



MIDCENTURY
TO TODAY

Modern Design

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

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MIDCENTURY
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Introduction

Known for its sleek lines and functional simplicity, midcentury modern's mainstream appeal has propelled it from a fleeting trend to the preferred design aesthetic of today's millennials and Gen Zs. While the enduring interest in this ubiquitous style—popularized by period dramas like TV's *Mad Men*—has transitioned from exclusive high-end boutiques to mass accessibility through big box retailers, how do we reconcile our complex relationship with contemporary design?

Drawn from the renowned Stewart Program for Modern Design, *Midcentury to Today* charts the captivating story of modern design—from the growing affluence and consumerism of the post-World War II years (and wholesale pursuit of “the good life”) to today's diverse, technology-driven world defined by globalization—reflecting and clarifying the ever-evolving needs, trends, and values of society and culture itself.

Through the essential design movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, *Midcentury to Today* focuses on the groundbreaking work of

such visionaries as **Eva Zeisel, Charles and Ray Eames, Dieter Rams, Philippe Starck, Isamu Noguchi, Zaha Hadid, and Olafur Eliasson.**

With over 120 designs from Italy, Japan, France, Germany, the United States, and Canada, the exhibition spotlights an extraordinary selection of designers, whose pioneering work in a range of media—furniture, ceramics, metalwork, graphics, textiles—has helped to define the look and zeitgeist of our modern world.

Delving into the remarkable origins of iconic objects such as the 1941 CHEMEX and 2002 iMac, *Midcentury to Today* traces the impact and significance of design in the everyday. By viewing familiar designs in a museum context, today's audiences will see “ordinary” objects in a remarkable new light, deepening their awareness of the daily choices we make as consumers.

Midcentury to Today takes audiences on a visual journey through seven decades of innovative design, highlighting its profound ability to solve problems (whether practical, ideological, or aesthetic) while transcending multiple cultural boundaries.

1. Charles Eames (1912–1988), Ray Eames (1907–1978) *LCW Lounge Chair*, Designed 1945–46. Stained ash-faced plywood, rubber. 26.38 x 22 x 21.88 inches. Produced by Herman Miller Furniture Company, Zeeland, Michigan. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Luc d'Iberville Moreau, 2015.37



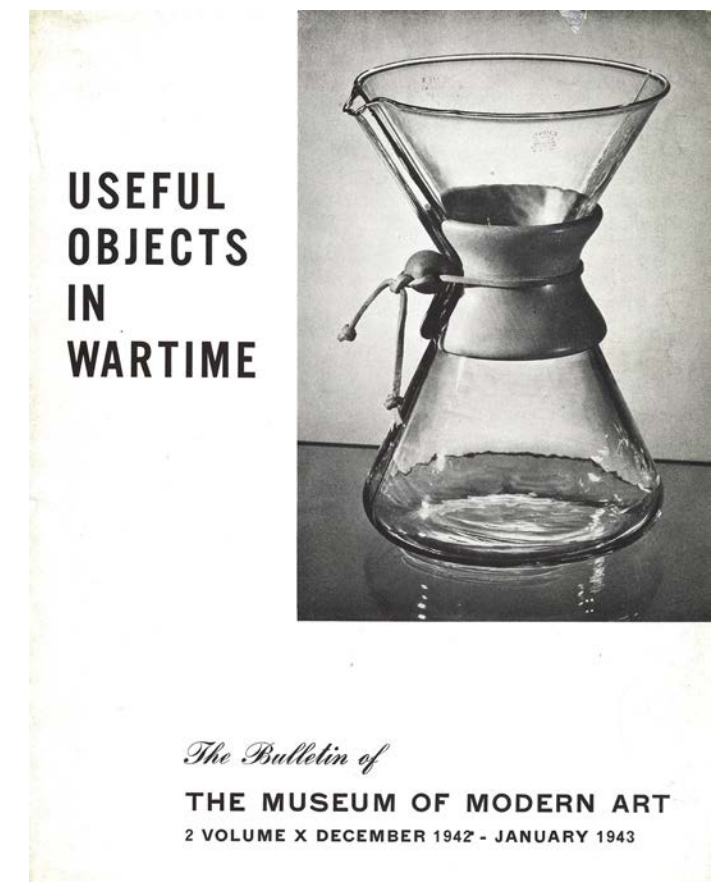
Good Design

The exhibition begins with an exploration of classic designs by **Charles and Ray Eames, George Nelson, Florence Knoll, and Eva Zeisel**, exemplifying the idea that objects can be fashioned according to certain universal and rational principles, and with a singular character that can be recognized and defined. This elegant concept is less than a century old: it descended from the teachings of the Bauhaus school, both from its publications and from the former Bauhaus students and teachers who immigrated to North America in the 1930s to escape Nazi Germany.

