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Introduction

During the course of this thesis I shall explore the role that design played on the post-war years.

During this period, the Government hoped to introduce a long term plan for modernisation through the 'Utility Scheme' which I shall detail during this thesis and organisations such as the Council of Industrial Design, to radically change the Post War design in the face of limited resources, man power and wealth.

This is a phrase of history characterised by a higher awareness of design by the general public and I wish to examine to what extent the public actually accepted the modernisation process and how they either adapted or resisted it.

Post War Years

The impact of the war on British industry was widespread. The labour force was considerably depleted and the raw materials necessary for production were in short supply. Rationing was therefore a necessity which affected every aspect of design and manufacture. Textiles, furniture and clothing were just a few industries that were restricted by a rigorous set of standards known as 'utility'. (Schoeser and Rufey, 1989, p. 184).

The Utility Scheme was introduced by the Board of Trade in 1942. Controls were placed on the use of colour in furnishing fabrics and according to Woodham, manufacturers were "confined to rusts, blues, greens and creams" until 1946 when "yellow was added to the palette", (Woodham, J., 1990, p. 194).

Due to 'Blackout' requirements colours had to be dark and sombre. To avoid wastage of limited resources, designs used no more than three or four colours and repeats were kept small. Thus restriction of colour became a distinctive feature in printed textiles and its influence prevailed throughout the 1950s. An example of this can be seen in Figure 1. this is a fabric design by J. Feldman which was produced in 1954, (Schoeser and Rufey, 1989, p. 185).

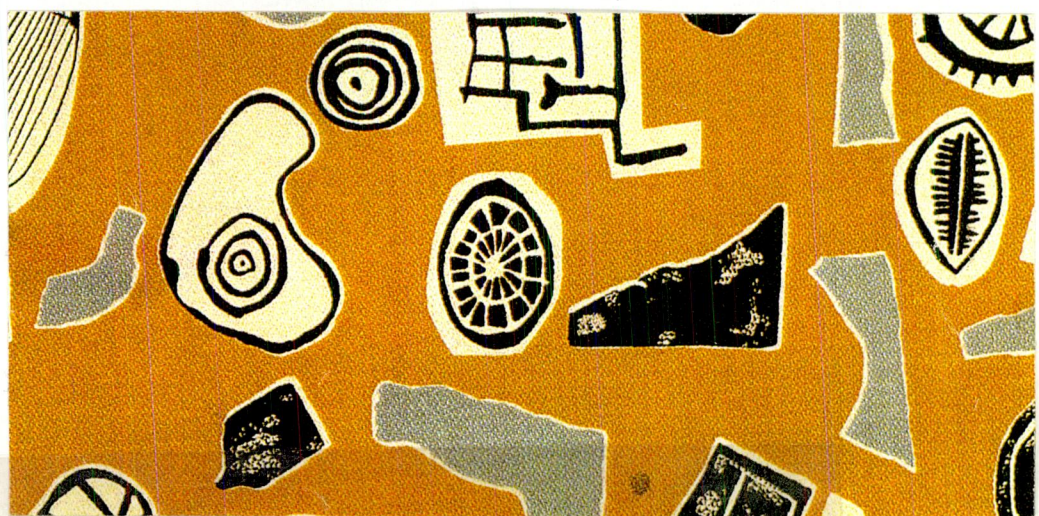


Figure 1 Textile design using just four colours. (Pleat, A. 1993, p.25)



Figure 2 Room finished with 'Utility ' Furniture. (Woodham, J. 1990, p240)

From 1942 to 1948 the Utility Scheme gave the government “almost total control over furniture making and buying”. All furniture was made by approved firms to specification and was only available at fixed prices to those with a permit, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990). Figure 2 depicts a room decorated with utility furniture.

Judy Attfield has argued that the scheme served a dual purpose, to deal with immediate problems presented by the war and to promote a design reform agenda of longer term planned modernisation” (Attfield, J., 1996, P. 185).

Concern had been growing throughout the 1930s over Britain’s declining industrial performance, this was generally put down to poor standards of design. This was now an ideal

opportunity to correct this problem by introducing the public to 'good design', (Harris, J., 1993, P.4).

In this context 'good design' refers specifically to the type of design being produced by the Utility Design Panel. These were characterised by the simplicity of their construction and the lack of non-functional ornaments. Gordon Russell the chairman of the panel welcomed the opportunity to influence mass taste he wrote in 1946, "I felt that to raise the whole standard of furniture for the mass of the people was not a bad war job", (Massey, A., 1990, p. 159).

There is conflicting evidence on whether the utility schemes was actually successful. According to Fiona Mc Carthy there was "regret even in trade circles" when the scheme officially ended in 1952 and "because of the stringency of the regulations it was impossible to produce a shoddy piece of furniture", (McCarthy, F., 1982, p.124). this suggests that utility had gained a widespread reputation for quality.

However not everyone was satisfied with it, or sorry to see the end of it. Macdonald and Porter give the example of a couple who married during the war and were entitled to utility furniture. They commented that the furniture was "very plain and sort of slung together, not like the old fashioned furniture, that was really made". Their criticism of the plainness of the design was a widely held opinion. New designs were "good solid and sensible, that's just what the public doesn't like", (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

Michael Snodin and Maurice Howard have observed that with the easing of restriction the public returned with relief to 'proper' furniture, veneered and ornamented", (Snodin and Howards, 1996, p. 183). In her introduction to the Daily Mail Ideal Home Book 1949-50

editor Margaret Sherman welcomed the return of quality raw materials from which to produce good furniture. She wrote that, "freedom of design brings again to the home market a wide range of elegant furniture. The fine timber of pre-war years is gradually becoming available", (Sherman, M, 1949, p.4). Woodham has argued that there was a "significant gulf" between what the authorities were trying to achieve and the "realities of the market place" (Woodham, J., 1997, p. 117).

Design Education

There was a widespread lack of design awareness in many areas of British Industry. Designers held a lowly position within the hierarchy of industry. They were frequently artists or architects employed part time. Only 40-60% were specialist freelance designers and they were often badly paid, (Harris, J., 1993, p.3).

According to Judy Attfield, "the development of 'good design' awareness marked the professionalisation of the practice of design" (Attfield, J., 1996, p.185). A transaction therefore had occurred. Traditional craft techniques gave way to structured intellectual processes, involving specific objectives and greater self criticism.

Training designers specifically for industrial production became a "central issue for both the Council of Industrial Design and the Education authorities".

The debate continued on the lack of visual training and the huge gap in British Art Schools between arts and the sciences, (Harris, J., 1993, p.7). In 1946 a report on the training of designers was carried out by Robin Darwin, Education Officer of the C.O.I.D. Two years later Darwin got the chance to reconcile these problems when he was appointed Principal of Royal College of Art in London. He did this with outstanding success. One of his plans for improvement was to employ tutors that were experienced architects or designers themselves. His methods got results and by the late 1950s a significant number of graduates were employed as staff designers, (McCarthy, F., 1982, p.123).

Housing

In London thousands of homes were lost or damaged due to the aerial bombings. In the meantime people had to live in temporary accommodation such as prefabs and rissan huts. There were huge waiting lists for new houses and flats. What was primarily meant to be short term ended up being long term for some people. One man lived with his family in a prefabricated building for nine years before eventually getting a council flat in 1956. People got impatient and felt they had at least earned the right to decent accommodation, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

These strong social and political factors prevailed at the time of Labour's election to government. The housing crisis was crucially important, demanding urgent action. One solution to the problem was the concept of 'New Towns', (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

Lesley Jackson argues that although 'New Towns' were originally intended to get people away from inner cities, they were not "dormitory satellites but self contained cities complete with their own offices industries and recreation facilities", (Jackson, L., 1994, p.180).

