

Unit 1

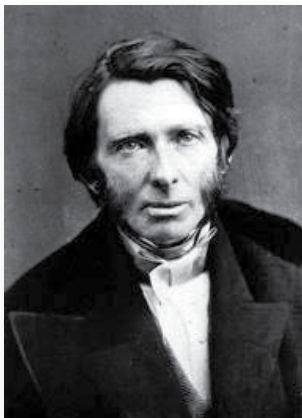
History of Art and Design

History of art and design is the study of objects of design in their historical and stylistic contexts. With a broad definition, the contexts of design history include the social, the cultural, the economic, the political, the technical and the aesthetic. "History of Art and Design" exists as a component of many practice-based courses. Among its aims was making art and design education a legitimate academic activity, to which ends a historical perspective was introduced.

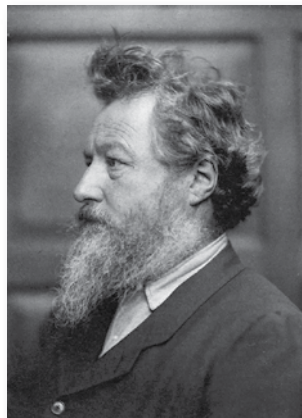
Lesson 1

The Origin of Design

According to the book *Pioneers of Modern Design* by the art historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–1983), the concept of design arose from the thinking of two figures: John Ruskin (1819–1900), an advocate of social thought, and William Morris (1834–1896), a theorist and the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement. This was only about 150 years ago, so it's not an old story. Thanks to the machine production system, which **sprang** from the Industrial Revolution, England flourished in the mid-19th century. However, the early machine-made products weren't much to look at; they were mere imitations produced by the awkward hand of machinery, aiming to reproduce furniture and other kinds of objects that maintained a **vestige** of **aristocratic** decoration. Glancing through reference material from the London's Great Exhibition of 1851, we can imagine what they looked like. The **cultivated** forms that were refined over time by manual skills were **superficially** interpreted, distorted and mass-produced at extraordinary speed.



John Ruskin



William Morris

Under circumstances like these, it seems that anyone with any affection for his own lifestyle and culture must have felt the sense of crisis over the loss of something, and must have been concerned about the deterioration of aesthetics. Those crude machine-made goods would never be embraced by the sophisticated traditional culture of Europe without a fight. In fact, the appearance of these substandard objects resulted in the unearthing of both the culture that had been **nurtured** by manual work and the sensibilities hidden beneath that culture. Ruskin and Morris represented the collective **snort** of the people: “We absolutely cannot bear it!” This was their protest against machine production, which threatened to roll right over the intricate, delicate sensibilities awakened in us by objects. Their activities were a warning and a great booping against the aggressive, impatient reform of the era. Clearly, the concept of design, or the beginning of its way of thinking, was the **backlash** of aesthetic sensibility against the **dullness** and **immaturity lurking** in the industrial mechanism that was so **violently** changing man’s living environment.



“Snakeshead” textile designed by William Morris

However, there was no turning back for machine production as long as it continued to **fuel** the trends of mass production and mass consumption. Even though the common intellect and aesthetic sensibilities leveled some criticism against it, nothing was going to slow the **momentum** of the production and consumption explosion **ignited** by the Industrial Revolution. Because Ruskin’s writings and lectures and Morris’ Art and Crafts Movement were so strongly anti-modern, with both men championing the revival of the manual skills of craftspeople and harshly criticizing the negative effects of machine production, their arguments were not accepted into

the mainstream of the time and failed to gather enough force to stop or slow society's transformation. Still, their insights and perceptions about the source of pleasure in the relationship between making things and daily life were **upheld** by the design movement activists of the next generation as the very **wellspring** of the concept of design, so we can say that in the end they had a significant effect on society.

