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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXECUTIVES OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AND BLOOMINGDALE'S INC.

EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF DESIGN COMPETITION AND INTRODUCE  
MEXICAN AND SOUTH AMERICAN WINNERS

A unique industrial design project for the twenty-one American Republics has resulted in a new group of home furnishing to be known as Organic Design, it was announced by executives of the Museum of Modern Art and Bloomingdale's Inc. at a luncheon-meeting held Monday, June 16, in the penthouse of the Museum, 11 West 53 Street,

Wallace K. Harrison, noted architect and Chairman of the Museum's Industrial Design Committee, presided. Speakers were John Hay Whitney, President of the Museum, who introduced the Mexican and South American winners of the Museum's Industrial Design Competitions for Home Furnishings; Ira A. Hirschmann, Vice-President of Bloomingdale's; and Eliot F. Noyes, Director of the Museum's Department of Industrial Design. Also present at the luncheon-meeting were winners of the Design Competition in the United States, and guests.

The purpose of the Design Competitions was to select a group of designers capable of creating a useful and beautiful environment for today's living in terms of furniture, fabrics and lighting. The winners of the Competitions were announced February 1. Winners of the Competition in the United States received royalty contracts for the manufacture of their designs. Winners from the other American Republics received a round trip ticket to New York and \$1,000 for expenses during a three or four months' stay here to visit stores and manufacturing plants and look into ways of utilizing the products of their countries for North American use.

At the luncheon it was announced that a large exhibition of the prize-winning designs and the actual pieces produced from them will open at the Museum of Modern Art on Wednesday, September 24, 1941. Simultaneously the manufactured pieces will be placed on sale in the sponsoring stores throughout the country. Full-scale models of some of the designs submitted by the Mexican and South American winners are

also being constructed and will be displayed at the Museum at the same time.

In introducing the Mexican and South American winners at the luncheon, Mr. Whitney said in part:

"By the dictionary's definition, 'a Museum piece' is something worthy of exhibition in a Museum. Thus, by inference, it is something too rare, too precious, for common use. The very practical turn we have been able, with the help of a far-sighted retailer, to give to the results of our Industrial Design Competition for Home Furnishings, puts us in the paradoxical position of sponsoring an exhibition of these 'Museum pieces' not with the exhibition as an end in itself but only as a means of launching so-called 'Museum pieces' for common use.

"This Competition was particularly felicitous because by means of it we have discovered how well contemporary designers of Central and South America as well as of North America can apply themselves to the practical solution of the problems of contemporary living."

Later in introducing Mr. Hirschmann, Mr. Whitney said:

"A classic example which the old physics books used to cite as proof of the ineffectuality of sound when there is no ear to hear it, was the hypothetical thunderclap over a hypothetical and deserted desert island. Not quite so ineffectual, but nearly so, is the design for a piece of furniture when there is no manufacturer to produce it and no retailer to place it before the public.

"Our Industrial Design Competition has not wasted its thunderclap over a barren desert isle, because, through genuine appreciation of the need for furniture which can keep the pace set by the new developments in housing and architecture, a retail organization has made possible the manufacture and distribution of the winning designs."

Mr. Hirschmann spoke of the Design Competition as the first project drawing upon the best talent of all designers of this continent and opening new fields to them. He also announced the name of the new furniture, "Organic Design." He said in part:

"Much has been done to bring North, Central and South America together. We think that this Design Competition, however, is the most tangible and realistic accomplishment to cement

the relations between the Americas. It is the first project relating to design, manufacturing and distribution which draws on the best resources and talents of all our people on this continent. We like to think of this as a happy symptom, only the beginning of a broader enterprise which will integrate our peoples and serve as a vehicle for the interchange of our talents, energies and industries. One needs more than goodwill to create good business. This project combines both good will and good works.

"It does another thing of first importance today. It gives an answer to youth who has been asking what he can do concretely to open up new fields for his talents, to give expression to his special gifts. It is well to wave a flag and to tell the young people that they must come to the aid of their country when it needs them. That is as it should be. But America must offer more hospitality to its young people than that which says, 'We need you only when we are in danger, when it is necessary for you to use a gun and stand in front of a tank. We have no encouragement or work for you in the so-called peace time.'

