

NEWS FROM GOOD DESIGN

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART • THE MERCHANDISE MART

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GOOD DESIGN TO OPEN 13TH EXHIBITION WITH LARGEST SELECTION OF HOME FURNISHINGS

The 9th season of Good Design, sponsored jointly by the Museum of Modern Art and the Merchandise Mart, will open on Sunday, January 3, 1954, with a special preview for the press at 11 a.m., and a summary of the significance and outstanding characteristics at 11 o'clock by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of Good Design. The exhibition will open to the market at 9 a.m. on Monday, January 4. The largest group of home furnishings ever picked for Good Design in one season will go on display - more than 350 items chosen by the Selection Committee from approximately 2,500 submitted. The larger size of the exhibition represents the high quality of the entries; there was no relaxation of standards in the selecting.

The installations for Good Design by Alexander Girard, well-known architect-designer, have been widely praised as successful, and have been held over for the January show. They will be replaced in June by special settings for a new program to be held in celebration of the 5th anniversary of Good Design and the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Museum of Modern Art. This anniversary Good Design exhibition will offer both a forecast and a resumé of design. For the forecast, ten leading design schools across the country have been invited to present their ideas independently in concentrated displays. The resumé on the other hand will show a) the Museum's selection of the 100 items considered best for their design, and b) the consumers' selections of the 100 best selling designs, both chosen from all the items shown in Good Design from 1950-54.

Trends:

The Selection Committee for the new January show was composed of Lazette van Houten, for many years Home Furnishings Editor of Retailing Daily; Edward Wormley, well-known furniture designer, and Edgar Kaufmann, permanent Chairman of the Committee. The members of the Committee noted that two trends, observable in the past, continued to flourish: The formal modern which stresses clear-cut shapes, precise details, smooth surfaces and definite colors and black and white; and the informal modern approach which is softer in line, flows from one shape into another, makes use of rough, homespun textures and muted and natural tones. Each continues to appeal to its own consumers, meeting their needs with its own designers. Yet to some degree these two trends in modern are sufficiently flexible to be used in combination just as modern furnishings are successfully combined with those of other periods.

Furniture:

Most noteworthy and important of the developments revealed in the January selections, according to Mr. Kaufmann, is the very considerable rationalization and experimentation apparent for the first time in the design of storage units.

Mr. Kaufmann said: "For some years now it has been clear that the time had come for a concerted effort on the part of progressive designers to open new paths for more reasonable structure in storage cabinets. Since unit furniture was developed twenty years ago, no basic new ideas had been presented. Unit furniture itself had ultimately bogged down in the relatively uneconomic and cumbersome concept of boxes: boxes on boxes, boxes on shelves, boxes hung between uprights or on brackets. Storage walls, where not incorporated into the architecture, came close to being very large boxes, too.

"Meanwhile real strides were being made in the design of upright chairs and recliners as well as in the more elementary problems of table design.

"Then in 1951 Charles Eames launched his elegant and problematic cabinets constructed of freely combined angles and panels, bolted and braced, and brightly

colored. If this was not yet a finished solution it was a prophetic start. This season for the first time several other designers and manufacturers have taken further steps in this direction, carrying the essential concept notably nearer the refinement and improvement which promise to make it an enduring feature of modern homes. Two of these were selected for the current additions to Good Design. It is notable and important that neither of these echo the visual character of Eames's first ventures; reminding us that the basic ideas which build the tradition of modern design are capable of rich variety and personal inflection at the hands of capable designers."

One of these storage units, by Norman Cherner, has flat front and back angle-iron frames, smaller and more completely "knock-down" than the other important line, by George Nelson, with three-dimensional welded frames. Mr. Cherner's pieces are shown in natural wood with white plastic panels and black frame. Attachment between frame and panels is achieved by small brass buttons, optionally visible on the outside. For Good Design the version with visible attachment has been chosen as expressive and suitable to the piece. The handles on the unit are continuous angles of black metal repeating the frame. Mr. Nelson's design is of a quite different nature, larger scaled in its elements, with black or white frames. Fronts and tops are in black and white only, in contrast to the filler panels on the sides and backs painted in deep, rich colors of blended tones.

Six distinguished furniture designs imported from Denmark reflect the trends already noted as influential in the American market: one the clean cut and progressive; the other informal and somewhat more conventional. These designs include two circular tables, one a tripod all of wood in the informal style, the other with plywood top on metal legs, overall lighter and neater. Two three-legged chairs are in the group: one molded from a single piece of flexible plywood with a plastic coating over the metal legs, the other with curved top rail of thick wood and a free form plywood seat.

