

Jacques & Jacqueline Groag



An architect who brought Viennese Modernism to Britain

A designer who revolutionised British textiles



2
© Wien Museum

Jacques's signature solo architectural achievement in Vienna is the duplex on Woinovichgasse 5-7

1
Jacques and Jacqueline Groag, Prague, 1939
Courtesy Dr. Willi Groag / Eve Linden

Formal purism

Jacques Groag's early modern architecture

Beginnings

Jacques Groag was born on 5 February 1892 in the Moravian city of Olomouc (today in the Czech Republic), to a wealthy German-Jewish family of malt industrialists, and moved to Vienna in 1910 to study structural engineering at the Technische Hochschule.

Through his friend from Olomouc, the architect Paul Engelmann, who was an ardent admirer of Adolf Loos and in contact with Ludwig Wittgenstein, Groag became acquainted with circles of artists and intellectuals. His sister Johanna and brother-in-law, Heinrich Jalowetz, an assistant to Arnold Schönberg also introduced Groag to the contemporary cultural vanguard.

After the First World War, Groag became a student of Adolf Loos and worked for numerous building firms as well as at Loos's office, all of which complemented his activities as a painter and illustrator.



3
Wittgensteinhaus, Kundmanngasse, perspective drawing presumed to be by Jacques Groag, 1927-8
Archive of the Magistratsabteilung 37-Weiner Baupolizei

Wittgenstein and Loos

In the mid-twenties, he opened an architecture firm in Döbling and took on his first engagement: construction supervision at the so-called Haus Wittgenstein, where a competent civil engineer was needed to carry out the difficult schemes set out by Ludwig Wittgenstein for his client-sister Margaret Stonborough after Paul Englemann resigned. There is evidence that the widely circulated colored sketch was done by Groag himself. [IMAGE 3](#) ↙

Meanwhile, Groag also became Loos's site agent for the Villa Moller in Währing, Vienna's 18th district. Since Loos lived in Paris at the time and only sent the direly needed plans hesitantly, or even failed to do so completely in spite of intense pleas, Groag became involved in the planning of the building. This is particularly evident in the design of the front facing the garden, which is formally reminiscent of Groag's later works. [IMAGE 4](#) ↓



4
Adolf Loos, Moller Villa, Vienna, 1927
Garden facade likely by Jacques Groag
© The Albertina Museum, Vienna

Independence and acclaim

The first project undertaken completely on his own terms was a detached house for his brother and sister-in-law Emo and Trude Groag in Olomouc in 1927-8. The three-story building conformed to the formal purism of Loos, and the organization of the individual rooms around an exposed staircase closely adhered to the schema of the Loos layout. The functionality and optimal use of space were so well received in his hometown that afterward he was tasked with numerous other projects for one-family dwellings. [IMAGE 5](#) ↙

Back in Vienna, and through contacts of the well-known photographer, Trude Fleischmann, Groag started to work for prominent celebrity clients, like Liane Haid, a popular film actress, whose old manor in Neuwaldegg was comprehensively adapted and furnished by Groag, and Paula Wessely, a famous Austrian actress and film star. He also was involved in a serious effort to create space-saving furniture [IMAGE 6](#) ↙ and multi-functional, single room apartments. [IMAGE 7](#) ↓
The architecture and design community responded positively, and his work was widely published.

His signature solo architectural achievement in Vienna is the duplex on Woinovichgasse 5-7 (1930-1) [IMAGE 2](#) ↑, lauded by the press as being the most accomplished among the Werkbundsiedlung's buildings, an experimental housing project spearheaded by Josef Frank.



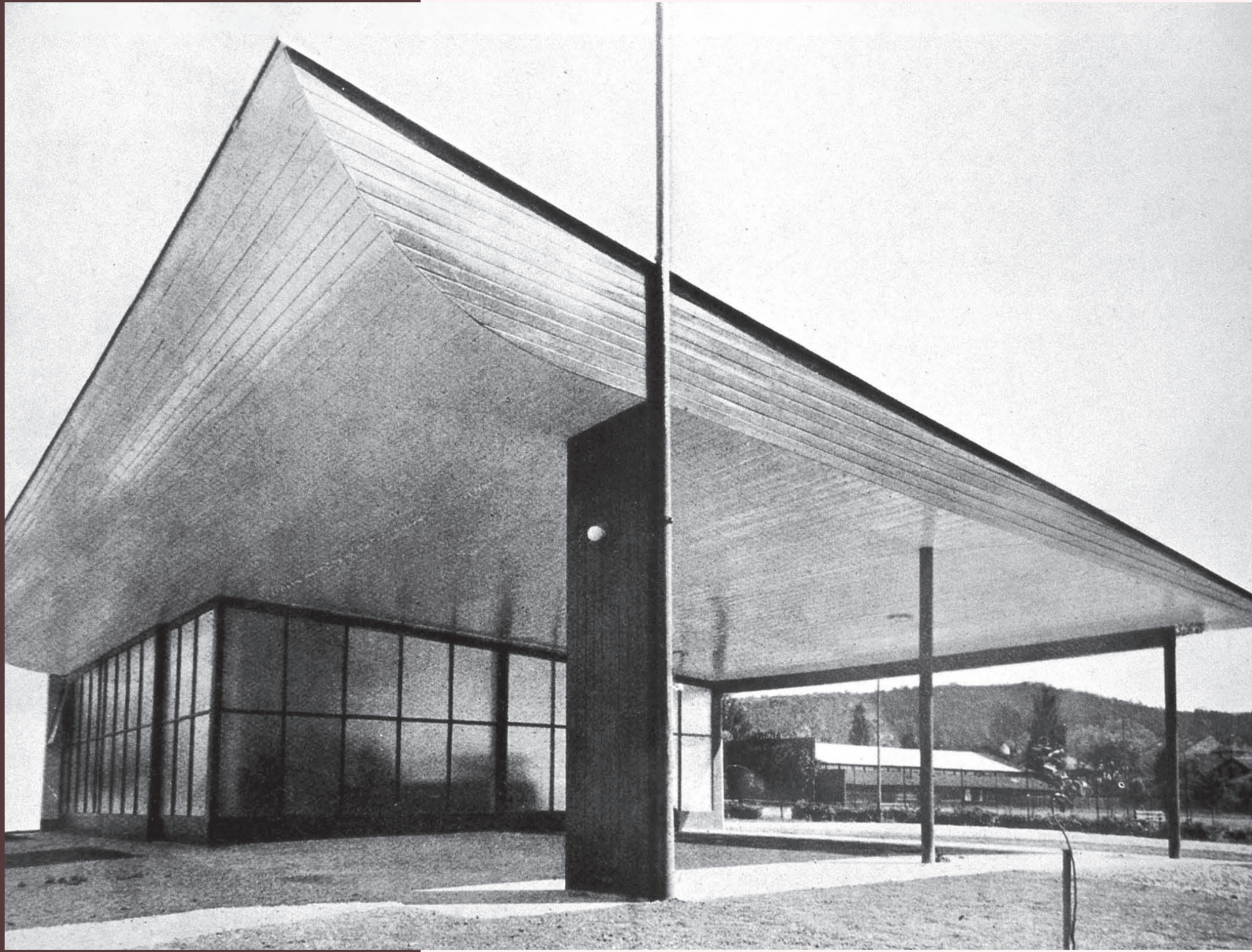
5
Haus Groag, Olmütz/Olomouc, garden side, 1927
Courtesy of Olomouc Museum of Art.



6
Dressing table built into a wall cabinet, c.1930
Published in *Innendekoration*



7
Studio apartment, c.1930
Published in *Innendekoration* and Neufert's *Standardbuch der Bauentwurfslehre* (Standard Book of Construction Design)



1
Gas station, Brunn/Brno
Published in *Architectural Review*



2
Alexandretta,
mixed media, 1960.
Laminate design
for Waverite
based on her doll
collection
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse
and H. Kirk Brown III,
Denver, CO

From an early stage,
Jacqueline's work is
marked by the use
of stylised flowers
and figures



3
Artwork created at the Kunstgewerbeschule,
under tutelage of Josef Hoffmann, 1929, Vienna
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Meeting & moving

Hilde Blumberger (Jacqueline Groag) and Jacques Groag

Jacqueline's early career

It was at this time, around 1930, that Jacques Groag met fabric designer Hilde Blumberger (née Pick), who was already a young widow. Born 6 April 1903 to a secular Jewish family in Prague, Blumberger had studied with Josef Hoffmann and Franz Cizek at the Kunstgewerbeschule and travelled in the same artistic circles as Jacques. Extraordinarily gifted, she worked for international fashion houses like Schiaparelli and Chanel, and won a gold medal for several textile designs at the Milan Triennale in 1933. **IMAGE 4 →** She was, in addition, a popular model, both for the photographer Trude Fleischmann and painters Josef Dobrowsky, Frederik Serger, and Sergius Pauser. **IMAGE 5 →**

Upon emigration to England, Blumberger would change her name to Jacqueline Groag, probably to establish a brand with her husband as they pursued collaborations.

From an early stage, Hilde/Jacqueline's work is marked by the use of stylised flowers and figures, many of which have a direct relation to her painted wooden doll collection. Jacqueline's designs bear the strong influence of Josef Hoffmann and Paul Klee. Until she and Jacques came to Britain, she continued an active life in art and was frequently photographed by Trude Fleischmann and another contemporary, Otto Skall.

