

Overstuffed 'Gorilla' Armchair 1941

Installation photograph from *Organic Design in Home Furnishings* exhibition, designed by Eliot Noyes

Photograph by Samuel Gottscho

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York

This tableau from 1941 represented the tradition of "horrible" design against which MoMA curators prepared to crusade. It shows the dismembered carcass of an old-fashioned, overstuffed armchair behind bars, against the backdrop of an enormous gorilla. Using zoological terms, the accompanying label describes the domineering, ungainly monstrosity of the armchair, and the jungle like clutter of its habitat: "Cathedra gargantua, genus americanus. Weight when fully matured, 60 pounds. Habitat, the American Home. Devours little children, pencils, small change, fountain pens, bracelets, clips, earrings, scissors, hairpins, and other small flora and fauna of the domestic jungle. Is far from extinct."

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Eero Saarinen

American, born Finland. 1910–1961

Marli Ehrman

American, born Germany. 1904–1982

High-back armchair

1940

Molded wood shell, foam rubber,
upholstery, and wood legs

Manufactured by Heywood-Wakefield Co.,
Gardner, MA

Purchase Fund

This armchair was among the winning furniture designs of MoMA's Organic Design competition that Haskelite put into production. The chair was created to give the sitter maximum support, while avoiding heavy construction and cumbersome upholstery. Its plywood frame was carefully molded to provide continuous contact with the body, and was covered with a thin rubber pad, as well as woven fabric designed by Ehrman, who had emigrated in 1938 from Germany to head the weaving workshop at the Chicago School of Design.

Noémi Raymond

American, born France. 1889–1980

Combination of Reeds fabric c. 1940

Strips, Trunks, Trees, Dots fabric late 1930s

Printed cotton

Manufactured by F. Schumacher & Co,
New York, est. 1889

Gifts of the designer

These prizewinning textiles were designed by Raymond for MoMA's Organic Design competition (though the name of her husband, Antonin Raymond, appeared in the credits instead). "The doing away with all but essentials, or discipline, is the basis of Japanese charm," observed Raymond, who had worked in Tokyo for eleven years. "It is through increased simplicity and elimination that the man of taste finds elegance." She went on to curate an exhibition at MoMA in 1951 of Japanese household objects, presented as models of unpretentious and affordable design.

Russel Wright

American, 1904–1976

American Modern dinnerware 1937

Glazed earthenware

Manufactured by Steubenville Pottery

Gift of the manufacturer

Oceana serving tray 1931

Hazel wood

Purchase Fund

Wright's unadorned and affordable dinnerware made its public debut in 1939 in a range of muted glazes. By the end of the 1950s, the line had sold some 250 million pieces, becoming a staple of MoMA's Useful Objects and Good Design exhibitions. Compared to Wright's industrially produced chinaware, the expressively hand-carved Oceana series was manufactured in relatively small quantities. The organic shape of the tray, presented in the 1939 exhibition *Useful Objects under Ten Dollars*, was compared by the show's curator "to images seen in modern sculpture and painting of recent years."

David Smith

American, 1906–1965

Fireplace set 1939

Hand-forged iron

Purchase

In 1939, Smith, a metal sculptor, was commissioned to create this fireplace set for the Members' Penthouse in MoMA's new building designed by Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone. At the Penthouse, members could experience contemporary design firsthand and judge it for themselves. The harmonious design and organic aesthetic of the furnishings—which also included pieces by Bruno Mathsson, Marcel Breuer, and Alvar Aalto—was shared by the works showcased in the *Organic Design in Home Furnishings* exhibition of 1941.

BOTTOM

Clara Porset

Mexican, born Cuba. 1895–1981

Xavier Guerrero

Mexican, 1896–1974

Designs for furniture

1940

Entry panel for MoMA Latin American
Competition for Organic Design in
Home Furnishings

Gift of the designer

Porset and Guerrero called for the use of cheap, locally available materials in the project they submitted to the Latin American section of MoMA's Organic Design competition. The furniture was to be made of pine, with webbing of *ixtle*—a Mexican plant fiber—on the cot and chair. In 1947, the designs were developed to furnish a low-cost housing project for farm families in Coyoacán, Mexico City. Porset was not recognized at the time, but has since received credit for the designs alongside her husband Guerrero.

Bernard Rudofsky

American, born Austria. 1905–1988

Designs for outdoor seating 1940

Entry panels for MoMA Latin American Competition for Organic Design in Home Furnishings

Gifts of the designer

The main structural components of Rudofsky's outdoor furniture designs made use of both wood and metal, combined with a variety of knitted and woven fabrics made from Brazilian fibers such as jute, caroa, and hemp. The detailing of these colorful panels indicates Rudofsky's interest in the senses and in the design of humane environments. Based in São Paulo in the 1930s, Rudofsky—who later went on to curate several exhibitions in MoMA—was among five winners of the Latin American competition, all of whom received round-trip tickets to New York and \$1,000 prizes.

