What was the Bauhaus?

Mention is so often made of the Bauhaus, and of the extent to which modern architecture and design is indebted to it, that a short description may be worth while.

The Founder

Its founder was an architect, Walter Gropius, who merits a short description. In 1907 the German Deutsche Werkbund made an effort to effect cooperation between the best artists and craftsmen on the one hand, and trade and industry on the other. They believed that mass production and division of labour must be made to produce quality. But architects and designers remained romantic individualists and no one had devised the means of absorbing, either practically or aesthetically, the spirit of engineering into art.

It was Gropius, the youngest of the Werkbund leaders, who, began, by founding the Bauhaus, to solve the problem. His characteristic was the driving earnestness with which he attacked the problem of reconciling art and an industrialized society. Already in 1919 he had published a memorandum on the industrial prefabrication of houses on a unified artistic basis; he gave further examples of this “unified basis” in his designs for factory and office buildings.

The Foundation

In 1919 Gropius combined the Grand Ducal Saxon Academy for Pictorial Art and the Academy for Arts and Crafts, and united them into the Bauhaus. Its object was to coordinate all creative effort, to achieve—in a new architecture—the unification of all training in art and design. Its ultimate and distant goal was the collective work of art—the building—in which no barriers exist between the structural and the decorative arts.

Instruction was carried out on the principle that every student was taught by two masters, a craftsman and an artist, working in close collaboration, and that instruction in crafts and in the theory of form are fundamental. Its instructors were carefully chosen and included Klee, Kandinsky, Marcel Breuer, Moholy-Nagy, Feininger. Its activities covered architecture, furniture and carpentry design, stained glass, pottery, weaving, metal, stage and theatre design, wall painting, commercial display, typography and lay-out, sculpture, applied photography, painting.

Story of a Long Battle

From its start the Bauhaus met with immense opposition and scurrilous attacks not only from the Press but from the old-fashioned academic institutions and from the shortsighted attitude of the craftsmen's organizations in Germany. Throughout its existence it found itself involved in the political convulsions of post-war Germany. It was founded under a Socialist Government and when that Government swung over to the “People's Party,” forerunners of the Nazis, the Bauhaus was attacked on the grounds that Socialists had started it. Menaced by an uncomprehending and antagonistic Government, and conscious of their solidarity and rights the Council decided in 1924 to dissolve the Bauhaus to forestall its destruction. Various cities opened negotiations for its transfer and the invitation of the Mayor was accepted for its re-establishment at Dessau. There it continued until Gropius left in 1928. After a few more checkered years, it came to an end in 1933 when the National Socialist Party took over its quarters as a training ground for political leaders. Many of its instructors emigrated to the U.S.A. where they introduced Bauhaus training methods at Black Mountain College, North Carolina; the New Bauhaus, Chicago; the Department of Architecture at Harvard University; and the Armour Institute, Chicago; The Industrial School of Design, New York; and the Southern Californian School of Design.

Its Legacy

There are certain methods and ideas developed by the Bauhaus that we may still ponder:

1. That teachers should face the fact that their future should be involved primarily with industry and mass production and not with individual craftsmanship.
2. That teachers of design should be in advance of their profession and not constitute a safe and academic rearguard.
3. That modern design should bring together the various arts of painting, theatre, architecture, etc., into a modern synthesis that disregards conventional distinctions of “fine” and “applied” arts.
4. That it is harder, but more useful, to design a first rate chair than paint a second rate painting.
5. That thorough manual experience of material is essential to the student of design.
6. That the student architect or designer should not be offered a refuge in the past but equipped to take his place in the modern world and function in society not as a decorator but as a vital participant.
Well, what is Design?

"Design" is what makes a thing
(a) easy to make,
(b) easy to use,
(c) easy to look at.

Why Is Design So Important?

Because it isn’t only concerned with making teapots and such things nice to look at; it also makes them easy to hold and easy to pour from. And it is lack of design that makes them awkward and uncomfortable to pick up and pour from, and allows the tea to dribble down the spout and drip on to the tablecloth.

What Does Design Mean to Me?

Well, assuming that you drink tea three times a day, lack of design in your teapot means that you hurt your hand and spoil your tablecloth more than a thousand times a year.

And it’s the same with everything you use—lack of design means much more than mere ugliness; it means awkwardness, waste of energy, petty annoyance and wear and tear all round. It makes your kitchen pots and pans hot to hold and hard to clean, it makes your furniture hard to dust and heavy to move; in fact, it adds to your work and your worry all day long and all over the house.

The sad part about it is that good design can be just as cheap as bad design; good design should be easy to make as well as easy to use—and that’s why it generally means quantity production and efficiency and cheapness.

What Can I Do About It, Anyway?

Every time you go into a shop to choose something you need, remember to choose the best design, the design that is going to be easiest to use, easiest to clean and nicest to look at—the one that will be the cheapest in the long run (even if it isn’t in every case the cheapest to buy). And remember to tell the shopkeeper why you choose it.

If only enough people will remember to do just that (and, after all, it’s only common sense) then the shoddy and the second-rate, the tiresome and the troublesome will quickly fade out from lack of support, and better and better designs will become more and more plentiful and more and more reasonable in price, just because of the demand for them.

