History of Furniture (FFD301)

By Raul PINTO

#### **furniture**

noun [mass noun]

- 1. the movable articles that are used to make a room or building suitable for living or working in, such as tables, chairs, or desks.
- 2. [usually with adjective or noun modifier] the small accessories or fittings that are required for a particular task or function:

the more sophisticated Mac furniture—number wheels, colour pickers, and so on the mountings of a rifle: the gun is fitted with wooden furniture

Printing pieces of wood or metal placed round or between metal type to make blank spaces and fasten the type in the chase.

in http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/furniture?q=furniture (on 18'02'2012)

## **Furniture Design**

Furniture design encompasses the microarchitectures of seating, reclining, storage, and display. Its products include chairs, benches, couches, stools, beds, cabinets, shelving, desks, and tables.

Ancient furniture being mainly constructed in organic materials (wood and animal furs), they rotted away. Our knowledge of ancient furniture is mainly derived from scenes depicted in early art forms, such as pottery decorations and frescos. Perhaps the earliest furniture in existence is that found at Catal Huyuk in Turkey that dates from around 3000 BC.

The best examples of ancient furniture still in existence are those found in the tombs of Egyptian noblemen. Egyptian furniture was placed in tombs for the use of the deceased in the afterlife, and many items are still in good condition due to the hot, dry climate and the fact that they were sealed inside the burial chambers.

in http://www.furniturestyles.net/ancient/ (on 18'02'2012)



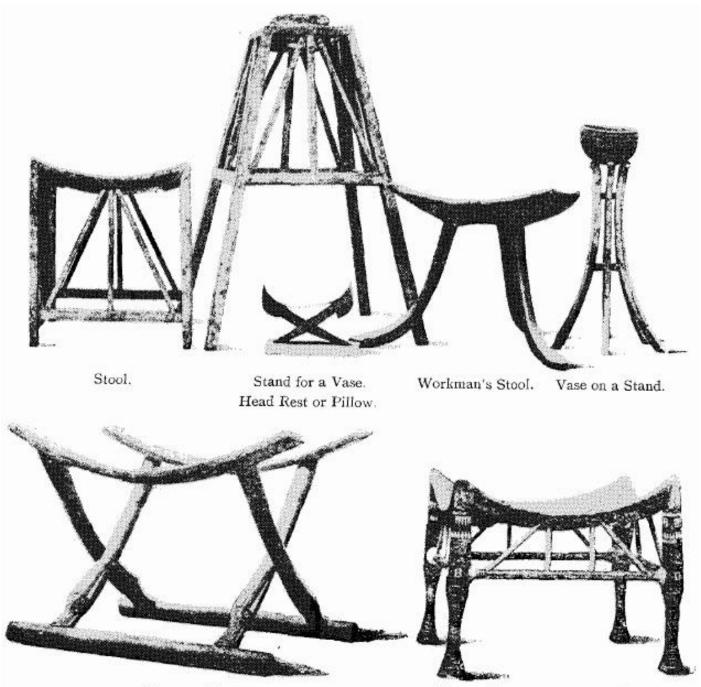
# **Ancient Egypt**

2500 – 1075 Bc

While most of Europe was still in the Stone Age, the Egyptians were building palaces, studying mathematics and writing on papyrus. They were great builders and great artists, drawing the inspiration for their art from nature. A complex social and religious structure was in place.

Egypt was eventually conquered by Alexander the Great, and later by the Romans. Both the Greek and Roman conquerors were significantly influenced by Egyptian culture, art and philosophy, so that to some extent it was a case of the conquerors being civilized by the conquered.

Egyptian antique furniture provides almost the only surviving examples of actual ancient furniture. Egyptians believed that possessions could still be used in the afterlife, and items of furniture were buried with the dead in sealed tombs.



FOLDING STOOL. EBONY SEAT INLAID WITH IVORY. (From Photos by Mansell & Co. of the orginals in the British Museum.)



## Pharaoh Tutankhamun's replica of burial chamber and throne

## **Ancient Greece** 499 BC to 79 BC

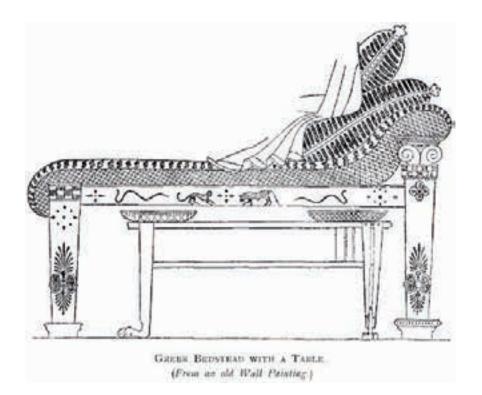
The Greek history of furniture can be traced back to the heritage of Egyptian furniture, evolving into softer lines, subtle and elegant curves, and more attention was given to comfort.

