

## 3045

### Chair

**James Romano:** The earliest piece of Egyptian furniture was a simple wooden stool upon which an Egyptian family would sit in the privacy of their own home. Around 3000 B.C., the Egyptians began to look for a more grand way of sitting, and they developed the chair. The chair was not high like a modern chair but quite low, and most Egyptian chairs had legs that were carved in the form of lions' legs. Note, if you will, the paws on each one of the legs of this chair.

By the 18th Dynasty, Egyptian furniture designers had developed two very interesting ways to make this sitting experience more comfortable. Notice that the back of the chair is not perpendicular to the seat but is actually set at a slight angle. Also, the seat is curved, much like a modern office chair.

**Lisa Bruno:** When the chair came into the collection of the Brooklyn Museum in 1937, it had no seat. In 1958, a technician in the Egyptian Department actually reweave the seat using jute, which is a natural fiber. It's not something that our Conservation Department would necessarily do today. We would probably choose to preserve the remnants of the original palm fibers.

The other interesting thing about the chair is that it has plywood veneer, sort of surrounding the outline of the chair back, and a lot of people think of plywood as being a modern invention, but actually the Egyptians were the first people to make plywood.

**Barry Harwood:** Many, many chairs that were carved in Europe and then in America in the early nineteenth century have the so-called hairy-paw feet that are clearly inspired by classical examples.

And then later in the nineteenth century, there was a reform movement when designers were interested in simplifying designs both in terms of materials and construction. When you look at the profile of the chair, a triangle is formed between the upright back and then the slanting part against which the sitter would place his back. This triangular form is extremely strong, and, in fact, aided in the strength of the chair and also afforded the sitter great comfort. It's also what we refer to as rational construction, and these elements were very, very important for the reformists of the late nineteenth century.

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