

EYSING ON THE CAKE

As you'll see from our Orgatec review, there are a number of trends emerging from the giant German show. One is that R&D is alive and well – and being shown off by all the major players. Another is that the hi-tech, futuristic aesthetic has been replaced by pared-down elegance.



A perfect example of a combination of the two is Interstuhl's VINTAGEis5 chair. We'd like to claim that we're so 'on the ball' that we'd foreseen all this and had requested, need demanded, that we meet with the chair's designer. The truth, however, is that our friends at Interstuhl were the smart ones – and knew that we'd be extremely impressed with VINTAGEis5 and would want to interview the man behind the design.

So, thanks to them, we find ourselves in the heart of the Orgatec throng on the impressive Interstuhl stand, where leading product designer Volker Eysing is waiting to talk to us about his latest groundbreaking product and his successful career to date.

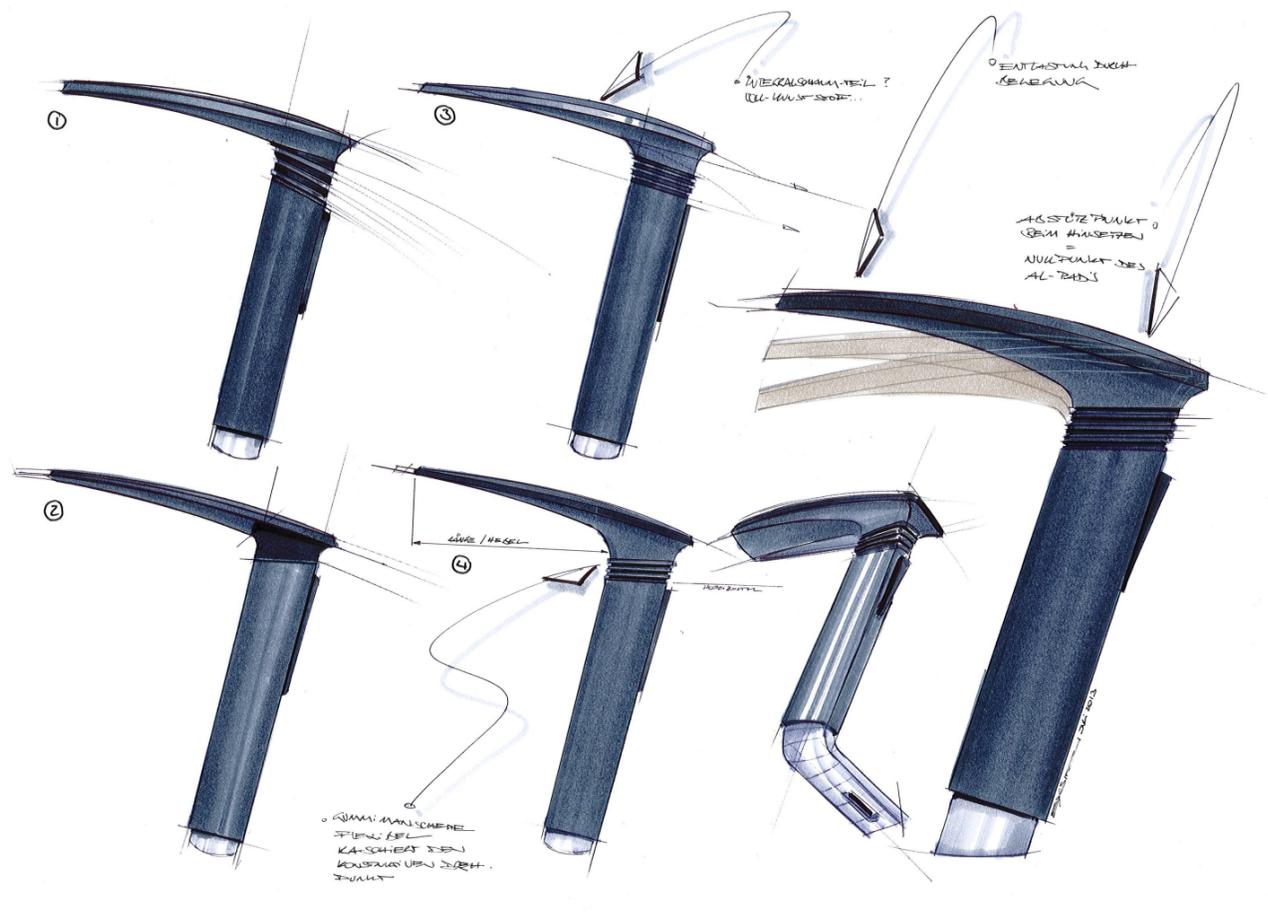
VINTAGEis5 is a family of chairs that...well, why should we explain when we have the mastermind behind the collection on hand to do that for us? 'I wanted to make a chair that was incredibly versatile so I went to Interstuhl with my idea – this was back in 2010,' Volker recalls. 'They thought it was a really cool idea. I had three versions – the work chair, the cantilever chair and the conference chair – and the versatility comes from the idea that although we had three versions, you can put every back onto each of the chairs. So you have seven or eight chairs in reality. Then you have three options for the armrest – including an innovative brand new design.'

