



The Furniture of Ed Cruikshank

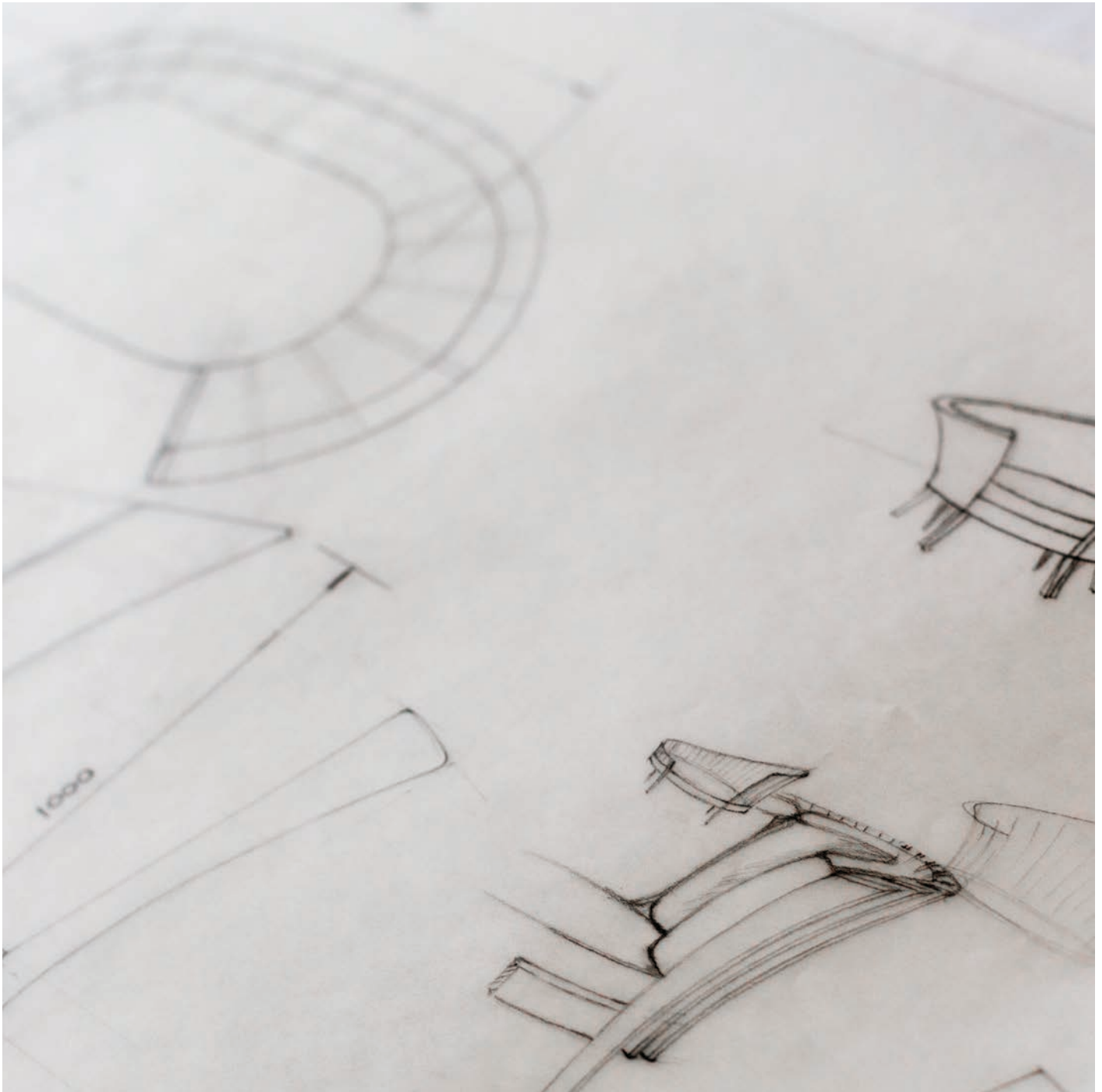
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A Retrospective

Every piece of furniture tells a story, has a lineage. Embedded within the design of each object are historical tells, bits of information about the interactions of people in a given period of time, their values and the materials they had access to. So too, then, does a range of furniture tell the larger story of the times; present and past. These stories reveal as much about the designers as they do about the ones being designed for - influenced by inherited styles, the economy, ego, practical need or whimsy. Any given exposure to furniture of today, in say, a showroom, the internet or this book, will at first glance appear as a discreet collection of functional items made for the 'now'. Looking more closely though, the larger story comes into focus. One piece may be the product of 21st century price conscious manufacturing while another piece looks (and probably feels) as though it was designed for the ages. All in all, every sketch, CAD drawing, material source, machine cut, build and finish will be the product of many stories coming together. What distinguishes one piece of furniture from another is the heritage it adheres to.

The design narrative Ed Cruikshank embraces comes from a time almost lost on many furniture designers today. His education and practice have been grounded in an aesthetic (visual and practical) that listens closely to a history where the details of design and production were so painstakingly applied that each chair, table, sideboard or bed became a piece of highly functional art, made to last hundreds of years (at least) so that the story of the piece and persons, would endure. In today's design and manufacturing milieu - where getting the most stuff for the cheapest price determines design, materials and quality, the idea of a bespoke piece of furniture intentionally made to outlive its owners - creating value and joy for generations - is an uncanny thing. A thing, nevertheless, Cruikshank strives to achieve. The ability to see back through time and appreciate the values of 17th century masters right through to functional modernists is what enables Cruikshank to make products that stand upon these stories while adding his own distinct sense of form, beauty and quality. To Cruikshank, this is the basis of enduring design.

To understand the work before you here - both the initial appearance and the hidden infrastructure - we need to look back through those stories and unpack various movements, economies, personalities and technologies. Parsing out what the designer had to work with and who they were working for gives us a long lens with which to focus in on the details of what constitutes an enduring piece today. For instance when the sawing technologies of the 1500's limited furniture makers to the larger planks of huge oak trees, the resulting long stout rectangular tables or massive four poster beds became great sturdy things made typically by nameless 'house carpenters' who received little or no credit for their craft. The ones commissioning the chunky pieces of this era had a strong if not controlling influence on the overall design and application. The Tudors during this 'Age of Oak' often borrowed from the previous gothic period and moved furniture design in general towards an English renaissance, largely in the service of their own vision. The designers









USCHA

EDITIONS 1959-1999
ENGLENO/WALKER ART CENTER

USCHA

PRINTINGS
VOLUME ONE
1958-1970

Amesbury







