

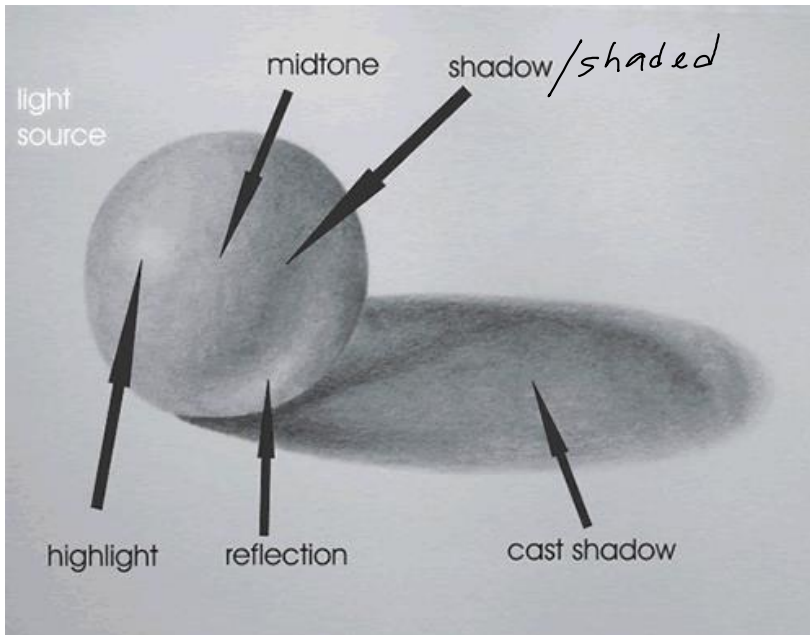
24 Case Study: The Chair

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 3:19 PM

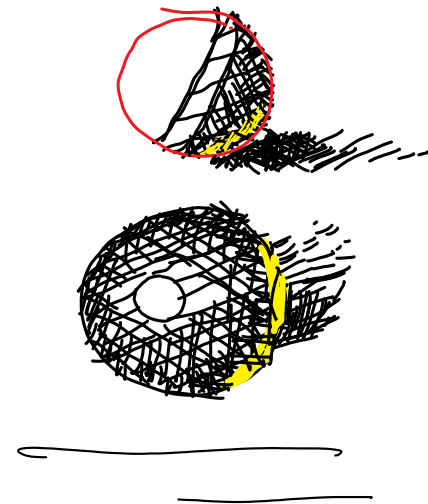
Today

Sketching: spheres
6 minute checkin, in breakout rooms
Chairs. Thonet to Eames

Sketching



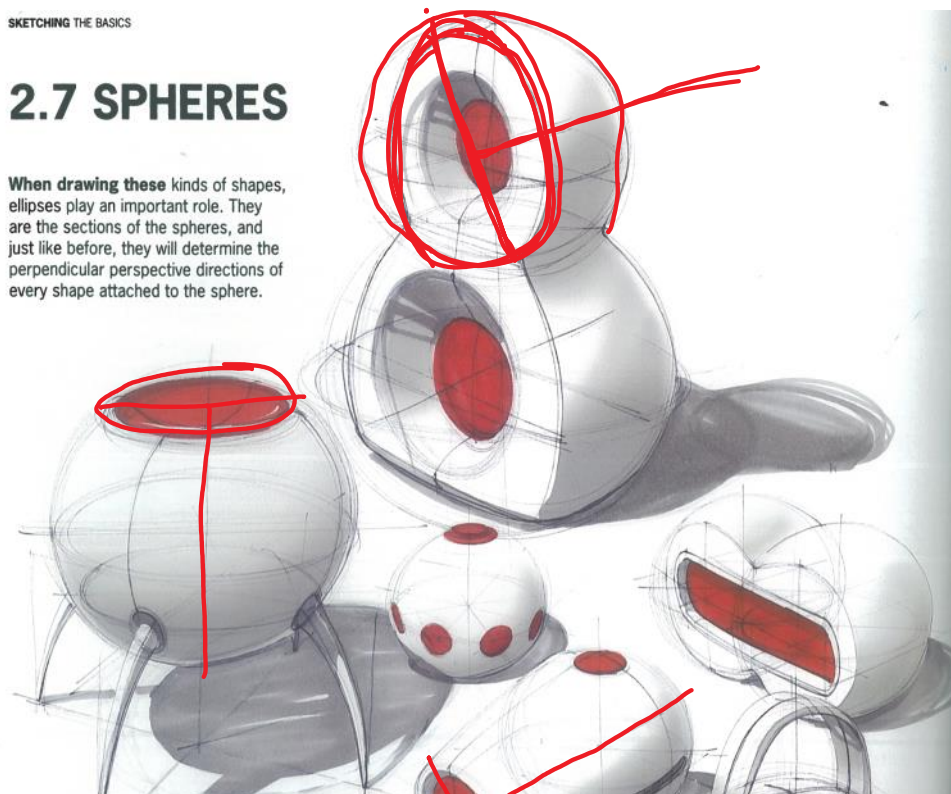
http://www.artinstructionblog.com/wp-content/themes/lifestyle_10/images/understandinglight.gif