It goes without saying that we cannot directly experience the era of Ruskin and Morris, but we can catch a glimpse from preserved materials. There is an abundance of these, vividly conveying the messages they introduced, including Morris' works of the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as his book designs for the Kelmscott Press and his wallpaper designs. Whenever I look at their work, I am in **awe**, as if I were actually meeting these **stalwart** men of the 19th century. Their spirited drive in demonstrating—not through theory but through real objects—an antithesis to the **doltish** objects manufactured by the clumsy machine is still intense and **ardent** enough to unsettle the sensibilities of today's designers; we still **succumb** to its beauty. Somehow their work makes me feel like I'm being **scolded**. Clearly their passionate enthusiasm inspired the concept of design.

On the other hand, although the idea of design emerged from a negative social situation arising from **deteriorating** product quality, we can't definitively state that it was solely the **brainchild** of Ruskin and Morris. No doubt during the middle of the 19th century, as civil society matured, there thrived in a **subterranean** channel a sensibility different from art, some sense of **gaiety** in creating appropriate objects or environments, and a joy in bringing these to daily life. With the appearance of crude, machine-made daily commodities as an **impetus**, this sensibility flooded all society. The movements by Ruskin and Morris symbolized this **deluge**.

In any event, the **raging** torrent of machine production pained the delicate aesthetic sense of daily life. This then triggered the emergence of design as a way of thinking and perceiving in society. Today, as our living environment is being newly



The Nature of Gothic
by John Ruskin

transformed by the development and spread of information technology, we need to once again focus on the circumstances and movements surrounding the origin of design. I think it's time we took a new look at the roots of design thought and sensibility and at the pain that's arisen in this new era, just as if we were backtracking to the era of Ruskin and Morris.

* Kenya Hara. (2007). *Designing Design*. Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, pp.416-418.

Words and Expressions

spring /sprɪŋ/ *vi.* 生长；涌出；跃出

vestige /'vestɪdʒ/ *n.* 遗迹；残余

aristocratic /ə,rɪstə'kræɪtɪk/ *adj.* 贵族的；有贵族气派的

cultivated /'kʌltɪveɪtɪd/ *adj.* 培育的；发展的；有教养的；文雅的

superficially /,su:pə'fɪʃəli/ *adv.* 表面地；浅薄地

nurture /'nɜ:rtʃər/ *vt.* 培育；熏陶

snort /snɔ:rt/ *n.* 嗤之以鼻

backlash /'bækklæʃ/ *n.* 反冲；强烈抵制

dullness /'dʌlnəs/ *n.* 迟钝

immaturity /,ɪmə'tʃʊərəti/ *n.* 未成熟

lurk /lɜ:rk/ *vi.* 暗藏

violently /'vaɪələntli/ *adv.* 猛烈地，激烈地

fuel /'fju:əl/ *vt.* 推动；加剧

momentum /moʊ'mentəm/ *n.* 势头

ignite /ɪg'naɪt/ *vt.* 引起；刺激

uphold /ʌp'hould/ *vt.* 支持，赞成；鼓励

wellspring /'welsprɪŋ/ *n.* 源泉

awe /ɔ:ɪ/ *n.* 敬畏

stalwart /'stɔ:lwɔ:rt/ *adj.* 坚定的，坚决的

doltish /'dɔ:ltɪʃ/ *adj.* 愚蠢的

ardent /'ɑ:rdnt/ *adj.* 强烈的；激烈的

succumb /sə'kʌm/ *vi.* 屈服

scold /skould/ *vt.* 训斥

deteriorating /dɪ'tɪəriəreɪtɪŋ/ *adj.* 退化的；变质的

brainchild /'breɪntʃaɪld/ *n.* 创作

subterranean /,sʌbtə'reɪniən/ *adj.* 隐蔽的；秘密的

gaiety /'geɪəti/ *n.* 快乐

impetus /'ɪmpɪtəs/ *n.* 动力；推动力

deluge /'delju:dʒ/ *n.* 风暴

raging /'reɪdʒɪŋ/ *adj.* 狂暴的；凶猛的

EXERCISES

What is the Arts and Crafts Movement? And why does Kenya Hara think the Arts and Crafts Movement is the origin of design?

