THESIS

on

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP

of

GOOD DESIGN AND LIVING ROOM FURNITURE OF LOW PRICE

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by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object and Scope</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms Used (Design, Art, Beauty, Aesthetic Experience, Criticism)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Low Price Range (Relative Unit-Value, Budget Plan)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Good Design in Living-room Furniture in Low Price Range (Judgment of Aesthetic Experiences, Art Forms, Art Elements, Art Values, Construction Standards)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Method of Criticism developed to Aid in Evaluating Good Design in Living-room Furniture of Low Price and Explanation of Questionnaire &quot;Living-room Furniture in the Low Price Range as a Source of Real Income&quot;</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Questionnaire</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs of Living-room Furniture Pieces of Low Price Considered in This Study</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charted Reactions of Fourteen Persons to Design Qualities of Furniture Pieces of Low Price Compiled from Questionnaire</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the possibility of rationalizing some of the problems concerned with the recognition of good design in living room furniture in the low price range.

The writer's interest in this field has developed through a period of years, due to the fascination of furniture and its use. It has finally taken this form, to wit: (1) that most of the books and magazine articles dealing with furniture of good design seem to deal with medium or high priced types of furniture; (2) that the greatest number of people who buy furniture are of the medium and low income levels; and (3) that there seems to be a lack of good design in low priced furniture. These facts seem to indicate an unfortunate situation, inasmuch as the distribution of artistic appreciation in the population does not in any way correspond to the distribution of material wealth.

Two sources of inspiration for studying the relationship of good design in living room furniture in the low price range come from the booklet "Furniture and Its Selection and Use," published by the United States Department of Commerce, and the report of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, which give the fullest appreciation of the importance of the home and its furnishings. As stated by Herbert Hoover in the first reference, "The Family is the unit of American life, and the home is the sanctuary of moral inspiration and of the American spirit. The true
concept of America is not of 122,000,000 people, but a nation of 23,000,000 families living in 23,000,000 homes." Closely associated with this idea, and furthering the idea of importance of the furnishings of the home, was the statement by Ray Lyman Wilbur in the second reference:

"A fundamental practical step towards adapting the home to the mental needs of the individual is outlined in the report of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. Order and good taste and beauty in the environment exert a powerful influence for harmony within the individual. And it is not a luxury but a part of all sound living. A work of art is an experience in the ideal. The home whose chairs and rugs and lamps and bureaus are constantly providing its inmates with such experiences will send better adapted, better disciplined men and women into society than the home of ugliness and discord. The aesthetic shortcomings of the furniture and decoration seen in many American homes can be corrected."
OBJECT AND SCOPE

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the possibility of rationalizing some of the problems concerning the recognition of good design in living-room furniture in the low price range and thus to formulate for the layman more workable standards of art values for living-room furniture of a low price range. Education in standards is fundamental to any program of housing reform and the passive acceptance of homes as we find them must be replaced by consciously molding them to our needs. One way of accomplishing a remedy would be in raising the level of taste and appreciation on the part of each and every section of the community, consumer, distributor and producer alike. This is clearly a question mainly of education; i.e., the training of those who are likely to exercise the most powerful influence in the forming of a national standard of quality.

It has been assumed in this study that the greatest proportion of the buying public is in the medium and low-income group, and that the consumer has an effective power to influence the art standard of any community. "The effective power of the consumer to influence the art standard may be confined to choosing among, say, half a dozen specimens brought before his notice; nevertheless, in the long run this power may be very effective, especially if the shifting of demand from the lower art values to the higher is general among the consumers who deal with the shop; i.e., if it is the result of a rise in the general level of artistic appreciation. For
the retailer's stock at any given moment is only a cross-section of a continuous flow of goods passing through his hands in the course of the general process of production and circulation. Even if we assume that the retailer himself be untouched by the assumed rise in the level of the consumer's taste, he is bound to be affected by the shifting of demand when replenishing his stock, and the wholesale buyers will similarly take note of the modification. He must, in the long run, be influenced in his orders to the manufacturer who, in turn, will note (more or less promptly and intelligently according to his own trained or instinctive capacity of appreciation) the signs of altered demand, and will endeavor to conform his production thereto.  

1 Smith - Economic Laws of Art Production, p. 126.
METHOD

In the development of this study it has been found necessary to touch upon the fields of aesthetics, psychology and economics in relation to art production, in order to explain in a rational manner the customary and so-called vague design principles. These fields were also scanned in an attempt to find studies of a similar nature. So far as the writer has been able to discover no studies which have been conducted in an attempt to apply technical methods to the recognizing of good design in living-room furniture of low price range.

The first part of the study is concerned with an attempt to find as nearly scientific a method as possible applicable to the problem. It was, therefore, found necessary to ascertain the type of scientific backing (if any) for the term "good design" in furniture; what its reaction is upon people; and what causes this reaction. It was then found necessary to determine what constituted a low price range and the essential pieces of living-room furniture generally suggested for comfort and satisfaction.

The second part of the study is concerned with an attempt to find some rational, or more definite approach to the training of the judgment of the layman; and, also, is concerned with an attempt to draft a more technical method of judging good design in furniture, thus to raise this task out of the realm of vagueness and uncertainty in which it apparently exists for great numbers of people.
That people need art - that they appreciate it, is certain, but because of wrong ideas concerning beauty and art, and confused methods of criticism, much vagueness has apparently developed.
Part I
Definitions of Terms Used - Design, Art, Beauty,
Aesthetic Experience, Criticism

In this study previously formed aesthetic theories and generally accepted aesthetic phenomena have been accepted as a working hypothesis. "An implication of an experimental attitude in aesthetics," as given in Munro - Scientific Method of Aesthetics, "is a willingness to make the best of the materials at hand, as to both data and hypothesis." "Too rigorous an insistence on absolute reliability and 'objectivity' of data, too impatient a zeal for universally valid generalizations, may be an obstacle in a field where these cannot be attained at once, if ever.... As far as objectivity is concerned we are gradually learning that no science, even mathematics, can be too sure of itself. Their (scientists) main effort is devoted now to making generalizations that will work as reliably as possible in predicting and controlling events. 'Objectivity' then comes to signify a relative and practical measure of how far a belief has ceased to be merely individual and ephemeral, and has grown to represent the tested experience of humanity." 2

It seems necessary at this time to state and explain these aesthetic phenomena which have been chosen as particularly applying to this study. In the first place, it is well that the definition

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2 Munro - Scientific Methods in Aesthetics, p. 17.
of design is understood as being "a piece of decorative art considered as to its form, colors, etc." Next, it is necessary to establish an understanding of the meaning of "art" as applied to this study.

"What is there in human nature that calls for art? To the layman, that which the artist produces is art only when he can report that it is beautiful - and therefore it is his need for beauty that it serves. If, then, we can obtain a clear idea of what he means by beauty, we have a key to that part of his nature to which art appeals."4

"For the creator, an art work is a successful expression of an experience of beauty. For the layman an art work is any product which is an outgrowth of artistic activity and which arouses in him an experience of beauty, or a product that arouses an experience of beauty. Thus our problem now is to arrive at an understanding of what constitutes beauty and apply this meaning to the study at hand."

"The experience of beauty like all complete experience is complex in structure. It is composed of a number of elements each of which is easily mistaken for the whole. Hence we have numerous so-called theories of beauty, each calling attention to one of its component ingredients and disregarding more or less the other

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3 Webster's Collegiate Dictionary
4 Schoen - Art and Beauty, p. 5.
constituents. It is this condition that has given rise in the minds of the uncritical to the notion that beauty is undefinable."\(^5\)

To quote further: "Beauty is an impression giving a feeling of completeness in its kind of self sufficiency, of significance in, by and for itself."\(^6\)

Continuing the quotation: "It (beauty) is a state of attention, of complete absorption, from which all mental strain is absent, in which the mind is free of desire and will, of straining and striving, calculating and scheming, a mental state of intense interest, yet without intellectual effort bent on understanding or consequent action." "Its appeal lies in the respite that it offers from oneself, from one's daily struggling ..... self."

