

# Arne Jacobsen

## 1902-1971

Arne Jacobsen (born 11 February 1902, died 24 March 1971) was a Danish architect and designer, exemplar of the "Danish Modern" style.

Among his architectural achievements are:

- St Catherine's College, Oxford;
- work at Merton College, Oxford;
- the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel, Copenhagen
- the Danish National Bank building in Copenhagen
- the Royal Danish Embassy in Knightsbridge, London

He also designed a number of town halls and other buildings in his native Denmark. Jacobsen has created a number of highly original chairs and other furniture. He has received several international distinctions and medals.



Many of Jacobsen's furniture designs have become classic, including the *Ant* chair from 1952 and the *Swan* and the *Egg* which were both designed for the Radisson SAS Hotel. Jacobsen is, however, perhaps best known for the *Model 3107* chair of 1955, known also as the "Number 7 Chair" which has sold over 5 million copies. The Number 7 chair is perhaps best known for being the prop used to hide Christine Keeler's nakedness in Lewis Morley's iconic portrait of 1963. Morley just happened to use a chair that he had in the studio, which turns out to have been a copy of Jacobsen's design. Since then, Number 7 chairs have been used for many similar portraits imitating the pose.

His other visible contribution to pop culture in the media is his flatware design, with right- and left-handed spoons in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, picked for the film because of its "futuristic" design.

St Catherine's College, Oxford, his interpretation of a quadrangle-based college, has all the requisite elements: a quad centered on a lawn (a circle with one or two Cedar of Lebanon trees), student rooms (laid out in two long rows), a garden, a dining hall, Master's Lodgings, and a "feature" (in this case, a lily pond). His creativity did not end there, however. A fastidious perfectionist, he also designed the original flatware, all of the furniture in the rooms, the locks and keys, the door handles, the sinks, the taps, and all the lights. Though only staircases 1 and 2 have the original and completed design (and his entire design originally was more extensive, with a three-story layout), the metal shower stalls and bathrooms are intact. It is also notable that the original paving is almost perfectly parallel and perpendicular to the buildings despite 30 years of wear.

Many of the furnishings and fixtures Jacobsen designed for St. Catherine's are considered classics of modern design, represented in galleries around the world. Jacobsen's work for St. Catherine's College is now a Grade 1 Listed Building, the highest designation available for architecture in England.

From 1927 until 1930, he worked in the architectural office of Paul Holsoe. In 1930, he established his own design office, which he headed until his death in 1971, and worked independently as an architect, interior, furniture, textile and ceramics designer. He was professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Arts, Copenhagen, from 1956 onwards. His best known projects are St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and the SAS Hotel, Copenhagen.

### Furniture Design

Arne Jacobsen's designs came into existence as brief sketches and were then modelled in plaster or cardboard in full size. He kept on working until his revolutionary ideas for new furniture had been realized at the utmost perfection. The *Ant* from 1952 became the starting point of his world fame as a furniture designer and became the first of a number of lightweight chairs with seat and back in one piece of moulded wood.

Model 3107, "the Number 7 chair", was launched in beech, black and white. The colour scale has through the years been further developed by the Danish architect Verner Panton and the Danish painter Poul Gernes 1925-96 and today includes a variety of colours in lacquer or lazure as well as beech, maple, ash, and cherry. It has become the most important success in Danish furniture history, manufactured in more than 5 million copies.

The Royal Hotel 1956-61, situated in Copenhagen, is one of Arne Jacobsen's masterpieces. For the decoration of the hotel he designed several pieces of furniture, lamps and fabrics, and also cutlery, glasses, and door handles. As significant counterpoints to the stiffly upright, monumental building his easy chair, the *Swan* and the *Egg*, stand out as organic sculptures.

During the 1960s Arne Jacobsen turned to forms as the circle, cylinder, triangle, and cubus. On the whole, his mind as an architect began to influence his design. Both the stainless steel tableware set *Cylinda-Line* and the lamp series *AJ* reflect this. Common to all Arne Jacobsen's designs is that they have become international design classics.

The *Ant* and the *Number Seven* chairs made Arne Jacobsen world famous as a furniture designer and made Fritz Hansen an international manufacturer of design and quality furniture.

