

# COLLECTING ICONIC 20TH-CENTURY CHAIRS WITH *Reg Taylor*

Heaven for this collector, is where no room is too small for a well-designed chair



**THIS PAGE FROM LEFT:** Miniature chairs: ● The Jacobsen Egg chair. ● Eames LCW. ● The Eames lounge and ottoman.

It's musical chairs with a difference in art teacher Reg Taylor's Mid-Century Modern Johannesburg home. Here the chairs get added to the game, not removed. "I like to do chair rotation. Every now and then I swap chairs from storage to display. Over the years I've run out of room." So what did Reg do? He started supplementing his collection with miniature versions.

"I've always appreciated good design, particularly early modernist pieces. My first really good find was a set of four 'Jason' plywood stack chairs by Carl Jacobs. A friend bought them in England in the 1950s and was going to throw them out when he moved house. He was kind enough to pass them on to me."

Whether full-size or miniature, Reg's collection focuses on chairs from the 20th Century. "It's amazing how timeless these designs are. When I tell people, for instance, that the Marcel Breuer Wassily chair was designed 90 years ago, they don't believe me. Today these designs, which are often seen in the pages of design magazines and on movie sets, look as stylish and contemporary as furniture designed yesterday.

"My favourites are the Barcelona chairs (designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) for their handsome good looks and the Le Corbusier LC4 chaise longue for its luxurious comfort. Just a couple of minutes on the chaise and I drift off to a dream world where no room is too small for a well-designed chair."

## TIPS FOR ASPIRING COLLECTORS

- Wim Castleman of Decades in Melville is still astounded by the quality of furniture that came into South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. "The economy must have been very good back then. Thankfully you can still get vintage pieces at reasonable prices," he says.
- "Do your research before you purchase and buy through a reputable dealer. Companies like Knoll, Vitra and Cassina hold the licence to manufacture authorised copies of design greats. Look for makers' stamps. If you know your stuff, you can pick up original Dansk designs at good prices. Also, look out for well-designed quality 1960's pieces from South African companies like Frystarke and Kallenbach – they're rapidly appreciating in value," Wim adds.

TEXT: DERICK KIRK PHOTOGRAPHS: HEMA PATEL



**ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Miniature chairs: ● Mackintosh's Willow chair. ● Eero Aarnio's Pastil chair. ● Eero Saarinen's Tulip chair. ● Gerrit Rietveld's Red and Blue chair.

## 20TH-CENTURY DESIGNERS

**Charles Rennie Mackintosh** A Scottish Art Nouveau designer, he created Japanese-inspired furnishings for his buildings. Designs include the Willow, Argyle Tea Room and Hill House chairs (1902).

**Gerrit Rietveld** This Dutch designer and member of the De Stijl movement reinvented the chair with his rectilinear Red and Blue chair (1918) with flat planks in bold primary colours.

**Marcel Breuer** This Hungarian-born designer deconstructed the club chair for artist Wassily Kandinsky's apartment in 1925.

**Le Corbusier** Considered to be the father of Modernism, his timeless designs include the LC4 chaise longue and Grand and Petit Confort club chairs and sofas (1927).

**Arne Jacobsen** This Danish architect designed entire buildings including the furnishings. His most famous works are the Swan and Egg chairs (1958).

**Charles and Ray Eames** This American husband and wife team experimented with plywood in mass production. Their recliner and ottoman (1956), for furniture company Herman Miller, became a fixture in top executives' offices.

**Eero Saarinen** Designed to eliminate the clutter of legs under a table, his Tulip chair (1956) was supported by a single moulded stem.

**Eero Aarnio** A Finnish industrial designer famous for his Globe, Bubble and Pastil chairs. Eero brought the fun back into interior design with brightly coloured, multi-functional designs. The Pastil chair can be used indoors or outdoors and even floats.

**Verner Panton** This Dane moved plastic furniture into the high-end designer market. His injection-moulded S-shaped chair is both simple and practical.

**Philippe Starck** When this French designer recreated a Louis XV chair in clear polycarbonate, a modern design classic was born. Kartell hold the license to manufacture the Louis Ghost chair, but copies have flooded the market in recent years. **GH**



**ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Full-size chairs: ● Marcel Breuer's Wassily chair. ● Arne Jacobsen's 'Series 7' chair. ● A Le Corbusier chaise longue.

**SOURCE** Decades 083 477 2430