Gilbert Rohde

Image:

Gilbert Rohde was born in the Bronx borough of New York in 1894, a first generation American of German immigrant parents. Following high school he worked as a cartoonist and freelance commercial artist, eventually specializing in interiors and furniture.
In 1927 after a four-month visit to Europe to study the Modern design movements in France and Germany Rohde decided to open his own design studio where he produced hand assembled furniture to be sold in New York stores.
Three of Rohde's tables with metal supports were shown at the Newark Museum's 1929 exhibition "Modern American Design in Metal". Publicity from the show led to Rohde's first notable commission: the interior of Norman Lee's Greenwich Village penthouse. Publicity from the commission launched Rohde's career. In 1930 he was retained by the Heywood Wakefield Company to design their first line of Modern furniture. In 1933 he designed furniture for Thonet Brothers; in 1934 furniture for the John Widdicomb Company. In 1934 he designed a line of chrome furniture for Troy Sunshade, and in 1935 he he designed furniture for Kroheler Manufacturing.
His most important commission came in 1932 when he convinced D. J. DePree, president of Herman Miller Furniture Company, which was losing money and shaken by the Great Depression, that a Rohde-designed bedroom suite could be the company's salvation. And it worked. By 1934 he was producing Modern furniture for Herman Miller and continued with success until his death in 1944.
As with Herman Miller, Rohde convinced Troy Sunshade to feature the designer's name (his) in the promotion of the lines. Thus the Troy Streamline Metal catalog boasted on its front cover: "Made by Troy ~ Designed by Rohde".
Rohde's varied output over 24 years for numerous manufacturers and his promotion of Modern design brand him as one of the 20th Century's design masters. Gilbert Rohde passed away in 1944 at age 48.a.

Country of origin:

United States

Life Span:

1894-1944

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