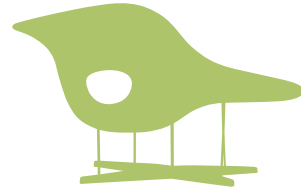
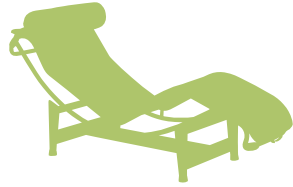


Design & Recline



Modern Architecture
and the Mid-Century
Chaise Longue



Design ~ Recline

Modern Architecture and the Mid-Century Chaise Longue

Robin Schuldenfrei

Modern architects in the late 1920s and early 1930s designed furniture to fit ideologically and aesthetically in the interiors of their new architecture. Their turn-of-the-century predecessors had had an almost obsessive interest in creating a *gesamtkunstwerk*, or “total work of art,” designing houses with all of their fittings, from the door-knobs to the chimney pots. Sweeping away the fussy and opulent interiors of art nouveau, modern architects sought to develop interiors and furniture appropriate to their new concepts. The modernist program for architecture espoused functionalism and rationalism, the use of new technology and materials, a visible expression of structural elements, a focus on health, and the integration of indoor and outdoor living. Designing furniture that would communicate these tenets became part of the ideology of a movement fraught with complex social agendas and varying theories concerning how modern life should be lived. Architects embraced the machine and its potential for inexpensive mass production of furniture as a viable way to bring modernism and its benefits to a broad public.

One furniture form that occupies an unusual place in the nexus of issues surrounding modernism is the chaise longue. Modern architects did not invent this chair type, which has existed since at least the sixteenth century in France.¹ The defining characteristics of the chaise longue,

or “long chair,” are its length, its canted back, and support for the legs. Unlike the daybed, *recamier*, or Greek sofa, which were intended for lounging on one’s side, the chaise longue is designed for lying on one’s back. The chairs were popular in England and America in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the 1830s, and the term itself has been in circulation in the English language since about 1800.

In the modern period, the chaise longue flourished as it was appropriated by architects such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, and Marcel Breuer, and reworked in various ways as a new solution for modern living. Flexible in both structure and function, the chaise longue was suitable for use in mass housing and elite private commissions alike. By looking at the design and development of this furniture form that attracted numerous modern architects, it is possible to investigate the often contradictory assumptions and products of architecture’s modern movement.

1. For a history of reclining chairs see Clive Edwards, “Reclining Chairs Surveyed: Health, Comfort, and Fashion in Evolving Markets,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 6 (Fall/Winter 1998/1999): 32–67.

Fig. 1. Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand, *Chaise Longue*, designed 1928, this example manufactured 2003.



Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand

Chaise Longue, 1928

The earliest chaise longue by an architect of the modern movement was designed in 1928 by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand (fig. 1). It celebrates metal, a material modern architects were “domesticating” in this period by bringing it into the home. Perhaps even more so than in buildings, metal in furniture design could powerfully express the possibilities of new materials. For the prototype the trio used tubular steel intended for bicycle frames, which Marcel Breuer had used in the bent metal chairs he developed a few years earlier at the Bauhaus. Consisting of two separate pieces—a stable metal frame with four legs and a metal reclining frame in tubular steel with a pony skin or canvas stretched over it—the chaise longue offered great flexibility: the user could tilt the frame to raise the feet above the head and vice versa. In a feature unique to this chaise longue, the body remains in one position on the inclined frame while the entire element tilts. The frame could even be removed from the base and used by itself as a rocker.

Through the mid-1920s Le Corbusier had been content to specify mass-produced, commercially available furniture, such as Thonet bentwood, for the interiors of his architectural commissions. In 1927 he began working with Charlotte Perriand while continuing an association with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret; the trio began to design metal furniture under the name “*Équipement intérieur de l’habitation*.” Significantly, they used the term “interior equipment” rather than “furniture” to indicate that the designs were necessary, functional objects for the interior. Le Corbusier famously called a house a “machine for living in,” and he thought of furniture in those terms, calling the chaise longue the “machine for rest.”² Despite this espousal of machine rationality and the fact that this chaise longue was commercially manufactured—first by Thonet and then by Embru Werke—it was labor intensive to make and, ironically, looked more machine-made than it actually was.