(By courtesy of the British Council of Industrial Design.)

Contributions and Letters

THE EDITOR is always glad to consider any contributions. Where possible, they should be accompanied by photographs of the illustrations suggested. Original works of art should not be sent unless requested.

For the purposes of reproduction, glossy photographs are preferable, and contributors are reminded that the appearance of good objects can be easily ruined by bad photography.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR and contributions should be addressed to The Editor, Design Review, P.O. Box 1628, Wellington, C.I., accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. If written under a pen-name, the writer must enclose his name and address.

Design Review has had its teething troubles, but it has recently undergone a complete reorganization.

If you should hear of complaints of non-receipt of numbers, etc., please communicate with the Editor, Box 1628, Wellington.

OUR NEW SERIES OF COVERS, designed by Mervyn Taylor, is one of the improvements that will signalize Design Review’s progress from now on.

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Cups, Saucers and Teapots

"Why is it," I asked, "that the tea-set in the corner is only half the price of any other one in the shop?"

"Oh?" said the shop assistant in a superior fashion, "that plain one is only fit for kitchen-ware. Now here is a really nice one, inlaid gold on it too, quite exclusive . . . ."

And so I was borne off from the dark corner with the attractive olive green tea-set ("but of course only fit for kitchen-ware, my dear") into a wild jungle of tea-sets for the dining-room, tea-sets for the morning tray, tea-sets for social afternoons, tea-sets for the display cabinet, all respectably adorned with gold paint, rosebuds, garden scenes, blue birds wildly chasing each other. None of them could possibly be confused with the naked Cinderella in the corner. At each category the price, the vulgarity, the sheer impossibility of the tea-sets mounted, so that the cup and saucer fit for that holy of holies, the china cabinet, was so fluted round the brim, so wiggly round the handle, so inlaid and overlaid with gold paint, so narrow waisted, and so genteelly small withal, that the idea of drinking from it filled me with nervous apprehension—but then, of course, one would not drink, one would sip, sip, sip.

It is no wonder really that we cannot choose good pictures for our Art Gallery, that we cannot build an unpretentious theatre, and that we are such an easy market for chromium and veneer, when we are unable to distinguish between beauty and ugliness in a tea cup.

Good taste is an individual affair. We should not blindly follow the judgment of the critic, but neither should we with equal blindness follow the judgment of our neighbours. It is essential that we clear our minds and eyes of what is the accepted thing. Why not have a plain tea cup in the dining room? If it has grace and good proportion it is as much at home in the dining room as in the kitchen.

The first thing to consider in, say, a cup and saucer and a teapot is "fitness for purpose." It is strange that in such a scientific age we have ceased to think in terms of technical function about many everyday things. What is the conventional rather than what is the most suitable has too often warped judgment.

A good tea cup and saucer should be able to pass certainly purely functional tests.

The cup must be easy to hold; that means a round, open handle devoid of wiggles and frills, and not so small that it is impossible for the little finger to do anything but just awkwardly outward.

Most of us like tea; therefore the cup should not be too small. There is a popular misconception that only the small cup is elegant enough for afternoon tea parties, but elegance comes from line and form, size has little to do with it. Of course, there is no need for a tea cup to look like a tramper's mug, but there is a satisfactory mean. The cup illustrated holds a quarter of a pint. The slight curve of the sides increases its capacity without adding to the height and also gives it a graceful line.

Most of us like our tea to keep hot while we drink it. This means that there should not be too great an increase in width between the top and bottom of the cup. Tea cups shaped like a coupe dish, while often attractive to look at, very quickly let tea cool.

The cup should be pleasant to drink from, and a smooth surface round the brim feels better to the lips than a fluted one. Too much "overhang" is also unpleasant; it is difficult to clean and is easily chipped.

Finally the cup must look and be at ease on its saucer. Narrow-waisted cups always appear to be precariously perched on their saucers. The wide-bottomed cup illustrated sits comfortably, and cup and saucer would even balance on a knee.

The saucer is not so important functionally, but the proportion of height of cup to depth and width of saucer should be correct. I do not think there is any need to bother about rules, the eye when it is used is sufficient judge. It is important that the cup and saucer should look as though they belong to each other.

There is, for instance, a brand of plain New Zealand cups and saucers of which the cup is functionally good, but its height is out of all proportion to the width and depth of the saucer with the result that the cup looks top-heavy. A cup and saucer should be designed as a unit.

A good teapot should also be able to stand up to this spring-cleaning process.

The most important thing about a teapot is that it should pour well—it should also look as if it pours.
Teapot designed by Victor Skellern combines good functional appearance with graceful simplicity of line and right proportions; nor is it marred, as many otherwise good round teapots often are, by having a square handle. Handle, spout, and lid are harmonious with the body, and do not look like excrescences spouting awkwardly from the pot.

The absurdity and vulgarity of the "racing-car" and "cottage" teapots need no comment.