Greek furniture styles were simple, elegant and tasteful. Although carving and inlays were used, furniture was not over-decorated. Houses were not cluttered with much furniture. However, the Greek love of beauty and art extended to furniture design, and the few simple items of furniture in an early Greek household were often works of art in their own right.

The Greeks followed the Eastern tradition of lying down to eat. These couches, known as klines, had a headboard that could be used as a backrest while sitting, and were elegantly upholstered. They could be made entirely of wood, but often had bronze legs cast in animal styles. The klines would be placed around the walls, and small tables would be placed next to them to hold the food and drink.

## **Ancient Greece** 499 BC to 79 BC

Cupboards and shelves were unknown. Various types and sizes of chests were used for storage. These were usually decorated, perhaps painted with a frieze of leaves and flowers. Chests were prized pieces of furniture, and would often be passed down from one generation to another.



in http://www.furniturestyles.net/ancient/egyptian/ (on 18'02'2012)



#### **Ancient Rome**

509Bc-180

Furniture in Roman houses tended to be sparse, since the occupants liked space and simplicity in their decor. Beauty was created by mosaics, frescos and water features and other features of Roman interiors rather than by use of elaborate furnishings. However, the few items of Roman Empire furniture were elegant and costly, using excellent materials and craftsmanship. Pictures of ancient Roman furniture painted on frescos and other artworks, together with the few pieces still in existence today, have made it possible to reconstruct with accuracy the furniture in Roman times.

Much furniture that we take for granted was entirely unknown to the Romans. The main items of Roman furniture found in the best houses were couches or beds (lectus), chairs and stools, tables and lamps. Adding chests or wooden cabinets with doors, an occasional brazier, and still seldomer, a water clock, we have assembled everything that can be called furniture, except perhaps for tableware and kitchen utensils.



## Middle Ages

400 - 1500 Ac

With the collapse of the Roman Empire during the 4th–5th centuries, Europe sank into a period in which little furniture, except the most basic, was used: chairs, stools, benches, and primitive chests were the most common items.

Medieval furniture was primarily made of oak, since it was easy to obtain, strong and durable. Perhaps the most important piece of medieval furniture was the chest or coffer. Chests were originally made from hollow tree trunks banded with iron, hence the origin of the modern word 'trunk'. A type of chest known as the hutch could be used for packing household possessions when traveling, but it was also used as a seat, a desk, a table, and a couch for sleeping purposes. When not traveling, the hutch was used for storage.

in http://www.onlinedesignteacher.com/furniture\_design/furniture\_design%20history.html#.VClry\_mSySo (on 18'02'2014)









#### **Gothic**

1150-1500 AC

Gothic wood furniture was mostly made from oak, although local softwoods were also used towards the end of the period. Medieval Gothic style furniture was heavily carved and decorated. Religious themes were popular in carvings, as were heraldic symbols such as griffins, lions or hawks. Floral themes were also widely used. Paintings and inlays were also used for furniture decoration so that the whole effect was much more ornate than the furniture of earlier eras. Furniture pieces were large and solid, following the lines of Gothic church furniture.

Gothic cabinet furniture progressed a long way from the simple storage chests and coffers of earlier times.

Gothic bedroom furniture featured massive four poster beds, with linenfold-carved valences, and heavily carved and decorated posts and bedsteads. Gargoyles and other horrific mythical creatures were popular motifs since it was believed that they would frighten away evil spirits. Bed coverings and hangings in rich colors completed the elaborate Gothic bedroom style.







#### Renaissance

1450 - 1600 AC

Characteristics of Renaissance furniture show a shift from Gothic design influences of geometry and foliage themes to images from the Bible, mythology, and history. Renaissance furniture reflected a renewed interest in the arts by the wealthy, with ornate carving on chairs, table legs, and cabinets adorned with figurines. This era in history was inspired by Greek and Roman ideals.

