Overview of 20th Century Design
How did design change from 1850 – 1950?

“Much of the furniture was monumental in effect, and copiously decorated with carving in high relief: flowers, fruit, animals, fabulous creatures and human figures, incongruously assembled, skilfully executed, and exhibiting a basic confusion of ornament with design.”

Gloag, Victorian Comfort, pp. 41-42
How did design change from 1850 – 1950?

1850: Rapid changes: Industrial Revolution

- **New technology**
- New levels of mobility & transportation
- Growing middle classes and consumerism
- Urbanisation
- International trends (trade and communications)

**Design responses**

- ‘Cheap’ *imitations* of ‘expensive’ and past styles (status)
- The **Arts and Crafts** movement – also concerned with the quality of life of workers and consumers
- The **Aesthetes** (beauty and pleasure)
- **Art Nouveau** (an international trend to search for original design styles)
Cast Iron Furniture c 1820 Origin: France – in the revivalist Rococo style

Historicism – heavily ornate and revivalist styles using new mass production processes (middle classes wanted to imitate the aristocracy-these styles filtered down to all goods)
Experimentation and Invention – not led by past aesthetic styles and expensive, labour intensive decoration.

Thonet chair, No.10 year: c.1870
Thonet Chair no 14 first produced 1859

- By 1860 this model cost less than a bottle of wine.
- 7 Million had been sold by 1891 and 50 million by 1930
- Thonet located its factories to exploit cheap labour that was relatively unskilled.
- A new aesthetic created by the structure itself…. rather than decoration

Michael Thonet (1796 – 1871) was a German-Austrian cabinet maker, known for the invention of bentwood furniture.

http://en.thonet.de/iniciohtml.html
Rejection or acceptance of new technology and the machine?

The Arts and Crafts Movement

- Rejected poor quality machine produced goods
- Concerned that arts and crafts should have social & moral principles (life enhancing)
- A love of the vernacular (local) traditions of the middle ages which had been lost in the industrial revolution
- To make well designed and crafted objects available to all (but their ideals for craftsmanship were costly)
- Sought to improve design through education

The A&C movement saw decoration as an outlet for crafts skills, job satisfaction and invention. They were happy to revive past styles in an authentic way (carving not casting)
Arts and Crafts: Design in a Nutshell
William Morris

William Morris (24 March 1834 - 3 October 1896) was an English textile designer, artist, writer, and socialist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/biography-of-william-morris/

Nature as inspiration

His sources were plants themselves, observed in his gardens or on country walks, and also images of plants in 16th-century woodcuts


“Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.”
MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY

The first Challenge Hull of February encourages us to think about nature, and the beautiful world around us.

Whether you are a nature lover or not, join in with week #6 challenge from Humber Mencap.

‘NATURE’S ART’

DO:

Give old nature new life. Find some objects in nature, like leaves or branches or stones and then make something beautiful out of them. Maybe a collage, a mobile, or a picture? Whatever works for you.

IF YOU HAVE A LITTLE MORE TIME:

Can you experiment with the materials you use? Is it possible to make prints from natural resources, press flowers, or draw something you’ve seen?

THINK:

Did you see nature in a different way? How would you describe the term ‘nature’ to an alien who has never encountered it before?

SHARE:

Share a photograph of something you have created or found within the next seven days.

Use #ChallengeHull and share your challenge on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You can then tag Hull 2017 (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and Humber Mencap (on Twitter) as we’d love to see your creations.

Check our social media channels or our website here next Monday for your next challenge. And don’t forget to share all the challenges (including your own) with others to encourage them to get stuck in too.
Those who were willing to embrace technology and work for/with manufacturers could see the need to develop styles that made mass production easier.

Designers could work on a different scale, serving industry rather than being advanced craftspeople.

They took their ideas for a new aesthetic from nature, geometry and the less decorative artefacts of Japan which were being displayed at the various international exhibitions.

Christopher Dresser 1834 - 1904 was a designer and design theorist. Widely known as one of the first and most important, independent designers and was a pivotal figure in the Aesthetic Movement.

