

SIDE GALLERY

JOSÉ ZANINE CALDAS



Armchair model “Bergère”

Manufactured by Móveis Z
Brazil, 1949
Marine plywood and leather upholstery

Measurements

68 × 85 × 98h cm
26,8 × 33,5 × 38,6h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Brazil

Literature

Soraia Cals, José Zanine Caldas, Olhares, São Paulo.
Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos, Móvel Moderno no
Brasil, Studio Nobel, São Paulo.

About

Designed in 1949, the Bergère armchair belongs to José Zanine Caldas' formative period as a furniture designer and reflects the experimental approach to plywood construction that characterized his early production. Created around the time of the establishment of Móveis Z, the chair demonstrates Zanine's interest in developing modern furniture through economical materials, rational construction, and expressive structural forms.

The design is defined by its sharply articulated plywood frame, whose angular side supports integrate the legs, seat structure, backrest, and armrests into a visually continuous composition. The pronounced inclination of the tall back and the generous upholstered seat reinterpret the traditional comfort associated with the bergère through a distinctly modern structural language.

The exposed wooden framework contrasts with the dark leather upholstery, while the visible upholstery studs emphasize the construction of the seat and back rather than concealing it. The sculpted arm supports and strongly inclined rear structure give the chair a dynamic profile, revealing Zanine's ability to transform sheet material into an expressive architectural framework.

The armchair anticipates concerns that would remain central throughout Zanine's career: an emphasis on the structural possibilities of wood, direct and legible construction, and the search for a specifically Brazilian approach to modern furniture. While his later work would move toward massive, hand-carved hardwood forms, his early furniture for Móveis Z represents an important phase in which industrial materials and production techniques became the basis for a new modern design vocabulary.

Biography

José Zanine Caldas (1918–2001) was a self-taught Brazilian architect and designer known for his innovative use of native woods and his integration of craftsmanship and environmental values. Starting as a model maker in the 1940s, he collaborated with leading modernist architects and founded Móveis Artísticos Z to produce industrial furniture using plywood. Later, he embraced a more rustic and ecological approach, creating expressive wooden houses and furniture using reclaimed materials. His work bridges industrial design and vernacular tradition, leaving a legacy of sustainability and regional identity. In 1991, he was named an honorary architect by the Institute of Architects of Brazil.