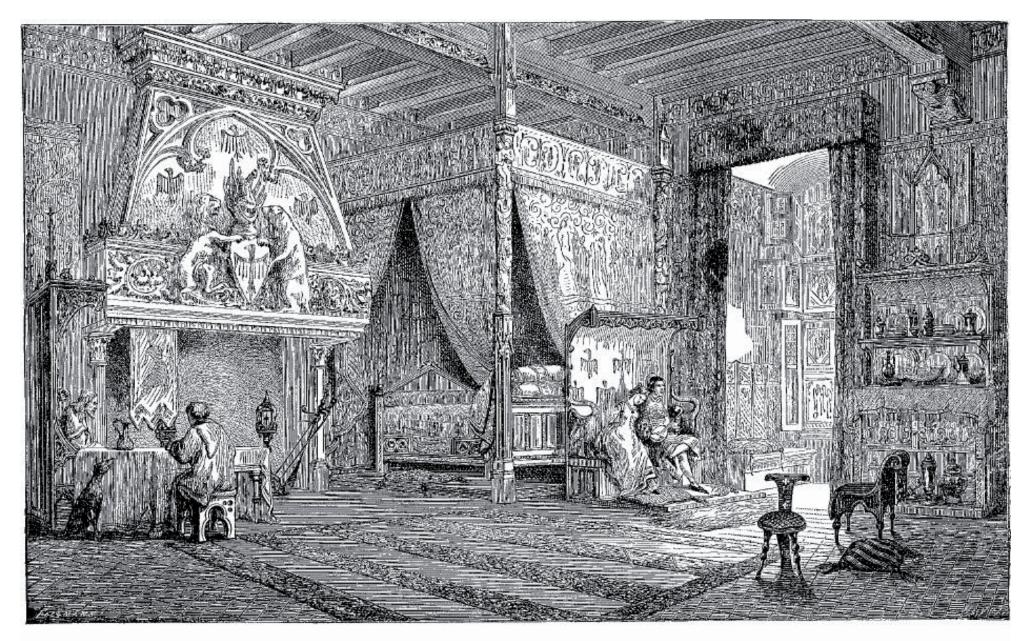
Renaissance furniture first appeared in Italy, where craftsmen began adorning their work with ornamental scenes taken from art and an evolving interest in science. Religion and Christianity might be represented by carved panels inspired by churches and palaces. Early pieces of Renaissance furniture focused on tastes of the wealthy and were not considered suitable for common domestic use.

Artisans from other European countries traveled to Italy to learn the emerging style of furniture building, beginning in the 14th century. French artists copied Italian designs but refined the style by carving intricate patterns on drawers and cabinet panels. The French craftsmen continued to incorporate Gothic foliage designs in Renaissance furniture. Chairs became larger and more ornate with high, richly carved backs.

Dutch furniture builders began using ebony and other wood in place of the traditional oak during the Renaissance period. The Flemish Renaissance furniture during the 17th century saw a shift from the Italian influence into more original designs. Tables commonly took a rectangular form, with scrolling on the legs. Artists began using marble or mosaic designs on table tops. Upholstery emerged, with silk, tapestry, or leather seats appearing on chairs.

The Tudor style and Elizabethan furniture of England also evolved during the 17th century. English furniture builders combined Gothic influences with images from mythology and Christianity. During the reign of Elizabeth I, knobs were added to the legs of furniture, along with the design of massive, four-poster beds known as Elizabethan beds. Decorative cornices and richly carved posts typically graced these beds. Furniture during this period began appearing with carved shields, family crests, or coats of arms to recognize family ancestry.

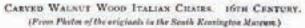
in http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-the-characteristics-of-renaissance-furniture.htm (on 18'02'2014)



INTERIOR OF A FRENCH CHATEAU SHEWING FURNITURE OF THE TIME.

PERIOD: LATE XIV. OR EARLY XV. CENTURY.







## **Baroque & Rococo**

17th & 18th Century

The Baroque style uses exaggerated motion and clear detail to produce grandeur and exuberance in painting, sculpture, music, and decoration. Baroque furniture captures that flair and is obvious in rich detail, vibrant colors, and opulence. Decorations of the period were profusely detailed and highly ornamental. The Baroque started in the early 1600s in Rome and spread all around Europe.

The Roman Catholic Church encouraged the opulent style by using Baroque furniture and paintings. The church said it wanted to use Baroque art and style to inspire raw emotions, thus enabling people to feel closer to religion. Aristocracy also appreciated the dramatic style of Baroque furniture and used it in their palaces. Baroque style favors large pieces, exaggerated decorations, colossal sculptures, and high volumes.

Small details were generally incorporated into Baroque furniture. They were also used as an accent in the furniture, often being carved into an arm chair or sofa. Nymphs and angels often accompanied, or replaced, the cherubs.



Rococo furniture is sumptuous and extreme in design, and often employs many different types of material and ornamentation in a single piece. While Rococo furniture may not suit more modest taste, it can provide an aura of luxury and will definitely create a design centerpiece that is impossible to miss.

Popularized by Louis XV's influential mistress, Madame de Pompadour, Rococo design emphasized detail, well-defined sculpted lines, and ornamentation. Not surprisingly, the Rococo period was followed by a neoclassical backlash, in which curving, gilded swirls were overtaken by a return to plain, monochromatic, and geometric styles reminiscent of Ancient Rome.

Many decorative arts, such as painting, gilding, and bronzing, were used to add additional levels of detail and magnificence to Rococo furniture. During the period, a decorative chair might pass through several different workshops on its path to completion, including a carpenter, carver, upholsterer, and gilder. Not surprisingly, the detailed style was primarily used by wealthy merchants and the nobility, as few middle-class or working-class households could afford such dramatic decoration.



#### **Neoclassic**

18th to 19th Century

Neoclassical furniture is a style of furniture that gained popularity in the mid-1700s and into the 1800s. Many countries followed the neoclassical design during that time period, each one giving the style a different name. As a result, in England neoclassical furniture is referred to as Late Georgian, in France it is called Louis XVI style, and in the United States it is called the Federal or Empire style. It is also called Grecian or Etruscan style in some places.