Also a major contributor to the allied Anglo-Japanese or Modern English style; both originated in England and had long-lasting international influence.
“The desire to abandon the historical styles of the nineteenth century was an important impetus behind Art Nouveau and one that establishes the movement’s modernism. Industrial production was, at that point, widespread, and yet the decorative arts were increasingly dominated by poorly-made objects imitating earlier periods. The practitioners of Art Nouveau sought to revive good workmanship, raise the status of craft, and produce genuinely modern design that reflected the utility of the items they were creating.”

**Two strains of Art Nouveau – curvaceous and rectilinear**

“None of these goods lend themselves particularly well to mass production but they are all swept up in this desire to break with the past and create a new aesthetic.”

Hector Guimard Cabinet (pear) *c1900*

Henry van de Velde 1903 Porcelain Sauce-boat

Hill House Chair – Charles Mackintosh (1904)

Josef Hoffmann – Silver/glass Vase (for the Wiener Werkstatte) – 1906
New attitudes and fierce debate

- ‘Form follows function’ Louis Sullivan 1890
  - The Art and Craft of the Machine

Frank Lloyd Wright 1901

‘Ornament is a Crime’ Adolf Loos 1908

The debate about standardisation -

- inexpensive, mass produced, quality goods or the individuality of artistic expression

Deutsche Werkbund 1907-1914
(debate between Van de Velde and Muthesius )
Modernism: Design in a Nutshell
The Early 20th Century – The revolutions in art, WWI, end of the Belle Époque

“Complete disillusionment with society and rejection of everything associated with the past.”

Futurism
Dada
De Stijl
Contractivism

“These art and design movements pave the way for Modernism to emerge after WW1 in the 1920s”

Arts and Crafts ideals of social reform and democracy (changing society) met with the desire to reject the decorative styles of the past. The Modern Movement was born.

The Belle Époque or La Belle Époque = French for "Beautiful Era") was a period of Western European history. It is conventionally dated from the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 to the outbreak of World War I in around 1914.
Futurist Manifesto of Architecture

- The decorative must be abolished.
- The aesthetic value of Futurist architecture depends solely on the use and original arrangement of raw or bare or violently coloured materials.
- Bold groupings and masses, and large-scale disposition of planes.
- Things will endure less than us. Every generation must build its own city.

Link to Futurist Manifesto of Architecture
http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/architecture.html

In contrast to Futurism, Dada was a reaction to the horrors of war (WW1)…it led them to question everything that had gone before.
In Holland **De Stijl** sought “a universal language of design”

**1920s. De Stijl** and **Constructivism** were both:-

- inspired by **futurism and cubism**
- trying to design for **modern city life**
- rejecting nature and the past in support of the machine
- trying to capture **absolute abstraction**
- characterised by **strong geometric forms, blocks of pure colour** and **a sense of overlapping and extending forms**
- **bold, daring, optimistic** and **experimental**

In **Russia Constructivism** sought an aesthetic that was **classless** and allied to industrial production and engineered forms.
Modern Movement


"Le Corbusier was born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris in Switzerland on October 6, 1887. In 1917, he moved to Paris and assumed the pseudonym Le Corbusier.

In his architecture, he chiefly built with steel and reinforced concrete and worked with elemental geometric forms. Le Corbusier's painting emphasized clear forms and structures, which corresponded to his architecture."

"created as a Modernist version of the French country house"

Maison Guiette, designed by Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret in 1926, is an early work based on the international style, built in 1927 as the residence and studio of the painter René Guiette.
• Designers adopted **industrial materials**

• There is a characteristic **Modernist** ‘look’ - a more stylised aesthetic using **steel, glass and concrete** which are seen as the modern materials of the day

• **Colour is often absent** in this ‘serious’ restrained look

• A shift from personal and nationalistic expression to that of establishing a **universal style (The International Style)**

  • **Hard geometry is softened** with **reflective materials** and the **curves of tubular steel**

  • **Ornament** is rejected

• **Function** is said to lead their **design** process

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Mies Van der Rohe
Barcelona chair 1929

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), a German-born architect and educator, is widely acknowledged as one of the 20th century’s greatest architects. By emphasizing open space and revealing the industrial materials used in construction, he helped define modern architecture.
The Bauhaus was the most famous design school of the 20C. Many eminent artists, architects and designers taught here. It established a firm relationship between art and design and in its later years trained designers to work alongside industry… Product Design as we know it today. Many of its tutors were previously participants in the art and design movements - De Stijl and Constructivism.
Bauhaus: Design in a Nutshell
Late Modernism & Organic Design  
(Scandinavia and America)

Other modernists had followed in the footsteps of Thonet by experimenting with materials and mass production rather than an obsession with aesthetics.