Between 1950 and 1955, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) organized a series of Good Design exhibitions curated by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., which introduced these design ideals to American audiences and ushered the term Good Design into the lexicon. Kaufmann and his fellow jurors selected objects that reflected “a thorough merging of form and function revealing a practical, uncomplicated beauty.” For Kaufmann, Good Design also had a moral dimension: it would not only enhance people’s lives aesthetically, but also uplift them spiritually. Good Design products were intended to reach a broad market, so affordability was as important as quality.



2. LEFT: Peter Schlumbohm (1896–1962) *Chemex Coffeemaker*. Designed c. 1939. Glass, wood, leather. 9.5 x 5.88 x 5.88 inches. Produced by Chemex Corp., New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Dr. Michael Sze
3. RIGHT: Harvey A. Anderson and Alice M. Carson. *Useful Objects in Wartime: The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art*. Issued December 1942–January 1943. Offset lithography. 9.25 x 7.24 inches. Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2013.15



“A thorough merging of form and function revealing a practical, uncomplicated beauty”

-Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.



4. LEFT: Massimo Vignelli (1931–2014), Lella Vignelli (1934–2016) *Nine pieces of Hellerware Tableware*. Designed 1972. Melamine. Pitcher: 8 x 7.48 x 5 inches; Tray: 1 x 9.63 x 9.63 inches; Mug: 2.63 x 4.5 x 3.13 inches. Produced by Heller Design, New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Dr. Michael Sze, 2007.21.1–9
5. RIGHT: Mario Bellini (born 1935) *Pop 45 Automatic Record Player*, Model GA 45. Designed 1968. ABS plastic, metal. 3.26 x 7.75 x 8.62 inches. Produced by Minerva, Milan, Italy. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2010.7

Postmodernism and Pluralism

The exhibition's second theme examines the subsequent shift away from the simplicity of Good Design, and includes the work of famed designers **Ettore Sottsass**, **Michael Graves**, and **Philippe Starck**. This new style, which emerged in the 1970s, was described by Charles Jencks in his influential 1977 book *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* as a hybrid of aspects of historical memory, local context, metaphor, and ambiguity. Practitioners saw design and architecture as exempt from any responsibility toward functionalism or social utility; design became a popular commodity (rather than an ideal), as well as a subject for debate. A plurality of styles and groups loosely gathered under the label of Postmodernism effectively defined the look of design in the 1980s and beyond. Philip Johnson's 1982 AT&T building, with its playfully historic open pediment, became an icon of Postmodernism in New York. Postmodern styles found expression in numerous objects throughout the world, including—in this section—in Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States.

6. Michael Graves (1934–2015) *Big Dropper Coffee Service*.
Designed 1987. Porcelain. Coffeepot: 8.85 x 10.43 x 6.69 inches.
Produced in Japan for Swid Powell, New York, NY.
The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2009.9



7. Michael Graves (1934–2015) *Desk Phone and Answering Machine, Model No. MG1000BL*. Designed c. 1999. Plastic, rubber. Phone: 6.29 x 7.87 x 6.69 inches. Made in China for Target, Minneapolis, MN. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Dr. Michael Sze



Postmodern styles attracted wide interest in North America and Europe. One reason for this was that consumers hungered for the exuberant decoration that had been banned by the Bauhaus and the functionalists in the first half of the century. In Italy, the Memphis Group—a collaborative renowned for their signature Postmodern style—began exhibiting in 1981 and flourished through the decade. Backed by the Milanese lighting firm Artemide and other Italian companies, Memphis produced a wide range of products, and invited artists from Italy and other countries to join their group.

