

## Virgil Abloh c/o Vitra

**In collaboration with Virgil Abloh, Vitra is presenting the installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE on 12 June 2019 in the Fire Station on the Vitra Campus. At the same time, three products developed by the American architect, artist and designer will be launched in a limited edition as an exhibition spin-off.**

The latest collaboration by Vitra continues a long series of experimental projects undertaken with designers, architects and artists – resulting in exhibitions, installations or special editions that reach an audience with a keen interest in both social issues and design topics.

Virgil Abloh is known for pushing boundaries. The 38-year-old architect, DJ, engineer, university lecturer, artist, entrepreneur and artistic director at Louis Vuitton has captivated an entire generation with his challenging methods of thinking and working. He uses his creativity to communicate socio-political messages and manages to lure us onto unfamiliar terrain with ideas that are often comprehended only in retrospect.

As a child of Ghanaian immigrants who was raised in a Chicago suburb, Virgil Abloh succeeds in designing luxury fashion while simultaneously raising questions about its legitimacy. He scrutinises existing regulations and hierarchies, frames of reference and modes of interpretation. Any kind of collective cultural heritage that falls into his hands – whether Renaissance painting or sneakers, Rem Koolhaas or Kim Kardashian – is ‘sampled’ or ‘hacked’, quoted or reinterpreted, optimised or altered, and thereby communicated to a new generation that increasingly looks to social media for information and inspiration. ‘To me, design has the inherent idea of being a bridge from the past, with an eye towards the future’, explains Abloh, who was fascinated by the designs of Jean Prouvé and had an interest in exploring the Frenchman’s work from the outset of his cooperation with Vitra.

‘His aim is to share knowledge with others. He does this in a way that is easily understood, appealing and highly accessible’, says Nora Fehlbaum, Vitra CEO. Her motivation for the collaboration was Abloh’s open approach to art and furniture classics, which enables him to shift the related discourse away from an elite circle towards a younger audience and to generate new excitement.

After the initial discussions, it was clear that this joint project would be targeted towards the emerging generation. According to Virgil Abloh, this generation is interested in a wide range of topics and does not regard art, architecture, music and fashion as separate disciplines, but finds pleasure in linking them together. Eckart Maise, Chief Design Officer at Vitra, also felt that the design of an object by Virgil Abloh should be preceded by a conceptual discourse.

The result of this discourse is the installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE, which will be shown from 12 June to the end of July in Zaha Hadid’s Fire Station on the Vitra Campus before travelling in autumn to the newly opened Vitra showroom in New York. At the focus of this artistic intervention by Virgil Abloh is the interaction between an adolescent and his home surroundings. On one hand, it looks at how the evolution of technology and changes in society might affect our homes, touching on such themes as sustainability by means of recycling, dematerialisation and overabundance – or as Abloh suggests: ‘It’s arguable whether we will even have a need for furniture by 2035.’ On the other hand, it addresses the degree to which our environment influences our life path, our tastes and the decisions we make over time. Drawing on this idea, Virgil Abloh has created a very personal ‘residential biography’ of a fictitious teenager from the year 2019, accompanying him into the year 2035.

The first section of the installation is titled ‘Past/Present’ and portrays a seemingly arbitrary collection of furniture and other items – resembling a condensed assemblage of memories. It consists of physical objects, colours and materials, which are viewed through a filter that creates the atmosphere of a dream sequence. In this manner, the scene shows the diverse influences that take root in the long-term memory of our teenager, and thus have a potential effect on his life at later points in time. The displayed objects – from the

Petite Potence lamp and Antony armchair by Jean Prouvé to designs by Charles and Ray Eames or Eero Aarnio, some in their original form, others creatively altered – might have come from the parents' household furnishings, but could also have been collected from a playground, a classroom or a friend's apartment.

The second section, 'Tomorrow', looks ahead to the year 2035 – just beyond the temporal horizon that we can currently envision, as Eckart Maise explains – and shows the first own home of our now adult protagonist. The teenager has become a creative "doer" who transforms his memories and experiences, all of the cultural and social influences, into his own products, thereby finding a personal field of activity', says Nora Fehlbaum. Important in this context are not only answers to the challenges of the future, but also bridges to the past, which are constructed by work methods for adapting, hacking and quoting familiar objects. The *déjà vu* effect of this 2035 studio, which serves as a space for both living and working, generates a sense of trust and creates a firm ground upon which to stand in an era marked by disruptive developments.

The futuristic living environment includes three spin-off products that were developed in conjunction with the exhibition and will be available for purchase on 12 June 2019 at the Vitra Campus, and also sold online in Europe as limited editions at [vitra.com](http://vitra.com) from the same date. Products derived from this collaboration will go on sale in the American market in the autumn.

### **Ceramic Block**

In the installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE, the visitor's gaze is directed to the future with a wall of consecutively numbered bright orange bricks: the Ceramic Blocks. These glazed ceramic objects are not just a structural element but also take on a life of their own as storage objects in Virgil Abloh's concept. The limited exhibition edition comprises 999 Ceramic Blocks, each with a noticeable numeral that makes it unique. The Ceramic Blocks can be purchased during the exhibition: the removal of an individual block changes the installation, simultaneously modifying Virgil Abloh's vision of 'Tomorrow'.

### **Petite Potence**

Jean Prouvé created the Potence wall lamp for his home in Nancy in 1942, and the design was soon produced in a range of sizes. Virgil Abloh is fascinated by the industrial clarity of this concept and has integrated the smaller Petite Potence in his installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE. He has accentuated the 'industrial DNA' of the design with an orange lacquer finish that gives it a new visibility, while a striking LED bulb in an oblong cage further enhances the appearance. Virgil Abloh's version of Petite Potence is available in a limited and numbered edition of 300 pieces.

### **Antony**

The armchair Antony was developed by Jean Prouvé in the early 1950s for the university halls of residence in Antony near Paris. With its dynamically curved wooden shell and characteristic metal base, this small armchair was one of the French designer's last furniture creations. Virgil Abloh pays tribute to the iconic design with an updated version in his installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE. He has transformed the armchair by giving it a plexiglass shell that reveals the supporting metal structure, which is further accentuated by a bright orange lacquer finish. This version is available in a numbered exhibition spin-off limited to 100 pieces.

The installation TWENTYTHIRTYFIVE will be accessible to the public from 13 June to 31 July in the Fire Station on the Vitra Campus.

Opening hours during Art Basel, 13 to 16 June 2019, are from 10 am to 10 pm.

Opening hours from 17 June to 31 July are from 10 am to 6 pm.