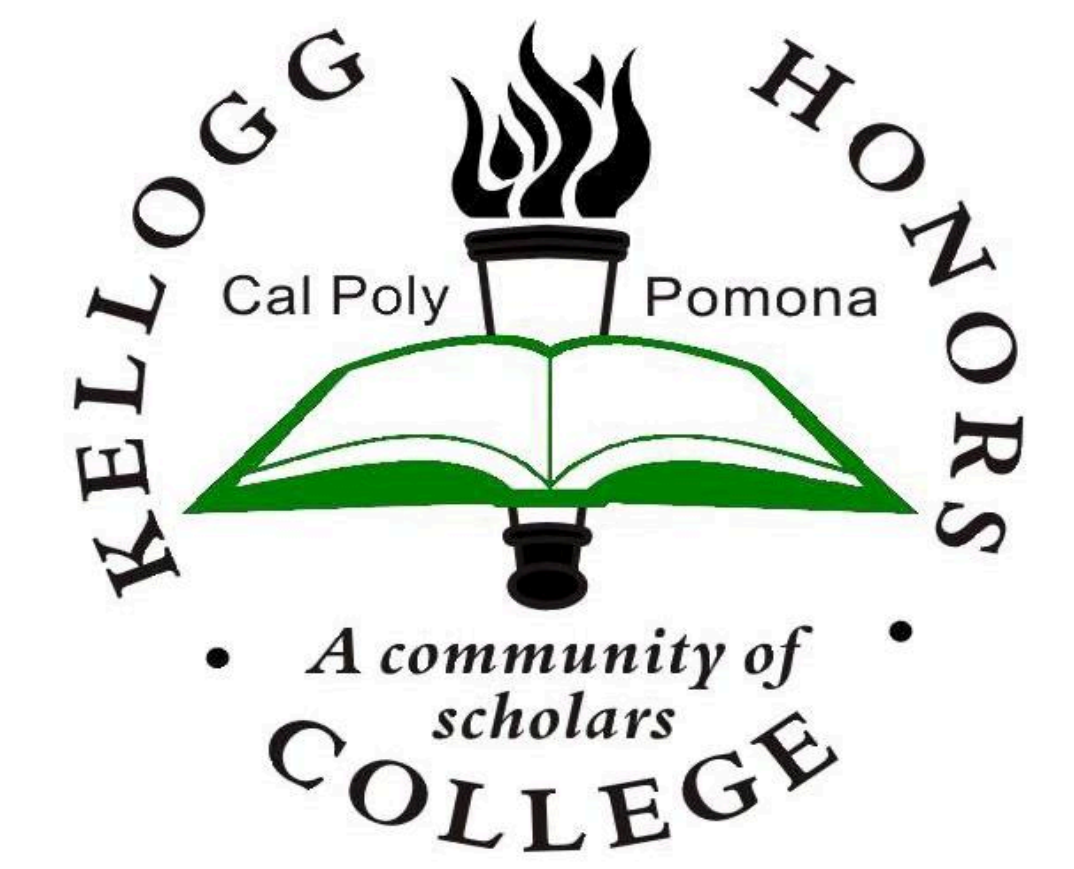


# FURNITURE DESIGN

# BY ARCHITECTS



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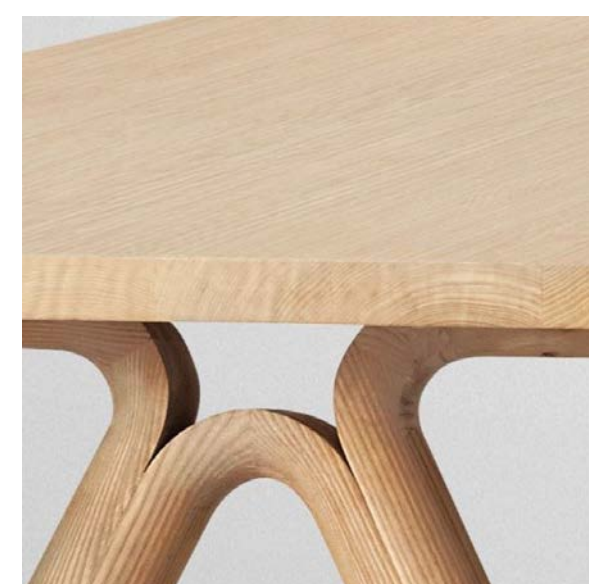


The founding of the Chicago school of architecture, Knoll school of design, and the Herman Miller Company helped shape design disciplines of the time. Moreover, they allowed design principles that were formerly reserved for architecture to apply to furniture design (Moody, 63).

George Nelson debuted the Catenary Collection in 1963 at a skyrocketed price. He was not designing for the average home, but showcasing fine technique and American materials. In contrast to Scandinavia's wood and France and Britain's antiques, American furniture was mostly represented by metal. George Nelson and the Herman Miller Company wanted to be revolutionary in their craft. He made the Catenary pieces using the minimum number of components in various permutations joining them with epoxy adhesive "in the spirit of the early pioneers of the railroad carriage seats and the barber's chair of the nineteenth century." (Moody, 64).

George Nelson described his own creative abilities as a series of flashes of inspiration and clarity that he called "zaps" and turned into innovative design ideas. The first-ever pedestrian shopping mall was the result of a 1942 "zap". Soon after, he pioneered the concept of built-in storage with the modular storage wall. It was an immediate sensation in the furniture industry, pulling the architect into this field that he has such a natural talent for. He was ahead of his time with interest in the environment, communications technology, writing, and teaching.

