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# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE COMPETITION

### ORGANIZED BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

is one of the leading furniture dealers in this country closely associated with an event of world-wide interest announced at a dinner last night given by the Museum of Modern Art, New York to launch an International furniture competition, the largest ever held.

is one of the forward-looking stores in 98 cities throughout the country pledged to the competition program of obtaining the best designs from the whole world from which low-cost furniture may be produced and sold. It will be the exclusive representative in for the presentation and selling of furniture resulting from this competition.

Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art, presided at the dinner. \*Addresses were given by Henri Laugier, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, Wallace K. Harrison Director of Planning for the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations, and Ira A. Hirschmann, Trustee of the New York City Board of Higher Education and former Vice President of Bloomingdale's.

For more than a year the Museum of Modern Art and a group of leading furniture manufacturers have been greatly concerned over the fact that although governments and industries throughout the world are at work on the housing problem, scant attention is being given to the design and production of good, inexpensive and attractive furniture.

To serve the needs of the vast majority of people there is need for adaptable furniture for small apartments and houses, well-designed yet moderate in price, comfortable but not bulky, and easily moved, stored and cared for; in other words, mass-produced furniture that is planned and executed to fit the needs of modern living, production and merchandising.

\*See page 3 for excerpts from speeches

To accomplish this, the Museum Design Project, Inc., a non-profit organization, was founded by a group of prominent retail merchants. Representing other leading merchants throughout the country, Museum Design Project took the problem to the Museum of Modern Art, and both organizations began working toward a means of improving low-cost furniture through encouragement of design talent and research activities. After further study, both organizations became convinced that means for a solution of the problem was available. The spectacular advances of technology have given us new materials, tools and productions methods that have already been successfully applied to other branches of manufacture. Individual progressive furniture designers in many countries have done brilliant experimental work but have found it difficult to find ways to translate their ideas into reality.

To break the deadlock and provide a powerful stimulus to designers and technicians to increase their efforts, an International competition for the design of low-cost furniture was organized. As the first step in this important program, Museum Design Project has signed an agreement with the Museum of Modern Art under which the Museum will organize and carry out this international competition for low-cost furniture design. Among the Trustees of the Museum are Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, Walt Disney, Marshall Field, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, Henry R. Luce, William S. Paley, Sam A. Lewisohn, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Beardsley Ruml, Edward M. M. Warburg, and John Hay Whitney.

During the past ten years the Museum has been extremely active in the field of industrial design, and it brings to this task a broad experience in conducting national and international competitions. The terms of the competition will be announced by the Museum within the next month and will be followed by announcements of the jury, the selection of research teams, and of the foreign countries participating.

This competition will be open to individual designers of all countries and to selected research teams consisting of technological laboratories working in collaboration with outstanding designers. The sponsors of the project believe that this competition will draw the attention of technicians and designers from all over the world to this important problem and that it will produce new and fresh designs leading to the manufacture and wide distribution of a new

type of furniture for today's homes.

Museum Design Project, Inc., will act for these merchants to obtain exclusive franchise in their communities for the sale of prize-winning furniture, if and when produced. In certain cases several merchants share the franchise in their city. For the period of the franchise no store in any one community other than those participating in the project will have the right to purchase, sell or exhibit any of this furniture or show any exhibition based on this competition. From time to time the contributing merchants will also receive promotional material for display and publicity releases on the progress of the project.

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#### Excerpts from Addresses

Dr. Henri Laugier, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations in charge of Social Affairs:

"This is a project in harmony with the broader aims of the Secretariat of the United Nations in the problem of raising the standards of living everywhere. The Department of Social Affairs has examined the resources of the world and organized surveys of the best methods to solve the housing situation in the world.

"This project, as I see it, shows a realization on the part of its initiators that in a rehabilitated world the machine must become a means to an end--a means to help make life more liveable and more pleasant for the greatest possible number of men and women everywhere."

Mr. Wallace K. Harrison, Director of Planning for the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations:

"Well here we are again, preparing the start of a competition for designs of furniture for the simple home. You have started by thinking in terms large enough for a problem which is tremendous. I hope this will initiate many advances in the art of furniture manufacturing. This should be not just a competition but a whole new approach to the problem. This must be a method of finding new techniques and, in particular, a method of finding good designs for mass production.

"You have chosen the Museum of Modern Art to conduct this competition. You can be certain that the Museum will assure you a standard of quality found in few other places. Furthermore, with the satisfaction of producing good things, you will have the added pleasure of knowing that to the average human being you will offer for his home possibilities which have heretofore been reserved only for the privileged few.

"Above all, you will have the deep contentment of knowing that you have fulfilled your duty to the civilization which gives you so much by seeing that in your short span everything you touch you will make more beautiful."

Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann, Trustee of the New York City Board of Higher Education and formerly Vice President of Bloomingdale Brothers Department Store in New York:

"The best brains and ideas are being put to work to create houses which will provide the maximum in living comfort from the minimum of space. Little advanced thought and planning have been applied to what will go into these houses. It is a truism that the cheaper the furniture, the larger it is. This is a holdover from the

C5 237

horse-and-buggy and gaslight era when the millions of new citizens, who have since become the backbone of this country, were tempted with overstuffed furniture of massive size--sometimes at overstuffed prices.

"Leading retail merchants who are represented here tonight have, for some time, been conscious of this problem. They have resorted to the most energetic and imaginative steps to harness the genius of the best designers in our civilized world, to the end that a new conception of furniture will result for the home of tomorrow.

"It has been amply demonstrated that simple design need not be expensive. On the contrary, the living quarters of the hundreds of thousands of new homes now going up in the momentum of home building will mean more sun, light, health, and actual living area in less physical space.

"Unless there is a coordination between the two, furniture designed for the obsolete home and apartment will counteract this progressive step on the part of the architects of homes. This Project is designed to bring about that essential eye-to-eye understanding between the designer of the home and the designer of the furniture, and under the ideal auspices of the Museum of Modern Art it will reach those designers as a challenge and a spur. The retailers will guarantee the distribution of the furniture to the large masses of the people who, inarticulate in their desire, will applaud and welcome the long-felt need designed for better living and a realistic approach to their incomes.

"During the war, because the life of our Nation was at stake, America pulled together the best brains available to meet certain practical physical problems. These were related to the destruction of life. There is no reason why the same best brains here and elsewhere cannot be brought together to prolong life and make it happier."