

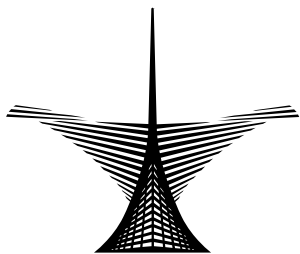


Teachers Guide

European Design Since 1985

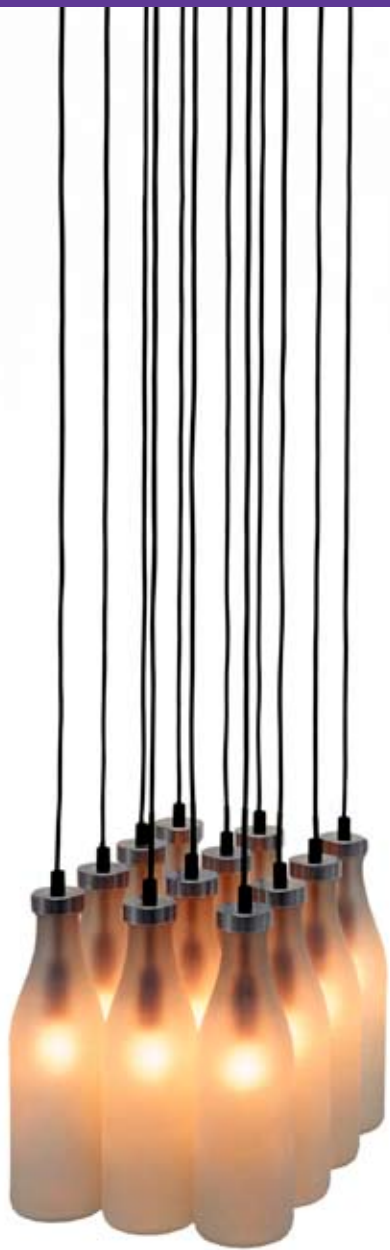
Shaping the New Century

Oct 9, 2010–Jan 9, 2011



MILWAUKEE
ART MUSEUM

Introduction



This guide, intended for teachers of grades K–12, includes classroom and gallery implementation ideas for use with *European Design Since 1985: Shaping the New Century*, on view at the Milwaukee Art Museum through January 9, 2011. These activities are aligned with state and district standards. In addition, the guide contains a walk-through of the exhibition, useful vocabulary, and further resources.

Learn more about the exhibition at mam.org/european-design.

Let us know what you think of this guide and how you use it. Email us at teachers@mam.org.

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What is design?

Design is the creation of objects—how they look and how they are used.

Toys, chairs, clocks, lamps, forks, bookshelves, vacuums, watering cans—we use these objects in our everyday lives, but we don't think about them much; they're simply tools we use to accomplish specific tasks. However, when a bowl is exceptionally beautiful or when a chair is painfully uncomfortable, we consider these objects in a new light: Is it visually appealing? Does it perform the action for which we need it?

Design is the creation of objects—how they look (their **form**) and how they are used (their **function**). Designers think both about how and why a person uses the object, and how and why the look of an object can enhance or change its use.

The objects in this exhibition are all things to be used, and they were all made within the past twenty-five years. So why are they in an art museum? Each of the two hundred objects in *European Design Since 1985* made a significant impact on the design world, because the designers challenged conventions and/or created something new. The designers represented in the show push the boundaries of the way these commonplace objects are used, in the same way that artists push us to freshly consider the world around us.



James Dyson, DC11 vacuum cleaner, 2003.
Photo courtesy Dyson Ltd.

Classroom and gallery activities

Considering how and why objects are made and used helps students think critically about the world around them, and enhances their visual literacy and creative-thinking skills.

These activities can be adapted for students of all grade levels and apply to a number of subject areas, including art and design and social studies. For the State and District standards that the below lesson starters meet, see Academic Standards.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Show and Tell

Talk with your students about **form** and **function**. Ask students to think about the objects in their own home. Students should bring either a photo of an object in their home or the object itself (depending on its size) into class for a show and tell. They might bring a toothbrush, toy, or clock; or they could bring a photograph of their couch, bed, or dining-room table. What objects are more functional and why? How does the way the objects look affect their function? Explain that, at the Museum, they will see many more objects, some of which are made with function as the main concern and some with form instead.