Charlotte Perriand

French, 1903–1999

Junzo Sakakura

Japanese, 1901–1969

Sori Yanagi

Japanese, 1915–2011

**Sentaku, Dento,
Sozo: Nihon Geijutsu
Tono Sesshoku
(Selection, Tradition,
Creation: Contact
with Japanese Art) 1941**

Folio sheets from the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Takashimaya department stores in Tokyo and Osaka

Published by Oyama Shoten, Tokyo

The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York

This folio accompanied an exhibition, sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Commerce, at Tokyo's Takashimaya department store in 1941. The installation featured Japanese household objects that Perriand selected or designed as ideal products for export to the West, with support from Sakakura and Yanagi. Much of the furniture was fashioned from bamboo, a local and versatile material unrestricted by wartime rationing. A collection of simple but functional objects, ranging from mass-produced tableware to traditional craft ceramics, was presented in custom vitrines.

Charlotte Perriand

French, 1903–1999

Low chair designed 1940;
manufactured 1946
Bamboo

Gift of Lisa Tananbaum, Susan Hayden,
Alice Tisch, and Committee on
Architecture and Design Funds

This sturdy but flexible chair was meant to be used bare (in humid or warm weather), or with removable cushions that Perriand fabricated in traditional kimono silk. Bamboo—light, strong, washable, pleasant to touch, and resistant to woodworm—was an organic and affordable material that attracted increased interest in the 1940s. Designed by Perriand as a potential Japanese export during her stay in Tokyo in 1940, but ultimately manufactured six years later in France, where she returned after the war, this chair reveals the growing influence of Western designers and furniture typologies on Japanese taste and industrial design.

Useful Objects in Wartime

1942

The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, vol. X
Lithograph

Published by The Museum of Modern Art,
New York

Architecture & Design Study Center

This exhibition highlighted domestic items, all selling for \$10 and under, that were either products made from materials not integral to America's war efforts, articles requested by members of the Armed Services, or supplies necessary for civilian defense. The catalogue gave a clear explanation of the importance of certain materials, encouraging its readers to practice responsible consumption. With a view to discouraging "the wasteful American practice of abandoning a good design simply to satisfy the craving to present something new," curator Alice Carson made a point of including a few useful objects shown in previous exhibitions.

Richard James

American, 1914–1975

Betty James

American, 1918–2008

Slinky designed 1945

Steel

Manufactured by James Spring & Wire
Company; later James Industries

Gift of the manufacturer

“Slinky was once just a little old everyday spring on a ship,” read a brochure describing the origins of this popular toy. “One day Dick took it home to show his family. His little boy, Tommy, surprised everybody by making the spring walk down the stairs—all by itself! That gave Dick the idea to make this little old spring into a toy. His wife named it Slinky!” What started as a chance discovery went on to become an international bestseller that has helped generations of children ponder the principles of gravity and tension.

Earl S. Tupper

American, 1907–1983

Tupperware 1946–54

Polyethylene

Manufactured by Tupper Corporation,
Farnumsville, MA

Gifts of the manufacturer

In 1946, Tupper, an inventor and chemist at DuPont, introduced his unique air- and watertight “Tupper Seal” for containers to prevent both spilling and food spoilage. He used this feature to enhance his range of polyethylene “Welcome Ware,” devised years earlier. The resulting Tupperware would become a symbol of suburban domestic life in the 1950s. Despite its cutting-edge material and form, Tupperware’s success was largely due to Brownie Wise, a single working mother with a background in advertising. Developing Tupperware’s innovative marketing model, which relied on home sales and hostess parties, Wise ultimately became the company’s vice president.

Peter Schlumbohm

American, born Germany. 1896–1962

Chemex coffee maker

1941

Borosilicate glass, wood, and leather

Manufactured by Chemex Corp.,
New York

Gift of Lewis & Conger

The Chemex, featured in James Bond's breakfast scene in *From Russia With Love*, is the most successful of more than three hundred designs patented by Schlumbohm. A German chemist turned designer, Schlumbohm adapted scientific principles to the development of domestic objects after immigrating to the US in 1935. This elegant, nonmechanical coffee maker was inspired by laboratory glassware. Schlumbohm explained, "A table must be a table; a chair must be a chair; a bed must be a bed. . . . A coffee maker must make coffee, and then I applied my knowledge of physics and chemistry."

