

A Study on the Development of Products Appearance Designs of “ART DECO” Style

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Abstract

Objective: The analysis on the development of the products appearance designs of the “ART DECO” style provides reference and theoretical basis for the design of modern products. The research on the world products appearance designs of certain phase help correct people’s cognition of the concept. **Method:** From the early twentieth Century to the 40s of twentieth Century, nearly half a century, the style of product designs aimed at the content. Different stages, different factions, different designers and design works classification research have been conducted. **Conclusion:** By studying the development of the products appearance designs with the “ART DECO” style, two basic developmental orientations can be concluded: characteristics of a product is a revival direction for traditional decoration; it is also a regressive direction for abstract decoration.

Keywords: ART DECO, product, appearance design, development

1. Introduction

“ART DECO” is the abbreviation of “Art Decoration”, which refers to the style of decoration arts. Recently, it has become a commercial hype in the real estate world, frequently used for advertising building styles by property developers. Not to mention whether the design style of the building conforms to the real design order of ART DECO, it has been used for references from 100 years ago up to now, which indeed shows its charms. ART DECO started in the early 20th century and lasted approximately half century, with France as its birthplace, and then spread to Germany, Australia, Italy, and Spain. It grows with modern design and lays solid foundation for the maturity of it. It is in the transitional phase between traditional and modern designs. It is a geometry style, which possesses distinctive characteristics of the times, and it is also an important decorative element in decoration arts movement. “Back then, plant patterns significantly dropped, and combination of geometry graphs replaced wavy line fashion inspired by flowers at the time of art nouveau movement, which was mainly influenced by the style of serious and meticulous cubism. It attempted to make arts free from haze of impressionist lyric and spiritless visual illusion of academism, and it concentrated different states and different points of view observed about an object on a single surface so as to achieve a general effect. (Yin & Wang, 2010)” This style movement involved a wide range, from architecture to furniture, from household appliances to clothes and daily necessities, etc. In each field emerged great design masters and their design works. Through analysis of surface characteristics of major products in this period, this paper studies on the design order in the field of “ART DECO” style products designing, ultimately sifts out two orientations and provides references for the modern products designing.

1.1 Styles of Products from Art Nouveau to Decoration Arts Design

1903 to 1907 was a transitional phase from art nouveau movement to decorative arts movement and it was also an enlightening period for the style of art decoration. “It’s an extension of arts and crafts movement as well as art nouveau movement. It’s a decorative activity after the designer accepts new technology and materials. (Li, 2010)” During this period, what coexisted were the natural style under the extension of art nouveau movement and renaissance of pure decorative style: Natural style refers to the imitation of natural flowers, leaves and so on in the process of products designing, and it was frequently used in arts and crafts movement, but with more lines, more decorative and complicated. Besides, the designs started to highlight the bud of modernism. Affected by Vienna Secession representative Gustav Klimt’s painting style, products designs were inspired by straight lines,

geometry shapes and pure color. “Gustav Klimt...broke traditional painting, with complanation, decoration, multiple means of expression and geometric forms brought more vigor to modern paintings (Guang, 2012).” Modern design guru, Joseph Hoffmann (1870-1956) just learned designing from secessionist Wagner. From 1904 to 1905, his series of designs on the tea pots and coffee pots reflected the straight lines and concise modern style; meanwhile, he also showed the style of both nature and decorative renaissance in designing clothing ornaments and jewelries. Take his design of a brooch in 1904 as an example (Figure 1), it has silver, lapis lazuli, malachite, moonstone, gem and coral on it. The intersection of different precious stones displayed the luxurious style of art nouveau period and it was also a combination of modern linear configuration. “Another feature of ART DECO style jewelries is that it tentatively introduces new materials, explores new combinations of them and truly exhibits the beauty of the material itself (Xu Minong & Xu Ji, 2007).” The chief founder of Vienna Secession, Koloman Moser (1868-1918) also strongly highlighted such special style in designing furniture. His design of a concave and convex round vase set with silver and amber in 1905 (Figure 2) fully embodied the tendency of transition to decorative arts at that time.