There is a common idea that beauty cannot be defined, and in regard to this Max Schoen says: "The wide spread notion that beauty is undefinable arises from the failure to distinguish between the terms art and beauty. These terms are related but not identical. Beauty is an experience, while art is an activity."\(^7\)

Again he states that "The most obvious rejoinder to the claim that beauty is indefinable is that we define it every time we say 'This is beautiful,' for the term 'beautiful' is descriptive of a certain unique attitude toward an object. If we went just one step

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5 Schoen - Art and Beauty, p. 133.
6 Ibid., p. 149.
7 Ibid., p. 5.
further and elaborated on the nature of this attitude, gave an ac-
count of it, we would have a definition of beauty." "Beauty is the
realm in which art dwells, and without an understanding of the nature
of that realm art itself is condemned to misunderstanding."8

Schoen also says, "A definition of beauty and art is not only
possible but valuable." "It is possible because the aesthetician
draws a clear distinction between the experience of beauty and the
object of beauty."9

Here we find that the explanation of beauty steps over into
the field of aesthetics, which we will consider in its relation to
beauty, a definite factor of good design. Max Schoen says in dis-
cussing the nature and objective of aesthetics, that "Aesthetics is
that region in the land of science whose borders of investigation
are known as experiences of beauty."10

In further explaining the object of aesthetics Schoen states
that "Aesthetics does not pretend to give a definition of an object
of beauty. But it does seek a definition of the art work as the
product of creative mind. Every product of man has a cause — some-
ting instigated it, and involves a process in its making. We can
therefore ask of any art work what it is that started it, what proc-
cesses were involved in its production, and how it came about being
what it is."11

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8 Schoen - Art and Beauty, p. 2.
9 Ibid., p. 13.
10 Ibid., p. 1.
11 Ibid., p. 13.
Schoen also says that "Aesthetic facts can be investigated by scientific procedure." "The scientist questions some observable phenomenon until it has told him what it is in its substance as different from other phenomena, how it comes to be what it is; that is, what processes operate in it, and when it gets to be what it is, or the conditions that bring it about. This method can readily be applied to art."\(^{12}\)

"Aesthetics, then, is the science of beauty. It will be developed as a system of laws expressing the relation between the object and aesthetic pleasure in it; or as a system of condition to which the object, in order to be beautiful, must conform."

"To find out what is beautiful and the reason for its being beautiful is the aesthetic task."\(^{13}\)

"It is hard to say where the task of the aesthetician ends and that of the critic begins; and for the present, at least, they must be commingled. But they are defined by their purposes; the end and aim of one is a system of principles; of the other the disposal of a given work with its aesthetic elements to the explanation (by means of the laws already formulated) of its especial power in the realm of beauty, and to the judgment of its comparative aesthetic value."\(^{14}\)

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\(^{12}\) Schoen - Art and Beauty, pp. 23-24.

\(^{13}\) Puffer - Psychology of Beauty, p. 17.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 46.
"Art is the human way of creating experience, and science is the human way of understanding it. Between the two there can be no antagonism."\textsuperscript{15}

However, Munro states that "The problems before it (science) are in many respects more elusive than any that have yet been undertaken. For in studying Art, man is seeking to know himself through the mirror of his own mind."\textsuperscript{16}

Munro also says, "There is no field of discussion, including aesthetics, in which the reliability of theories cannot be gradually increased through systematic testing and revising in the light of new experience."\textsuperscript{17}

And thus the importance of art criticism is connected with this study.

"Art criticism, on the other hand," (Munro had been writing of trying to explain aesthetic experience with methods and concepts remote from the experience itself; in the one case with those of exact science; in the other with those of metaphysics) "is a process that has arisen spontaneously out of the efforts of the past generations to think intelligently about particular works of art; its terms and methods are in much closer touch with practical affairs. Granting that its observations of works of art are mixed with personal feelings, it should be remembered that these feelings are themselves

\textsuperscript{15} Munro - Scientific Method in Aesthetics, Introduction X.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., Introduction p. X.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 17
important to aesthetics. The latter is not interested in works of art 'in themselves,' or as collections of physical atoms, but in the ways they affect human beings. Criticism is the nearest approach we have to a recording of particular interactions between works of art and responsive minds. From this standpoint all the characteristics of criticism which disqualify it as observation are themselves important as data to be explained. ⑩

And to form an understanding of the meaning of art criticism as regarded in this study we quote:

"In the present generation of criticism there have been two movements in the direction of greater objectivity of thinking. One of these is toward psychology and the other is toward analysis of form. The tendency of criticism toward psychology begins whenever the critic turns his attention from a work of art to wonder about his own feeling or that of others toward it." ⑪

"The tendency toward a study of form has in some cases expressed itself as a direct reaction against the psychological approaches. But in the work of a few critics the analysis of form has gone along with a sensible use of psychology, and each viewpoint has aided the other."

"Both of these movements in their present state are far from scientific, but they are tendencies in that direction in so far as

18 Munro, Scientific Method in Aesthetics, p. 20.
19 Ibid., p. 22.
they stress accurate detailed perception of the actual structure of a work of art, and investigations of its peculiar psychological causes and effects." \(^{20}\)

Continuing with our understanding of art criticism we quote:

"What the idea of criticism is we have tried to work out; a judgment of a work of art on the basis of the laws of beauty. That such laws there are, that they exist directly in the relation between the material form and the suggested physical reaction, and that they are practically changeless, we have sought to show." \(^{21}\)

"And if there can be a science of the beautiful, then an objective judgment on the basis of the laws of the beautiful can be rendered. The true end of criticism, therefore, is to tell us whence and why the charm of a work of art; to disengage, to explain, to measure and to certify it." \(^{22}\)

"The beautiful object possesses these qualities which bring the personality into a state of unity and self-completeness. The reason for being of beauty is simply the desire of the human heart for the perfect moment."

"Beauty is to bring unity and self-completion into the personality. By what means? What causes can bring about this effect?" \(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 25.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 49.
Definition of Low Price Range.

Relative Unit-Value Budget Plan.

The relation of incomes to a study of this nature is expressed in the report of the committee on House Furnishing and Decoration of the President's conference on Home Building and Home Ownership which states that "The buying power of the American public, as shown by incomes and the normal rate of expenditure, is a necessary basis for any concrete suggestions regarding qualities of merchandise."\(^1\) The income was therefore taken as a starting point for the basis of a group of hypothetical facts working up to the suggested unit furniture value of each essential piece of living furniture. "Luxury incomes," to quote again from the report of the President's committee on House Furnishing and Decoration "are represented by a very small proportion of the public. As the average family income of a large proportion of the population in both urban and rural communities in the United States appears to be $1,500 or under, a year, these groups may be taken as the ones upon which major emphasis should be placed."\(^2\) It was decided, therefore, to base this study of Low Priced Furniture on incomes of $1,500, $1,250 and $1,000.

The next steps included the finding of the hypothetical proportionate value for the house of these income levels and the

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2 Ibid., p. 106.
amount which should be allotted for furnishings. According to Andrews, "the house value in relation to income is usually stated as not over two times one's income."\(^3\) The amount allotted for the furnishings of a house, according to a bulletin from the United States Department of Commerce, should be 25 per cent of the house value.

The amount allotted for furnishing the living room of a 5-room house is suggested as 32 per cent of the total furnishing sum, in the booklet "Furniture, Its Selection and Use."\(^4\)

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>2-room</th>
<th>3-room</th>
<th>4-room</th>
<th>5-room</th>
<th>6-room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living Room</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Furniture, Its Selection and Use," United States Department of Commerce. Figures based on cost of furniture and furnishings in demonstration houses arranged by local Better Homes in America committees, together with budgets prepared by Home Economics classes in colleges and universities.

The proportion of this amount suggested for use in the purchasing of furniture for the living room is 67 per cent of that room's proportion of the furnishing sum. This figure is also suggested by the United States Department of Commerce.

