

NEWS FROM GOOD DESIGN

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART • THE MERCHANDISE MART

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NEW YORK 19, N.Y. • 11 WEST 53RD STREET • CIRCLE 5-8900

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JUNE 1951 "GOOD DESIGN" EXHIBITION TO OPEN DURING FIRST MARKET WEEK

Approximately 150 new items of home furnishings will go on view at The Merchandise Mart, 11th Floor, on June 21, as part of the "Good Design" exhibition sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and The Merchandise Mart in Chicago.

In choosing these items from among products put on the market since the opening of the January "Good Design" show, the Selection Committee's criterion was whether or not each item offered a real contribution, in looks, in efficiency or in price. A well-designed product that did not rise above the general current practice in design would not qualify under this requirement. Pieces that would dominate a room by their sensational aspects were passed over in favor of ones that showed a more controlled design.

The June Selection Committee was composed of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., of the Museum of Modern Art and Director of "Good Design," as chairman; Philip C. Johnson, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, and Eero Saarinen, well-known architect and designer.

The exhibition will open officially on Thursday, June 21, with a breakfast for buyers, manufacturers, press and other industry leaders, who will be addressed by Richard Stambaugh, designer; Harold Dayton of James Lees & Sons, Co.; Paul McCobb, designer; Wallace Ollman of The Mart, and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of "Good Design."

FURNITURE

Considerable imagination and originality is demonstrated in the furniture produced during the past six months. Many pieces show a new freedom in experimentation and considerable refinement. Thin metal rods recur and seem to have established a definite place for themselves. A variety of materials are freely combined in many of the furniture pieces shown.

A set of transparent black wire mesh and metal rod furniture designed by Sol Bloom introduces a new use of materials. The lounge chair of this group is well suited to outdoor use; a series of serving trays, long and narrow and standing on low legs, are made in numerous sizes; a "catchall" for fruit, magazines, etc. and a set of stacking stools, all come from Designed for Moderns, which also supplies a wood-topped table with magazine rack underneath of black metal rod construction similar to that of the mesh furniture.

Tables in various sizes with glass tops are supported by three crossed wooden legs. Clean and shapely, these tables, from Raymor, are particularly ingenious in their structure which depends entirely on a small, shaped piece of wood and a simple metal ring which hold the legs in place.

A large two-cushion armchair designed by Martin Freedgood is constructed as an X-shaped wood frame held in tension by arms of wide leather strips. An upholstered armchair by Edward Wormley simplifies an earlier design of his by eliminating back and seat cushions and shortening the seat, yet retains great comfort at lower cost. Armchairs by Paul McCobb have managed to endow mass-produced upholstering with a neatness and workmanlike quality usually found only in custom chairs. A black metal angle-iron chair and footstool, with cushions covered in charcoal grey linen, from Arbuck carries further this firm's new contributions to clean lines in porch and terrace furniture.

An interesting group of light weight metal furniture, from Konwiser, is constructed of black rod frames with wood or marble tops. A dining table, a coffee table and a small stool are included. The most recent version of the slat bench, in walnut and black iron rods, comes from Knoll Associates. A folding armchair in

bent plywood and black metal tubing from Shwayder Brothers was designed by Russel Wright. Tony Paul has designed an ingenious new iron chair supported in the back by an X-frame, in the front by the conventional H-frame. The back and seat are separate rectangles upholstered in plastic-treated natural fiber. The design is distinguished by the treatment, frequently preferred by modern designers, by which a clear separation is made between the frame and the upholstery.

A new Hallicrafters radio is distinguished among table model radios for its simplicity and directness of design.

Several interesting pieces come from European designers. Two tables and two chairs were made by Finn Juhl, the Danish architect and designer responsible for the background of this year's "Good Design" exhibition. The thin-edged plywood top of the dining table rests on cross members between the legs, but the round legs do not themselves extend as far as the top. The unusually large and high coffee table has an intriguing, graceful shape with a wide curve on one side and a gentle curve on the other, tapering to rounded ends. This Juhl furniture is now being manufactured in this country by Baker. Also Danish in design are two chairs from Jensen's: a desk chair with arms by Wegner, and a reed and rattan chair by Viggo Boesen which, although it has been seen here before, is now widely available. This chair shows a free treatment of a traditional form.

A small folding table from Vienna, unusually manoeuverable, combines three crossed brass legs with a leather-covered top. This comes from Plus Studio. Alvar Aalto, the distinguished Finnish architect, is represented this time by an armchair of wood wrapped with rattan. A Salterini chair, designed by the Italian architect Tempestini, combines a frame of black iron with a basket-weave back and a loose cushion seat.

LAMPS

Very considerable effort and progress are apparent in the design of lamps, and many show inventiveness and a knowledgeable control of design. Paul McCobb contributes a black metal standing lamp which incorporates the technical excellence for

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two-way floor lamps now accepted as a usual advantage. Combined with this is its crispness of shape and a choice of materials that makes it very suitable to go with much of the furniture that has recently come on the market.

