in a refugee centre [Ommer continues]. He is responsible for carpet production and she paints pictures and postcards. 'We don't want to be Indian or Chinese: we are Tibetan.'" I cannot help but feel totally annoyed and powerless as an instructor. The information is more aggravating than useful and means more to the writer/photographer than anybody else. Why has he chosen this to highlight his meeting? What is the prognosis for this family? Are teenagers expected to understand? Is this family now squarely placed in its "box of identification"? What have we learned? We have learned we need to know more and go elsewhere for answers, yet if we do this for nearly 1300 images, the students will have a reading list of over 3000 books. In comparing it with the *Material World* text, the bottom line is that *1000 Families: The Family Album of Planet Earth* is just that — a family album of pretty pictures to flip through. Out of context, out of place, out of time, the book fails to stimulate interest and will prove unusable for educators but stands as a fabulous record for Ommer himself to cherish and expand upon when giving the inevitably more entertaining public lecture.

It is easy to understand why the "course pack" came into existence. Professors find articles of pertinence, images to copy, from a variety of sources that are bunched together under copyright and distributed at the beginning of term. Material historians are still troubled by not having a specific and inexpensive single text, let alone have it with Canadian content. Even *Design in Canada* is disappointing in this area — what are Canadian designs? A talk with one of the authors at a book signing the other week revealed that there isn't much in that text that helps us out, despite the title.

Taschen is helping us in that they are publishing in multiple languages in one book — both French and English predominate. The *1000 Objects* text also makes reference to Canada and objects available here — for example, the Insectarium in Montreal sells those lollipops with crickets in them, that grace the section heading "food" (11). If you put *1000 Objects* together with *1000 Families* you have a controversial yet not as enlightening *Material World*. For those students who submit papers with an edge to them, *1000 Objects* could act as a springboard to interesting insights. For parents of innocent children, and we do sometimes get the latter at McGill, *1000 Objects* is anathema in print. And so, I still await that text that is suitable and more encompassing for my material culture class.

Rachel Gotlieb and Cora Golden, *Design in Canada: Fifty Years from Teakettles to Task Chairs*

RHONA RICHMAN KENNEALLY

Gotlieb, Rachel and Cora Golden. *Design in Canada: Fifty Years from Teakettles to Task Chairs*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2001. 277 pp., illus. (b&w, colour), cloth, $74, ISBN 0-676-97138-5.

In 1976, Bill Lishman, a designer practicing in Blackstock, Ontario, designed a rocking chair in which his wife could knit comfortably. Little did he know that it would later be used as a prize on the American game show, *The Price is Right*. In a similar claim to fame, a Toronto-made Clairtone Project G stereo, "the epitome of 'bachelor pad' cool," appeared in such films as *The Graduate* and was rumoured to have been purchased by Hugh Hefner for the Playboy mansion. Such are the nuggets of information that may be found in *Design in Canada: Fifty Years from Teakettles to Task Chairs*, a new and welcome publication in this under-represented field of Canadian culture. Co-written by Rachel Gotlieb, curator of Toronto's Design Exchange (a pre-eminent centre for design research and promotion), and Cora Golden, a committed advocate of Canadian design in her own right, this work is an ambitious overview of three-dimensional product design, especially for the home, from the postwar era to the present. Building on such works as Adele Freedman's *Sight Lines: Looking at Architecture and Design in Canada* of 1990 and Virginia Wright's 1997 *Modern Furniture in Canada: 1920–1970*, *Design in Canada* successfully contributes to Canadian design historiography, in this case staking out a domain in which selected furniture, lighting, textiles, consumer electronics, ceramics, glass, small appliances and metal arts justifiably receive the attention they deserve, both inside and outside

the Canadian context. If for no other reason than this (and there are other reasons), this book more than justifies its existence.

Design in Canada is part coffee table book, part reference work, and both objectives are quite satisfactorily met. Five essays introduce key themes in the book, and, more or less chronologically, highlight contemporary issues and design stimuli. Incentives for innovative design are considered, through such institutions as the National Industrial Design Committee (NIDC), created in 1947 as the Industrial Design Information Division and later undergoing another name change, to Design Canada. The rise in the use of such materials as plastics, aluminum, and moulded plywood is charted, and then balanced with an essay that looks at the ongoing influence of traditional craftwork, and craftmakers who also managed to integrate with Canadian industry to produce high-quality products. In two additional essays, the Pop period and Postmodernism receive attention; moreover, a look at "the new era of pluralism" beginning in the 1980s, targets designs that reflect tendencies toward bricolage and cross-cultural influences, recognizable as well in international designs of the period.

But it is the modernist ethos, outlined by Gotlieb and Golden in the first essay of the book, that is isolated as the dominant design ideology in Canada after the Second World War. Modernism's influence on Canadian designers is perceived as continuing through to the 1960s, when it coexisted alongside design trends derived during the Pop period, and later as providing inspiration for 1990s designers such as Karim Rashid and Helen Kerr. Early valorization of modernism had been undertaken by the NIDC, which sponsored a variety of projects for that purpose, ranging from design competitions and exhibitions held across the country to conferences, like the one held in 1954 called "How Can We Sell More Modern Furniture?"

Perhaps not surprisingly, modernism can be seen as a theme underscoring many aspects of the book as well. Gotlieb and Golden, themselves, pay homage to the "Zeitgeist called modernism" that "dominated the cultural agenda" in the "postwar world," and argue that the "'form follows function' dictum of modernism is regarded as the defining aesthetic of the twentieth century." Accordingly, they declare a main criterion for the inclusion of artifacts in this book to be "excellence in design," and selection to be accorded on the basis of "visual appeal," as well as "functionality, imaginative use of material and design innovation" — all of these priorities residing comfortably within the modernist paradigm.

