

EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY

WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS NUMBER 28, 1953

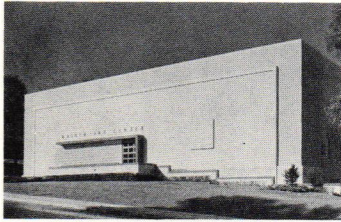
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A circular graphic centered on a black background. The graphic consists of a solid red circle in the center, surrounded by a white, intricate, lace-like border. The border is composed of multiple concentric rings of repeating, pointed, geometric patterns that resemble stylized leaves or snowflakes. The overall effect is that of a decorative seal or a calligraphic ornament.

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EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY

ISSUE NUMBER 28, 1953

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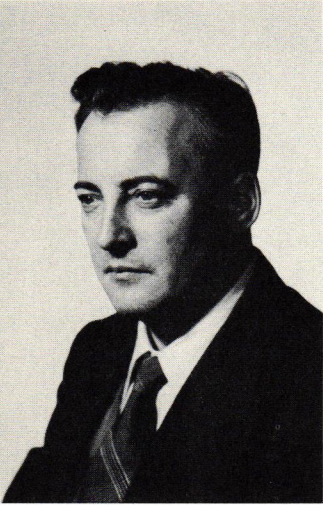
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William Armbruster came to this country in 1929 from his native Germany, graduating from Pratt Institute in 1934. In 1947 he founded the Edgewood Furniture Company, in New York, with the aim and or hope of providing well designed and well built furniture for fellow architects. He still does occasional jobs in domestic architecture.

Mr. Armbruster lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, in what he hopes will be a soon completed house with butterfly roof with his wife, Sylvia (who bosses the upholstery department at Edgewood), and three Siamese cats: Hildegard, Assault and Battery, commuting to New York City in a fire-engine red convertible.

1953 would seem to be an excellent time to stop for a moment, look around, and take stock.

Modern design of today is a vigorous, healthy, broad, accepted movement. In this movement you find willingness and ability to serve the public, you find integrity and you find variety.

Modern does not merely reflect, it searches and anticipates. Generally, within the design profession, there is honesty of approach; there are good healthy battles of words and deeds: straight line versus romantic, functional design versus monumentality, etc., etc., etc. Almost every day we see more good buildings, more good furniture and more good can openers. While we still sometimes look to individual achievements of superb excellence: such as Lever House, the Eames chair, and Russel Wright ceramics, we also see numerous wondrous things all over the country; good sound furniture has become more general in department stores, hospitals and schools. Domestic

architecture has achieved such excellence and acceptance that even the most conservative banks will undertake financing. In furniture we see great diversity of material and approach: steel, bronze wood—formal, informal, personal.

The very strength of modern design, its variety, has recently provoked a tempest in a teapot. Knowing or sensing legitimate divergence of thought in the design profession and confronted with the ever-present necessity to be interesting, provocative, to present good copy to keep and increase circulation, the editors of lay publications have chosen to attack modern or, as they sometimes put it, certain foreign superimposed, rarified, impractical facets of modern.

Some spokesmen of the design profession have permitted themselves to be baited into useless arguments, useless, that is, to designers. Indications are that the lay readership either does not know of, or does not care about the argument. Therefore there is little reason for us to have words with the consumer magazines.

We can, however, have words with ourselves. There is occasion for discussion and there is room for improvement. It seems that now we are at the point where we can or should make a few minimum demands on practicing designers. Assuming integrity, we should expect competence, knowledge of and respect for materials and techniques and a few other things, as well as a cosmic sense of humor. Our economy has "relocated" craftsmanship almost entirely from the workshop and work bench to the drafting board where construction details, materials and sizes must be predetermined. We still have people with us

who are tempted into thinking that one particular material or construction is the universal one. In furniture we sometimes hear that foam rubber is *the* filling material, or that *the* frame will be of metal, or that tension type springs is *the* ultimate platform. Not so, of course. Any more than that all modern buildings should be of reinforced concrete or any other single particular structural system. The knowing designer chooses his material and methods to suit his problem and his solution. Above all he strives for expression, simplicity and Function, with a capital F. We take it for granted that the seating profile of a chair is comfortable. (Almost anybody who wants to, can make a chair comfortable; many super-Borax seating pieces are.) The Function we speak of is far larger and includes response to one's sense of touch to materials, and whether the sight of the chair makes one happy.

There is still much striving for superficial effect. Possibly much of this has been induced by the wish and hope to be "discovered" and some of it may come from observing premiated examples shown by exhibits meant to show good design. I think it is well to remember that steel painted dull black does not wrought iron make, nor is gadgetry necessarily design.

The ideal is the competent, poised, assured man who can give us a fresh and simple solution, who is versatile, who does not always strive to glorify himself by working in a particular personal mold. His, I think, is the lasting contribution to design. It is the likes of him, who, though their names seldom become household words, influence and stimulate their brethren.