Raymond Loewy Associates

est. 1944

Raymond Loewy

American, born France. 1893–1986

**The Hallicrafters Company Design and
Research Team**

**Communications
receiver (model S-40A)**

1947

Steel casing

Manufactured by the Hallicrafters Co.,
Chicago, IL

Distributed by Haynes-Griffin Co., New York

Gift of the manufacturer

Free from decorative styling on its exterior, this receiver conforms to the modernist view that form should follow function. “A good design,” MoMA curator Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. wrote, “will never pretend to be more than one thing at a time. . . . Beware the radio that looks like a tea caddy.” By the end of World War II, Hallicrafters, an Army supplier, turned its attention from technically minded ham radio operators to amateur and professional markets. The Loewy office designed these radio cases with hinged tops for access to the inner workings, and color-coded controls arranged according to function.

John G. Rideout

American, 1898–1951

Magnalite tea kettle 1936

Magnalite and lacquered wood

Manufactured by Wagner Mfg. Co., Sidney, OH

Purchase fund

To counter faltering sales during the Great Depression, some adventurous manufacturers began to employ outside design consultants and invest in materials research. In the early 1930s, the Wagner Manufacturing Company introduced Magnalite, a patented aluminum alloy. Rideout, one of a new generation of American industrial designers, was brought in to rework the appearance of the company's housewares, including teakettles. His efforts here were more focused on beauty than functionality: this kettle's lid is semipermanently attached and can only be removed by unscrewing and removing the handle.

Marguerite Wildenhain

American, born France. 1896–1985

Bowl c. 1945

Glazed stoneware

Distributed by Gump's, San Francisco, CA,
est. 1861

Gift of Gump's

Wildenhain, who had trained at the Weimar Bauhaus (1919–25) and emigrated to the United States in 1940, believed that good design—both in a unique handmade piece and in one mass produced by the millions—depended on the same basic qualities: functionality, the appropriate use of materials and techniques, and a unified approach to line, color, volume, texture, tension, and decoration. “Each glaze has a certain character,” she wrote, “and you have to find the one that says the same thing with its color and character that the pot actually says with its form.”

Albin J. Herek

American, 1893–1973

Philip V. Leivo

American

Stag hunting bow c. 1946

Painted magnesium alloy, wood, and leather

Manufactured by Metal-Lite Products, Inc.,
Bay City, MI

Gift of the manufacturer

Freed from the material restrictions of wartime, and against the backdrop of increasing economic prosperity in the US, more expressive kinds of household goods came to the fore in the 1947 *Useful Objects* exhibition at MoMA, including this hunting bow, a high-end novelty. The installation was designed by the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—the former director of an innovative German art and design school known as the Bauhaus—whose work has been favored by MoMA since the Museum's early forays into exhibiting modern architecture.

Anthony Ingolia

American, born 1921

Table lamp c. 1950

Steel, nickel, aluminum, and enamel

Manufactured and distributed by Heifetz Mfg.
Co., New York, est. 1938

Gift of the manufacturer

Eva Zeisel

American, born Hungary. 1906–2011

Museum Dinner Service

c. 1942–45

Glazed porcelain

Manufactured by Castleton China Co.,
New Castle, PA, est. 1901

Gift of the manufacturer

Organic, modern tableware was an important element of any American home concerned with good design in the mid-twentieth century. Zeisel designed the elegantly sculptural Museum Dinner Service in consultation with Castleton China and MoMA, which promoted it as “the first translucent china dinnerware, modern in shape, to be produced in the United States.”

Davis J. Pratt

American, 1917–1987

Chair 1948

Fabric-covered inflated tube seat
and metal rod

Gift of the designer

Pratt was coawarded second prize in the Seating Units category of the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture for this entry. The chair is made from a folded rubber inner tube set atop rubber-tipped metal legs. Its four component parts were designed to pack flat for easy shipping and storage. Pratt was among the first students at the School of Design in Chicago (later the Institute of Design), and in the 1940s he worked on visual design for the Office of Strategic Services in Washington, D.C.— a predecessor to the modern-day Central Intelligence Agency.

Alexey Brodovitch

American, born Russia. 1898–1971

Floor chair (model 1211-C) c. 1948

Plywood, wood dowels, and plastic-covered cord

Gift of the designer

Brodovitch won third prize in the Seating Units category of MoMA's International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture for this knock-down rocking chair. The design speaks to the years he spent working on the challenges of producing inexpensive furniture. Described as "exceptionally simple and comfortable," it employs basic construction methods and inexpensive materials. Its parts can be cut from standard sheets of plywood with a minimum amount of waste.

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Ray Eames

American, 1912–1988

Prototype for a chaise longue (La Chaise) 1948

Hard rubber foam, plastic, wood, and metal

Gift of the designers

This chaise longue was inspired by Gaston Lachaise's 1927 sculpture *Reclining Nude* and nicknamed after the artist. It did not receive a prize in the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture because it was considered too "specialized in use" and too expensive to manufacture at the time. However, the judges called it "striking, good-looking, and inventive." La Chaise finally went into production in 1990 and is now one of the Eameses' signature works.