"Fitness for purpose" then can place with perfect propriety the plain cup and saucer or teapot in the dining room. Ease in handling, grace and simplicity of form and good proportion are the most important attributes of either. It is possible, however, for something else to be included which although not functionally necessary in the purely technical sense can add beauty and joy to the design. Many people of good sense are suspicious of ornament and rightly so; it is a healthy reaction both to the extravagance of the nineteenth century and to the flamboyance of the twentieth. Good taste has become associated with the plain and the simple—both these things can be good, but simplicity need not imply nakedness, and elegance can be enhanced not destroyed by good decoration. But just as cup and saucer and teapot must fit the purpose for which they are designed so should their decoration fit their shape. Most decoration on the teapots we see in New Zealand shop windows seems to have been designed on the principle that only by crowding on as much gold paint and as many rosebuds as possible—even the inside of the cup is not to be neglected—can the manufacturer ensure against the odious stigma of kitchenware. All decoration must have breathing space, in fact, it could possibly be defined as the arrangement of space. The Chinese knew how to achieve beauty with a single line. It is we Westerners, afraid of space as we are of stillness, who use decoration to cover up blanks rather than to enhance form. The decoration on the Victor Skellern teapot is good but not perfect. The shape of the teapot has been considered and the pattern is in harmony with its mouldings. Nor is the design crowded by too much decoration—it is a satisfactory balance of space and pattern. The weakness of the decoration is the number of unrelated bands round the handle and in particular delineating unnecessarily the join of the spout. The teapot though would be a welcome relief amid the vulgar mediocrity of those that we are accustomed to use and display.

Well-designed cups and saucers and teapots are being made but New Zealanders see them generally as illustrations in overseas magazines, seldom in our own shop windows. Buyers for the larger firms may be blamed, though it seems likely that they buy only what they know will sell. As with so many other examples of bad taste in this country "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."
At least some interest in industrial design has been aroused in this country by the recent visit by Milner Gray. His visit was a short one—a fortnight—of which a week was spent in Auckland and a week in Wellington.

At each of these cities Milner Gray gave four lectures on different aspects of industrial design. His audience was small in number and consisted of those who had already had an interest in the subject which is as yet, perhaps, too new and unknown to be of interest to the general public. Through generosity of Milner Gray we are enabled to make use of his notes in the following articles on "The Industrial Design Profession in Great Britain": "Design in Everyday Life": "Packaging Design."

Who Is Milner Gray?

Mr. Milner Gray, R.D.I., F.S.I.A., is a practising designer. He is a director of (Design Research Unit, 37 Park Street, London, W.1., a cooperative partnership of architects, designers and engineers. He is a member of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry, and President of the Society of Industrial Artists. During the war he was head of the Exhibitions Branch, Ministry of Information, which branch he was responsible for starting. He was chief designer of the "Design at Work" Exhibition at the Royal Academy, London, 1948.

Mr. Milner Gray's appointments include the following: Board of Trade representative on Governing Board Central School of Art, 1945; Member of Council Central Institute of Art and Design; Member Modern Architectural Research Group; Member of Packaging Advisory Committee Printing and Allied Trades Research Association; Principal Sir John Cass School of Art 1937-40; Visiting Lecturer Goldsmith's College, London University 1932-40; Chelsea School of Art, 1934-37; Reimann School of Art 1937-40; and on Board of Honorary Advisers, Royal College of Art 1936-40.

He has exhibited pottery and china at the Exhibition of British Industrial Art, Dorland Hall, 1933, pottery and textiles at the Exhibition of Contemporary Industrial Design at Dorland Hall, 1934, window display and packaging design at the Exhibition of British Art in Industry, Royal Academy 1935, packaging design at the Paris International Exhibition 1937, and at the International Exhibition of Packaging, Zurich, 1940, and in America.

He has been responsible for—Industrial Designs including watch cases, silver and plated goods, Bristol "Wayfarer" passenger plane interior (with Misha Black), kitchen utensils and domestic equipment, domestic chairs, china tea services, earthenware tea and dinner services, improved taxicab for Council of Industrial Design.

Exhibitions and Displays including R.D.I. "Design at Work" Exhibition, Royal Academy, 1948; Stands at British Industries Fair, 1947-8.

Packaging Design

Symbols and Trade Marks for British Broadcasting Corporation; Ministry of Information (Royal Arms for use in Exhibitions); Ministry of Food (British Restaurant Symbol); Ministry of Agriculture (Symbol); Building Centre; etc.

Posters for Building Centre; London Passenger Transport Board; Ministry of Labour; Ministry of Information; etc.

We owe his visit to this country to the British Council.

Milner Gray's Broadcast Interview

On his visit to Australia the A.B.C. broadcast an interview with Milner Gray. As his answers to the questions contain many points of interest we print the interview below:

1. Question: Reason for this Australian visit.

Answer: I have come here at the invitation of the British Council to tell interested manufacturers and designers in the Commonwealth of Australia what we are doing in Great Britain to try to organize our industrial design resources and to improve the design of consumer goods.

2. Question: You are the President of the Society of Industrial Artists in Britain? What is the task of the Society?
Answer: The Society of Industrial Artists is the designers' professional association, as the Royal Institute of British Architects is for architects and the Royal College of Physicians for medical practitioners. The Society was founded in 1930, and formulates the codes and rules by which designers practise in Great Britain. Membership is a guarantee of professional competence and aesthetic ability. Members conform to a code of professional conduct no less rigorous than those codes which govern the conduct of other professions; they undertake work on terms which have been regularized and standardized.

