



From: THE COUNCIL OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN Press Office

THE DESIGN CENTRE

28 Haymarket, London S.W.1 Phone TRAfalgar 8000

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THE DESIGN CENTRE FOR BRITISH INDUSTRIES

A new stimulus to trade

The Design Centre (to be) opened by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on Thursday, April 26, is a service to the public and to trade buyers and visitors from Britain and abroad which the Council of Industrial Design has planned ever since its formation. As a national showroom of selected products, it is the first of its kind in the world to cover so wide a range of industries.

The major part of the exhibition area will be given over permanently to a general display of changing content, showing well-designed consumer goods of British manufacture. Every item included must be in current production so that it is readily available to the public who visit the Centre as a preliminary to shopping.

A wide range of products

The Centre opens with 1020 products from 433 firms, all chosen by the CoID for their high standard of design - both in appearance and performance. Represented are products from all parts of the United Kingdom in the following industries:

Bicycles	Household textiles
Building fittings	Lighting
Carpets & rugs	Pottery
Clocks & watches	Radio & television
Cutlery & flatware	Street lighting
Domestic equipment	Travel goods
Furniture	Office equipment
Furnishing textiles	Wallpapers
Glass	Linoleum

For ease of reference and comparison, goods in the same categories will, in the main, be shown together. As manufacturers will always know well in advance what has been chosen for exhibition, they will have an opportunity to prepare to meet extra demands from trade buyers for a particular product.

MORE

For export

There will be no section in The Design Centre confined to goods for export only, mainly because there is less distinction nowadays between these and goods for the home market. A few items will be included which are not on sale in this country, but these will be clearly captioned 'for export only'. The CoID hopes, however, that manufacturers will let them have up-to-date news about export arrangements so that the Information Staff at the Centre can give accurate information to overseas trade enquirers.

Special displays

In addition to the main display, there will, from time to time, be special displays of topical and trade interest. Details of the first of these will be announced shortly.

'Design Review'

It would be impossible in the 8,000 square feet of floor space to show at any one time all the well-designed goods available in Britain. To supplement the display, Design Review has been made an integral part of the exhibition and thus effectively enlarges its scope. In this picture and sample record of some 8,000 products the visitor can find a much wider selection of the things he is interested in and gain a fairly complete picture of the good designs of a particular type of product available.

For buyers

The Design Centre should be a regular port of call for wholesale and retail buyers, both from home and abroad, for architects, suppliers and purchasing officers, for it offers an excellent opportunity to keep abreast of design developments in this country, and a unique ready-reference to new lines of goods of a high standard. Everything will be clearly captioned and additional information for trade enquirers will be available on request. Besides circulating buyers in this country, the CoID has sent nearly 100,000 buyers and businessmen abroad an illustrated brochure in English, French, German or Spanish on the

services of The Design Centre. This is being supplemented at home and abroad by posters. A bulletin giving details of The Design Centre exhibits will be circulated regularly to overseas buyers.

Though standards vary from industry to industry, Britain can rival any country in the world as a source of modern mass-produced goods designed for today. By showing changing selections of these at a convenient showroom for overseas buyers and visitors to London, The Design Centre will help to build up the prestige of modern British products.

For retailers generally

The Design Centre will not compete with the retail trade, for nothing will be on sale there. The Centre's slogan 'Look before you shop' pinpoints one of its main aims; open from 9.30 to 5.30 six days a week, it offers the public an attractively displayed 'shopwindow' where they can browse at leisure and take careful stock of what is really worthwhile before going into a store to buy. Everything shown will as far as possible be captioned with retail prices and every effort will be made to direct enquirers to their nearest stockists, whether in London or the provinces - the Centre is not intended to benefit only shops and stores in the capital. Naturally, the effectiveness of this service depends on the co-operation the staff receives from manufacturers and distributors.

The large number of special displays arranged in stores throughout Britain to tie in with the opening shows that retailers have already realised the possibilities which the Centre offers as a stimulus to sales. The CoID hopes that it will be able, in the near future, to develop this.

For manufacturers

The manufacturer whose product is selected for showing will gain both trade and prestige. This may encourage firms whose products are not yet included in Design Review to raise their standards of design. For the medium and small-scale manufacturer it has the additional advantage of providing the chance of a London showing and a nation-wide promotion which he might otherwise be unable to afford.

