

Alive and well

Modern design appeals to ever-growing audience

BY HELEN DIANE VINCENT
SPECIAL WRITER

Modern design has come a long way since emerging from the European political hotbed of the 1880s. And no wonder. The original thrust of modernism was based on a belief in progressive change toward a Utopian future relieved of most historic influences.

The movement, long dominated by an uncompromising elite of talented architects, textile and furniture designers, eventually gave way to the needs of an international marketplace with its competitive manufacturers, retailers and a new breed of interior and product designers.

Together they served, and continue to serve, a fast-growing segment with an assortment of styles created over the years: Classic Modern, Art Deco, Scandinavian, International, Classic Contemporary and Contemporary, a catch-all word for a range of cutting-edge designs.

Foremost among local retailers with a niche exclusively in modern furnishings is Bernie Moray, president of Gorman's Gallery of Fine Furniture in Southfield. He has served as president and is now CEO of the National Home Furnishings Association.

Moray and his staff are sought by a number of furniture manufacturers before their lines are brought to market. This close relationship extends to top-gun designers who make guest appearances at Gorman's, providing a first-hand contact with customers and their interior design needs.

At different times throughout the year, you might run across John Musceroni of Swaim, Vladimir Kagan of Directional, Milo Baughman of Thayer Coggin, H. Fillmore Hart of Preview and J. Beam Wade of Brueton Industries.

Baughman's "Free Style" (see cover photograph) for Thayer Coggin picks up on the strongest trend in all home furnishings: softening of shapes and extended use of color. Although modern will always be synonymous with black, white, and neutrals, his featuring of a wider palette of color opens up interior design to greater individuality and an atmosphere of warmth and contentment.

Baughman admits he likes "working both ends of the modern spectrum." He has done it by incorporating hints of the 1950s retro with the individualistic Art Furniture influence.

Pioneer modernists

While the softer looks gain momentum, J. Beam Wade of Brueton withstands the temptation by advancing the rigorous design principles of pioneer modernists. Except he has gone one step further by blending the requirements of furniture with sculpture, focusing on structure and the strength of materials. It's the variety of materials in many colors and finishes that allows for an almost custom look with Brueton furniture.

Also Stanley Jay Friedman's "Angular" bold new seating group for Brueton provides a completely original style for the modern individualist. The combination of sharp geometry and soft radiused shapes exudes a new attitude. It's a bet you'll be seeing a lot more of these proportions in future modern design.

The metropolitan area boasts two other retail operations that also concentrate on modern furniture:

COLOR IT CONTEMPORARY! HOME FURNISHINGS '92

MODERN DESIGN and how it has shaped home furnishing patterns within the Observer & Eccentric area dominates the thrust of this annual fall supplement.

The supplement, together with today's Creative Living section of the newspaper, spotlights folks on the cutting edge of invigorating design, including designers and retailers, and families whose homes showcase contemporary trends.

Stories include:

- Futuristic furniture designs courtesy of Center for Creative Studies students — Page 2.
- An overview of contemporary retail trends — Page 3.
- Sleek and shapely kitchen and bath designs — Page 4.
- Making even the garage look snazzy — Page 6.
- Making the kids' rooms more practical — Page 7.

About the cover: The Free Style Collection is freely influenced by both ends of the design spectrum: retro and art furniture. Milo Baughman designed the collection for Thayer Coggin. Particulars: five-piece sectional covered in periwinkle blue Allure, 100-percent washable polyester suede cloth, upholstery comes in 40 colors, approximately \$9,450. The upholstered chair and ottoman, approximately \$2,200, is covered in a 100-percent cotton print. At Gorman's Gallery of Fine Furniture, Southfield; Jacobson's, Sherwood Studios, West Bloomfield; Englander's, J.L. Hudson's. Also available to the trade at the Designer Group in the Michigan Design Center, Troy.

Credit: O&E assistant managing editor Bob Sklar, with assistance from design and color consultant Helen Diane Vincent and special writer Janice Tiger-Kramer, oversee this special section, appearing today in all 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Graphic illustrator Gwen Dietrich designed the cover. O&E sales representatives Gigi Badalamenti and Sandy Griso coordinated advertising. Direct queries to Bob Sklar: 953-2113.

Sherwood Studios in West Bloomfield and Hillside Contemporary Furniture with two stores, one in Bloomfield Hills and the other in West Bloomfield.

