

DESIGN
THE GROUNDBREAKING
MOMENTS



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Pioneers of Design

Bentwood Furniture

The Bauhaus

Tubular Steel

Design and Marketing

Streamline Design

Corporate Design

The Cantilever Chair

Organic Design

Design for All

Plastic

Pop Culture

Postmodernism

Minimalism

Paper

High-tech Design

Ecological Design

Scandalous Design

Banal Design

Art in Design

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*“Design is everything—
everything!” Paul Rand*

INTRODUCTION

Design is omnipresent in our modern society. The cup from which we drink; the chair on which we sit; the clothes we wear; the automobile or airplane in which we travel—all these objects need someone to “give them a form.” And the term has also acquired an adjectival form: we need think only of the *designer* sofa, the *designer* dress, and *designer* stereo equipment. But what, in fact, is design? What is hidden away behind this term, which is so heavily over-worked nowadays?

“Design” is a relatively new English word that has become a worldwide export success like “industrialization,” in the context of which it actually developed. Division of work led to the task of designing objects and then eventually to the need for a new term. Etymologically, “design” is derived from both the French *dessin* (drawing, pattern, plan, draft) and the Italian *diseño* (sign, drawing, sketch). The word appears for the first time in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1885, and is now defined as “a plan or drawing produced to show the look and function or workings of a building, garment, or other object before it is made.” It is used not only for the process

of designing but also for the resulting product. The English design critic Stephen Bayley has provided a short, apt definition of the meaning of design as it is used in this book: “Design is what happens when art encounters industry, when people begin to decide what products of mass production should look like.” Basically, therefore, any object that has been planned, designed, and industrially produced is design.

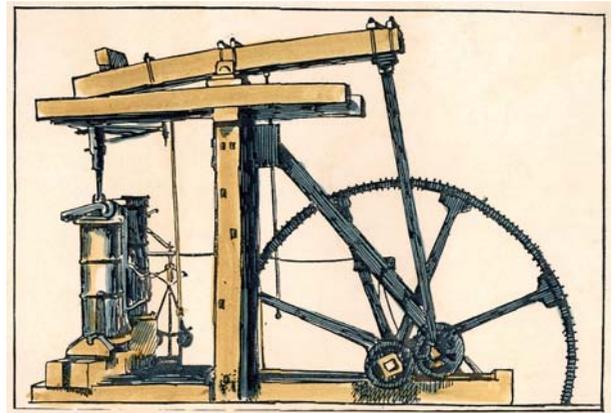
With its 20 groundbreaking moments in design, this book is intended to provide an introduction to the development of modern design, from its beginnings in industrialization to the latest trends in product design. Both technical innovations and newly invented materials are presented, as are the various styles and cultural influences that have left their mark on design. At the same time, special objects and ideas that have had a lasting effect on the complex world of the design of everyday objects are presented. Design is a broad field subdivided into various subsidiary fields. The main focus of this book is the product design of exclusive consumer goods that reflect not only cultural and technical phenomena but also social developments.



PIONEERS OF DESIGN: FROM CRAFTS TO INDUSTRIALIZATION

There was no such thing as a “designer” in pre-industrial society: utility objects were made by craftsmen and artisans and generally based on traditional forms. Although craftsmen could be creative and sometimes design things, until the advent of mass production it was not necessary to design objects in such a way that they could be produced serially. This had to be done by somebody who possessed not only a knowledge of the technical and material aspects of production, but also aesthetic design skills. This led to the creation of a new job at the interface of art and industry: the job of the designer, though they were not always called this in the past. There were numerous developments between the invention of the steam engine and the first industrially produced modern designs, even before the Bauhaus was established with the express aim of constituting the link between art and industry.

James Watt fired the starting pistol for the Industrial Revolution in 1775 when he developed an efficient steam engine, and in 1783 a rotary version



