

# History of Modern Design

Reviewed by Glyn Jones, The Alun School, Mold.



Written primarily as a text to be used as a reference for University based design history courses, the book details the history of modern design since the Industrial Revolution. The book tells the story of the art and design movements that have shaped the world in which we live, dealing with the socio-economic effects of design and the technological and commercial developments that have aided and progressed design capabilities over the last 300 years. The social, economic and historical events from around the world that have impacted upon design are also discussed in some detail.

The book is broken into five distinct and individual chapters. These are as follows:

- Supply, Demand and Design (1700-1865)
- Arts, Crafts and Machines (1866-1914)
- After World War 1 (1918-1944): Moderne, Industry and Utopias
- Humanism and Luxury: International Modernism and Mass Culture after World War 11 (1945-1960)
- Progress, Protest and Pluralism (1960-2000)

Every chapter begins with an introduction that serves as a flavour of what is to come. I found this to be very useful. A scan of this introduction allows a decision to be made as to whether or not the chapters content is of relevance or

interest when researching a particular theme or topic. Each chapter is further broken down into sub-chapters that discuss individual episodes of relevance to the history of modern design. Not only are the major and most well-known design movements (Bauhaus, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Arts and Crafts etc.) discussed and described, the book also looks further afield. For example, at happenings in the Far-East and the smaller European countries and their impact and input into the history and developments of design.

As a text to be used by undergraduate students, the book would provide detailed information regarding a range of issues and events within modern design history. The information given is very thorough and would provide the reader with an understanding of the issues and events that surround modern design. For use within a school environment, I feel the text maybe too advanced. Some of the more able sixth form students may gain some knowledge and direction from its content, but I would not attempt to use the book as a resource with any Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 pupils. From a teacher's perspective, I feel the book would be a worthwhile read. Certain information, such as the technological, social and material advances further broadened my knowledge and understanding of

these topics and their impact upon the products that we take for granted today.

Although very informative, I do feel that the book required more images and examples of the material and information described. Many of the images focus upon the illustration and graphic design of the last 300 years. I would have liked to have seen more images showing the products and architecture that have been developed out of the changes made to materials and technological advances.

The History of Modern Design was not an easy book to just pick up and read cover to cover. I found myself skimming the chapters looking for points of particular interest, so therefore feel that this book is best suited as a reference text. It is well presented and the chapter and index structure make it easy to research almost any topics related to design over the last 300 years.

Any undergraduate studying a design related course would benefit from owning this book, the wealth and breadth of information contained would, at some point in the future, be of some use. I would recommend the book to anybody associated with the teaching of Design and Technology, especially at Advanced or FE level.

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Appropriate Content ✓✓✓✓  
 Pupil/Student Use ✓✓  
 Teacher Resource ✓✓✓✓  
 Visuals ✓  
 Overall Style ✓✓✓

Generic Use ✓  
 One of a series  
 Photocopiable  
 Pupil/student activities  
 Cross-curricular