

Press Release  
Frankenberg/Germany, May 2017

## **A jewel of the post-war era: Villa Harnischmacher II is a brilliant example of the architecture and tubular steel artistry of Marcel Breuer**

**Thonet in a starring role: an iconic Bauhaus villa in Wiesbaden's city centre by Marcel Breuer in 1954 sets the ideal stage for the tubular steel furniture that he designed in the late 1920s for the Frankenberg-based company. These classic Breuer designs are supported by a sympathetic cast of contemporary designs from the Thonet portfolio. The bungalow is Breuer's only existing example of a residential home in Germany and is considered an outstanding work of modern architecture. The clear, open and simple design of the Thonet furniture harmoniously merges with the elegantly discreet and highly functional layout of the house. The Thonet cantilever chairs, lamps and tables contribute to the character of the restored bungalow in a very special way. The house is furnished with more than ten different pieces from the portfolio. The family that now lives in the house undertook a major and authentic restoration of the Villa Harnischmacher II between 2011 and 2014, in close cooperation with the German office for the preservation of historical monuments.**



A bright open-plan layout of living room, dining area and kitchen is located in the western wing of the 275 m<sup>2</sup> bungalow. The light-flooded dining room becomes the centrepiece of the house with a generous dining table. Eight cantilever S 64 chairs in finishes from the "Pure Materials" collection are grouped around the long wooden S 1071 table. Probably the most famous and most often produced tubular steel classics by Marcel Breuer (1929/30), the S 64 chairs specified for Villa Harnischmacher II have been upholstered in a sophisticated dark-brown Napa leather. Designer Glen Oliver Löw pays homage to this tubular steel tradition with his rectangular S 1071 table (2004) for Thonet by resting a simple walnut table top onto an elegantly curved frame made of this refined yet ultra-versatile solution..

Adjoining the dining area is a spacious living room, where a comfortable S 35 lounge chair in brown buffalo leather takes pride of place in front of a distinctive marble fireplace from the 1950s. The particular arrangement of the marble sections reflects the floor plan of the house. Breuer created the design of the S 35 chair in 1929, during the same creative period that generated the S 64. In 1930 the design was presented at the Paris Grand Palais as the contribution of 'Deutscher Werkbund.'

A large glass sliding door opens up to the roofed terrace, where a group of chairs from the "Thonet All Seasons" collection invites the family and their guests to relax and socialise. The clear and

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discreet form of the S 40 garden chairs references the design of Mart Stam's classic S 43 from 1935. The linear garden adjoins this terrace and stretches along the western side of the house, featuring a rectangular swimming pool bordered by an original stone wall.

The aesthetic of tubular steel runs through the entire house as a central theme. In addition to the numerous furniture pieces, the material can be found also in lamps, sideboards and side tables from the Thonet portfolio, such as the popular B9 side table, which is represented in various versions throughout Villa Harnischmacher II. With this recurring motif, the history of tubular steel production and the relationship that began in 1925/26 between Marcel Breuer and the family company Thonet is elegantly expressed.

**Marcel Breuer and Thonet.** In the mid-1920s the architect began using tubular steel as a material for the construction of furniture. Inspired by bicycle handlebars, he first experimented with tubular steel during his studies at the Bauhaus in Weimar and developed furniture for various uses. Thonet recognised the potential of this impressive material early on and, through its contacts with the Bauhaus in Dessau, secured the rights to the best designs of the avant-gardists including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Mart Stam and Marcel Breuer. In 1928 an agreement about a tubular steel range was signed between Thonet and Breuer, and one year later the company acquired Breuer's firm "Standard Möbel", which he had founded in 1926/27 with Kálmán Lengyel, and brought a comprehensive tubular steel collection to market. To this day, the popular models can be found in the Thonet portfolio and are a key part of its essence.

**Villa Harnischmacher II.** In addition to designing furniture, painting and creating graphic art, architecture was Marcel Breuer's great passion. In 1923 he turned his talent to building architecture. Although he had no formal architectural training, he acquired practical experience early in his career, including at Walter Gropius' private architecture studio in Weimar. After he had completely refurbished the apartment of entrepreneur Paul Harnischmacher in 1929, the Harnischmachers commissioned Breuer to create an archetypal villa in Wiesbaden, which was completed in 1932. However, as this was destroyed during World War II, the Harnischmachers again commissioned the Bauhaus architect in 1953 and asked him to build a new villa in the garden of the old house.. The new and extraordinary bungalow, which impresses with strict functionality and bold simplicity (the guiding principles of the Bauhaus) was completed in 1954 and received the first award given by the Bund Deutscher Architekten one year later. The now 60 year-old Bauhaus villa was restored and renovated in a painstaking process beginning in 2011 by a family with no lack of courage, patience and love for detail, and in cooperation with the office for the preservation of historical monuments. The owners set themselves a goal to preserve as much as possible of the original bungalow, re-equip it in an energy-efficient way and remain loyal to the principles of the Bauhaus. For this reason it was a natural and heartfelt choice for them to furnish the Breuer house with his own iconic designs, together with further contemporary Thonet pieces inspired by the Bauhaus principles. Today, Villa Harnischmacher II is classified as a historical monument.

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We would be happy to receive any article you may publish.

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### ***Thonet – future-oriented furniture design with a long tradition***

*The unique success story of Thonet began with the work of master carpenter Michael Thonet. Since establishing his first workshop in Boppard on the River Rhine in 1819, the name Thonet has stood for high-quality, innovative and elegant furniture. The breakthrough came with the iconic chair No. 14, the so-called Vienna Coffee House Chair: the pioneering technique of bending solid beech wood for the first time enabled the mass production of chairs. The second milestone in design history was the tubular steel furniture by the famous Bauhaus architects Mart Stam, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer in the 1930s. At the time, Thonet was the world's largest producer of these tubular steel furniture designs, which are considered timeless today.*

*For the company today, the continuous process of innovation stands in the foreground alongside a focus on tradition and fine craftsmanship. Thonet collaborates with renowned national and international designers – in addition, some of the furniture is designed by the in-house Thonet Design Team. All of the furniture is produced in the company-owned manufacturing facility, and, following the motto "Individuality is our standard", custom-tailored solutions are part of everyday life in Frankenberg. Chief Executive Officer Brian Boyd together with Chief Operating Officer Michael Erdelt and Creative Director Norbert Ruf manage the company at the corporate head offices and production site in Frankenberg/Eder (Germany). The descendants of Michael Thonet, the fifth and sixth generations, are actively involved with the company's business as partners and sales representatives.*