William H. Miller, Jr.

American

Inflatable chair c. 1944

Vynylite (polyvinyl chloride) tube ring,
plywood frame, aluminum legs, and
string netting

Manufactured by Gallowhur Chemical
Corp., Windsor, VT

Gift of the manufacturer

Composed of Vynylite and manufactured by a chemical company, this chair typifies the application of innovative materials and production techniques—heightened during wartime—to domestic products. Miller was an employee of Gallowhur Chemical Corporation. During World War II, he collaborated with a cousin of Franklin D. Roosevelt to design a pocket-sized water-desalination device that became standard equipment for Army and Navy fliers.

Donald R. Knorr

American, born 1922

Side chair 1948–50

Versalite plastic and chrome-plated steel

Manufactured by Knoll Associates,
New York, est. 1946

Gift of the manufacturer

Knorr was coawarded first prize in the Seating Units category of the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture for this side chair. Described as “light, flexible, and elegant,” it features a conical Versalite plastic shell designed to conform to the human body. Its simple shape and fixtures make for easy manufacture and storage, and its flexible paint finish prevents cracking. At the time, Knorr was working in the architecture office of Eero Saarinen, who helped him refine the design. In 1950, Knoll began producing the chair, but in sheet steel, which was cheaper to use than the original plastic.

Eszter Haraszty

American, born Hungary. 1920–1994

Triad fabric c. 1951

Screenprinted cotton

Manufactured by KnollTextiles, New York,
est. 1947

Gift of the manufacturer

In modernist interiors, textiles often supply brilliant color and bold geometric patterns that contrast with subdued architectural backgrounds. From 1949 to 1955, Haraszty was director of KnollTextiles, a division of the Knoll furniture company. A brilliant colorist and friend of fellow Hungarian Marcel Breuer, she joined the impressive roster of international architects, artists, and textile designers brought together by Florence Knoll.

Alexander Girard

American, 1907–1993

Rain fabric 1953

Screenprinted linen

Manufactured by Herman Miller, Inc.,
Zeeland, MI, est. 1923

Gift of the manufacturer

Girard, an architect, designer, and director of the fabric division at Herman Miller, once stated, “Color is sexy. It is playful. It disturbs.” Apart from exhibiting textiles at MoMA, he was also active in the Museum’s Good Design program as both a juror and designer of exhibitions at home and abroad, working in close collaboration with the designers Charles and Ray Eames, as well as MoMA curator Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

Hans Wegner

Danish, 1914–2007

Armchair 1949

Oak and cane

Manufactured by Johannes Hansen,
Denmark, est. c. 1940

Gift of Georg Jensen, Inc.

Wegner famously stated, “A chair is only finished when someone sits in it.” Of the three-hundred-odd chairs he designed in his lifetime, this one became known as “the chair.” With its strong zigzag joints, gently curved arms and back, and handwoven cane seat, this iconic work exemplifies the leading Danish designer’s craft sensibility and dedication to wood, his favorite material. During the first nationally televised U.S. presidential debate in 1960, Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy each sat in one of these armchairs.

Marcel Breuer

American, born Hungary. 1902–1981

Side chair 1948

Plywood, rubber mounts, and caning

Gift of the designer

This side chair was the product of a team research project led by Breuer, a celebrated architect and Bauhaus émigré known for his tubular metal furniture. Collaborating with the United States Forest Products Laboratory, he applied knowledge accumulated over fifteen years of experimentation, as well as new developments in high-frequency gluing, to plywood construction. The team's report boasted of the chair's ability to carry a load of five hundred pounds, and the jury of MoMA's International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture described the design as "ingeniously articulated."

Flint kitchen tools 1943–46

Stainless steel and phenolic plastic

Manufactured by Ekco Products Co.,
Chicago, IL, est. 1888

Gifts of the manufacturer

Ekco Products Company, already famous for first adding holes to kitchen tool handles for hanging, launched the Flint Series as its first major postwar design project in 1946. Durable Bakelite replaced wood for the handles, and the steel was spring-tempered for toughness. Flint's success was secured by its innovative marketing. Kitchen utensils traditionally retailed in dime-store bins, but the Flint collection was sold at a higher price point, presented as a neatly packaged set designed by Raymond Loewy Associates, and promoted as a desirable gift for a new bride.

Freda Diamond

American, 1905–1998

Classic Crystal glasses

1949

Glass

Manufactured by Libbey Glass Company
Division, Owens-Illinois Co., Toledo, OH,
est. 1818

Given anonymously, 2001

In the 1940s, there were “fewer gold rims, etched grapes and roses, and even painted cartoons on bar glasses” according to MoMA curator Elodie Courter. This inexpensive glass tableware was praised for being well balanced and easy to wash and dry, because of its broad rim relative to its height. It was a favorite in Good Design exhibitions at MoMA and abroad.

