

Watch Alexander Girard's Designs Come to Life

The short film made to commemorate Girard's AIGA medal dips deep into the Herman Miller archives:

<https://vimeo.com/354910783>

By Alissa Walker |@awalkerinLA Aug 21, 2019, 2:45pm EDT
Attendees of Girard's AIGA medalist ceremony were treated to a video tribute by Dress Code.

When Alexander Girard was posthumously awarded the AIGA medal earlier this year, Herman Miller produced a video tribute that attempted to compress the designer's voluminous accomplishments into a five-minute film now available to stream online. What's remarkable about the video is not only how it captures Girard's colorful legacy, but also how it brings his designs to life.

As head of Herman Miller's textile division for two decades, starting in 1951, Girard designed more than 300 textiles—many of which are still manufactured today. To show the depth and breadth of his work, the video team at Dress Code was given access to the Herman Miller archives, allowing them to create real-life table settings and seating areas—complete with many, many period-appropriate ashtrays—that show how real people might have interacted with his creations.

As Amy Auscherman, Herman Miller’s corporate archivist, says in the video, “What Girard brought to modernism was a warmth and a humanity. He wasn’t afraid of using textures and bright warm colors. He brought levity to an otherwise cold perception of modernism at the time.”

Girard’s work for Herman Miller gained him international recognition, but it was only one small part of his career arc. As Curbed’s editor-in-chief Kelsey Keith wrote in his medalist essay:

Alexander Girard was a designer who defied easy categorization, mostly because he worked— and excelled—in every field. Tireless, creative, and immersive, Girard was most comfortable when absorbed in a project, and he managed to complete a staggering catalog raisonné in his lifetime: houses, department stores, trendy restaurants, less trendy restaurants, logos, a terrazzo material, an airline, a folk art museum, even an imaginary land with its own language.

If you want to view the full spectrum of that catalog raisonné—and you’re looking for the ultimate design pilgrimage—*Alexander Girard: A Designer’s Universe* is on view at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico through October 27, 2019, then at the Palm Springs Art Museum from November 23, 2019 to March 1, 2020.