

# VERNER PANTON

The Collected Works



## **Verner Panton**

With the Panton-Chair, the first single-unit cantilevered chair made of moulded plastic, he succeeded in creating one of the most famous chair designs of the century. His «Fantasy Landscape» room at the «Visiona 2» exhibition became an emblem of the sixties which is included in virtually every study on the design of that wild decade. However, it would be erroneous to regard the Danish designer Verner Panton (1926–1998) merely as a great master of sixties design. Although extravagant forms and the use of strong, intense colours typify his work, it is undeniably grounded in the elegant functionalism of the fifties. And in spite of the creativity and love of experimentation revealed in his oeuvre, he retained a systematic approach to design throughout his life. His interest was not limited to single objects, but extended to the development of groups of furnishings and the design of entire spaces. For this reason, Verner Panton's unusually extensive and diverse work, now the subject of a comprehensive retrospective by the Vitra Design Museum, is rightly regarded today as a major contribution to the development of design in the second half of the 20th century.

## **The Exhibition**

In preparation for this retrospective, the Vitra Design Museum has drawn on its superb collection of Panton objects, as well as the entire Panton archives. Thanks to many years of personal contact with the designer these have been preserved and received scholarly evaluation in Weil. Along with countless sketches and drawings for furniture, lighting elements and other objects, the museum archives include documents related to Panton's architectural work, which until now has remained unexplored. In addition, this exhibition provides the opportunity to systematically organise and analyse his textile designs, which occupy a central position in his oeuvre.

The extraordinary productivity of Verner Panton discourages any effort to present his work in its entirety. For this reason, the retrospective focuses primarily on works created between the mid-fifties and mid-seventies, during which time he had a substantial influence upon the direction and development of inter-national design. The exhibition is organised according to chronological and thematic considerations, but does not regard the communication of knowledge and the presentation of background information as its only task. Its other goal – very much in the spirit of Panton – is to offer the visitor an intense sensorial experience. Accordingly, great attention will be given to the physical design of the exhibition.

## Structure

The exhibition will begin with Panton's first furniture collection, which clearly bears his artistic stamp and with which he immediately established himself at the forefront of avant-garde design in Europe. The following biographical section will trace the most important stages of his international career. Special attention will be accorded here to the highly charged artistic and intellectual atmosphere with which he was confronted at the outset of his work as a designer, and within which he established a clear position early on. His architectural designs, few of which were actually built, will also be introduced within this context.

