

*Please refer to
Galina Petroschins*

INTERIORS PAST & PRESENT

AN EXHIBITION OF FURNITURE
AND FURNISHING ARRANGED BY THE
NATIONAL GALLERY SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND

AT THE QUEENSLAND NATIONAL ART GALLERY, 26th AUGUST TO 21st SEPTEMBER 1958

This Exhibition

is presented as a practical expression
of belief in a National Gallery
concerned with all aspects
of aesthetic experience.

None but a Gallery
equipped for the purpose
and permanently assigned
can do full justice
to the cultural study
which is the art of furniture.

It is for this reason
that the four "rooms"
which comprise this exhibition
must be regarded
as a collection of elements
of furniture and furnishing
rather more significant as symbolic
than exemplary.

Intended primarily
for your enjoyment
the exhibition will nevertheless
inspire a wish for more—
a wish that must be met
in the National Gallery
of the future.

RUSSELL CUPPAIDGE
PRESIDENT

ROOM WITHOUT EPOCH

This could be a living room in almost any house. The wall which does not exist has built-in bookcases, radio-gramophone, a generous supply of long windows and a glass door opening to a terrace or balcony (on which you are standing), and as the whole thing is make-believe, the windows overlook a beautiful garden with a view beyond.

The furnishings of the room belong to no period, some are antique and some are modern, but the over-all decoration of the room is of our time.

A room of this type has a warm, romantic and 'lived-in' flavour about it, avoiding the dead period show-room look that antiques and correct background often give and escapes the clinical and too new look that many modern rooms possess. It is a room that has grown, inheriting from the past and mingling these with present taste and needs. Each thing has been selected for its own qualities regardless of period and place of origin and an attempt has been made to blend them into a harmonious whole. The only rule in selection has been that each object should be good of its own kind and not extreme in fashion. All are original and it is to be noted that reproductions have been ruled out—everything is genuine and honest. The guiding thought has been that the most livable room is the one that has the appearance of having grown.

Exhibit arranged
by the Staff of the National Gallery

A LIVING ROOM WITHOUT EPOCH

FLOOR

Black and white lino tiles by courtesy of Olympic General Products Pty. Ltd., Valley.

- 1 Shiraz Rug : Deep blue, blue green and gold with a design of birds interwoven. Antique.

WALLS

Bamboo curtains by courtesy of Sun kayne.

FURNITURE

- 2 Chest on stand; walnut, the top and sides decorated with inlay and the draw fronts cross banded, cabriole legs.
English. William and Mary Period, about 1690.
Lent by Mrs. E. Farfan.
- 3 Desk, with drop front, sycamore, inlaid classical design with medallion and flowers in various woods, carved cabriole legs.
Italian. Early 18th Century.
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cuppaidge.
- 4 Chair, with arms, walnut, carved back and seat, the frame of the chair carved with fluted legs.
French. 18th Century.
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cuppaidge.
- 5 Small desk or table with three drawers: walnut, the drawers with cross banding, cabriole legs.
English. Queen Anne Period, about 1720.
- 6 Couch; upholstered with walnut cabriole legs with a loose cover of yellow green damask.
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cuppaidge.
- 7 Coffee Table, Italian white marble with brass undercarriage. Made in Australia. Modern.
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cuppaidge.
- 8 Two Chairs, upholstered with walnut undercarriage. Designed by Grant Featherstone, Melbourne.
Modern.
By courtesy of Bell Bros.
- 9 Two Louvred Screens, white painted wood.
Fabrics for curtains and cushions. Siamese silk.
By courtesy of Chamford Decorative Furnishings.
- 10 Table Lamp; Italian white marble and spun brass.
Made by L. C. Fuller.
- 11 Standard Lamp; Italian white marble and spun brass.
Made by L. C. Fuller.
- 12 Lamp Shades, white silk.
By courtesy of Rordons Art Shop.

PICTURES

- 13 'Little Rachael', oil, Walter Sickert, 1860-1942.
English School.
From the collection of the Queensland National Art Gallery.
- 14 Nude, drawing, Sir Jacob Epstein.
From the collection of the Queensland National Art Gallery.

SCULPTURE

- 15 'Dancer,' bronze, Degas.
From the collection of the Queensland National Art Gallery.
- 16 Flower vases, ash trays, glasses; glass, modern, made by Orrefors.
By courtesy of Arts & Interiors.