Grading Your School

Give students a chance to wander around their classroom or other school areas, looking at the objects that help them learn—desks, chairs, chalkboards or whiteboards, cafeteria tables, swing sets, and even their paper and pencils. Ask them to choose one object and sketch it. How does the object relate to its purpose—of helping students learn in school? Is it successful or does it fail? How and why? Explain that the class will be looking at more objects in the same way at the Museum.

What Would They Say?

Use the image gallery on the *European Design Since 1985* minisite (<http://www.mam.org/european-design>) to display photographs of some of the objects students will see at the Museum. As you show each image, ask students to write down what they think the object might say if it could talk. Share as a group, asking students to discuss their reasoning for the object's mini-monologue. You could extend this activity by having students write a dialogue between two or more objects. Use the advertising images (example at right) as inspiration.



“I am not just an object.”

Guessing Game

Find information about the exhibition on page 6 of this guide. Display the same photographs from the image gallery on the website, and read the descriptions of the design movements aloud. Ask students to choose an image that best fits each description. Students can work with a partner or small group to decide which piece best fits each description. Remind students that some objects overlap or might be able to fit into more than one category.

Classroom and gallery activities

AT THE MUSEUM

WITH ANY SINGLE OBJECT

Back to Basics

These objects might at first glance be everyday items (a chair, a lamp, etc.), but they are also works of art, so the elements of art can be found in each piece. Have students use a journal to do the following, and then share in pairs:

- Draw the shapes they see.
- Make an inventory of the colors.
- Describe the textures: How would it feel if you could touch it?
- Draw the different kinds of lines the designer used (see below for an example).
- Remember that lines are not just straight; they can be curved, zigzagged, or coiled.



Getting the Job Done

Ask students how they think someone could use this object and why. Think about the materials it is made out of and how someone might hold it. Do you think this object would help get the job done easily or would it be difficult? Why?

Pair Share

Ask students to pair with a partner and look silently at an object for about a minute. Then get together and discuss which parts struck you the most. How do these parts relate to the form and function of the object? As a whole group, discuss whether or not you and your partner saw different things or if you both noticed the same thing. Why do you think that was?

Jorge Pensi, *Toledo* stacking chair, 1988.
Photo courtesy Knoll, Inc.

WITH GROUPS OF OBJECTS

All Together Now

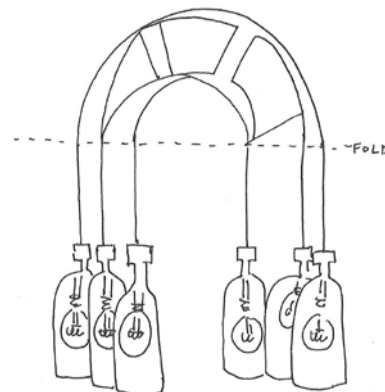
Ask your students to look at one grouping of objects within the same category (i.e., at the section on Expressive design or on Neo-Decorative design). Why do you think all of these objects are grouped together? Is there something that visually connects them? Is it something about how they are used? Or is it a bit of both? If so, what?

Mystery Comparison

Ask students to choose one object from any section in the show and quickly draw a sketch of the object. Count off to pair up. If the objects are in the same section, discuss why they are both in the same section, as well as how they are different. If objects are in different sections, discuss why they fit into the sections they are displayed in, how they differ from each other, and how they are similar in terms of form and function.

“Exquisite” Objects

Play “Exquisite Corpse,” the Surrealist party game, with objects. In this game, students choose one object and draw the top half of it in their journals. Then, they fold the paper over and exchange with a partner, drawing the second half of their object underneath, and creating a new object. See the example below using Ron Arad’s *This Mortal Coil* bookcase and Tejo Remy’s *Milk Bottle* lamp. As a group, decide what this new creation would be used for and why. (This activity can also be adapted for groups of three—drawing the top, middle, and bottom of the object.)