Kaj Franck

Finnish, 1911–1989

Kilta tableware 1948

Glazed earthenware

Manufactured by Arabia, Wärtsilä Ab, Helsinki,
Finland, est. 1874

Distributed by Waertsila Corp., New York

Gift of Waertsila Corp., New York

Always aiming for what he called the “optimal object,” Franck reduced forms to their most basic in the interest of enhanced function, affordability, and anonymity. Each piece of this monochromatic series (originally produced in white, black, green, blue, and yellow editions) was meant to serve a wide range of purposes—from food preparation to serving and even storage. Franck veered from traditional table services by removing unnecessary handles, reshaping spouts, and designing lids to fit multiple pieces. The Kilta service attracted international attention and eventually became Arabia’s most popular model for more than twenty years.

Finn Juhl

Danish, 1912–1989

Armchair (model 45)

1945

Teak and wool

Manufactured by Niels Vodder, Allerød,
Denmark

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Fund

The refined form of this easy chair breaks with furniture construction traditions by separating the seat and back elements from the load-bearing wooden frame. Curator Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., introduced Juhl to American audiences in an article that inspired a Grand Rapids manufacturer to start industrial production of the furniture. Kaufmann also commissioned Juhl to design the installation of MoMA's 1951 *Good Design* exhibition, including specimen store layouts and promotional materials.

Joel Robinson

American, born c. 1923

Ovals fabric

designed c. 1950–51

Screenprinted linen

Manufactured by L. Anton Maix Fabrics,
New York, est. 1948

Committee on Architecture and Design
Funds

Robinson was the first black designer to participate in MoMA's Good Design series and to have work acquired for the Museum's permanent design collection. This textile was featured in *Ebony* and *Jet Magazine*, and was among six of his designs featured in MoMA's 1951 Good Design exhibition. Though the former bellhop was initially lauded for his "strikingly original designs," little is known of his life after 1954, when he was promoted to vice president of a New York advertising agency.

Eero Saarinen

American, born Finland. 1910–1961

Womb Chair 1948

Upholstered latex foam on fiberglass-reinforced plastic shell and chrome-plated steel rod base

Manufactured by Knoll Associates,
New York, est. 1946

Exhibited in the US Pavilion in the 1951
Milan Triennale

Gift of the manufacturer

Saarinen designed this celebrated chair shortly after joining Knoll Associates in 1947. Its name expresses its purpose: “It was designed on the theory that a great number of people have never really felt comfortable and secure since they left the womb. The chair is an attempt to rectify this maladjustment in our civilization,” Saarinen explained. “There seemed to be a need for a large and really comfortable chair to take the place of the old overstuffed chair. . . . Today, more than ever before, we need to relax.”

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Ray Eames

American, 1912–1988

Hang-It-All clothes hanger 1953

Enameled steel and lacquered wood

Manufactured by Tigrett Enterprises
Playhouse Division

Gift of the George R. Kravis II Collection

The Eameses' interest in design for children extended to many different kinds of playroom objects, including this hanging rack made from colorful wooden balls that was featured as a "Useful Object" in one of MoMA's exhibitions. The Hang-It-All remains in production to this day.

Dante Giacosa

Italian, 1905–1996

500f city car designed 1957

(this example 1968)

Steel with fabric top

Manufactured by Fiat S.p.A., Turin, Italy,
est. 1899

Gift of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Heritage

Commonly referred to as the Cinquecento, this compact, rear-engine city car helped make automobile ownership attainable for an Italian public experiencing dramatic improvements in its economic circumstances. Building on the success of his earlier work on the Fiat 600, Giacosa's design for the "Nuova" 500 maximized interior space while minimizing costly raw materials and complex engineering. In 1965, the car was slightly redesigned to eliminate the rear-hinged "suicide doors." This model, the 500f Berlina, was the bestselling version of the Cinquecento, and remained in production until 1973.

Giovanni Pintori

Italian, 1912–1999

Poster for the Olivetti Lexikon 80

c. 1950

Lithograph

Gift of the Olivetti Corporation

Poster for the Olivetti Lexikon 1954

Lithograph

Gift of the designer

In the early 1950s the Lettera 22 typewriter was exhibited internationally as an icon of good design. Two years after opening its first American office at 80 Fifth Avenue in 1950, Olivetti sponsored an exhibition at MoMA of the firm's office machines and adventurous company design policy. The show was curated by Leo Lionni, art director of Fortune magazine as well as Olivetti's American advertising campaigns, and was in line with the Museum's efforts to increase representation of well-designed products from Europe, Scandinavia, and Japan.

