

1956

EC56-505 Creative Design

Jean Stange

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CREATIVE DESIGN

Creative Design

Jean Stange

The Importance of Design:

A knowledge and an appreciation of fine design are of value to everyone, as through such knowledge and appreciation we gain greater awareness of our surroundings and thereby enrich our lives. Whether or not we ever sit down to design a decorative unit for a rug, a tray, draperies or some other item, we are still participating in a creative act when choosing new pottery, a new dress or when buying a new piece of furniture. To know what constitutes good design helps us become more discriminating consumers. At the same time, if we enjoy making items for our homes, some idea of what factors need to be considered in designing, and some possible methods of designing are important.

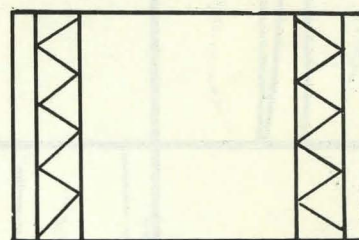
What Design Is:

Design has been defined many ways but the following definition is all inclusive: "any arrangement of lines, forms, colors and textures. It involves the problem of choosing these forms and colors, and then arranging them. A good design shows an orderly arrangement of the materials used and, in addition, creates beauty in the finished product.

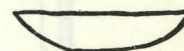
"There are two types of design: structural and decorative. Structural design is the design made by the size, form, color and texture of an object, whether it be the object itself, in space (that is the space surrounding it, or within it), or a drawing of that object worked out on paper. Decorative design is the surface enrichment of a structural design."* The use to which the article is to be put or its function determines its structural and decorative design to a large extent.

Examples of Structural and Decorative Design:

Let us think in terms of a placemat. The rectangle forms the structural design while the bands, which might be stenciled, block printed, or perhaps embroidered on each end of the mat, form its decorative design.

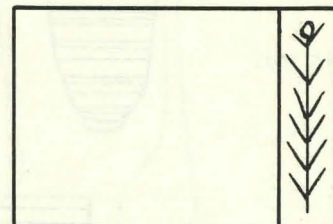
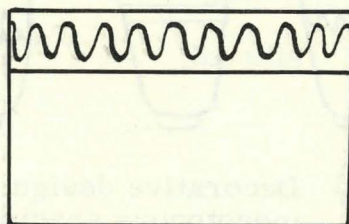
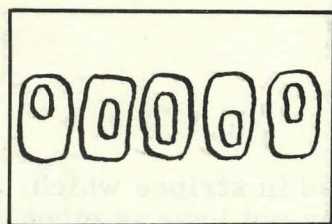


In this ash tray, or coaster, we find a nicely proportioned shape -- structural again -- with an etched unit placed in its center. In each of these units, placemat and ashtray, the decorative design harmonizes in its placement with the structural design. In other words, the decorative design should strengthen the structural design rather than be placed in opposition to it.

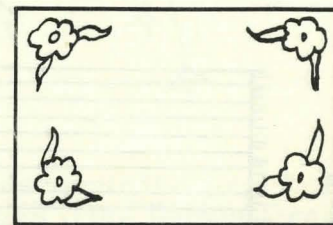
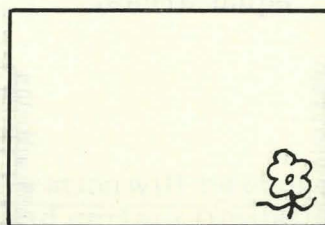
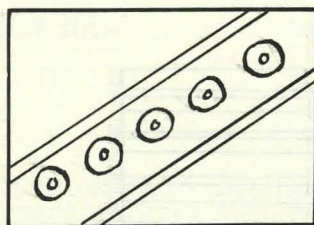


* Goldstein, Harriet and Vetta, Art In Everyday Life. (The Macmillan Co., 1954)

This on a placemat:

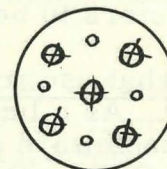
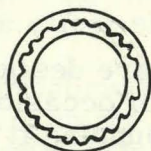


Not:

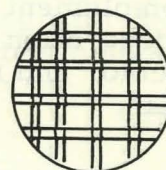
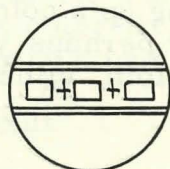


as the shape is rectangular.

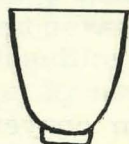
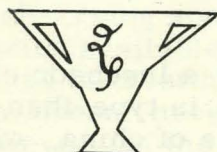
This on an ash tray or coaster:



Not:



as the shape is round.



