

Modernism Part 1 .2 CEU Webinar

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Beverly Vosko's
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Modernism Part 1 Handouts

Welcome to our 2 hour CEU!

Furniture design experienced more dramatic changes in the 20th Century than at any other time in its history because in the 20th Century a truly modern notion of furniture evolved which revolutionized and transformed the traditional attitudes toward furniture that had remained unchanged since the 18th Century

The Victorian Era 1837-1901 favored overly decorated furniture design, fussy details and clutter. The fundamental difference between the 20th Century and all the previous centuries is the shift in emphasis from the hand made to the machine made product.

Our design today is influenced by the modernist concepts that evolved in the 20th Century... So in order to understand today's design, we need to look back to the stylistic design concepts and changes that occurred during the 20th Century.

The story of the Modern Movement is surely the strongest thread running through the story of 20th Century furniture, so we need to begin this story at the beginning of the 20th Century... with the 1st design style that was popular at the turn of the 20th Century...

Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau was a short lived extravagant international fashion that became the rage in 1900, catered to a very small circle of wealthy patrons who were able to indulge in its luxury and soon faded from fashion, a the victim of its own excesses.

Art Nouveau was especially popular in France, in both Paris and in a small town called Nancy. It was to a certain extent also popular in Belgium, Germany and Austria and even Spain... though not widely adopted in the U.S. or Britain.

Art Nouveau emphasized either curved naturalistic forms or curved abstract organic forms and used the "whiplash line" which was an updated version of the Rococo "cyma curve".

The high point of the Art Nouveau style was the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900.

The most important Parisian furniture makers of this Art Nouveau style were Georges de Feure, Eugene Gaillard, Hector Guimard, Alexandre Charpentier, and Edward Colonna and they all used the curvaceous Whiplash line on their furniture.

When the Art Nouveau style fell out of favor in Paris, it continued in popularity in the small French town of Nancy fostered by Emile Galle and Louis Majorelle. Galle created his own unique version of Art Nouveau wherein he revived the use of marquetry and used natural plant forms and insects as his main subjects combined with very curvilinear whiplash lines.

Louis Majorelle was greatly influenced by Galle and produced curved carved mahogany pieces embellished with gilt bronze mounts such as tub chairs.

Art Nouveau was popularized in Belgium by the architect Henry Van de Velde who designed entire rooms in a more restrained version of the Art Nouveau style.

Van de Velde formed "the Libre Esthetique" group to promote Art Nouveau style in Belgium and two group members, Victor Horta and Gustave Serrurier-Bovy produced extravagant Art Nouveau furniture.

Van de Velde then moved to Berlin, brought his Art Nouveau style with him and influenced furniture designers like Peter Behrens and August Endell to create rooms in the Art Nouveau style. Their designs were more restrained than most French or Belgian Art Nouveau designs.

Joseph Olbrich also popularized a more restrained version of the Art Nouveau style in Austria. In both the U.S. and Britain the fluid high Art Nouveau style was used in isolated instances but never became a major national design trend.

The Arts and Crafts Movement

The Arts and Crafts Movement originated in England as a reaction to both the mechanized production in the Decorative Arts that was beginning to develop throughout Europe and the excessive curvaceous Victorian and Art Nouveau styles.

Instead, British furniture makers gravitated to what they were more at ease with: simple, rectilinear furniture and to what they believed to be the “honest”, “cozy” comfort of plain sturdy, rustic oak... They looked back retrospectively to the simple ancient medieval Gothic style And so the Arts and Crafts Movement was born

William Morris emerged as the proponent /key figure and guiding spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement because of his reformist thinking

Morris desired to restore the art of handcraft work to furniture design and formed the firm Morris and Co. in 1861 which made simple “honest” furniture using traditional, practical, unpretentious materials such as oak wood in unassuming rectilinear often rustic Gothic designs

Seeking to emulate the ancient English Medieval Guild system, Morris helped found several English Crafts Guilds.

