

Press release
Cologne/Frankenberg, March 2021

Togetherness – the 520 upholstered chair by Marco Dessí epitomises elegant comfort and sociable gatherings – and looks forward to their full return!

The simple pleasures of getting together, sitting sociably, celebrating life and its important connections have been much missed recently. Thonet has been offering timelessly beautiful seating and bringing such values to life for more than 200 years – and looks forward positively to their full return. One recent design epitomises these values perfectly and is now widely available to international markets. With his 520 design for Thonet, Marco Dessí has created a contemporary interpretation of an upholstered chair that forms a direct link to the heritage of Thonet, the famed furniture manufacturer, based in Frankenberg, Germany.

The 520 exudes an elegance that echoes the culture and history of the classic Thonet bentwood chair. In his design, Dessí has replaced the open spaces between the bentwood elements with inviting upholstery, thus combining the lightweight design of the classic chair with maximum comfort. Available in a wide selection of materials and with or without armrests, the range can be used in a variety of settings: around a residential dining table, as seating in an elegant restaurant or in relaxed workplace settings.



The new 520 range of upholstered chairs references Dessí's personal favourite from the Thonet product portfolio: the bentwood chair 209, a model that many an architect has fallen in love with over the years. "While working on the 520, I studied the Thonet classics. The arc that forms a unit with the back legs is so iconic and so characteristic of Thonet. Essentially, our approach is based on that one specific detail." And it is precisely this beech bentwood component that Dessí has incorporated as a structural element. He has cleverly reduced the space between the lower arc and the seat so it doubles as a kind of carry handle, particularly convenient when there is a need to reposition the chairs.

Comfort in a variety of forms

Dessí has designed two options for the chair backs of the 520: one with armrests (520 PF) and one without (520 P). The chair is available in a variety of wood finishes and fabric coverings, which makes the 520 extremely versatile and allows it to be customised to suit a variety of settings. The 520's shape in itself is a welcoming suggestion to take the weight off and take a seat. "You immediately associate the 520 with comfort, even before you sit down," says Dessí. "When you settle in, the backrest nestles gently against you and, even in the versions without armrests, the shell provides cushioning and support to the sides." This means optimal seating comfort in a variety of positions, even over many hours.

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“Quality stands the test of time”

The innovative process for bending solid wood developed by Michael Thonet in the mid-19th century gave rise to the typical Thonet design language and had a considerable influence on Dessí during his design process: “The fact that the very first Thonet chairs are still in use today demonstrates just how robust, sustainable and utterly contemporary the process is,” he says. For Dessí, the heritage of the tradition-steeped furniture manufacturer is proof that “quality stands the test of time – and that striving for quality can guarantee that a company will be around for 200 years.” With the 520 chair, a model has been added to the Thonet portfolio that promotes the idea of community and therefore unmistakably embodies the DNA of the heritage-rich company. A resident of Vienna, Dessí prefers to experience this aspect of Thonet for himself in one of the city’s many coffee houses, where Thonet products have been a fixture since the 19th century.

Thonet press contact in the UK

QuickStep PR
Stephanie Bretherton
Unit 405 United House
North Road
London N7 9DP
United Kingdom
Tel. +44 (0) 20 – 7609 1151
E-mail stephanie@qspr.com

Thonet press contact international

neumann communication
Claudia Neumann, Anne Polch-Jahn, Hannah Knospe
Eigelstein 103-113
50668 Köln
Germany
Tel. +49 (0) 221 – 91 39 49 0
Fax +49 (0) 221 – 91 39 49 19
E-Mail thonet@neumann-communication.de

Thonet GmbH
Susanne Korn
Michael-Thonet-Straße 1
35066 Frankenberg
Germany
Tel. +49 (0) 6451 – 508 160
Fax +49 (0) 6451 – 508 168
E-mail susanne.korn@thonet.de

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Thonet – future-oriented furniture design with a long tradition

The unique success story of Thonet began with the work of master carpenter Michael Thonet. Ever since he established his first workshop in Boppard on the River Rhine in 1819, the name Thonet has stood for high-quality, innovative and elegant furniture. The breakthrough came with the iconic chair No. 14, today known the world over as the Vienna Coffee House Chair: the pioneering technique of bending solid beechwood enabled the mass production of chairs for the first time. The second milestone in design history was the tubular steel furniture by the famous Bauhaus architects Mart Stam, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer in the 1930s. During those pioneering years, Thonet was the world’s largest producer of these tubular steel furniture designs, which are today considered timeless.

For the company today, the continuous process of innovation is the top priority, together with a focus on tradition and fine craftsmanship. Thonet’s furniture designs originate both from its collaborations with renowned national and international creatives and from the in-house Thonet Design Team. All the furniture is produced at the company-owned manufacturing facility in Frankenberg where, in line with the motto “Individuality is our standard”, customised solutions are part of day-to-day life. Chief Executive Officer Brian Boyd and Creative Director Norbert Ruf manage the company from the corporate head office and production site in Frankenberg/Eder (Germany). Michael Thonet’s fifth- and sixth-generation descendants are actively involved with the company’s business as partners and sales representatives.