Although Le Corbusier spoke of furniture as functional and machinelike, he did not lose sight of how the human body interacted with both architecture and furniture. In particular, he was interested in the role of furniture in creating a health-enhancing environment. He collected information on nineteenth-century mechanical chairs including Victorian reclining chairs, adjustable American-patented invalid chairs, and the “*Surrepos*,” a reclining medical chair by a Paris physician. Indeed, he saw furnishings as artificial extensions of the body, calling them “human-limb objects.”³ He was concerned with establishing a human scale and function in order to define and meet human needs through his work.

Fig. 2. Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, 1929–31, Poissy, France.





Fig. 3. Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Bathroom, 1929–31, Poissy, France.

In furniture and architecture alike Le Corbusier admired the aesthetics of industry and was not alone in finding the new technology and dynamism epitomized by the luxury transatlantic ocean liner especially compelling. In his manifesto *Towards a New Architecture* of 1923, he characterizes the ocean liner as “an architecture pure, neat, clear, clean and healthy,” praising

its walls of windows and saloon full of light and contrasting it with the perceived ill effects of the era’s carpets, cushions, wallpapers, and gilt furniture.⁴ He incorporated the aesthetics of the ship in, for example, his Villa Savoye of 1929–31, in Poissy, France (fig. 2). Raised off the ground on thin columns, or *pilotis*, as if it were a floating vessel, the villa features shiplike metal railings, ramps, and roof terraces where inhabitants could relax, sunbathe, and take the air like passengers on a ship’s deck. Le Corbusier’s concept of integrated indoor/outdoor spaces for a clean and healthy architecture can be seen in the light-filled space of the Villa Savoye, with its many terraces designed for sunbaths, thought to be healthful in the 1920s. The bathroom exemplifies his ideas: a sun terrace is directly accessible from the master bedroom/bathroom suite, and a chaise longue form was translated into a tiled lounge recliner built directly into the bath (fig. 3). This chaise longue form attached to a brilliant aqua-tiled tub surrounded by a sparkling white-tiled bathroom evokes a sanitary medical facility rather than a luxurious weekend retreat. In the context of Le Corbusier’s architecture, the 1928 *Chaise Longue* can be understood as both a rational, machinelike extension of the body, raised off the ground like the Villa Savoye, and a form intended to foster relaxation and health.

2. Le Corbusier, *Précisions sur un état présent de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme* (Paris, 1930), 118.

3. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925), trans. James I. Dunnett (London, 1987), xxiii.

4. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (1923), trans. Frederick Etchells (1931; reprint, New York, 1986), 96–100.



Fig. 4. Henry-Jacques Le Môme and Pol Abraham, Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium, Passy, France, 1935.

Jean Prouvé

Chaise Longue for the Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium, 1935

The pursuit of health also accounted for the proliferation of sun porches and roof decks in modern architecture, borrowed not only from ship decks for lounging transatlantic passengers but also from the outdoor “cure porches” where tuberculosis patients convalesced, reclining on chaise longues and covered in blankets.⁵ In part because modern sanatoriums were structurally enhanced by the new material of reinforced concrete, they could support projecting cantilevered balconies, allowing inhabitants easy access to the outdoors for restorative sunbaths. Modernist architects, such as Alvar Aalto, seemed particularly attuned to the needs of the ill and won commissions to design sanatoriums. Predecessors included strikingly modern facilities such as the Purkersdorf Sanatorium of 1904–5 by Josef Hoffmann, in which the architecture itself was viewed as a tool in the scientific treatment of nervous illnesses that were being identified and diagnosed by Sigmund Freud and others.⁶ Freud’s famous couch—

actually a chaise longue form covered with carpets—enlisted this reclining shape in the service of psychological health. The position of the body was an important aspect of the treatment: the patient reclined, and Freud located himself behind and out of sight. In treating both physical and psychological illness, the chaise longue was part of the cure.

