CALIFORNIA DESIGN, 1930-1965: LIVING IN A MODERN WAY

The National Art Center, Tokyo, Special Exhibition Gallery 1E  Closed on Tuesdays (except for April 30, 2013)

Hours | 10:00-18:00 (10:00-20:00 on Fridays)
* Open until 22:00 on Saturday, March 23, 2013 (Roppongi Art Night 2013)
* Admission up to 30 minutes before closing

Organized by The National Art Center, Tokyo & Los Angeles County Museum of Art
In cooperation with JAPAN AIRLINES & Nippon Cargo Airlines

2013.3.20 WED - 6.03
The National Art Center, Tokyo 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 250 objects in wide-ranging media, including furniture, textiles, fashion, graphic and industrial design, ceramics, jewelry, metalwork, and architectural drawings, as well as film.

“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 tell the story of 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".

In conjunction with LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), renowned as the largest museum on the West Coast of the United States, this major exhibition will allow visitors to experience mid-century California Modern firsthand.

Along with furniture, fashion, graphic design, ceramics, jewelry, and architectural photographs, cars and surfboards will be among the approximately 250 works from a variety of genres on display. Visitors will have an opportunity to see actual works by noted designers such as Charles and Ray Eames, and R. M. Schindler.

In addition to TV commercials and scenes from Hollywood movies of the era that feature California furniture and fashion, we will present interviews with some of the pioneering artists whose work appears in the exhibition. This multitude of rare footage will add another dimension to the event.

Along with an essay by Wendy Kaplan, who in addition to being a recognized specialist in design history has overseen countless large-scale exhibitions, the catalogue will include many intriguing and informative texts, making it an attractive and essential guide to understanding the field.

A variety of events including lectures by specialists from a wide range of fields related to California and design will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition to provide visitors with an opportunity to consider the subject from a multitude of perspectives.
Outline

Shaping California Modern

In the boom economy of the 1920s, California experienced extraordinary population growth. As aerial views of Los Angeles demonstrate, millions of new denizens flocked to the states’ urban areas. All these people needed housing and furnishings: the “Shaping” section focuses on the 1930s because that is when buildings and their contents started to be made in modern ways and in modern styles.

By the onset of World War II, these homes and their furnishings were characterized by a particular kind of modernism 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, an openness to Asian and Latin influences, and an advocacy of fluid spaces and cross-disciplinary approaches) made California’s best products distinctive.

While championing new technologies, innovative materials, and simplified geometric forms, California modernists retained the individuality of the earlier Arts and Crafts movement, the sense of being particular to a place, and a connection to nature. In contrast to the stern moral dictates of the European International Style, a more humanistic modernism emerged here, one that fully embraced comfort and leisure, and responded directly to the environment.

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. Fiberglass, molded plywood, wire mesh, and synthetic resins were only some of the innovative materials developed in the early 1940s that would be imaginatively adapted to peacetime use. For the first time, such materials could be applied inexpensively to products for the home, opening a new middle-class market for California modern design.

California artists working in traditional craft media also responded to the spirit of modernism and experimentation: many tried to adopt new methods of production to make their work more accessible to middle-class consumers. The state became the national model for “designer-craftsman” production—activities that sought to bridge the gap between the studio and the factory. The same qualities that characterized the modern California home—fluidity, openness, experimentation, and the abolition of boundaries—equally applied to the work of the modern California designer. The goal was to provide well-designed homes and furnishings, whether handmade or industrially produced, for the millions of newcomers to California who craved them.
Living California Modern

The people of America have found a new mode of living, and southern California, the richest community in the world, is fostering the economical, colorful, casual California Way of Life that you all enjoy.

Richard Neutra, *The California* (March 1948)

The climate and culture of California provided the ideal environment for modernism to take root and flourish. Like its counterpart in Europe, California modern was functionalist, anti-ornament, and utopian in the conviction that design and technology could transform society. California practitioners, however, adhered to a looser, warmer, more ad hoc modernism, one almost exclusively domestic in scale. The focus of the “Living” section is the contents of the modern California home, with architectural drawings selected to highlight how such spaces were animated.