IMAGE 7 ↓



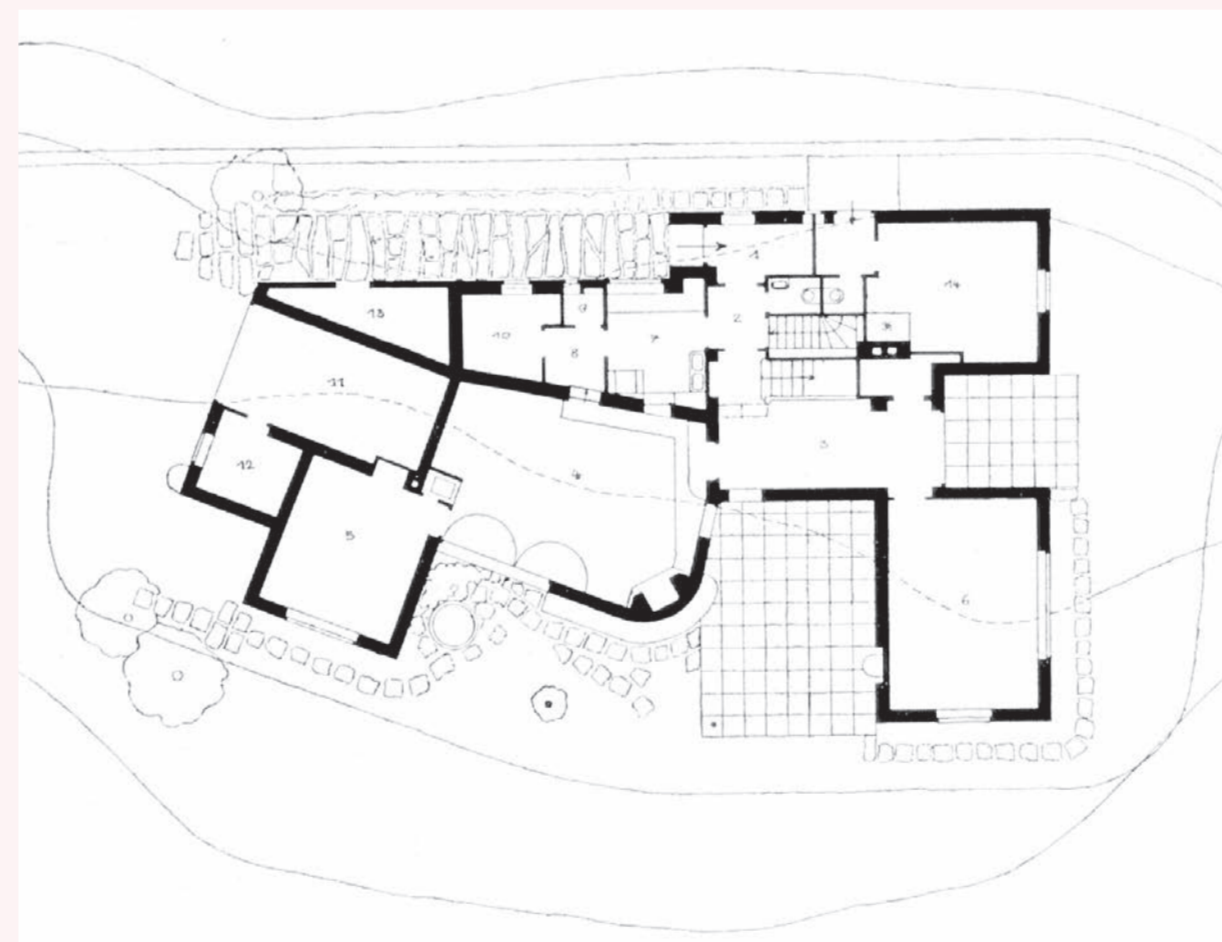
7
Hilde Blumberger, painting in her Vienna studio, circa 1930. Photo Otto Skall.



4
One in a series of textile designs awarded a gold medal at the Milan Triennale, 1933
Collection of Ursula Prokop, Vienna; gift from Jan Groag



5
Hilde Blumberger (I),
Sergius Pauser,
1930 or earlier
Courtesy Schütz Fine Art,
Vienna



8
Floor plan and garden front of the Eisler country house, Ostrava, 1936
Published in *Innendekoration*

Organic gestures

Meanwhile, from 1933 onward, as Jacques's buildings were featured in the international press, he became a leader in his cohort of architects. Gio Ponti in *Domus* had highly complementary words for his 1936 country house for Dr. Otto Eisler which features a unique vocabulary of painterly and organic gestures. He integrated the design of the house and the garden into the rolling hills of the surrounding Beskids, establishing a single unit of nature and architecture. **IMAGE 8 ↙**

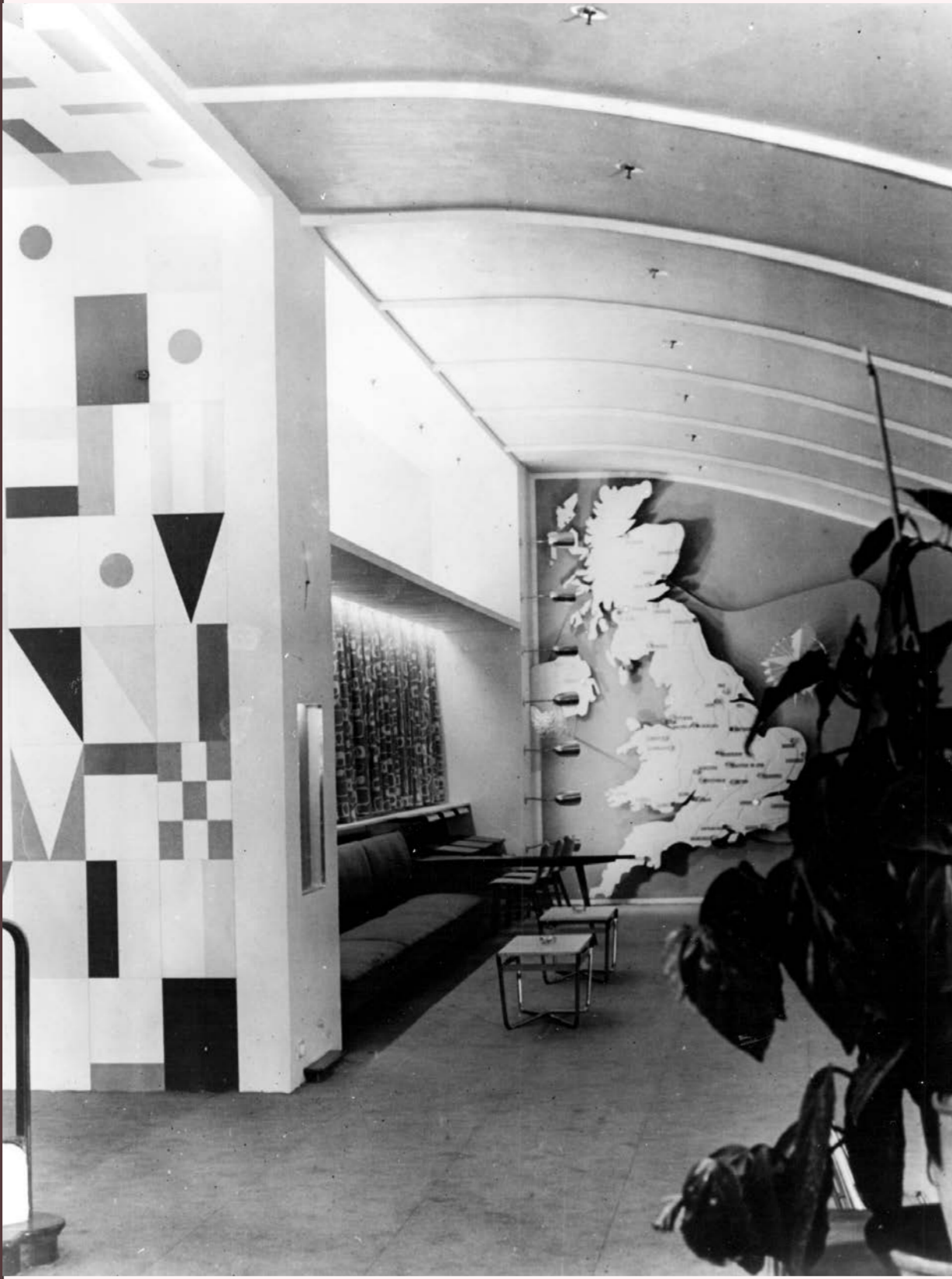
Toward the end of the thirties, Groag built a workers' housing complex in a suburb of the Silesian town Ostrava/Ostravice, **IMAGE 6 ↓** planned industrial buildings, and designed a fascinating gas station with a 'flying roof' in Brno. **IMAGE 1 ↖**



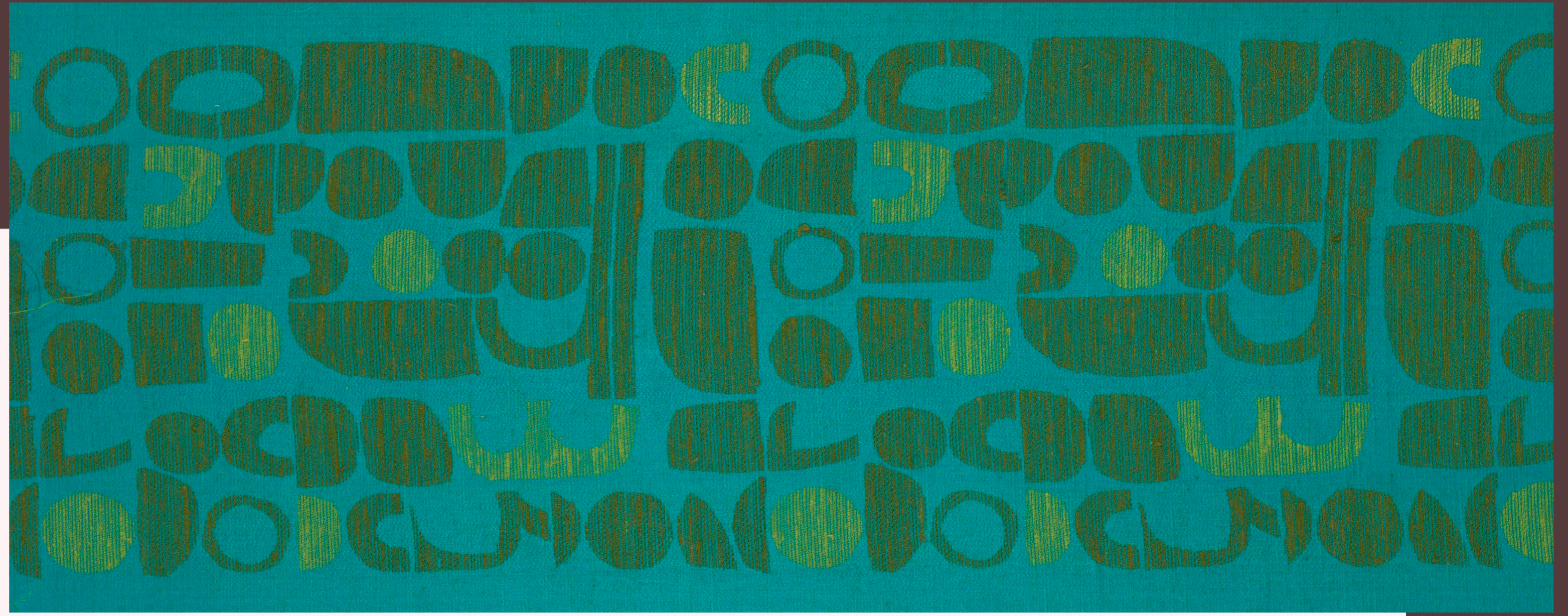
6
Workers housing,
Moravia-Ostrava/
Ostrava, c.1938
Published in *Architectural Review*

