



The Red-Blue Chair can be seen as one of the famous representations of the De Stijl movement and it is now housed in MoMA. Its original design started in 1917, and the chair was not painted on yellow, red, and blue, and black until 1923. Gerrit Rietveld designed and made the chair before he joined the De Stijl movement, which strongly influenced him to use primary pure colors to construct the strong visualization of the chair. Moreover, the chair is also seen as the visual representation of Piet Mondrian's painting, another famous De Stijl artist in the 20's of 20th century.

Rietveld's chair is entirely made of wood, and such construction requires 15 wooden sticks perpendicular to each other to form a spatial structure. Although it was painted on black and grey at the beginning, Rietveld later replaced the pure bright colors to strengthen the visual composition of the chair without any extra decorations and modifications and every stick is measurable. Such creation can be mass produced rather than to individual handicraft. And Rietveld's goal of crafting simple and united in relations made this chair a standard of design and craftsmanship.

According to Paul Overy in *De Stijl*, which fully illustrate this chair, "Gerrit Rietveld's red-blue armchair is the most compact visual statement of the principles of De Stijl" (Overy 7). As the red-blue chair is demonstrated as a radical form of pure geometrics, it shares the same visual translation and balance of color relationships as Mondrian's *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow* and all the other artworks done by the De Stijl artists.

Rietveld wrote about his chair: "The construction is attuned to the parts to insure that no part dominates or is subordinate to the others. In this way, the whole stands freely and clearly in space, and the form stands out from the materials" (Overy 7). As a result, Rietveld's spatial structure created an opening form to furniture or any other design later on, and such openness points to "totality and integrity" of the chair and other works as a whole rather than the separated part.

It's rational design of the chair also brought designer's establishment of his confrontation and intrinsic link to the war. "It was during WWI that Rietveld began to design furniture that marked a profound break with the older tradition... The principles underlying their design and construction will serve to illustrate the practice and theoretical achievement attained by him before 1920" (Brown 17). Theodore M. Brown, the author of the book *The Work of G. Rietveld Architect*, has enriched and categorized Rietveld industrial designs and architectures based on five major periods of his design life. Based on its functionality, this chair is not comfortable as can be seen, but it proved Rietveld's ideas of constructionism and unity. "This simple geometric mechanism is almost as direct and primitive as the use of parts of the human anatomy, such as hands and feet, to establish spatial relations" (Brown 20). Lines and forms are well organized and then form an spatial harmony not only on the whole composition - the chair, but also each independent wooden block. "Rietveld believed there was a greater goal for the furniture designer

than just physical comfort: the well-being and comfort of the spirit." (MoMA) Its unique modern form got rid of the influence of traditional furniture designs and stepped beyond into a new trend of pre-modern movement of simplicity and function. Rietveld's spirit also had a profound impact to the following designs of the modernist movement, and he believed that the spiritual comfort and ease is his greater goal than the physical. "Rietveld and his colleagues in the De Stijl art and architecture movement sought to create a utopia based on a harmonic human-made order, which they believed could renew Europe after the devastating turmoil of WWI." (MoMA). Rietveld's Red and Blue Chair, with its hard seats and backs, is a new and designated way for people to seat and focus on own senses and spirits, and be aware.

Rather than being seen as a piece of nice furniture, the chair is also being considered as an art of modern design. The construction was simplified to aim the large amount of mass production rather than individual handmade, which means everyone can afford that chair, including the producer who made the chair. Its accessibility and functionalism demonstrated the core value and final goal of the modern furniture design. "As a craftsman, Rietveld knew that satisfaction was derived from the chair's aesthetic motivation" (Brown 21).

Bibliography

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Typefaces:
Arial
Theo Van Doesburg

designed by
Gerrit Rietveld in 1917

RED BLUE CHAIR

