

**The New School University
Parsons School of Design
Department of Architecture Interior Design, and Lighting**

**Critical Studies in Design I – E302
Fall 2006**

Tuesdays: 12:30-5:40

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Course Description

This course explores periods, styles, idioms, and thoughts in the history and theory of design and interior décor in the West from the first creation of the modern home in the early years of the nineteenth century, to the present. It focuses on changing notions of comfort, style, forms, and social significations, while examining concrete accoutrements of living as being expressed in furniture and furnishings, interior décor, metalwork, ceramics, glass, and the other decorative features and accessories of domestic life. The architectural forms as they developed over the course of these two centuries are significant to this study as well.

Learning Outcomes

Students should develop an understanding of the history of interiors, furniture and architecture, theories of design and design composition. They will gain an awareness of decoration, ornaments and vocabularies of forms as well as the social, historical, and theoretical context of the domestic interior in history. They should develop skills in critical, analytical and strategic thinking and active listening skills. The course instills appreciation and consideration for consciousness of alternate points of view and appreciation of cultural diversity, understanding the designer's role in affecting people and their environments, an understanding of trends in thought, technology, and design. Students should enhance their communications skills in effective verbal, visual and written communication, clear expression of ideas in oral presentations and critiques, clear grammar, spelling and syntax in written forms, and communication through visual methods of representation.

Bio

Daniella Ohad Smith received her Ph.D. degree from the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture. For the past fifteen years, she has worked as a professor and art advisor in the field of decorative arts. She has been a faculty member at Parsons School of Design since 1999, and has taught in academic institutions such as Pratt Institute, Bard College, and Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. Professor Ohad Smith serves on several acquisition committees of public collections in the field of modern decorative arts and design.

Evaluation and Grading

Midterm Exam 15%

Final Exam 10%

Preceptorial 25%

Presentation at Sotheby's 5%

Research paper and presentation 45%

Text Book

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

Students may buy the book free of tax when presenting the syllabus of this course at Barnes and Noble, 105 Fifth Ave (corner of 18th street).

Preceptorial

Students are required to conduct regular readings and to actively participate in weekly discussions that typically focus on the material covered in the previous lectures. If the texts are not found in the required text book, they can be obtained in the binder, placed in the reserve shelf at Gimbel Library. The texts are theoretical and primary writings of major figures in the history of design, focusing on various issues related to design philosophy. Students must read the assigned material thoroughly, and are required to contribute to the discussions, while expected to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking.

Presentations at Sotheby's

The December sale of 20th Century Decorative Arts, held at Sotheby's is the focus of our last session. Each student is required to select an object offered for sale as a topic of his/her presentation. When the exhibition opens to the public, each student must visit the showroom of Sotheby's on East 72nd street and examine the object of his/her selection firsthand. In an approximately a five-minutes presentation the student presents the object. The presentation typically consists of a short introduction, but more importantly, places the object in a broad stylistic and historical context. Material and methods of production are discussed as well. Each presentation concludes with a critical and personal view that explains what makes the object a good (or a not) example of its period.

Final Papers: Fabulous Interiors

Some interiors have left their trace on the history of interior décor. These interiors were typically created by talented and innovative artists, designers, and architects, often commissioned by patron of progressive taste, willing to pay large sums to live in modern, artistic, and fabulous homes. These interiors have succeeded in becoming sources of

inspiration, stimulation, and dissemination to generations of designers, while manifesting in iconic examples of interior design. What made them important, “fabulous,” unforgettable, and great? Why are they memorable, leaving their trace on the evolution of the history of design? What makes these interiors valuable in historical, visual, and aesthetic terms?

The most substantial product required from each student for this course is an in-depth research paper, which will be orally presented in class. Each student is assigned one example of such an interior décor, which is the topic of his/her paper. Students are expected to conduct a thorough research based on broad literature sources, which would include primary and secondary sources. You are expected to consult as many sources as possible, and to address and challenge these sources in the body of the paper. The main objective of the paper is an extensive analysis of the interior in broad contexts of history, style, material culture, color scheme, and furnishings. Your paper will include references to individual pieces of furniture and furnishings and to those who produced them. The work on this paper must be conducted throughout the ENTIRE course of the semester in relevant libraries. Each student is expected to master his/her topic and to be prepared to conduct a discussion, following his/her oral presentations. It is each student’s responsibility to bring the progress of the work to our attention on a REGULAR BASIS. The research papers, consisted of no longer than 20 pages of double-spaced text (excluding footnotes, bibliography, and figures), must conform to style guidelines established by a standard resource such as the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers must include full citations and bibliography, as well as illustrations. Each paper will be handed in two hard copies and in one CD. One hard copy stays at the archive of the department, the graded one will be returned to students, and the CD remains at the possession of the professor. The oral presentations, of about 20 minutes will be accompanied by visual illustrations in form of slides or digital. This is your most substantial work in this course and must be handled as such.