War and emigration

Following Austria's annexation into the Third Reich, Jacques and Jacqueline Groag fled to Prague. But after Czechoslovakia was occupied, the couple was forced to flee once again during the autumn of 1939, reaching England in rather adventurous circumstances by way of France and the Netherlands. Their relatives were not able to leave but instead were sent to Terezin (Theresienstadt), a concentration camp outside of Prague that most of the Groag family luckily survived. Jacques's brother, Emo, and Emo's son Willi (wife Mlada), along with Emo's wife, Trude, all worked in Terezin as art educators with the famous Austrian designer Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. Willi Groag was able to save the remarkable children's drawings created there, and it is thanks to him these memories survive in the Jewish Museum in Prague.

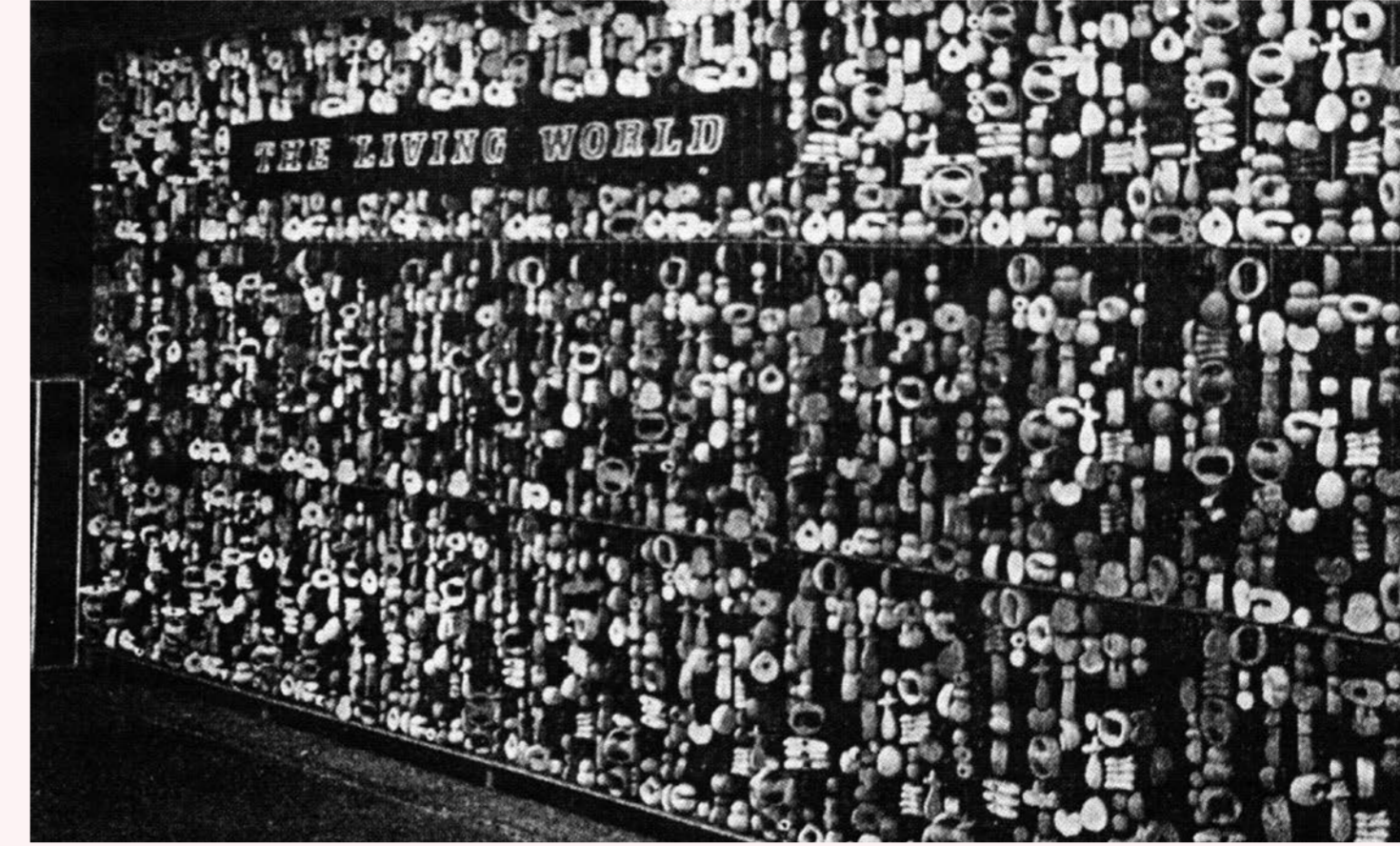


1
Collaboration: Information Center,
Festival of Britain, London, 1951
Courtesy Olamouc Museum of Art



2
Jacquard woven furnishing fabric, a design
related to her screen for *The Living World*
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO

The 1951 Festival of
Britain featured the
most fruitful interior
design collaboration
in their career



3
Screen designed for *The Living World* section of
the Dome of Discovery at the Festival of Britain

Isokon years

Postwar activities and exhibition design in Britain

Contrasting experiences

Exiled in Britain from 1939, and living for many years at the Isokon, the Groag couple had very different experiences. Jacques Groag had serious difficulties relating to his lack of language skills and the general wartime reduction in construction activity, to the point of only being able to work as an interior and furniture designer. As a furniture designer, Groag was particularly active in the Utility Furniture program, a project launched by the British government for the serial production of good-value furniture for the English market to meet the huge demands due to bomb damage caused by the Blitz.

IMAGE 5 ↓



5
Lounger, presented at the British Industries Fair, 1950
Published in *Design and Decoration*



6
Depression, painting by Jacques Groag, 1947
Courtesy Shmuel Groag



4
Jacques (left) in the Groag's Isokon flat, c.1946
Courtesy Marc Aronson

Jacques worked with Sir Gordon Russell on a small book for Penguin entitled *The Story of Furniture* (1946), which featured not only amusing drawings but also adroit renderings of modern furniture and interiors, some of which recall the interior views of his own houses built in Vienna and Czechoslovakia.

ON DISPLAY BELOW ↓

As a side activity, Jacques Groag taught at the Hammersmith School for Arts and Crafts. Increasing levels of depression over his later years led him to take up painting once again, and he spent a lot of his time in his local Hampstead Heath as a nature and scene painter, in addition to his continued interest in portraiture.

IMAGE 6 ←

Jacqueline, in contrast to Jacques's professional difficulties in Britain, embarked on a flourishing new career. With her European modernist background, she breathed fresh life into the British design and textile scene, and would become one of the leading fabric designers of the postwar years in Great Britain.

Creative collaboration

Some of the professional highlights for Jacques and Jacqueline Groag in this country were their collaborations on several postwar exhibitions: first, the modest *Modern Homes*, organised and curated by Jacques Groag in 1946 and featuring Jacques's 'one room living' solutions from the Vienna interwar period, followed that year by the significantly larger exhibition *Britain Can Make It*, which opened in a badly damaged wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum but exuded a spirit of optimism and was visited by 1.4 million people in just three months. Jacques was responsible for the exhibition design in the furniture and textiles section. He and Jacqueline designed large wall panels, and her textiles were generously draped as spatial divisions.