A small floor lamp by Gilbert A. Watrous brings to the living room the flexibility of the photographic studio lamp in an ingeniously simple design. This was the first-prize winner for floor lamps in the recent lamp competition conducted by the Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with The Heifetz Co. Another prize winner included in this exhibition is the table lamp by Robert Gage with four movable panels for diffused or direct lighting, as desired. A floor reflector lamp in grey lacquer is designed by David Wurster.

An interesting variation on the lamps designed with cylindrical shades and wire frames is one from Paul Mayen with a basketry shade suspended so as to swing freely on the wire frame. From this same source comes a cylindrical ceiling fixture. A miniature metal tripod lamp, imported from Italy by Raymor, has a universal joint and can stand on a table or hang on the wall.

FABRICS

The Selection Committee reviewed a wide range of printed fabrics and found most of them somewhat disappointing compared to what has appeared in recent seasons. However it was able to pick a small group of sparkling designs, notable among them the simple wide stripes in varied colors from Knoll Associates, and a neat pattern of cross-hatches by Bernard Rudofsky. Another unusual print is the Quaintance line drawing of crystal ware in black on natural colored gauze which, earlier this year, was awarded a prize by the American Institute of Decorators, and is entitled "Garden of Glass." This was designed by Don Wight.

A. Joel Robinson contributes a fascinating essay in graded proportions, printed in charcoal and black on white, which he calls "Ovals." From Paul McCobb comes a lively playroom print called "Kites and Mites." A Konwiser print is a small, neat one-color pattern printed on vivid backgrounds.

In woven fabrics a number of new texture effects were chosen from the Moss Rose

line, including both upholstery and window fabrics. Among less expensive upholstery fabrics several were selected from Louisville Textiles, Inc. At the other end of the price scale are five handsome, solid-color, heavy handwoven silks from Siam supplied by Thaibok. An unusual item among upholstery fabrics is the grained and textured plastic developed by Russel Wright. It is shown in four colors. Few such plastic films - the flexible sheets such as those used for shower curtains - can be found that do not attempt to imitate another material, such as leather or a woven fabric. Therefore it was gratifying to the Selection Committee to find these straightforward and handsome designs. Several different fabrics from Konwiser, each available in a wide range of unusually attractive colors, were also a pleasure for the Committee to find.

In floor coverings, there is an interesting rug from Lees of black and natural looped tweedy mixture. Two new paper rugs in clean, good colors come from Waite, as well as three - an off-white, a putty grey and a corn yellow - from their extensive new line of short-looped cotton carpet with rubber back. Another more subtle looped carpet is shown in a luxurious sample from V'Soske which combines white with accents of black and gold colored yarn.

DECORATIVE POTTERY; GLASSWARE; METAL PIECES

Foreign imports have considerably broadened the field of pottery. Two distinguished German lines were designed, one by the late Hermann Gretsch who also designed the Arzberg pottery previously selected for "Good Design"; the other by Trude Petri-Raben. Three English bowls and a large pot, from Jensen's, are handmade, designed by Lucie Rie in simple forms somewhat inspired by the Japanese. Norwegian and Swedish earthenware as well as some Swedish glassware, including a decanter and highball glass, present new forms and decorations.

Several completely simple ashtrays in warm, earthy colors come from Los Tres, in California. From Sitterle, a part wood, part porcelain serving set consists of a large ladle, a serving spoon, and a salad fork and spoon with wood handles. Two pieces of Higgins glass, a bowl and a flat rectangular tray, utilize abstract

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patterns for decoration in the green-toned glass. A set of two large plastic bowls by Grainware is designed so that one, which is black, can hold ice on which the other, in colorless plastic, can be placed.

A set of aluminum bowls and dishes comes from Florence Thomas in California in silvery blue with edging the color of natural aluminum. Several silver pieces are from Jensen's including three dishes that are replicas of some designed in 1648, but entirely modern in their simplicity. A brass bowl and dish is by Ronald Pearson.

A wallpaper selected for the exhibition is a gay black and gold on a white background called "Aviary" by the well-known cartoonist and designer Saul Steinberg. A Hotpoint dishwasher, a combination of mechanical dishwasher and sink, is designed with a lightweight pullout front and an undisturbed top surface. A small, inexpensive plastic dishwasher, designed by C. E. Waltman and Associates, is clean cut and very compact.

Mr. Kaufmann comments on the June "Good Design" exhibition as follows:

"The manufacturers and designers have been unusually co-operative in presenting their new products, particularly since the difficulty in securing materials has often meant that some of the most important lines were not ready to be seen even in sample form until the last few days before the exhibition. In addition to these difficulties - that were overcome because of the willing co-operation of manufacturers and designers - the other members of the Selection Committee, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Saarinen, had to be called upon on many occasions to examine a number of products after the official Committee meeting in May. Despite these problems, it seems that we have been able to add to the exhibition a particularly distinguished group of new products of good design."