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## COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

Sponsors —

RÖHM & HAAS COMPANY, INC.

Philadelphia

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

MODERN ART

ence and submissions are  
to the Technical Adviser:

Rohde  
57th Street

The purpose of this competition is to explore the possibilities of Plexiglas as a sculptural medium, in the hope that a new sculptural technique may be developed which will express the unique properties of this plastic material.

<b>AWARDS</b>	First Place.....	\$800.00
	Second Place.....	300.00
	Third Place.....	200.00
	Fourth Place.....	100.00
	Fifth Place.....	100.00

The sculpture awarded first place will be shown in the Röhm & Haas exhibit in the Hall of Industrial Science, Chemicals and Plastics at the New York World's Fair, 1939.

Röhm & Haas reserves the right to withhold any or all the awards if, in the opinion of the jury, the sculptures are not of sufficiently high artistic calibre to justify the awards.

<b>DATES</b>	Mailing of Sketches.....	(postmarked) February 10, 1939
	Selection of Five Sketches.....	February 20, 1939
	Completed Sculptures.....	(shipping date) April 15, 1939
	Announcement of Awards.....	April 25, 1939

Sketches and completed sculptures are to be sent to: Plexiglas Competition, Office of Gilbert Rohde, 32 East 57th Street, New York, New York.

**JURY** A jury of three, one of them a sculptor, is to be selected by the Museum of Modern Art, and the names of the jurors will be announced on the day of the first judging, which will be February 20, 1939.

**JUDGING PROCEDURE** From submissions in sketch form the jury will make a selection of five to be executed in Plexiglas. These five designs will not receive ranking until the final judging.

The five sketches which have been chosen by the jury will be returned immediately to the artists and within as short a time as possible, the artists will also receive the Plexiglas from which the sculpture itself is to be constructed. Full instructions as to the nature and handling of Plexiglas are given elsewhere in this folder. Preliminary sketches from other entrants will not be returned unless specifically requested. Final awards will be allocated among those who send in finished sculptures.



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## COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

### Sponsors —

RÖHM & HAAS COMPANY, INC.

Philadelphia

Makers of Plexiglas

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

New York

All correspondence and submissions are  
to be directed to the Technical Adviser:

Gilbert Rohde

32 East 57th Street

New York

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The sculpture must be so designed that the sculptor can construct it by bending, carving, etc., sheets, rods or blocks of the material, without the necessity of Röhm & Haas making any special molds for special forms. Failure to meet this requirement will disqualify the entry.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS** Announcement of final awards, on the basis of executed sculptures, will be made not later than April 25th, 1939. The report of the jury will be published in the June, 1939 issue of MODERN PLASTICS. Unsuccessful competitors will be informed in what stage of the judging their sketches were eliminated.

**OWNERSHIP OF FINISHED SCULPTURES** The sculpture winning first prize will remain the property of Röhm & Haas. The other prize-winning pieces of sculpture will become the property of the sculptors but will remain in the possession of Röhm & Haas for one year after the opening of the New York World's Fair.

**EXHIBITION** The sculpture winning first prize will be shown in the Röhm & Haas exhibit at the New York World's Fair. The Museum of Modern Art reserves the right to exhibit all winning designs after the closing of the Fair.

**COMPETITORS** This competition is open to all sculptors, except employees of Röhm & Haas, the Museum of Modern Art, and Gilbert Rohde.

**NOTIFICATION OF ENTRY** All entrants will return the enclosed blank, duly filled out, to Gilbert Rohde, 32 East 57th Street, New York. Return of the blank does not put the entrant under any obligation to make a submission.

**FORM OF SUBMISSION** Since it is impossible for reasons of cost for Röhm & Haas to supply every entrant with large quantities of Plexiglas of every possible size and shape and since many of the parts in each sculpture will have to be cut to size and polished by Röhm & Haas, only small samples of Plexiglas will be supplied to entrants in the competition. Therefore it is required that submissions be made in the form of sketches, placed vertically on a sheet of illustration board 20 inches by 30 inches. If the entrant feels that one sketch is insufficient to explain his design, he may submit up to three sketches, all placed on one sheet of illustration board. It is suggested that for the purpose of showing the various kinds of Plexiglas to be used, a small scale outline be placed at the lower right hand corner of the sheet, with diagrammatic explanations of materials. Lines describing the material may be run from each part toward the edge of the paper, with notes — for example: "1/8 inch sheet"; "1-inch square rod, polished ends", and so forth.