Lesson 2

Integration of Design

There's one more development that occupies a significant position in the minds of us designers as a special **epoch enshrined** right next to the concept of design. That's the Bauhaus movement. Bauhaus refers to both a school of design and a movement begun in Weimar, Germany, in 1919. In 1933, the Nazis forced the Bauhaus to close, so the activities of the Bauhaus properly only lasted fourteen years. Even in its heyday, the Bauhaus was small, with a little more than a dozen teachers and less than two hundred students. But this is where the concept of design got its direction. Here, the machine production system was accepted as a positive aspect. At the same time, a variety of concepts for the **plastic arts, excavated** via the art movements of the beginning of the 20th century, were reorganized here.

During the period **spanning** the epoch of Ruskin and Morris through that of the Bauhaus, a storm of new and dazzling art movements swept across the entire world, including **Cubism, Art Nouveau, the Vienna Secession, Futurism, Dadaism, De Stijl, Constructivism, Absolutism, Modernism**, and so on. The names and representational style varied depending on the country, region, and **ideology**, but if one thing can



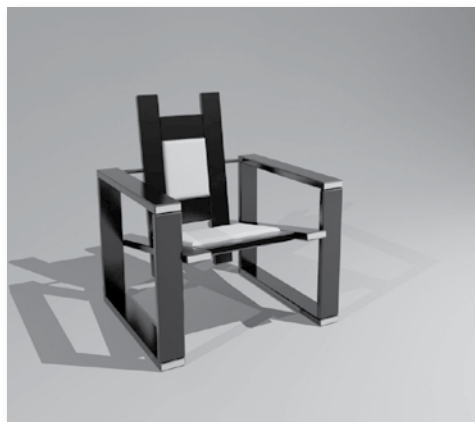
Bauhaus building

be said, it's that in every area of Europe and in every field of art, in order to break from the forms of the past, **practitioners** used a passionate, radical **trial-and-error** approach to completely **dismantle** those forms.

Targets were all the vocabularies of the plastic arts that had accumulated during the history of the decorative arts: **ornamental** idioms, **artisanal** skills, and **snobbish, monomaniacal** aristocratic pursuits. It may very well be that as a result, various disciplines of the fine arts and the plastic arts momentarily turned into a kind of nutrient-packed mountain of **debris**.

It was the Bauhaus that, with **penetrating** ideas and energy, both verified and dissolved this mountain, then crushed it into powder in the **mortar** of powerful thought, and finally, in screening this **detritus**, arranged and ordered the elements. At this stage, all kinds of elements linked to the plastic arts were examined from the point of view of speculation as well as the senses and then were reduced to the zero point. The elements that could not be simplified any further were identified as color, form, texture, material, rhythm, space, movement, dots, lines, planes, and so forth. It was the Bauhaus that, by neatly laying out these elements as if on an operating table, proudly declared, "All right then, let's begin a new era of plastic arts." And it did.

Of course I am fully aware that this is a rough summary made with a simple metaphor. The Bauhaus was a whole bundle of activities undertaken by a great number of people and can't be bound into any single thought. Walter Gropius



Bauhaus chair final by Joetruck

(1883–1969) put his heart and soul into integrating a wide range of arts and outlined the Bauhaus plan. Johannes Itten (1888–1967) embraced **mysticism**. With his precise theory of the plastic arts, Hannes Meyer (1889–1954) brought an accurate indicator to the activities of the Bauhaus. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1896–1946) explored a new approach to the plastic arts for the new era based on elements derived from the **dismantlement**

of past forms. Both Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) pursued the original forms of the dynamics through which living beings create order (form) by equating the process of molding with the issue of life. Focusing on the Bauhaus theater workshop, Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) developed a modernism that **transcends** conventional world perceptions. The more carefully we look, the more individuality we find. The Bauhaus is simply the result of the **convergence** of activities carried out by individuals of many talents.