A wood dining chair with arms by Borge Mogensen has a wide seat of natural sisal cords, whereas a more ingeniously constructed armchair by Madsen and Larsen has a laminated seat and a similar element carried through the arms and back in one smoothly articulated curve.

Two inexpensive chairs, highly ingenious, and a sensible table come from Harold Cohen and Davis Pratt. The chairs are a development of pieces shown earlier in Good Design, now covered with colorful transparent nylon in a seamless ~~pipe~~ sleeve stretched across ^{black enameled} metal frames ~~enameled in colors to match~~. The large square occasional table is topped with white plastic on square metal legs.

Shelves of ^{cork} ~~ply~~ on folding metal supports have been designed by Hendrick Van Keppel and Taylor Green. A daybed by the same designers has a frame of angular tube, oblong in section. The daybed is equiped with a long cushion divided twice, making it possible to lift the sections into various positions for comfort. An occasional table is made of spaced redwood slats on a similar angular tube frame. The frames knock down for shipping.

From Germany a wood folding chair with brass fittings is the first piece shown in Good Design by Prof. Eiermann, a leading German designer who was responsible for furniture in the new German parliament building at Bonn.

A terrace chair of metal with plastic tape seat and back clipped on for easy replacement, and a cafe table with plastic top are new contributions for outdoor uses.

Tableware:

Two sets of plastic dinnerware, by George Nelson and by Russel Wright, are a major contribution in practicality and gaiety to the household table. Both lines are large and well detailed, Mr. Nelson's crisp in color and shape, Mr. Wright's shown only in deep gray of a heavier plastic with softer tones and rich texture achieved by coarser grinding of the ingredients.

Finland's huge Arabia plant, the largest pottery in Europe, offers outstanding

pieces by Kaj Franck, of the firm's art studio. Other designs of his have already been presented in Good Design. A long line of black and white casseroles, hollow and flat serving pieces and individual dishes, round and square, is included not only in Good Design but also in the large exhibition of Scandinavian design to tour this country in 1954.

A boldly novel and entertaining American line of tableware designed by Eva Zeisel is vigorously decorated. Certain pieces are shaped to suggest charmingly humorous birds. A full line includes teapot, pitchers, tureens and various sizes and shapes of serving dishes. Their thick off-white glaze touched with earthy colors is reminiscent though not imitative of peasant wares.

Three groups of table mats were liked by the Selection Committee for their restrained quality, expressed in quite different ways, which set off to advantage the dishes and glasses and flatware placed on the mats. One large group of 17 different solid color linen mats achieves this result in an informal manner with a big-scale weave combined with soft, plain shades. Other mat sets, one of brilliant horsehair and one of wood and fibre, emphasize texture with rich but never dominating color tones.

Decorative Pieces:

Some particularly interesting decorative pieces are included this season. One group, four pieces of handmade stoneware, comes from a Montana pottery which has been developing for the past few years and is now beginning to be known in the East. The pots shown here are by Peter H. Voulkos whose work was also included in the Museum of Modern Art's design show recently assembled for Europe and in the current national survey of handicraft traveling to American museums. A remarkable stoneware bowl decorated in bas-relief was made in New Hampshire by Edwin Sheier and closely resembles one of his pieces in the national handicraft show. A sturdy and handsomely glazed tobacco jar and ash tray in high fire stoneware of top quality were made by Nathalie Krebs of Denmark.

A Haitian designer, David Auld, has contributed three exotically shaped wooden bowls, one in black, two in natural finish. From Scandinavia a lazy suzan in teakwood has an unusually well detailed base. Five glass vases are made in conic shapes joined at the tapering ends so that they are reversible and will stand on either end.

Metalware:

In metal, three flatware sets show differing yet successful solutions of this now popular design problem. A stainless steel set by Don Wallance is skilfully shaped for balance and grip. Only two sizes each for forks, spoons and knives are included, compared to only one fork, one knife and two spoons in another in steel by Gio Ponti. Both indicate a current tendency to simplify tablewares and household cares. In the four-piece Ponti set, the stamping of the blocked shapes and the polished metal itself are emphasized. A silver-plated set on a nickel silver base comes in place settings of seven and nine. The working part of each piece is bold in shape contrasting strongly with a lightly curved "stick" handle; the contrast gives special character to the pieces.