Gino Colombini

Italian, born 1915

Covered pail 1954

Polyethylene and metal

Gift of Philip Johnson

Kitchen brush 1955

Plastic

Gift of the manufacturer

Manufactured by Kartell S.p.A., Milan,
Italy, est. 1949

Around the same time that Tupperware was gaining popularity in the United States, the Milan-based plastics manufacturer Kartell was establishing itself as a European leader in this increasingly important modern material. Colombini, who headed Kartell's technical department since its founding in 1949, was awarded the *Compasso d'Oro*—Italy's top prize for good design—in 1955, 1957, 1959, and 1960. His household objects, including this kitchen pail, took advantage of plastic's aesthetic possibilities, in addition to being both economical and durable.

Bruno Munari

Italian, 1907–1998

Textile designs for the tenth Milan Triennale

1954

Gouache on paper

Patricia Bonfield Endowed Acquisition Fund,
2016

Ettore Sottsass

Italian, born Austria. 1917–2007

Fosforescenze textile design 1957

Gouache on paper

Committee on Architecture and Design Funds

These colorful, abstract designs were exhibited at the Milan Triennale exhibitions in 1954 and 1957, events that underpinned the Italian textile industry's international resurgence in the 1950s. The Milan Triennale, a highly influential design showcase with a worldwide reach, was the primary platform for Italy's answer to the midcentury Good Design programs in other parts of the world.

Benjamin Bowden

British, 1906–1998

Spacelander bicycle

1946

Fiberglass, chrome-plated steel, leather,
and rubber

Manufactured by Bombard Industries,
Grand Haven, MI

Gift of the George R. Kravis II Collection

Launched at the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition organized by the Council of Industrial Design in 1946, this curvaceous product hinted at a future of consumerist affluence, and the glamour associated with the utopian worlds of science-fiction films. It was one of many prototypes for new, industrially produced goods that over 1.4 million people queued to see. While it could be admired, the bicycle could not be bought at the time of the exhibition, owing to continued shortages of materials and labor after World War II. “Britain Can’t Have It” became the show’s popular nickname.

Lucienne Day

British, 1917–2010

Spectators fabric 1953

Screenprinted linen

Mezzanine fabric 1958

Screenprinted cotton crepe

Manufactured by Heal Fabrics, London,
est. 1810

Gift of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III

In the 1950s, many manufacturers adopted mechanized screenprinting techniques that were more cost effective than previous labor-intensive methods. Meanwhile, Day observed that floral motifs were becoming considerably less popular, and were being replaced by “nonrepresentational patterns—generally executed in clear bright colours, and inspired by the modern abstract school of painting.” As Day noted, “Probably everyone’s boredom with wartime dreariness and lack of variety helped the establishment of this new and gayer trend.” Her *Spectators* textile won a Grand Prix at the 1954 Milan Triennale exhibition.

Robin Day

British, 1915–2010

Royal Festival Hall chair 1951

Rosewood and sycamore-faced plywood,
copper-coated steel, latex foam, and
upholstery

Manufactured by Hille, London, est. 1906

Committee on Architecture and Design
Funds

Day's prizewinning design for MoMA's 1948 International Low-Cost Furniture Competition helped launch his career as an industrial designer, leading to a long-term consultancy with Hille, the chair's manufacturer, as well as the establishment of a studio with Day's future wife Lucienne. Epitomizing the contemporary style and technological innovation of the 1951 Festival of Britain, the chair was featured in the couple's Home and Gardens pavilion as well as in the lounge of the new Royal Festival. The chair also appeared in that year's Milan Triennale and was soon put into production for an international market.

Abram Games

British, 1914–1996

Poster for the
exhibition *Londons*
Design Centre 1965

Lithograph

This poster's assertively modern design and patriotic color scheme advertised the Council of Industrial Design's first national center in London's Haymarket, opened in 1956 by the Duke of Edinburgh. Here, the general public and foreign trade buyers could consider 1,020 products selected from 433 British firms. The Design Centre introduced an annual Awards Scheme and logo the following year. This promotional strategy to boost sales was similar to that behind Italy's *Compasso D'Oro* award (started in 1954), as well as the branding of products shown in MoMA's Good Design exhibitions with a logo designed by Mort Goldsholl.

Jacques Nathan-Garamond

French, 1910–2001

Poster for the first
*Formes Utiles (Useful
Forms)* exhibition 1949

Lithograph

Gift of the artist

World War II left Charlotte Perriand unable to leave Asia and return to France until 1946. After that, she began a collaborative relationship with Jean Prouvé that led to numerous commissions for products and interiors. In the 1950s, committed to the democratization of design through the industrial production of low-cost, useful objects, these designers played an important role in l'Association Formes Utiles—a French group promoting good design—and a series of annual design exhibitions titled Formes Utiles that the association launched in 1949.

