

WHOSE OBJECT IS IT, ANYWAY?

JONATHAN M WOODHAM*

Abstract: *Museum acquisition and display policies for contemporary design have been the subject of considerable debate for more than a century including the ways in which for several decades from the mid-20th century onwards an aesthetically charged approach was improbably shared with state-driven initiatives to improve standards of design for economic and social benefit. For many years both state and cultural interests placed a low premium on the performance and function of designed products. Museums internationally have also built up their design collections around «ubiquitous objects», i.e., iconic «designer» products that are collected and displayed as core objects regardless of their failure to represent the realities of living in a pluralist age, multicultural age. Today society faces the realities of a design agenda that has been emerging for some years: design for climate change, ecology, extended product life, health and well-being. Can this be represented historically in design museums today?*

Keywords: *design museums; contemporary design; design collecting policies; design awards; design history.*

Resumo: *As políticas de aquisição e de exibição dos museus relativamente ao design contemporâneo têm sido objeto de um debate considerável, durante mais de um século, incluindo sobre o modo como, por várias décadas, e a partir de meados do século XX, uma abordagem esteticamente carregada foi provavelmente partilhada com iniciativas impulsionadas pelo Estado para melhorar os padrões de design para o benefício económico e social. Durante muitos anos, tanto os interesses estatais como culturais atribuíram pouca importância ao desempenho e à função dos produtos concebidos. Museus internacionais também construíram as suas coleções de design em torno de «objetos omnipresentes», ou seja, dos produtos icónicos de «designers» que são recolhidos e exibidos como objetos centrais, independentemente da sua incapacidade de representar as realidades de viver numa era pluralista, multicultural. Atualmente a sociedade enfrenta as realidades de uma agenda de design que tem vindo a emergir há alguns anos: design para as alterações climáticas, ecologia, prolongamento da vida do produto, saúde e bem-estar. Poderá isto ser representado historicamente nos museus de design dos nossos dias?*

Palavras-chave: *museus de design; design contemporâneo; políticas de aquisição de design; prémios de design; história do design.*

For much of the past 150 years museum displays of design and the decorative arts have been dominated by the cultural and aesthetic values that accompanied their establishment. To the forefront were commitments to «improving» the taste of workers in arts manufactures, to «educating» the general public in what might be described as the principles of «good» or aesthetically pleasing design, or to displaying objects of contemplation untarnished by association with the worlds of consumption and everyday life. The question «Whose Object is it Anyway?» was rarely asked, nor how objects were made, marketed, purchased or used in life outside the museum.

* Professor Emeritus of Design History, University of Brighton, United Kingdom. Email: jmwoodham@historian.design.

Furthermore, contemporary design has been inconsistently dealt with in many museums around the world. For example, following considerable criticism of the Victoria & Albert Museum London's contemporary design purchasing policies before the First World War they were largely abandoned until the later 1980s. Acquisition was restricted by a «50-year rule» which precluded the acquiring of an object less than 50 years old — with the notable exception of the purchasing activities of the small, low profile and controversial Circulation Department, established in 1947¹. Following Circ's closure in 1977, Margaret Timmers from the V&A's Department of Prints and Drawings curated an exhibition entitled *The Way We Live Now: Designs for Interiors, 1950 to the Present*², promoted as an «invaluable comprehensive survey of the British design scene at that time». A number of visitors were struck less by any notion of comprehensiveness than by the question as to who the «We» actually were. The educated, professional, museum-visiting middle classes?

By the 1990s inclusion of contemporary design in museum displays at the V&A was reinvigorated, sparked by the activities of the Boilerhouse Gallery between 1982 and 1986. Following an invitation from the V&A's flamboyant director Sir Roy Strong to the British designer and entrepreneur Terence Conran, the Boilerhouse (named after its location in the museum's former boiler house) operated as a quasi-autonomous unit within the Museum, supported by a five-year agreement underwritten by funding from the Conran Foundation (established 1980). Stephen Bayley, Conran protégé and the Boilerhouse's founding director, fashioned a new and often controversial presence within the V&A's walls through an intensive flurry of more than twenty contemporary design exhibitions that fell largely outside the existing scope of its host institution. This resulted in an uncomfortable relationship between the Boilerhouse, Sir Roy and many of the V&A's Keepers (senior curators) who often viewed their departments as personal fiefdoms and quasi-independent competing units within the wider museum setting.

