

A G A I N S T T H E G R A I N

BENTWOOD FURNITURE FROM THE COLLECTION OF FERN AND MANFRED STEINFELD





30 / SIDE CHAIR, MODEL NO. 51

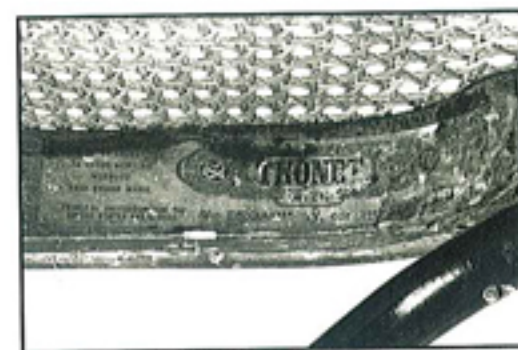
Designer: attributed to August Thonet (1829–1910), c. 1885

Manufacturer: Gebrüder Thonet (1853–1921), c. 1900/1915

Beech, cane

36 x 16 x 20 1/4 in. (91.4 x 40.6 x 51.4 cm)

This chair first appeared in Gebrüder Thonet's catalog of 1885 and remained in production through the firm's 1911/15 catalog along with an armchair and a stool (cat. no. 31). It exemplifies the versatility of bentwood manipulation: a single length of bentwood frames the back, extending diagonally down and forward to terminate at the front feet; another length of wood forms the hexagonal back piece and the back legs. Stability is assured by two inverted V-shaped rods that support the front corners of the seat frame and terminate at diagonally opposed front and back legs. Its design has been attributed to August Thonet, Michael's third son, who designed a number of Thonet's most technically precocious, if commercially impractical, forms for display at the many international exhibitions the firm



30 A / PAPER LABEL FOR THONET'S NEW YORK SHOWROOM AT 860 BROADWAY, IN USE FROM 1900/1901

continued to enter after Michael Thonet's death in 1871. The strongly angular note of the bent rods in this chair stands in contrast to the more curvilinear, scrolling forms of the preceding decades. This model, unlike some of August Thonet's, was designed for mass production. It was especially popular in the North American market, and was featured in Thonet's promotional photographs as seating for the dining room of New York's Hotel Astor.



31 / STOOL, MODEL NO. 51

Designer: attributed to August Thonet (1829–1910), c. 1885

Manufacturer: Gebrüder Thonet (1853–1921), 1885/1915

Beech, cane

17 1/8 x 14 7/8 x 14 7/8 in. (43.5 x 37.6 x 37.6 cm)

42 / STAND, MODEL NO. 42

Manufacturer: Gebrüder Thonet
(1853-1921), after 1904

Beech

52 in. (132 cm)

This stand is one of the few examples of Art Nouveau-inspired furniture to appear in Gebrüder Thonet's catalog of 1904. In this model, Thonet has suspended a tray resembling a lily pad between square-sectioned rods arranged to echo the organic growth of plants. The interest in curving, asymmetrically disposed lines and forms was characteristic of the Art Nouveau, which appeared in the graphic and decorative arts of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The style was most fully represented at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, especially in the work of French and Belgian architects and designers. Of the bent-wood furniture and interiors shown at the Exposition, Kohn's work was the more informed (albeit subtly) by this new taste for flowing lines and sweeping curves (see Ottillinger, fig. 11). This stand represents a rare attempt by Thonet to capture the essence of the movement. Generally, Austrian bent-wood furniture of the new century took a different direction than contemporaneous French design: it used geometry, rather than the idea of organic growth, as its inspiration.



**73 / HALL STAND, MODEL NO.
1369**

Manufacturer: Jacob & Josef Kohn
(1867-1914)/Kohn-Mundus (1914-
1922), after 1916

Beech, wood laminate, mirror glass,
metal

78 3/4 x 42 1/4 x 9 5/8 in. (200 x 107.3
x 24.5 cm)

Though the firm had merged with the conglomerate Mundus in 1914, Jacob & Josef Kohn issued a new catalog of designs under its own name in 1916 so as not to lose its established audience. In addition to the bentwood classics of the previous century, this catalog featured an expanded range of furniture in the spare, architectonic language of architects and designers such as Siegel and Hoffmann. Apart from the lengths of wood that form the ovals enclosing the mirror glass, there is little in this stand that technically required its manufacture in bent wood. The stark grids formed by the square-sectioned wood rods that describe this piece show the extremes to which bent wood might be taken under the geometricizing principles of early twentieth-century Viennese design. The stand has become a skeleton, almost without substance.

