



THEY ARE ACTUALLY TWO RATHER PROFANE METHODS BY WHICH TINA ROEDER TRANSFORMS THE STEREOTYPICAL MONOBLOC CHAIR INTO A POETIC OBJECT OF RARE EXPRESSIVENESS. INITIALLY SHE HAS STREWN THIS CHAIR IN A POINTILLIST MANNER WITH THOUSANDS OF APPROXIMATELY 3MM SMALL, ROUND HOLES, SCATTERING MORE OR LESS DENSELY LIKE CLOUD FORMATIONS ACROSS THE PLASTIC SHAPE OF THE FURNITURE, GIVING AN ENTIRELY NEW LIGHTNESS TO THIS RATHER MANIFEST SYNTHETIC EXTRUSION. HOWEVER, THIS INTERVENTION WORKS SO PERFECTLY ONLY BECAUSE SIMULTANEOUSLY SHE HAS STRIPPED THE CHAIR OF ITS ASEPTIC HIGH GLOSS, REMINISCENT OF THE RADIANCE OF BLEACH DETERGENTS; SHE HAS SIMPLY SANDED THEM OR MAYBE, I DON'T KNOW, SHE HAS SIMPLY WASHED IT OFF. IN ANY CASE, BY APPLYING PURELY MECHANICAL MEANS SHE ACHIEVES A NEAR MAGICAL UPGRADING OF A COLLECTIVELY TABOOED TASTE-DOWNER, TO AN ICONIC CONTRIBUTION TO CONTEMPORARY DESIGN.

VOLKER ALBUS





THE POET WILL POLISH.

THE MONOBLOC CHAIR THAT EVERYBODY LOVES TO HATE IN THE DESIGN WORLD MAY NOT EXHUME THE AURA, STYLISHNESS AND AESTHETICS OF ITS PREDECESSORS IN DESIGN HISTORY, BUT EVEN ONE OF THE GREATEST DESIGNERS WHO HAD EMBARKED ON THE PIONEERING EXPERIMENTS THAT LEAD TO THE PLASTIC CHAIR OUT OF ONE PIECE, VERNER PANTON, LATER HUMBLY ADMITTED THAT 'WHATEVER ONE MAY THINK OF ITS DESIGN, THE IDEA BEHIND (THE MONOBLOC, MB) TOUCHED GENIUS: TO CREATE A COMFORTABLE GARDEN CHAIR, LIGHT, FEATHER-LIGHT EVEN, AND CHEAP, OUT OF A SIMPLE MATERIAL. ALMOST ANYONE CAN FIND SOME COMFORT IN IT, WHEREAS ITS LIGHTNESS DOESN'T PREVENT IT FROM BEING ALSO VERY STABLE. IT CAN BE STACKED ALMOST ENDLESSLY, IN ORDER TO BE STOCKED OR TRANSPORTED, AND CAN BE CLEANED EASILY, WITH NOTHING BUT WATER AND SOAP. WEATHERPROOF, IT DOESN'T NEED ANY FURTHER MAINTENANCE. IT CAN HIBERNATE WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS, WHILE IT ALSO SAVES SPACE. AND WITH A PRICE OF 10 MARKS (IT WAS STILL 1997 WHEN VERNER WROTE THIS IN A CATALOGUE OF AN EXHITION ON THE MONOBLOC, MB), ANYONE CAN AFFORD IT'¹.

VICO MAGISTRETTI, WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO SUCCEED IN CREATING A PLASTIC MONOBLOC CHAIR IN 1967, WITH THE SELENE HE DESIGNED FOR ARTEMIDE, MAY WELL HAVE DESCRIBED ITS ANONYMOUS COMPETITOR AS "A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF ALL THE VULGARITY OF OUR TIME" IN THE SAME CATALOGUE, BUT DESPITE – OR RATHER BECAUSE- OF THIS, IT HAS ALSO BECOME THE OBJECT THAT, MORE THAN ANY OTHER PIECE OF FURNITURE,