Nearly two decades later in 2004 the Design Museum London pushed at definitions of design by mounting an exhibition devoted to influential British interior designer, social reformer, and society floral arranger Constance Spry. Much of the ensuing, especially male, industrial design and engineering-inclined criticism derived from gendered definitions of design, designers and design activity. Perhaps the Design Museum's 2011 acquisition of a Mikhail Kalashnikov AK-47 rifle, one of the world's most widely used assault weapons, represented the other end of the design spectrum.

The new Barcelona Design Museum (open from 2014) reflected the fusing together of a number of previously separate Barcelona museums, collections and

¹ WEDDELL, 2016.

² TIMMERS, 1979.

archives, respecting local, regional, national and international understandings and the documentation of design. At Barcelona «the common denominator of all these collections from the past and the present is the object and all that it signifies or has signified and contributed to our lives: from conception, creation and production to use in different epochs and societies, during both the artisanal and preindustrial periods and the industrial and digital ages»³. 2014 also marked V&A London's more energetic commitment to the acquiring of contemporary design through the establishment of its Rapid Response Collecting Gallery.

For much of the 20th century attitudes to museum collecting policies, displays and exhibitions had commonly favoured the display of individual designers, materials, styles and techniques rather than acknowledgement of the social, cultural, economic, or political climate in which they came into being, were purchased and used. After 1970 the emergence of design history⁴ resulted in an incrementally more informed, sophisticated and sustainable intellectual framework that embraced a larger and more diverse body of theoretical and cross-disciplinary perspectives, research agendas and geographies of design. Additionally, the range of national and international outlooks has proliferated through the formation of design history societies and journals in different countries together with the emergence of other more globally-oriented collectives that helped move design history away from the restrictive domination of Anglo-American interests, publishing and language, albeit initially flavoured with European modernist orthodoxies.

UBIQUITOUS OBJECTS

A common characteristic shared by many design museums around the world is their acquisition of a series of «must have» design icons that reinforce a singular globalizing history of design out of synch with an age of pluralities and awareness of localities, regions, and peripheries that pervade so many aspects of daily life. The actors in this narrative account of 20th-century design might include the products of, and designers for, companies favoured by the educated, professional middle classes such as Herman Miller and Knoll Associates in the USA; Olivetti, Kartell, and Arteluce in Italy; Braun and Rosenthal in Germany; Arabia and Fiskars in Finland; Orrefors and Gustavsberg in Sweden; or Tendo Mokko and Sony in Japan. The list is almost endless and the «names» overwhelmingly male and white.

Take, for example, a single product that encapsulates the essence of a design icon synonymous with the «ubiquitous object»: the widely travelled 1969 Valentine typewriter designed by Ettore Sottsass Jr. and Perry King for the Olivetti company,

³ BARCELONA DESIGN MUSEUM, [s.d.].

⁴ WOODHAM, 2001: 85-97.

manufactured in Barcelona and assembled from metal and ABS plastic. Although available in other colours, it was most widely recognized in its bright red edition and stars in countless museum design collections worldwide. In Britain one might encounter the Valentine at the V&A and the Design Museum London, the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh; travelling to France one might renew its acquaintance as part of the Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle (MNAM/CCI) design collection in Paris. Elsewhere in Europe trips to Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum or Ghent's Design Museum would remedy any withdrawal symptoms, as would a visit to Lisbon's Museum of Design and Fashion (MUDE)'s Francisco Capelo Collection or Jerusalem's Israel Museum. And in Italy, the birthplace of the Olivetti company and for almost a lifetime home to the Valentine's superstar co-designer Ettore Sottsass Jr., it is hard to distance oneself from its cultural radar not only through its high visibility in museum collections but also through other ways in which its aura has been boosted across the decades, appearing in Carlo Scarpa's refurbished *Negoziolo Olivetti* in Piazza San Marco, Venice in 1917 and the Italian Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architectural Biennale, curated by Luca Zevi, as well in numerous other national and international exhibitions celebrating the centenary of Sottsass's birth. In the USA there are also countless possibilities to catch view of the Valentine, whether at MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Cooper Hewitt (Smithsonian Design Museum), all in New York; or even the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum 300 kilometres away, as well as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on the west coast, to mention but a very few. Added ports of call in this global cultural pilgrimage might even include the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences at the Powerhouse in Sydney, Australia.