4 United States Department of Commerce Booklet - Furniture, Its Selection and Use, p. 6.
5 Ibid., p. 6.
Table II

Amount allotted for living-room furniture proper in proportion to amount allotted for living-room furnishings in a 5-room house in proportion to amount allotted for entire furnishings in proportion to value of house based on incomes of $1,500, $1,200 and $1,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Value of house (1)</th>
<th>Amount allotted for furnishings (25% of house value)</th>
<th>Amount allotted for living-room in 6-room house (32% of furnishings sum)</th>
<th>Amount allotted (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1500</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$750.00</td>
<td>$360.00</td>
<td>$254.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>625.00</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>134.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>500.00</td>
<td>160.00</td>
<td>107.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. More complete figures on proportional room percentages will be found in United States Department of Commerce, "Furniture, Its Selection and Use," p. 6, from which this per cent was taken.

The relative unit budget plan for budgeting and selecting furniture pieces was developed by Mr. Leon Pescheret of Chicago, which is given in the report of the President's conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. The report states that this unit budget plan had been thoroughly checked by several prominent
decorators who reported that it worked admirably, and that it was a most valuable asset in giving a basis for selection far superior to the ordinary percentage method.

It consists briefly of the process of dividing the room into a given number of units and allotting to them a fraction in proportion to the relative importance of the items of furnishings. This sets up a definite relation of values between the individual pieces and precludes the possibility of over-expenditure upon any one item. Moreover, it keeps a constant ratio in the balancing of values.

For this study the relative unit value scale as suggested for the five-room apartment in the report of the President's conference on "Home Building and Home Ownership" was used as a basis for establishing the essential furniture pieces and the relative price of the furniture pieces. As suggested in this scale, the living-room furnishings were allotted 9 2/3 units. Dividing, then, the sum allotted for the living-room furnishings by the number of units (9 2/3) will give the unit value for any furnishing sum. This data is given in itemized form in Table III.
Table III

Relative unit value and prices of suggested living-room furniture of low price range based on various allotments for living room furniture. (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allotment for living room furniture</th>
<th>$254.60</th>
<th>$134.00</th>
<th>$107.20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative unit price (one unit value)</td>
<td>26.11</td>
<td>13.74</td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested essential furniture pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Relative unit value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 sofa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 easy chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 easy chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 desk or (writing table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(hanging shelves)</td>
<td>$1 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1 rug (6 x 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*curtains (2 windows)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$9 3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* The rug and curtains are not included in this study but are necessary to include in figuring Living Room furnishing units.

Realizing that the difficulty of finding well made and well designed furniture increases with the decrease in price, the $1,000 income was taken as a basis for the actual working out of this problem. It will be noticed in Table I and Table II that $107.20 is the
sum allotted for the living room furniture. With 9 2/3 furniture units each unit would amount to $10.33. Thus, the sofa or davenport or studio couch with the relative unit value of three should be priced at $30.99; the two easy chairs each rated as one relative unit value should be priced at $10.33; the small table with a relative unit value of 5/2 should be priced at $7.74; the desk or writing table and hanging shelves with a relative unit value of 1 1/2 should be priced at $15.49; the small chair or desk chair with a relative unit value of 1/2 should be priced at $5.16.

One of each of the furniture pieces were chosen at a local furniture store. A davenport was found for $28.75, $2.24 under the allotment; an easy chair for $8.95, a deficit of $1.38; the other easy chair for $12.75, an excess of $2.42 of the budget allotment; a table for $9.75, an excess of $2.01; a desk for $7.74 below the budget; and a small chair for $3.75, $1.41 under the budget plan. The actual price of the six pieces of furniture came to $1.34 below the amount allotted for them in the unit budget plan.

By correctly apportioning the available money, by choosing slowly and carefully each piece of furniture that goes with a home, and by securing good value (art value and economic value) for every cent expended, a well-furnished home is possible even on a limited budget.

It is not the purpose of this work to set up arbitrary standards in budgeting, but to suggest a price range within which a balancing of quality, style, and price might be more easily
effected. The price range should be considered elastic, but considerable deviation from the usual allotment should cause the consumer to consider whether or not certain items of the home may be receiving too much emphasis at the expense of the other parts.
Recognition of Good Design in Living Room Furniture

in Low Price Range

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Judgment of Aesthetic Experiences - Art Forms - Art Elements - Art Values - Construction Standards.

In order to be able to recognize Good Design in living-room furniture of low price range, it seems that there should be some simple criteria upon which the layman might base his judgment. That some apparent confusion exists is evinced in the contradictory judgments concerning good design. It has probably been due to critics and to others in the past claiming to speak authoritatively that such confusion prevails in art criticism. Often it is those who cry loudest that beauty is indefinable who are most dogmatic in their pronouncements on art works. It is invariably the person who claims that there is no disputing of tastes, since what is beauty to one is not beauty to another, who disputes with those whose tastes differ from his, and who gives the impression that his own taste can not be challenged. Continuing with this idea in mind, Schoen says, "Now the net results of such lop-sided logic, a logic that proclaims that in art the less you know the better and surer is your judgment, that the critics get caught in their own nets and entangle the layman with them."\(^1\)

Such occurrences as these have probably helped along the case of disagreement in aesthetic judgment when in other judgments there

\(^1\) Schoen - Art and Beauty, p. 3.
are none. Prall in explaining this phase of aesthetic judgment says:

"At least it must be admitted that no mere statement by
others is, in the matter of beauty, acceptable. We are willing
enough to admit another man's record of the dimensions of a rug or
estate, often without verification; but whether the rug is beautiful
or ugly, or the buildings are fine to look at, we can only tell by
looking ourselves. And once we do look and see them, if they de-
light us by their physical appearance we have the experience neces-
sary for making the judgment that they are beautiful, or agreeing
with or verifying the judgment as communicated to us by someone
else."²

Continuing this explanation of differences of opinion, Puffer
states:

"But must every self-complete object give rise to the aesthe-
tic experience? An object is absolutely self-complete only for the
perceiving subject; it is so, in other words, only when it produces
a self-complete experience for that subject. If reconciliation of
the warring elements of the universe is the end of beauty it must
take place, not for, but in, the human personality; it must not be
understood, but immediately, completely, experienced."³

² Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 16.
³ Puffer - The Psychology of Beauty, p. 49.
"The beautiful object possesses those qualities which bring the personality into a state of unity and self-completeness."  

To continue the discussion of differences of aesthetic judgment, Prall states:

"And it often happens that in the very presence of a friend whose experience completely verifies the judgment of beauty, our own experience as completely fails to. Since the object and its qualities, its shade of color, its shape, its dimensions, do not vary, it would seem clear that the variation which is to account for the difference, and hence for the conflict of judgment, lies in the person having it."

"Since disagreement is so common between aesthetic judgments, it would appear also that the processes of apprehension in the case of beauty differ from person to person much more widely, whether because of native endowment or by acquisition through training, than the processes of ordinary sense perception of ordinary sense qualities."

"This apprehension of beauty, whatever it is fully and analytically, however many processes internal to our bodies and brains and nerves and muscles and our very blood it may involve, is characterized roughly by the delight we feel or fail to feel in apprehending objects. Our part of the transaction, the whole of which is our

4 Puffer - The Psychology of Beauty, p. 46.
5 Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 19.
apprehension of the beauty of anything or the manifestation of that thing's beauty to us, seems then to be the delight in the object as directly apprehended, with no reference beyond this apprehended form or appearance. Thus aesthetic experience is an experience of an object as apprehended delightfully, primarily too, as so apprehended directly through the senses. \(^6\)

"Thus the ordinary conflicts of aesthetic judgment reveal at once various important points. First of all, in our apprehending beauty, or in beauty's being manifested to us, the character of the transaction depends as clearly on the apprehending person as upon the other main term in the transaction, that is, the object; and while the object may remain the same, persons differ greatly by nature and training with respect to this apprehending activity."

