

SIDE GALLERY

MICHEL ARNOULT



Armchair and Ottoman Model "Ouro Preto"

Manufactured by Mobilinea
Brazil, 1960s
Imbuia wood, nylon cord

Measurements

Armchair
68 × 76 × 75h cm
26,8 × 29,9 × 29,5h in

Ottoman
62 × 46 × 40h cm
24,4 × 18,1 × 15,7h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Brazil

Literature

Michael Arnoult, Design e Utopia. Moveis em serie para todos. Author Ether Leon. Published by Edifies SESC

Details

Considered one of the eight Brazilian design classics, winner of the Roberto Simonsen Industrial Design Award 1964, seat and backrest in nylon threads, loose cushions

Biography

Michel Arnoult (1922–2005) was a French-born Brazilian designer who played a crucial role in the development of modern furniture design in Brazil. Arnoult is widely recognized as one of the early pioneers of ready-to-assemble furniture, advocating for accessible, affordable design long before it became a mainstream concept. His commitment to democratizing modern design placed him at the forefront of social design movements in Brazil, and his work remains a key reference in the history of 20th-century furniture.

Trained in France, Arnoult emigrated to Brazil in the 1950s, where he quickly became involved in the dynamic postwar design scene. He collaborated with renowned designers and manufacturers but soon focused on developing his own vision: creating functional, minimalist furniture that could be efficiently produced and easily assembled by the consumer. His work stood in contrast to the handcrafted, luxury-focused pieces of his contemporaries, instead offering high-quality modern furniture at accessible prices.

One of Arnoult's defining contributions was his introduction of flat-pack and knock-down systems, an innovation that allowed furniture to be sold disassembled, reducing shipping costs and bringing modern design into the homes of Brazil's growing middle class. His use of noble woods, simple joinery, and leather emphasized durability, sustainability, and clarity of structure. Throughout his career, Arnoult maintained a strong ethical stance, seeing design as a tool to improve everyday life, not merely as an aesthetic exercise.

Among his most celebrated pieces are his rocking chairs, armchairs, and dining chairs in solid wood with visible joints and leather seating. These designs, which often used native Brazilian woods, embodied a tactile elegance while remaining resolutely functional and unpretentious.

The pair of rocking chairs from the 1970s, executed in noble wood and vegetable-tanned leather, exemplifies Arnoult's design ethos: ergonomic comfort, visual lightness, and a deep respect for material honesty. His approach anticipated many of the concerns of contemporary design—sustainability, modularity, and social accessibility—decades ahead of their global adoption.