Canadian Modern

Travelling Exhibition

ROM

Introduction

Innovations and experimentation in Canadian modern design and craft affect our daily lives, demonstrating that design is everywhere, whether we know it or not. Canadian modern design grew out of the technological advances of the Second World War, consumer demand for new products, a national desire to join the world stage, and the cultural and social movements of the late 20th century. Today Canadian designers continue to flourish -- innovating and inspiring across design disciplines, at home and abroad.

Canadian Modern includes a range of limited edition, and mass-produced objects; pieces that excite, inspire, and tell stories of how modern design shaped Canada and, conversely, how Canada shaped modern design. Culturally and aesthetically significant examples of furniture, glassware, ceramics, fashion, jewellery, textiles, electronics, and graphic design from the 1940s to today are featured. The exhibition includes a series of audio-visual installations that provide context for the objects and evoke temporal moods.

Visitors will engage with diverse stories and develop new ways of looking at everyday objects. They will discover the challenges and opportunities of design and craft in Canada through inspiring stories of Canadian designers and makers, past and present.

Esa Niemi, *Onion* fabric, c.1970s

With their senses engaged, visitors will be inspired and have a new appreciation as to how design affects their lives.

Ay Lelum,
Woman's Jacket, 2021

Thomas Lamb,
Steamer Chair, 1978

John Fluevog, Dr. Henry Limited Edition,
J2020, Patent leather

Doug Funk, Tea Service in
Ptarmigan Pattern, c. 1972

The Story

Organized thematically, the exhibition unfolds in four sections. Woven throughout are stories of diversity, individual designers, and the impact Canadian modern design had on the world and vice versa.

Modernism and Professionalization: Canadian designers embraced and experimented with new materials and processes developed for the war effort, applying them to the design of domestic goods. Design and craft emerged as professional disciplines that required education, training, and standards. All these factors contributed to the blossoming of modern design. Jacques Guillon's *Cord Chair* (left), Sid Besudsky's magnifying projector, and Ray Hildebrand's *New Look Dress* are some of the featured designers and objects.

Pop and the Swinging Sixties and Seventies: Canadian designers and manufacturers embraced the playfulness of Pop design along with the heady optimism of the "Space Race", Expo '67, and the Canadian Centennial. They introduced innovative products that succeeded in the global markets and put Canadian design on the world stage. It is in this section, that visitors engage with Hugh Spencer's Project G stereo created for the Clairtone Sound Corporation in 1963.

John Tyson, *Contempra* telephone, 1968

Maggie Reeves,
Flower Power Dress,
1965-1970

Guy Vidal, Pendant with "moon rocks", c. 1970s

Of Land, Sea, and Sky: Many Canadian designers are driven by a powerful sense of place, turning to regional flora and fauna and topography as design touchstones. Indigenous artists and collaborations along with contributions by new Canadians shaped Canadian design giving it a strong identity connected to the land, sea, and sky. Michael Massie's engraved silver and bloodwood teapot exemplifies this inspiration.


Michael Massie, Teapot, 2008

Carl Poul Petersen, Bird Necklace

Elaine Fortin, *Punt Chair*, 2011

Post-Modernism and Beyond: The 1980s saw the return of colour, decoration, and historicism — the tenets of postmodernism. Canadian designers continue to innovate in the global marketplace, drawing upon a wide range of cultural sources and technologies to address contemporary issues such as the environment and universal design in meaningful ways. For example, Izzy Camilleri's Leather Jacket was designed to accommodate wheelchairs.
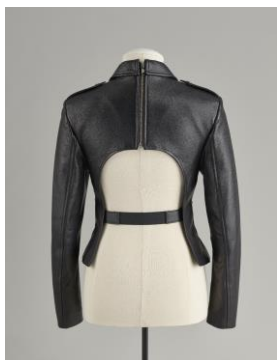
Izzy Camilleri, Leather Jacket, 2018

