SYLLABUS

UCLA Department of Design | Media Arts
Design 10 / Design Culture
Professor Erkki Huhtamo
Fall Quarter 2002

Design Culture

DESCRIPTION

Design has become a powerful force in contemporary culture and society. It surrounds our daily lives wherever we go and whatever we do. It has an impact on us, whether we are aware of it or not. Its forms are constantly proliferating. At the same time its boundaries are becoming more and more blurred, hard to define. It is becoming increasingly difficult - according to some, impossible - to state where design “ends” and phenomena like art, architecture and popular media “begin”. Behind the magic surrounding the word “design” it is not even easy to provide a definition for the things it is supposed to denote. One thing is sure: design is not just about creating “cool” looking things, it is much more than that. Like the CEO of IBM, Thomas Watson Jr. said in 1975, “Good Design is Good Business”, but even this is not sufficient. Design is also an ideology, that affects our ways of seeing the world. It is a form of communication too - by creating or using certain designs we send a message about ourselves to others. There are no objects in contemporary society that have not been designed.

This lecture course provides a broad overview of the development of those phenomena that make up the “culture of design”. It demonstrates that design does not only mean the "high design" of famous star designers and design companies. Much of the most efficient design is invisible - devices like door knobs and traffic lights help us lead our lives without drawing attention to themselves as “design” objects. To understand the culture of design we must pay attention to both kinds of objects. We also have to explain the motives that guided their planning, their marketing, their reception and their actual uses. Beginning from the 18th century, the lectures will deal with the main movements and trends in the history of design as a cultural phenomenon. Particular emphasis will be given to the interconnections between design and new technologies. The relationship of design to art will also be discussed in various contexts (from the Victorian era to early 20th century modernism; from the 1960s pop culture to Postmodernism). A rich variety of demonstration material ranging from classical industrial design to recent postmodern design trends will be presented.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

There will be a midterm assignment and a final assignment. Together with the final assignment, a short “book review” (2-3 pages) of John Heskett’s Industrial Design has
to be submitted. In addition, in the beginning of each meeting there will be a short quiz, based on the previous lecture’s material and the assigned reading. The grading consists of the midterm assignment (30 %), the final assignment (50 %), the quizzes (10%) and the “book review” (10%). More than two absences (without the teacher's permission) from the class meetings will have a negative effect on the overall grade.

TEXTS

REQUIRED READINGS:

The following publications are required:
- A class reader. Will be available for purchase during the second week’s meeting.

It is strongly recommended to buy both the class reader and Heskett’s book. A limited number of copies will also on reserve for consultation at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building).

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

The following books are recommended as optional background readings. Copies are on reserve at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building):

CLASS MEETINGS

Fridays from 1-4pm at Dodd Hall 121.

THE T.A’S; CONTACT INFORMATION
I can be contacted after the class meetings, by email (erhuhta@ucla.edu) or during my office hours (Thursdays, 12noon-1pm, Dept. of Design | Media Arts, Kinross North Building (11000 Kinross Ave, Westwood Village), room 228K. I have two T.A.’s: Daniel Sauter and Shohreh Rashtian. Daniel Sauter can be contacted in my office (see above) on Thursdays 1.30 pm - 2.30 pm, or by e-mail: dsauter@ucla.edu. Shohreh Rashtian can be contacted in the her office at the Department of Architecture and Urban Design, Perloff Hall Room # B 125 on Wednesdays 12:30-1:30pm, or by e-mail: siavali@ucla.edu.

The use of e-mail for minor issues is recommended. Please address your e-mail to all of us for quicker reply!

COURSE OUTLINE

MEETING ONE (Sep. 27)
Introduction:
- What do we mean by design?
- Design, culture, society
- The field of design
- Design, crafts, art - defining the borders

MEETING TWO (Oct. 4)
The Origins and Early Development of Design Culture
- The beginnings of industrial design
- Mechanization and rationalization
- Reaction: Arts and Crafts
- The American system: mass production

MEETING THREE (Oct. 11)
Design and Modernism
- From Jugendstil to Bauhaus and "L'Esprit Nouveau"
- Art Deco vs. Constructivism
- The Interplay between Avant-Garde Art and Design
- Design and new technology in the early 20th century

MEETING FOUR (Oct. 18)
The United States: “The Birth” Modern Industrial Design
- Streamlining: myth and reality
- The birth of the “star designer”
- The World’s Fair’s, MOMA and Design Culture
- Design between the home and the workplace

MEETING FIVE (Oct. 25)
Design Culture in the 1950's
- the Cold War era as a challenge to design
- New corporate design, branding
- The impact of the new youth cultures
- The emergence of European design culture: Italy, Germany

MEETING SIX (Nov. 1)
- Special Session: Topics in Design Culture
- This session will have a closer look at two selected thematic issues
  (Details announced later)
- MIDTERMS TO BE HANDED IN!

MEETING SEVEN (Nov. 8)
Design Culture of the 1960s and 70s
- Pop Art and Pop Design
- Design and the emergence of new media

MEETING EIGHT (Nov. 15)
A new (?) field: the Emergence of Interface Design
- Computer culture as a new challenge for design
- Corporate versus subcultural design
- Mobile computing, UbiComp and design

MEETING NINE (Nov. 22)
Design in the Postmodern Era I
- The notion of product semantics
- “High design” and art culture

----- Nov. 29 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, NO LECTURE -------

MEETING TEN (Dec. 6)
Design in the Postmodern Era II

Dec. 11-15 FINALS WEEK
- FINAL PROJECTS TO BE HANDED IN FOR GRADING ON TUESDAY, DEC.10!