

The Museum of Modern Art

50th Anniversary



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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS NEW ADDITIONS TO ITS DESIGN COLLECTION

Selected items acquired by the Department of Architecture and Design of The Museum of Modern Art since 1976 will be on view in the Museum's second-floor Goodwin Galleries from August 4 through September 30, 1979.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN, directed by J. Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design, presents a wide range of objects in a variety of materials, made both by industrial and craft processes and spanning one hundred years of design history.

The selection of 25 objects and 12 posters and architectural drawings was made from the approximately 250 items collected by the Department during the past 3 years. This selection represents not only the Museum's continuing interest in presenting the most significant developments in contemporary design but is also an attempt to fill gaps in the collection in preparation for the new and more spacious Architecture and Design galleries that are planned for the expanded Museum. For the first time, it will be possible in these projected galleries to trace the development of modern design from its beginnings to the present day.

The earliest works in the show are two pieces by the nineteenth-century English designer Christopher Dresser: a tureen and ladle in silver

and ebony and a tall glass pitcher with silver and ebony mounts. In 1876, Dresser, an aesthetic visionary like William Morris, was sent by the British government to Japan, where he travelled through the small villages observing the native crafts. The strength, elegance, and simplicity he found in Japanese rural crafts deeply influenced his subsequent work. These qualities, so opposed to the opulent taste dominant in Europe at the time, strikingly anticipate the modern approach to design and are manifest in the two pieces in the exhibition, both of which were executed shortly after Dresser returned from Japan.

Also in the exhibition is a parasol handle in ormolu, gold, and ivory, which the French Art Nouveau innovator Hector Guimard designed for his wife. Josef Hoffmann, one of the founders of the Wiener Werkstatte and an architect and designer whose work shares the sensibility and concerns of the Secession movement, is represented by a set of iridescent liqueur glasses. An oval table in the exhibition by the famed Scots designer and architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh is from one of his most famous projects, Hill House. Mackintosh designed the furniture for Hill House as well as having planned the building itself.

Otto Wagner designed the two pieces of bentwood furniture with aluminum fittings that are featured in the exhibition for his important 1904 Postsparkasse (Postal Savings Bank) in Vienna. The use of aluminum in furniture was highly unusual at the time. Also on view is the sideboard designed by the Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld in 1919, the year he became associated with De Stijl. The flat boards and sticks which form the unit make an abstract composition of lines and planes, rather like a three-dimensional Mondrian. Louis C. Tiffany's hanging lamp,

(ca. 1905), the ribbed glass shade of which is shaped like a giant lotus leaf, is from Tiffany's own dining room at Laurelton Hall, Oyster Bay, Long Island. Marcel Breuer's tubular chromed steel armchair of 1928-29 was exhibited in the 1930 Salon des Artistes Decorateurs in Paris, where the installation he and Walter Gropius created in marked contrast to the prevalent French Art Deco style caused a sensation among members of the French design community. Eileen Gray, the uncompromising modernist designer who will be the subject of a major exhibition at the Museum in February 1980, is represented by a screen of the early 1920s composed of black oriental lacquer plaques. Also in the exhibition is a remarkable porcelain teapot decorated with Suprematist motifs by Nikolai Suetin.

An armchair by Richard Riemerschmid, exhibited in 1899 and long thought to have been destroyed, was recently discovered in Amsterdam by Mr. Johnson and will be displayed together with Edward J. Wormley's 1951 version, which the American designer recreated from a photograph of the original.

Among the contemporary works in the exhibition is Cityscape #2, a wall hanging woven from strips of microfilm and from lurex and mylar threads by Arturo Sandoval. Sandoval acquired the microfilm strips when a Frankfort, Kentucky, department store converted its bookkeeping procedures from microfilm to a computer. A record of checks, bills, and other sales transactions, the microfilm in Sandoval's hanging is a veritable financial landscape of the city. A glass vase by the young designer Thomas J. Patti is indicative of Patti's rigorous and intellectually disciplined approach to the art of glassmaking. The exhibition also includes new chairs by

Danish designer Niels Bendtsen and Italian architect and designer Gaetano Pesce, lamps by Isamu Noguchi and Vico Magistretti, and strikingly different designs for hi-fi equipment by Jakob Jensen and Mario Bellini.

There is a selection of posters, among them works by Takayo Yamada, Otto Morach, U. di Lazzaro, Koichi Satoh, Jan Tschichold, Chermayeff and Geismar, Paul Colin, Josef-Maria Olbrich, and Helmut Schmidt-Rehn. RECENT ACQUISITIONS: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN also presents Mies van der Rohe's structural model for his Chicago Convention Hall project of 1953--it was never built but recently the design was seriously considered for New York City's new convention center--a drawing by the contemporary architect Michael Graves, and a rare architectural drawing, which has been placed on extended loan in the Department, by Arturo Sant'Elia, the visionary Italian Futurist.

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