Department Policies

Attendance

It is important that you arrive on time and attend every class since much of the work is to be accomplished during class. Two absences from class will constitute a failing grade for the course. Attendance will be taken each class session in the form of a sign-in sheet. The sheet will be available though the first 15 minutes of class. Tardiness policies are up to the discretion of the instructor of a particular section. Attendance for both sections is counted together and there are no exceptions to this policy. Excuses for tardiness or absence will only be granted on ground of medical or family emergency. Proof must be provided in such cases in the form of official letterhead from the proper authority (i.e. – your doctor). Outside employment is not an excuse for incomplete work or absence from class. Students will not be penalized for absences due to religious observance. However, the student still may not miss more than three class sessions. It is the student’s responsibility, prior to registering, to assess the number of holidays that

will arise during a given semester and their impact on attendance. The student, in consultation with the major department, should make a determination as to whether or not the given semester is the appropriate time to take a particular class. Accommodations may include make-up sessions in a different section of the class and/or independent projects. The student must inform the instructor at the beginning of term of any anticipated absences due to religious observance.

Policy on Data Loss and Working with the Computer

This course requires the use of digital media for storing and transmitting required coursework. Learning good data management practices constitutes a portion of the class agenda. As such, computer failure or other forms of computer data loss will NOT be accepted as a legitimate excuse for late work. Working with computers is always a risky business as some computers can behave unpredictably, especially in experimental situations. Each student must act responsibly and make back-up copies of personal data at every convenient opportunity. The safest way to do this is to copy data to a portable medium that can be stored in a secure location. Simply making extra copies of files and storing them on the same hard drive is not enough. The 'zero-tolerance' position in this matter is a result of the fact that lenience on this issue is far too easily abused. Loss of computer data will be interpreted as personal irresponsibility. Each student is expected to take precautionary measures and make copies of personal data during and after each work session.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic honesty, the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship of his or her own work and only for that work and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely, is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate and creative and academic pursuits. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty. Students are responsible for knowing and making use of proper procedures for writing papers, presenting and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student's work or by utilizing unauthorized materials
- any act of plagiarism, defined as the fraudulent presentation of the written, oral, or visual work of others as original
- theft of another student's work
- purchase of another student's work
- submitting the same work for more than one course
- destruction or defacement of the work of others
- aiding or abetting any act of dishonesty
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents

Any instance of academic dishonesty in the form of cheating or plagiarism will be reviewed according to the procedures outlines in the Parsons' Student Handbook. Each student is encouraged to review these policies if they have not done so already. Remember that all work must be your own. If it is not, the source should be cited and documented appropriately.

List of Topics for Research Papers

1. The Richard Mandel House, Bedford Hills, NY, Interiors by Donald Deskey
2. Housing dwelling at the 1927 Weissenhofsiedlung Exhibition, by Mart Stam
3. The Frank House, Pittsburg, Interiors by Marcel Breuer
4. Maison de Verre, designed by Pierre Chareau
5. The Snail Room at the Turin Exposition of 1902, designed by Carlo Bugatti
6. Casa Encantada, designed by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibblings
7. Rockefeller House, designed by Philip Johnson
8. Walter Gropius Office, Bauhaus Weimar
9. Lobbies of the San Remo and the Beresford, by Emery Roth & Sons; the El-Dorado, by Margon & Holder and Emery Roth; the Majestic, by Irwin S. Chanin and Jacques Delamarre.
10. The Frankfurt Kitchen, designed by Grete Schütte-Lihotzky
11. Maison de la Tunisia and Maison de la Mexico, designed by Charlotte Perriand
12. Villa Karma, designed by Adolf Loos
13. Oscar Niemeyer's own house in Rio De Janeiro
14. 2 Columbus Circle, designed by Edward Stone
15. The Hyman Levin House, designed by R. M. Schindler
16. Offices of Alitalia Airlines in New York, designed by Geo Ponti (1958)
17. The Kaufmann House, designed by Neutra (1946)
18. The Wolf House, designed by Ettore Sottsass, Jr. (1985-89)
19. The Bendell store on 34th Street, designed by Joseph Urban (1929)
20. Hans Christiansen House, designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich (1901)
21. Gunnløgsoon House, designed by Poul Kjærholm (1959)

22. The Lila Acheson Wallace Garden at Colonial Williamsburg, designed by Claude and Francois-Xavier Lalanne (1986)

Course Outline

September 5, 2006

Introduction to Course

Biedermeier: the Creation of Germanic National Style

The age of Biedermeier in the German-speaking world and northern Europe was marked by the first creation of the modern domestic sphere, which came to define Germanic national and cultural identity for the next century. The greatest architect of the period, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, built some of the iconic buildings of Biedermeier Germany, searching for a visual expression of modern Germany in his public and royal commissions. This lecture examines the identity of the dwelling as being developed during those formative years of German modernity.

