

V&A

20TH CENTURY DESIGN

Teachers' Resource: Key stages 3, 4 & 5
Design & Technology and Art & Design



Bofinger chair (Stacking chair)
Karlsruhe, 1964–65 (designed), 1966 (made)
Rudolf Baresel-Bofinger (consultants),
Menzolit Werke Albert Schmidt Kraichtal-Menzingen (manufactured)
Polyester resin molded
Furniture, Room 133, The Dr Susan Weber Gallery

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The 20th century (1900–99) was a time of great social, political and artistic change. Two world wars and the advent of air travel, television and computer technology all transformed the work of artists, architects and designers. Fashion, youth and a focus on the individual became key factors in promoting goods to a growing consumer base. Technological advances like the miniaturisation of electronics enabled entirely new objects to develop.

Use this resource to support teaching and learning about the 20th century. The V&A's collections from this era span the museum: you can find examples in Furniture (Rooms 133–135, The Dr Susan Weber Gallery), Fashion (Room 40), Architecture (Room 127), Ceramics (Rooms 140–143, The McAulay Gallery, The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery and The Timothy Sainsbury Gallery) and Britain (Rooms 123 and 125, The Edwin and Susan Davies Gallery). Visit the Prints & Drawings Study Room to search for examples of 20th-century graphics, posters and prints. Find out more: vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms#prints-drawings-study-room

This resource supports the National Curriculum for Art & Design and D&T and meets key criteria for AQA, Edexcel, and OCR D&T GCSE specifications by linking with suggested artists, designers, themes and movements.

How to use this resource

Included in this resource are an image pack and framework. The objects selected represent key design movements by influential 20th-century designers. Visit the suggested galleries and use the simple framework to support students as they investigate these objects and others in the collection.

Museum visit

The 20th century is defined by its incredible output and diversity. Included here are short introductions to some of the major design movements from the time. Use these in conjunction with the suggested framework and image pack to investigate objects on display across a range of design disciplines. Further activities are suggested in the image pack to support extended learning in the galleries (we recommend bringing sketchbooks and creative drawing materials for these). The framework and activities can also be used to explore other objects on display.

Arts and Crafts: *Hand vs Machine*

The Arts and Crafts Movement developed in Britain as a reaction against growing industrialisation and its impact on design, traditional skills and the lives of ordinary people. Its legacy was long-lasting, flourishing across Europe, North America and Japan. Two of the movement's most influential figures were the theorist and critic John Ruskin, and the designer, writer and activist William Morris, who advocated the use of handmade crafts and rejected machine-making.

Art Deco: *Luxury and Exoticism*

Art Deco responded to the human desire for pleasure, luxury and escape. Designers borrowed from historic European movements as well as contemporary avant-garde art, the Ballets Russes, folk art, exotic and ancient cultures, and the urban imagery of the machine age, creating a much-needed feeling of optimism.

Modernism: *A Utopian World*

Modernism is a term which covers a range of movements and styles that largely rejected social and artistic traditions and instead embraced abstraction. Emerging in the aftermath of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Modernists had a utopian desire to create a better world, believing in design and technology as the key means to achieve social improvement. They believed that design and art could, and should, transform society.

Post-war design: *Material Innovation*

At the end of the Second World War, many countries increased their industrial output as they rebuilt their economies. Design was promoted by governments in various ways to reinforce a sense of national identity. Changes in materials and manufacturing processes encouraged consumers to embrace new affordable designs in their homes.

Postmodernism: *Radical Style*

Postmodernism shattered established ideas about modern style. It brought a radical freedom to art and design through gestures that were often funny, sometimes confrontational and occasionally absurd. Artists, designers and architects rejected the principles of Modernism and prioritised surface over depth, style over structure and embraced the 'low' and the 'kitsch'.

Discover more

Explore the Rapid Response Collection online by visiting: vam.ac.uk/collections/rapid-response-collecting

This collection is responsive to current global events, technological advances, political changes and pop cultural phenomena that may have an impact on art, design and architecture today.

Can you draw any parallels between some of the issues discussed here and those confronted by 20th-century designers?

Access further information and research on the 20th century by exploring our online pages at vam.ac.uk



ARTS AND CRAFTS

Key design principles: Truth to materials, domestic and functional, looking to the past, inspired by nature and simple forms

Consider the success of this textile design.

Why has it had such an long-lasting legacy?

Use simple motifs found in this object or from the rest of the gallery to create a textile design that can be used across a range of contemporary applications.

Strawberry Thief (Furnishing fabric)

London, 1883

William Morris (designer), Morris & Co. (maker)

Indigo-discharged and block-printed cotton

British Galleries, Room 125, The Edwin and Susan Davies Gallery



ARTS AND CRAFTS (THE SCOTTISH STYLE)

Key design principles: Truth to materials, domestic and functional, looking to the past, inspired by nature and simple forms

Investigate this object carefully from as many angles as possible. Create an exploded diagram of the chair to show its constructional detail or assemblage. Make notes on what you can see and how it has been constructed or made.