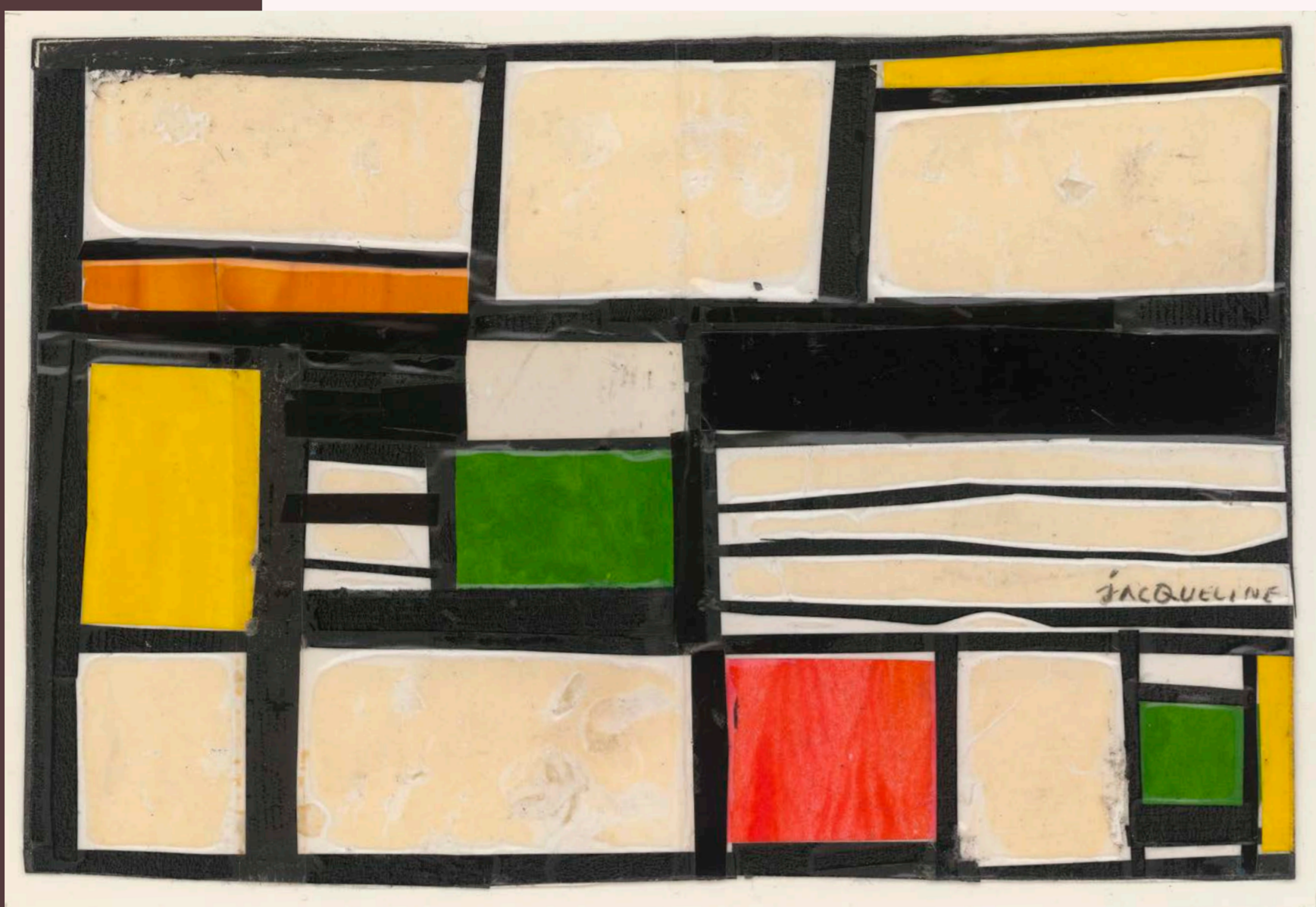
The largest exhibition by far was the Festival of Britain in 1951, which featured the most fruitful interior design collaboration of the couple in their career. Tasked by the presenting Council of Industrial Design with the creation of the information kiosk, the project provided the Groags a certain prestige as they created the visual trademark for the festival office in the centre of London on Regent Street.

IMAGE 1 ↗

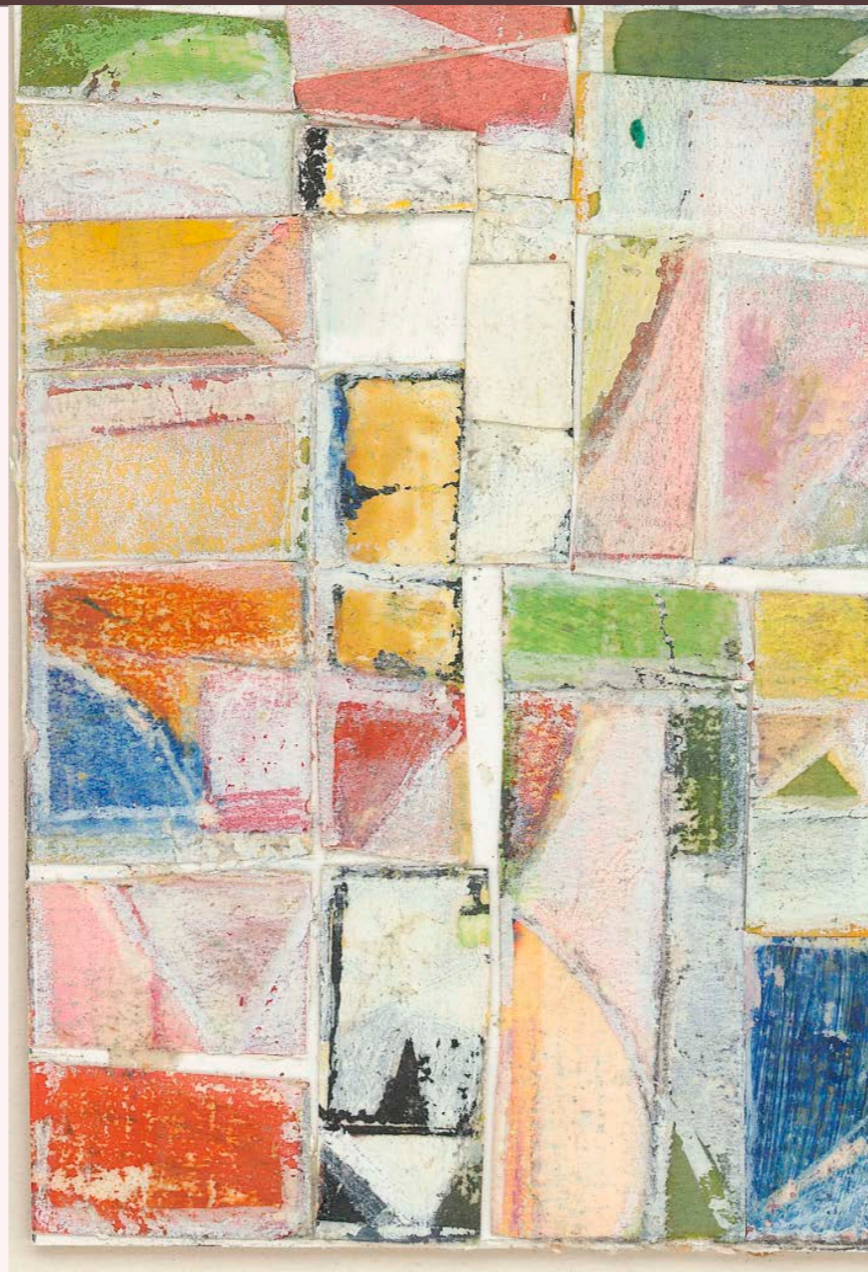
Jacqueline also designed a sculptural screen for *The Living World* section of the Dome of Discovery which she later carried into textile designs. IMAGES 2&3 ↑



7
Jacqueline Groag in the Isokon flat with her *Pebbles*
curtain in the background, early 1950s
Courtesy Marc Aronson



1 Card design for Hallmark, mixed media, c.1960s
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO



2 Untitled textile design, collage and paint, 1950s
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO



3 Mixed media and collage designs for textiles, 1950s
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO

Jacqueline did not merely draw, but constructed her work three-dimensionally

Rejuvenating textiles

Jacqueline Groag, textile designer

Influences and inspiration

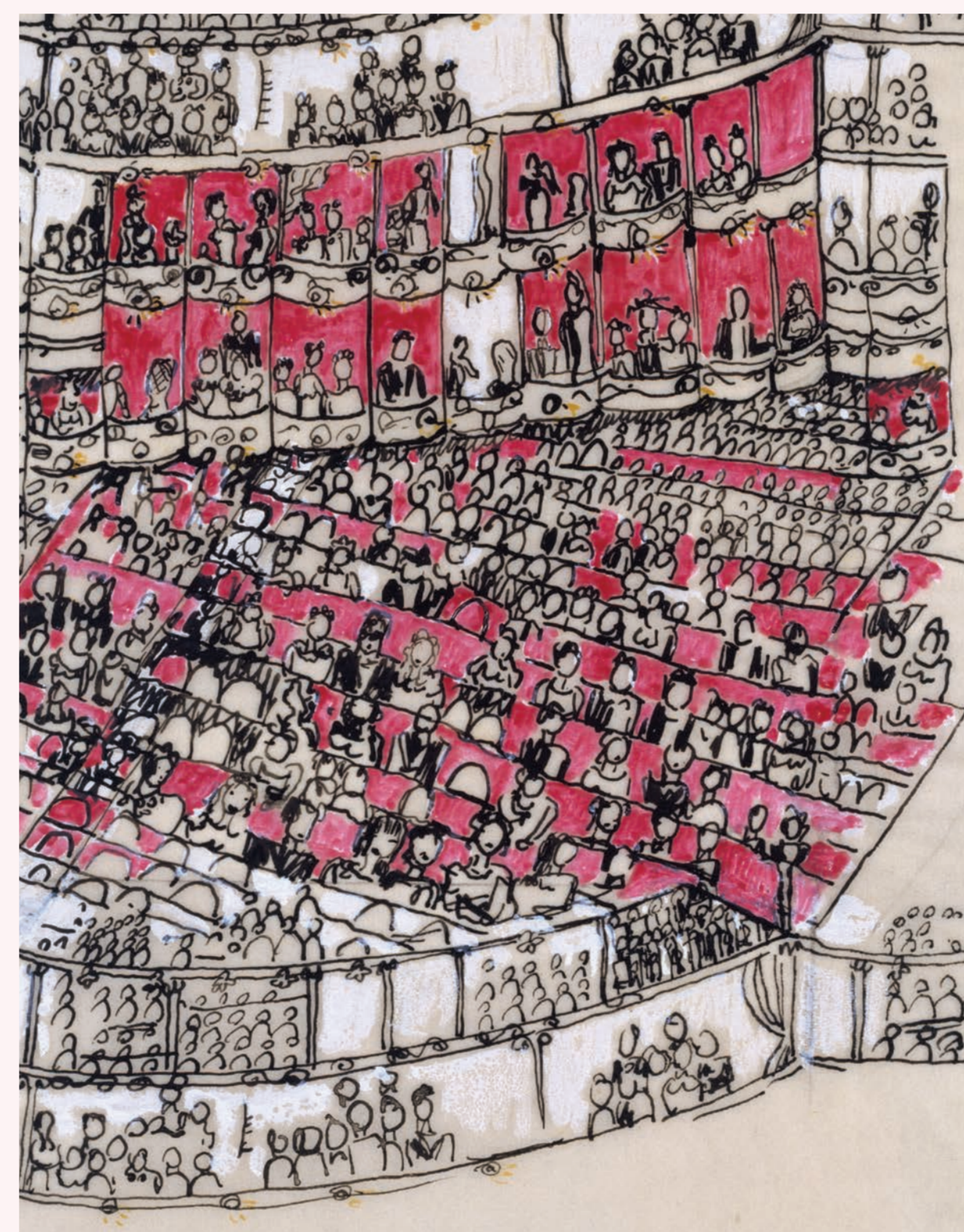
Starting at a young age in Vienna, Jacqueline (Hilde Blumberger) established international contacts through awards, prizes, and commissions with major fashion houses. Her cheerful and lyrical designs based on the Wiener Werkstätte aesthetics incorporated impulses from avant-garde painters such as Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Oskar Schlemmer, Jean Arp, and Raoul Dufy as well as architectonic elements and stylized 'Slavic' or Austrian inspirations. Invigorating British design, she quickly became a popular and sought-after freelance designer of textiles, wallpapers, and carpets. As early as 1945, she was mentioned together with artists such as Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland in key publications.