In keeping with this application of modernist principles to sanatoriums, the architect and engineer Jean Prouvé manufactured metal chaise longues (fig. 5) for the Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium in Passy, France, an alpine facility designed by Henry-Jacques Le Môme and Pol Abraham in 1935 for the treatment of military personnel returning from active duty (fig. 4).⁷ Prouvé’s interest in the technology and functionality of movement and his self-consciously functional aesthetic is apparent in the design of several reclining armchairs of the 1930s. Each spartan room of the sanatorium contained only four pieces of furniture—a bed, desk, chair, and this lacquered tubular steel chaise longue—underscoring the chaise’s perceived importance in the recuperation process. Placed on the balconies as an integral part of the *suites de cures individuelles*, this unwieldy chaise longue resembles and functions as an amalgam of a hospital bed and a deck chair. It is adjustable and reclines like a deck chair, but in its overall mass and details such as the metal bars at the end of the chair it resembles metal hospital and sanatorium beds of the period.



Fig. 5. Jean Prouvé, *Chaise Longue for the Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium*, 1935.

5. For a full discussion of health and the chaise longue see Margaret Campbell, “From Cure Chair to Chaise Longue: Medical Treatment and the Form of the Modern Recliner,” *Journal of Design History* 12, no. 4 (1999): 327–43.

6. Leslie Topp, “An Architecture for Modern Nerves: Josef Hoffmann’s Purkersdorf Sanatorium,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56 (December 1997): 414–37.

7. Some Prouvé scholars credit the architect Jules Leleu with this chaise longue’s design and Prouvé with its production. However, the diameter of the tubular steel and the shape of the wooden armrests and ball feet are similar to those found in other furniture by Prouvé.



Fig. 6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Landhaus Lemke, 1931–32, Berlin, Germany.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Chaise Longue, 1931

Mies's architecture of the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as the Tugendhat House (1928–30) and the Barcelona Pavilion (1929), reduced form to the essentials of structure and used sumptuous modern materials such as chrome and stainless steel. The luxurious

metal furniture he designed for the houses of his wealthy patrons was often intended for predetermined places and thus integral to the overall concept of space in his architecture. This was the case for the 1931 *Chaise Longue* (fig. 7), which Mies used inside the Tugendhat House and specified for the garden of another commission—the modern, flat-roofed Landhaus Lemke in Berlin, designed in 1931–32 as a lakeside retreat for an industrialist and his family (fig. 6). The design emphasis on transparency and seamless indoor/outdoor living is revealed as the brick of the house's street facade gives way to large glass walls on the garden facade. This creates a light-filled interior and an enticing view of

the garden, with its modern furniture, and the lake beyond it. Despite contemporary events in Germany—financial crises and political unrest that caused the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, while Mies was the director—Mies envisioned luxurious homes and furnishings using modernism's materials and aesthetics, if not its ideology of social reform through better living for the masses. Mies's *Chaise Longue* was more appropriate to an architecture of lakeside retreats than to one of mass housing blocks.

This chaise longue does not recline or depend on a supporting frame; instead it exploits the cantilever as a structural principle. Lacking vertical legs, the chair depends on the strength of the curving, chrome-plated steel tube frame for cantilevered support and springy comfort as well as an aesthetically simple design. Lilly Reich, who collaborated with Mies on many interiors in the 1930s, is credited with the design of the one-piece roll-and-pleat cushion held in place by thirteen rubber straps, shown in checkered linen at the Landhaus Lemke and also available in velvet or leather. An elongated version of Mies's earlier *Cantilevered Chair* of 1927, this chaise longue is a study in structure, embodying one of modernism's primary fascinations.