3. Question: Has skilled technical design guidance improved the quality and quantity of British output?

Answer: Where design is being properly used it has helped and is helping the qualitative standard of goods. In collaboration with research departments it is a part of the design process to effect economies in production by keeping a constant watch on developments in materials and processes; as well as on the sales-appeal of consumer goods. Other things being equal, those firms with a sound design policy, well integrated with production, sales and finance policies—but not dominated by them—are playing an important part in building up British output.

4. Question: Why was Government assistance granted to the Society?

Answer: Government support, but not financial assistance, is given to the professional association through the Council of Industrial Design. This Council was set up in 1944 by the President of the Board of Trade, because it was felt that design was a vital factor in our post-war trade. The Council is financed by the Government, and the annual report on its activities is made to Parliament. It is charged with the task of improving the standard of design in British industry by all practicable means. One of its main functions is to help industries to set up Design Centres which operate on a co-operative basis, supported by contributions from the manufacturers in each industry in addition to a grant from the Exchequer. The Council also acts as a centre of advice and information on all matters of industrial design to manufacturers, designers, Government Departments, and any other interested bodies. Good design is publicized by means of exhibitions, design weeks throughout the country, and lectures and visual aids in the schools and to specialized and general audiences.

5. Question: How are British manufacturers reacting to the encouragement of industrial design by the Government?

Answer: In spite of the present encouraging developments—and they are encouraging—it would be wrong for me to pretend to you that a Golden Age of Industrial Design had dawned in Great Britain overnight. There is a clear gleam on the horizon—no more. The urgent need to increase our exports has focused attention on design as a sales factor of equal importance to the technical efficiency of our manufacturers: and more and more British producers are recognizing that this design business is not just a stunt or a luxury, but a very necessary factor in making goods to sell in world markets, as well as to improve the amenities of the life of the people at home. But the industrial process cannot be speeded up beyond a certain point; however, I believe that the great Exhibition planned for 1951 will demonstrate the extent to which British manufacturers are now turning to the designer to help to improve the quality of their goods.

6. Question: Can you tell us something more about this Exhibition?

Answer: The Festival of Britain—as it is to be called—will be held in 1951 to commemorate the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851, for which the Crystal Palace was built in Hyde Park. The main exhibition will be sited on a large area of the south bank of the Thames which was badly blitzed during the war and will be developed as a new civic centre to coincide with the centenary scheme. The Festival of Britain will be not only a shop window for British goods, but a festival of music, drama and the arts, and I hope that many Australians will be able to visit the Old Country, where we shall certainly do our best to give them the same generous welcome which I have been given here in Australia.
The Industrial Design Profession in Great Britain

An abridgement of a lecture
by MILNER GRAY

The Editor wishes to state that these reports of lectures given by Mr. Milner Gray are necessarily shortened. While every effort has been made to represent what Mr. Milner Gray said as faithfully as possible, the process of condensing brings with it a measure of distortion, as everyone knows who has suffered at the hands of the newspaper reporters. We owe Mr. Milner Gray a debt of gratitude for his generosity in allowing the Editor the loan of his verbatim notes.

This profession is so new that I must confine myself to definitions.

In Britain industrial design has been the subject of discussion since the appointment in 1836—before the Great Exhibition in 1851—of Mr. Ewart’s Committee on Arts and Manufactures. All shades of opinion from widely differing sources have so confused the terms used, including “design” and “designer” that it is necessary to define them. This practice has led to the invention of a number of terms to clarify a meaning: terms such as “streamlining,” “product styling,” “design engineering,” “technological design.” In the U.S.A., the term “product development” is used. In Great Britain the Society of Industrial Artists has been working to establish accepted meanings for the basic and technical terms in common use.

“Design” may refer to the visual aesthetics of painting and decoration or to the solution of the purely mechanical problems of engineering, such as the planning of a tool or mould. In industrial design the term implies the solution of problems of both appearance and function.

Industry may be served by designers in two ways: in the making of its products; in the selling of them. The first is concerned with problems of production; the second with those of distribution; the one with industry, the other with commerce. “Industrial design” is now accepted as a description of design for manufacture; “commercial design” as the equivalent definition of design for selling.

Scope of the Designer

Considering the wide diversity of articles which are mass produced, one may well ask whether design can only be considered in relation to one industry, or are there common characteristics? The designer is not only an artist but a man of science and of business, concerned with facts and figures, involved equally in the problems of production and in those of selling. He is as interested in the researches of the metallurgist and chemist as in those of the industrial psychologist. He is concerned not only with how things are made but with marketable commodities—goods with a human appeal over and above their functional value.

This is the designer’s first responsibility, to hold a watching brief for the user of what we so glibly call consumer goods. We tend to lose touch with ourselves as ordinary men and women: this is true no less of the manufacturer or his production engineer than of the rest of us. It is easy enough when your job involves economizing in the production costs of a teapot or a toaster, to forget about effecting economies in the housewife’s time or temper. It is the designer’s responsibility to keep the common touch. In addition, the designer needs to increase his store not only of knowledge but of wisdom, acquiring a sense of tolerance which will enable him to get on with other people. Industrial design is a team job and the designer must learn to work as a member of the team—with the production manager and engineer on the one hand and the cost accountant and sales manager on the other.

