

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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WORK OF PRIZE-WINNING AMERICAN DESIGNERS GOES ON EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AND IN DEPARTMENT STORES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Wednesday, September 24, the Museum of Modern Art will open to the public an exhibition of furniture, fabrics and lamps manufactured from the designs which won the prizes in the inter-American Competition which the Museum's Department of Industrial Design conducted from September 30, 1940 to January 11, 1941. The exhibition will remain on view at the Museum through November 9 and will then be shown at the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Mass.; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md.; College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.; Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.; Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn.; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.; and the University of New Hampshire, Durham, N. H.

The Museum has devoted to the exhibition all of the gallery space on its first floor and has even built an additional gallery which extends out into the garden. The entire series of galleries at the rear of the Museum's second floor will be given over to the work of the Latin-American winners in the Competition.

The exhibition and the Competition which was a preliminary part of it, is the first major project of the Museum's Department of Industrial Design which was established in the early summer of 1940. It demonstrates the intention of the Museum, through this new department, to become a positive force in giving fine modern design its normal place in today's environment. Further competitions with resultant exhibitions may be initiated in other products such as automobiles, china and glassware, radios, compacts, locomotives, tooth brushes and many other objects large and small used in today's living.

Eliot Noyes, Director of the Museum's Department of Industrial Design, managed the Competition and with the help of Alice Carson, technical assistant in the department, has designed and installed the exhibition. In the catalog which the Museum will publish for the

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exhibition, Mr. Noyes explains the meaning of the phrase Organic Design as follows:

"A design may be called organic when there is an harmonious organization of the parts within the whole, according to structure, material, and purpose. Within this definition there can be no vain ornamentation or superfluity, but the part of beauty is none the less great--in ideal choice of material, in visual refinement, and in the rational elegance of things intended for use."

In a note on the exhibition Mr. Noyes writes in part:

"The wonders of modern mechanism, we all know, have wrought much more than a change in our habits of life. Economics and politics and the fate of nations in war and peace are all affected by the vast recent changes in the equipment of man.

"In some respects, however, we foolishly flatter ourselves. We are not as modern as we think. In private, at home, most of us still live in the clutter of inheritance from the nineteenth century. Much of this out-of-date and rigidified furniture is no longer in tune with today's esthetic requirements, and is certainly far from suitable to our needs. Through design inertia, modern mass manufacture has simply seized upon and lifelessly repeated many weary old styles that are often neither beautiful nor practical.

"Obviously the forms of our furniture should be determined by our way of life. Instead, for the most part, we have had to adapt ourselves uncomfortably and unreasonably to what has happened to be manufactured. For several years the Museum of Modern Art has been studying this problem in order to foster a collaboration between designer, manufacturer, and merchant, to fill this strange gap in the conveniences for modern existence."

The designers who won awards in the Industrial Design Competition will have the unique opportunity of seeing their designs and the corresponding manufactured pieces on exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art at the same time they go on sale in twelve retail stores throughout the country. As a concrete result of the Museum's Competition, contracts from manufacturers were arranged for all the prize-winners and for some of those who had received honorable mention. In some cases, designers were asked to make additional pieces for the manufacturers.

With one or two exceptions, the designers are in their thirties or younger. Some are American-trained; others are Americans with European training; and some have come from Europe to establish themselves in this country. Only one first prize went to designers in New York; the other winners are scattered throughout the country. There were five prize winners from Latin-American countries.

Eero Saarinen and Charles O. Eames of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, were first prize winners in two categories. In their designs for Category A: Seating for a Living Room, they have evolved an entirely new principle of chair construction consisting of a shell cast

like a piece of sculpture.

In Category B - Other Furniture for a Living Room, they have developed a group of unit furniture of multiple use which may be arranged in an almost infinite number of combinations. Mr. Saarinen, a young architect who has won many prizes, was born in Finland in 1910 and is the son of Eliel Saarinen, a noted architect who has worked for many years in this country. Mr. Eames was born in 1907 in St. Louis, Mo., and studied architecture in Washington University. He is now teaching design in Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

No submissions were found worthy of a first prize in Category C - Furniture for a Dining Room.

First prize winners in Category D - Furniture for a Bedroom - were Oscar Stonorov and Willo von Moltke of Philadelphia. The winning bedroom furniture consisted of flexible or interchangeable units on interesting structural bases. Oscar Stonorov was born in Germany in 1905 and studied at the Ecole Polytechnique Federale, Zurich. In 1932 he started practicing architecture in the United States as a Housing consultant for the P.W.A. He is now practicing in Philadelphia. Willo von Moltke was born in Silesia in 1911 and graduated from the Technische Hochschule, Berlin. He has worked in both England and Sweden and for Alvar Aalto on the medical center for Caracas, Venezuela, and the Finnish Pavilion at the World's Fair.