Neomodernism



A neo-minimalist aesthetic, representing yet another shift in public taste, is the subject of the exhibition's third theme. This new aesthetic, a reaction in part to the Memphis Group and the excesses of Postmodernism, inspired designers such as **Jasper Morrison** of Great Britain, **Antonio Citterio** of Italy, and **Naoto Fukasawa** of Japan. Morrison introduced his pared-down, straightforward designs for wood furniture in the 1980s, looking back to such elegantly austere 1950s designs as Gio Ponti's

Superleggera chair; in the 1990s, his simplified furniture forms won him international acclaim. In Morrison's opinion, what "led to modernism's temporary downfall was its lack of humor, or at least a lightness of touch which took into account that, while a product was born to industry, it was destined to spend the rest of its life with people, who might not be interested in the dry logic of manufacturing solutions. Looking back, there was nothing wrong with modernism, it just needed an oil change."



8. LEFT: Janne Kyttänen (born 1974), Jiri Evenhuis (born 1973) *Punch-Bag Handbag*. Designed 2005. Laser-sintered polyamide. 10.82 x 11.81 x 0.78 inches. Produced by FOC (Freedom of Creation), the Netherlands. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2010.50
9. RIGHT: Jasper Morrison (born 1959) *Four Air Stacking Chairs*. Designed 1999. Polypropylene. 30.31 x 20.27 x 19.09 inches. Produced by Magis, Torre Di Mosto, Italy. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2008.11.1-4



Bauhaus principles were once again in vogue, and designers poured their energies and ingenuity into this renewed phase of modernism. Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa teamed up to organize the exhibition *Super Normal* in London, which was their updated version of Good Design. Their own work reflected the simple, well-made products that have existed for

centuries, and was a response (they said) to the industry's regrettable shift away from the integrity of everyday objects to products that were up-to-date but faddish and temporary. This theme of the exhibition features works by **Jasper Morrison**, **Konstantin Grcic**, **Yves Béhar**, and the **Campana Brothers**.



10. LEFT: Naoto Fukasawa (born 1956) *Pop-Up Toaster*. Designed 2015. Plastic, chromium-plated steel, rubber. 7.67 x 6.10 x 9.64 inches. Produced by Muji, Toshima, Tokyo, Japan. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of S. Bernard Paré, 2017.3
11. RIGHT: Konstantin Grcic (born 1965) *Mayday Lamp*. Designed 1998. Polypropylene. 20.86 x 8.46 x 8.46 inches. Produced by Flos, S. p. A., Milan, Italy. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, bequest of Liliane M. Stewart, 2015.13



12. LEFT: Ionna Vautrin (French, born 1979) *TGV Lamp*. Designed 2017. Aluminum, polycarbonate. 11.22 x 10.82 x 3.54 inches. Produced by Moustache for SNCF (French National Railway Company), Paris, France. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Jane Scobey, by exchange, 2019.12

13. RIGHT: Konstantin Grcic (born 1965) *360 Swivel Task Chair*. Designed 2009. Enameled tubular steel, aluminum, polyurethane. 24.8 x 24.8 x 27.44 inches. Produced by Magis, Torre Di Mosto, Italy. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2011.32