"The furniture resulting from this competition began with today's living problems and grew out of their needs. In each piece, neither design nor purpose is accidental or secondary. The design does not lean on the purpose nor the purpose lean on the design. They are necessary one to the other. They are an organic whole. That is why we call this furniture 'Organic Design.'

"The designers of Europe have long drawn upon the museums with their exhibits of the past for their inspiration. Our program works the other way 'round. We, the retailers, draw upon the designer of today--not via the archives of yesterday--not from the museum of yesterday, but from that dynamic, affirmative organization, the Museum of Modern Art."

Mr. Noyes said in part:

"Production of merchandise is a chain in which the designer depends on the manufacturer, and the manufacturer depends on the retailer, who is the final control on what sort of design is presented to the public.

"A year ago, executives from Bloomingdale's came to us at the Museum with the request that we help them procure some

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young designers who could produce for them fresh, sound design. They emphatically did not mean another commercial version of modernistic, but the best contemporary design thinking which we could procure for them. A request of this sort provided exactly the kind of opportunity which the new Department of Industrial Design was hoping for, of course....

"In working out the program for procuring these designs, it was found possible to draw in the largest stores of twelve of the big cities in the country, and in this way to provide nation-wide retail outlets for the merchandise to be produced. Under the sponsorship of our group of twelve stores, we planned a large scale competition in the design of furniture, lighting, and textiles. The prize for winners was to be the manufacture and sale of their designs, for which they were to receive the usual royalties.

"It was about at this point that the second competition was added to the program. We knew vaguely of wonderful woods, interesting fibres, reeds, skins, and other materials which were available in the other American Republics, and we heard occasionally of extremely interesting design work being done in these countries. We therefore planned this second contest to discover what we could of both designers and materials. The purpose was to find designers of ability, and to see in their designs what materials their countries provided and how they used them. As a prize, we offered winners a round trip to New York so that they might see us in our natural surroundings and find out how we live. We wanted them to look us over so that when they return to their own countries they may be able to supply us with designs, materials, and so forth, which fit our way of living.

"I am delighted to be able to announce that in the last few days we have completed arrangements to have sample designs by each of these men actually constructed for our exhibition. With the cooperation of Bloomingdale's, skins, woods, fibres, and such materials are being imported to be used in these pieces--they are coming from Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Over twenty pieces of furniture are to be made up,

in duplicate at least, and these will be on display both here and at Bloomingdale's. It is possible that they may also be made for others of the sponsoring group of stores. In this way we shall be able to present adequately to the United States both the materials and the realization of the designs for which they were used. We sincerely hope that from this project there may grow many further possibilities for collaboration in design and the arts between all the twenty-one American Republics."

The winners introduced at the luncheon were Julio Villalobos, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Bernardo Rudofsky, Sao Paulo, Brazil; Xavier Guerrero, Mexico, D.F.; and Roman Fresnedo, Montevideo, Uruguay. The fifth winner in the Competition was the firm of Domus of Mexico City, composed of Michael van Beuren, Klaus Grabe and Morley Webb. Mr. Grabe will arrive in New York later this week to represent his firm.

Under the leadership of Bloomingdale's Inc., New York City, twelve stores throughout the country are sponsoring the production and sale of the winning designs. These stores have cooperated with the Museum from the time plans were first made to hold the Competition; and they will be the retail outlets for the home furnishings produced as a result of the Competition. It is expected that stores in other cities may join the project. The original sponsoring stores are:

Jordan Marsh	BOSTON, MASS.
Marshall Field	CHICAGO, ILL.
Halle Brothers	CLEVELAND, OHIO
The F. and R. Lazarus Co.	COLUMBUS, OHIO
J. L. Hudson Company	DETROIT, MICH.
Wolf and Dessauer	FORT WAYNE, IND.
L. S. Ayres and Co.	INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
Barker Brothers	LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
Bloomingdale's, Inc.	NEW YORK, N. Y.
Strawbridge & Clothier	PHILADELPHIA, PA.
Kaufmann's Dep't. Stores	PITTSBURGH, PA.
May Company	ST. LOUIS, MO.