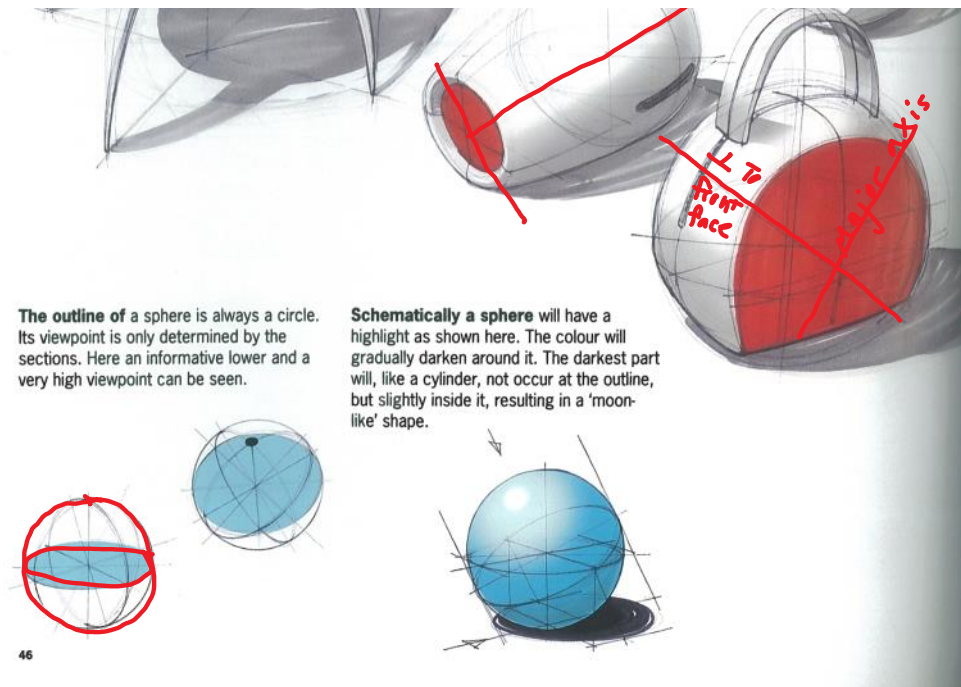


SKETCHING THE BASICS

2.7 SPHERES

When drawing these kinds of shapes, ellipses play an important role. They are the sections of the spheres, and just like before, they will determine the perpendicular perspective directions of every shape attached to the sphere.



