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**Design**

*The Women  
Left Out When  
The Credits Roll*

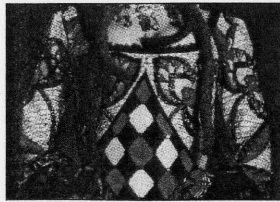
By LINDA HALES  
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK

By most measures, women came a long way in the last century. Not in the design world.

This is the first revelation of an ambitious exhibit at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts. The show, "Women Designers in the USA 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference," presents 221 examples of how women have shaped the material culture. From a curvy teapot to exotic necklaces, women have left their mark on objects. They've achieved spectacular success in fashion and interior design. But the Bard project suggests women

See DESIGN, C2, Col. 1



BY TIMOTHY WHITE

Detail of a Deborah Nadoolman costume for the movie "Blues Brothers 2000."

# Designing Women: You've Got a Long Way to Go, Baby

DESIGN, From C1

have yet to wield real influence in fields that are most important now: architecture, industrial design and filmmaking.

"I'm a seasoned historian, and I was still surprised," says Pat Kirkham, design historian and curator of the show. "I knew there were many differences today. I wasn't quite aware how polarized things still are."

A scholarly 462-page book of the same title (Yale University Press, \$80) will spread the message far beyond the center's town house at 18 West 86th St., and long after the show closes Feb. 25. It is must reading for women considering design careers.

Bard's delivery is anecdotal. A film clip of "Gone With the Wind" rolls as text points out that the credits fail to mention the women who designed Tara's landscape, down to the dogwood blossoms that were tied by hand onto plaster trees. The two, Florence Yoch and Lucile Council, were movie pioneers in the 1930s, but even today, Bard found, Hollywood remains a frontier for female set designers.

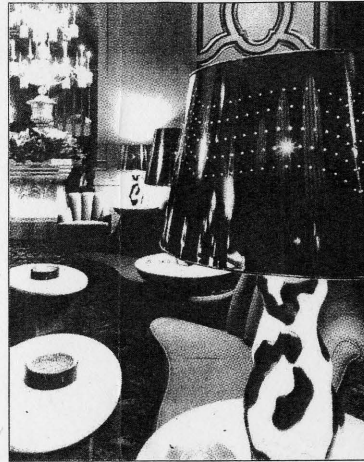
The show's second point has to do with the contribution of diverse cultures to American design. Nearly 20 percent of the show is devoted to African American and Native American quilts, jewelry, fashion, graphics and interiors. These are some of the most uncelebrated designers of all.

Textile designer Lois Mailou Jones was the only black student enrolled at Boston's School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1923, and she went on to design bold motifs for such high-end fabric companies as Schumacher. She became frustrated by her behind-the-scenes role and eventually gave up designing.

"There are issues of race and gender around," says Kirkham. "This shows that design isn't outside of those things."

The experience of women who are married to men in design is also explored. Kirkham caused a reappraisal of the work of Charles and Ray Eames a few years ago when she showed that Ray was a full partner in design with husband Charles. During research for the

Deborah Nadoolman's Queen Moussette costume for "Blues Brothers 2000."



COURTESY DOROTHY DRAPER AND MO.

Women have made strides in interior design (Dorothy Draper's Mark Hopkins Hotel) and in crafts (Dorothy Torivio's Pueblo vase, far left, metal collar by Arline Fisch, Eva Zeisel teapot and theater poster by Paula Scher), but they still lag in such heavyweight fields as architecture and filmmaking.

Bard show, Kirkham did the same for a piece from the studio of married architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. As Kirkham tells the story, Scott Brown picked the Queen Anne side chair, a well-known postmodern design from the 1980s, as her contribution to the exhibit. Until that moment, the chair had been attributed—and marketed by Knoll—as the work of Venturi.

By starting with the year 1900, the exhibit begins at a high point for female artisans. The Arts and Crafts movement of the late 1800s had resurrected domestic decorative arts as a high ideal, and women were nurturing beauty at home by weaving rugs and textiles, and turning out objects in glass, metal and ceramics. They moved into interior design, a field then dominated by men, though the Bard show makes the point that men still design most of the furniture.



BY TIMOTHY WHITE



PHOTOS FROM THE BOOK "WOMEN DESIGNERS IN THE USA 1900-2000"

The Arts and Crafts ideals—essentially valuing handicrafts over machine-made goods—made Native American crafts highly collectible. Thus, early in the century, baskets, pottery, jewelry and textiles were taken seriously as "authentic" cultural icons.

Interestingly, African American crafts of the period were considered expressions of a blended culture and thus were not collected. The Bard show takes the opposite view: that African American textiles, graphics, costumes, quilts and other designs are to be appreciated because they are hybrids.

Among contemporary examples is a carpet designed by Holly Hampton for the lobby of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. The runner's pattern never repeats, expressing an ever-changing, never-ending cultural story. A costume by Deborah Nadoolman for the Queen Moussette character in the movie "Blues Brothers 2000" uses African patterns and motifs but is based on the image of Marie Antoinette.

"The show is a revelation," says David Rice, founder of the Washington-based Organization of Black Designers, which contributed research to the project. "We're glad this is becoming a piece of history."

Washington's Black Fashion Museum

contributed a debutante dress by Ann Lowe, the black couturier who designed Jacqueline Bouvier's wedding dress.

Design history has long recognized stars like landscape designer Beatrix Jones Farrand, who began work at Washington's Dumbarton Oaks in 1921; industrial designer Eva Zeisel, who is still creating at 94; furniture designer Florence Knoll; and interior designers Elsie de Wolfe, Eleanor McMillen Brown and Dorothy Draper.

In this show, the missing IDs are more fascinating. A "George Nelson clock" from the '50s is reattributed to Lucia DeRespini. An embroidered Mylar "Jack Lenor Larsen textile" is presented as the work of Win Anderson. Both women worked at the firms named for their famous founders.

Since the show opened in November, visitors have come forward with stories of mothers and grandmothers who worked as designers. With additional funding, Bard would like to build an online database.

"We're beginning to compile a much wider and broader history," Kirkham says. "This is 'tip of the iceberg' stuff. That's what is exciting."

For more on women in design, go to the Bard Graduate Center's Web site: [www.bgc.bard.edu](http://www.bgc.bard.edu).