In neoclassical furniture, form is ultimately the most important factor. The furniture should be considered orderly, with more tidy lines and fewer swirls and curves. There is still plenty of ornate detail, as was common in previous furniture styles, however. The detail in neoclassical furniture comes from delicate painting and precise carving. In addition, wood can be inlaid with other pieces of wood, gold foil, or other materials.

Popular pieces of neoclassical furniture include the chaise lounge, similar to the one in which Cleopatra was so often depicted relaxing; fire screens; chairs; sofas; footstools; tables; and bookcases. Many times, room accessories are often used to carry out the theme in a room as well. These often include statutes and fountains, as both are reminiscent of ancient Greece or Rome.

http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-neoclassical-furniture.htm (on 18'02'2014)





## From the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War:

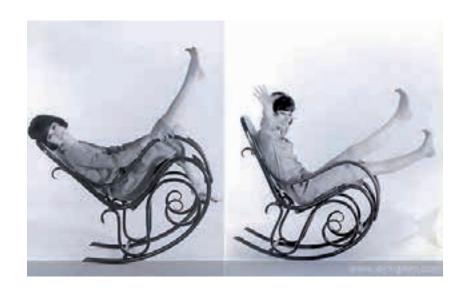
Industrialization gives way to mass production, Design as a synonym for simplification of form; Relationship between skilled craftsmen and industry;

top concerns: aesthetic, ethical, technical and functional;

#### **Michael Thonet:**

1796 - 1871

The idea for a bentwood chair originated with Michael Thonet, a German born cabinetmaker. Thonet wanted to design a piece of furniture that could be mass produced at low prices, that had few parts, and that was not difficult to assemble. The manufacturing process for this type of chair involves heating the wood with steam, which allows the wood to then be bent into the classic rounded chair shape. This simple way of making furniture enabled mass production of the bentwood chair and helped to pave the way for what became the standard bentwood design.





the Thonet Model 14



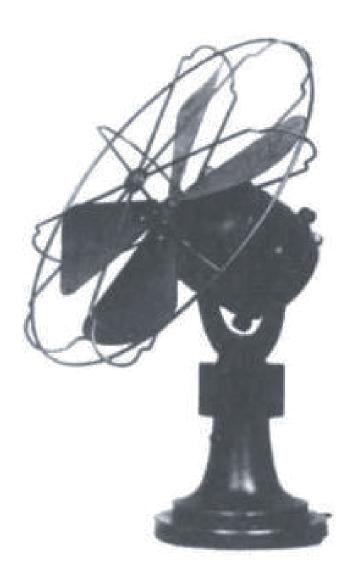
#### **Peter Behrens:**

1868 - 1940

Peter Behrens is one of the most influential 20th-century German designers. At the beginning of the century, he brought forth outstanding works in painting, architecture, graphic design and industrial design, which exerted a paramount influence in all these various fields, opening up uncharted territory for the generations to come. He is viewed as the founder of modern objective industrial architecture and modern industrial design.

In 1906 Peter Behrens received his first commission from AEG (Allgemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft) to design advertising material. Emil Rathenau hired Behrens as an artistic consultant to work on a wide range of projects. In 1908-09 Behrens designed the AEG Turbinenhalle in Berlin, a concrete, steel and glass factory building with an outspoken agenda. In addition to architecture (housing for working men and their families), Behrens also designed household electrical appliances, standardizing the forms of their components and thus making them interchangeable, which rationalized production. Further, he was in charge of designing sales rooms, catalogues, price lists, etc, thus using design for the first time to create a unified appearance as the sign of corporate identity. This collaboration lasted until 1914.







# Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen):

founded in 1907

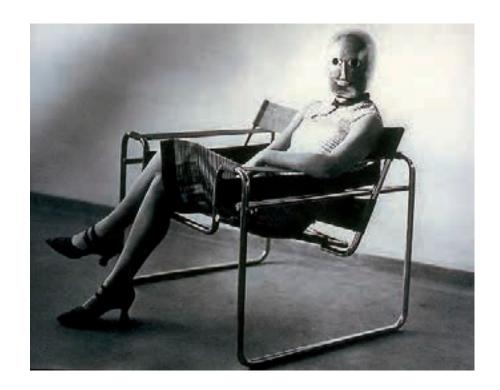
The Werkbund was to become an important event in the development of modern architecture and industrial design, particularly in the later creation of the Bauhaus school of design. Its initial purpose was to establish a partnership of product manufacturers with design professionals to improve the competitiveness of German companies in global markets. The Werkbund was less an artistic movement than a state-sponsored effort to integrate traditional crafts and industrial mass-production techniques, to put Germany on a competitive footing with England and the United States.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutscher\_Werkbund

## **Bauhaus:**

1919 to 1925; 1925 to 1932; 1932 to 1933

Weimar - Walter Gropius Dessau - Hannes Meyer Berlin - Ludwig Mies van der Rohe





### **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe:**

1886 - 1969

At 19 he moved to berlin, where he worked for Bruno Paul, the art nouveau architect and furniture designer. At 20 he received his first independent commission, to plan a house for a philosopher (Alois Riehl). In 1908 he began working for the architect Peter Behrens. He studied the architecture of the Prussian Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Frank Lloyd Wright. he opened his own office in berlin in 1912, and married in 1913.

