Crafting Furniture in the Global South (online, 9 May 26)

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Crafting Furniture in the Global South: Contemporary Practices, Histories and Futures

Furniture occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of craft, design, architecture, and everyday life. In regions across South and Southeast Asia and the wider Global South, furniture-making has long mediated relationships between local material cultures, artisanal knowledge systems, colonial and postcolonial histories, and global markets. Yet contemporary furniture design from these contexts remains underrepresented within dominant design history narratives, museum collections, and critical discourse.
This symposium, co-convened by Dr Rukmini Chaturvedi and the Design History Society critically examines contemporary furniture design through the lens of craft, with particular attention to practices, objects, and discourses emerging from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the broader Global South. It seeks to foreground furniture as a site where questions of authorship, labour, material knowledge, identity, modernity, and global circulation are negotiated and contested.

Programme

9.00-9.05: Introduction

Panel 1: Colonial Objects, Material Histories & Extraction

9.00-9.15: Arpna Gupta - Reclaiming Women in Post-Independence Indian Design and Craft

9.15-9.30: Francesca Vita - Portuguese Modern Design and the Contemporary Materialities of the Empire

9.30-9.45: Lina El-Shamy - The Glided Salons of Contemporary Egyptian Homes

9.45-10.00: Metini Krivanish - From Lanna Woodcarving to Danish Modern: Tracing the Legacy of Colonial Teak Dispositif

10.00-10.15: Q&A

10.15-10.30: Tejaswini Bedekar and Priya Joseph - Portuguese Colonial Legacies: Reading material histories through furniture on the Konkan Coast of India

10.30-10.45: Jay Thakkar - Writing Design Histories through Vernacular Furniture: Methods, Mappings and Museological Futures

10.45-11.00: Petra Seitz, Nia Thandapani, Gregor Wittrick - A chair is a chair is a chair is a chair: Use-based furniture history as an anti-colonial techniques

11.00-11.15: Q&A

11.15-11.30: Break

Panel 2: Global Circulations & Material Economies

11.30-11.45: Seet Yun Teng - Rattan Relations: Craft, Materiality, and Furniture Design in South-east Asia

11.45-12.00: Geoff Isaac - Renewable by Origin, Unsustainable by Design: Bio-based Plastics and Furniture from Brazil

12.00-12.15: Tanya Talwar - Punjab Woodwork

12.15-12.30: Aashka Kamdar and Shevang Berani - Material Culture and Colonial Design: A Study of Furniture at Pattani Archives

12.30-12.45: Q&A

12.45-13.45: Lunch break

Panel 3: Craft, Labour & Distributed Making

13.45-14.00: Ufaq Inaam - Remaking Authorship in the Bazaar: Craft Labour, Copying, and Furniture Design in Urban Pakistan

14.00-14.15: Muhammad Rahman and Bishwajit Goswami - Craft, Collaboration, and Post-Independence Furniture Cultures in Bangladesh

14.15-14.30: Beatrice Bianco and Maria Rita Ferrara - Crafting Furniture Histories: Recalibrating Design History in a Saudi Craft Ecosystem

14.30-14.45: David Stairs - Ugandan Vernacular

14.45-15.00: Chandana Reddy - Design histories and present-day practices of furniture makers of Tamil Nadu, India

15.00-15.15: Q&A

15.15-15.30: Break

Panel 4: Institutions, Studios & Design Formation

15.30-15:45: César Peña - From Workshop to Design Studio: Anatole Kasskoff and the Emergence of Modern Furniture Design in Bogotá

15:45-16:00: Ishan Khosla - Street Furniture

16.00-16.15:Jade Nijman, Tanay Kandpal and Niels Nijman Diffre - Kaarkhaney: Collaborative furniture design and craft knowledge in Mumbai

16.15-16.30: Rachel Lee and Sarita Sundar - “Supply Uncertain ” : Craft Production and the Distributed Making of the Planter’s Chair

16.30-16.45: Q&A

16.45-17.00: Closing Remarks

Register via Eventbrite: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/crafting-furniture-in-the-global-south-tickets-1988159740303

This event is free to attend for members and £5.00 for non-members.

The full book of abstracts can be found here: https://cdn.designhistorysociety.org/uploads/images/Copy-of-Crafting-Furniture-in-the-Global-South-book-of-abstracts_compressed.pdf

Reference:

CONF: Crafting Furniture in the Global South (online, 9 May 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 5, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52378>.