Chair - Chair Thing

Object: Chair

Place of origin: London (designed)

Date: 1968 (designed)
1968 (made)

Artist/Maker: Murdoch, Peter, born 1940 (designer)
Perspective Designs Ltd (manufacturer)

Materials and Techniques: Laminated paper

Credit Line: Given by the Council of Industrial Design

Museum number: CIRC.795-1968

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description

The 'Chair Thing' is from a range of pieces named such similarly ambiguous titles as 'Stool Thing' and 'Table Thing'. The chair is designed for a child and is made from a single piece of folded cardboard.

Peter Murdoch's designs were mass-produced and approximately 76,000 pieces were sold over a six-month period in 1967, retailing for less than £1 each. Despite the large numbers sold, few survived, owing to the nature of the material and the intended disposability of the pieces. The chair won the Council of Industrial Design Award in 1968, an award which sought to promote the improvement of British product design.

Descriptive line
Chair, fibreboard printed with lettering in black on white; designed by Peter Murdoch for Perspective Designs Ltd, 1968

Physical description
Child's chair made from a single piece of folded card. Hexagonal in section, back extends from three sides. White with black alphabet pattern on white in a variety of typefaces.

Dimensions
Height: 49 cm, Width: 44 cm, Depth: 36 cm

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Object history note
This simple form was made from a single piece folded card but required complex development. Original packaging for this chair was designed by Paul Clark.
C.O.I.D. Design Award, 1968.

Decorated with lettering in a variety of typefaces, including the fancy Victorian ones which were revived in the 1950s and 60s. This paper chair was an inexpensive but fashionable product, designed to be delivered flat for home assembly. A spotted pattern was also available. It won a Council of Industrial Design Award in 1968.

Historical significance: Won a Design Centre Award in 1968.

According to 'Design' (May 1968, p.33), the earlier versions of the paper chairs were made in the USA, while Murdoch was still a student. Perspective Designs commissioned him to design a new range in 1967. These were manufactured by New Merton Board Mills for Perspective Designs. Perspective Designs was established by Philip Bidwell in 1966 to promote young British designers, with a particular focus on selling overseas.

Historical context note
The range of 'Chair Things', 'Stool Things' and 'Table Things', emphasised the multi-purpose, play-orientated function and reflected relaxing social attitudes towards children. Over 76,000 pieces were sold in six months on 1967, retailing at less than £1 each. Despite several awards, the potential for mass-production in the 1970s was never fully realised and the disposability of Pop furniture means few examples have survived.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O49115/chair-thing-chair-murdoch-peter/