

Mélange in Milan

Notes on the Triennale, by Alfred Auerbach*

The Triennale in Milan this year had high points of interest, though it is generally agreed that it is not as provocative nor as significant as the one staged in 1951. Some 14 foreign lands participated but, as usual when one country invites others to an industrial design show, the host dominated. The space here permits only a telegraphic resumé:

Installation and presentation had dash and imagination. The Italian bravura flair (a postwar phenomenon in archi-

ture and design) was in full evidence. . . . The Scandinavian countries had the most finished, the most precise installation. All else seemed a bit raw and unpolished, by comparison. Yet theirs was an oft-told story, little new and mostly recapitulation. . . . The Italians repeated themselves, too. Much spontaneity and ingenuity—but somehow in a groove. A new preoccupation with mass production and low-cost items, but the Italian efforts were crude and unsuccessful. Their architects and designers are learning a game at which we in the U.S. have become expert. . . . U.S. participation was

sad. A few items of furniture, a few lamps and lighting fixtures (somehow, no funds from Government or industry for a representative presentation), whereas an accurate cross-section of U.S. industrial design, 1954, would have rocked the Triennale. For shame!

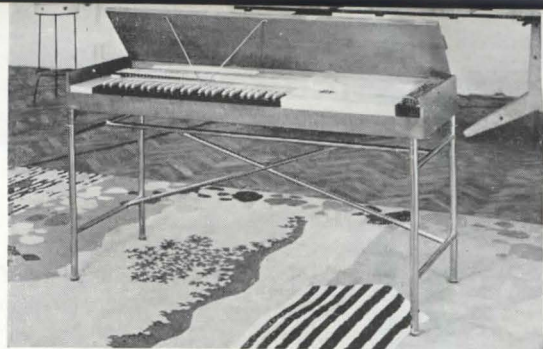
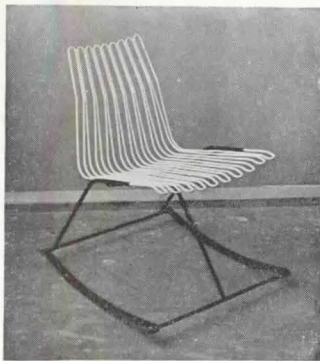
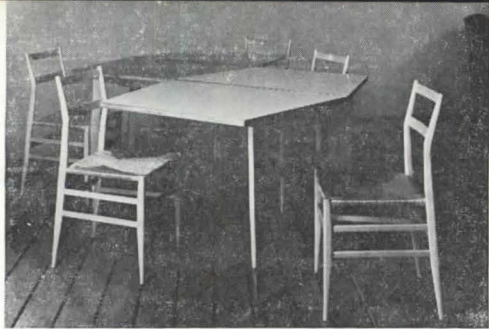
Much experimentation with chairs. Seating seems to have irresistible challenge for contemporary designers. A crop of molded-plywood chairs—mainly derived from the Eames original, but not as perfected in detail. Eames metal bases also in evidence—one instance of U.S. impact on Continental design that is unmistakable.

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In Italian area (above), black walls and ceiling dramatized shallow cones of white cotton suspended over floor displays of small objects.

Norwegian installation (left) was a meticulous statement which, with other Scandinavian displays, made most impressive impact.



1. Free-form dropleaf table by Gio Ponti, Italy; 2. Amusing metal-and-plastic rocking chair by Ernest Race, Great Britain; 3. Clavichord of metal-and-wood by Rainer Schütze, Germany; 4. Room divider by Gustavo Latis, Italy.

Dramatic highlight of the Triennale's architecture was the "Theater in Space" (below) supported on demountable tubing. Designed by Agnoldomenico Pica, it was another token of Italian imagination and skill. Bravo and a rivederci!