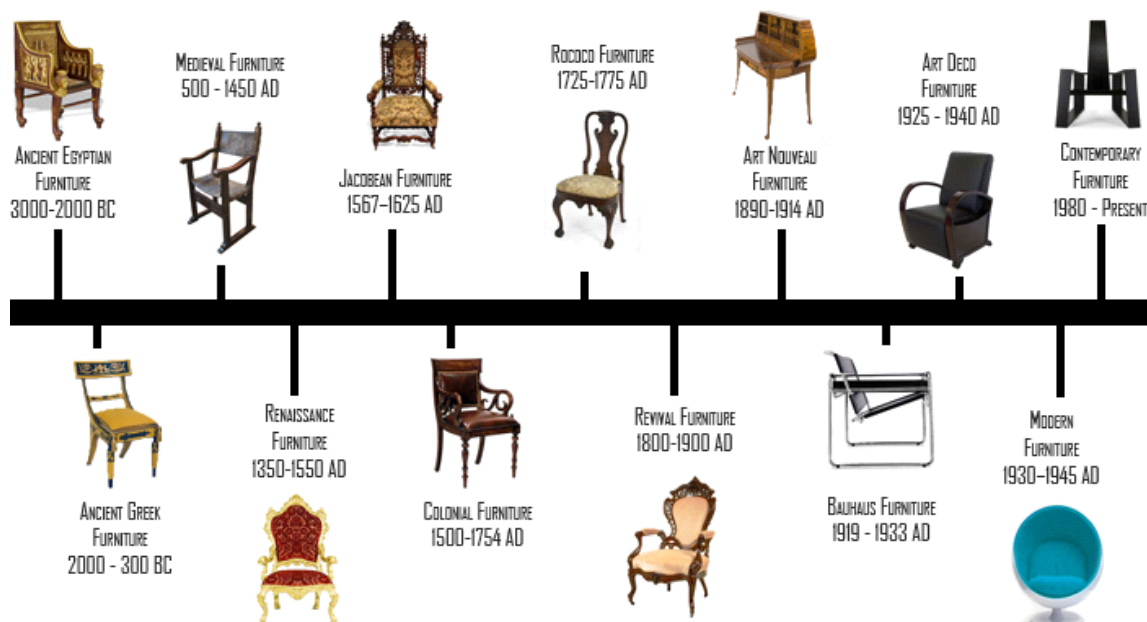


Case Study: The Chair

Rybczynski, Witold. *Now I Sit Me Down: From Klismos to Plastic Chair: A Natural History*. First Edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

Design Movements in Furniture

<http://www.onlinedesignteacher.com/2016/02/furniture-design-history.html> Has additional examples and closeups



What are the elements that define each one? Visual, materials, fabrication techniques, philosophy?

<http://www.connectedlines.com/styleguide/index.htm> has details of pre-1920 styles. Chippendale etc. Not the same categories as above.

<http://www.furniturestyles.net/> Another timeline with examples. More text, not so many images.

Prehistoric
Ancient Egyptian
Ancient Greek
Medieval
Renaissance
Jacobean <http://www.furniturestyles.net/european/english/jacobean.html>
Colonial
Rococco
Revival
Arts and Crafts
Art Nouveau
Bauhaus
Art Deco
Modern
Contemporary

Modern Chairs

20th Century +

<http://www.design-museum.de/en/collection/100-masterpieces.html> Vitra Design Museum site. Basel, Germany. Southwest, near Switzerland. Focuses on furniture and lighting, and some other industrial design collections.

Modern design is a bit personality driven. The Design Encyclopedia is nothing more than a list of designers and who they worked for/with. (Byars, Mel. *The Design Encyclopedia*. Laurence King Publishing, 2004.)
OK, fine, so let's look at specific designers.

Let's start with industrialization of chairs. Prior to 19th century, chairs were carved from solid wood pieces, by hand.

1836 Michael Thonet. From Czech Republic. Large beechwood forests. Developed lamination process for making bentwood chairs. Boiled strips of wood with glue, put in molds, etc. A type of early plywood.



