

"Since the new furniture makes much of simplification, its development fits neatly into the defense agencies' program for simplification throughout industry."

Review of Organic Design in Home Furnishings exhibition at MoMA,  
The New York Times, 1941

**"You (the consumer) can influence  
the future."**

**Serge Chermayeff, curator of *Design  
for Use* exhibition, MoMA, 1944**

**"Good design ... survives temporary  
and superficial changes."**

**Serge Chermayeff, curator of *Design  
for Use* exhibition, MoMA, 1944**

"The importance of the industrial arts as a factor in the life of a nation lies in their constant and direct contact with every individual. The quality of objects that are in daily use by everyone cannot fail to affect the taste and visual imagination of society as a whole."

Serge Chermayeff, curator of *Design for Use* exhibition, MoMA, 1944

"Every article that derives good form from efficiency helps to make the enjoyment of art an intrinsic part of living."

Serge Chermayeff, curator of *Design for Use* exhibition, MoMA, 1944

"We must analyze and question the simple gadgets we use in our daily lives—our glasses, our dishes, our pots and pans, our shoes, our dresses, our radios, our chairs, our lamps, etc."

Elizabeth Mock, Director, Department of Architecture, MoMA, 1945

**"I have never seen any useful object  
that could not have been done in  
innumerable ways, shapes and contours  
equally well-suited to its purpose."**

**Eva Zeisel, designer, 1946**

**"A good design should have nothing  
that is irrelevant, accidental, or  
unrelated to the main idea."**

**Eliot Noyes, Director, Department of  
Industrial Design, MoMA, 1944**



"Price has very little to do with  
good design."

Charles Parkhurst, Curator, Albright  
Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1947

**"What we call good design is one  
which achieves integrity—that is,  
unity or wholeness in balanced  
relation to its environment."**

**George Nelson, designer, 1948**

**"There is a market for good design."**

**George Nelson, designer, 1948**

"A frequent misconception is that the principal purpose of good modern design is to facilitate trade, and that big sales are a proof of excellence in design. Not so. Sales are episodes in the careers of designed objects. Use is the first consideration."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1946

"Good design in any period is simply  
... a thorough merging of form  
and function, and an awareness of  
human values expressed in relation  
to industrial production for a  
democratic society."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948

"How does all this interest in beauty and quality tie in with the great machines and democratic ideals shaping our world? Can art and science work together; can democracies be as good patrons as the kings and prelates of old?"

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948

**"Good looks cannot be added to the  
practical core as icing is poured  
over a cake."**

**Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948**

"Five-and-ten-cent stores, unpainted furniture departments, chemical supply houses, camera stores as well as all the regular shops have dozens of things waiting for you to find them."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948



"Good Design need not be costly....

There are innumerable things keyed to moderate budgets that bring the quiet authority of good design to the homes that harbor them."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948

"Good modern design will be quiet,  
honest and functional."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1948

"One museum after another has found it desirable to hold exhibitions of modern home furnishings based on good looks, availability and utility."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director,  
Department of Industrial Design,  
MoMA, 1950

**"To me good design is simply art  
applied to living."**

**Dorothy Shaver, president of Lord &  
Taylor Department Store, New York, 1950**

"Good Design is not a label or a price tag. The piece selected may be a sofa or a soap holder, but is completely new, completely uncluttered ... utilizing the best from the past in designs keyed to the present."

Scruggs, Vandervoort & Barney  
Department Store promotion, 1950

**"Since undefinable emotional factors  
as well as judgment play a part in what  
one likes, good design will always be  
different things to different people."**

**Betty Pepis, *The New York Times*, 1951**

"All we do is exhibit or not exhibit.  
All the ticket does, is to say  
that the thing has been in the show.  
It's not an award. The purpose of  
Good Design is to survey the market.  
We are not setting up eternal values.  
We are not buying things for a  
permanent collection."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of  
Good Design, MoMA, 1955

**"Good Design is a manifestation of  
the capacity of the human spirit to  
transcend its limitations."**

**George Nelson, designer, 1957**



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**George Nelson, designer, 1957**

Good Design "cannot transform a little dull life into a large brightly colored one—only the person doing the living can do that. It is not a vitamin pill."

George Nelson, designer, 1957

**"Good design is neither a book of  
etiquette nor a social register."**

**George Nelson, designer, 1957**

**"Good design**

- 1 Fulfills its function**
- 2 Respects its materials**
- 3 Is suited to the method of production**
- 4 Combines these in imaginative expression."**

**Eliot Noyes, designer, 1959**

"House Beautiful finally speaks up  
to point plainly at the nonsense that  
goes on in the name of 'good design'  
... non-rational objects that are  
chosen for glorification by avant-  
garde museums."

*House Beautiful*, 1955

"It seems to be up to the museums to assume the responsibility of guiding the consumer toward those qualities which make an object beloved for generations."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of  
Good Design, MoMA, 1950

"In this great land where we all think and choose freely let's not have any powerful group dictate their standards of taste and their ideas for us all to follow."

Letter to *Retailing Daily*, 1954



Good: "Satisfactory for its purpose;  
ample; full; considerable, not  
insignificant; possessing attractive  
qualities; agreeable, pleasant; adapted  
to a useful end; valid, adequate;  
of comparative excellence in its kind,  
admirable; commercially sound or  
reliable. This seems like a good word  
to use in our title."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of  
Good Design, MoMA, 1950

"The points of [Good Design's] origin are more widely spread than ever before—reinforcing the very positive impression that good designs for the home are international both in origin and appeal."