Classroom and gallery activities

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

Classroom Museum

Use students' "show and tell" objects from the pre-visit activity and create a classroom museum. They can display either their small object from home or the photograph of their object. Have each student write a brief exhibition label. The label could include why the object is important to them and/or their family. For younger students, ask them to decide if they're Modernist or Postmodernist (focusing more on form or function) and explain why. For older students, ask them to place the objects within one of the exhibition's categories and explain why. Students could also act as docents, touring visitors from other classrooms through their museum.

Marketing Opportunity

Ask students to think about what happens when they go to Target, IKEA, or Walmart and they or their parents want to buy something to have or use in their house. Some questions for discussion could be: What kind of marketing do you see—in other words, how does the store convince you to buy the object? Did you see an ad for it in a magazine or online? Does the packaging (box) of the object make you want to buy it? Where did you find it in the store (right out front or hidden), and did that help you make your decision? If you were marketing this object today, what would your slogan be? What might the design of the packaging look like? How would you get the word out (could you use magazines, the newspaper, TV, Facebook)? Who would your target audience be (adults, kids)?

On the Map

In the galleries, have your students make a sketch and write down all the label information for one work they are drawn to. Back in the classroom, have students research their object's designer, using links in the Resources section. Look into what was going on in that designer's country at the time and what his or her influences were. Have students write an index-card biography of their designer and put the sketch of their object on it. Then have all the students post their biographies up on a map of Europe so that the class can see the wide range of projects.

Be the Designer

Ask students to design their own object by creating preliminary sketches and a final drawing from a few different angles. What is its use going to be? Will it focus more on form or function? Ask them to align themselves with **Modernism** or **Postmodernism**. If you're working with advanced students, ask them to align themselves with one of the categories within **Modernism** or **Postmodernism**. Students should be able to explain why they made their object look the way it does.

Have students actually create their objects. Then have students make a store—advertise throughout school, choose prices, group and/or package objects, and assign roles for each student (cashier, on-floor assistant, etc.). This activity could also incorporate the Marketing Opportunity activity above. Invite younger students in the school to come "buy" objects that your students have made.

A walk through the exhibition

Use this section to familiarize yourself with background information about the exhibition. Here, each movement/category presented in the exhibition is described, and the object that is highlighted in the exhibition within each movement/category is featured as an example.

Introduction

This exhibition is the first to offer an overview of Western European design in the past twenty-five years. It is organized into eight design categories identified by R. Craig Miller, an art historian and design curator at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Some objects and designers are part of more than one movement, showing the reactions and interactions that occurred during this time.

Modernism and Postmodernism

While there are many different movements, each falls into one of two driving design principles: **Modernism** or **Postmodernism**. The first two objects in the show, which your students will see right as they walk into the exhibition, illustrate the difference.

Modernism

EXAMPLE: Jorge Pensi, *Toledo* chair, 1988

Designers who focus on how an object will be used fall into categories within Modernism. Modernist designs are, above all, functional.



Jorge Pensi, *Toledo* stacking chair, 1988.
Photo courtesy Knoll, Inc.

Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: Mathias Bengtsson, *o3 Slice* chair, 1999

Postmodernist designers create objects that are **conceptual** in nature; these designers are concerned with how the objects look and/or what the objects might say about society or history.



Mathias Bengtsson, *o3 Slice* chair, 1999.
Photo courtesy Martin Scott-Jupp.

A walk through the exhibition

Decorative Design | Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: Bořek Šípek, *Prosim Sni* chaise, 1987

Decorative does not necessarily mean ornamental. Instead, these objects are made out of luxurious materials, are often handcrafted rather than mass-produced, and are modeled after historical furniture. How the object looks is of greatest concern in Decorative design. For example, Bořek Šípek's **chaise**—a chair lengthened so that the sitter can lie back—was inspired by a fashionable style in the 1800s. Šípek uses rich blue fabric, expensive leather, and curving forms in his reinterpretation.

