



## THE PELICAN MEETS MACBETH

*Finn Juhl's armchair the Pelican turns 75. In connection with this Onecollection launches a special Artwork Edition with new upholstery designed by one of its contemporaries, the world famous Danish artist Asger Jorn.*

### FINN JUHL (1912 - 1989)

*Finn Juhl is often considered the father figure of Danish Design, although the idea was far removed from his personality. Finn Juhl followed what was closest to his heart – the modern free art. With an artistic approach to functional design, he created a brand new idiom in the last mid-century, which today is clearing the way for new designers.*

*Finn Juhl's furniture is the centre of a modern revival. His Chieftain Chair, the Egyptian Chair, the Poet Sofa, the Pelican Chair and many other original pieces of furniture are exhibited in museums all over the world, highly valued at auctions and a new original licenced production of furniture by Onecollection is a success from Tokyo to New York.*

### ASGER JORN (1914 - 1973)

*Asger Jorn was one of the most influential Danish artists of the 20th century, strongly inspired by Jean Arp, Joan Miro and Max Ernst. He was a student of Fernand Léger at L'Académie Contemporaine in Paris 1936-1937. In Paris, he also collaborated with the Swiss architect Le Corbusier.*

*Jorn was a member and founder of numerous international artistic constellations, of which COBRA and L'internationale situationniste are the most famous. His works include painting, prints, ceramics, sculpture and tapestry. He was also the author of many books on art, architecture and society.*

The Danish architect Finn Juhl (1912-1989) loved modern art and he was a great fan of Asger Jorn (1914 - 1973), who was perceived as one of Denmark's most famous young and wild artists. The two men had a lot in common. Juhl and Jorn were both inspired by the 1940s' free and imaginative artistic movements, and both were perceived as rebels in their own fields.

In the year that the Pelican turns 75, these two personalities meet again through an exciting collaboration between the Danish manufacturer of Finn Juhl's furniture, Onecollection and the London-based design company Domicileculture.

Domicileculture, conceived and owned by creative director Daniel Schou, initiated a collaboration with the Museum Jorn five years ago with a focus on textile projects with Jorn designs. The first fabric in this collection is Macbeth. The motif of the design was found in a small drawing Asger Jorn did

in the summer of 1942, when he and his artist friend Ejler Bille had rented a modest fishing cottage on the west coast of Jutland. Jorn had studied under Fernand Léger at L'Académie Contemporaine in Paris, and quickly adopted Léger's theory that all artwork should start as small pencil sketches without colour. It is possible that the Macbeth drawing was meant as a sketch for a larger project.

Macbeth is full of playfulness and spontaneity, which was typical of Jorn's early work, where he sought to be free of colour and focused more on drawing and composition. Macbeth is a graphic combination of quickly sketched faces, animals and symbols. In this case, the fluid line has a dramatic resonance in conjunction with the sculptural form of the Pelican.

The Jorn Museum in Silkeborg is home to the world's largest collection of Jorn's work. Museum director Jacob Thage is excited about the new Jorn/Juhl collaboration. "It is a fact that Juhl and Jorn knew each other and without doubt also inspired each other. Finn Juhl had paintings by Jorn in his home, and when Jorn exhibited on a small island in a lake in the Dyrehaven Park in 1942, he asked Juhl to design a bridge and organize the gigantic marquee, which was a sign of huge respect for his work," Jacob Thage explains.

The new fabric is produced from 79% cotton and 21% wool in a Jacquard-weave, with the lines of the drawings raised in relief on a white or coloured background, adding a three dimensional tactile effect. The fabric is also produced in a Chenille version from 96% cotton and 4% polyester.



## THE PELICAN TAKES OFF

*Onecollection was taking a big risk when it re-launched the Pelican Chair in 2001, but it paid off, and the chair made an elegant comeback.*

When the generously padded armchair The Pelican was launched in 1940, nothing indicated that the chair would later become one of Finn Juhl's most iconic and best selling designs.

In fact, the Pelican had quickly been written off and disappeared into oblivion, so it came as a great surprise when Onecollection re-launched the chair in January 2001 at the IMM fair in Cologne.

To Onecollection's two owners, however, there was method behind the madness. Henrik Sørensen and Ivan Hansen were both deeply fascinated by the chair's strong sculptural appearance and felt that the time was finally ripe for the Pelican to spread its wings. And their boldness paid off. The chair was received with huge acclaim by the public and the international media, who quickly proclaimed it a timeless design classic.

