

Press release  
Cologne/Frankenberg, January 2020

## **Togetherness – the new upholstered chair 520 by Marco Dessí stands for contemporary elegance and communicative gatherings**

**Getting together, sitting together, celebrating life and its pleasures: that’s what Thonet and its timelessly beautiful seating furniture have embodied for 200 years. Now, inspired by the Café Thonet concept, Vienna-based designer Marco Dessí has created a contemporary interpretation of that heritage in the form of the modern upholstered chair 520. Thanks to the different versions available, it’s the perfect chair for multiple use, not only at the dining table: besides combining excellent seating comfort with a pleasantly light look and surprisingly light weight, it radiates a poised elegance that echoes the culture and history of the classic Thonet bentwood chair. In Dessí’s model, the voids between the bentwood elements have been replaced with comfortable upholstery. Its simple, intelligent design permits different versions with and without armrests. In combination with the extensive choice of materials available, this all adds up to a chair collection that’s suitable for a wide range of applications – from sophisticated dining to executive meetings.**



The new no. 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. “When I was working on the 520, I studied the Thonet classics. The arc that forms a unit with the back legs is so iconic and characteristic for Thonet. Essentially, our approach is based on that one specific detail.” In his design, Dessí incorporated this distinctive beech bentwood component as a structural element. He cleverly reduced the space between the lower arc and the seat so it doubles as a kind of carry handle, particularly convenient when the chairs need to be moved. Dessí designed two options for backs of the 520 – one with armrests (520 PF) and one without (520 P): “It’s a modern, economical idea based on the same modular principle that Thonet developed more than 150 years ago.” The possibility of choosing and combining different wood finishes and upholstery coverings makes the 520 extremely versatile as it can be customised to suit a variety of different settings. As a result, the design looks just as much at home in an upscale eatery or family dining room as it does around a conference table.

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 the 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 him, the heritage of the tradition-steeped furniture maker is proof that “quality stands the test of time – and striving for quality can guarantee a firm’s existence for 200 years.” The chair 520 enhances the Thonet portfolio with a model that promotes the idea of community behind Café Thonet and therefore unmistakably embodies the DNA of the heritage-rich company.

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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. Since establishing 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, the so-called Vienna Coffee House Chair: the pioneering technique of bending solid beech wood for the first time enabled the mass production of chairs. 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. At the time, Thonet was the world's largest producer of these tubular steel furniture designs, which are considered timeless today.*

*For the company today, the continuous process of innovation stands in the foreground alongside focus on tradition and fine craftsmanship. Thonet collaborates with renowned national and international designers in addition, some of the furniture is designed by the in-house Thonet Design Team. All of the furniture is produced in the company-owned manufacturing facility, and, following the motto "Individuality is our standard", custom-tailored solutions are part of everyday life in Frankenberg. Chief Executive Officer Brian Boyd together with Creative Director Norbert Ruf manage the company at the corporate head offices and production site in Frankenberg/Eder (Germany). The descendants of Michael Thonet, the fifth and sixth generations, are actively involved with the company's business as partners and sales representatives.*