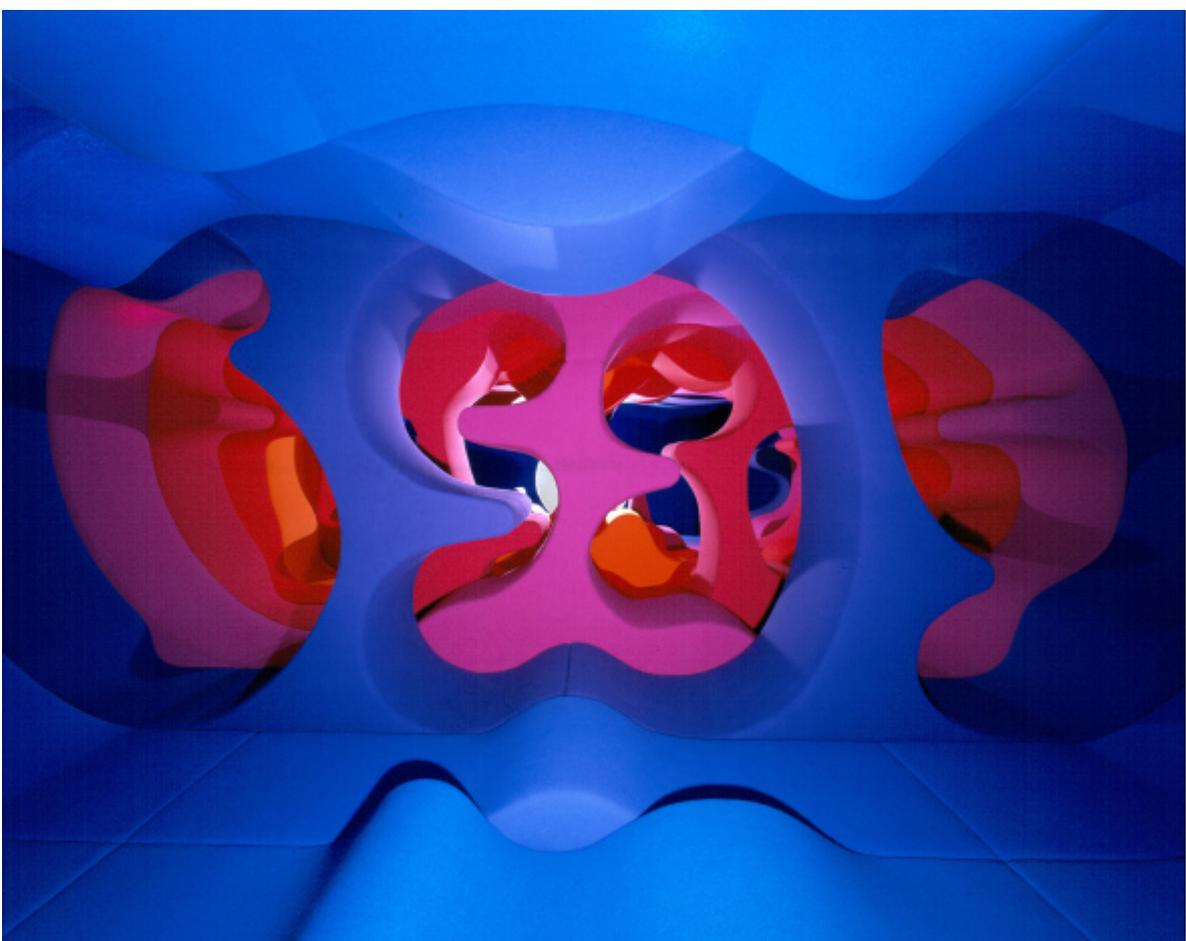
The exhibition presents the highlights of Panton's work in the areas of furniture, lighting and textile design in individual sections. In the unit devoted to furniture, his contributions to several of the central themes of sixties design are introduced: modular seating systems, mobile living, and domestic environments. The Panton chair, probably his most important design, deserves particular attention and is the subject of an exciting chapter on design history. By outlining the lengthy development process of this chair, technical problems regarding materials and manufacturing methods will also be addressed.

Of all the disparate areas of his oeuvre, Panton's Scandinavian roots are ever more evident than in his lighting designs. He was not only interested in finding solutions to technical and aesthetic problems, but also in exploring the emotional effect of light. Along with designs for «traditional» lamps and lighting fixtures, he also developed light sculptures and lighted wall elements which functioned both as a source of light and as a decorative object.

The section «Colours – Designs – Systems» focuses on Panton's textile designs. His collaboration with the company Mira-X over many years resulted in a historically unique, extensive collection based on just a few patterns and colours, once again exhibiting his adherence to systematic principles. The aesthetic elements which appear in his textile designs are also found in other materials used in interior decoration such as enamel or paper. Panton's legendary interior design projects can be regarded as moments of climax and synthesis within the context of his entire oeuvre. His primary goal was to over-come the traditional division of a room into three parts – floor, walls, and ceiling – and to achieve a unified design concept. A partial reconstruction, true to the original, of the «Fantasy Landscape» room from the «Visiona 2» exhibition will effectively demonstrate this to visitors.

The final section is devoted to Panton's late work. By setting it against the backdrop of works by younger designers, this exhibition also aims to document his abiding influence upon the development of inter-national design.