Abuse of the Designer

Between 1918 and 1939 American industry produced a new kind of designer—the independent stylist. The team suggests superficial treatment and an imperfect integration of design with production. It has given place to the term “design consultant.”

The consultant designer, then, is one who designs for more than one industry and who therefore practises in a consultative capacity. In America today, he is well established and in Great Britain the number is growing.

But American industry which has done so much to establish the industrial design profession, is responsible for some of its worst excesses. The constant re-styling of goods has been used as an artificial stimulus to sales, developing beyond reason and against the interests of the consumer. The practice of styling for obsolescence, so noticeable in the motor-car industry, is one which the industrial designer must regard with a wary eye.

Selection of Designer

Design in Great Britain has developed from within industry by the use of designers employed by and specializing in a particular field of manufacture. In those industries where the actual-craft has played a large part—textiles, pottery, glass,
Steel office furniture for Romeo, Ltd., and sideboard in two contrasting woods designed by Frederick Gibbard, F.R.I.B.A., A.M.P.T.I., F.S.I.A.

boots and shoes, saddlery and leather goods—these specialist designers have a long tradition of good design. But it is generally accepted that the standard of design in a wide range of pre-war British goods was poorer than it need have been. This low standard is owing to the way designers have been recruited.

Great Britain was the first to develop machine production on a national scale and industries grew up as aggregations of small units. Their products were copies of the hand-made articles which preceded the machine, perhaps modified by the work foreman. Later, designers were selected from existing staff, being usually young persons with an aptitude for drawing. This practice persists today. As a result, while the designer may have some technical knowledge, he has practically no culture or knowledge of conditions outside his usual environment. It is no matter for surprise that his average work is that of a copyist and adaptor, imitating the products of competitors or transcribing the ideas of manager and sales staff. But as the status of the industrial designer becomes more firmly established the trend is for more manufacturers to follow the example of the enlightened few.

How may the qualified designer be identified?

No perfected system of training has yet been established whereby a student may qualify for practice as an industrial designer, although much time is being given both by educational authorities and practising designers to this pre-requisite for successful practice.

Courses in general industrial design are held at the Royal College of Art and the Central School of Art in London, and specialist courses are held in various industrial centres. But no diploma is yet given which is recognized both by industry and the profession.

Designers now practising have graduated from many sources of learning both academic and otherwise, but they have gained their proficiency in the hard school of experience. Schools of art, architecture, and engineering have each provided recruits, while others have served their apprenticeship in industry itself or in the offices of practising designers.

Official Bodies

In 1936 the Royal Society of Arts singled out a limited number of designers of high eminence and bestowed on them a diploma carrying the right to use the affix R.D.I. (Royal Designer for Industry). This is often called “the blue ribbon” of the profession.

The most complete as well as the most selective action taken to organize the profession has been that of the Society of Industrial Artists founded in 1930 and reconstituted in 1944.

The principal object of this Society is to establish for designers a status comparable with that of the architect and the engineer. In addition to a code of professional conduct, it issues schedules of average fees, conditions of contract, and regulations governing the conduct of open and limited competitions. Only recently has the Society begun to be accepted as an authoritative body.

On reconstitution in 1944 the Society disbanded membership and re-recruited with the imposition of rigid qualitative tests for membership. Its members were divided into three comparative grades—Licentiates, Members, and Fellows.

A newer body, the Council of Industrial Design, has importance as the symbol of official recognition of the part design can play in overseas trade and improving the amenities of national life. It was set up in 1944 by the Board of Trade and is financed by the Government. Its purpose is to improve design in British industry and by publicity to increase public awareness of the elements of design. It offers manufacturers and designers an advisory service for promoting good design and information on new materials and new processes. It provides a list of designers.

Responsibility of the Designer

Industrial design is an essential part of a standard of quality enabling the best use to be made of available techniques and suitable material. Good design can only come through full and equal co-operation. The designer’s responsibility rests on his ability to help to produce goods which satisfy the people’s needs at a price they can afford.
Design in Everyday Life

An abridgement of a lecture
by MILNER GRAY

Of the many meanings of the word "design" I would like to select one. "Design," says the dictionary, means "adaptations of means to ends". If we apply this to industrial design then "means" are machines and raw materials, and "ends" are the satisfaction of the user of the goods and the manufacturer and trader who sell them.

Forerunners

Following the first World War, the emphasis on design was on art, taste, aesthetic values, as witnessed by the work of the Design and Industries Association and the officially sponsored British Institute of Industrial Art. The Design and Industries Association drew its support from public-spirited people who wished to see a better standard of design in everyday things. They wanted the mass of the people to enjoy the use of common things that were aesthetically pleasing. The principle on which this improvement was to take place was embodied in the slogan "Fitness for Purpose." This was essentially an aesthetic and altruistic movement in the Morris-Ruskin tradition. Its main influence was not on industry but in the creation of a benevolent official attitude towards design.

In the later period between the wars, propagandists for good design, influenced by American "stylists" changed to the idea of "design for selling." This doctrine received its greatest stimulus in America, claiming that the purpose of the designer was to move the goods as quickly as possible from the dealer's shelves to the consumer's hands. It created an artificial obsolescence or short life for consumer goods by tricks of fashion calculated to persuade the public to replace purchases frequently and long before they were worn out.