Manufacturers generally have shown themselves very ready to give the Centre their support. This is a good omen for the Centre's success, for, unlike previous exhibitions which the CoID has organised, manufacturers are

being asked to contribute towards the annual running costs of the exhibition by paying display charges for those products which the CoID has selected for showing. These are based on the size of the exhibit and the period it is on display. For an average monthly display of 26 days the charge will range from £3 5s for the smallest articles, such as watches or single items of tableware to £9 15s a month for the largest pieces of furniture or kitchen equipment. In the main charges are based on three standard scales - cubic content, (furniture, cookers), area (tiled fire surrounds, radiators) and linear measurements (standard lamps, bag and stick vacuum cleaners). There are special rates for table flatware, while textiles, carpets and linoleum will be charged 2s 6d a day for standard samples. As items will be on show for varying periods, the charges are being calculated on a daily basis, though few items will in fact be shown for less than a month.

Methods of selection

'Design Review' is the basis of selection for the main exhibition - no product is eligible for display until it has been accepted for this record.

A selection committee, meeting weekly under the chairmanship of Sir Gordon Russell, Director of the Council, considers products submitted by manufacturers. The Committee consists of a panel of Council members who attend by rota, the Council's industrial officers (each of whom is experienced in a particular group of trades), and two independent consultants, one of whom advises on craft-based industries and the other on light engineering products. Industrial advisers have been nominated to assist the committee on trade matters, and these have the right of veto on technical grounds. The committee examines currently between 100 and 200 products a week. The CoID takes a wide and catholic view of good design and does not narrowly sponsor any one style or idiom. The point of selection is to promote good design as comprising good materials and workmanship, fitness for purpose and pleasure in use. The reputation that many traditional products now enjoy could not have been won if earlier generations had not had the courage to experiment. Therefore, while accepting the claims of many traditional designs that measure up to today's requirements from the point of view of the user and maker, the bias of the CoID is to encourage fresh thought and design in both the old craft-based and the new technical industries.

The Design of the Centre

The main problem in designing a permanent, changing exhibition was to provide maximum flexibility in the lighting and display equipment. Goods of all kinds have to be shown simultaneously and be frequently changed.

The lighting problem has been solved by providing a false ceiling - an aluminium grid of 2ft. squares, filled in with interchangeable Formica panels. Into these panels are fixed a variety of lighting fittings. Thus any type of lighting fitting can be fixed in any part of the display area. The panels are different colours on each side, so that the colour of the ceiling can easily be changed.

In addition to the ceiling grid, the display equipment consists of vertical, moveable partitions, shelves, ladder units and tables. These are unobtrusive in character, and rely for their effect on fine workmanship and material; all the aluminium parts have been anodised an unusual slate grey.

The Architects' Department of the Ministry of Works were responsible for the premises, and, on the recommendation of the Council, they commissioned the Nicholson Brothers to design the interior and exhibition fittings. Ward & Austin prepared a special treatment for the street frontage.

How the Centre is financed:

It is estimated that the annual running cost of the Centre will be £80,000. Provided that a minimum of half this sum is covered by receipts from exhibitors' fees, the Government has agreed, since the Centre will promote British trade, to match the Centre's receipts subject to a maximum which has not yet been determined. In addition, over £25,000 has already been contributed towards the establishment of the Centre by firms whose names will be published when the list is closed.

Acknowledgments

Without widespread co-operation, it would have been impossible to set up this unique permanent exhibition.

The following were generously presented to The Design Centre:

the lighting installation for the display by General Electric Co Ltd.

the Formica panels for the ceiling by Thomas De La Rue & Co Ltd.

the linoleum throughout the Centre by the Linoleum Manufacturers' Association Ltd, and laid by Sementex Ltd.

The contractors for the interior of the Centre were George M. Hammer & Co Ltd,
and for the shop frontage Harris & Sheldon Ltd. The subcontractors were:

Decoration and building work

PCS Ltd.

Metal work

Crawley Metal Productions Ltd.

Electrical work

Berkeley Electrical Engineering
Co. Ltd.

Heating and ventilation

Matthew Hall & Co Ltd.

Signwriting

Edward G. Truss

NOTE TO EDITORS: Copies of catalogues of the various categories of goods shown are available; also general shots of the exhibition, of various displays, of the exterior, and of some of the individual items included in the exhibition.