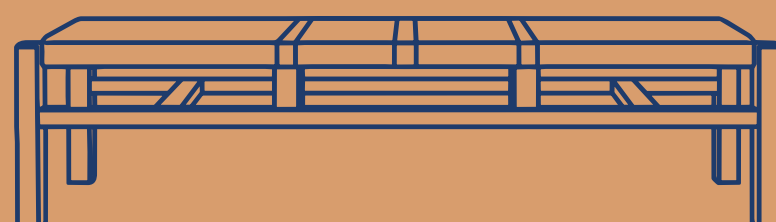
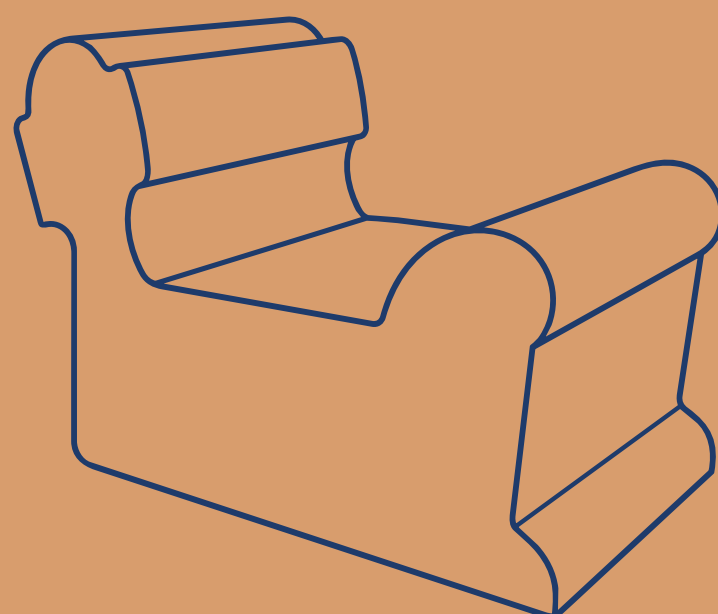
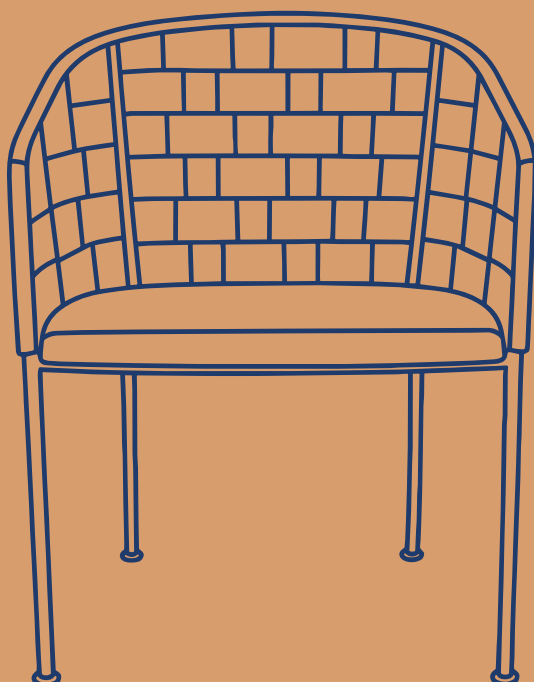
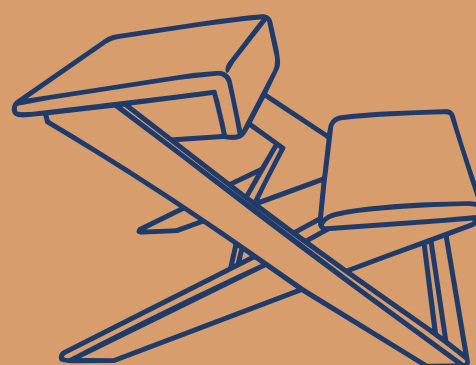
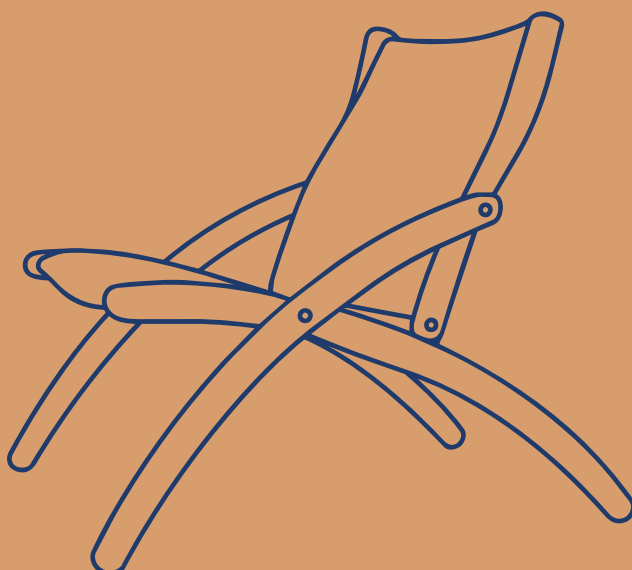


The History of Sitting

Variations on the Chair in Mexico



Content

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Glossary

Exhibition Credits

We have presented this information on the exhibition in an interactive format so it can accompany you before, during and after your visit. You may also consult it directly in the galleries.

All the exhibition views are courtesy of MUAC unless otherwise indicated. Photo: Oliver Santana



About the Exhibition

Sitting seems to be a simple gesture, yet few actions reveal so much about a culture as the way bodies are deployed in space. The height of a seat, its materials, its proximity to the ground, the posture it demands or the context in which it appears all speak to forms of coexistence and ideas on rest, labor, authority, intimacy and time. This exhibition encourages us to see the design in Mexico through this apparently banal yet profoundly cultural gesture.

Through a selection of twentieth and twenty-first century pieces from the Colección de Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC, this exhibition presents a genealogy of the chair in Mexico. This is not a linear history of furniture, but a dense framework of appropriations, translations and reinventions. Here, the chair is not a functional object but a place of convergence between tradition, modernity, memory and experimentation.

In Mexico, modernity did not emerge through a negation of folk or vernacular forms, but through dialogue with them. Designers, architects and artisans found a material and corporeal intelligence in the butaque, the equipal, the silla de palo or the heirs of the hammock that could inform new modern explorations. Rather than limit itself to styles or authors, this exhibition reflects on how objects shape everyday life and how design actively participates in the construction of cultural identities. Each chair on display has its own vision of habitation and the body: some evoke community and connection with the earth, others represent the aspirations of industrialization, modernization and cosmopolitanism and still others criticize the nationalist narratives that left their mark on much of the history of design in Mexico.

The History of Sitting is also an invitation to see the objects we use each day through different eyes. In Mexico, sitting has never only meant occupying a place: it is a way of understanding one's context and the world itself.



Chair with cane back and modern black swivel base on casters. 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s.

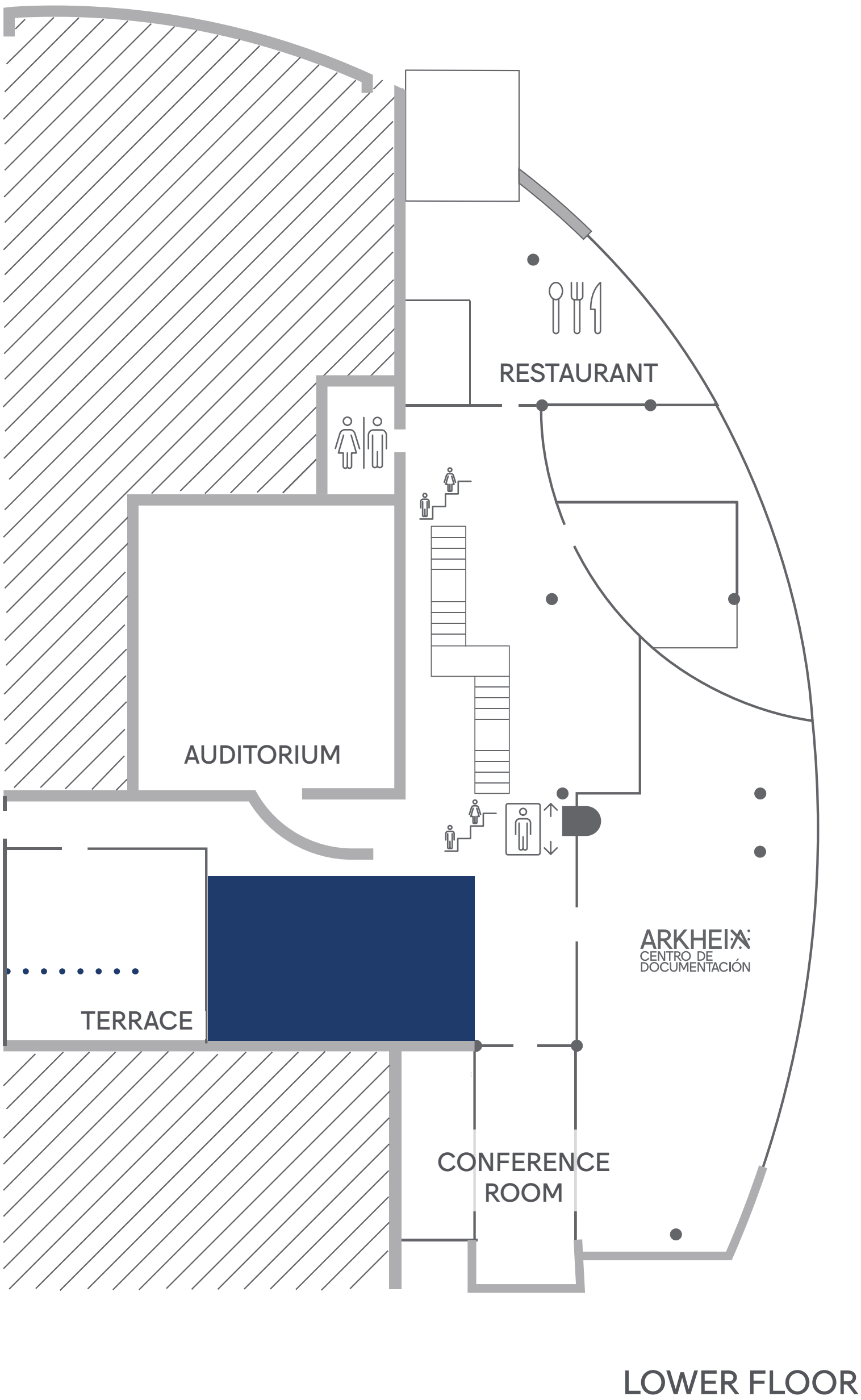
Chair with cane back and modern black swivel base on casters. 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s.

Chair with cane back and modern black swivel base on casters. 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s. Designed by the architect and furniture designer, 1970s.

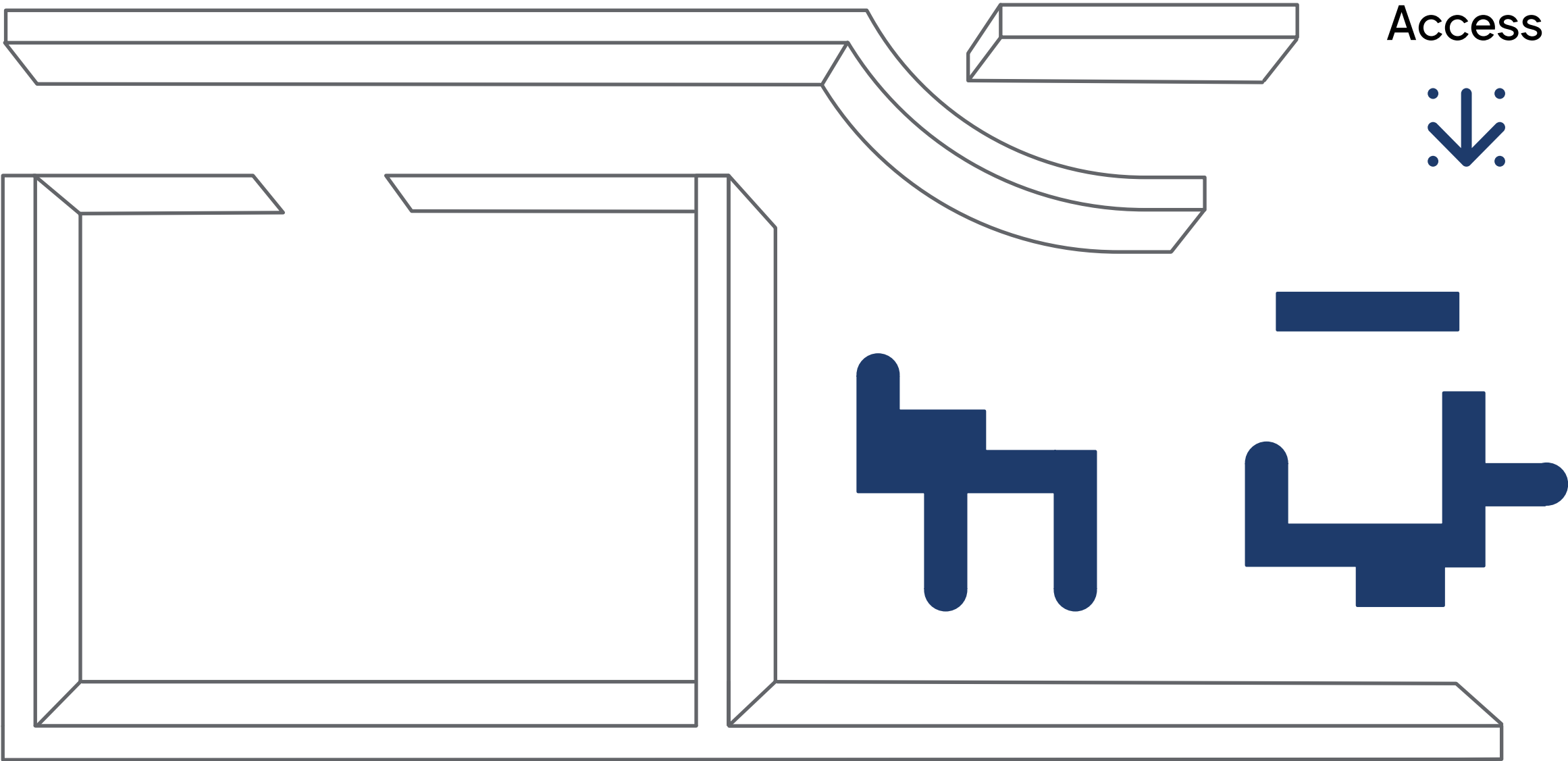
Museum Layout

Exhibition Gallery

● *The History of Sitting*



Layout of the Exhibition Gallery

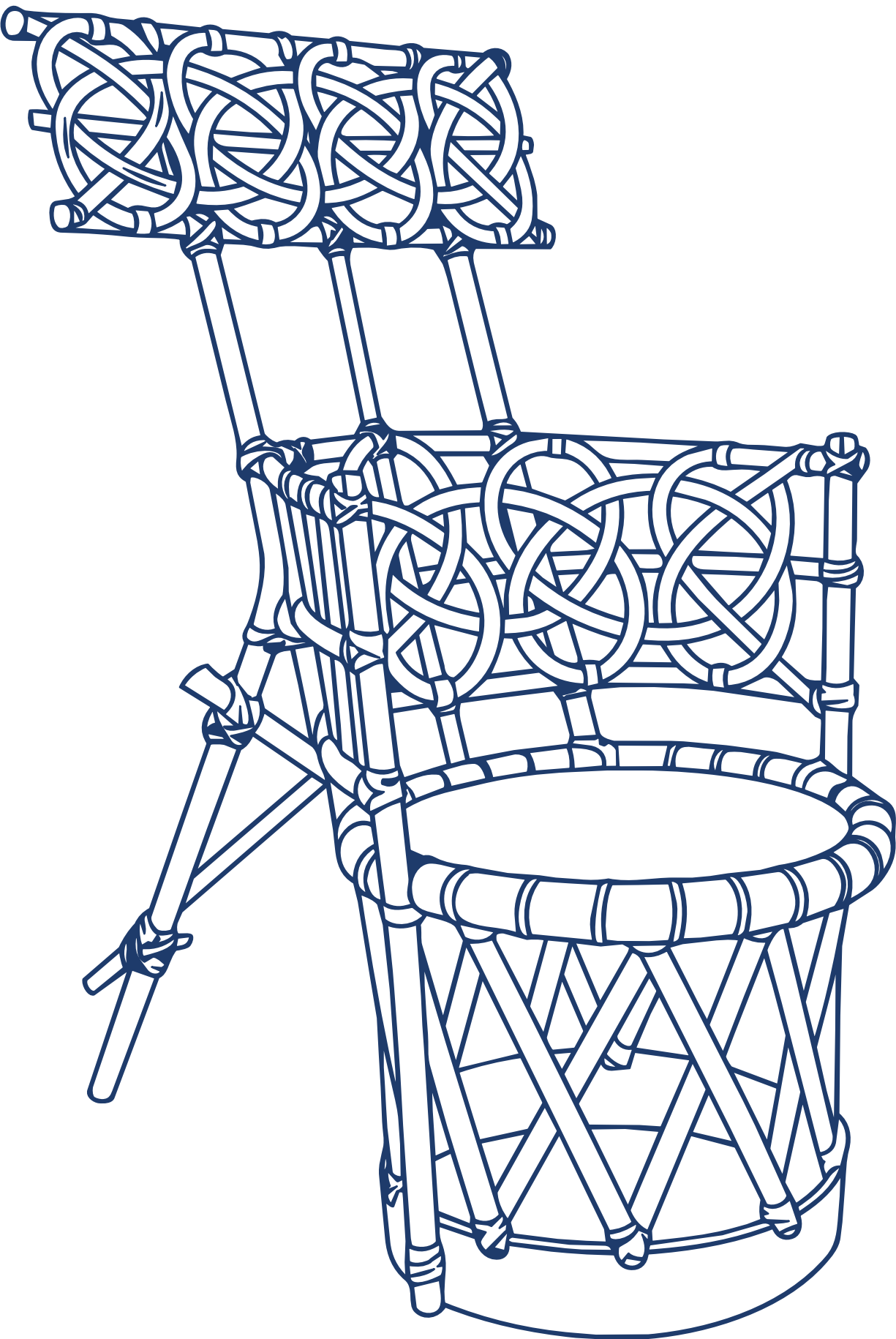




Sitting as a Cultural Act

In Mexico, sitting has historically meant a variety of ways of inhabiting a territory: from direct contact with the earth and the Indigenous legacy of reclining at rest to the incorporation of Western models associated with modernity, domesticity and urban life. Sitting is thus an extension of the body, but also a reflection of culture.

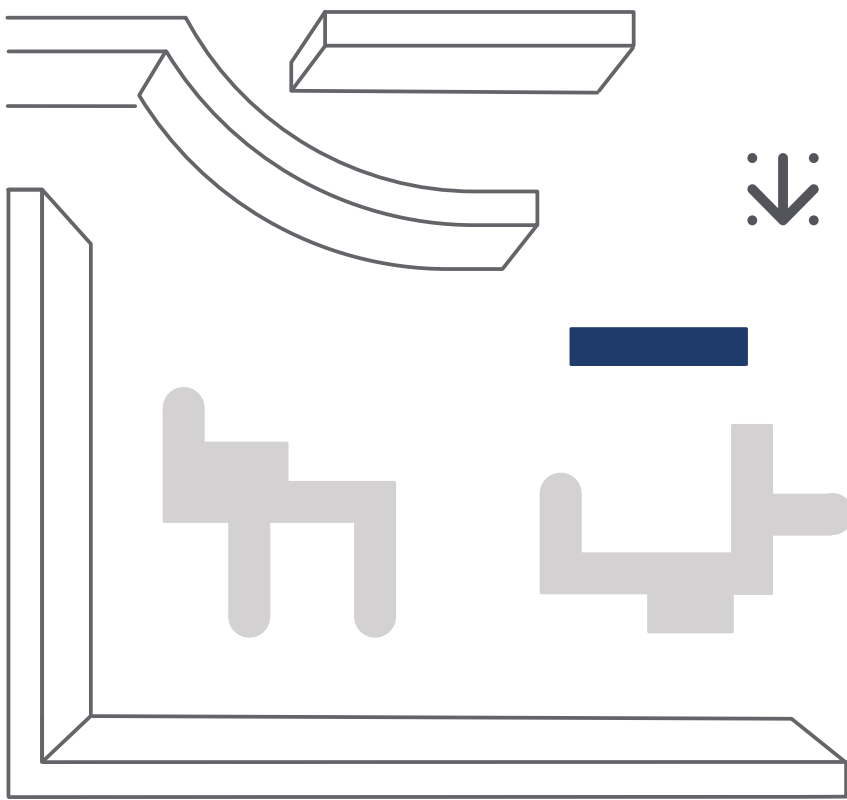
This section suggests that we think of sitting as a historical and symbolic construction. Beyond its function, each chair, stool, petate or butaque organizes social relationships, determines forms of coexistence and conditions our perception of space. Sitting, in this sense, is also a way of seeing, learning and belonging.



Sitting as a Cultural Act

The History of Sitting

Lobby Arkheia



1. **Unidentified author**
Butaque, 2016
Pine and hair-on cowhide
Veracruz
Colección particular

2. **Unidentified author**
Petate, s. f.
Natural palm
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

3. **Unidentified author**
Stool, ca. 1960
Carved mezquite wood
Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato
Colección particular

4. **Unidentified author**
Stool, 2020
Wood and natural fibers
Zona lacustre de Michoacán
Colección particular

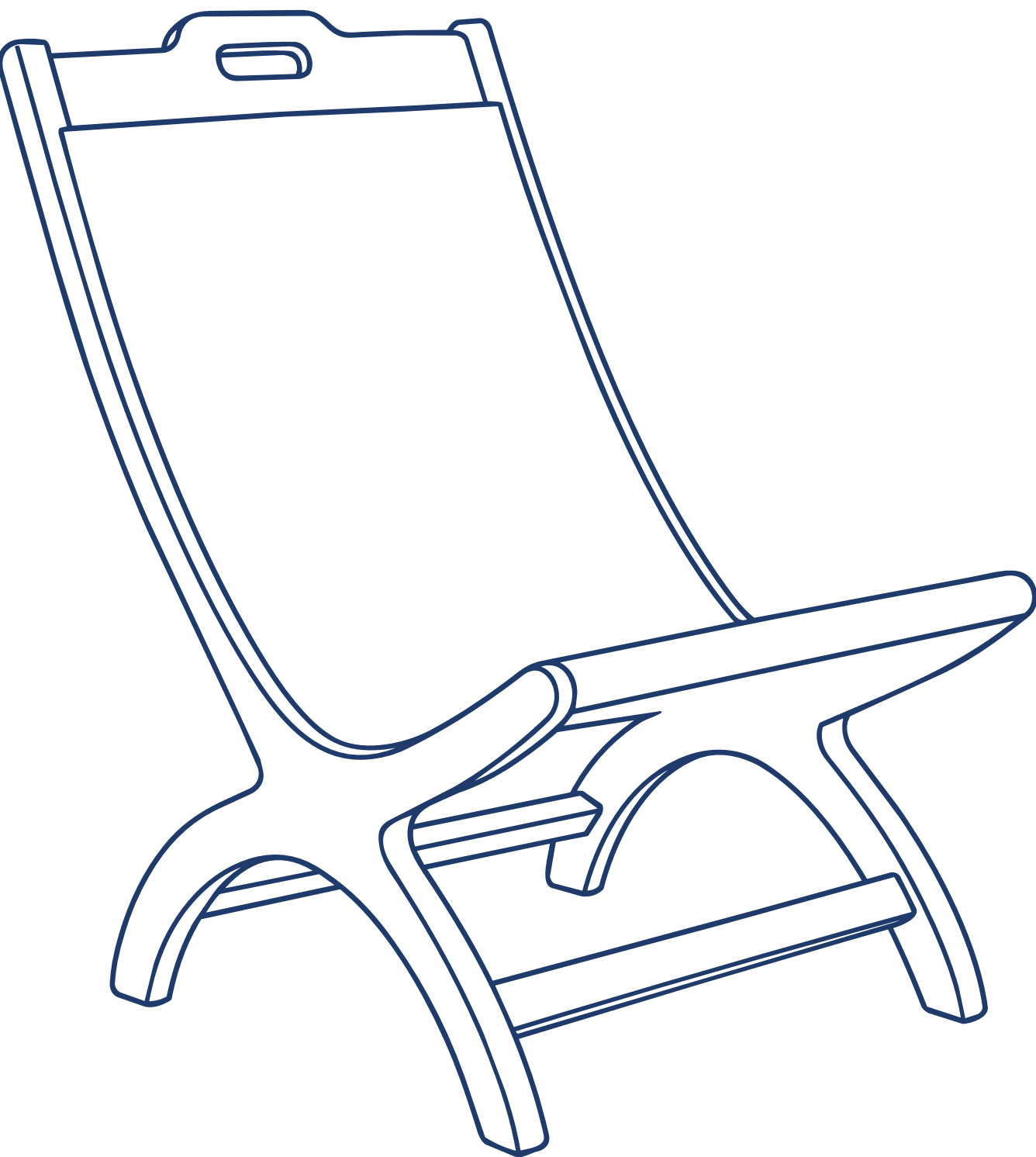
5. **Unidentified author**
Stool, ca. 1960
Carved mezquite wood
Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato
Colección particular

Butaque: Rest and Temporality

The butaque has a central place in the history of the design in Mexico. Its low, open and reclined structure encourages another relationship between the body and time: an unhurried state of rest, suspended between contemplation and conversation. This seat expresses the cultural forms of inhabiting space and understanding comfort of the country’s south.

As a product of the encounter between two traditions, this type emerged from the hybridization of the pre-Hispanic duho—a ceremonial chair from the Caribbean—and the x-shaped scissors chair introduced by the Spanish conquistadors. Its inclined curve evokes the duho, while its built structure is derived from the techniques used in European folding chairs. Over time, the butaque spread to other territories, adapting itself to local climates, materials and ways of life, becoming a routine presence in many regions of Mexico.

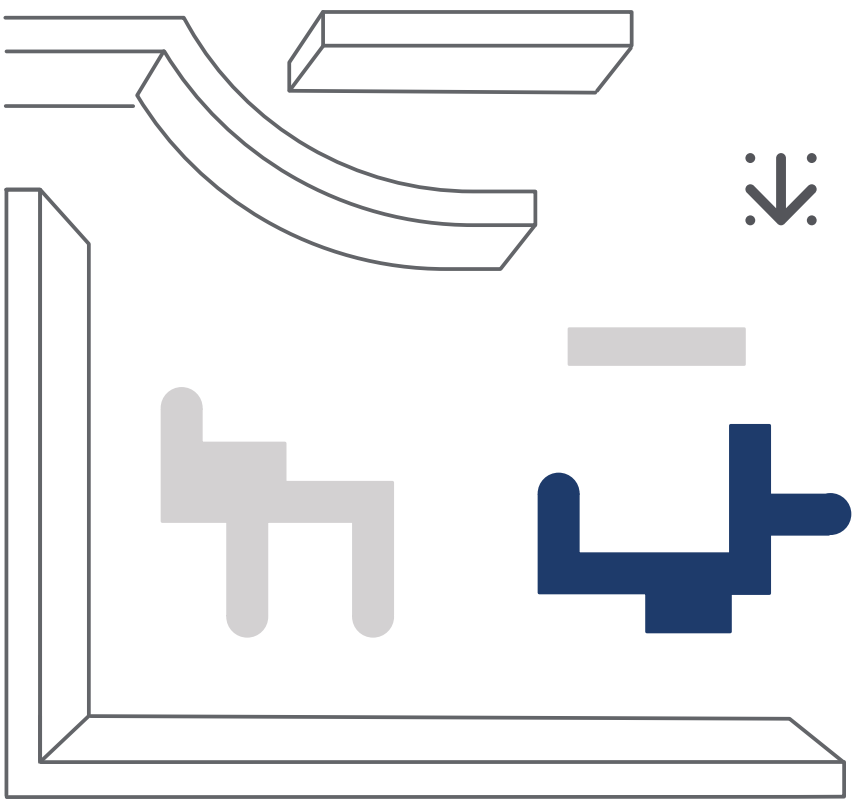
William Spratling was one of the first designers working in Mexico to reinterpret it through a modern sensibility. Later on, Clara Porset turned the butaque into a field of ergonomic, aesthetic and identitarian exploration, understanding its convergence of tradition, modernity and material culture. Since then, it has been constantly revisited by designers and architects as a persistent symbol of Mexican and Latin American design.



Butaque: Rest and Temporality

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



6. **Josef Albers (Alemania, 1888–Estados Unidos, 1976)**
Mexican Chair, ca. 1940
Ash wood, leather and brass
Talleres de Black Mountain College,
North Carolina, by Mary “Molly” Gregory
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

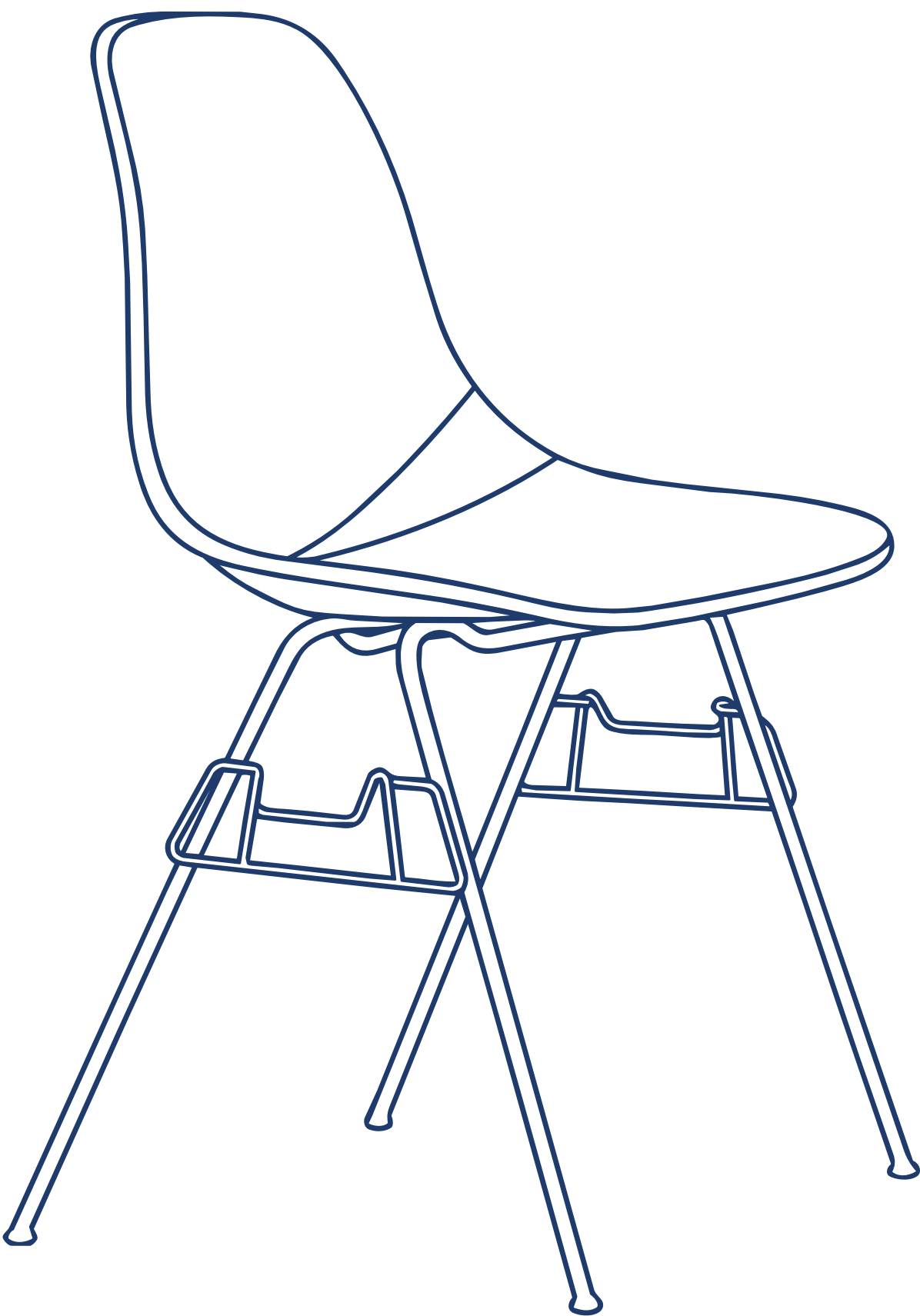
7. **Don Shoemaker (Estados Unidos, 1919–México, 1990)**
Swinger, línea *Sling*, ca. 1970
Chair. Cocobolo wood and leather
Señal S.A., Santa María de Guido, Michoacán
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

8. **Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo (México, 1923–2000)**
Rangelian butaque, n. d.
Wood and leather
Taller de la Ex Hacienda de Noguerras,
Comala, Colima
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Plastic Shells

The invention of plastic gave designers new formal, ergonomic and productive possibilities. Molded shells allowed them to see the body as a continuous, enveloping and standardized surface, marking the transition toward an industrial modernity that sought to democratize design through mass production. Charles and Ray Eames were fundamental to this transformation: their fiberglass research led to the first industrially-produced plastic chairs, designed to provide the best to more people and for less.

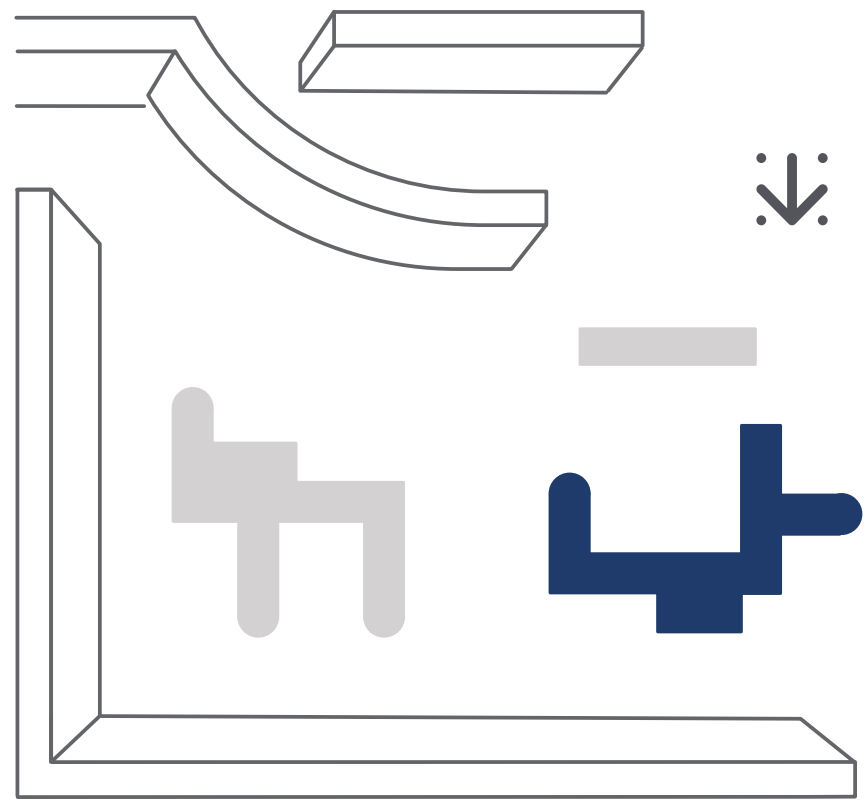
In Mexico, these developments had an impact on local industry. At the end of the sixties, PM STELEE obtained a license to produce Robin Day’s *Polyside* chair—one of the most common stackable chairs of the twentieth century—which was used in schools, auditoriums and public spaces, including the Estadio Olímpico Universitario. At the same time, Guadalajara’s Industrias Gallo S.A. began to manufacture fiberglass chairs inspired by the Eames experiments, which were originally made for hospitals and were later acquired by schools and government buildings. These plastic shells transformed everyday life in Mexico, becoming symbols of efficiency, modernity and serial production.



Plastic Shells

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



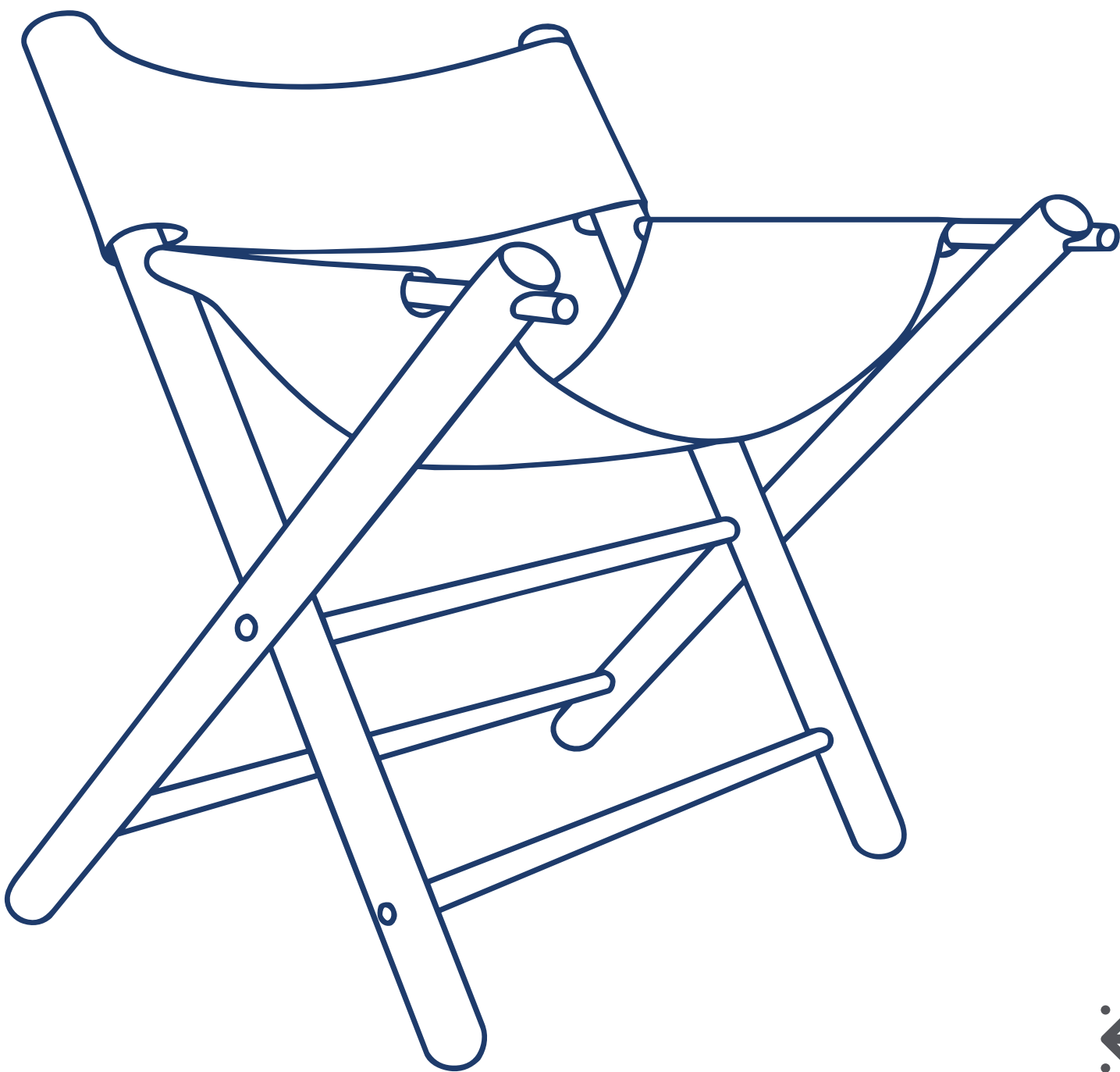
9. **Industrias Gallo S.A. ([IGA S.A.] México, 1936–1993)**
Pop Seat, ca. 1970
Chair. Polypropylene, metal and faux leather
Jalisco
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Ana Elena Mallet, 2021

The Heritage of the Hammock

Before the chair we know today, many Indigenous peoples of America had developed forms of rest that involved movement, lightness and a connection with their environment. The hammock, originally woven from vegetable fibers and hung between trees or simple structures, transformed the relationship between body and habitation. It was a domestic object, but also an adaptable and portable technology that accompanied ways of life that were nomadic, sensitive to the climate and deeply connected to nature.

Their ability to rock, envelop and support the body has been a decisive influence on different types of Latin American furniture. Clara Porset observed how certain tropical seats—such as the butaque—inherited a “free, airy and nearly horizontal” arrangement from the hammock, one capable of responding to their warm environment and expressing other ways of understanding rest.

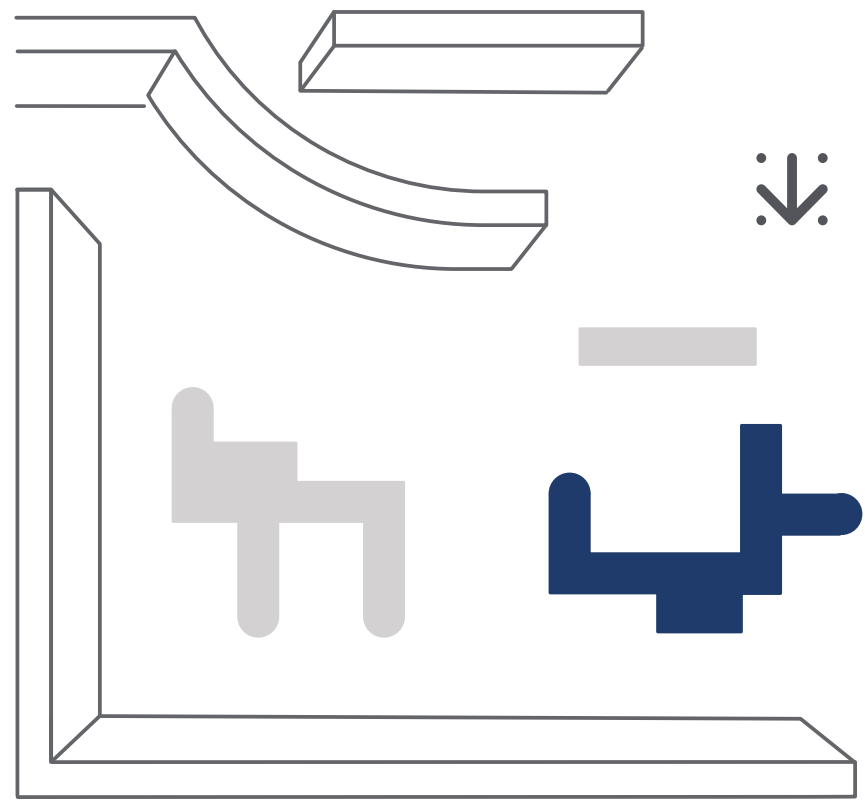
Over the course of the twentieth century, designers and architects turned to these characteristics to produce furniture whose inclination, suspension and flexibility evoke the experience of using a hammock. Rather than a formal reference, its legacy is a broader idea of comfort and unhurried time.



The Heritage of the Hammock

The History of Sitting

Lobby Arkheia

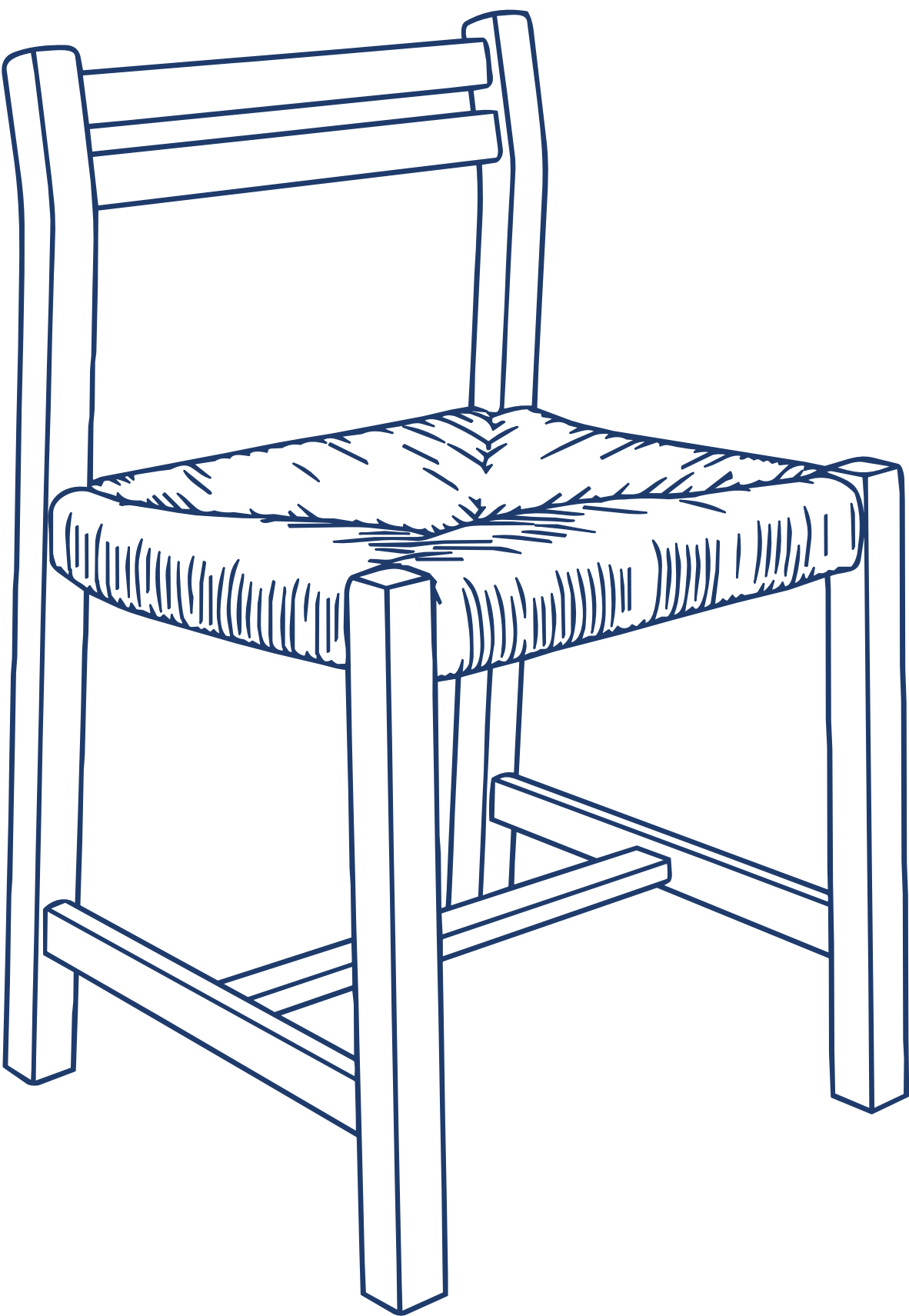


10 . Po Shun Leong (Inglaterra, 1941–Estados Unidos, 2025)
Chamela, ca. 1975
Chair. Wood and canvas
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Silla de Palo: Ethics and Austerity

The silla de palo is one of the most austere and honest expressions of Mexican furniture. Found in markets and domestic spaces, this anonymous type synthesizes a profound material intelligence: minimalist structures, local woods and tule or palm fibers that respond with simplicity to the needs of the body and the climate. Clara Porset observed how these low, fresh and resistant seats reflected a cultural tendency toward sobriety, intimacy with the earth and a limited but meaningful use of the objects found in the popular homes.

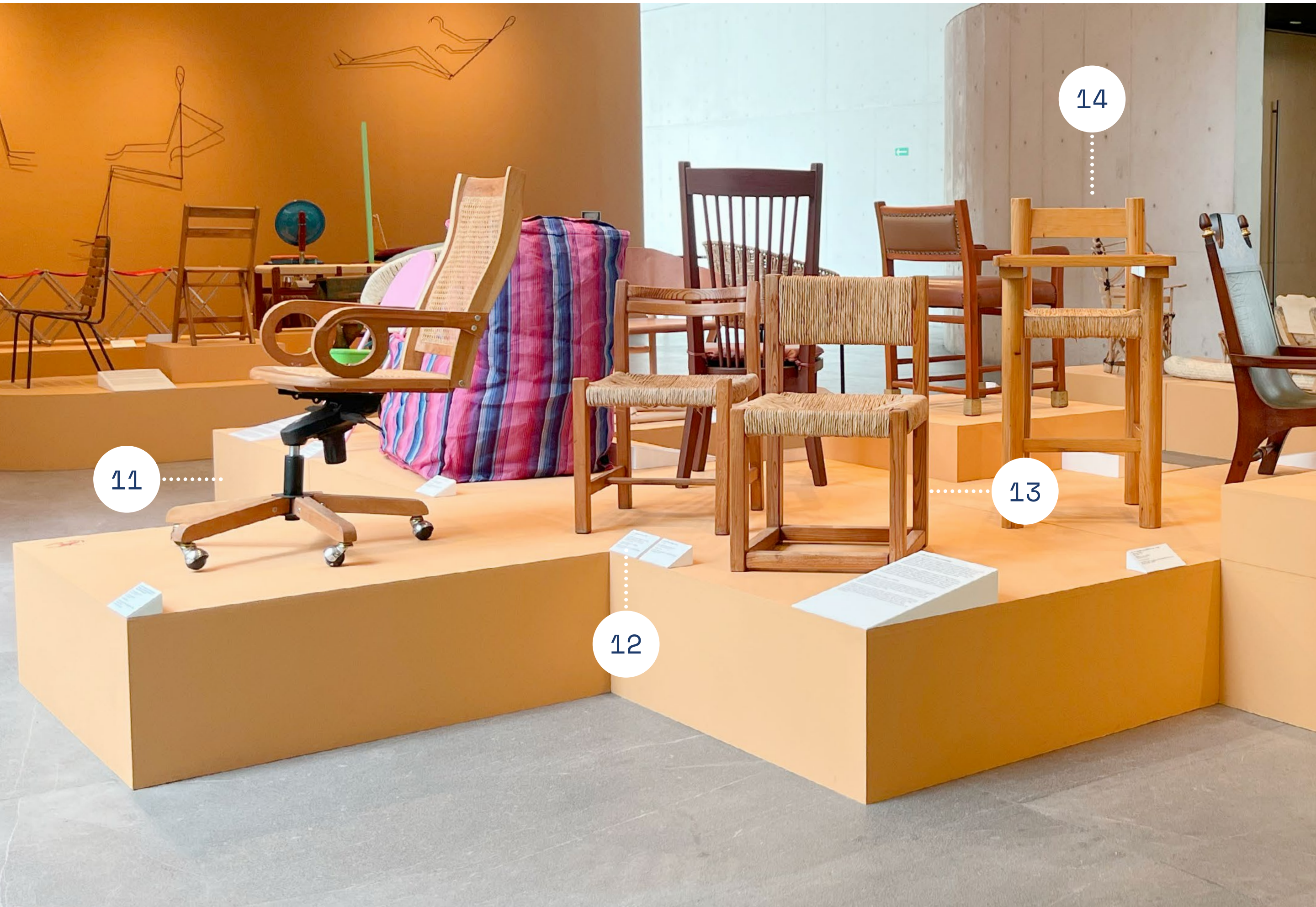
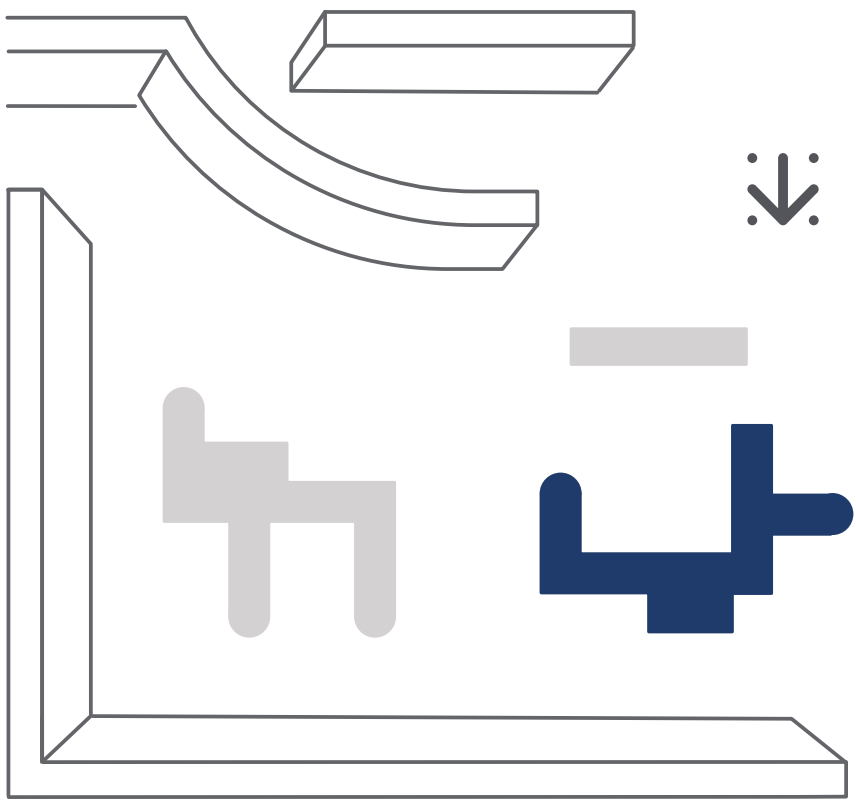
During the twentieth century, architects and designers saw this peasant chair as a model capable of expressing an ethical, localized modernity. Óscar Hagerman took up this tradition in the *Arrullo* chair, designed in collaboration with Cooperativa Don Emiliano, seeking to produce reasonable, affordable furniture that could be naturally integrated into everyday life. Other architects, such as Diego Matthai, Ricardo Legorreta, Manuel Álvarez and Antonio Attolini Lack, offered reinterpretations of geometry and folk textiles to show that austerity could become a contemporary form of beauty.



Silla de Palo: Ethics and Austerity

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



11 . **José de la O (México, 1980) en colaboración con Charlotte van der Sommen (Países Bajos, 1991) y Miguel Ramírez (México, 1989)**
Standard office chair, 2015
Red cedar and wicker
Tlacotalpan, Veracruz
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by José de la O, 2025

12 . **Óscar Hagerman (España, 1936)**
Arrullo, 1963
Chair. Ayacahuite wood and woven tule seat witha nitrocellulose matte finish
Cooperativa de Carpinteros Don Emiliano, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

13 . **Manuel Álvarez (México, 1948)**
MAF, 1975
Chair. Pine wood with woven tule
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

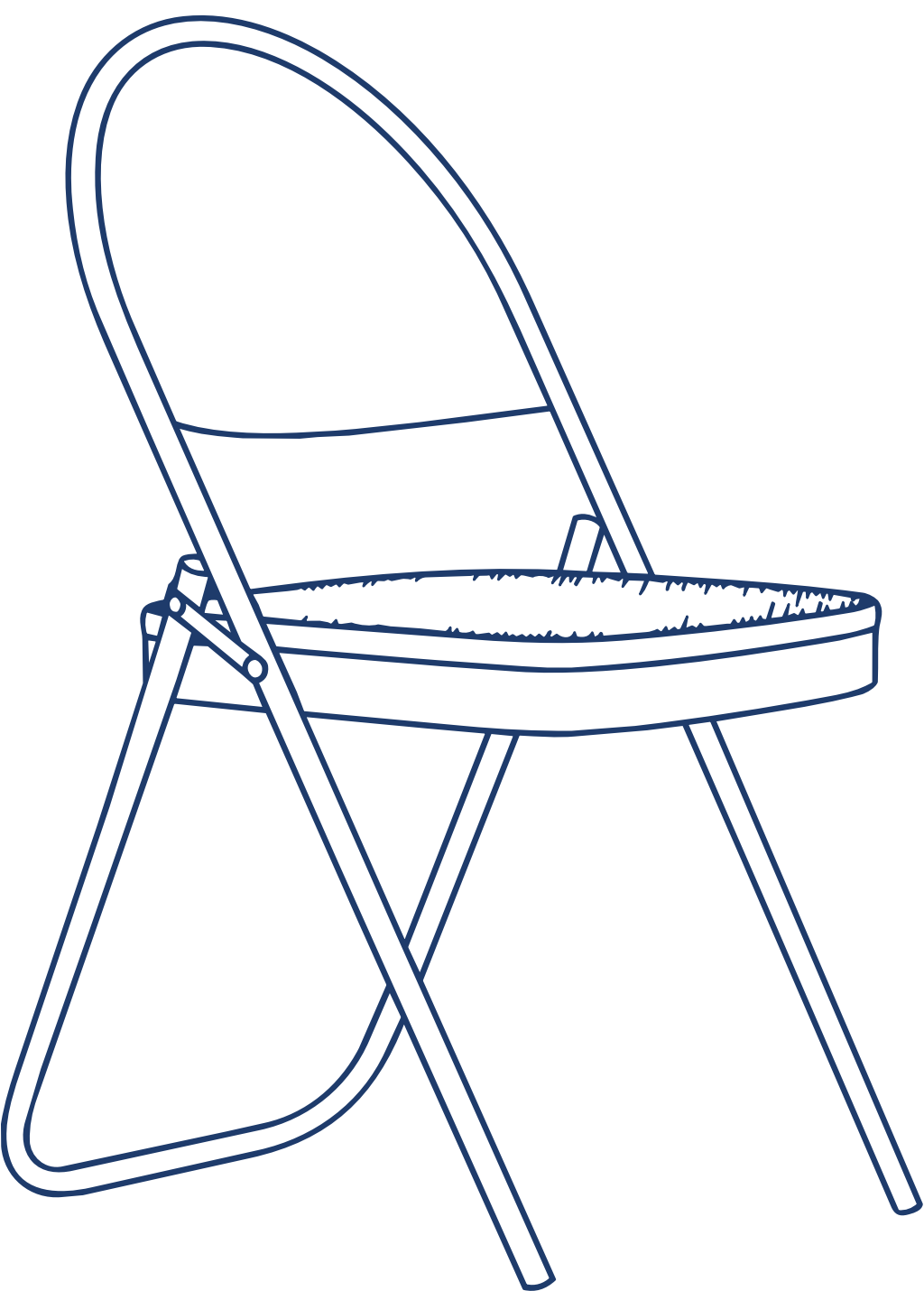
14 . **Antonio Attolini Lack (México, 1931–2012)**
Baby chair, n. d.
Pine wood and palm
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Folk and Vernacular Abbreviations

This section explores two different ways in which contemporary Mexican design has reinterpreted the chair through folk and vernacular approaches. On the one hand, there are projects that involve traditional rural furniture, which retain a profound connection with artisanal craftsmanship, communitarian memory and a given territory. On the other, there are objects associated with contemporary urban culture, shaped by mobility, migration and the constant transformations of the city.

In his project *The Chair that Rocks*, José de la O revisits the traditional rocking chairs of Tlacotalpan through a dialogue with Veracruz artisans. This initiative understands vernacular furniture as a living practice in which inherited techniques, proportions and materials communicate a cultural identity and a sense of belonging. De la O manages to bring the chairs into contemporaneity and urban life by proposing seating associated with rest and working life, using the traditional techniques of that region in Veracruz.

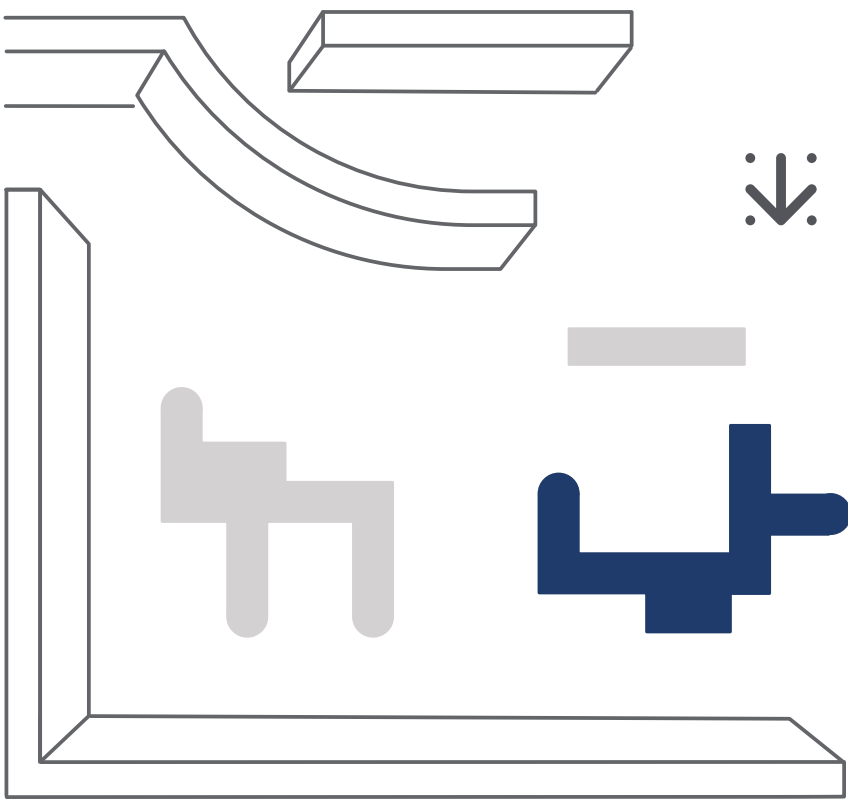
In contrast, Andrés Lhima’s *Fidencio* armchair and the CCC chair developed by José de la O, Matteo Guarnaccia and Adrián Marfil alongside Monterrey’s Los Patrones workshop are situated in the field of the urban vernacular. The *Fidencio*, made with a plastic similar to that used in market bags, can be folded and temporarily filled with paper or plastic bottles, a metaphor for the nomadic object: portable and adaptable, evoking the experience of displacement. The CCC chair, in turn, exaggerates the forms, colors and visual codes associated with contemporary pop culture, vindicating excess, appropriation and hybridization as an essential part of modern urban identity.



Folk and Vernacular Abbreviations

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



15 . **Andrés Lhima (Mexico City, 1984)**
Fidencio, 2012
Armchair. Machine-sewn plastic mesh
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

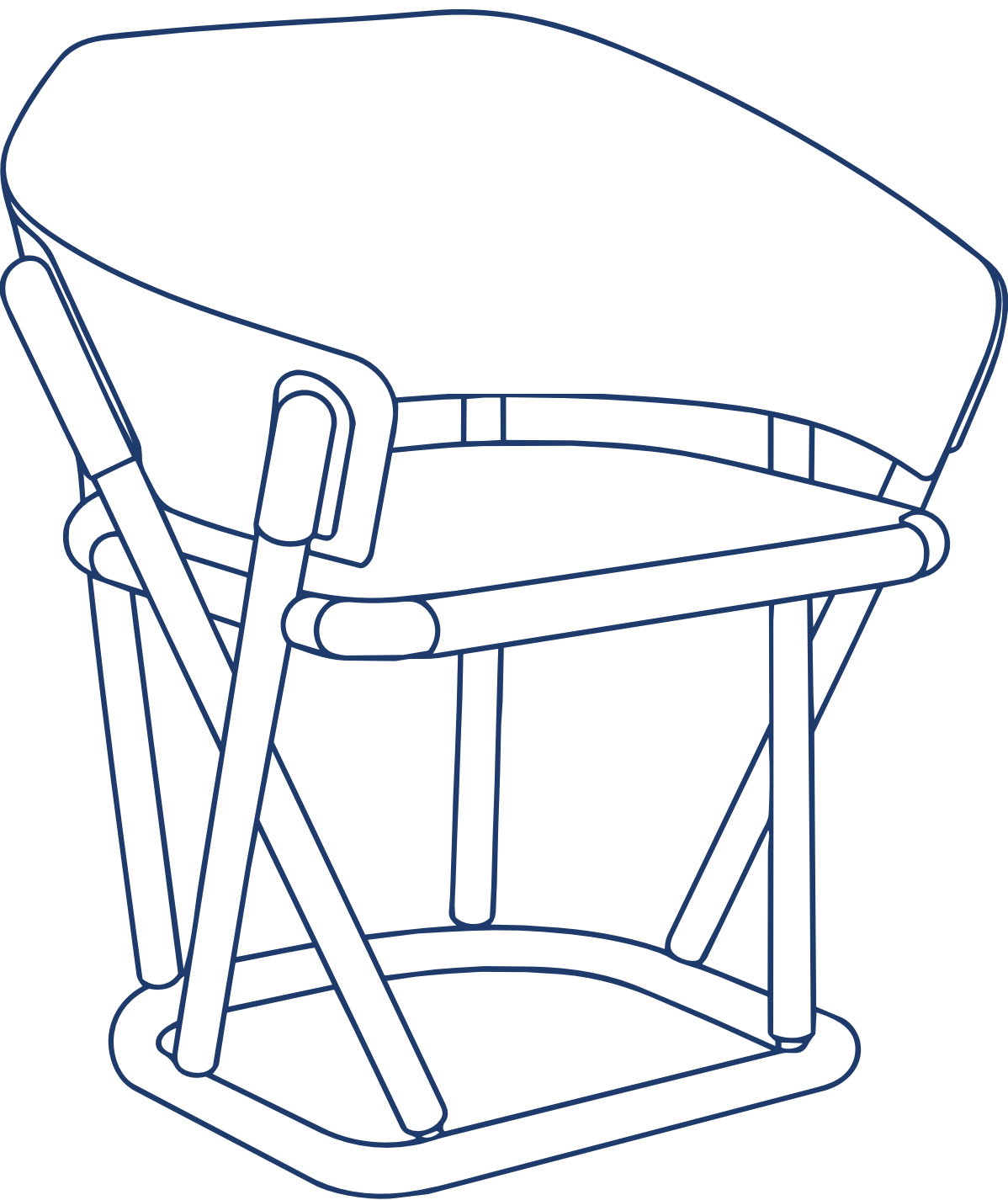
16 . **José de la O (México, 1980), Adrián Marfil (México, 1990), Matteo Guarnaccia (Italia, 1994) en colaboración con Los Patrones (México, 2015) para The Cross Cultural Chairs Project (Brasil, 2018)**
CCC México, 2019
Chair. Ironwork and microperforated sheet with electrostatic paint
Monterrey, Nuevo León
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by José de la O, 2025

Equipal: The Seat as Embrace

The equipal is one of the most iconic types of Mexican furniture. Its enveloping form produces an immediate sensation of safety: as you sit down, your body is surrounded by a circular structure that embraces your back and torso, generating an intimate ceremonial space. More than a seat, it suggests a corporeal experience associated with conviviality, rest and permanence.

Its origins can be found in the icpalli, a chair reserved for rulers, priests and high-ranking individuals in pre-Hispanic cultures. Over time, this ritual piece was incorporated into daily life and became an artisanal tradition with deep ties to the state of Jalisco, although it is also produced in Nayarit and Michoacán. Originally made out of wood, reeds, ixtle and leather, the equipal incarnates technical knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation.

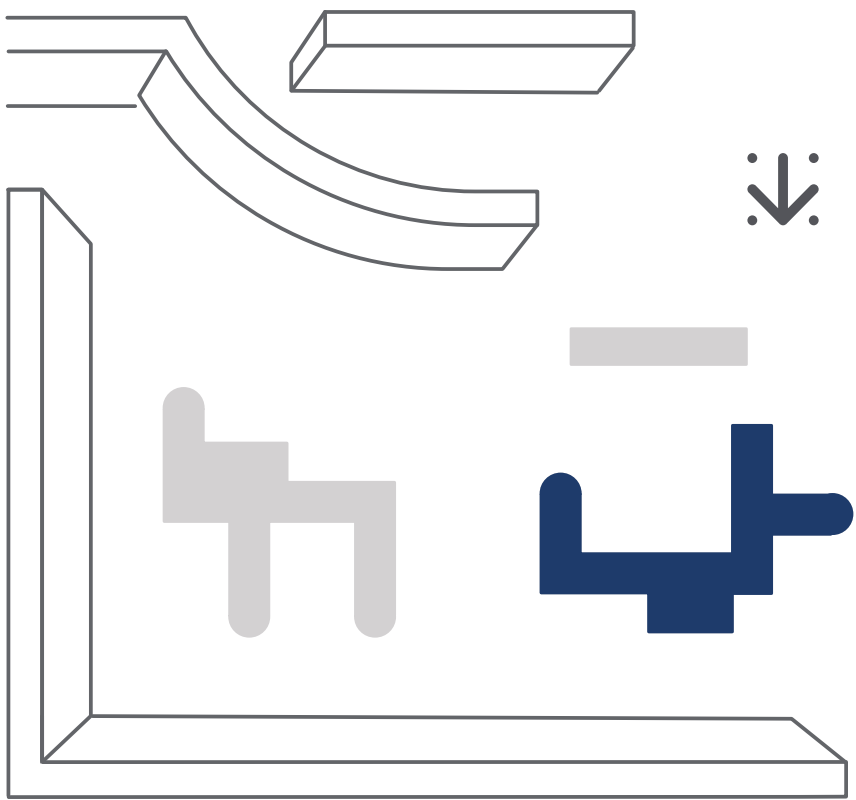
In the twentieth century, modern architects and designers saw the equipal as an exemplary synthesis between identity and comfort. Many reinterpretations substituted traditional materials with metal structures or industrial solutions, but conserve what has defined the equipal since its origins: the idea of the seat as an embrace.



Equipal: The Seat as Embrace

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



16 . **Ezequiel Farca (México, 1967)**
Gallito, 1993
Chair. Stainless steel and tule
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

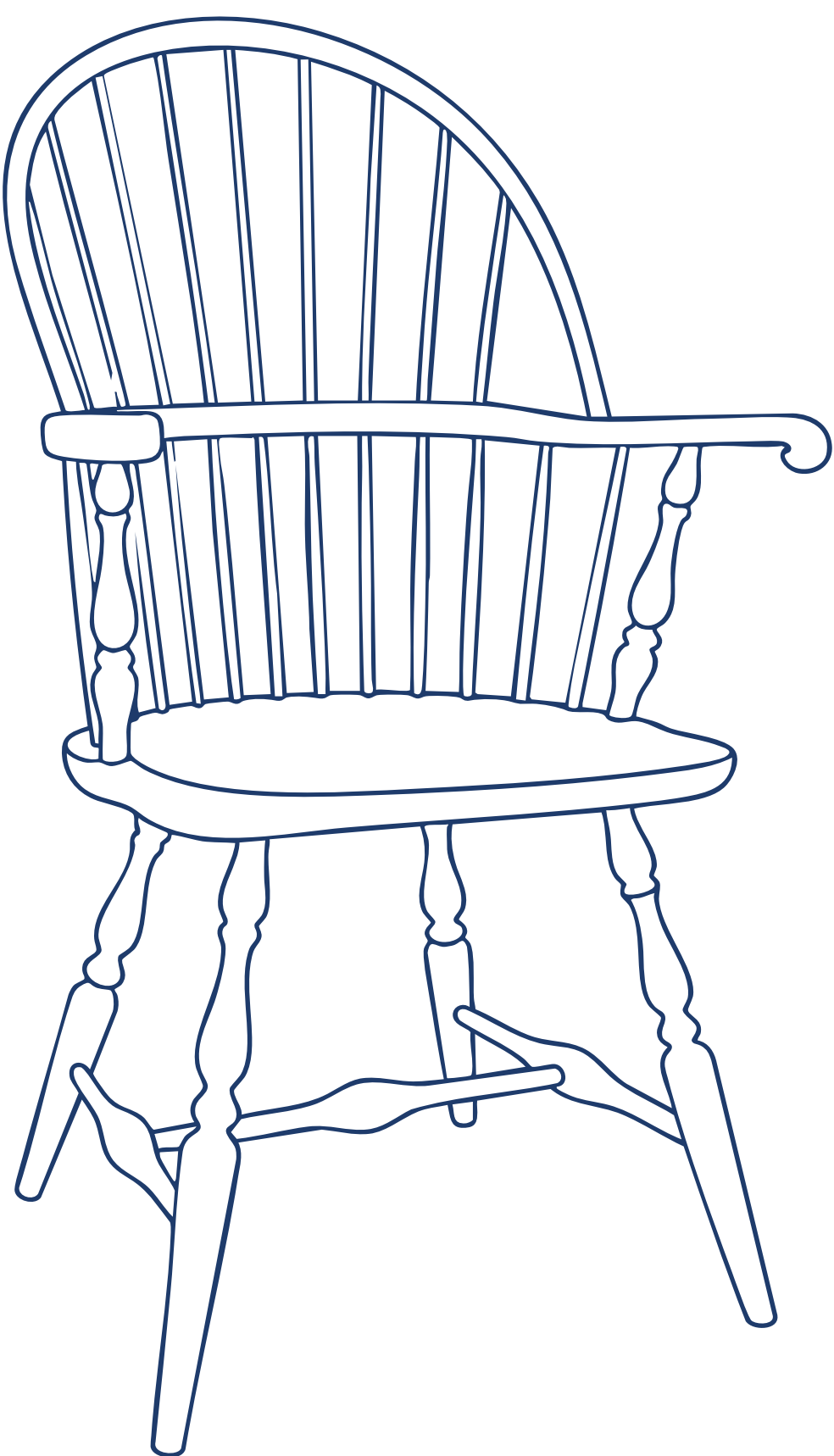
18 . **Moisés Hernández (México, 1983) para Mexa (México, 2012)**
Mestiza, 2020
Chair. Steel tube and woven palm
Jalisco
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

17 . **Javier Reynaga (México, 1996) para Tributo (México, 2013)**
Milo, 2022
Chair. Beechwood and leather
Jalisco
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Windsor a la Mexicana: Translations and Appropriations

The Windsor chair—one of the most popular types of traditional Anglo-Saxon furniture—underwent new forms of adaptation and persistence in Mexico. Its lightweight structure, based on turned spindles that are joined directly with the seat, allows for folk, industrial and modernist reinterpretations. Over the course of the twentieth century, this chair went from being a foreign reference to part of the landscape of Mexican domesticity.

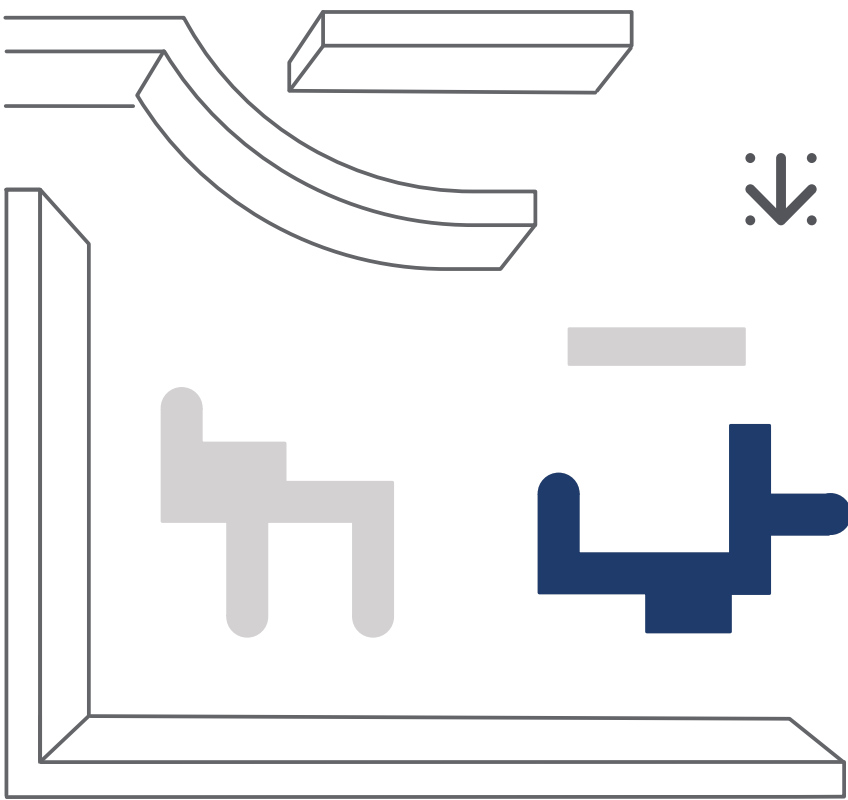
In the forties, Monterrey’s La Malinche factory popularized a version of the Windsor chair that was rapidly integrated into the homes of the urban middle class. Its everyday presence reveals how certain international models can be appropriated and reinterpreted through their local context. Decades later, designers and architects would take up this type to explore new readings of Mexican furniture. For example, the Swedish designer Edmond Spence produced a sophisticated reinterpretation of the Windsor chair for Industria Mueblera S. A., combining futurist references with traditional elements in a piece that projected a modern Mexicanist image in the international market. Decades later, Ricardo Legorreta turned to this type to create his Tlaquepaque chair, lengthening the back and curving the legs to give it a more sculptural, architectonic presence.



Windsor a la Mexicana: Translations and Appropriations

The History of Sitting

● Lobby Arkheia

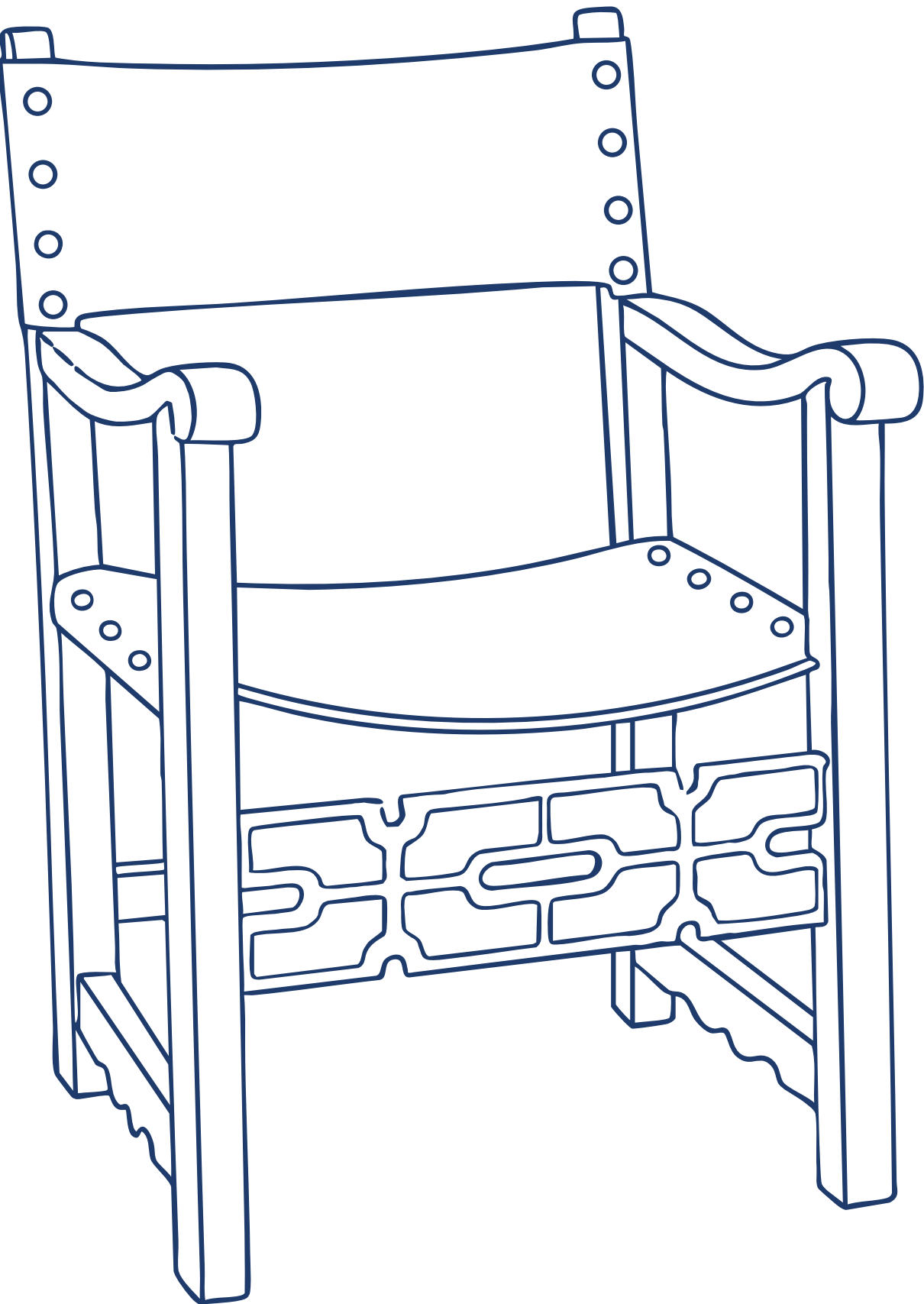


19 . **Ricardo Legorreta (México, 1931–2011)**
en colaboración con Emilio Guerrero
(México, activo en el siglo XX)
Tlaquepaque, 1980
Chair. White oak
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Legorreta Arquitectos,
S.A. de C.V., 2023

Historicist Styles

Historicist furniture styles reveal how past forms have constantly been reinterpreted to respond to new forms of habitation. Rather than merely reproduce old models, these objects take up an inherited language—viceregal, European or vernacular—and translate it into another social, cultural and material context. In Mexico, there was a very specific dimension to this process in the twentieth century, when the search for a modern identity led to a recuperation of local traditions and historical references as part of a broader cultural project.

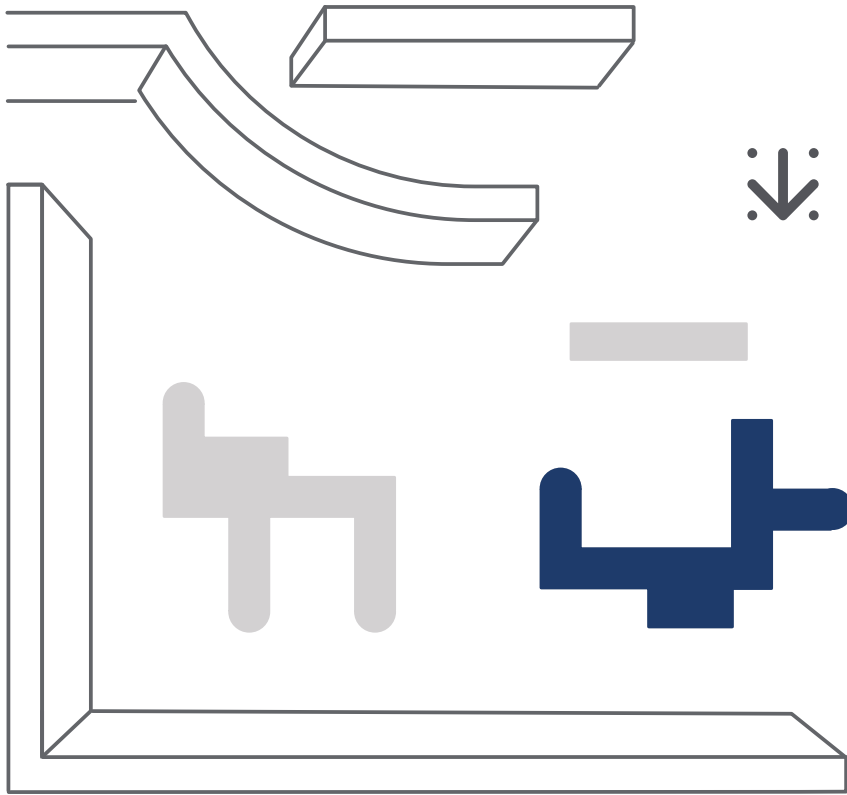
Clara Porset’s reinterpretation of the sillón fraileró for the Churubusco Country Club exemplifies this gesture, being a piece that takes up a historical type and transforms it into a functional modern design, one with a deep connection to its Mexican context.



Historicist Styles

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



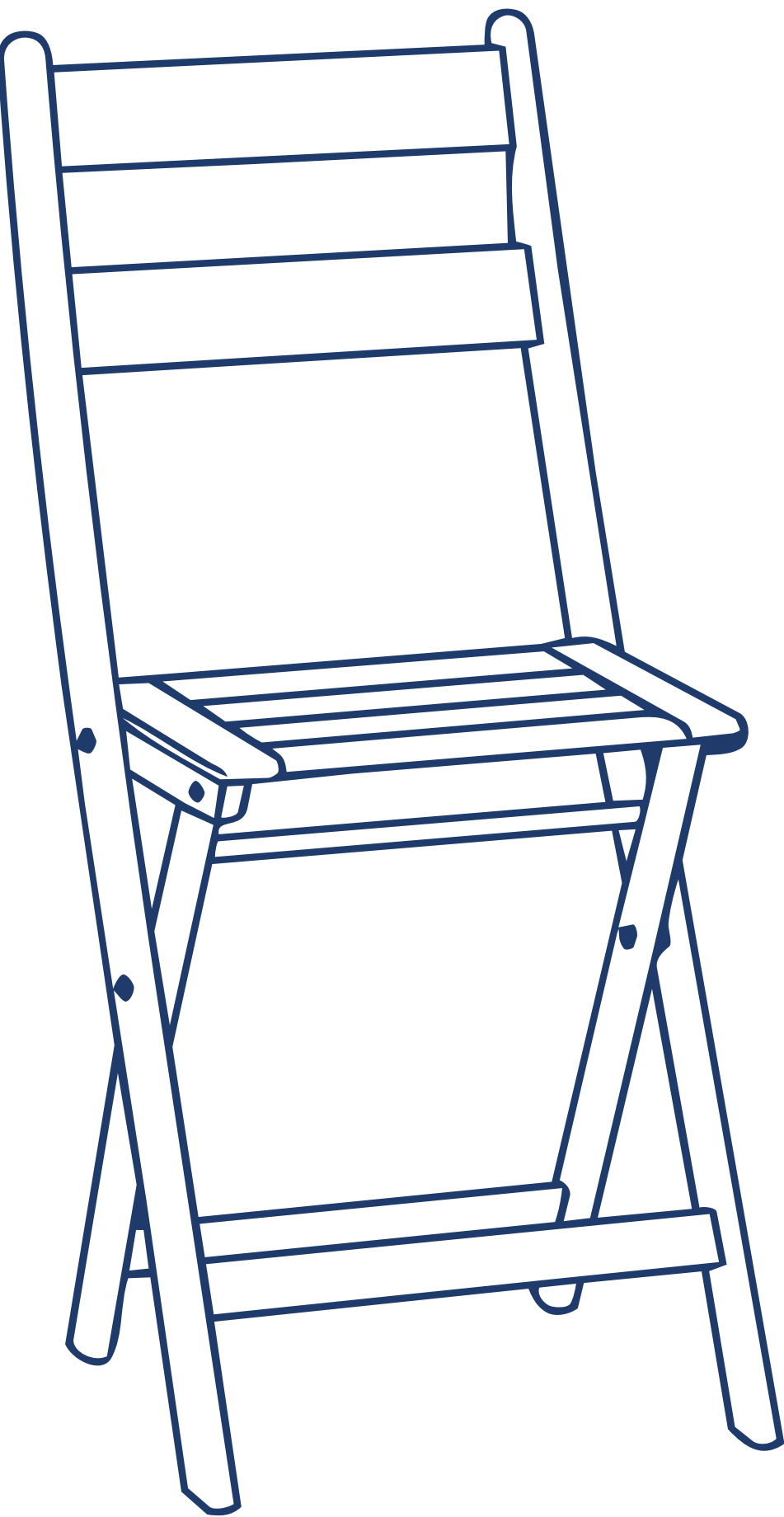
20 . Clara Porset (Cuba, 1895–México, 1981)
para Industrias Ruiz Galindo S.A. ([IRGSA]
México, ca. 1940)
Country Club, ca. 1961
Chair. Mahogany, leather, bronze
and metal studs
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Country Club Churubusco, 2022

Designing for Education and Leisure

Designing for education and leisure means seeing the chair not only as an everyday object, but as a tool capable of organizing bodies, behaviors and collective experiences. During the twentieth century, the growth of schools, theaters, cinemas and athletic spaces transformed furniture needs: it was necessary to produce functional pieces that could resist heavy use.

Modern schools required furniture that would be appropriate for modern pedagogical approaches and learning methods, while spaces for entertainment demanded flexible, lightweight solutions, driving designs capable of bringing together the masses and creating shared experiences. The chair was no longer a domestic piece as it became a part of social infrastructure.

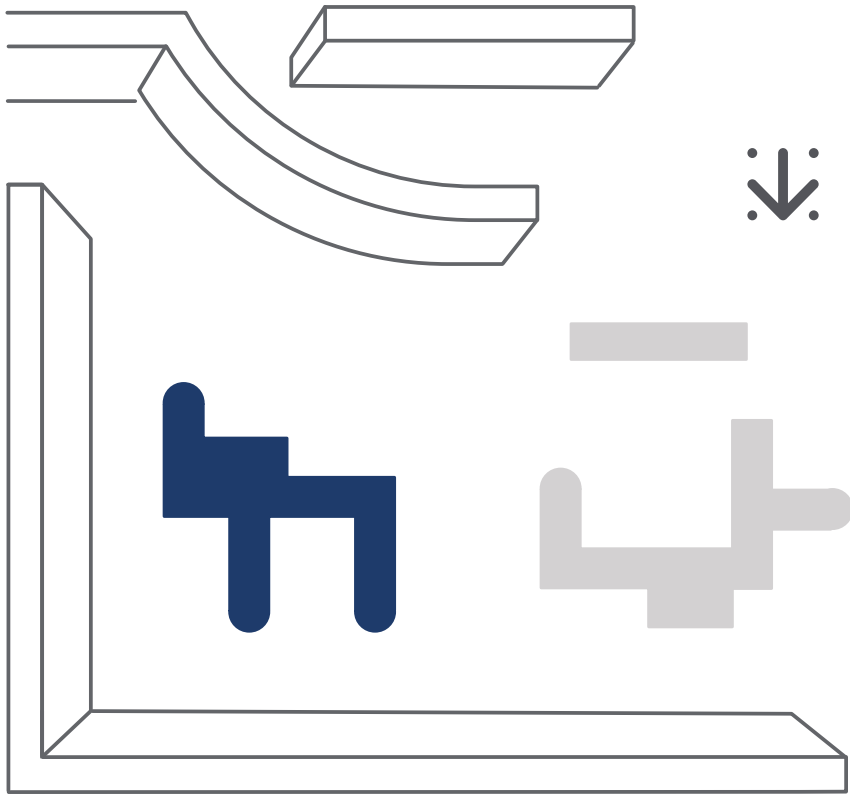
The pieces shown here illustrate different stages of this process, from the chairs and chair-desks designed by Ernesto Gómez Gallardo for classrooms and rural homes to the foldable *Malinche* chair for public space and leisure environments, as well as the judge’s benches created for the 1968 Olympic Games.



Designing for Education and Leisure

The History of Sitting

● Lobby Arkheia



21 . **Ernesto Gómez Gallardo (México, 1917–2012) para CAPFCE ([Comité de Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas] México, 1944)**
Pair of stackable Rural Home/Classroom chairs, ca. 1958
Black steel and wood
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

22 . **Compañía Manufacturera de Muebles La Malinche S.A. (México, 1895–1973)**
Malinche No. 20 (foldable), ca. 1950
Chair. Elm wood and varnished metal
Monterrey, Nuevo León
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Ana Elena Mallet, 2024

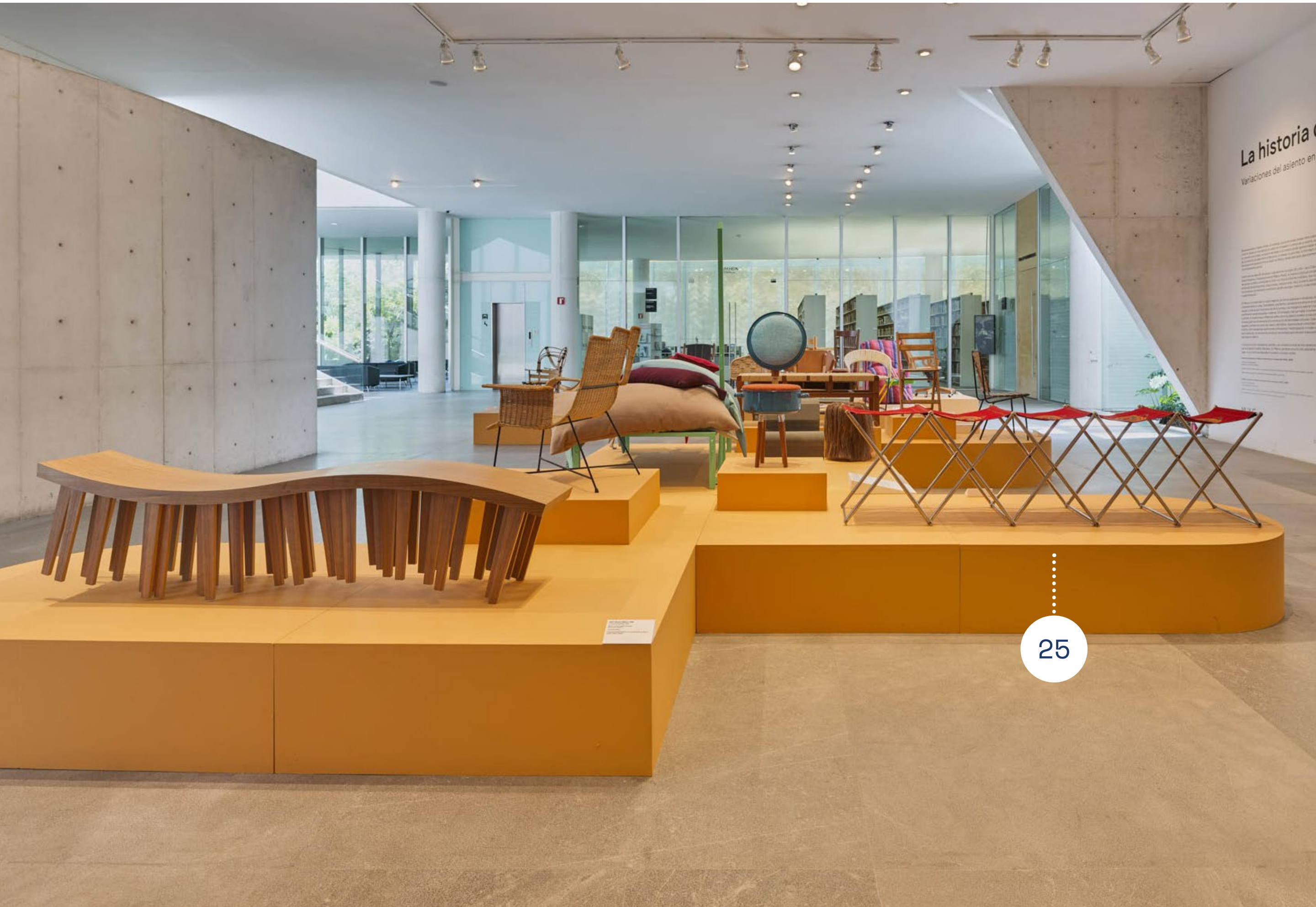
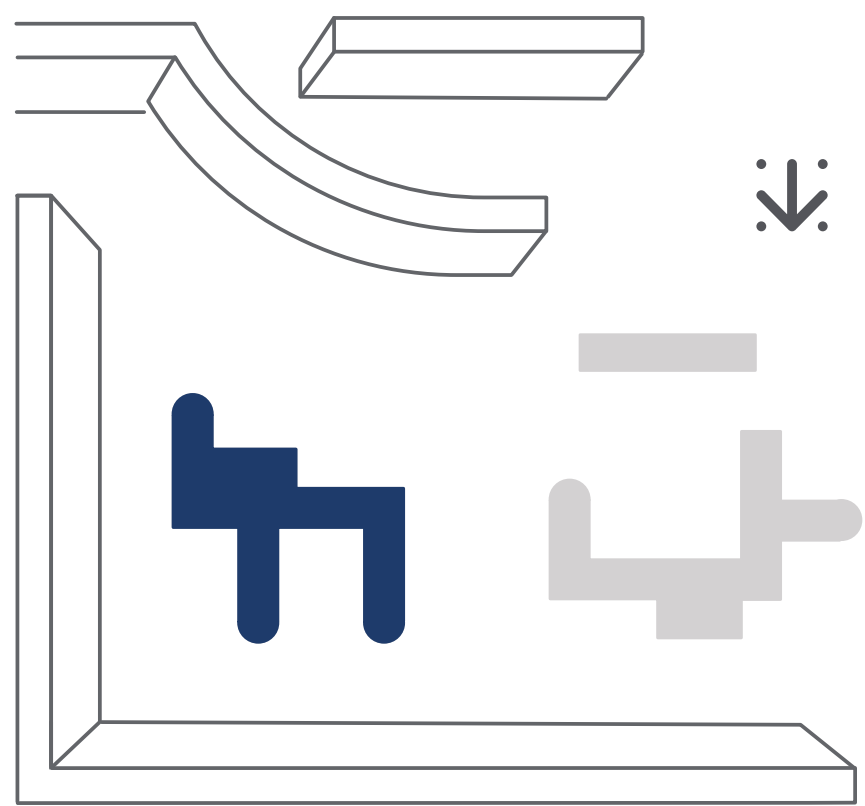
23 . **Ernesto Gómez Gallardo (México, 1917–2012) para CAPFCE ([Comité de Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas] México, 1944)**
Chair-desk, 1962
Planed and waxed wood
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

24 . **Rodrigo Escobedo (México, 1982) para La Metropolitana (México, 2008)**
S, 2017
Bench. Tzalam wood and Danish cord
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Designing for Education and Leisure

The History of Sitting

● Lobby Arkheia



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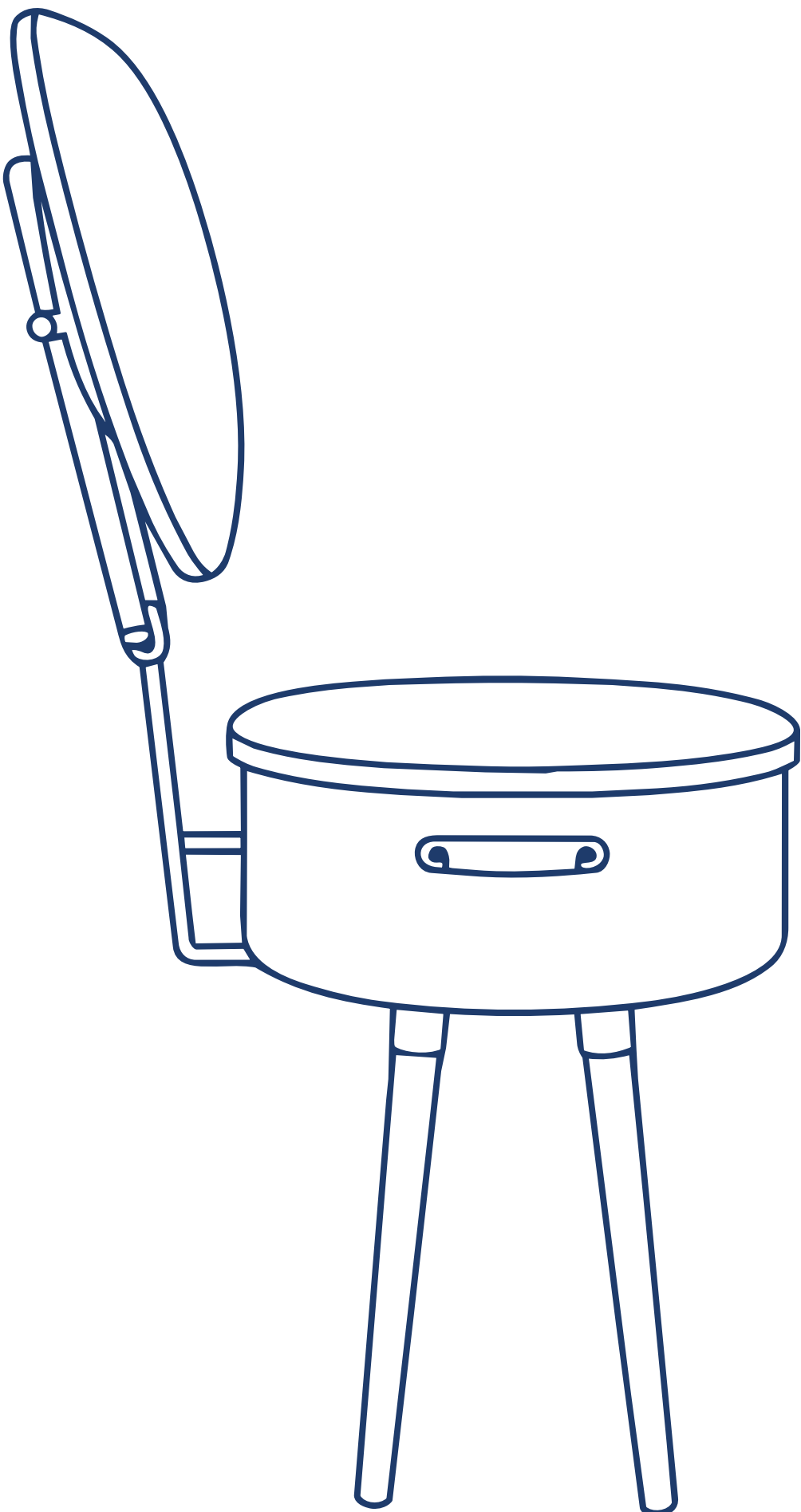
25 . **Autoría sin identificar**
Judge’s Bench for the XIX Olympiad, 1968
Aluminum and printed fabric
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Contemporary Variations and Digressions

Today, designers offer reinterpretations of these types in which they turn to Mexican identity, traditions and cultural landscapes to create new languages. Rather than recreate forms literally, these pieces translate memories, gestures and references from pop culture, the trades and everyday urban life into objects that are in dialogue with the present.

Here, seating becomes a territory for exploration, where new materialities, scales and meanings all converge. Fibers, metals, plastics and both artisanal and industrial processes allow us to question our ways of inhabiting space and building meaning through objects. The goal is no longer solely to resolve a functional need, but to tell stories and produce new associations.

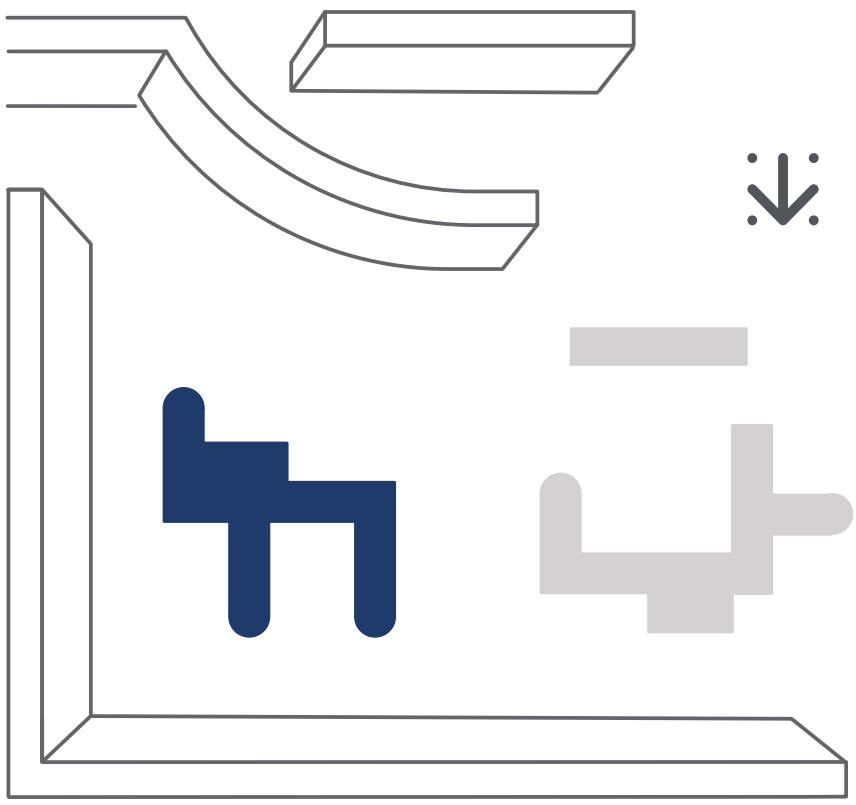
In these approaches, sitting is no longer a routine action but an experience that articulates memory, experimentation and a new vision of Mexico.



Contemporary Variations and Digressions

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia

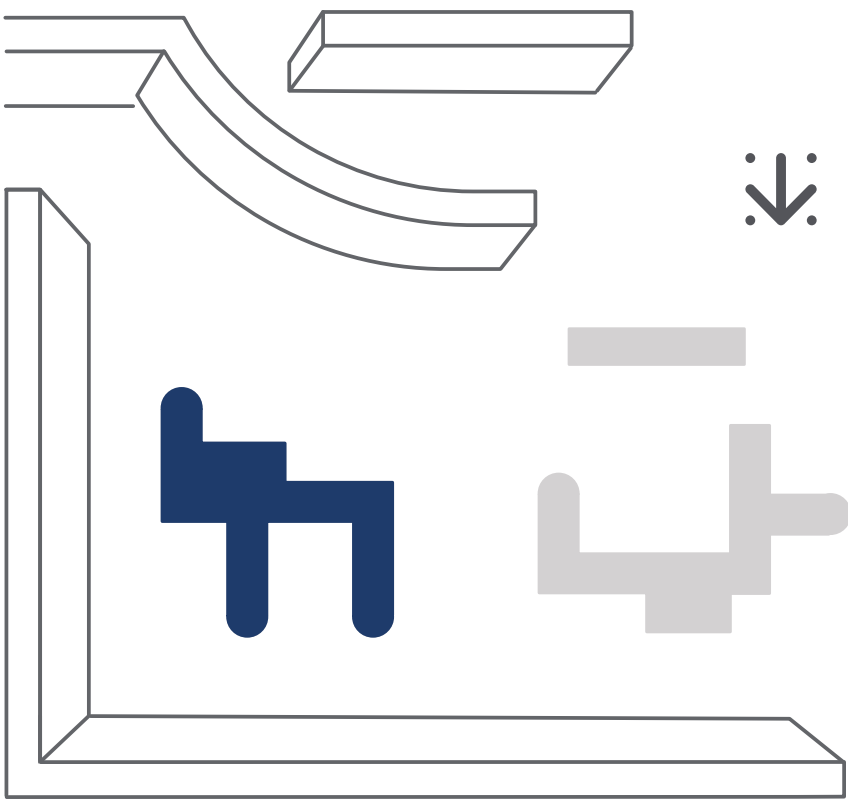


26 . **Héctor Esrawe (México, 1968)**
Centipede, 2009
Bench. Birch plywood
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo
en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Contemporary Variations and Digressions

The History of Sitting

- Lobby Arkheia



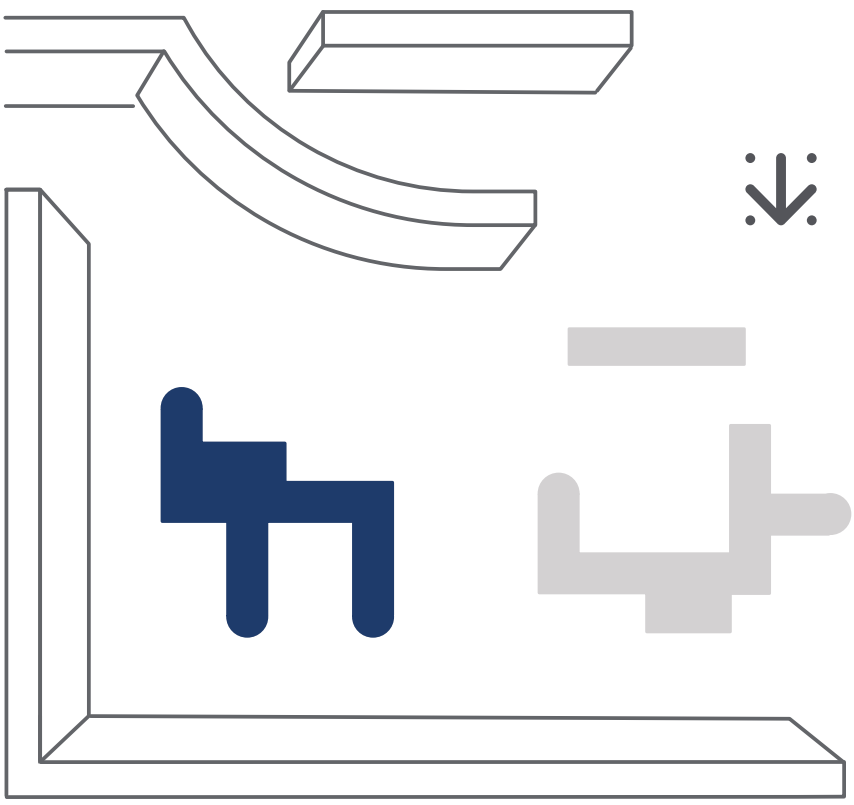
27 . **Liliana Ovalle (México, 1977)**
Montage No. 1 (Ties) [Mugroso, a chaise lounge], 2006
Armchair. Screen-printed fabric, walnut wood and lacquered steel
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Liliana Ovalle Piedra, 2022

28 . **Alejandra Antón Honorato (México, 1983)**
Sitting Like in Mexico, 2017
Chair. Wicker and wire rod
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

Contemporary Variations and Digressions

The History of Sitting

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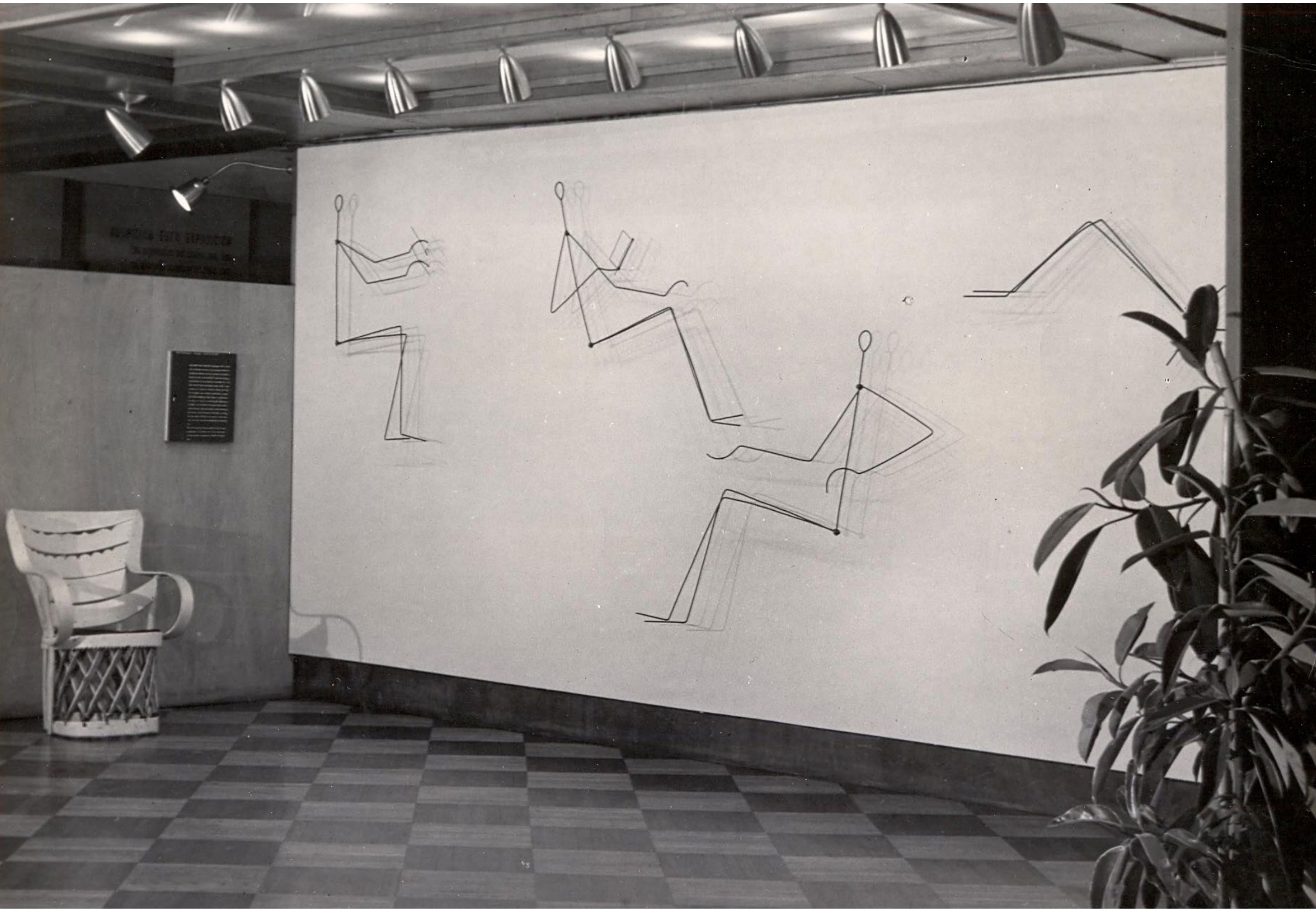
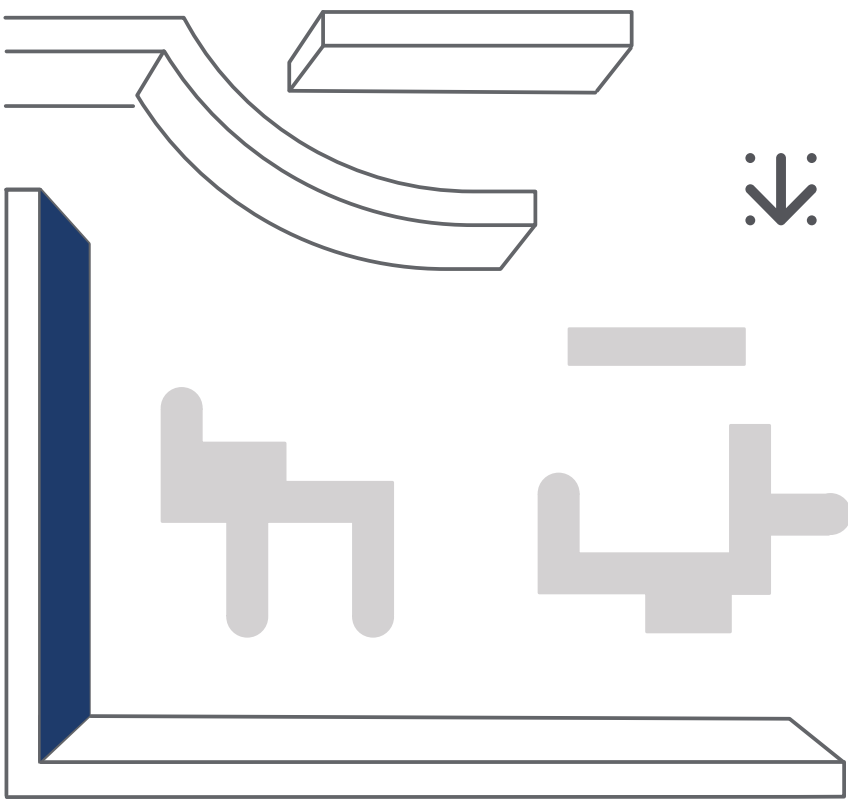
30 . **Andrés Lhima (México, 1984) en colaboración con Rodolfo Morales (Venezuela, 1981)**
Arrocera, 2019
Chair. Tzalam wood, metal, pewter, soldering and bolts
Mexico City
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)
Donation by Andrés Lhima, 2024

31 . **Mauricio Lara (México, 1968)**
Chac-Seat, 2005
Stool. Polyurethane foam
Jalisco
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

32 . **Aldo Álvarez Tostado (México, 1987)**
Caballito stool, 2016
Stool. Turned apamate wood, mane of braided hair and cowhide
Carpintería Ramírez, San Juan de Abajo, Nayarit/Taller de Crin Rodríguez, Cajititlán, Jalisco
Colección Diseño Moderno y Contemporáneo en México MUAC (DGAV, UNAM)

The History of Sitting

● Lobby Arkheia



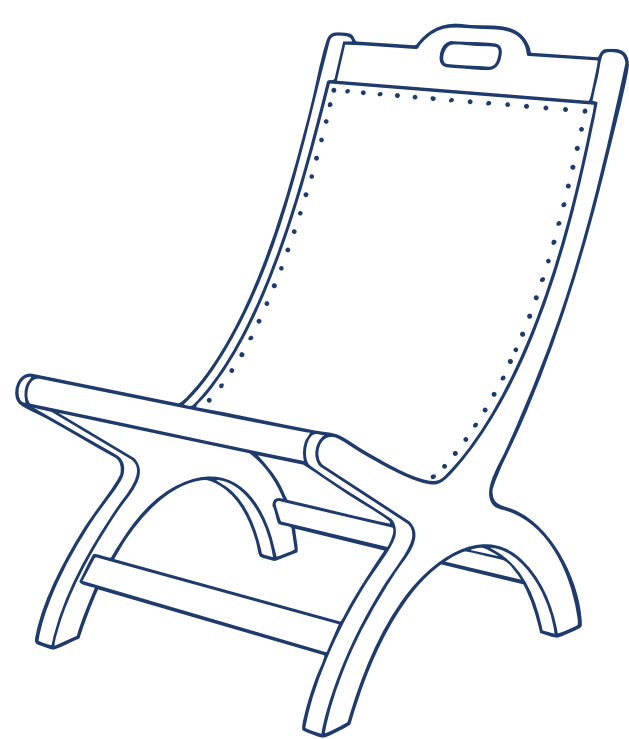
In 1952, the Cuban-Mexican designer Clara Porset organized Art in Daily Life: Objects of Good Design Made in Mexico, the first design exhibition in the country and perhaps in all of Latin America. Held at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, this exhibition maintained that design should form part of daily life, through well-conceived, affordable and functional objects capable of improving domestic space.

Porset included a wall of wire silhouettes that represented different ways of sitting and resting. These were not mere anatomical diagrams, as each silhouette explored the relationship between the body and the postures imposed by a particular type of seat, along with an associated way of inhabiting space. In a condensed form, this captured one of Porset’s central convictions: design should be conceptualized through the user experience rather than merely through the form of the object.