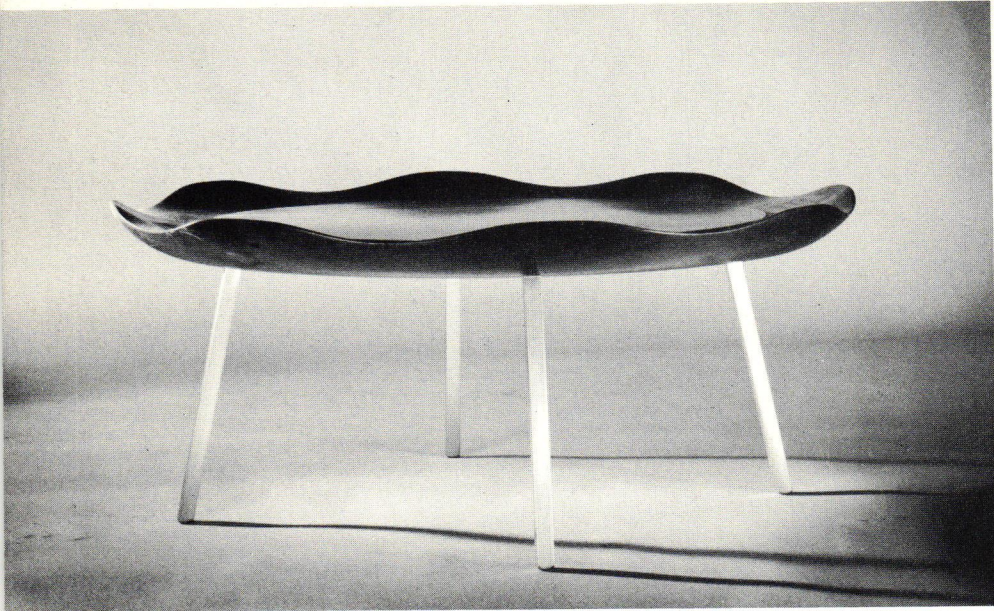
William Armbruster



Armless easy chair
 $\frac{3}{4}$ " square steel tubing frame
upholstered in foam rubber

Large side chair
 $\frac{3}{4}$ " square steel tubing frame
foam rubber seat
curved back panel in maple or walnut



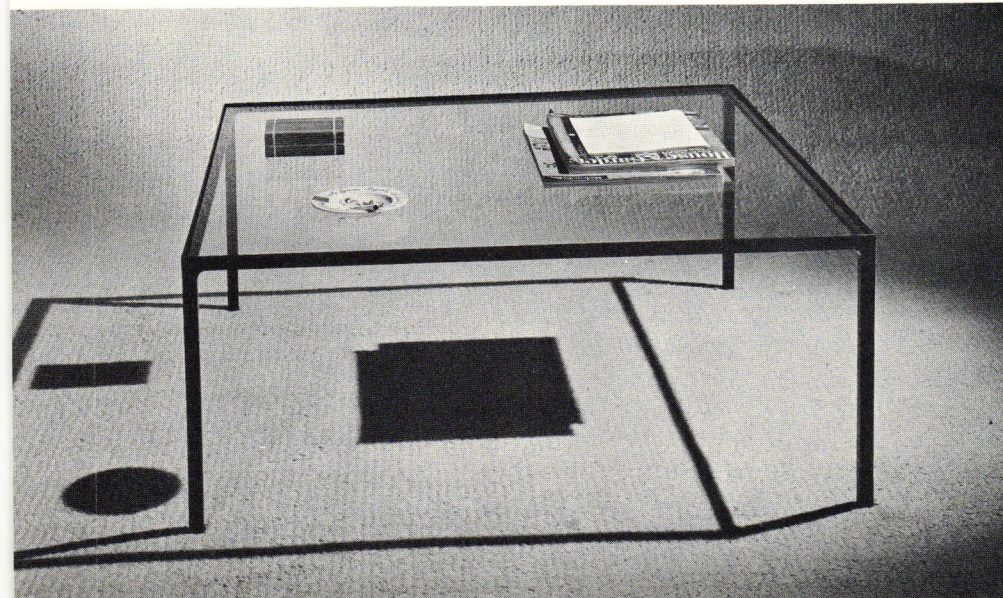


photos: David Royter

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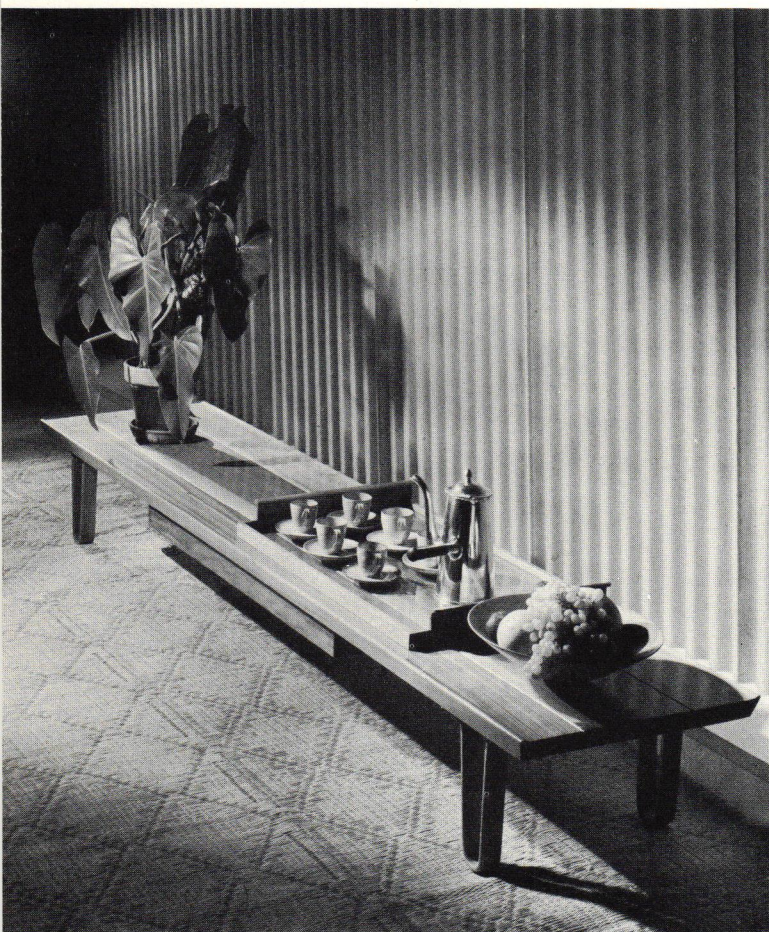


