

Peter Hvidt (1916-1986) and Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen (1907-1993)

Peter Hvidt was trained as an architect and cabinetmaker at the School of Arts and Crafts in Copenhagen. He exhibited regularly at the Cabinetmaker's Guild exhibitions, as a designer and as an exhibition architect, and also taught at the School of Arts and Crafts from 1942 to 1945. In 1944 he designed the "Portex" chair, one of the first stacking chairs to come out of Denmark. Orla Mølgaard-Nielsen graduated from the Department of Furniture Design at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art.



In 1944, Hvidt and Mølgaard-Nielsen co-founded the Hvidt & Mølgaard firm of architects.

Throughout the latter part of the 1940s, they produced furniture that was basically very traditional, but which often manipulated the standards of furniture design in some very subtle way. A 1948 mahogany furniture set which included a desk, cupboard and chairs was criticized for the wide seat and armrests that Hvidt had added, which made it impossible to slide the chair under the desk.

In 1950 Hvidt and Mølgaard-Nielsen designed the "AX" chair which became the major icon of their career. Inspired by the designs of Charles and Ray Eames, the "AX" chair was the first Danish chair with a seat and back made of double curved laminated wood. The chair was produced by Fritz Hansen and was built using Hansen's process for laminate gluing, which was in turn borrowed from a technique used to make tennis racquets. The process gave way to expansive opportunities for mass production because it could be produced more quickly without compromising the standards for quality wood furniture. It helped to open up a successful market for Danish furniture that made the country a leader in modern design. This design also opened up an exciting new arena of exportation possibilities because it took into account the elements necessary to break down the item. The seat and back could be removed and packaged separately, basically dismantling the entire chair for easy shipping. The "AX" chair was built in several different variations, with and without armrests and with reversible leather upholstery instead of the wood seat. It was also accompanied by the "AX" table and was exhibited in 1951 as part of the "Good Design" show sponsored by the MoMA.

Hvidt and Mølgaard-Nielsen continued to produce furniture for the annual Guild exhibits, although no single piece ever achieved the same international acclaim as the "AX" chair. In 1951 Hvidt created a dignified set of executive office furniture in teak and in 1959 he exhibited a luxurious furniture set made in Rio rosewood with leather upholstery. He received the *Diplôme d'Honneur* at the Milan Triennial in 1951 and 1954.

Hvidt and Mølgaard-Nielsen created designs for Fritz Hansen and Frands and Søborg.