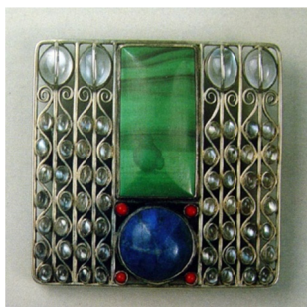


Figure 1. Brooch, Josef Hoffmann, 1904

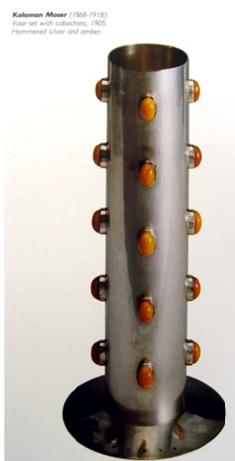


Figure 2. Vase set with silver and amber, Koloman Moser, 1905



Figure 3. Cabinet, mother of pearl, boxwood, marquetry, Eduard Josef Wimmer, 1910-1914

2. Towards New Decoration in 1907 to 1914

2.1 Designs of Vienna and the Surrounding Areas

At this time, a new order came to Vienna designs. Joseph Hoffmann's design style turned to be mature and became the core in decoration art designs, who principally designed for architecture, exhibition, furniture in a wide range. In architecture designing, geometry patterns were commonly used, while detailed decoration often adopted traditional flower-and-grass style. "Among Ruhlman's works, it can be found that, when the shape is too complex and difficult for the exterior to form a dominant geometry shape, in order to increase the sense of wholeness of products, same detailed processing or ornamentation was adopted in each part to produce the wholeness. (Li, 2014)" For example, his design of primavesi residence finished in 1913 to 1914: using straight line, concise style in building the framework and using Vienna national flower to decorate, with priority given to the color of blue, purple and orange when designing the style of the walls, super-face and furniture; with distinctive national flavor, such design further showed the transformation from traditional design to modern design. This kind of design also embodied in his designs for lamps and lanterns, glass ware and jewelries. In addition, Edurad Josef Wimmer (1882-1961) in 1910 to 1914 adopted pearl-embedded technique to design a set of boxwood lash ark (Figure 3), rectangular cabinet with the volumes decreasing from bottom to top, rectangular decorative patterns on the front, pearl ornaments dotted on each joint, a perfect match of taupe, pearl white and black color, which formed design works with modern decorative elements. The design of 1910 on the cardcase was a gold-plated design. Although the material was expensive, emblazonries were highly intensive stripes, which were used frequently in modern designs. Another design of a hexagon glass ware in 1913, there was check plant emblazonry in the central section, which was a perfect combination of tradition and modern times. Examples above fully prove that the design style during this phase was transforming to modern decoration designs in an all-round way.

2.2 Decorative Arts under the Impact of Modern Arts

When the genre of modern arts stepped onto the historical stage, it brought impact to decoration design to certain extent. Fauvism, cubism, Barbizon school, De Stijl often appeared in design works, which made the designs full of artistry instead of scrupulous line-adorning, and it combined fashion with arts in a proper way. A screen designed by Vanessa Bell (1879-1961) in 1913 for a seminar adopted cubist painting under the influence of Picasso and it provides richer content for modern art decoration designs.

3. Modern Decoration Designs in 1914 to 1925

3.1 Return to the Order-Counter-Current of Paris

The initiation of WWI meant significant changes in social pattern, economic and political situations. Many modern artists became restless, upset and panicked in their manifestation because of the war. For example, Picasso's painting *Guernica* adopted all kinds of abstract, bloody figures to show cruelty of the war. After the war, newly-emerged affluent class tried to show their social status by enjoyment of material living, so French decoration style mainly reflected in interior furniture and fashion designs and there sparked a retro counter-current in the circle of Paris's designing field. The designs spread throughout Vienna and Paris, such as using complex mosaic technology, expensive materials, luxurious crafts. Obviously, this type of design serves the upper class and totally turns its back to modern design, which decreases the cost and serves the vast public.

