



Beisheim's inflatable designs combine wooden elements with hard-wearing Hypalon, a synthetic rubber commonly used for pool toys.

German product designer **Philipp Beisheim** pumps fresh air into pop-culture icons



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Is there such a thing as a universal design language? If so, what does it tell us about the world we live in? PHILIPP BEISHEIM:

People have been trying to formulate a universal design language for decades. During the Bauhaus movement, the language of the time expressed concerns of affordability and a push towards mass production – ideas later challenged by postmodernists, who argued that modernist design was boring. When viewed from a contemporary perspective, however, postmodernism lacks the clarity of thought and sophistication of its predecessor. This is all to say that design languages keep changing and evolving. When it comes to the world today, I think we're somewhere between modernism and postmodernism. I'm not sure that we will ever reach an *absolute* design language. Only time will tell.

What triggered your line of inflatable furniture? I was inspired by the flamboyant blow-up furniture designs of the 1960s, pieces that made a bold statement. I spent a

long time – about five years – researching those iconic designs and the culture around them. I think inflatable furniture has a lot of potential, especially in the leisure- and outdoor-furniture market. Inflatables are perfectly suited to temporary settings.

Is collapsible furniture the way of the future? I think collapsible and inflatable furniture should be given serious consideration as alternative solutions for situations in which hard and heavy industrial materials continually fail us.

The refugee crisis springs to mind. What can design do to help? The refugee crisis has to be understood in its totality. It's not an isolated design issue. That said, I think that we designers should work collectively to come up with creative concepts for assisting these people – particularly the children. I envision a platform initiated by designers for designers, where creatives can share innovative ideas for helping refugees. – MEO
philippbeisheim.com