Michael Thonet

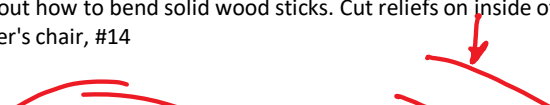
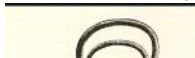
Austrian-German cabinet maker

Michael Thonet was a German-Austrian cabinet maker, known for the invention of bentwood furniture. [Wikipedia](#)

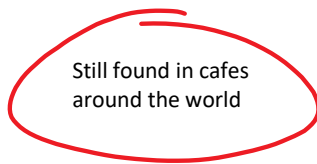
Born: July 2, 1796, Boppard, Germany

Died: March 3, 1871, Vienna, Austria

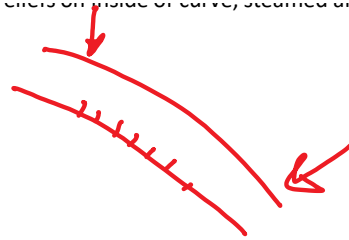
Later (1856) he also figured out how to bend solid wood sticks. Cut reliefs on inside of curve, steamed and molded.



later (1859), he also figured out how to bend solid wood sticks: cut joints on inside of curve, steamed and molded.
1859 Konsumstuhl, Consumer's chair, #14



Still found in cafes
around the world

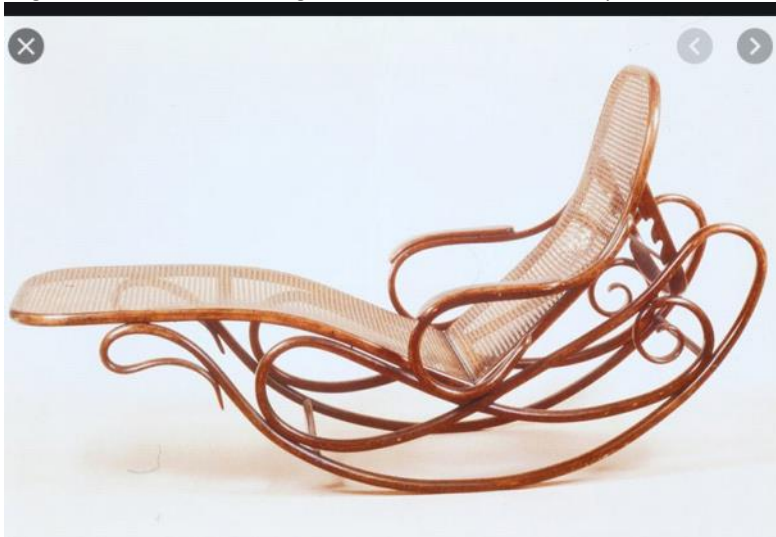


The original No.14 chair is made up of six pieces of wood, ten screws and two nuts. It was the first piece of furniture designed to be shipped in parts to save space during transportation and came with simple instructions to put it together. The No.14 could have been a source of inspiration for IKEA, the biggest manufacturer of ready-to-assemble furniture today.

From <<https://designmuseum.org/discover-design/all-design-objects/thonet-chair-no-14>>

