

the italian job

Passenger
Terminal
EXPO 2014
exhibitor

Italy's long tradition in functional, comfortable and elegant furniture design is being brought to airports

Italy has long been recognised as one of the most important design nations worldwide – be it for furniture, automobiles or fashion. Nowadays, Italian design is synonymous with attributes like elegance, iconic aesthetics and a sophisticated and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Unlike the theoretical approach of the Bauhaus in Germany or the mass-oriented mid-century design of the Americans, Italian design always came from experiments and the wild ingenuity of independent designers and architects. There was never uniformity within Italian design – classic and elegant furniture continued to exist alongside more radical products, for example the works of Michele De Lucchi and Ettore Sottsass of the radical Memphis Group.

This coexistence of subtle beauty and iconic experiments lives on and Italian designers still largely influence the world of furniture today.

Vitra and Italian designers

Naturally, Vitra as a manufacturer of design-oriented furniture soon developed an interest in working with Italian designers and architects. More than 25 years ago a collaboration began with one of the peers of Italian design, Antonio Citterio, and has lasted until today. Another great Italian designer, Alberto Meda, joined the Vitra network in the 1990s.

Both Citterio and Meda initially designed task chairs for Vitra before expanding their focus to office furniture. Their sense of appropriateness and talent in solving technical problems has helped create products that are practical and at the same time elegant and beautiful. As a result, their products proved to have a



long visual and technical lifespan, and most continue to be part of Vitra's portfolio.

Current works

In the past decade, both designers started to design products for Vitra that went beyond the office space. Citterio supported the Vitra Home Collection with some classically elegant designs, such as the Suita sofa family, using the sense of form and proportion that made him one of the most successful designers in home furniture in Italy.

One of his latest products for Vitra is the Grand Repos, an upholstered lounge chair with timeless elegance and great comfort. Thanks to its bio-

ABOVE: The Meda Gate seating solution has been installed at Molde Airport, Norway

LEFT: Antonio Citterio's Suita Sofa
TOP RIGHT: Antonio Citterio's Grand Repos offers comfort to VIP passengers at Pulkovo Airport, Saint Petersburg

mechanical construction, this chair follows the movements of the user and adjusts to the body weight. The Grand Repos epitomises for the designer's as well as Vitra's experience in ergonomic office seating.

Alberto Meda also has a long tradition of working on ergonomic chairs for Vitra. Lately, he has used that experience to design a gate holdroom system of great comfort and elegance. For Meda Gate, he developed ergonomically shaped seat shells made out of



robust and flexible PU foam. The seats are mounted on the base with a cantilever construction that offers freedom of movement, considerably increases long-term sitting comfort and gives the impression of floating seats.

It is this elegance of combining an outstanding technical solution, reduced use of materials and visual subtlety that Alberto Meda and Italian design as a whole are famous for.

Vitra and airports

Like these two Italian designers, Vitra brings together experience in two different fields – the office and the home. Public spaces such as gate hold rooms and airport lounges can profit from this combination. The installations at Molde Airport in Norway and the VIP lounge at Pulkovo Airport in Russia are just two of the most recent examples.

Products like the Grand Repos and Meda Gate bring Italian sophistication to airports. It is easily recognised through the quiet elegance and subtlety felt when entering a room, a feeling reminiscent of one of the basic understandings of Italian design – that beauty and function should never be separated.

These and more products will be shown on stand 1836 at Passenger Terminal Exhibition from 25-27 March in Barcelona, Spain.

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