Study Session: The New York Public Library

September 12, 2006

Domestic Interiors of the Nineteenth Century

Domestic interiors of the nineteenth century were complex entities, which rooted in a major shift in historical circumstances. They are analyzed in this lecture in broad contexts of industrialization, eclecticism, historicism, change in style and taste, and the emergence of the interior decorator. 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 emergence of the middle class domestic sphere in England and the United States.

Preceptorial

Frances Collard, “Historical Revivals, Commercial Enterprise and Public Confusion: Negotiating Taste, 1860-1890,” *Journal of Design History* 16 (1) (2003): 35-48; Rachel Rich, “Advice on Dining and Décor in London and Paris, 1860-1914,” *Journal of Design History* 16 (1) (2003): 49-61.

September 19, 2006

The Reformers

John Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood, and William Morris are the key figures in the reform movement, taken place from the mid nineteenth-century onward. They are responsible for revolutionizing the traditional concepts of interior décor, while challenging the modern domestic sphere by elevating the value of the vernacular to the level of modern lifestyle. This lecture examines the ideology formulated by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites and the way in which they were substantiated by William Morris who succeeded in transforming the appearance of the modern home and came to be a great inspiration for a whole generation of designers working in the entire western world.

Preceptorial

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).

Bibliography Due

September 26, 2006

The Arts and Crafts Movement in England and the US

The Arts and Crafts Movement which originated in England and spread through various nations in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century consolidated style and ideology. It was advanced by romantic writers, philosophers, architects, craftsmen, and designers all of whom formatted ways of lifestyle, rooted in their social and economical conscious. Its ideology advanced industry, guilds, workshops, and societies, advocating moral satisfaction of craftsmanship affected by cluttered historicism. The idea that every nation should have its own modern design culture that reflected its heritage was central to the movement, resulting in revivals and interpretations of the vernacular.

A Field Trip: Craftsman Farms

October 3, 2006

International Exposition Paris: Art Nouveau

The Art Nouveau style had emerged in fin de siècle France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and other countries whose progressive designers strived to achieve a visual expression of modernity. It was manifested as an attempt to reform the complete design of daily life and can be valued as the first true modern style, free of traditional style and historicist idioms. It was founded upon modern principles that became fundamental to the modern design of the twentieth century. This lecture explores some of the key concepts of Art Nouveau, such as organicism, modernity, crafts revival, and the Gesamtkunstwerk.

Preceptorial

Samuel Bing, “L’Art Nouveau,” in *Artistic America, Tiffany Glass and Art Nouveau* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, the MIT Press); Nancy J. Troy, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France: Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier* (New York, 1991), the chapter “Art Nouveau in Paris: From an Eclectic Movement to a National Style.”

October 10, 2006

Vienna 1900

Fin de siècle Vienna had been the cradle of modern design. This lecture explores the evolution of its design school from the advent of nineteenth-century historicism-eclecticism into the early modernist language. The work of the key figures responsible for this Renaissance, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, and Adolf Loos, are examined in the light of their contributions to the emergence of modernism.

Preceptorial

Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, "The Work-Program of the Wiener Werkstätte;" Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in *The Industrial Design Reader* (New York, 2003): 61-64; Adolf Loos, "Die Herrenmode," "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," in Werner Oechslin, "Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, and the Road to Modern Architecture" (Cambridge, 2002), 247-8, 250-54.

October 17, 2006

Jugendstil

The seeds of the German Modern Movement lie in turn-of-the-century design movement, originated in the Munich secession and known as Jugendstil. The main artists producing decorative arts in Munich were Eckmann, Behrens, Stück, Riemerschmid, and Endell. This lecture traces the principles that were to establish the foundation for German Modernism. Outside of Munich, the most notable artistic achievement of the period was the artists colony in Darmstadt, founded by the Great Duke Ernst Ludwig who invited young and talented artists, such as Josef Maria Olbrich and Peter Behrens, to establish a colony modeled after the British Arts and Crafts communities, to produce modern architecture, art, and design, and to elevate Germany into a capital of the arts.