As a matter of fact, it was time that had finally caught up with the Pelican and not the other way round, but the point was: it flew!

Today, the Pelican Chair is seen as one of Finn Juhl's most iconic designs and at the same time the most popular model in the House of Finn Juhl portfolio, selling handsomely in more than 30 countries.

To Henrik Sørensen and Ivan Hansen, the success of the Pelican Chair is also their own personal success, because they single-mindedly believed in the potential of a chair that had been forgotten for 60 years: "Ivan and I are particularly proud of having reborn the Pelican. In 1940, it was criticized and mocked as an Ugly Duckling, but today it is celebrated as a beautiful swan - or pelican or whatever these birds are called," Henrik Sørensen says with a humorous reference to the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale.



## THE PELICAN AND FUNCTIONALISM

*In the 1940s, upholstered chairs were terrible monstrosities. Finn Juhl the functionalist set out to change that.*

Finn Juhl's talent for creating furniture with a sculptural quality was and still is unique in Danish design history, but his main focus wasn't on aesthetics. Finn Juhl first and foremost saw himself as a pure functionalist, who championed the ideas of practical furniture for ordinary people.

The ideals of functionalism must have hit straight home with Finn Juhl, because already as an 18 year old boy, at the beginning of his studies at the architect school, Juhl visited the famous 1930 Stockholm exhibition, organised by the Swedish architect Erik Gunnar Asplund. This was the first time functionalism was introduced to the Scandinavian public and for Finn Juhl it was a life-changing experience.

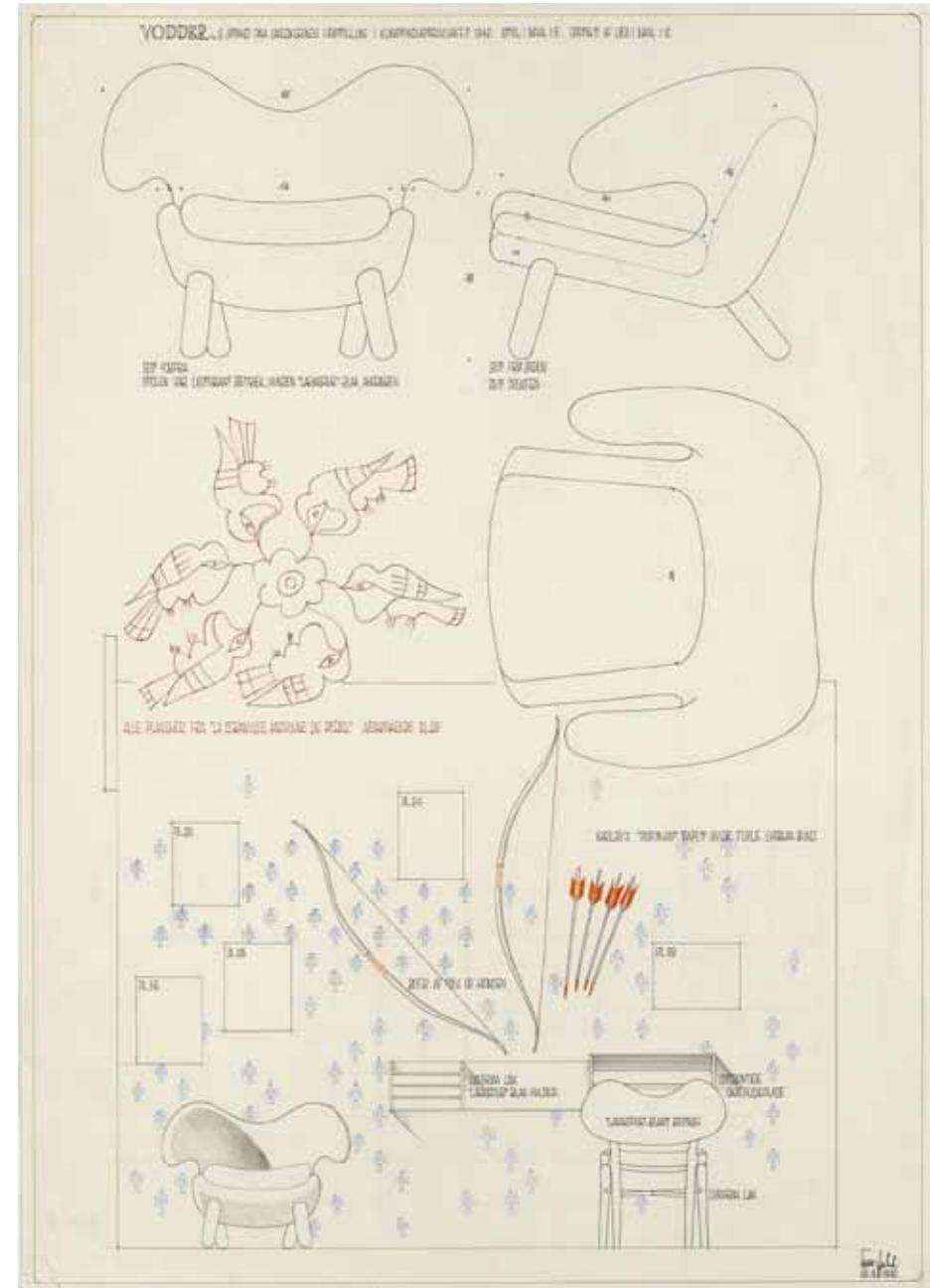
At first sight, the Pelican does not come across as a particularly functionalistic chair. But once you sit down, there is no doubt that function is a priority. Juhl's philosophy was that in order for a person to sit comfortably, the human form should be the starting point. The organic shape of the Pelican is therefore dictated by its function.

