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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1940

DEMOCRACY IN DESIGN SHOWN IN EXHIBITION OF USEFUL OBJECTS
AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

For months scouts from the Museum of Modern Art have been combing the city for a wide and varied assortment of articles to show in the exhibition of Useful Objects of American Design Under Ten Dollars which opens at the Museum, 11 West 53 Street, Tuesday, November 26. Each article must meet four requirements: it must be useful, well-designed, American and under ten dollars. The result, as shown in the exhibition of nearly two hundred items, is that designers unknown even by name are much more largely represented than designers of big reputation.

Just as democratic is the wide range of shops where these articles were found: cigarette cases and toilet articles from drugstores; vases, table mats, bowls and trays from exclusive decorator shops; desk accessories, kitchenware, baskets and small rugs from department stores; a phonograph needle and a set of duck pins from a sports shop; a calendar, a silver bowl and a stud box from a leading jeweller; a cookie-cutter, an orange juicer, a set of travelling cups, glassware and assorted items from the five-and-dime store.

The Museum's purpose in presenting exhibitions of Useful Objects, of which the current exhibition is the third, is to stimulate public interest in well-designed articles. This is the first year the objects have been limited to those of American design. For the convenience of visitors--and furthermore to encourage manufacturers and retailers to continue presenting well-designed articles!--the Museum will furnish a check list which will give name and price of each article and the shop where the item may be purchased.

The exhibition this year has been assembled and installed

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by the Museum's Department of Industrial Design. Its Director, Eliot F. Noyes, comments as follows on the method of selecting the articles: "As we searched this year, limiting our selection to American pieces, we were able to compare the American objects with foreign pieces also on sale. We found American glass and china design notably weak in comparison with the Swedish and Czechoslovakian examples still available. Unfortunately, in many American products superfluous decoration and meaningless forms abound. We found that the frankly utilitarian pieces were often the best designed: kitchen equipment, sports goods, etc. Objects for use in homes are often generously covered with superficial decoration adapted from world's fair motives, stream-lining or irrelevant 'moderne motifs.' It was interesting to find that a new object appearing on the market for the first year was very often straightforward and interestingly designed, while the same object in its second year had usually acquired 'style' by the application of spurious art in one form or another.

"In collecting the pieces for the exhibition, we have found considerable interest on the part of manufacturers and retailers in what we are trying to do. In some cases manufacturers even offered to make changes of design to improve the appearance of their products. This to us is a very hopeful note because in our new Department of Industrial Design we want to be as active a force as possible in helping manufacturers to increase the number of objects as well-designed as those we have selected for the current exhibition."

This exhibition and the exhibition of Color Prints Under Ten Dollars, which will open simultaneously, will remain on view until Christmas Eve. Immediately after the closing of the exhibition of Useful Objects of American Design Under Ten Dollars it will be sent to The Alger House of the Detroit Institute of Arts and after being shown there it will be circulated to other cities and towns throughout the country.