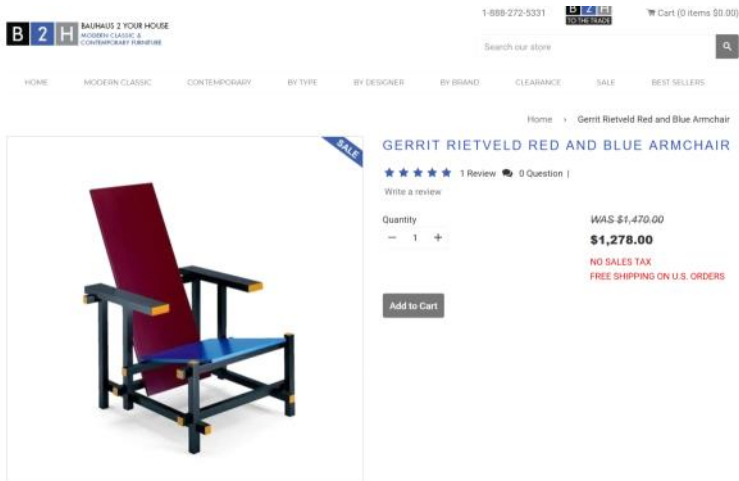


August Thonet, third son, designer : Schaukensofa ~1860. Early Art Nouveau



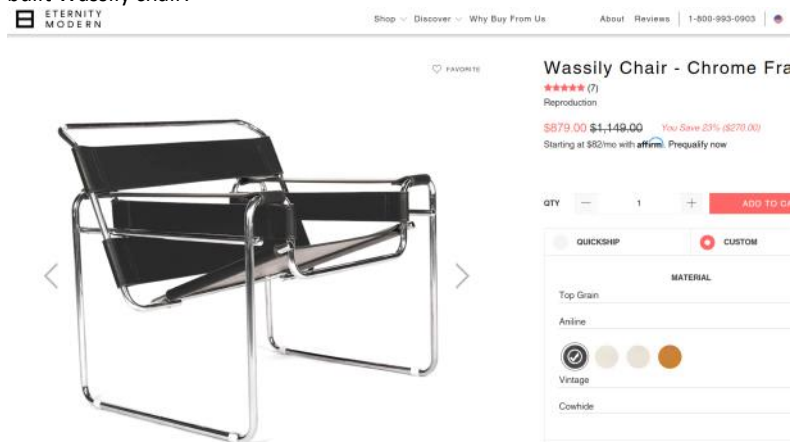
Thonet company, 200 years old, is still big in furniture today: <http://en.thonet.de/startseite.html>. Pioneered mass manufacturing and mass marketing.

This allowed independent chair designers to begin to work in late 19th century; neither cabinetmakers nor manufacturers



Dutch designer Gerrit Rietveld chair. Designed 1918 as work of art. Not very comfortable. Yes, part of De Stijl (Mondrian)

Then, Bauhaus: Gropius' protégé Marcel Breuer graduated 1925, immediately became furniture design teacher and built Wassily chair:

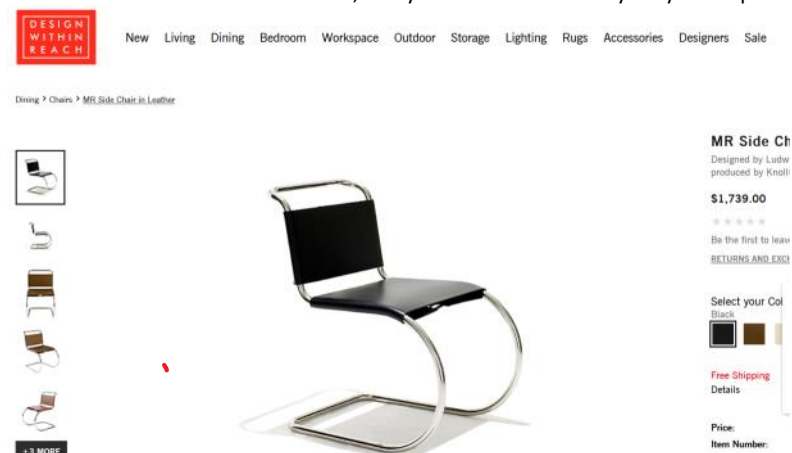


"This was the first technical innovation in furniture making since Thonet invented bentwood 65 years earlier"
Now I sit me down, pg 121.

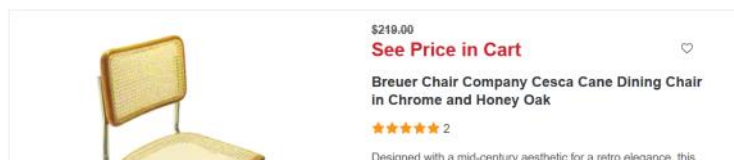
This chair had huge impact. Bauhaus was big in architecture, and now had a model in furniture.