THE GEORGIAN ROOM

Essentially a period of restrained taste, the Eighteenth Century saw the introduction of mahogany partially replacing the prevalent use of walnut in furniture. Designers relied less on the grain of timber and turned to carving in this fine timber, increasing their attention to line and proportion. Gentlemen cultivated the arts and patronised the architects and designers, who gave time and trouble, as well as beauty, to their work. Excellence in proportion was understood by the buyer, who could discuss the appropriate ornamentation of a chair with his cabinet-maker and had a sensitive awareness of architectural order.

At this period architects and furniture-makers produced books on design and greatly developed the taste of the average person. Architects exerted an exacting influence over the interiors of houses they designed. This age of generous but never overlavish decoration owes much to the influence of architects working for educated patrons. We find the eighteenth century house and its interior planned to the door knocker, candlesticks, fireplace, furniture and chairs, accorded with the character of the walls, doors and ceilings. The scene was graciously pleasing in ample and elegant style.

Mahogany was the predominant timber used; it was lovely material for the painstaking woodworker, who used gilding and inlay with discrimination, never obscuring the beauty and warmth of the natural wood. Eighteenth century designers seldom resorted to the fantastic, the few exceptions making little impression on the general trend. Line, proportion and ornament were profoundly influenced by the cult of purity and simplicity. We who can appreciate the purity of line and proportion achieved by the best designers of contemporary furniture in mass-produced, as well as individual pieces, look back to the Georgian period as an era when men gave generously as designers, craftsmen and patrons, to create some of the most beautiful houses and furniture in our heritage. The four Hepplewhite chairs loaned by Mrs. D. J. Clarkson are part of a well preserved set of six. Mrs. J. H. Cannan's armchair with small stool has the rare distinction of having been used by three English Queens, the late Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Mrs. F. A. Verger's mahogany tripod screen is an exquisite example of the painstaking workmanship of the period. The large mahogany cabinet and the card table from Mrs. A. M. Greenfield's collection are excellent examples of the cabinet maker's craft.

Pierot Damask fabrics for the room were kindly loaned and arranged by Mrs. Jean MacDonald, through the courtesy of P. Rowe Pty. Ltd., Sydney. Persian rugs were loaned by Mrs. R. Darvall, whose mahogany framed mirror is a typical Georgian piece. Mrs. W. Buttner has loaned the small

secretary, droptside table and square-topped tripod table. The teepoy and several items of silver are from Mr. W. L. Archer's collection. Mrs. A. McDowall arranged the mantlepiece and secretary from the Georgian collection, and Dr. F. Garrett Scholes and Miss N. Marks have added to the interest of the room with Georgian chairs. Mr. Neville Matthews was responsible for the fireplace and window settings.

Exhibit arranged by Mrs. G. J. Whitfield,
with the assistance of Mrs. W. Buttner, Mrs. Jean
MacDonald, Mr. W. L. Archer, Mr. Neville Matthews.

THE GEORGIAN ROOM

- 1 Mahogany Pole Screen
- 2 Gainsborough's
- 3 Wedgwood candlesticks, Chelsea figures, bellows
- 4 Fire-irons, fire-dogs
- 5 Screen
- 6 Card table
- 7 Four Hepplewhite chairs
- 8 Droptside table
- 9 Armchair and stool used by three Queens
- 10 Large mahogany cabinet
- 11 China from the collection of the Queensland National Art Gallery
- 12 Painting
- 13 Mahogany tripod table
- 14 Revolving book shelves
- 15 Teepoy and display
- 16 Arm chair
- 17 Arm chair
- 18 Arm chair
- 19 Arm chair
- 20 Tripod table
- 21 Secretary
- 22 Contents Secretary
- 23 Mirror
- 24 Urn table and candelabra
- 25 Rugs

SELF PORTRAIT by John Opie

THE DESERTED COSTANZA by Angelica Kaufmann

- Mrs. F. A. Verger, Toowoomba
Queensland National Art Gallery
- Mrs. A. MacDowall
- Mrs. F. A. Verger
- Mrs. J. H. Cannan
- Mrs. A. M. Greenfield
- Mrs. D. J. Clarkson
- Mrs. W. Buttner
- Mrs. J. H. Cannan
- Mrs. A. M. Greenfield
- Queensland National Art Gallery
- Queensland National Art Gallery
- Mrs. W. Buttner
- Mrs. F. A. Verger
- Mr. W. L. Archer
- Mrs. J. H. Cannan
- Mrs. J. H. Cannan
- Dr. F. Garrett Scholes
- Miss N. Marks
- Mrs. J. H. Cannan
- Mrs. W. Buttner
- Mrs. A. MacDowall
- Mrs. D. J. Clarkson
- Mrs. R. Darvall
- Mrs. R. Darvall