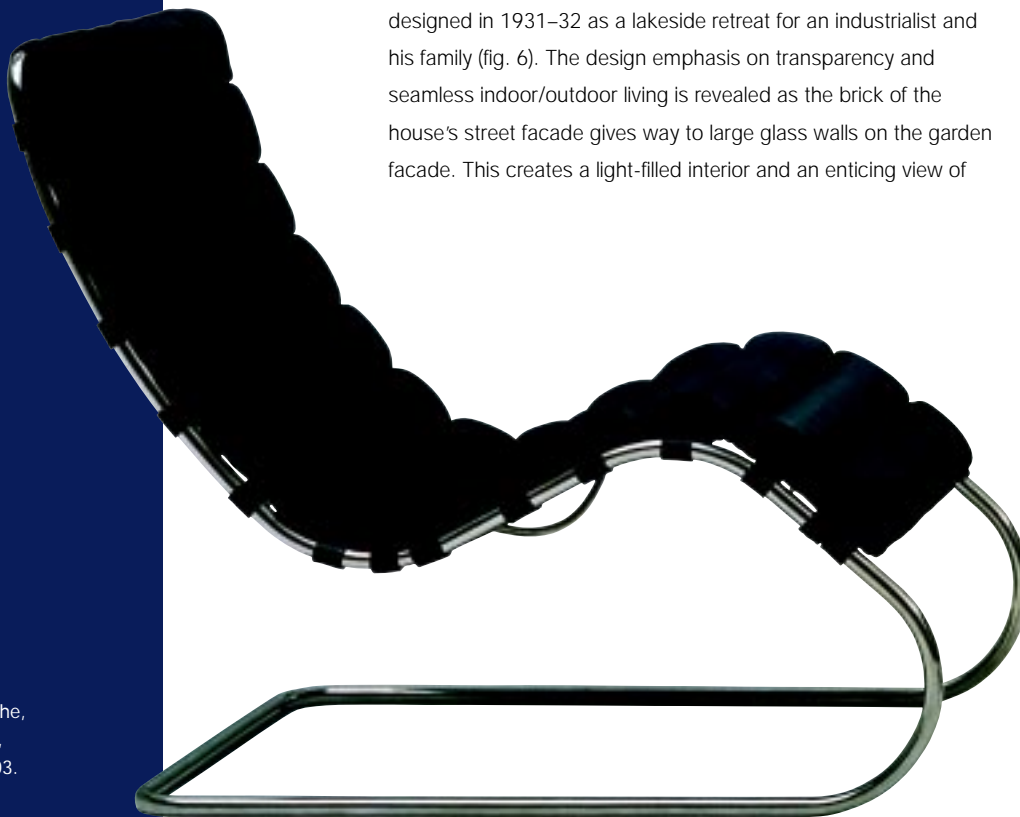


Fig. 7. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Chaise Longue*, designed 1931, this example manufactured 2003.





Fig. 8. Marcel Breuer, *Chaise Longue*, No. 313, designed 1932, manufactured 1934.



Fig. 9. Marcel Breuer, *Chaise Longue*, 1936.

Fig. 10. Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, Gropius House, 1938, Lincoln, Mass.



Marcel Breuer

Chaise Longue, No. 313, 1932

Chaise Longue, 1936

Unlike Mies, who embraced an opulent version of modernism, Marcel Breuer designed domestic furniture that could actually be mass-produced and inexpensively priced. Despite modernism's ideals of rationalized production and functionality, most architect-designed furniture, like modern architecture itself, was costly and time-consuming to produce. Breuer sought to remedy this situation; he brokered contracts for furniture production with manufacturers throughout his career and designed with mass production in mind.

Though Breuer was one of the earliest architects to design modern furniture, he did not produce his first chaise longue until 1932, when he brought out this version in aluminum, a less costly alternative to nickel- or chrome-plated tubular steel (fig. 8). Structurally similar to Mies's cantilevered *Chaise Longue*, Breuer's chair has legs that loop around and continue upward to become a springy seat, stabilized by the arms. It was available upholstered in fabrics for indoor use or with waterproof cushions for outside and terrace use. Its indoor/outdoor flexibility, in keeping with the modernist agenda, was augmented by aluminum's light weight, malleability, and corrosion resistance.

While it did not prove to be a commercial success, this chaise longue provided the Jewish-Hungarian Breuer with the means to flee Nazism in 1935. Walter Gropius, who had already left for England in 1934, was in charge of design for Isokon, a company that was formed to apply modern functional design to houses, apartment buildings, and furniture, and which employed noted architects to design the furniture, mostly in plywood. Gropius offered Breuer a design position and suggested that he make

a plywood version of his aluminum chaise longue for Isokon. Breuer, who had helped pioneer the use of metal in furniture while still a student at the Bauhaus under Gropius, agreed to try a plywood version.

