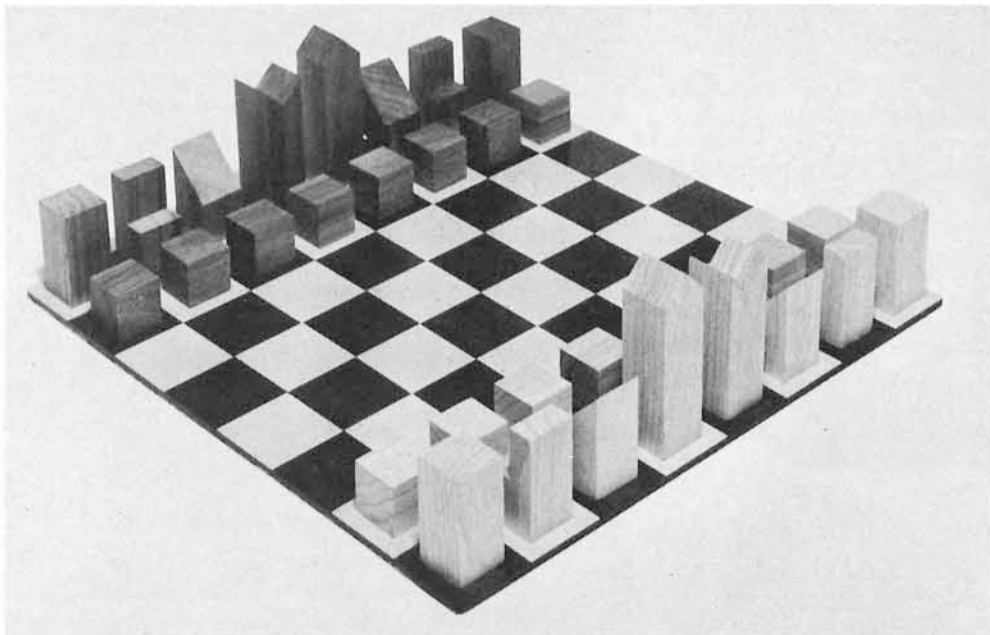
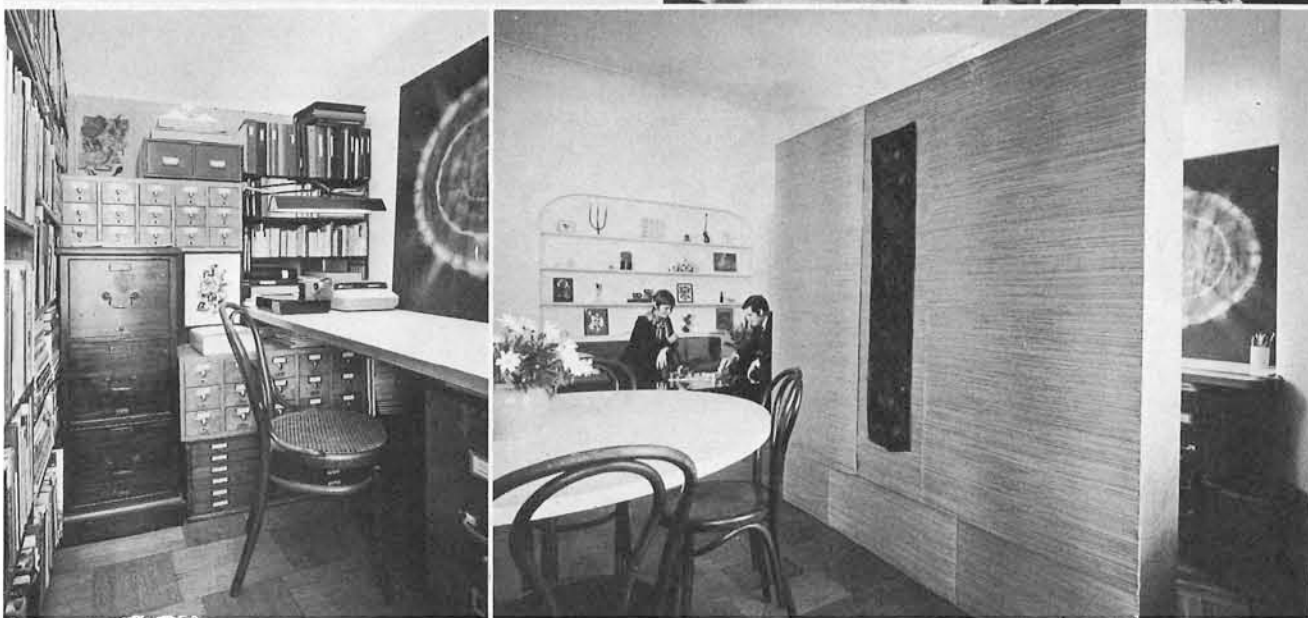
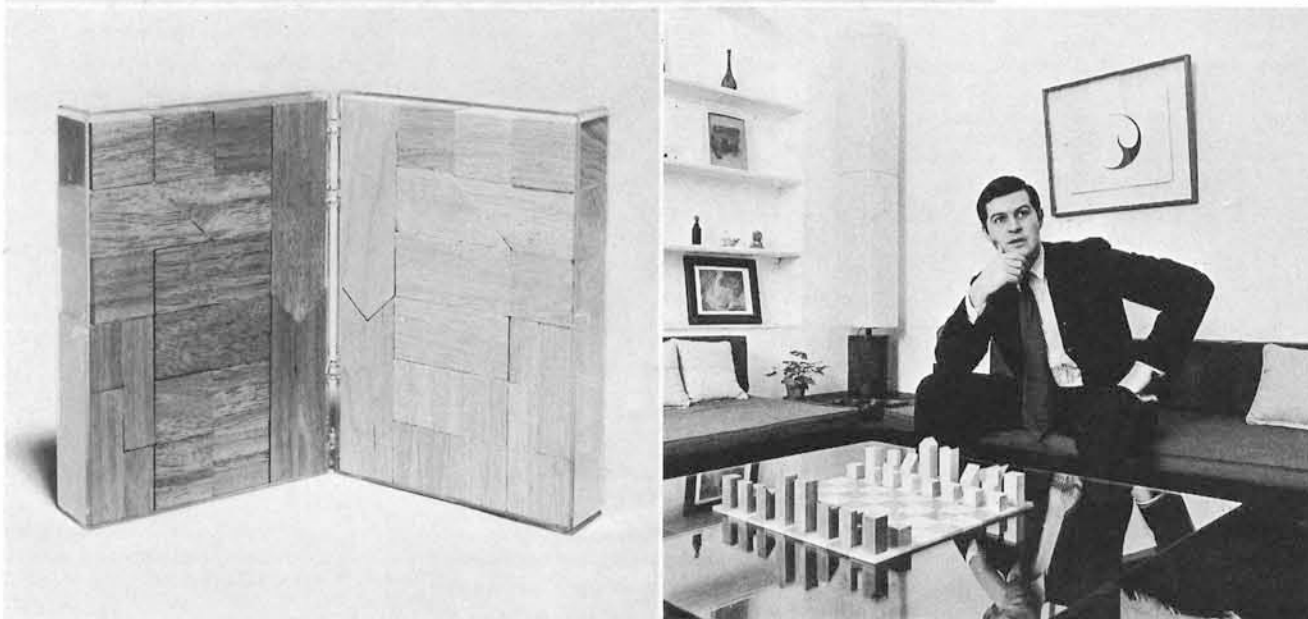




