

Finn Juhl (30 January 1912 – 17 May 1989) was a Danish architect, interior and industrial designer and industrial designer, most known for his **furniture design**.

He was a leading figures in the creation of "Danish design" in the 1940s and he was the designer who **introduced Danish Modern to America**.

Wikipedia



Finn Juhl

Finn Juhl was born January 30th 1912 at Frederiksberg as son of cloth merchant Johannes Juhl and his German born wife, who unfortunately died three days after the birth of little Finn.

He grew up together with his two years older brother Erik Juhl and their authoritarian father in a home with Tudor and Elizabethan dining room, leaded windows and tall panels.

Originally Finn Juhl wanted to become an art historian but his father persuaded him to join The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture after his graduation in 1930. During the Summer of 1934 Finn Juhl had a job with the architect Vilhelm Lauritzen and at the school he chose classes with Professor Kay Fisker, who was a brilliant lecturer whose lectures always were a draw.

In 1931 Kay Fisker had, along with Povl Stegmann and C.F. Møller, won the competition concerning The University of Århus and created a Danish vision of the international functionalism, which was much admired, not at least by his students. Both teachers and professors took the opportunity of hiring some of the most clever students for their own drawing offices, so it told much about Finn Juhl's qualifications that Wilhelm Lauritzen chose to hire him.

All architects – also Kay Fisk and Wilhelm Lauritzen - had in the years up to 1930 been classicists, but when the functionalism got it's break through in the 1930'ies, the classic conception of a building being a bloc with symmetric windows and doors came to an end.

In 1934 Wilhelm Lauritzen, and so also Finn Juhl, got the assignment of designing the new broadcasting house, Radiohuset, which turned out to be a beautiful and clear example of functionalism with it's clean, geometrical form of the buildings and the flat roofs. When the broadcasting house was finished in 1945, Finn Juhl resigned from his job and started his own drawing office.

Finn Juhl was not an educated furniture architect, but an all round building's architect, something he often emphasized. Never the less, it was the furniture which made him known both in Denmark and abroad. He designed his first furniture for his own apartment and they were manufactured by the young carpenter Niels Vodder, with whom he got a long lasting and fruitful co-operation.

In 1937 Finn Juhl debuted in public as a furniture architect at the exhibition of the Copenhagen Cabinetmaker's Guild at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and right from the beginning his furniture was

a subject of discussion. The furniture architects, who were known, all had either a carpenter's education or were educated by Kaare Klint at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture. But not Finn Juhl, who was self taught and who broke the craftsman like traditions within the design of furniture.

Even though there was a lack of acknowledgement to begin with of Finn Juhl's furniture design, he, ten years after his debut, got his furniture in a series production at the company Bovirke and later with France & Son, and others. From 1951 the company Baker Furniture Inc. in Grand Rapids, Michigan produced his furniture in USA.

In 1946, when Finn Juhl was at the peak of his career as a furniture designer, he got his first big interior assignment, Bing and Grøndahl's store at Amagertorv in Copenhagen. This became later on one of his main works and was awarded with the Eckersberg- Medal in 1947.

In 1937 Finn Juhl married the dentist Inge-Marie Skaarup and when the highly art interested couple in 1942 were building their new house at Krattvænget in Ørdrup, it was decorated with works of the Danish art painters of the time: Lundstrøm, Richard Mortensen, Eigill Jacobsen, Robert Jacobsen and others. Finn Juhl always saw his furniture as a part of the expression of the room and thought that furniture, handicraft and free art should create a completeness of the house, his own house being a school example of this idea.

He was not only interested in high profiled interior assignments but also participated in competitions concerning social house building. He thought that the architect should always work out a suggestion of the interior possibilities, either it was for storey houses or one-family houses, he expressed this in the magazine Arkitekten. His idea did not gain hearing. Not until later it became common to work out interior suggestions for apartments.

From 1945-1955 Finn Juhl was senior teacher at The School of Interior Decoration (now The Danish Design School) at Frederiksberg. In his classes he emphasized the importance of practical interior of new buildings. He gathered all his views in a small book called "Hjemmets Indretning" which was admired and published in both professional papers and weekly magazines.

