

SIT? A Show of Contemporary Seating

15 February to 29 August 2005



Me and Auntie Nan 1954
by Claire Matthews



Naked Comfort Chair
by John Angelo Benson



Rupert
by Alma Home



The Love Pod
by The Collaborators

Designers and artists today are challenging notions about seating through varied and innovative approaches to form and function, materials and the ideas behind this most familiar of everyday objects. This exhibition will include examples of contemporary chair and seating design that have been selected for the ways in which they challenge tradition. SIT? will run alongside *The English Regional Chair* exhibition, which looks at traditional chairs made in the 18th and 19th centuries, and offer a contemporary contrast.

The chair is intrinsically linked to the representation of design styles and shifts in periods of style, as well as developments in technology and form. For example, Claire Matthews' *Me and Auntie Nan, 1954* is a play on differing forms and styles. The design overlays two differing woods together and employs different stylistic references, with the more modern form seated on the knee of the traditional, and the arms designed to give the impression of a fond embrace. This acknowledges the anthropomorphic and psychological aspects of seating and comfort.

With his *No Kissing Seat*, Peter Woollin subverts the conventional mid-19th century form commonly referred to as the 'Love Seat' and makes a contemporary statement about form and materials. Through the re-use of an existing chair combined with the new bench form, Woollin engages with the contemporary issue of sustainability alongside references to past forms and traditions. Continuing this theme of materials and form, the *Rupert* chair by Alma Home is a reworking of an 18th-century French salon chair. However, in contrast to the custom of using an expensive damask textile for the upholstery, which gives a neat finish and clearly defines the shape, the *Rupert* chair uses longhaired goatskin to dramatic effect.

With his *Naked Comfort* chair, John Angelo Benson reworks a classic example of 20th-century modernism: the Le Corbusier-designed *Grand Comfort* of 1928. The *Naked Comfort* spans art and design: it leaves the form untouched but replaces the architectural rigidity and urban styling of the black padded leather upholstery with hay bales. The chair is transformed into a less contained structure/shape that challenges the traditional materials of domestic furniture, and plays on the austerity of modernism.

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The Love Pod by the Collaborators is designed to be more than just a chair or seat, or even a hanging chair, but is an intimate space in which people can meet - a "nomadic soft machine for living". The Collaborators' innovative use of military materials is integral to the design, and is used to present a "new luxury". Shape and structure are inspired by the crinoline hoop dress and in conjunction with the use of military webbing these stark contrasts create a new take on the swing seat.

This exhibition will draw on the work of international designers and all chairs shown are marketed and available to the UK market. This reflects the global nature of today's consumer choices, both through the opening up of the retail market place through the use of the Internet and by the ease of travel within, and beyond, Europe. The result of the 'global community' is that the geographic location of any designer is no longer an indicator of influence and/or nationality, nor his or her ability to reach a wide public.

Choice Chairs

A small exhibition of photographic portraits showing eight members of the London design community with a chair or seat of their choice, will run alongside SIT?.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. For further information or images, please contact Nancy Loader, Press Officer, on 020 7739 9893 or nloader@geffrye-museum.org.uk.
2. SIT? will run alongside and offer a contemporary contrast to *The English Regional Chair* exhibition, which looks at traditional chairs made in the 18th and 19th centuries.
3. The Geffrye Museum specialises in 400 years of urban interiors and has a strong track record in spotting and showcasing the most exciting makers and style trends in London today.
4. Admission: FREE
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Tel No: 020 7739 9893 / Recorded Info: 020 7739 8543
Web Address: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk Email: info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
Opening Hrs: Tue - Sat 10am - 5pm, Sun and Bank Holiday Mons 12 - 5pm
Travel: Buses: 149, 242, 243, 67 or 394
Tube: Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242/Old St (exit 2), then bus 243