Lina Bo Bardi

Brazilian, born Italy. 1914–1992

Poster for agriculture exhibition in São Paulo 1951

Lithograph

Gift of the artist

The playful combination of a massive bull and an insect-like helicopter hovering in the distance captures the essence of an exhibition celebrating modern agriculture, the mainstay of Brazil's economy. Although trained in her native Italy, she became central to the Brazilian renaissance of modernist architecture and design soon after settling in São Paulo in 1948. The agriculture exhibition and launch of the São Paulo Biennial in 1951 brought international attention to the city as the center of this national movement.

Lina Bo Bardi

Brazilian, born Italy. 1914–1992

Poltrona Bowl chair 1951

Steel and fabric

Committee on Architecture and Design Funds

The soft, round form of this chair encouraged a more relaxed or upright posture depending how the removable bowl was angled in the ring of its metal frame. It was publicized in *Habitat*—a multidisciplinary arts magazine established in 1950 that helped define Brazil’s modern postwar environment—and was showcased both in Bo Bardi’s own home, the Glass House (1951), and in the prestigious Palace Hotel (1958), one of the first buildings by Oscar Niemeyer to be constructed in the country’s new capital, Brasília.

Timo Sarpaneva

Finnish, 1926–2006

Casserole 1959

Cast iron and teak

Manufactured by W. Rosenlew and Co., Pori,
Finland, est. 1853

Gift of the designer

Sarpaneva's cast-iron casserole has become an iconic work of organic design. It is one of several objects that represent his interest in multipurpose kitchenware—items that could be used in the oven, on the stovetop, and at the table (sometimes also in the refrigerator). The teak handle allows one-handed transportation and, when detached, inserts into the container's lid for opening. Along with contemporaries Kaj Franck and Tapio Wirkkala, Sarpaneva achieved international fame as postwar Finnish design grew in popularity due to its clean and warm modern forms, often inspired by nature as well as traditional decorative arts.

Astrid Sampe

Swedish, 1909–2002

Lazy Lines fabric c. 1954

Printed linen

Manufactured by KnollTextiles, est. 1947

Gift of the manufacturer

This abstract fabric is typical of Sampe's approach to pattern design and color planning, which was, in her own words, "systematic to the point of dryness." As head of Nordiska Kompaniet's textile design studio she also commissioned work from a wide range of designers and played an important advisory role in international organizations promoting good design. Her own textile designs were exhibited widely in Britain, Italy, and the US, and were included in the critically acclaimed traveling exhibition, *Design in Scandinavia*, which promoted design from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland in North American markets from 1954 to 1957.

Sori Yanagi

Japanese, 1915–2011

Elephant Stool 1954

Fiberglass

Manufactured by Kotobuki Seating Company,
Tokyo, est. 1914

Gift of Moon Palace Daisuke Enomoto

The all-plastic Elephant Stool was one of the first products of the industrial design studio established by Yanagi in Tokyo. Its lightweight, stackable form is suited to indoor and outdoor use. Like his other famous piece, the Butterfly Stool, it reflects Yanagi's interests in nature and in marrying traditional Japanese craft with Western modernism. It also reflects his experience as a student in the office of Junzo Sakakura, a participant in MoMA's International Low-Cost Furniture competition, and as an assistant to French designer Charlotte Perriand during her time in Tokyo in 1940–41 (both featured in this exhibition).

Kitaōji Rosanjin

Japanese, 1883–1959

Vase with narrow neck

1953

Shigaraki-ware

Square platter 1953

E-Shino-ware

Gifts of the Japan Society

Renowned not only as a ceramicist but also as a chef, epicure, and calligrapher, Rosanjin referred to his plates and vessels as “the kimonos of good food.” The dull glazes and rough, irregular shapes with chipped edges were designed to complement Japanese delicacies served in small portions. In 1946, Rosanjin opened a restaurant in the famous Ginza District of Tokyo. Patronage by American occupation forces helped establish his international reputation, leading to an invitation to exhibit his work at MoMA in 1954.

Hans Coray

Swiss, 1906–1991

Landi Chair 1938

Bent and pressed aluminum, and rubber

Manufactured by P. & W. Blattmann,
Metallwarenfabrik, Switzerland, est. 1908

Gift of Gabrielle and Michael Boyd

This chair was among the examples of international design in the exhibition *Die gute Form* (Good Form), which the designer Max Bill curated and designed on behalf of the Swiss Werkbund—an organization established in 1913 to promote good design—and which traveled to venues in Switzerland, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands 1949–51. “We’ve tried in this exhibition to dispense as much as possible with ‘appearance’ and focus instead on what is modest, true—even good,” wrote Bill in the catalogue.