James Fair, barber, by Inner Temple Gate, presented by the Inquest of
St. Dunstan's in the West, for making a sort of liquor called coffee,
to the great nuisance and prejudice of the neighbourhood. (1657)
New View of London



3

THE ROOM WITHOUT EPOCH

- 1 Walnut chest on stand
- 2 Italian desk and French chair.
- 3 Walnut table or desk.
Sickert's "Little Rachael."
Degas bronze of a dancer.
- 4 Modern glass decanter and flower bowl.



2

I was to-day at an auction of pictures with Pratt, and laid out two pounds five shillings for a picture of Titian; and if it were a Titian it would be worth twice as many pounds.
 SWIFT JOURNAL TO STELLA (1.3.1713)



THE GEORGIAN ROOM

- 1 CHAIR, glazed screen and foot stool.
- 2-3 CHAIR with upholstered seat.
- 4 SECRETAIRE.

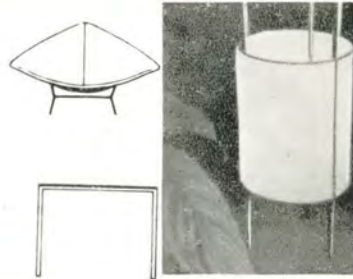
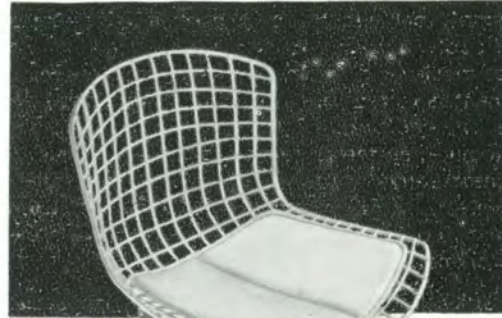
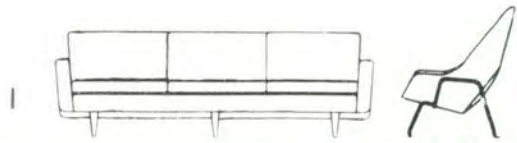
Sprinkle a pint of coarse bran over one-half the carpet of the room, the bran being dripping wet, and then, beginning at the wall, sweep the bran over the other half of the floor. Avoid walking on the bran.
 "HOW TO BUILD, FURNISH & DECORATE" (1882)



THE VICTORIAN ROOM

- 1 Card table with a lustre vase and porcelain dish.
- 2 Drawing room chair.
- 3 "Grandmother" chair.
- 4 Music stand with porcelain ornaments.

All buildings date themselves; and none so securely as those which are designed to show the utmost stretch of fashion.
SIR WILLIAM HOLFORD (1953)



CONTEMPORARY ROOM

- 1 CHAIR (1)—Pierre Jeannerat.
- 2 DINING CHAIR (7)—Harry Bertoia.
- 3 LAMP (13)—Isamu Noguchi.
- 4 SLAT BENCH (9)—Harry Bertoia.
- 5 ROUND COFFEE TABLE (3)—Florence Knoll.



THE VICTORIAN ROOM

When speaking of furniture of a particular era, it is not usual to refer to the worst examples of the period or even the mediocre; so it should be with the Victorian age. To shut out the good simply because the bad exists is self-deprivation.

Broadly, Britain experienced a period of unparalleled expansion during the reign of Queen Victoria, particularly from the mid-Victorian period. At the lower level, people flocked to towns and employment awaited them. Upper middle-class fortunes were made. Increased purchasing power brought a hitherto unknown demand for household goods, by people who had previously no opportunity to acquire aesthetic taste. Because of this, much of the furniture and furnishings then produced was unattractive in design. Cheaper furniture was made for the masses, of pine with thin mahogany veneer. From wealthy, still relatively uncultured classes, came the demand for grander, more ornate and more capacious furniture. Nevertheless, Victorian furniture earned the reputation for good workmanship.