Naturally, such ubiquity related to many other designed objects, albeit occasionally with less cultural pretensions. The BIC™ Cristal® biro ballpoint pen designed by Marcel Bich and the *Décolletage Plastique* design team, launched in 1953, was added to MoMA's permanent collection in 2001 and included in its 2004 *Humble Masterpieces* exhibition alongside Post-It® stick notes, paper clips, Tupperware items, and Frisbees, though in reality it sits more easily with the rarified oxygen of MoMA's aesthetically-charged 1934 *Machine Art* exhibition and 1950s *Good Design* shows than any major concession to understanding the culture of the everyday other than as «hidden masterpieces» of art and design. In 2006 the BIC™ Cristal® biro was declared the best-selling pen in the world following its 100 billionth sale and was included in the permanent collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle (MNAM/CCI) at the Centre Georges Pompidou.

Realities

In the real world beyond the confines of museum settings, the Valentine typewriter was far from a commercial success and was quite expensive; its technical performance was fairly run-of-the-mill even if its intense carmine red casing conferred an emotional intensity that encouraged a close bond between the individual owner-user and consumer product. This took it beyond Olivetti's and IBM's post-war aestheticization of the typewriter as a means of helping to persuade women workers to move from the factory floor to the more «civil» ethos or «status» of the office workplace. In contrast, the lightweight Valentine was intended to be used anywhere but the office and was something of a personal mobile accessory in the increasingly informal, casual and fun world of 1960s pop culture, sustained by enhanced levels of disposable income. Nonetheless, it remained more of a niche «designer» product rather than a commercially profitable design object.

Furthermore, beyond its symbolic association with creativity at the hands of its would-be purchasers, there were other important aspects of design relating to the Valentine that had nothing to do with Sottsass, most significantly the typefaces⁵. The most widely known of these was the Quadrato font by the Head of the Olivetti in-house type design office, Arturo Rolfo. He designed it in 1962-1963 for use on Olivetti mechanical and electric typewriters including the Valentine. It became one of the company's most popular typefaces and was used on several typewriters. Stephan Müller designed a later digital version (2002), based closely on the quality, feel and appearance of the original.

MORE OF THE SAME? COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY DESIGN IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

In 1982 the British-based Design History Society (est. 1977) held its sixth annual conference at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, on the theme of «Design and Public Collections», with European and USA speakers involved in collecting and displaying 20th century. They included Stephen Bayley, Director of the Boilerhouse Project; Michael Collins, Curator of the British Museum's Modern Design Collection; Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design at MoMA, New York; and Françoise Jollant of the Centre de Création Industrielle (CCI), Paris. Striking an oppositional outlook, Jollant underlined the fact the CCI did not at that time collect exemplars of 20th-century design (or any other objects) and felt that documentation was key to understanding the wider social, cultural and economic significance of design. One design historian at the conference⁶ commented that Stewart Johnson (MoMA) had remarked to his

⁵ RAMOS SILVA, 2015.

⁶ KIRKHAM, 1983: 27-31.

audience that he had considered removing some of his slides (such as the Valentine typewriter) that accompanied his prepared talk on the grounds that the audience had already seen them at least twice in previous speakers' presentations about 20th-century collections.

It is worth highlighting here the work of the CCI, established in Paris in 1969, the year in which it held its first exhibition: *Quest-ce que le design?* It was integrated with the Centre Nationale d'Art et Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, in July 1973, prior to the latter's public launch in 1977. This new organization incorporated the Public Information Library (BPI), the National Modern Art Museum (MNAM) and the CCI, bringing the latter more strongly into the public gaze. It continued its mission of developing a cultural brief that included the organization of design exhibitions, issuing publications and further development of a design documentation centre (rather than object collection) that represented its core presence and philosophy. In the 1980 CCI exhibition *L'Objet industriel: empreinte ou reflet de la société?* design was considered from three perspectives: conception, distribution and consumption and accompanied by questions such as: who buys the product? What is it that is actually being purchased? And what are the reasons behind its purchase, what are the limitations of its use and how long will it last?

Just twelve years later the CCI lost its departmental autonomy and was merged with MNAM in the Pompidou Centre to form a single department (MNAM/CCI) in order to develop a «world-leading collection» of the arts, architecture and design. In the same year a series of exhibitions entitled *Manifeste* were mounted by the Pompidou Centre to give the wider public a taste of the combined departments: the second edition, *Manifeste2*, put into the public domain the new permanent CCI design collection, a radical change from its earlier investigative outlook focused around the documentation of design⁷. It incorporated some of the mainstream icons of 20th-century design found in most museums of 20th-century design, albeit with a French inflection, so providing yet another repository containing well-known ubiquitous objects — by the early 21st century the MNAM-CCI collection comprised 1500 design objects (drawings, models and mass-produced products).

