

**EXHIBITION SHOWCASES MASTERFULLY DESIGNED EVERYDAY OBJECTS AT MoMA QNS**

Humble Masterpieces
April 8–September 27, 2004
MoMA QNS, The Museum of Modern Art, Queens

NEW YORK, March 2004—In a tribute to the inspired design of everyday objects, The Museum of Modern Art presents *Humble Masterpieces* from April 8 to September 27, 2004, at MoMA QNS. From the simple shape of a paper clip to the practical utility of a tea bag, brilliant design makes life easier, safer, and more fulfilling. This single-gallery exhibition presents roughly 120 common objects, half from MoMA's collection and others being considered for acquisition. These masterfully designed objects, often small and inexpensive, range in date from chopsticks, designed thousands of years ago in China, to the 2002 design for the Yaktrax Walker, a device that attaches to shoes to protect walkers from slipping on ice. This exhibition is organized by Paola Antonelli, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.

Among the first design objects acquired by the Museum in 1934 were a group of more than a hundred simple industrial objects, such as springs and calipers. The Museum's collection currently includes about 3,600 objects of design ranging from a helicopter to a microchip. Some of the items in this exhibition have become time-tested staples, like safety pins and plastic erasers. Others, such as the Hairspray Face Protector and the home canning jar, have drifted into new uses or reduced popularity due to shifts in cultural attitudes. Throughout the exhibition, the Museum invites visitors to nominate other everyday objects that should be considered masterpieces.

"Every day, we use dozens of minute objects, from Post-it Notes to Band-Aids, erasers, and pie cutters. If they work well, chances are we will not pay much attention. Yet, albeit modest in size and price, some of these objects are true masterpieces of the art of design, and deserving of our admiration," states Ms. Antonelli.

Many of the objects in this exhibition have a noteworthy design history. For example, the now indispensable office supply, the Post-it Note, was conceived to mark pages in a church hymnal. In the late 1970s, Art Fry, a product development researcher at 3M, applied the adhesive that 3M scientist Spencer Silver had discovered in 1968, to create a bookmark that would not fall out of his hymnal during choir practice. Later, the applications for the sticky-backed paper slips would become innumerable.

The Chupa Chups lollipop was made by a candy maker concerned with creating confections that would fit into a child's small mouth without making a mess on his or her hands. So, Enric Bernat i Fontlladosa put his candy on a stick, creating the first lollipop. He later asked his friend, the artist Salvador Dalí, to create a design for the wrapper. The result was the famous daisy-shaped logo that has become one of the most recognized in the world.

The popularity of the T-shirt began during World War I when American soldiers noticed European soldiers wearing a practical lightweight cotton undershirt during the hot and humid summer days. American soldiers soon adopted this more comfortable option over the standard wool uniforms. By World War II, both the Navy and Army included the T-shirt as standard issue in military garb. Eventually, the T-shirt became commonplace in the American vernacular as synonymous with comfort.

The Band-Aid was created thanks to Earle Dickson's accident-prone wife. The cotton-buyer at Johnson & Johnson noticed that his wife Josephine, who would often cut and burn herself while cooking, needed a quick bandage to protect her wounds. He put squares of cotton on gauze and adhesive strips, covering the cotton with crinoline to keep them sterile. Dickson's boss decided to manufacture the innovative product in 1921, selling them under the now-famous Band-Aid trademark.

The toy we now know as the Frisbee® began its life as a pie tin. In 1948, building inspector Walter Frederick Morrison, along with his partner, Warren Franscioni, designed a saucer-like plastic disc and named it the Pluto Platter. Wham-O bought the design in 1955 and renamed it the Frisbee after learning college students had been tossing light pie tins by the Frisbie Baking Company since the 1870s.

Other items included in the exhibition include Scotch tape, Adams chewing gum, scissors, Bubble Wrap Air Cellular cushioning, Bic Cristal ballpoint pens, Victorinox Swiss Officers' Knife, lead pencil, Q-tips, Rubik's Cube, clothes hanger, Jelly Belly jelly beans, tennis ball, M&M's, incandescent light bulb, LEGO building blocks, Tupperware, and many others.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Paola Antonelli, Curator in the Department of Architecture and Design, joined The Museum of Modern Art in 1994 as an Associate Curator and became Curator in 1999. Her first major exhibition at the Museum was *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design* (1995), followed by *Contemporary Design from the Netherlands* (1996), *Achille Castiglioni: Design!* (1997), *Projects 66: Campana/Ingo Maurer* (1998–1999), *Open Ends* (2000), and *Workspheres* (2001). Ms. Antonelli has lectured widely on design and architecture in Europe and the United States and has served on several international architecture and design juries. She is a member of the Design Committee of the International Design Conference in Aspen, and of the Board of Trustees of the Van Alen Institute. From 1991 to 1993, she lectured on design history and theory at the Design Department of the University of California, Los Angeles, and in 2003 at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Born in Sassari, Italy, Ms. Antonelli graduated with a master's degree in architecture from the Polytechnic of Milan in 1990.

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