Expressive Design | Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: Ron Arad, *This Mortal Coil* bookcase, 1993 (below, left)

Handmade and very sculptural, these objects, such as Ron Arad's *This Mortal Coil* bookshelf (below, left), are designed with seemingly little concern for how it will function. Here, one long piece of steel is bent in on itself to create something that is more like a piece of fine art sculpture than a bookshelf. Meanwhile, books displayed would topple over and lean in on each other: it is more about the startling visual effect than its actual use.

Geometric Minimal Design | Modernism

EXAMPLE: Jasper Morrison, *Plywood* side chair, 1988

These designs were meant to be mass-produced, as simple and clearly constructed as possible, and made use of new materials and technology. In *Plywood*, Jasper Morrison has refined the chair to its most basic shapes, with metal screws on the sides as its only ornamentation. Made of just two materials—readily available plywood and metal screws—the chair was inexpensive and easy to produce.

Biomorphic Design | Modernism

EXAMPLE: Marc Newson, *Embryo* chair, 1988

Although the shapes of these objects are unexpected, designers were still concerned with their function. Designers combined the inspiration they got from nature with new materials and technology. Marc Newson's *Embryo* chair was inspired by the human form, but it is constructed of high-tech neoprene, the material used to make wetsuits—complete with a zipper on the back of the chair.



Ron Arad, *This Mortal Coil* bookcase, 1993.
Photo courtesy Philips de Pury & Company.

A walk through the exhibition

Neo-Pop Design | Modernism

EXAMPLE: Jerszy Seymour, *Easy* chair, 2003

Neo-Pop designers borrowed from the 1960s and 1970s while using new materials and incorporating fun into the function of their objects, which were often humorous and bright. Jerszy Seymour's *Easy* chair was a breakthrough in manufacturing (cast in plastic in one mold rather than multiple molds), but the bright colors and stacking functionality make it fun and useful.

Conceptual Design | Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: Tejo Remy, *You Can't Lay Down Your Memories* chest of drawers, 1991

For Conceptual designers, the idea behind the object was more important than either its form or function. Beauty was considered subjective and their usefulness was not of high priority; these designers created objects in small quantities to spark an object-based conversation with the user, much like a modern or contemporary artist might. Tejo Remy's mysteriously named chest of drawers, *You Can't Lay Down Your Memories*, is the answer to a question (idea) the designer posed to himself: "If I was shipwrecked like Robinson Crusoe, how could I make furniture?"

Neo-Dada/Surreal Design | Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: John Angelo Benson, *Naked Comfort* lounge chair, 2003 (below)

The makers of these objects viewed themselves as artists first, designers second. Using found objects, unconventional materials and techniques, and often dark humor, they created objects to challenge the viewer/user. This chair by John Angelo Benson (below) uses the same shape and frame as the famous *Petit Comfort* chair by Le Corbusier, but instead of plush leather, it is made from hay bales—as if it has been stripped of its upholstery to show what is underneath.

Neo-Decorative Design | Postmodernism

EXAMPLE: Tord Boontje, *Garland* hanging light, 2002

Combining craft techniques and historic design, Neo-Decorative designers create objects that are visually arresting and often complex and/or ornamental. For *Garland*, Tord Boontje used an inexpensive material to create a glowing chandelier of flowers, for the pure joy in the beauty of the object. Anyone can buy this light today for \$85.



Further resources

VOCABULARY

Chaise Type of chair elongated so that the sitter can lie back

Conceptual Intended to convey a specific idea

Form The structure of a work of art or how it looks

Function The purpose of a work of art or how it is used

Modernism Design as industry—the creation of functional, mass-produced objects.

Postmodernism Design as art—the appreciation of artistic concept.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Miller, R. Craig, Penny Sparke, and Catherine McDermott. *European Design Since 1985: Shaping the New Century* [exhibition catalogue]. London: Merrell, 2009.

Milwaukee Art Museum *European Design Since 1985* minisite (<http://mam.org/european-design/>)

Audio Guide available at the Milwaukee Art Museum: Includes interview with Design Curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Indianapolis Museum of Art *European Design Since 1985* minisite (<http://www.imamuseum.org/exhibitions/european-design/>): Contains detailed profiles of every designer represented in the exhibition.