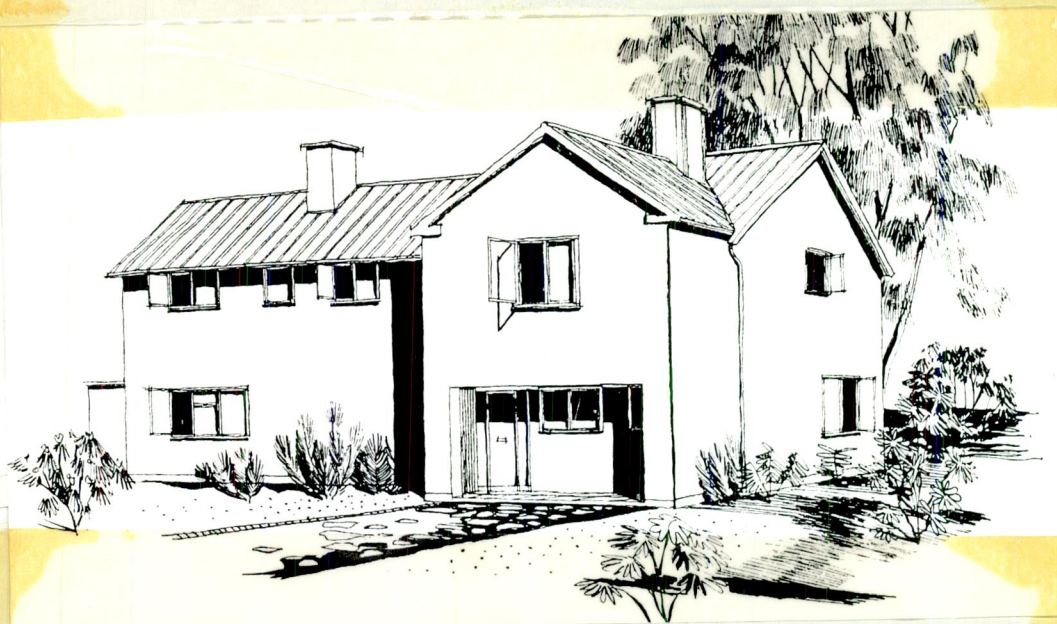
Incentives were offered to people to move to these new towns. Houses were offered as a deal with a job. However a lot of people felt isolated in these areas as they were distanced from family and friends. Macdonald and Porter record that this feeling became known as the 'New Town Blues', (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

An alternative solution to housing problems was to build high rise blocks of flats, such as those on the Alton Estate in Rochampton. At first they were satisfied with this new type of

accommodation, but this was not to last. Tenants described the flats as “matchboxes” and said they felt “boxed in”. Comparisons were made between the high rise flats and prison, as people felt cut off from the sense of community they were previously used to, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

The Ideal Home Book 1949-50 suggests how to get, “The house for your money” in an article written by Eric Bird. According to Bird you could not build a house “without let or hindrance was you could before the war, (Sherman, M, 1949, p. 17).

The reasons cited for this are “high costs, the building trade was busy and controls” (Sherman, M., 1949, p.17). Controls were slackening on supplies of building materials and bricks were now unrationed. Angela Partington asserts that Post war reconstruction created a “boom time for architects, planners and designers”. In the Festival of Britain designers made a feature of prioritising utility and efficiency. The language used by designers transformed the consumers desires into needs and requirements that a well kept home should have, (Partington, A., 1989, p. 208).



The plan for the 'Two Stage' house in the Ideal Home Book 1949-50 seen in Figure 4 shows the new fashion for open plan living spaces, the living room and dining recess are combined. According to Macdonald and Porter, planners and designers looked for new ways to combine living spaces. "The old fashioned kitchen and scullery" often was changed to a larger "working kitchen", traditional dining rooms and parlours were combined for an "all purpose living space", (Macdonald and Porter, 1990). This plan shows that this particular house does have a parlour but quite often they were considered to be obsolete.

There were still size restrictions for houses it was a maximum of 1,500 square feet. To get the best value out of this space the Ideal Home Book advises that having a low sloping roof cuts down the bedroom space upstairs to maximise on the ground floor dimensions.

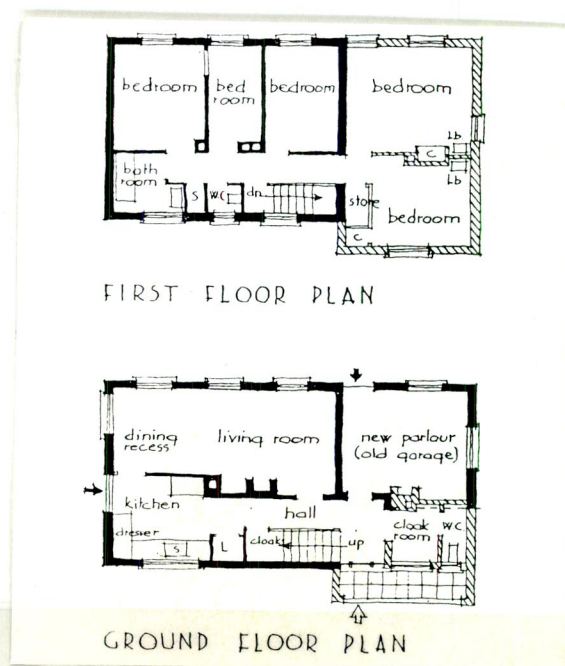


Figure 4 Plan for two stage house.

Design Awareness

The dubious success of the Utility Scheme did not deter the officials and supporters of modernism. In 1945 a Council of Industrial Design (C.O.I.D.) was established to continue the campaign for good design (Masse, A., 1990, p. 160).

According to Woodham the C.O.I.D. displaced “a strong sense of social idealism married to a belief that it was genuinely possible to bring about improved design in the competitive post war climate”, (Woodham, J., 1990, p. 196).

When the labour government came into power in 1945, one of its first actions was to ask the Council for its assistance in relaunching British export markets, (Harris, J., 1993, P. 6). Macdonald and Porter assert that the Government was keen to recapture the “home market” which had been affected by competition from American goods (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

The Council organised a major exhibition of consumer goods, demonstrating the high quality of British goods in 1946. This was entitled ‘Britain can make it’. In the space of just three months one and a half million people flocked to see the exhibition, (Schoeser and Rufey, 1989, p. 194). This indicates that people were curious about design and wanted to know more. The main focus of interest proved to be the furnished rooms, (Pleats, A., 1993, p.13).

This was the first attempt at introducing the public to the concept of industrial design. The C.O.I.D. employed promotional catchphrases such as “Good Design - Good Business”. According to Mary Schoeser the exhibitors intention was to encourage the manufacture of

well designed products at a time when shortages meant that even the most badly designed product would sell", (Sparke, 1986, p. 71).

The exhibition was nick-named 'Britain can't make it', this was due to the fact that many of the exhibits were either prototypes or they were for export only. The judgement of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps was brought into question, on whether it was wise to display British achievement at a time of great austerity, (McCarthy, F., 1982, p.162).

For the first time designers names were displayed alongside the names of the manufacturers. Attempts were made to demonstrate the contribution of the industrial designer in a section called 'What Industrial Design means'. Seeing a name beside the product made the observer realise that there was an actual person involved in the production process and it was not purely mechanical. This gave the public an insight into the role of the designer and the role they played alongside those making and selling the product, (Harris, J., 1996, p. 17).

Five years later the C.O.I.D. organised the Festival of Britain to promote British Industry and to consolidate national identity.

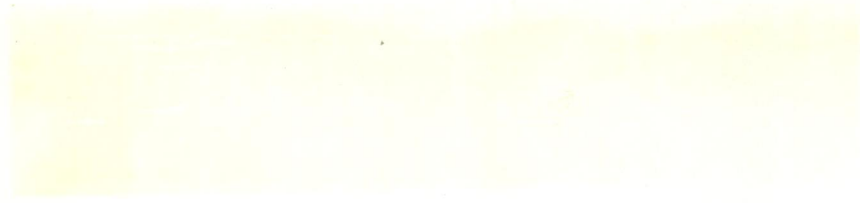
New Imagery

The prevailing spirit of the 1950s was a celebration of, and fascination with, mass production, engineering, science and machine production.

This preoccupation with technology found a significant role as the guiding principles for textile designers and manufacturers. The term applied to the resulting style was 'contemporary', (Jackson, L., 1994, p. 168).

The Festival of Britain in 1951 was an exhibition that celebrated British achievements in arts and science and technology. One feature at the festival was a "large aluminium flying saucer" which housed an exhibition called the 'Done of Discovery'. Its form inspired the design of electrical goods such as heaters and vacuum cleaners, (Woodham, J., 1990, p. 203). Perhaps the 'Done of Discovery' influenced the idea of a Millennium Dome at Greenwich which is currently being planned.