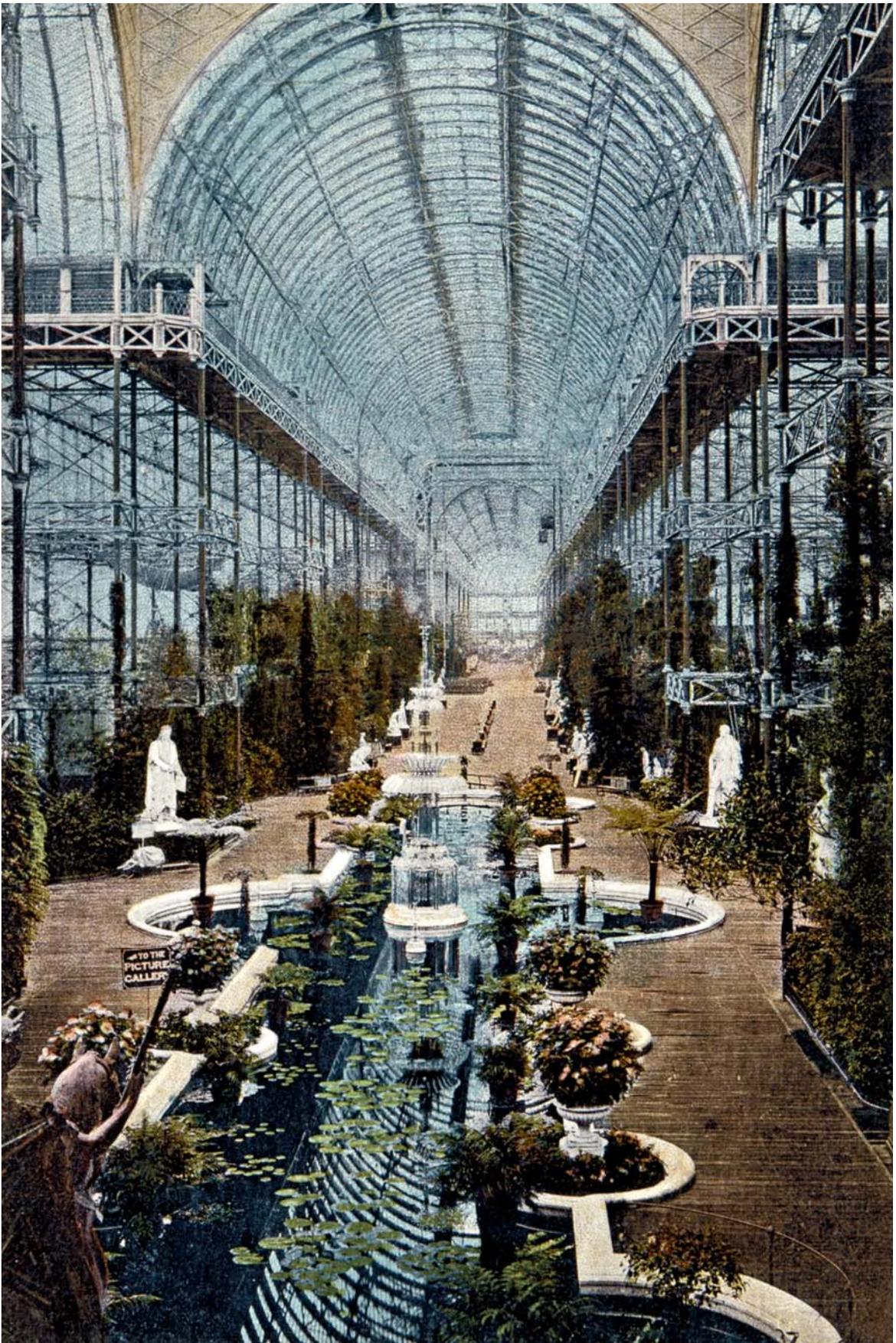
(fig. above), thereby providing an independent energy source for powering machines. A plethora of further technical innovations that would have an increasing impact on people’s everyday lives soon followed. The period between 1830 and 1870 in particular is considered to have been the time of the “industrial take-off.” This led to two decisive developments in the design of utility objects: firstly, design and production became separate from one another; and, secondly, an increasing number of objects and implement with new uses were invented, and these required appropriate designs.

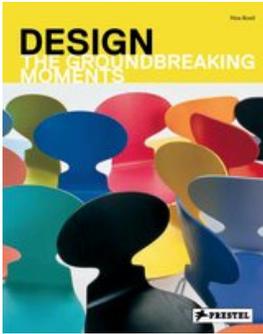


Newly developed manufacturing methods made possible the speedy, inexpensive production of objects on a large scale. Aesthetic considerations, however, were not a priority. Untrained workers were often in charge of design, typically making machine-produced decorations that could then be attached to furniture, implements, and decorative objects. Whereas production made continuous progress, design remained nostalgic, imitating stylistic elements from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Gothic periods. An object's function was often obscured by exaggerated decorations, and even entirely new products were covered with historic ornamentation. Critics considered this to be an imitative and uncreative position. It resulted in a number of bizarre objects, such as a Renaissance-style sofa (fig. above)—bizarre because sofas did not appear until the nineteenth century, whereas the Renaissance flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This revivalism also reflected a desire for luxury items among the rising middle classes, who wanted to display their wealth and to emulate the aristocracy.

The achievements of the new age of the Industrial Revolution were presented to the public at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, from new technologies, machines, and materials to industrially manufactured products. The greatest sources of excitement at the exhibition were the architecture of the vast exhibition hall, the newly constructed Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton (fig. right), and the technology exhibited. But criticism of style was scathing: the great mass of things brought forth by the industrial age were said to be nothing more than copies of things from past ages, frequently of poor design and smothered in irrelevant decoration. William Morris, who with his reforming ideas would go on to breathe new life into art and

above—RENAISSANCE-STYLE TRIPLE BACK SOFA | 19th century
right—JOSEPH PAXTON, CRYSTAL PALACE FOR THE GREAT EXHIBITION
IN LONDON IN 1851 | view of interior | c. 1900





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