Before long the more responsible designers in America realized that the same skill which had been brought to superficial styling could be applied to improving convenience in use and economy in production. The designer, hitherto on the fringe of industry, had graduated to the position of an essential technician within industry. During the second war the production of armaments and essentials goods imposed economies in skill, time, material and effort. In certain fields design became closely integrated with production as a sheer necessity of survival. So in the 1940's "Design for Selling" gave way to "Design for Making." From the cozy gatherings of the converted and the high ideals of the highbrows of the 1920's, industrial design had come down to earth.

Obstacles to Expansion

The design of cheap mass-produced articles is still, with few exceptions, as unsatisfactory in Great Britain as in most other countries. This is due to the failure of the manufacturer to understand the purpose of industrial design. The manufacturer is justified in believing that it is not his responsibility to educate the public taste at the expense of his dividends. The industrial designer has failed to explain that he is as much concerned with tooling costs as with the function of the articles he designs for its sales appeal. The approach to industrial design must be a synthesis of the three ideals of form and function, sales appeal and economic production—fitness for purpose, design for selling, and design for making.

Another factor working against the industrial designer has been the manufacturer's resentment against the pretensions of the "expert."

Purpose of Industrial Design

Glance backward a moment. The mediaeval craftsman was an expert in his material and in close touch with the buyer of his goods. The machine killed the craftsman and produced cheap ugly goods to which the manufacturer gave some surface decoration. The results were uglier than ever because they were pretentious. Against this, Morris's revolt was a failure as he failed to realize that the machine was still a tool. Designers and manufacturers have been unable or unwilling to come to terms with the implications of machine production. The difference between designing for production by hand and by machine is that on is a process of making while the other is a process of planning.

Industrial design is a team job and its functions comprise:

1. Ensuring that the product fulfils the purpose for which it is made.
2. Keeping as low as possible its cost of manufacture.
3. Reducing to a minimum the cost of finishing, handling, packing, storage, repair and maintenance.
(4) Promoting its sale by control of its form and presentation.

Preliminaries to Design

The first preliminary to successful industrial design is fact-finding about the market to which the product is intended to appeal.

The designer must know about the people to whom the producer expects to sell, their fads and fancies, how they live, what they expect to pay, whether it is a novelty, a luxury or a necessity to them.

Manufacturers themselves, like the public, are apt to observe two standards—a standard of judgment and a standard of buying. Thus when a panel of women was asked to judge the best of six scarves and chose one design as best, only 10 per cent. selected it when offered as a gift.

Colour is an important factor, as is shown by an instance in which factory workers complained that they strained their backs lifting black metal boxes, but when the boxes were painted pale green commented that the new lightweight boxes made a great difference.

The enterprising firm will wish to try out new ideas perhaps ahead of its public. While the easiest thing to sell is what is already familiar the changes resulting from two wars have made the present a time when people are more ready to accept new ideas.

The second preliminary to successful design is fact-finding about productive equipment and methods.

The designer must ascertain the limitations imposed on him by the client’s production equipment and methods, the source of supply of raw materials, and his commercial policy. It is the little things that count. The omission of a gear, the substitution of a standard part for a special one, often will make no difference to the consumer’s satisfaction, but a great deal to the shareholders.

The third preliminary to successful design is fact-finding about the distribution and handling of the product to ensure that every aspect of its design is efficient and economic from the control of its form so as to avoid damage in transit, to the lay-out of its consignment labels to make for quick and easy identification.

For every fraction of a penny that can be trimmed off the cost of producing an article a shilling can often be saved by greater efficiency and speed in moving it from the factory through all stages of warehousing, transport and display to the point of sale.

The services of the design consultant have been most frequently used in packaging. War-time experience with military stores showed how much wider is the subject of package design than had been realized in the years when selling was all-important. We now know that the protection of the contents from all the hazards of transport, storage and climate, breaking and crushing, permeation by water, drying-up, mould attack, insect infestation, tainting from odours of adjacent products have to be taken into account as well as economies brought about by the better adaptation of the package to storing and handling.

Practical Considerations

By concentrating on the economics of design the impression may have been created that aesthetic considera-
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NOTES

Although Design Review and the activities of the Architectural Centre
are the result of the combined efforts of many, it might well be that neither
the Centre nor its journal would exist but for the enthusiasm and vision of
Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter was never one who rested on his laurels nor was he ever
satisfied that what was done could not be improved. The committee of
Design Review will feel his absence keenly, and the Centre of which he
has been honorary secretary since its formation will eagerly look forward
to his return.

We wish to congratulate Mr. George
Porter. He has just left for the
United States to take up a scholarship
awarded by the Foreign Students
Summer Project Committee of the
Massachusetts Institute of Techno-
logy. The actual travelling expenses
to and from the United States are
paid by the New Zealand Govern-
ment. At M.I.T. Mr. Porter intends

to study regional planning, a subject
of his own choice.

Our congratulations on the award
of this scholarship are all the more
sincere in that we know Mr. Porter
will use his opportunity to the full
and that he is an eminently suitable
representative of his country to send
to M.I.T.