The resulting *Chaise Longue*, also known as the *Long Chair*, was produced soon thereafter (fig. 9). A canted seat holds the sitter at a precise angle, forming a single bent plane in space supported by the shorter runners, which curve up to join the frame before the end of the footrest, making this chaise longue appear smaller than its aluminum counterpart. Breuer refined the chair so that the points of connection between the supporting frame and the seat are hidden via joints in the wood. This compact chair supports the body in the necessary places—at the back of the leg, seat, and neck—yet it is a full chaise longue for a smaller domestic setting. It functioned well in more than one type of space; for example, it could be brought onto a terrace at noon and back into the living room at dusk. The chaise longue is often shown in contemporary photographs as a transitional piece between dining and living areas, especially useful in an open plan dwelling in which multiple types of furniture must reside together.

Gropius became director of the Department of Architecture at Harvard in 1937 and secured a position for Breuer as well. The two formed an architectural partnership, designing many modern houses between 1938 and 1941, including two for themselves in nearby Lincoln, Massachusetts. Many of the forms and structural solutions that Breuer was working out in his chairs, such as planes extending freely into space, he later translated into architecture. As the chaise longue made the transition to wood from aluminum, so Gropius and Breuer chose wood over reinforced concrete for the white modernist shell of the 1938 Gropius House, a concession to its New England surroundings (fig. 10). The house's furniture included the plywood *Chaise Longue*, which Gropius had brought from Europe, symbolically carrying the premises and promises of modernism across the Atlantic.



Fig. 11. Alvar and Aino Aalto, "39" Chaise Longue, 1936–37.

Alvar and Aino Aalto "39" Chaise Longue, 1936–37

Attracted to the rationalism and functionalism of European modernism as well as to its ideas for social reform, Alvar Aalto combined these concepts with the traditional Finnish vernacular in his architecture and in the furniture he designed with his wife,

Aino. Thus for the "39" Chaise Longue of 1936–37 (fig. 11) he used molded wood to support occupants at a canted angle on a cantilevered seat, achieving the strength of material that other architects realized with steel and aluminum. Aalto's use of wood, which he valued for its tactility and warmth, distinguished his design in architecture and furniture from the machine-made aesthetic of other modernists of this period.

While the chair may appear "natural," however, Aalto spent much time and creative energy working out new technological and structural solutions. His patented bentwood process eschewed the standard practice of steam-bending wood, resulting in a significantly stronger veneered wood that could withstand the weight of a cantilevered occupant as effectively as tubular steel. Aalto specifically invoked modernist architectural rhetoric to sell his furniture. For example, his sales booklet of 1941 noted that the design utilized the "principles of standardization" that developed from "revolutionary manufacturing techniques directed to serve the ends of functionalism."⁸

The design principles and materials evident in Aalto's furniture are in many ways extensions of his architectural forms and ideas. In the Villa Mairea of 1938–41 in Noormarkku, Finland (fig. 12), for example, the jutting balcony and the free form of the entrance canopy extend outward like the planes of the chaise longue. Aalto's furniture also melds with his buildings through his use of curves and natural materials like wood and jute. For the Villa Mairea, Aalto designed a house with all the specifications of modernism: a flat roof, open interior plan, metal railings, and horizontal windows. Yet, as with his furniture designs, he also celebrates traditional regional materials such as wood, stone, and brick.



Fig. 12. Alvar Aalto, Villa Mairea, 1938–41, Noormarkku, Finland.

8. Artek-Pascoe, *Catalogue of Furniture by Alvar and Aino Aalto and Others* (New York, 1941), 3.

Fig. 13. Bruno Mathsson,
Summer House, 1960,
Frösakull, Sweden.



Fig. 14. Bruno Mathsson,
Pernilla Chaise Longue, 1944.

Bruno Mathsson

Pernilla Chaise Longue, 1944

The Swedish architect and designer Bruno Mathsson began making chairs in 1931 and by 1933 had developed his first chaise longue, a form he continued to improve upon over many years. Like Aalto, he drew upon the natural world for his many versions: this 1944 chaise, which he called the *Pernilla Chaise Longue* (fig. 14), was available with a sheepskin slipcover or a loose cushion stuffed with reindeer hair, or webbed in jute, hemp, or strips of oxhide. Mathsson shaped these natural materials into organic-looking curves, leaving the light colors of the wood untreated. For Mathsson, wooden chairs were to follow the gently curving form of a growing tree.

