

32 Chairs: Modern to Post Modern

Monday, April 21, 2025 3:19 PM

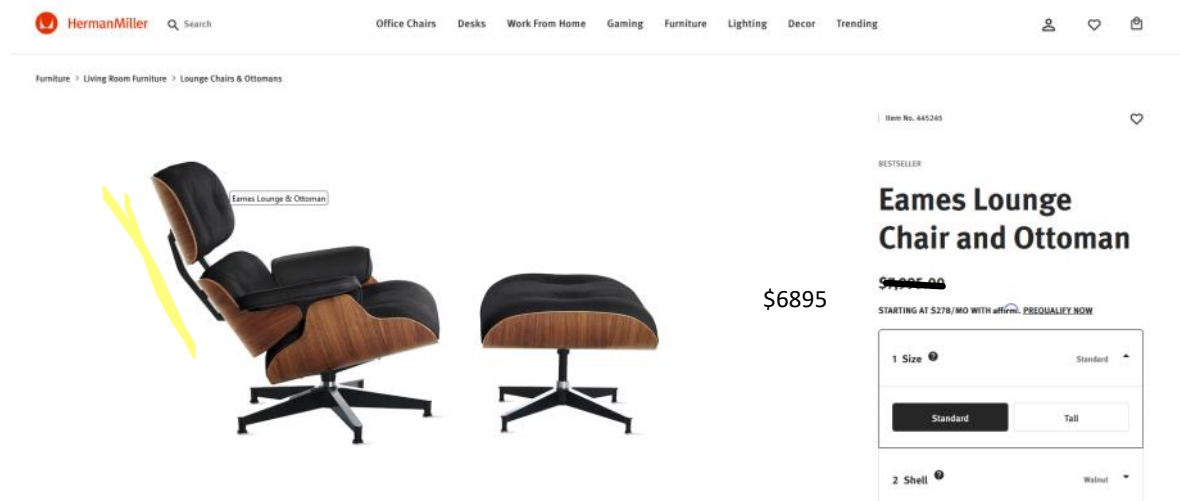
Today

Cole Sites	Bohemian Design
Nicolas Rios	

Chairs. Eames to Post Modern

Still need some Pod Facilitators. Nobody has requested in-person.

Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman



Originally was \$310 in 1956. Equivalent to \$3500 today. Knock off Eames lounge = \$800 to \$1000 (Hermann Miller part numbers 670/671)

Designed specifically for mass production, **organically** so that the elements of the mass production process actually enhance the design of the chair. Aimed at the middle class. Now \$7000, still available new from Herman Miller, almost 70 years after its introduction. Priced a bit high for the current middle class.

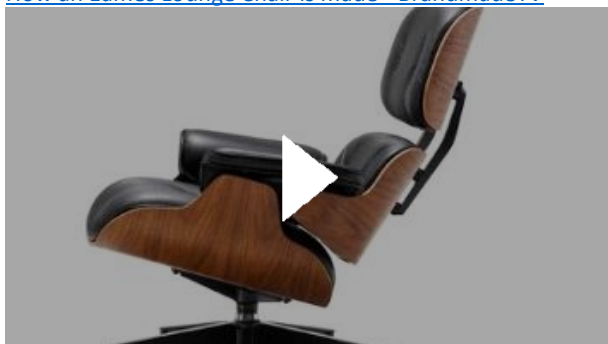
"the warm, receptive look of a well-used first baseman's mitt."

From <https://store.hermanmiller.com/living-room-furniture-lounge-chairs-ottomans/eames-lounge-chair-and-ottoman/5667.html?lang=en_US&sku=9120884>

Build process videos:

[How We Make the Eames Lounge Chair: Six New Films About the Classic, n.d.](#)

[How an Eames Lounge Chair is made - BrandmadeTV](#)



The plywood is only bent in one plane.
8:17 long



<https://shanechendesign.com/lounge-mouse>

However, the Eames' goal was a single piece, inexpensive chair. Plywood is hard to mold in 3D. They tried stamped steel and aluminum. Eventually (1950) they made one from a new material, fiberglass; i.e. glass fibers impregnated with polyester (epoxy) resin: the Shell chair



View all

The **Eames Molded Plastic & Fiberglass Armchair** is a fiberglass **chair**, designed by Charles and Ray **Eames**, that appeared on the market in 1950. The **chair** was intentionally designed for the 'International Competition for Low-Cost **Furniture** Design.

Designer: Charles and Ray Eames

Style / tradition: Mid-century modern furniture d...

Materials: Zenaloy (polyester reinforced with fi...

Date: 1948-1950

en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Eames_Fiberglass_Armchair ▾

[Eames Fiberglass Armchair - Wikipedia](#)

Life Magazine article, 1950: "Eames is so interested in making the products of his drawing board available at the lowest cost that the modest retail price of his recent chair (\$32.50) bothers him... he guiltily feels that it should sell for less."

Later redone in polypropylene by Robin Day.

