

SIDE GALLERY

MICHEL VAN BEUREN



“San Miguelito” Chair, from the Domus Line

Manufactured by Luteca Furniture
México, 1947
Pine, agave fiber

Measurements

81,3 × 55,3 × 66h cm
32 × 21,8 × 26h in

Provenance

Purchased with funds provided by the Bernard and
Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art Deaccession
Fund (M.2015.42), LACMA

Literature

Wendy Kaplan, ed., *Found in Translation: Design in
California and Mexico, 1915–1985* (Los Angeles: Los
Angeles County Museum of Art; Munich: DelMonico
Books-Prestel, 2017).

Details

Constructed in pine with a woven seat and back in
agave fiber (ixtle), the chair is part of the Domus line,
one of the most recognizable expressions of modern
furniture design in mid-century Mexico.

About

The “San Miguelito” Chair stands as an emblem of Mexican modernist furniture and the cosmopolitan exchanges that defined design in the Americas during the 1940s. Conceived by Michael van Beuren, Klaus Grabe, and Morley Webb—three foreign-born designers who made Mexico their creative home—the piece merged the principles of Bauhaus modernism with the materials and craft traditions of Mexico. The chair’s pine frame is simple, sturdy, and rectilinear, while its woven ixtle seat and back highlight the tactile qualities of local craftsmanship. Produced between 1947 and 1960, the design represents an approach that was at once international in spirit and deeply rooted in its Mexican context. Affordable, functional, and modern, the Domus line reached a wide audience and remains a landmark in the development of Latin American design history.

Biography

Michael van Beuren (1911–2004) was an American designer who, after studying at the Bauhaus under Josef Albers, moved to Mexico in the late 1930s. There, he became one of the leading figures in shaping a modern Mexican design identity, blending European modernist principles with local craft and resources. His Domus furniture line exemplified this synthesis, making well-crafted, modern furniture accessible to a broad public.

Klaus Grabe (1910–2004), born in Germany and also trained at the Bauhaus, arrived in Mexico as part of the intellectual diaspora fleeing Europe in the 1930s. His work emphasized simplicity, modularity, and rational construction, ideals he brought into collaboration with van Beuren and Webb in Mexico.

Morley Webb (1910–1986), an American architect and designer, was likewise drawn to Mexico during this fertile period of cultural exchange. Alongside van Beuren and Grabe, he helped define a distinctly Mexican modernism that was deeply aware of international debates while remaining rooted in local tradition and resources.

Together, their contributions to the Domus line—particularly the “San Miguelito” Chair—solidified their place in the history of 20th-century design, positioning Mexico as a key site in the global story of modernism.