This strong futuristic theme was carried on throughout the exhibition. The dominant motif was the 30 foot Skylon by Powell and Moya. Several structures incorporated the imagery of molecular structures such as the Abacus screen at the entrance to the festival on the Southbank in London. The C.O.I.D. was in control of the design policy for the festival and they saw this as a perfect "opportunity to use science literally as a subject for ornamentation in design", (Woodham, J., 1990, p. 203).



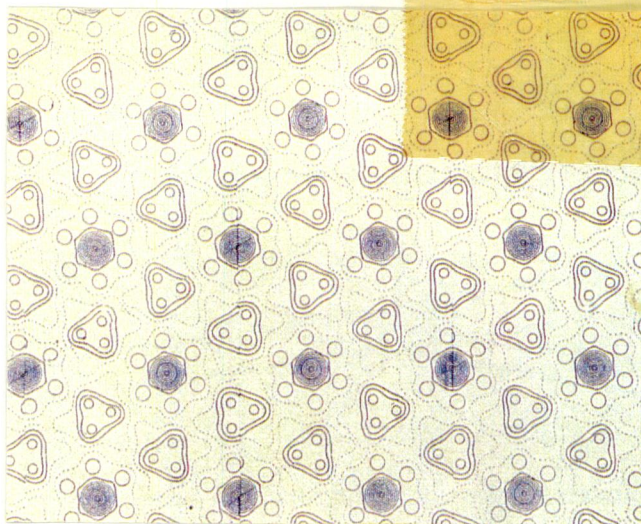


Figure 5 Design by the Festival Pattern Group, based on crystal structures. (Woodham, J. 1990,

The Festival Pattern Group was assigned the task of designing patterns based on crystal structures. As a direct source for these designs the structures of Boric acid, insulin and aluminium hydroxide were among those studied, (Jackson, L., 1991, p.62). An example of this type of design is shown in Figure 5.

According to Lesley Jackson “textiles offered the greatest opportunities for designers involved in the festival”. Many manufacturers from this field, contributed to the scheme. Among them were David Whitehead, DePloeg, Warner and Sons Ltd, Wedgewood and Chance Bros., (Jackson, L., 1991, p. 88). Figure 6 is an example of fabric produced for the Festival, it was designed by Marian Mapler. A good example of the molecular motif can be seen on the abstracted birds foot.

In the early 1950’s abstract art was a major influence on all areas of design. Abstract patterns came to dominate all levels of the market. Jennifer Harris described this as the “democratisation of avant-garde design”, (Jackson, 1991, p.61). It was so absorbed into peoples lives, that by the end of the 1950’s almost everyone had abstract decoration in their homes, whether it was wall paper, linoleum, ceramics or curtains.

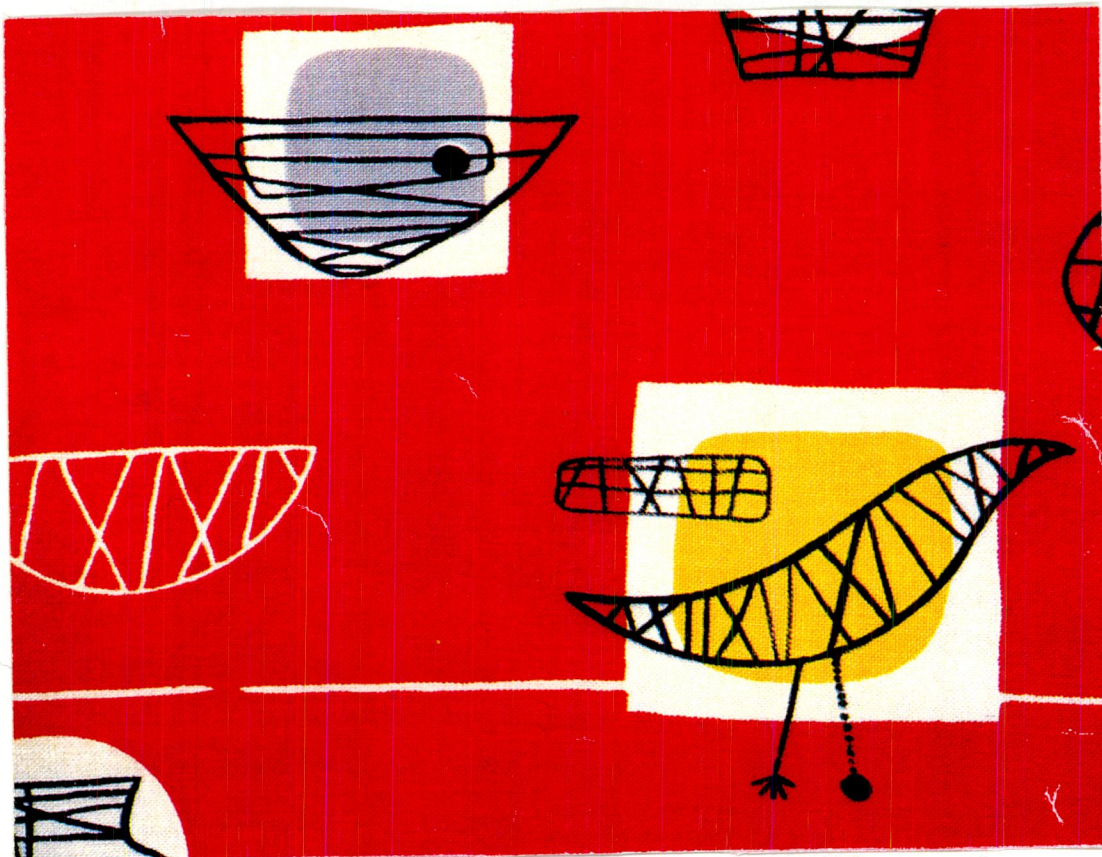


Figure 6 Molecular motif, as seen on the abstracted birds feet. (Pleat, A. 1993, p30)

The artists who had the strongest influence on pattern in the early part of the century were Paul Klee and Joan Miró. Jackson argues that the vibrant colour and primitive style of Paul Klee were very important influences on the “aesthetics of pattern making in the 1950’s”, (Jackson, L., 1991, p.64).

The linear style of Miró was clearly a strong influence, particularly in textile design. Both of these artists obviously influenced the work of textile designer Lucienne Day. Her fabric design ‘Fall’ Figure 7. is clearly derived from Klee’s style of drawing, with its spindly, organic motifs, Figure 8. shows an example of one of his drawings.