Finn Juhl was now known as a furniture architect and so also labelled as such. Not until 1952, he got his first assignment as a buildings architect, for a lumber dealer in Nakskov. The result was Villa Aubertin, a fine worked through house furnished with Finn Juhl's own furniture.

Finn Juhl is regarded as the father of Danish Design and became world famous after he designed the Trusteeship Council in the UN building.



The 1950'ies became the busiest decade of Finn Juhl: In 1951 he made his appearance at the American stage, when the new headquarters of the United Nations was opened – and the interior of the building of the permanent counsels had to be made. Among the international team of architects who had been in charge of the project, was the Danish born American architect Abel Sorensen, who had visited Finn Juhl earlier in order to see his furniture. When the then managing director of the design department of the Museum of Modern Art, Edgar Kaufmann jr. was going to Scandinavia on a study tour, Abel Sorensen recommended him visiting Finn Juhl. This visit became the start of a life lasting friendship and co-operation between the two regarding exhibitions in USA.

The interiors of three equally large meeting halls had to be made: The Security Counsel, The Trusteeship Counsel and The Economic Counsel. The three Nordic countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden had taken on them each to appoint an architect to solve these assignments. In 1950, the 38 years old Finn Juhl was appointed by the state of Denmark, Sweden chose the 61 years old Sven Markelius and Norway chose the 68 years old Arnstein Arneberg.

Finn Juhl was young and had never before been involved in such a big public assignment, and therefore one could get the idea, that Abel Sorensen and Edgar Kaufmann jr. from the American side had mentioned his name "on the quiet".

With the counsel hall in UN Finn Juhl was suddenly an international name, and in 1956 SAS asked him to be in charge of the interior of their air terminals in Europe and in Asia.

In the 1950'ies Finn Juhl proved himself being a brilliant exhibition's architect with exhibitions like "Good Design" 1951 in Chicago and the Museum of Art in New York.

In 1952 Finn Juhl arranged a large representative exhibition in Zürich for Landsforeningen Dansk Kunsthåndværk and later the national league's exhibitions for Triennalen in Milan in 1954 and 1957.

The travelling exhibition "Neue Form aus Dänemark", which in 1956-57 was shown in a number of German cities and in Vienna was arranged by Finn Juhl.

In 1960 Finn Juhl arranged the exhibition "The Arts of Denmark" at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts in New York, as a part of a big Danish campaign in connexion with the Danish Royal couple's official visit in USA. The exhibition was beautiful and was subject of much conversation in the daily press, the large professional papers and magazines - in these years the concept of Danish Design was born in USA.

The Danish Embassy in Washington was opened in 1960. Originally it was designed by Vilhelm Lauritzen and Finn Juhl had been in charge of the new interior of the embassy, almost exclusively with his own furniture.

All in all through the years it became sixty different exhibition assignments abroad – and at the end in 1982 for his 70th birthday, he got the assignment of arranging his own retro perspective exhibition at the Danish Museum of Art & Design.

Finn Juhl died in May 1989.

In 1998 Hansen & Sørensen, the present Onecollection, was contacted by Finn Juhl's second wife Hanne Wilhelm Hansen.

She asked the company to produce a Finn Juhl model 57-sofa for an exhibition. This led to the co-operation with Hanne regarding the re-launching of Finn Juhl's furniture.

Unfortunately Hanne Wilhelm Hansen suddenly passed away in 2003, but the co-operation is carried on in her spirit through the Wilhelm Hansen Foundation.

Today Onecollection has, as the only part in the world, the rights to produce and sell Finn Juhl's furniture and the company has for the past ten years put 15 pieces of the many models in production.

Mr. Noritsugu Oda, Professor at Sapporo University in Japan, has for the past 30 years studied and collected especially Danish chairs. He is very fascinated by Finn Juhl whom he knew personally.

"I like the way Finn Juhl dared to play with the colours and organic forms in his designs. The 45-chair is my favourite chair – it is the mother of all modern chairs", says Mr. Oda.

