

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

510104 - 1

FOR RELEASE MONDAY, JANUARY 8

MUSEUM'S "DESIGN FOR USE, U.S.A." EXHIBITION SAILED FOR EUROPE

JANUARY 5

Twenty-five thousand pounds of American home furnishings exhibition material left on January 5 to start a tour of the principal cities of Europe and Great Britain. The 500 items that make up this first large show of its kind to travel abroad have been selected by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of this Museum activity; and they will be presented against a striking background, suitable for shipment, prepared by Alexander Girard, Detroit architect. First to exhibit them, early in February, will be the Landesgewerbemuseum in Stuttgart, which was first to ask for such a showing.

## Selected for European Viewpoint

This is the first exhibition of home furnishings prepared by the Museum to be limited to American products only. National boundaries are normally of no importance to the Museum in selecting the best progressive designs, but in this case the European demand for the show is based on their interest in what is being done on this side of the Atlantic. A certain amount of emphasis has been put on items that are typically, even peculiarly, American. On the other hand some items have been omitted because they are so typically American that they would be little understood abroad - such as an ice-cube tray.

American synthetics are well represented in this show since they are so highly developed here. Thus a number of rubber and plastic films by the yard, woven plastics and woven fibres are included in the upholstery section.

Other products included are little known in Europe but typically American: a sectional stove, a Frigidaire stove, a drawer-type refrigerator, a portable dish washer, 3 sizes of radios, an electric iron, a toaster, a meat slicer for home use. Hickory rustic furniture is shown as well as plastic and glass-topped furniture. Hand made

products, such as fabrics, pottery, plastic bowls, are included as well as mass manufactured goods.

### Display Techniques

Alexander Girard has worked out a highly ingenious, simple design for this large undertaking to make the best possible presentation of the progressive side of American design. To achieve this, Mr. Girard obtained the generous co-operation of materials manufacturers.

The most careful kind of research into European conditions of presentation was required. The kind of electric current and the replacement parts available across Europe were determined from information obtained from International General Electric Co., and lighting fixtures were designed to be used to augment the frequently conventional lighting in Europe. A transformer will accompany the exhibition to take care of power differences. The straight-line fixtures to be shipped with the exhibition are a combination of fluorescent tubes and incandescent flood lights arranged so that either or both may be used. No lamps will be required that are not available for replacement overseas. These flexible fixtures may be used for general lighting of the whole display area, or they may be lowered to spotlight the exhibits should it be desirable to minimize a background out of key with the exhibition.

A series of tables and display racks on a unit system go with the show. Each is carefully labeled to correspond with a container inside which are objects destined for that display unit. Each object also carries the label of its container and its display table. Thus three tables are designated for kitchen accessories: one white-topped table for all white accessories, one white table for all yellow accessories and one black-topped table for red and blue accessories. Two tables are assigned to decorative accessories such as vases and ashtrays, both hand and machine made. Many other items such as luggage, toys, etc. are grouped by usage, but furniture and lamps are scattered freely throughout the show.

The especially designed and manufactured display units supply a permanent, good-looking surface for the exhibition and unify the entire display by their clean lines. The top surfaces are made of black or white Panelyte, a plastic contributed by the St. Regis Paper Corp., mounted on light-weight honeycomb paper panels made by the Chrysler

Corp. The frames, of 3 standard heights, are of Unistrut stainless steel channels with demountable legs, thus easy to ship and of light weight. In addition, there are 8-foot high racks for fabrics, grouped according to types of fabrics, which are caught at top and bottom for neatness of display.

The entire exhibition will occupy 7,000 to 8,000 square feet. The standard display units and lights make it easy to rearrange the show to suit a wide variety of surroundings or to divide or reduce the show.

#### Shipping

Two huge lift vans constructed especially as permanent containers will carry all the exhibition items. Cross-braced for strength, they are padded and fitted to protect the objects from damage. Display stands and lighting fixtures fill 15 additional cases.

#### Catalog

A profusely illustrated catalog of the exhibition has been prepared by Mr. Girard and is being printed polylingually in Europe.

Commenting on the shipping of these designs to Europe, Mr. Kaufmann says:

"Imports have always formed an important part of the home furnishings market in the United States. Most of them have been designed for volume selling in our market on a strictly commercial basis. The European manufacturer up to now has focused on the largest volume of business. Hence there has been little exchange in style leadership. If anything we tended to look to Europe for such leadership.

"But since the war, European magazines have been increasingly active in showing American home furnishings. In 1948 the first representation of progressive American furniture was sent by the Museum of Modern Art to Scotland where it was exhibited in a small section of a Scottish furniture show along with Swedish and Danish displays. But 'Design for Use, U.S.A.' will be the first exhibition of modern American home furnishings to be seen in actuality, in quantity and widespread throughout Europe. Now we are beginning to be accepted by Europeans as design originators; they recognize American progressive design in its own right in addition to their interest in the purely commercial side of the United States market."