4 Future queen, Elizabeth II, wearing a Moulineux model with 'tulip' design by Jacqueline Groag, Cover of *Illustrated*, September 1946
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Key works

Several designs by Jacqueline Groag had remarkable success, such as the 'tulip' design – which graced the Molyneux model worn by Princess Elizabeth on the cover of *Illustrated* in 1946. **IMAGE 4** ↙ Similarly, *Gala Night* (1947) **IMAGE 5** ↓ and her graphic design for *Ambassador* magazine shows her humour, often characterized by a delicate irony. **ON DISPLAY BELOW** ↓



5 *Gala Night*, preliminary drawing for a printed dress fabric, pen and ink with white and pink body color, 1947
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London

FW Grafton & Co, John Lewis, Wareite, the Association of American Artists (AAA), and David Whitehead are just some of the many organizations who produced Jacqueline Groag's remarkable and diverse body of work. Her designs became a formative influence on English postwar design, casting a sure influence on the work of others, such as Lucienne Day, who would follow her.

Clifton Hill in St John's Wood, where the Groag couple finally established themselves in the 1950s, had a studio for Jacqueline. It was part of the refurbished Georgian house that she and Jacques Groag converted and refurbished into a modern home and was featured in several magazines. Completely unexpectedly, Jacques Groag died aged only 69, of a heart attack in January 1962, while travelling by bus to the London opera.

After Jacques

Jacqueline survived her husband for several decades and continued to be very successful in her work for British and international firms. In the 1950s and 1960s she designed textiles for transportation companies like the Sealink Ferry. In 1958, she was commissioned to design patterns for use in the interiors of BOAC's Boeing 707s and de Havilland Comet 4s; in 1960 she created decorative wall panels for British Rail's Silver Train; and in the late 1970s, she designed fabrics for London Transport stock. Some of her international work included creating plastic laminates designs for the Swedish company Perstorp, wallpaper designs for Rasch in Germany and Sandudd in Finland, and designs for Hallmark, the American card company. **IMAGE 1** ↗

Working methods

While Jacqueline Groag's work oscillates between abstraction and stylized representation, it also is created uniquely. Employing additive methods like collage, and subtractive methods like sgraffito, Jacqueline did not merely draw, but rather constructed her work three-dimensionally. **IMAGES 2 & 3** ↑

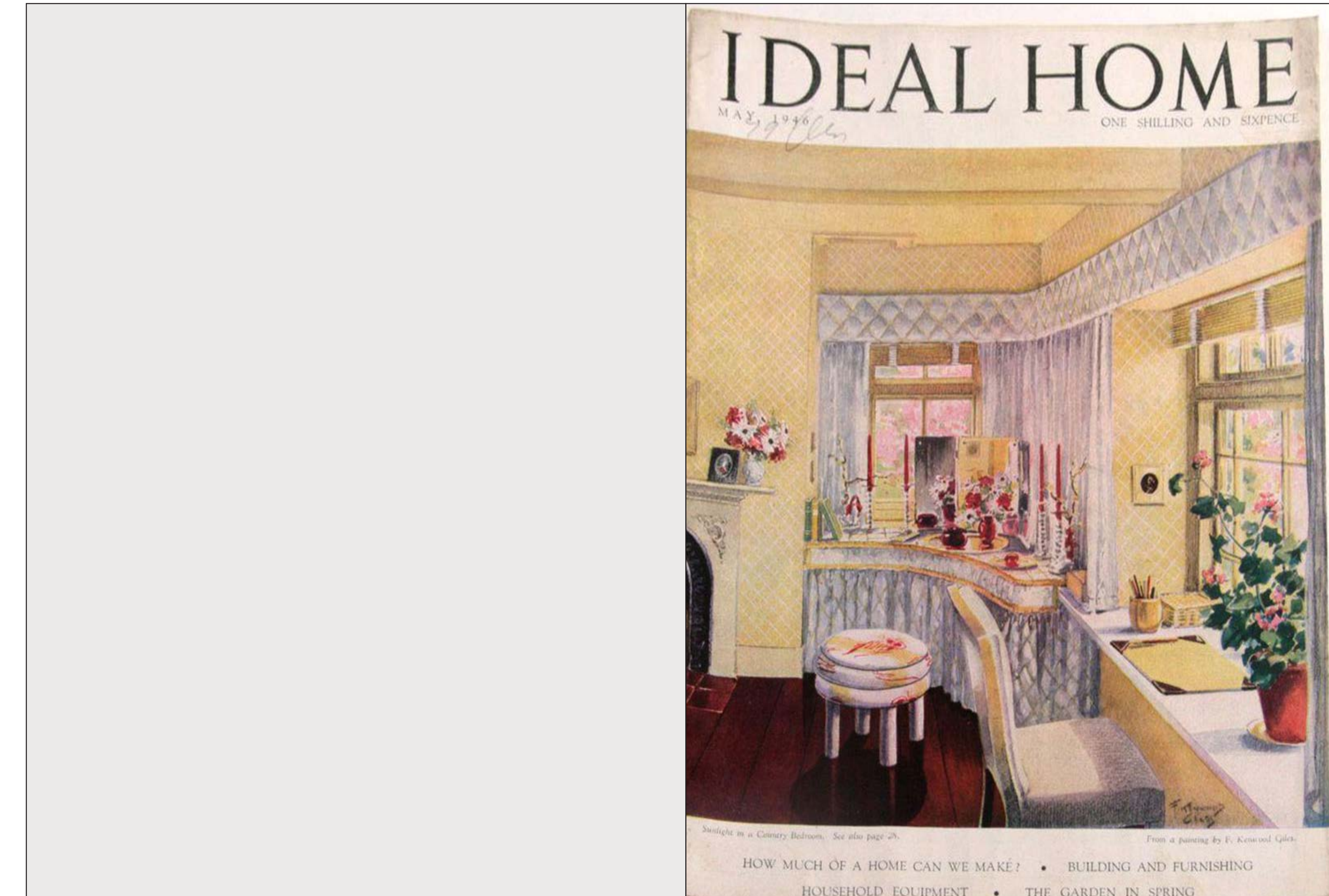
Legacy

In 1984, and by now an old woman, Jacqueline was awarded the title of RDI (Royal Designer to Industry). Two years later, she succumbed to cancer.

Jacqueline's textiles and patterns can still be found actively in use today. Her work was the subject of a travelling exhibition in the United States in 2013 and 2014, and recently some of her textiles were collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Jacques and Jacqueline Groag were distinguished residents of the Isokon who made outstanding contributions to modern architecture and design both in Europe and Britain. The Isokon Gallery is proud to remember and celebrate their remarkable lives and work.

