

INSIDE OR OUT

Snøhetta revises the Series 7™ chair

Interpreting such a legendary product is not the most natural thing to do. But if one is selected by the likes of Fritz Hansen and asked to attempt the task, then it tends to be embraced wholeheartedly. For Snøhetta, the request also contained that extra tang brought by the particularity of the designer's Scandinavian renown. Hark! The team of three designers approached the project with a well-balanced abundance of gusto and awe, and produced a jolly good version resonant with our time. DAMN° interviewed the players and discovered just how the Snøhetta-modified Series 7™ was born.

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How to interpret the Series 7 by Arne Jacobsen? For the iconic chair's 60th anniversary, Fritz Hansen invited international architects to think about new renditions of it. One of the most striking ideas has come from Oslo-based architecture and design office Snøhetta. In this conversation, senior interior architect Marlene Fenger Vedal, architect Stian Alessandro Ekkernes Rossi, and graphic designer Sofie Platou from the practice's multidisciplinary team, explain how their idea of a shell without legs came to be, and what added value is brought by this rocking version that also spins sideways.

DAMN°: Why was it interesting for you to interpret the Series 7 chair?

Marlene Fenger Vedal: Arne Jacobsen is such an important architect and designer for Scandinavia and the rest of the world. His Series 7 chair is an icon. For us, it is a challenge to look at a previously designed object and discuss whether we can add something or change its use. We were not interested in creating our own icon or a new chair – we wanted to find out if we could bring new value to the existing design.

DAMN°: Is the effect of iconic furniture pieces similar to that of architectural icons?

MFV: Both are everlasting. Even if they are specifically of their era, they continue to stand strong over time. Good design is never out-dated, it is timeless.
Sofie Platou: There are many icons in different fields, and they all have something in common: people take these objects to heart. The status of the Series 7 also



has a lot to do with Arne Jacobsen's design approach. He wanted to make a low-cost chair that could be produced in large quantities.

DAMN°: How did you approach the project?

Sofie Platou: Fritz Hansen delivered two raw shells of the chair to our office in Oslo. When we began our research, we played around with these. All of a sudden, we were sitting in the shell without its legs, rocking around on the floor. We were intrigued to see how it worked in this way, without legs.

Rooftop of the Oslo Opera House / Designed by Snøhetta, the white marble building opened in 2008. It is here, looking out across the Fjord, that the architects tested their proposal for the legless version of Arne Jacobsen's Series 7™ chair, rocking and spinning sideways on the marble deck.



1

DAMN°: What else came with that initial idea?
Stian Alessandro Ekkernes Rossi: Actually, we connected the idea of the shell-without-legs to one of our architectural projects, the Rauland Mountain Church in Norway. The concept for the building was to bring the church to the people. Thus, we placed it in the middle of a ski area up in the mountains. Skiers can use the space as a common room and can ski into it from the slopes. The design of the church is free, as the building is taken out of the formal urban context. That is exactly what we did with the chair – we separated the shell from the legs, which are responsible for the formal aspect, and came to a freer and softer version. Our intention was a seat for use in a more social setting, be it indoor or outdoor. In the Mountain Church, for example, you can easily take all the chairs outside for an outdoor service. Or you can use the shell for a concert on the rooftop of the Oslo Opera House – with a view to the sea.
SP: We also figured out how to attach straps so that the shell can be carried like a backpack and taken to the park or to the beach – moving your living room outdoors! Another option is that the shell can be attached to its legs for use indoors, and can be detached for carrying outside. The shell offers a very relaxing way of sitting, like a rocking chair that also spins sideways.

DAMN°: What about the matter of one's balance when sitting in the shell?
MFV: We have added a rubber element on the back, in the curved part. It gives the user balance and stops the shell at both of the angles, so that the person won't fall over.



2



3

DAMN°: The landscape is an important consideration in many of Snøhetta's architectural projects. Is that also the reason you thought about an outdoor possibility?
MFV: Absolutely. We always try to integrate the landscape and the environment into our projects, so this was also a natural outcome of our interpreting the chair. We wanted to make it more playful and social, and to encourage people to use it both indoors and out in nature.



4

To celebrate the iconic chair's birthday, Danish artist Tal R was invited by Fritz Hansen to choose nine new lacquer colours, adding vitality to the collection. Each colour comes with a story. Altstadt Rose, for example, refers to the time when Tal R was a guest professor at the Arts Academy in Düsseldorf and living in the old city centre. <

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7 Cool Architects, with seven interpretations of the Series 7™ chair, including that of Snøhetta, is at Wohnbedarf in Zürich until 20 November. wohnbedarf.ch

The Rauland Mountain Church, also by Snøhetta, is positioned in the middle of a ski slope. Its unusual form is reminiscent of the shell of the Series 7 chair. The legless version of the chair has found a new setting here, indoors and outdoors. (1)
 Photo © Snøhetta and Sonaar

The Snøhetta team at work in their Oslo studio (2/3)

The Snøhetta version of the Series 7, uniting landscape and design (4)



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