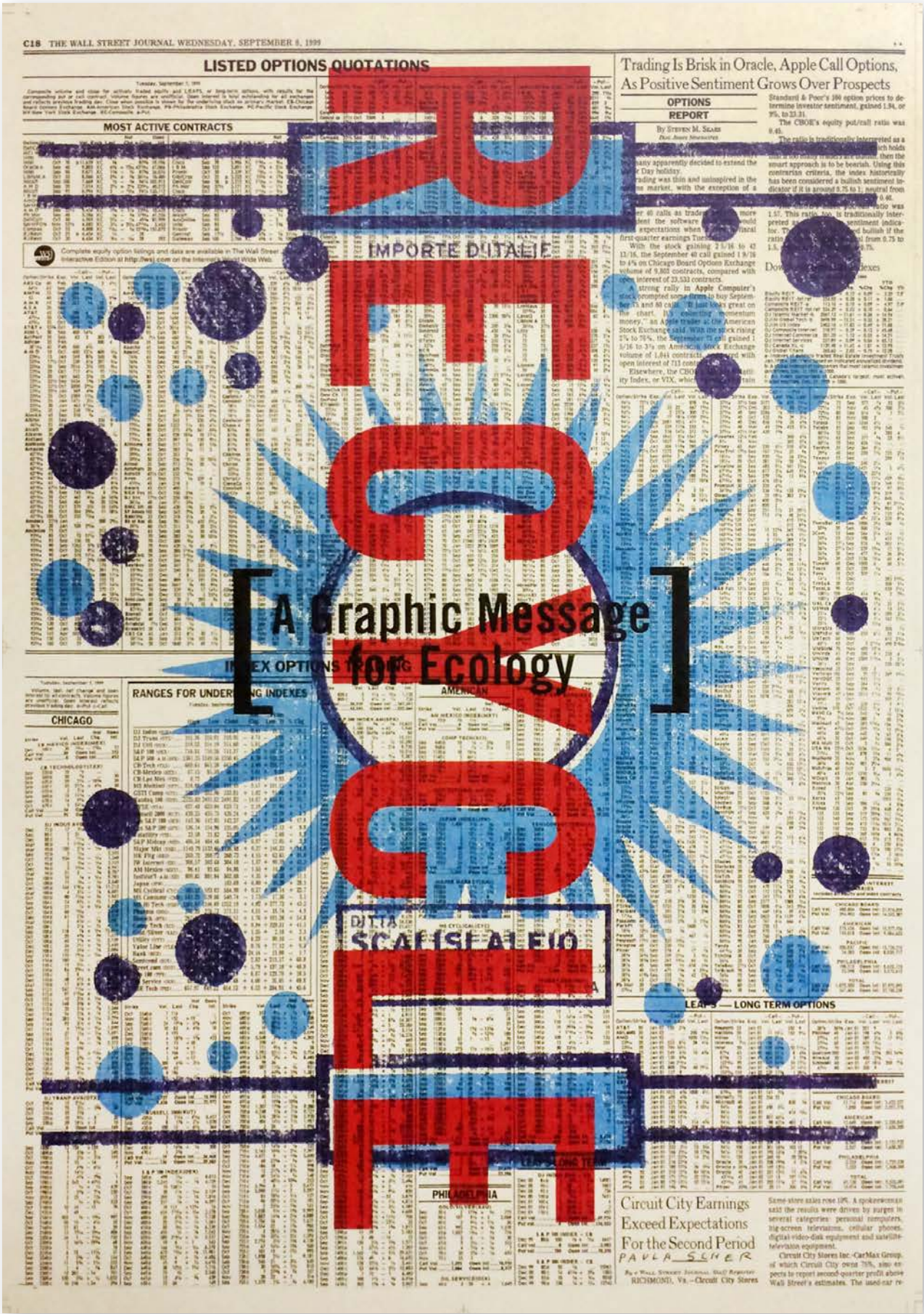


Responsible Design



The exhibition's final theme looks at aspects of Responsible Design, which was advanced in the 1970s to address growing concerns about the environment, and which folded design into the context of wider ecological problems facing the planet. This conscientious approach was not entirely new: Bauhaus designers had already collaborated successfully with ecologists, in the belief that design should be modeled on nature.

- 14. LEFT: Olafur Eliasson (born 1967), Frederik Ottesen (born 1967) *Little Sun Solar Lamp*. Designed 2012. Plastic, ABS, solar panel, LED, nylon. 1.25 x 4.72 x 4.72 inches. Produced by Little Sun, Berlin, Germany. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of the manufacturer, 2014.2
- 15. RIGHT: Paula Scher (born 1948) *Recycle: A Graphic Message for Ecology Poster*. Designed 1998. Offset lithography. 24.25 x 17 inches. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of the designer, courtesy of Pentagram, 2018.9.15





Recycling continues to be a major concern for designers. An ever-widening sense of personal responsibility to the environment, and the recognition of design as an essential component of a “green” approach, gained traction in the 1990s and later, as governments, designers, and consumers began to look for new ways of conserving resources and protecting the natural world. Recycling laws became ubiquitous, and designers joined the crusade: “Green Design” became key to many new products, which used “green” features as selling points.

