

LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: CALIFORNIA DESIGN, 1930–1965: "LIVING IN A MODERN WAY"

ON VIEW: OCTOBER 1, 2011–JUNE 3, 2012

LOCATION: RESNICK PAVILION

LACMA PRESENTS FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF MID-CENTURY MODERN CALIFORNIA DESIGN

SHOW FEATURES MORE THAN 350 WORKS BY LEADING DESIGNERS INCLUDING CHARLES AND RAY EAMES, RUDOLPH SCHINDLER, RICHARD NEUTRA, AND GRETA MAGNUSSON GROSSMAN



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 7)

(Los Angeles, September 15, 2011)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *California Design, 1930–1965: "Living in a Modern Way."* The exhibition—the first major study of modern California design—examines the state's key role in shaping the material culture of the country at mid-century. *California Design* features more than 350 objects in wide-ranging media, including furniture, textiles, fashion, graphic and industrial design, ceramics, jewelry, metalwork, architectural drawings, and film, as well as two period re-creations—most notably the living room from the home of renowned designers Charles and Ray Eames. The exhibition is organized by Wendy Kaplan, Curator and Department Head, and Bobbye Tigerman, Assistant Curator, of LACMA's Decorative Arts and Design Department.

"Given that California became a world center for design innovation after 1945, it's surprising that this exhibition is the first comprehensive study of the subject. While figures such as the Eameses, Richard Neutra,

and Rudi Gernreich are well known, we present new context for their work," stated Wendy Kaplan. Bobbye Tigerman elaborated, "At the same time, we also introduce audiences to previously unheralded designers who played an integral role in the development of California design."

California Design, 1930-1965: "Living in a Modern Way" is one of five exhibitions LACMA is presenting in conjunction with Pacific Standard Time, an unprecedented collaboration initiated by the Getty, bringing together more than sixty cultural institutions across Southern California to tell the story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene (beginning October 2011).

Exhibition Overview

"California is America, only more so," the author Wallace Stegner famously declared in 1959. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the state symbolized the good life in America. After 1945 a burgeoning, newly prosperous population—intoxicated by the power to purchase after the deprivation years of the Great Depression and the wartime rationing of goods—turned the state into America's most important center for progressive architecture and furnishings. This exhibition explores how the California of our collective imagination—a democratic utopia where a benign climate permitted life to be led informally and largely outdoors—was translated into a material culture that defined an era.

To illustrate how California provided the ideal environment for modernism to flourish in a way particular to the state, the exhibition is divided into four sections: "Shaping," "Making," "Living," and "Selling." As émigré Greta Magnusson Grossman declared in 1951, California design "is not a superimposed style, but an answer to present conditions...It has developed out of our own preference for living in a modern way."

Shaping California Modern

In the 1920s boom economy, California experienced extraordinary population growth. Millions of new residents needed homes and furnishings, and in the 1930s, buildings and their contents started to be made in modern ways and in modern styles.

The exhibition examines the role of native designers and transplants from other parts of the country as well as the contributions of European émigrés such as Kem Weber, R. M. Schindler, Richard Neutra, and later, in the 1930s, those fleeing Nazi persecution. By the onset of World War II, these innovators' designs for homes and furnishings were characterized by a particular kind of modernism, one rooted in California culture and conditions. The general qualities associated with the state (optimism and democracy, fearless experimentation, and a love of new technology) and those specific to design (an affinity for light and brilliant color, openness to Asian and Latin influences, and an advocacy of fluid spaces and cross-disciplinary approaches) made California's best products distinctive.

Making California Modern

After 1945, the United States became the world's strongest industrial, military, and cultural power. California played a key role in this development, having dominated defense and aerospace production during World War II. After the war, this escalated production had a galvanizing effect on the design and manufacture of consumer goods in the state. California's material culture was shaped by the imperative to apply innovative wartime materials and production methods to peacetime use. For example, Charles and Ray Eames began working with molded plywood to make leg splints for the Navy about 1943, and produced their now-iconic furniture made with this material a few years later.

California artists working in traditional craft media also responded to the spirit of modernism and experimentation. These "designer-craftsmen," as they became known—including Edith Heath, David Cressey, Sam Maloof, and Margaret De Patta—tried to adapt new methods of production to make their work more accessible to the new middle classes. Whether handmade or industrially produced, the goal was to provide well-designed homes and furnishings for the millions of newcomers to California who craved them.

Living California Modern

The heart of the exhibition focuses on the modern California home, famously characterized by open plans and furnished with products from companies such as Van Keppel-Green and Architectural Pottery. The distinctive vocabulary of the California house and its furnishings at mid-

century emerged from a response to the benevolent climate, which permitted indoor/outdoor living. Coupled with new construction techniques and domestic applications for materials such as steel, this allowed space to be made more permeable by completely freeing the wall. The use of steel enabled windows to be floor-to-ceiling; the size of these glass panels was made possible by new technology developed during World War II.

California Design features an extraordinary demonstration of "living in a modern way" with a unique re-creation of the living room from Charles and Ray Eames' Case Study House #8, part of *Arts and Architecture* magazine's groundbreaking post-war program to build high-quality, affordable, mass-producible homes. The installation of these furnishings offers an unprecedented look at the rich, eclectic interior in which these legendary designers lived, showcasing several hundred objects on loan from the Eames Foundation.

Selling California Modern

Julius Shulman declared, "Good design is seldom accepted. It has to be sold." He was referring to his own role in staging architectural photography, but as this section demonstrates, the statement could be equally applied to exhibitions, stores, advertising, publications, and film, which were the principal agents in disseminating modern California design.