Three groups of pewter bring onto the market a material not much changed or improved hitherto. This is thus the largest representation of pewter ever included in Good Design. Trays and bowls from California and mugs from Holland all are in classic shapes scaled to fit dining- and living-room use.

Lamps:

The Selection Committee was gratified to find three floor lamps to include in Good Design. One by Isamu Noguchi, like his two table lamps also chosen, is a Japanese lantern set on delicate black metal legs. It is packaged flat, easy to set up, and inexpensive. The other two floor lamps are by Gerald Thurston, one with an opaque shade.

Indicative of a new trend in lampshades is the number of lamps or fixtures included which have a warm soft glow. In place of the bright white light typical of

materials like fibre glass, a mellow light emanates from these shades of plywood, paper and wicker. One of three Danish wall bracket lamps of wood shows this - even the shade is wood.

Imaginatively formed and folded shades are made from sheets of glass fibre in plastic and represent a new variation on the theme of bubble-lamps.

Rugs:

An unusual technique combining handwork with machinery was used to make two tufted wool carpets designed by Raymond Loewy Associates. An operator guides a mechanized needle, somewhat like an electric awl or screwdriver, feeding the tufts into a heavy canvas stretched on a vertical frame. This permits the great flexibility and variation of a handmade product to be kept, even though power is used.

Bright colored, wittily designed hand woven rugs were made in Mexico by Saul Borisov, an American painter who learned traditional Mexican weaving. In one rug are woven two prancing cats, in the other a vividly stylized dog.

Blanket:

A reversible wool blanket designed by Dorothy Liebes serves as both blanket and spread. Cream colored, silky in texture, it represents a happy combination of luxury and sense.

Fabrics:

Interest in the design possibilities of paper fibre - already seen in several porch rugs in Good Design shows - has extended to upholstery fabrics. In stripes and in solid black, it is carefully styled both in pattern and color to make the best use of the grainy texture. Another unusual texture with a casual homespun effect has resulted from combining two kinds of goats' hair with linen and cotton in natural tones and an occasional color thread forming a vertical striation. This is designed by Jack Larsen.

Inexpensive drapery fabrics appear in cottons in many solid, bright colors from Moss Rose. Woven silk stripes and plaids in lyrical three-color combinations by Jack Berizzi come from a firm usually concerned with fashion fabrics which, however, occasionally ventures with decorative fabrics for the home. This preoccupation with stripes, frequently in bright colors, is apparent in fabrics of many types and is perhaps most noticeable in the prints. Effective and handsome color combinations in stripes that vary considerably in width and sharpness of accent are found in prints by Boris Kroll, Albert Herbert and Astrid Sampe. An unusually inexpensive printed cotton candy stripe was designed by Lois Long. At the other end of the price scale, a handwoven plaid by Dorothy Liebes is done in wide bands of different metallic threads, with controlled brilliance.

Ramie, said to be the oldest fibre woven by man, is found in a group of the sheer fabrics by Emily Relding. A most original one is composed of three strips of narrow-loom cloth in black and white blocks joined together in syncopated patterns; the selvages themselves creating the vertical accent. Her two other wider fabrics are classics in the important theme of stripes.

Wallpapers; Shades:

Ten wallpapers in eight designs were selected this season. All are crisply geometric, completely abstract in design, avoiding any suggestion of representation. They emphasize the value of the wall plane itself, adding to its importance through color and sharp rhythmic patterns in direct contrast to the atmospheric effects, the scenes and flowers that are so usual in wallpapers.

The three types of window shade material shown use some form of wood as base. One, a very finely split bamboo, gives an effect of silky elegance. Of the other two, one alternates horizontal strips of basswood and translucent plastic; the other, of pinewood and plastic, is woven into a continuous field of sparkling, small-scaled texture.

Kitchen Equipment; Miscellaneous:

A carpet sweeper proved to be most excellently designed in the eyes of the Committee. Its use and combinations of materials and its clean cut simple hardware are noteworthy; and the lettering - even of the instructions on the under side - is handsomely controlled. Later, the Committee was delighted to see that this design was by Harley Earl, an outstanding figure in the auto industry.

Smaller electrical appliances, such as a combination waffle iron and hot plate and a deep-fry cooker, have better representation in this exhibition than heretofore. They were selected for their simple detailing at edges, joints, handles and control dials; and for their clear lettering and discreet trade marks.

A handsome radio-phonograph in two separate wood cabinet sections was selected. Though simpler and more direct than most, the Committee felt that the handles, certain labels and the finish of the wood were not carried out on the same high level as the general design itself.