**QUESTIONS** Reasonable questions, which must be asked anonymously in unsigned communications, will be answered in one or two mimeographed memoranda sent to all entrants.

**STYLE OF SCULPTURE** The judges will favor no preconceived ideas of any particular style but will consider the submissions on the merits of their form and their use of Plexiglas as a suitable medium. The use of any other material, except some other kind of plastic, is permitted as a minor part of the composition. The word "sculpture" includes "constructions", "mobiles", etc.

**SIZE** The sculpture should fall approximately within a forty-two inch cube. It is suggested that at least one of the dimensions should fill the space reasonably well so that the total mass is not too inconspicuous for exhibit purposes. It is not a requirement that the sculpture touch any or all of the boundaries of this cube and an entry will not be disqualified if one dimension projects slightly beyond the limits of the cube. Visitors will be able to view the sculpture from all sides.

**ANONYMITY OF SUBMISSION** A plain sealed envelope, containing the competitor's name and address should be pasted on the back of the drawings. No identifying marks should be placed on the drawings. The office of Gilbert Rohde will receive the drawings and remove outer wrappings which for safety in mailing, will have the artist's name and address. Envelopes containing the names of the entrants will not be opened until the jury has made its selection of five drawings.

**THE AESTHETIC PROBLEM** Plexiglas is a transparent, colorless plastic having an exceptionally high light transmission. Its sculptural properties are entirely different from the natural materials that have heretofore been available to the artist.

Plastics are one of the most characteristic products of our technology. The important consideration in this problem is to develop a technique which will fully explore and exploit the new aesthetic qualities of the material and which will be as appropriate to its working qualities as the techniques that have been developed throughout the ages for stone, wood, clay or metal.

Plexiglas is distinguished among plastics by its high transparency — it is more transparent than the clearest glass — and its complete freedom from color. It possesses the brilliance of crystal. The sculptor must keep in mind the necessity of handling Plexiglas in such a way that its special qualities are emphasized.

The problem of evolving a sculptural technique which deals competently with the properties of the material challenges the imagination of the artist. When this technique is disclosed, it may be found to be as new as the material itself. Several detailed suggestions for developing the optical properties in particular are contained in the technical description of the material.

**LIGHT TRANSMISSION** The ability to transmit light around curves is one of the peculiar characteristics of Plexiglas. If one of the extremities of a polished bar, rod or block of Plexiglas rests on a base with a concealed light source, the other extremity will show a point of light. Light is conducted whether the piece of Plexiglas is straight or curved as long as the radius of curvature is not less than 3.1 times the diameter of the rod or the thickness of the bar used.

If the source of light is colored, colored light will emanate from the other end, and changing light color will appear changing at the extremity where the light emerges. The observer is never conscious of the source of the light. The middle portion of the piece of Plexiglas will show only a faint glow and will not detract attention from the lighted extremity.

Light from a concealed source will also illuminate lines or designs incised on the surfaces of sheets of Plexiglas. The edge of the sheet must be placed next to the source of light in order to produce this effect of a luminous pattern.

Lighting effects may also be secured by focussing spotlights on the sculpture from above. It will be legitimate for competitors to use special light effects as part of their design.

**USE OF CLEAR PLEXIGLAS** Plexiglas can be supplied in practically any color desired, in either transparent or translucent stock. The use of small portions of colored Plexiglas is permitted. But it is mandatory that by far the largest portion of the sculpture should be in the clear transparent material, as this is unique.



