



St Louis
Modern

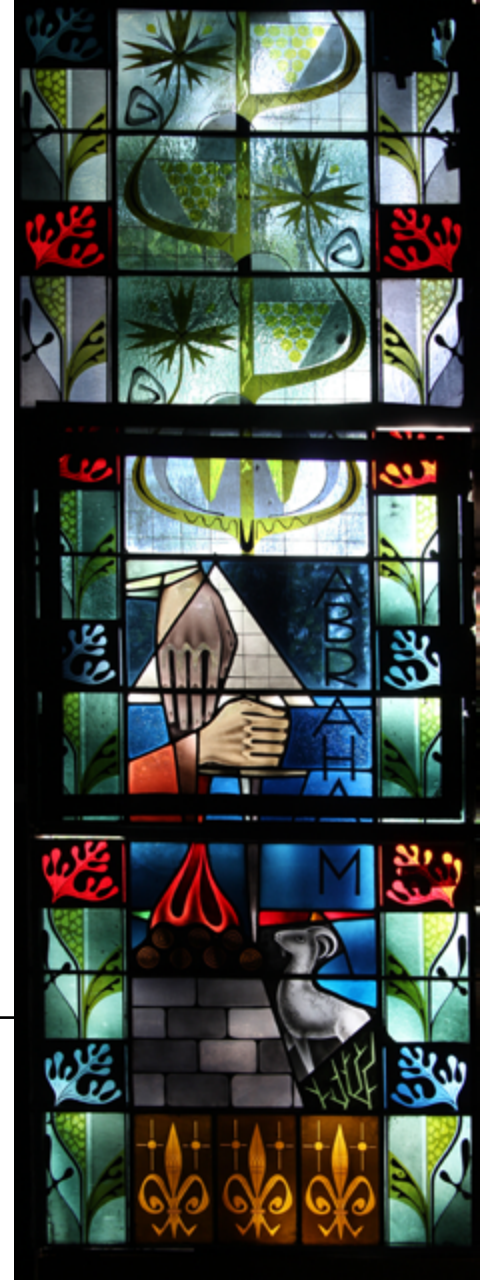
**The Era of Innovative Design
At Saint Louis Art Museum**

By Kate Eagen Johnson

St Louis, MO. — “The story of Modernism in America is not simply about MoMA, Cranbrook and Los Angeles,” observed David Conradsen when describing the thematic thrust of “St Louis Modern,” an exhibition on view at the Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM) through January 31. Conradsen, the Grace L. Brumbaugh and Richard E. Brumbaugh associate curator in charge of decorative arts and design, explained how he and exhibition co-curator Genevieve Cortinovic, research assistant at SLAM, wanted to spotlight the “architects, designers and makers as well as patrons and ‘movers and shakers’ who helped to nurture Modern design in the region.” They discuss the adoption of Modernism in St Louis and environs as seen in architecture, interior design, furnishings and related objects.

Stained glass window panel illustrating “Abraham and Isaac,” Francis Deck (1918–2001) for Emil Frei & Associates; circa 1950. Lead, glass and pigment, 102 by 38 by $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Emil Frei & Associates.

Page Above: Table lamp designed by Harris Armstrong (1899–1973), circa 1935. Chromed-plated steel and glass; 17 by 15 inches. Saint Louis Art Museum.





The joint exhibition and catalog mark the 50th anniversary of the completion of Eero Saarinen's "Gateway to the West" Arch in 1965. The stainless-steel-clad, inverted catenary curved structure rises 630 feet above the Mississippi riverfront and is recognized internationally as the symbol of St Louis. While the co-curators address some antecedents, they ostensibly start the story of Modernism in St Louis in 1935. In that year, planning for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the park where the Arch would eventually be constructed, began. Conradsen and Cortinovis focus their study on the period 1935 to 1965.

"Residence for Morton D. May, Ladue, Missouri" designed by Samuel A. Marx, 1940. Chicago History Museum. —Hedrich-Blessing photo

Bridge table and chairs designed by Charles Eames (1907–1978), made by John A. Rausch (1904–1978), 1936–38. Cherry, cherry veneer and other materials; table, 30 by 36¼ by 36¼ inches and armchair, 32³/₈ by 23¼ by 22½ inches. Saint Louis Art Museum, courtesy Eames Office, LLC. Eames designed furniture for the John Philip Meyer IV House, his last commission in St Louis before leaving town in 1938.



Topics addressed in the exhibition, and more fully in the catalog, include the relationship between St Louis's civic development during the Mid-Twentieth Century and Modernist architecture and design; the promotion of Modernist design and merchandise by local department stores, including Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney and Famous-Barr, which Cortinovis termed "cultural centers at the time;" and the ways St Louisans incorporated Modernist design and products into their homes, offices and houses of worship.

Also highlighted is the role the Saint Louis Art Museum played as both a trumpeter and an adopter of the style by hosting traveling art and design exhibitions, acquiring Modernist art objects for the collection and by incorporating Modernist decor into its own facilities' renovations during the Midcentury era.



Maquette for sculpture screen at Lambert-St Louis Airport Terminal by Harry Bertoia (1915–1978), 1954–55. Metal and paint on metal, 8 by 48 by 2¼ inches. Saint Louis Art Museum. For approximately a decade during the 1950s and 1960s, the full-scale, 48-foot-long version of this sculpture separated the Kitty Hawk Restaurant from Lambert's main terminal lobby.

Corvette, designed by Harley Earl (1893–1969) for Chevrolet of General Motors, Detroit, 1954. Plastic, fiberglass, chrome, rubber, leather, glass, canvas and assorted metals; 51 by 167 by 72 inches. Collection Stephen F. Brauer. Introduced as a concept car in 1953, the Corvette was manufactured in St Louis from 1954 to 1981.



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