

# The other side of DANISH MODERN

*The Danish design movement was alive and very well in the decades before its acknowledged reign of supremacy. Jason Mowen highlights a few of its leading lights and their star pieces.*

*Philip Arctander's Clam chair (left) and Flemming Lassen's The Tired Man armchair, in the petit salon of French interior designer Pierre Yovanovitch's 17th-century chateau in Provence.*





## ICONIC STYLE



FROM LEFT: *Kaare Klint's Faaborg chair (1915) and a rare daybed in Cuban mahogany (1917), one of only two produced. The daybed sold at Danish auction house Bruun Rasmussen in 2015 for 598,000 Danish krone (around \$117,300); a pair of Klint's early Easy armchairs in Cuban mahogany and Niger leather sold at Phillips in London in 2016 for £56,250 (around \$92,580).*

**N**OTHING IN THE VOCABULARY OF 20TH-CENTURY DESIGN is quite so reductive as 'Danish Modern', a phrase that conjures images of retro-looking armchairs, teak sideboards and ceramic table lamps, many of which are not even Danish.

Whether it is the result of poor geographic knowledge on our part or the enduring legacy of Denmark's prolific design output during the 1950s and '60s, a particularly golden era of Danish design from the interwar years is often overlooked.

It was an era born of Modernism without mass-production and its virtue lies therein: furniture was designed and handcrafted slowly, the love child of a generation of Danish architects and the brilliant cabinetmakers with whom they collaborated.

International collectors and some of the world's greatest interior designers are once again celebrating this noble precursor to the Danish Modern we're so familiar with today. Here is a brief (and eclectic) summary of those who forged the path of early Danish Modernism, which, in this humble person's opinion, is one of the most elegant manifestations of all Scandinavian creativity.



## KAARE KLINT

No story on Danish Modern would be possible without mention of Kaare Klint, whose 1915 Faaborg chair is considered to be *the* seminal piece of modern Danish design.

His Barcelona or Red chair, the winner of the grand prix medal at the 1929 World Exposition in Barcelona, makes sporadic but powerful appearances in sophisticated contemporary interiors (French interior designer Pierre Yovanovitch is but one of a handful of sophisticated devotees).

Klint's son Esben recalled an encounter between his father and renowned Swedish architect Gunnar Asplund regarding the Red chair. "Asplund met Klint in Stockholm, and Klint asked Asplund what he was working at," said Esben. "Asplund then told him that he was working on a library, a cinema and a store building. 'And how about you, Kaare Klint?' asked Asplund. 'I am working at a chair,' responded Klint. A few years later they met in Copenhagen, and again Klint asked Asplund, 'Well, what are you up to now?' He answered, 'I am now doing a town hall, a school building and a couple of villas — but what are you up to, Kaare?' 'Well, I told you the last time we met, I am working at a chair...' replied Klint." »

FAABORG CHAIR AND DAYBED IMAGES COURTESY BRUUN RASMUSSEN; EASY ARMCHAIRS AND BARCELONA CHAIRS IMAGES COURTESY PHILLIPS; FRITS HENNINGSEN IMAGE COURTESY PIERRE YOVANOVITCH. EXCHANGE RATE AT TIME OF PRINT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FROM LEFT: *a 1930s Frits Henningsen sofa in the salon of Pierre Yovanovitch's chateau in Provence; this set of six Kaare Klint Barcelona (or Red) dining chairs sold at Phillips in London in 2014 for £22,500 (around \$37,040).*





## ICONIC STYLE

«**ORLA HØYER** An early Danish Modern curveball, so to speak, is the recently discovered set of custom furniture, designed in 1941 by little-known theatre architect Orla Høyer for a villa in Copenhagen's Frederiksberg district. The striking suite (below), which comprised a daybed and four case pieces, feels more 'Deco' and glamorous than Klint's sober brand of luxury — still, that exacting Danish craftsmanship is visibly apparent.

The suite went under the hammer at Danish auction house Bruun Rasmussen in June, and the five pieces sold separately for a total of 420,000 Danish krone (around \$82,967), destined for European galleries. Peter Kjelgaard, head of Bruun Rasmussen's design department, proclaimed, "We normally see the greatest demand and hundred-thousand-kroner hammer prices on design classics by the most famous Danish architects, but this evening we proved that unknown Danish design can also arouse the attention of international collectors."



### FRITS HENNINGSEN

One of Kaare Klint's earliest disciples, and later competitors, was Frits Henningsen, who also drew inspiration from 17th- and 18th-century English furniture reinterpreted for life in the 20th century. I first discovered Henningsen and the unforgettable silhouette of his High Wingback leather chair while working for interior designer Jonathan Reed in London early last decade. Handcrafted in small numbers in the 1930s and '40s by Henningsen himself, the High Wingback is quite simply one of the most elegant and memorable chairs of all time.



### PHILIP ARCTANDER

One of the most mysterious pieces from this period, the Clam chair has resurfaced over the years at minor Danish auction houses. When its price began to rise in 2008, the chair was incorrectly attributed to Danish architect-designer Viggo Boesen, probably due to its similarity to his 1938 Little Petra chair. Then it was credited to a Norwegian Martin Olsen, with that attribution coming from Norway's National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design.

Following extensive research, Danish auction house Bruun Rasmussen has confirmed the chair is definitely Danish and was designed by hitherto-unknown architect Philip Arctander. Not that this flip-flopping of attribution did anything to quash the Clam chair's escalating price; in April 2013, London auction house Phillips sold a pair of the infamous chairs for £146,500 (around \$240,573).

### FLEMMING LASSEN

The furniture designs of architect Flemming Lassen were characterised by soft, organic shapes. His The Tired Man armchair, designed for the Copenhagen Cabinetmakers' Guild Exhibition in 1935, was, according to the designer, supposed to make the person sitting in it feel "like a polar bear cub held by his mother in the middle of the ice cap, feeling warm and safe". A single The Tired Man armchair sold at Bruun Rasmussen in September 2015 for 1,775,000 Danish krone (around \$350,638), a record for the sale of a Danish chair. *IL*

FROM LEFT: *Frits Henningsen's High Wingback chair*; *Flemming Lassen's The Tired Man*.



ORLA HØYER AND CLAM CHAIR IMAGES COURTESY BRUUN RASMUSSEN; HIGH WINGBACK CHAIR AND THE TIRED MAN CHAIR IMAGES COURTESY PHILLIPS. EXCHANGE RATE AT TIME OF PRINT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE