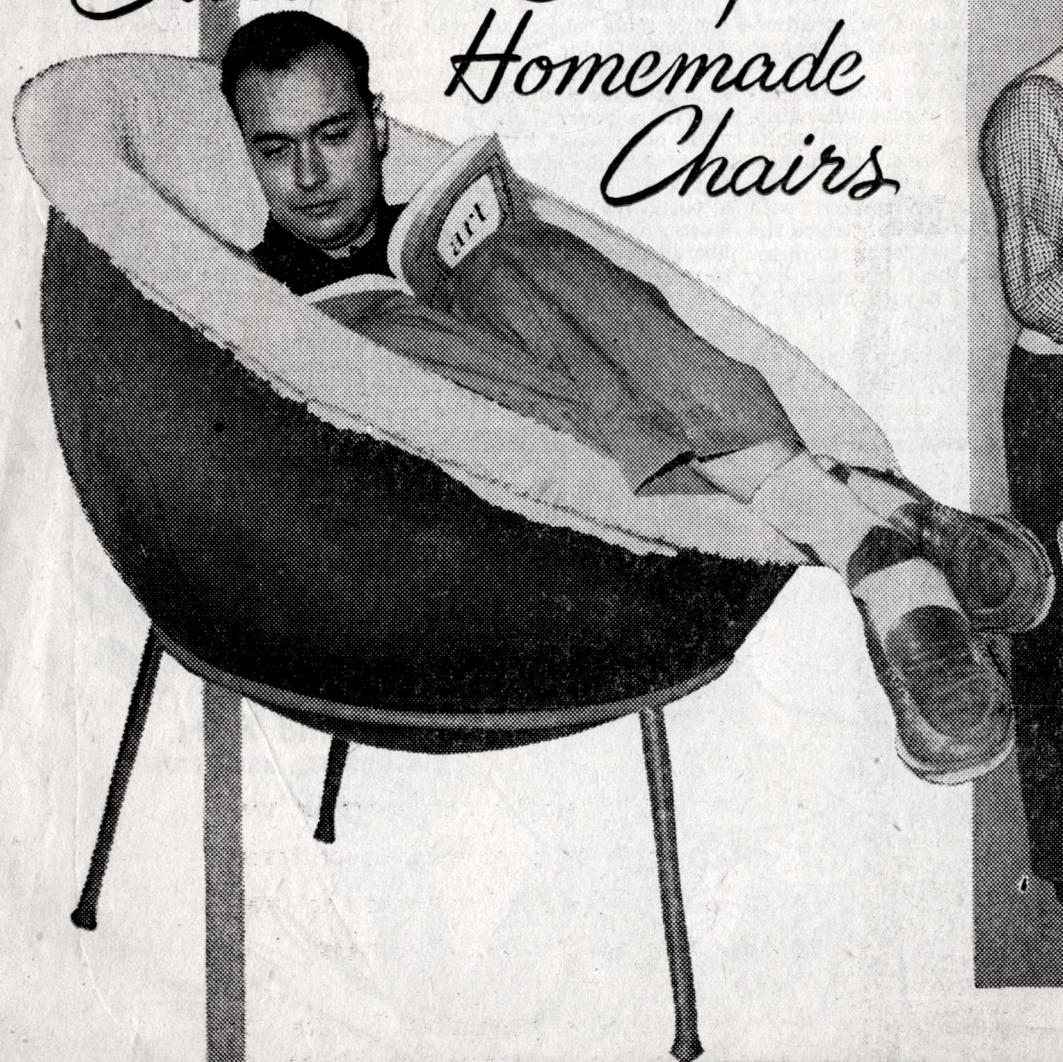


Custom Look for Homemade Chairs



ADJUSTABLE CHAIR — The bowl of Louis Battistone's lounge chair can be shifted into many different positions.



MAKE IT YOURSELF—C. U. students, seeking ideal chairs for specific needs, designed and made them. Howard Mehring and Wilbert Petty had in mind, respectively, comfortable reading and painting.



PLYWOOD AND PLASTIC—Instructor Kenneth Noland (right) discusses the occasional chair William Perna made with a plywood frame, laced with plastic clothesline. — Star Staff Photos by Gene Abbott.

CLASS CHAIR—Helen Schrider made a chair for classroom comfort. (Story on Page B-2.)