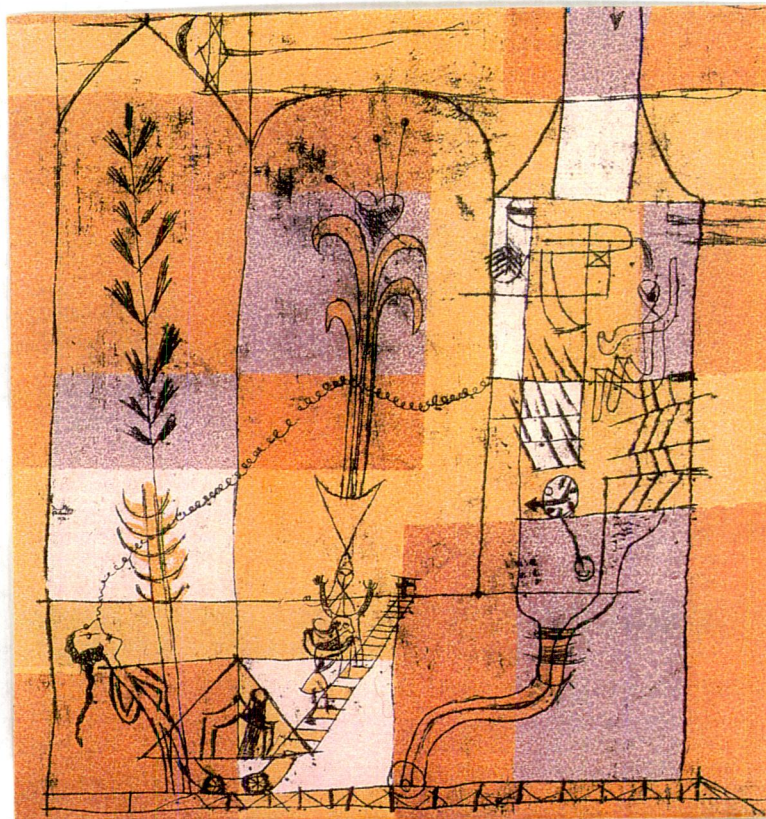
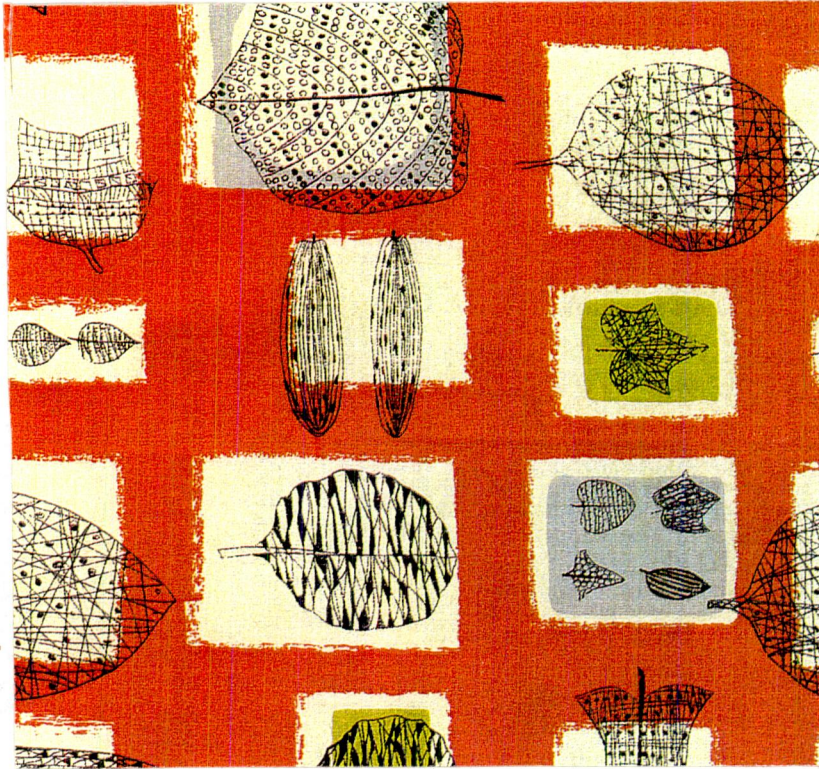


Figure 8 Painting by Paul Klee. (Guggenheim Museum. 1993, p136)

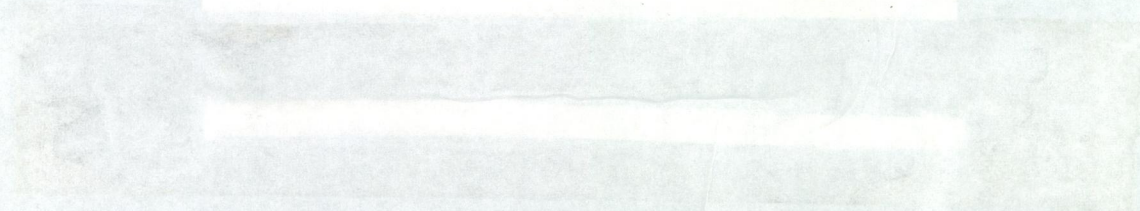




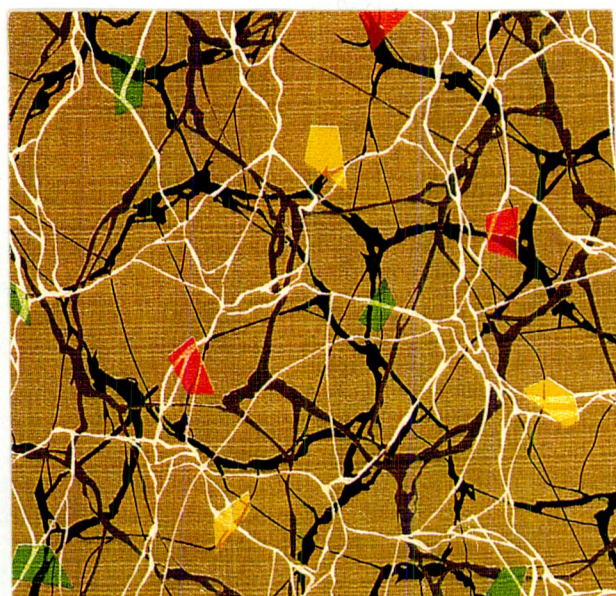
Figure 9 Calyx, by Lucienne Day. Jackson L, 1994, p160)



One of Days most famous designs is 'Calyo' Figure 9 which was designed for the Festival of Britain. Jackson asserts that the cupped shapes and spindly lines in the design were to become "hallmarks for 1950s textile design".



Figure 11 Fabric design. (Powell & Peel, 1988, p250)



(Anthony d'Offay, 1989, p110)

Another influence on textiles, that can clearly be seen in Days work is the kinetic sculptures of Alexander Calder seen in Figure 12. with similar shapes connected by lines, (Jackson, 1991, p.67).

The abstract expressionist art work of Jackson Pollock began to influence patterns in the later half of the century. He used mainly primary colour as can be seen in Figure 10 the rhythmic, splashes of his paintings adapted successfully for use in textiles. A piece of American fabric seen in Figure 11 is obviously influenced by Pollock, in both the imagery and colour used.

There was strong links between these two media that prevailed throughout the 1950s.



10.