During the 1930s and 1940s, a period in which Mathsson designed his most important pieces of furniture, he received many architectural commissions in Sweden including villas, row-houses for workers, and schools, completing about a hundred structures over ten years.⁹ However, his interest in furniture design, where he was able to control the entire design process, came to rival his architectural career. He gave up architecture except for a late project, a summer house for himself and his family in Frösakull, Sweden, begun in 1960 (fig. 13). The interior featured a white marble floor, two side walls entirely of glass, and translucent corrugated plastic to loosely divide areas of the house and to serve as a roof. The house opened onto a courtyard, allowing the inhabitants direct access to an enclosed outside area. Mathsson's chaise longue, lightweight and easy to move, facilitated this indoor/outdoor lifestyle, particularly appropriate to a modern weekend cottage.

9. Carl E. Christiansson, "Bruno Mathsson: Furniture/Structures/Ideas," *Design Quarterly*, no. 65 (1966): 21.



Fig. 15. Charles and Ray Eames, *La Chaise*, designed 1948, manufactured 1999.

Charles and Ray Eames

La Chaise, 1948

"Billy Wilder" Chaise, 1968

The emigration of modern architects from Europe and their establishment in the United States, a booming economy, and a desire to break with the recent past were all factors in postwar America's embrace of European modernism. Equally important were department store room displays and museum exhibitions like the Museum of Modern Art's *Useful Objects* series of 1938–50, followed by the *Good Design* series of 1950–55, which successfully promoted modernism to middle-class America. European modernism's focus on mass production and functionalism was translated into the promotion of a more practical and relaxed lifestyle in which the fussiness of formal dining gave way to informal family dinners on the patio, guided by texts such as *Mary and Russel Wright's Guide to Easier Living* of 1951. A feature of this American version of modernism was the proliferation of lawn chairs and poolside chaise longues, more often marketed as "lounging chairs," a catch-all phrase that could indicate the

traditional chaise longue form, the garden chaise longue, or the reclining easy chair. In postwar America the chaise longue became de rigueur, appearing in living rooms and backyards in pristinely photographed houses from the pages of *Arts & Architecture* magazine's Case Study project and popular women's magazines.

Of the designers who significantly influenced the postwar American domestic setting, among the most versatile and successful were the husband-and-wife team of Charles and Ray Eames. They understood the foundational design principles and ideology of European modernism yet were able to create objects and architecture for a distinctly American lifestyle.

By 1948 the Eameses were already famous for their molded plywood furniture. Their *La Chaise* (fig. 15) of that year, however, consisted of a fiberglass shell mounted on a chrome-plated tubular steel frame supported by a cross-shaped base of natural solid oak. For their house and furniture designs alike, the Eameses consistently pushed the limits of modern technology to find new materials and modes of manufacture. Like their European colleagues, they did not simply apply new materials in a design that looked rational and functional but tried to express new forms appropriate to the use of new materials. Beginning with bent plywood and moving on to fiberglass, the signature Eames form was not a pared-down tubular steel or bentwood structure, but rather a biomorphic form reminiscent of the work of surrealist artists of the period such as Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí. Yet the Eameses' whimsical style was uniquely their own.



Fig. 16. Ray Eames, Plan of the Eames Office room display for *An Exhibition for Modern Living*, 1949.



Fig. 17. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, Case Study House #8, Eames House, 1945–49, Santa Monica, Calif.