Design in Canada is a prioritization of designers' and design promoters' intentions and strategies. Notwithstanding the authors' articulated interest, not only in a given design's suitability in response to its creator's intentions, but to "its reception in the marketplace," the book primarily "recognizes and honours the work of design pioneers of the second half of the twentieth century" and analyses the artifacts contained in the book as a function of how they reflect and satisfied the goals of the makers. Significantly, this rationale operates despite a shift that has taken place in the fields of material and visual culture and communication studies. In research undertaken over the last decade or so, many critics have turned their attention from producers to users, that is, to an investigation of the reception and appropriation of design by those who chose — or did not choose — to incorporate these products into their lives.

The repercussions of Gotlieb and Golden's point of view can be illustrated by focusing on one significant issue, namely the relatively low priority given by national design institutions referred to in this book to the implications of the degree to which Canadians voluntarily elected to embrace these manifestations of modern. Initial consumer response to modernism, particularly outside urban areas, was reluctant, especially at first. For example, undated statistics publicized at the aforementioned NIDC conference revealed that only eight percent of buyers of dining room furniture purchased suites in the modern style, as opposed to eighty-two percent of buyers who preferred more traditional design. Rather than accommodating consumer demands, concerted efforts were made to impose modernist "taste" in the marketplace. In one such gesture, the NIDC created a portfolio of material aimed specifically at schoolchildren, entitled *Designs for Canadian Living*, to assert the merits of modernism for an impressionable audience. Gotlieb and Golden are clearly aware of the hesitation apparently felt by many Canadians in this regard: they note in one instance that the interior of the Three Small Rooms Restaurant in the Windsor Arms Hotel, which opened in 1964, "dragged Toronto society into the modern world." But aside from commenting on the occasionally extreme methods of advocates — "viewers could be forgiven if they found the tone of the literature [of the NIDC] somewhat hectoring" — the elitism inherent in such a hegemonic stance seems not to require direct address. In light of the work of such scholars as Valerie Korinek, who notes the discontent of many readers of *Chatelaine* magazine during the same time frame over what they perceived as unrealistic lifestyle expectations

imposed in its advice columns, important components of design history from the users' perspective seem to have been sidelined by the decision to focus on production.

Instead, Gotlieb and Golden rely on the tried-and-true, greatest-hits method of presenting Canadian design, which defines a worthy canon of artifacts in accordance with the parameters outlined above. To this end, most of the book consists of sections on Canadian artifacts divided according to material or typology, each section containing a brief introduction. Into each section are placed entries on individual objects, with one or more paragraphs describing the influences or strategies of the designers, and adding interesting production information. At least one image accompanies each entry, most of them in colour, making this a useful visual archive. It is interesting that here, too, the photographs often emulate the modernist impulse of acontextuality, since many objects are presented as isolated entities against a solid coloured background. It is when this routine is broken, for example, in an image depicting the female staff trimming mugs at the Hycroft China factory in Medicine Hat, Alberta, in the 1940s, that one most laments the missed opportunity to include more revealing historical visual documents such as advertisements and old photographs, as a means to gain further insight into the significance of these objects as reflecting the culture of their time. Similarly frustrating, in cases when contextual images are included, is the occasional irreverent gesture of superimposing the text right over the picture, as is the case for Peter Cotton's dining chairs; Christen Sorensen's 1+1 series modular seating; Gordon Duern's 701 stereo; and Duern and Keith McQuarrie's Apollo 861 and Circa 711 stereos.

And yet, Gotlieb and Golden do Canadian design an immense service with this book. Establishing ground for further work in the field are documentation of knowledge gleaned from numerous interviews with designers, an appendix of biographies and corporate histories of pre-eminent practitioners, and a bibliography that includes periodicals, archives, and both published and unpublished primary and secondary sources. In addition, a list of artifacts included in the book, which are part of the collection of the Design Exchange in Toronto, is a welcome point of entry for the researcher who wishes to study these artifacts in more detail. *Design in Canada*, then, deserves to be considered as a major contribution, highlighting an impressive national design heritage, setting precedents in its breadth of attention both regional and typological, and challenging academics to devote subsequent critical attention to this fascinating and pivotal field.

Christine A. Finn, *Artifacts: An Archaeologist's Year in Silicon Valley*

David McGee

For some time now, anthropologists have been turning their gaze away from "primitive others" to focus on various aspects of Western civilization, including science and technology. To have an archaeologist do the same is an intriguing proposition. After all, archaeologists deal pre-eminently with the interpretation of things while our own lifetimes have seen the extraordinary proliferation of a brand new and powerful kind of thing known as the computer. Moreover, while some archaeologists deal with relations between artifacts and their local context, others follow the diffusion of artifacts over time and space in order to track major change. Thus the idea of an archaeologist in California's Silicon Valley, the *Ur*-source of modern computers, seems full of promise.

One could imagine, for example, that Silicon Valley might be used as a sort of test bed for archaeological theory. That is to say, where archaeologists normally try to reconstruct the use and meaning of artifacts in the absence of a living culture, the case of computers in Silicon Valley could offer a chance to test theoretical approaches against a live context. Alternately, one could use archaeological theory to provide insight into the nature of the change brought about in modern civilization