

Bard College
Department of Art History

***A Survey of European and American Decorative Arts and Design from
1750 to the Present***

Thursday 2:30-3:50

Friday 10:30-11:50

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Course Description:

This class will survey the history of the decorative arts from the Rococo period to the present. Students will explore the evolution of historical styles as they appear in furniture, interiors, fashion, ceramics, metalwork, and graphic and industrial design. Objects will be evaluated in their historical contexts, and formal, technical and aesthetic questions will also be considered. This course is taught by two PhD students from the Bard Center for the History of the Decorative Arts under the supervision of Professor Wolf. Two trips are scheduled to view decorative arts collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the Modernism show at the Armory.

Text Books

Carma Gorman, ed., *The Industrial Design Reader* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003).

Selected texts will also be available in a course pack and on web reserve.

Final Papers

A research paper will be submitted on the final day of the class. Topics may derive from any area of scholarly research dealing with the history of decorative arts and design from 1700 to the present. A list of suggested topics will be available to choose from, although students are encouraged to devise their own research topics if they wish. Each student is required to make an appointment with an instructor to review and approve his or her topic. Research papers consist of 8-12 double-spaced typed pages (2000-3000 words) and include a bibliography and footnotes following the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers will be graded on the clarity and strength of the thesis, depth of research, adherence to style, and formal presentation.

Preceptorials

Four discussion sessions are included in this course, three in the classroom and one at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For Preceptorials, students are required to read assigned essays that correspond to the topic discussed in the previous lecture. All students are asked to actively participate and contribute to the discussions. The purpose of these sections is to accent skills of critical looking at, and the historical interpretation of, artworks, while reviewing readings and lectures.

Requirements

Midterm Exam 25%

Final Exam 30%

Preceptorial 15%

Paper 30%

September 1

Introduction to Course (D & J)

September 2

Italian Baroque and French Rococo Decorative Arts: 1640-1740 (J)

This lecture will examine exuberant style of the French Rococo. The mid-Eighteenth century saw a dramatic evolution in the economic, social, and political circumstances of Europe, changes that are reflected in the art and design of the period. In Italy, France and Germany art and design reflected baroque classicism as well as more exotic influences such as chinoiserie, as will be seen in furniture and Interiors at the Barberini Palace In Rome and churches like Vierzehnheiligen church Germany.

Required Reading

John Morley, The History of Furniture, 136-176

September 8

English and American Neoclassicism (D)

The Neoclassical Movement of the 18th century developed in England and in America in two phases. The first, the Neo-Palladian, was loosely based on the work and writings of Andreas Palladio, the Italian architect of the 16th century, and materialized mostly in country houses. It became the sought-after style by wealthy merchants of progressive taste. The second phase was led in England by Robert Adam, who formulated an ideal style that became highly influential in England and in the United States in interiors and domestic furnishings.

September 9

Continental Neoclassicism: 1740-1840 (J)

This lecture will explore the impact of the revived interest in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome among continental European designers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Special attention will be given to innovations in furniture, metalwork, ceramics, interior design, and musical instruments. We will consider figures such as Piranesi, Winckelmann, Mengs, Ledoux, and Percier and Fontaine.

Required Reading

Hugh Honour, Neo-Classicism, 13-42; Adrian Forty, Objects of Desire, chapter 1, pages 11-28

September 15

Biedermeier and the Creation of German National Style (D)

The age of Biedermeier in Germany and Austria was marked by the creation of the ideal “everyday home,” and the concept of national design in the German-speaking world. It was the Biedermeier era that initiated a simple,

affordable style for the growing middle-class, in which ease and comfort played a central role.

Required Reading

Angelika Wesenberg, "Art and Industry," in Michael Snodin, ed., *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: A Universal Man* (New Haven, New York: Yale University Press, 1991): 57-63 .

Saturday, September 17

Tour the MET (D)

French Rococo interiors and their furnishings were highly influential on domestic decoration in 18th-century England and North America. This session will explore actual Rococo interiors from those centers as well as Neoclassical period rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Required Reading

Alastair Laing, "Foreign Decorators and Plasterers in England," in Charles Hind, ed., *The Rococo in England: A Symposium* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984): 21-45/

September 22

Nineteenth-Century concepts: historicism, eclecticism, industrialization (D)

The age of industrialization brought a transformation in the design and production of objects and domestic interiors during the nineteenth century. These are analyzed in the context of industrialization, eclecticism, historicism, and change in style and fashions. The "battle of styles," the issue of revivalism and the discourse of the copy, the tension between industrialization and craftsmanship are discussed in the light of the concept of the home as the women's sphere and the emergence of the middle class domestic ideal in England and America.

Required Reading

Wolfram Koeppe, "French Renaissance and Pseudo-Renaissance Furniture in American Collections," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 1 (2) (Spring, 1994): 48-66.