Review Session: Research Papers

October 24, 2006

German Modernism

The lecture traces the evolution of German Modernism in the Weimar Republic from 1919 until 1933. The period under discussion was marked by innovation, revolution, and formulation of some of the most important principles that shaped the German Modern Movement, while design culture became central to the political discourse and particularly to the concepts of rebuilding Germany after the First World War. The lecture traces the evolution of those ideas through the work of some of the movement's key figures, such as Peter Behrens, Haney Van de Velde, Bruno Taut, Mies van der Rohe, and Erich Mendelsohn. It focuses on the contributions of the Deutsche Werkbund, the Bauhaus school of design and art, the Expressionist movement, and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

Preceptorial

Herman Muthesius, "Aims of the Werkbund;" Herman Muthesius and Henry van de Velde, "Statements from the Werkbund Conference of 1914," in Carma Gorman, ed., *The Industrial Design Reader* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003); Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany: 1918-1945*, the chapter "The Debate over the New Architecture."

October 31, 2006

Art Moderne: Modernism in France and the United States

The Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925 Paris displayed and set the standards for French modernism. Unlike the Germans, the French demonstrated a strong preference for a new decorative style that, with a high quality of handcraftsmanship, came to connect modernity with the traditional French decorative arts. American designers did not participate in the seminal fair, yet the influence of the new French style would be felt across the country for the next two decades. In the Treasure Island Fair, held in San Francisco in 1939-40, America exhibited its own version of the 1925 Paris Exposition and the translation of the French style into America. This lecture explores the decorative arts as being developed in the two countries and the dual approach to crafts and industry.

Review: Midterm Exam

November 7, 2006

Midterm

November 14, 2006

American Post War Design

[Levittown, the showcase of the American suburb of postwar America, and the Case Study House program \(1945-66\)](#), which came to elevate and express the quality of the California modern home, are two projects that came to identify postwar American living. In industrial design, the softly curving line, the contours that reflected the human body, marked the transformation of modernism away from the machine aesthetics into a new expression of modernism. New technologies and materials, such as plastic and molded plywood came to define the new aesthetics for the masses, merging the functional and the beautiful.

Students Presentations

November 21, 2006

French and Italian Postwar Design

During the postwar years, Italy and France became central production centers of modern design, with numerous designers and architects, seeking to revitalize their countries after the Second World War. The leading figure of the Italian movement, Ernesto Rogers defined the new goal as to rebuild and redesign everything “from the spoon to the city.” Other central figures of the movement included, Gio Ponti, Carlo Mollino, and Ico Parisi. The French postwar design movement took on a different direction, where designers such as Jean Prouve, Charlotte Perriand, and Jean Royere were searching for the industrial identity of modern design, seeking to shape mass production of the postwar consumer market.

Students Presentations

Field Trip at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall—An Artist's Country Estate.

November 28, 2006

1960s and 1970s: Postmodernism, Minimalism, Modern Baroque

This lecture examines three waves that shaped modern design during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, all came from attempts to challenge the values and aesthetics proposed by the Modern Movement, with proposal of new directions. The first, Postmodernism, swept Europe and the United States from the 1960s, proposed new values of modern design, such as consumption of popular culture, kitsch, and nostalgia, directions expressed by Robert Venturi's phrase "less is a bore." Minimalism was a movement that evolved in the fine arts, but produced a significant body of furniture and design as well. Growing from an attempt to reject qualities of uniqueness as the defining character of modern design, Minimalist artists sought to display mass-produced objects as works of art. Along with Minimalism, the 1970s witnessed the emergence of a unique form of modern design which emphasized baroque and theatrical notions. Whether industrially produced or hand made, designers such as Verner Panton, Maria Pergay, Paul Evans, George Nakashima, and Wendell Castle formulated new and innovative vocabularies, while consolidating the modern and the Baroque.

Students Presentations

December 5, 2006

Contemporary Design and the Marketplace

Collecting twentieth-century furniture and decorative arts is becoming one of the most exciting fields in the marketplace today. A whole new generation of young and serious collectors is willing to pay top dollar for such stars as Carlo Mollino, George Nakashima, Charlotte Perriand, and contemporary designers such as Israeli-born London-based designer Ron Arad and the Brazilian Campana brothers. What makes a home dazzling today, is not one unified style as in collectors' homes in the past, but rather the gathering of diverse forms, mixing materials, high and low, modern baroque and minimalism, silver and plastic, silk and raw wood, light and dark. We live in an eclectic era, where the creative tasteful homes feature mix of styles, textures, colors, and forms. This lecture gives an overview of the market, introducing the popular designers of our times, who typically produce, along with their role as industrial designers, lines of limited editions, which have recently become the focus of public and private collections.

Students Presentations

Final Exam

Presentations at Sotheby's