The wall seen here reconstructs this installation as an homage to one of the foundational exhibitions of Mexican design.

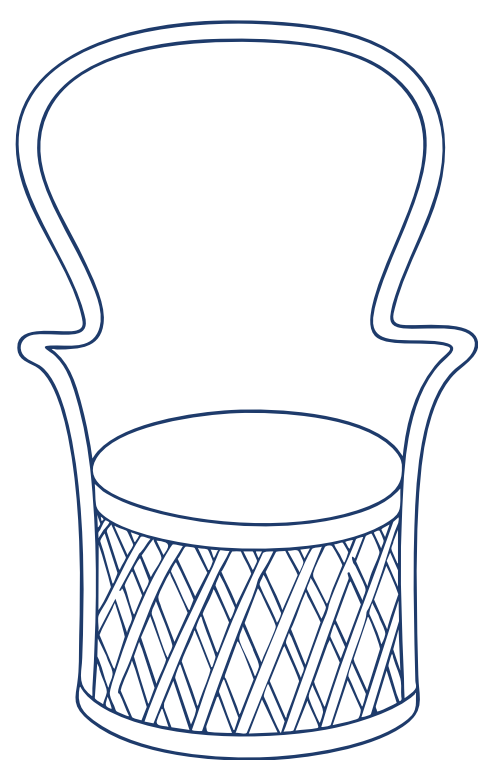


Glossary



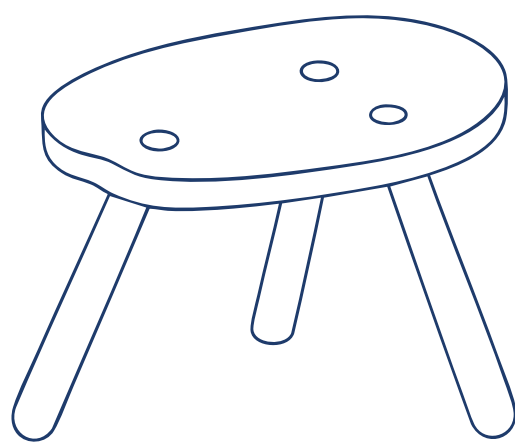
Butaque

Originally from the Caribbean basin, the butaque reached Mexico through colonial trade routes, with a production center in Campeche. Its design combines Indigenous references—such as Taino duhos—with European carpentry techniques. Low, inclined and enveloping, it was conceived for rest. Its simplicity and comfort make it one of the most recognizable and enduring pieces of Mexican furniture.



Equipal

The equipal is one of the oldest types of seating in Mexico and is one of the few of Indigenous origins that continue to be used today. Historically associated with ceremonies and spaces of authority in regions such as Jalisco and Nayarit, it is distinguished by its lightweight structure of woven canes and its leather-upholstered circular seat. The equipal is not just a chair, as it represents the continuity of tradition, craftsmanship and forms of habitation that are deeply rooted in Mexican culture.



Tripod Bench

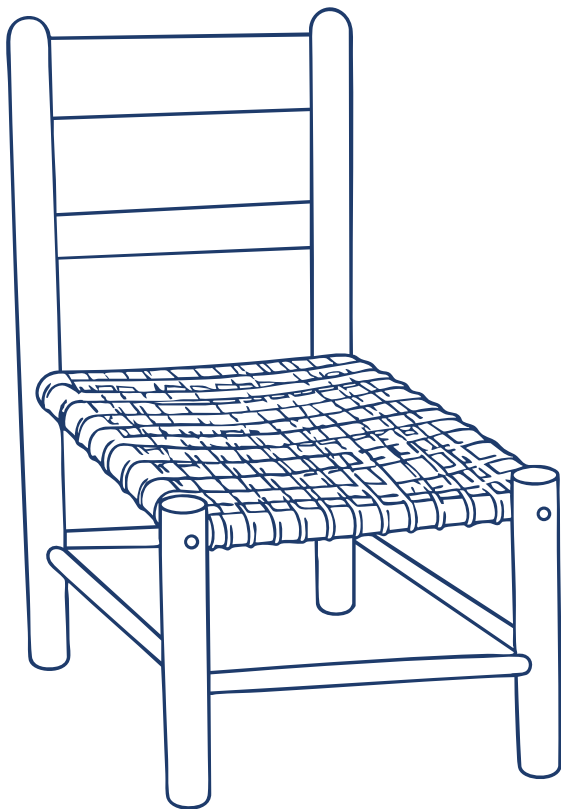
The tripod bench is one of the most essential and persistent forms of Mexican furniture. Its three legs allow it to remain stable even on irregular surfaces, and so it is commonly found in kitchens, markets and rural environments. Beyond its practical function, its form also has a symbolic dimension: in Mesoamerica, the tripod evoked the relationship between the heavens, the earth and the underworld, making it an everyday object that represented the balance between the material and the spiritual.



Petate

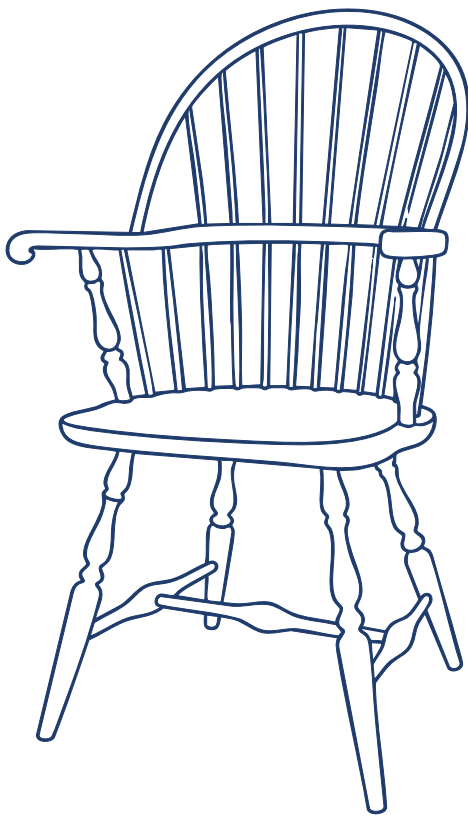
The petate is one of the oldest and most versatile pieces of Mexican material culture. Woven from vegetable fibers such as palm or tule, its lightweight structure allows it to be rolled up and easily transported. Its design is based on its relationship between technique, material and function. You can eat, sleep, rest, give birth or die on a petate. Rather than a mere domestic object, it is an expression of artisanal knowledge and cultural permanence upon which life is lived.

Glossary



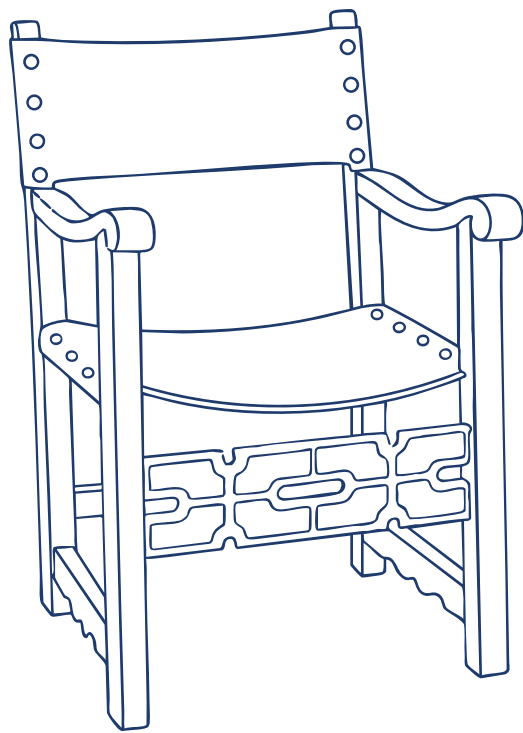
Silla de palo

Born in rural contexts, the silla de palo captures a logic of efficiency and simplicity. Built from turned parts that are assembled through mortise-and-tenon joints—a traditional carpentry technique—it is lightweight, resistant and easy to build. Over time, this type influenced emblematic models of Western design such as the Windsor chair. In Mexico, it took on its own identity thanks to the use of regional woods and fabrics, making it an object in which craftsmanship intertwines with collective memory and territory.



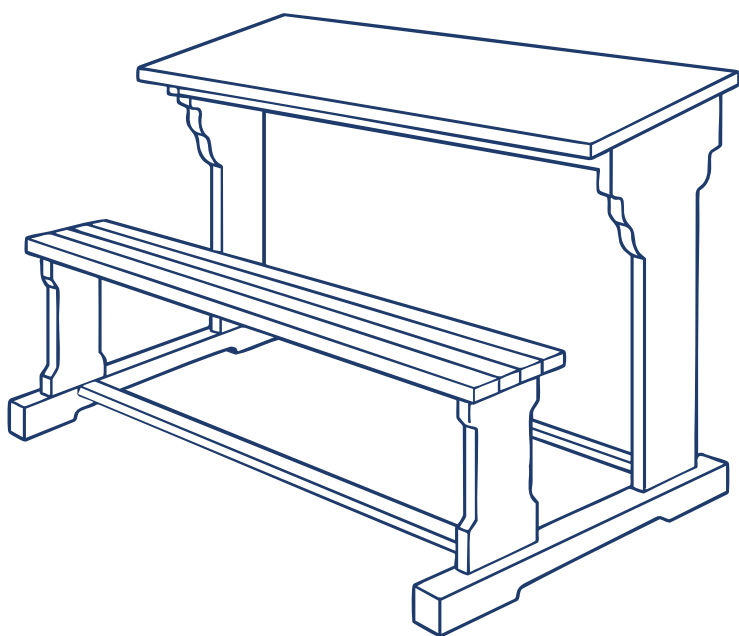
Windsor Chair

The Windsor chair emerged in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England. Its structure combines a solid seat with turned legs and thin spindles that form a curved, lightweight and resistant back. Its design allows for multiple variations and broad diffusion. In Mexico, it was reinterpreted through an artisanal, vernacular sensibility, incorporating local woods and popular finishes that adapted it to the country’s domestic spaces and manual traditions.



Sillón Frailero (Example of Historicist Styles)

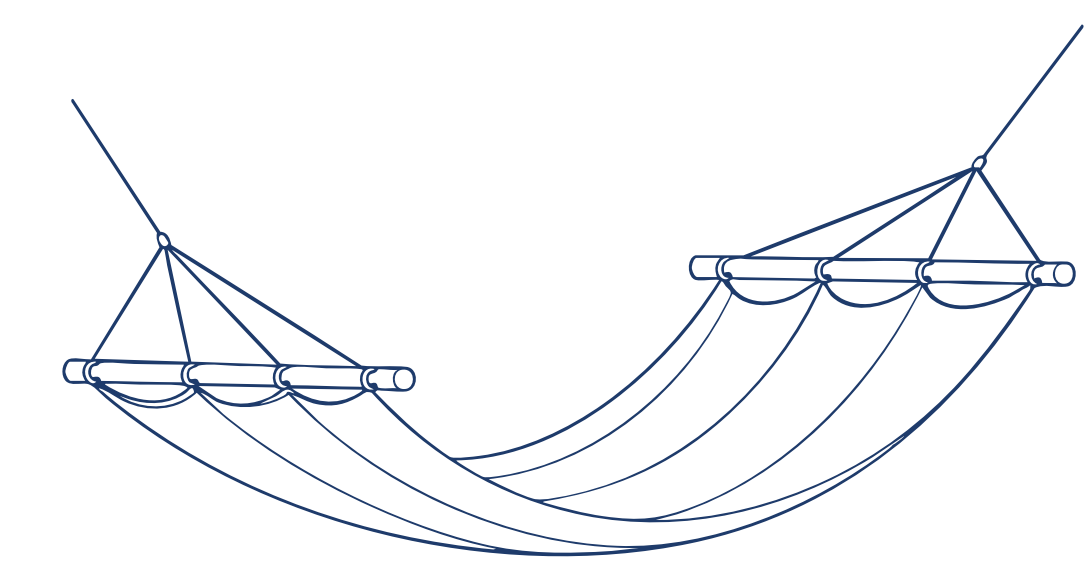
The sillón frailero emerged in sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain as an austere seat used in convents and viceregal spaces. Generally made out of walnut, with straight arms and a taught leather back with metallic studs, it elevated solidity above ornamentation. In Mexico, it was adapted and reinterpreted through local materials and craftsmanship in colonial and domestic contexts. It is one of the most recognizable examples of historicist furniture: a piece where tradition, power and memory can still be found.



School Chair-Desk

The school chair-desk combines a seat and a work surface in a single functional structure. In Mexico, it played a key role during the twentieth century, especially as a part of government projects that sought to expand access to education in urban and rural communities. It was not a merely utilitarian object, though, as it became a symbol of education and social mobility: an object shared by generations of students who learned, grew up and built a collective identity around it.

Glossary



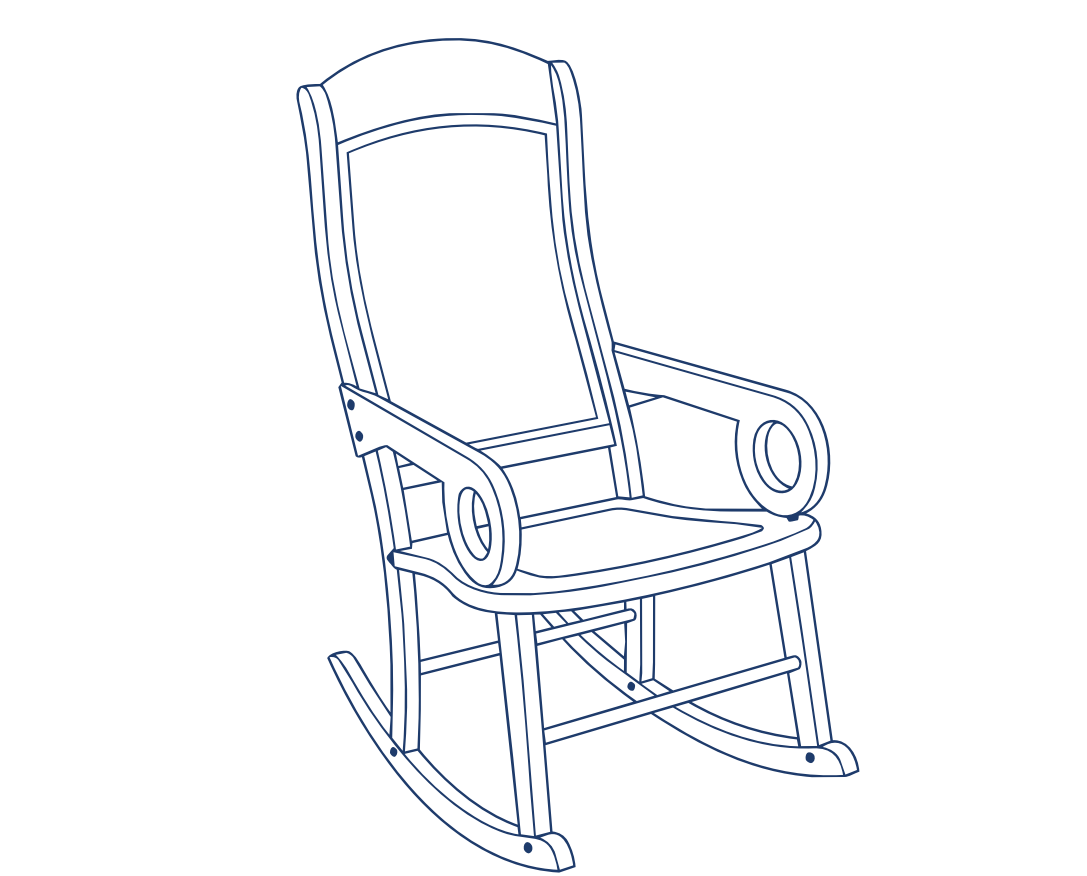
Hammock

One of the most ancient resting devices on the American continent, hammocks are an essential part of the material culture of southeastern Mexico and the Caribbean. Suspended between two points and originally woven from vegetable fibers, hammocks were developed as a fresh and practical solution for hot climates and nomadic lifestyles. Hammocks are not just for sleeping, but are also spaces for conversation, leisure and domesticity. Their persistence reflects an intimate relationship between body, territory and tradition.



Plastic Shells

The plastic chairs developed by Charles and Ray Eames transformed the relationship between the body, design and industry. Their one-piece molded plastic seat envelops the body in a light ergonomic surface that can be combined with different bases and materials. Conceptualized for affordable mass production, they redefined everyday furniture and helped to democratize design. Their easy, functional aesthetic has made them emblematic of modernity and the new forms of habitation of the twentieth century.



Tlacotalpan Rocking Chair

The Tlacotalpan rocking chair is known for its light wooden structure, its wickerwork and the continuous curves of its rockers, which produce a soft, constant movement. It forms part of everyday life on the Gulf of Mexico, especially in doorways and passageways that are open to the warm climate. Its movement accompanies naps, conversations and ways of life in which time seems to move to a different rhythm.



Exhibition Credits

The History of Sitting is organized by the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, MUAC, UNAM.

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Curatorial Assistant: Pilar Obeso
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