Three Design Classics: Marianne Brandt, Margarete Schütte-Lihotsky and Henry Dreyfuss

Cilla Robach
Head of Collection Unit

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Stockholm
Volume 27:2
Artemisia Gentileschi's Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Johan Wilhelm Bergström's Portrait of his Wife, Charlotta Ronjon
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Sidney, the Duke of Buckingham
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Copying from the Old Masters. Raphael “à la française”: The Holy Family with a Sparrow and its Copies by Philippe de Champaigne and Jean Baptiste Corneille
Photo: © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (fig. 1, p. 63).

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Cornelis de Vos Assisting Rubens. A Note on his Head Studies for the Torre de la Parada
Photos: © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (figs. 2–4, p. 72–74).

Cover Illustration
Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1654), Saint Catherine of Alexandria, c. 1627–30(?). Oil on canvas, 90 × 75.4 cm. Purchased with funds from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous 2019. Nationalmuseum, NM 7538

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, is published with generous support from the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

The Nationalmuseum collaborates with Svenska Dagbladet, The Wineagency and the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

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Publisher
Susanna Pettersson, Director General.

Editors
Ludvig Florén, Magnus Olausson and Martin Olin.

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Photographers
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Graphic Design
BIGG.

Layout
Ludvig Florén.

Translation and Language Editing
Clare Barnes and Martin Naylor.

Publishing
Ludvig Florén, Magnus Olausson, and Martin Olin (Editors) and Ingrid Lindell (Publications Manager).

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum is published annually and contains articles on the history and theory of art relating to the collections of the Nationalmuseum.

Nationalmuseum
Box 16176
SE–103 24 Stockholm, Sweden
www.nationalmuseum.se

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EISSN 2001-9238

Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Volume 27:2, 2020
Thanks to a generous donation from the Friends of the Nationalmuseum’s Design Fund, the Nationalmuseum has been able to add three international design classics to its collections. These objects were owned by advertising designer Torbjörn Lenskog (1936–2020), one of Sweden’s leading collectors of international industrial design. His collection was the foundation of the Nationalmuseum’s Returnity exhibition in 1997 and of the design museum, Formens Hus, which opened in Hällefors in 2005, the official Swedish Year of Design.

Kandem by Marianne Brandt
Over a century has passed since German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) started the legendary Bauhaus School in Weimar in 1919. Gropius’ vision was that every element in architecture – choice of material, proportions, light, interior design, carpets, glass, porcelain, signs, door handles – would interact to create a comprehensive artwork. Shapes should be based upon circles, squares and triangles and colourways on the primary colours of red, blue and yellow. Function would determine design, and superfluous ornamentation and decoration would be removed. The conflicts and hierarchical differences between art, crafts and industry, experienced by previous generations of artists, were to melt away through cooperation. Architects, artists and designers would develop a new and contemporary style by returning to crafts, but do so in collaboration with industry.

The vision of the Bauhaus School provided the foundation on which Modernism’s iconic design and architecture grew. Smoothly rendered, flat-roofed buildings with steel furnishings were soon found throughout Europe. Still, the essence was the life that would be lived in these functionalistic buildings, and how art and design could reach out to large sections of society. However, this vision of a modern life in modernist comprehensive artworks eventually collided with the political situation.
in Germany. In 1925, the school moved to Dessau and, when the Nazis came to power, it was moved to Berlin where, in 1933, it was shut down by the Gestapo.

The telling of the Bauhaus School’s history has long been filled with male players, such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Johannes Itten, Josef Albers and Paul Klee. However, recently, more of the women who were active at the school have received attention, among them textile artist Anni Albers, photographer Gertrud Arnt and, not least, designer and metalsmith Marianne Brandt (1893–1983). Thanks to a generous donation from the Design Fund, the Nationalmuseum now has one of Brandt’s most famous objects – the low bedside lamp called Kandem – in our collections.

Marianne Brandt began studying at the Bauhaus School in Weimar in 1923. She had László Moholo-Nagy as a metalwork teacher and soon showed a talent for this material. In 1928–29 she worked at the school, including teaching metalwork. Her design is characterised by an interest in geometry, typical of the Bauhaus School. Her objects are constructed from cones, spheres and triangles, where the tension arises from the meetings and transitions between these shapes, regardless of whether she was designing exclusive silver jugs, ashtrays or regular table lamps. Kandem, which she designed with Hin Bredendjeck (1904–1995) in 1927–28, has a shade that consists of a cylinder that transitions into a soft curve, and a forward-leaning triangular base (fig. 1). The material is eggshell-coloured lacquered steel. It was produced by Körting & Matthiesen in Leipzig, and inspired many other designers to make similar lamps, including Swedish designer Sigvard Bernadotte’s “architect lamp” from the 1960s (fig. 2).