September 23

Preceptorial — 19th-Century Domestic Spheres (D)

Required Reading

Emma Ferry "'Decorators May be Compared to Doctors': An Analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork, and Furniture," *Journal of Design History* 16 (1) (2003): 15-33; Frances Collard, "Historical Revivals, Commercial Enterprise and Public Confusion: Negotiating Taste, 1860-1890," *Journal of Design History* 16 (1) (2003): 35-48.

September 29

William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement (D)

John Ruskin, the members of the Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood, and William Morris revolutionized the concepts of modern design. This lecture examines their ideologies, and traces the way in which they succeeded in transforming the appearance of the modern home. Works by some of the principal progressive designers of the era, such as C.R. Ashbee, C.F.A. Voysey, and Baillie Scott, will be discussed.

September 30

Preceptorial — William Morris (D)

Required Reading

William Morris, “The Lesser Art,” John Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic,” C. R. Ashbee, “Craftsmanship in Competitive Industry,” in Carma Gorman, ed., *The Industrial Design Reader* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003).

October 6

The Aesthetic Movement (J)

This lecture will examine the British Aesthetic movement within the context of later-Victorian visual culture. The Aesthetic slogan “art for art’s sake” constituted a challenge to traditional categories and hierarchies in the arts. We will explore a wide range of decorative arts with a special focus on interiors and dress. Examining the writings of key nineteenth-century authors, attention will be placed on the influence of Japanese design and the debates concerning style, design, and morality.

Required Reading

Du Maurier, George. “The Rise and Fall of the Jack Spratts” from *Punch*, 1878; Lambourne, Lionel. *The Aesthetic Movement*. 10-65

October 7

International Exposition Paris: Art Nouveau (J)

This lecture will examine Art Nouveau architecture and design in fin-de-siècle Europe. Art Nouveau, an attempt to reform and renew the complete design of daily life, has been perceived as pivotal point in the transition from a historicist 19th-century tradition to modernist ideals of the 20th century. This lecture will consider concepts of organicism, and Gesamtkunstwerk. We will look at the work of designers like Emile Gallé, Hector Guimard, Victor Horta, Alphonse Mucha, and Henry van de Velde and explore and the role of craft revivals in the design of the period

Required Reading

John Morley, *The History of Furniture, 177-132*; Paul Greenhaul, *Art Nouveau*. Chapters 1 and 2

October 13

The Glasgow School (J)

The Glasgow School refers to a small group of artists, designers, and architects working in Scotland at the turn of the last century. Their work is regarded as pivotally important in mediating between the English Arts and Crafts and Continental Modernism. Designers like Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald made significant impressions on subsequent designers, especially those of the Vienna workshops. The second half of this class will serve as a review for the midterm.

Required Reading

Wendy Kaplan, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*

October 14

Byrdcliffe, an American Arts and Crafts Colony (TW)

This class will look at an actual Arts and Crafts colony, and evaluate how it succeeded in realizing the ideals of Ruskin and Morris already studied. It will locate the furniture and ceramics made at Byrdcliffe in the context of the Arts and Crafts movement in America, comparing them to furniture by Stickley, Roycroft, and Greene and

Greene, and ceramics by Grueby and Rookwood.

October 20

Midterm (D)

October 21

Vienna: Early Modernism (D)

Viennese early modernism was the produce of turn of the century work of Vienna Secession, a group of artists and architects who sought to establish a new art for the new century. It was further developed in the Wiener Werkstätte, established in 1903 by Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser. The firm, modeled after British Arts and Crafts production, employed over a hundred craftsmen, creating metalware, furniture, ceramics, glass, jewelry, and fashion for the new century.

Required Reading

Christian Witt-Döring, "Austria: Idealism or Realism," in Wendy Kaplan, ed., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World* (Thames and Hudson, 2004): 109-141.

October 27

German Modernism (D)

The lecture traces the development of German modernism from the advent of the Jugendstil of the turn of the century. The Deutsche Werkbund, funded in 1907, brought a revolution and integration of art and economics. The Bauhaus, founded by the Werkbund member Walter Gropius in 1919, came to bring all arts together, to encourage individual artisans and craftsmen to work cooperatively and combine all of their skills, and to elevate the status of crafts and design. Design of this era was central to the political discourse of regenerating and rebuilding the German society after WWI.

October 28

Preceptorial — The Werkbund Debate and Gesamtkunstwerk: The Concept of Total Work of Art

"Muthesius/Van de Velde: Werkbund Theses and Antitheses," in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press): 28-31; Andres V. Munch, "Design as Gesamtkunstwerk: Historical Transformations of a Vision from Wagner and Morris to Verner Pantan," *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* 11 (2001): 32-59.