Another functionalistic feature of Juhl's designs was his idea that you should be able to sit comfortably in many different positions in his chairs. Also, a Juhl chair doesn't require a certain position in the room. It works from all angles and fits perfectly with most interior styles.

In Finn Juhl's version of functionalism, furniture should work individually and not be too domineering. Most other 1940's chairs were large and heavy and didn't work well in people's small flats. He therefore shaped the Pelican with the aim to give it a visual lightness.

Unfortunately this combination of sculptural shape and functionalism was not to people's taste in 1940. The chair was ahead of its time, and it took 60 years before someone had the courage to give it a second chance.

*Finn Juhl's beautiful hand drawing for cabinetmaker Niels Vodder's stand at the Guild Exhibition in 1940. It is clear that Finn Juhl's knowledge about furniture construction was particularly inadequate, at least at the beginning of his career. His drawing for the Pelican chair was more like a conceptual idea.*



ONE CANNOT CREATE HAPPINESS  
WITH BEAUTIFUL OBJECTS,  
BUT ONE CAN SPOIL  
QUITE A LOT OF HAPPINESS  
WITH BAD ONES

*Finn Juhl*



## THE PELICAN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

*Today's Pelican is a great example of how modern technology and traditional craftsmanship can go hand in hand.*

Most Danish furniture designers in the 1940s were trained cabinetmakers and had a solid knowledge of materials and techniques. Finn Juhl had none of that. He had trained as an architect at the Royal Danish Academy of Art and throughout his life called himself an “amateur” furniture designer.

Through his work as an architect, Finn Juhl met cabinetmaker Niels Vodder, who became instrumental in translating his lofty ideas into practical pieces of furniture. Vodder was also Finn Juhl's ticket to the only Danish furniture show at the time: the annual Cabinetmaker's Guild Exhibition.

At the Cabinetmaker's Guild exhibition in 1940, Juhl exhibited a couple of innovative padded chairs, which attracted considerable attention because of their sculptural shape. The media wasn't impressed, however, and scornfully called them “a couple of tired walruses”. Finn Juhl didn't take the criticism too hard, though. To him, the chairs were more of an experiment.

The making of the chairs had also been an unconventional process: Juhl had just presented his cabinetmaker with a simple sketch and a few key measurements, and it had then been up to Niels Vodder to find a way to construct the chair.

Niels Vodder's solution remained a secret for 60 years. When Onecollection decided to re-launch the chair in 2000, there were no instructions in the archives as to how it could be made. There was only one thing to do. Onecollection borrowed one of the original Pelican chairs from professor Noritsugu Oda in Japan, a passionate Finn Juhl collector, who kindly let the manufacturer carefully dissect the chair layer by layer, to reveal its construction.

