

surface

THE SERGIO RODRIGUES SHOP-IN-SHOP AT ESPASSO

11.21.11 DESIGN | *By JAMES GADDY*



Cross one first-world problem off the list: Fans of the Brazilian designer Sergio Rodrigues finally have decent access to his work in the U.S., courtesy of Tribeca-based dealer Espasso. In addition to its comprehensive roster of Brazilian designers like Carlos Motta and Claudia Moreira Salles, Espasso now holds the country's first permanent retail space dedicated to a full range of Rodrigues's chairs, lamps, tables, and chests.

While some of the pieces in the shop are originals, many are re-editions that—produced to exacting specifications by

a Brazilian manufacturer—have never before been available in the States. The chairs can be customized with various types of woods and upholstery leathers; the selection includes the luxuriously puffy Mole lounger, the cartoonish Chifruda chair Rodrigues originally designed for the 1962 exhibition “Furniture as Work of Art,” and the gracefully rendered Kilin, which is made from a single piece of leather stretched across a wood frame. All of the re-editions are made to order in Brazil and require about 12 to 14 weeks for delivery.



Sergio Rodrigues with his Mole chair and ottoman (1961).

The shop-in-shop concept was developed in collaboration with Rodrigues himself, who was tired of dealing with multiple American distributors and wanted to consolidate his catalog under one roof. The agreement with Espasso—the first gallery in the U.S. devoted entirely to vintage, contemporary, and artisan reproductions of Brazilian furniture—came about organically, says owner Carlos Junqueira. Since its original Long Island City location opened in 2002, he says, “people started to learn more about Sergio and request more pieces.” Rodrigues, who began his career in the ’50s, is now widely recognized outside his native country as the father of Brazilian design. As far as any new works by the 84-year-old designer coming down the line, Junqueira is mum for now. “It’s up to him,” he says.



Rodrigues’s Cantu Low dining chair (1959) and Mocho stool (1954).