The style Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann (1879-1933) dominated the era of French decorative arts. He favored simple and straightforward style plus complex surface ornaments and he often took ivories, copper and silver plaque as decorative accessories. His designs included chairs, study desks and armchairs, with gorgeous and smooth surface as well as rich and fine decorations emphasizing the traditional model all the way. He usually adopted kinds of rare wood to design furniture inlaid with ivories or as accessories; sometimes copper and silver plaque was added to enhance the effects of decorative patterns. For example, his design of three-legged rosewood and ebony corner cabinet in 1916 (Figure 4), with ivory and rosewood mosaic flowers pattern and ivory on the three ark legs. The overall designing lines are concise but luxurious; the collocation of red and white is passionate without fickleness. "Such a precise symmetric structure gives people a sense of decency, seriousness and steadiness. The mosaic surface decorative patterns break the sense of seriousness brought by simple symmetric structure, being more vivid and lively. The appropriate arrangement of the surface segments plus the visual powers of different colors and materials achieves a balanced effect. (Li, 2014)" Besides, another French furniture design guru, Paul Follot (1877-1941) designed a chair and a dresser in 1919 with wood carved and gilded, marble as table facet, black painting, black marbles and gold gilding to make them conspicuous and gorgeous.



Figure 4. Three-legged corner cabinet, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, 1916

3.2 Dawn for the Modernistic Decoration

Modernistic decoration came into being with modern arts. Modern arts of cubism, fauvism, De Stijl and Russian conciliarism brought unlimited visual space to the modernistic decoration. The idea of cubism simplifies complex shapes to spheres, cylinders, cones and then to straight lines, circles and triangles, etc. Abstract expression of fauvism, De Stijlin in the pursuit of primary color, simplification of Russian conciliarism all shaped the foundation of modern products designs. “Futuristic kinesthesia, primitive and exotic tropical plants and animals, the cultural arts of South pacific areas in Africa and America Indians have aroused much interest of arts (Hu, 2001)” Take the design of Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), a conciliarist, prominent for symbol decoration painting in Russia (Figure 5). His design of cup and saucer totally freed from retro style with completely new look. The decoration with straight lines and simplified symbols adds modern taste to this set of tableware. Definitely, what can represent modernistic design better are design works without any decoration and complex lines. For example, German designer Marianne Brandt (1893-1983), his design of a teapot with strainer completely adopts geometry (Figure 6), low-key silver plate in color, without any ornament, which is regarded as the simplest decoration style, and it shows highly rational and rigorous design concepts of Germany. “Confronted with De Stijl, he gradually developed a teaching principle and style which emphasized rationality and functions, enhanced modernistic designs and made it heated international movement (Shao, 2011).”



Figure 5. Cup and saucer decorated after one of his pictures, Wassily Kandinsky, 1921



Figure 6. Bauhaus teapot with strainer, Marianne Brandt(1893-1983)1924

4. Two Modes Deposited in Decoration Arts from 1925 to 1929

After 1925, decoration arts movement completely turned to modernistic decoration style, but at the same time two tendencies came into being: traditional decoration and abstract decoration.

The traditional decoration orientation mainly occurred in France, advocating the combination of arts and technique and emphasizing visual effect. The traditional decoration inherited the elements of early decoration arts and it is designed under the modern concise facade. But the simplicity of the design does not mean that the cheap, the majority of the selection of the material is still on the upper course, expensive wood, ivory, shark skin, gold and silver; complex inlay, collage, polishing, coloring process time reflects the work of expensive. At this time the work of Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann (1899-1933) continues to use expensive materials at the same time, simplify some of the decoration. For example, he designed the Egyptian style desk in 1926, kingwood, drop-front lined with sharkskin set with ivory, ivory rings and footpieces. Works with production of sharkskin geometric modeling, instead of the early flower decoration, color ivory white wood and red contrast strongly. In addition, he designed the Fluted cabinet in 1927-1928, Amboynas wood with bronze plaque, did not use gold and silver but with the bronze decoration, the above cast nude figures, the whole wood color. George plank design of New York fashion magazine cover, publication in January, 1927, the use of the plane figures, each color interspersed reflects the modern geometric design style. In 1928, ean Dupas (1882-1964) design of the fashion design shop posters, attention to the performance of the line, the combination of traditional and modern dress, show that the concept of the designer was changing. In short, this type of design tends to be in the original luxury, gorgeous traditional decoration style, trying to combine with technology, reduce costs, reduce the decoration, adapt to the trend of modern design. This design style also provides a new way of thinking for the French luxury and gorgeous traditional ideas.