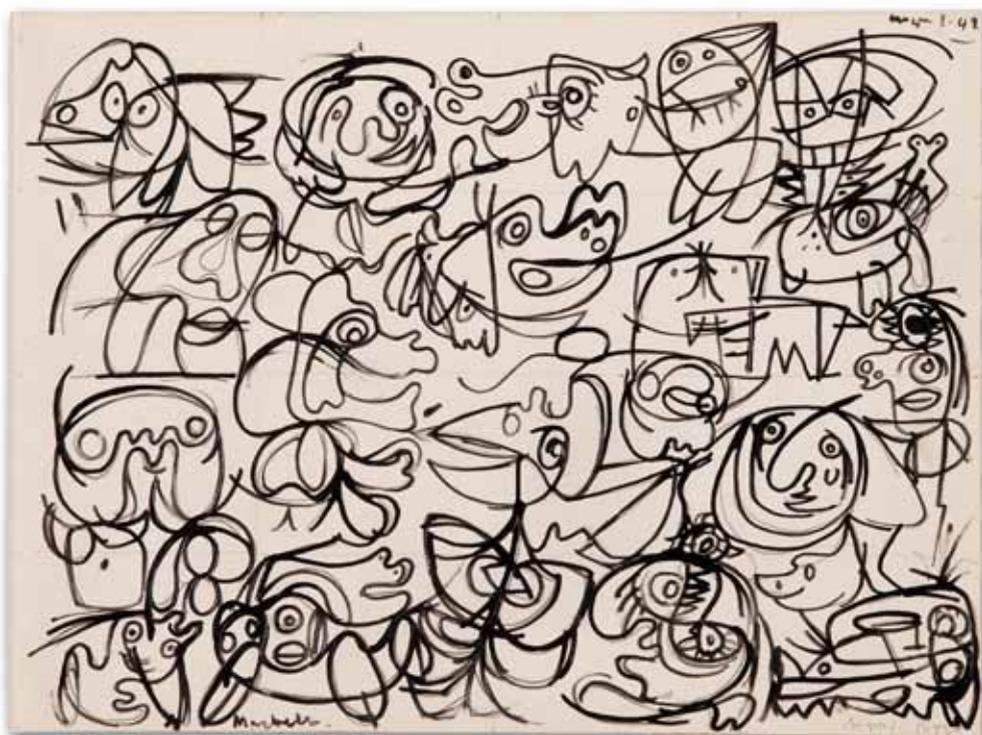
Instead of the original chunky pine frame with three layers of upholstery, which was extremely heavy, the modern Pelican is now produced as a hard foam shell with a steel core frame. With the Danish expertise in traditional craftsmanship the upholstery is made by hand with a tufting needle.



ART AND HANDWRITING ARE THE SAME.

AN IMAGE IS WRITTEN AND HANDWRITING IS IMAGES.  
THERE IS HANDWRITING, A GRAPHIC ELEMENT, IN EVERY IMAGE  
JUST AS THERE IS AN IMAGE IN EVERY PIECE OF HANDWRITING.  
THE BORDER BETWEEN ART AND HANDWRITING IS BLURRED  
IN ORIGIN. EVERYTHING IS A SYMBOL OF SOMETHING.

*Asger Jorn*  
*"The Prophetic Harps," 1944*



*The drawing Macbeth, Asger Jorn, 1942*  
*Pen, Indian ink, pencil, 230 x 306 mm, Donation from Asger Jorn*

## TEXTILE PROJECT – DOMICILECULTURE

With colourful works full of fantasy, Asger Jorn (1914-1973) was a source of inspiration in his time, but also a challenge. Play and spontaneity were indicative of Jorn's working method.

Jorn is regarded by many as Denmark's pre-eminent 20th-century artist. His spontaneous abstract style has achieved considerable international acclaim. Distinctly versatile, Asger Jorn worked as a painter, ceramic artist, draughtsman, graphic artist, sculptor, and writer. His imagery evolved throughout his artistic career.

The drawing *Macbeth* is characteristic in so far as myriads of figures spread across the whole picture plane. The drawing was probably intended as a sketch for a painting and was executed during a stay on the North Sea coast at Nr. Lyngby during the summer of 1942 where Asger Jorn had rented a small fisherman's cottage together with Ejler Bille. The motif expresses spontaneity, playfulness, experiment, all of which are significant themes in the works of Asger Jorn.

Together with Danish and European artist colleagues, Jorn tried to combine the currents in modern European art with the Danish tradition. He was a member and co-founder of several artists'

groups, including Høst, COBRA and, later, the Situationist International.