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Finn Juhl - Curriculum vitae

- Born on January 30, 1912 in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, 1930-34.
- Employed by the architect Vilhelm Lauritzen, 1934-45.
- Debut with furniture at the Cabinetmakers' Guild exhibitions, 1937.
- Furniture models for cabinetmaker Niels Vodder, 1937—59.
- Membership in the Academic Architects Association (now the Federation of Danish Architects).
- Built his house on Kratvænget, 1942.
- C. F. Hansen prize for young architects, 1943.
- Independent design office in Nyhavn opened, 1945.
- Senior teacher at the School of Interior Design, 1945-55.
- Designed Bing & Grøndahl store on Amagertorv Square, 1946.
- Eckersberg Medal, 1947.
- Svend Schaumann's flourist's shop, Kongens Nytorv, 1948.
- »Contemporary Danish Architecture« exhibition, London, 1950.
- Danish Handcraft Guild exhibition, London, 1950.
- Mrs. Anthon Petersen's summer house in Asserbo, 1950.
- **»Good Design« exhibition, Chicago, 1951.**
- **Designed the Trusteeship Council Chamber, U.N. Headquarters, New York, 1951—52.**
- **Furniture ranges for Baker Furniture, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1951—55.**
- Furniture ranges for France & Daverkosen, Ørholm, and France & Søn, Hillerød, 1953-69.
- **»Angewandte Kunst aus Dänemark« exhibition, Zurich, 1952. Remodeled the Georg Jensens store on Fifth Avenue, New York, 1952.**
- Single-family house for M. Aubertin, Nakskov, 1952.
- Designed a room with his own furniture, etc. at the Nordenfjeldske Museum of Applied Art, Trondheim, 1952.
- »Home of the Future« exhibition at the Cabinetmakers' Guild 400th anniversary exhibition at Forum, 1954.
- Georg Jensen silversmithy, 50th anniversary exhibition, Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen, 1954.
- **»Fifty Years of Danish Silver« exhibition, London, 1954; i Washington, Louisville, and Dallas, 1955; and St. Louis, 1957.**
- Designed Denmark's stand at the Xth Triennial in Milan, 1954. Honorary diploma.
- Villabyernes Bio movie theatre, Vangede, 1955.
- Awarded a diploma by Gentofte Municipality.
- Director's office for France & Daverkosen, Ørholm, 1955.
- Model apartment at the H55 exhibition in Helsingborg, Sweden, 1955.
- Designed SAS's ticket offices in Europe and Asia, 1956-61.
- »Neue Form aus Dänemark« traveling exhibition in 8 German cities and Vienna, 1956-57.
- Designed a store in Toronto for Georg Jensen, Inc., 1956.
- Designed interior of DC-8 planes for SAS.
- Remodeled the Georg Jensen store on New Bond Street, London, 1957 (together with Trevor Danatt).
- Denmark's stand at the XIth. Triennial in Milan, 1957. Awarded a gold medal.
- **Furnished the ambassador's residence at the Royal Danish Embassy, Washington D.C., 1960.**
- **»The Arts of Denmark« exhibition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1960.**
- **»The Arts of Denmark« exhibition moved to museums in Washington D. C., Chicago, and Los Angeles, 1960-61.**
- **Trophy for The Kaufmann International Design Award, 1960.**
- Summer-house for Anders Hostrup-Pedersen, Raageleje, 1962.
- Expansion of Bing & Grøndahl store, 1963.
- **A.I.D. prize for design, Chicago, 1964.**
- **Visiting professor, Institute of Design, Chicago 1965.**
- Designed the Hotel Richmond restaurant, 1965.
- Remodeled the Wilhelm Hansen Musikforlag store on Gothersgade, 1966.
- »Two Centuries of Danish Design« exhibition, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1968.
- »A Century of Danish Design« exhibition, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow, and Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 1968.
- Exhibition of arts and crafts, Brussels, 1969.
- Retrospective exhibition of his own work, Charlottenborg Autumn Exhibition, 1970.
- Received a life-long pension from the State Budget, 1971.
- Exhibition of his own work, Cantu, Italy, 1973.
- Made an Honorary Royal Designer for Industry, London, 1978.
- Retrospective exhibition of furniture and other work, Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen, 1982.
- Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog, 1984.
- Died, May 17, 1989

