



DESIGN HERO

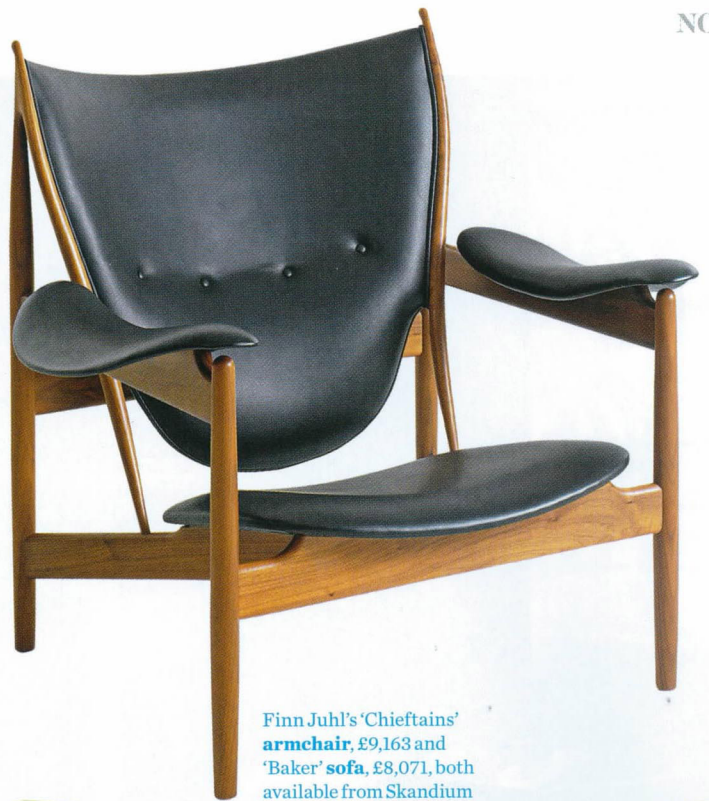
Finn Juhl

The Danish master who popularised teak furniture and open-plan living

Who was he? Like his fellow Danes Hans J Wegner and Arne Jacobsen, Finn Juhl (1912-1989) helped put Danish design on the world map in the 1950s. He grew up wanting to be an art historian, but his father, a textile businessman, thought this an insufficient means of making a living, so Finn became an architect instead. He believed that architects should take as much care with the interiors of their buildings as with the structure itself – an approach that can be seen in his most famous project, the Trusteeship Council Chamber at the United Nations headquarters in New York. His concern for the finer details of a space led him to create his own furniture designs, and it's these for which he's now best known.

What makes him a design hero? Unlike many Danish designers, Finn was not a trained craftsman, which meant his style was unconventional. Departing from the spare lines favoured by his contemporaries, he took his cue from modern art. He designed several sofas with sinuous forms inspired by the work of Picasso and Henry Moore, such as the '4600' (1946) and 'Baker' (1951). But his masterpiece is the 'Chieftains' chair (1950), which earned him a reputation as the father of Danish teak style. It's a beautifully complex structure inspired by ancient weapons – one section looks like an archer's bow, while the leather back and armrests resemble shields. You can see it and other Finn Juhl creations at his self-designed home north of Copenhagen, which is part of the Ordrupgaard art museum and open to the public. Built in 1942, it's an early example of open-plan architecture (ordrupgaard.dk).

Where can I buy his work? Danish brand Onecollection manufactures 15 of Finn Juhl's designs, all available at Skandium (skandium.com).



Finn Juhl's 'Chieftains' armchair, £9,163 and 'Baker' sofa, £8,071, both available from Skandium



Stop press! If World Cup fever has inspired you to take a trip to South Africa, be sure to check out our sister magazine ELLE Decoration South Africa's new online Hip City Guide 2010 before you go. Compiled by the stylish denizens of Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria, it's essential reading for style-savvy travellers (hipcityguide.co.za)

Top of the shops

Kingston shop 37 Old London Road is at the forefront of the new 'upcycling' trend – its owners Denny and Dazzle rework second-hand furniture into desirable, hand-crafted pieces for your home. Expect to find revived vintage sofas, restored Welsh dressers and rare designs by forgotten British brands such as E Gomme. We think it's a must-visit – especially as we helped create its stylish new look!

See ELLE Decoration editor-in-chief Michelle Ogundehin and retail guru Mary Portas working their makeover magic on the store in the new series of 'Mary Queen of Shops', on BBC2 from mid May (37oldlondonroad.co.uk).