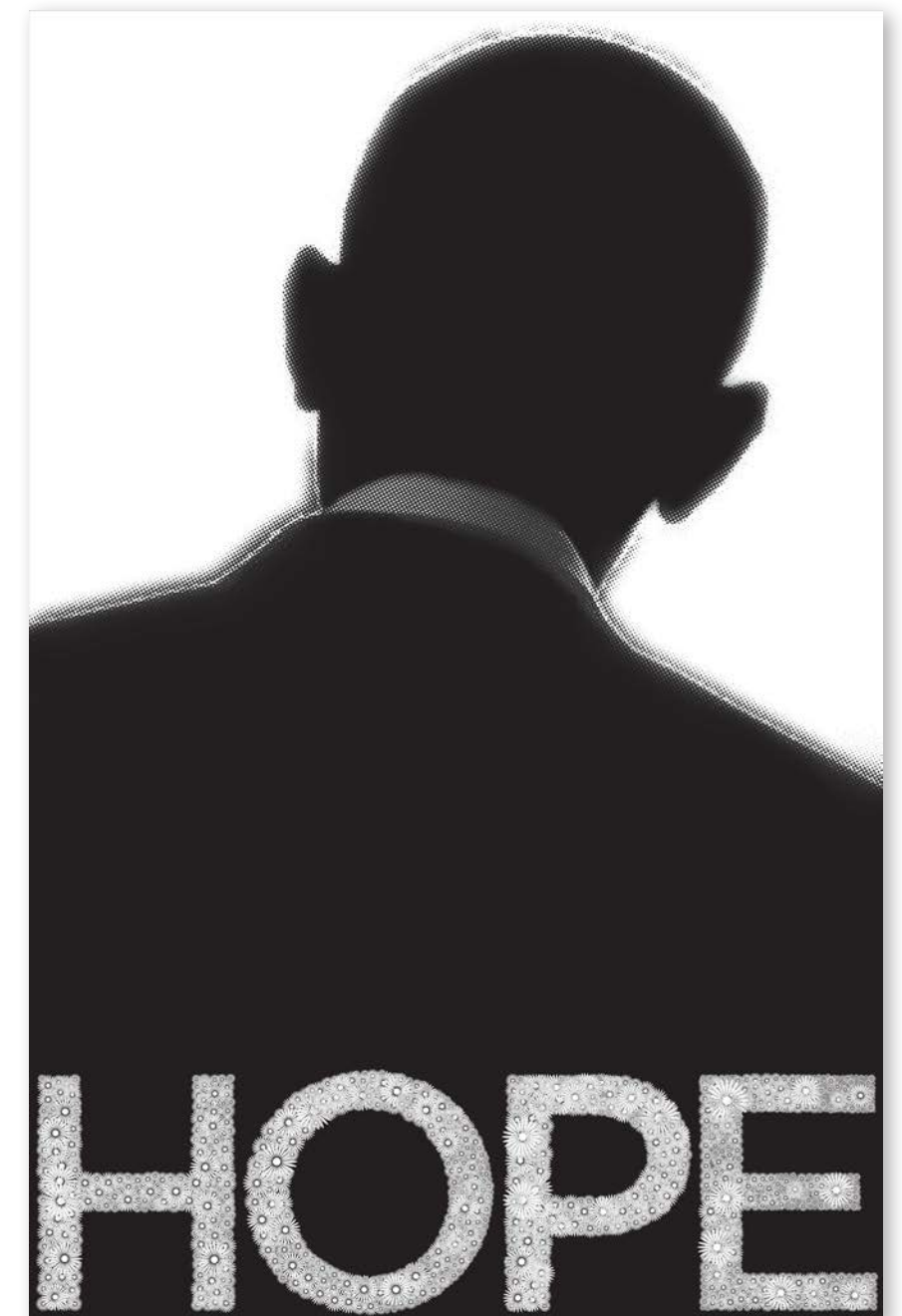
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15. LEFT: Alan Heller (born 1940) *ErgoErgo Stool*. Designed 2009. Recyclable polyethylene. 19.48 x 15.94 x 15.94 inches. Produced by ErgoErgo Inc., New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of David A. Hanks, in memory of Tessa Craib-Cox, 2012.31
16. RIGHT: Smart Design: Davin Stowell (born 1953) Steven Allendorf (born 1927). *Three Good Grips Mixing Bowls*. Designed 1992. Santoprene, rubber. Largest: 5.7 x 12.32 x 10.82 inches. Produced by OXO International, El Paso, Texas. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of Dr. Michael Sze, 2007.29.1–3