MUSEUMS: CHANGING FACES AND PLACES

In the later 20th and early 21st centuries an increasing number of design museums rewrote their acquisitions policies and placed greater emphasis on research, innovation, education, learning and more sophisticated models of interpretation than in earlier post-Second World War decades. Several dimensions of this re-evaluation had been bolstered by the innovative research and scholarship that had helped establish the

⁷ WOODHAM, 1993: 55-57.

history of design. Since the 1970s several world-class museums of the decorative arts, art and design have followed the example of the V&A, the first to establish a dedicated Research Department under Dr Charles Saumarez Smith in 1990, the year in which the museum's first Research Register was produced. This consolidated listing of all research undertaken across the Museum allowed for greater strategic planning through a dedicated hub where museum curators, university research fellows and collaborative PhD students were able to research a variety of V&A oriented projects and exhibitions. However, it is perhaps a little shocking to think that, even as late as the end of the 1990s, an established researcher based in the V&A's Research Department was still able to comment that:

The V&A, for example, altered its criteria for 20th century collecting a decade ago from objects of «aesthetic excellence» to objects of «aesthetic significance» thereby allowing more relative arguments to be made. However, there is a strong persistence of the idea that museums venerate their contents in ways that cannot be undone by the most plural-minded of curators. An object in a gallery, behind glass, untouchable and on a plinth, has a resonance that is hard to avoid. Museums give new context to objects, often denying their status as commodities and presenting them within a discourse of art value⁸.

PARALLEL UNIVERSES? DESIGN PROMOTION, DESIGN AWARDS AND DESIGN MUSEUMS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the immediate post-war years there was a widespread belief in many countries that improved standards of design in industry, coupled to the education of consumers, retailers and buyers, would lead to improved national economic performance and a better quality of life for citizens. Nonetheless from the 1950s to the 1970s exemplars of good design were often approved by state-funded design promotion and professional design organisations for their aesthetic rather than functional or durability qualities, seemingly having more in common with the expectations of traditional museum and gallery visitors than consumers seeking to buy practical, durable and good value products for everyday use.

Such thinking was discernible in the public face of design promotion bodies around the world, including those in Britain, France, Italy, Japan, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Australia to name but a few. Their outlook in this period generally reflected a moralizing critique of what were viewed as the excesses of conspicuous consumption so visible in the extravagant styling of contemporary

⁸ PAVITT, 2001: 285.

American automobiles, domestic products and the ephemera of everyday life. They took their place in a long time-line of design reform organizations and individuals, often sharing the modernist visual aesthetic favoured by curators, design collections and exhibitions of contemporary design at the time. The clean, abstract forms that accompanied such proselytizing were bound up in their origins in the International Style of the interwar years. Originally these forms were bound up with a social utopian mission to improve the quality of life for the majority of citizens and enjoyed a measure of success in a number of Europeans. Such forms also shared their roots in collections and exhibitions at MoMA New York, established in 1929 with a commitment to provide a showcase for contemporary art and design removed from the generally traditional collections found in most American museums and galleries. Important in this mission was MoMA's department of Architecture and Design, established in 1932, and the inauguration of its Design Gallery that put on the celebrated *Machine Art* exhibition in 1934. Curated by modernist-leaning impresario and architect Philip Johnson, it included a variety of industrial products such as laboratory glassware, springs, and steel balls for ball bearings, as well as domestic items such as kitchen mixers, electric toasters, cutlery, drinking glasses and even a Meerschaum tobacco pipe. A MoMA Press Release of March 1 1934 communicated that:

Three methods of display will be employed: isolation—a water faucet, for example, will be exhibited like a Greek statue on a pedestal; grouping—the massing of series of objects such as saucepans, water glasses and electric light bulbs; and variation—a different type of stand, pedestal, table and background for each object or series of objects⁹.