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In 1927 he designed one of his most famous buildings, in 1929. this small hall, known as the barcelona pavilion, for which he also designed the famous chrome and leather 'barcelona chair'.

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In the 30s, none of his designs were built due to the sweeping economic and political changes overtaking Germany. He was director of the Bauhaus school from 1930 until its disbandment in 1933, shut down under pressure from the new Nazi government. He moved to the United States in 1937...

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"God is in the details"

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"Less is more""









# From the First World War to the post-Second World War:

1914 - 1933

Vanguards and the different ways of the modern movement:

The elimination of ornament, the birth of a new aesthetics - more geometric and rational.

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The utopia of the object-type (archetype): the perfect and ideal way with universal validity: chair Red / Blue by Rietveld, Grand Confort by Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona chair.

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Charlotte Perriand, Jean Prouvé, Alvar Aalto, Marcel Brauer, ...

### Le Corbusier:

1887 - 1965

Le Corbusier was a Swiss-born French architect who belonged to the first generation of the so-called International school of architecture.

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He was born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris in Switzerland on October 6, 1887. In 1917, he moved to Paris and assumed the pseudonym Le Corbusier. In his architecture, he chiefly built with steel and reinforced concrete and worked with elemental geometric forms. Le Corbusier's painting emphasized clear forms and structures, which corresponded to his architecture.

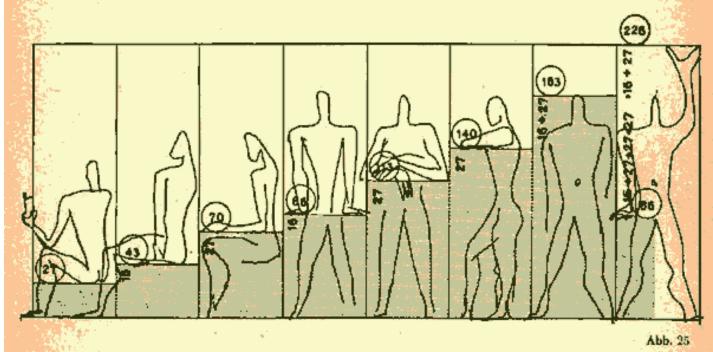
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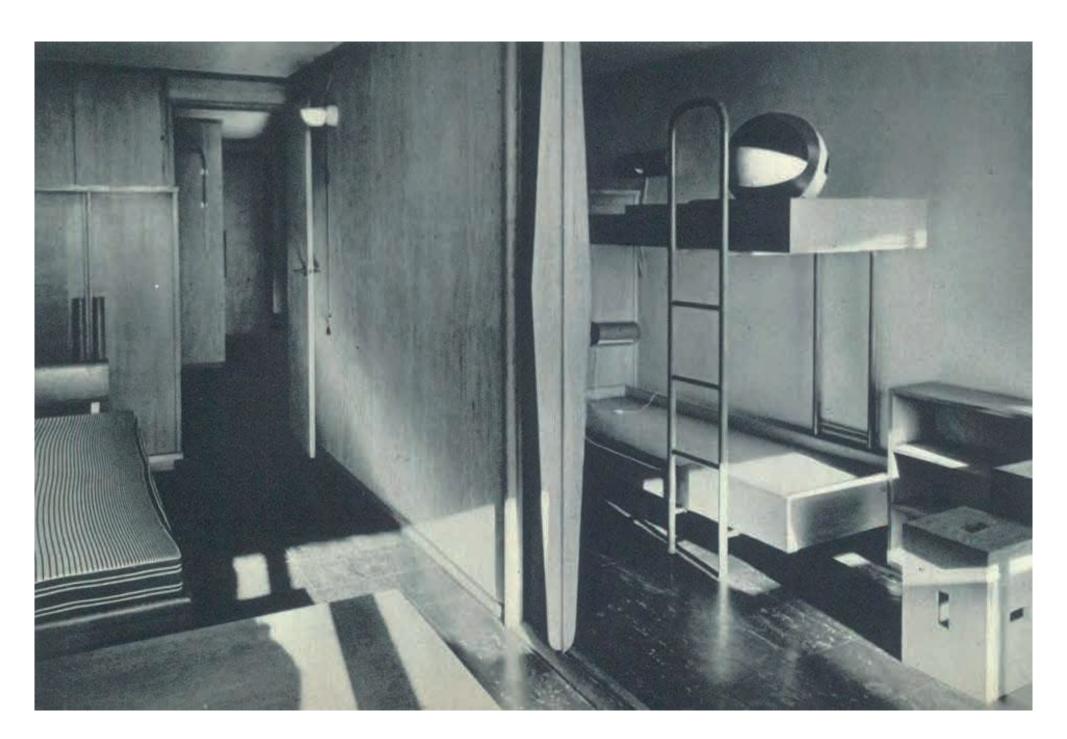
After designing his first house, in 1907, at age 20, Le Corbusier took trips through central Europe and the Mediterranean. His travels included apprenticeships with various architects, most significantly with structural rationalist Auguste Perret, a pioneer of reinforced concrete construction, and later with renowned architect Peter Behrens, with whom Le Corbusier worked from October 1910 to March 1911, near Berlin.

