

Press Information

Vitra Design Museum opens Schaudepot

On 3 June 2016, a new building will open on the Vitra Campus: the Vitra Schaudepot, designed by the Basel-based architects Herzog & de Meuron. The Schaudepot provides the Vitra Design Museum with a venue for presenting key objects from its extensive collection to the public, complemented by a new café and a shop. In this context, a second entry point will be created to the Vitra Campus, enhancing its connections to the cities of Basel and Weil am Rhein.

The collection of the Vitra Design Museum ranks among the most important holdings of furniture design worldwide. It contains some 7000 pieces of furniture, a vast assemblage of lighting objects and numerous archives, as well as the estates of such designers as Charles & Ray Eames, Verner Panton and Alexander Girard. Although the main museum building by Frank Gehry from 1989 was originally conceived to house the collection, the museum utilises the space to stage major temporary exhibitions.

To date, the museum's collection has never been on permanent display. The Basel-based architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron has now created a new structure for the museum in which the collection will be exhibited and communicated to the public. The centrepiece of the Schaudepot is a permanent exhibition of more than 400 key pieces of modern furniture design from 1800 to the present. The objects shown include early bentwood furniture, icons of Classical Modernism by Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto and Gerrit Rietveld, along with colourful plastic objects from the Pop era and recent designs produced with a 3D printer.

This presentation will be complemented by smaller temporary exhibitions on themes related to the collection, beginning with a look at the »Radical Design« movement of the 1960s. On the lower ground level, the Schaudepot offers insights into additional focal points of the collection, such as Scandinavian and Italian design, the lighting collection and the estate of Charles and Ray Eames.

With the opening of the Schaudepot, the Vitra Design Museum is greatly expanding its exhibition space and its programme. The museum building by Frank Gehry will continue to be used for the large-scale temporary exhibitions and the Vitra Design Museum Gallery will show smaller, experimental projects, while the Schaudepot will display the permanent exhibition as well as one temporary exhibition.

All of the museum's exhibition venues are open daily from 10 am to 6 pm. The exhibitions are complemented by a diverse programme of guided tours, discussions, workshops and other events. Once in operation, the Schaudepot will be one of the world's largest permanent exhibitions and research facilities on modern furniture design.

The architecture of the Vitra Schaudepot

The architectural office Herzog & de Meuron was founded in Basel in 1978 by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Today, the office is a partnership comprising five senior partners – Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Christine Binswanger, Ascan Mergenthaler und Stefan Marbach. Among Herzog & de Meuron’s most renowned projects are the Tate Modern in London, the Olympic Stadium in Beijing and Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie. Following the VitraHaus from 2010, the Schaudepot is the second building by Herzog & de Meuron on the Vitra Campus. The new structure combines the simple appearance of an industrial building or warehouse with the complex requirements of a walk-in museum repository.

To the outside Schaudepot presents itself as a monolithic volume constructed from hand-broken bricks, characterized by a completely windowless façade and a simple gable roof. The bricks were split on site and give the building a lively texture. With its simple and dignified appearance, the Schaudepot reflects the cultural worth of the objects stored within. The interior of the building offers ideal conservational conditions for the preservation of the valuable pieces in the collection.

The main hall on the ground floor of the Schaudepot is defined by a regular gridded arrangement of fluorescent tubes on the ceiling, which evenly illuminate the interior. This space houses the permanent exhibition as well as temporary exhibitions related to the collection, along with the entrance area and a shop. A third section contains wardrobes, sanitary facilities and a café and links the building to the restoration workshop, the library and the offices of the Vitra Design Museum.

A large window connects the main hall to the lower ground floor, from which visitors can get a glimpse of the other repositories of the collection. This visual contact emphasizes the underlying concept of the building: the Schaudepot enables the museum’s collection to outwardly grow and expand and gain a greater public presence with an above-ground display space. The existing repositories on the lower ground level will remain in operation, being further expanded and likewise becoming part of the overall presentation.

The Schaudepot is fronted by a raised, public forecourt that ties the building into the architectural ensemble on the Vitra Campus. The new building contrasts appealingly with the dynamic contours of the opposite Fire Station by Zaha Hadid (1993) while corresponding to the factory buildings by Álvaro Siza (1992), which were also executed in brick. The Schaudepot opens up a second entry point to the Vitra Campus on the southward, city-facing side and creates a new public zone that incorporates the Fire Station. The entrance can be easily reached on foot from the town centre of Weil am Rhein, which connects it to the tram line with service to inner city Basel that was inaugurated in 2014. The Álvaro Siza Promenade links the Schaudepot to the north-facing entrance of the Campus, the VitraHaus and the museum building by Frank Gehry.

