

# NEWS FROM GOOD DESIGN

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART • THE MERCHANDISE MART

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON EDGAR KAUFMANN, JR., AND FINN JUHL

COMMENTS BY FINN JUHL

ON THE INSTALLATION OF "GOOD DESIGN" AND ON AMERICAN DESIGN

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of "Good Design":

Mr. Kaufmann, who has been Director of "Good Design" since its inception a year ago, has just published a book, "What Is Modern Design?" that will be on sale for \$1 at The Mart in the "Good Design" exhibition. The book, put out by the Museum of Modern Art, is designed for the layman and aims to clarify and simplify the basic purposes of modern design in general and to increase understanding in a controversial field.

Mr. Kaufmann has had an unusual combination of both scholarly and practical business experience in the field in which he works and writes. Born in Pittsburgh in 1910, he went to New York after preparatory school to study painting, and then to Vienna to the Arts and Crafts School of the Austrian Museum. He continued his study of painting in Florence for the following 3 years, where he also assisted in the work of a private printing press, learning much about lettering and bookbinding.

In 1933 he returned to this country and worked for a year with Frank Lloyd Wright. For the following 6 years he worked in Pittsburgh in his father's department store, in the home furnishings departments and later as merchandise manager. It was during the latter part of this period that he took sufficient time off from his department store duties to organize the Museum of Modern Art's first design show of "Useful Objects" in 1938. Two years later he went to the Museum to work full time in the Department of Industrial Design and, after his return from 3 years of service in Army Air Force Intelligence, became head of this department. He is at present Director of "Good Design" for the Museum and serves in a consultant capacity to the Museum on various design projects. He has just completed one such project to assemble more than 500 articles of American home furnishings to be sent abroad for exhibition in the principle cities of Europe and Great Britain, and he will soon leave for Europe to inaugurate these showings.

Finn Juhl:

Comments on the installation and on American design:

Mr. Juhl, well-known Danish architect and designer who has installed the 1951 "Good Design" exhibition, describes some points of his design as follows:

In the hall outside the exhibition, there hang from the ceiling 10 bright yellow, spotlighted tabs, each with one letter on it to spell out "GOOD DESIGN." These are placed at intervals, one behind the other, and each one to the right of the one before it "to lead the visitor in to the entrance to the right," as Mr. Juhl explains.

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The first wall the visitor sees is the same yellow as the tabs so that the visitor will realize that "this is it." Regarding the colors in general, Mr. Juhl says, "I have tried to make them a little brighter and a little more interesting because of working in a space with no windows and no daylight. Though it is not especially important which way the visitor goes through the exhibition, for those who prefer some directional aspect I have designed the installation to lead first straight ahead and then to the right." Towards this end a large green-toned glass wall is set at an angle converging inward towards the back wall, which is white "to give a feeling of spaciousness."

Instead of his originally planned mural which was to have outlined briefly the development of man's techniques as related to design, Mr. Juhl has instead simply placed on the back, white wall a huge photographic enlargement of an ancient piece of simply but effectively decorated pottery found in Swedish excavations. "It is a kind of symbol of all design through the ages in its relation to humans. It is eternal in a way, and would exist whether or not there had ever been any important names in the arts."

Mr. Juhl has tried to stress architectural elements in his installation, feeling this to be the best setting for home furnishings. But rather than attempt to set up actual rooms, "like a toy house, which can become rather monotonous, I prefer the suggestions only of divisions into areas" - the green glass, the bamboo screening which act as partitions yet can be seen through, thus adding to the architectural spaciousness, "because this is suitable to the modern design of the furnishings."

There are contrasts of spacious areas adjoining more crowded areas. One entire wall covered with white lattice-work against a light green background offers contrast to wallpapers, fabrics and pottery placed against it. Square white columns are accented here and there with one side painted in deep orange, purple-blue or pale green-blue, acting as breaks or transitions between sections of the exhibition.

Mr. Juhl feels that American design differs from European design largely because of the preponderance here of the machine-made product. "The awareness of the machine seems to have had a definite influence - as it should - on the designs. But the European items here, even those designed for machine production, show the influence of the tradition of hand production. There is less of the traditional clamping down in this country as compared with Europe, in spite of the limitations necessarily imposed by machines. The eye-catching, the unusual is much more popular here. In my short acquaintance with America it seems to me that here there is a widespread attitude of 'let's try it.' I am sure there must have been many technical and sales difficulties with manufacturers and distributors about some of these products in the long process of getting something new on the market, and yet here they are, mass-produced."

#### Biographical notes:

Finn Juhl was born in Copenhagen in 1912. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in architecture, he worked for several years in an architectural office on the plans for the Danish Government's radio headquarters and for the airport. His work in architecture has included a shop and showrooms for a large porcelain factory. He has built several houses, including his own on the outskirts of Copenhagen. Last year he was appointed architect for the United Nations' Trusteeship Council Chambers as one of the three Scandinavian architects appointed officially for the three Council Chambers, and he is at present working on these plans.

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In 1932 he started to design furniture, which has since been shown and placed on sale in a number of foreign countries including the U. S. In Copenhagen he has won prizes every year in the official competitions in furniture design, and each year he has been given an exhibition of his prize-winning designs. Last year, in addition to the prize show, he was given a retrospective exhibition, comprising the designs for 24 of his chairs, at the official annual art exhibition of the Royal Academy. He is at present designing a line of modern furniture for the Baker Furniture Co. of Grand Rapids, which plans to present it this summer.

On his return to Denmark later this month, Mr. Juhl expects not only to continue work on his United Nations plans and his new furniture line, but also to work on contracts for the design of a complete dinner set of pottery and of some silverware.