

Laser Chair (2002) by Ineke Hans (NL)

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When scanning the vast amount of chair designs made throughout history, in a basic search for something that resembles the Laser Chair, we end at the dawn of modernity with furniture pioneer Thonet. Like most other "café" or "kitchen" chairs we now today, the Laser Chair has affinity to Thonet's "Chair nr 14".

-For a number of obvious reasons yes; but there is more to it, than them just being in the same "genre":

Ineke Hans has been attracted to making new designs from a perspective of playing with new methods and materials. Especially in a series like "Black Magic" to which the Laser Chair belongs. The Laser Chair is made from laser-cut MDF: The pieces themselves and also the cut-out decorations. -Thonet at his time made the groundbreaking invention of 'bendwood'.

-In other words the Laser Chair and its being out of a series rising from a concept of developing a such fundamental thing as the building material itself, clearly shows substantial relations with the work of for instance Thonet. The way of working so to say.

The familiar

Whereas the the 2 designers both at there time, seek(ed) to innovate, Ineke Hans with Laser Chair also recognize the traditions; embodied in the motif of the cut-out decorations. Although Thonet also tried a decoration of the sitting surface, Hans has, it seems, a more profound conceptual approach. The patterns arise from folklore and the tradition of 'folded and cut' paper; and so she inscribes herself, in the list of artists who found major inspiration in folk art. (Picasso with his african art, Pollock with his native-american art and so on)

Being generally occupied with aspects of childhood and in this design, folk-art, Hans plays on the 'known', the recognizable; the familiar.

Where the first experience of the chair could impose a form of alienation due to its progressive physical appearance, Laser Chair at the same time tries to create a soothing nostalgic feeling with its sweet decorations, deeply rooted in our tradition.

Me

As part of my research on Laser Chair I decided to experience the tradition of folding and cutting pieces of paper. I recommend to try it if it's been a while.

-I deeply adore both the physical and the psychological approaches in Laser Chair; by themselves and also together a concept of creating a balance. The actual chair however for some reason does not get me 'up there'. On the contrary I consider it brute and ugly.

NOW

The interest in folklore, myth and ritual continues to influence design; for instance present in a very recent Amsterdam restaurant interior made by Müller en van Tol (NL) (FRAME Magazine Jan/feb 2008)

BOOKS: -Honour and Flemming: "A World History of Art, Post-war to Post-modern"

-Pictogrammen & iconen, Ineke Hans: Pictogrammen om op te zittten (translated w. Babel)

