

Press release
Frankenberg, January 2022

A real all-rounder: the Triennale S 661 chair **A new take on Günter Eberle's design from 1954**

In the 1950s, moulded plywood was a driver of innovation; a love of organic design inspired designers. Furniture like the S 661 chair designed by Günter Eberle brought lightness and life into interior spaces. The malleable design, with its elegantly curved seat shell made of moulded plywood, was awarded a silver medal at the Triennale design exhibition in Milan in 1954, and also went on to win the iF Product Design Award in the same year. Thanks to its versatility and its efficient use of resources, the S 661 is as contemporary today as it was back then, and is now undergoing a revival with a new version available in beech, oak or walnut with a sleek tubular steel frame.



Thonet's relaunch of the S 661 includes numerous different versions of Günter Eberle's design from the early 1950s. This true all-rounder, available in a range of woods and colours, is at home in the dining room, kitchen, living room or office as well as in public spaces such as restaurants and waiting areas. The essence of the moulded plywood seat shell is in its natural materials, available in elegant walnut or warm oak. The chair also comes in natural beech as well as stained rust red, olive green or black. The tubular steel frame is available with a chrome-plated finish or powder-coated white or black. Despite the minimalist shape and use of materials, the visible wood grain and soft curves lend the chair a homely look and give it a special presence in the room.

"Günter Eberle, head of the Architecture Department in Frankenberg at the time, successfully set the organic against precision in his award-winning design," says Creative Director Norbert Ruf. "The S 661 combines clear lines with a precise contour. Though the chair has reduced aesthetics and a lightness about it, thanks to its plasticity, it also appears warm and inviting. It's the perfect time for this type of furniture to make a comeback." A two-dimensional material is shaped into a three-dimensional object, lines and planes form spatiality. The combination of materials, in this case moulded plywood and tubular steel, is typical of Thonet. This was the reason for including the chair in the current exhibition "Thonet & Design" in Die Neue Sammlung – The Design Museum, Munich (Pinakothek der Moderne). Curator Dr. Josef Straßer explains its inclusion: "We chose the S 661 chair for our exhibition because it has an interesting, stand-alone design. The seat shell (...) is very harmonious. Designers were already experimenting with moulded plywood in the United States in the 1940s. Yet the shell seems ahead of its time; its angular look was already hinting at the style of the 60s."

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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. 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.