

Murray, Keith 1892 - 1981

Keith Day Pearce Murray [commonly known as Keith Murray] was born in Auckland, New Zealand on 5 July 1892 and emigrated with his parents to England at the age of 14. During World War One he served with distinction in the Royal Flying Corps following which he trained as an architect at the Architectural Association in London, graduating in 1921.

After leaving the AA, Murray worked for a while producing drawings for architectural magazines. However, visits to the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925 and to the Exhibition of Swedish Industrial Arts held in London in 1931 seem to have decided him on a career in the decorative arts. He produced some experimental glass designs for Whitefriars Glassworks, but the shapes were not suited to the production processes used by the company. In 1932 he obtained work as a freelance designer with Stevens & Williams at their glassworks at Brierley Hill in Dudley. He subsequently produced some 1,200 designs for the company between 1932-39.

Having seen his designs for Stevens & Williams, Josiah Wedgwood & Sons approached Murray with a request for him to design some 'modern' shapes for their company. His response was the '3765' vase. Introduced in 1933, the vase is recognised as a modern classic and remained in production until the 1960s. In addition to further work for Wedgwood, Murray also designed silverware for Mappin & Webb in the 1930s.

By 1936 Murray's reputation as a designer was sufficiently established for him to be appointed one of the first ten Designers for Industry (DI) [In 1937 renamed Royal Designer for Industry (RDI)] by the Royal Society of Arts.

In 1936 Murray opened an architectural office in London with [Charles Stanley White](#) (1893-1966) as Keith Murray & C.S. White (Murray & White), and in the late 1930s Murray was employed in his capacity as an architect by Wedgwood for whom he drew up plans for their new factory at Barlaston.

The Murray & White partnership was probably dissolved in 1939 following the outbreak of World War Two. During the war Murray served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1942.

In 1945 he set up the architectural practice Murray, Ward & Partners with [Basil Ward](#) (1902-1976). The same year, he was made a Master of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry.

From the late 1940s Murray concentrated on his architectural work. By 1950 he and White had formed a partnership with [Stanley Churchill Ramsey](#) (1882-1968) which operated as Ramsey, Murray & White [Ward's name did not appear in the title of the practice]. The firm had an office at 32 Wigmore Street, London. In 1955 Ward became a partner in the practice which was renamed Ramsey, Murray, White & Ward. The firm designed numerous industrial and office buildings, including the Hong Kong air terminal and the British European Airways engineering base in London airport. Murray died on 20 May 1981.

Examples of Murray's work are in the permanent collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; the Wedgwood Museum in Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, England; Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York; Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand.

Worked in
New Zealand
UK
Australia
Bibliography

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Craw, Robin and Tyler, Linda. Keith Murray in context. Napier New Zealand: Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust, 1996
Jenkins, Douglas Lloyd. 40 legends of New Zealand design. Auckland, New Zealand: Random House New Zealand, 2006

Johnson, Stephen. Keith Murray designer. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Gemini Publications, 2006

Keith Murray: a travelling exhibition. London, England: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1976.

Taylor, Diane. 'Keith Murray, architect and designer for industry'. Twentieth Century Architecture. The Journal of the Twentieth Century Society [Industrial Architecture Special Issue] no.1, Summer 1994 pp.45-54

Links

- Examples of Keith Murray's work in the Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/agent/1644>
- Alun R. Graves, 'Murray, Keith Day Pearce (1892–1981)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online [Subscription service]
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61753>
- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Murray_%28ceramic_artist%29
- Work by Keith Murray in the Powerhouse Museum Collection, Sydney
<https://collection.maas.museum/search?q=Keith%20Murray>
- Brooklyn Museum
<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/artists/6996/objects>
- Victoria & Albert Museum, London
https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?q=keith%20murray&year_made_from=&year_made_to=
- Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum
<https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/people/18044797/bio>
- Gordon Campbell. Keith Day Pearce Murray. Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online [Subscription service]
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2073201?q=keith%20murray>
- Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain & Ireland 1851-1951
https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/person.php?id=msib4_1237294351&search=