Universal Design, which focuses on social inclusion, represents another facet of this ecological theme. With its mission of maximum usefulness, Universal Design aims to create versatile products with the widest possible utility—ideally, for all people, rather than for limited customer groups (such as those with disabilities or the elderly), which would create waste. OXO’s *Good Grips* kitchenware, for example, helped pioneer the new, widely inclusive standards of Universal Design.



Electoral politics are also an important part of Responsible Design. During the 2004 American presidential election, the American Institute of Graphic Arts prevailed upon designers to create “Get Out the Vote” posters, saying, “The intent is a call to action, motivating people to register and turn out to vote.” The significance of these political posters, which supported progressive candidates and ecological values, acquired a special urgency during the run-up to the contentious 2016 election.



17. LEFT: Rafael Esquer (born 1966), Alfalfa Studio, *Vote Poster*. Designed 2004. Lithograph. 40.94 x 26.88 inches. Produced for AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts), New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of the designer, 2008.27
18. RIGHT: Paula Scher (born 1948) *Hope-Obama Poster*. Designed 2008. Offset lithography. 39.17 x 25.19 inches. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of the designer, courtesy of Pentagram, 2018.9.22



About the Curator

David A. Hanks has extensive experience in the museum field, including curatorial positions at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Since 1980 he has served as the Curator for Montreal's Stewart Collection of decorative arts and design. Mr. Hanks has curated numerous pioneering design exhibitions, from *Innovative Furniture in America* for the Smithsonian Institution in 1982 to *American Streamlined Design: The World of Tomorrow* in 2005.

Recent exhibition projects include *Louis Comfort Tiffany: Treasures from the Richard H. Driehaus Collection* (2013), *Partners in Design: Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Philip Johnson* (2016) and *Hector Guimard*, which will open in 2021 at the Driehaus Museum. Mr. Hanks has also curated a number of important collections, including the Frank Lloyd Wright decorative arts collection of Thomas S. Monaghan and the industrial design collection of George R. Kravis.

Stewart Program for Modern Design

THE STEWART PROGRAM FOR MODERN DESIGN

The Stewart Program for Modern Design, based in Montreal, collects international design and decorative arts from 1900 to the present. Developed by Liliane Stewart, the collection includes a broad range of work—from mass-produced, industrial products to unique crafted objects, limited editions, and prototypes. In assembling the collection, Liliane Stewart developed relationships with established international designers while remaining open to work by young, lesser-known designers. Currently, the collecting focus is on contemporary design. The Stewart Program makes the collection accessible to the public through traveling exhibitions, publications, films, and digital initiatives that present groundbreaking new scholarship on twentieth- and twenty-first-century design. The core mission has always been to educate the broadest possible public about design and its role in contemporary society.

19. Dorothy Cosonas (born 1961) *Arrondissement Textile*. Designed in 2018. Polyester, cotton, 118.11 x 51.96 inches. Produced by KnollTextiles, New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, gift of the manufacturer, 2019.31.2



FRONT Greta Von Nessen (1900–1978) *Anywhere Lamp*. Designed 1951. Aluminum, enameled steel. 15.15 x 14.37 x 14.37 inches. Produced by Nessen Studio, Inc., New York, NY. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2011.20

BACK Maria Bernsten (born 1961) *Quack Insulated Jug*. Designed 2002. Plastic, aluminum, zinc. 6.29 x 8.66 x 5.7 inches. Produced by Georg Jensen, Copenhagen, Denmark. The Stewart Program for Modern Design, 2008.12

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works

Approximately 100 objects

Organized by

The Stewart Program for Modern Design, Montreal, Canada, and toured by International Arts & Artists

Curator

David A. Hanks

Requirements

High security; approximately 3,000 square feet

Participation Fee

Please inquire

Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous US

Booking Period

12 weeks

Tour

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Publication

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