- 1 Pie Crust table
mahogany with solid
architectural Bronze base
- 2 The Captain's Chair
all show wood of oak
spring and foam rubber construction
- 3 Cocktail table
base of square steel tubing,
top of $\frac{1}{4}$ " polished plate glass with polished edges
- 4 Residence—William Armbruster
club sofa, foam rubber construction
loose foam rubber seat and back cushions



Edward J. Wormley

"Long John" table
 sap-streaked walnut boards
 laminated walnut "hairpin" legs
 84" long 19" wide 12" high
 available in any length from 7 feet down



Frank Willmington

Edward J. Wormley was born near Chicago, Illinois, and received his art education at the Art Institute and abroad. He was on the design staff of Marshall Field, Berkey & Gay, and was associated with Dunbar Corporation of Indiana for eleven years. When the war broke out Mr. Wormley was called to Washington to head the Furniture Unit of OPA during the emergency. After the war he opened his own office in New York City for the design of modern home products, continuing the development of the Dunbar line.

For the past five years Mr. Wormley has been designing furniture under an exclusive contract with Dunbar. He has also designed carpets, fabrics, radio-phonograph cabinets, lamps, glassware, decorative serving accessories, as well as several store and showroom interiors and private residences.

It is next to impossible, I suppose, for a practicing professional designer to set down a statement labeled, "This I Believe," which would content him for more than five minutes. For it is the difficult role of the frankly commercial designer to live and to live with himself. To live he must cultivate a sense of the market place, which means he must anticipate the needs of the buying public, and with whatever skill he has, must conceive products which will meet known demands and stimulate new ones. To live with himself, if he has a decent pride in his field and has the integrity born of respect for human values, he will have learned early that "to compromise" (as it is too disdainfully put by self-appointed "purists") is his lot.

To compromise, however, need not mean that the designer "lose faith" with himself, or that he hoodwink his clients or the consumer public. Rather it may mean that he has learned that in matters of taste—and whatever else design is, it is the raw material of taste—he may work for success in more than one way; converting the public to accept his ideas, pleasing his client, even (and this is not unimportant in the scheme of things) keeping an eye on continuing his op-

portunity for effective work. Indeed, it is less likely, if not impossible, that he will achieve more than a *succes d'estime* if his most advanced ideas are all he is willing to offer. If this critical success is his sole purpose in taking up design, so be it. But if he expects to make a lifetime career of it he cannot be satisfied with plaudits alone. He may also learn that his talents are better suited to a slow and steady influence in his field and for long-run service to his retainers than to assume—as too many brash designers do—that if Charles Eames can build a world-wide reputation on a chair design, he can too.

There are some notorious and rich industrial designers who have gone so far as to say that the prime duty of the designer is to make money for the client. I would rather say that the designer can by his contribution guarantee greater customer satisfaction, longer life for product designs, and in the long run can bring to his client a realization of accomplishment and a pride above and beyond money profits—providing these occur persistently enough for their business marriage to continue. Because the plain fact is that some business firms in a given field make more money *without* a designer by stealing their competitors' best-selling items.

I have been called a "gradualist." I do not shrink from the term, and I might even say I find it apt. I have a real admiration for the design of the past and I am quite frank to say that too little design today can compete in interest, ingenuity, and beauty with the best traditional design. To say this, however, does not mean that I believe for one moment in reproducing old design for present day use. We must continue to work with contemporary materials, techniques, and especially within the framework of our own highly developed and ever-changing distribution patterns.

At the same time there is a heritage of design fundamentals—some would call them principles—which Frank Lloyd Wright is talking about when he speaks of organic design. Mies van der Rohe constantly shows his respect for them in his classic handling of proportion and emphasis. Modernists from Gaudi to Le Corbusier even in

their efforts to escape from the cliches of traditionalism have made conscious use of these elements which seem to be the very sinews of design.

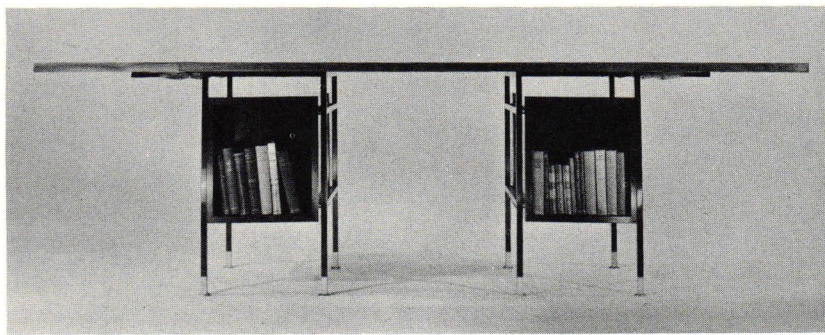
We cannot help being aware that household furniture design is the true offspring—not the stepchild—of residential architecture. The very real changes that have taken place in modern architecture as it reflects new living ways, new luxuries which soon become taken-for-granted conveniences, new building materials and building techniques, are at the root of our attitudes toward furniture (not to mention the economic climate since World War II).

In self-appraisal let me say that I am realist enough to know that I can do my work with these changes in mind and sometimes achieve a happy result without striving to be the aesthetic pioneer or the technical innovator which I know I am not. I have addressed myself in the main to design for the furniture industry (with all its faults) as I find it, and am thankful for the tangible improvements it makes in itself. To design for a hypothetical industry (and perhaps a hypothetical market) is not, however, unfortunately a part of my equipment.

