Useful objects in wartime

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The Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.
USEFUL OBJECTS IN WARTIME

The Bulletin of

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

2 VOLUME X DECEMBER 1942 - JANUARY 1943
COVER ILLUSTRATION

56. Chemex coffee maker (Pyrex glass) 1 to 10 cups. $6.50

designer: Dr. Peter Schlumbohm
manufacturer: Chemex Corp.
retailer: Lewis & Conger
USEFUL OBJECTS IN WARTIME

Fifth Annual Exhibition of Useful Objects under $10.00

This year the USEFUL OBJECTS IN WARTIME exhibition could not be undertaken without considering our vital war needs. With these needs in mind, the exhibition has been divided into three sections.

1. Household objects made of non-priority materials, pp. 11-17
2. Articles asked for by men and women in the Army and Navy, pp. 18-19
3. Supplies necessary for adequate civilian defense, pp. 20-21

Men and women in the Services have responded eagerly to the Museum’s queries about their needs. The various offices of civilian defense have supplied the information regarding the requirements for fire-fighting and protection. In these sections, a few items suggested by those in the Armed Services and the civilian defense agencies contain priority materials. When the present supply is exhausted, no more will be made.

The Conservation and Substitution Branch of the War Production Board has been most cooperative in making recommendations to the Museum as to what should be included or omitted. Although there are many household articles made of critical materials still for sale for civilian use, these have been left out.

This year no metals have been included, except gold. The supplies of nickel, copper, aluminum, tin, steel and other metals are inadequate for military and civilian needs.

No plastics are shown, except where they replace more critical materials. Lucite, plexiglass, nylon, bakelite, beetleware and crystallite plastics, among others, are all used in aeroplanes or other military equipment. Leather, according to Mr. Harvey A. Anderson, Chief of the Conservation and Substitution Branch, Conservation Division, War Production Board, is considered “essential to the war program” and “a scarcity even of certain grades and types of lumber has developed.”
STEEL is critical.

CHROMIUM is required for the war: civilians must do without.

The Japanese now control the major TIN deposits.
Don’t buy BEETLEWARE or BAKELITE—they are needed for war equipment.

ALUMINUM supplies are not adequate for military needs.

LUCITE and PLEXIGLASS are urgently needed in aeroplane construction. NYLON is used for parachutes.
To quote further from a letter from Mr. Harvey A. Anderson, Chief of the Conservation and Substitution Branch, Conservation Division, War Production Board, to the Museum's Acting Director of Industrial Design:

WAR PRODUCTION BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Conservation Division
1100 H STREET NW.

November 17, 1942

"The Conservation and Substitution Branch is in favor of any measure which will aid the war effort. This includes the policy of recommending transition to war usage of parts and materials stocks, fabricating capacity, and labor wherever feasible.

"The following metals are available for use in non-essential products intended for civilian use: Gold, Lead, Palladium (similar to Platinum), Osmium to a limited degree (similar to Iridium), Ferroboron and Ferromanganese.

"No foreign silver may now be diverted to non-essential uses. Silver is needed in the war effort: we have an acute shortage of copper, and since silver conducts electricity as well as copper, we can substitute silver for copper in many cases and use the copper thus saved for vital military applications. This is why we ask civilians to refrain from seeking products made of silver.

"Our conviction is that the men in America's Armed Forces would prefer to see used in their armaments many of the metals ordinarily used in gifts. . . . Nor do we believe that an aluminum or stainless steel alloy cocktail shaker is necessary to maintain the morale of the worker on the home front. . . . These are the convictions you gain when you examine the casualty lists."
“Every ounce of chromium, copper, nickel, tin, aluminum, lucite, etc., used in such items as program flashlights, chrome-plated jiggers, small lucite bowls, lucite salts and peppers, means in altogether too many cases another American casualty.

“It is our understanding that the Japanese nightclubs have been closed for five years. That dancing is forbidden even in the Japanese private homes. That one brand of shaving soap is sufficient for this need in Germany. That German women do not wear cosmetics. That large-scale spectator sports have been abandoned in Germany. If the Axis civilians can part with many peacetime luxuries, for the sake of their soldiers, we think American civilians can do that job better too.