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Educator Resource Center (<http://www.educatorresourcecenter.org/>): Lesson plans, teacher discussion center, and student reading all focused on using design in the classroom.

NEXT.CC (<http://www.next.cc/>): Resource for educators with materials that connect design and environmental issues.

Maarten Baas, *Hey Chair Be a Bookshelf!* bookcase, 2005.
Photo courtesy Maarten van Houten.



Academic standards

Activities and resources in this guide, combined with your class’s visit to the Museum, are designed to dovetail with the following learning standards for students. You may want to print out this page for your administration to support your visit.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Art & Design

Resource: <http://dpi.wi.gov/standards/pdf/art&design.pdf>

Content Standard A:

Know and remember information and ideas about the art and design around them and throughout the world.

Grades K–4: A.4.1-3, 6
Grades 5–8: A.8.1-3, 6
Grades 9–12: A.12.1-3, 6

Content Standard B:

Understand the value and significance of the visual arts, media, and design in relation to history, citizenship, the environment, and social development.

Grades K–4: B.4.1-7
Grades 5–8: B.8.1-7
Grades 9–12: B.12.1-7

Content Standard C:

Design and produce quality original images and objects, such as paintings, sculptures, designed objects, photographs, graphic designs, videos, and computer images.

Grades K–4: C.4.1-3
Grades 5–8: C.8.1-3
Grades 9–12: C.12.1-3

Content Standard D:

Apply their knowledge of people, places, ideas, and language of art and design to their daily lives.

Grades K–4: D.4.4-5
Grades 5–8: D.8.4-5
Grades 9–12: D.12.4-5

Content Standard G:

Interpret visual experiences, such as artwork, designed objects, architecture, movies, television, and multimedia images, using a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Grades K–4: G.4.1-3
Grades 5–8: G.8.1-3
Grades 9–12: G.12.1-3

Content Standard I:

Use senses and emotions through art and design to develop their minds and to improve social relationships.

Grades K–4: I.4.5
Grades 5–8: I.8.5
Grades 9–12: I.12.5

Content Standard J:

Reflect upon the nature of art and design and meaning in art and culture.

Grades K–4: J.4.1-2, 7, 10
Grades 5–8: J.8.1-2, 7, 10
Grades 9–12: J.12.1-2, 7, 10

Content Standard K:

Make connections among the arts, other disciplines, other cultures, and the world of work.

Grades K–4: K.4.1
Grades 5–8: K.8.1
Grades 9–12: K.12.1

Content Standard L:

Use their imaginations and creativity to develop multiple solutions to problems, expand their minds, and create ideas for original works of art and design.

Grades K–4: L.4.4, 6
Grades 5–8: L.8.4, 6
Grades 9–12: L.12.4, 6

Academic standards

Milwaukee Public Schools Learning Targets (by grade level)

Resource: Via MPS Portal at <http://bit.ly/9gOtVK>

Grade K4

Show an awareness of art and artists from various cultures and environments.

Grade K

Become more aware of the aesthetic qualities of the immediate environment.

Grade 1

Participate in class discussions of artworks. Relate artwork to the visual world.

Grade 2

Know the art museum is a place to find original artworks. Know and use appropriate vocabulary in discussing and making art. Recognize that toys and playthings of cultures are art forms. Become aware of the artist's choice of subject matter from the environment.

Grade 3

Recognize the function of an art gallery.

Grade 4

Discuss art and the built environment in terms of design elements. Identify and compare free form shapes.

Grade 5

Appreciate the informative value of artifacts.

Grades 6–8

Distinguish between fine art, functional art, and commercial art. Find and list the elements and principles of art and design in a work of art. Understand that art begins with a concept.

Grades 9–12

Understand the historical development of techniques and the historical context of their own work. Demonstrate understanding of design elements and principles. Understand rudimentary commercial art principles. Appreciate the importance of artworks through interpretation of emotional impact.