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## TECHNICAL DATA

### FORMS IN WHICH PLEXIGLAS IS AVAILABLE

#### SHEETS

Sheets polished on both sides from which shapes of any size can be cut, may be furnished up to 3 feet by 4 feet in any of the following thicknesses:  $\frac{1}{8}$ " —  $\frac{3}{16}$ " —  $\frac{1}{4}$ " —  $\frac{3}{8}$ " and  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Sheets up to 2 feet by 3 feet can be supplied in thicknesses of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 1" and  $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

#### BLOCKS

Blocks 2" and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " thick are available in any proportion having approximately two square feet of surface area and a limit of 4 feet in length. No blocks or lumps thicker than  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " can be supplied.

#### ROUND RODS

Can be supplied up to a length of 4 feet, in diameters of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " —  $\frac{3}{8}$ " —  $\frac{1}{2}$ " —  $\frac{3}{4}$ " — 1" —  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " —  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " — 2" and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

#### SQUARE BARS

Can be supplied in the same dimensions — that is, up to a length of 4 feet, in the following sizes:  $\frac{1}{4}$ " —  $\frac{3}{8}$ " —  $\frac{1}{2}$ " —  $\frac{3}{4}$ " — 1" —  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " —  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " — 2" and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ". Can be supplied polished on 4 or 6 sides.

#### TRIANGULAR BARS

Bars of triangular section can be cut in any dimension within limits listed for square bars.

#### RECTANGULAR BARS

Can be furnished in all thicknesses listed for square bars, and in any desired width up to the width of sheet material; can be polished on 4 or 6 sides.

#### OTHER SHAPES

Cubes, prisms, cones and other geometric or "free" shapes can be furnished by the manufacturer within a limit of  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " for one of the dimensions. The other dimensions can exceed  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " up to the limits of the size of the block from which the fancy shapes could be cut, as listed in block sizes above.

### HANDLING OF MATERIAL

#### BENDING

Plexiglas, technically known as an acrylic resin, is thermoplastic — that is, it softens under heat. Sheets may be heated in an ordinary range oven or in a bath of hot oil or kerosene, but care must be taken that they do not overheat or sag.

**TWO-DIMENSIONAL CURVES:** Sheets heated to a temperature between 200 and 250 degrees Fahrenheit may be bent into two-dimensional curves. The warm sheets may be bent over a wood or metal form covered with felt or another soft cloth. Such forms are available in every household — pipes, washing machines, waste baskets and the like may be used for bending surfaces. Slight bends in long pieces may be made by holding the ends and allowing the material to sag, or by holding one end of a strip, letting it hang vertically and then pressing downward, with the lower end resting on a table.

**THREE-DIMENSIONAL CURVES:** Slightly spherical curves may be made by placing the soft material between two pillows and press-

ing it at various points. For certain curves the human body provides a great variety of surfaces for bending. The sheet is pressed against the body with a pillow or soft pad. Deep spherical curves are difficult, requiring special equipment and it is advisable that they not be attempted.

**Care must be taken at all times to prevent the heated Plexiglas from coming in contact with rough surfaces or dirt particles, as they will harm the surface. (See section — POLISHING — for further instructions on this point.)**

#### CUTTING

Plexiglas may be cut by an ordinary fine tooth hacksaw, a fine tooth circular or band saw, or scroll saw, either hand or power. Care should be taken to avoid scratching when handling the material. When cutting, it should be placed on soft cloth.

Plexiglas can be drilled with an ordinary metal drill and holes can be tapped for screws with ordinary metal taps for metal threading. Small drilled or threaded holes will be visible, as they cannot be polished on the inside.

Plexiglas can be turned on a lathe in much the same manner as metal.

#### POLISHING

**It is most important to avoid scratching in the first place, by careful handling.**

For hand polishing, an automobile cleaner and polisher is recommended. The cleaner is first applied with a damp cloth and rubbed vigorously on the scratch. The cleaner is then rubbed off with a damp cloth and the process is repeated until the scratch is removed. The polisher is applied in the same manner. Care must be taken that the cloth is soft and clean.

**Since it is not practical for the sculptor to polish a sawn edge to a smooth level surface by hand, the surfaces that are to be polished should be indicated on the sketch, so that the manufacturer can supply those pieces with surfaces polished.**

It is not necessary that all edges be polished. If it suits the aesthetic purpose, edges may be left as the saw leaves them—a translucent white.

