

Guide to International Decorative Art Styles Displayed at Kirkland Museum

(by Hugh Grant, Founding Director and Curator,
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Kirkland Museum's decorative art collection contains more than 15,000 objects which have been chosen to demonstrate the major design styles from the later 19th century into the 21st century. About 3,500 design works are on view at any one time and many have been loaned to other organizations. We are recognized as having one of the most important international modernist collections displayed in any North American museum. Many of the designers listed below—but not all—have works in the Kirkland Museum collection. Each design movement is certainly a confirmation of human ingenuity, imagination and a triumph of the positive aspects of the human spirit.

Arts & Crafts, International 1860–c. 1918; American 1876–early 1920s

Arts & Crafts can be seen as the first modernistic design style to break with Victorian and other fashionable styles of the time, beginning in the 1860s in England and specifically dating to the Red House of 1860 of William Morris (1834–1896). Arts & Crafts is a philosophy as much as a design style or movement, stemming from its application by William Morris and others who were influenced, to one degree or another, by the writings of John Ruskin and A. W. N. Pugin. In a reaction against the mass production of cheap, badly-designed, machine-made goods, and its demeaning treatment of workers, Morris and others championed hand-made craftsmanship with quality materials done in supportive communes—which were seen as a revival of the medieval guilds and a return to artisan workshops. Now the fact that those noble aspects put the goods financially beyond the reach of the average person is ironic, but does not detract from the revolution the artists created with their handsome designs, their admirable craftsmanship and their philosophy.

Designs are characterized by their simplicity and functionality, generally without unnecessary curves and ornament. The way objects were constructed was not hidden. For instance, mortise and tenon joints were left exposed, becoming a notable, handsome feature. The wood was not painted and the exposed grain of the wood, generally quarter-sawn oak, was considered beautiful and celebrated the character of the wood. This was called “honest construction.” Americans got their first exposure to Arts & Crafts at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. One of the most important beliefs was that all the artistic disciplines were to be considered equally important to the entirety of a project, each strengthening the other as a total work of art or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In the 1880s, Charles, Albert and Gustav Stickley established Stickley Brothers in Binghamton NY. Gustav subsequently published his influential magazine, *The Craftsman* (1901–1916). Arts & Crafts in America then became known as “Craftsman Style” or also “Mission Style” from the California missions that exemplified simplicity of construction.

Some other names of note are: Charles Ashbee (also Art Nouveau), Peter Behrens, Carlo Bugatti (eccentric designs), Christopher Dresser, E. W. Godwin, Greene and Greene (Charles and Henry), Robert Jarvie, Charles Limbert, Adolf Loos, Albin Müller (also Art Nouveau), Richard Riemerschmid, E. E. Roberts (Eben), Charles Rohlf, Roycroft community (1895–1938), Dirk van Erp, Otto Wagner, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Zen; **writings** of John Ruskin; **ceramics** by Arequipa Pottery, Charles Fergus Binns, Grueby, Marblehead Pottery, Newcomb Pottery, George Ohr, Overbeck Pottery, Rookwood, Adelaide Alsop Robineau, Jutta Sika, Teco (The Gates Potteries), Artus and Anne Van Briggel, and many others.

Art Nouveau, International 1880s–c. 1918; American 1890s–c. 1918

This movement/style originated virtually simultaneously in France, Belgium and England. Siegfried Bing gave the style its name when he opened a shop and gallery in Paris in December 1895 called *Maison de L'Art Nouveau*. He soon expanded his gallery with workshops and was responsible for significantly exposing the “new art.” Prior to that time the movement in France was called *Le Style Moderne*. It soon spread to many

other countries and was variously called: in German speaking countries—*Jugendstil* (Youth Style) and specifically in Austria—*Sezessionstil*; in Italy—*Stile Liberty* from the London store, Liberty & Co. that helped popularize the style; also sometimes called *Stile Floreale* in Italy; and in Spain—*Modernisme*.

