

IT'S A WRAP

Persistence pays off: the chair JÖRG BONER spent four years completing features upholstery that folds around the wooden frame like a garment.

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PHOTOS MARK WERDER



The magazine is titled *Dressed like a Chair*. It comes across as a stylish fashion mag, but with Wogg 42 – a chair – as the focus rather than a model. The magazine's star is at times worn like a garment, at times skipped around by children, and at times serves as an acrobatic work of art.

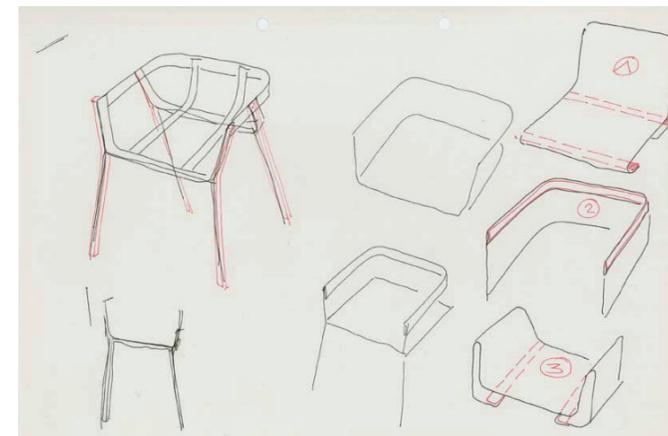
This chair's advertising is as unusual as its story. What today looks so appealing is the result of over four years of work, enormous persistence, lots of experimentation, long discussions and a fruitful collaboration between the designer, Jörg Boner, and Wogg, the furniture company. The concept behind this unostentatious yet sophisticated chair is novel. The frame of minimalist wooden sections with tapered legs has a light and graceful appearance, while the slight angling of the legs

lends the design a sporty feel. The upward-angled arms are joined to the back by sprung metal strips. The real innovation, however, lies in the two-part upholstery which fits snugly around the backrest like a collar, while the seat cushion lies on the supporting structure like a quilt. The cover offers the finish and protection of a loose cover, but its main function is providing a padded seat cushion and backrest. The two fabric parts fasten to the frame with press studs and can be changed according to need and occasion.

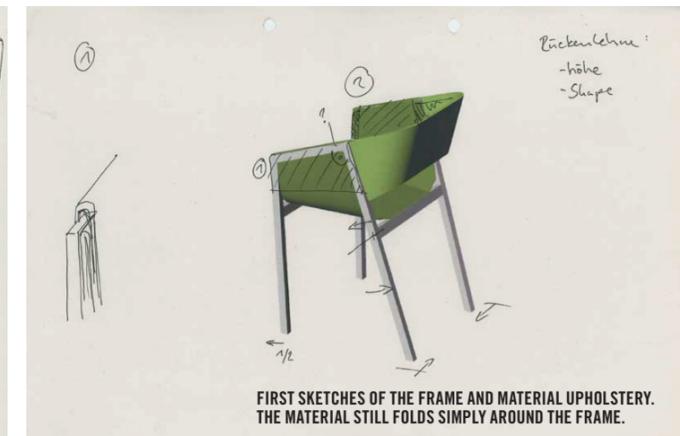
The furniture company, based in Baden-Dättwil in Switzerland, asked Zurich designer Jörg Boner to design a lightly upholstered armchair. First-off sketches showed a chair with fabric folded around the frame in different ways. However, this used too much fabric.

'I wanted to develop a technical solution,' says Boner. To achieve this, he further developed a process, employing heat-welded materials from the sports fashion sector, that he had previously employed in an award-winning cabinet for Nils Holger Moormann. The pattern for the chair cover was made similarly from two pieces, with the upper and undersides of the polyamide fabric, together with the upholstery material, welded into a single piece by a high frequency process. This was followed by trials where the punched-out piece was folded into a garment and fitted around the frame, experimenting with the form and height of the backrest. Using scissors and cardboard drew the concept ever nearer prototype status.

