



W Editors' blog

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IF YOU LOVE BRAZILIAN MODERN DESIGN (AND HAVE 20K TO SPARE) ...



Brazilian design legend Sergio Rodrigues was recently in Manhattan to celebrate the reissue of some of his signature furniture designs at Espasso Gallery. Along with his frequent collaborator architect Oscar Niemeyer, the 82-year-old Rodrigues is credited with pushing Brazilian design into the modern age. Taking a cue from the stripped-down aesthetic of Arne Jacobson and other Danish midcentury designers and using traditional Brazilian materials such as leather, eucalyptus and Jacaranda wood, Rodrigues developed his own clean and modern, yet playful aesthetic. Espasso is selling a reissue of his Moleca chair (a favorite of actress Kim Novak) as well as his notoriously flamboyant Chifruda ("the horned one") lounge chair, which bears a rather pre-recession era price tag of \$20,000.

What was it like to work with Oscar Niemeyer?

I worked with Oscar all during the 1950s and 1960s, but especially in 1956 during the planning of Brasília. I see him as a god of artwork. We still collaborate today but when we were working together it was the boom of modern architecture and design in Brazil, so it was a very exciting time.



Tell us a little about your Chifruda chair.

I created the chair (*above right*), then called the "Aspas," in 1962 for an architectural exhibit that I organized. I wanted to create a caricature, something outlandish, something that was more of a sculpture. I didn't see the need to mass-produce it at the time because it was ridiculed for its scandalous form. Many years after the exhibition, a collector purchased the Aspas and it stayed in his house for 40 or 50 years. Somehow, it ended up in an antique shop in Rio and eventually, an American came and purchased it. It's now being offered at NOHO Modern in Los Angeles for \$120,000.

How many reproductions will be available?

Now that there's interest in the chair, we are producing 40 of them through custom order.

How do you feel about the price being \$20,000? That's quite a lot.

I don't really want to know about money. It's not important to me.

**How did Kim Novak come to know your work?**

When Kim Novak was in Rio, she happened to come into my gallery, OCA. She became absolutely enthralled with my pieces, especially the Moleca chair. There is a picture of her in that chair (*above*). She shows exactly what I want people to do with my furniture—to sit and be comfortable.

Can you share any memories of Kim?

Once, I delivered a chair to her home in Carmel, California and remember that her house with filled with animals. There was a goat sitting on the Moleca chair.

By *Meghan McElheny*