

## A treasury waiting for discovery

By C. L. Rugenstein  
special writer

**F**OR FINERY of another sort, Arkitektura in Birmingham is a treasury waiting to be discovered.

Arkitektura's main stock in trade is architecturally designed furniture for the corporate and trade market. That accounts for 87 percent of their business, said Arkitektura president Andrew Fisher.

But more and more people are discovering unique items in accessories — lamps, tableware, tea services and lamps — to give as gifts or keep for themselves.

"We experience a lot of people who come in here to shop who say 'Oh my gosh, I'm so glad you're here! I've had to go to New York, or Chicago or Vienna to find the things that you have here!'" Fisher said.

### AND WHAT THINGS they are!

Futuristic looking Woka (pronounced "voka") lamps in solid brass, Swid Powell tableware, and reproduction Saarinen sterling silver tea services, are only some of Arkitektura's goodies.

Two Woka lamps in particular could be given as table or desk accessories to some lucky recipient.

One, its umbrella-like brass shade suspended by four struts connecting to a cone-base of brass, sells for \$2,962.

Another is like an arc lamp, only desk size. The half-circle dome shade is suspended from the top of the narrow brass arc, which sweeps around to anchor to a circular base. This one is available for \$1,554.

The Swid Powell tableware, also designs from the fertile minds of architects, includes the pattern chosen for Detroit's Rattlesnake Club.

Since "architects have a special talent for manipulating form, color and pattern," according to the Swid Powell brochure. They bring a different perspective to other things they design.

The Rattlesnake's pattern, "Tuxedo" (by Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel), for example, has clean, non-fussy lines. Four small, evenly spaced black squares in the center of the white plates balance the black line of the inner rim, four larger squares on the quarter hour around the rim, and tiny squares circling the rim's edge.

Michael Graves' "Little Dripper" is a coffee service with a sense of humor.

**THE POT** IS A white, ceramic globe girded by three wavy black lines. Its spout is a triangle, its handle a half-circle. It comes with a white ceramic cone shaped filter, also with the wavy lines. When the filter is not in use a gold-knobbed white lid graces the top.

Companion sugar and creamer are miniatures of the pot, and all have a ceramic, X-shaped base built-onto their little round bottoms.

Cost for the cheerful service is \$135 for the pot and filter, \$60 for the sugar and creamer.

The piece de resistance of the tableware, if not the whole showroom, is the Saarinen reproduction metalwork and furniture.

Fisher brought out a sterling silver reproduction of a tea service designed by Eiel Saarinen.

The 14 1/2-inch high globe rested on a slatted basket-like grill that surrounds the warming candle below. A tall, thin column of silver rises from the urn's lid like an antenna.

Bracketed by handles that look like small, flat wings, it puts one in mind of the spaceships from the old Flash Gordon movies.

It also comes with a matching sugar and creamer, to rest on an 18-inch silver tray. Price? \$28,000.

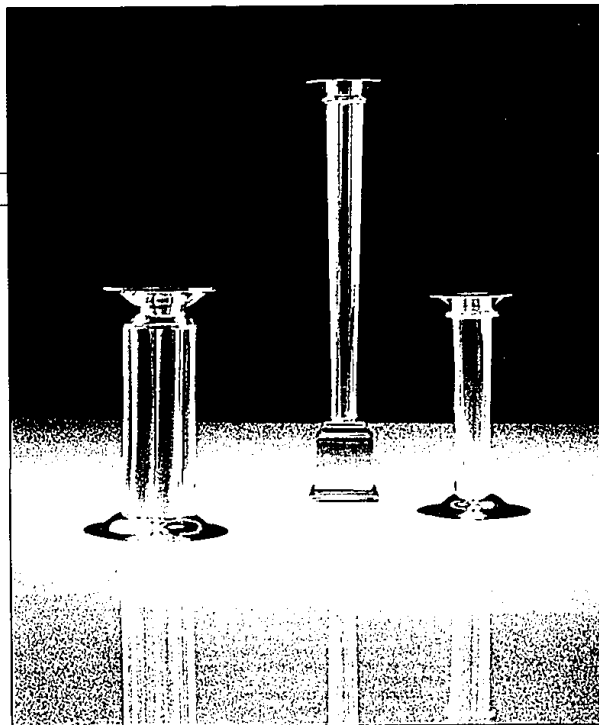
This particular silver reproduction is the work of an Italian manufacturer, Alessi. The bulk of the Saarinen metal reproductions however, are being done by master metalsmith James Starr, himself a product of Cranbrook's Master of Fine Arts program.

**STARR'S REPRODUCTION** pieces include two- and four-branch candlesticks by Saarinen's daughter, Pipsen Saarinen Swanson; towering seven- and five-branch candelabras by her husband J. Robert F. Swanson, and a torchiere by Eiel himself.

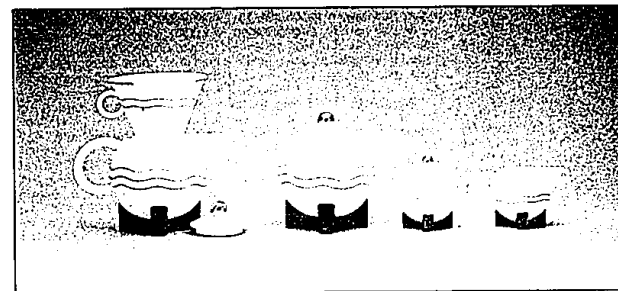
The prolific Saarinen also designed rugs, reproductions of which Arkitektura will have in the near future (with designs by both Eiel and his wife Loja), as well as furniture from the Saarinen home at Cranbrook.

"The business has been growing at 100 percent for four straight years," Fisher said. "I thought this year it was going to slow down."

Not a chance, as long as he keeps serving up Arkitektura wonders like these.



Cylindrical silver candlesticks by designer Robert A.M. Stern come in a variety of heights to fit any decor.



Carrying the whimsical name of the Little Dripper, this coffee set by designer Michael Graves includes a six-cup coffee pot, filter and lid, sugar bowl and creamer and a spoon.

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