

Furniture: Simple, Functional

By MARGARET MORAN

America cannot compete successfully in furniture manufacture unless the designer turns our machine technology to advantage in this field—this does Hugh Acton, a local designer and manufacturer, explain how he was prompted to develop his "system" of handsome, precision-made furniture.

Acton was recently the recipient of a top award by the American Iron and Steel Institute for his "imaginative use of steel" in a folding pedestal table; almost any of his designs could qualify for such an honor, for their distinctive feature is the use of metal bases or frames to support prefabricated flat panels of wood, in almost infinite variations of size and function.

An ORIGINAL method of joining the metal parts by uniform screws and pegs, rather than by welding, makes possible such production benefits as compact storage, easy shipping and simple assembly, while retaining functional strength and rigidity in literally clear construction.

The first Acton furniture design was made while he was acquiring his master's degree at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. It was a suspended beam bench which is in the foreground of the picture.

Now, not a great many years later, his catalogue—a work of itself—is replete with tables, executive desks, free-standing and wall-mounted storage units.

Accessories such as smokers, vases, desk equipment are produced under the names of AMV, Inc.

A FAIRLY SMALL number of designs are offered in a multitude of sizes, and the parts are so freely interchangeable that a dizzying number of adaptations can be ordered.

The term "beautiful" comes readily to mind when looking at his furniture, but Acton doesn't talk about beauty as such.

The simplest form answering the various requirements of function is, to him, bound to be aesthetically satisfying. Each part must be predicted by the structure, and arbitrary detail is out.

A unit of furniture is not an object or possession, but a functional part of the environment, serving unobtrusively and reflecting the user rather than the maker.

THIS APPROACH is particularly justified in institutional furnishings, and a large number of Acton designs are a new specific problem posed by architects. A wall-mounted wardrobe is ideally suited to a business office; Moor-

less, it offers both easy access and quiet good looks.

In spite of being directed to industry, however, many items have domestic application as well.

The folding table created for the cafeteria of Yamasaki's Michigan State Medical Building is well suited to use in a private home, perhaps in multiples which connect for dining, serve separately for games, and fold for storage.

Of course, the free-standing storage "wall," which won an A.I.D. award in 1957, would be equally attractive in the home.

Examples of his work are soon to be displayed in a new department at Englander's store here; designs in present use can be viewed in the Birmingham-Bloomfield Bank, the Detroit Public Library and several Detroit office buildings.

HEADQUARTERED on Hamilton Street, Hugh Acton Design Associates has showrooms and sales

Gary A. Wodtich of Detroit has been appointed to the new post of director of alumni education at Oakland University, according to Dr. Lowell Eklund, director of the division of continuing education.

Wodtich will administer a novel program of alumni education which the university is inaugurating with its first graduating class this spring. On February 9 the Kellogg Foundation awarded a three-year grant of \$60,000 to the University for a pilot project in building lifelong educational programs for its graduates.

A graduate of the University of Detroit, Wodtich also received his master's degree from that institution. Before joining the university staff, he was manager of international operations and a three-year conference director of the American Society of Tool and Manufacturing Engineers in Detroit.

Decisions and bashfulness disappear when Oliver Walling (played by Ray Marks) puts on what was originally simply a masquerade costume—a dog suit. Surprised by such a sudden outburst of aggressiveness and forthrightness is his wife, Martha, who is played by Mrs. Richard Caskey. "The Man in the Dog Suit" is being presented by the Frank-

lin Village Players Friday and Saturday and April 5 and 6 in the Farmington Players Barn on 12 Mile Road west of Orchard Lake Road. The "dog suit" is the same as the one used in the original Broadway production. Performances begin at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the door.

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FROM THE BOOKCASE:
Novel Pictures Mechanical Horror

FAIL-SAFE, by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler Jr.; McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc.; 1952. New York: 284 pp. \$4.95.

Reviewed by MARY COLLEEN LABBE, English Teacher, Seabolt High School

The co-authors of the thrilling story "Fail-Safe" provide little comfort for the millions of Americans who are concerned about world extinction.

This book on nuclear destruction is not just exciting fiction, but a dramatic appeal to the world leaders to be aware of the consequences when humans allow machines to make judgments. The message of the book concerns itself with war and the very motives that drive men to acts that eventually lead toward complete destruction.

A communications system breaks down; and a group of American planes, carrying atomic bombs, proceeds on course to destroy Moscow. It is obviously a mechanical error, but in a very short time the world can be destroyed. The Pentagon is alerted by machines, and they watch in horror the entire movement on a special radar screen.

The play has begun; the spectators are helpless; the strings to the curtain are out of human order; and the real adversaries—the machines—are in control!

THIS SYSTEM breaks down and the world is at the mercy of the machine's failure. The bombers move toward Russia; they are spotted by Russian radar, and nuclear war is inevitable.

Khrushchev is reached by phone and the most moving and dramatic part of the story unfolds in a final conversation between Khrushchev and Kennedy. The world is about to be destroyed, but two humans reach an understanding, breaking all barriers of completely different

social systems, and the world is saved from total destruction.

THIS BOOK indeed has a pungent situation is so credible and horrible that readers will find it difficult not to finish the book at the first reading. The co-authors, Burdick and Wheeler, are to be congratulated for depicting modern man's real adversary—The Machine.

