

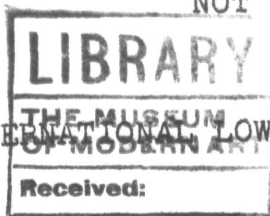
# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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NOT TO BE RELEASED UNTIL JANUARY 19



## AWARDS GIVEN IN INTERNATIONAL LOW-COST FURNITURE COMPETITION

Nelson Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, presented checks to the designers, here from various parts of this country and Europe, whose entries were judged best in the Competition for Low-Cost Furniture sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum Design Project, Inc. Nearly 3,000 entries had been submitted from 31 countries. The event took place at a cocktail party given in honor of the winners in the Museum's Penthouse at 5 o'clock on Tuesday, January 18, 1949. In making the awards, Mr. Rockefeller stated:

"The competition has fulfilled our highest expectations. It has demonstrated the effectiveness of close co-operation between scientist and designer, museum and industry. It has been truly international in that it brought together designers from all over the world to help solve an important social problem and has resulted in designs and technical reports that should make a real contribution to the improvement of standards of living."

### AWARD WINNERS:

The first prize for seating units, \$5,000, was divided between Don R. Knorr and Professor Georg Leowald. Don R. Knorr, 26-year-old

veteran of the Navy, born in Chicago, is a graduate of the University of Illinois where he also took a degree in architecture under the G. I. Bill of Rights and taught architectural design for one year. He then studied a year at Cranbrook Academy, majoring in design, specializing in furniture. He now works in Eero Saarinen's office at Bloomfield Hills in both furniture and architecture. He executed his winning chair during evenings and weekends.

Professor Georg Leowald from Berlin-Frohnau, the French Sector, is a designer hitherto unknown in this country who flew here from Germany to receive the award. From Germany had come more entries in the Competition than from any other foreign country.

The second prize for seating units, \$2,500, was divided between Charles Eames and the University of California, Los Angeles Campus, group with which he was working and Davis J. Pratt. Eames studied architecture at Washington University on scholarship, won an architectural fellowship to Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1938 and worked there with Eliel and Eero Saarinen during 1939-40. With Eero

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Saarinen he won two first prizes in the Organic Design Competition conducted by the Museum of Modern Art in 1940-41. During the war he designed splints for the armed forces in association with the Molded Plywood Division of the Evans Products Co. with which he now works. An exhibition of "New Furniture Designed by Charles Eames" was held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946. The group with which he worked in Los Angeles consisted of members from the University's Engineering Department and his own design workshop.

Davis J. Pratt, 31-year-old veteran of OSS, studied in Chicago where he now teaches at the Institute of Design, in the Product Design Department. A steel-tubing and plywood chair of his design, markedly differing from the present prize-winning design, was included in the exhibition "Art in Progress" held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944. He wishes to acknowledge a debt to his wife, Elsa, and his brother, John, for help in this newest chair.

The third prize for seating units, \$1,250, went to Alexey Brodovitch, Art Director of Harper's Bazaar since 1934. Born in St. Petersburg in 1898, he spent the 1920s in Paris and came to this country in 1930. Self-taught in his field, Mr. Brodovitch, in addition to his art director work, has designed packages for cosmetic accounts. Also he devotes much time and thought to courses he teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York on what he calls "Graphic Journalism." He has been interested for some time in furniture design, but this is his first recognition in the field.

The Simmons Prize, offered for a sleeping unit convertible for daytime use, was not awarded as no designs were submitted which were superior to those already in use.

When it came to judging storage units, the jury awarded only the first prize. This prize of \$5,000 was awarded to Robin Day and Clive Latimer, well-known British designers, for their sectional unit storage pieces. Both Englishmen are 33 years old. Mr. Day is a designer of general industrial products, of exhibitions, especially for the Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., and of posters and typographical design. Extensive work in radio cabinet design led him to investigation of unconventional forms of cabinet construction. Mr. Latimer teaches furniture design at Central School of Arts and Crafts and has worked as a member of the Design Panel of the Board of Trade, the designing agency for the British furniture industry. He planned and designed furniture for the "Britain Can Make It" exhibition in veneered aluminum sheet, a new material since the war.

The \$2,500 prize for the best research report went to James L. Prestini and the Armour Research Foundation of the Illinois Institute of Technology, where he is working at present. Mr. Prestini studied at Yale University, at the University of Stockholm where he specialized in furniture design, and at the Institute of Design in Chicago. He has taught in a number of colleges in various parts of this country, and his designs, exhibited widely both here and abroad, may be found in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, Northwestern University and other institutions.

All six of the reports from the research teams are to be published in the near future, for the benefit of the furniture industry as a whole.

Honorable Mentions, carrying no reward, were given for a seating unit design to John O. Merrill and John B. McMorran of the Massachu-

setts Institute of Technology; for a storage unit design to Ernest Race, an English designer.

Ira A. Hirschmann, Executive Director of the Museum Design Project, Inc. has made the following statement:

"NO MODELS, DESIGNS OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANY KIND WILL BE RELEASED UNTIL THE FURNITURE HAS BEEN MASS-PRODUCED, EXHIBITED AND PLACED ON THE MARKET."