The presentation at the Vitra Schaudepot

The Schaudepot was initiated with the goal of making the constantly growing collection of the Vitra Design Museum more accessible to the public. The cornerstone for the collection was laid by the museum's founder Rolf Fehlbaum. In the 1980s he assembled a collection of furniture, which he transferred to the Vitra Design Museum upon its founding in 1989. Ever since, the collection has been expanded by the museum's directors Alexander von Vegesack (1989 to 2010) and Mateo Kries and Marc Zehntner (since 2011) together with Rolf Fehlbaum and now numbers among the largest of its kind.

Today the collection of the Vitra Design Museum encompasses a total of around 20 000 objects. The core is formed by the furniture holdings, with some 7000 pieces covering almost all important epochs and protagonists of design from 1800 to the present. A second focal point is the lighting collection, which contains more than 1000 objects by such designers as Gino Sarfatti, Achille Castiglioni, Serge Mouille or Ingo Maurer. Further holdings include electrical appliances, architectural models and textiles as well as objects of everyday use. The museum's archive comprises about 100 000 units, including several significant estates, such as those of Charles & Ray Eames, Verner Panton and Alexander Girard. The goal of the collection is to document the past and present of the interior and foster research in a broader context.

The presentation at the Schaudepot is divided into three areas with a total of around 1600 sqm. The ground floor contains the main hall where the extensive permanent exhibition is shown. The central focus is a selection of more than 400 key pieces of furniture design, including rare works by such designers as Gerrit Rietveld, Alvar Aalto, Charles & Ray Eames or Ettore Sottsass, but also lesser-known or anonymous objects, prototypes and experimental models. The selection reflects the main areas of emphasis and key pieces of the museum collection while simultaneously providing a comprehensive overview of the history of furniture design – from stylistic and technical innovations to the societal transformations reflected in the objects. Detailed information on the objects is communicated in a digital catalogue that Schaudepot visitors can call up via smartphone or tablets that can be loaned.

While the permanent exhibition in the main hall of the Schaudepot is structured chronologically, the glimpses of the other collection holdings on the lower ground level present thematic focal points and offer a view behind the scenes of the museum where conservators and curators deal with objects from the collection on a daily basis. Other aspects of the Schaudepot also serve to make museum work more comprehensible and accessible to the public. From the café, guests can see into the museum offices and the library, which is open to researchers and students on request.

The restoration workshop can also be viewed on guided tours. The Schaudepot thus creates a »transparent« design museum, which opens up the research of design in all its many facets to a wider public.

On one hand, the Vitra Design Museum is raising the awareness of furniture design as the focus of its collection and making it accessible to visitors and scholars. On the other, it is responding to a characteristic development in the world of design and museums today. Contemporary design surrounds us in all aspects of life – from iconic furniture objects to digital communication and social processes. A design museum in the twenty-first century must therefore not merely collect and exhibit objects, but also needs to communicate the significance of design beyond the individual object by initiating discussions, demonstrating social correlations and establishing references to other areas such as architecture, art or new technologies. With the expansion related to the Schaudapot, the Vitra Design Museum is specifically addressing this development and disseminating design in the same breadth and diversity with which it presents itself in our world today.

Facts

Press conference:	1 June, 2 pm
Opening:	3 June, 6 pm (Opening Talk), 7pm (Vernissage)
Regular Opening times:	From 4 June, 10 am
Architects:	Herzog & de Meuron, Basel
Interior design:	Dieter Thiel, Basel
Curatorial Concept:	Mateo Kries, Janna Lipsky
Project Management:	Marc Zehntner
Head of Collection:	Susanne Graner
Curators of Collection:	Serge Mauduit, Heng Zhi
Content Coordination:	Jolanthe Kugler
Graphics:	onlab, Berlin
Objects in permanent exhibition:	approx. 400
Exhibitions per year:	1 permanent exhibition, 3 temporary exhibitions

Represented designers

(selection):

Alvar Aalto, Ron Arad, Maarten Baas, Ronan und Erwan Bouroullec, Andrea Branzi, Marcel Breuer, Humberto and Fernando Campana, Achille Castiglioni, Luigi Colani, Charles and Ray Eames, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray, Konstantin Grcic, Arne Jacobsen, Shiro Kuramata, Joris Laarman, Le Corbusier, Alessandro Mendini, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Minale Maeda, Jasper Morrison, George Nelson, Marc Newson, Isamu Noguchi, Verner Panton, Gaetano Pesce, Gio Ponti, Jean Prouvé, Tejo Remy, Eero Saarinen, Jerszy Seymour, Philippe Starck, Superstudio, Marcel Wanders, Hans J. Wegner, Tokujin Yoshioka and many more.

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Press images:	High-res photos are available at: http://www.design-museum.de/press_images
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