

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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FOR RELEASE Saturday afternoon or  
Sunday morning, March 3 or 4, 1934.

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces that its Exhibition of Machine Art will open to the public on Wednesday, March 7, and will continue until April 16. It will be an exhibition of beautiful objects rather than an industrial show or an art exhibition in the usual sense. The objects to be shown are produced by machines for domestic, commercial, industrial and scientific purposes. Beauty--mathematical, mechanical, and utilitarian--has determined their selection for display in the Exhibition, regardless of whether their fine design was intended by artist or engineer or was merely the unconscious result of the efficiency compelled by mass production.

Nearly twenty-five hundred years ago Plato defined the beauty of form which served as a guiding principle in choosing the objects for the Exhibition. In the Philebus, he says: "By beauty of shapes I do not mean as most people would suppose, the beauty of living figures or of pictures, but, to make my point clear, I mean straight lines and circles, and shapes, plane or solid, made from them by lathe, ruler and square. These are not, like other things, beautiful relatively, but always and absolutely."

Commenting on the Exhibition, Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, points out that "In Plato's day the tools were simple handworker's implements but today, as a result of the perfection of modern materials and the precision of modern instruments, the modern machine-made object approaches far more closely and more frequently those pure shapes the contemplation of which Plato calls the first of the 'pure pleasures.'

"Machines are, visually speaking, a practical application of geometry. Forces which act in straight lines are changed in direction and degree by machines which are themselves formed of straight lines and curves. The lever is geometrically a straight line resting on a point. The wheel and axle is composed of concentric circles and radiating straight lines. The watch spring is a spiral. Sphericity and circularity are the geometrical characteristics of a ball bearing. Screws, coil spring and propellers are various--and variously beautiful--applications of the helix and helicoid.

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"The beauty in Machine Art as in all art varies in relation but not in proportion to its complexity. A watch crystal, perfect though it may be, is too simple a form to hold our visual interest for long. A printing press, on the other hand, is too complicated an arrangement of shapes for the human eye to enjoy aesthetically. Moderately simple machine compositions prove more satisfactory."

Mr. Philip Johnson, Chairman of the Department of Architecture of the Museum, has directed the Exhibition. In outlining the history of Machine Art in the catalog of the Exhibition, he contrasts handicraft with mass production, stating that "The difference between craft and the machine lies in spirit and convention as much as in actual method of manufacture. Tools, and simple machines have always been used: the potter's wheel and the hand loom are machines. Modern equipment is merely more efficient and complex. But whether the designer sits at the loom and works up the pattern as he weaves or whether a motor weaves and the designer sits in an office, the actual work is by machine. A man at a hand loom can weave a rug of machine-like simplicity. A glass blower can make laboratory beakers as well as picturesquely shaped vases. But the craft spirit does not fit an age geared to machine technique. Machine made imitations of craft objects are parodies, and the real handicrafts have lost their original vigor."

For the convenience of the visitor to the Exhibition, the objects displayed have been divided according to use into six categories:

1. Industrial units: Machines and machine parts: springs, insulators, cable sections, propeller blades, etc.
2. Household and office equipment: Sink, furnace, bathroom cabinets, dishwasher, carpet sweeper and business machines.
3. Kitchenware.
4. House furnishings and accessories: Objects used in daily life: tableware, vases and bowls, smoking accessories, lighting fixtures, and furniture.
5. Scientific instruments: Precision, optical, drafting and surveying instruments.
6. Laboratory glass and porcelain: Beakers, hydrometer jars, petri dishes and boiling flasks.

The Committee in charge of the Exhibition is composed of Stephen C. Clark and Nelson A. Rockefeller, Trustees, and A. Conger Goodyear, President of the Museum.

The exhibitors are The Accessories Co. Inc., Aluminum Company of America, The Aluminum Cooking Utensil Co., The Accessories Co., Inc., American Radiator Company, American Sheet & Tin Plate Co., American Steel & Wire Company, Arundell Clarke Ltd., The Bingham Stampin; & Tool Co., Bissell Carpet Sweeper Co., The Brown Instrument Company, Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Co., L. D. Cahn Company, Carnegie Steel Co., Chase Brass & Copper Company, Clyde-Mallery Line, Conant Bros. Co.

The Conover Co., Coors Porcelain Co., P. & F. Corbin, Corning Glass Works, Design Engineers, Inc., Dictaphone Sales Corporation, Eugene Dietzgen Co., Inc., Henry Disston & Sons, Inc., Distillers Products Corp., Alfred Dunhill of London, Inc., Eimer & Amend, Electric Boat Company, Electrol Inc., Electromaster Inc., The Fay Company, Fleetwings, Inc., Ford Motor Company, Fostoria Glass Co., The Gorham Co., Hamilton Beach Manufacturing Company, Hamilton-Standard Propeller Corp., Hanson Scale Company, Hoffmann & Billings Manufacturing Company, Holophane Co., Inc., Howell Co., The International Nickel Co., Inc., Jaeger Watch Co., Inc., Janes & Kirtland, Inc., Lalance & Crosjean Mfg. Co., Leeds & Northrup Co., Lenox Inc., Lewis & Conger, Lily-Tulip Cup Corp., Herman Miller Clock Co., The National Cash Register Co., National Tube Company, Ovington's, Owens-Illinois Glass Co., Platinel, Inc., Platinum Products Company, Polar Ware Co., Inc., Revere Copper & Brass Inc., Ritter Dental Manufacturing Co., Inc., S K F Industries, Inc., Saks-Fifth Avenue, Scovill Manufacturing Co., Scully Steel Products Co., The Silex Company, Standard Gage Company, The Standard Oil Co. of Ohio, Carol Stupell, Sullivan Shipyards Inc., Taylor Instrument Companies, Thonet Brothers, Inc., The Torsion Balance Co., United States Steel Corp., Kurt Versen, Waters-Genter Co., Western Clock Company, Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Co., The S. S. White Dental Manufacturing Co., Russel Wright, The Yale & Towne Manufacturing Co., York Safe & Lock Co., Carl Zeiss Inc.

The catalog of the Exhibition is an elaborate book of 116 pages and 115 half-tone illustrations, more than in any previous catalog issued by the Museum. The catalog will thus serve as a useful guide for the person who wants to use or study the art of the machine. The price is \$1.50 for the paper-bound, \$3.50 for the cloth-bound book.