



1 2 5 JAHRE DEUTSCHE MANUFAKTUR

Bretz

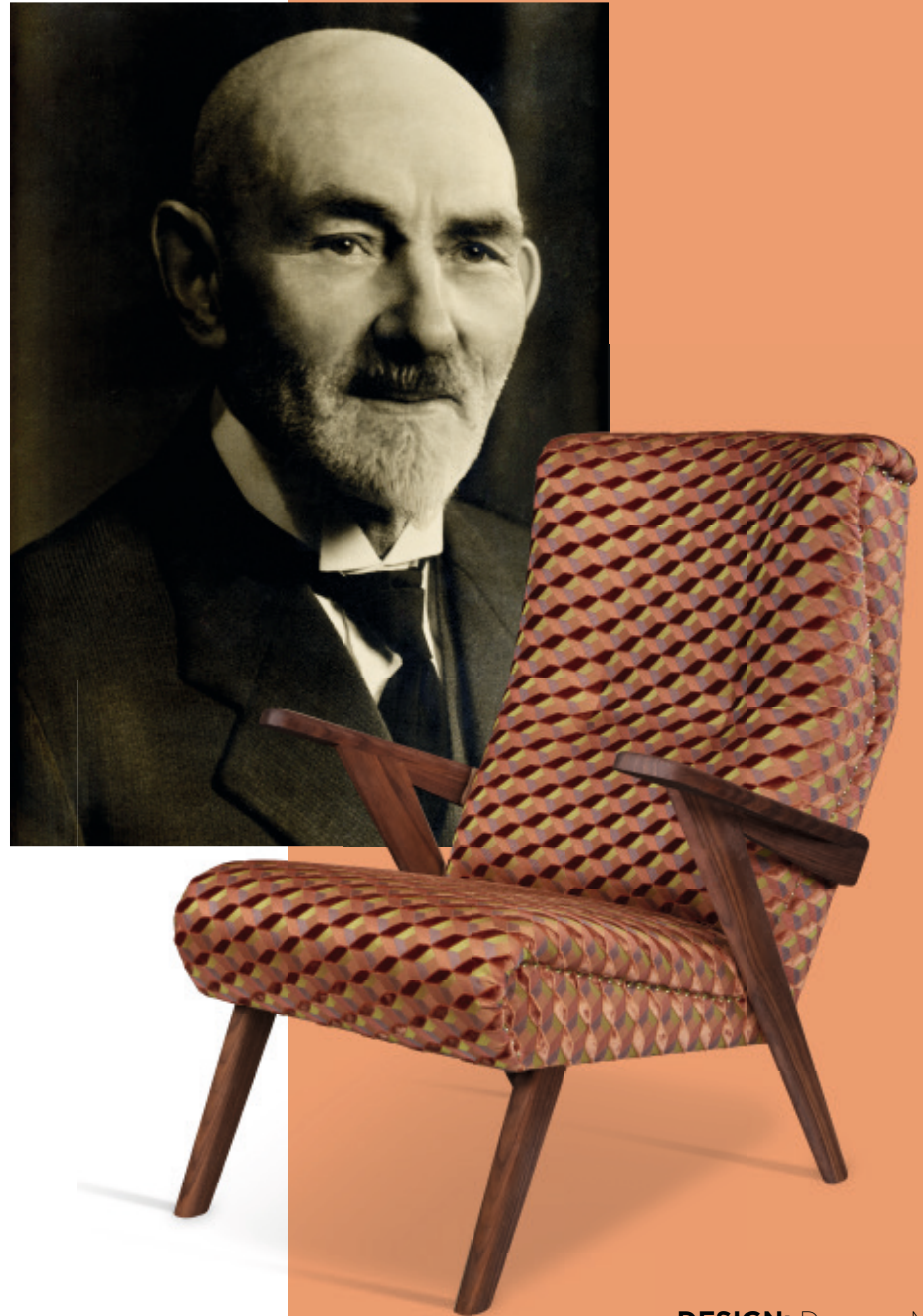
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JOHANN 125 - A TRUE CHARACTER

„Johann“ has grown. He's also put on a little bit of weight, which he wears well, and now also exudes his own style. Who else carries off brightly coloured op art patterned velvet, golden rivets teamed with solid walnut backrests and legs like a made-to-measure suit?

„Johann“ is a Bretz' present to itself, a new armchair designed to mark its 125th anniversary. It is named after the company's founder Johann Bretz and is based on a model that dates back to 1957. Its design bridges the gap between the past and the present and its workmanship shows what has always set apart the company based in Gensingen in the Rhine Hesse region: outstanding craftsmanship.



