

Programme

American Design in the Twentieth Century

Details

Tuesdays, 9 January – 13 February 2024. Online.

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until Tuesday 26 March 2024.

Overview

During the twentieth century the most compelling and contradictory features of American design were its classless practicality and its shameless appeal to status and desire. The aggressive and sensuous contours and colours of a Corvette Stingray sports car or a Fender Stratocaster guitar are as typically American as the mechanistic visual austerity of a Kryptonite bicycle lock or a Zippo lighter. In this course of twelve lectures we will examine many such objects, both familiar and obscure, mass manufactured or uniquely hand-made. But this is more than a catalogue of classic objects. We will also consider the intricate story of how design evolved as a professional practice in the service of commerce and as a leisure activity reflecting the national traditions of self-improvement and self-expression.

Your course leader

Professor Greg Votolato is an architect, curator, teacher and writer on design, technology and culture. He is a course leader and visiting lecturer in the Victoria & Albert Museum Academy specialising in architecture and design. His publications include *American Design in the Twentieth Century*; *Transport Design, A Travel History*; *Ship*; *Car* and many essays on subjects including fashion and contemporary crafts.

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice.

Week 1 – 9 January

13.50 Introduction

14.00 American Design

15.30 Taste and Style, Beyond the Cringe

Week 2 – 16 January

14.00 Objects and Ideas

15.30 Materials and Technology

Week 3 – 23 January

14.00 Design and Designers

15.30 Work and Play: Sport fashion in the USA

Week 4 – 30 January

14.00 The Private Car

15.30 Public Mobility: Land, Sea and Air

Week 5 – 6 February

14.00 Home

15.30 Suburb

Week 6 – 13 February

14.00 The Iconic City: New York

15.30 The Emerging City: Lost Angeles

All talks will be given by Greg Votolato