Hillside has featured color in its advertising long before it was popular to do so. Sherwood Studios can be credited with sophisticated interior designs for clients also breathing colors where one might expect the typical whites and neutrals.

Not until you step inside the Arkitektura/In-Situ showroom in Birmingham, and meet Andrew Fisher, president, will you get a more complete view of modern design — past, present and future — and the mind-set required to carry it off.

Representing the modern pioneers, Arkitektura displays Frank Lloyd Wright's and Eliel Saarinen's pieces.

For the hottest, newest designs, Fisher makes available the Frank Geary Collection, made of slender bentwood laminate stripes. The KnollStudio bankrolled his project, which had as its source of inspiration an orange crate. Nonetheless, it won the 1992 Contemporary Furniture Award in New York City.

As far as a future modern classic is concerned, Fisher reserves this accolade for the French designer, Philip Stark, and his Royalline line, made for the renovation of the Royalline Hotel in New York. "Future generations will see his work the same way we now see Charles Eames or Harry Bertoin."

Dine on clear glass

Coming back to a more familiar scene and local talent, Larry Eppers, assistant store manager at Jacobson's in Birmingham, points out an elegant dining table made of optically clear glass. It's part of a line manufactured by Andrew Pearson Design, a Troy company, and is designed by Hal Brownfield, the company founder and president.

The table's many cut and polished facets creates an impression of large-scale jewelry and demon-

strates yet another aspect of modern design — the inherent quality of materials is potentially a source of beauty.

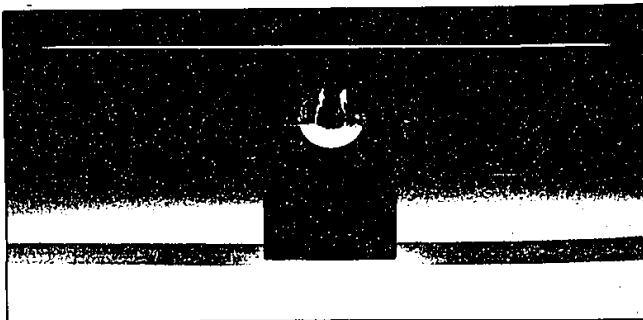
Eppers is quite intrigued with state-of-the-art developments in glass, which has such an important part to play in modern design.

This time, he points to the German import, Plenum, a wall system that employs technically advanced glass techniques involving fusion and curves. These subtleties are part of an overall trend in wall systems originating in Europe. The very American company, Ello, is doing similar things with its new Concord line, also juxtaposing wood with glass using curved facades.

The ultimate tribute to the modern movement, generating as it does technical proficiency and style explorations, is its capacity to help the consumer express the way they want to live.

Scott-Shuptrine's president, Gary VanElzlander, and his youthful management team, understand this very well. As the recently opened Troy store amply demonstrates, Scott-Shuptrine is assuming an ever larger share of the local furnishings market.

It's doing it by catering to the still more demanding consumer with a range of home furnishing products grouped into six lifestyle collections for ease of selection. Of these six, one is decidedly modern in many of its guises, from authentic reproduction Stickley Mission Oak furniture by L. & J.G. Stickley to Ello, Premium and Thayer Coggin, among others, that make a contemporary statement.



Functional sculpture: J. Beam Wade designed the Maida console for Brueton Industries. Indirect lighting is housed in the top of the console, which is inset with sand-blasted peach, gray, bronze or clear glass. The console measures 20 inches wide, 30 inches high and 60, 72 or 84 inches in length. Priced approximately \$9,500, depending on grade of materials and finishes. At Gorman's Gallery of Fine Furniture, Southfield; Sherwood Studios, West Bloomfield; and to the trade at Billie Born Ltd., Michigan Design Center, Troy.

Aside from the lifestyle groupings, Scott-Shuptrine is putting a greater emphasis on lamps and accessories, reflecting increased consumer interest in these items.

Modern ideas spread

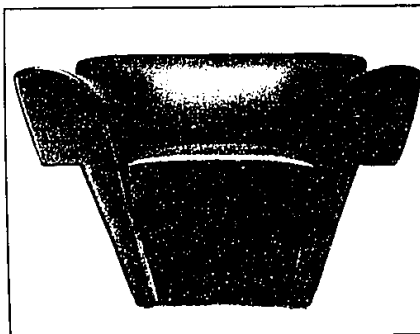
Though known primarily for traditional and transitional furniture, Classic Interiors in Livonia has gotten into the modern swing with Lane's Grave Park Collection, a scaled-down Mission Oak style initiated by the arts and crafts movement, which inspired Stickley in the first place.

