

Reinterpreting a furniture classic: fashion designer Jil Sander reinvents Marcel Breuer's iconic S 64 cantilever chair

Design: Jil Sander, 2025 (Marcel Breuer, 1929/1930, artistic copyright: Mart Stam)

German fashion designer Jil Sander is internationally renowned for her purist aesthetics. Her catwalk collections consistently featured striking cuts, exceptional material quality and an innovative approach. While she might have left the world of fashion behind, Sander's creative spirit burns as strong as ever. As she explains: "Creativity is simply a part of my life." Her collaboration with Thonet is her first foray into the world of furniture design. With the JS . THONET signature collection, she has taken the most famous tubular steel classics from the late 1920s and put her own stamp on them. "Design and architecture have always been a part of my life and I began designing at a young age," says Sander. In her two lines, **SERIOUS** and **NORDIC**, the designer has reinterpreted the iconic S 64 cantilever chair, adding an extra touch of elegance and class – with high-gloss lacquered wood details, refined tubular steel frames, and seats and backrests made of Viennese canework or leather in a nuanced colour palette.

The JS . THONET collection: a homage to detail and craftsmanship

The JS . THONET signature collection comprises two lines. For the **SERIOUS** line, Jil Sander worked closely with the Thonet Design Team to take the S 64 tubular steel classic to a new level with glossy frames with a titanium-like appearance and leather upholstery for the seats and backrests in four different shades. There is also a Dark Melange version with dark-coloured canework in the seats and backrests. As requested by Sander, the chairs' wooden frames and armrests have been given a matching high-gloss lacquer finish. The **NORDIC** line, in contrast, features frames with a warm, matt nickel silver finish combined with white pigmented oak, and seat and backrest upholstery with white or natural-coloured leather. **NORDIC** also includes a version with a light-coloured canework seat and backrest. With their luxurious reinterpretations, both lines celebrate this classic chair, highlighting the ground-breaking design of the original while sensitively elevating every last detail.

Jil Sander and Thonet: mutual values

For decades, fashion designer Jil Sander has been synonymous with minimalist aesthetics and a poetic purism realised in materials of exceptional quality and meticulous craftsmanship. Shunning short-lived trends, her designs stand the test of time. And the very same can be said of Thonet furniture. With its passion for bentwood and tubular steel, the German manufacturer is responsible for design icons, not least the renowned Bauhaus furniture by Marcel Breuer. "Jil Sander herself drew inspiration from the Bauhaus tradition making her the perfect designer to reimagine these iconic furniture classics," explains Norbert Ruf, Creative Director at Thonet. Jil Sander's work and Thonet's values have a lot in common: both are extremely exacting when it comes to material, craftsmanship and design, as well as the quality of the finished product. Thonet's furniture and Jil Sander's designs both strive for longevity through timeless design with an innovative approach that often lies in the detail. Both project partners have an eye for exemplary structure and immaculate execution, and both consistently strive to create well-designed, usable pieces.

The idea: elevating an icon

“Jil Sander’s designs have always represented laid-back, elegant luxury and her clothes are worn with pleasure year after year – just as Thonet furniture often accompanies people throughout their lives,” explains Norbert Ruf. “Just like us here at Thonet, Jil Sander wants to use her products to convey a sense of value.” The luxury aspect of Jil Sander’s collection for Thonet is rooted in the exceptional quality of the materials and attention to detail, and is bolstered by the pieces’ absolute timelessness and high value retention: sustainable investment pieces that will last a lifetime. “I wasn’t interested in completely redesigning these classics,” she insists. “It was more about taking them to the next level.” Sander was captivated by the long history of the cantilever chair and about the quality craftsmanship so evident in Thonet’s Frankenberg factory, such as the process of bending wood. For her new interpretations of the S 64, Jil Sander reveals she took inspiration from a variety of looks: the finish on a Steinway grand piano, the leather upholstery of a stylish English car and the matt nickel silver of architectural elements. Sander herself is well-versed in architecture and interior design. She was heavily involved in the interior design for her flagship stores across the world, favouring the use of steel with a satin-finish nickel silver alloy.

Table and chair: a design ensemble

The JS . THONET signature collection also includes a side table, the classic tubular steel B 97, a versatile Thonet design dating from 1933. This piece has been designed to match the chairs. In its dimensions, the table set B 97 is reminiscent of Marcel Breuer’s nesting table B 9. Its altered design, however, offers a practical advantage: the opening on one side allows the tables to be positioned over the edge of a sofa, armchair or bed. They can also be pushed into one another to save space.

JS . THONET: the duality of classic and avant-garde

Uniting traditional values with innovation, Jil Sander’s design has bridged the gap between fashion and classicism, paving the way for the future. Her new interpretation of Thonet’s tubular steel classics draws on beautifully balanced material and colour upgrades to lend these icons of modern furniture design fresh luxury appeal.

About Thonet

Thonet has been making furniture for the residential and contract sectors since 1819. With a passion for bentwood and tubular steel, the German company produces iconic designs – from its famous coffee house chair and Bauhaus classics by Mart Stam, Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe, to contemporary pieces by leading modern designers. Combining the latest production technology with traditional craftsmanship has made Thonet one of the world’s favourite furniture makers. Its production facility in Frankenberg continues to create innovative products that are designed to last. Thonet furniture is synonymous with quality, functionality and a timeless design language. Sustainability is engrained in the Thonet story. From the earliest days, Michael Thonet’s first bentwood designs were not just aesthetically remarkable. They expressed a deep understanding of efficient use of resources. Thonet furniture has a very long life cycle and is built to be handed down from one generation to the next. It can also be revitalised in Frankenberg upon request.

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