Art Nouveau is distinguished by its graceful, curving designs mostly emulating botanic forms, but sometimes bird, animal and human female forms. Examples are whiplash handles, playful serpentine grills, arching buttresses, delicately entwined motifs such as table supports or gentle depictions of falling curls of hair in sculptures and jewelry. Art Nouveau is more restrained in its curves and amount of decoration than Victorian design. Also the sinuous references to plants, tendrils, flowers and other natural forms are stylized rather than being realistic. Referring to the vocabulary of Art Nouveau, artist Louis Majorelle commented, “My garden is my library.”

Some designers of note include: Charles Ashbee (also Arts & Crafts), Maurice Dufrêne, Paul Follot, Émile Gallé, Antoni Gaudi, Hector Guimard, Victor Horta, René Lalique, Max Laeuger, Liberty & Co. (designers included Archibald Knox, Oliver Baker, etc.), Louis Majorelle, Alphonse Mucha, Albin Müller (also Arts & Crafts), Ferdinand Hubert Schmitz, Louis Sullivan (often collaborating with Dankmar Adler), Louis Comfort Tiffany, Eugène Vallin, Henry Van de Velde, C. F. A. Voysey, WMF (Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik); **ceramics** by Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat, William Moorcroft, Frederick Hurten Rhead, Teco, Tiffany, Artus and Anne Van Briggel, and Weller Pottery (*Sicardaware*) and Zsolnay (Hungarian; as particularly designed by József Rippl-Rónai).

Glasgow Style, 1896–1914

The Glasgow School was a circle of influential modern artists and designers who began to coalesce in Glasgow, Scotland in the 1870s, and flourished from the 1890s to sometime around 1910. Glasgow experienced an economic boom at the end of the 19th century resulting in a burst of distinctive contributions to the Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau movements, particularly in the fields of architecture, interior design, and painting. Glasgow Style (a blend of Celtic and Japanese art) found favor throughout the modern art world of continental Europe. The artists of Glasgow created one of the most important design styles of the 20th century. Other movements and groups such as the Wiener Werkstätte, Bauhaus, Vienna Secession and the Deutscher Werkbund were significantly inspired and affected by the Glasgow Style.

Among the most prominent figures of the Glasgow School’s loose collective were acclaimed architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the painter and glass artist Margaret MacDonald (Mackintosh’s wife), MacDonald’s sister Frances, and J. Herbert MacNair—who together were known as “The Four” and notably gave a celebrated display as part of the 8th Wiener Sezession exhibition in 1900 in Vienna. By the time the Mackintoshes left Glasgow in 1914, the group was also dispersing and getting fewer commissions. Their early modernism was too severe for most patrons and their sinuous elongated figures, which had a great influence on Gustav Klimt, had been labeled the “Ghoul School” or the “Spook School”.

Some other significant Glasgow designers include: John Ednie, Jessie M. King, George Logan, Talwyn Morris, M. H. Baillie Scott, E. A. Taylor and George Walton.

Wiener Werkstätte (Viennese Workshops), 1903–1932

Another style and association of artists developed at almost the same time as Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau, but had its own distinct character. The Wiener Werkstätte was founded by architect Josef Hoffmann and painter and designer Koloman Moser with the aim of promoting Austrian and particularly Viennese artworks. The works of Charles Mackintosh, Charles Ashbee and E. W. Godwin influenced the Wiener Werkstätte, and in particular Mackintosh influenced Hoffmann. In line with Arts & Crafts principles, the artists also strove to achieve total works of art or a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with their various disciplines. Visually, the style is often characterized by restrained geometric curves, square corners and duplicated linear patterns. Ornamentation tends to be repetitive, such as the curling lines or squares in a Gustav Klimt painting. Decoration is generally restrained and sometimes there is none. In addition to architectural projects, the designers created metalware, glassware, tableware, furniture, flatware, ceramics, textiles, fashion design, theater costumes, jewelry and graphics (lettering, posters, wallpapers, bookbinding, box designs and coverings

and postcards). The Wiener Werkstätte was disbanded because of financial instability, which was due to the severe economic conditions in the world following the stock market crash of October 1929 in America.

