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Cooper-Hewitt Announces New Acquisitions to the Collection

The Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum today announced the acquisition of several important works to the collection, including a key early example of bentwood furniture by Marcel Breuer and Alexander Girard's armchair for Braniff International Airways. The purchase of the 1936 Breuer Long Chair for Isokon was made possible by funding from Collections Committee member George R. Kravis II, museum trustee Judy Francis Zankel and an anonymous donor. The Girard chair is a gift of Kravis in honor of Caroline Baumann, director of the museum.

"These new acquisitions truly reflect the continuum of design, from an iconic piece of early modern graphic design by Piet Zwart to contemporary product design by Naoto Fukasawa," said Baumann. "It's especially exciting to secure these acquisitions in the run-up to the museum's reopening, as Cooper-Hewitt will have 60 percent more gallery space, as well as a dedicated gallery to showcase gems from the permanent collection."

Cooper-Hewitt's collection is international in scope and contains more than 217,000 objects spanning 30 centuries in four curatorial departments—Drawings, Prints and Graphic Design, Product Design and Decorative Arts, Textiles and Wallcoverings—and the National Design Library. To advance the public understanding of design and underscore the museum's role as a design resource, acquisitions also include supporting design process material and recorded interviews with designers and manufacturers.

New acquisitions this quarter include:

Drawings, Prints and Graphic Design

- Ranked among the most celebrated graphic designers of the 20th century, Piet Zwart created his most famous work of graphic design, the poster "ITF: Internationale Tentoonstelling Op Filmgebeid" (ITF International Exhibition of Film), in 1928. The poster is recognized for its carefully organized proportions, its balance of positive and negative space and its incorporation of photographic imagery along with typography.
- Three sheets of katagami (a Japanese paper-stencil dyeing technique) from the mid-1980s, which represent different carving techniques. These works augment Cooper-Hewitt's significant holding of katagami, which is among the largest in the United States.

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Product Design and Decorative Arts

- Breuer's 1936 Long Chair for Isokon, which represents an important step in the history of bentwood furniture. The chair's design is a derivation of a Breuer aluminum chair of 1932-1933, whose design followed his innovative Bauhaus designs in chrome-plated metal, such as the B3 and the B5 chairs, (both in Cooper-Hewitt's collection) of the 1920s.
- Girard's circa 1968 Model 66310 chair for Braniff International Airways, for whom Girard worked on everything from branded playing cards to the plane fleet itself. This rectilinear armchair was designed with rounded corners in a low profile to complement contemporary low-ceilinged spaces. The chair has its original Braniff upholstery, which Girard also designed.
- Naoto Fukasawa's wall-mounted CD player for MUJI, which has been in constant production for more than 10 years. The CD player was inspired by a kitchen wall fan design; when the cord is pulled, the CD slowly begins to turn and music emanates, like the flow of air from a fan.
- Fukasawa's humidifier and LCD TV for Plus Minus Zero, whose products are characterized by minimalism and attention to detail. The durable plastic humidifier body features a porcelain-like appearance, and the LCD TV is shaped like an old cathode ray tube, reminiscent of early TV technology.

Textiles

- Two sets of four outfits from Issey Miyake and Reality Lab's recent project 132 5. A series of garments made from a single piece of folded cloth, Miyake's innovative fashion design combines new and old developments in science and technology.
- A kimono by Masao Aida, a master edokomon dyer, which was created especially for Cooper-Hewitt. To produce the entire kimono, Aida and his assistants printed the fabric using the same stencil a total of 28 times. The katagami stencil and other sample materials were also acquired to document the cutting and dyeing process that was used to produce the kimono.

About the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

Founded in 1897, Cooper-Hewitt is the only museum in the nation devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. The museum presents compelling perspectives on the impact of design on daily life through active educational programs, exhibitions and publications.

The museum's main facility, housed in the Carnegie Mansion, is undergoing renovation as part of a \$64 million capital campaign that includes enlarged and enhanced facilities for exhibitions, collections display, education programming and the National Design Library, and an increased endowment. During the renovation, Cooper-Hewitt's usual schedule of exhibitions, education programs and events will be staged at various off-site locations. The renovated facility will reopen in fall 2014.

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