

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FACT SHEET ON ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN COLLECTION IN "NEW" MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Although the Museum of Modern Art pioneered by including architectural and industrial design objects in its collections, no space is available for continuous display. Only occasionally can the Museum show any of its unique collection of ^{11,000}~~1,000~~ mass-produced utensils and furniture, decorative silver, textiles, Tiffany glass and Matisse vestments, posters, architectural drawings, and models of buildings by the great architects of our time. In the "new" Museum, a whole floor will be devoted to these collections.

The fact that there has not been sufficient space to keep even a part of the collection on view has been particularly important in relation to that part of the architectural and design program which is concerned with the improvement of standard of design. For example, with the Collection chronically hidden in storerooms the public has had no opportunity to measure selections from current work against the best examples in a collection covering a period of roughly 65 years.

As a reminder to the public of this hidden asset, a small sampling of objects have been installed in the second floor galleries along with selections from other parts of the collections, including prints, drawings, photographs, painting and sculpture.

This capsule exhibition of about 120 objects illustrates the range of the Design Collection, from a Thonet chair of the 1860's to the most recent pedestal chair by Eero Saarinen, from an English silver and turquoise jewelry box to inexpensive mass-produced plastic kitchenware. Art Nouveau objects from France and America, a de Stijl chair from Holland, Lobmeyr glass from Austria and a chess set and tapestry designed at the Bauhaus in Germany document the background of the design objects of today. A ball bearing and a boat propeller, first exhibited at the Museum in the famous Machine Art show in 1934, are included to illustrate important characteristics of the Twentieth Century attitude toward design. Chemical ware, kitchen pots and pans, and such recent well designed useful objects as chairs, lamps, tableware, glasses, silver, and household appliances are shown. A chasuble designed by Matisse and a printed circuit, an example of the "new" machine art of the electronics industry, complete the small exhibition.

A model of the Ville Savoye by Le Corbusier (1930), a group of original drawings by Mies van der Rohe of studies for houses and two drawings from the office of Frank Lloyd Wright and a tile from his Midway Gardens are also shown

in this concentrated sampling of works from the Collection. In the "new" Museum, about one third of the Design Collection will be permanently on view with the rest in adjacent storage rooms, easily accessible to students, writers and designers. Also on the same floor, the architectural photographic files will be available. A small gallery will be devoted to changing displays of an experimental nature.

Material for the Design Collection is assembled by the Department's staff, which is under the direction of Arthur Drexler. Their recommendations are presented through the Director of the Museum Collections, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., to a committee comprised principally of trustees. This committee must formally approve design acquisitions (just as it does painting and sculpture) before they can be added to the Museum Collections. In addition, the Department maintains a separate study collection for supplementary material of marginal interest. Objects are chosen for the Collection on the basis of quality and historical significance. An object is chosen for its quality because it is thought to be truly original, or to achieve in high degree those formal ideals of beauty which have become the major stylistic concepts of our time. Significance is a more flexible evaluation. It applies to objects not necessarily works of art but which nevertheless have contributed importantly to the development of design.

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