Abstract decoration happened in Germany, profoundly influenced by modern arts, advocating functions of products first, highlighting rigorous design ideas, comparatively rational products appearance, and giving priority mainly to neutral colors. "Decoration arts movement designers no longer rejected mechanical production and they made the movement of more modern characteristics than ever. The ART DECO style experienced nearly 30 years' accumulation and baptism. Its design methods and content have become more mature to be accepted (Shi, 2012)" At this time the most representative is the architectural environment design and decoration product design. For example, Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886-1945) designed the Rue Mallet-Stevens in Paris in the 1927. Stress straight line, geometry, and neutral color, architectural style has been completely modernized. At the same time, he also did the interior design for many buildings, from the housing structure, to furniture, lamps and lanterns to decorate, always stressed that the form of function, all in order to use comfort. In the 1928, Jean Goulden (1878-1947) design silver cigarette case by cube box, using the decoration of porcelain enamel and binding geometry colors and lines, can see that Mondrian style influenced. In the 1927, Magnussen Erik design of the coffee pot in the shape of more geometric, the use of angular joints, no circular surface, reflecting the super rational. Oxidized steel and gold plated film make the coffee pot shiny, The texture of the metal and the rationality of the modern design are very ingenious. Ivan Da Silva Bruhns (1881-1980) design and production of handmade wool carpets in the 1930-1933. The pattern consists of a number of small triangles, large rectangular and irregular geometry. Seemingly arbitrary combination can reflect the simple rational thinking. These abstract designs tend to differ significantly from those of the traditional decorative style. But they are fall under to the de Stijl, Russia Suprematism, cubism and other modern art, because of the environment change, in order to people's quality of life. Abstract decorative style is also reflected in the German design of a concept, that is, the form of service functions. From now on, the rational design style of German has been established. The two have their own development space, in the face of different groups, the mutual influence, mutual witness.

5. Conclusion

Inheriting the style of industrial arts and art nouveau, ART DECO style is deeply rooted and it is not transient. It can be influenced by concepts and artistic styles with the pace of the times. "Decoration arts movement was the last attempt in the process of modern design at the beginning of the century. It regards handicrafts and industrialization as double characteristics and unifies grand, luxurious, delicate handicrafts production with popular, concise, simple industrialization (Han, 2012)." It is considered predecessor of modernistic design in designing history. Actually, it is not clearly defined though. During 1903 to 1925, in brief 20 years, the traditional design style and modern design developed, repeated, changed, wandered between the concrete and the abstract, and finally deposited two orientations of modern designs. The traditional decoration and abstract decoration have laid the foundation for the modern design, which provides the source of the modern design. No matter what type: graphic design, product design, architectural design or animation design are all influenced by these two tendencies. Modern design of the simple, geometric, neutral color, glass curtain wall and other design

ideas, and the DECO ART design style of abstract decorative closely related; In the modern design, the design idea and the traditional decoration are closely related with the local elements, national elements and historical elements. DECO ART design style as the intermediate link, its formation and development is worth to be understood by us.

As successors, we should understand the concepts both objectively and comprehensively. It is undesirable to know a little and impose them onto the designs in everyday life. We cannot make a stunt, switch the concepts and misguide people just for getting some benefits. It is an obligation of a modern designer to establish fine culture and design order.

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