Other names of note include: Karl Hagenauer, Karl Klaus, Berthold Löffler, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Dagobert Peche, Michael Powolny, Otto Prutscher, Jutta Sika, Thérèse Trethan, and Josef Urban.

De Stijl, 1917–1931

This association of artists and architects and a monthly magazine (also called *De Stijl* and published 1917–1931) were founded in 1917 in the Netherlands by painter, writer and architect Theo van Doesburg. *De Stijl* translates as “the style”. *De Stijl* artists/designers embraced cubist ideals, pure abstraction, primary colors, horizontal and vertical lines, rectangular shapes, use of black, white and gray to express their universal values and absolute harmony. *De Stijl* designers had a dematerialist approach to design and, along with the Bauhaus which was greatly influenced by *De Stijl*, were integral in the development of the later Modern movement. Painter Piet Mondrian and architect/designer Gerrit Rietveld are the best known proponents of *De Stijl*. The movement was brought to an end by the death of van Doesburg.

Bauhaus, 1919–1933

The Bauhaus was a renowned art school, whose immense influence continues today. It was founded April 1919 by German architect Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany, when times were very difficult directly after World War I. It re-located to Dessau from 1925 to 1932, then moved to Berlin briefly until the Nazis closed it in April 1933. One of the most important philosophies of the Bauhaus was that of unity of the arts through craftsmanship or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Geometric forms were the basis of most objects, sculptures, paintings and buildings. Primary colors, grey, black and natural metal patinas were widely used. Function was more important than decoration, leading to clean lines and simplicity of shapes.

Other names of note include: Josef Albers, Herbert Bayer, Marianne Brandt, Marcel Breuer, Werner Drewes, Lionel Feininger, Josef Hartwig (famous chess set, etc.), Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, László Maholy-Nagy, Margarete Heymann-Loebenstein-Marks, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Lilly Reich, Mart Stam, Gunta (Adelgunde) Stölzl and Wilhelm Wagenfeld.

International Style, 1920s–1960s

Although “International Style” applies to architecture, some of its proponents designed decorative arts and these objects could be considered to also represent International Style, such as those of Eileen Gray, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand and others listed below. The hallmarks of International Style architecture are simplistic, modernistic designs, generally with buildings of reinforced-concrete, glass and steel. The term gained wide use when Alfred Barr, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, gave the exhibition 1932 *Modern Architecture—International Exhibition*, co-organized by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, with a companion book entitled *International Style: Architecture Since 1922*.

Other names of note include: Alvar Aalto, Josef Albers, Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Arne Jacobsen, Philip Johnson, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra, J. J. P. Oud, I. M. Pei, Gio Ponti and Lilly Reich.

Art Deco, International c. 1920–c. 1940; American mid 1920s–early 1940s

The hallmarks of Art Deco are sleek, jazzy, streamlined designs that often connote speed. Typical elements are sweeping, tapering curves, contoured shapes and reinforcing outlines that suggest forward motion. Repetitive geometric patterns; stepped forms; angular, zigzag motifs; stylized nude or clothed figures—generally female—in elegant poses or graceful, dance-like positions; sleek depictions of animals such as hounds, deer, jungle or domestic cats, gazelles; frequently bright colors and usually with black or silver or gold; use of chrome or aluminum; beautiful exotic woods; all are indicative of Art Deco designs. The term derives from *l'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, a celebrated world fair, held in

Paris in 1925. The Deco movement flourished in the 1920s and 1930s as designers moved away from the organic forms of Art Nouveau.

Some names of note are: Ivan da Silva Bruhns, Pierre Chareau, Chase Brass and Copper Co. (Waterbury CT), Clarice Cliff, Susie Cooper, Donald Deskey, La Maison Desny, Henry Dreyfuss, Jean Dunand, Paul Frankl, Eileen Gray, Franz Hagenauer, Wolfgang Hoffmann, Ilonka Karasz, René Lalique, Jules Leleu, Warren McArthur, Keith Murray, Pierre Patout, Jean Puiforcat, Gilbert Rohde, Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Süe et Mare (Louis Süe and André Mare), Walter Dorwin Teague Sr. and Jr., Tétard Frères, KEM Weber and Frank Lloyd Wright (who lived long enough and was inventive enough to make contributions to Arts & Crafts, Art Deco and Modern design).

