

Twentieth Century Design Icons  
no. 2

“Wassily Chair”  
by  
Marcel Breuer  
(1902-1981)



**THE WASSILY CHAIR**, also known as the “Model B3 chair”, was designed by Marcel Breuer in 1925-26 while he was the head of the cabinet-making workshop at the Bauhaus, in Dessau, Germany.

Contrary to popular belief, the chair was not designed for the non-objective painter Wassily Kandinsky, who was concurrently on the Bauhaus faculty. However, Kandinsky had admired the completed design, and Breuer fabricated a duplicate for Kandinsky’s personal quarters. The chair became known as “Wassily” decades later, when it was re-released by an Italian manufacturer who had learned of the anecdotal Kandinsky connection in the course of its research on the chair’s origins.

This chair was revolutionary in the use of the materials (bent tubular steel and canvas) and methods of manufacturing. It is said that the handlebar of Breuer’s “Adler” bicycle inspired him to use steel tubing to build the chair, and it proved to be an appropriate material because it was available in quantity. The design (and all subsequent steel tubing furniture) was technologically feasible only because the German steel manufacturer Mannesmann had recently perfected a process for making seamless steel tubing. Previously, steel tubing had a welded seam, which would collapse when the tubing was bent.

The Wassily chair, like many other designs of the modernist movement, has been mass-produced since the 1960s, and as a design classic is still available today. Though patent designs are expired, the trademark name rights to the design are owned by Knoll of New York City. Reproductions are produced around the world by other manufacturers, who market the product under different names.