November 3

Modern Graphic Design: 1900-1950 (J)

Graphic design, in the sense that we now understand it, was developed in the late 19th century. Catering to a new mass society, graphic design utilized the enhanced capabilities of modern printing technologies to communicate with an increasingly urban population. This lecture considers the forces shaping European graphic design in the period, paying particular attention to commercial advertisements and political propaganda in German, British, and Russian/Soviet graphics. Designers to be discussed include Alexander Rodchenko, Peter Behrens, A.M. Cassandre, and Herbert Bayer, and

will be contextualized with reference to movements such as Art Nouveau, Art Deco, New Objectivity, and Russian/Soviet Constructivism.

Required Reading

Steven Heller and Seymour Chwast, *Graphic Style from Victorian to Digital*; Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire*, chapter 10, 222-245.

November 4

Exposition internationale des arts Decoratifs et industriels modernes (J)

Launched at the Paris World's Fair of 1925, Art Deco borrowed from such avant-garde movements as cubism, futurism and expressionism as well as more traditional styles like neoclassicism. This highly innovative commercial aesthetic would become one of the most popular styles of the interwar period. Furniture, book jackets, ceramics, and glass are among the diverse categories to be examined. We will consider new and exotic materials like aluminum, bakelite, and egg-shell lacquer in designs by Reneé Lalique, Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann, and Jean Dunand.

Required Reading

Charlotte Benton, ed., *Art Deco: 1910-1939*, pages 13-36; Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* chapter 3.

Bibliography DUE

November 10

Guest Lecture:

Emminent frame maker Jared Bark will speak about frames in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries.

Saturday, November 12

Tour in NYC: Modernism at the Armory (J)

The class will visit the premiere annual exhibition of contemporary design that will give hands-on access to major examples of what we are studying.

November 17

Art Deco in the United States (J)

Imported from Paris, Art Deco became a prominent style in America during the interwar years, and became known as "streamlined" design. This period saw the rise of the industrial designer in American consumer culture. Designers like Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfuss, Raymond Lowey, and Donald Desky applied this modern look to the design of a wide range of industrial objects, from vacuum cleaners to locomotives. We will investigate what differentiates American Streamlined design from its European inspiration, Art Deco.

Required Reading

Charlotte Benton editor. *Art Deco: 1910-1939*, pages 312-360; Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, chapter 4.

November 18

Postwar American Design (J)

American Modernism flourished after World War II, particularly in corporate and industrial design. This lecture will explore the emergence of a uniquely modern American design, through the furniture, graphics, product design, and packaging of the postwar period. Reference will be made to important American designers such as Charles and Ray Eames, Russel Wright, Florence Knoll, Alexander Girard, and Eva Zeisel.

Required Reading

Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design, Chapter 5, 6, and 7*; Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* Chapter 6, pages 120-155.

December 1

French Postwar Modernism (D)

France was a center for innovative modernist design after WWII. This lecture explores the work of its leading industrial designers, such as designers Jean Prouve, Charlot Perriand, Jean Royere, and Jean Adnet whose work combined sculptural elegance and simplicity.

Required Reading

Roger Aujame, "A Synthesis of the Arts: The Collaborations of Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé," in Mary McLeod, ed., *Charlotte Perriand: An Art of Living* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2003): 131-153

December 2

Japonisme (TW)

After the opening of Japan in 1853 Japanese art and design had a great influence on European and American culture. This class will start by looking back at the *chinoiserie* of the Rococo period and then focus on the impact of Japanese art in the West in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, looking at designers and architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Gropius.

December 8

Scandinavian Design (J)

This lecture will survey *Swedish, Finnish, and Danish Modernism, looking closely at these* emerging modern industrial societies where economic and social transformations introduce new design challenges. We will focus on the work of designers such as Joseph Frank, Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Tapio Wirkkala between 1920-1960. We will also consider the influence of Scandinavian design institutions Merrimekko and Ikea

Required Reading

Cecilia Widenheim editor, *Utopian and Reality: Modernity in Sweden 1900-1960*, chapter 1; Marriane Aav editor, *Finnish Modern Design: Utopian Ideals and Everyday Realities, 1930-1997*, chapter 1.

December 9

Postmodernism (D)

Postmodernist design culture was wave that swept Europe and the United States from the 1960s. It brought a reaction towards the values and aesthetics proposed by modernism. This lecture examines the role taken by

postmodernism in design, focusing on the central concepts, such as the consumption of popular culture, kitsch, nostalgia, and Robert Venturi's phrase "less is a bore."

Required Reading

Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987): 225-262, the chapter "Kitsch."

December 15

Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design; A Review for Finals (J)

This lecture will focus on the last decade of design in which digital media and global communications have significantly modified the market demands and implications of design. We will examine the work of contemporary designers such as the graphic designer Tibor Kalman and lifestyle designers like Philippe Starck. We will consider objects from the Vespa scooter to Levis Jeans, and from web graphics to I-pods. The second half of this lecture will be a review for the final exam.

Required Reading

Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, chapter 9 and 10

December 16

Finals (J)
Papers Due