"As we shall see later, there is even ground for supposing that beauty is constituted in the very transaction that is this pleasurable apprehension, and that it is therefore properly a tertiary quality, since for its manifestation it requires not merely sense perception as of color or shape, but such further processes as are in themselves pleasurable. But being processes of apprehension and not mere bodily feelings like pains in the eye, etc., their delight must be taken as the quality of what is apprehended, the only term in the transaction to which we can attach them; the only visible or sensible object to be found in the

\(^6\) Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 20
experience, the only object present at all. Not seeing the light transmissions or the nervous currents running about, or the brain processes going on, but being conscious of delight in what is happening, and needing to have this attributed to something - since it is qualitative, and all qualities are by us attributed to something, quality meaning attribute, of course - we attribute beauty to all that there is present to consciousness in the case; namely, the so-called external object entering into this elaborate transaction."}

7 Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 21.
Since this study concerns the relation of good design and living-room furniture of low price, we will leave the discussion of the differing aesthetic reactions to various objects for psychological works, accepting the fact that the aesthetic experience depends upon the apprehending activity as well as the object of apprehension. We now turn to an analysis of the object to see what possible factors it might possess to help create the aesthetic experience.

That the object or piece of furniture does contain certain qualities which affect us seems sure. The problem now is to define those qualities in recognizable form. Schoen quotes Clive Bell in regard to this: "There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? Only one answer seems possible - significant form. In each, lines and colors combine in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. Their relations and combinations of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'significant form' and significant form is the one quality common to all works of visual art."8

To continue the discussion of form qualities Schoen states:

"The form is the essence of the phenomenon ...."9

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8 Schoen - Art and Beauty, p. 137.
9 Ibid., p. 139.
To return to Puffer's discussion: "If a given combination of lines and colors is beautiful, then the anticipation of the combination as beautiful is what has brought about its incarnation. The artist's attitude toward his vision of beauty, and the art lover's toward that vision realized, are the same."  

To analyze further the significant form of an object we quote from Prall who says: "And as we say, beauty always is just felt. If it strikes you and you are struck by it, the blow is upon your feeling capacities through the senses, not merely upon the external senses themselves operating only so far as to apprehend the so-called primary and secondary qualities of the object, its shape and color suggestion. It is the object as one unified and unitary apprehended form that has the beauty that you feel."  

Analyzing further we refer to Puffer who says, "What is the form of reflection for the absolute idea? It would appear to be a combination of unity and totality - self completeness. An object then, which should be self-complete from all possible points of view, to which could be applied the 'form of reflection' for the absolute, would, therefore, alone truly express it, and so alone fulfill the end of beauty. The idea would be there in its form; it would be shown to sense and so first fully expressed."

"When we enter the realm of cause and effects, however...... it is fitting that the concepts which we have to use should be 

10 Puffer - The Psychology of Beauty, p. 17.  
adapted to the empirical point of view. The personality as dealt with in psychology, is but the psychophysical organism; and we need to know only how to translate unity and self-completeness into psychological terms."

"The psychophysical organism is in a state of unity either when it is in a state of virtual congealment or emptiness as in a trance or ecstasy. Secondly, the organism is self-complete when it is at the highest possible point of tone, of functional efficiency of enhanced life. Then a combination of favorable stimulation and repose would characterize the aesthetic feeling."

"But it may be said that stimulation and repose are contradictory concepts, and we must indeed admit that the absolute repose of the hypnotic trance is not aesthetic, because empty of stimulus. The only aesthetic repose is that in which stimulation resulting in impulse to movement or action is checked or compensated for by its antagonistic impulse; inhibition of action, or action returning upon itself, combined with heightening tone. But this tension equilibrium, or balance of forces, is thus seen to be a general condition of all aesthetic experience."

"Moreover, this requirement, which we have derived from the logical concepts of unity and totality as transplanted into psychological terms, receives confirmation from the nature of organic life. It was the perfect movement we sought, and we found it in the immediate experience of unity and self-completeness; and unity for a living being can only be equilibrium. Equilibrium in greater or
less excursions from the center is thus the ultimate nature of organic life. The perfect equilibrium; that is, equilibrium with heightened tone, will then give the perfect moment.\textsuperscript{12}

"So may be analyzed the aesthetic ecstasy. The tension of those mutually antagonistic impulses which make balance, and so unity .......\textsuperscript{13}

"The further steps of aesthetics are then toward analysis of the psychological effect of all the elements which enter into a work of art with reference to their effect in producing stimulation or repose. What colors, forms, tones, ideas ...... favorably stimulate? What combinations of these bring to repose?\textsuperscript{14}

The further steps of this study are concerned with an analysis of "Significant Form," unitary apprehended form, and of the elements which go to make up this form. "Form," according to Munro, "is any distinctive way of organizing materials in a work of art, not detachable framework, but the distinctive way of handling the subject and materials."\textsuperscript{15} The elements of unitary apprehended beauty are lines, mass (shape and size), colors, textures, in furniture design for we say that these are beautiful, as Prall states, "They are characteristic materials of the aesthetic experience that such judgments record."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} Puffer - The Psychology of Beauty, pp. 49-51.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 86.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{15} Munro - Scientific Methods of Aesthetics, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{16} Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 62.
To continue quoting from Prall, "Colors and ... shapes — textures are only materials of beauty, but in any kind of intelligible human art, become for us, composed and complex and elaborated beauties as we build up out of shapes and colors and lines and textures ...." 

"Human composing is doing something with elementary materials that are capable of being composed and elements cannot be put together at all unless in themselves and by their very nature they are capable of sustaining structural relations to one another, relations of contrast, balance, rhythmic sequence, form in general."

"Nature appears to have no aesthetic prejudices against any sort of elementary aesthetic materials, nor to lack insight into the principles of their combination in the greatest variety. Only human limitations may miss some of these elements and human insight fail to recognize any principles of structure or form to hold them so firmly together and make them often so transcendently beautiful."

We have now seen that unity is a necessary quality of an object from which aesthetic satisfaction is experienced. A study of the forms or elements which might when combined give this feeling of unity must be considered. To continue from Prall: "The simple distinction that marks these materials is that they present objective structural orders intrinsic to their qualitative variation, through

17 Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 70.
18 Ibid., p. 65.
which we have control over them to build them into the complex formal beauties characteristic of the human arts and no longer the beauties of elements alone or of merely accidental natural combinations."

"And to know even a little of humanly made beauties or even of natural ones involving these intrinsically ordered elements, we must know their order and their formal variations and learn from this the possibilities they furnish, ..... not for mere chance occurrence, if happy outcome, but for composition in which the principles of such order and form have been consciously employed or at least intuitively discerned."

"The essential nature of these orders or structural principles, which are intrinsic to the materials as such, which lie embedded in the very nature of color ..... or shape and line, vary of course with the varying materials, since it is just the defining nature of the material that is its falling into that sort of order that it has, that unique kind of relation that establishes the place of any one given determinate color ..... or shape ..... or the structural possibilities of lines and shapes and masses."

"Clearly enough also, colors are found in shapes along lines and in general in spatial order. What we must look for here is that peculiar order in color which is not temporal, and for that order in shapes that is uniquely spatial."19

Design principles are generally regarded as harmony, balance, proportion, rhythm and emphasis, of color, texture and line and shape. In this study rather than call all these factors principles of design the first five have been considered as art forms and the latter four have been considered as art orders or elements. The customary meaning is incorporated under different headings apparently more easily and logically explained psychologically. Thus, the ideal design seems to require unity which is a perfect balancing of all of its elements and rhythm which is applied to all elements of composition. Good design necessitates balance of, or unity of the rhythmic sequence of the elements of design. The elements would be color, mass, line direction or attention, and texture.

To quote from Puffer, "The diffusion of stimulation, the equilibrium of impulses .... this is aesthetic experience ...." 20

Whether color, mass, line or texture are considered of first importance as elements of design form would depend entirely upon the particular object being judged. But unified or balanced form elements would be necessary and paramount for unity or significant form.

If we consider color first we find that in order to gain unity we must consider three inherent qualities of color; namely, hue, intensity and value. A good deal of experimentation has been carried on concerning the qualities of color, but of which this study

is not primarily concerned, other than the fact that color effects are based on the psychological need for equilibrium of stimuli, the stimulation of the motor, visual and purely ideal fields.

