



Girsberger Model 1600
reinterpreted 50 years on

girsberger

Everything has been thought of before, but the problem is to think of it again.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Production in Endingen 1970

Model 1600 – since 1963

A key turning point in the history of Swiss furniture manufacturer Girsberger occurred in 1961 and bore the modest name “Model 1600”. The classically inspired lounge chair was just right for the zeitgeist of the time. It proved to be so popular that Heinrich and Wilhelm Girsberger decided in 1963 to exploit the market opportunities resulting from the establishment of the European Economic Community with their own production facility in Germany. Three employees set up shop in a former cigar factory in Endingen am Kaiserstuhl. This developed into Girsberger GmbH, which now has a staff of 120 and which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2013. What could be more appropriate than to create a new edition of the successful Model 1600 to mark the anniversary?

Under the designer notes, the Model 1600 is designated as a “work in progress”. It is based on an idea that Wilhelm Girsberger originally sketched on packing paper. His idea was to produce an extremely comfortable lounge chair with a classic, modern design. Stretchable fabric straps and soft upholstered cushions provide the comfort. The frame is made of solid chromium-plated flat steel. The Model 1600 is available either with felt-type fabric or high-quality smooth leather cushions. Two and a half square metres of leather from a single piece, i.e. half a cowhide, are used for each chair.

Heinrich Girsberger comments on the Model 1600

In 1953, after the death of his father, Heinrich Girsberger (born in 1929) took over the family business with his brother Wilhelm and sister Magdalena. The brothers ran the company for over 40 years until the business was handed over to Heinrich Girsberger’s son Michael in 1995.

Mr Girsberger, the Model 1600 is Girsberger’s new version of the lounge chair that was a huge hit in the 1960s. How did the design come about back then?

My brother Wilhelm and I were inspired in the 1960s by contemporary interior design. At the time, seating groups in executive offices, waiting areas or reception halls were very modern. In 1961 Wilhelm designed a lounge chair – Model 1600 – whose shape was particularly stylish and timeless. It was also very functional and versatile. The chair could be combined into seating groups using a connecting piece and was available either with or without armrests. Model 1600 seating groups are still in use, for instance in the lobby of the Federal Administrative Court in Karlsruhe, Germany.

How did the production of a lounge chair affect the company’s development?

The Model 1600 was the first Girsberger chair on the market that was not made of wood. The chair was just right for the time and proved to be extremely popular. The many requests from Germany prompted us to establish our own production facility in Germany in 1963. In Endingen we employed three people who used a modest range of tools and sewing machines and initially worked only on the Model 1600.

What possibilities were opened up to Girsberger by the new facility in Germany?

Prior to this, Girsberger had been known only in the Swiss furniture and office furniture market. After opening the facility in Endingen we engaged in direct talks with furniture and office furniture companies in northern Germany, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. Like door-to-door salesmen, my brother and I went to the specialist dealers and presented the Model 1600 directly in the shops. This strategy proved very successful. Over time, more and more of the Model 1600 chairs were displayed in the showrooms of well-known dealers in Germany. Later on, the high demand for the elegant Girsberger lounge chair opened the door to other European markets. Girsberger GmbH still supplies the UK and the Benelux countries from Endingen.



1907

Piano stool



1958

Model 3100



1963

Model 1600



1973

Eurochair 5600



1978

Eurochair 3900



1985

Trilax



2007

Reflex



2012

Jack