

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART • THE MERCHANDISE MART

CHICAGO 54, ILLINOIS • WHITE HALL 4-4141  
NEW YORK 19, N. Y. • 11 WEST 53RD STREET • CIRCLE 5-8900

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## LARGE NEW GROUP OF "GOOD DESIGN"

### EXHIBITS TO GO ON VIEW AT MART ON JUNE 22

An entirely new set of more than 150 outstanding exhibits displaying important design advances in the field of modern home furnishings is now added, on June 22, to the continuous "Good Design" exhibition on the 11th floor of The Merchandise Mart, sponsored jointly by The Mart and the Museum of Modern Art.

Chosen from more than 400 items submitted to the Museum-picked Selection Committee from all over the country, these well-designed products are all new on the market since the installation of the January "Good Design" show.

The June Selection Committee was composed of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. of the Museum of Modern Art and Director of "Good Design," as chairman; Serge Chermayeff, Director of Chicago's Institute of Design, and Berthold Strauss, President of Moss Rose Co., Philadelphia fabric manufacturers. Their selections were made on the basis of the standard: "Design intended for present-day life, in regard to usefulness, to production methods and materials and to the progressive taste of the day."

These new products are being added to the exhibition of the January selections for which the colorful installation was especially made by the well-known West Coast designer Charles Eames. The showing will be opened officially on Thursday, June 22, with a luncheon for buyers, manufacturers, press and other industry leaders which will be addressed by William Pahlmann, President of the New York chapter of American Institute of Decorators; Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art; Wallace O. Ollman, General Manager of The Merchandise Mart, and Kaufmann.

The selections for this show point up developments especially in furniture and lamps. About 50 new pieces of furniture have been selected, almost twice as many as in January, indicating wide activity and improvement in this field of design during the past six months.

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add 1 - june selections for "good design"

In lamps the entries showed an increase in intelligent design and good looks, with every indication that lamp design has taken a clear turn toward better selections.

In the home furnishings market in general, the stolid, stodgy type of design shows definite signs of decline, giving way to a wider and wider acceptance of original design by both trade and public.

This new and original design can be divided into two types: one that shows lightness, refinement of proportion and detail and a new sense of intrinsic elegance, with harmony in the use of materials; the other showing development of the casual - familiar for country and outdoor living - but of a type which is trim and neat enough to be agreeable inside as well as outdoors.

A few worthy designs were overlooked in the January selections in the haste of organizing a new enterprise. These are now being put into the exhibition. Moreover, the Selection Committee feels that, especially with the spread of information about "Good Design," an even larger percentage of enterprising new home furnishings has by now been submitted and carefully examined.

The present enlarged showing will continue in The Mart until November. New selections will be made at that time and added to the exhibition. It is expected that there will be a particularly large influx of giftwares including kitchen and bathroom accessories and other smaller items usually brought out for the season.

In addition to this enlarged show at The Mart, which will be as good a representation as can be found of everything of new noteworthy design put on the home furnishings market in 1950, the Museum of Modern Art will instal a concurrent exhibition of as many of these same products as its space will permit. The Museum exhibition will occupy the entire first floor and will be a greatly enlarged version of its usual annual pre-Christmas show of "Useful Objects." These two exhibitions, one in Chicago, the other in New York, will continue until the time of the January Market when a completely new selection will be installed at The Mart. Both will be under the direction of Kaufmann. The exhibitions for the rest of the year at The Mart will utilize the installation originally designed by Charles Eames because of the widespread enthusiasm for the interesting

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and original character of the installation as well as its ability to withstand heavy use.

#### FURNITURE

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the furniture - chairs, dining and casual tables and storage units - included in the exhibition is the clearcut articulation of their design. It is immediately apparent that each structural component is doing its special job, and despite the fact that most furniture must be composed of many parts this clarity of expression carries over into the whole. The furniture shown uses techniques ranging in inspiration from the traditional to the highly experimental, yet all are progressive in their artistic form. Despite a frequently voiced idea that furniture is technologically and even stylistically backward in its development in the U. S., there is every evidence here that the industry is making a great advance.

Some of the designers work along classic lines like Robert Levine's inexpensive table and storage units which are based on the simplest rectangular construction; or the now available pieces by the Danish Finn Juhl, among the most eloquent and satisfactory of those European designers who feel that the poetry of form and the expressive emphasis of structure is more important than experimental technology and strict attention to mass production methods. These chairs even though inspired by tradition are fine examples of modern form; they are up-to-date, contemporary pieces of great refinement and luxury.

