floral decorative vocabulary of Baroque art in the Protestant Netherlands and in England. Baroque architecture, too, displayed this sense of drama with its boldly massed classical forms and powerful silhouettes. Interiors were dominated by a carefully planned sequence of rooms, each with a particular significance. Controlled contrasts of size, shape, colour and texture were at the heart of the effect of the formal Baroque state chamber.

The rapid development of trade with non-western cultures during the 17th century resulted in a flood of new and exotic materials to European cities which were quickly adopted by craftsmen to achieve the effects of novelty and surprise that were much prized during this period. For example, the English writer Aphra Behn, who possibly travelled to the Dutch Pacific colony of Surinam in the 1660s, described in her best-known work, *Oroonooko* (1688), the wonder felt by Europeans at their discovery of the richly coloured woods of the tropics: "The very wood of all these trees have an intrinsic value above common timber; for they are, when cut, of different colours, glorious to behold, and bear a price considerable to inlay withal."

The undoubted centre of the Baroque was Rome, where the Catholic Church used this powerful new style as a means of reasserting its authority in the wake of the challenge of the Protestant Reformation. However, while the emergence of a Baroque style in painting began in Italy late in the 16th century, the development of Baroque interiors can be traced to Rome during the 1620s, a decade that also saw the beginnings of the Baroque interior in France and the Netherlands. Therefore, although the influence of the Roman Baroque remained strong throughout the 17th century, even in the Protestant countries, each region developed its own version of the style. Indeed, in most cases Roman Baroque forms were used for their classical references, Rome having long been the centre of the antique world, rather than for their Catholic associations.

Among the early promoters of the Baroque in Rome were the Barberini family, whose most prominent member was Urban VIII, elected Pope in 1623. He was the principal patron of the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini, whose genius for creating dramatic architectural spaces and whose powerful modelling of the human form were to influence designers all over Europe.
such as three-legged chairs and tables, were not uncommon either.

However, the impulse towards the organic did not exclusively determine the form of furniture in the 1950s. Between the turn of the 19th century when the organic and naturalistic Art Nouveau style had dominated design, and the middle of the 20th century when organic abstract "Contemporary" design developed, the Modern Movement had intervened. Modernism had an enduring impact on the thinking of the architects and designers who were working during the 1950s, many of whom had been trained during the inter-war years. Rectilinear forms in buildings and furniture were an expression of Modern Movement principles, as was the desire to perfect structures that were modular and which could be made from prefabricated components. These impulses influenced the development of storage furniture during the late 1940s and 1950s, in particular the unit furniture and the Storage wall shelving systems devised by George Nelson and Charles Eames. Interestingly it was these designers who were at the same time creating such strongly organic seating designs for Herman Miller, including the moulded fibreglass swagged legged chair designed by Nelson, and the bent wire chairs designed by Eames. One of the most interesting characteristics of 1950s design was this counterpoint and interplay between the creation of geometric structures and buildings, and organic furniture and accessories.

Although there were common characteristics which pervaded the "Contemporary" style internationally, it was interpreted in a highly distinctive way and given very different emphases in each individual country depending on the circumstances which prevailed. In Britain the "Contemporary" style was playful and somewhat quirky. It was strongly coloured by the fact that it was associated with an attitude of determined gaiety as the country struggled to break out of a demoralising period of post-war austerity, and self-consciously endeavoured to raise its spirits. Even the Government admitted that the Festival of Britain of 1951 was a propaganda exercise intended to act as "a tonic to the nation". The furnishing fabrics designed by Lucienne Day for firms such as Heal's during the 1950s typify the spirit of the time, especially Calyx, produced for the Festival, and it was in the field of surface pattern design - wallpapers, plastic laminates and carpets included - that Britain made its most original contribution to the development of the "Contemporary" style. The bold progressive abstract patterns commissioned by the wallpaper firm, John Line, and the textile manufacturer, David Whitehead, from leading British artists and designers of the day were particularly significant, and were much favoured by architects for use in "Contemporary" interiors.

The Italian interpretation of the "Contemporary" style was, if anything, even more idiosyncratic than that of the British. Isolated during the 1930s because of the political situation which prevailed, Italian architects and designers made a vigorous recovery after the war, re-establishing contacts with the