Such display techniques that showed the ways in which manufactured goods were viewed through high-cultural lenses — not as objects of use but rather as objects of aesthetic contemplation in a museum setting — were slightly moderated by exhibitions during and immediately after the Second World War years as, for example, MoMA's 1940 *Useful Objects under Ten Dollars* show accompanied by a checklist with prices as an aid to encourage consumers to buy «better-designed» goods. It was held under the auspices of the Department of Industrial Design and its then Director, Eliot F Noyes. Noyes was himself to go on to design a number of office products, some with coloured casings that were unequivocally part of the Good Design ethos: a celebrated example was his 1961 Selectric 1 («Golfball») typewriter for IBM. Like his predecessor, Philip Johnson, Noyes felt that many of the solely American products on display in 1940 compared unfavourably with European goods, writing that:

⁹ MOMA, 1934: 1.

Unfortunately, in many American products superfluous decoration and meaningless forms abound. We found that the frankly utilitarian pieces were often the best designed [...] Objects for use in homes are often generally covered with superficial decoration adapted from world's fair [the New York World's Fair 1939-1940] motives, stream-lining or irrelevant «modern motifs». It was interesting to find that a new object appearing on the market for the first year was very often straightforward and interestingly designed, while the same object in its second year had usually acquired «style» by the application of spurious art in one form or another¹⁰.

Other projects relating to the idea of affordable well-designed products included the 1948 *Low-Cost Furniture Competition* sponsored by MoMA, NY and the Museum Project Inc. It attracted 3000 entries from 31 countries and the Director of the Competition was the arch-advocate of «Good Design», Edgar Kaufmann Jr., also MoMA's Consultant on Industrial Design. The winners included Charles Eames (whose furniture populates design collections around the world), and the jury included Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who had emigrated to the USA in 1937 as an influential exponent of the values of European modernism, having been the first Vice-President of the Deutscher Werkbund and the final Bauhaus director in Berlin. His association with MoMA was close physically as well as spiritually, having been granted a large retrospective in 1947. Also, on the seven-person jury was Gordon Russell, the Director of the Council of Industrial Design (COID) in Britain, a major European spokesman for «good design» and an advocate of the COID Design Awards scheme launched in 1957.

Philip Johnson's 1934 *Machine Age* approach at MoMA was taken further by Edgar Kaufmann Jr., a prominent post-war Director of the Industrial Design Department at MoMA and the driving force behind the latter's *Good Design* exhibitions from 1950-1955. As had been the case at the 1940 *Useful Objects under Ten Dollars* initiative he acknowledged the significance of design in the marketplace by linking these exhibitions with the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. However, the extent to which this genuinely influenced consumers, retailers and manufacturers on any significant scale is highly questionable. The design values promoted by MoMA and Kaufmann were largely European in origin, the latter's writings often didactic in tone and guides to the etiquette of Good Design¹¹. Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s the somewhat limited and aesthetically charged definition of Good Design in a number of countries across the world was increasingly challenged by the absence

¹⁰ MOMA, 1940: 2.

¹¹ KAUFMANN JR., 1950.

of systematic testing for safety, durability, efficiency, compliance with government standards and value for money. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Molony *Final Report of the Committee on Consumer Protection* (1962) was very critical of the State-funded COID for misleading the general public by implying that its Good Design Awards underwent any form of rigorous testing as part of the process, thus questioning exactly what «Good Design» was. Indeed, in 1967 the Director of the COID Paul Reilly acknowledged in an article entitled *The Challenge of Pop*¹² that the values of his state-funded organization were out of touch with many consumers. Three years later, in a well-known contribution to the periodical «Arts in Society», British academic, critic, writer and at times *agent provocateur* Reyner Banham spoke of the gulf between household gadgets as objects of contemplation in the contemporary kitchen and their post-use realities:

*the pretensions of Good Design require us to bring the noblest concepts of the humanistic tradition into direct conflict with scrambled egg and soiled nappies, and that's not the sort of thing that humanism, historically speaking, was designed to cope with. The big white abstractions must be devalued, ultimately, by these associations with dirt and muck and domestic grottitude*¹³.

THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE OF GOOD DESIGN

As indicated, the canon of «good design» had played a role in post-Second World War efforts of government bodies and related agencies that sought to bring about improved standards in design in manufacturing industry as a supposed means of aiding economic performance and competitiveness. Many of those involved in post-1945 positions of relative power and influence in this endeavour were drawn from the ranks of the professional, educated and middle-class circles who had so admired the language of modern design and the symbolic and aesthetic values that it had represented in the interwar years. Space precludes a detailed analysis of how such developments and closely related design award schemes unfolded in the three post-Second World War decades in Britain, the Netherlands, West Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Norway as well as the wider world, including Canada, Australia, India, South Korea and the Philippines. In the 1950s and 1960s the syntax of «Good Design» shared an international common language in countless products such as Marcello Nizzoli's Mirella sewing machine for Necchi (Compasso d'Oro award, 1954), Robin Day's 1957 Pye television design (CoID Design of the Year Award, UK, 1957), or Yoshiharu Iwata's 1954 rice cooker for Toshiba (G-Mark Award, Japan, 1958).

