



Cooper Hewitt

Smithsonian Design Museum

Design Research, Inc. collection, 1953-1979

2011

Smithsonian Libraries
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Libraries
Title:	Design Research, Inc. collection
Identifier:	SIL-CH.1997-123-2
Date:	1953-1979
Creator:	Design Research, Inc.
Extent:	6.5 Cubic feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	<p>This collection consists of correspondence, scrapbooks, catalogs, brochures, original drawings, photographs, financial records, resumes, legal documents, magazine articles, business records, press releases, artwork, and samples of boxes, bags, and buttons. Files documenting the company's history include a statement of the company's philosophy and records pertaining to the establishment of new stores in various cities. Project files document the furniture, fabrics, rugs, and accessories imported and design by Design Research, Inc. Bound reprints of articles that appeared in Interiors and International Design magazines are included. Clippings and other records documenting the design and construction of D/R stores are provided in the files pertaining to Benjamin Thompson & Associates, Inc. Also found in these files is a printed and bound presentation copy of Thompson's address, "The Craft of Design and the Art of Building", along with other articles by and about Thompson. Additional information pertaining to D/R's association with Marimekko can be found in the Cooper- Hewitt Design Archive's Marimekko Collection.</p>

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The materials in this collection were donated to Cooper-Hewitt in 1995 by Benjamin and Jane Thompson.

Other Finding Aids

No finding aid.

Restrictions

Unprocessed; access is limited. Permission of Library Director required for use.

Biographical Note

Retail establishment and product design. Design Research, Inc. (D/R), founded in 1953 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by architect Benjamin Thompson, specialized in the latest post-war products for the modern

home. The displays in the stores were considered unique in that they were designed at domestic scale and the products were shown in realistic, homelike arrangements.

Products were sought and selected based on the anticipated preferences of customers, not on traditional retail buying patterns. At the time, the availability of "good design" was limited to wholesale firms such as Herman Miller and Knoll. Thompson was the first to introduce the work of many European and Asian designers to the American retail market, including the work of the design firm of Marimekko for which D/R was the exclusive U.S. representative. The company also created many of its own products including chairs manufactured by Thonet. D/R later opened stores in New York City, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. Thompson's own architectural firm, Benjamin Thompson & Associates, Inc., designed all of the D/R stores. For the San Francisco store, Thompson renovated the former Ghirardelli Chocolate factory. Even after the stores officially closed in 1978, D/R remained a model for many merchants.

Arrangement

Unprocessed. Consists of six record groups: 1) Company history; 2) Office records; 3) Project files; 4) Clippings and Scrapbooks; 5) Benjamin Thompson & Associates, Inc. for D/R; and 6) Photographs.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Display of merchandise -- United States
- Furniture design -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Furniture store
- House furnishings -- United States
- Retail trade -- United States
- Stores, Retail -- Design
- Stores, Retail -- United States

Types of Materials:

- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Financial records
- Legal correspondence
- Photographs
- Press releases
- Resumes
- Scrapbooks
- Speeches
- Writings

Names:

- Benjamin Thompson and Associates
- Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
- Design Research, Inc.
- Marimekko Oy
- Thompson, Benjamin, 1918-2002