I cannot feel that my output is necessarily less socially useful though in a different way than if I were to concentrate such creativity as I possess on evangelical innovation or else.

If modern furniture design in the last two decades in this country and for a number of years before that in Europe—notably at the Bauhaus in the 20's—has frequently looked with impatience and aggressive distaste on the middle-class conformism of furniture fashions in revived past styles, surely we can today regard these emotions as more therapeutic than subversive. Just as surely we can be confident that present and future design expressions, even more inextricably tied to architecture, will complement it; sometimes romantically, sometimes austere ("Purely" if you will). This, without the need for investigation by future McCarthys looking for un-American lint under our as yet "unmade" beds.

Edward J. Wormley



Dropleaf desk
one leaf up, showing open-shelf side

Dropleaf desk with both leaves up

Arm chairs
22½" wide 21¾" deep 34" high
natural walnut frame, cane seat
open cane back panel





Eight-drawer chest
34" wide 35" high 21" deep
mahogany with laminated walnut pulls
rosewood legs

Three-door cabinet
42" wide 35" high 21" deep
mahogany with laminated walnut pulls
rosewood legs—closed cane doors
shelves and pull-out storage trays
behind sliding doors

"Mrs." chair—"Mr." chair
27½" wide 32" deep 37" high
31" wide 35½" deep 37" high
mahogany legs, foam rubber upholstery

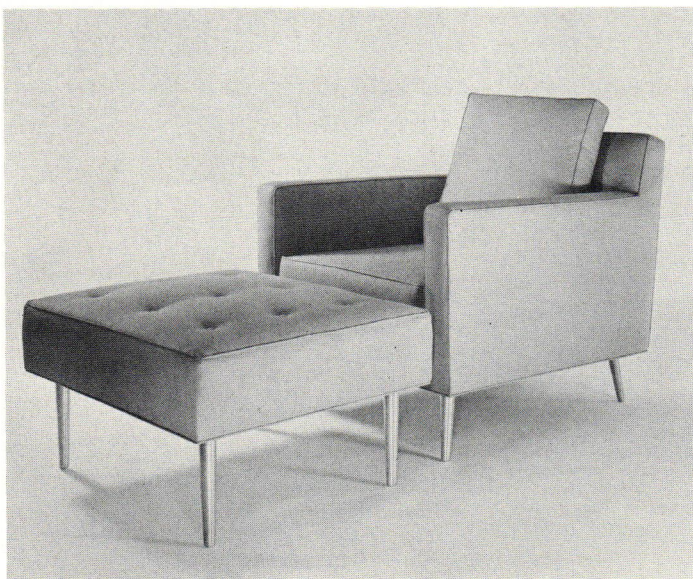




Frank Willming

Dropleaf desk
natural walnut top and leaves
dark mahogany pedestal drawers
metal frames lacquered "Peat Brown"
brass anklets

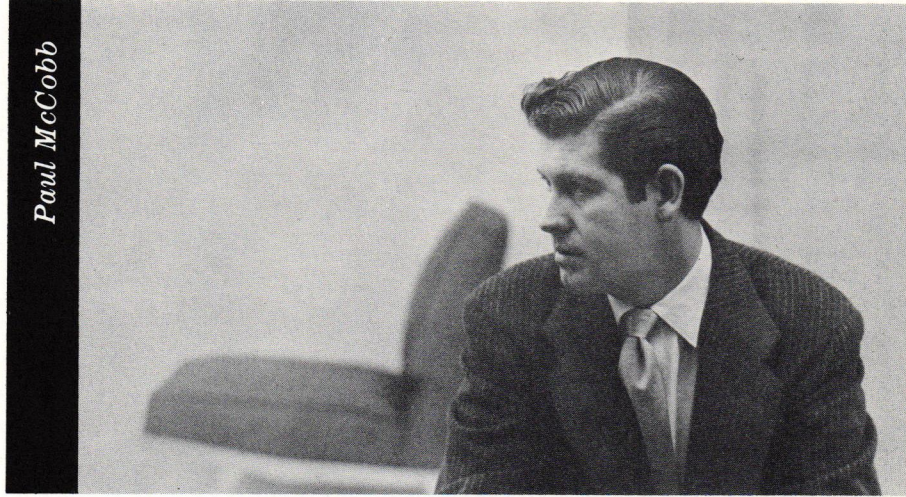
G. Barrows



Lounge chair
28½" wide 34" wide 32" high
down back pillows, foam rubber seat cushion
detachable metal legs, brass or aluminum

Ottoman
28" wide 24" deep
foam rubber upholstery
detachable metal legs

Paul McCobb



Paul McCobb received his early education in Boston under private instructors, and continued his studies at Vesper George School of Fine Arts. During the war he was attached to the Camouflage Division of the U. S. Army Engineers. He has become known for his furniture designs including those for Directional Modern and Planners Group furniture.

Brass and mahogany Breakfront sanddrift finish







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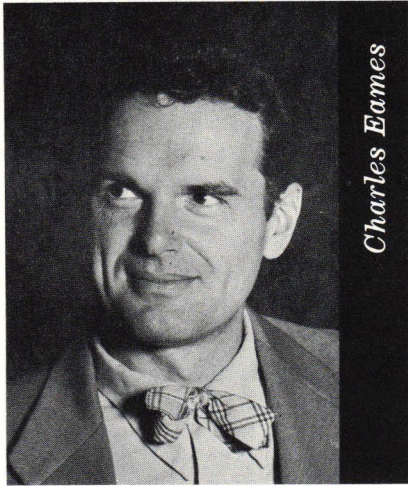
- 1 Lounge chair
hand-sewn welting and hand finishing
100% horsehair double stuffed with foam rubber
finishes are walnut, sandrift, fruitwood,
ebony and deep mahogany

mahogany pedestal table

desk available in sandrift, teak or gray-coat walnut,
brass hardware and stretcher

chair
woven cane back
- 2 Game table
36" x 20"
detailed checker-board surface
ebony squares combined with a lighter finish
can be used on other side, which has plain mahogany surface
storage area for chessmen and other equipment

sidechair
caned back and upholstered seat
- 3 Room Divider
brass and mahogany sanddrift finish
60" wide



Charles Eames

Charles Eames is an old friend to EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY readers. Some of his latest designs produced by the Herman Miller Furniture Company are pictured here.

