

GALERIE MARCILHAC

XXth CENTURY DECORATIVE ARTS
PARIS



CHARLES & RAY EAMES (1907-1978 & 1912-1988)

Charles Eames, born in 1907 in St. Louis, Missouri, studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis and designed a number of houses and churches in collaboration with various partners. His work caught the attention of Eliel Saarinen who offered him a scholarship to the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in 1938. In 1940, together with Eero Saarinen, he won first prize in the "Industrial Design Competition for the 21 American Republics" - also known as the "Organic Design in Home Furnishings" - organized by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. During the same year, Charles Eames became director of the industrial design department at Cranbrook.

Ray Eames, born Bernice Alexandra Kaiser in 1912 in Sacramento, California, studied painting at Bennett College in Millbrook, New York. Until 1937, she continued her studies of painting at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts. During that year, she participated in the first exhibition of the American Abstract Artists group at the Riverside Museum in New York. She enrolled at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1940.

Charles and Ray Eames married in 1941 and moved to Los Angeles where they began experimenting together three-dimensional plywood moulding techniques. The goal was to create comfortable and affordable chairs. However, the war interrupted their work and Charles and Ray turned to the design and development of plywood splints, manufactured in large quantities for the U.S. Navy. In 1946, they exhibited their experimental moveable designs at MoMA. The Herman Miller Company in Zeeland, Michigan, began producing Eames furniture. In 1948, Charles and Ray participated in the MoMA Low-Cost Furniture competition, and in 1949, they built the Eames House as their private residence. In addition to their work in furniture design and architecture, they also regularly try their hand at graphic design, photography, filmmaking and exhibitions. Charles Eames died of a heart attack on August 21, 1978, at the age of 71, while on a business visit to his hometown of St. Louis. He is buried at the Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis. Ray Eames died in Los Angeles in 1988, ten years to the day after him. She is buried next to her husband.

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