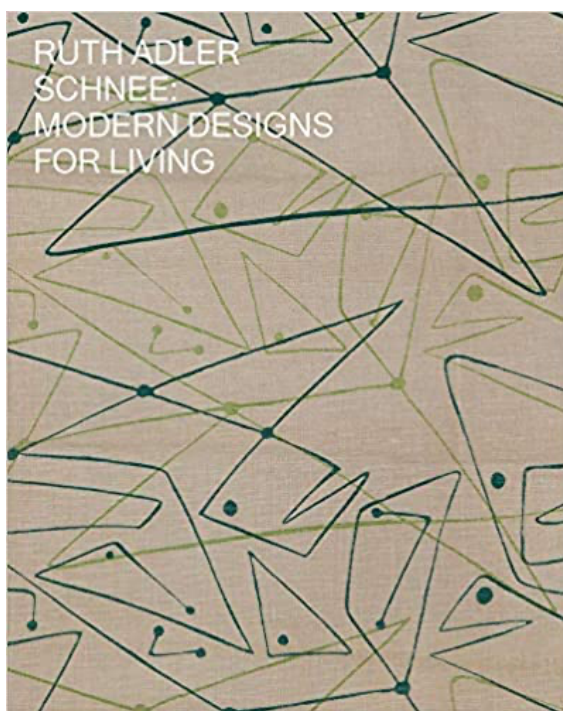


Ruth Adler Schnee: Modern Designs for Living

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This richly detailed catalog tells the story of the prolific designer who grew up in Düsseldorf where the Adler family was part of the Bauhaus circle. Some of Ruth's seminal experiences include visits to Paul Klee's studio "amidst mobiles, stabiles, and bold colors," and attendance at the famous 1937 exhibition "Entartete Kunst" ("Degenerate Art"), partially covered with a large felt hat to conceal her Jewish identity. Anti-Semitic fervor ignited on November 9, 1938, "Kristallnacht," when German soldiers set on German Jews, seizing and ruining their property. The Adlers were not spared, and within days Ruth's father Joseph Adler was taken to Dachau by the Gestapo. Marie Adler labored unremittingly for her husband's eventual release and planned their escape to America. By early 1939 the Adlers arrived in Detroit where Ruth would leave a lasting imprint.

First though, she studied interior architecture and design at the Rhode Island School of Design, on a full scholarship. Then on to a job as a designer at the offices of Raymond Loewy in New York, before returning to Michigan and a fellowship at Cranbrook where she studied under Eliel and Loja Saarinen. After earning her MFA, Adler won a 1947 Chicago Tribune Better Rooms for Better Living competition. Her proposal, a Miesian-style house, required window coverings for which she had to design modern fabric patterns as none existed. Shortly after, she received a call from an architectural firm requesting the modern drapes, and she decided to take her vision from ideation to fruition, creating the now-familiar colorful, abstract screen-printed fabrics that would come to be associated with many mid-century interiors.

In 1948, Ruth married Edward Schnee, with whom she founded the Adler-Schnee Associates retail store, which would serve not only as an outlet for her designs but also an inspirational hub in Detroit, carrying eclectic wares such as Alvar Aalto furniture, Copco enamelware, and Marimekko apparel. Her practice increasingly moved toward interior design work and also grew into carpet design. Today, Schnee's designs have been reprinted and adapted by Anzea and KnollTextiles. At ninety-seven, she continues to work.

The catalog, produced in conjunction with an exhibit curated by Ian Gabriel Wilson at the Cranbrook Art Museum, thoughtfully examines Schee's marvelous career and lasting impact on the visual language of Modernism. Deborah Lubera Kawsky's biographical outline, Susan Brown's examination of Schnee's textiles, Wilson's essay on the designer's interiors, and especially Schee's own 1946 MFA thesis, "Designing a Contemporary Background," make for illuminating, entertaining reading. Extensive reproductions of Schnee's work and related ephemera have high production values and complement a top-notch publication that also includes a chronology and extensive chapter notes. Recommended for libraries that support interior design and architecture studies.