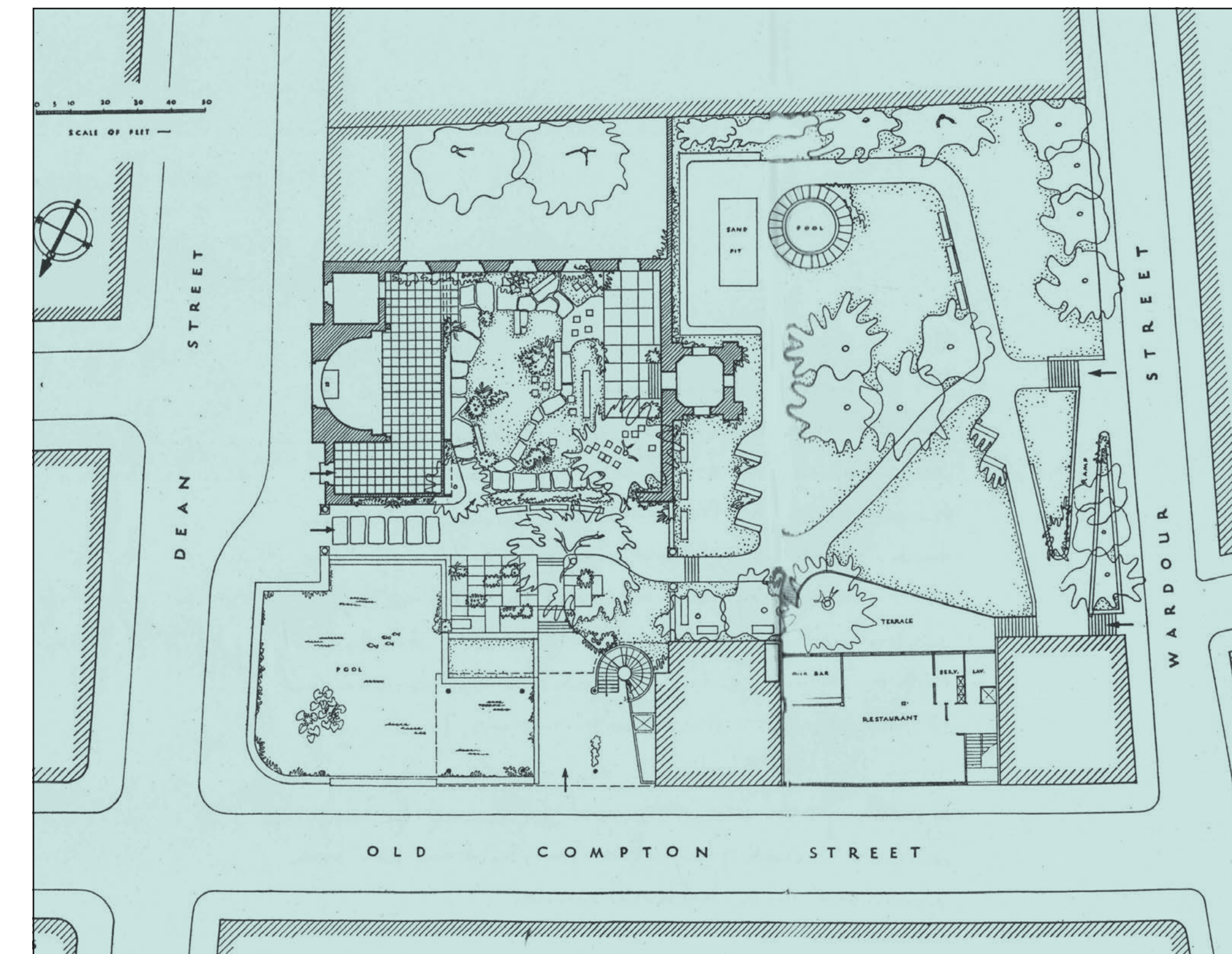
Exhibition Credits
Researched and written
by Ursula Prokop
& Carrie Paterson
www.doppelhouse.com/groag
Designed by Tom de Gay



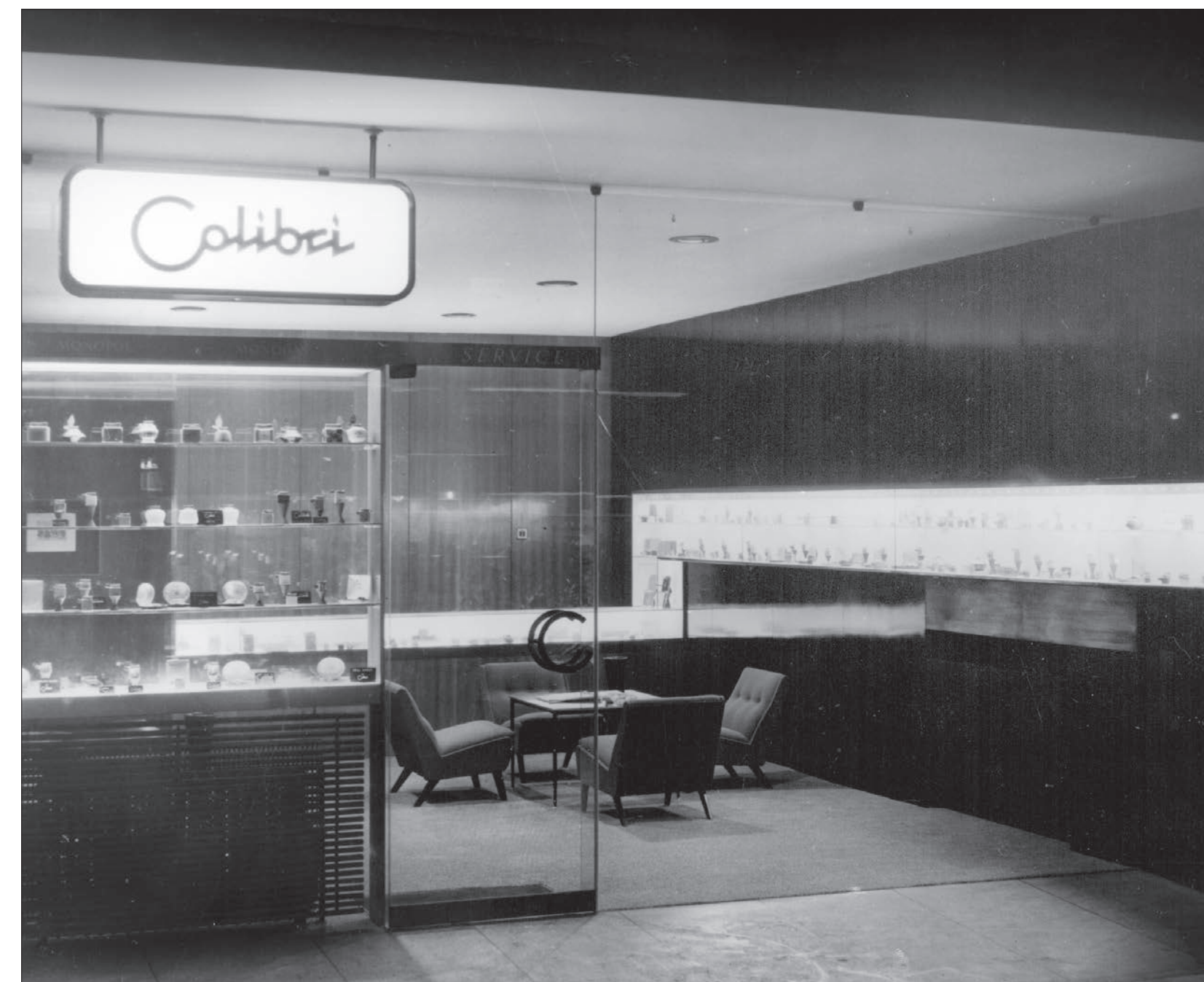
Ideal Home magazine, May 1946.
Produced in coordination with the Ideal Home exhibition and featuring a number of Jacques Groag's projects from Central Europe.

Handwriting by former resident of Jacques Groag's Werkbundsiedlung duplex, Doris Schanzer Paterson, age 19, after her and her brother Karl's adoption in Australia to get them out of Nazi-controlled Europe.

