



Cooper Hewitt

Smithsonian Design Museum

Don Wallance collection, 1936-1990

2011

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Libraries
Title:	Don Wallance collection
Identifier:	SIL-CH.1991-81-1
Date:	1936-1990
Creator:	Wallance, Don, 1909-1990
Extent:	6 Cubic feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	<p>This collection documents Wallance's career from his enrollment in the Design Laboratory School in 1936 to his death in 1990. Included are his designs for tableware, furniture, and household accessories, as well as material on his research and writings. This collection consists of sketches, drawings, photographs, correspondence, and reference materials, in addition to publicity and promotional materials. Extensive documentation exists on Wallance's pioneering designs for stainless steel flatware for H. E. Lauffer Company and his experimental furniture for the U.S. Army, Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center, and the Hard Manufacturing Company. Thorough documentation of his research for his landmark book, "Shaping America's Products," is included. The collection also contains a substantial amount of information on the Design Laboratory School, the first industrial design school in the United States to be patterned after the Bauhaus.</p>

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

These materials were donated to Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, in 1991 by David M. and Gregory J. Wallance, sons of the designer.

Other Finding Aids

71-page Research Guide.

Restrictions

Unrestricted research use onsite by appointment. Permission of staff required to photograph materials.

Biographical Note

Metalworker, furniture and industrial designer. Born New York City, September 26, 1909. Wallance graduated New York University in 1930 with a B.A. in English Literature. He traveled to northern Europe where he was exposed to the International Style in architecture and design. Upon returning to the United States, he went to work in his father's furniture store and saw the need for more inventive designs in retail

furnishings. He attended Design Laboratory School in New York City from its inception in 1936 until it closed its doors in 1940.

From 1941-2, Wallance served as the state of Louisiana's technical and design director for the National Youth Administration, established in 1940 by President Roosevelt to help build a young, technically capable work force. During World War II, Wallance designed mass-produced furniture for servicemen's families living abroad for the Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington. He began designing tableware, cutlery, and accessories for H.E. Lauffer in 1951.

Among his most recognizable designs for Lauffer were Design One, a highly sculptural, brushed stainless steel flatware created in 1953, and Design Ten, a colored plastic flatware created in 1978-79. Both designs are now produced by Towle Manufacturing Company. In addition, Wallance designed auditorium seating in steel and upholstered polyurethane foam for Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center in 1964 and hospital furniture in steel and plastics for Hard Manufacturing Company in 1965. Wallance is best known for his book, "Shaping America's Products", 1956, which remains a seminal study of the relationship of craftsmanship to industry.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into eight record groups: 1) Industrial Design Projects; 2) "Shaping America's Products"; 3) Other Activities; 4) General Correspondence; 5) Business Records; 6) Biographical Material; 7) Reference Material; and 8) Photographs and Slides. Within each record group, materials are arranged by client, or in lieu of a client, by project name.

Letter size, legal size, and oversized materials, photographs, slides, film, and video are all boxed separately. Where possible, subjects have been cross referenced between the various sizes and types of material.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Applied Arts Department. Approximately 100 items, consisting of models, prototypes, and production pieces of flatware, cutlery, and other items.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Cookware
- Design, Industrial -- United States
- Flatware -- United States
- Furniture design -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Shaping America's Products
- Stainless steel tableware

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Blueprints
- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Invoices

Patents
Photographs
Press releases
Sketches
Speeches

Names:

Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
Design Laboratory School (New York, N.Y.)
H.E. Lauffer Co.
Hard Manufacturing Company
Lincoln Center Theater (New York, N.Y.)
National Youth Administration
Towle Mfg. Company
United States. Army -- Barracks and quarters
Wallance, Don, 1909-1990

Occupations:

Furniture designers -- United States
Industrial designers -- United States