

patented on january 28, 1958; and still unchanged- we are talking about the standard lego brick! precursor to many an architectural career; and companion of our childhoods. the sheer versatility of lego is unmatched by any other toy. every child has played with these, some of us going on to replicate the same with real bricks!

invented by the danish carpenter ole kirk christiansen, he named lego after the danish phrase 'leg godt' meaning 'play well'. the first lego bricks were manufactured from cellulose acetate and developed in the spirit of traditional wooden blocks that could be stacked upon one another; with one important difference. these plastic bricks could be locked together. the blocks snapped together, but not so tightly that they could not be pulled apart by a child.

what not many people are aware of is that lego's motto is 'only the best is good enough'; adopted to encourage employees to never skimp on quality. initially lego did not do well, but now it sells so successfully that it is estimated that if all lego pieces manufactured were distributed equally across the world, we would all receive 62 pieces per head!

there are now 4 lego theme parks - one at billund (the place where it was invented) in denmark, another at windsor (near london), a third in germany and one in california. on one of archohm's journeys a bigger than lifesize model of the harry potter character hagrid was seen at the vienna airport.

closer to home, the largest lego set is one of the taj mahal which has 5,922 pieces!

in the villa savoye le corbusier came closest to his goal of creating the home as a "machine for living in". situated in a suburb of paris and finished in 1931 the building is based on his modular system and incorporates his five principles as set out in "towards a new architecture" published in 1923.

these five principles are:

- :: pilotis
- :: free plan
- :: free façade
- :: roof garden
- :: ribbon windows

as le corbusier described "the plan proceeds from within to without; the exterior is the result of the interior, the elements of architecture are light and shade, wall and space. through this fusion, architecture focuses on space and volumes and their interaction rather than the two-dimensional cosmetic treatment of the 'façade'."

le corbusier was very interested in technology such as cruise liners and automobiles. in fact the curve of the ground floor of the villa savoye is based on the turning radius of the 1927 citroen with the approach to the building designed to be viewed best as a passenger in a car.

achille and pier giacomo castiglioni set up a design office together in 1944. in the following years they created numerous design classics from their tractor seat stool which emerged during the 1950s as part of their experimentation with the notion of the 'ready-made' art object to their 1982 cutlery line for Alessi, entitled dry, a reaction to decades of ultra-functional scandinavian style.

the castiglioni brothers felt that design must re-imagine everything about the object. only by discarding all preconceived notions and exploring the objects' form, function and production process anew could real design emerge. they described this process as follows 'start from scratch, stick to common sense, know your goals and means'.

castiglioni is probably best known for their lamps which were designed principally for flos. a quick search of the flos website produced 27 different lights designed by castiglioni from the sixties onwards and still available to buy. it is this ageless quality of the products that mark them out as exceptional design.

don't be fooled by the scale, a miniature lc4 purchased from moma, san francisco for the not so minature price of \$300.

form follows function.

'chairs are architecture, sofas are bourgeois.'

In the salon d'automne of 1929 something extraordinary happened. under the title "équipement interieur de l'habitation", a chair that was being publicly exhibited for the first time became an instant design classic. lc4, also known as b306, is arguably one of the most famous and easily recognisable pieces of twentieth century design and grew out of a collaboration between le corbusier, his cousin pierre jeanneret and charlotte perriand.

this chaise longue comprises a bent tubular steel frame, long leather cushion and head roll. the design allows for multiple seating possibilities giving the sitter freedom to choose his or her ideal position of comfort. so important was comfort to the design of the chair that it was nicknamed the relaxing machine by le corbusier.

as with all le corbusier's furniture, lc4 has no superfluous ornament, the machine made nature of the steel frame highlights his principles of rationalisation and standardisation as set out in his book l'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui published in 1925.

1 : 1

1 : 10

MUJI

muji. a design house, a way of life.

muji was born in japan in 1980. muji's basic philosophy is to design and develop simple household products at the most reasonable prices, utilizing the best of materials and technology, the simplicity advocated by it falls in line with architecture. they started with 9 products and are now at more than 7000. the name muji derives from the beginning of mujirushi ryōhin which translates as no brand quality goods.

to test and stretch the limits of every form and material and reduce it to the only logical answer to the problem or function it is trying to address. isn't that supposed to be an architectural theorem?

muji designs stem from lifestyle details through consumer profiling, the program or brief of what to make is innovative itself. design of a pencil sharpening blade that secures your finger from getting cut to rainshower speakers to continue to listen to music in your bath are completely mad and lovable products.

an aspiration to reach a level where nothing more can be added and nothing is removable! each and every element true to itself and critical to the whole. bringing a level of comfort and a smile on the end users face....a simple need that architecture needs to satisfy as one of its primary aims.

no muji product bears any branding. that's the brand!