Other examples of good and poor design:

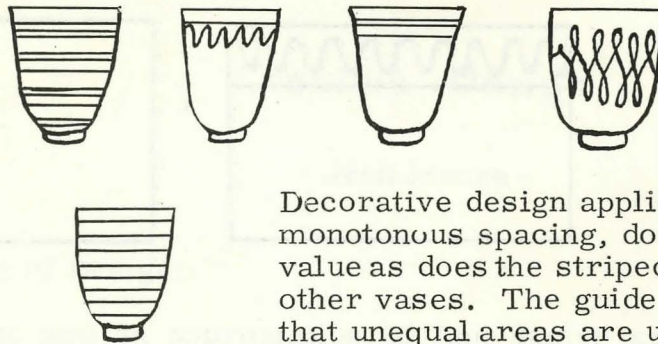
Poorly proportioned, top heavy, with useless and meaningless handles, spotty decoration which is not consistent in feeling with the structural design.

Well proportioned with wide enough base in relation to the diameter of the top to lend stability.

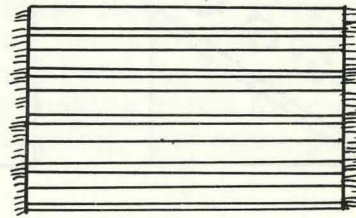
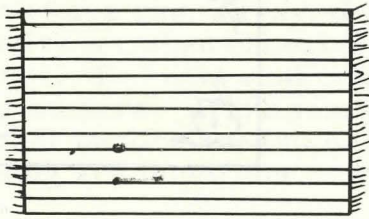
Well proportioned, with a handle which seems to grow out of the cup and which would be comfortable in the hand.

Well proportioned but with handle which looks tacked on and which would be difficult to hold in the hand.

Decorative design applied which is related to the structure:



Decorative design applied in stripes which, through monotonous spacing, does not have as much interest value as does the striped design applied on one of the other vases. The guide in designing applied here is that unequal areas are usually more interesting than equal areas.



This applies in weaving also, as in other instances.

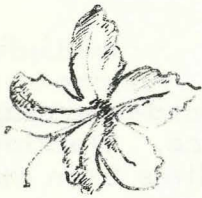
Other Factors to be Considered When Designing:

For what use are you designing this item? Let us say you are designing a luncheon cloth. As a luncheon cloth, it will be used for what type of occasion, with what dishes, tableware and type glasses? With what colors surrounding it? What type napkins will be used with it? Perhaps you might choose a color and texture for the napkins which will complement the cloth by picking up a color note you wish to carry out in your applied decoration on the cloth. Or perhaps you will wish to have the napkins of the same color and material as your cloth, either plain or with the same motif repeated on them.

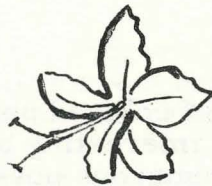
As a luncheon cloth, the fabric chosen and the type of decoration used should be practical. The fabric should be easily laundered if it is to be used often and the decoration should at the same time be of a type which will not demand extra care in the use of the cloth.

Of what material will this item be made? If you were making a luncheon cloth of net or organdy, the design you applied to it would be different in type than one used in decorating burlap. Organdy or net lends itself to the use of china, while burlap suggests the casualness of pottery. The delicate fabric suggests a delicate design, the heavier fabric a heavier, perhaps more compact design.

Any person who wishes to produce good quality of design adapts or conventionalizes it to suit the materials she is using. In other words, she avoids a highly realistic, imitative treatment of an object such as a flower or an animal. A rose stenciled on a luncheon cloth, shaded and handled to make it seem as realistic and three-dimensional as possible, lacks design quality. Leave the beauty of the rose in its natural state and do not decrease its beauty by attempting to capture it in a two-dimensional medium.



Not this



but this

Not this



but this



What medium or method of decoration will be chosen to decorate the item? Each medium has certain possibilities and certain limitations, and if the person creating the design has had no previous experience with the one she thinks she would like to use, it would be to her advantage to experiment first.

Perhaps she would rather create the design first and then experiment in the medium of her choice to see if it lends itself to the type of design she has produced. Certain modifications may need to be made in the design in order to suit the medium. Or she may decide to use another method of decoration which more nearly gives her the effect she wants.

Medium, fabric and color are sometimes quite closely related. If stenciling is chosen, for example, the fabric might be a washable cotton, rather light in value. Colors in textile paints do not usually show up well on dark backgrounds. In block printing, white on a dark fabric will show up, but, generally, the same problem must be considered. If a dark colored cloth is desired along with decorative design, then applique and/or embroidery might be the most effective method of decoration.

