

On 15 December 2009 the Danish Architectural Press releases:

## FURNITURE WITH MEANING. DANISH FURNITURE 1840-1920

A two-volume, 808-pages work on outstanding furniture from a forgotten age

Author: Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

The book *Furniture with Meaning* addresses the furniture of the age of historicism, national romanticism and art nouveau. The “forgotten” furniture, one might say, as for generations many researchers and museums have thought it best to ignore this period of so-called stylistic confusion. Furniture from the period of 1840 through 1920 – an entire era – was put into cold storage in the museums. Only in recent years have design researchers and historians been able to break through the barrage of good taste and delve into the melting pot of this neglected era.

*Furniture with meaning* is written by one of Denmark’s most highly acknowledged art historians specialising in the history of art & craft and industrial art, D.Phil. Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen, former chief librarian at the library of the Danish Museum of Art & Design.

The fruit of Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen’s research efforts is now published in two lavishly illustrated volumes with many previously unpublished interiors and furniture pieces. Many original drawings are also published here for the first time.

In an international context, Danish furniture-making during this era was characterised by a high degree of artistic quality and craftsmanship. The furniture of the time laid the groundwork for the international recognition that Danish furniture was later to gain. The book describes the development of cabinetmaking and its importance for Danish furniture design as well as the international and modern perspective that characterised the period leading up to the 1920s with their functionalism and more puritanical outlook.

The title of the book clearly states that every carving and decoration, every profile and ornamentation springs from careful deliberation and creative ambition – the form is based

on meaning and a far cry from stylistic confusion.

The era featured intense collaboration among formidable cabinetmakers and talented furniture designers, many of whom were also building architects: Nebelong, Dahlerup, Kampmann, P.V. Jensen-Klint, Nyrop, and Rosen. But designers and craftspeople such as Frølich, Bindsbøll, Slott-Møller and Rohde also created beautiful and unique pieces of furniture for the burgeoning middleclass. The art of furniture-making was thriving.

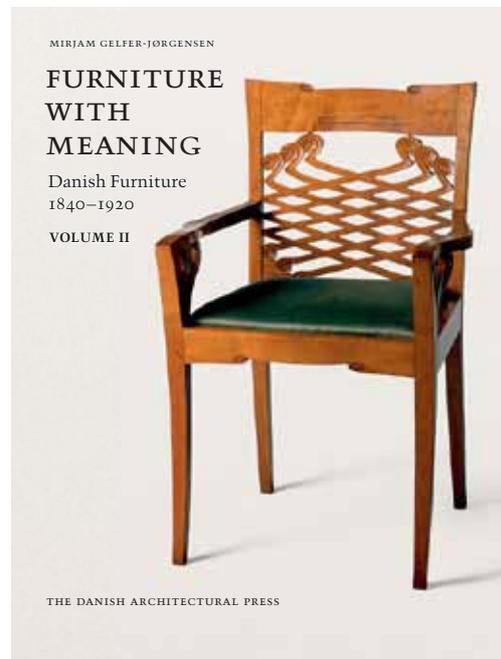
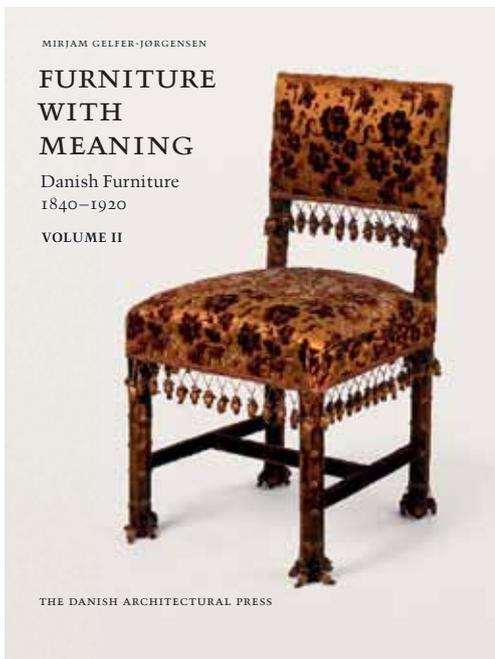
Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen’s two-volume work tells the story of a previously neglected section of our common cultural history, which had a powerful impact on the entire 20th century. Therefore, the book also draws lines to current home design and furniture.

The book is written and structured as a reference book and contains more than 700 illustrations, including new photographs, a wealth of beautiful drawings and informative captions.

To ensure high-quality reproduction of the often very detailed drawings, the book is printed in a large format, so that every line is clear, and notes remain legible.

*Møbler med mening* is published in extension of Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen’s major treatise on the preceding period: *The Dream of a Golden Age – Danish Neo-Classical Furniture 1790-1850*.

Previously, Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen has authored *Dansk Kunsthåndværk 1730-1850 (Danish Craft and Design 1730-1850)* and *Dansk Kunsthåndværk 1850 til vor tid (Danish Craft and Design 1850 Until the Present Day)*, *Herculenum paa Sjælland (Herculenum on Zealand)*, *Toulouse Lautrec Posters* and *Danish Jewish Art – Jews in Danish Art*.



## **FURNITURE WITH MEANING** **Danish Furniture 1840-1920**

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Danish and English text

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### **Illustrations**

1. Chair in gilded wood with springs in the seat, upholstered in silk damask. Made by C.B. Hansen and J.G. Lund's furniture firms, circa 1865.

2. Harald Slott-Møller, Cradle in pear wood with oil-paint decorations, 1893-94. The Danish Museum of Art & Design

3. Thorvald Bindsbøll, Mahogany chair with inlaid brass ornaments. Seat and back upholstered in fabric with appliqué and silk embroidery. Exhibited at the World Fair in Paris in 1900.

4. Anton Rosen, Grand piano in wood with white paint and gilding made by Hornung & Møller for the Danish section of the World Fair in San Francisco in 1915. Old photo. The Danish Music Museum.

### **About the author's other publications**

Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen took her doctorate degree with the book *Medieval Islamic Symbolism and the Paintings in the Cefalù Cathedral* (Brill 1986), where the theoretical perspective is iconography, that is, the interpretation of motifs; this perspective has been a persistent feature in her studies of art and craft & design. She has written several books on Danish craft & design with an emphasis on Danish furniture, but her work also includes *Toulouse-Lautrec Posters* (Copenhagen, 1995) and *Jødisk kunst i Danmark – Jøder i Dansk Kunst*, (Copenhagen, 1999), English edition *Danish Jewish Art – Jews in Danish Art*, which she edited and wrote several chapters for.

In 1990 Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen founded and became the editor of the *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* (1991-2005). Over the years, Gelfer-Jørgensen had edited many other publications and written numerous articles on design and craft & design in magazines and catalogues both in Denmark and abroad.