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The Museum of Modern Art

EXHIBITION PRESENTS THE USE OF MATERIALS AS A COMMON LINK BETWEEN
CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN

For Immediate Releases
September 2000

Matter

September 28, 2000–January 2, 2001
Second Floor

Contemporary art and design, although often divergent in their goals and expectations, are brought together in *Matter*, an exhibition that juxtaposes works in terms of materials and mediums. *Matter* includes contemporary works from the Museum's collection by artists and designers such as Gunnar Aagard Andersen, Matthew Barney, Joseph Beuys, Félix González-Torres, Mona Hatoum, Hella Jongerius, Shiro Kuramata, Ingo Maurer, Gaetano Pesce, and Fred Tomaselli. On view from September 28, 2000 through January 2, 2001, as part of *Open Ends*, the third and final cycle of *MoMA2000*, the exhibition is organized by Paola Antonelli, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design; Laura Hoptman, Assistant Curator, and Kristin Helmick-Brunet, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings.

"Because it is so elemental, the substance of things presents a common dialect through which art and design can communicate, flaunt their unique attributes, and at the same time express their similarities," note Ms. Antonelli and Ms. Hoptman in the brochure text.

The material from which an object is made contributes to its meaning and is often central to its structural, functional, and narrative identity. Felt, for example, is used by Pesce for his *Feltri Chair* (1986), in *Untitled* (1969) by Robert Morris, and in Beuys's *Felt Suit* (1970). For his chair, Pesce made the felt partly rigid by dipping it in resin and molded it into a self-supporting shape. Bright pink quilted upholstery gives the *Feltri Chair* its thronelike appearance, despite its composition from one of the cheapest materials available. In his *Untitled* work, Morris left the overall configuration of the sculpture to the medium itself, allowing thick strips of gray-green felt to take on whatever shapes resulted from a series of basic formal procedures. Conversely, Joseph Beuys manipulates felt in many of his works to emphasize the industrial, generic look while imbuing it with symbolic connotations and the personal memory of his childhood and family history. In *Felt Suit*, for instance, Beuys uses felt to form an oversized suit, referencing his survival as a pilot shot down during World War II after he was saved by Tartar nomads who covered his wounds with fat and wrapped him in felt to protect him from the cold.

The varied art production of the past 30 years frequently uses a range of nontraditional materials. So-called process works by artists including Lynda Benglis, Robert Morris, and Jackie Winsor featured materials such as molten lead and plastic, felt, and burned wood, all of which retain the direct results of the artist's physical manipulation. A younger

generation of artists was inspired by this use of materials, including Gabriel Orozco, whose *Untitled* (1992) comprises a small vertical line of dirt that resulted when a piece of paper was pinched and rubbed by the artist.

The designer's relationship with materials has also evolved dramatically during the past forty years, in part because the introduction of new materials and processes has allowed for greater creative freedom. Andersen's *Armchair* (1964), constructed from a blob of brown polyurethane foam, has come to symbolize material experimentation throughout the 1960s. Similarly, Marcel Wanders's *Knotted Chair* (1996) uses knotted fibers that are frozen with epoxy resin into the shape of a low chair. Many design landmarks of the past forty years display designers' surprise and delight in response to the unexpected creative freedom afforded them by new materials and techniques.

While design and art may not meet on the plane of theory, they often meet on the stage of practice. The affinity between designer Kuramata's "*Miss Blanche*" *Chair* (1989) and artist Tomaselli's colorful explosion *Bird Blast* (1997) lies in the adoption of techniques—from inlay to marquetry. In Kuramata's chair, red paper flowers are suspended in the translucent acrylic resin body of the chair, while in Tomaselli's work, a marquetry-like collage is created with pills and cut-out illustrations.

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