“Thus the manufacturing of non-essentials, the wholesaling and retailing of them, the consumer’s purchase of them, and the tacit recommendation (through exhibition of them) that they be purchased as a demonstration of ‘doing your bit,’ ‘boosting morale,’ etc., often come to be regarded as merely a convenient excuse for ‘business as usual.’

“Further, the availability of such items deludes the purchaser with a false sense of security, encourages further purchases along the same line, encourages further demand for such articles and materials by consumer, retailer, wholesaler and manufacturer, and results in unfortunate pressure on the war agencies for diversion of materials vital to the armaments of our Armed Forces. We believe, finally, that the informed consumer, retailer, wholesaler, and manufacturer will patriotically insist that every available ounce of these critical materials be used where they will serve America’s fighting men best.”

These recommendations have guided the selection of the materials chosen for this exhibition.
This is the fifth annual exhibition of USEFUL OBJECTS to be presented by the Museum of Modern Art. The purpose of these exhibitions, held each year a few weeks before Christmas, has been to show inexpensive articles, readily available and of good design.

The standards originally used in selecting the objects have remained constant:

**FUNCTION**—"how it works" or "what it does"

**MATERIALS**—their appropriate use

**TECHNIQUE** or process of manufacture (whether by hand or machine)

**SYNTHESIS** of the above in the expression of the designer

The minor articles and utensils in our surroundings may fulfill these requirements just as well as more important machines and pieces of furniture.

In the past, there has been no limitation in materials. Metals, glass, china and pottery, leather, natural materials, wood and plastics were included. Metals and glass were the most numerous, and in the last two years plastics have been more abundant than previously. They are a relatively new material, going through a period of development and expansion.

Great strides have been made in the designing of glass during these years, whereas china has remained inferior. For years we have been a country of toolmakers, and many tools have been included in the metal category.

However, few appliances, such as toasters and coffee makers, have been shown. This is chiefly because designers and manufacturers have insisted on ornamenting with stamped patterns or meaningless lines objects intended for utilitarian purposes. In other cases, static objects have been streamlined into grotesque forms or their shape has been hidden under a deformed covering. To look back at the MACHINE ART exhibition of 1934 makes one realize that all change is not progress.

Alice M. Carson

*Acting Director*

*Department of Industrial Design*
ALL CHANGE IS NOT PROGRESS

Toaster, 1934. Shown by the Museum in its Machine Art exhibition of that year, this design is a forthright, clean and simple solution by comparison with the same manufacturer’s

Toaster of 1940 which is streamlined as if it were intended to hurdle through the air at 200 miles an hour (an unhappy use for a breakfast-table utensil) and ornamented with trivial loops, bandings and flutings. This object has never been exhibited by the Museum.
WHY KILL A GOOD DESIGN?

To those hunting for Useful Objects, the apology "there is nothing new this year" is often made, as if it were a sin to be caught offering the same design again. To find that a good design has been superseded by a new and often inferior "styling," or has been abandoned, is discouraging evidence of the "conspicuous waste" for which Americans are noted.

Handbag watch, bakelite case. $2.95
des. De Vaulchier & Blow
mfg. Westclox Division of General Time Instruments Corp.

MACHINE ART 1934, USEFUL OBJECTS 1938, 1939, 1940 (not manufactured after 1939)

GOOD DESIGNS HELD OVER FROM PREVIOUS SHOWS

17. Cocktail shaker
   mfg. Heisey's
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1939, 1940, 1942

18. Pitcher
   mfg. Cambridge Glass Co.
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1938, 1942

69. Pyrex sauce pan
   mfg. Corning Glass Works
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1938, 1939, 1942

70. Pyrex kettle
   mfg. Corning Glass Works
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1940, 1941, 1942

   (now in the Museum Collection)

86. Pottery plates, mug, bowls, etc.
to des. & mfg. Rowantrees Kiln
89. USEFUL OBJECTS 1941, 1942

105. One-handle baker
   mfg. Mexican
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1938, 1941, 1942
   (now in the Museum Collection)

121. Soup bowl and saucer
   mfg. Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, England
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1939, 1942

122. Pottery plates, bowls, etc.
to des. Russel Wright

125. mfg. Steubenville Pottery
   USEFUL OBJECTS 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942

151. Braquette
des. Nathan George Horwitt
mfg. Braquette Inc.
MACHINE ART 1934, USEFUL OBJECTS 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942
Material has changed from metal to plastic and now wood. (Plastic Braquette in the Museum Collection)
29. Bell. $1.75
   des. Dorothy C. Thorpe
   mfg. for Frederik Lunning Inc.
   ret. Georg Jensen Inc.