Papier Mache enjoyed a vogue, its popularity reaching its zenith in the fifties. Screens, tables, chairs, and even secretaires in this ware, were extraordinarily strong. The japanned groundwork (generally black but occasionally green or brown) was decorated with handpainted flower bouquets in Natural colours. Gilt decorations were used as the inlays of iridescent shells and pearls. Late, highly coloured landscapes ornamented the panels of chair backs—usually caneseated—and trays and table tops.

The exigencies of fashion can be discerned in early-Victorian furniture. Some easy chairs were armless, and the arms of the largest type were low enough for the wide hooped skirts to spread gracefully over the sides of low capacious seats. Extremely comfortable, they are lovely to look at with their deeply-buttoned upholstery.

The derided antimaccasar was simply the means of protecting the chair from macassar-oil, then popular as a hair-dressing; frequently it was an article of beauty, and surviving examples are highly prized. Today the antimaccasar is again becoming fashionable.

Invariably associated with the antimaccasar, horsehair (much used for tougher, harder-wearing easy chairs, sofas, ottomans and settees) was generally black, but it was also procurable in colours. Its use was out of favour by the eighties and well into the present century. Silk and plush covered the better quality pieces.

In the early Victorian days skilled craftsmen still expressed themselves through their work. The design, the line and the gleam imparted by the passage of time are all there. The woods they worked—walnut, mahogany, fruitwoods—were worthy allies. Beauty of grain was enlisted in the creation, frequently being used to form subtle decorative patterns. Wood was plentiful, hence the serpentine front of a drawer, a cabriole leg cut from one solid piece. Carving, being original, had freedom and vitality, happily devoid of mechanical perfection.

These qualities everlastingly gratify. There is the exquisite 'feel' one experiences when rubbing the palm of the hand over the polished surface, a feeling perhaps too subjective to be adequately conveyed in words. Time never diminishes these aesthetic pleasures; it enhances them. One never becomes unaware of or indifferent to even a single good piece in a room.

To enjoy these pleasures, the embryo collector does not need extensive technical insight or unlimited resources. Amazing satisfaction is found in the ownership of even one fine piece.

Exhibit selected and arranged
by Cecilia McNally
assisted by Margaret Olley

EARLY VICTORIAN FURNITURE

- 1 Model in hand-made lace gown.
- 2 Fire Place and Arrangement of early Victorian.
- 3 Ornaments.
- 4 Ornatly carved Piano (Walnut) and Chair, Music Canterbury.
- 5 Walnut Devonport (Ladies Bureau).
- 6 Carved Walnut upholstered and deep-buttoned Conversational Seat.
- 7 Corner Whatnot.
- 8 Folding Walnut Card Table.
- 9 China Cabinet with collections.
- 10 One Oval Tea Table (set).
- 11 Wall Bracket Chandelier.
- 12 Two Crinoline Chairs.
- 13 Two Gentlemen's Chairs (carved Walnut), upholstered, deep-buttoned.
- 14 Other odd occasional pieces and ornaments.

All the exhibits in this unit have been provided by Cecillia McNally of Tattersalls Arcade, Brisbane.

THE CONTEMPORARY ROOM

The advancing twentieth century is identified by rapid growth of scientific knowledge and its application, affecting not a privileged few but almost all the civilised world. Through printing and television we can reach the far corners of the world from an armchair. Leisure allows choice—rest and quiet are sought. Mass production inherited from the nineteenth century is now better understood. In more common instances the economies have been applied wisely to finance research towards a better and more versatile product. The industrial designer is properly credited as a leader of men and machines for the manufacture and assembly of components. The interior where such units can and should be properly applied calls again for study. New materials and the findings of contemporary architects give us great opportunities to obtain a feeling of "space flow." A review of the work of Eastern and Western artists over the past fifty centuries reveals a continuous striving for a balance of forms and voids. We have never had greater opportunities to apply their findings to the interiors of our buildings. Furniture can be conceived as a series of studied sculptural pieces focused upon a required activity. Comfort, utility and beauty may all be harmoniously combined. Usually a simple form is the best solution, and lest this idealistic approach result in some undesirable uniformity, pure art becomes most important as it contributes individual emotional content. Incomplete statements in art, which stimulate the imagination, seem to have a useful place.