¹² REILLY, 1967.

¹³ BANHAM, (1977 [1970]): 170.

Also contributing to debates in parallel with the Good Design drive was a slightly more nuanced and consensual view of what were deemed to be «The 100 Best Designed Products». Published and illustrated in an article in the American business magazine «Fortune» in April 1959¹⁴ many of them were to be found in museum collections internationally, albeit almost exclusively on account of their aesthetic rather than social, domestic or practical considerations. The article was based on American industrial designer and educator Jay Doblin's (1920-1982) idea of drawing up a list of 100 well-known designers, architects and design educators to solicit their opinions: around 80 supplied their top ten choices as requested. After further correspondence a definitive list of 100 objects was drawn up and included designs by Marcello Nizzoli (the Lettera 22 portable typewriter for Olivetti, 1950), the number one choice, Mies van der Rohe (the Barcelona Chair, 1929, produced by Knoll Associates from 1953), Eliot Noyes (IBM electric typewriter, 1948), Gio Ponti (toilet for Ideal Standard, 1954), and Gruppo Bertone (the Citroën DS-19, 1955). This was followed up in a book published 11 years later, entitled *One Hundred Great Product Designs*¹⁵, with fuller rationale for the inclusion of objects, much of it worked up by Doblin's staff at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Many of these designs validated by the design profession mirror «ubiquitous objects» that are even today the staple diet of many museum collections of contemporary design.

From the late 1980s the V&A was forced to adopt a more positive acquisition policy for contemporary design, bolstered by the establishment of its Research Department in 1990; from 2002 the V&A's Contemporary Team took on responsibilities for displays, events and exhibitions of recent, and in some cases current, design. Showing the distance that had been travelled since the end of the 1980s the V&A stated in its 2010 *Collections Development Policy* that:

Our collecting represents a variety of markets for design — the home, the high street, the commercial client and the specialist gallery or collector. As well as collecting works by internationally renowned designers, we reflect design trends in social, economic and other contexts. Similarly, we aim to represent the global nature of culture and practice and to chart the work of British-born and British-based practitioners¹⁶.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Space precludes a detailed analysis of the ways in which this repositioning of the V&A's collecting policy unfolded in the 21st century as well as the ways in which it was —

¹⁴ DOBLIN, 1959: 135-141.

¹⁵ DOBLIN, 1970.

¹⁶ V&A, 2010: 63.

or was not — reflected in the outlook of other leading museums around the world that collected and displayed contemporary design. Its embrace of a more pluralistic yet defined approach and inclusion of «design trends in social, economic and other contexts» found in other progressive museums was also matched by a significant late 20th and 21st century redefinition of «Good Design» in the wider world of design promotion. For example, such a recalibration was highlighted in Japan in 1998 when the Ministry of Trade and Industry¹⁷ launched a prestigious new Good Design Award scheme in 1998, replacing the aesthetically rooted G-Mark scheme inaugurated in the 1950s and closed in 1993. «Good Design» as a term internationally embraced in the post-Second World War decades had been increasingly abandoned due to its close association with the post-war modernist aesthetic of the corporate and capitalist world rather than the earlier radical commitment of the majority of modernism's founders to social utopianism and improved quality of daily life for the majority of its founders. The Japan Industrial Promotion Organization (JIDPO, established 1969), previous managers of the discarded G-Mark, oversaw the completely reconstituted 1998 «Good Design» scheme¹⁸. Awards fell into three main categories: Product, Architecture and Environmental Design, and New Tendency Design. The last was a category that included major contemporary social issues with a profound impact on Japanese life, including global warming and ageing populations. In addition to the Grand Prize and Good Design Gold Prize a range of other Special Awards were made, including Ecology Design, Interactive Design, Urban Design, and Long-Selling Good Design. Such ideological reorientation was reflected globally in a significant percentage of the many other international design awards available for the endorsement of national and multinational companies, countries and the widespread promotion of the potential significance of design as a means of unlocking and solving problems, the majority of which had been man-made. Furthermore, increasing levels of international design collaboration between several other Asian countries resulted in the closely linked ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, established 1967)¹⁹ Design Selection awards that began in 2003. By 2008 the importance of consumers was also recognised in these awards which by then included categories such as «body», «life» «industry» and «society» with further awards such as Sustainable Design (2008) and Frontier Design (2009). These and many other international awards that draw attention to the wider issues that face our planet and its population — such as ecology, the environment, sustainability, health and well-being — are beginning to be more widely recognised as stages on which design has a leading role to play. How long will visitors have to