La Chaise won the Museum of Modern Art's 1948 International Competition for Low Cost Furniture Design. The competition entry promoted the chaise for "conversation, rest & play" and showed multiple uses: one could lounge on one's back, as with European chaise longues, but it was also counterweighted so that two people could sit upright on it. Its shape had been inspired by the recumbent figure of a 1927 sculpture by Gaston Lachaise—an homage reflected in its punning title. In 1949 *La Chaise* traveled to the Detroit Institute of Arts for an

Exhibition for Modern Living, which featured contemporary housewares and objects in a series of rooms, each of which was designed and furnished by a different designer. In the Eameses' space, shown in a layout by Ray Eames, a colorful architectural interior is filled with Eames furniture, including a free-floating *La Chaise* hovering in the foreground (fig. 16). Ironically, although *La Chaise* was designed to be inexpensively produced (the manufacturing price was estimated at \$27, much lower than that of other chaise longue designs), it was not put into production until 1991, more than forty years later.



Fig. 18. Charles and Ray Eames, "Billy Wilder" Chaise, 1968.

In 1968 the Eameses designed their second chaise longue, for their friend Billy Wilder, the film director (fig. 18). This narrow "*Billy Wilder*" Chaise, only 45 centimeters (17 3/4 inches) wide, consists of six foam cushions atop a gently sloping sand-cast aluminum frame, with two additional loose cushions for support under the neck or the legs. Charles Eames noted that Wilder wanted "something he could take a nap on in his office, but that wouldn't be mistaken for a casting couch."¹⁰

For the design of the Eameses' own house they teamed up with another modern architect, Eero Saarinen (fig. 17). Known as Case Study House #8 (1945–49), the house was commissioned by *Arts & Architecture* as part of its Case Study House Program, which featured modern house designs. The Eameses' combination of a modular steel structure with materials such as stucco, asbestos, and plywood painted red, blue, black, white, and gray connoted a European modernist aesthetic that referred to the de Stijl movement while using industrial materials in an innovative manner. The whimsical color panels and photographs of the beaming Eameses holding hands atop the newly assembled steel frame of their house also highlighted the postwar emphasis on modernism as an enjoyable way of life. The rectilinear black metal frame of the house and the severe black "*Billy Wilder*" Chaise have a strikingly similar appearance, very different from that of the biomorphic *La Chaise*. Together the three designs illuminate the breadth of the Eameses' modern vision.

10. "Q&A: Charles and Ray Eames by Digby Diehl," *Los Angeles Times WEST Magazine* (October 8, 1972): 14.

For modern architects, the design and production of furniture formed the link between the ideology and the reality of a new mode of living in modern buildings. Open plans and roof gardens required flexible and portable furniture types that embraced evolving manufacturing techniques and materials, as well as a new spirit and style. Whether in pristine aluminum or light bentwood, chaise longues were designed by architects just at the moment that the tenets of modernism were being codified, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and were then popularized in the postwar period. Concepts associated with modern architecture such as mass production, truth to materials, affordability, an industrial aesthetic, and stripped-down forms without surface decoration were also applied to furniture designed in the same period. As with modern architecture, however, technical and financial constraints often prevented the ideals from being realized. Almost all tubular steel furniture, for example, had to be made by hand. Thus, although modernism advocated that the masses live in a new, rationalized environment, including a modern interior, much of this furniture remained beyond their reach.

In this period of great social unrest and economic uncertainty modern architects were drawn to the chaise longue, essentially a chair for relaxation. Certainly the chaise longue can be linked to the principle of the efficient use of space. By virtue of its light weight and relatively small size for a piece of furniture that lets the occupant fully recline, the chaise longue was able to fill a number of needs, perhaps even as a replacement for a visually larger and bulkier armchair. With the advent of the open plan in house design, where living and dining areas were combined, the chaise longue could disguise the fact that overall floor space was reduced. In addition, its flexibility allowed its use indoors or out.

Ultimately, though, furniture by modern architects was most often designed for private homes of wealthy avant-garde patrons. These commissions may be the best explanation for the rise of the chaise longue—a luxurious and complicated furniture type designed for relaxation and contemplation, or simply lounging.

The chaise longue thus embodies many of the contradictions and compromises inherent in modern architecture's attempts to mediate between a progressive, ambitious program and the contemporary world.

Robin Schuldenfrei is a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, and the Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Intern in the Busch-Reisinger Museum.

