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The RISD Museum of Art Presents
Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture
Friday, April 17, through Sunday, July 19, 2009

Exclusive Northeastern U.S. Venue for Retrospective of Breuer's Work

PROVIDENCE, RI— As a designer and architect, Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) can be regarded as one of the most influential and important designers of the 20th century. As a young student at the Bauhaus Weimar, Breuer, who was Hungarian by birth, was noticed for various furniture designs inspired by the Dutch De Stijl group. In 1925, at the age of only 23, he “invented” tubular steel furniture, a revolutionary development considered to be his core contribution to the history of design. The form now holds a place among the great classics of modernism. Opening on **April 17, 2009** *Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture* is the first exhibition to treat all facets of Marcel Breuer's work with equal weight, from the highly innovative furniture he produced as both a student and teacher at the famed Bauhaus, to the elegant but modestly scaled houses he created after moving to the United States, to the large-scale governmental and institutional buildings he eventually designed for major cities around the world. Developed by the Vitra Design Museum in Germany, the exhibition traces several themes that connect the apparently diverse elements of this prolific and influential designer's portfolio. The exhibition has been touring Europe since 2002 and makes its second North American and exclusive Northeastern stop at the The RISD Museum of Art from Friday, April 17, through Sunday, July 19, 2009.

Twelve models—produced exclusively for this exhibition—will highlight Breuer's extensive architectural work from single-family houses to major religious, cultural, and civic institutions. In addition, drawings, floor plans, photographs, video projections, and interactive computer terminals will shed light on Breuer's long and varied architectural career.

Breuer's furniture has become symbolic of modern design. His "Cesca" and "Wassily" chairs, for instance, with their characteristic tubular steel armatures, have become staples of contemporary living and working environments all over the world. By virtue of his innovative furniture alone, Breuer could be ranked among the most influential designers of the modernist period. This retrospective of Breuer's prolific and varied career offers a balanced exploration of his furniture, interiors, and buildings, revealing that he was a powerful force in the architectural theory and practice of his era.

The exhibition opens with a section entitled **Materials**, which chronicles Breuer's use of various materials—most notably tubular steel—in his furniture design. Featuring more than 50 original pieces, as well as drawings and photographs of his designs, this section reveals his explorations in solid wood, steel, aluminum, and even plywood. Breuer's architectural works are presented in three sections: **Houses, Spaces, and Volumes**.

The **Houses** component includes examples of the often modest yet consistently innovative single-family houses that brought him critical acclaim; **Spaces** presents Breuer's four churches as examples of his masterful manipulation of structure and light; and **Volumes** offers a corollary analysis of his compositional skill. Twelve large-scale models of his buildings, along with drawings, floor plans, photographs, video projections, and digital media, help to illustrate the scope of Breuer's architectural legacy.

The exhibition closes with a section entitled **Motifs**, which presents central elements and themes in Breuer's designs. Throughout his career, Breuer experimented with and reinterpreted motifs such as protrusion, horizontal bands, and reclining rectangles in his furniture and architectural designs.

PUBLICATION

Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture is complemented by a 448-page catalogue featuring illustrations of Breuer's architecture and furniture and essays from leading architects and scholars who worked with or have been inspired by his work. The book will be available through risd/works in the Chace Center, 20 N. Main Street as well as on its website: risdworks.com.

PROGRAMMING

Opening Celebration: Wednesday, April 15, 2009

5:30 pm: Radeke Society Preview Reception

6 pm: Members' Opening Celebration and Exhibition Preview

This members-only celebration will include an exclusive first look at the exhibition, *Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture*. Return to 1920s Europe for a Bauhaus-inspired party featuring period music, refreshments, and a cash bar.

Thursday, April 16, 6 pm

Gallery Talk: Breuer's Design + Architecture

Chace Center Galleries

RISD Museum Assistant Director James Brayton Hall (MLA 1994) discusses the furniture and architectural designs of Marcel Breuer and the materials he used.

Wednesday, April 30, 6:30 pm

Lecture: Won + Lost?: Modern Architecture USA: Survival in the Sub-urbis

In conjunction with the exhibition *Marcel Breuer*, architect Diane Lewis lectures on the competition-winning "Riverview Music Quadrangle," a project to save Paul Rudolph's first civic building. Since 1982, Lewis served both as principal at her own firm and as a professor of architecture at the Cooper Union School of Architecture. Her minimalist approach emphasizes refined, inventive use of structural elements and space, integrating the character of preexisting conditions.

Wednesday, May 13, 6:30 pm

Lecture: Homasote Manifestos:

Documenting + Preserving Modernist Architecture on the Outer Cape

Beginning in the late 1930s, a group of visionary architects congregated on the isolated backshore of Wellfleet and Truro. The modest, experimental homes they built only hinted at their other accomplishments as designers of many of the iconic works of modern architecture.

In conjunction with the exhibition *Marcel Breuer*, this lecture by Peter McMahon explores the modernist legacy of the Outer Cape, along with efforts to document and preserve it.

McMahon is principal of PM Design and focuses on sustainable modern architecture and restoration of mid 20th-century buildings.

Saturday, May 16 9 am-5pm

Sneak Peek Walking Tour: Cape Cod Modern Architecture

Visit the Cape Cod National Seashore to view the Modernist cottages. A chartered bus provides transportation for an exclusive tour by Peter McMahon (see May 13). See these examples of modernist architecture and learn about the preservation of these "gems in the rough" at-risk for demolition. Members: \$40; non-members: \$60; Space is limited. To reserve your seat contact Fran Gorman at 401-454-6530 or fgorman@risd.edu by April 29.

Saturday, April 25, 2009, 11 am-4 pm
FREE-FOR-ALL SATURDAY

Held the last Saturday of the month, 11 am-4 pm. Admission and all activities are free! These programs offer fun for the entire family: a variety of hands-on workshops, performances, videos, and special gallery quests throughout the day. Refreshments, too. Stay half an hour or the whole afternoon. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For information, please call 401 454-6674 or visit www.risdmuseum.org.

Modular Cities

Using blocks of different shapes and sizes, kids will create Modular Cities after viewing the exhibition. Performing that afternoon will be Jump Inc.

Ongoing throughout the exhibition

Docent-led 30-minute guided tours for the public. Every Friday at 12:15 pm, starting from the Chace Center lobby. Free with museum admission. For information about this tour, or to schedule a group tour, please call 401 454-6534.

ORGANIZATION

The **Vitra Design Museum** ranks among the most prominent design museums worldwide. Housed in a building created by Californian architect Frank Gehry, Vitra Design Museum first opened its doors to the public in 1989. The many faceted program of the museum focuses upon the research and presentation of historical and contemporary developments in industrial furniture design and related fields of study. Temporary exhibitions explore design topics within the various contexts of architecture, the fine arts, society and non-western cultures. The design and architecture exhibitions of Vitra Design Museum are shown internationally in renowned partner museums. The Museum Collection of furniture is certainly one of the most important of its kind. Vitra Design Museum also holds workshops for school children and students. Furthermore, the Museum publishes exhibition catalogues and produces miniature models of classic furniture designs and authentic re-editions of historical designs. Further information on www.design-museum.de.

The **RISD Museum of Art**, a world-class museum in Providence, RI, was founded as part of Rhode Island School of Design in 1877. Its permanent collection of more than 84,000 objects includes paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, costume, furniture, and other works of art from every part of the world, including objects from Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and art of all periods from Asia, Europe, and the Americas, up to the latest in contemporary art. In addition, the Museum offers a wide array of educational and public programs to more than 100,000 visitors annually.

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