idea accessible to the public by publishing the assembly instructions for the chair. Anyone who wants to can simply copy the chair, which comprises 13 squared timbers, two beech slats and two plywood boards for the seat and seat back.

### Fiat Nuova 500 – simplicity is democratic

The introduction of the Fiat Nuova 500 in 1957 marked the first market launch of a minimalist car. With a length of just 2.97 m, a width of 1.32 m and a weight of 500 kg, the car was extremely compact while still offering enough space inside for a family of four. The simplicity of the very small car was also reflected in its Spartan fixtures: it wasn't possible to roll down the windows, the tachometer was small, the steering wheel was thin and the engine had just 13.5 HP.

Nevertheless, the Fiat Nuova 500 was a full-scale car that became very popular after some initial teething problems. One reason for its popularity was the body design, which was very well loved. Another was the low purchase price, which made the dream of owning your own car come true for a lot of

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people for the first time. In this example, simplicity resulted in a minimalist car with a small price tag and maximum popularity.

### **Red Dot Design Museum - Opening times and admission fees**

Tuesdays–Sundays & Public Holiday: 11 am–6 pm (last admission: 5 pm)

Museum closed: 24, 25, 31. December 2019 and 1 January 2020

Admission fee for special exhibitions: 9 euros (concessions: 4 euros)

Children under the age of 12: free admission

Fridays: pay what you want

[www.red-dot-design-museum.org](http://www.red-dot-design-museum.org)

### **About the Red Dot Design Museum Essen**

Making good design tangible and exhibiting the quality of daily objects – that is the task of the Red Dot Design Museum, the roots of which date back as far as 1955. With roughly 2,000 exhibits from around 45 countries, it presents the entire range of current product design. The museum is situated in the former boiler house of the UNESCO world heritage site Zeche Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex and extends across five floors and more than 4,000 square metres. It presents well-designed objects that have been selected as winners by renowned experts in one of the largest international design competitions, namely the Red Dot Design Award. The world's largest exhibition of contemporary design informs about current design trends, and visitors are encouraged to try out many of the exhibits. Special thematic exhibitions complement the inspiring insight into the fascinating world of design.

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