1) IN: SIBYLLE HOFER: MODELL: AURORA. 500 000 000 PLASTIKSTÜHLE



SYMBOLIZES THE SPIRIT OF SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. IN OTHER WORDS: IF ONE WOULD TAKE ALL DEFINITIONS OF DESIGN OF THAT PERIOD, AND MIX THEIR CRITERIA OF WHAT THE ULTIMATE CHAIR SHOULD BE, FROM COMFORTABLE TO DEMOCRATIC, THE MONOBLOC SEEMED A CANDIDATE THAT COULD COME NEAREST TO THE FINAL RESULT, NOT IN THE LEAST BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT IT HAS ALSO BECOME UBIQUITOUS, SINCE IT HAD FIRST BEEN LAUNCHED BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTIES. WHEN SIBYLLE HOFER PUBLISHED THE CATALOGUE IN WHICH PANTON AND MAGISTRETTI VENTILATED THEIR OPINION, THE NUMBER OF COPIES SOLD, IN EUROPE ONLY, WAS ESTIMATED AT HALF A BILLION. TODAY, THAT NUMBER MUST CERTAINLY HAVE DOUBLED. LENNON MAY HAVE BLUFFED WHEN HE SAID THAT THE BEATLES WERE MORE POPULAR THAN GOD, BUT THE MONOBLOC CHAIR IS CERTAINLY MORE POPULAR THAN THE CROSS.

WHAT'S MORE: ITS POOR AND OLD-FASHIONED AESTHETICS, AND ITS SUCCESS AS A POOR MAN'S THRONE IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, ALSO TURNED IT IN A SYMBOL OF ANTI-DESIGN. WHEREAS THE CHAIR THAT COULD BE SEEN AS ITS EQUIVALENT IN THE 19TH CENTURY, THE THONET STUHL NR 14, WAS WAY AHEAD OF ITS TIME IN EPITOMISING EVERYTHING THAT WOULD LATER BE PRESCRIBED AS GOOD DESIGN BY THE BLOOMING AVANT-GARDE, TO SUCH A DEGREE EVEN THAT LE CORBUSIER STILL PRAISED IT AS THE CHAIR THAT DID AWAY WITH ALL OTHERS, THE MONOBLOC IS ITS VERY OPPOSITE, IN THAT ITS QUALITIES ARE PURELY ECONOMICAL AND FUNCTIONAL. WHILE EVEN MUCH MORE MIMICKING THE METAL BISTRO CHAIR THAT HAD RULED THE TERRACES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, THAN THE EXPERIMENTS IN PLASTICS OF THE LIKES OF PANTON, COLOMBO OR MAGISTRETTI, ITS QUALITIES ARE ONLY A MATTER OF QUANTITY, FUNCTIONAL AND ECONOMICAL. IN DOING SO, IT ALSO PERFECTLY EXPRESSES THE BANKRUPTCY OF MODERNISM, AND ITS IMPOTENCE VERSUS A CORPORATE INDUSTRY, WHOSE PHILOSOPHY CAN BE SUMMARISED IN ONE SINGLE SENTENCE: SELL WHATEVER TO WHOEVER IN WHATEVER WAY.

ALL THIS MIGHT HELP EXPLAIN WHY THE MONOBLOC HAS BECOME SUCH AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT MATTER AND SOURCE OF INSPIRATION, NOT SO MUCH FOR THE CLASSICAL MODERNIST DESIGNER, BUT FOR A YOUNGER GENERATION THAT HAS GONE ON THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES – BEYOND MODERNISM, AND BEYOND THE INDUSTRY. IF A CHAIR HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSIDERED TO BE THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FOR A DESIGNER, TODAY THE MONOBLOC IS THE FIRST AND FOREMOST OBSTACLE ON THE WAY TO NEW TYPOLOGIES. THAT ALSO GOES FOR THE YOUNG BERLIN DESIGNER TINA ROEDER, WHOSE OTHER WORK, SUCH AS CREDENZA OR VISUAL ANAESTHESIA, ALSO DEALS WITH THE WAY IN WHICH IDEOLOGIES, FROM COMMUNISM TO PSYCHO-ANALYSIS, FIND THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN OBJECTS AND FURNITURE. WHILE INVESTIGATING THE LINE BETWEEN THE MASS-PRODUCED AND THE SINGULAR, AND THE READY MADE AND UNIQUE, SHE ALMOST RETURNED TO THE ADAGIO THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN THE STARTING POINT FOR JASPER MORRISON WHEN HE WROTE 'THE POET WILL NOT POLISH' AS A MANIFESTO FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL MOVEMENT IN THE KAUFHAUS DES OSTENS CATALOGUE IN THE EIGHTIES: REDUCING THE DESIGN ACT TO GOING OUT, EYES WIDE OPEN, AND CELEBRATING WHAT IS ALREADY THERE, BY CHOOSING THE OBJECTS, AND GIVING THEM A SIMPLE TWIST, A DÉTOURNEMENT. YET, THIS POET ADDS SOME POLISHING TO HER PIERCING, AND INVESTS HER WHOLE BODY, WHILE TURNING THE ANONYMOUS INTO SOMETHING PERSONAL, AND THE VULGAR INTO SOMETHING EXTREMELY PRECIOUS AND VULNERABLE. MAX BORKA