Gord Peteran, *Chest on Chest,* 1984

Johnny Lim, *Star 69 Side Table*, 1998

Rachel Gotlieb, Lead Curator

Rachel Gotlieb, Ph.D. is a design and craft historian who has curated over 20 exhibitions on Canadian craft and design including *True Nordic: How Scandinavia Influenced Design in Canada*; *Beaver Tales: Canadian Art and Design*; *The Art of Clairtone: The Making of a Design Icon*; *On the Table: Hundred Years of Functional Ceramics*; *Thor Hansen: Crafting a Canadian Style*; and *Pop in Orbit: Design from the Space Age*. She was the founding curator of the Design Exchange where she co-authored *Design in Canada*. Dr. Gotlieb was the Theodore Randall Visiting International Chair in Art and Design, Alfred University, Alfred, New York, and Visiting Scholar, Winterthur Museum Garden & Library. She is the inaugural Ruth Rippon Curator of Ceramics at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento. Previously, she was the Adjunct Curator and the former Chief Curator at the Gardiner Museum.

Arlene Gehmacher, Advising Curator

Arlene Gehmacher, Ph.D. is an Art Historian specializing in imagery of Canada from the 18th century to the present, primarily in the visual idioms of Western European art. She studies "Canada" as a subject in its social context, in terms of production, critical reception, institutional histories, and display strategies, as a means to address how identities and historical narratives from national to personal levels are articulated and communicated. In this regard she is also interested in the significance of the development and role of printmaking - particularly chromolithography - in 19th century Canada.

Dr. Gehmacher is cross-appointed as Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto. She was elected a member of the Print Council of America in 2006.

Exhibition Information

Availability: 2024 to 2026, 3-4 month bookings

**Size:** 4,000-5,000 sf / 370-460 m²

Content included:

- 100-120 objects including ceramics, consumer products, glass, furniture, jewellery, metalwork, textiles and works on paper
- Object mounts, hanging systems, small plinths
- Graphic banners – section dividers
- 4-5 digital experiences (digital format) in English with French subtitles
- Text and labels in English and French (digital format)

Fees:

- Fee / Shared Costs: $75,000 CAD (includes: external loans, packing/crating, mounts, dispersal of external loans, in-transit insurance, copyright clearances, e-files for text and digital experiences)
- Venue to cover: in-/outbound shipping, casework, 2 ROM couriers for de-/installation, on-site insurance, production costs, playback equipment, local costs, ROM VIP travel

Catalogue: available for sale at venue
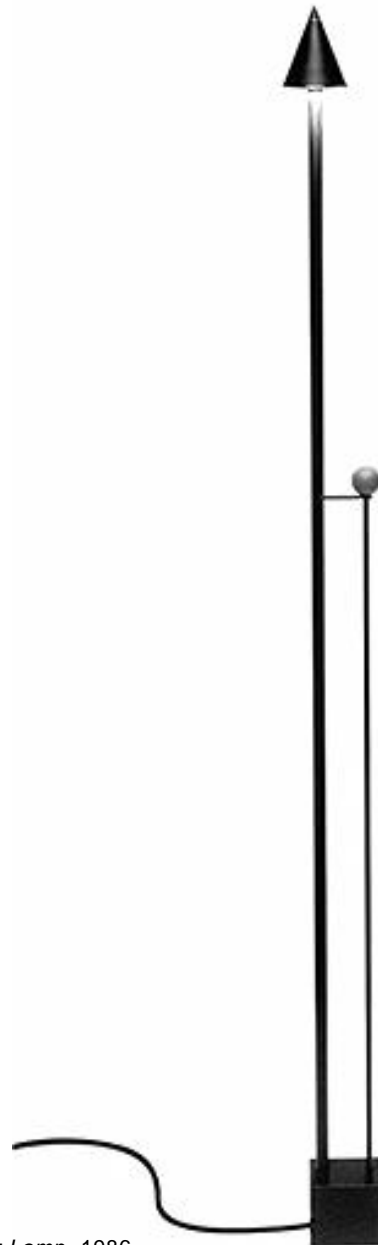
Scot Laughton, *Strala Floor Lamp*, 1986

Only 500 produced. Lamp voted best design by Time Magazine.

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