



Armchair (AX Chair 6003)

Pete Hvidt

Not on display

Title/Description: Armchair (AX Chair 6003)

Artist/Maker: Pete Hvidt

Born: 1950

Measurements: h. 760 x w. 610 x d. 710 mm

Accession Number: 31217

Historic Period: 20th century

The AX-chair was designed by the Danish architects Peter Hvidt (1916-1986) and Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen (1907-1993) in 1947. Hvidt and Mølgaard-Nielsen worked in partnership under the name Hvidt & Mølgaard between 1944-1975. As a student of the Danish furniture designer Kaare Klint (1888-1954) Mølgaard-Nielsen was grounded in the relatively new science of anthropometrics - the systematic collection and correlation of measurements of the human body an idea that could be applied to the designs to create furniture that achieved better performance and more comfortable solutions which is reflected in the chair. [1]

The AX-chair also reflects a time where the dialogue between designers and the industry on the new methods of construction was intensified. The Danish furniture manufacturing company Fritz Hansen had been experimenting with bending of thin plates of glued veneer since the 1930s. Hvidt & Mølgaard became interested in the experiments and presented new interesting ideas for a furniture competition launched by Museum of Modern Art in 1946. Springing from these ideas the AX-chair was designed in 1947 but first launched by Hvidt & Mølgaard together with Fritz Hansen in 1950 after developing the production method, which meant that one now not only could bend plywood in one direction but in more directions which created a three-dimensional effect. The pioneering and novel form of furniture construction which was called "lamella gluing" in which layers of beech wood were laminated onto a mahogany core. This technique was similar to the technique that was used to produce wooden tennis rackets and created a contrast between the dark and light wood that visually interplayed with the laminated seat and back in mahogany. [1] The use of material and the organic shape of the armrest gave the chair that was mass produced a "handicraft look" with a Nordic approach. [2]

The AX-series was further developed with chairs without armrest, with one armrest and complemented with tables. [3] It was also an early example of a design where easy and cheap transport was one of the tasks for the design duo. They created an early example of flat

packed/knock down furniture which was easy to package. Back, seat, legs and stretchers could come apart and be packed for transport. It was a success; already by January 1951, 200 chairs a week were shipped to the USA where Herman Miller Furniture Company marketed them as the FH-chair.

Therese Wiles, April 2022

[1] Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell. *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2005) p. 142.

[2] According to Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell. *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2005) p. 143. "On the early versions there are also chairs with quilted leather-upholstered sling seat /back that was attached to its beech veneered mahogany frame but the design was later modified so that it was better suited to industrial mass production".

[3] Lars, Dybdahl. *Dansk Design: 1945-1975: Produktdesign, Grafisk Design, Møbeldesign* (Valby: Borgens Forlag, 2006) p. 437

[4] Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell. *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2005) p. 142.

Further Reading

Dybdahl, Lars. *Dansk Design: 1945-1975: Produktdesign, Grafisk Design, Møbeldesign* (Valby: Borgens Forlag, 2006).

Ellison, Michael, and Leslie A. Piña. *Scandinavian Modern Furnishings, 1930-1970: Designed for Life* (Atglen Pa: Schiffer, 2002).

Møller, Viggo Sten. *Funktionalisme og brugskunst siden 1920erne: Danmark, Norge, Sverige* (København: Rhodos, 1978)

Fiell, Charlotte, and Peter Fiell. *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2005)

<https://hvidtmolgaard.com/om-peter-og-orla>