The basis for the combination of textures would also depend upon this necessity for unity or perfect balancing of the qualities peculiar to texture such as roughness, smoothness, glossiness, etc., so that the senses would have an experience in textures of favorable stimulation with repose.

What is there for aesthetic contemplation in lines, shapes or masses? In the first place, lines, even straight lines, cause us to react differently. As Prall states, "For it is plain that for our actual visual experience there is a difference between one straight line and another at least as important as the difference between curved and straight lines. A vertical line has one visual character, a horizontal line quite another, as the words vertical and horizontal indicate in the first place ...... Now this difference between vertical and horizontal, while it is clearly made out, is a difference in the relation of the bodily position and conformation of the observer to what he is seeing ......"21 When lines are combined in good design, a balance or unity of this visual character is felt and also they are combined in such a way as to give a feeling of unity or balance of rhythmic sequence. Rhythm is generally spoken of in regard to combinations of lines and to mass, line shapes or areas,

although it is also a requirement for color and texture placements if the effect is to be totally unified. When shapes or masses (compositions of line) are used in design their relationships will be satisfying and pleasant and therefore beautiful when this same unity or balance and balanced rhythmic sequence is evident to the eye. Prall says, "Shape is appreciated as well by ..... muscular activity. And shape and distance and even direction are as clearly matters of muscular sensation as they are also matters of vision."22 The particular means of balancing or unifying shapes or masses is generally spoken of as the principle of proportion. Rhythmic sequence is obtained by the combining in a unified or balanced way shapes or masses.

A diagram of this arrangement would appear as follows:

### Good Design Requirements

Unified or balanced form (Significant Form).

Rhythmic sequence of form elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hue</td>
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<td>Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texture</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roughness, smoothness, etc.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Direction</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight - horizontal - vertical - diagonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mass - shape and size |   |

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In this plan emphasis and variety or interest would be considered in unity or balance — for in order to have an object perfectly unified would preclude any possibility of having any one part of too great importance to upset the balance required for aesthetic pleasure, and also offset any possibility of having lack of necessary variety in the elements which would cause repose with lack of stimulation and thus lack of interest.
Art Values

The ideal design seems to call for the consideration of another quality, that of fitness, which is very closely connected with the perception of art forms and values in the judgment or criticism of an art work. The result of the evaluation of any art work to these combined considerations is in this study referred to as the "art value."

Puffer mentions this dual requirement when she states, "One school asserts that the real pleasure in perception comes only from form. The given object is beautiful, through its original qualities of line, color, .... which strike the special senses in a way that is pleasing to them."

"The opposite school maintains that the meanings of a work of art are all that it exists for."¹

Also, describing the importance of fitness of a work of art in its ultimate art value, according to Smith, intellectual qualities may also arouse our love and our desire for a work of art and this love and desire is influenced by such considerations as its utility, fitness, cost. To quote from Smith, "So closely interwoven are these various causes of attraction that it is difficult to isolate any one of them, and to frame any useful proposition about 'beauty in itself' divorced from the other essential factors in a work of art. So much

¹ Puffer - The Psychology of Beauty, pp. 268-269.
have some felt this difficulty that they have even suggested a doubt whether beauty is an independent element at all, or whether it may not be simply the resultant of all the other factors including perfect fitness for useful function. It is unnecessary to accept a view so contrary to common experience and belief. But while we must regard beauty as an original and independent source of attraction in a work of art, it must be admitted as a result of experience that its attractive force can only be fully exerted if the other essential elements of art value are also present."

"Hence, finally, we may say that a product of human labor is called beautiful, if while fulfilling the conditions of fitness for useful function it also attracts our love and admiration by its appeal to the eye."

Smith further defines this economic nature of an art work when he says, "We have now arrived at a coherent working definition of a work of art considered as an economic commodity. It must be a product of human labor, exhibiting unity of conception, fulfilling a useful function by means well suited both to its purpose and to the means of its production, and possessing the quality of beauty."

To continue with Smith's definition of an art work, he states, "The first thing that strikes us about the above formula is that, with the exception of the two qualities first named (viz.,

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3 Ibid., p. 25
that a work of art must be a product of labor possessing unity), all the elements of the description are relative rather than absolute. Such terms as 'useful,' 'well fitted,' 'beautiful' are all comparative terms, and it is impossible to say a priori how much utility, fitness, and beauty are essential to the composition of a work in order to qualify it to be described as a 'work of art.'

"Thus we are naturally led to view the whole matter from a somewhat different angle, and to regard every product of human labor which possesses unity as a potential work of art, its place in the ascending scale of art values being determined by its utility, fitness and beauty. If we could imagine an ideal standard by which these qualities might be quantitatively measured the resultant figure would fix the position of each product possessing unity of design in an ascending scale ....."

"Looked at in this way the problem of defining a work of art is not so much a problem of defining a special class of products which differ fundamentally from all other products, as a problem of valuation of products according to the extent to which they possess certain specific properties; viz., utility, fitness, and beauty ..."  

Prall refers to the importance of the fitness to function of an art form when he says that "artistic expression ..... will keep its strength and health and its vital emotional significance

only so long as the underlying need for the object is at least indicated in their forms, or emphasized and accented, not blurred or concealed by refinement and ornamentation."5

This quality of fitness which in a criticism of an art work is so closely allied with the "significant form" of the object has two aspects. One of them is known as "economic" fitness and has to do with the cost of production which either places the object beyond the reach of a great majority of consumers or is out of proportion to the importance or rank of the function which the article is designed to serve.

Smith says, "The use of 'dignity' as a term of commendation and 'vulgarity' as a term of detraction in connection with works of art is in itself proof that we do in fact allow our aesthetic judgments to be affected by considerations of economic fitness. Similarly the fact that a beautiful and useful article can be produced at a low cost which places it within the reach of all is not merely an irrelevant economic fact, but one which is justly and inevitably regarded as enhancing its real art-value ...."6

In this particular study the economic fitness would be the consideration of the relationship of large scale production of furniture to design problems.

Smith states, "This requirement of 'standardization' (i.e.,

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5 Prall - Aesthetic Judgment, p. 49.
6 Smith - Economic Laws of Art Production, p. 113.
exact conformity to specification) is an extremely important and formidable factor in the modern problem of industrial art. It is sometimes even assumed that there is such an absolute incompatibility between art and uniformity that it is wrong to call a machine-made product a work of art at all.\(^7\)

To continue, Smith says, "The acceptance of such an extreme view would, of course, make it of little use to proceed with our economic analysis, for nothing can be more certain than that standardization, in the sense in which the term is used above, is an inevitable result of the mechanical transformation of industry, and that this condition is destined to play an increasingly important part in the economy of national production. If, then, we accept economic fitness as well as technical fitness as a factor in art-value, we shall frequently be bound to regard standardization in this sense as one of the basic conditions of art-value, to be studied and fulfilled, rather than to be shunned..... The exclusion of the results of mass production from the category of works of art would limit art in the modern world to the role of an art de luxe having no organic relation to the economic life and structure of society, and little practical interest for the mass of mankind."\(^8\)

The other aspect of fitness is that of "technical fitness" of which this study is only concerned with its importance as a factor.

\(^7\) Smith - Economic Laws of Art Production, p. 75.
\(^8\) Ibid., pp. 75-76.
in art-values. Smith states, "A work of art is a 'function' of many variables of which fitness for purpose is one ... As, for example, the epithet 'artistic' cannot rightly be applied to a piece of furniture whose drawers or cupboards will not properly open or close ...." Smith - Economic Laws of Art Production, p. 110.

Technical Fitness would be the consideration of the technique of construction, the skill of construction.