The Eames goal was eventually achieved by the Monobloc:

Monobloc

Contrast the Eames Lounge chair to the Monobloc, or Resin chair: \$14.





https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Plastic_Tuinstoel.jpg

The Paradox of the Monobloc Chair | Turning Points in Design



\$8000 USD



\$14 at Big Lots



History of the Monobloc

Wikipedia:

The Monobloc chair is a lightweight stackable polypropylene chair, often described[by whom?] as the world's most common plastic chair.

Based on original designs by the Italian designer Vico Magistretti <https://www.pamono.com/designers/vico-magistretti> in 1967, variants of the one-piece plastic chair went into production with Allibert Group and Grosfillex Group in the 1970s. Since then, millions have been manufactured in countries including Russia, Taiwan, Australia, Mexico, the United States, Italy, France, Germany, Morocco, Turkey, Israel and China. Many design variants of the basic idea exist.[1]

The Monobloc chair is named because it is injection molded from thermoplastic polypropylene, the granules being heated to about 220 degrees Celsius, and the melt injected into a mold. The gate of the mold is usually located in the seat, so ensuring smooth flow to all parts of the tool. The chairs cost approximately \$3 to produce, making them affordable across the world.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

<https://www.pinterest.com/davidortegatorr/vico-magistretti/>



"Everybody Take A Seat." *Smithsonian*. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/everybody-take-a-seat-2386495/>. Short article describes the ubiquity of the chair, and its mysterious history.

"Then, in 1968, came what Fiell calls "one of the most important events in the entire history of furniture design." Danish designer Verner Panton, after ten years of searching for the right plastic, produced the first single-form, single material, injection-molded chair. It achieved total design unity in combination with a high-volume industrial process. Still, Panton's chair was very high style, a single long S curve with a U-shaped base, and demand for it was limited.



Knock-off \$100.
Authentic \$500

A variant appeared in sci fi series "the Orville" last year. Still looks futuristic.

<http://www.design-museum.de/en/collection/100-masterpieces/detailseiten/panton-chair-panton.html>

Vitra Museum

2017 exhibit on Monobloc: <http://www.design-museum.de/index.php?id=1821&L=1>

Shortly after 1970, the monobloc began appearing. Probably designed by a plastics manufacturer. Spread worldwide in 1980s. Injection molding machines and the molds are very expensive, but if you can make tens of thousands of something in two minutes each from cheap materials, the payback is pretty quick.
A new mold ~ \$300K. Used mold ~50K. Polypropylene.



http://www.kailinke.com/en/news/:mirror_chair Mirror Chair by Kai Linke, 2009.

Sidebar:

<https://www.chindogu.com/> Almost Un-Useless designs

Chindogu is in contrast to perfectly useless objects by artist Katerina Kamprani
<https://www.theuncomfortable.com/>



There is a collector for everything under the sun: Bryan Ropar. *Plastic Chair Collection Video From Tosh.O*, 2013.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PL0gsOtujqLgT7k71oh5g44Gc29UyM_QZZ&time_continue=10&v=endP6hTviXE.

Impact of the Monobloc Chair

Social theorist Ethan Zuckerman describes them as having achieved a global ubiquity:

"The Monobloc is one of the few objects I can think of that is free of any specific context. Seeing a white plastic chair in a photograph offers you no clues about where or when you are."

John Dunnigan, head of furniture design at the Rhode Island School of Design called the monobloc chair the "emblematic chair of our time" *

* Rybczynski, Witold. *Now I Sit Me Down: From Klismos to Plastic Chair: A Natural History*. First Edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016. Pg 210.

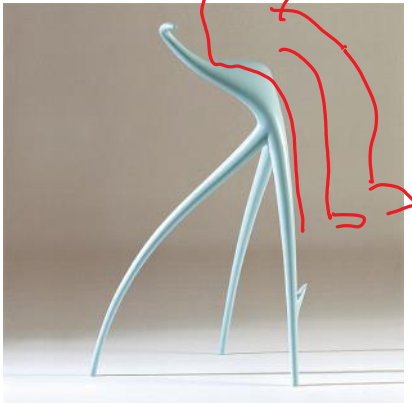
Since Then

Contemporary chairs



<http://www.design-museum.de/en/collection/100-masterpieces/detailseiten/vodoel-coop-himmelblau.html>

Vodol, by Coop Himmelblau



<http://www.design-museum.de/en/collection/100-masterpieces/detailseiten/ww-stool-starck.html>

W.W. Stool by Philippe Starck. Created for Wim Wenders, 1990. Elements of biomorphism; a germinating rhizome, with 3 roots and a shoot.

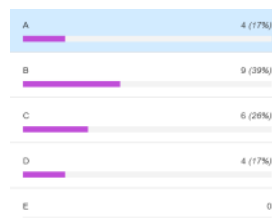
More on him on later.

Pinterest actually has broad collection

Do you have a favorite chair? Search online, post in Slack #classroom discussions

Take a guess, how much do the chairs in this classroom cost?

- a) \$ < \$100
- b) \$100 < \$ < \$500
- c) \$500 < \$ < \$1000
- d) \$ > \$1000



2024

Answer: \$403