No story on modern home furnishings trends would be complete without a nod to the large department and chain stores. Their role has always been providing an assortment of products and wielding a lot of purchasing power because of their size.

When you add to this the pizzazz of well-executed room displays, whatever style is featured is bound to make a positive impression on the consumer.

Recently, J.L. Hudson, under the direction of Donna Stevens, who heads up all of Hudson's 40 designers, decided to send a strong message about contemporary. The results were urbane — a mix of Baker's Plaster classic modern furniture with post-modern Rhyne pieces in lacquer and leather set on bordered rugs and accented with JAB, Struhm & Romann metallized fabrics. Greens and corals were used throughout. Stevens admitted she'd "like to see more color used in contemporary settings."

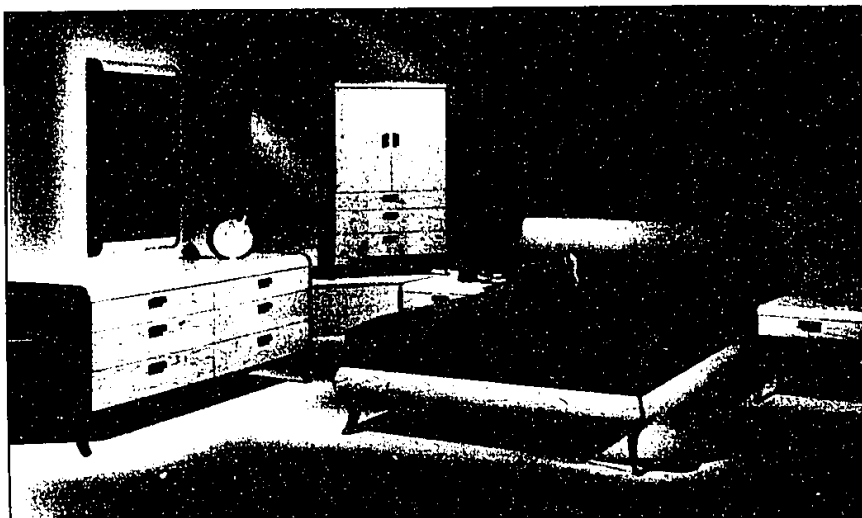
Taking all of these retailers together, then adding the number-one retailer in Michigan, Art Van, with its slick contemporary Natuzzi leathers, and J.C. Penney and Sears, whose trade-up assortments always include contemporary, you then know that modern furnishings, in one form or another, are here to stay for at least another 100 years.



Showstopper: The new seating group, Angular, was designed by Stanley Jay Friedman for Brueton Industries. It's fully upholstered and offered in three sizes (lounge chair, two-seat and three-seat sofa) with companion ottoman in a variety of leathers and fabrics. Lounge chair price in leather, \$5,576; in customer's own fabric, \$2,565. At Gorman's Gallery of Fine Furniture, Southfield; Sherwood Studios, West Bloomfield; and to the trade at Billie Born Ltd., Michigan Design Center, Troy.



Shapely styling: This dining chair, designed by Sergio Orozco, is from Carson's. The metal base is available in brass finish. Priced from \$699 to \$1,199. At Scott-Shuptrine; Hillside Furniture; Sherwood Studios, West Bloomfield.



Touch of past: O.B. Solie designed this Arriva bedroom set by Ello. The black chrome cabriole-styled legs from the 18th century soften the modern lines in light cherry and darkwood. Price ranges from \$7,500 to \$9,000. Retail exclusively at Englander's. Available to the trade at Designer Group, Michigan Design Center, Troy.



Poised for success: The Tabla lamp is designed by Mario Barbaglia and Marco Colombo for Italiana Luce, formerly the PAF company, and distributed by Koch + Lowy. The lamp is expected to play a pivotal role in the growing importance of decorative accessories. The finish is heat-resistant black technopolymer. Uses a 12V 50-watt halogen bulb. Height 14 1/2 inches, base diameter 4 1/2 inches, arm extends 37 inches. Priced at \$345. In many local stores.