#### CARVING

The material can be incised or carved with ordinary wood carvers' tools, files, rasps, etc. It should be remembered however that filed surfaces become white and it would not be practical for the sculptor to attempt to polish these surfaces by hand. White rough surfaces are a natural quality of the material and actually will add to the interest of the sculpture if used appropriately. The surface may be sandpapered to create a white surface, if desired.

#### CEMENTING

Surfaces can be cemented together but a slight line will probably show. It is not recommended that the sculptor attempt to cement together large surfaces. For small amounts of cementing the manufacturer will supply cementing compound.

#### FASTENING OF PLEXIGLAS

Other means than cementing can be used. Parts can be bolted or secured together by pins made of thin rods of Plexiglas. Metal fastenings may also be used. The inside surfaces of drilled holes are white and opaque.



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December 13, 1939

MR. EKSTROM  
MISS COURTER

Dear Mr. Ekstrom:

Will you look at the two Plexiglas sculpture in my room on the Mezzanine Floor and let me know how much it would cost to build bases which would include light fixtures? The bases should not be too heavy or too big. They should, however, be able to withstand travelling around the country. If they are not too costly I will send these two sculptures on tour to about four places.

I shall appreciate it if you will also give me an estimate on packing cases in which they could travel safely.

ec:vs  
c.c. Mr. Baxter  
Mr. McAndrew

Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas



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December 11, 1939

MR. MC ANDREW

PLEXIGLAS SCULPTURES

MISS COURTER

Dear John:

Are you planning to show the Plexiglas sculptures upstairs? I would like to get an estimate from Ekstrom on the cost of making stands for the sculptures which would include lighting arrangements. However, unless we plan to show them upstairs I think it would be too costly to do just for travelling. So far we have only two requests for the exhibition.

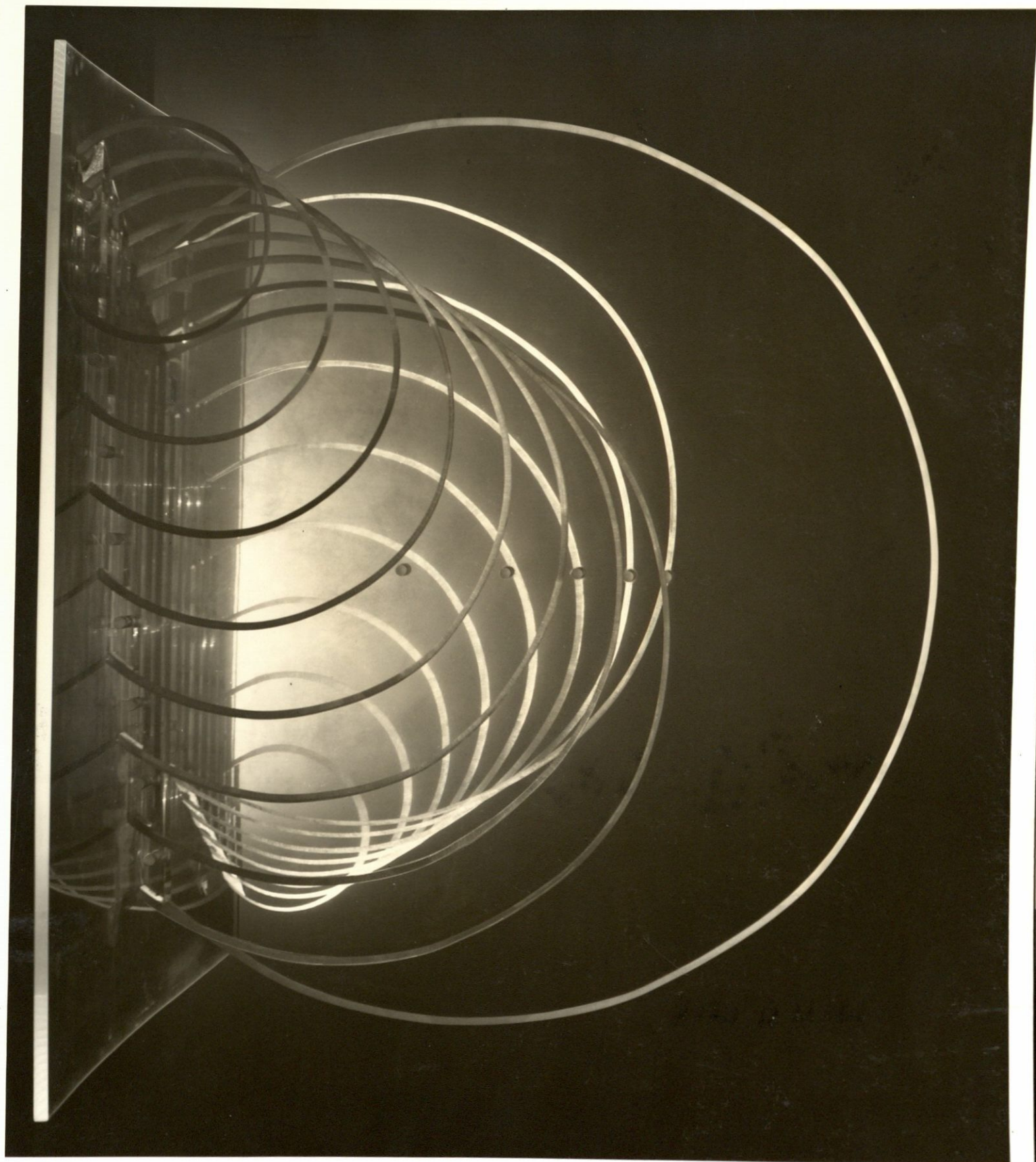
Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas



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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas



NEGATIVE #17243-3

MAY 1939

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

Sponsored by Rohm & Haas & the Museum of Modern Art  
Technical Advisor - Gilbert Rohde  
Judges - Miss Katherine Dreier  
Mr. Robert Laurent  
Mr. James Johnson Sweeney

Fourth Prize Winning Design, entry of C. K. Castaing

Luminous circles appear in this sculpture, the edges of the circular sheets of Plexiglas, and since the sheets grow successively larger, and therefore the luminous circles, the sculpture is given a feeling of great depth and perspective.

This edge lighting is possible because of the property of Plexiglas of carrying light from a light source (in this case concealed in the base of the sculpture) to an outlet point, without giving off light in transit. Plexiglas also carries light around curves in the same manner. Because of this marvellous lighting effects are possible.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PLEXIGLAS WRITE

Rohm & Haas  
222 West Washington Sq.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PLEASE RETURN PHOTOGRAPH TO:

Gilbert Rohde  
22 E. 60th St.  
New York, N. Y.

PUBLISHED BY PLEASE CREDIT

*Louis W. Verlet*

309 HARRISON AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

NEGATIVE NUMBER

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas 1/1



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NEGATIVE #17243-4

MAY 1939

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

Sponsored by Rohm & Haas & the Museum of Modern Art

Technical Advisor - Gilbert Rohde

Judges - Miss Katherine Dreier

Mr. Robert Laurent

Mr. James Johnson Sweeney

Fifth Prize winning design, submitted by Xanti Schawinsky

In this sculpture we find a Euclidian simplicity of curve and cube, with interest lying in the juxtaposition of the curved to straight lines.

The radiating etched lines in the sides form interesting angles, the angles changing with the position of view, but with a constant emphasis on geometrical relationships. These etched lines serve also another purpose - since Plexiglas is so transparent a material the lines serve to make more apparent the existence of the cube.

The use of Plexiglas for the cube in this sculpture is a true use of the material - for only with a transparent material would it be possible to have a part of the design completely enclosed within another form.

In a sculpture of geometric relationships, light when introduced may be considered another dimension. Here light is reflected throughout the sculpture from the base through frosted Plexiglas. Plexiglas has the property of carrying light from a light source to an outlet point, giving off light in transit only at points where the surface is unpolished or "frosted" in appearance. Here the whole base area is "frosted" and so light radiates from the whole area.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PLEXIGLAS WRITE

Rohm & Haas  
222 West Washington Sq.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PLEASE RETURN PHOTOGRAPH TO:

Gilbert Rohde  
22 E. 60th St.  
New York, N. Y.