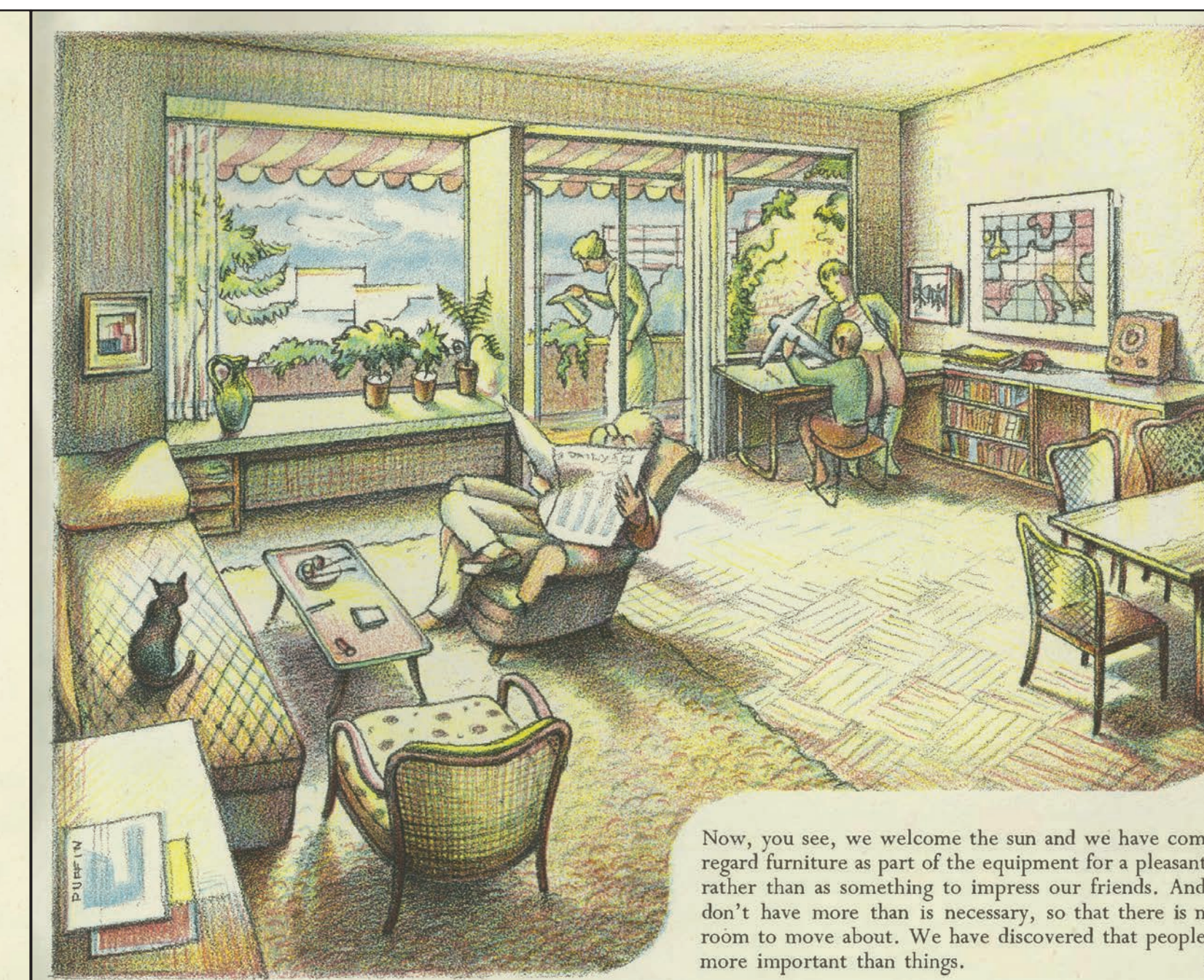
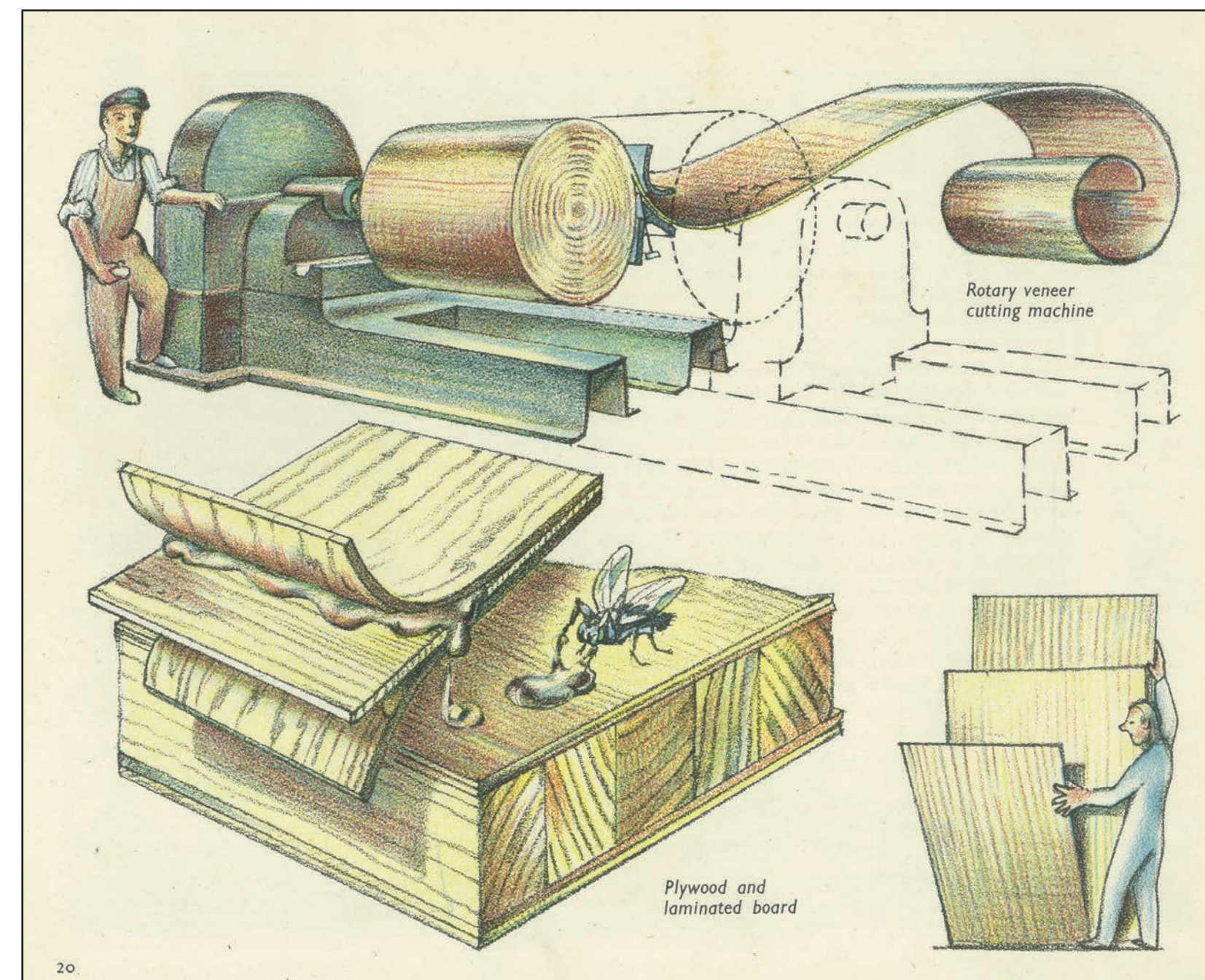
The magazine was sent by Doris to their father Stefan Schanzer, who survived the war by escaping to New York following the fall of France. It was many decades before they learned the full story of the architect of the house they had to abandon.
Paterson Family Archive



Jacques Groag, redesign of the neighbourhood surrounding St. Anne in Soho, London, 1944-5
Published in The Architectural Press



Jacques Groag, Colibri store, possibly London, c.1955
Courtesy Olomouc Museum of Art



The Story of Furniture by Jacques Groag and Sir Gordon Russell (Penguin, 1946).

Groag's illustrations of residential interiors feature several of his own furniture designs and built-in furniture pieces as well as glazing and awnings reminiscent of Groag's past projects in Olomouc and Vienna.

