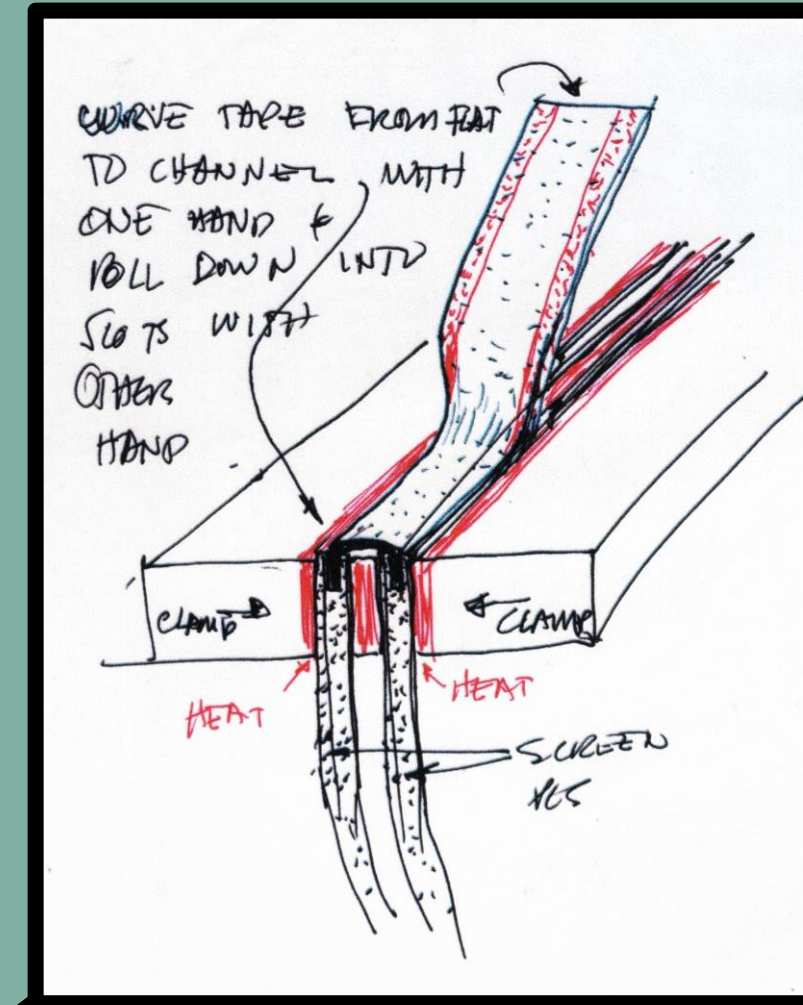


From Domestic to Design Object

The husband-and-wife duo Charles and Ray Eames were some of the most influential designers of the 20th century. The Eames' designs, organic and inspired, softened industrial materials, bringing them into the homes of a wide consumer base. While they experimented with a range of materials, they are particularly known for their pioneering use of molded plywood. The Folding Screen in Wood (FSW) exemplifies the Eames' early design philosophy. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's screen [Gift of Daniel and Suzanne Geller, 1984 (1984.264.1)] is composed of six molded plywood segments with mahogany veneer, joined in sequence with woven fabric hinges.

Furniture is enmeshed in the events of daily life that occur around it, capturing records of those activities in the form of wear; be it stains from a spilled drink, or inscribed scratches made by young children. The Eames FSW is a particularly dynamic object, meant to be moved, opened and closed, and repositioned in limitless configurations. The Met's screen bears the markings of an actively used domestic object. Damages like these become hotspots where the values of the owner or caretaker of an object are projected. In the case of The Met's screen, repairs, likely made at home with materials the original owner had on hand, denote self-sufficiency and a prioritization of a speedy return to function over pristine aesthetics.