California modern was not a single aesthetic but a loose, albeit clearly recognizable group of ideas. It was “democratic” in the sense that it could be achieved by people of modest means. It was characterized by the easy commingling of all kinds of production for the home, whether handmade, industrial, or a combination of the two. It drew on influences from many different cultures, especially Asia and Mexico, for both materials and forms. And it embraced the informality that came with permeable spaces by blurring the distinctions between indoors and out as well as the functions of living, eating, and sleeping spaces inside the home.

Selling California Modern

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

After 1945 pent-up demand for new products was enormous, fueled by the lifting of restrictions on domestic consumption. A prosperous postwar America required the promotion of a consumer culture. In California, as elsewhere, museums teamed up with retailers and magazines: magazines formed alliances with building and furniture companies. For example, *Case Study House Program* was supported with materials donated by the housing industry, and many of its furnishings were provided by local retailers. Such collaborations attest to the fluid boundaries between art and commerce, together with a democratic belief in the integration and equality of all forms of artistic expression.

Descriptions of California between the 1930s and the 1960s portray the state either as a larger-than-life reflection of the country as a whole or as a portent of America’s future; they are usually characterized by a relentless, giddy optimism.

As a journalist noted in 1946, “What America is, California is, with accents, with italics”. Selling California’s products could not be separated from selling the idea of California itself.
**Admission**

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Tickets</td>
<td>¥1,000</td>
<td>Adults, ¥500 (College Students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advance Tickets</td>
<td>¥800</td>
<td>Adults, ¥300 (College Students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Tickets</td>
<td>¥800</td>
<td>Adults, ¥300 (College Students)</td>
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* Visitors who are under 18, including high school students, and disabled people with ID booklets (along with one assistant) will be admitted free.
* Free admission on Sat., March 23 in conjunction with “Roppongi Art Night 2013”
* Free admission on Sat., May 18 for International Museum Day.
* Group tickets will only be available at the venue (discounts only applicable to groups of 20 or more).
* Visitors who present a ticket or ticket stub from another exhibition currently underway at the National Art Center, Tokyo, Suntory Museum of Art or Mori Art Museum (the three facilities that make up the Roppongi Art Triangle) will be eligible for the group discount.
* Tickets (both Advance and General) are available through Ticket Pia (P-Code:765-394), and Lawson Ticket (L-Code:39105). Service charges may apply.

Advance tickets can be purchased through the above services from Wed., November 7, 2012 to Tue., March 19, 2013 (until Mon., March 18, 2013 at the venue).

* For details and the latest information, see the center website: http://www.nact.jp/

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**Related Events**

**“California Design: Why Now ?” (Tentative Title)**
Wendy Kaplan (Organizer of this exhibition, Curator and Department Head, LACMA) × Japanese architect

* In cooperation with Shinkenchiku-sha

**“California Design, 1930-1965”**
Wendy Kaplan (with consecutive interpretation into Japanese)

**“California: Culture and Design”** Hiroshi Unno (Art Critic, Writer)

Venue: 3F Auditorium, The National Art Center, Tokyo (Limited to 250: First-come, first-served) Admission free with exhibition ticket

* "EAMES: the architect and the painter" Screening (with Japanese subtitles) and Talk Event
  Sun., April 21, 14:00-15:40
  * in cooperation with UPLINK

Venue: 3F Auditorium, The National Art Center, Tokyo (Limited to 250: Prior registration required.)

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**“California Design” × Exhibition “Design Ah!”**

* Lecture by Taku Satoh
  Sat., May 11, 14:00-15:30
  Venue: 3F Auditorium, The National Art Center, Tokyo (Limited to 250)
  * Workshop
  Sat., April 27

Discount (¥100 off) applies for one person presenting one ticket stub or entrance receipt of the exhibition “Design Ah!” Cannot be combined with any other discount.

