

SHAPING MODERNITY: DESIGN 1880–1980 INCLUDES VISIONARY OBJECTS FROM THE MUSEUM’S DESIGN COLLECTION

Installation Includes *New Typography*, A Section of Posters and Small-Scale Works Drawn from MoMA’s Rich Collection of Soviet Russian, German, Dutch, and Czechoslovak Graphics

Shaping Modernity: Design 1880–1980

The Philip Johnson Architecture and Design Galleries, third floor
December 23, 2009–July 2010

NEW YORK, December 22, 2010— The Museum of Modern Art has reinstalled the modern design section of The Philip Johnson Architecture and Design Galleries on the third floor. ***Shaping Modernity: Design 1880–1980***, on view from December 23, 2009, to July of 2010, features a selection of visionary objects, graphics, architectural fragments, and textiles from the Museum’s collection that reveal the attempts of successive generations to shape their experience of living in the modern world. The installation features 300 works organized into five sections: Art Nouveau objects and posters from 1890 to 1914; the graphic design movement known as the “New Typography” (1927–37); works that focus on the relationship of machine, body, and mind (1925–40); the Good Design movement (1944–56); and works from the 1960s and 1970s. The reinstallation is organized by Juliet Kinchin, Curator, and Aidan O’Connor, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.

The installation is organized into the following sections:

The International New Art 1890–1914

The International New Art (1890–1914) flourished in urban centers around the world taking on many localized forms and names (among them Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, Arte Modernista, Sezession, and Glasgow Style). Hector Guimard (French, 1867–1942), the leading figure of the movement in France, looked to the natural world to revitalize modern forms. His personal desk and armchair (c. 1899) exemplify the Art Nouveau style with organic, especially inspired by flowers and other plants, and flowing curvilinear forms. The pieces in this installation were used in the office of the MoMA’s founding director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Other examples in the exhibition include a side chair (1897) by Charles Rennie Mackintosh (British, 1868–1928), a side table (1901) by Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott (British, 1865–1945), and a plaster cast of Antoni Gaudí’s (Spanish, 1852–1926) original finial sculpture for the Church of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona.

The poster movement of the 1890s was a new phenomenon that emphasized connections between the graphic and fine arts. Many of the graphics of this time embodied the New Art style. Jules Chéret (French, 1836–1932) was one of the most famous printmakers of the late nineteenth

century and is credited as the originator of the artistic lithographic poster. His poster *Folies-Bergère, La Loïe Fuller* (1893) features the American dancer Loïe Fuller. A video of Fuller dancing is also included. Among the other works are Mackintosh's poster for the magazine *The Scottish Musical Review* (1896) and Jan Toorop's (Dutch, 1858–1928) *Het Hoogeland Beekbergen* (1896), which advertises a rehabilitation center for the destitute.

New Typography 1927–37

In the 1920s and 1930s the movement known as the "New Typography" brought graphics and information design to the forefront of artistic avant-gardes in Europe. Rejecting traditional arrangement of type in symmetrical columns, modernist designers organized the printed page or poster as a blank field in which blocks of type and illustration (frequently photomontage) could be arranged in harmonious, strikingly asymmetrical compositions. Taking his lead from currents in Soviet Russia and at the Weimar Bauhaus, the designer Jan Tschichold (Swiss, b. Germany, 1902–1974) codified the movement with accessible guidelines in his landmark book *Die Neue Typographie* (1928). Almost overnight, typographers and printers adapted this way of working for a huge range of printed matter, from business cards and brochures to magazines, books, and advertisements. This installation of posters and numerous small-scale works is drawn from MoMA's rich collection of Soviet Russian, German, Dutch, and Czechoslovak graphics. They represent material from Tschichold's own collection, which supported his teaching and publication from around 1927 to 1937.

Included in the exhibition are 14 posters by Tschichold, Ladislav Sutnar (American, b. Bohemia [now Czech Republic], 1897–1976), Johannes Molzahn (German, 1892–1965), Theo H. Ballmer (Swiss, 1902–1965), and others, as well as small-scale letterpress works and objects by Herbert Bayer (American, b. Austria, 1900–1985), Frantisek Kalivoda (Czech, 1913–1971), Zdenek Rossmann (Czech, 1905–1984), Joost Schmidt (German, 1893–1948), and Aleksandr Rodchenko (Russian, 1891–1956).

Mind, Body, Machine 1925–40

The tone of this section is set by a giant railroad-car spring and a boat propeller first shown in MoMA's landmark *Machine Art* exhibition in 1934, which celebrated such items of anonymous industrial design as symbols of social improvement and technological progress. The theme is further explored in utilitarian objects such as a streamlined meat-slicer (given in memory of the "Yippie" leader Abbie Hoffman), and the Vipp trash can, designed for a Danish hair salon.

Among the other works in this section are A. M. Cassandre's (French, 1901–1968) iconic billboard for the Ford Motor Company from 1937. By employing Cassandre, Ford Motors infused their corporate reputation for industrial innovation with the artistic cachet of European modernism. The poster features a giant eye with the slogan "Watch the Fords Go By," which gives a sense of modern vision in motion, while the V8 icon imprinted on the iris suggests a fusion

of mind, body, and technology. Also included are amorphous aluminum coffee tables (1935–38) designed by Frederick Kiesler (American, b. Romania, 1890–1965), and Eileen Gray's (British, b. Ireland, 1879–1976) elegant lacquered screen (1922).

What Was Good Design? MoMA's Message 1944–56

The section *What Was Good Design? MoMA's Message 1944–56*, which opened in May of 2009, presents over 100 selections from the Museum's collection—ranging from domestic furnishings and appliances to textiles, sporting goods, and graphics—to illuminate the primary values of Good Design as promoted by MoMA within an international debate conducted by museums, design councils, and department stores. Iconic pieces by designers including Marcel Breuer (American, b. Hungary, 1902–1981), Charles (American, 1907–1978) and Ray (American, 1912–1988) Eames, Eero Saarinen (American, b. Finland, 1910–1961), and Hans Wegner (Danish, 1914–2007) are shown alongside more unexpected items such as a hunting bow and a plumb bob, as well as everyday objects including an iron, a hamper, a rake, a cheese slicer, and Tupperware. See separate press release for more information.

Continuity and Critique 1960–80

The clean and elegant forms of classic modernism continued to appear in the domestic appliances of Dieter Rams (German, b. 1932) for Braun, and the Vignelli Associates' stacking plastic dinnerware. For many however, the emphasis on pop music, youth, and counterculture opened up new possibilities in materials, colors, and forms, as well as more humorous, expendable design. The Blow Inflatable Armchair (1967) designed by Jonathan De Pas (Italian, 1932–1991), Paolo Lomazzi (Italian, b. 1936) and Donato D'Urbino (Italian, b. 1935) became a landmark of Pop furniture and an icon of 1960s Italian design. Executed in candy-colored PVC plastic, it was more affordable than many other contemporary works. Ugo La Pietra's (Italian, b. 1938) *Uno sull'altro (One on Top of the Other)* Stacking Shelves (1970) exemplifies the strong interest at this time in flexible design suited to new ideas regarding lifestyles and domestic environments.

SPONSORSHIP:

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Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Film Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)