'When we started the first thing we did was the classic conference chair and then, three years ago, we started to focus on developing the work chair. We wanted to make it as light as possible. As you can see from the construction, it is very pure and simple. The mechanism – the power package – is tucked into the seat. So the seat is actually part of the mechanism, which is a really new idea.'

'There are three seat positions and the chair follows your body and regulates your sitting position. The tilt works in harmony with the back, so if one is right for you, then the other will also be right for you. It is really easy.'

As Volker invites us to sit and experience VINTAGEis5 we can't help but be drawn by its aesthetics. The sleek profile and lack of a big, clunky mechanism gives the work chair model the air of a much less technical and sophisticated chair. Couple this with the exquisite finish and engineering and you have >





the product that so many designers have been looking for – an advanced, technically superior work chair that doesn't look like a work chair.

And we haven't even mentioned what we like most about this collection yet! Well, for a start, this is a totally brand new chair. You've already said that, you might be thinking. What we mean by this is that VINTAGEis5 is brand new from the castors all the way to the armrests. Every element and every component has been specifically designed and developed by Volker and Interstuhl for this project.

The controls, for example, could have been bought in as an afterthought. But they weren't. Instead, they are recessed, neatly hidden from sight – and this just adds to the elegance of the overall design of course.

The unique armrest is equally impressive. The flexible, concertina effect allows the user to move his or her arms up and down – and although this may sound like quite a minor thing, it actually makes a huge difference to the sitting experience and, importantly, has major ergonomic benefits.

Again, we'll let Volker explain. 'The armrest allows you to move into the working position,' he shows us. 'This takes pressure away from

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'This is totally new – and like the rest of the chair is completely self-explanatory. The chief at Interstuhl said to me that we needed to do something with the armrest. He said to me 'You're the designer – do something brand new for us'. I then thought about what we could do and I quickly thought about the idea of movement.

'I thought this was a cool idea that benefits – both in the way that people can move and also in the aesthetics.

'We also had a big discussion when it came to the lumbar support. I have seen this on mesh back chairs before and I really hate that! I had a problem with my shoulder and I had it taped up with Kinesiology sports tape – and this gave me an idea that maybe we could use this technology for the lumbar support. We went to a local company – their studio is just four streets away – which makes motifs for shirts and we told them about our idea. They said 'That's no problem, we can do that' – so now we have something that no one else in the industry has.

'Every story here is a small story. This is not a huge single ergonomic innovation. It is a series of small stories that have come together. I think it is really important that someone who has no idea how these chairs work can learn the functions really quickly. It is self-explanatory.

'I even like the name. I think VINTAGEis5 sounds like something that is of a very high quality, is classic and is timeless – and that is what we have tried to achieve.'

Volker, we discover, was destined to move into the world of industrial design. 'My mother was an artist and my father was a construction engineer in Germany,' he tells us. 'I guess the two have come together for me. It is something I have really wanted to do since I was 16 – I was interested in design and how designs work.

'I started working with wood – this was the basis for my studies. We had a very good university for industrial design – and especially furniture design – in Kiel in the very north of Germany. I moved from Münster to study there. It was a very different place to study but I was lucky enough to study under a great professor who was very interested in

furniture. This was the basis for my work. He knew everyone – it was really cool.'

Volker went on to work for six months with a design firm in Switzerland and then a further six months with another firm in Los Angeles before sitting his design exam – with his final piece going on to be produced by Drabert.

'Since then I have only worked for furniture companies – such as Sitag, Martin Stoll and now only for Interstuhl,' Volker explains. 'When I met with Interstuhl they said to me 'If you want to work with us, you work only for us'.

'We have come a long way over the last four or five years. It takes a lot of trust and a really big investment from the company. This is such a great thing for me – it was an amazing opportunity to work on such a big project. There so many designers who would love to work with Interstuhl. I am really thankful for that opportunity.'

As we continue to chat, Volker fondly recalls his internship in the States, where he was given an apartment in Santa Monica and a car – and was paid for the privilege! 'It was so cool!' he grins. Today he enjoys working in his adopted home in Kiel. 'I like it because you have the sea outside your door. It's also nice

because it's not as big or as busy as Hamburg or Berlin.

'I like to work with just one company at a time – for me it's important to have just one company who tells me exactly what they want. This way you can trust one another. This (VINTAGEis5) was very much a team effort – we had a big development team who had some great ideas. You get better quality from working in this way.'

With VINTAGEis5 now complete and 'out there' in the market, Volker is clearly not sitting back and waiting for the plaudits. Watch this space. ●