HIERARCHY

gothic for the churches,
neo-greek for banks,
plaster bands for factories,
shops and other ranks.

Claudius

"This book gives a pictorial survey of domestic architecture during the whole period of Australian history, illustrating the best examples of houses from all over Australia." This quotation from the dust jacket sums up the contents adequately and the book can be accepted as such a survey with the usual allowances made for works on architecture that are, perhaps, over-selective. Within its limits the book is good, both as an object to handle, read, and place on the bookshelf, and also as a survey of domestic architecture. It has clear type, easy lay-out and informative captions. The drawings used in conjunction with the photographs, and plans used, are excellent, in the way that all such drawings should be—they record simply and efficiently and are for the most part lively. I shall mention the photography particularly because it is of a very high standard. Australia does not seem to be suffering from the dearth of architectural photographers that we know in New Zealand. There is in some examples an annoying lack of plans. In books illustrating architecture, I think this is unforgivable.

The houses illustrated are in many cases surprising. Where I could see a similarity in form and idea with our own early architectural picture, appreciation came easily, but there are many things here that are not usual. Many of the early Australian settlers must have been wealthy people, and they managed to carry from an England fast becoming industrialized, a technique of building which is fine in mood and execution and usually exciting. What little we have seen of good traditional eclecticism in New Zealand pales besides the glory of some of those old Australian houses. These were men of discrimination. Take a look at the illustration of the Treasury build-

ing in Long Street, Sydney, at Greystanes, Prospect, N.S.W., and MacArthur’s house, Camden Park, N.S.W. But the tradition of good building, as is obvious from this book, weakened as it did here in New Zealand. But never does it become bad, and always it is interesting.

Two people who seem to have done good modern work are Hardy Wilson and Arthur Baldwinson. The former works in a traditional form of a high standard of detail design, and the latter works in a more contemporary idiom which is occasionally bogged down by a disappointing lack of discrimination.

But by far the most interesting section in the book is that devoted to the Sir John Sulman Medal awards of 1934, 1940, 1945. Of these the 1940 medal winner by Gerard H. B. McDonell is in my opinion most worthy of notice. The 1945 winner Sidney Archer has designed another house, making a pair that architects in this country might well discuss.

To conclude. The book should be read by every man and woman in New Zealand who is interested in architecture.

L.W.

Sixty Home Interiors, by Dorothy Senior, A.S.T.C.


Here are two fully illustrated books, for people who want ready-made solutions to their architectural and interior design problems.
In recent decades drastic changes have taken place in the design and appearance of the home and especially of the furnishings and equipment of the average household.

The utilitarian viewpoint is constantly kept to the fore in planning room layouts and in orienting the house to its surroundings. The same sense of practicality is extended to furniture design and the building-in of standard furniture items such as beds, settees, benches, tables, etc., has been advanced to such an extent that it is now not easy to draw a dividing line between house and furniture.

In keeping with this trend, window openings, blinds and furnishings have changed their appearance, in some instances drastically, as is seen when we compare the modern all-steel tubular frame chair with its wooden predecessor.

It may safely be said that no home is now complete without a radio, in the purchase of which one may select from an extensive range of designs or judging a receiver solely from its external appearance.

But it was not always so. Time was—and that but a couple of decades ago—when the receiver was somewhat of a haphazard collection of boxes, cords, dials, and batteries. Then little or no thought was given to appearances, indeed Mum usually consigned Dad and his gear to an outbuilding or store-room whereupon she became a radio-widow for a shorter or longer period according to Dad’s inclinations.

At that time it was the fact of radio reception which mattered. What was received had little or no entertainment value. It was only with the early beginnings of broadcasting and with the gradual building up of a programme which had community interest, that the other members of the family began to participate in the new home novelty.

With the awakening interest, there developed on the one hand a demand for receivers which had some value as a home decorative unit and simultaneously a need for better programmes which would make it worth while to spend time listening-in.

Where there was competition, either in set design and manufacture, or on the other hand, in the broadcasting programmes, then competition was a spur to the more extensive purchase and use of receiving sets.

These changes brought to the fore the importance of designing radios to please the feminine mind, for as more and more the final choice was left to the housewife, so more and more has radio design been influenced by “eye appeal.”

The function of a radio is to reproduce voice, music and speech true to life. While there are still many radios which fall short—sometimes lamentably so—in the quality of reproduction, it is undeniable that a reasonably large number of receivers leave but little to be desired in the quality of the reproduced programmes. Consequently, the design factor has become of especial importance for the housing of the “good” chassis and accessories.

While in the early days of radio the electrically-minded technician who built the set had also to make up his mind what sort of a box to sell it in,
the drift to factory mass production has had the advantage that more time and money could be devoted to designing and selecting cabinets which would induce sales. Radio factories with larger outputs were better able to employ skilled design artists for the longer production runs.

A not unimportant factor has been that overseas magazines and technical and trade journals with world-wide circulations give publicity to new trends in radio design and the influence of these changes can be reflected in the production of New Zealand receivers long before sample sets to be used as models could be imported from abroad. It will thus be seen that there always is a number of converging factors which go to make the modern receiver look as it does look.

