

Press Release

Rietberg, Germany, October 2011

Top Class at School: PRO by FLÖTOTTO

Design: Konstantin Grcic

Together with designer Konstantin Grcic, the German manufacturer FLÖTOTTO has developed an innovative chair that continues the company's successful tradition of producing school furniture. The new PRO line of chairs can also be used for other contract areas and for domestic interiors. PRO's seat pan has a distinctive shape, allowing a very comfortable seating experience and giving the chair its specific aesthetics. The design of the seat pan is based on several studies into the area of 'active seating' in schools. PRO has a lightweight and welcoming appearance and is available in six attractive colours. The complete PRO product line with four different types of frames will be introduced at imm cologne in January 2012.

A Piece of Everyday Culture: School Chairs by FLÖTOTTO

It started in the 1950s, near the German town of Gütersloh, when FLÖTOTTO took up the production of school furniture. During the following decades, the brand became the market leader in this sector and FLÖTOTTO school chairs were a familiar component in the schooldays of many generations of students in Germany and Europe. The chair's success was, to a great extent, due to its flexible and ergonomically formed seat pan made of Pagwood, a densified beech plywood material impregnated with phenolic resin. The seat pan, which has sold 21 million so far, was patented in 1952 and is widely known as the 'FLÖTOTTO Formsitz' in design history.

The FLÖTOTTO brand has been closely linked with school chairs right up to the present. 'There is something like a particular FLÖTOTTO DNA, based on the specific shape of the seat pan and its related functionality', says managing director Frederik FLÖTOTTO, who, together with his father and co-director Elmar FLÖTOTTO, has resumed the production of school furniture. He goes on: 'When we asked Konstantin Grcic to help us develop a new school chair, it was clear that we wanted to continue the firm's tradition of placing high demands on ergonomic and functionality aspects, and to combine these with contemporary design and materials.'

According to Grcic, developing such a complex project 'within tight guidelines and requirements' was a challenging task. The development was also based on recent research regarding the requirements for school furniture: in contrast to earlier decades, 'active seating'

and the so-called flexible classroom are the main demands today. Says Grcic: "Children learn best if they have a great deal of freedom of movement . the opposite of sitting still. However, the school furniture available on the market today does not sufficiently implement these new research results. So with PRO, we saw the opportunity of developing a truly useful chair."

From Pagwood to Polypropylene: an Exciting Development Process and a New Characteristic S-Shaped Seat Pan

Naturally, FLÖTOTTO and Grcic initially focused on Pagwood, the material that had been used so successfully in the past. But, during the development process, it became obvious that Pagwood would not be fully able to meet today's high demands for flexibility and would have made it impossible to create the desired three-dimensional form. So FLÖTOTTO and Grcic decided to use polypropylene, which offers better characteristics in this respect. This decision implied using a new production method, which also meant that FLÖTOTTO had to invest in an injection-moulding tool. "We decided to create a real industrial product, designed to be produced in large quantities," says Grcic.

With PRO, a totally open chair has been created that not only allows the user to move in all directions but also encourages them to do so, thus perfectly meeting the latest requirements. On the one hand, this is due to the round seat, similar to that of a stool, which does not force the body forwards and, on the other hand, the narrow backrest allows the upper part of the user's body to move sideways.

The third and most crucial design aspect is the PRO's specially shaped seating pan with its distinctive three-dimensionally shaped form that lends the chair its characteristic aesthetic. The pronounced S-shape meets both construction-related and ergonomic requirements. The lower curve allows freedom of movement and takes strain off the lower back, while simultaneously stabilising the seat pan and thus allowing the designer to forego the use of reinforcing fiberglass. This increases the recyclability of the seat pan and results in less environmental impact. The second curve is created through the backwards bend of the upper part of the backrest, which allows a frequent change of sitting positions and also provides . and encourages . the option of sitting in a straddling position. Supported by the flexibility of the backrest and the fact that there are no hard edges, the user's lower body will slide forwards while the back reclines far into the backrest, which results in a high degree of mobility for the upper body.

"With PRO, we have created a chair that meets the latest requirements for school furniture while, due to its specific characteristics, it can also be used as a normal chair in various other settings," is how Grcic sums it up. Frederik FLÖTOTTO adds: "We wanted to revive the

legend and continue our tradition, but we wanted to do so in an innovative way. We put our hearts and souls into this project where commercial considerations did not play the primary role. This new chair is a real improvement, it provides many solutions that have long been called for, without being a machine for sitting.+

PRO Details

Chair series for use in schools and in the private and commercial sector

School furniture series, initially available in 3 sizes according to DIN EN 1729: size 4 (primary school), size 5 and 6 (different ages up to 6th form / high school graduates); further sizes to be available in future

Plastic seat pan made of 100% polypropylene, available in 6 colours: snow white, graphite black, granite grey, aqua blue, coral red and green

Frame designs: C frame (for use in schools) made of tubular steel, four-legged frames in tubular steel or wood, sled base frame in tubular steel

Additional accessories for use in commercial sectors (seat padding, row connectors, trays etc.)

Matching tables in 2 sizes are also available for use in schools