C h e c k l i s t o f t h e E x h i b i t i o n

1. Le Corbusier (1887–1965), Pierre Jeanneret (1896–1967), and Charlotte Perriand (1903–1999) *Chaise Longue*, designed 1928, this example manufactured 2003 Chromed tubular steel, lacquered steel, polyurethane, cowhide, 22 1/2 x 63 x 29 in. Exhibition purchase, TL39101 © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / FLC. Photograph: Julius Beebe, Harvard University Art Museums

2. Le Corbusier *Villa Savoye*, 1929–31, Poissy, France © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / FLC. Photograph: Ralph Lieberman

3. Le Corbusier *Villa Savoye*, Bathroom, 1929–31, Poissy, France (not in exhibition) © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / FLC. Photograph: Ralph Lieberman

4. Henry-Jacques Le Mème (1897–1997) and Pol Abraham (1891–1966) *Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium*, Passy, France, 1935 Photograph: Assemblée des Pays de Savoie, archives d'architecture, Fonds Henry-Jacques Le Mème

5. Jean Prouvé (1901–1984) *Chaise Longue for the Martel-de-Janville Sanatorium*, 1935 Lacquered tubular steel, wood, 44 x 78 x 33 in.

Fogg Art Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, by exchange, 2001.143 Photograph: Julius Beebe, Harvard University Art Museums

6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) *Landhaus Lemke*, 1931–32, Berlin, Germany © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photograph: Paul Schulz / Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

7. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe *Chaise Longue*, designed 1931, this example manufactured 2003 Tubular steel, cowhide, leather, 70 x 32 x 26 in. Exhibition purchase, TL39160 Photograph: Knoll

8. Marcel Breuer (1902–1981) *Chaise Longue, No. 313*, designed 1932, manufactured 1934 Aluminum, beech wood, 28 x 56 x 23 in. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Berdan Memorial Trust Fund, 1997, TL39156.1 Photograph: Peter Harholdt

9. Marcel Breuer *Chaise Longue*, 1936 Bent laminated birch veneers, bent plywood, 30 1/2 x 51 x 24 in. Busch-Reisinger Museum, Purchase through the generosity of Claudia Oetker and Liliane Soriano, and Francis H. Burr Memorial Fund, 1999.272

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Photograph: Michael Nedzweski, Harvard University Art Museums

10. Walter Gropius (1883–1969) and Marcel Breuer *Gropius House*, 1938, Lincoln, Mass. Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Photograph: David Carmack

11. Alvar (1898–1976) and Aino (1894–1949) Aalto **39* Chaise Longue*, 1936–37 Birch plywood, cotton webbing, 60 x 24 1/4 x 28 7/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Theodore R. Gamble Jr. Gift, in honor of his mother, Mrs. Theodore Robert Gamble, 1985 (1985.211), TL39157 © 1989 The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph: Mark Darley

12. Alvar Aalto *Villa Mairea*, 1938–41, Noormarkku, Finland Photograph: Rauno Träskelin

13. Bruno Mathsson (1907–1988) *Summer House*, 1960, Frösakull, Sweden Photograph: Bruno Mathsson International AB

14. Bruno Mathsson *Pernilla Chaise Longue*, 1944 Beech wood, canvas webbing, 70 x 23 x 37 in.

Courtesy Robert M. Wilson / Watermill Center Collection, TL39158

Photograph: Noah Khoshbin

15. Charles (1907–1978) and Ray (1916–1988) Eames *La Chaise*, designed 1948, this example manufactured 1999 Fiberglass, chromed steel, oak, 33 1/2 x 19 3/4 x 21 1/2 in. Vitra, TL39159 Photograph: Vitra

16. Ray Eames *Plan of the Eames Office room display for An Exhibition for Modern Living* (September 9–November 20, 1949), Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Mich. © 2003 Lucia Eames dba Eames Office. Photograph: Andrew Neuhart

17. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen (1910–1961) *Case Study House #8*, Eames House, 1945–49, Santa Monica, Calif. © 2003 Lucia Eames dba Eames Office. Photograph: Eames Demetrios

18. Charles and Ray Eames *"Billy Wilder" Chaise*, 1968 Aluminum, Fibertin, leather, 18 x 29 1/2 x 76 1/2 in. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Museum Appropriation, 2003, TL39156.2 Photograph: Peter Harholdt