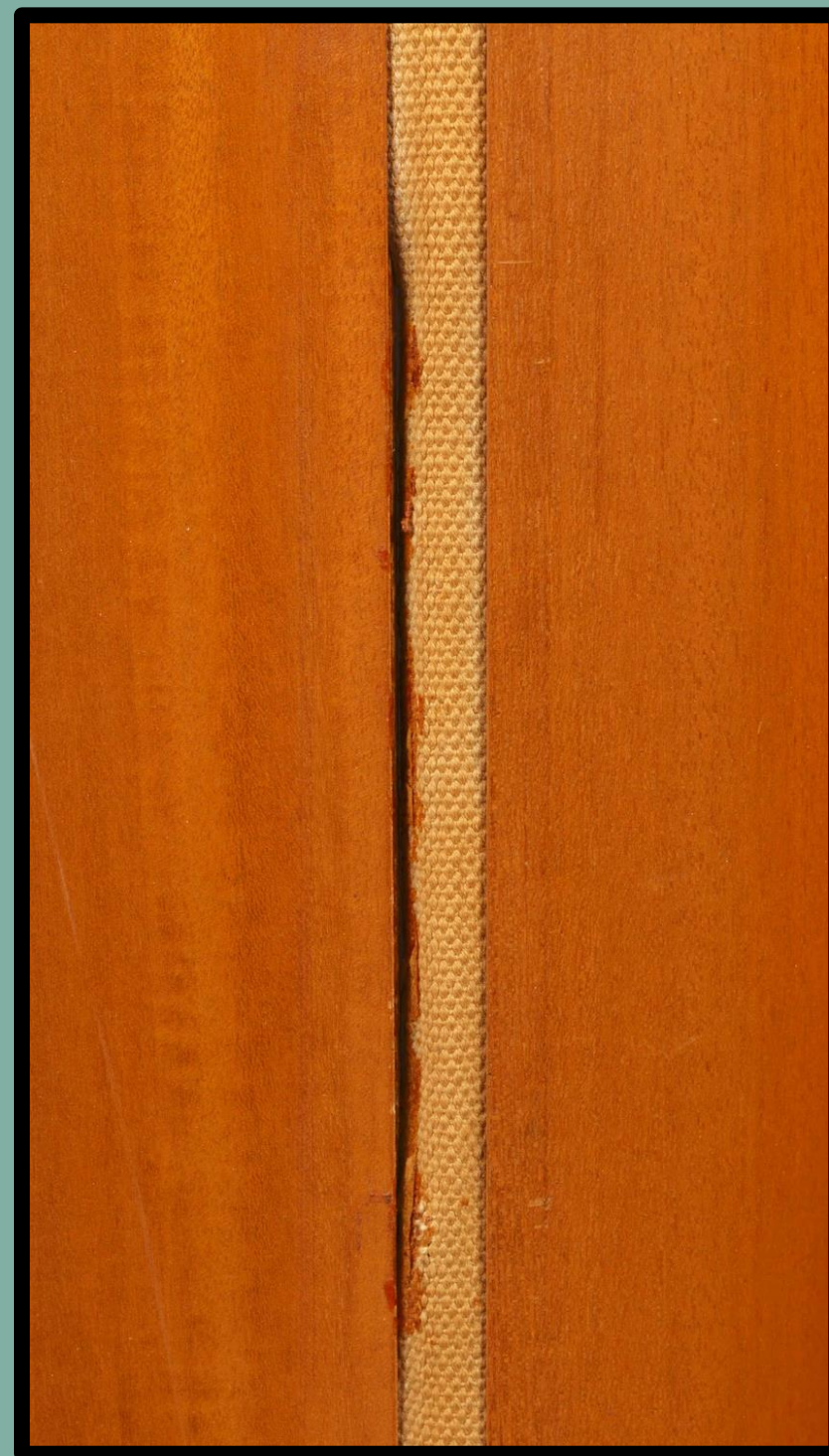


Original diagram illustrating the heat-setting method for adhering the fabric hinges to the plywood panels [LEFT].

The FSW came in a range of sizes and finishes [RIGHT].

FSW production begins (1946)

DOMESTIC OBJECT



FSW enters The Met's collection (1984)