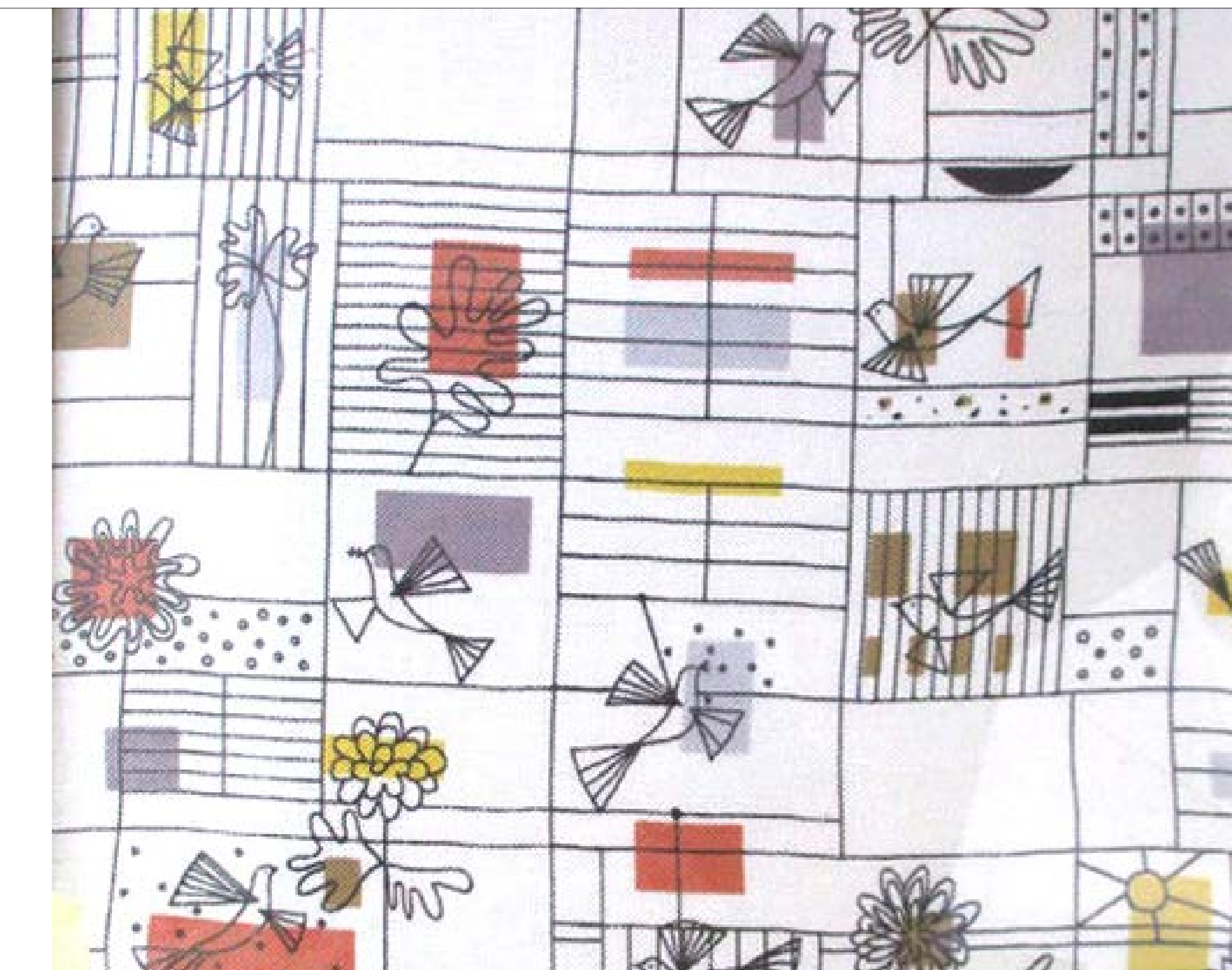
Courtesy Magnus England

Jacques Groag, armchair with wicker, plumping, and upholstered cushions, 1928

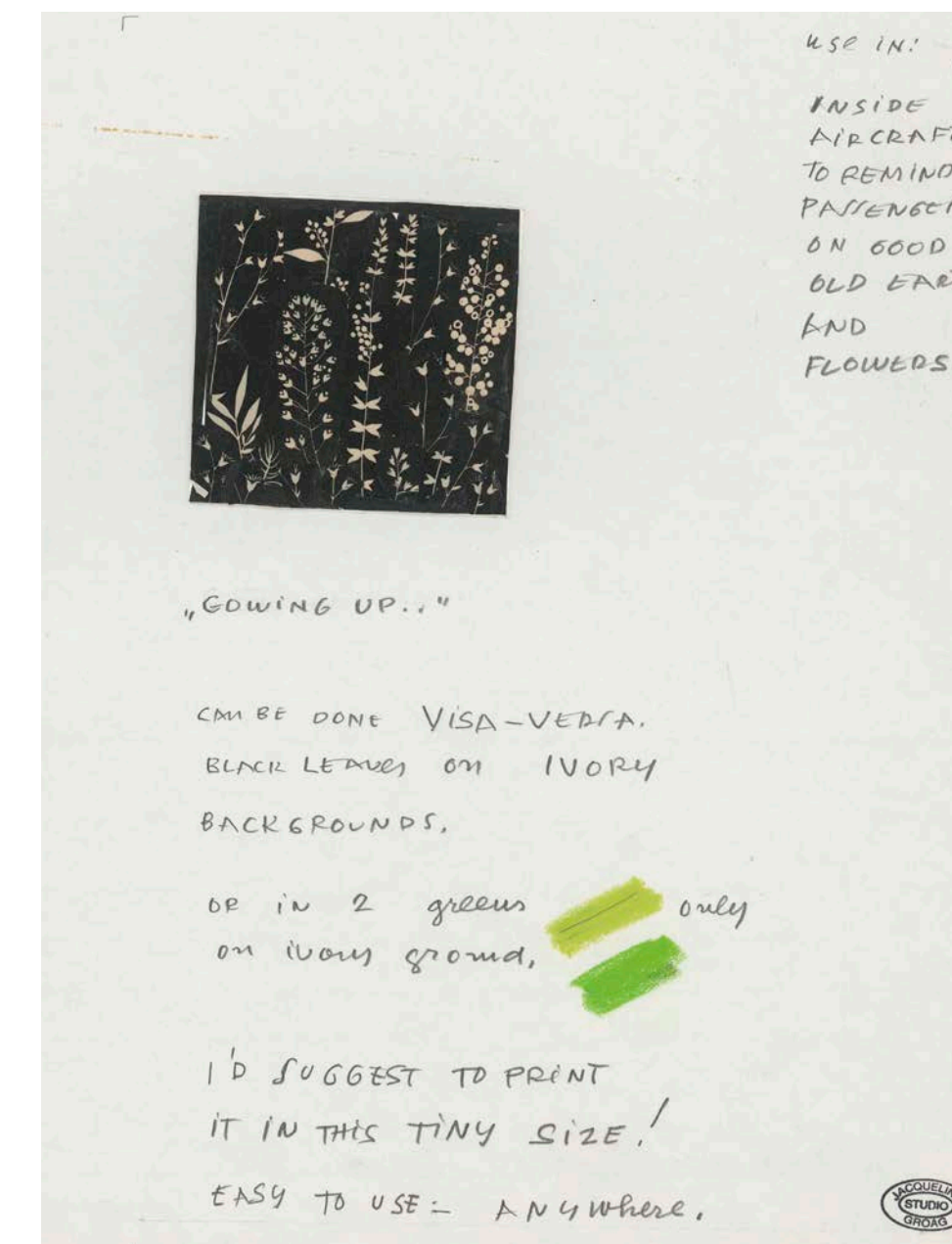


Courtesy Olomouc Museum of Art

Jacqueline Groag, Birds & flowers, roller-printed rayon, manufactured by David Whitehead Ltd.



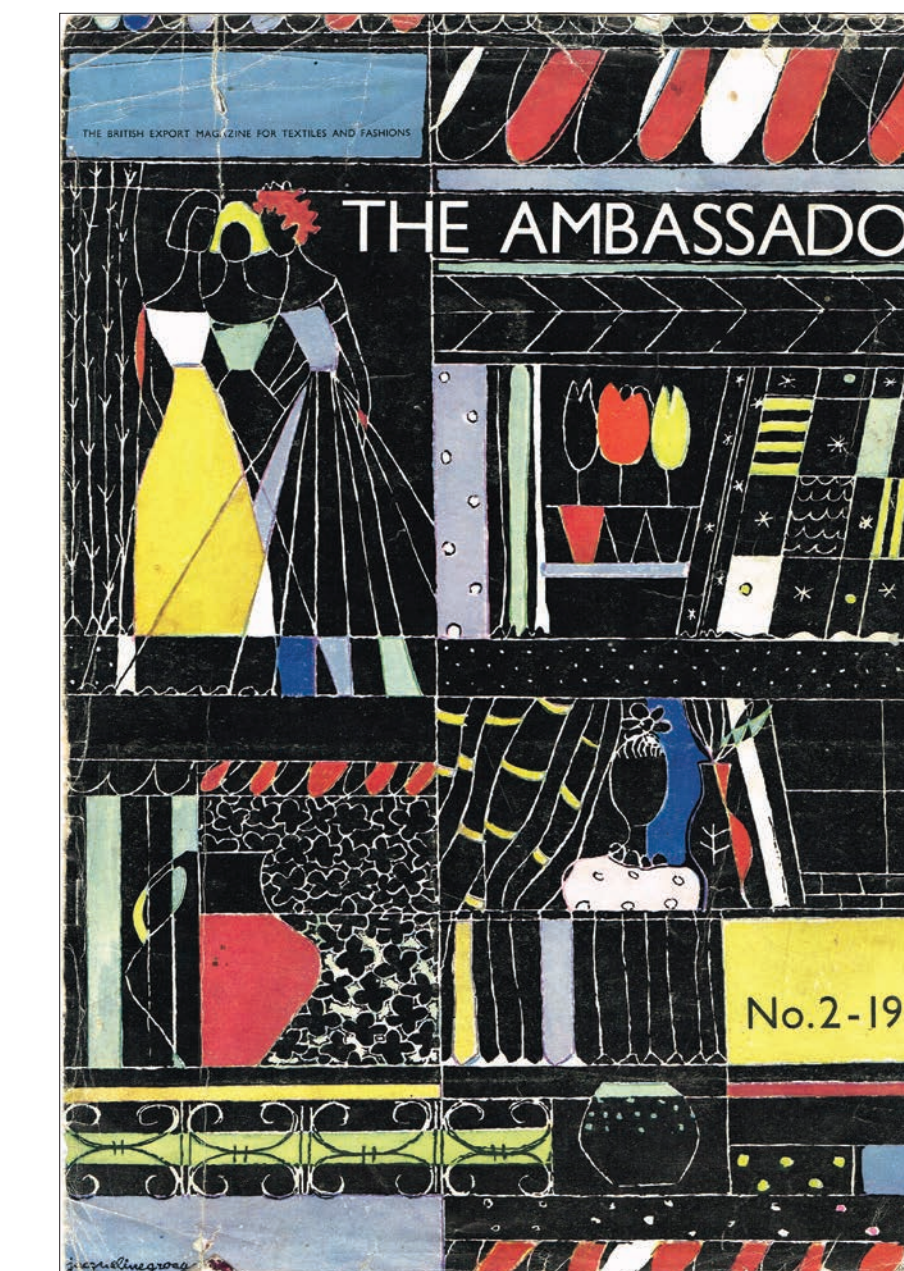
Jacqueline Groag, untitled textile design, printed cotton, manufactured by John Lewis, 1950s
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO



Jacqueline Groag, design board created for BOAC transatlantic airlines, 1959
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO



Jacqueline Groag, design for BOAC transatlantic airlines, collage, pencil and hand scraffitto, c.1958
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, CO



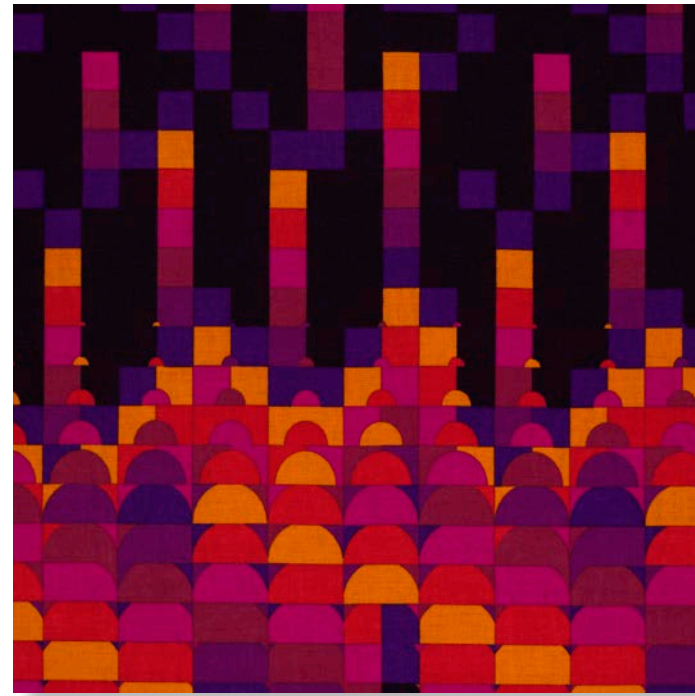
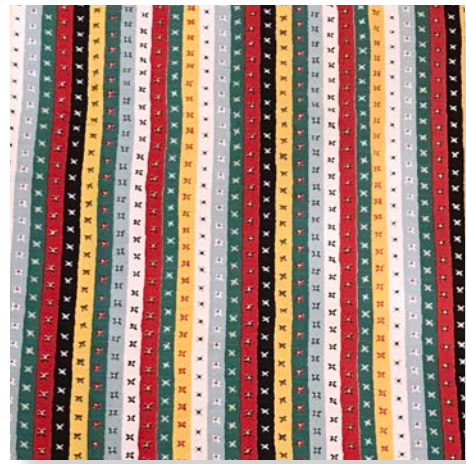
Ambassador covers with artwork by Jacqueline Groag
Courtesy Shmuel Groag

Advertisement in Ambassador magazine featuring Stoplights (1952) by Jacqueline Groag, manufactured by David Whitehead Ltd, circa 1953. Stoplights is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Courtesy Shmuel Groag

Fabrics stretched over frames and suspended horizontally from ceiling above exhibit



Caption 170x200mm
Displayed to right of exhibition panels.



Fabrics displayed above

Original Jacqueline Groag pieces.

Left to right:

Multistripe curtain fabric, early 1950s.
Manufactured by John Lewis.

Untitled dress fabric, c.1967. Printed
cotton, manufactured by John Lewis.

Pebbles, textile design based on
backdrop for the Festival of Britain
exhibition Information Centre, 1951.
Roller-printed rayon, manufactured by
David Whitehead Ltd.