

Knoll Partners With Illinois Institute of Technology Mies van der Rohe Society and College of Architecture to Present “A Discerning Eye.”

The exhibit explores the importance of mentorship in architecture and design while celebrating the relationship and works of Florence Knoll and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.



April 1, 2022, Chicago, IL – Knoll has partnered with the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Mies van der Rohe Society to transform lobby space in the Michael Paul Galvin Tower into a gallery. The Mies Society Gallery for Illinois Institute of Technology Campus and History provides students and internal and external communities with a space to interact with and learn about the principles and relationship of architecture and design. The College of Architecture Dean, Reed Kroloff, is a past director of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum so this exhibition represents a bridge between both places that Florence Knoll studied.

“The relationship between Knoll and IIT began with Florence Knoll, who received her architecture degree from the school,” said Alana Stevens, President of Knoll. “We are honored to continue this legacy by working with IIT to inspire future generations of impactful leaders in architecture and design.”

“Knoll and IIT have a natural partnership and a common language of modernist design, clear purpose, quality, and integrity,” said Kroloff, dean of College of Architecture at IIT. “It’s exciting to see this on display as we honor the legacies of Mies and Florence while educating students.”

The current exhibit, “A Discerning Eye,” is presented in partnership with the Mies van der Rohe Society and explores the mentoring relationship between Mies and Knoll. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was a German-born architect and educator who helped define modern architecture. He was director of the Bauhaus before coming to America to serve as the Dean of the College of Architecture at IIT. During his tenure, Mies mentored and inspired numerous students, including Florence Knoll.

Mies’ teachings on space, spatial planning, and the role of furniture within space inspired Knoll’s signature rigorous and methodical approach to design. Knoll’s idea of total design for the entire space was a foundational part of the Knoll Planning Unit and influences the Knoll perspective on design to this day.

“The power of mentorship remains core to IIT, Chicago’s only tech-focused university,” said Cynthia Vranas Olsen, M. ARCH ‘01, Ph.D. ‘17, Director of the Mies van der Rohe Society and Adjunct Professor, College of Architecture at IIT. “Mies and Florence were always designing and always educating, and the College of Architecture is carrying that tradition to the present day and shaping the future design leaders and architects of the world.”

The exhibit transforms the beautiful—yet underdeveloped—lobby space into purposefully designed, educational areas. Furniture from the IIT campus is featured throughout, including the Florence Knoll Lounge, Barcelona Chair, Florence Knoll Sofa, Florence Knoll Parallel Bar Chair, and the Brno Chair. Display cases and features showcase Knoll’s history as a trailblazer in spatial planning through the revolutionary Planning Unit and Mies’ role as a pioneer of modern architecture and details in design.

Student high-rise models from graduates of the [Master of Tall Buildings and Vertical Urbanism \(M.TBVU\)](#) are also on display strategically positioned next to two Florence Knoll Lounge Chairs to underline Mies’ statement: “a chair is a very difficult thing to design. Almost harder than designing a high rise. That is why Chippendale is so famous.”

Jennifer Graham, Architecture and Design Manager for Knoll, as well as Vranas Olsen, Kroloff, and Dirk Lohan (Mies’ grandson) participated in presenting the exhibit to a virtual audience for the opening on Thursday, March 3, 2022. The exhibit will be on display through April 2022.

Photography by Bonnie Robinson.

About Illinois Institute Of Technology

Illinois Institute of Technology, also known as Illinois Tech, is a private, technology-focused research university. Illinois Tech is the only university of its kind in Chicago, and its Chicago location offers students access to the world-class resources of a great global metropolis. It offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in engineering, computing, architecture, business, design, science and human sciences, and law. One of 23 institutions that comprise the Association of Independent Technological Universities, Illinois Tech provides an exceptional education centered on active learning, and its graduates lead the state and much of the nation in economic prosperity. Illinois Tech uniquely prepares students to succeed in professions that require technological sophistication, an innovative mindset, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Visit iit.edu.

About Knoll

A globally recognized leader in modern design and the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk program, Knoll uses modern design to create places people love to be. Our commitment to modern design and ongoing dialogue with designers and customers has yielded a timeless collection of pioneering products for high-performance workplaces, work-from-home settings, and luxury residential interiors. A recipient of the National Design Award for Corporate and Institutional Achievement from the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Knoll has championed sustainable practices in manufacturing, and can help organizations meet their sustainability goals.


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Mies van der Rohe Society

The Mies Society is a membership organization devoted to strengthening architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s legacy by preserving his buildings on the Illinois Institute of Technology campus and promoting engagement

and fresh interpretations of his design principles in Chicago and beyond. Enhancing educational programs for students means using flexible and modular plans created by Mies to be transformed to meet the needs of students and faculty. The campus, as a living, learning laboratory attracts visitors from around the world. Embedded in the heart of Bronzeville, it is a showcase for the design solutions that Mies and his followers pioneered—solutions which ultimately transformed the city spaces and skylines of the world.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(8\)](#)



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