Design Needn't Be Difficult:

The thought of creating designs often unnecessarily frightens people. As in other things, you learn by doing and one can grow in ability by experimenting and practicing, by the trial and error method. Only by creating one's own design can a person enjoy real satisfaction and pride in his or her product. One often thinks in terms of too elaborate designs when considering the possibility of creating them. Actually, by observing some of the better looking printed dress fabrics, upholstery or drapery fabrics available today, a person becomes aware that usually it is the simple motif, varied in treatment, color, or in the method of repeat, that stands out. A good design doesn't necessarily mean that it is involved and intricate, taking trained skill to achieve. On the contrary, some of the outstanding fabric designers, backed by fine training, seek to achieve simplicity, yet with some variety and interest. The untrained person can often obtain good looking results by creating a simple motif -- then handling it in different ways, using various colors and seeing what effects she can get by using it as a border or as a repeat.

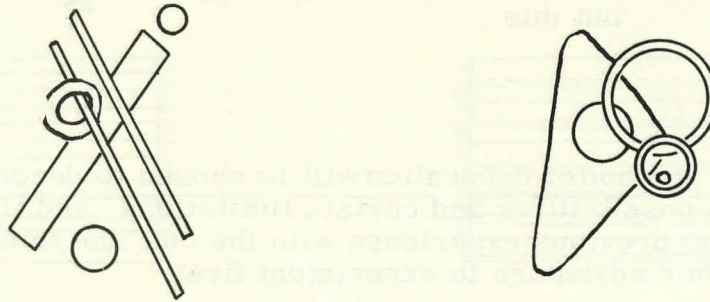
In our surroundings we live daily amidst design and by concentrated observation we can become increasingly aware of it. The shape and veining of an interesting leaf, the cross section of an apple, the color and pattern of a flower bed can all give design inspiration which can be developed into concrete expression. Mr. George Wells, a young man who gained national prominence when one of his unusual hooked rugs

won the top award in a national competition among craftsmen, wrote an interesting article on designing in which he developed rug designs based on macaroni, an abacus, pieces of paper and an aerial view.*

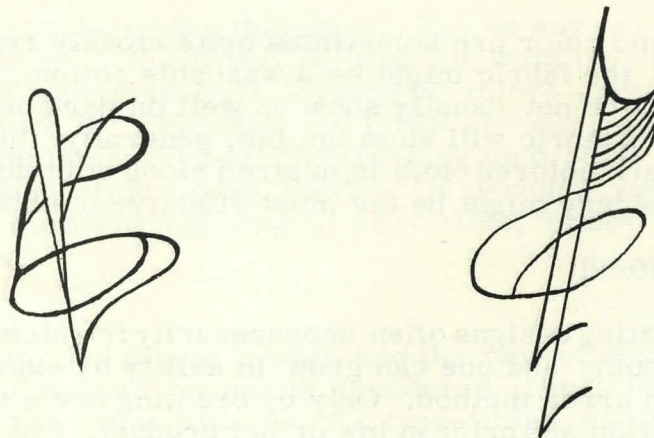
There are various approaches to design and people generally find one or two methods of designing which appeal more to them than others.

Other Suggested Methods of Designing:

One method is to cut different shapes out of colored paper and to arrange them on a common background until you achieve an interesting balance. Working with a variety of shapes, colors and sizes you find numerous possibilities from which you can choose.



Another method is rhythmic line in which you actually "doodle." These lines may be straight or curved or a combination of both. By putting a sheet of tracing paper over the unit to be developed, you can eliminate some lines, change others until you have a design which can perhaps be worked out in one of several media quite successfully.



Gather up some utensils or objects around the house which are comparatively small and do not have a smooth surface. They might include a small rivet, a cookie



* House Beautiful. August 1955, pp. 52-55

cutter, a potato masher, a cup and other such items. Place one of them against a soft sponge which has been soaked in tempera or show card paint, so that the edge is pressed into the sponge. Then after the edges are outlined in paint place the object down on unlined paper, reapplying paint to the surface after every impression. Various arrangements and two or three colors might possible be used or a combination of two or three objects might be used together to gain some variety.

Whichever method is used, designing can be enjoyable and stimulating as one idea lends to another, and the more a person designs, the better she finds her results. In addition, the satisfactions she realizes are greater.

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Designs used to illustrate the cut paper and rhythmic line methods were done by freshmen students in beginning design class in Home Econ. at the Uni. of Nebr.

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