

New exhibition on the Vitra Campus

‘Project Vitra – Design, Architecture, Communications (1950–2017)’ is opening on 25 March 2017 in the Vitra Campus Fire Station. The exhibition provides an overview of the diverse cultural and commercial activities of the Swiss furniture manufacturer and offers insights into the company’s history. This show is an expanded presentation of the exhibition mounted at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA) in 2014.

There are many stories to tell about the Vitra company, and many discoveries can be made on the Vitra Campus in Weil am Rhein. It was here that Frank Gehry realised his first building outside the USA: the Vitra Design Museum. The Fire Station by Zaha Hadid was her very first constructed work. Prior to the completion of his Conference Pavilion in Weil, Tadao Ando had never worked outside of Japan. A rare Petrol Station designed by Jean Prouvé is located here, and the iconic VitraHaus, a stacked assemblage of twelve house-shaped elements, was conceived by Basel-based architects Herzog & de Meuron. With the opening of their new Vitra Schaudepot last year, the large furniture collection of the Vitra Design Museum was made accessible to the public. These and other stories were first portrayed in a comprehensive exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA) in 2014. ‘Project Vitra’ will open in the Fire Station on the Vitra Campus in March 2017.

‘The diversity of the Vitra project can seem almost confusing at times’, comments Rolf Fehlbaum, the son of company founders Erika and Willi Fehlbaum, long-time Vitra CEO and now Chairman Emeritus. ‘That has never bothered us. The Vitra Campus in Weil defines us as readily as the chairs and office furniture that we produce. The Vitra Design Museum with its temporary exhibitions and collections belongs as much to the project as the twentieth-century classics and collages for home and office interiors that we have developed during the past years. Our work is based on the conviction that everyday life holds great potential for inspiration and aesthetic enjoyment, and that design can discover and develop this potential.’

The exhibition guides visitors through the early years of the family-owned business, provides insights into the origins of Vitra as a shopfitting company (the name ‘Vitra’ is derived from the word ‘vitrine’), and describes how the encounter between Willi and Erika Fehlbaum and Charles and Ray Eames in 1957 evolved into a pioneering partnership. The show explains the conceptual process behind the unique architectural ensemble on the Vitra Campus and the development of the Vitra Home Collection. Vitra manufactures furniture classics, but it also continually creates novel products in collaboration with such designers as Antonio Citterio, Jasper Morrison, Hella Jongerius or the brothers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec. The various thematic categories of the exhibition include architecture, communication, concepts (Home, Office Public, Retail), classic products, contemporary design, Vitra Edition, Vitra Design Museum and Vitra Schaudepot.

By combining a variety of media, ‘Project Vitra’ also reflects the project-like character of the company through its compositional structure: a lively collage of products and objects, historical materials, photographs, drawings, graphics, films and models.

PRESS INFO

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'Project Vitra – Design, Architecture, Communications (1950–2017)'
25 March – 3 September 2017

Fire Station, Vitra Campus, South Entrance
Charles-Eames-Strasse 2
D-79576 Weil am Rhein

Opening hours: Monday to Sunday 10 am – 6 pm

www.vitra.com