- 1 New Fibre glass side chair
available with either struts or steel legs
- 2 New version of fibre glass lounge chair
1" foam rubber laminated to the fibre glass shell
available with tailored fabric or Naugahyde cover
struts or steel legs
- 3 Desk—29½" high 60" wide 28" deep
birch or walnut top
black drawer fronts
typing counter 26¼" high 47" wide 16" deep
chrome plated angles and legs
choice of neutral or colored panel combination

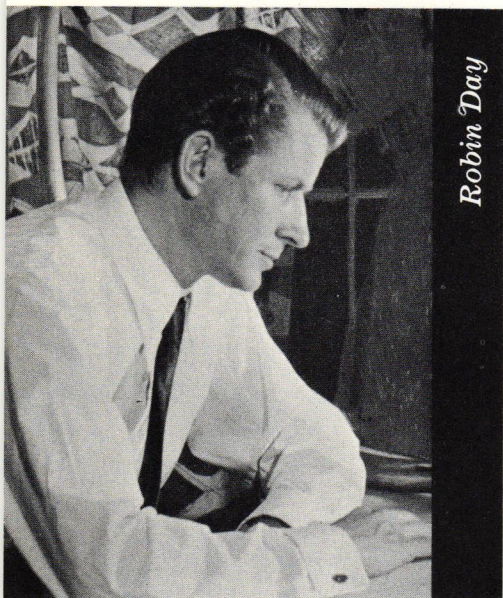




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Robin Day

Mann Bros.



Easy chair with steel frame
latex foam upholstery

Robin Day was born in the provincial town of High Wycombe, the traditional centre of the English furniture industry. After a period of working in furniture factories, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art. He has since been in practice as an industrial design consultant and designer of display and graphic art, as well as teaching at schools of art and architecture. With Clive Latimer he won first prize in the Museum of Modern Art International Furniture Design Competition. His work has been widely exhibited in Europe.

In Britain it is primarily in the low cost market that opportunities for the manufacture of progressive furniture occurs. The decorators' market as it exists in America is almost unknown, and there are comparatively few buyers with a taste for modern design who can afford expensive furniture. Acceptance of contemporary furniture is highest among younger people with less spending power, and an expression of their way of life is seen in the more advanced work here. These younger people tend to live in small flats, rooms or small pre-fabricated houses, and are likely to move their quarters from time to time. Space saving, dual-purpose pieces, and light demountable bookshelf-storage without permanent walls, help to meet these requirements.

New schools, hostels, and housing schemes form the main post-war building program in Britain, and provide another outlet for genuine contemporary work. The rational outlook of Architects concerned with the equipping of these buildings and the fact that the quantities required justifies investment in enterprising production techniques, has caused some of the most interesting work in this country to occur in this market.

A more general development of modern design in Britain has been impaired not only by the timidity of manufacturers and conservatism of public taste, but also the existence among serious designers and critics, of a nostalgia for the refinements of 18th Century design, resulting in a school of somewhat formal and decorative modern design. In Scandinavia and other agricultural countries which have not experienced a craft destroying industrial revolution, this attitude is more natural than here where the furniture industry is comparatively highly mechanized.

Although obviously there are a number of perfectly valid directions which the development of modern furniture design can take, I feel that here

we have still to benefit from a genuine and lively phase of direct, functional and obviously machine-made work before contributions of a really subtle or complex nature will be made. The crystallization of such a phase has occurred in those industrialized countries where design standards are most advanced, but has been resisted in Britain on the grounds of coldness and visual monotony. The almost total absence of central heating in homes may have contributed to this attitude. However, the realization is growing that interiors can contain furniture of a simple functional character and still be rich, gay, dramatic or intimate by the use of color, decor, painting, pottery, etc.

Looking towards America where the output of good contemporary work is so large, and indeed towards any country where a high level of modern design has become established, it is impossible not to notice an increasingly feverish straining for novelty in the field of furniture design. It seems that the creation of new furniture has sometimes become almost entirely a vehicle of self-expression for the designer, or a seasonal quick-change act for the marketing requirements of manufacturers. A nervous pitch appears to have been reached in the competition for purely formalistic originality, without, I suspect, an equally tenacious struggle for technological development and higher manufacturing skills. No one would pretend in 1953 that material, technical needs, and function were the sole dictates of form, but all the same it is evident that in some of the finest furniture of our time, such as the whole range of Eames chairs, and the best Danish work, technology on the one hand, and superlative craftsmanship on the other, have played a major role.

The desire for continual change and novelty is no doubt a reflection in terms of design, of the social instability and restlessness of our times, and in this sense is valid. Furniture becomes tiresome, however, when it displays an apparent constructivist or machine aesthetic, but actually ignores function. Space wasting uncomfortable chairs and storage structures backed by such a casual analysis of dimensions that they are little more than decorative, are typical of this school.