In this regard the report of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership states, "Further preparation to meet a growing demand for well-designed and well-made furniture in the lower-price field is necessary. Construction and finish are sufficiently improved in all grades to merit confidence in our manufacturing future. We, therefore, turn to the correctness of form, and arrive at the conclusion that the basis of good design as applied to moderate-priced and inexpensive furniture is largely a matter of absolute simplicity of thought and outline. One of the greatest needs in the home-furnishing field is the more well-designed merchandise - priced at levels that make it available to the great masses of our people who cannot afford to buy in the luxury group. Simple furniture of good proportion and sound style can be produced to meet this demand." Report of The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, pp. 116-117.
on Home Building and Home Ownership.

"Another point for strong emphasis in relation to the furnishing of houses of this group is that of the importance of buying good furniture at the outset. It must be low-priced furniture, but it should be good in design and as good in respect to construction and materials as the price will allow."¹¹

Another fact pertaining to this phase of technical fitness states, "Good design and durability are not necessarily dependent upon cost, for some of the best wearing materials are available in such volume as to sell at very reasonable prices .... With this in mind the prospective purchaser may be prepared to consider the specific problem, remembering that one receives the values for which he is willing to pay."¹²

¹² United States Department of Commerce Booklet - Furniture, Its Selection and Use, p. 3.
Part II

A Method of Criticism Developed to Aid in Evaluating Good Design in Living-room Furniture at Low Price

and

Explanation of Questionnaire "Living-room Furniture in the Low Price Range as a Source of Real Income."

To the writer it seemed that there might be a need for a method of criticism which would aid the layman in his evaluating of the good design of living-room furniture of low price range. Its help could be two-fold - to the layman, by showing him what to consider in getting full value for his money, both in design and construction forms; and to the dealer, in illustrating the fact that when furniture is bought with sound judgment the design and construction is as good as one pays for.

Concerning this, is the statement from the report of the President's Conference, "There is great need for information regarding articles of furniture available at various sums, and what their values represent in terms of both decorative quality and structure with its correlative of wearing quality. Over and above this stands the need of the development of good judgment."

Continuing the quotation, the report states: "Substantial sums go into the furnishing of any home, no matter how simple it may be. Whatever proportion they bear to income or wages, they represent a

noticeable percentage. Particularly in the lower and middle-income groups, these sums always represent effort and often great sacrifice in many other directions. There is every reason for demanding full value for money spent and refusing to be warped out of good judgment by blandishment, argument or the subtleties of trade propaganda. Any object that is once good design is always good design. Items are soundly bought when they represent good design in as good material as the price will allow."

In this regard Munro states, "The outstanding need, however, is for much direct study of concrete works of art in relation to aesthetic problems, for criticism which shall be coordinated by a general comparative interest, but specific in its reference to particular objects and their effects on the beholder."

Explanation of Questionnaire - Living-room Furniture in Low Price Range as a Source of Real Income.

This questionnaire was developed not with the idea of using it as a means of settling complicated problems of production, distribution or selection of furniture pieces, but as a means of study for the layman, of the relationship of good design values and construction values for living-room furniture of low price; as a way of getting people to look at the pieces of furniture, and parts of those pieces of furniture, and to consider definite issues one at

3 Munro - Scientific Methods of Aesthetics, p. 24.
a time as they do so. One of the outstanding difficulties of aesthetic criticism ('from a scientific standpoint')," to quote from Munro, "... is their tendency to wander aimlessly, and to confuse issues."

The questionnaire includes not all of the facts considered in this discussion but enough of the salient points of art forms, art elements, art values and construction facts as would seemingly be sufficient as a basis for the forming of a sound judgment of the relative importance of good design and construction in living-room furniture of low price.

The questionnaire was used as a basis for criticisms for six pieces of living-room furniture of low price, by 15 students in a non-Home Economics group taking an elementary course of House Furnishing. They had had no class work pertaining to furniture previous to the answering of the questions.

The furniture pieces were chosen by the writer from the regular stock of a local furniture store and consisted of a desk, a davenport, an overstuffed chair, an occasional chair, a small table and a desk chair; all within the low price range as described previously. The students went to the store and by means of the questionnaire gave their frank opinions and reactions (so far as could be ascertained) to the various furniture pieces, and investigated the construction of the pieces.
The writer felt that a statistical tabulation in this particular study would be unsatisfactory and misleading inasmuch as the study has been merely a movement toward a descriptive study of furniture values - an effort to see a furniture piece clearly and as a whole.

The results of the questionnaires could not be taken as giving any particular view as to the correctness or incorrectness of any one piece of furniture, or would it make the majority right. Its aim would be, perhaps, to see what possible basis of agreement might exist, how persons vary in aesthetic responses and critical appraisals.

The following charted reactions are compiled from part of the data from the questionnaires. They are concerned with design qualities of the furniture pieces criticized. They are examples as to how the facts gathered by the questionnaires might be organized. Organized information of this nature might be helpful if carried out on a large enough scale to approximately determine the apparent preference in styles of decoration, types of upholstery pieces, or types of shapes for various pieces of furniture.
Living Room Furniture In The Low Price Range
As A Source of Real Income

Does good design in Living-room furniture in the low-priced range, carry values in experienced satisfaction so that there is a real need for it?

The questions below seek to ascertain possible effects of good design and construction in living-room furniture of low-price range in contributing to life's satisfactions.

What do you notice in your own experience? Have you experienced a feeling of satisfaction in viewing the piece of furniture before you? Yes ___ No ___ Partial ___ Complete ___

I. Consider the art value of the piece of furniture before you. Analyze the factors which possibly cause you to react in this way.

1. Do you consider the piece of furniture attractive to your sight? Yes ___ No ___

2. Do you notice a unity of plan or design? Yes ___ No ___

3. Are all of the parts of the piece of furniture of pleasing size relationship? Yes ___ No ___ Deviation ___

4. Is the shape or outline of the piece of furniture the factor which is most pleasing to you? Yes ___ No ___

5. Is the decoration the most pleasing part of the piece of furniture? Yes ___ No ___

   Is the decoration of correct size? Yes ___ No ___
   Correct amount in keeping with general feeling or spirit of the piece of furniture? Yes ___ No ___

6. Is the color of the furniture piece the most pleasing factor to you? Yes ___ No ___

   If the piece is of wood, is it light ____, dark ____, medium value ____; if of fabric, is it bright ____, medium ____, dull ____; is the fabric design large ____, bold ____, medium large ____, small ____; or is the fabric plain ____, alternative ____.

7. Do the inward and outward curves of the furniture piece seem to be pleasantly balanced? Yes ___ No ___
8. Do you notice a feeling of balance or rest from the relationship of plain and broken surfaces? Yes ____ No ____

9. Is the shape or outline of the furniture piece based on straight lines ____; sharply curved lines ____; sweeping curved lines ____; short squatty curves ____; curved and straight lines ____; other types ____.

10. Do you notice a pleasing sense of rhythm established in the furniture piece by the well spaced repeating of some design motif? Yes ____ No ____

What is the repeated or rhythmic motif? Panelling ____; carving ____; the turned shapes of the legs and stretchers ____; general contour of form lines ____.

11. Does the piece of furniture give you a feeling or impression or sense of dignity ____; formality ____; sturdiness ____; gracefulness ____; lightness ____; daintiness ____; heaviness ____; coziness ____; informality ____; richness ____; bareness ____; quaintness ____; comfortableness ____; restfulness ____; elaborateness ____; hominess ____; naturalness ____; sophistication ____.