Nelson earned much of his fame as director of design at Herman Miller from 1945 to 1972. Nelson said that designers must be "aware of the consequences of their actions on people and society and thus cultivate a broad base of knowledge and understanding." He saw these qualities in other talented, minimalist designers including Charles Eames and Isamu Noguchi. Another great influence in his circle was his friend Buckminster Fuller, who helped him shape the belief that the ultimate goal as a designer "to do much more with much less."



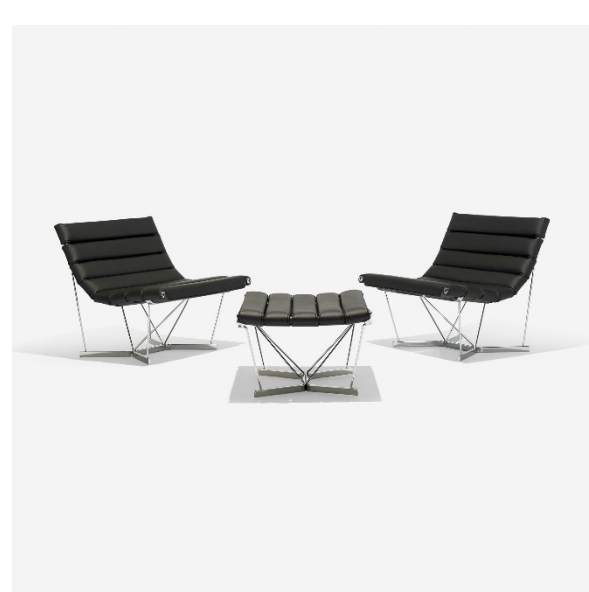
After the second World War, the Pacific northeast was not as hopeful and light as the west. Their defeat in the World War was felt across the board. The manufacturing sector was impacted similarly to the United States in that all the factories that were halted of their usual work a decade earlier to produce wartime goods and weapons now had to switch their production again. The quick turn-around in these scenarios damaged companies profits greatly. Japanese design was struggling at this time and they looked to foreign products for inspiration or even to copy as a source of direction and to start production quickly.

The stylish, quality, and bold designs of the Japanese that we so highly regard today began to emerge in 1950. Publications of how to and how not to design were being written and quality standards in the workplace were implemented for the first time. These ideas were implemented on cameras, cars, radios, accessories, and, of course, furniture.

Plastic was a very popular material in these designs. The Japanese appreciated its clean, glossy look and the versatility to make any abnormal shapes or colors they chose. Plastic compounds are also much cheaper than fine, natural materials. This financial assist helped companies rise up from their financial struggles after the war. Some designers were masterful in using plastic with wood, leather, or metal so create a more dynamic and inviting piece. Masayuki Kurokawa was one of those designers.

Architect Masayuki Kurokawa was born in Nagoya, Japan in 1937. He completed doctoral courses at Waseda University's Graduate School of Architecture and founded an architecture studio in his name in 1967.

Kurokawa earned national recognition and helped display Japanese product design to the American audience. Several of his works are displayed in the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in the Denver Art Museum, and Metropolitan Museum of Art. He is also the author of four publications on Japanese design.



Another important technique that shaped Modern furniture (literally) is lamination. The use of plywood and veneer in furniture date back to the Paris Exhibition of 1878 and way, way back to ancient Egyptian craftspeople. Finnish architect Alvar Aalto found a groundbreaking use for bent plywood as a cantilevering arm/leg piece of a chair. Aalto used a native birch in his country to design the signature Cantilevered Chair that inspired many spin-off designs after the war.

In Scandinavia, wood was used more so after the war than before, in fact. Upholstery was too heavy and old-fashioned, and metal reminded Scandinavian designers of wartime. Arne Jacobsen worked as an architect in Denmark for over a decade before the war (Moody, 91). Scandinavian furniture design was not even a topic of conversation before the war - except, perhaps, for its poor quality and lack of aesthetic.

Wood is a material of basic qualities that has proven to have infinite applications. A diverse range of designs were created by designers such as Finn Juhl, Mogens Lassen, and Ole Wanscher, to name a few. Danish furniture was a huge success. Demand grew and the designs refined the Scandinavian style of clean curves and simple materials for modern living.

Arne Jacobsen was born in Denmark in 1910. His first big hit in the furniture realm was the Ant Chair that he designed in 1952. From then on, his most recognized works are names and shaped after common, seemingly random objects.

Jacobsen got into furniture design through collaboration with Fritz Hansen since 1934. In 1952 Jacobsen made a breakthrough with the Ant Chair and from then on he would mostly be remembered for his simple, yet elegant and functional chair designs. At the end of the 50s Arne Jacobsen was the lead architect for the Royal Hotel in Copenhagen, and designed the famous Egg Chair, the Swan Chair, the Swan Sofa and Series 3300 Chairs. He took after his grandfather's minimalist, Danish style and was fond of working with teak and leather.

## ABSTRACT:

A look into the work of architects turned furniture designers in the post-war era. What drives them, their design, and their interest in furniture? This project focuses on patterns that emerge in design through geographic influence and materials to answer this question.

## CONTEXT:

Post-war modernism expressed faith and hope in the democratic ideal brought on by World War II. This sentiment was felt across the globe, not just in the United States. But for the first time in the realm of design, America was leading, not Europe.

Mies van der Rohe is credited with being one of the leading figures of post-war Modernism. Rohe was a skilled architect, and his impact on all realms of design and space are a clear example that architects have a place in those realms. Furniture and interior design has been a natural transition for many architects, often driven by their desire to control everything that goes into or is used in the spaces they create.

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