We could draw unlimited speculation from a detailed, microscopic examination of this group and its activities. But if we observe their combined activities from some distance, through the telescope of the 21st century, the collection of glittering stars would certainly appear as swirling **galactic** clouds. Unless we look at it with our eyes half closed, we often lose sight of the essence of history, but here, viewing the Bauhaus just as we would a galaxy from afar, I'd like to roughly summarize its entity and continue my story. Briefly put, the concept of design realized an extremely pure form in the framework of modernism, thanks to the opportunity provided by the Bauhaus.

* Kenya Hara. (2007). *Designing Design*. Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, pp.418-420.

Words and Expressions

epoch /'epək/ *n.* 时代; 新纪元

enshrine /ɪn'ʃraɪn/ *vt.* 铭记, 铭刻

plastic arts /'plæstɪk 'ɑ:rts/ *n.* 造型艺术

excavate /'ɛkskəveɪt/ *vt.* 发掘

span /spæn/ *vt.* 横跨; (时间)持续

Cubism /'kju:bɪzəm/ *n.* 立体派; 立体主义

Art Nouveau /,ɑ:rt nu'vov/ *n.* 新艺术, 新艺术派

Vienna Secession 维也纳分离派

Futurism /'fju:tʃəɪzəm/ *n.* 未来派; 未来主义

Dadaism /'dɑ:dɑ:ɪzəm/ *n.* 达达派; 达达主义

De Stijl /də'staɪl/ *n.* 风格派; 风格主义

Constructivism /kən'strʌktɪvɪzəm/ *n.* 构成派; 构成主义

Absolutism /'æbsəlu:tɪzəm/ *n.* 专制主义

Modernism /'mɑ:dərnɪzəm/ *n.* 现代主义

ideology /,aɪdɪ'ɑ:lədʒi/ *n.* 意识形态; 思想体系

practitioner /præk'tɪʃənər/ *n.* 实践者; 开拓者

trial-and-error *n.* 试错法; 反复试验法

dismantle /dɪs'mæntl/ *vt.* 拆除; 取消; 废除

ornamental /ɔ:rnə'mentl/ *adj.* 装饰的, 装饰性的

artisanal /ɑ:'ti:znəl/ *n.* 手工艺性的

snobbish /'snɑ:bɪʃ/ *adj.* 势利的, 功利的

monomaniacal /,mɑ:nə'meɪniækəl/ *adj.* 偏执狂的

debris /də'brɪz/ *n.* 碎片, 残骸

penetrating /'penətreɪtɪŋ/ *adj.* 尖锐的; 有洞察力的; 深刻的; 透彻的

mortar /'mɔ:rtər/ *n.* 灰浆, 砂浆

detritus /dɪ'trɪtətəs/ *n.* 碎屑, 碎石

mysticism /'mɪstɪsɪzəm/ *n.* 神秘主义

dismantlement /dɪs'mæntlmənt/ *n.* 拆卸; 拆散; 取消; 废除

transcend /træn'send/ *vt.* 胜过, 超越

convergence /kən'vɜ:rdʒəns/ *n.* 集合, 集中

galactic /gə'læktɪk/ *adj.* 银河的, 星系的

EXERCISES

1. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)?

- (1) The Bauhaus was first founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar. ()
- (2) The school existed in three German cities: Weimar from 1919 to 1925, Dessau from 1925 to 1932 and Berlin from 1932 to 1933. ()
- (3) Though the school was closed by its own leadership under pressure from the Nazi regime, the staff continued to spread its idealistic precepts as they left Germany and emigrated all over the world. ()
- (4) The school did not offer classes in architecture until 1927. ()

2. Analyze the influence and inspiration of the Bauhaus on contemporary design education, please.