The New York winners were Martin Craig and Ann Hatfield, awarded first prize in Category E - Furniture for a One-Room Apartment. This group, preeminently suited to New York living, is of solid natural birch and includes five basic units and an unusual swivel couch which can be converted into a sofa or full-size bed, as well as other pieces. Martin Craig is not only a designer but a sculptor. He was born in 1906 in Paterson, New Jersey. He and Miss Hatfield both work in New York. The latter was born in 1903 in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, and has worked for Pola and Wolfgang Hoffman, the Plymouth Patchogue Mills and also the Decorating Department of B. Altman and Company. In 1938 she opened her own office for "Suitable Interiors" and has collaborated with architects in carrying out interiors of the Museum of Modern Art and Time and Life Reception Room and offices.

Outdoor living, an increasingly popular aspect of American life, has given rise to new problems for designers. Harry Weese and Benjamin Baldwin of Kenilworth, Illinois, have contributed an interest-

ing solution in a group of informal but sturdy tubular steel pieces-- prize winners in Category F - Furniture for Outdoor Living. Harry Weese is a native of Evanston, Illinois. In 1938 he received his degree from M.I.T. and is now working with Benjamin Baldwin, with whom he collaborated in the Museum Competition. Mr. Baldwin was born in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1913, and is a graduate of the Princeton School of Architecture. Like Mr. Weese he received a fellowship to Cranbrook Academy of Art. During 1939-40 he was technical supervisor for the W.P.A. in Alabama.

Peter Pfisterer, architect, was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1907 but is now active on the West Coast. He received his architectural training at the University of Vienna and worked in French and Swiss offices. From 1933 to 1940 he was associated with Richard J. Neutra in Los Angeles. He served in 1940 as State Architect and chief of Planning Office for National Youth Administration in Los Angeles. It is as a designer of ingenious and flexible lamps that he appears in the present group--the winner in Category G - Movable Lighting Equipment.

The only other woman besides Miss Hatfield to win a first prize was Marli Ehrman for her textiles in Category H - Woven Fabrics. Born in 1904 in Berlin, she studied at the Royal Arts and Crafts School, Berlin, and at the Bauhaus where she also had an experimental weaving shop. Since 1938 she has continued this work as head of the Textile Workshop of the School of Design, Chicago.

First Prize for Category I - Printed Fabrics, was won by Antonin Raymond of New Hope, Pennsylvania. These designs in various colors as well as Miss Ehrman's fabrics, have been used extensively on many of the winning chairs and beds. Mr. Raymond, who was born in Czechoslovakia, worked in the office of Cass Gilbert and Frank Lloyd Wright. With Wright he went to Japan where he consequently stayed to practice from 1921 to 1938. Since 1939 he has worked as architect, engineer and designer in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

Carl Anderson and Ross Bellah of Los Angeles received Honorable Mention in Category A, for their rattan chaises and sectional chairs; and Emrich Nicholson and Douglas Maier of New York City also received Honorable Mention in the same category. Their designs have been made up as samples which may be produced in quantity later.

The department stores which cooperated with the Museum in the Competition and where the prize-winning pieces will be put on sale, are

as follows: L. S. Ayres and Company, Indianapolis; Barker Brothers, Los Angeles; Bloomingdale's, Inc., New York; Famous-Barr Company, St. Louis; Marshall Field and Company, Chicago; Gimbel Brothers, Philadelphia; Jordan Marsh Company, Boston; The Halle Brothers Company, Cleveland; The J. L. Hudson Company, Detroit; Kaufmann Department stores, Pittsburgh; The F. & R. Lazarus and Company, Columbus; Wolf and Dessauer, Fort Wayne.

The following manufacturers collaborated in carrying through the production of furniture, fabrics and lamps from the prize-winning designs: Cyrus Clark Company, Inc., New York; Ficks Reed Company, Cincinnati; Haskelite Manufacturing Corp., Chicago; Heywood-Wakefield Company, Gardner; Moss Rose Manufacturing Company, Philadelphia; Mutual-Sunset Lamp Manufacturing Company, New York; Red Lion Furniture Company, Red Lion; Red Lion Table Company, Red Lion; Valley Upholstery Corporation, New York.

Samples of the Latin American designs were made by Bielecky Brothers, John B. Salterini, and Christian Von Oehsen, of New York; and The Mahoney Chair Company of Gardner, Massachusetts.

The catalog which the Museum will publish simultaneously with the exhibition has text by Eliot Noyes analyzing the development of modern furniture. The book contains 48 pages and 91 halftone plates. The retail price is \$1.00.