

# HOSTLER BURROWS



GEORGE NELSON (American, 1908–1986)  
*Pretzel Chair*, ca. 1950  
Bentwood  
29.75" H x 20" W x 19.25" D; seat 18" H

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## **George Nelson** **American, 1908 - 1986**

George Nelson began his career studying architecture at Yale University before winning the Rome Prize, which offered a two-year stipend to study at the American Academy in Rome from 1932 – 1934. While abroad, he conducted in-depth interviews on 12 important architects, including Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Gio Ponti, a precursor to Nelson’s career as an associate editor of *Architecture Forum* before running his own architectural firm in 1936. Through his writing, Nelson drew the attention of the president of furniture manufacturer Herman Miller, with whom Nelson released his first collection in 1945.

Nelson was appointed design director of Herman Miller in 1947, transforming the company and designing hundreds of pieces of furniture as well as recruiting other designers like Charles and Ray Eames, Alexander Girard, and Isamu Noguchi. Nelson designed for Herman Miller under the umbrella of his own studio, known as George Nelson & Associates as well as George Nelson and Company. Clients of his own office included General Electric, and by the time the company officially closed in 1980, he had worked with most of the Fortune 500 companies.

Nelson continued writing throughout his design career with the intent of communicating the importance of design to students and the general public. He introduced ideas like the “family room” and a “storage wall,” recessed, built-in bookcases or shelves using space previously lost between walls. Nelson also pioneered the idea of the outdoor shopping mall, a part of his attempt to reduce all forms of pollution.