The photographs show Graham's chess set ready for play, boxed and on a table with Graham in his living room. Bottom right: another view of the Graham living room showing the ingenious Tatami covered study—in the background, Graham and his wife Rosemary. Bottom left: interior of the study.



Cavalier Of The Month: **Lanier Graham**

By Parker Hodges

If there is any word with more fusty a connotation than "librarian" it is probably "curator." Visions of wispy old ladies in maroon serge dresses and sensible shoes inevitably arise in the minds of the uninitiate. And besides, the quote curator unquote, spending all his or her time with "old" things, must not smell too good, really. Happily, these preconceptions are about as true as the belief that burying a potato will cure warts. Curators, and especially young curators at Manhattan's famous Museum of Modern Art, can be as hip a group as is possible.

Lanier Graham is the twenty-nine year old Associate Curator of Architecture and Design at the Modern, one of the youngest associate curators in American museum history. Graham's purview is the Study Center of the Department of Architecture and De-

sign—an amazing gathering of the best design of the past century, including architectural drawings and models, furniture, and objects ranging from posters and teaspoons to tennis racquets and mixing bowls. The elegant installation in the museum's mid-Manhattan International Study Center was supervised by Graham.

Among the items in the prestigious collection overseen by Graham is a Graham-designed chess set, each piece articulating the power and pattern of its moves. Chess is one of Graham's obsessions. Late last year Walker published his book *Chess Sets*, which surveys the design and theory of chess sets during their 1,000 year history—it's already recognized as a small classic in the field.

Graham and his wife Rosemary live in one of a row of *beaux-arts* townhouses on the upper West Side of Manhattan (the houses were recently designated architectural landmarks by the city). But it's not quite as grand as it sounds. The one-time mansion is divided into apartments, and the Grahams fit their life into two moderately-sized but high-ceilinged rooms, augmented by a closet-sized kitchen. But Graham, recently faced with the task of writing a long monograph on the French Art Nouveau designer Hector Guimard, devised an ingenious solution to his space shortage. In one corner of his bow-windowed living room, he built an open-topped study, just large enough to hold his desk, some files and his books. The space, which looks out onto the street, adds an efficient extra room to the apart-

ment, while apparently not reducing the size of the living room—a blessing in New York's famous space crush.

Graham on being a curator: "One of the privileges of a modern curator is the ability to not only collect and classify but to influence direction. A curator of medieval armor can, naturally, only collect medieval armor—I mean that's all there is in his field. Whereas in the modern area, a trend can be encouraged by an exhibition—or even by commissioning something. That's how the chess set got designed. I didn't like any of the existing sets that much so I designed one I'd like. Luckily, it came out well enough that the museum acquired it for the collections."

On designing a chess set: "It took only twenty minutes to work out the shapes for all but two of the pieces. But the King and Queen took six months."

On Art Nouveau: "It was the first of the modern movements in design—self-consciously so. Its fad status has faded so that we can now do a show of the work of Guimard—furniture, architecture, etc.—seriously and objectively as beautiful works."

**A short course
in the wearing of
many hats — curator,
designer, collector
and writer.**