

object lesson THE STORY BEHIND AN ICONIC DESIGN

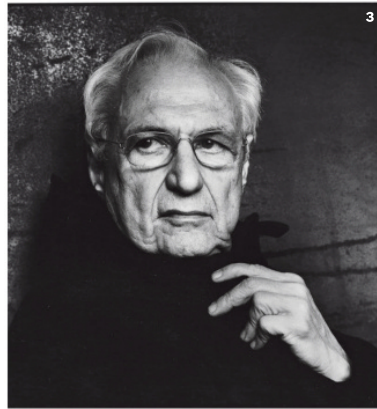


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1. A WIGGLE SIDE CHAIR AND STOOL IN A GLUCK+ BEDROOM. 2. JAFAR DAJANI PUT A LIMITED-EDITION WHITE-EDGED WIGGLE IN A DUBAI VILLA. 3. FRANK GEHRY. 4. THE CARDBOARD SEAT AT DESIGNER JULIE HILLMAN'S EAST HAMPTON HOME. 5. A NEW WIGGLE SIDE CHAIR BY VITRA.



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When a group of artists and scientists from NASA called a meeting at artist Robert Irwin's studio in 1969, they asked architect Frank Gehry to give the place a quick makeover. Given the shoestring budget, Gehry came up with something simple yet subtly futuristic: seating made from stacks of cardboard, a humble material he kept around for making models.

"I discovered that by alternating the direction of layers of corrugations, the finished board had enough strength to support a small car, and a uniform, velvety texture on all four sides," he told *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1972. "I found I could cut these edgeboard sections into geometrical forms, or bend them into sculptural, ribbon-candy folds."

It was also durable, needed no finishing, and had a noise-canceling quality that reportedly cut sound volume in half.

Soon, with Irwin's help, Gehry made a file cabinet and reception desk for his office, which led to the Easy Edges series of shelves, side tables, and, its enduring claim to fame, the Wiggle Side Chair, a narrow slab bent into an S-shaped seat.

While the press and public went wild for what *The New York Times Magazine* deemed "paper furniture for penny pinchers," Gehry worried its popularity would eclipse his architecture, so he stopped production of Easy Edges in 1973 and quit cardboard furniture altogether by 1982, eventually ceding rights to Vitra, where the Wiggle (from \$1,175) is made today.

The perch continues to intrigue: Designer Julie Hillman placed one in her East Hampton retreat, while *Cabana* founder Martina Mondadori Sartogo set a duo in her London library. "They add a touch of modern," she says. "Plus, they're quite comfortable!" vitra.com —HANNAH MARTIN



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1. SCOTT FRANCES; 2. CAMERON CLEGG; 3. IRVING PENNIFRANK GEHRY; NEW YORK, 2006 | © CONDE NAST; 4. MANOLO YLLERA; 5. COURTESY OF VITRA