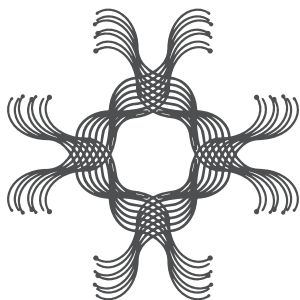


Giseok Kim



Otto Zapf

Giseok Kim (1990) designed the Aluminum Shelf series in 2021. The shelves were first produced in Seoul for Spatial Semiology (2019–2022), the spatial design studio Giseok founded to explore the potential of movable objects and symbols in an interior design context.

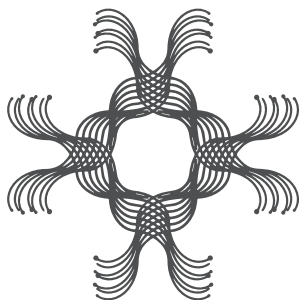
In 2023, COUR became the first to produce the Aluminum Shelf series in Europe, introducing the modules to a wider audience via the COUR showroom and exhibition space in Antwerp. Aluminum Shelf is inspired by ‘skeleton architecture’, the beauty of empty spaces, exposed materials and visible functionality. The modules consist of aluminium U-profiles connected with nuts and bolts – industrial materials typically used for functional purposes. However, Giseok wanted to expose these materials as an integral part of the design, valuing their recognisability and functionality. Produced in small-scale industrial ensembles using readily available materials, Aluminium Shelf offers a practical and versatile solution for storage and display in any type of space – whether stacked or mounted side by side, as stand-alone units or in modular ensembles.

Although both Zapf and Giseok emerged from a specific time and place, allowing themselves to be influenced by the zeitgeist – for Zapf, the rounded modularity of space-age comfort, for Giseok, the rising popularity of modern Korean design – putting them in a room together allows us to crystallise what makes each of them unique: clever engineering, functionality, modularity, customisability, material simplicity and an uncompromising aesthetic vision. Both contribute to a unique stream of design history, one that blends functionality with timeless appeal.

Otto Zapf x Giseok Kim brings together two designers – one modern, one contemporary – whose minimal, technical and sculptural designs effortlessly embody the essence of the different eras in which they were created. Nowhere is this more apparent than in two of their most iconic objects, Zapf's Softline series and Giseok's Aluminium Shelf series.

Otto Zapf (1931–2018) introduced the Softline series in 1969 – the same year as the moon landing. The series uses detachable surfaces which snap onto the frame with metal snap fasteners. For the shelving system, Zapf used light wood frames that could be dressed with glossy taps. Born into a family of carpenters and cabinet makers, Zapf entered the world of design at a moment in history when people longed for a clear break with the past. To promote his Softline series, he drove around Paris in a VW bus announcing the line's arrival. The line's shelving program appealed to both retailers looking for a display that could be quickly customised and customers looking for furniture that reflected an individualistic, fast and flexible lifestyle. The snap fasteners and Technicolor hues evoke space-age and ski chic. Furniture for a new bourgeois consumer who – unlike their stiff parents – values both functionality and fun.

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