49. Salt and pepper balls. $1.50 pr.
   mfg. Cambridge Glass Co.
   ret. Carole Stupell Ltd.

31. Double jigger. $.75
   mfg. Seneca Glass Co.
   ret. Hammacher Schlemmer & Co. Inc.

11. Salt holder. $1.50
   mfg. Libbey Glass Co.
   ret. Georg Jensen Inc.

35. Beer mug. $1.25
   mfg. Seneca Glass Co.
   ret. The Waldrons
62. Evaporating or crystallizing dishes, 80 mm.
to 105 mm. and 150 mm.
64. $.35, .45 and $1.00 each
mfg. Corning Glass Works
ret. Eimer & Amend

23. Martini mixer. $7.50
mfg. for Frederik Lunning Inc.
ret. Georg Jensen Inc.

43. Lotion bottle. $3.00
des. Palme
mfg. Czechoslovakian
dist. Lenart Imports
ret. Carole Stupell Ltd.

27. Bowl. $7.50
mfg. for Frederik Lunning Inc.
ret. Georg Jensen Inc.
83. Bowl, lava gray. $10.00  
des. & mfg. Natzler Ceramics  
dist. Amberg-Hirth  
*ret. Museum of Modern Art

70. Ashtray, oval, yellow. $2.50  
des. & mfg. Natzler Ceramics  
dist. Amberg-Hirth  
*ret. Museum of Modern Art

86. Beer mug, duckhead. $1.00  
des. & mfg. Rowantrees Kiln  
ret. America House

125. Salad bowl, chartreuse. $2.85  
des. Russel Wright  
mfg. Steubenville Pottery  
ret. Bloomingdale's

* The Natzler ceramics in the exhibition are individual pieces and may be purchased by applying at the front desk. Similar pieces are to be found at Artek-in-New York and Carole Stupell Ltd.
WARTIME COOKING UTENSILS

During the war, it will be necessary to limit the amount of metals used in cooking utensils and housewares.

Glass and pottery have been used for some time and further developments are now being made to take the place of the aluminum, steel, copper, tin and enamelled iron formerly used for this purpose. Only a limited number of kinds and sizes of pots, pans, etc., may now be produced.

Pyrex cooking utensils
mfg. Corning Glass Works
ret. Department and hardware stores

68. Loaf pan. $0.45
70. Kettle. $2.95
(from the Museum Collection)
71. Double boiler. $3.95
POTTERY AND PAPER COOKING UTENSILS

117. Skillet. $0.51
mfg. Redwing Potteries
ret. R. H. Macy & Co.

119. Pot and cover. $2.11
mfg. Redwing Potteries
ret. R. H. Macy & Co.

113. Double boiler. $3.00
mfg. Joaquin Pottery Co.
ret. Lewis & Conger

136. Square baking pan, paper. 5 for $0.10
mfg. Keyes Fibre Co.
MORE WARTIME MATERIALS

177. Leaf eyeglass case, felt. $1.00. Substitute for metal and leather
des. Mrs. Margaret Ripin
ret. H. L. Purdy

145. Compact, paper. Substitute for metal
mfg. F. N. Burt Co.

180. Sink stopper, plastic. Substitute for rubber
dist. Celanese Celluloid Corp.
ret. F. W. Woolworth

178. Matchbox cover, stripetex. $1.00. Substitute for leather
des. Carl Froelich
mfg. Froelich Leathercraft Co.
ret. America House

163. Doormat, cornhusks. $3.50
dist. Mary Rodney
ret. America House

154. Grocery carrier. $4.50
mfg. Leipzig & Lippe Inc.
ret. Lewis & Conger

140. Paperboard toys. $1.50 box
des. Barnes & Reinecke
mfg. Container Corporation of America
KNOCK DOWN FURNITURE DESIGNED FOR HOUSING PROJECTS

