

Press release
Frankenberg, July 2020

Fusion of culture, nature and economy

Thonet furniture features throughout the new Triodos Bank offices in Driebergen-Zeist (NL)

The futuristic new office building of the sustainably operating Triodos Bank in the Netherlands is an impressive marriage of eco-conscious architecture and modern working practices. A team drawn from RAU Architekten and interior architects at Ex Interiors worked closely with the project designer Gispén and the bank's own staff to achieve this cohesive vision. The result is a unique, energy-neutral building on the large De Reehorst estate in Driebergen that sits in harmony with nature and which focuses on enhancing communication and bringing people together. The new flagship building, which observes all the principles of the circular economy in construction, is designed to nestle organically within its landscape of greenery.

Much of the furniture selected for the interior is drawn from the renowned Thonet portfolio, with its 200-year track record of designing for the meeting, socialising, working and living spaces of our lives, specifications that further emphasise the 'communicative' character of the new Triodos offices. More than 130 of Thonet's classic pieces in bentwood and tubular steel furnish the working and mingling spaces, a choice in keeping with the architect's environmental approach and preference for natural materials. The result is a perfect meeting of eco-friendly construction and sustainable furniture.



With its new corporate premises, Triodos Bank has created a monumental work of architectural art that invites nature, culture and economy into harmony. Recycled materials and the conscious use of the resources available reflect the commitment to circular construction practices. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring a supply of healthy fresh air within the building, as well as natural light, comfort and acoustic quality. The result is a particularly energy-efficient structure that has been described as 'a cathedral of wood' and which blends elegantly with its natural environment. The principal frame is constructed entirely of timber, and, according to Triodos Bank Managing Director, Matthijs Bierman, the overall effect reminds him of the shape of a mushroom. The light, airy internal spaces appear to merge seamlessly with the surrounding woodland through expansive glazed walls. The generous application of wood and glass, with linen accents to attenuate the acoustics, produces an inviting effect that welcomes the natural world inside, providing staff, clients and visitors with a biophilic space in which to meet and relax.

Sustainable pieces from Thonet furnish the interiors, complementing this overarching holistic approach. Thonet's durable design icons became the perfect solution to the company's desire for a

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consciously designed space that is conducive to communication.

In keeping with the precise selection of construction materials, the office and common areas are furnished with more than 100 Thonet classics made from tubular steel and naturally stained bentwood with canework. The iconic Marcel Breuer S 64 V tubular steel cantilever chair and its new refinement, the S 64 Atelier swivel chair version, which was added to the portfolio last year, represent 54 of the building's individual seating options. In addition, the restaurant area offers 76 of the famous model 218 bentwood bistro chair, made according to the Gebrüder Thonet design from 1876. The seating is completed by several of Stefan Diez's contemporary 404 H bar stools stained in black. Thanks to their clean, minimalist aesthetics, all the chairs in the Thonet portfolio can be used in a wide range of settings – an essential prerequisite in modern office buildings.

The project's Chief Interior Architect Odette Ex (from Ex Interiors) had specific criteria in mind when making her selection of furniture, such as durability, quality and a stylish, modern appearance. As she explains, "The model 218, in particular, is a complete design classic. But its elegant shape is also perfect for contemporary interiors. The chair looks modern in any setting and it retains its design value. We had previously specified this model for the former Triodos Bank corporate offices, since its timeless look meant it could be used effortlessly again and again in subsequent interiors." As a result, visitors to the newly designed corporate base can take their seats not only on brand new Thonet pieces, but also on refurbished chairs from the former company building.

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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.