

HOSTLER BURROWS

AKSEL BENDER MADSEN (Danish, 1916 – 2000)

Danish designer-cabinetmaker Aksel Bender Madsen (1916-2000) created a number of classic midcentury designs in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, often working jointly with his business partner and friend Ejner Larsen (1917-1987).

Bender Madsen (as he is usually referred) trained as a cabinetmaker before spending four years studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, graduating in 1940. It was there that he met his lifelong friend Larsen, with whom he would work throughout his career. The pair designed over 300 pieces of furniture together until Larsen's death in 1987, often working with cabinetmaker Willy Beck, who produced their designs over a 25-year period. Larsen and Bender Madsen participated annually in the Copenhagen Cabinetmakers' Guild competitions from 1947, and their work was exhibited at the Triennale di Milano and in the Design in Scandinavia exhibition, which traveled across the US. from 1954 to 1957.

Larsen and Bender Madsen's most famous design, namely the *Metropolitan Chair*, was developed in 1949 and produced from 1950; its name came from New York's [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), where it was shown and acquired for the Arts of Denmark exhibition in 1960-61. Upholstered in saddle leather, the *Metropolitan Chair* is an elegant example of organic Danish modern design.

Before he began working with Larsen, Bender Madsen worked for Danish icons [Kaare Klint](#) and [Arne Jacobsen](#) from 1940 to 1943. While designing furniture, he also worked simultaneously as an architect for the Danish Consumers Cooperative Society (1943-1950) and as a teacher and principal at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (1950-54).

Bender Madsen was committed to building the Danish design identity and exporting Scandinavian style. He introduced a clear Danish aesthetic to the Dutch brand [Bovenkamp](#) in the 1950s and 1960s, who also worked with fellow [Arne Vodder](#). Bender Madsen designs for Bovenkamp feature many models of easy chairs and armchairs, including the low-backed *Edith* and the high-backed *Karen* (circa 1950).

Together Bender Madsen and Larsen received many awards, including winning the prestigious Copenhagen Cabinetmakers' Guild Annual Prize in 1956 and 1961. Their furniture is housed in museums around world, including the aforementioned Met Museum and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark.

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