Modern, c. 1931–c. 1970

The key to recognizing Modern design is its rounded, organic, biomorphic, natural shapes. Modern came in gradually, as Art Deco was running its course. Landmarks of Modern design are the *Paimio Lounge Chair* by Alvar Aalto (1930–1, thereby dating the beginning of Modern design as the first chair, widely known, to curve to the human body), *Egg Chair* by Arne Jacobsen (1957–8), the *Marshmallow Sofa* by Irving Harper of George Nelson Associates (1956), *American Modern* tableware by Russel Wright (1937–8), the Studebaker car by Raymond Loewy (1950), the TWA terminal at JFK airport by Eero Saarinen (1956–1962), the *Potato Chip Chair* by Charles and Ray Eames (1945), the *Panton* plastic stacking chair by Verner Panton (the first functional one-piece plastic [polyurethane] chair, des. 1960, prod. 1968), *Compact* (later Hellerware) plastic, stacking tableware by Massimo Vignelli (1964) and later additional designs by Massimo and his wife Lella.

Other Modern designers of note include: Eero Aarnio, Emilio Ambasz and Giancarlo Piretti (collaboration on a series of vertebra chairs, etc.), Gaetano Aulenti (also did Postmodern), Harry Bertoina, Norman Cherner, Joe Colombo, Robin Day, Paul Evans, Paul Frankl (first did Art Deco then Modern Design), Alexander Girard, Jacques Guillon, Greta Jalk, Finn Juhl, Frederick Kiesler, Florence Knoll, Henning Koppel, Vico Magistretti (also Postmodern), Bruno Mathsson, Matta (Roberto; also surrealist painter), Paul McCobb, Carlo Mollino, Olivier Mourgue, Isamu Noguchi, Pierre Paulin, Charlotte Perriand, Warren Platner, Gio (Giovanni) Ponti, Jean Prouvé, Lino Sabattini, Claudio Salocchi, Ben Seibel, Giotto Stoppino, Gerald Summers, Hans Wegner, Tapio Wirkkala, Frank Lloyd Wright, Sori Yanagi and Eva Zeisel; **ceramists:** Shoji Hamada, Jun Kaneko, Bernard Leach, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Pablo Picasso, Axel Salto, Rudolph Schindler, Paul Soldner, Peter Voulkos, Beatrice Wood and Betty Woodman.

Postmodern (c. 1970–c. 1990) and Contemporary, c. 1990–present

Postmodern is noted for its unusual use of materials such as the cardboard *Easy Edges* chairs (1969–73) by American architect Frank Gehry, or the combination of plastic and metal for several of Michael Graves designs of teapots and other items for Target stores. An important Postmodern style developed with the Memphis-Milano Movement active from 1981 to 1987, led by Ettore Sottsass and including Michele de Lucchi, Shiro Kuramata and others. It was an Italian design and architecture group based in Milan, Italy, whose products included furniture, ceramics, glassware, metalware and textiles.

Other notable names include: Ron Arad, Robert Arneson (ceramics), Mario Botta, Biagio Cisotti, Fernando and Humberto Compañá, Peter Danko, Stefano Giovannoni, Matthew Hilton, Éric Jourdan, Toshiyuki Kita, Ross Lovegrove, Vico Magistretti (also Modern), Michael McCoy, Alessandro Mendini, Ilian Milinov, Jasper Morrison, Marc Newson, Patrick Norguet, Gaetano Pesce, Paolo Rizzatto, Aldo Rossi, Pierre Sala, Bořek Šípek, Philippe Starck, Paola Ulian, Masanori Umeda, Patricia Urquiola, Maarten van Severen, Robert Venturi, and many others. With Contemporary design happening now, no one knows what is next except perhaps the current designers.