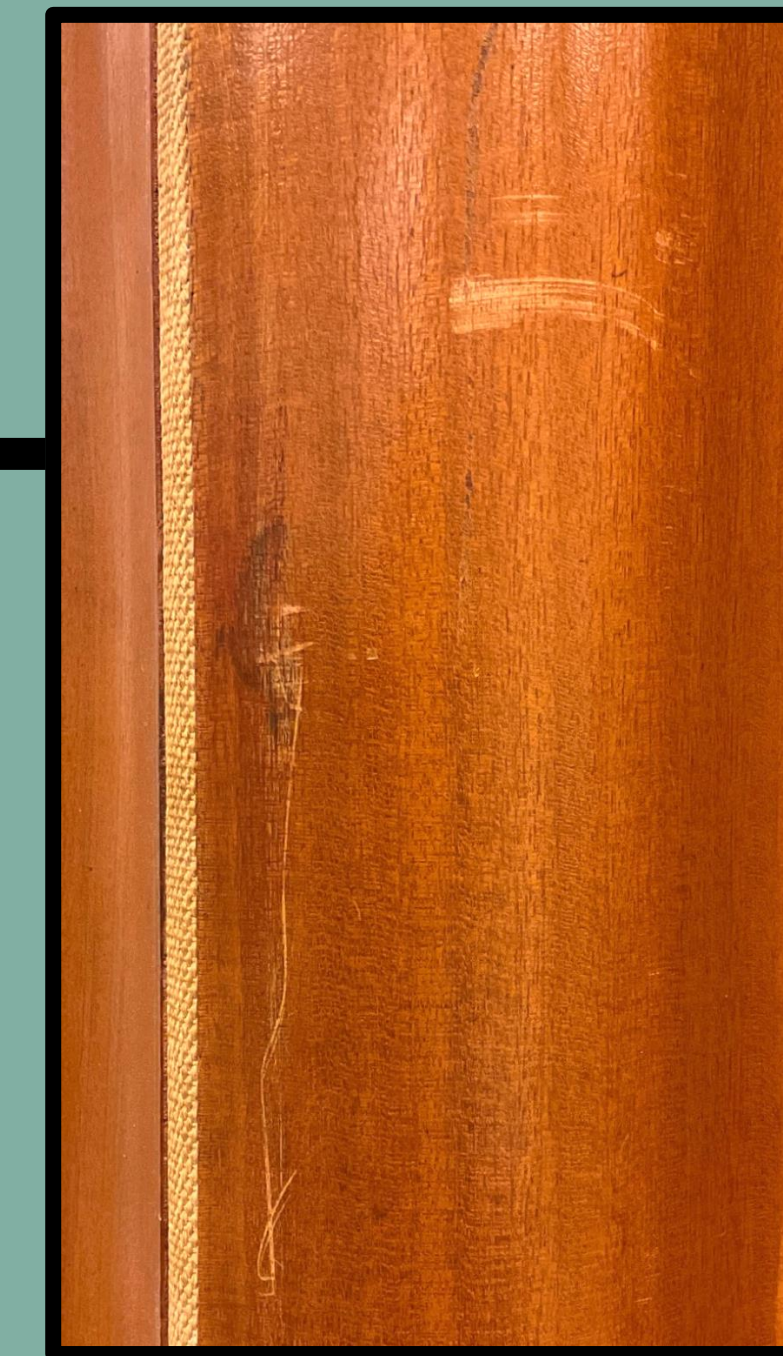


BT



FSW receives damages and repairs as a functional object

Sections of the FSW's hinges were repeatedly detached from and re-adhered to its plywood panels [FAR LEFT].



Brown paint was used to cover blemishes and damages in thirteen locations across the screen [MIDDLE LEFT].

Scratches and abrasions to the screen's cellulose nitrate finish were widespread [FAR RIGHT].

DESIGN OBJECT

FSW undergoes conservation treatment (2023)

Lascaux 498 HV was used to resecure the sections of loose hinges to their furrows in the sides of the screen's plywood panels.

The screen predominantly fluoresces green under ultraviolet light due to its cellulose nitrate finish, but patches of old overpaint appear dark [RIGHT].

The patches of old overpaint were concealed with Maimeri Ketonic Resin Colours [LEFT].

Scratches in the screen's finish were saturated with Plexigum PQ611 in ShellSol.



AT



UV

Objects can have multiple identities. The Met's FSW is no longer a specific screen in the home of a specific family, it is an archetypal example of a design object. Some evidence of the screen's previous life now distracts from its most important attributes—chiefly form and materiality. Through conservation treatment, the screen is changed from a FSW to *the* FSW.



FSW is displayed in The Met's modern & contemporary galleries (2023)



FSW is packed for offsite move (2024)

The screen was packed by Atelier Fine Art Services during The Met's Oscar L. Tang and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang Wing renovation project. Spacers support the folded plywood panels to avoid straining the hinges.

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