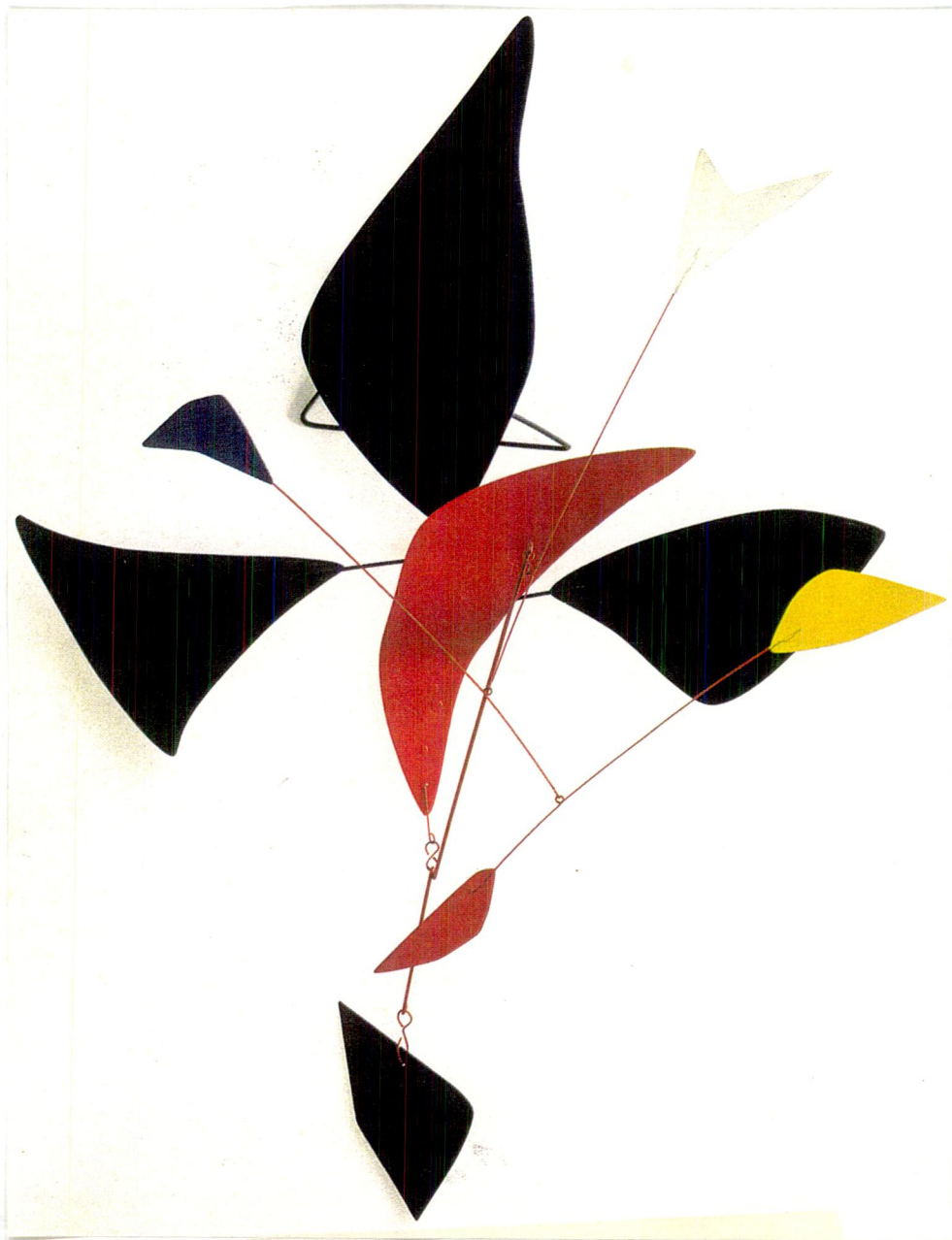


Figure 12 Sculpture by Alexander Calder. (G. Carandute.1983, p,227)



1875

Screen Printing

The 1950's saw the first fully automatic flat bed machine come into operation, this totally revolutionised the whole printing process by making it both cheaper and faster. Prior to the war printing was restricted as the processes such as block printing and hand screen printing were very costly. They were also labour intensive and slow, (Miles LWC, 1981, p. 56).

This made it an expensive process for the manufacturers. It also filtered down to add to retail cost. So when this new merchandised system was available, manufacturers took this opportunity to capitalise on its advantages. David Whitehead Ltd made the decision to fully automate their company it was a move that paid off. Clifford Whitaker, the Chairman of the company, wrote about his decision to "equip the mills with the most modern machinery we could buy", the initial transition stage was problematic, but within the space of a few years "a revolution had taken place within the mills", (Pleat A., 1993, p. 20).

The automatic screen printers printed all the colours of a design simultaneously with the aid of an endless moving blanket. While the printing action is actually taking place the fabric and the blanket are stationary. It only moves when the screens are raised. Therefore the printing process is intermittent (Storey, J., 1974, p. 124).

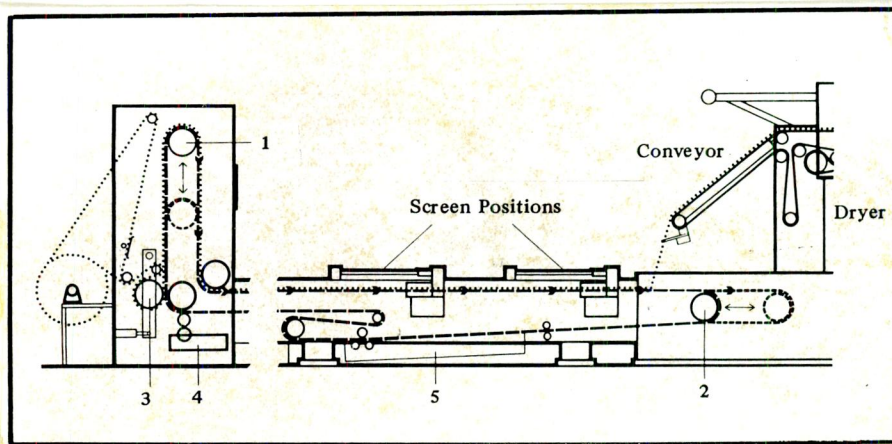


Figure 13 Automatic flat screen printer.(Miles, 1981,p.39.)

The main features of a typical flat screen automatic machine are shown in figure 13 and figure 14. All the screens for the design are positioned accurately along the top of the blanket. The width of the gap between the area printed by one screen and the area printed by the adjacent screen must be the same as the length ways screen repeat, as there can be several repeats per screen.

The fabric was gummed to the blanket at the start, it was carried along with the blanket in an intermittent fashion, one screen repeat distance at a time. All colours were printed simultaneously while the fabric was still, then the screens were lifted and the fabric approaches the turning point of the blanket.

When the fabric was taken off the blanket it was put through a dryer. The soiled blanket was then washed, dried and returned through the machine, (Miles LWC, 1981, p. 65).

When flat screens were used for printing the blanket was either spread length or width ways but widthways was more usual. This probably went back to traditional hand painting methods, (Miles LWC, 1981, p.67).

The development of the screen itself was just as important as the machine. In order to print a multi coloured accurately a stable screen was used. Screen fabrics were made from silk, cotton or nylon. Until the 1950s frames were made of wood despite the tendency for wood to warp when constantly wet and dried, metal frames provided the solution to this problem. They were strong and stable making the printing more economic and efficient.

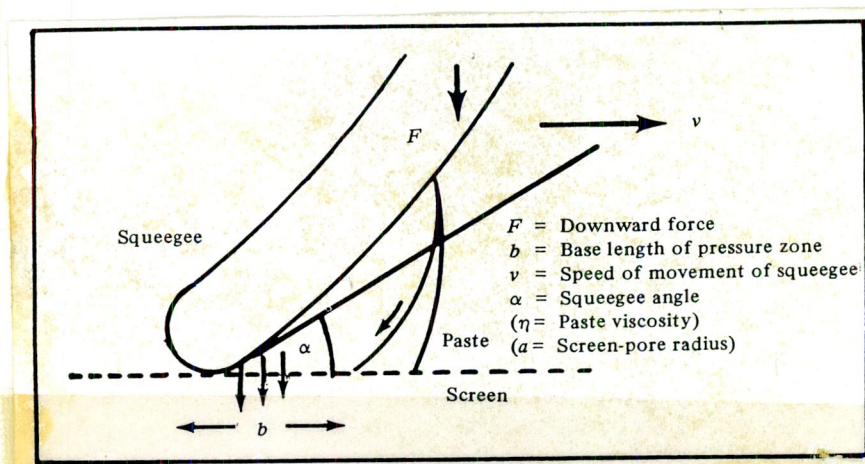


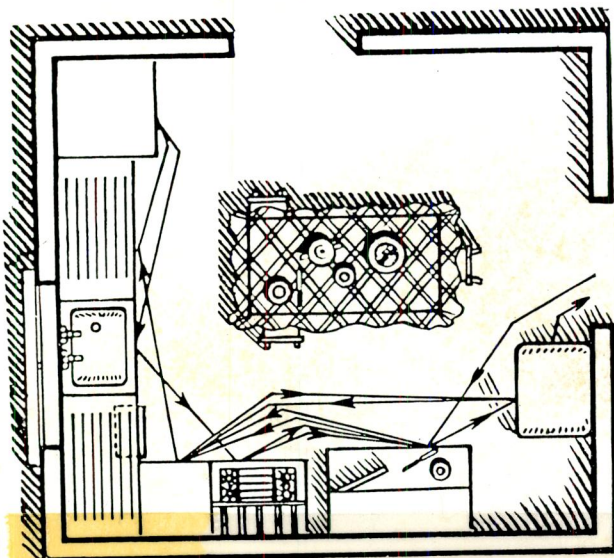
Figure 14 Squeegee. (Miles, 1981, p.59)

Consumer Culture

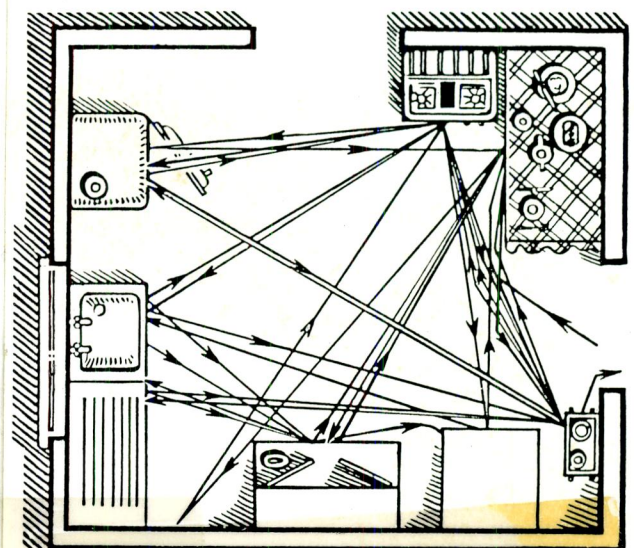
Now that the war was over the reinstatement of the woman's domestic role in the home was advocated by both the media and the authorities. According to Angela Partington, women were encouraged to return to being wives and mothers "with a new fervour and enthusiasm as part of their patriotic duty in the 'battle for peace'" (Partington A., 1989, p.206).

