

Charles and Ray Eames

1907-1978

1912-1988

Charles Eames was born in 1907 in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended school there and developed an interest in engineering and architecture. After attending Washington University on scholarship for two years. After being thrown out for his advocacy of Frank Lloyd Wright he began working in an architectural office. In 1929, he married his first wife, Catherine Woermann, and a year later his only child, daughter Lucia, was born. In 1930, Charles started his own architectural office. He began extending his design ideas beyond architecture and received a fellowship to Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, where he eventually became head of the design department.

Ray Kaiser Eames was born in Sacramento, California, in 1912. She studied painting with Hans Hofmann in New York before moving on to Cranbrook Academy where she met and assisted Charles and Eero Saarinen in preparing designs for the Museum of Modern Art's "Organic Furniture Competition". Charles and Eero's designs, created by moulding plywood into complex curves, won them the two first prizes.



In 1941, Charles divorced his first wife, and married Ray. They moved to California where they continued their furniture design work with moulding plywood.

During the war they were commissioned by the US Navy to produce moulded plywood splints, stretchers and experimental glider shells. In 1946, Evans Products began producing their moulded plywood furniture. Their moulded plywood chair was called "the chair of the century" by the influential architectural critic Esther McCoy. Soon production was taken over by Herman Miller, Inc., which continues to produce the furniture in the United States to this day; another company, Vitra International, manufactures the furniture in Europe.

In 1949, as part of the Arts & Architecture Magazine's "Case Study" programme, Ray and Charles designed and built the groundbreaking Eames House, Case Study House #8, as their home. Located on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and hand-constructed within a matter of days entirely of pre-fabricated steel parts intended for industrial construction, it remains a milestone of modern architecture. Their design and innovative use of materials made this house a mecca for architects and designers, and it is considered one of the most important post-war residences built anywhere.

