

# **EAMES**

*the architect and the painter*

A film by

Jason Cohn & Bill Jersey

84 minutes, HDCAM, Stereo/Dolby E, English, 2011



## **FIRST RUN FEATURES**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

The “Eames Era” began in the optimistic flush of American victory during World War II, and the global impact of the Eames aesthetic continues to grow unabated today. With *Eames: The Architect and the Painter*, Jason Cohn and Bill Jersey have made a definitive and unprecedented cinematic foray into the private world of the Renaissance-style studio that Charles and Ray Eames conceived in a cavernous warehouse on a gritty street in Venice Beach, CA. *Eames: The Architect and the Painter*, insightfully narrated by James Franco, is the first film to be made about Charles and Ray since their deaths — and the only one that peers deeply inside the link between their artistic collaboration and sometimes tortured love for one another.

Despite their unrivaled impact on American design, the personas of the steadfastly private Charles and Ray Eames have remained oblique beyond the giddy publicity photos they doled out to inquiring journalists while they were alive. *Eames: The Architect and the Painter* draws extensively from a virgin cache of archival material, visually stunning films, love letters, photographs and artifacts produced in mind-boggling volume by Charles and Ray with their talented staff during the hyper-creative forty-year epoch of the Eames Office.

Interviews with family members, including Charles’ insightful grandson Eames Demetrios, and design historians guide the viewer on an intimate tour of the Eames era, while junior designers who were swept into the 24-7 world of “The Eamery,” as they called it, flesh out a fascinatingly complex blueprint of this husband-and-wife powerhouse. Featuring interviews with Charles Eames’ daughter, Lucia and grandson, Eames Demetrios, filmmaker Paul Schrader, TED founder Richard Saul Wurman, noted architect Kevin Roche and a cast of former Eames Office designers, including Jeannine Oppewall, Deborah Sussman and Gordon Ashby, *Eames: The Architect and the Painter* provides a candid view of the emotional inner lives of two great American artists as they applied their genius to practical problems and innovation, not out of a sense of ego, but out of sheer creative necessity.

## **ABOUT CHARLES AND RAY EAMES**

Charles and Ray's career symbiotically tracked major developments in postwar America. Just as California was becoming a viable counterweight to the cultural power of New York, the Eameses moved to Los Angeles. Their light and whimsical designs, particularly the landmark house they built in the Pacific Palisades, became emblematic of a new West Coast lifestyle whose influence reached Europe, Asia, and beyond. And, as American society began shifting away from manufacturing and towards an economy based on ideas and communications, the Eames Office was always a step ahead. *Eames: The Architect and The Painter* incorporates clips from their films and exhibitions for clients like IBM, Westinghouse, Polaroid and the U.S. government, which pushed the envelope for communicating complex ideas to mass audiences.

One of the most lasting Eamesian innovations was the technique known as "information overload." Their 1959 project "Glimpses of the USA" featured thousands of images of American life projected simultaneously on seven enormous screens. It was shown to Russian audiences at the height of the Cold War. The strategy was later employed in the landmark IBM-sponsored film "Powers of Ten," and with the popular but widely criticized bicentennial exhibition, "The World of Franklin and Jefferson" foreshadowed the layering of massive amounts of information on the Internet.

The work of Charles and Ray Eames remains an ideal of design at its most virtuous. It represents an alchemical combination of beauty and purpose, for designers and consumers alike. Though the Eameses are best known for their ubiquitous furniture and the signature innovation of the molded plywood chair, this essential documentary shows Charles and Ray applying the same process of inquiry to architecture, large-scale exhibitions, and their quirky, beautiful films. As Franco's narration quickly makes clear, the film's subtitle contains a grain of irony. Ray was a brilliantly trained painter who rarely painted, and Charles was an architecture school dropout who was never licensed to practice. Contemporary design historians may argue about how to delineate Charles and Ray's respective roles in the prodigious Eames design output, but this documentary reveals how Charles, Ray and the other Eames Office designers themselves actually dealt with these endemic questions of authorship and control. The film shines a light on the genuine legacy of Eames design, which elevates the marriage of aesthetic refinement and functionality to a higher plane.

## **CREDITS**

<b>Producers</b>	Jason Cohn and Bill Jersey, Producers
<b>Editor</b>	Don Bernier
<b>Narrator</b>	James Franco
<b>Writer</b>	Jason Cohn
<b>Co-Producer</b>	Camille Servan-Schreiber
<b>Associate Producer &amp; Archivist</b>	Arwen Curry
<b>Musical Score</b>	Michael Bacon
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Shirley Kessler
<b>Produced by</b>	Quest Productions and Bread and Butter Films
<b>Cast:</b>	Lucia (Charles Eames' daughter)
	Eames Demetrios (Eames' grandson)
	Paul Schrader
	Richard Saul Wurman (TED Founder)
	Kevin Roche (Architect)
	Jeannine Oppewall (former Eames office designer)
	Deborah Sussman (former Eames office designer)
	Gordon Ashby (former Eames office designer)

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