



Isokon Long Chair

Marcel Breuer

Not on display

Title/Description: Isokon Long Chair

Artist/Maker: Marcel Breuer

Born: 1936

Object Type: Chair, Furniture

Materials: Fibre, Laminated birch wood, Plywood

Measurements: h. 813 x w. 610 x d. 1370 mm

Accession Number: 31161

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England

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Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) for Isokon Furniture Co.

Long Chair, 1936

Birch frame and plywood

Sainsbury Centre 31161

Marcel Breuer's *Long Chair* became one of the most famous plywood designs of the 1930s. It was commissioned by Isokon, a London-based firm established in 1931 by Jack Pritchard. The company worked with leading designers and fuelled the fashion for plywood in Britain. Breuer was influenced by Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto, whose plywood furniture featured in Britain's stylish new coastal resorts.

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Marcel Breuer's *Isokon Long Chair* has a special place in British design history. It dates from the brief time in the middle 1930s when the maestros of the Bauhaus - Walter Gropius, László Moholy-Nagy, Breuer himself - were living in London as refugees from Nazi Germany before moving on to a more promising future in the United States.

For me the *Long Chair* is indelibly connected with Jack Pritchard, a rare modernist entrepreneur in interwar Britain, whose valuable archive is now at the University of East Anglia. It was Pritchard who had vouched for the arrival of first Gropius and then Breuer, providing accommodation in Lawn Road Flats in Hampstead, a concrete building of startling modernity that Jack and his wife Molly had recently commissioned from the architect Wells Coates.

It was the ever-enterprising Pritchard who appointed Gropius Controller of Design in his own Isokon Furniture Company, subsequently asking Breuer to work on "a new production of plywood furniture". Breuer was already famous for his tubular steel furniture. This new material, plywood, allowed him greater flexibility. The *Long Chair* has a beautiful organic quality. A sales leaflet designed by Moholy-Nagy suggests that reclining in a *Long Chair* represented a modernist form of levitation.

Over the years I often went to visit the Pritchards in their house in Blythburgh in Suffolk, a house rich in art and culture, good food and conversation. Something of the Bauhaus spirit revived here in East Anglia. In the last years of his life I helped Jack Pritchard write his memoirs. The title was, inevitably, *View from a Long Chair*.

—

Fiona MacCarthy (d.), biographer and cultural historian