Kandem is an important addition to the Nationalmuseum’s collections, both as an example of the Bauhaus School’s early modernism and as part of our efforts to reinforce the collection of design by pioneering women. The Nationalmuseum already owned two objects by Brandt: the “5488” napkin holder from 1931 (NMK 90/2003) and a pair of bookends in lacquered sheet metal, produced by Ruppelverk in 1930 (NMK 220A–B/2015).

Frankfurter Küche by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky

Germany suffered a severe housing crisis after the Armistice of 1918 and, in the 1920s, a range of housing projects were introduced to rapidly increase the number of cheap apartments for working class families. One problem was how to include the kitchen in the apartments without taking up too much space. The solution was designed in 1926 by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897–2000), Austria’s first female architect.

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky’s kitchen design has become known as the Frankfurt kitchen, because she designed it for architect Ernst May’s social housing project in Römerstadt, Frankfurt. The basis of the kitchen’s design was not only keeping costs down, but also the radically changed lifestyle offered by life in the city. A rural farmer’s wife previously had to bake the bread, make sausages and produce jam from berries she picked herself. Urban housewives did not need to work on these tasks, as grocery shops sold finished goods – instead of flour, she bought bread, instead of half a pig she bought sausages, and so on. Simpler dishes were what would be prepared in the Frankfurt kitchen, so less space was required.
Another important issue was the floor plan in these modern apartments. Where families once had a large kitchen for a range of functions – socialising, sleep, homework – the Frankfurt kitchen would only be used by the housewife for basic cookery. This separation of life’s various parts was central to modernism’s ideology – sleep was for the bedroom, socialising in the living room and hygiene in the bathroom.

Another factor was, as mentioned above, financial. To offer large numbers of low-income workers a roof above their heads, these homes had to be produced in a rational and cost-effective manner. The solution was standardisation. This is also characteristic of Schütte-Lihotzky’s Frankfurt kitchen, which was designed as modules and thus allowed mass production at a low cost. Visually, the kitchen was reminiscent of the design of industrial workplaces. She also found inspiration in the cramped kitchens of railway carriages.

The décor was made from wood painted a blue-green shade that, according to the latest research, was unattractive to flies. The worktops were clad in linoleum and there was a double sink, with one side for washing and another for drying. Below the counter, there was a module with 12 aluminium storage bins for ‘Paniermehl’, ‘Kaffee’, ‘Rosinen’, ‘Reis’ and ‘Kartoffelmehl’, etcetera (breadcrumbs, coffee, raisins, rice and potato flour). The Nationalmuseum has been gifted one of these modules by the Design Fund. It was produced by Gebrüder Haarer. The Frankfurt kitchen influenced the design of Swedish kitchens, from functionalism’s laboratory kitchens to standardised cabinet dimensions and countertop heights and IKEA’s contemporary kitchen advice. This makes Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky’s module an important addition to the Nationalmuseum’s collections (fig. 3).

**Wall lamps for luxury trains by Henry Dreyfuss**

As a profession, industrial design developed in the US during the depression years of the 1930s. Industrially produced objects had, of course, been designed prior to this, but often by an engineer who was good at drafting. To increase demand for American goods, companies started to hire more artistically motivated people, frequently advertising men, and design became a distinct factor in competitiveness. One pioneer in American industrial design was Henry Dreyfuss (1904–1972). His background as a scenographer may seem unusual today, but the step from theatre to design was a short one. Both Dreyfuss and his mentor, Norman Bel Geddes, combined these activities. Bel Geddes opened his design studio in 1927 and Dreyfuss opened his in 1929. History often regards the designer and object as separate entities, but industrial design often involves teamwork, both in the creative work and in the context for which the object is intended.
The above is particularly true of the two wall lamps, designed by Dreyfuss, which the Nationalmuseum has been gifted by the Design Fund (fig. 4). They were designed in 1938, for a specific context and location, namely the Pullman Standard Car Company’s *Twentieth Century Limited* express train, which ran a night service between New York and Chicago for three decades.

There was great competition among the railroad companies in the US, and the design of the trains and the stations’ architecture became important elements in creating attractive brands. Embarkation on the *Twentieth Century Limited* was thus magnificent: at Grand Central Station, passengers strolled along a red carpet bearing the name of the train and, once aboard, they were met by staff who served cocktails, cigars and food.

The lamps were just one detail in Henry Dreyfuss’ design commission. His office designed the entire train, from these lamps to the steam engine. The colour scheme of the carriages was dominated by shades of blue, grey and silver. The streamlined express train gleamed with speed, utility and modernity. The lamps were placed by the padded passenger seats, which had back-rests that could be folded down to make a table. The lampshades angle the light, so people who wished to read did not dazzle their neighbour. The lamps were made from aluminium and glass by Luminator Co. of Chicago and became a familiar feature in many Americans’ everyday routines, influencing their perception of modern life.

**Note:**