The room envisioned in this display could be set in a private garden, a skyscraper apartment—looking out on the clouds or stars—or, even below ground in a basement with no windows at all—the fishnet curtains giving an illusion of space flow. Part of the wall is a series of shutters to conceal television, books, food, etc., when they are not being enjoyed. The room provides a setting for nature and the pure arts. Designers and artists presented come from the cultural backgrounds of Finland, Italy, Japan, United States of America and Australia, and typify this our time.

arranged by
LAURENCE AND MARY WEST

THE CONTEMPORARY ROOM

FLORENCE KNOLL

U.S.A. Architect, 1- of Interior Planning Group and pioneer of new industrial techniques.

- 1 Dining table 309. T' and L' section rolled steel supports, laminated plastic encased plywood top—1st Award, American Inst. of Decorators, 1953.
- 2 End table 304. Same construction as 309—included in 1st Award, A.I.D., 1953.
- 3 Round coffee table 404. Parallel bar and rivet construction with solid Queensland walnut top in rubbed oil finish—1st Award, A.I.D., 1954; Selected Industrial Design Magazine Review 1955.
- 4 Sofa 26. 100% foam rubber cushions over tied springs in hardwood frame on wood or metal legs.
- 5 Stacking stool 75. Plywood on steel—for use as table or stool.
- 6 Hanging cabinet 123. Natural timber and pandanus cloth with natural saddle leather pulls.

HARRY BERCIA

Italian sculptor and metal-craft research worker. Wire chairs are result of sculptural studies in space structure and light. New precision techniques and low-cost methods in use of metals and rubber were evolved during years of pure research.

- 7 Dining chair. Formed steel wire and snap-on rubber pads.
- 8 Diamond chair. Formed steel wire and hook—on rubber pads.
- 9 Slat bench. Queensland black bean on steel—multi-use unit of studied simplicity.

EERO SAARINEN

Finnish Architect who uses a painstaking perfectionist approach to design problems. He has studied sculpture and won a number of famous architectural contests such as Chapel & Hall at M.I.T. Boston and new U.S. Embassy, London.

- 10 Easy chair. 100% rubber in cushions and on shell of special reinforced plastic bolted to steel cradle. A perfect example of refined application of Twentieth Century technique. Good Design Award—Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1951.

PIERRE JEANERAT

French Architect and Art Critic. Worked with his Uncle, "Le Corbusier", on new capital of Punjab.

- 11 Chair. 100% foam rubber cushions snap fastened to webbed and sprung wooden frame. Chair can be stacked or demounted.

ISAMU NOGUCHI

Japanese Sculptor and Landscape Gardener practising in many parts of the world; at present commissioned to design gardens for U.N.E.S.C.O., Paris.

- 12 Rocking stool. Queensland maple and steel wire—Highest Honours Award, Production Furniture, Fine Hardwoods Association, U.S.A., 1956.
- 13 Lamp. Natural timber, wire and fibre-glass re-inforced plastic.

ANDRIANO CASELLA

Italian Painter.

- 14 Fabric. Print on satin—exhibited in recent Milan Triennial. Lent by Mrs. Jean MacDonald.

LEONARD SHILLAM

Australian Sculptor.

- 15 Sculpture. Lent by Artist.

CLIFTON PUGH

Australian Painter.

- 16 Oil painting. "West Australian bush scene," lent by Mr. and Mrs. Laurence West.

Weltex panels by courtesy of Hancock & Gore.
Furniture by courtesy—West's, 618 Wickham Street, Valley—Knoll International Licensee for Australia.

Historic furnishing, as it is popularly known, did not concern the mass of the people—it belonged to the few. It was the product of an exclusive cultural hierarchy. The so-called era of bad taste associated with the spread of wealth in modern society was really an outward evidence of economic change—during which the mass of a populace became possessed of the means to imitate, rather poorly the ways of the aristocracy.

Good furnishing has always been available to those possessed of cultural and aesthetic appreciation and much of this has come down to our time as pieces of furniture have been loved for their beauty and cherished by successive owners.

Today as in our immediate yesterdays the mass of furnishing lacks discriminative market and is inevitably mediocre.

But as the contemporary section of this exhibition shows, the process of change is with us.

The mass market of the future will be served, with increasing abundance, by products moulded by great artists in their field—designed to serve both the mind and the physical needs of men.

E. J. A. WELLER, L.T.R.A.I.A.
CONVENER—EXHIBITION COMMITTEE

THE NATIONAL GALLERY SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND

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