On the other hand the furniture by more experimental designers indicates that these innovators are becoming more sure of themselves, more fluent as they become more generally accepted. This is borne out in the ingenious chairs by Don R. Knorr and Davis Pratt, both of which won prizes in the Museum of Modern Art's International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design and are currently also on view among the prize designs at the Museum. Other good examples of the experimental are the side chair by the young West Coast designer Maurice Martine' and the arm-chair by Alvin Lustig, well-known graphic designer, architect and teacher. The Knorr chair is made of a single sheet of metal bent around to meet in the seat. The Pratt chair utilizes inner tubes in back and seat to make a simple and cushiony comfortable chair. The Martine side chair shows an interesting triangular support conceived in three dimensions, an unfamiliar device that is sturdy and still leaves some spring in the chair.

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add 3 - june selections for "good design"

The Lustig upholstered armchair uses separate molded shapes for back and seat, since it is not only easier to make such shapes in smaller units and easier to upholster, but it also has esthetic value. These experimental designers, who might also be called "expressionist," tend to utilize the lines of force in their furniture designs finding it economical as well as beautiful to develop their designs in this frank manner.

In both the more classic and the more expressionist types of design there is marked indication of a development toward lightness of line. The framing is notably thin, and even storage cases are restrained in their dimensions. The Museum-selected Committee felt it was important to be able to continue the tradition of showing both trends in this "Good Design" exhibition.

In addition to two trends in ideological approach on the part of modern designers, there is a great variety of uses of materials and techniques in the furniture shown. For example, a lounge chair and ottoman by Robert Brown utilize newly developed flat aluminum tubing and plastic webbing, but at the same time are designed with traditional rectangular lines and a feeling of being hand made rather than mass produced.

LAMPS:

The group of lamps shown, besides indicating a noticeable improvement in lamp design, will be able to satisfy people with very different tastes. It is now possible to find lamps on which the small fittings and joints are neatly and trimly designed - a factor too often overlooked in the past.

In two Lightolier table lamps shown, three slim polished brass supports converge upwards as they rise, in one case from a small pyramid base of oak, in the other from an open ring of matte black metal.

Two versions of a Greta Magnusson-Grossman lamp are shown with chromium flexible arms; one table model and one wall model, both rising from simple circular bases to asymmetric shades of smoke grey.

A metal desk lamp designed by Harry Gitlin makes highly practical use of a double universal joint at either end of the brass rod support, making the light source most flexible.

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add 4 - june selections for "good design"

FABRICS:

The fabrics included in this show are of interest because they show an increasing tendency toward design in which the pattern flows over the surface of the textile instead of the once ubiquitous repetition of units in rows. In addition, there is a greater range of more interesting colors and an increase in the use of monochromes and natural tones in good patterns. Over-exaggerated textures would seem to be decreasing. A striking enrichment of the fabric market is shown in fine bright silks from Italy and wools from Scotland imported by Knoll Associates.

In rugs, the hand made examples from Puerto Rico and the U. S. were selected from among many good neutral rugs and carpetings which in color and in texture show a marked improvement in the field - mass produced as well as hand made

TABLEWARE AND KITCHEN ARTICLES:

A number of useful and often amusing kitchen utensils and gadgets turned up for the exhibition, generally well designed, but in most cases showing no great adventuresomeness or development beyond already established good standards. Black plastic serving dishes in sets, with thin and interesting shapes; new wood-based magnetic knife and tool rack, and a 5-piece place setting of stainless steel flatware made in Italy are some of the most simply designed utilitarian items to appear. A "Swedish Maid" grocery and herb cabinet with all-glass drawers to show the contents is included. Installed in the kitchen of the modern exhibition house in the Museum of Modern Art Garden, this is currently attracting much public attention.

Some good glass was found, such as Russel Wright's new pressed tumblers, unusual in their wide proportions and agreeable colors in flecked glass; and a set of interesting stemware from Finland.

An original Georg Jensen jug from Denmark is made of hammered sterling silver with an ivory handle and demonstrates that good design of twenty-five years ago still looks excellent when it returns to the American scene.

A wide range in usability to the consumer in the many items to be shown runs from the purely useful to the purely esthetic; prices also run the gamut from low to high.

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add 5 - june selections for "good design"

Kaufmann, Director of "Good Design," comments as follows on the

June exhibition:

"Very warm and genuine thanks are due the trade for real co-operation in making possible the scope and effectiveness of this whole program. This is the first time the Museum has had the opportunity to organize a series of home furnishings exhibitions geared to the timing of the market itself. Even these first two collaborative showings have been a strong indication of the many advantages of such an arrangement - the opportunity to discuss design problems with manufacturers, retailers and salesmen as well as designers, the chance to test the Museum's standards in the active world of business, an unprecedented working basis between the Museum and the industries. There is no doubt that this is the finest opportunity ever offered an educational institution to relate its standards and influences to every day life, and to develop them accordingly."

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