To some extent the radio has been designed functionally, as for example the floor console is expected, in addition to being a musical instrument, to be an attractive article of furniture and one which will conform to the general trend of modern furnishings.

Smaller are the table models varying in size and sometimes rather imposing in appearance. These, too, were functional in that they became part of the furnishings and were often given a permanent position mounted upon a small occasional table of suitable size and appearance.

The smaller receivers are designed in the "mantel model" class. Filling the decorative and utilitarian capacities of the mantel clock, and being relatively low-priced, much importance is attached to eye-catching appeal so as to induce shoppers to buy on sight. A further development of these mantel models which is now being worked out is to design them with an all-round-and-no-back appearance so that they can be used as table models, presenting an harmonious appearance when viewed from any angle.

Although this article deals with radio as a home decorative component, we would mention that group of receivers—the portables—which have grown out of the large family of home radios.

Like the later mantel models, portables are totally enclosed and designed to present a pleasing appearance from whatever angle they are viewed. That type of portable known as the A.C.-Battery has indeed to be designed as a home decorative unit because when not functioning as a battery portable in the car or at a picnic, it is brought back into the house, plugged into the house current mains, and takes its place as a small, but necessary, piece of home equipment. As such, it must be one of good looks, if not beauty, and in its purchase it is judged accordingly.

The small personal portable to operate on batteries only is, like the ubiquitous Kodak, to be found most frequently at the end of a shoulder strap, and therefore, is not to be considered as a piece of equipment for the home.

Changes in listening habits have influenced radio design and still do so. More and more the idea of a set for every room tends to group receivers into classes. The radiogram while the most used set, located in the console reigns supreme in the lounge,
kitchen or in the adjacent breakfast parlour, is usually more modest in design, execution and price, even if used morning, noon, and night.

With such a background, there will inevitably be strongly influencing factors in design due to the desire of various radio factories to cater for the tastes and fancies of that army of womenfolk who buy the household needs, including radio.

This poses a problem solvable only by experience, for who can tell what is "best" in design and what the public will buy? It is a fact demonstrated on many occasions that a design, from a series or from a group, may be selected as the "best" design, yet it may not be, and often is not, the best seller.

The design section of a modern radio factory when planning for a new model will prepare several prototypes and dress these up in various colours to be submitted to a cross section of people for opinions. Prospective customers vote differently from radio retailers, while artists and furnishing experts may have still different views, and out of such a medley of opinions the radio manufacturer has to make a choice as to the model on which he will spend many thousands of pounds before it comes on the market. And on one of those occasions when the radio manufacturer happens not to be right—well, it becomes an expensive business for him.

One might add a few words on the effect of colour in radio cabinet design as an influence in home decoration.

Receiver housings constructed of timbers and veneers have but little choice in colour effects. Not so the plastic cabinets. These run to a variety of colours and shades, plain and mottled, which are a striking contrast to the Victorian era of furnishings. Plastic sets are small, being limited by the overall costs of mould manufacture. Small articles can take colour—indeed, are improved thereby—so portable and mantel radios in colour as now manufactured are a pleasant visual acquisition to any home.

**How's Your Sense of Balance?**

Nothing upsets people more than something which appears to be out of balance—witness the recent Press discussions when the Minister of Finance reported an excess of income over the year's estimates.

Hang a picture crooked, place a ladder askew or attempt to rest a heavy object on a fragile support and someone will scream in terror and alarm. Ever since mankind decided that it was more progressive to walk on two legs than on four he has been concerned with problems arising from his decision.

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In previous issues were published lists of leading manufacturers and suppliers who have made offers of materials and manpower. Here is a further list. There are more to come.

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edge and restless. Things do not actually need to topple or collapse to cause discomfort—the likelihood of their doing so is enough. So they must look safe. We ask for balance, and the appearance of balance, in our buildings, paintings and designs. Preferring comfort to a feeling of distress we decide that balance is one of the elements of design.

If we watched someone crossing the Niagara Falls on a tight rope we should experience an acute feeling of tension. If we saw the same feat every day for a year we should by that time hardly bother to watch. The anxiety about a failure to balance would be adjusted by repetition and custom.

The architect's problems in days gone by was to build his walls so as to hold the roof. Walls were wide at the bottom and narrowing as they rose, to counter the thrusting weight of roof. Countless years of familiarity built up in us an idea of balance based on stone and brick. Every European painting for centuries has been designed on the same principle of balance as a building, with a heavy base and becoming lighter as it ascends. Chinese paintings on the other hand have their apparent weight evenly distributed over the surface.

New materials, however, have been discovered at an amazing rate during the last few years and most of these materials will stand a strain far greater than those of age long use. Their employment calls for a readjustment of our sense of balance. At first we feel uncomfortable on seeing a tall building which appears to rest its weight on a few sheets of plate glass and a thin steel rod. Modern building materials have abolished the problem of walls as support for the roof. Walls are now conditioned only by questions of light or privacy. Unbreakable glass or plastics used as table tops appear unsafe to bear weight, for time has not yet conditioned our sense of balance to the new materials.

Abstract artists are the experimenters in a new sense of balance. Their abstract art, both sculpture and painting, consists of attempts to effect a new feeling for balance and to extend our comprehension of balance over new and unfamiliar fields.
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