DESIGN: Dagmar Marsetz

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**JOHANN 125
LIMITED EDITION**

Nur je 100 Sessel in den Bezügen
Diamond Green, Copper & Turquoise

Only 100 chairs each with the covers
Diamond Green, Copper & Turquoise

Seulement 100 fauteuils disponibles
par modèle: Diamond Green,
Copper & Turquoise

50er

JOHANN

1 2 5
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20er

JOHANN

125 YEARS BRETZ - TRUE CHARACTERS

125th anniversary – this is a veritable rarity in the furniture industry, where there are only a handful of brands that are as old and continue to be under family ownership. And indeed probably none have undergone such a radical transformation as Bretz: from a mass-market furniture producer to a small, high-end manufacturer, from solid standard to sophisticated and nonetheless distinctive upholstered furniture. They are as distinctive as they are comfortable, often with an unorthodox shape, always covered in velvet and as brightly coloured as a bird of paradise – essentially „True Characters“. And the people behind the products are as well: individualists full of energy, ambition and determination. They are the reason that Bretz has been able to undergo change yet still remain true to itself.

50er



90er



20er





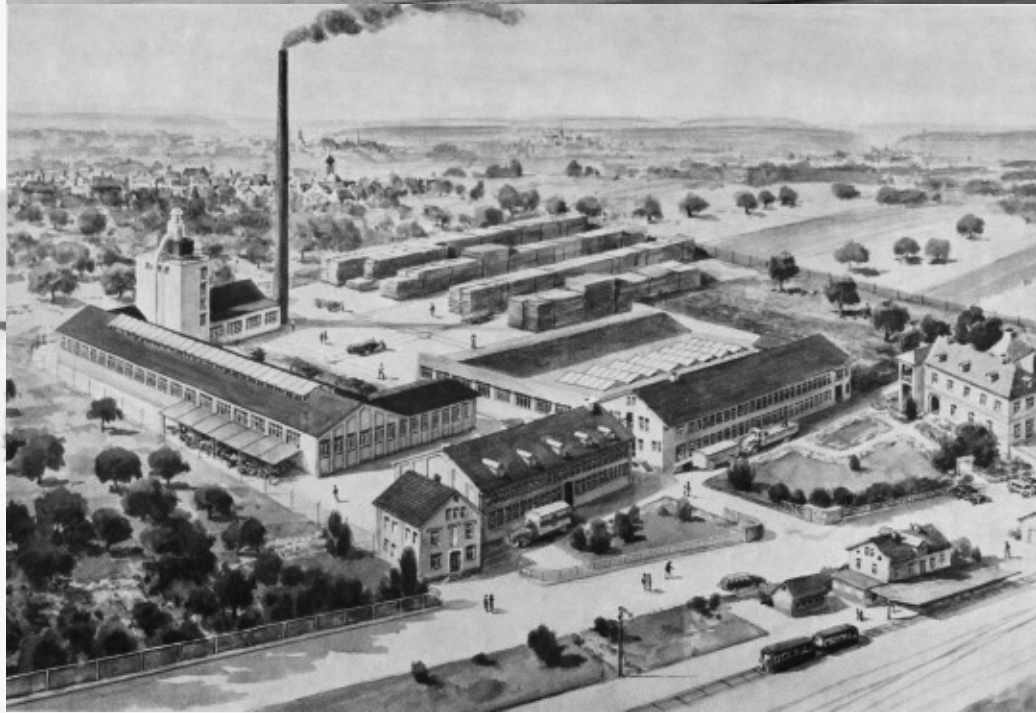
HISTORY

Company founder Johann Bretz had a mind of his own. He was sixth child of a farming family living in Gensingen, who gave up on a career as a plumber after completing his apprenticeship to set up in business as an independent mattress manufacturer. He established his first factory in 1895. By contrast, his son Alexander, who expanded the product range to include upholstered furniture and increased the number of employees to 100, was left with nothing after the Second World War. Air raids had comple-

tely destroyed the factory – yet, he immediately rebuilt it. Karl-Fritz, the third generation of the Bretz family experienced both the company's heyday in the mid-1970s when the company had 1,600 employees, as well as its decline due to the oil price crisis, recession and the hapless purchase of another company – the company went into administration in 1986.

But the following year, he founded a company with five former employees, asked his sons for support and so ushered in a new era.

1 2 5
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TRANSFORMATION

„Actually, it was a totally mad idea,“ explains Norbert Bretz about the decision in 1992 to save the company together with his brother Hartmut. Their father had asked them to do so, and they agreed, even although they had long since left Gensingen and had completely different careers with the prospect of well-paid jobs. However, they had both grown up with the furniture, the company and a sense of family and responsibility towards the region, whose main employer was Bretz. And, of course, ambition also played a major role, „we

were just excited by the idea“. Norbert and Hartmut Bretz took over as the fourth generation. However, instead of producing furniture, with which the company had supplied mainstream customers with everything from kidney table styles to Gelsenkirchen baroque for decades, they quickly moved to sofas and armchairs, the soft contours and vibrant colours of which were somehow reminiscent of comic books and Keith Haring pop art.

„We just liked it,“ explains Norbert Bretz – and the so-called ‚New

Economy‘ generation, which was making a lot of money online at the time, like it just as much. As more and more cheap copies started arriving from Eastern Europe, the brothers transformed the company into what it is today: a luxury brand that systematically pushes back the boundaries – ultra-big, ultra-bright, ultra-extravagant – and globally successful and distinctive. A total of around 90 people once again work in Gensingen and, in addition to shop-in-shop concessions, the company also has 6 own stores and 9 dealer-run brand stores and a 40 percent export share.

