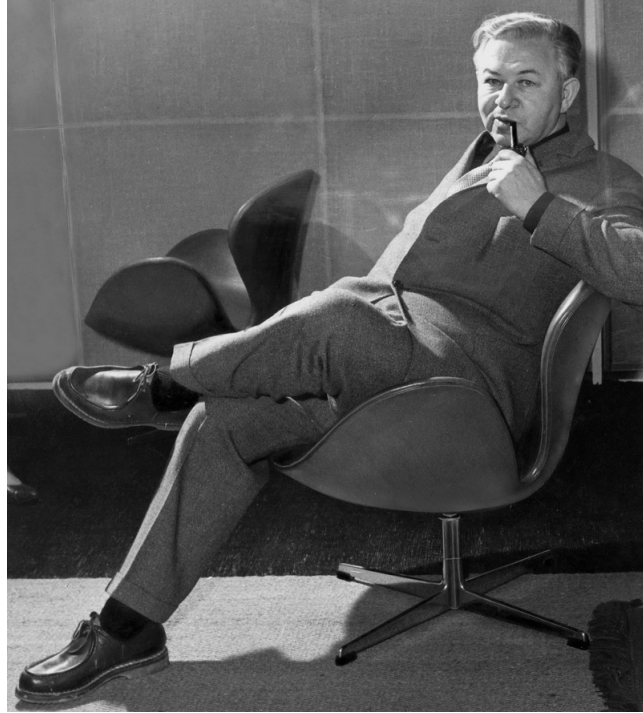


Fritz Hansen: Celebrating 150 Years of Rational, Emotional Design - The Edit | Lumens.com

[HomeThe Makers](#) Fritz Hansen: Celebrating 150 Years of Rational, Emotional Design



Arne Jacobsen, Courtesy of Fritz Hansen

The first day for a new designer at legendary Danish brand, Fritz Hansen, feels like a homecoming. From Series 7 Chairs that outfitted dentist's offices and classrooms to pendants that hung above cocoon-like Egg Chairs in the family home, furniture by Fritz Hansen is woven into the very experience of growing up in Scandinavia. For 150 years, functionality, rationality and the courage to be emotional about design has led the brand in making some of the most iconic, cherished pieces of the last century and a half, and it's curiosity that will propel the brand's legacy into the next.

From the very beginning, collaboration, craftsmanship, and innovation have been integrated elements in the company. Today, when celebrating our first 150 years, the exact same ethics are profound principles. We look back at the visionary designs of Arne Jacobsen, Poul Kjærholm and Hans J. Wegner, who revolutionized design forever – bending wood, curving steel, breaking new ground, pushing the boundaries of Nordic design.

Marie-Louise Høstbo, Head of Design at Fritz Hansen

Ahead of the Curve at the Turn of the Century

In 1872, cabinet maker Fritz Hansen obtained his first trade license in Copenhagen and seven years later, the doors to the first Fritz Hansen furniture workshop were opened. With contracts from the Danish Parliament and Supreme Court, Christiansburg Palace, the University

Library and Copenhagen City Hall, Hansen was ahead of the curve at the turn of the century. The family-owned brand quickly saw their furniture gain popularity, and renowned Scandinavian designers flocked to the workshop in pursuit of collaborations with one of Denmark's fastest rising stars.



Deconstructed Series 7 Chair, Courtesy of Fritz Hansen

With each passing decade, Fritz Hansen made great strides in producing technologically innovative designs without sacrificing its belief in the aesthetic strengths of Nordic simplicity. In the 1930s, Hansen's son, Christian Hansen, began experimenting with steam bending techniques, and over the next decade Fritz Hansen would become the global leader in producing molded and laminate wood furniture. In the 40s, the brand weathered the instability of WWII by stockpiling wood from a forest they'd purchased—that signature Fritz Hansen rationality, preempting the industry's supply and demand—and produced a new series of wooden furniture that was praised by the press for its craftsmanship.

While seminal designers like Kaare Klint, Hans J. Wegner, Piet Hein and Verner Panton worked to perpetuate the brand's notoriety, it's perhaps the work of Arne Jacobsen in the 1950s that placed Fritz Hansen into its historical league of a brand that can last throughout the centuries. In addition to the Series 7 Chair, Jacobsen designed the SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen inside and out, including iconic pieces like the Egg, Swan and Drop Chairs that remain in the Fritz Hansen collection to this day.

The Series 7 Chair: 1955



[Series 7 Chair – Natural Veneer](#) by [Arne Jacobsen](#) for [Fritz Hansen](#)

One of Jacobsen's most popular and long-lasting designs, the Series 7 has been duplicated all over the world, but never matched in ingenuity. Inspired by the plywood bending technique popularized by Charles and Ray Eames, nine layers of pressure-molded wood veneer produce the minimalist but undeniably strong design that stands the test of time both in aesthetics and the construction of the design itself.

The Egg Chair: 1958



[Egg Chair](#) by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen

Tasked with creating each element of the SAS Royal Hotel, Jacobsen outfitted the hotel's lobby with 50 Egg Chairs—a design that would go on to become one of the most recognizable creations of all time. Breaking common design conventions of the time, Jacobsen experimented with clay in his garage to create the now iconic curved shape achieved by a molded foam inner structure covered with upholstery.

The Swan Chair: 1958



[Swan Chair](#) by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen

A complement to the Egg Chair, Jacobsen's Swan Chair is another of his hotel designs that broke from conventions. Where designers had once been constrained by the pliability of wood materials, using molded foam allowed Jacobsen to create freely, producing a cocoon of a chair without any straight lines that could swivel and rotate 360 degrees. One of the first chairs produced within the Organic Modernism design movement, the Swan Chair—and its Egg companion—quickly found themselves at home in both public and private spaces.

The Drop Chair: 1958



[Drop Chair](#) by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen

Found in both bar and lobby of the Jacobsen-designed hotel, the Drop Chair—named for its tear drop-shaped shell—is one of Jacobsen's more futuristic-looking creations, taking its inspiration from the contours of the human body, and contrasting the straight lines of the hotel's architecture. Despite being “a small chair with a big personality,” according to Fritz Hansen, only 200 Drop Chairs existed until the brand re-introduced the design to the public in 2014, at the Salone del Mobile Milano.

“Our belief in Nordic simplicity continues to inspire us to bring extraordinary designs to life in collaboration with some of the world's greatest contemporary designers and architects. From early sketches to the final design, the thorough process is dedicated to long-lasting materiality, details, and sustainability to create designs that stand the test of time.”

Marie-Louise Høstbo, Head of Design at Fritz Hansen

From the 1960s to the present day, the brand continued opening new factories to meet international demand, and balanced the more traditional wood designs for which they'd become known with the imagination and innovation of design movements to come. Designs of decades past were revitalized for a more modern sensibility, and collaborations with contemporary designers like Hiromichi Konno, Piero Lissoni, Cecilie Manz and Kaspar Salto flourished while pushing the boundaries of Nordic design.

Always on the cutting edge, Fritz Hansen changed what furniture could look like, and the comfort it could provide. Straight lines and rigged backs became curvaceous shells made from upholstery-covered foam. Wood bent, steel curved and today, Fritz Hansen designers carry on the tradition of making timeless furniture for the contemporary age while paying homage to their Nordic history.