CU Students Design, Construct Own Chairs

(Picture on Page B-1.)

By Betty Miles

There's one way to find a really comfortable chair—make it yourself.

That, at any rate, is what the graduate students in the advanced creative design class at Catholic University did. Concerned with the philosophy of design and creative living, they discussed chairs — an object whose design, they felt, could be improved. They discussed the ideal chair. Then they decided to make one.

Since this is a design, not a construction class, the students were on their own. Furthermore, the use of books with detailed, how-to suggestions was discouraged. They were equipped only with their own ideas, some knowledge of their materials, and a try-try again point of view.

Tedious trial and error was the order of the day. But the finished products are both comfortable and attractive, and the students intend to make more.

The way the chair feels, rather than the way it looks, was their first concern.

"Chairs can be dictatorial instruments," instructor Kenneth Noland pointed out, which force you to sit in a certain way. The modern butterfly chair does this, he feels.

Another dictator is the high, straight-backed traditional chair.

"To sit in this you'd have to be stiff, prim, alert and formal," Mr. Noland believes.

"Some chairs are taut as a poised sling shot. Others seem to say, 'Come, sit down and relax'.

"Design a chair so it's the least forcing," he told his students, "a chair in which you can sit in many ways—a democratic chair."

All-purpose designs were out. Each was fashioned with a specific use in mind.

Battistone Bowl

Most spectacular of the lot is Louis Battistone's. Mr. Battistone's goal was a wonderfully comfortable lounge chair. His chair has been dubbed by his associates "The Battistone Bowl."

With the finished product three inches larger in diameter than he intended it to be, "You'd have to have a room as big as Union Station to fit it in," he admits.

But he is satisfied with the result, which he feels makes a wonderful TV chair. Also, pressure on the rim tilts the bowl in any direction and at various angles.

To fashion it, Mr. Battistone made a large dome of plaster over sand from which a plaster mold or shell was made. In all, 160 pounds of plaster were used.

Fiberglass material was molded into this shell. Fiberglass is built up with alternate applications of a strong plastic resin, to which the color, in this case, black, is added, and a glass mat.

This fiberglass shell, when removed, was lined with foam rubber, which was covered with a 6-by-9-foot white cotton rug, found on sale. A foam rubber, rug-covered cushion fits into the bottom of the chair.

Since fiberglass is weather-proof, the chair could be adapted to porch use, too.

William Perna's attractive occasional chair of plywood, painted black and laced with white plastic clothesline, is upholstered with a removable piece of foam rubber covered with charcoal-gray denim. Since the cord had a tendency to draw the sides of the frame together, he reinforced it with horizontal pieces of wood.

Back to the Drawing Board

Although Mr. Perna had had practically no experience using

the tools in his family's workshop, he went to work with power jig saw and other equipment, first producing a chair of fir. When tested, the seat promptly broke in two. Plywood proved a happier solution. After the chair has been used for a while and the plastic lacing stretched to its maximum, he will pull in the slack and the chair will be finished.

Howard Mehring wanted "a comfortable chair to read in without falling asleep." His fiberglass chair, white on top, light chocolate brown beneath, was his answer.

He determined its dimensions by measuring other chairs he found comfortable, and making a pattern to decide where the most support was needed. The fiberglass materials were applied to the outside of a plaster mold.

Inspired by the three hours at a stretch she spent in hard classroom chairs, Helen Schrider wanted one in which she could sit straight—comfortably—for long periods of time. She de-

signed her chair with particular attention to the support it gave to the small of the back.

Miss Schrider's chair, which has a fiberglass base, is covered with green burlap. An initial mold of wire mesh, in which she sat to get the right shape in the seat and back, served as a base for a plaster mold. This in turn was shellacked and waxed, separator applied (to simplify removal of the fiberglass shell later), then the fiberglass materials added.

Wilbert Petty designed a stool that would be just the right height for sitting at his easel.

Mr. Petty, who never sewed before, got advice from a tailor before tackling a sewing machine. He found it surprisingly easy. Yellow and black plastic covers foam rubber on a plywood seat. The seat is fastened to a triangular metal plate to which the rubber-tipped, wrought-iron legs are attached.

Also at work on designs are two other class members, H. V. Bellanca and Gerald Patterson.