It was at this time that the welfare state was established to support the family as a "social institution" and an "economic unit". Manufacturers and advertisers spotted an opportunity to capitalise on circumstance and the housewife became a prime target. Massey argues that the media constructed a new image of the "professional housewife" and sought to give her greater status through "scientific justification" (Massey, A, 1990, P. 165).

The Ideal Home Book 1949-50 illustrates this point with an article entitled, "What housing research means to you". Several methods of improving efficiency in the home are cited, even fireplaces were tested for effectiveness. It was claimed that, "labour saving in the home was a job for the scientists too". (Sherman, 1949, p.45)



The top layout corrected to save walking.



Bad kitchen layout showing wasteful circulation.

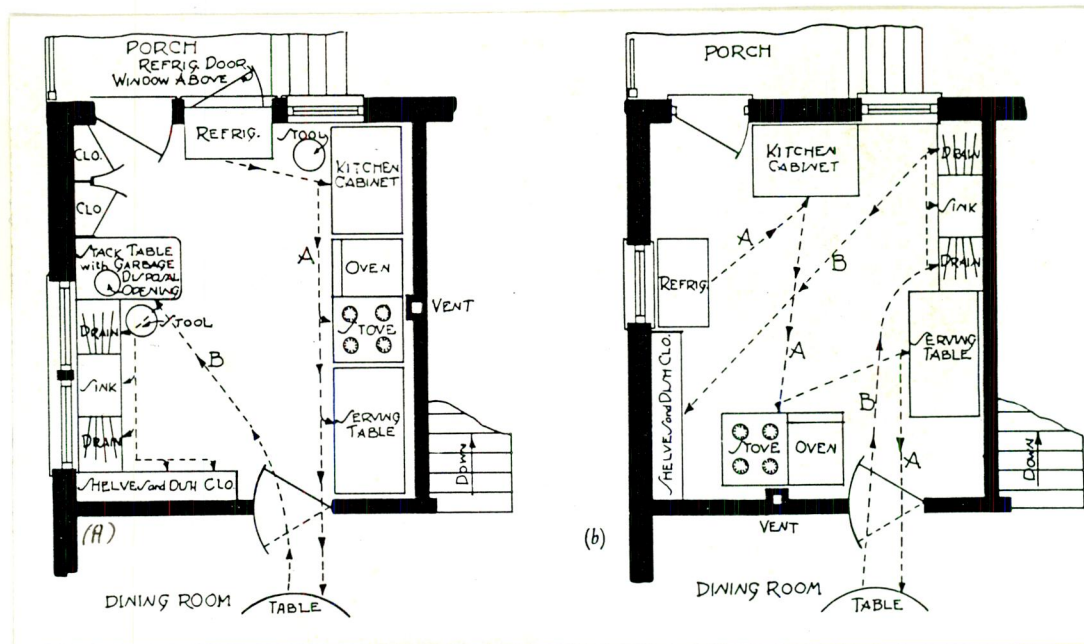


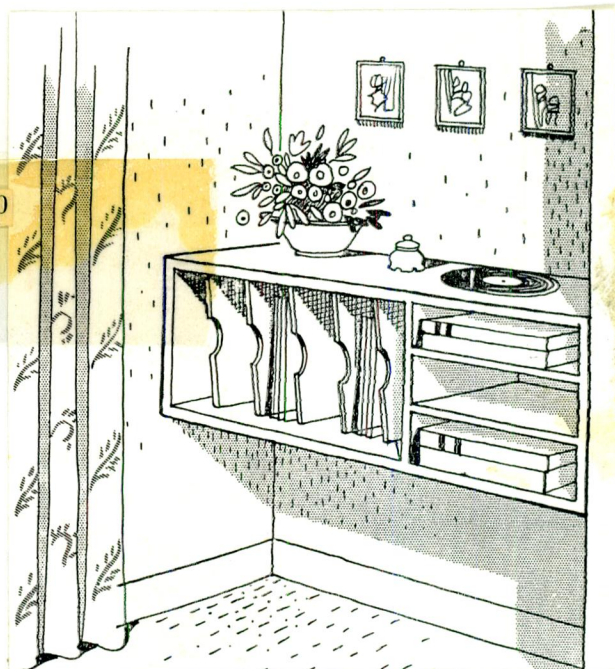
Figure 16 Efficient (A.) and inefficient (B.) kitchen plans from C. Frederick, *Scientific Management in The Home : Household Engineering*, 1920. (Forty, A., 1986, P.217)

The technical theory of ‘time and motion’ study was employed to demonstrate both good and bad kitchen layouts, these can be seen in Figure 15. This was probably inspired by work carried out in America by Christine Frederick, who wrote a book in 1920 called *Household Engineering*. Frederick applied the theories of Taylorism, which analysed labour in factories, to the kitchen. In doing so, Frederick believed that the most efficient kitchen plans could be made, Figure 16. shows diagrams from her book (Forty, A., 1986, p.217). The similarity between these diagrams is apparent.

Partington argues that this strong analogy between the home and the factory was to “reposition women as consumers not producers as most of them had been during the war”, (Partington, A., 1989, p.207). “Home Management” was a term that became commonly used by women’s magazines during the 1950’s. An entire section of the *Ideal Home Book 1949-50* I dedicated to ‘Management’. It covers subjects such as moving home, installing boilers, cooking and do it yourself ideas. Figure 17.

Figure 17 D.I.Y. suggestion from the Ideal Home Book 1949-50

to make your own record cabinet.



D.I.Y. grew out of the 'make do and mend' philosophy of the war years. For many people it became a hobby. There was a section in the Festival of Britain for hobbies, it offered suggestions of items to make for the home, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

Home management required the consumption of better designed equipment for the kitchen such as utensils and electrical equipment. Manufacturers made kitchen equipment to resemble industrial equipment, to emphasise their labour saving efficiency, (Forty, A, 1980, p.217). According to Partington these designs followed functionalist ideals of "form follows function" and they were stripped of any excess decoration (Partington, A, 1989, p.208).

Forty argues that these functionalist designs began to receive bad press as they were to be bought by those who had spent time working in factories. They made housework seem like real work this was a "comparison that everyone was anxious to avoid", (Forty, A., 1986, p.217).

The C.O.I.D. endorsed this type of functionalist design. It was understandable that the public rejected them. Their plainness and restraint was out of touch with the mass media and the

consumerist age. The strict design rules that they embodied were not popular with young people. Nigel Whitely has argued that they found this attitude of dictated taste patronising, (Whitely, N., 1987, p.33).



You've dreamed of a kitchen help like this



... now it can be yours!

Picture this streamlined multi-purpose Kenwood mixer in your kitchen—ready to do any one of a dozen wrist-aching jobs for you at the flick of a switch! It's something straight from the luxury kitchen of the future—but it's here for you *now*! Whenever there's a job of mixing, beating, stirring, whipping, juice extracting to be done, just switch on your Kenwood. You've never seen cake mixtures so feathery-light—never had creamed potatoes of such velvet smoothness. Once you've had the help of a Kenwood you'll wonder how you ever managed without it. Find out more about the Kenwood—you deserve its help.



The story of Kenwood Electric Mixing is the subject of one of the most enlightening booklets you could hope to read. Send for your free copy today and for the name of your nearest Kenwood stockist.

The **Kenwood** MIXER

The pioneer of British mixers

BEATS • BLENDS • BUFFS • MIXES • MASHES • WHISKS • JUICES

KENWOOD ELECTRICS LTD., (DEPARTMENT 22) 151 OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1

Figure 18 Advertisement from the Ideal Home Book 1949-50.

