

## Good Design Lab

“Why do museums get mixed up in price tags? Aren’t they supposed to stick to art?” asked MoMA curator Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., in 1948. The shop—and by extension, the price tag—are fundamental aspects of the modern-day museum-going experience, even if cynics suggest that they merely bolster an institution’s bottom line. But, as Kaufmann later pointed out, “Sales are episodes in the careers of designed objects. Use is the first consideration.” Engaging with modern consumer culture, in his view, kept the Museum at the forefront of experimental thought and production.

Kaufmann’s legacy of merging art with commerce is an intrinsic part of the MoMA Design Store, which brings Museum curators together with Design Store staff to select products for audiences around the world. In the Good Design Lab, objects introduced at midcentury and still in production today appear alongside twenty-first-century counterparts, some launched and produced by MoMA. Since good design will always mean different things to different people, we invite you to interact with and touch these objects, and judge their “value” for yourself.

#ValueofGoodDesign

The son of Richard and Betty James discovered the playful properties of a machine spring by sending it down the stairs, leading to the invention of the Slinky. Today, toys continue to encourage tactile engagement. Magna-Tiles, invented by a Japanese school teacher, were developed to teach students about color and shape. The Magnatab allows users to commit shapes to muscle memory by drawing pixelated forms with a magnetic stylus that raises metal balls nestled in plastic base.

In the early 1950s, plastic was a revolutionary material, one that spurred various innovations, including the development of Tupperware. In a world of scarce resources, the ability to withstand the test of time is a key feature of today's plastics, ranging from brightly colored produce crates, convenient for home organizing, to durable domestic textiles woven from plastic threads.

Electric lighting changed the way people lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. Shown in the Museum's inaugural Good Design exhibition in 1950, Magnusson Grossman's Cobra Lamp was stationed on desks across America at midcentury. Meanwhile, contemporary lighting like Gunawan's Lumio Book Lamp, launched by the MoMA Design Store, was developed for more mobile ways of living. Eliasson and Ottesen's Little Sun and Chun's Solar Puff bring solar-powered lighting to communities without centralized power grids.

The Chemex Coffee Maker marries form with function. Recalling a chemistry beaker, it is rendered in borosilicate glass, an example of how unexpected material innovations can yield practical applications. Harnessing the very same material, the Multi-ccino Mug—designed by Corn while he was a student at the School of Visual Arts in New York and manufactured by the MoMA Design Store—uses a clever graphic chart to indicate proper coffee and milk proportions for an array of espresso-based beverages.

The removable teak handle of Sarpaneva's casserole recalls those of large vessels used for centuries over an open flame, but was adjusted to meet the needs of a stovetop cook. The Combekk Dutch oven—made from recycled railroad tracks—is a contemporary counterpart to Sarpaneva's midcentury design, incorporating handy tools like a built-in thermometer. These thoughtful approaches to a time-tested design suggest the universal appeal of—and consistent demand for—a most basic form of cookware.

Designed by the Eameses for MoMA's Low-Cost Furniture Competition in 1949, La Chaise evokes the form of a reclining figure. Seventy years on, Morrison's elegant seating designs shed light on contemporary issues such as resource scarcity and sustainability. His flat-packed lumber stools, designed with Wataru Kumano, come in a range of sizes and shapes, built to seat different numbers of people. Morrison's 2018 line of chairs for Emeco, made from 90 percent industrial waste, have curved seats and backs that make them easily stackable.