21_21 DESIGN SIGHT Exhibition “Design Ah!”
Fri., February 8 -Sun., June 2
Venue: 21_21 DESIGN SIGHT (Tokyo Midtown Garden)

* Unless otherwise mentioned, these events are only available in Japanese.
* All events are subject to changes in time and content. For details and the latest information, see the center website: http://www.nact.jp/

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**Exhibition held in the same period**

*“California Design” × Exhibition “Design Ah!”*

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**For inquiries or more information, please contact:**
Public Relations Division
The National Art Center, Tokyo
Tel: (81) 3-6812-9925, Fax: (81) 3-3405-2532
E-mail: pr@nact.jp

**Access:**
Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line, Nogizaka Station, Exit 6 is directly linked to the Center
Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line, Roppongi Station, 5-minute walk from Exit 4a
Toei Oedo Subway Line, Roppongi Station, 4-minute walk from Exit 7
We are pleased to offer a number of images of the works on display to help promote the exhibition. If you would like to receive one (or more), please fill out the attached form and return it to us by fax (e-mail requests will also be honored).

   Acrylic on panels. W. 60 in. H. 70 in. 1955
   Photo: Linda Rurrence / LACMA
   The Buddy Taub Foundation

2. Mary Ann DeWeese (1913-1993, active Los Angeles)
   Woman’s swimsuit, 1961
   Spandex, Lycra
   LACMA, Gift of Mary Ann DeWeese, DeWeese Designs

3. Carlos Diniz (1928-2001, active Los Angeles)
   Ladd & Kelsey, Architects (Pasadena, 1958-1980)
   (outdoor dining terrace), 1961
   Screenprint
   20 1/8 x 26 in. (51.1 x 66 cm)
   © 2011 The Museum Group, Inc. All rights reserved. The Authentic Press
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   Ladd & Kelsey, Architects (Pasadena, 1958-1980)
   Elephant, 1945
   Molded plywood
   16 1/2 x 30 3/4 x 16 1/4 in. (41.9 x 78.1 x 41.3 cm)
   © 2011 Charles Eames, LLC; © Herman Miller, Inc. Photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA.

5. Charles Eames (1907-1978, active Venice), Ray Eames (1912-1988, active Venice)
   Herman Miller Furniture Company, c. 1949
   Zinc-plated steel, birch-faced and plastic-coated plywood, lacquered particle board, rubber
   69 x 47 x 16 in. (175.3 x 119.4 x 40.6 cm)
   LACMA, Gift of Mr. Sid Avery and Mr. James Corcoran

6. LACMA, Gift of Gilbert Ortiz and Edward Cella Art + Architecture

7. Arline Fisch (b. 1931, active San Diego)
   necklace, 1962
   Silver, enamel
   9 x 7 1/2 in. (22.9 x 19.1 cm)
   LACMA, Gift of Arline Fisch in honor of Dr. Jae Carmichael

8. H. Gallo (1920-1965, active Los Angeles, San Francisco, 1945-present)
   c. 1958
   Walnut, leather
   46 3/4 x 30 1/2 x 26 1/2 in. (118.8 x 77.5 x 67.3 cm)
   LACMA, Purchased with funds provided by Martha and Bruce Karsh

9. John Follis (1923-1944, active Pasadena and Los Angeles)
   Lighthouse at Laguna (album cover), 1955
   Offset lithography
   12 1/4 x 12 1/4 in. (31.1 x 31.1 cm)
   © Concord Music Group, Inc. unless otherwise indicated. All rights reserved.

List of Image Data for Press Use


18. Kem Weber (b. Germany, 1889-1963, active Los Angeles): Desk and chair, c. 1938. Satinwood, primavera, chrome, aluminum, resin, leather (replaced). Desk: 30 1/4 x 60 x 30 in. (76.8 x 152.4 x 76.2 cm). LACMA, Purchased jointly with funds provided by the Decorative Arts and Design Deaccession Fund, Viveca Paulin-Ferrell and Will Ferrell, Shannon and Peter Loughrey, Heidi and Said Saffari, and Holly and Albert Bark. © Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA.


20. La Gardo Tackett (1911-1984, active Los Angeles area): Architectural Pottery (Los Angeles, 1946-1957). Architectural Pottery, designed c. 1942; made c. 1959. Earthenware. Largest totem, height: 81 in. (205.7 cm); diameter: 14 in. (35.6 cm). Collection of the Lawrence family; lent in honor of Max and Rita Lawrence. © Architectural Pottery, Vessel ® USA Inc. All rights reserved. Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA.


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