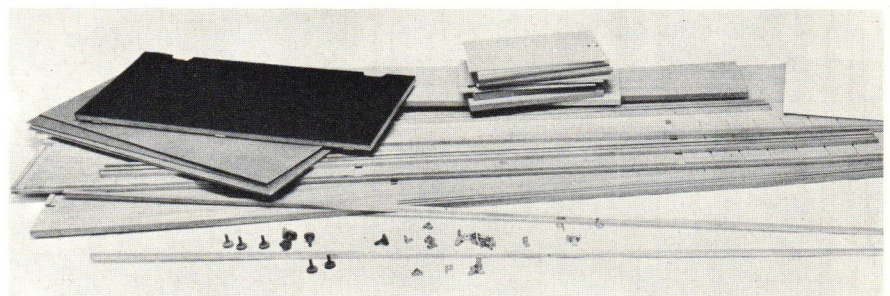
If these notes seem unduly critical it is because I think that general acceptance of modern furniture depends largely on sincerity of design. If designers accept this responsibility, and if manufacturers allow them to do their best work, the movement should eventually mature with endless diversity and refinement.

Robin Day

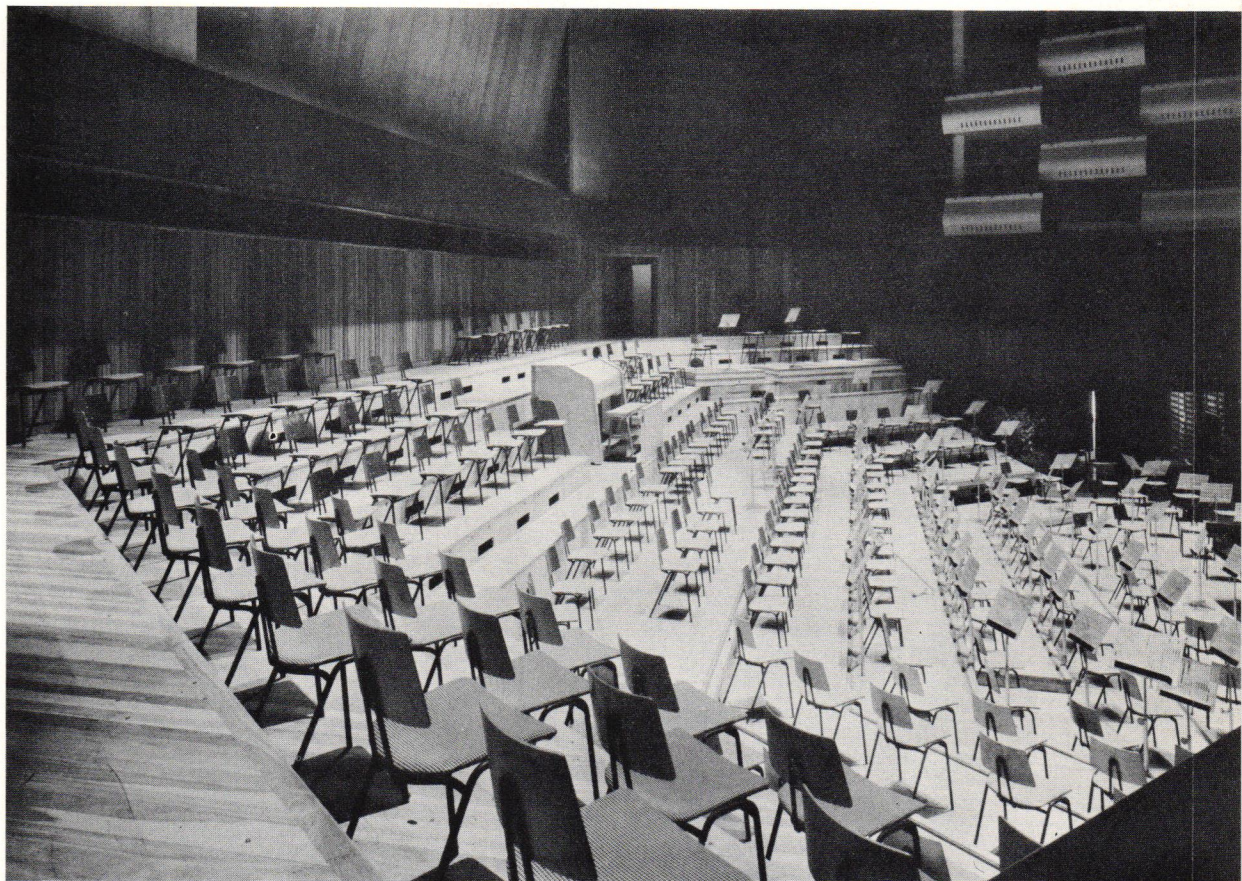


Storage system
adjustable shelf positions
record rack and fall front with writing fittings
completely demountable

