



Carl Hansen and Søn introduces a new generation to octogenarian architect Bodil Kjær's groundbreaking furniture.

BY TIFFANY JOW

A few centuries ago, an ancestor of the Danish architect Bodil Kjær married a woman named Anna Kjær, who insisted he adopt her surname because her family was wealthier. So when Bodil was born, in 1932, she joined a lineage of women who were comfortable calling the shots. She never thought twice about pursuing the male-dominated field of architecture. Today, as many of her now-iconic furniture pieces are being reissued for the first time in more than a half century by blue-chip brands, Kjær couldn't care less about the attention she simply does what she wants, and what she wants is to design. "I've always known my own mind," Kjær told *The Wall Street Journal* earlier this year. "And I've never kissed ass."

Kjær decided to be an architect at age 12, and, in 1951, attended the Copenhagen School of Interior Design (now the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Design), where she was tutored by Danish Modern pioneer Finn Juhl. She earned a two-year scholarship from the Scandinavian-American Foundation, and traveled to the U.S., where she worked for designer Paul McCobb and Boston's Contract Interiors. Later, she moved to the U.K. to study at the Royal College of Art and the Architectural Association School of Architecture; she remained in London to work for engineering firm Arup, where she helped introduce flexible work environments for the likes of Oxford University, Penguin Books, and IBM. Now, while she's technically retired, Kjær travels internationally to lecture on her work and approach.

Kjær's desire to create furniture for people—by her definition, objects that are practical, comfortable, and that solve a problem—is perhaps best illustrated by her Indoor-Outdoor Series, a line of chairs, tables, and benches that Danish furniture company Carl Hansen and Søn will release in solid

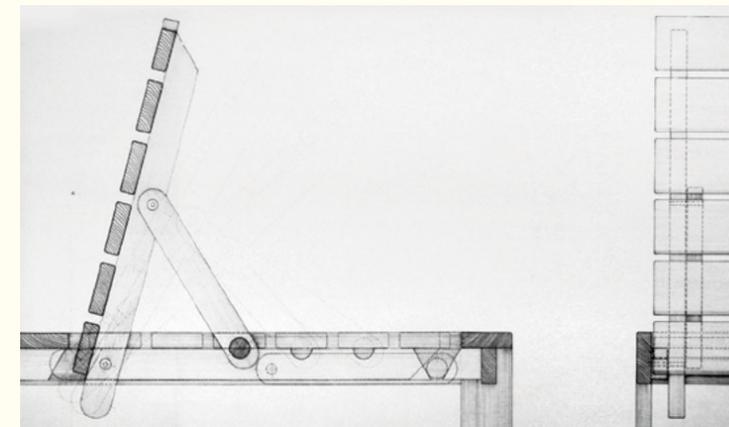
teak this October. The original designs came about while Kjær was living in the U.S., exploring how she could make outdoor furniture more contextual. "I looked at the American market and the outdoor furniture was mostly spindly stuff or things that looked like big insects," Kjær says. "Very nice, but it had no relationship to the architecture." So she devised objects that were extensions of modern buildings, using the same design language to create a dialogue between the two. And she wanted it to be suitable for indoor use, too: Why have two sets when you can have one?

The resulting slatted-wood pieces are dignified, spare, and luxurious in their exactitude and durability. Early prototypes, made of redwood, were placed on a terrace facing the Atlantic Ocean—exposing them to wind, sun, fog, and salt—to see how they stood up. They're also made to be comfortable. "I knew about the body because I did sports—high jumping, long jumping, throwing the javelin, and handball," she says, which gave her insight into how her pieces would be experienced on a physical level.

The collection became part of Kjær's

Elements of Architecture series, created from 1955 to 1963. Largely personal exercises, the objects were never intended to be put into production—that is, until other architects discovered them. Kjær's designs were relatives of modern architecture, and soon were united with it: An upholstered seating series fascinated Paul Rudolph, the erstwhile dean of the Yale School of Architecture, and was produced for his Blue Cross/Blue Shield building in Boston; Marcel Breuer ordered the same set for a project he was working on in New York. Another piece, the Desk—whose slim, drawer-lined wood top appears to float atop thin steel legs—ended up being used at MIT, in the office of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and in three James Bond films. These pieces, among others from Kjær's Elements of Architecture, were the ones reintroduced this year by brands including Fritz Hansen, Holmegaard, and Karakter Copenhagen. When Indoor-Outdoor was manufactured, in 1959, she was just 27 years old.

Like all her furniture, the Indoor-Outdoor Series appears at once contemporary and timeless. The only change to the originals is an adjustment in height, to accommodate contemporary human proportions. Carl Hansen and Søn produces the collection with a highly skilled company in Vietnam, where the FSC-certified teak is sourced. "You should visit it one day," Kjær says. "It's a wonderful place on an island in the countryside. There are lovely people working there, but there are also robots." Is that good or bad? "It's very up-to-date," she says. "It's a good thing."



A sketch of the BK14 sun bed from the Indoor-Outdoor Series. BK11 lounge chairs and a BK16 side table. Bodil Kjær in the BK11 lounge chair. (OPPOSITE) Pieces from Kjær's Indoor-Outdoor Series, available this fall in teak from Carl Hansen and Søn.

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