Chair

Glasgow, 1897–1900

Charles Rennie Mackintosh (designer)

Stained oak chair with drop-in seat

Britain 1760–1900, Level 4, Room 125



ART DECO

Key design principles: Geometric patterns, exotic references, luxury materials, speed and new technology

Using paper, experiment with cutting, tearing and folding techniques to build a 3D representation of this outfit. You may wish to recreate part of the garment's form like the pleats in the skirt or a surface detail like the geometric patterns, which you can then incorporate into a more contemporary design.

Tennis Dress

Great Britain, 1926

Miss Hepburne Scott (designer & maker)

Machine-sewn linen

Fashion, Level 1, Room 40

MAI
NOVEMBRE

PARIS
1937



ARTS et TECHNIQUES
EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE

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15 Rue Galvani, PARIS XVII^e

ART DECO

Key design principles: Geometric patterns, exotic references, luxury materials, speed and new technology

How does the use of colour and line give this poster a sense of movement and speed?

Take a piece of paper and fold it into four. In each section, experiment using different marks, media and colour to try getting a sense of movement through line.

Exposition Internationale Paris, Poster

France, 1937

Leonetto Cappiello (designer)

Colour lithograph

Prints & Drawings Study Room, room 405M, case E, shelf 2



MODERNISM

Key design principles: Rejection of ornament, preference for abstraction, industrial materials, modular designs, social mission

In pairs or small teams, use card and tape to form a basic model of this object.

How many components do you need to make it and can it be built up using modular sections?

Trial different approaches to modelling the chair.

How might you adapt the chair if you were redesigning it?

Fauteuil Transatlantique (Armchair)

Paris, 1925–30

Eileen Gray (designer)

Galerie Jean Desert (manufacturer)

Sycamore and chromium-plated metal

Upholstery: faux leather made from a kaolin-filled polyacrylate resin

Furniture, Room 135, The Dr Susan Weber Gallery

AVSTIN
COOPER

JUNE 20-JULY 12



EXHIBITION OF
BRITISH INDUSTRIAL
ART IN THE HOME
LONDON
DORLAND HALL • LOWER REGENT ST.

4048 E 133-1961

MODERNISM

Key design principles: Rejection of ornament, preference for abstraction, industrial materials, modular designs, social mission

Consider how you might communicate an important message in a simple way. Use the sheet of grid paper at the end of this pack and, utilising only two colours and bold shapes, map out your message in this style. Use tracing paper to retrace some of the elements of the design you have created and trial re-positioning them to make the message even more effective.

Exhibition of British Industrial Design in the Home, London (Poster)
London, 1933
Austin Cooper (artist)
Colour lithography
Prints & Drawings Study Room, room 514, case Topic, shelf 9, box A



POST-WAR DESIGN

Key design principles: Key design principles: Futuristic forms, new materials, bright colours, mass produced

Gather inspiration from the print on this shirt and other garments on display from this era. Develop a simple shape and use it to create a pattern using tracing paper or a block print to repeat on fabric or paper.

How easy is it to generate this pattern in large volumes? What else could you use it on?

Poppy (Man's Shirt)
London, 1968–70
Ossie Clark and Celia Birtwell (designers)
Printed cotton muslin
Fashion, Room 40