12. Is the impression heightened by the type of decoration? By the design of fabric used? Yes ____ No ____
   By the color of the fabric used? Yes ____ No ____
   By the color of the wood used? Yes ____ No ____
   By the shape of the silhouette? Yes ____ No ____
   By the size of the space areas? (such as size of legs, arms, width of mouldings, etc.) Yes ____ No ____

13. Have you been influenced in your reaction because of magazine illustrations? Yes ____ No ____

Because you have seen this type in some friend's home? Yes ____ No ____

Because you recognize some "period style" feature? Yes ____ No ____

II. Consider the piece of furniture before you for its fitness for function, or its degree of usefulness.

Check the factors which possibly cause you to react in this way;

A. What is the piece of furniture? ______________________
B. What is your impression as to its fitness for function? unfavorable ____ favorable ____
C. What is the price? ______________________
1. Is the shape of the piece of furniture fitting for its function? Yes ____ No ____ Why not ____________________________

2. Is the height of the piece correct for its purpose? Yes ____ No ____ Difficulty ____________________________
   Is the width of the piece correct for its purpose? Yes ____ No ____ Difficulty ____________________________
   (If the piece is a chair, sit in it)

3. Does the decoration seem to appear too elaborate ____; too costly for the rest of the furniture piece ____; too light ____; too heavy ____; just enough and in keeping with the size and cost and function of the piece? Yes ____ No ____

4. Does any part of the piece give a feeling of unsuitability for the size, cost, or use of the piece? What ____________________________ How ____________________________

5. Does any part of the design of the furniture piece hinder its intended usefulness? What ____________________________ How ____________________________

6. Does the piece seem to conform to the limiting conditions of the materials of which it is made? Yes ____ No ____ Difficulty ____________________________

7. Does the piece seem to conform to the limiting conditions of its class (low price range) and production? (mass or quantity) Yes ____ No ____ Difficulty ____________________________

8. Is any part of the piece designed so that it could not be "kept up" (clean) easily? Yes ____ No ____
III. Under the outer surface of furniture, one will find the strength-making features which determine whether or not the piece will endure when subject to wear and tear. Check these factors in your furniture piece.

1. The "up-side down" test. Is the bottom splintered? Yes ____ No ____
   Does the bottom have a coat of finish? Yes ____ No ____
   (This applies principally to chairs)

2. Are the drawers loose and rattly? Yes ____ No ____
   Do they properly open and close? Yes ____ No ____

3. Do you find any loose nails? Yes ____ No ____

4. Do the pieces stand squarely on the floor? Yes ____ No ____

5. There are three important types of legs of which the post sawed from a single board according to pattern is the most common. If there is a very evident short length of grain across the post where it starts to slope backward, there is the chance that the wood may break at this point. (See Fig. 1A) Is the backpost of the chair of this type? Yes ____ No ____

In another type the post is bent to form after the wood has been softened temporarily in a steam vat to make it pliable. Note that the grain follows the shape of the post and it will therefore stand unusual strains. On the other hand, remember that bent posts are apt to change shape when kept in places where extremely high relative humidity prevails. (See Fig. 1B) Is the back post of this type? Yes ____ No ____

Some thick legs are made up of layers of wood glued together; these are called "built up" legs. This is not an evidence of structural weakness if the proper glue has been used, for a glue is at least as strong as wood.... With different pieces of the same wood, perhaps varying in natural color, grain, or pattern making up the leg, extreme care should have been exercised in the finishing room at the factory to stain the adjoining layer of wood to an identical color. Close examination of built up legs will repay the effort. (See Fig. 1C) Are the legs of this type? Yes ____ No ____
6. Inasmuch as the joints of furniture are hidden it is necessary to have confidence in the integrity of the distributor of whom you buy and the manufacturer. Is the furniture piece made by a reputable manufacturer?  
Yes ____ No ____  
Is the furniture piece sold by a reputable dealer?  
Yes ____ No ____

7. In order to be strong and durable, furniture shall be securely framed and braced throughout, and mortised and tenoned or dowled, in the most skilled and workmanlike manner. Parts subject to stress should be strengthened with glue blocks and screws. (See Fig. 2A and B)  
Are the legs and rails joined with dowels?  (See Fig. 3C)  
Yes ____ No ____  
Are the legs and rails joined with mortise and tenon?  
(Fig. 2B) Yes ____ No ____  
Are the legs braced with corner blocks and screws?  
(Fig. 3D) Yes ____ No ____

8. Are the exposed parts of solid or plywood construction?  
Solid ____ 3 Ply ____ 5 Ply ____

9. Are the edges of the pieces of furniture smooth?  
Yes ____ No ____

10. A great deal is evident to the experienced furniture buyer when he looks at the drawers in a piece of furniture. The joints will disclose highly important facts in regard to quality of the construction. Pull out the drawer; has dovetail construction been used? (See Fig. 4E)  
Do the drawers have dovetail construction at the sides of the front panel?  
Yes ____ No ____  
Do the drawers have dovetail construction at the back of the drawer?  
Yes ____ No ____  
Between drawers there should be a panel at least 3/16 of an inch thick to prevent dust from getting into the drawers. Is there such a panel?  
Yes ____ No ____

11. Are the sides and back of such pieces as chests, cabinets, and similar furniture of good quality rather than cheap wood?  
Yes ____ No ____

12. Is the back of the furniture piece finished to some extent?  
Yes ____ No ____

13. Is the back nailed ____, screwed ____, or grooved ____ into the sides?
14. Do you notice dry glue smeared about a joint? Yes ____
   No ____
   Or a sunken joint where glue has fallen out? Yes ____
   No ____

15. The stretcher or rung between the legs of a chair serves primarily as a brace. The more rungs or stretchers the stronger the furniture will be. Too many rungs, however, would spoil the appearance of any piece of furniture and in some period designs no stretchers are used. In these styles, the customer should be particularly careful in examining the corner structure to make sure that it is sturdy enough to withstand the treatment to which it will be subjected in the home.

16. If there is carving used for decoration detect if it is of wood compound glued in place. This chips easily. Yes ____ No ____

17. Carved wooden portions glued to the furniture are often seen. The customer should know which type of decoration has been employed. Yes ____ No ____

18. Mouldings in inferior furniture usually are very poorly sanded, and one of the quickest ways to determine the grade of the piece is to inspect the moulding. Does the moulding feel rough ____, slivery ____, smooth ____

19. Does the finish seem to be clear ____, deep ____ , transparent ____

20. Does the finish seem to be muddy and glossed over with shiny varnish? Yes ____ No ____

21. Is the finish coating smooth and free from rough spots? Yes ____ No ____

22. Is the finish brittle? Yes ____ No ____ (Scratch with the finger nail a small section in an unexposed area to determine whether the finish is brittle.)

23. Rub a section with the thumb rapidly for several seconds until the coating becomes warm; if finished with inferior materials, the coating may powder or become sticky. Does the finish become sticky? Yes ____ No ____

24. Some furniture is decorated with decals and stencils. In these some are good and some are bad. Special care should be taken to avoid the cheap and obvious transfers which appear to have been slapped on. Is the decorating carefully done? Yes ____ No ____
Figure 1.— A shows a chair in which the legs were sawed to form from a board. If there is a short length of grain, as shown by the arrow, there may be possibility of a break at this point. B shows a chair in which the posts are of bent-wood, and the grain parallels the shape of the posts throughout. C shows a built-up leg wherein several blocks of wood are glued together, and the pattern is turned on a lathe, giving the shape desired. The lines indicate the glue joint of the various pieces of wood.

Figure 2.— A shows a dowel. The spiral and longitudinal grooves permit the escape of air, and prevent air pockets in the glue. B shows the mortise and tenon, another method by which wood parts may be joined together with a fair measure of security. In both dowel and mortise and tenon construction the use of good glue is essential. The glue is applied to the portion which is inserted in the socket.
Figure 34. — C shows how a chair post is joined to the chair rails. Central figure is the chair leg; beneath it is a corner block; at either side are the rails with the holes bored in them, as well as in the leg, to hold the dowels. The holes in the corner block are for screws. D shows how the joint looks when assembled. The pieces fit snugly and are braced to prevent pulling apart, the corner block augmenting the dowel joint.

Figure 45. — E shows a dovetail of the "half-blind" type. The joint is very strong, and dovetail joints should be sought at the back as well as the front of drawers. F shows the dado joint — the method by which shelves are fitted into the sides of cabinets.
IV. Deep under the surface of upholstered furniture, comfort and durability are built. It becomes evident that the purchaser should know something of the reliability and integrity of both the maker, and retailer of the upholstered furniture he is considering.

Frames of upholstered furniture usually are made of wood, and it is well to know what kind of wood is used. Ash, birch, hard maple, are especially suited to this purpose.

Is the frame constructed of ash_____, birch_____, hard maple_____, other wood__________?

