

The Museum of Modern Art

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ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN COLLECTION ON VIEW IN NEW GALLERIES

Beginning May 27 The Museum of Modern Art will be the only place in the world where an international selection of 20th century furniture, useful objects, posters and other graphic design, and architectural models and drawings selected on the basis of quality and historical significance will be permanently on view.

The exhibition, installed in the new Philip L. Goodwin Galleries, is drawn from the Museum's unique Architecture and Design Collection of almost 4,000 items surveying the major styles of the 20th century from Art Nouveau to the present. Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, has selected and installed the exhibition which is one of nine shows marking the opening of the Museum's new galleries and enlarged Sculpture Garden.

The material on view ranges from Tiffany Glass to mass-produced plastic boxes, from turn-of-the-century innovations in manufacturing and design to new products; from machine art to electronic components.

Among the Collection material being exhibited for the first time are selections from 57 original drawings by Mies van der Rohe covering three decades of his work and from 40 original drawings by Louis Kahn. Both gifts were made to the Museum by the architects. Models of the Robie House by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Savoye House by Le Corbusier and the Richards Medical Center by Louis Kahn are also shown in this section.

Examples of graphic design, drawn from the Museum's extensive poster collection, will include more than 30 posters from 10 countries.

Historically the earliest group of material on view is Art Nouveau, the international style that flourished from approximately 1893 to 1910 and was the first movement in the arts to break with the custom - prevalent in the 19th century - of

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imitating past styles. Like the painting of van Gogh, Gauguin and Lautrec, Art Nouveau was influenced by the curvilinear patterns of Japanese prints at the time popular in Europe and America. The sinuous whiplash curve became Art Nouveau's typical contour, embracing everything from poster design to architecture with forms often reminiscent of plants and flowers.

Examples on view include a large desk by the French designer Hector Guimard, which not only employs what are now called free-form shapes, but also anticipates today's practice of grouping separate storage elements in a convenient "L" plan; tableware from Scotland; a pewter candleholder from Germany; and a silver jewel box from England. A special vitrine is devoted to a selection of the more than 200 objects by the famous American Louis C. Tiffany in the Joseph Heil Collection given to the Museum in 1961.

The influential de Stijl movement, initiated by Dutch painters during World War I, existed as an organized group from 1917 to 1928. Its best known exponents were the painter Piet Mondrian, the painter-architect-writer Theo van Doesburg, the architect Gerrit Rietveld and the sculptor Georges Vantongerloo.

Like Art Nouveau, de Stijl developed unifying concepts affecting all the arts. But while the richly curvilinear Art Nouveau was dependent on organic forms, de Stijl reduced the elements of composition to independent rectangles and circles; replaced traditional symmetry with freely asymmetrical balance; and used clear, flat, primary colors. The theories advanced by de Stijl artists still provide the basic formal aesthetic of much modern design and most modern architecture. Examples in the exhibition include a table lamp, a side chair/^{and} an armchair by Rietveld, and a perspective drawing of a house by van Doesburg and van Eesteren.

Established successively in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin from 1919 to 1933, the Bauhaus school was the focal point in the integration of design with the machine age. The artists and designers who taught and worked there were far more preoccupied with problems of function than were de Stijl artists, but their functional solutions were expressed in geometric forms influenced by de Stijl concepts. Some Bauhaus ideas
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that broke with European precedent were the use of metal tubes in the design of furniture and other household objects; stacking furniture designed for easy storage; and highly polished surfaces relieved by textures rather than ornament. Objects on view designed at the Bauhaus include a silver tea pot, a lamp, a fruit bowl, tea glasses, textiles, and a cantilevered chair by Marcel Breuer - the prototype of thousands of metal chairs now seen throughout the world.

The section of the exhibition devoted to industrial design objects includes an airplane propeller blade, laboratory equipment, a boat propeller (shown in the Museum's "Machine Art" exhibition in 1934), as well as printed circuits and other electronic components. Among the mass-produced useful objects are the Olivetti office typewriter, plastic kitchen containers by Tupper, porcelain cups and saucers and stainless steel flatware, industrial packages, and a group of clocks.

Furniture in the exhibition is arranged chronologically on a low platform at one end of the galleries; posters from each successive period are mounted on the wall behind. Beginning with a bentwood Thonet chaise, a 19th century design which led to the mass production of standardized furniture, and followed by chairs by Gaudi and Mackintosh, the sequence includes an early chair by Frank Lloyd Wright, the classic chairs of the '20s by Breuer and Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe's "Barcelona Chair," and chairs from the '40s and '50s by Alvar Aalto, Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen. The section concludes with a 1963 couch by George Nelson and a new rattan chair from Japan, designed by Kenmochi. Desk lamps are shown with the furniture and there is a separate group of floor lamps.

A selection of 20th century crafts includes Japanese pottery, glass by the Italian Venini, wood platters from Finland and America, a tapestry by Anni Albers and one of a set of vestments designed by Matisse for the Vence Chapel.

Although the Department of Architecture and Design has presented 169 temporary exhibitions of loan and collection material, and has published many books and catalogs, lack of space has prevented its unique and constantly growing collections

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from being permanently on view. Now, with the completion of the first phase of the Museum's building program, a significant selection can be continuously shown. When the Museum's west wing is added later in the '60s, the Philip L. Goodwin Galleries of Architecture and Design will occupy four times the space now available, allowing a more detailed presentation together with ready access to material in storage.

This permanent exhibition of work selected from the Collections is presented as a standard of reference for the general public, students, designers and artists. It supplements the program of temporary loan shows of architecture and design which will be on view periodically in other galleries in the Museum. This summer the temporary exhibitions are: "Two Design Programs: The Braun Company, Germany and the Chemex Corporation, U.S.A. (May 27 - Sept. 20); and "Twentieth Century Engineering" (June through the summer): In the fall, the Department will present "Architecture without Architects" and in the spring of 1965, a survey of modern architecture in this country.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.