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The Franco-Argentine artist and designer, born in 1955 in Buenos Aires, was first exposed to carpentry by his late grandfather, and created his first chair at the age of seven. Terry Ong talks to the legendary artist about starting out and the origins of his iconic works.

By [Terry Ong](#) | published Jan 19, 2012



How did you get into sculptures?

As a child, I had a grandfather whom I loved dearly. He was a Frenchman who had migrated to Argentina after WWII who had a passion for carpentry and had set up his own workshop. I would spend hours with him on the weekends there, as I loved that place. Years later, I made a trip to Paris to meet my relatives, and had some defining encounters. In the Rodin Museum I discovered Henri Laurens' work, which had such a profound impact on me that I decided to become a sculptor. Then I met Jorge Michel, who became my real sculpture mentor. He was making benches. I was fascinated by his work and technique, which he passed on to me. Still, I forbade myself from doing benches, which I considered his domain.

But you started making benches after that...

As time went by, I realized that this object was a recurring theme in my life: I collected and questioned it. The chair is a fetish object for a designer and I have always been involved with design; it also a fetish object for an architect, and I have always been involved in architecture... hence the arrival of the Thonet chair in my work.

Why the Thonet Chair?

Because from the moment I decided to introduce the notion of design in a work of art, I felt a need for an iconic object. And the Thonet chair is the first known product of industrial design. Before 1850, when the chair was created, there was no notion of design, as it's known today. I thus chose this very object and not any other that would be considered more fashionable.

If someone who has never seen your work asks you what you do, what do you say?

Thanks to the new technologies today, I'm able to use my iPhone and show a picture of a spaghetti bench that lets my interlocutor figure me out by himself. Giving him all the elements enables him to answer his own question. Fundamentally I am an artist, and as such I want to question society from both an art and design perspective.

[Pablo Reinoso Solo Exhibition](#) runs through March 3 at [Art Plural Gallery](#).