



Fine Arts Center  
COLORADO SPRINGS

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## Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DESIGNING WOMEN 'Art and the Modern Interior' from Postwar Britain**

**COLORADO SPRINGS** (Sept. 5, 2008) – The Fine Arts Center is pleased to present, *Designing Women of Postwar Britain: Their Art and the Modern Interior*, opening on Sept. 20. This exhibition of works by three influential female artists will be displayed in the El Pomar Gallery through Jan. 25, 2009.

The Opening Celebration for this exhibition with music, hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar is Saturday, Sept. 27, from 5-8 p.m. and is open to the public. Admission is \$7.50 for FAC Members and \$12 for non-members.

The art of textile design radically changed after World War II. Three women artists working in England in the 1950s were pivotal in this artistic revolution. The drab days of the War were suddenly washed with the light of the fresh, progressive designs by **Lucienne Day**, **Marian Mahler** and **Jacqueline Groag**.

Original artist designs with bold abstract patterns inspired by Modern artists like Alexander Calder and Joan Miró, as well as the use of dramatic saturated color marked a dramatic departure from England's conventional notions of interior fabric design. *Designing Women* showcases the stunning geometric and abstract designs of the three leaders with furnishing fabrics, hand-towels, and dishware in varied sizes and colors.

Day changed the direction of furnishing fabrics with her 1951 design, *Calyx*. The revolutionary design, introduced at the Festival of Britain, captured the spirit of the era and subsequently received the coveted International Design Award of the American Institute of Decorators.

"They brought together art, design, and everyday practicality," said FAC Curator Tariana Navas-Nieves. "Their work is a reminder to all of us, that art beautifies our life, and that it should be accessible to all."

Exhibit curators Navas-Nieves and Shanna Shelby draw from the Denver collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, whose passion for this unique area of design showcases rare and hard to find patterns.

"All the work showcased is stunning," said Navas-Nieves. "Jill A. Wiltse and Kirk Brown have collected a great array of works. In addition to this, the exhibit brings a unique opportunity to represent how art is still an

integral part of contemporary interior design. Elements of a 1950s living room, including period furniture and additional works by other important designers of the time like Paule Vezelay, Mary White and Mary Warren, will be presented in a special gallery to provide the right context of how the beautifully designed modern textiles were originally used.”

### **Home Interiors**

In the span of 20 years after World War II (1945-1965), Britain was transformed from a nation devastated by war to an affluent consumer society. This new prosperity became evident in the modernization and stylization of home interiors. Works by designers such as Day, Groag and Mahler made art accessible to the general consumer, contributing the country’s spirit of renewal and defining a historical turning point in the development of international textile design.

Textiles were a crucial component of the domestic interior during this time, with new furnishings adorning the home with the vibrancy of beautiful textiles. Art and design came together to change the direction of the modern design industry worldwide. Britain held a preeminent position in textile design due to leading manufacturers and wholesale firms and the inventiveness and creative energy of many young designers like Day, Groag and Mahler. Their new genre of dynamic, abstract and whimsical works transformed the market by inspiring new product lines that were elegant and artistic, yet affordable. The distinct and innovative style of the works created by these women is still relevant to contemporary domestic interiors.

### **Lucienne Day**

Lucienne Day (b. 1917) created modernist fabrics for the home. Most of her work was designed for Heal’s Furnishing Fabrics, and employs the technique of screen printing. Day’s skill at creating abstracted designs inspired by modern art and nature were and continue to be stunning and vibrant. Her color choices and stylized forms result in intriguing formats that are timeless. ‘The Festival of Britain,’ held in 1951, launched the career of Day and her work, *Calyx*, which is now considered to be a landmark of post-War design.

### **Jacqueline Groag and Marian Mahler**

During this revival period after the Second World War, Britain attracted talented European designers including the innovative Jacqueline Groag and Marian Mahler. Both had trained with famous Austrian artist, architect, and interior designer Josef Hoffmann at Vienna’s Kunstgewerbeschule, the reputable School of Applied Arts. Alongside Day, Groag and Mahler became highly influential in creating a “New Look” that brought new light into Britain after the austerities of the War. Groag and Mahler are known for whimsical and playful designs.

*Designing Women of Postwar Britain: Their Art and the Modern Interior* is sponsored by the El Pomar Foundation

**Photo Requests:** Contact Melissa Thompson at [mthompson@csfineartscenter.org](mailto:mthompson@csfineartscenter.org) or by calling 719.477.4350.

### **Admission, Hours**

The Fine Arts Center is located on the NW corner of Dale and Cascade. The FAC is open Tuesday-Friday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. on Saturday. Admission for *Designing Women of Postwar Britain: Their Art and the Modern Interior* is \$5 for FAC Members and \$10.00 for non-members. For more information, visit [csfineartscenter.org](http://csfineartscenter.org).