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In 1912, Le Corbusier returned to La Chaux-de-Fonds to teach alongside L'Eplattenier and to open his own architectural practice. He designed a series of villas and began to theorize on the use of reinforced concrete as a structural frame, a thoroughly modern technique.







#### **Charlotte Perriand:**

1903 - 1999

Charlotte Perriand, was a French architect and designer. Her work aimed to create functional living spaces in the belief that better design helps in creating a better society. In her article L'Art de Vivre from 1981 she states "The extension of the art of dwelling is the art of living- living in harmony with man's deepest drives and with his adopted or fabricated environment."

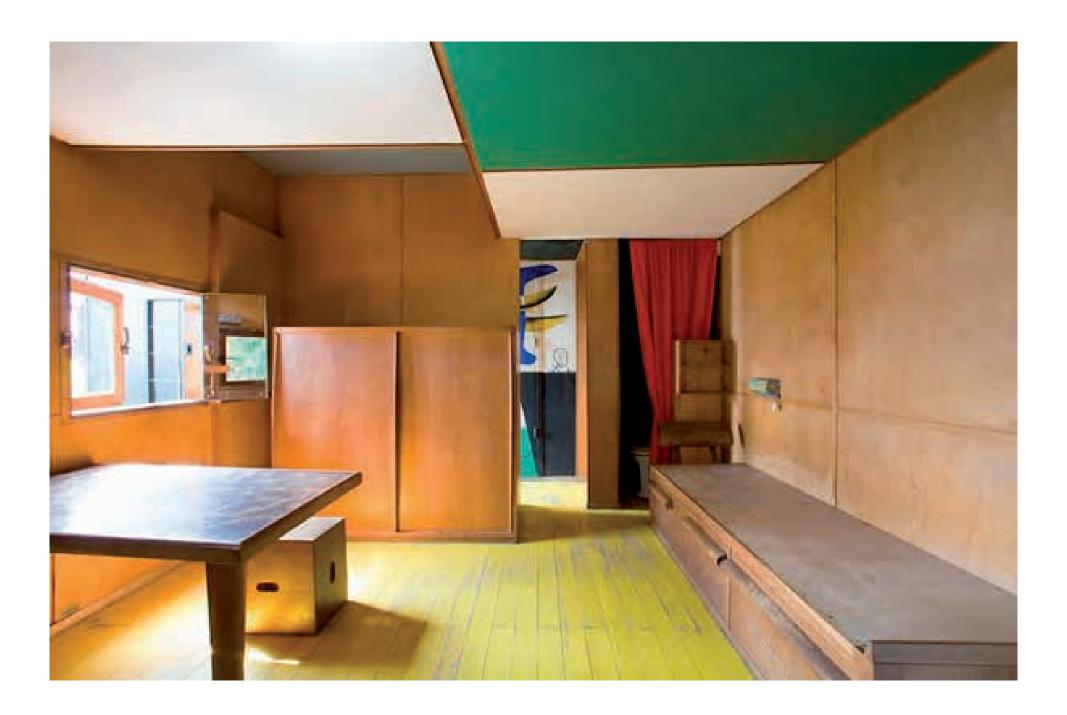
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After applying to work at Le Corbusier's studio in 1927 and being famously rejected with the reply "We don't embroider cushions here", Perriand renovated her apartment into a room with a large bar made of aluminum glass and chrome. She recreated this for the Salon d'Automne, gaining notice from Le Corbusier's partner, Pierre Jeanneret, convincing Corbusier to offer her a job in furniture design. There, she was in charge of their interiors work and promoting their designs through a series of exhibitions.









### Jean Prouvé:

1901 - 1984

Jean Prouvé, born 1901 in Paris, was trained as a metal artisan under Emile Robert, Enghien and Szabo in Paris. In 1924 he opened his own workshop in Nancy and began to produce his first furnishings made of formed sheet steel in 1925. He was a founding member of the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM) in 1930. In the following year he established his own manufacturing firm, Les Ateliers Jean Prouvé. During the 1930s, the company produced numerous furniture designs, as well as some of the first prefabricated architectural elements, including components for the Maison du Peuple in Clichy (in collaboration with the architects Beaudoin and Lods), whose steel-and-glass structure attracted a great deal of attention.

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Due to the scarcity of steel during the Second World War, Prouvé constructed wood furniture and developed simple houses made out of prefabricated parts. Active in the French Résistance, Prouvé was elected mayor of Nancy after the city was liberated. He designed and constructed residential buildings for the homeless.