People wanted to look to the future and leave the drudgery of the past behind. The forms that had a more immediate marketing attraction were those derived from cars or spaceships. Their appearance was unlike industrial equipment and so “preserved the illusion that housework was a noble and elevated activity”, (Forty, A., 1986, p. 219). A good example of this can be seen in the advertisement for the Kenwood mixer shown in Figure 18. It is extolled as being “straight from the luxury kitchen of the future” (Ideal Home Book, ‘49-’50, p.188, 1949).



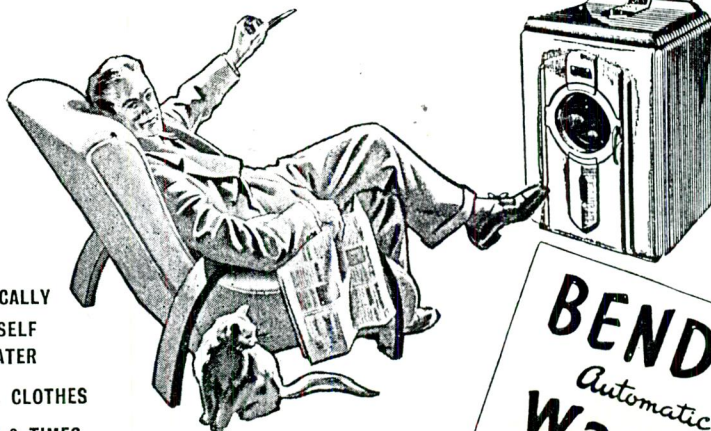
Forty argues that advertisements “tended to exaggerate the extent to which appliances would take over tasks” (Forty, A., 1986, p. 210). For example the advertisement for a Bendix washing machine from the Ideal Home Book 1949050 seen in Figure 19. This implies that it does all the work, leaving the man free to his leisure.

Although these appliances undoubtedly did reduce the amount of labour involved in particular household tasks, they did not reduce the time spent on housework. Forty argues that “women spent not less but more time on housework”. The standards expected of women in housework had therefore been raised as they had more time to spend on a particular job, (Forty, A., 1986, p. 210). The failure of appliances, to save time on housework, still didn’t prevent them being called ‘labour saving’.

From now on, even I can do the washing

The Bendix is not only the most labour-saving washer in the world—it is also the kindest to your clothes. “Tumble action” is exclusive to Bendix; gently it lifts and drops your clothes into and out of rich suds hundreds

of times. Then the three separate clean water rinses flush away the dirt. Clothes retain their original freshness, and last longer because they are not beaten or squeezed in the BENDIX laundering process. In fact, you can wash anything in a BENDIX, from blankets to the daintiest fabrics—9 lbs. of beautifully fresh clean washing ready for the line in 40 minutes; and all for a quarter of a unit of electricity.



AUTOMATICALLY
FILLS ITSELF
WITH WATER

WASHES 9 lb. CLOTHES

RINSES THEM 3 TIMES

SPINS THEM DAMP DRY

CLEANS AND DRAINS ITSELF

SWITCHES ITSELF OFF

4 WASHES FOR ONE
UNIT OF ELECTRICITY

H.P. TERMS TO SUIT EVERY POCKET



Write for leaflet and address of your nearest BENDIX dealer

BENDIX HOME APPLIANCES LTD. (DEPT. K) ALBION WORKS, KINGSBURY ROAD, BIRMINGHAM 24

Figure 19 Advertisement from the Ideal Home Book 1949-50.

Contemporary Style

The 'Contemporary Style' was launched by the C.O.I.D. in 1949. The term contemporary was used to describe the new fashion for modern design. According to Lesley Jackson the choice of this word, "reflected a desire on the part of society to avoid dwelling on the past and to re-affirm its faith in the future". (Jackson, L, 1994, p. 9)

The 'Contemporary' style was evolved from the Modern Movement of the 1920s and 1930s. During this period Modernist architects fought against historical revivalism and fought to create a new style. The wishes to introduce a "style without a style", one without references to another era. It did not however prove to be popular with the general public (Jackson, L, 1994, p. 9).

Lesley Jackson argues that despite its unpopularity, Modernism, helped to pave the way for the acceptance of the new 'Contemporary' approach to architecture and design. This new style played a "dynamic role in the 1950s interior because of its innovative shapes, colours and materials", (Jackson, L, 1994, p. 160).

It is difficult however to assess the extent to which this style was actually accepted by the British public during the 1950s. This is largely due to the fact that much of the design history of the post-war years, has been based on sources published by the C.O.I.D. as propaganda to promote British design and products. Woodham has argued that accounts of events "written mainly by their initiators, tend to celebrate the most optimistic ideal and reassuring aspects", (Woodham, A., 1997, p. 120).

This is particularly true of the C.O.I.D. They produced their own pamphlets and exploited the media in getting across the message of their success. Fortunately they commissioned the mass observation organisation to conduct surveys of public opinion. The results of these tests help to sort out truth from myth, to uncover what the public opinions really were,(Woodham, J, 1997, p.119).



Figure 20 Contemporary interior . (Whitely, 1987, p.211.)

A survey carried out on visitors to Britain Can Make it Exhibition is very interesting. It was recorded that the section on furnished interiors was the most popular feature of the exhibition. The survey revealed that those who saw the displays considered what they saw to be “idealised and in most cases unobtainable images of domestic interiors”. The level of interest shown in contemporary design therefore had no connection with what people wanted for their own homes (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

The exhibition was visited by 1,432,546 people, 60% of those were under 40 and according to Macdonald and Porter, the largest social group to be represented there, was the “skilled working classes”. Mass observation was critical of the C.O.I.D attempts to connect the public opinion, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990). According to Woodham the exhibition consisted of



rooms designed for “fictitious families” and there was a sense of “social paternalism” evident in the displays. This highlighted the importance of sociology in the design process. The exhibition would have been considerably more effective, if adequate background research had been carried out, (Woodham, J., 1997, p.120).

Doubts had been cast on the judgement of the C.O.I.D., its members had been drawn from the upper classes of society, Woodham argues that because of the fact many provincial manufacturers “felt” suspicious about the supposed cultural election of a body firmly rooted in the metropolitan taste making circles of South East England”, (Woodham, J., 1997, p.119).



Figure 21 Contemporary interior (Schoeser & Rufey, 1989, p.330.)



The C.O.I.D. made use of television and women's magazines to create a positive image of the contemporary style, as these medias reached a large section of society. Leading interior magazines such as *House and Garden*, *Ideal Home* and *Homes and Gardens* all promoted good design and the new contemporary look. They gave advice on how to achieve the right look on a limited budget. An example of a contemporary interior can be seen in figure 20. According to Massey the "tradition of home advice manuals for middle class woman had been established in the nineteenth century". There was also much written by designers offering guidance on taste. However these books "generally recommend one style only and criticised all other trends", (Massey, A., 1990, p. 163).

The Festival of Britain was the first major exhibition of the Contemporary style again the C.O.I.D. came under criticism. The organisers were according to Macdonald and Porter portrayed as "Highbrow" by the press. Despite all these criticisms the contemporary style did influence people in all areas of life.



Figure 22 Fabric design by M. Mahler 1952. (Jackson, L. 1994, p.265.)



Fabrics are Gay Again

The Daily Mail Ideal Home Book 1949-50 gave advice on how to decorate interiors with the right fabrics and how to choose a successful colour scheme. Roger Smithels wrote an article entitled "Fabrics are Gay again". According to Smithels in the years before the war British textiles had a world wide reputation for quality. Now that the war was over, Britain was "entering a new creative period in fabric design, with particular emphasis on gaily patterned prints and weavers", (Sherman, M., 1949, p. 83).

As most people were moving into new houses or redecorating old ones after the war, choosing a bright new curtain fabric such as those seen in Fig 21. was one inexpensive way to update a room.

Although many people were probably attracted to the contemporary style, there was just as many again who preferred a more traditional look. This can be seen from the results of the Mass-Observation surveys. So when it came to choosing curtain fabric for the home economic factors played a role in the choice made. Even if they might have liked the contemporary designs such as seen in Figure 22., they would not necessarily buy it. They considered the style to be fashionable and feared that it would date, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990). According to Anne Massey, architects were also dismissive of the style as just a fashion phase that would be outlined by traditional styles, (Massey, A., 1990, p.171).