Storage system demounted

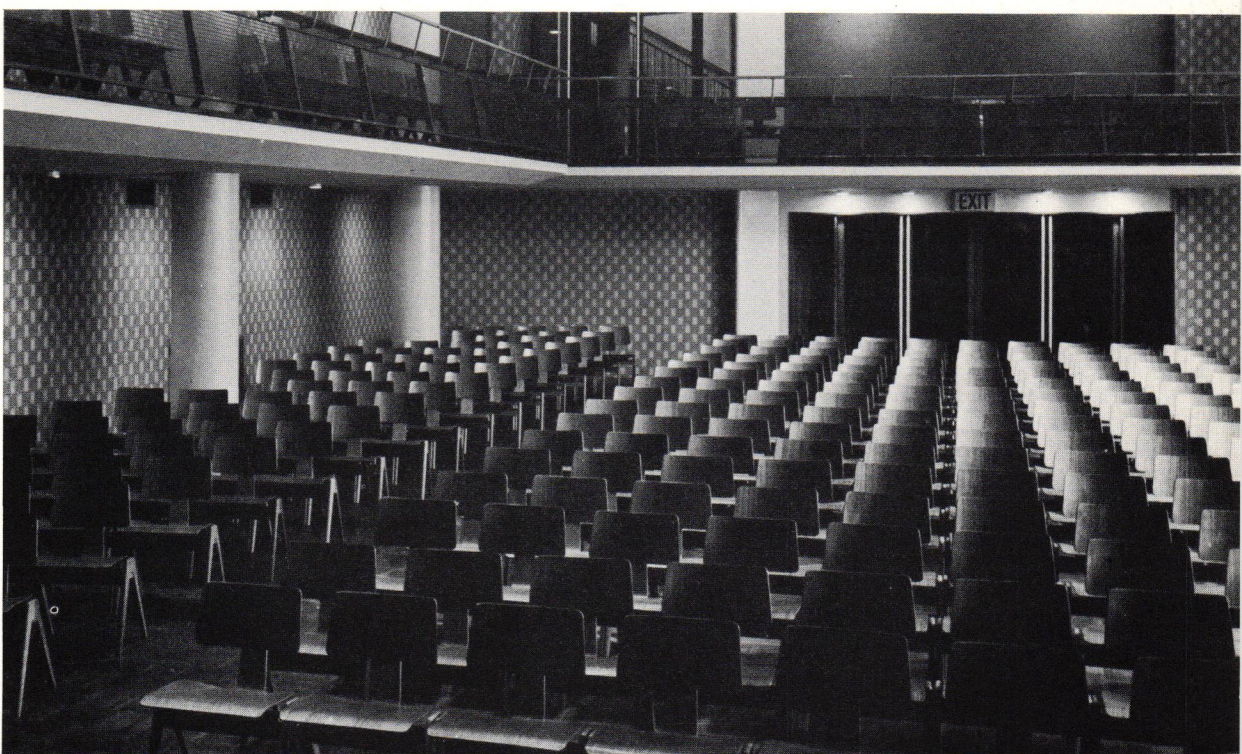


Sydney W. Newbery



Metal frame stacking chairs

Architectural Review



Plywood stacking chairs

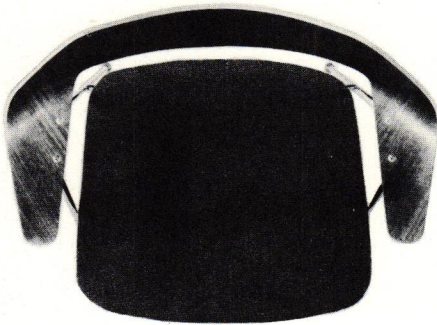
Mann Bros.



1



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- 1 Armchair
back and arms moulded in one piece
- 2 Sideview showing form ply unit
mounted on steel frame
- 3 Plan view showing shape of formed back and arms



HANS HOFMANN

HANS HOFMANN

Hans Hofmann thinks of abstract art as a universal language. He is the oldest of the artists of the New York School. Distinguished as a painter, he is also the leading teacher of abstract aesthetic theory in this country. He has been teaching in New York for almost twenty years, so that he is well qualified to evaluate the current situation. He emphasizes that what has taken place during the past few years—this sudden, collective upsurge of spirit—has not taken place before, not here. He finds that the young people who come to him today have unprecedented confidence—justified confidence, for they seem to be psychologically ready to be themselves, and at the same time to think critically. To criticize unsparingly and at the same time to defend the rights of one's fellow artists within the movement, that Hofmann feels is the new attitude, and he finds in it an approximation of the attitude which has prevailed in Paris for so many years.

For Hofmann, as I have already indicated, Paris is still the center, the spiritual or ideational center. But now that a new generation of painters has appeared in this country, painters self-reliant enough to paint without first cocking an eye at the work of the masters of modern art, we may expect to see first-rate art being produced here as well.

In discussing the background of this development, Hofmann refers to a long period of decline in European art, preceding the sudden efflorescence which began in the late 1800's. Decline outside of France, mainly. In France things were better. There the painterly tradition passed from Gericault to Delacroix, to Corot, Courbet and Manet, and after Monet came the great revolutionary upsurge. But the discoveries and rediscoveries made in Paris took a long time to spread. First-rate artists outside of France were isolated. Figures like Corinth, Munch, Ensor and Mancini appeared, and in this country we had Ryder, Maurer, Carles and a few others. According to Hofmann the emergence of a New York school signifies the arrival of a generation of

younger artists who are creating from deep within, rather than from the level of conventional taste and design, and who are at the same time *consciously* concerned with the interaction of form and color, each obeying its own laws.

That, of course, is Hofmann's own theory of composition. It certainly doesn't apply to all the members of the New York School, nor even to all the members of this group. But it may well represent an ideal toward which many artists are working, including those who paint almost entirely from the solar plexus, and whose ideas of theory are fully covered by the word "agony".

Hofmann's theory is inclusive and comprehensive. His approach to easel painting is quite different from his approach to mural painting, and he himself works in at least three different styles, all of which he has made his own. The paintings in which a painter's theories are most consistently applied are not always his best, but in Hofmann's case I would say they were. In these large, audaciously architectonic compositions, natural forms are abstracted and redistributed in a manner that implies an essentially rational view of reality. A dynamic formal scheme establishes order and unity among the richly clashing colors, and a note that is rather rare in modern painting is sounded, a note of massive gaiety. Hofmann is a big, radiant man with a scrupulous mind. All of this comes across in his best work.

Hofmann's reply to a question about the artist and society is characteristic. He says—without a trace of resentment—that society today certainly gives its artists scant encouragement, but that the artist must go on doing his job as he sees it, conscientiously and devotedly. In that way he fulfills his function and sets an example of honesty and courage that must benefit those around him, and eventually, indirectly, all of society.

