

Design in the Modern Period

This five-week course examines the history and theory of design from c.1900 to the present, focusing on the theme of modernity. Through a chronological survey of key styles and movements in 20th and 21st century design, we will consider how designers within a global context have responded to the experience of the modern world. Central themes will include modernism, art deco, post-war design, brutalism and postmodernism. Addressing the full spectrum of design practice, examples will be drawn from the disciplines of architecture, interior design, product design, graphic design and fashion. While concentrating on canonical designs and designers, the lectures will also consider how cultural forces have impacted upon North East England, giving students the opportunity to study local examples first hand. Underpinning the analysis of design styles and movements, we will examine the underlying social and cultural factors that have shaped the history of design.

Syllabus

Week 1: 10/11/17 – Modernism in Design

Modernism is a collective term for a range of avant-garde movements emerging c.1900 to 1939. Among the major forces in 20th century culture, modernism impacted art, literature and music, but also represented a revolution in design. Responding to industrialisation, urban expansion and rapid technological progress, designers concluded that the styles of the past were no longer valid: the Machine Age required radically new design.

Suggested reading:

- Crouch, C. (1999) *Modernism in Art, Design and Architecture*. Hampshire: MacMillan Press.
- Frampton, K. (2007) *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Greenhalgh, P. (ed.) (1990) *Modernism in Design*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Whitford, F. (1994) *Bauhaus*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Wilks, C. (2006) *Modernism, 1914-1939: Designing a New World*. London: V&A Publications.
- Woodham, J. (1997) *Twentieth-Century Design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week 2: 17/11/17 – Art Deco and Exoticism

Art Deco was a glamorous style that flourished during the 'Jazz Age' of the 1920s and 30s. Embracing the finest craftsmanship and the most expensive materials, Art Deco initially catered to the elite consumer, but was gradually democratised as it spread around the world, propelled by the new mass media. The style drew on ancient and modern sources and synthesised these into a compelling vision of deluxe modernity.

Suggested reading:

- Arwas, V. (1980) *Art Deco*. Academy Editions.

- Benton, C. Benton, T. and Wood, G., eds. (2003) *Art Deco, 1910-1939*. London: V&A.
- Duncan, A. (1984) *Art Deco Furniture: the French designers*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Lussier, S. (2009) *Art Deco Fashion*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

Week 3: 24/11/17 – Design in Post-war Britain

Emerging from the Second World War, Britain's urban landscape was scarred by bomb damage, rationing was still in force, and the economy was in ruins. Architecture and design played a major role in rebuilding vital infrastructure and forging Britain's post-war identity. Central themes include the Festival of Britain, Scandinavian influences, the emergence of an organic modernism, and post-war reconstruction.

Suggested reading:

- Atfield, J. (ed.) (1999) *Utility Reassessed – The role of Ethics in the practice of Design*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Banham, M. (1976) *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain, 1951*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Dover, H. (1991) *Home Front Furniture: British Utility Design, 1941-1951*. Aldershot: Scolar.
- Jackson, L. (1991) *The New Look: Design in the Fifties*. London: Thames and Hudson

Week 4: 1/12/17 – Brutalism

Stemming from the late work of Le Corbusier and the need to rebuild Britain's shattered infrastructure, brutalism was a notorious architectural style of the 1950s and 60s. Conceived as an egalitarian style for the age of the Welfare State, brutalism was based on pre-formed concrete and exuded an exaggerated monumentality.

Suggested reading:

- Banham, R. (1966) *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic*. London: The Architectural Press.
- Harwood, E. (2015) *Space, hope and brutalism: English architecture 1945-1975*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Potts, A. (2012) 'Realism, Brutalism, Pop' in *Art History*, April, 2012, Vol.35, p.288(26).

Week 5: 8/12/17 – Postmodernism in Design

Within the field of design, postmodernism can be understood as a reaction to the minimalist functionalism of the Modern Movement. In a broader sense, postmodernism is a cultural response to the social and economic conditions of the late 20th century, such as industrial decline, globalisation and the explosion of information technology. Postmodernist design responds to this chaotic, destabilised world by embracing parody and pastiche. References to past styles are used in a

detached, ironic way to demonstrate that universal solutions are impossible in a global culture of disorientation and flux.

Suggested reading:

- Farrell, T. (2011) *Interiors and the Legacy of Postmodernism*. London: Laurence King.
- Fitoussi, B. (1998) *Memphis*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Jameson, Fredric (1991) *Postmodernism: or, The cultural logic of late capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Jencks, C. (1986) *What is post-modernism?* London: Academy Editions.