The Ideal Home Book 1949-50 makes suggestions on how to choose fabrics for the home. Figure 23. shows a fabric design called 'Pegasus'. Hilliers suggests that this particular

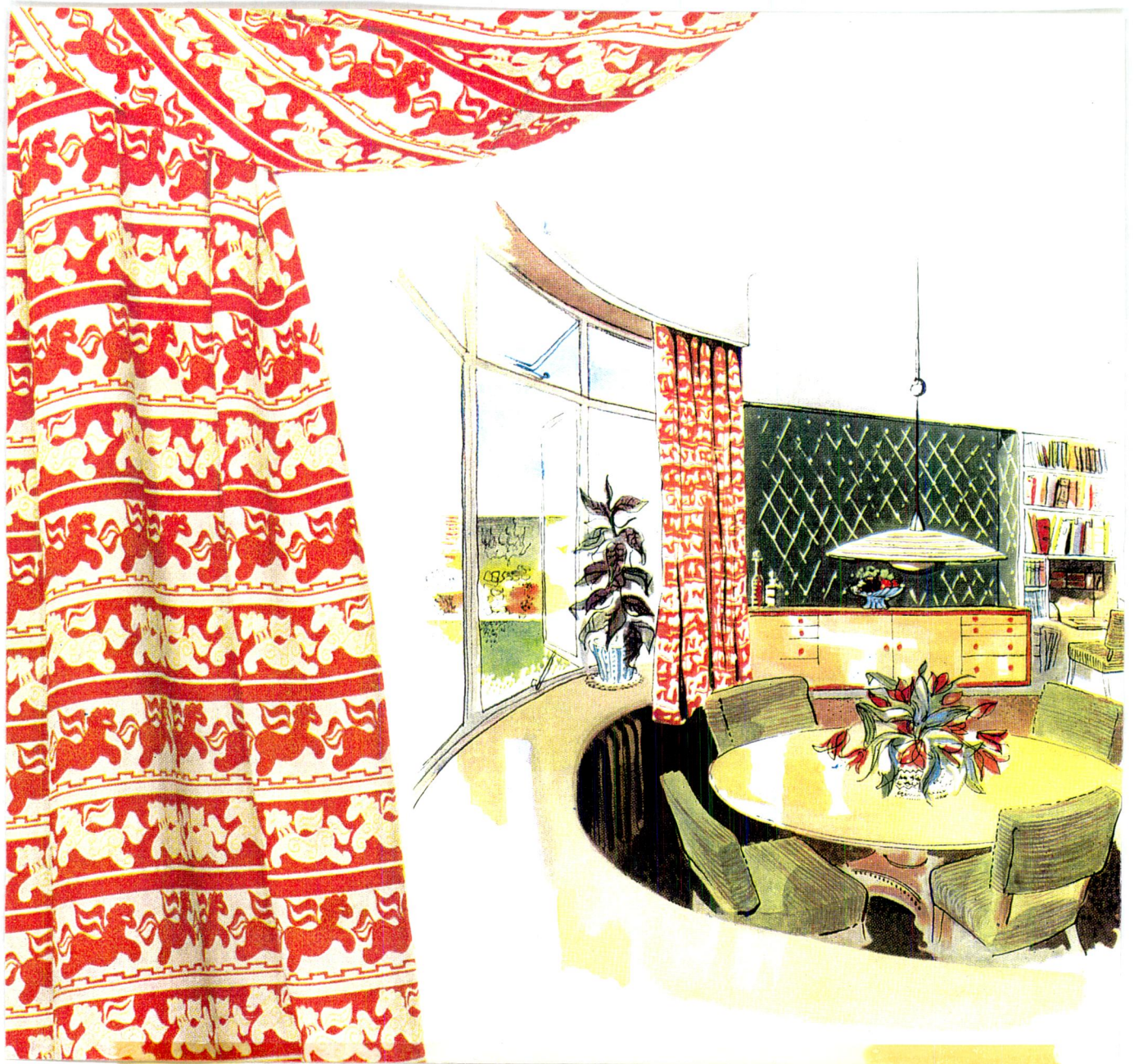


Figure 23 This 'Pegasus' motif was common in the 1950s (Ideal Home Book 1949-50.)



design was popular in the post war years as it was a symbol that the sky was safe again and to dispel threatening symbols of war, (Millar, B., 1983, p. 126).

It was advised by Roger Smithells in the fabrics are Gay Again article to use pattern sparingly. He advised to choose the fabric first, when decorating a room and the pattern would "contain all the ingredients for a well balanced colour scheme", (Sherman, M., 1949, p.83).

Macdonald and Porter argue that most people were on a budget and only these who were lucky enough to have an unlimited budget could afford to have a "pre-planned decorating scheme". Most people already had pieces of furniture that they had to work around and integrate into these new schemes, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

Harmonisation was a key word used in choosing fabrics for the interior. As many new houses were small Macdonald and Porter argue that there was the need for furniture and furnishings to be inconspicuous.

Although contemporary designs were intended for small living spaces, most people felt that they were too strong and dominated the room. It was recommended to use neutral backgrounds for patterned curtains such as this combination seen in Figure 24. suggested by the Ideal Home Book 1949-50.



Figure 24 Neutral Background was suggested to complement a patterned fabric by the Ideal Home Book 1949-50.

Neutral ground of creams and buffs were according to Macdonald and Porter the most common colour schemes for walls. In 1949 a Mass-Observation survey discovered that “half the population used no particular scheme”. It was claimed class variations didn’t make for significant differences in choices of interiors as it was previously thought, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

Forty argues that the creation of the 1950s interior decoration scheme was not “entirely the creation of its occupants”. He believed that women were actually conforming to an outside influence whose intention was to make the home the basis of the nations welfare, (Forty, A., 1986, p.118).

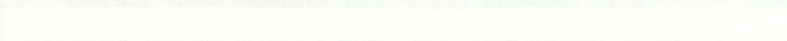
Woman were expected to be good homemakers by the media. The Ideal Home Book suggests ways for the house wife to make tasteful colour schemes. Figure 25. shows some of the

suggestions made (Sherman, M., 1949, p. 87). Roger Smithels acknowledged in his article fabrics are gay again that not everyone was gifted with a good colour sense, he gives advice to “ordinary” people to achieve successful outcomes, by “building up a colour scheme bit by bit to make a satisfactory whole”, (Sherman, N., 1949, p. 83).

Woman’s magazines were an important influence on the decisions woman made and books such as the Ideal Home Book 1949-50 played the role of educating woman to make decorating decisions in a ‘disciplined’ and ‘responsible’ manner. Woman were expected to show their ‘good taste’ by choosing well. Angela Partington argues that some woman’s magazines actually set out to “test housewives on their ability to choose wisely”. This was then justified by claiming that the housewife was saving valuable time and money, by helping her make the right choices, (Partington, A., 1989, p.208).



Figure 25 Colour schemes suggested by the Ideal Home Book 1949-50



The scheme suggested by the Ideal Home Book 1949-50 in Figure 26. is a very traditional combination. According to the Mass Observation finding comfort was a major factor in people decisions particularly those of the working class. Macdonald and Porter argue that preferences for “earthy, autumnal patterns” derived as much from the “emotional concerns for familiarity as the practical need for harmony”, (Macdonald and Porter, 1990).

People equated tradition with comfort and one major concern that had with modern styles was that they appeared to be uncomfortable. So tradition therefore still had a guaranteed loyalty from a considerable section of society.



Figure 26 This scheme gives 'richness and variety ' according to the Ideal Homes Book 1949-50



Conclusion

Through my investigations into design in the post-war era, I have discovered that what people actually wanted from products went against Government plans to rationalise and modernise design.

These Government plans made no provision for the consumer with particular tastes or preferences. I have uncovered what the majority of people wanted for their homes through the Ideal Home Book 1949-50.

This book illustrated a realistic image of the products which people both wanted and liked, therefore showing that a greater need for what we now call "market research" was needed. Often the designs which we associate with this period were not universally popular. The realities of post-war life affected peoples choices and ultimately the success of the programme for modernisation which the government had wished to implement.

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