



Furniture

The design of Michel de Klerk's 1916 dining room "ameublement" shows that furniture, too, can have architectural allure. Significant shapes like the cone and triangle appear in the furniture as well as in De Klerk's edifices. Regardless of the scale of his design, the harmony remains the same. The furniture was produced and sold commercially by the company t'Woonhuys and so might end up in any kind of building. Despite the fact that the design could not be matched with the interior it was to be placed in, De Klerk managed to bring a unity to any dining room. The pieces are made of the same material, mahogany. Shapes such as the sledge-style feet recur in the chairs, dining table, china cabinet and tea table. Because of its complex and labour-intensive manufacturing process, however, this series was only produced in limited numbers by the factory. In the drawing De Klerk made for t'Woonhuys showing the furniture in situ, in an interior, the stately pieces are enhanced by a carpet and matching ceiling elements. His intention is to show how you can bring uniformity to your home interior at a fairly affordable price.

M. de Klerk, design dining room, t'Woonhuys, 1916

M. de Klerk, armchair, mahogany, ebony, velvet and leather, executed by t'Woonhuys in Amsterdam, 1918

A. Gaudí, dining room in Casa Batlló in 1927

A. Gaudí, dining room chair Casa Batlló, ash wood, made by Taller Casas i Bardés, 1904-1906

Gaudí also created monumental furniture. For Casa Batlló he designed an ergonomic dining-room chair, after endless experimentation and analysis creating a piece whose form follows and supports the occupant's body. These complex and meticulously drawn shapes were turned into reality by furniture maker Casas i Barnès, which also made the organic doorposts mentioned earlier. Gaudí applied the ergonomic principle to the door handles at La Pedrera, too. The bronze grips follow the shape of the palm so that the user's body seems to merge with the building. The chapters of this book about nature (by Laura Lubbers) and construction (by Jan Molema) may at first glance seem worlds apart, but in the creations of Gaudí and the architects of the Amsterdam School these two subjects come together. The factor binding them is a search for the essence of forms occurring in the natural world so as to produce a total work of art which generates unity in its diversity. In the buildings described here, functionality and beauty are combined by utilising principles always secreted within nature. The same synthesis also occurs in the smaller pieces discussed, such as Gaudí's ergonomic utensils and the dining room furniture designed by Michel de Klerk.