### **Alvar Aalto:**

1898 - 1976

Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto was a Finnish architect and designer, as well as a sculptor and painter. His work includes architecture, furniture, textiles and glassware. Aalto's early career runs in parallel with the rapid economic growth and industrialization of Finland during the first half of the twentieth century and many of his clients were industrialists.

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The span of his career, from the 1920s to the 1970s, is reflected in the styles of his work, ranging from Nordic Classicism of the early work, to a rational International Style Modernism during the 1930s to a more organic modernist style from the 1940s onwards. His furniture designs were considered Scandinavian Modern.

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Together with his first wife Aino Aalto – would design not just the building, but give special treatments to the interior surfaces and design furniture, lamps, and furnishings and glassware.













### The postwar consumer society:

The postwar situation leads the industrialized countries to rethink design, looking for new product adapted to needs and ways of life, new materials and production processes. The Marshall Plan rehabilitates the German economy, Italian and Japanese.

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"Good Design" and "Good Form" are the primary concepts of this period. Both imply Rationality, functionality, quality, accessibility and low cost, but while the first emphasizes the aesthetics of the piece, the second prints a focus on ethics and underlying philosophy.

#### **Ettore Sottsass:**

1917 - 2007

Whilst the Memphis movement in the eighties attracted enormous attention around the world for its energy and flamboyance, Ettore Sottsass was simultaneously assembling a major design consultancy which he named Sottsass Associati. The studio was established in 1980 and gave the possibility to build architecture on a substantial scale as well as to design for large international industries.

Sottsass Associati, primarily an architectural practice, also designed elaborate stores and showrooms for Esprit, identities for Alessi, exhibitions, interiors, consumer electronics in Japan and furniture of all kinds.

Sottsass Associati are presently based in London and Milan and continue to sustain the work, philosophy and culture of the studio.





### **Arne Jacobsen:**

1902-1971

While Arne Jacobsen was also a successful architect, he is best remembered for his simple, yet elegant and functional chair designs.

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The cooperation between Arne Jacobsen and Fritz Hansen dates back to 1934. But it wasn't until 1952 that Jacobsen made a break-through: the Jacobsen Ant™ Chair. The-Jacobsen Series 7™ Chair quickly followed in 1955. This propelled Jacobsen and Fritz Hansen's names into furniture history.

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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. Arne Jacobsen was and is an admired and outstanding designer. While the significance of Arne Jacobsen's buildings was less appreciated, his furniture and other design work have become national and international heritage.









# Hans Wegner:

1914 - 2007

Hans J. Wegner - cabinet-maker and furniture designer and one of the principals of "Danish Modern". He is one of the Danish designers who has achieved world fame. Wegner is a meticulous and admired craftsman and his furniture is a combination of good, solid details rooted in the tradition of the craftsmanship he highly regards. Fritz Hansen has manufactures the China Chair™ since 1944.

http://www.fritzhansen.com/en/designers/hans-j-wegner













#### The era that revolutionized the world:

The economic development of the 60's causes an explosion in consumption and an unprecedented optimism, accompanied by profound sociocultural changes.

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Consumption, optimism and the Pop spirit.

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Form follows gradually more emotion, and "not so much the function".

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Fashion is dominated by dream and the imaginary.

# **George Nelson:**

1908 - 1986

George Nelson Architect and Designer was, together with Charles & Ray Eames, one of the founding fathers of American modernism. George Nelson is seen as "The Creator of Beautiful and Practical Things".

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Several George Nelson products are still in production today.



### **Eero Aarnio:**

21 de julho de 1932

Eero Aarnio is a Finnish interior designer, noted for his innovative furniture designs in the 1960s, such as his plastic and fibreglass chairs.

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Aarnio studied at the Institute of Industrial Arts in Helsinki, and started his own office in 1962. The following year, he introduced his Ball Chair, a hollow sphere on a stand, open on one side to allow a person to sit within.

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Aarnio's designs were an important aspect of 1960s popular culture, and could often be seen as part of sets in period science-fiction films. Because his designs used very simple geometric forms, they were ideal for such productions. Eero Aarnio continues to create new designs, including toys and furniture for children. Eero Aarnio opened his official webshop and first Design Eero Aarnio Showroom, in Helsinki. There you can find Aarnio's latest design, prototypes and latest news.



### Joe Colombo:

1923 - 1978

After experiences in various art's fields, from informal painting to furnishings, since 1963 he devotes himself to the industrial design for a mass-production; many of those objects, assembled in different ways, look as true systems.

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By experimenting new materials and using most advanced technologies, he creates a kind of "machines for living", habitat of the future: multi-function mobile units, like "VISIONA 1", "TOTAL FURNISHING", "ROTO--LIVING", "CABRIOLET-BED" and "MINI-KITCHEN".