Museum Jorn, Silkeborg, possesses the world's largest collection of works by Asger Jorn. In addition to the permanent displays of Jorn's works and his collection, the museum arranges changing exhibitions. Every year, the museum opens its doors to large numbers of visitors from Denmark and abroad, who, above all, will have the privilege of experiencing, Jorn's main work *Stalingrad*.

## THE PELICAN AND ART

*As a young man, Finn Juhl wanted to be an art historian, but he became an architect instead. Luckily, art remained a large part of his universe.*

The organic shape of the Pelican is strongly influenced by Finn Juhl's passion for modern art, an interest he had even before he started to study architecture. As a young boy, Juhl wanted to study art but his businessman father would have none of that. He argued that the young Finn should have a practical education so he could earn money and be able to provide for himself and a family. Architecture was therefore the result of a compromise and Juhl had ulterior motives: the architecture school was part of the Royal Academy of Art, and once he was an accredited student, he would be able to sneak in and listen to lectures on painting and sculpture. It didn't turn out like that though, as Juhl quickly became absorbed by architecture.

Finn Juhl never lost his interest for art - particularly the free and imaginative art of his time, represented by international names like Jean Arp, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Alberto Giacometti as well as the Icelandic artist Sigurjón Ólafsson and Danes like Asger Jorn, Richard Mortensen, and Erik Thommesen,

whose artworks almost always were part of his many exhibitions.

To Finn Juhl, art was not an interest like any other. The modern, free art movement was a direct source of inspiration and Juhl was arguably the first Danish designer to have an artistic approach to designing furniture.

The Pelican from 1940 is a particularly good example of this. Its amorphous shape has a clear reference to the sculptor Jean Arp's surrealist torsos from the 1930s and 40s. Arp had the human torso as his starting point - just like the Pelican, which so to speak was a body shaped to hold another body.



CHAIRS ARE LIKE BEDS –  
THEY ARE MADE TO MOVE IN.  
THAT IS WHY CHAIRS,  
WHICH ONLY ALLOW ONE POSITION,  
ARE WRONG.

*Finn Juhl*



## THE PELICAN AND ITS TIME

*The Pelican was an experiment aimed at combining functionalism and modern art, but criticism was tough.*



*At the Cabinetmaker's Guild Exhibition in 1940 Finn Juhl showed his Pelican Chair, which received a lot of attention for its provocative organic shapes and relatively slim upholstery. The chair was exhibited together with a big wooden sculpture by the Icelandic artist Sigurjón Ólafsson, who joined a group of artists together with Asger Jorn. Its amorphous shapes underlined Finn Juhl's inspiration from the modern free art with roots in cubism and surrealism.*

It is not surprising that the Pelican got a lot of attention when it was first presented in 1940. Its shape, with the low-slung back and rounded armrests had no references to anything anyone had ever seen before.

The Pelican's sculptural shape was unusual and without doubt also provocative. But to Finn Juhl, the chair simply represented a distillation of his ideas, which were to combine the ideals of functionalism and the limitlessness of modern art. It was an experiment of form and expression completely different from anything anyone had ever done before him. Therefore, the debate did not come as a surprise to him.

One of Juhl's fiercest opponents was the grand old man of Danish furniture design, the architect Kaare Klint (1889 - 1954), who had founded a "Department for Furniture and Room Art" at the Academy of Art's Architect School. Klint was one of Denmark's first functionalists, and extremely systematic in terms of measuring the human physique and its needs for space. His department had huge influence on the development of Danish furniture design at the time. One of his most famous students was Børge Mogensen. Klint was also very dogmatic and in his eyes, Juhl was nothing but a "dandy" who courted fleeting fashion trends. Needless to say, the two architects sparked passionate debate whenever they met.

According to Juhl, Klint gradually softened his views once he discovered that Juhl's designs were also rooted in functionalism. The two architects never reached full agreement, but they did grow to respect each other over the years.

It is not known if Klint and Juhl ever discussed the Pelican, but it is clear that the armchair never won the hearts of the greater public at the time. Only a few chairs were manufactured and luckily one of these ended up in the Japanese furniture expert Professor Noritsugu Oda's collection. The exact same chair later became the foundation for the re-launch of the chair in 2001.

One of the most interesting features about the Pelican is how seamlessly it fits into almost any modern interior style. In no way does it seem old-fashioned, arrogant or inflexible. On the contrary: it carries its age with an extraordinary ease.



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