3 from Area Read Papers to Academy

Among those presenting a total of 284 professional papers at the 67th annual meeting of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters in Kalamazoo last week were at least three persons from this area.

They were Warren P. Stoutamire of Cranbrook Institute of Science, who read a paper on botany; and John Sterling Meyer of 375 Lake Park, Birmingham, and J. Frederic Johnson of 860 Watkins, Birmingham, both members of the faculty of the Wayne State University College of Medicine.



He Leads a Dog's Life

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Baritone Warfield Gives Concert Tuesday

Acclaimed as one of today's great vocal artists, William Warfield, the bass-baritone, will sing for the Community Concerts Association at 8:15 p.m. Tuesday in the Oak Park High School Auditorium.

Since his New York Town Hall concert in March, 1950, Warfield has been in great demand as a recital artist or orchestral soloist from coast to coast in North America, and in the leading cities of Europe, Southeast Asia and Africa.

WARFIELD MADE his mark on the stage before he became famous on the concert platform. His greatest role was in George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess."

On radio and television, he has been featured on many popular shows, and in the movies he is remembered for "Show Boat" singing and study at the Eastman School of Music, where he earned his B.A. degree.

Marshall Fredericks Is Made Knight By King of Denmark

The Danish Consulate at Detroit has announced Birmingham sculptor Marshall Fredericks has been made a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog by His Majesty King Frederik the Ninth of Denmark.

The honor is presented to Fredericks in recognition of his efforts in working for Danish prestige and goodwill in this country. His most recent contribution was the gift of a beautiful fountain to the Danish Old Peoples Home at Rochester in honor of Danish immigration to this area.

Fredericks' grandfather immigrated from Denmark to America in the late 1800's and was a ship builder in Rock Island, Illinois.

COUPLE VISITS FORMOSA, HONG KONG

Dramaticus Presents Play This Weekend

What's your alibi for Friday and Saturday night? Here's one for you!

You were attending Groves High School Dramaticus' presentation of "Kind Lady," a psychological mystery story of a sheltered "old maid" whose peaceful existence turns to terror when her household is infiltrated by Henry Abbott and his friends.

The cast includes Kathy Longeway, Janie Upward, Paul Grandner, Theo Warren, Dick Orton, Mary Gidley, Jim Thomas, also Kathy Shank, Hugh Grambo, Judy Rosello, Willie Wong, Janie Meinhardt and Tim Gordon.

The cast is being directed by Katy Bigge with Gail Schuba as assistant student director.

THE MAXIMUM of simplicity combined with functionality is the desired end of furniture design for designer and manufacturer Hugh Acton. He believes that a piece of furniture should not be an "object" or a "possession," but rather an unobtrusive, functional part of the environment.

THE STREET just under our hotel window was enough for any artist to concentrate on for weeks. It was constantly changing, and between the horns of the pink taxis the bells of the pedicabs and the shouts of the hucksters, you needn't bother to set an alarm. Activity begins at 7 a.m. and continues until about 10 p.m.

Hiring a pedicab (bicycle rickshaw) for sight-seeing was a new experience to us and there was a picture after every turn so we used our cameras constantly. (The travel service consists of having

the desk clerk translate your places to visit into Chinese and telling the driver. From then on you are in for a real ride.)

We were told that many of the Chinese banquet styled luncheon aboard the floating restaurant "Tai Pak."

of Hong Kong caused me to expose twice the time film originally planned for Hong Kong.

We were all treated to a Chinese banquet styled luncheon aboard the floating restaurant "Tai Pak."

Moving into the restaurant area at Aberdeen by water is a must for anyone who visits Hong Kong. The number of people and boats in this small area is unbelievable.

We were told that many of the people who live aboard the junks and sampans are born, live all their lives and die here without stepping on shore.

SO MUCH activity has given us only limited time shopping, but we have still managed to get some of that in too, as well as a walking trip through Hong Kong proper and a trip to the top of Victoria peak in a tram car.

Buffet, Chagall Exhibition Set At Jacobson's

Paintings by one of the world's most popular and prolific young artists will be presented for the first time at any Michigan art gallery April 1 at Fine Arts in Jacobson's.

Two paintings by the increasingly popular 35-year-old French artist, Bernard Buffet, will go on display at Jacobson's, 325 N. Woodward, Birmingham, April 15 through 22. They will be exhibited first at the Grosvenor Pointe gallery, April 1 through 12.

DISPLAYED with them will be color lithographs by Buffet and Chagall, many of them being shown for the first time in mid-America. In the selection of 25 color lithographs by Chagall are many from a portfolio termed "what may well rank as his masterpiece in this medium."

Chagall executed the portfolio in 1961, for "Daphnis et Chloe." An artist who creates with a light, almost whimsical touch, Chagall has been world-famous since the first large-scale exhibition of his work in 1933.

WIN A NEW RCA COLOR TV

OUR NEW BLOOMFIELD-BIRMINGHAM OFFICE

W. MAPLE AT LAHSER

APRIL 4, THURSDAY
APRIL 5, FRIDAY
APRIL 6, SATURDAY

9:30 A.M. - 9:00 P.M.

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