*Letter to Retailing Daily, 1954*

"Good design, both in a unique hand-made piece and in one that is produced by the millions with the machine, will depend on the same basic qualities."

Marguerite Wildenhain, ceramic designer, 1954

"Most countries of the world have been building up their own industries. Why, therefore, should they buy our goods at all? The answer to that is obvious. Our goods have to be functionally better and they have to be more attractive in appearance."

*The Value of Good Design Congress,*  
Edinburgh, Scotland, 1954

"What do we mean by good design? First, does it exist? It is often said that ... design has no real measurable standards, that it is just a measure of personal taste; that because an article sells in great quantities, this alone proves it must be well designed."

Gordon Russell, Director of the U.K. Council of Industrial Design, 1946

"We can learn something of the nature of good design by considering what it is NOT.... Good design is not something that can be added to a product at a late stage in its planning or manufacture. It is fundamental."

Gordon Russell, Director of the U.K. Council of Industrial Design, 1946

**"Good design is not something precious  
or 'arty'! ... Good design is not  
a luxury which enters only into the  
expensive end of a trade."**

**Gordon Russell, Director of the U.K.  
Council of Industrial Design, 1948**

**"Good design depends on the harmony  
established between the form of an  
object and its use."**

**Max Bill, designer and curator of  
Die gute Form exhibition, Basel,  
Switzerland, 1949**



**"The aesthetic impulse which stimulates  
the emergence of good practical forms  
is always a basically moral one."**

**Max Bill, designer and curator of  
Die gute Form exhibition, Basel,  
Switzerland, 1949**

"Design for everyday use is intimately bound up with many aspects of the Scandinavian social structure: the democratic outlook which places the common man in the centre, the social conscience, the striving for a high general standard of living."

*Catalogue of Design in Scandinavia*  
traveling exhibition, 1954

**"Today's contest between freedom and  
despotism is a contest between  
the American assembly line and the  
Communist Party line."**

**Paul G. Hoffmann, former CEO of  
Studebaker and head of Marshall Plan's  
European Recovery Programme, 1951**

"All need not be new, but the proportions should be good, and the materials, wood, metal, cloth, should have quality. Quality is a rare word because it represents not expensive value but something spiritual—the essential beauty of substance."

Noëmi Raymond, designer and curator of Japanese Household Objects exhibition, MoMA, 1953

"In our opinion the only solution will be a sort of humility that might prevent the periodical appearance of new dogmas, which although 'true' and 'thrilling' at their time of birth, are bound to become commonplace with time."

Lina Bo Bardi, architect and designer,  
São Paulo, 1951

"There shall no longer be misgivings  
in recognizing the aesthetic value of  
a paper flower or an object made out  
of a kerosene can. Great art shall, as  
it were, surrender its place to a non-  
privileged aesthetic expression."

Lina Bo Bardi and Martin Gonçalves,  
introduction to the catalogue for the  
Fifth São Paulo Biennial, 1959

"This love for everyday objects should not be confused with decadent aestheticism; it is a vital necessity to be found in the origins of human life.... It is a way of being that extends to the way of looking at things, of moving, of placing one's feet."

Lina Bo Bardi and Martin Gonçalves,  
introduction to the catalogue for the  
Fifth São Paulo Biennial, 1959

**"Having helped to nurture good taste, we  
must now satisfy its growing demands."**

**Dorothy Shaver, president of Lord &  
Taylor Department Store, New York, 1955**



"American kitchenware is worthy of study by us Danes because it demonstrates how much can be achieved artistically when the designer thinks of the daily use of the items."

J. Møller Nielsen, critic, Danish newspaper *Social-Demokraten*, 1954

"A new kind of humanity is about to develop into an essential trend.... It means reaching a balance between individual form and its structural management. To my mind, there were many things referring to this at this exhibition."

Reima Pietilä, review of MoMA traveling exhibition, *American Design for Home and Decorative Use* in Helsinki, Finland, 1953

"People tend to assume the purpose of Good Design is to find the ultimate best, whereas our purpose is to survey the market. We are not setting up eternal values."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of Good Design, MoMA, 1954

**"Is the purpose of Good Design to raise the level of public taste? Isn't there some risk of starting fade instead of emphasizing design?"**

**Eliot Noyes, designer, addressing Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of Good Design, MoMA, 1954**

"One senses that [the Americans] have understood the value of well-thought out analysis, of the demand, the method of production and aesthetic pleasure and that they are now trying to fuse the results.... Above all, they do not see machines as the enemy of the craftsman, but as an ally."

P. Lübecker, review of MoMA traveling exhibition, *Made in the USA* in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1954

**"The purpose of home exhibitions is  
to give practical hints to potential  
users."**

**Alfred Altherr, Jr., editor of Swiss  
magazine Werk, 1950**

**"American consumers do not buy, one  
sells to them."**

**Just Lunning, Director of Georg Jensen  
Inc., New York, 1956**

"It may be hoped that this competition represents only the first stage on the road, an early moment in a chain reaction, which will lead to simpler constructions and more varied expressions of good living."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of  
Good Design, MoMA, 1950