"What Makes the California Look" was a question so pressing it was the cover story of the *Los Angeles Times* "Home" magazine in October 1951. Many of the objects photographed for the cover—an Eames fiberglass chair, an Architectural Pottery planter, a Van Keppel-Green lounge chair—have become emblems of California design, endlessly seen in photographs of the period. The works from the *LA Times* cover (or nearly identical examples) have been located and reassembled to recreate the original photo shoot for the exhibition, demonstrating how selling California's products could not be separated from selling the idea of California itself.

By the end of the 1960s, the relentless optimism that had made California the embodiment of the good life became far more subdued. Counterculture protests and ecological and social justice issues challenged the very idea of consumerism and unbridled growth. These shifting beliefs, however, do

not diminish the unprecedented and lasting contributions of California design at mid-century. This exhibition tells a story of the exhilarating innovation and optimism about building a better, modern world that made California loom large in America's, and indeed the world's, imagination.

Installation Design

The installation for *California Design* is created by the design and architecture studio Hodgetts + Fung, which is also responsible for a number of Los Angeles landmarks, including the renovated Hollywood Bowl and Egyptian Theater. The design for the exhibition is inspired by California's unique style, with lithe, sensuous lines carried throughout the installation, including the display cases and a helical construction that soars through the center of the space. Hodgetts + Fung also collaborated with curators Wendy Kaplan and Bobbye Tigerman to bring the re-creation of the Eames living room to life.

Catalogue

The accompanying 360-page catalogue, edited by Wendy Kaplan, is co-published by LACMA and MIT Press, and features essays by Kaplan and Bobbye Tigerman, along with other leading architecture and design historians.

Related Programs at LACMA

Discussing California Design: Living in a Modern Way
Sunday, October 16, 2 pm
Bing Theater | Free, no reservations

D. J. Waldie, contributing writer at *Los Angeles* magazine and contributing editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, has written extensively on mid-century Los Angeles. His 2005 book, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*, was hailed by critic Patricia Hampl as "nothing less than the spiritual autobiography of the midcentury American suburban dream." This lecture presents Waldie's impressions of Southern California life during that crucial time, evoking the spirit and essence of California design and architecture.

The Art of Wine: California Wine by Design
Saturday, October 22, 6 pm
Resnick Pavilion and LACMA West | \$75 general admission, \$65 members
Tickets: 323 857-6010

Tour *California Design* with LACMA educator Mary Lenihan, followed by insightful commentary from wine historian Barbara Baxter of Planet Wine, outlining the history of winemaking in California—from small operations in the 1930s to a place of international prominence in

the 1970s. Five California wines will be sampled, accompanied by artisan bread, tapenade, and California cheeses.

The Legacy of the *California Design Exhibitions: Creating a Forum for Craft and Design*

Saturday, November 12, 2011, 10 am-7 pm

Bing Theater | Free, no reservations

Inspired by the *California Design* exhibitions held at the Pasadena Art Museum between 1954 and 1976, this all-day program offers a look at the state's design history through interviews with designers, documentary footage, and a discussion between scholars and curators. Attendees may also view the concurrent exhibition *The Golden State of Craft: California 1960-1980*, on view at the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

Related Pacific Standard Time Exhibitions

The House that Sam Built: Sam Maloof and Art in the Pomona Valley, 1945-1985

Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Opens September 24 | huntington.org

The Golden State of Craft: California 1960-1980

Craft and Folk Art Museum

Opens September 25 | cafam.org

Sympathetic Seeing: Esther McCoy and the Heart of American Modernist Architecture and Design

MAK Center

Opens September 28 | @makcenter.org

Eames Designs

A+D Museum

Opens October 1 | aplusd.org

Indoor Ecologies: The Evolution of the Eames House Living Room

Eames House Foundation

Opens October 1 | eamesfoundation.org

In Words and Wood: Sam Maloof, Bob Stocksdale, and Ed Moulthrop

Sam and Alfreda Maloof Foundation for Arts and Crafts

Opens October 1 | malooffoundation.org

San Diego's Craft Revolution—From Post-War Modern to California Design

Mingei International Museum

Opens October 16 | mingei.org


Common Ground: Ceramics in Southern California, 1945-1975

American Museum of Ceramic Art

Opens November 12 | amoca.org

Credit



The exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and is sponsored by  The Getty Foundation and *Barbie*. In-kind support provided by DuPont™ Corian®.

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About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: noon-8 pm; Friday: noon-9 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 5 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Images (page 1)

(Left) Charles Eames and Ray Eames, *DCW (dining chair wood)*, 1946-49, LACMA, Decorative Arts and Design Council Fund, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

(Center Left) Gertrud Natzler and Otto Natzler, *Bowl*, 1943, LACMA, Gift of Rose A. Sperry 1972 Revocable Trust, © 2007 Gail Reynolds Natzler, Trustee of The Natzler Trust, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

(Center Right) Richard Neutra, *Kaufmann House, Palm Springs*, 1946, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Used with permission. Julius Shulman Photography Archive, Research Library at the Getty Research Institute (2004.R.10), Photo by Julius Shulman, 1947

(Right) Margit Fellegi, *Woman's Swimsuit and Jacket*, c. 1950, LACMA, Gift of Doris Raymond/The Way We Wore, © 2011 The Warnaco Group, Inc. All rights reserved. For Authentic Fitness Corp., Cole of California, Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

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