Max Bill

Swiss, 1908–1994

Kitchen clock 1956–57

Ceramic, metal, and glass

Manufactured by Gebrüder Junghans A.G.,
Schramberg, Germany, est. 1861

Architecture & Design Purchase Fund

The distilled functionalism of this kitchen clock is characteristic of pieces designed by Bill, the architect-designer and cofounder of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, Germany, considered the most influential school of design after the Bauhaus (which he attended). This clock—among the earliest of Bill’s designs to be produced—is considered a classic example of postwar good design. Bill later summarized his pragmatic design philosophy: “Functional design considers the visual aspect, that is, the beauty, of an object as a component of its function, but not one that overwhelms its other primary functions.”

Dieter Rams

German, born 1932

Hans Gugelot

German, born Indonesia. 1920–1965

Radio-phonograph (model SK 4/10) 1956

Painted metal, wood, and plastic

Manufactured by Braun A.G., Frankfurt,
Germany, est. 1921

Gift of the manufacturer

Nicknamed Snow White's Coffin on account of its white metal casing and transparent lid, this product has an elemental look that redefined the typology of domestic audio equipment. The detailed consideration of such compact, simple designs secured Braun's success in the postwar consumer electronics market and became a model for its many competitors.

Hermann Gretsch

German, 1895–1950

Dinnerware before 1949

White porcelain

Manufactured by Arzberg Porcelain Mfg.
Co., Arzberg, Germany, est. 1887

Gift of the Court Association

This unadorned tableware, with a cool, off-white glaze, and simple, refined forms that are satisfying to look at and to handle, was popular with curators at MoMA, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Detroit Institute of Art, all of whom were promoting affordable everyday design in the 1940s and 1950s.

Hans Brockhage

German, 1925–2009

Erwin Andra

German, born 1921

Schaukelwagen (Rocking car) 1950

Beech frame and birch plywood seat

Architecture & Design Purchase Fund

With a lightweight, flexible seat suspended between rails, this ingenious design forms a racing car with bright red wheels; flipped over, it becomes a rocking chair. The piece was developed while Brockhage and Andra were still studying with Dutch designer Mart Stam at the East German Art Academy in Dresden. Brockhage came from a region of East Germany well known for its wooden-toy-making tradition. The design received one of the first Spiel Gut (Good Toy) awards in 1956 and was exhibited internationally on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Ernst Fischer

German, 1910–2006

Freia portable electric sewing machine 1948

Cast metal, Bakelite, and wooden case

Manufactured by VEB Ernst-Thälmann-Werke, Suhl, East Germany (DDR)

Gift of George R. Kravis II

This robust electric sewing machine, named after the Norse goddess Freia, was manufactured in a group of decommissioned East German armaments factories that had been turned over to the nationalized production of sewing machines in 1945–48. Its carrying box opens to form a working table. The compact design was well suited to the cramped spaces of postwar homes in East Germany and beyond, in which many families relied on sewing machines to make their own clothes and household furnishings.

Vera Lisková

Czech, 1924–1979

Bowl and tumbler 1947

Crystal

Manufactured by Lobmeyr, Kamenický Šenov,
Czechoslovakia

Distributed by A.J. Van Dugteren & Sons, Inc.,
New York

Gift of A. J. Van Dugteren & Sons, Inc.

The unadorned shapes and modest pricing of this glassware garnered praise on both sides of the Cold War divide. Lišková designed the handblown prototypes ready for mass production, while still a student in Prague. At a time when Czechoslovakia's expulsion of its German population had drained the northern Bohemian glass industry of workers, designers, and teachers, the country's ministry of industry and commerce commended Lišková's designs as "paving the new way for postwar industrial glass." The glassware made its first US appearance at MoMA in 1949 and rapidly became a collection highlight as a paradigm of good design.

Werra 1 35mm film camera

c. 1955–1960

Aluminum body with vulcanite surface

Manufactured by Zeiss-Werk, Jena, East
Germany (DDR)

Gift of Michael Maharam

The Werra series of 35mm viewfinder or rangefinder cameras was promoted by the Design Institute of the German Democratic Republic as a textbook example of good design principles. Manufactured for a mass market, the camera featured a compact, ergonomic design. It offered a high degree of control with a minimum number of levers, knobs, and rings, making it both suitable for amateur photographers and less prone to mechanical failure. The conical lens cap inverts to screw on as a lens shade. Over half a million Werra cameras were produced from 1956 to 1966, and sold throughout the Soviet Bloc.

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Ray Eames

American, 1912–1988

Glimpses of the USA 1959

16mm film transferred to video (color, sound)

12:20 min.

Committee on Architecture and Design Funds

The United States Information Agency commissioned the Eames Office to make this film about “a day in the life of the United States.” The film would serve as an introduction to the American National Exhibition held in Moscow in 1959. Taken together as a piece of propaganda, the impressions of a typical day in suburbia underscored the social values and capitalist infrastructure upon which the domestic lives of American consumers depended. Projected across seven twenty-by-thirty-foot screens inside a geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller, the film presented Soviet visitors with a dazzling audiovisual presentation of the American way of life.