¹⁷ After restructuring in 2001 MITI became the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

¹⁸ Since 2011 the Japan Institute of Design Association (JIDP).

¹⁹ Member states included Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

wait until museums of design begin to reflect this and help educate future generations understand such pathways through historic displays of designed objects?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BANHAM, Peter Reyner (1970). *Household gadgets (kitchen machines)*. In BARKER, Paul, ed. (1977). *Arts in Society*. London: Fontana, pp. 164-169.
- BARCELONA DESIGN MUSEUM [s.d.]. *Presentation statement on BDM website*. [Consult. 9 Nov. 2018]. Available at <<http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/museudeldisseny/ca/presentacio>>.
- DESIGN MUSEUM LONDON (2004). *Constance Spry: A millionaire for a few pence*. 17 September-28 November. Exhibition curated by Libby Sellers.
- DOBLIN, Jay (1959). *The 100 «best designed» products*. «Fortune». (Apr.) 135-141.
- DOBLIN, Jay (1970). *One hundred great product designs*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- KAUFMANN JR., Edgar (1950). *What is good design?* New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- KIRKHAM, Pat (1983). *Designed items viewed as art objects, functional artefacts or as an aspect of material culture?* «Design History Society Newsletter». 15 (Jan.) 27-31.
- MOLONY, Lord J. T. (1962). *Final report of the committee on consumer protection*. London: HMSO.
- MOMA (1934). [One of 6 press releases on the MoMA documents website along with Philip Johnson, *Machine Art*, New York: MoMA, 1934], p. 1. [Consult. 13 Feb. 2018]. Available at <https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325016.pdf>.
- MOMA (1940). *Democracy in Design Shown in Exhibition of Useful Objects at Museum of Modern Art*, p. 2. Press Release 26 November. [Consult. 13 Feb. 2018]. Available at <https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325201.pdf>.
- PAVITT, Jane (2001). *Redrawing the map/Rethinking the canon: product design in museums*. In CALVERA SAGUÉ, Anna; MALLOL ESQUEFA, Miquel, eds. (2001). *Historiar desde la periferia: historia e historias del diseño/Design history seen from abroad: history and histories of design*. Barcelona: University of Barcelona, pp. 284-287.
- RAMOS SILVA, María (2015). *Type design for typewriters: Olivetti*. Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA in Typeface Design, Department of Typography & Graphic Communication University of Reading, United Kingdom. [Consult. Mar. 2018]. Available at <http://www.olivettiani.org/dwd/TypeOlivetti_MariaRamos.pdf>.
- REILLY, Paul (1967). *The challenge of pop*. «Architectural Review». 142:848 (Oct.) 255-257.
- TIMMERS, Margaret (1979). *The Way We Live Now: Designs for Interiors 1950 to the Present*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum.
- V&A (2010). *V&A collections development policy including acquisition & disposal policy*. London: V&A.
- WEDDELL, Joanna (2016) *The ethos of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) Circulation Department 1947-1960*. In FARRELLY, Liz; WEDDELL, Joanna, eds. *Design Objects and the Museum*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 15-26.
- WEDDELL, Joanna (2018). *Disseminating design: the post-war regional impact of the Victoria & Albert Museum's Circulation Department*. PhD University of Brighton/V&A. Available at <https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/4781099/Joanna_Weddell_Disseminating_Design_E_Thesis.pdf>.
- WOODHAM, Jonathan M (1993). *Establishing a permanent collection: the Centre de Création Industrielle*. «Journal of Design History». 6:1, 55-57.
- WOODHAM, Jonathan M (2001). *Recent Trends in Design Historical Research in Britain*. In CALVERA SAGUÉ, Anna; MALLOL ESQUEFA, Miquel, eds. (2001). *Historiar desde la periferia: historia e historias del diseño/Design history seen from abroad: history and histories of design*. Barcelona: University of Barcelona, pp. 85-97.