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas



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NEGATIVE #17243-5 L W

MAY 1939

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

Sponsored by Rohm & Haas & the Museum of Modern Art

Technical Advisor - Gilbert Rohde

Judges: Miss Katherine Dreier

Mr. Robert Laurent

Mr. James Johnson Sweeney

Alexander Calder's entry which received first prize among the 250 entries.

This sculpture is equally interesting and strong when seen from any side, an important factor in its selection, since one of the conditions of the competition was that the entries be "central features", that is, to be viewed from all sides.

Other values in its choice were positive strength, its direct thrust to a focal point, its clarity of purpose, and the fact that its proportions show a real mastery of scale.

The whole sculpture is illuminated from a concealed light source --and through the ability of Plexiglas to carry light around curves and to carry light from a source to an outlet without giving off light in transit, the sheets of this sculpture thus become edge-lit and the extremities of rods show points of light. The manner in which this sculpture exploits these properties makes light an organic part of the design.

Plexiglas as a medium for sculpture offers the ability to pose relationships of color masses, and the balance of dark against light in Calder's sculpture portrays that ability excellently.

The judges also felt that an important contribution to the technique of sculpture had been made in the use of Plexiglas rod to give motion and sweep to the whole design.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PLEXIGLAS WRITE:

Rohm & Haas

222 West Washington Sq.

Philadelphia, Pa.

PLEASE RETURN PHOTOGRAPH TO: Gilbert Rohde  
22 E. 60th St.  
New York, N. Y.

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas



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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas 1/1



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NEGATIVE #17243-2 L.W.

May 1939

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS

Sponsored by Röhm & Haas & the Museum of Modern Art  
Technical Advisor - Gilbert Rohde

Judges - Miss Katherine Dreier  
Mr. Robert Laurent  
Mr. James Johnson Sweeney

Second Prize Winning Design - submitted by Herbert Matter

This design gives a feeling of simplicity and sureness.

The sculpture is illuminated by concealed lighting in the base, and - through the property of Plexiglas of carrying light from a light source to an outlet without giving off light in transit, and also of carrying such light around curves - the edges of this sculpture become lit and form luminous lines of light, which are an integral part of the design of the sculpture.

The sculpture is mainly transparent Plexiglas but introduces a note of color contrast in a suspended sheet of red Plexiglas, to which is attached a section of white translucent Plexiglas. The under surface of the transparent Plexiglas base has been painted white.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PLEXIGLAS WRITE

Röhm & Haas  
222 West Washington Sq.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PLEASE RETURN PHOTOGRAPH TO: Gilbert Rohde  
22 E. 60th St.  
New York, N. Y.

*Louis Werner*  
509 MADISON AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N.Y.  
NEGATIVE NUMBER



17243 2

Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas 1/1



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NEGATIVE #17243-1

MAY 1939

COMPETITION FOR SCULPTURE IN PLEXIGLAS - 3rd Prize by Werner Drewes  
Sponsored by Rohm & Haas and the Museum of Modern Art  
Technical Advisor - Gilbert Rohde  
Judges - Miss Katherine Dreier  
Mr. Robert Laurent  
Mr. James Johnson Sweeney

The bending properties of Plexiglas are fully expressed in the spherical bends and curves of this sculpture. The form evolved is complex, but makes a rythmical composition when viewed from any angle.

The sculpture is illuminated by concealed lighting in the base and this lighting is carried to the edges by the property of Plexiglas to transmit light from a source to an extremity without giving off any of the light in transit, and especially by its ability to conduct light around curves and bends. Thus the lighting can emphasize the form and rythm in this sculpture and become an integral part of the design.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PLEXIGLAS WRITE

Rohm & Haas  
222 West Washington Sq.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PLEASE RETURN PHOTOGRAPH TO:

Gilbert Rohde  
22 E. 60th St.  
New York, N. Y.

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Competition for Sculpture in Plexiglas

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