

# Eames for Herman Miller Storage Unit and Bikini Chair.

Few design firms have left such a lasting impression on American culture as the Eames Office, whose works in molded plywood and fiberglass came to represent mid-century modern design. Spawning countless imitators, Eames furniture is known for its smart design and durable construction and is found in homes, offices, and museums around the world. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer an **Eames for Herman Miller ESU 200 Storage Unit** (\$3/5,000) in our Summer Fine Sale, held on Monday, June 17th, and an **Eames for Herman Miller Bikini Chair** (\$5/900) in our June Gallery Auction, held on Friday, June 14th.

Ray Eames (née Bernice Alexandra Kaiser) was born in

Sacramento in 1912 to a family of modest means. Ray excelled in the arts from an early age, and when her mother was widowed at an early age, Ray moved with her to New York to be closer to her brother, who was a West Point cadet. She studied at Bennett Women's College in New York and moved to New York City to continue her art studies with the mentor of her art teacher. She was a founding member of the American Abstract Artists group, promoting abstract expressionism before it was



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accepted by major galleries, and was closely connected to the avant-garde scene. After her mother died in 1940, she planned to return to California but was convinced instead to study at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan by a friend, where she would meet her husband Charles Eames, with whom she would form a lifelong artistic partnership.

Charles Eames was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1907 to a working-class family. He studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis but left the school after two years, either due to his advocacy for Frank Lloyd Wright and his modernist approach to architecture, or due to poor grades stemming from sleep deprivation while trying to balance full-time employment at an architectural firm with his studies. In 1930, he opened an architectural firm that enjoyed modest success in the

Midwest. He decided to further his studies in architecture at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, meanwhile becoming an instructor in the industrial design department. It was during the design process of a 1941 Museum of Modern Art competition that he developed his plywood molding technique and where met his future wife, Ray Kaiser.

The couple was married in 1941 and they moved to Los Angeles, California. Together they designed and built the historic Eames House, a landmark of modern architecture. Located north of Santa Monica, the house consists of two connected steel framed glass boxes, one a residence, and the other a working studio. Nestled into the natural landscape, the home features light wood interiors, filled with the couple's mid-century modern furniture.

Ray and Charles Eames founded the Eames Office in 1943 in the Venice

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neighborhood of Los Angeles. The couple's lives revolved around their work in the design studio, regularly working thirteen-hour days for six or seven days a week. This dedication allowed them to dedicate extensive time to testing new designs which were then introduced to the team at the Eames Office, which included many soon-to-be notable designers. The couple achieved early success with a design for a leg splint to aid wounded soldiers during WWII. Fabricated from wood veneer and shaped into complex shapes with heat and pressure, this design reduced

gangrene by increasing blood circulation and was funded extensively by the U.S. Navy. The experience and capital gained from this project would allow the couple to advance their production methods of molding plywood to manufactured furniture.

Following WWII, the Eames Office quickly earned its reputation as one of the nation's leading design firms. The Lounge Chair Wood, produced in 1945, was an advancement of Charles Eames's submission to the MOMA design contest, with prior deficiencies in durability corrected by the couple's extensive research process. Contrary to most furniture at the time, and Charles's previous design, this chair was simple and unadorned, revealing the structure that supports the user rather than hiding it beneath upholstery. It was a quick success and led the way for the Eames Molded Plastic & Fiberglass

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Armchair, with its iconic bucket seat, and the Eames Lounge & Ottoman which was introduced in 1956. Eames Office designs continue to be produced to this day by Herman Miller, a Michigan-based manufacturer of furniture and furnishings.

The Eames for Herman Miller ESU 200 Storage Unit (\$3/5,000) is a storage cabinet divided into four rectangular shelves. The metal frame is closed across the sides and open along the bottom two shelves, with a metal grill covering the top right shelf. The top left shelves feature three, thin wide drawers, each made from the same black wood as the shelves and top surface, with centered metal handles bent into a rectangular shape. The storage unit features two metal cross braces, sixteen potential heights for the shelves, and six cushioned feet. The unit is a little over 32" tall, 47" wide, and 17" deep.

The Eames for Herman Miller Bikini Chair (\$5/900) is a small metal frame chair with wooden legs. Featuring the iconic Eames bucket design, this chair is formed from a metal grid rather than fiberglass or plastic and features two leather cushions, one at the seat and one at the back. These cushions take the shape of a half circle over a triangle, similar in form to a baseball playing field, with points that meet at the center. The chair spins atop a four-legged wooden base, with two metal cross braces between each of the legs.

**An Eames for Herman Miller ESU 200 Storage Unit (\$3/5,000)** will be offered in Michaan's Auctions Summer Fine Sale, held on Monday, June 17th. This sale features an incredible selection, full of the season's most esteemed items. The sale is headlined by historically important works in the Asian Art Department,

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exquisite jewelry in the desirable Art-Deco style, and important works from notable American and European modernist artists. Also featured are fine examples of Persian carpets, sterling silver dishware, and an extremely rare book by an icon of American poetry.

Also on June 17th, Michaan's Auctions will be presenting an initial selection from the vast estate of the notable New York artist and antiques dealer, Vito Giallo, who is finally offering the most treasured items from his Madison Avenue store, in a special auction preceding our Summer Fine Sale. This collection, titled "Chapter I" to commemorate the recent publishing of Vito Giallo's memoir, features exceptional pieces across every department, headlined by bronzes and painted works in the Fine Art Department, as well as impressive

collections of Silver & Objects de Vertu.

Also included are important collectibles, quality decorations, and admirable pieces in glass.

An **Eames for Herman Miller**

**Bikini Chair** (\$5/900) will also be offered in Michaan's Auctions June Gallery Auction, held on Friday, June 14th, in a sale featuring a deep collection of well-regarded pieces from the Jewelry Department, in addition to refined collections from the Silver & Objects de Vertu Department, and a number of fine examples from the Rugs, Carpets & Textiles Department.

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