J P Seddon, Charles Annesley Voysey, Mackay Hugh Baillee Scott and C.R. Ashbee were followers of Morris who made Arts and Crafts style oak Gothic looking furniture. Liberty’s of London also made Arts and Crafts style furniture.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh was a Scottish member of the Glasgow School who created Arts and Crafts style furniture but looked forward to the future rather than looking retrospectively back to the Medieval Era... and used exaggerated streamlined straight lines on things like chairs that made them very contemporary looking even by today’s standards

The American Gustav Stickley travelled extensively throughout Europe meeting all the leading European Arts and Crafts figures of that era and then set up Gustav Stickley & Co. in 1898 which produced simple oak furniture using plain wood planks designed in practical if a bit austere structural Gothic looking forms in what he called “the craftsman style” and this “craftsman style” furniture is still popular among some groups today

Another furniture designer who influenced Modern Design with her simplicity was Elsie de Wolfe Elsie de Wolfe is often considered the 1st truly professional Interior Designer

Elsie de Wolfe removed the heaviness and the clutter from the dark, gloomy Victorian styled homes, instead painting or wallpapering those rooms in light fresh colors or delicate Chinoiserie prints and furnishing them in a simple, straight lined, paired down version of 18th Century French & English Neoclassicism

Art Deco

The Art Deco Style was created in Paris in the 1920’s flourished internationally between the World Wars until 1929 when it was crushed by the 1929 Crash & then further waned & disappeared in post- World War II era

The Art Deco style is an eclectic style that combined the rectilinear lines of the Arts and Crafts designs with a love of luxury and refinement that was found in the Art Nouveau

Art Deco is slightly similar to the Arts and Crafts style in its stark lines and its rectilinear forms but differed considerably from the Arts and Crafts style in several ways:

1. It didn’t look back to the handcraftsmanship of the medieval guilds... it looked forward to the machine age and

2. It didn’t use simple materials such as oak that were affordable by everyone... it loved luxurious exotic materials that only the rich few could afford

Art Deco is characterized by restrained, disciplined, sharp rectilinear lines combined with a few stark sweeping curves and can be compared to a simple, elegant, slightly sharper and more angular, pared down version of Neoclassicism similar in that sense to the design of Elsie de Wolfe.

Art Deco designers loved combining various textures, using rich colors such as bright red mixed with black and using luxurious materials such as exotic macassar ebony wood which had a richly

striped grain, sharkskin which they called Galuchat and we today call shagreen and inlaid ivory and mother of pearl.

Jacques Doucet, the great patron of the Art Deco Era designed his entire home in the Art Deco style and employed several Art Deco furniture designers to help him decorate his home, such as Pierre Legrain, Marcel Coard, Rose Adler and Eileen Gray.

Other Art Deco designers Louis Sue and Andre Mare, Jules Leleu and Maurice Dufrene created furniture which juxtaposed stark lines and sweeping curves

The most important Art Deco exhibition was The 1925 Paris Exposition International and the famous Art Deco Designer Emile – Jacques Ruhlmann who was one of the most important designers of the Art Deco Era, designed the Grand Salon which was the most important Art Deco Room at this exhibition, using rectilinear lines, stark curves and opulent décor typical of Art Deco style

These Art Deco chairs, sofas, tables and case furniture with their clean, sharp angular rectilinear lines or rectilinear lines juxtaposed against sweeping stark curves which are totally devoid of excessive decorative detail and are often finished in simple black lacquer or black wood finishes, look incredibly similar to today's Contemporary pieces

And not only is Art Deco furniture very similar to ours today, but the Art Deco design style in general is also very similar to our style today: both use simple straight paneled curtains hanging from simple poles, large round mirrors, Tortiere's or tall, thin floor lamps which use "uplighting" wrought iron, and simple minimalism design.

The Art Deco style believes in clean lines, and "less is more" and that is exactly what we like today!

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Biography

Beverly Vosko, RID, ASID (Allied Member) UDACP. CAPS, L.E.E.D Green Associate, TAID, MBA... is a “Full Service”, Registered Interior Designer in Texas #6333. She is President and founder of both Beverly Vosko Interiors, and InteriorDesign-ED; both DBA’s for C. V Design Inc. For over 25 years, she has been designing homes across the United States and Europe, specializing in creating custom Residential and Commercial environments, be they Traditional, Transitional, Contemporary or Eclectic, that match her Design clients’ every need, through her Design Firm, Beverly Vosko Interiors. For over 15 years she has taught Interior Design, Aging in Place, Green/Sustainable Design, and Antiques at Rice University, the University of Houston, and for the last 10 years nationally, with her Continuing Education company, InteriorDesign-ED. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude from the University of Pennsylvania, studied Art History at Harvard University, received her MBA in Marketing from NYU Stern Graduate Business School, and her Design and Antiques training from Sotheby’s and the world renown Inghbald School of Design. Please check out her websites, www.vosko.com and www.InteriorDesign-ED.com