James Fitzsimmons

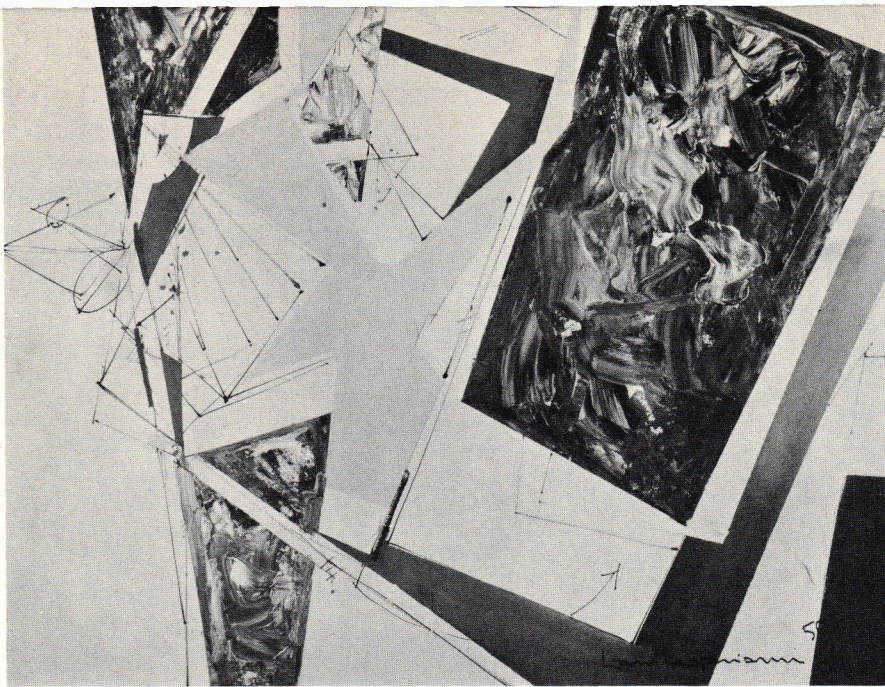
photos: Kootz Gallery



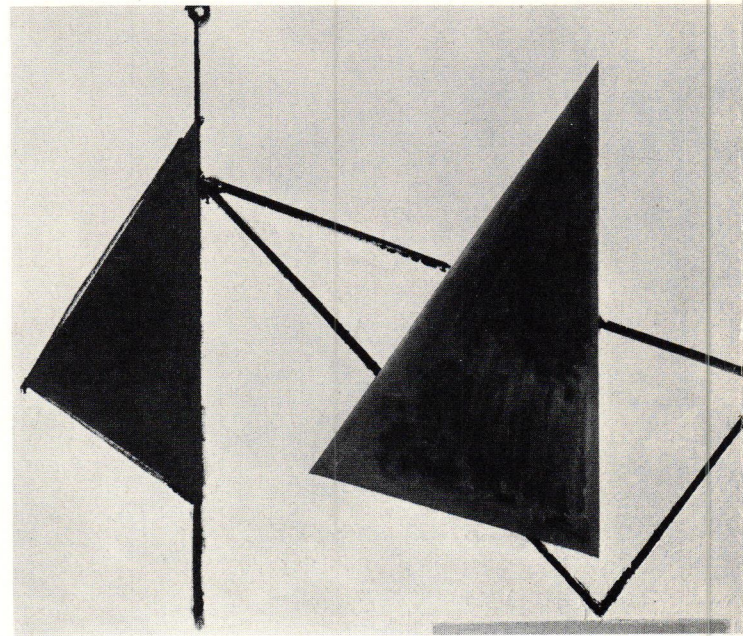
Ascension



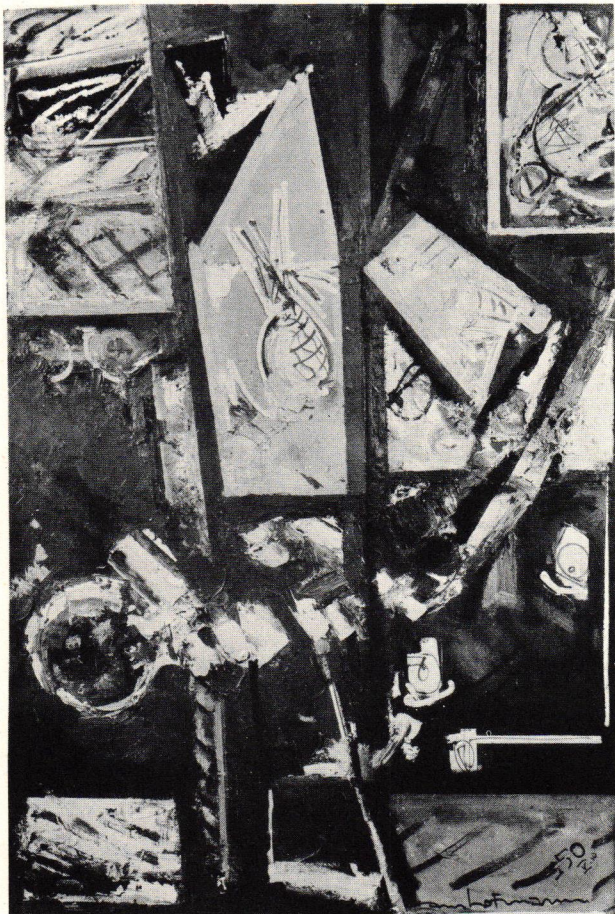
Lyric Mood



Push and Pull #3



Pure Space



Reminiscence