Is the frame well glued, doweled, tenoned, and corner blocked? Yes____ No____; or nailed together? Yes____ No____

Three different types of materials may be used as the base for springs in upholstered furniture. There is textile webbing; there is tempered steel webbing, either in the form of flat strips or of wire; and there is the foundation of wooden slats. Manufacturers of wood and steel bases point out that these types are more durable than the fabric webbing, while the makers of the latter type declare their type of construction ensures greater comfort. In all three types, much depends upon the materials and methods used; the webbing must be strong, and there must be a sufficient amount of it to provide satisfaction. The steel strip, wire, and wooden slat bases must likewise be strong and placed so that the largest possible spring depth can be obtained.

The size of the barrel in the coil spring, and the number of turns to the height of the spring are highly important in obtaining resiliency, the prerequisite of comfort.

High tempered steel wire, enamelled to prevent corrosion, is used for the coiled springs, which vary in size according to their use. Deep springs are used in the seat, shallow ones at the edges of the seat; tiny ones are used in the arms, and medium sized ones in the back. Upon them and the way they are fastened together depends much of the resiliency, comfort, and lasting qualities of the furniture.

The coiled springs are fastened firmly to the webbing in such a manner as to preclude slipping out of position. These springs are tied at the top with strong hemp twine which is knotted at the spring and fastened to the front and back of the frame. Other twines are knotted and tied from side to side. A layer of burlap or heavy cotton fabric is placed over the springs.
What type of base was used? Fabric webbing____ steel webbing____ wooden slats____.
Are the springs enameled? Yes____ No____.
Are the strings securely tied? Yes____ No____.

Stuffing is set over the burlap or cotton fabric-topped springs, being smoothly worked into a compact mass, over this, additional protection is placed and stitched to prevent shifting....

The following materials are used as stuffing: long curled hair (horse hair is preferred to pig hair); short hair, or hair and moss; tow, cotton; and excelsior. The first named are the most expensive. Moss and tow are quite widely used. In some execrably made furniture, wherein quality is sacrificed to the great God Price, one may even find a stuffing of old paper!

Examine the upholstered furniture for the assurance that new stuffing has been used. Most states require labeling of stuffing to guard against unsanitation.

Does the upholstered piece have a state upholstery guarantee? Yes____ No____

What is the upholstery stuffing material? Spanish moss____ tow____ cotton____ Kapoo____ excelsior____.

Mirror -
For the guidance of the buying public and the protection of the mirror manufacturer, each commercial standard grade mirror may be labeled in a distinguishing color for each particular grade. However, as the use of labels is not compulsory, it may be necessary for the purchaser of furniture to ascertain the quality of a mirror in question from the concern with which he is dealing.

The commercial standard grades of mirrors are designated in a descending quality scale, as follows: "AA," "A," No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3, which may be accompanied with labels in the following respective colors: white, red, blue, green, yellow.

The No. 1 quality mirrors are high class products which contain, in limited number, certain defects which are inherent in practically all plate glass from which mirrors are made. This quality of mirror will adequately suit the needs of most homes!

Is the mirror No. 1____ No. 2_____ or No. 3_____ grade?
NOTES

Section III

1. For more detailed discussion of furniture construction see U. S. Department of Commerce, National Committee on Wood Utilization, Furniture, Its Selection and Use, p. 45.


Section IV

f. For fuller discussion of upholstered furniture see U. S. Department of Commerce, Committee on Wood Utilization, Furniture, Its Selection and Use, p. 61.
Illustration 1.
Illustration 2.
Illustration 3.
Illustration 4.
CHARTED REACTIONS OF FOURTEEN PERSONS TO DESIGN QUALITIES OF
A DAVENPORT OF LOW PRICE (SEE ILLUSTRATION 1) COMPILED FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Aesthetic Response</th>
<th>Unity of Design</th>
<th>Unity of size relationship</th>
<th>Pleasing outline of correct shape</th>
<th>Decoration of plain amount</th>
<th>Balance established and functional</th>
<th>Rhythm established by repetition of broken surfaces</th>
<th>Pleasing fitness of design motifs</th>
<th>Unsuitability of any part</th>
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1 Arms too small
* Unanswered
2 States a deviation in size relationship - does not state what it was
3 Height - depth of seat if anyone is short legged.
4 Color
CHARTED REACTIONS OF ELEVEN PERSONS TO DESIGN QUALITIES OF A TABLE OF LOW PRICE (SEE ILLUSTRATION 2) COMPILED FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

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<th>Unity of size relationship</th>
<th>Pleasing outline of correct shape</th>
<th>Decoration of plain and established fitness</th>
<th>Balance of amount</th>
<th>Rhythm established by repetition of design motifs</th>
<th>Pleasing functionality of any part</th>
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1 Decorations too elaborate - cheapened effect
2 Decorations too elaborate - cheapened effect
3 Too elaborate decoration
* Unanswered
CHARTED REACTIONS OF TWELVE PERSONS TO DESIGN QUALITIES OF
AN OCCASIONAL CHAIR OF LOW PRICE (SEE ILLUSTRATION 3) COMPILED FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

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<th>Unity of size relationship</th>
<th>Pleasing Decoration</th>
<th>Balance of plain and broken surfaces</th>
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<th>Pleasing fitness of any part</th>
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1. Too elaborate decoration for cost
2. Decoration not of correct size
3. Decoration not of correct size
4. Carved piece under seat too heavy, carving too elaborate
5. Indicated decoration too heavy

* Unanswered
CHARTED REACTIONS OF SIX PERSONS TO DESIGN QUALITIES OF AN OVERSTUFFED CHAIR AND LOW PRICE (SEE ILLUSTRATION 4) AS TAKEN FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

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<th>Balance of Plain and Broken Surfaces</th>
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1 Stiff
2 Not comfortable
3 Back in relation to arms
4 Too small for comfort, material too elaborate
5 Uncomfortable
6 Too large pattern; uncomfortable; seat too long for back
7 Design of fabric too large and too close together
8 Too stiff
9 Seat too long for back - not good proportion
10 Indicated back not high enough
11 In general not large enough - feels stiff
* Unanswered
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1. Didn't like light finish inside of desk

* Unanswered
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<th>Rhythm established and by repetition of broken surfaces</th>
<th>Functional ability of design motifs</th>
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CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from this study might be stated as follows:

1. That the status of the art-value of living-room furniture of low-price depends, first, upon the judging ability of the layman; second, upon the alertness of the retailer to interpret the layman's state of judging ability; third, upon the manufacturers' alertness as to the requirements of the retailer.

2. That the standard of the art-value of living-room furniture of low-price might be noticeably raised by the producer and the retailer upon their recognition of the value of research in the art-values in their respective phases of the industry, for the purchaser in the low-price range, particularly, is affected in his choice of purchase by the type of merchandise which the retailer chooses to have in stock.

3. That the technical requirements of fulfilling the art-value standards as given in this study of living-room furniture of low price as evinced by the system of mass production are in a more advanced stage of improvement than the design proper requirements of those same art-values.

4. That the producer apparently excuses the design qualities of the inexpensive furniture prices on the ground that the layman buying inexpensive pieces requires ornateness and over-elaboration.
5. That the writer has been unable to explain this conclusion of the producer because the liking of an object depends upon the aesthetic experience, and the aesthetic experience depends upon understanding, and the meaning of simple forms and lines is more easily grasped than the meaning of intricate forms and lines.

6. That the desire to copy or imitate what someone else has is an important influence on the choice of style of the layman.

7. That mental associations have an important effect upon the layman's choice of furniture styles.

8. That educational facts regarding the importance and benefits of good design in living-room furniture of low-price should be emphasized in schools and magazines and by Better Homes organizations and manufacturers and retailers.

9. That there is a vast amount of research to be done in this aged and interesting subject of furniture and its close association with the home and family.

10. That some such method, on a much enlarged scale, might be used by retailer or manufacturer to aid him in choosing style types desired by the layman.

11. That the layman might appreciate some such guide to the selection of furniture of good design in the low-price range.
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