



Architecture and Design Library: Retro-Modern (Arch & Design Library)

Lisa Skolnik

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With roots in prewar Germany, modernism leapt to popularity in postwar America. Advocated by architects Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius (who fled the encroaching Nazi movement and settled in the U.S.), modernism blended functionality with frugality. Between 1945 and 1960, architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and designers like George Nelson revolutionized the home landscape. Today, modernism is experiencing a resurgence in popularity. Filled with incredible photographs of classic modern homes and beautifully spare rooms, Retro Modern is well researched and admirably demonstrates the intersection of history, society, and the arts. The clean, cool lines of modern architecture was a direct rebuttal to the neoclassical styles that came before. Rooms flowed into one another and often included floor-to-ceiling glass walls to open the house to the natural world. "The new structures placed emphasis on efficiency and function, as well as informality and comfort," says author Lisa Skolnik. Inside, bold, spare furnishings like low-slung sofas and ovoid glass coffee tables were arranged with minimum clutter and often featured built-in furniture to keep the space open and airy. Clocks, lamps, and glassware took on asymmetrical and free-form shapes; most popularly, kidneys, amoebas, and boomerangs. That lime-green Egg chair of grandma's--which you thought hideous as a child--would now be snapped up in a second by a savvy collector....--Dana Van Nest

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