"This restriction was made in order to protect the design rights of both the designers and the manufacturers. It is an essential step in carrying out the project of the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum Design Project, Inc. that the prize-winning designs shall reach people's homes in a practical way."

STATEMENTS REGARDING SIGNIFICANCE AND GENERAL TRENDS:

Harry Fish, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Museum Design Project, Inc., states:

"A revolution is growing in the field of designs and techniques in the manufacture of furniture. A new approach to the problems is being forced by the pressing need for furniture to fit into the twenty billion dollars worth of new homes that will be built within the next two decades. Much of the furniture of the 1930s and the 1940s is already becoming dated. It is not designed to fit into the rooms in the new housing developments, and it is much too high in price for the average income.

"Furniture manufacturers spurred by a group of retailers have moved to meet this crisis. For the first time in the history of the furniture industry, educational, industrial and creative forces have pooled their resources and active interest to create a vehicle for tapping the best design and technical brains in the civilized world. A dynamic museum, some of the nation's finest research laboratories and many forward-looking retailers and manufacturers have joined together to take this progressive step so vital to the future history of the entire industry."

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Director of the Competition and Consultant on Industrial Design for the Museum of Modern Art, has summed up the general trends in today's furniture design as indicated by the competition entries:

"In the category of seating, certain themes predominated. First among these was that of demountable furniture, advantageous for ease, safety and economy in transportation. Next there was emphasis on reducing the number of parts which compose a chair - a frequent device was two pieces of sheet material diagonally crossed, each one cut out to include two of the chair legs. The next most important theme was the use of foam rubber for upholstery, and springs forming a thin meshed surface were often presented in place of coils. There was also frequent use of form fitting shapes usually presented with hard surfaces.

"In the category of storage units, two main themes were evolved to overcome the expense inherent in multiple joints. Most frequently presented were cabinets with molded parts. Molded one-piece drawers were the most frequent theme of all. Another theme much presented was a system of formed frames into which simple sheet material

could be slipped. Roll-top tambour fronts and similar devices showed up more frequently than hinged doors or sliding doors. In this field knock-down entries were also numerous. Above all there was a great effort to reduce the number of parts necessary to construct such a piece."

#### THE JURY:

Alfred Auerbach, design and merchandise consultant, head of Alfred

Auerbach Associates. Mr. Auerbach was Editor-in-Chief of Retailing magazine for 15 years. An early writer in behalf of modern design, he has contributed many articles to periodicals here and abroad, and he is a frequent lecturer on the subject. During the war, he was Director of the Consumer Goods Division of OPA.

Catherine Bauer, housing expert, Vice-President of the National Public

Housing Conference of Washington, D. C. Author of "Modern Housing" published in 1934, and a Guggenheim student of housing and planning abroad, Miss Bauer was instrumental in the promotion of basic social legislation in the housing field and in the passage of the U. S. Housing Act of 1937. She has been a professor and lecturer in a number of the larger universities in the country, a consultant to several government housing and planning boards.

Luis de Florez, President of the de Florez Engineering Co., former

Deputy Chief of Naval Research. Active in engineering research for naval aviation in both World Wars, Rear Admiral de Florez received among other honors the Legion of Merit and the Distinguished Service Medal. In civil life he has been granted scores of patents for his inventions particularly in the oil refining industry.

Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of Curatorial Departments, Museum of

Modern Art. Mr. d'Harnoncourt has been Chairman of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the Department of the Interior, and also Chairman of the Committee on Manual Industries for the Inter-American Development Committee. In addition to his Museum work, he has been active in UNESCO affairs since its establishment.

Hugh Lawson, Divisional Merchandise Manager of Home Furnishings,

Carson Pirie Scott & Co., Chicago, since 1938.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Director, Department of Architecture, Illi-

nois Institute of Technology. Mr. van der Rohe first practiced architecture in Berlin where he directed architectural exhibitions and was the First Vice-President of the Deutscher Werkbund. From 1930-33 he was Director of the Bauhaus in Dessau and Berlin. He came to this country in 1938. A large retrospective exhibition of his work was held in the Museum of Modern Art in 1947.

Gordon Russell, Director, Council of Industrial Design, Great Britain.

As early as 1919, after his demobilization, Mr. Russell established his own furniture manufacturing firm where some of the best-known designers in Britain received part of their training. He has studied design extensively in Europe and America and has written, lectured and broadcast for many years. Besides numerous other honors bestowed on him, he has been elected a Royal Designer for Industry and a First Fellow of the Society of Industrial Artists.

#### BACKGROUND OF THE COMPETITION:

Manufacturers, retailers, designers and research laboratories all banded together on a nationwide scale to produce furniture of good

design that could be sold at prices within the average man's income. Co-sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum Design Project, Inc., the Competition, offering prizes and grants totaling \$55,000, was announced in January 1948. It closed on October 31 having brought forth nearly 3,000 entries from designers in 31 countries. The jury met and made their decisions over a period of three days and nights during Thanksgiving weekend. Participating manufacturers now have a chance to open negotiations with the designers to put the winning designs into mass production, and they also have the sponsorship of retailers in more than 200 cities. The Museum will exhibit the final selections in New York and in various other parts of the country after the furniture has been produced and is for sale in local stores.