165. Butterfly table, oak veneer, $7.50
   des. Dan Cooper
   mfg. Drexel Furniture Co.
   ret. Abraham & Straus Inc.,
   Bloomingdale's
"Extra hangers."—ARMY & WAACS & WAVES

"The locker accommodations and regulations are meager and strict." Corp., Sig. Serv. Reg’t

"Officers’ quarters are so ill-supplied that what they actually need are items of basic usefulness."
Capt., Signal Corps

"Everything waterproof, if possible, and marked."
Lieut., Field Artillery

"Clothespins—because we do most of our own laundry unless we are rich."
WAAC

"What we all have to have and can’t get along without are accessories like money belts that are water-proof (and therefore very practical), small leather travelling kits, sewing kits, etc. You see it’s all very prosaic."
Ens., U.S.N.R.

"Things small and unbreakable."
"A small duffle-bag or satchel (of canvas) for furloughs!"
Sgt., Camp Upton

"Simple luggage i.e.—the idea is to boil living and travelling space down so that if alone you went to an airplane you could carry your own and it wouldn’t weigh too much."
Lt. j.g., WAVES
ARMY (AND WAACS)

237. Clothespins and string. $.10

238. Dust cloth. $.10
ret. F. W. Woolworth

241. Handkerchief, linen. $.75
mfg. Block Frères
ret. Saks Fifth Avenue

192. Pocket dictionaries, Italian-English, French-to English, German-English. $.75 each
193. mfg. David McKay Co.
ret. Brentano’s

236. Hunting knife. $3.75
mfg. Union Cutlery Co. Inc.
ret. Parker & Battersby

188. Shoetrees. $4.00
mfg. Mackay
ret. Saks Fifth Avenue

217. Wood shower scuffs. $1.00
mfg. Reece Wooden Sole Co.
ret. B. Altman & Co.

189. Folding hangers. 3 for $.50
mfg. Birnbaum Co.
ret. Lewis & Conger

NAVY (AND WAVES)

244. Bag, with zipper. $7.50
mfg. & ret. Hardy Luggage Co.

248. Picture holder, cloth. $3.50
mfg. & ret. Mark Cross

242. Writing case, cloth. $6.75
ret. Bergdorf Goodman
LOCAL LAW NO. 25 N.Y.C.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

ADD. FOR EACH 5 FLOORS

KEY

SANDBOX
WATER
PUMP
SHOVEL
LANTERN
HOSE

APARTMENTS

HOUSES

OR
SUPPLIES FOR CIVILIAN DEFENSE

266. Stirrup pump. $3.10
    approved by N. Y. Fire Department
    mfg. Standard Container Corp.
    ret. Modell's Sporting Goods Co.

268. Green metal pail with cover. $.84
    ret. R. H. Macy & Co.

278. First aid kit (Boy Scout). $.85
    mfg. Bauer and Black
    ret. Bloomingdale's

274. Lantern. $1.50
    mfg. Dietz
    ret. Lewis & Conger

267. Wooden sandpail, 15 qt. $.69
    ret. R. H. Macy & Co.
Traveling Exhibitions of Industrial Design

During the past four years the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions has sent on tour four exhibitions of useful objects. They have been shown in thirty-one cities outside New York. The first two exhibitions were organized by the Department of Circulating Exhibitions in collaboration with the Department of Architecture and Industrial Art. These exhibitions were so popular in New York, as well as among other exhibitors throughout the country, that the Museum decided to make this an annual show to be assembled by the Department of Industrial Design. The original show, Useful Objects under $5, has been adapted by the Educational Project for use in secondary schools and it is still on tour. This one exhibition has been shown seventeen times in schools, colleges and small galleries.

As a result of circulating these annual selections of useful objects the Department of Circulating Exhibitions had many requests for a show analyzing good industrial design. Last year's collection of useful objects was therefore reassembled for tour under the title, What is Good Design? Objects were grouped together according to material, function, manufacturing process, etc., to demonstrate the elements of good design which every industrial designer must consider in creating a useful and, at the same time, beautiful object.