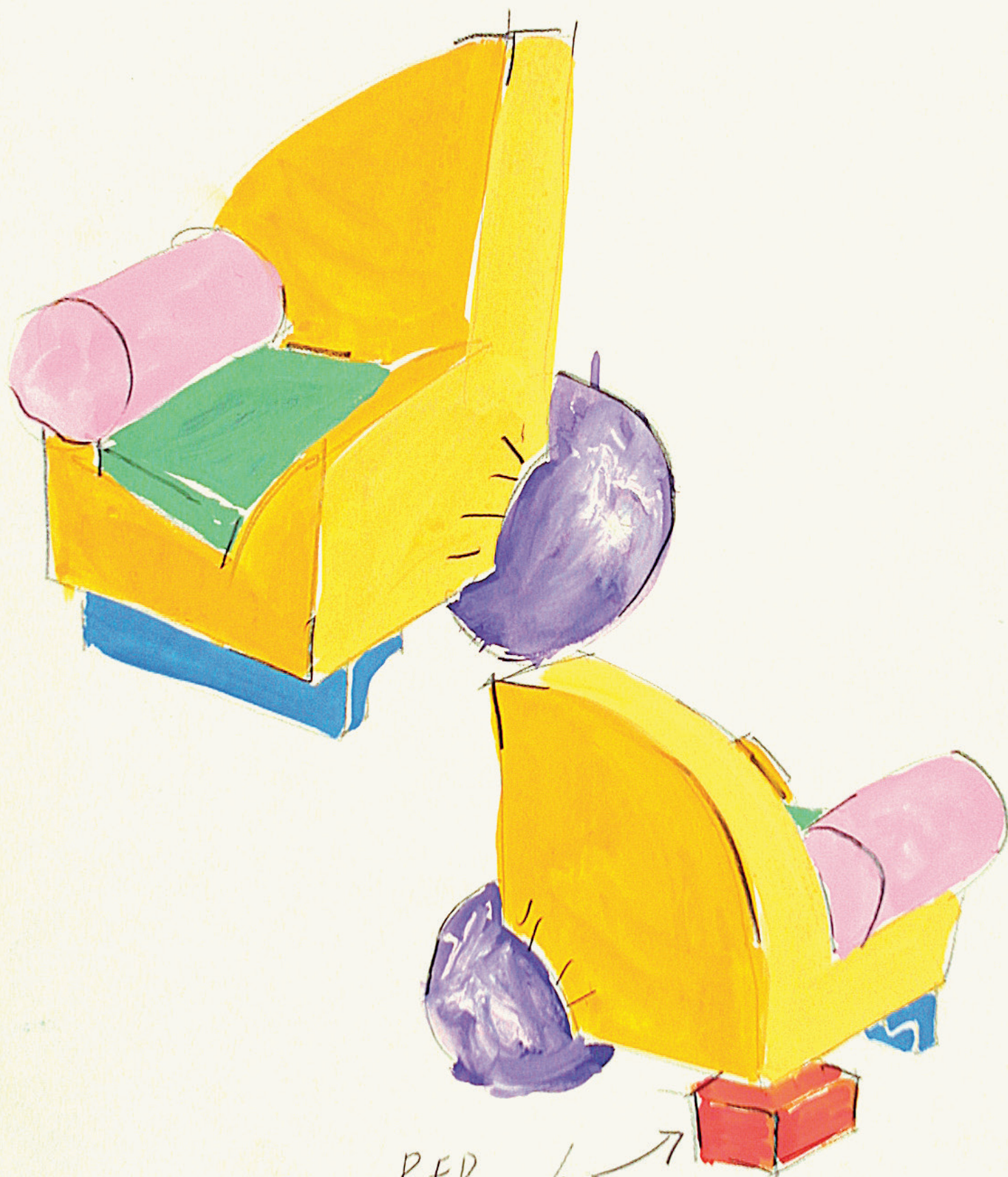
POST-WAR DESIGN

Key design principles: Futuristic forms, new materials, bright colours, mass produced

This object is intended to be mass produced in high volume. There are many benefits to manufacturing furniture in this way, but mass manufacturing also has its downsides. Discuss with a partner what these might be. Make some annotated notes about how you might adapt the design of this object in order to make it a more sustainable option.

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X



RED
ORANGE/OR WHITE CUBE

SH 1126
1962

POST MODERNISM

Key design principles: Pastiche style, radical, humorous, subversive statements, bold forms

Use tracing paper to sketch an outline of this iconic armchair design. Use further sheets to retrace the form and then play around with this shape by moving, rotating and morphing it on the page as a basis to form other designs for products or furniture.

Bel Air armchair (Drawing)

London, 1982

Peter Shire

Pencil and bodycolour

Prints & Drawings Study Room, level F, case EDUC, shelf 10G



POST MODERNISM

Key design principles: Pastiche style, radical, humorous, subversive statements, bold forms

It is not immediately obvious what the function of this object is – *do you think that is important?*

Discuss in which scenarios it is key to understand an object's function purely by looking at it.
Find an example of an object in the gallery which does this.

In what ways does it differ from this design?
What do you think this tells us about who this design is for?

Bookworm (Bookshelf)

Designed in London, 1993; made in Milan, 1995

Ron Arad (designer), Kartell (manufacturer)

Batch-dyed PVC

Furniture, Room 133, The Dr Susan Weber Gallery

OBJECT FRAMEWORK

The objects selected in this pack represent key design movements by influential designers of the 20th century. Visit the suggested galleries and use the simple framework set out here to support students to investigate these objects and others in the collection.

Through exploring a range of objects in this way, students will uncover the significant designers, design styles and movements from this period and understand how they have helped to shape design and manufacture both in the 20th century and today.

Consider these factors when analysing objects:

AESTHETIC

What does it look like?

TECHNICAL

What is it made from?

How does it work?

INDUSTRIAL

How and in what volume is it manufactured?

CULTURAL

What or who is it responding to?

BEHAVIOURAL

How do you interact with it?

ECONOMIC

How does it financially impact the consumer and/or manufacturer?

ENVIRONMENTAL

Is it sustainable?

What is its lifespan?

Extend your research

Explore 21st century design objects by designers and architects who started working in the 20th century to see how their work has developed.