These designers were largely Scandinavian and had not been caught up in the desire to create a singular international style. Here we see experimentation with timber using machinery to mould plywood (local materials). Organic, curvaceous forms are naturally incorporated into low cost mass produced products and furnishings. Aesthetics relate to human form. A major competition and exhibition at MOMA (1942) prompts interest in organic design in the USA.

Form follows Function

Savoy Vase, 1936, Alvar Aalto

LCW (Lounge Chair Wood) – Charles and Ray Eames (1945)
However....

As modernism began to establish itself.....

There were forces and ideas that served to undermine it.....
Popular Design – Art Deco and Streamlining (20s and 30s)

- Modernist goods were rarely adopted for mass production.
- The aesthetic didn’t meet the needs of either ordinary people or the wealthy.
- The styles were more usually incorporated into modernist buildings that were ‘one off’ commissions – artistic projects?
- Art Deco and Streamlining were the consumer driven alternatives to modernism.

Kem Weber 1937 USA Triple Band Chair - Steel Tubing Chrome finish

Raymond Loewy, Pencil Sharpener, USA 1933

Oliver Bernard Strand Palace Hotel staircase 1930–31 glass and chrome
Popular Design – **Art Deco** and **Streamlining** (20s and 30s)

**Art Deco** was sometimes **derivative** of **Cubist and Futurist** artworks

A new kind of popular ‘**decorative**’ aesthetic developed which was **sculptural** rather than **ornamental** (not always functional!)

**Ruba Rombic vase, ca. 1928**

**Reuben Haley**

**Coldspot refrigerator**

**Raymond Loewy** 1934

The aesthetic associated with **Streamlining** was adopted for **new and expanding product types** such as **transport and electrical goods**
**Surrealism** - a major influence on design in the later half of 20th C

- **Surrealism** is generally aligned with modernism because it breaks with artistic conventions and traditions...

- It can also be seen as subversive of modernism...it returns to the figurative and rejects the modernist obsession with surface and materials.

- Surrealist design focuses on the **consumer’s dreams and fantasies**...it does not accept modernist ideals of form follows function and the obsession with aesthetics.

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Meret Oppenheim
*Table with Bird Legs* 1939

Salvador Dali
*Mae West Lips Sofa* 1938

Salvador Dali
*Lobster Phone* 1938
Modernism... becomes Brutalism

Post WWII housing shortage prompts an interest in the modernist ideals of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.

‘The house is a machine for living’ Le Corbusier.

‘Less is more’ Mies

But low budgets imitations and lack of understanding of social behaviour leads to failure on a mass scale.

Unité d'Habitation, Marseille (Le Corbusier 1952)

Park Hill is a council housing estate in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England. It was built between 1957 and 1961, and in 1998 was given Grade II listed building status. Following a period of decline, the estate is being renovated by developers Urban Splash. The renovation was one of the six short-listed projects for the 2013 RIBA Stirling Prize.

http://www.urbansplash.co.uk/residential/park-hill

PARK HILL HOUSING PROJECT (c.1962)
A housing estate in Hull has been transformed into a brightly-coloured work of art this week, as part of a Hull 2017 project.

*I Wish To Communicate With You* has been spearheaded by the social enterprise Goodwin Development Trust, and has seen residents of the Thornton Estate working closely with an international artist to turn their homes into an awe-inspiring art installation.

1950s Modernism - increasing problems

• Design is dominated by ‘old masters’ - younger generation frustrated.

• Designers had become like Gods – obsessed with their creations and out of touch with the people modernism had originally been created for.

• International Style alienated people and promoted elitist attitudes to design.

• Public buildings and housing often unpopular and even termed ‘brutal’.

These factors led people to look for other alternatives:

Pop Design... 1960’s
Post Modernism... 1970’s