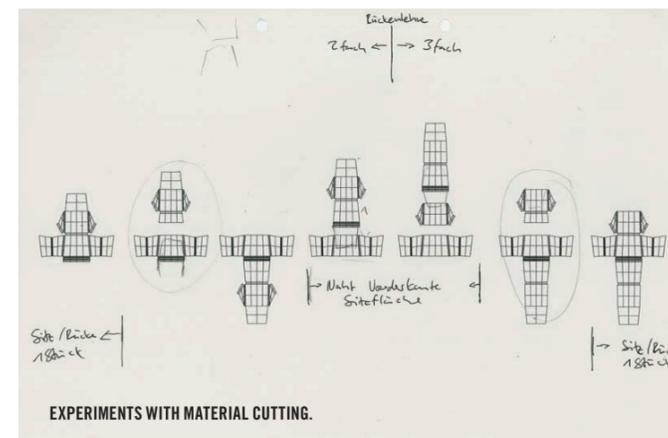
In the autumn of 2007, the point was reached for the chair to be presented to the



FIRST SKETCHES OF THE FRAME AND MATERIAL UPHOLSTERY. THE MATERIAL STILL FOLDS SIMPLY AROUND THE FRAME.



'Production economy was a central priority'
JÖRG BONER



EXPERIMENTS WITH MATERIAL CUTTING.

IDEAS WERE REJECTED AND FURTHER DEVELOPED USING A ONE-FIFTH SCALE CARDBOARD MODEL. THE HEIGHT AND FORM OF THE BACKREST ARE DEFINED.



public for the first time. However, perfectionist Jörg Boner was not yet entirely happy. 'I did not like the feel of the synthetic cover. And the cover also created.' Boner and his assistant Jonathan Hotz continued their research. Their goal was the production of a cover and padding that fitted perfectly. Looking at other sectors they discovered that padding that fits perfectly to the body is worked into motorcycle jackets and protective clothing for extreme sports. In their search for a company able to adapt the technique to a chair cover, they came across a Swedish engineering office that is active primarily in the automotive industry. Working closely together, Boner and the engineering team developed a process in which foam padding and a covering fabric could be thermally pressed, without creases, over its full surface

to form a three-dimensional shaped seat. The backrest and seat could be made with a tool that was two-dimensional, and so relatively inexpensive. 'With this we had found the technology for our creation,' says Boner. Using this industrial tooling, both padded parts can now be made in just 90 seconds, reducing the working time and costs many times over compared to the requirements of a hand-upholstered chair. Production of the wooden frame was also industrialized, with a high-technology wood processor in central Switzerland being selected instead of assembly work.

The investment in new technology convinced Wogg. 'Wogg 42 is a milestone in our collection,' confirms Wogg's managing director Mark Werder. 'Instead of outsourcing to low-wage countries we can now produce >>>



THE FIRST PROTOTYPE: THE BACKREST DOES NOT YET HAVE ITS FINAL ELEGANT FORM.



FIRST WELDING TRIALS, STILL WITHOUT A TOOL.



SMOOTH: THE UPHOLSTERY FITS LIKE A COLLAR OVER THE BACKREST.



‘Design is a slow process’
JÖRG BONER

the chair in Switzerland and Sweden.’ And Jörg Boner adds: ‘For me, production economy was a central priority. I see the greatest challenge in design as being the making of things that are affordable.’ Ecological aspects, however, are also important to him. All the materials in the chair can be fully separated.

The chair has its own clothes: the feel-good covers are almost as easy to change as a dress. They can be swapped in no time at all, and this ability to change – with the season, or the occasion – opens up new perspectives. Fully washable, the material will not lose its shape due to the full-surface thermal forming process. There are currently eight different covers. ‘It would be a nice idea to bring out a limited collection of upholstery for each season – just like in the fashion world,’ says Boner. The next

collection will also include cotton materials. ‘We are convinced this product will make design history, although that will certainly take some time,’ says Mark Werder. It’s a chair with character, one whose personality will mature over the years. ‘Design is a slow process’ is a credo that Jörg Boner once again proves true.

joergboner.ch
wogg.ch



DRESS CODE: THE GRACEFUL ASH FRAME IS UNDERESSED IN NO TIME AT ALL.
PHOTOS MILO KELLER

FIRST PRESENTATION OF THE PROTOTYPE AND DESIGN PROCESS IN ZURICH IN AUTUMN 2007.

