

As Charlotte and Peter Fiell explain so well in their book *Modern Chairs*, "...the chair, as a significant object, is incomparable, it establishes an unmistakable expression of power and authority and serves as an indicator of social transformations. More than any other piece of furniture, it can give us information about the political opinions and objectives of its owner, whose character and origin it has the power to reveal: the chair enables us to have a look at the human soul".¹

In fact, all these affirmations and observations can be applied to Toni Giró's work *Confort* (Comfort) centred on this object: on the poster there appears the almost impossible image of a man camouflaged *within* the seat of a bus – an image published in the media to refer to the way in which certain illegal immigrants try to cross the frontiers which separate them from a better life –, face to face with a projected image of the chair, Egg, which Arne Jacobsen designed at the end of the fifties. Unmistakably the man-chair tells us many of his objectives as well as his origin, in the same way that the lines which define the polygons that construct Jacobsen's chair reveal an organic shape similar to a wrapping, welcoming, *comfortable*.

According to the *Diccionari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, the word *comfort* is defined as "the absence of all that can be a nuisance or material discomfort, the arrangement of things to provide a greater physical well-being". Modern design – as it was defined in the founding principles of the Bauhaus –, was born with the desire to improve the lives of people and make it more comfortable. However, in the phase of capitalism of fiction,² it has become an object of advertising as a result of a need to find more effective systems to make more desirable certain products which no technical or functional improvements have been introduced but with the aim of generating a great demand for mimetic *styles of life*. Industrial production has had to find the necessary techniques which make it possible to force the wishes of society towards their products. Thus, by using the mass media, the competitive nature of the market economy has invested the industrial object with univocal and exclusive meanings so that what is valued is not its utility but rather its significance. The image of the objects designed will symbolize social and economic status; each object will seem to provide the answer to a schematic *necessity* which the consumer cannot nor must not question, but only buy. Therefore, we could say that the idea of comfort that prevails today has been emptied of any programmed content and has been transformed into a simple economic interchange, into a commodity.

In his installation, Toni Giró demonstrates this loss of content and puts into practice what we could call *antidesign*. In its materialization and transformation into sculpture, Jacobsen's chair becomes a useless object; what in the drawing would suggest commodity – the projectional lines – are recreated and transformed into ropes which prevent its use as a comfortable object. Giró also questions the unidirectional messages of advertising, dedicated exclusively to the creation of needs based on fictitious realities in order to achieve the massive consumption of products which provide the consumer with an instant pleasure. The poster which forms part of this installation was already presented independently in the exhibition *Advertising*, situated in the illuminated signs and canopies of the cities of Mataró and

Sabadell, and in which twenty artists took part in these spaces dedicated to commercial advertising, in an attempt to convert them temporarily into places for discussion and reflection. Therefore, in his poster, he ironically manipulates the mechanisms of the language of advertising to criticize an unjust social organization that condemns many people to immigration and a badly paid job, so that the rest can enjoy *comfort*.

1. Charlotte & Peter Fiell: *Modern Chairs*, Benedikt Taschen Verlag CmbH, 1994.
2. Vicente Verdú: *El estilo del mundo. La vida en el capitalismo de ficción*, Anagrama, 2003. Vicente Verdú defines three stages of capitalism: after the capitalism of production and the capitalism of consumism, there is the capitalism of fiction (or what is also called postcapitalism), the objective of which is not the production of goods but rather the production of a second reality or reality of fiction at the service of the culture of the show.