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BRETZ FILM

DESIGN &
PRODUCTION



PRODUCTION

“Say no to normal” is the company’s slogan, which only works in design if the workmanship can keep pace. Upholstery with ultra-deep recesses that also form precisely distorted squares, like the best-seller „Cloud 7“ model – but first you need to know how to produce such a unique piece. Or how to button-tuft not just the back and seat of a sofa, but densely over the entire product, as is the case with the “Cocoa Island” seating ensemble. And not forgetting the

snail-shaped armrests on the „Gaudi“ or the tightly pleated edge and extra-thick piping of the „Ohlinda“ sofa that hark back to the company’s mattress heritage. The upholsterers and sewers give of their best with every new design, and anyone who visits the extensive factory premises in Gensingen immediately understands how much design and craftsmanship are involved – and the wealth of hidden expertise. The new „Moonraft“ sofa, for example, „is intended to convey a feeling of

floating,“ Norbert Bretz explains. It consists entirely of continuous upholstered tubes, rather like the chambers of an air mattress. And yet the filling could not simply be sewn under the covering to ensure that they appear light as if they were filled with air, at the same time remaining straight and in place. Instead, each tube was given its own ticking, which in turn has its own zipper. Everything done by hand. Everything made in Germany. And ultimately, total teamwork.

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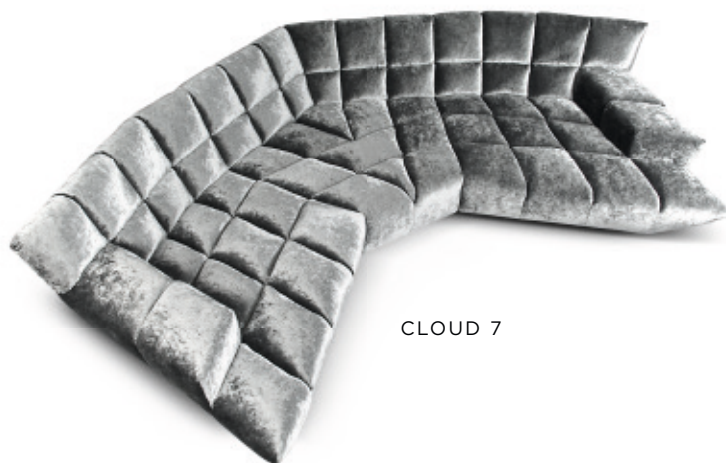
Bretz



OHLINDA



COCOA ISLAND



CLOUD 7



GAUDI



MOONRAFT

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DESIGN PROCESS

Bretz designs are almost exclusively drafted in-house. It started with sofas and armchairs designed by Norbert and Hartmut Bretz. Both are economists rather than designers, but gained an insight into upholstering through internships. They also designed to suit their own taste and the conviction that design means more than just the design of a piece of furniture –

design also means the conversation about it. For the brothers, this also means a lot of arguing. It's both exhausting and extremely fruitful and has, in fact, given rise to a culture of open discussion that shapes the entire company and, above all, the creative process. Carolin Kutzera is also greatly involved in this process. As Hartmut Bretz' daughter, she is the fifth

generation of the Bretz family to be involved in the company and joined in 2009. As a trained fashion designer, she initially worked as a creative director, while completing her MBA and then replaced her father in the management team in October 2018. Now she heads up the company together with Norbert Bretz.

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Bretz

FUTURE

Carolyn Kutzera studied in Milan and Paris, worked in London and travelled a lot before joining the company. „I wanted to get out there and get to know the world,“ she says, continuing, „I love to discover different and new things“. And as she is convinced that Bretz customers share a similar passion, she wants the company's history, expertise and openness to the world to be much more strongly experienced in future – in stores and online, where in-house produced films are available around the clock.

“Many people are already very well informed when they visit our stores. They are much more interested in how their sofa is made, what materials are used and what manufacturer's values,“ she observed. In future, it is essential that the company becomes more widely known internationally, far beyond the German-speaking world. The fact that people are longing for a special kind of tactility and “off-line zones” as a counterpart to the growing digitalization of the world plays into the hands of a manufacturer like Bretz, as does its “Made in Germany” label.

1 2 5
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The collection itself is becoming more and more international, mixing urban with ethnographic, avant-garde and historical overtones, as is the case with “Drop City”, a modular system consisting of upholstered cubes of different sizes. Depending on the fabric and colour, its clean lines at times convey a rather muted Indian feel – with striped velour in warm earth tones – and at times cheekily modern with a purple and green art deco pattern. Yet always individual. It was designed by Dagmar Marsetz, who has been part of the creative team with her colleague Pauline Junglas since 2016.





1 2 5
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Velvet plays a vital role at Bretz. In 2015, the brand phased out leather for ethical reasons and uses only the highest quality velour as upholstery fabrics. Probably no other furniture brand has as much experience with this sophisticated, hardwearing yet often unmanageable fabric. Nobody understands better how to keep the material moving through folding and quilting, and highlight its shimmering surface with curves and edges than the Gensingen experts. Perhaps because they let its unique character shine through as they do their own.

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