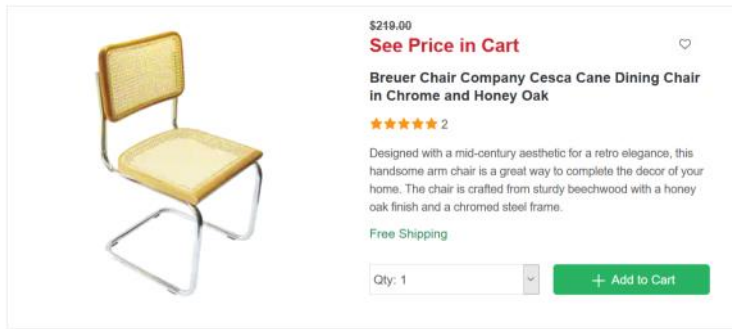
My parents bought one. Was uncomfortable, and they quickly sold it. It's still iconic, and available.

Tube steel furniture was a short fad, <10 years. Reminded everybody of hospitals and dentists. Still, some designs lasted:



MR10 by Mies van der Rohe. 1927. Expensive to manufacture, and easy to tip forward. Still Bauhaus, but looks Art Deco. Both were between WW I and II.





Marcel Breuer again. 1928 or so.

Le Corbusier liked bentwood better. Designed some chairs, inspired others.
Alvar and Aino Aalto, Finnish architects, husband and wife. Paimio lounge chair



Designed for a tuberculosis sanatorium, 1929. This one is actually comfortable.

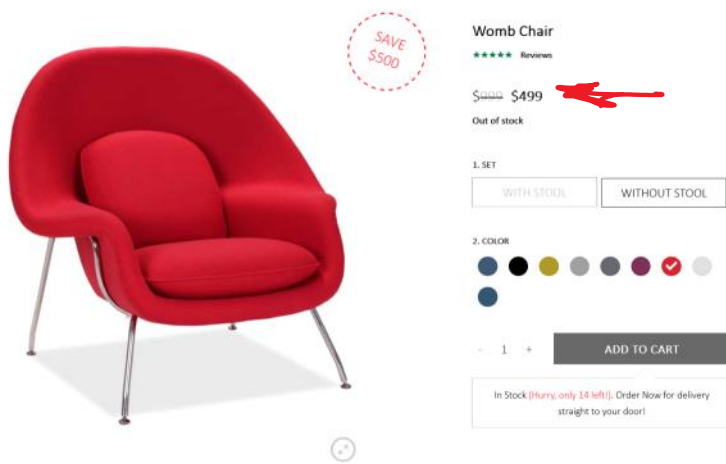
The Aaltos then influenced Eero Saarinen, who partnered with Charles Eames to make the Reading Chair:



The Organic Chair – a small and comfortable reading chair – was developed in several versions for the 1940 'Organic Design in Home Furnishings' competition organised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. With its sculptural shapes, the design was ahead of the times. But due to the absence of suitable manufacturing techniques, the armchair never went into production. Not until 1950 did it become possible to manufacture and market organically shaped seat shells in large quantities, as exemplified by Charles and Ray Eames's famous Plastic Armchair or Saarinen's Tulip Chair.

This one wasn't manufactured until 2004, for \$2000

Eames then moved away. Saarinen went on to design the Womb chair. My mother loved this chair. I spent my childhood curled up in it watching TV.



Powers of 10

Charles and Ray Eames, husband and wife, members of Mid Century Modern/Organic design movement. Pioneered fiberglass and molded plywood seating. Many designs for huge furniture manufacturer Hermann Miller (Grand Rapids, MI). Eames Intro: <http://www.eamesoffice.com/eames-office/charles-and-ray/>
 They made a number of educational films as well. My favorite is Powers of Ten: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfKBhvDjuy0>

Eames were big in the Organic movement: Incorporated user experience philosophy (the good host, providing comfort) with pioneering manufacturing process; formed plywood shells + upholstery

You have probably sat in this at an airport:



Eames Tandem Sling, by [Herman Miller](#). Still available new. Aluminum frame, vinyl fabric. 2 seater \$4200 up to 47 seats for \$24K. Refurbished with leather, \$6K on Etsy. I always try to sit in these at airports; they fit me.