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Many of his works have been exhibited and included in the most important Museum's collections all over the world.

http://www.joecolombo.com/colombo.htm

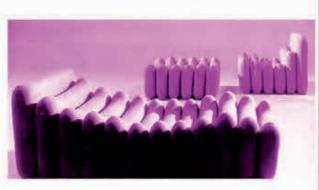


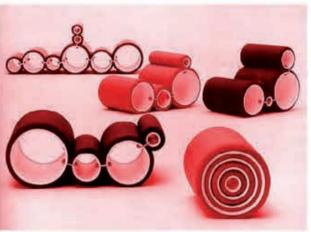












Images sourced from http://designmuseum.org/design/joe-colombo

### **Verner Panton:**

1926 - 1998

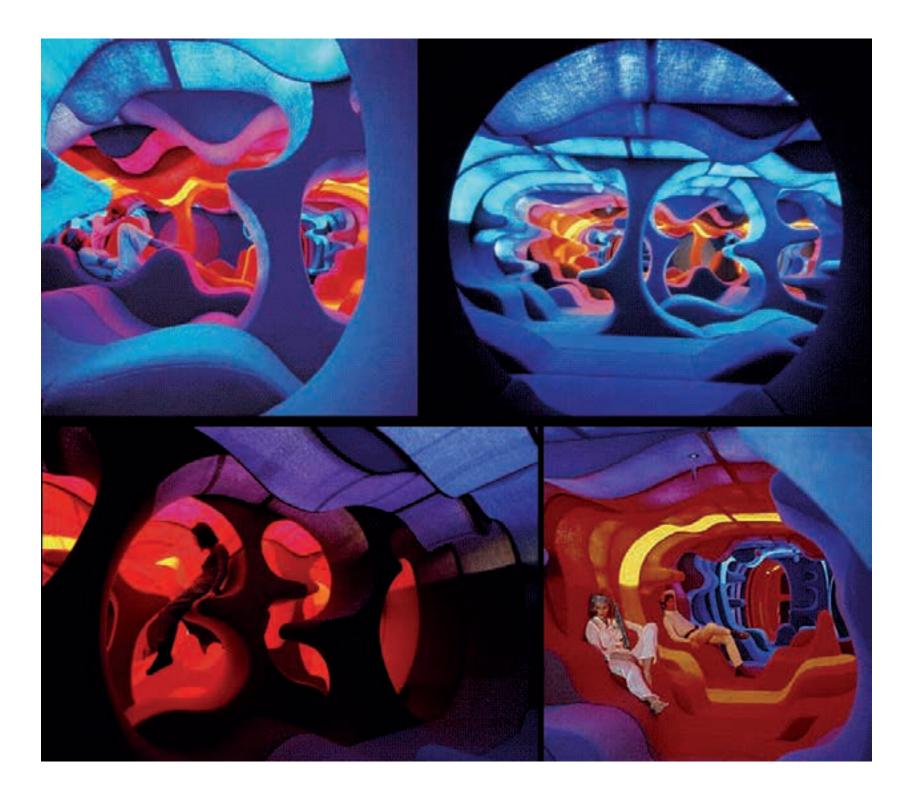
Verner Panton, born 1926 in Gamtofte, Denmark, studied at Odense Technical College before enrolling at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen as an architecture student.

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He worked from 1950-52 in the architectural firm of Arne Jacobsen, and founded an independent studio for architecture and design in 1955. His furniture designs for the firm Plus-linje attracted attention with their geometric forms. In the following years Panton created numerous designs for seating furniture and lighting.

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His passion for bright colors and geometric patterns manifested itself in an extensive range of textile designs. By fusing the elements of a room—floor, walls, ceiling, furnishings, lighting, textiles, wall panels made of enamel or plastic









ANCIENT EGYPTIAN **FURNITURE** 3000-2000 BC







JACOBEAN FURNITURE 1567-1625 AD







ART NOUVEAU FURNITURE 1890-1914 AD







CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE 1980 - PRESENT



ANCIENT GREEK FURNITURE 2000 - 300 BC





1350-1550 AD



1500-1754 AD



COLONIAL FURNITURE



















# For further reading:

1000 Chairs charloote &Peter Fiell
Dünden Bu Güne Mobilya Tasarım Ve Teknology Adem Yılmaz
The Abrahams guide to Period Stlyles for Interior Judıth Gura
Architecture and Interior design from the 18th Century
Architecture and Interior design from the 19th Century
by Buie hardwood, Bridget May, Curt Sherman

http://www.onlinedesignteacher.com/furniture\_design/furniture\_design http://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/online/a-century-of-chairs/1960s http://theredlist.fr/wiki-2-18-392-1335-1341-1343-view-german-bauhaus-1-profile-breuer-marcel-1.html#photo http://gadgets.boingboing.net/2008/11/12/the-worlds-greatest-1.html http://www.furniturestyles.net/ancient/ http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12254/12254-h/12254-h.htm http://zeroland.co.nz/directory/visual-arts/applied-arts/furniture/