# VERNER PANTON





VERNER PANTON

## Biography

Like many of his colleagues, Panton, who was born on the Danish island of Fünen in 1926, found his way to design via architecture. After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, he worked from 1950–52 in the office of Arne Jacobsen, where he was involved in the design of the legendary «Ant» chair. Working as an independent architect and designer in many European countries from the mid-fifties onward, Panton first attracted international attention with furniture based on geometric forms and manufactured by the company Plus-linje («Cone» chairs). These designs are distinguished by their extravagant forms and a keen interest in new plastic materials produced industrially at the time. Simultaneously, they are evidence of an unfettered joy of experimentation, which can be regarded as a central characteristic of Panton's work. Over the following decades, numerous designs for seating furniture and lamps were produced together with renowned manufacturers such as Fritz Hansen, Louis Poulsen, Thonet, Herman Miller/Vitra, Royal Copenhagen, and Rosenthal, some of which are still in production. Among these are true «bestsellers» such as the «Flowerpot» lamp and design icons like the Panton-Chair, which immediately garnered international accolades upon its presentation to the public in 1967 after a long and intensive development process. In addition, Panton distinguished himself as a textile designer. His close collaboration with the company Mira-X, for whom he designed an extensive collection of domestic textiles from the end of the Sixties onward, clearly exhibits his preference for intense colours and geometric shapes. Of central importance within the context of his oeuvre are Panton's room designs. His comprehensive design philosophy was already evident in early interior designs for the restaurants «Komigen» (Langsö, 1958) and «Astoria» (Trondheim, 1960). He was particularly skillful in fusing disparate elements – floor, wall and ceiling treatments, furniture, lighting elements, textiles, and plastic or enamel wall panels – into a consummate and indivisible spatial unit. The «Visiona» ships for the Cologne Furniture Fair (1968 and 1970), the offices of the Spiegel publishers in Hamburg (1969), and the restaurant «Varna» in Aarhus (1970) are the best-known examples of this. Residing in Basle from the beginning of the Sixties and having received many international design awards, Panton remained active until his death in September 1998. Re-editions of his works and, in addition, an exhibition overseen by the designer himself in Kolding, Denmark, are evidence of the increasingly growing interest in Panton's oeuvre over recent years. In spite of its undisputed importance, until now it has neither been the subject of a design-historical retrospective, nor received comprehensive monographic treatment in a publication.

<b>Concept and Curator:</b>	Mathias Remmele																								
<b>Exhibits:</b>	<table> <tr> <td>Furniture:</td> <td>70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Partial usable reconstruction of phantasy Landscape, Visiona 2, 1970</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lightings:</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Textiles:</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Models:</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Drawings (copies):</td> <td>33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Historical publication material</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Photos (in frames):</td> <td>62</td> </tr> <tr> <td>+ large photos (80 x 120 cm)</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>+ x-large photo (216 x 330 cm)</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>interactive computer terminals</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Video-documentation:</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </table>	Furniture:	70	Partial usable reconstruction of phantasy Landscape, Visiona 2, 1970		Lightings:	60	Textiles:	25	Models:	4	Drawings (copies):	33	Historical publication material	35	Photos (in frames):	62	+ large photos (80 x 120 cm)	5	+ x-large photo (216 x 330 cm)	1	interactive computer terminals	7	Video-documentation:	2
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<b>Space requirement:</b>	600 – 1000 sqm																								
<b>Shipping volume:</b>	300m <sup>3</sup> (eight containers)																								
<b>Min. ceiling height:</b>	3,50 m																								
<b>Catalogue:</b>	Editors: Alexander von Vegesack and Mathias Remmele																								
<b>Contents</b>	Eight critical, richly illustrated essays covering the central aspects of Verner Panton's entire work as a designer and architect; biography, bibliography and list of works																								
<b>Size</b>	384 pages, 23 x 30 cm, approximately 300 illustrations (mostly in colour)																								
<b>Editions</b>	Exhibition Catalogue, 380 pages including a complete list of works. English and German																								

Accompanying products for museum shops are available (re-editions, miniatures)

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