Looking Through the *Red Blue Chair*

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Gerrit Rietveld’s *Red Blue Chair* is considered as one of the icons of modern design. While originally made in 1918, the chair wasn’t painted until 1923. Rietveld’s involvement with *De Stijl* artists from 1919 influenced his decision to paint the furniture, their primary colors reflecting associations with the abstract paintings by Bart Van der Leck and Piet Mondrian. It has been proposed that Rietveld painted the chair to match the interior of an exhibition with Bart van der Leck’s paintings on the walls.

During the period of 1919-1923, Rietveld also used primary colors in his designs for children’s furniture and toys (*Witteveen Child’s High Chair, Child’s Wheelbarrow, etc.*). In 1924, he applied the same color scheme to the Schröder house in Utrecht, The Netherlands, built for Mrs. Schröder-Schräder and her three children.

While simple primary colors exemplify the pure abstraction pursued by *De Stijl*, they also evoke fun and wit seen in children’s furniture and toys. The addition of bright colors in the *Red Blue Chair* along with Rietveld’s other designs create a sense of festivity, which fits into *De Stijl* artists’ vision to renew Europe after the turmoil of World War I.

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1 Marijke Küper, *De Stoel van Rietveld = Rietveld’s Chair* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2011), 104.