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Celebrating 175: Florence Knoll Bassett, Letters (1960s), 1961-1968

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Article Ten: Years - Knoll International in Germany
Publication: Deutsche Bauzeitung. October 1961 Deutsche Verlags-
Anstalt GmbH, Stuttgart
Author: Charlotta Heythum
English Translator: Else Stone

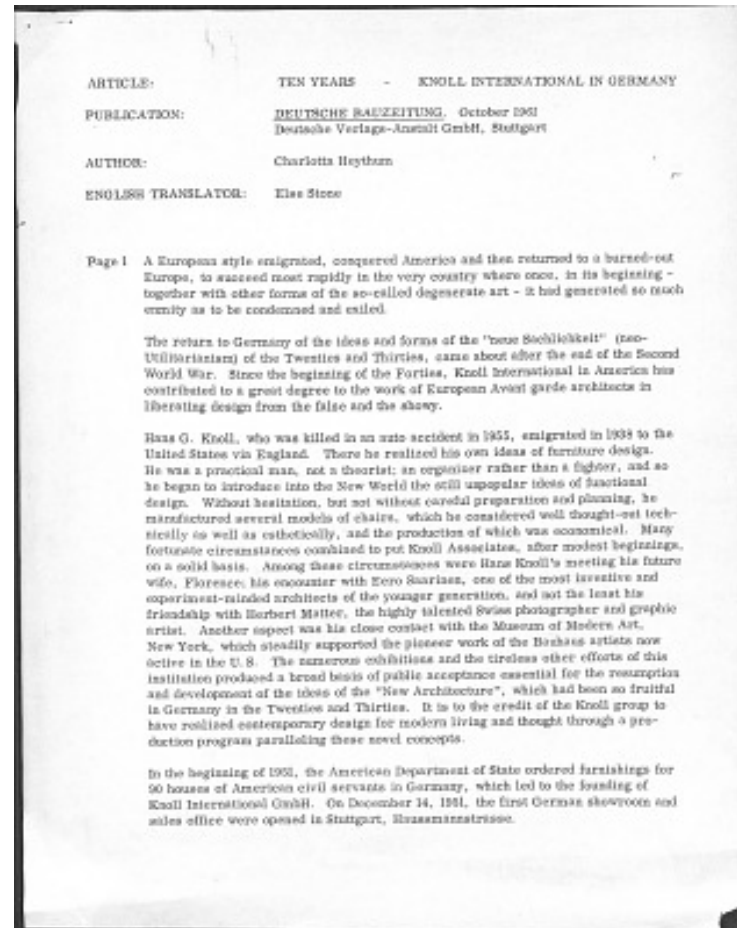
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A European style emigrate, conquered America and then returned to a burned-out Europe, to succeed most rapidly in the very country where once, in its beginning - together with other forms of the so-called degenerate art - it had generated so much enmity as to be condemned and exiled.

The return to Germany of the ideas and forms of the "neue Sachlichkeit" (neo-Utilitarianism) of the Twenties and Thirties, came about after the end of the Second World War. Since the beginning of the Forties, Knoll International in America has contributed to a great degree to the work of European Avant garde architects in liberating design from the false and the showy.

Hans G. Knoll, who was killed in an auto accident in 1955, emigrated in 1938 to the United States via England. There he realized his own ideas of furniture design. He was a practical man, not a theorist; and organizer rather than a fighter, and so he began to introduce into the New World the still unpopular ideas of functional design. Without hesitation, but not without careful preparation and planning, he manufactured several models of chairs, which he considered well thought-out technically as well as esthetically, and the production of which was economical. Many fortunate circumstances combined to put Knoll Associates, after modest beginnings, on a solid basis. Among these circumstances were Hans Knoll's meeting his future wife, Florence; his encounter with Eero Saarinen, one of the most inventive and experiment-minded architects of the younger generation, and not the least friendship with Herbert Matter, the highly talented Swiss photographer and graphic artist. Another aspect was his close contact with the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which steadily supported the pioneer work of the Bauhaus artists now active in the U.S. The numerous exhibitions and the tireless other efforts of this institution produced a broad basis of public acceptance essential for the resumption and development of the ideas of the "Ne Architecture", which had been so fruitful in Germany in the Twenties and Thirties. It is to the credit of the Knoll group to have realized contemporary design for modern living and thought through a production program paralleling these novel concepts.

In the beginning of 1951, the American Department of State ordered furnishings for 90 houses of American civil servants in Germany, which led to the founding of Knoll International GmbH. On December 14, 1951, the first German showroom and sales office were opened in Stuttgart, Haussmannstrasse.



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