Other Industrial Design exhibitions now on tour include:

- Rugs by Modern Artists (shown at the Museum, July 1-August 9, 1942)
- Manufacturing Modern Furniture
- Furniture Design Today

The last two exhibitions were assembled at the suggestion of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions from the competition, Organic Design in Home Furnishings (shown at the Museum, September 24-November 9, 1941), for use in colleges and schools. They represent the introductory sections of the Competition show, analyzing the changes in furniture design and manufacture in the twentieth century and they have been used to supplement courses in the history of furniture design at colleges and universities.

The Shapes of Things, a small traveling exhibition, assembled by the Department of Industrial Design in collaboration with the Educational Project, is touring secondary schools and colleges. It serves to introduce the student to basic principles of design in aircraft, motorboats, furniture, clocks, etc.

The popularity of Industrial Design exhibitions among the colleges and schools suggests that many others should be prepared for teaching purposes. At the present time the Museum is the sole source of such traveling exhibitions, and an even greater need for teaching material on industrial design is indicated for the post-war period. Educational institutions have already requested exhibitions of airplane and automobile design as well as of furniture and textiles. The Department of Circulating Exhibitions hopes to send such shows on tour and would appreciate suggestions from the colleges and schools as to material which is seriously needed.

Elodie Courter
Director of Circulating Exhibitions

P. 4, lower and center photographs: Feininger from Black Star.
Museum Notes

CORRECTION
To the credit given for help in designing and assembling the exhibition, Camouflage for Civilian Defense, described in the October-November Bulletin, "The Museum and the War," the Museum wishes to add an expression of its gratitude for editorial assistance to Bartlett Hayes, Director of the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, where the exhibition was first shown. Mention of Mr. Hayes' assistance was unfortunately omitted in the earlier Bulletin.

CHRISTMAS GIFT MEMBERSHIPS
In a membership in the Museum of Modern Art you will find—without having to take time from all-important war work to shop for it—a gift which for a whole year will please and profit anyone interested in painting, in sculpture, in industrial design, in photography or in films.

The Christmas gift includes the regular membership privileges and, in addition, the choice of one of the following books will be sent to the person to whom the gift is given:

Indian Art of the United States by René d'Harnoncourt and Frederic H. Douglas.

Painting and Sculpture in the Museum Collection Edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism Edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.; essays by Georges Hugnet.

Photography: A Short Critical History by Beaumont Newhall.

TEA TICKETS FOR SERVICE MEN
Men in uniform and men in the Merchant Marine Services are admitted without charge to the galleries and the film showings. They may obtain from the service organizations tickets which will entitle them and a guest to tea in the Members' Room.

Funds for the tea tickets have been contributed by members and friends, and the Museum will be pleased to accept further contributions to make it possible to continue this hospitality.

CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL OF MODERN ART
The Children's Festival of Modern Art last year was so popular that by request the Museum will again hold an exhibition to introduce younger children to modern art. It will be in the Young People's Gallery on the Third Floor from December 15th to January 17th. A miniature gallery built to the scale of children from three to twelve years will house this Festival. Works of art, selected for children, are shown in a play center which includes games, toys, puzzles, and constructions and a table for painting and drawing. These activities are especially designed for the interest and enjoyment of children of age levels three to six and seven to twelve years.

The Festival will be open Saturday mornings from 10:00 o'clock to noon for children of Museum members. Each child who visits the Festival on Saturday morning will have a choice of one of the following color reproductions:

Hicks Peaceable Kingdom
Bombois Before Entering the Ring
Van Gogh The Starry Night

It is advisable for members wishing to bring their children to call the Educational Program, CI 5-8900, to make an appointment for a particular Saturday.

200 NATIONAL WAR POSTERS
Twelve hundred people attended the opening of the 200 National War Posters exhibition on Tuesday, November 24th. The exhibition will be held through January 3d. Nine of the posters were selected by the jury for prizes. The public, however, will be given an opportunity to exercise its own judgment about the posters; for at the request of the Office of War Information the Museum has provided ballots on which visitors are requested to vote which poster makes them want to do more to help win the war. A $50.00 bond, donated by the Museum, will be awarded to the artist whose poster receives the most votes.
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This list is published for the convenience of the Museum's non-resident members who may wish to see its circulating exhibitions.

Circulating Exhibitions:

DECEMBER 1942, THROUGH JANUARY 15, 1943.