

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

Local Girl + 150

Nat'l Design

To: City Editors
Home Furnishings Editors
Picture Editors

August 12, 1953

Dear Sir:

You are cordially invited to attend a special press showing on Tuesday, August 18, of an exhibition called AMERICAN DESIGN FOR HOME AND DECORATIVE USE which has been assembled by the Museum of Modern Art to be circulated in Europe by the United States Information Agency.

The exhibition, described in the attached press release, consists of approximately 300 useful and decorative objects by American designers and producers. Release date for the story is Thursday, Aug. 20.

The exhibition can be seen only at this press showing on Tuesday, August 18, from 2:30 to 4:30 at the Manhattan Storage and Warehouse, 801 Seventh Avenue (53rd Street). It will not be on view at the Museum and will not be shown publicly in America. The first showing will be in Helsinki, Finland, in late October under the auspices of the Finnish-American Society. The exhibition will then be shown in other Scandinavian cities, and possibly in London, Paris and Milan.

Mr. Richard Brecker of the United States Information Agency and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., of the Museum will be present at the press showing for interviews. A complete checklist of items in the show and photographs will be available.

If you would like additional information, please call me at CI.5-8900.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Shaw

Elizabeth Shaw
Acting Publicity Director

P.S. The Manhattan Warehouse regulations do not permit visitors to be admitted after 4 p.m.

Refreshments will be served.

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PRESS PREVIEW: TUESDAY
August 18, 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the
Manhattan Storage and Warehouse
801 Seventh Avenue (53rd Street)

FOR RELEASE: THURSDAY
August 20, 1953

DESIGN EXHIBITION ORGANIZED BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO GO ABROAD

Over 300 useful objects ranging from chairs to earrings and including knives and forks, ashtrays, rugs and kitchen equipment, have been selected by the Museum of Modern Art for an exhibition called AMERICAN DESIGN FOR HOME AND DECORATIVE USE which will be sent abroad this September under the auspices of the United States Information Agency.

The exhibition will have its first showing in Helsinki in late October under the auspices of the Finnish-American Society. It will then travel to other Scandinavian cities and possibly to London, Paris and Milan. The selection was made by a committee composed of Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Philip C. Johnson, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of the Museum's Good Design activity. Mr. Kaufmann organized the exhibition.

This is the first exhibition prepared under the recently inaugurated International Exhibitions Program in collaboration with a government agency. The International Program, a 5-year project directed by Porter A. McCray, was established to foster understanding among nations by presenting American exhibitions abroad and bringing exhibitions from other countries to the U.S.

The purpose of the exhibition, as stated in the accompanying catalog, is to show the best work of present day American designers and producers with emphasis on individual creative expression through machine production, handcraft, or mixed production techniques.

Approximately 40 chairs and tables and 40 printed and handwoven fabrics were selected as well as nearly 120 articles of tableware, such as stainless steel flatware, silver, pottery, wooden bowls and plastic plates. A number of the objects in the exhibition are primarily decorative accessories such as vases and cigarette boxes. Household aids such as a sweeper and a portable washing machine are included along with a dozen rugs, lamps and jewelry pieces. There is a small selection

of especially designed show pieces such as a hand-tufted rug, some examples of hand weaving and specially created furniture.

In his foreword to the catalog which will accompany the show, Mr. Kaufmann sketches the conditions facing American designers: their vast public and the varied materials and methods of production developed in our advancing technology. He describes three attitudes which, he says, have emerged in the United States: designers who are mainly concerned with the possibilities of mass production and mass distribution; designers who believe that the individual expression as seen in handcraft is needed today and the designers who believe that both kinds of design can be combined, not only in the way people live, using both kinds of design, but in the designer's workshop, at the point of creative inception.

In the exhibition, Mr. Kaufmann says, all three attitudes toward design are represented in a diversity of products.

"These products hardly ever give evidence of a unique or solitary way of work. The design office, the craftsman's group or craft school, the collaborative design teams are too prevalent for that.... creative skill in the United States today tends to be the result of an interchange of experiences and insights, the result of a continuing process of trial and error and amelioration, some of it developed in actual use. Many of the best products have been improved over many seasons....in the future we may expect more explicit acknowledgement of continuity, less mention of change."

About 150 American designers are represented in the exhibition; 80 commercial firms have contributed items, while 40 come from the Museum Collection and a dozen from private collectors. This is the first time that items from the Design Collection of the Museum have been sent abroad.

AMERICAN DESIGN FOR HOME AND DECORATIVE USE is the second large traveling exhibition in the design field assembled by the Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with the United States Government. The first of these, an exhibition of American home furnishings called "Design for Use, U.S.A.," was organized in 1951 and toured Europe the following 3 years.

An approximate breakdown on the show gives the following figures:

Method: Objects of industrial design 130

Handmade objects 115

Products of combined technique 80

Items: Tablewares 120; decorative accessories 55; textiles 40

Furniture 35; kitchen and housekeeping equipment 30

Lamps, jewels and miscellaneous items, 12 each; and 6 floor coverings