A Level product Design
Pre-course Step-Up Tasks

Introduction

To ensure you are prepared for this course, please find below some useful information (full course details can be found on our online prospectus) and the **step-up work** which needs to be completed over the summer and brought to your first lesson.

Lead teacher of the course and email:

Mr Dolman, adamdolman@fernup.dorset.sch.uk
(Note that the teacher will be unable to respond during the summer holidays)

Course Outline

Year 12

	AD – Technical Principles	BMY - Designing and Making Principles
Autumn 1	**Wooden chair - timbers**	**Design Movements**
Autumn 2	**Plastics and Metals theory**	**Technology and cultural changes**
Spring 1	**Design and make Challenge**	**Design Processes**
Spring 2	**Finish Design and Make challenge**	**NEA - Coursework**
Summer 1	**Intellectual Property**	**NEA - Coursework**
Summer 2	**NEA - Coursework**	**NEA - Coursework**

Year 13

Autumn 1	**NEA - Coursework**	**NEA - Coursework**
Autumn 2	**NEA - Coursework**	**NEA - Coursework**
Spring 1	**Revision**	**Revision**
Spring 2	**Revision**	**Revision**
Summer 1	**Revision**	**Revision**

Step-Up Tasks:

Three tasks:

1. The Language of Design
2. Big Life Fix
3. Product Analysis

Written tasks can be typed as a digital document or hand written, the drawing tasks will need to be by hand, but can then be photographed and inserted if you are producing a digital document.

Task one. The Language of Design

Deyan Sudjic is the former director of The Design Museum, London and a much-respected author, editor, critic and lecturer at the Royal College of Art.

1: Read the extract from **Deyan Sudjic's 'The Language of Things'** - highlighting/making notes on the key points. (Scanned in here, marked as pages 27-31).

2: Write a 500-word illustrated essay where you compare and contrast the work of two of the designers mentioned in the text - William Morris, Raymond Loewy, Philippe Starck and Dieter Rams. You will need to carry out further reading/research on these designers (The V&A and Design Museum websites are good resources to use to explore further). Remember to use PEE (Point, Evidence, Explain or similar technique) to make relevant use of quotations to 'hang your ideas onto'. Include decent colour images of the designer's work to illustrate your writing.

3: Finally, end your essay with a strong, personal conclusion - do you agree or disagree with Sudjic? Why?

William Morris rejected industrial production and tried to give design a moral dimension by looking back to the Middle Ages for the ornamental patterns derived from nature in his work.

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to make design that speaks in such a way as to convey these messages, as it is to resolve formal and functional problems. They manipulate this language more or less skilfully, or engagingly, to convey the kind of story that my MacBook whispered in my ear at Heathrow.

To understand the language of design, we also need to understand how the designer has evolved as a professional. Ever since design emerged as a distinct activity, closely linked to the development of the industrial system towards the end of the eighteenth century, designers have lurched from seeing themselves as social reformers, idealists, profoundly out of sympathy with their times, like William Morris in nineteenth-century England, to become the charismatic snake-oil salesmen led by Raymond Loewy in mid-twentieth-century America. Morris hated the machine age, and tried to find a way to re-create the tradition of the hand crafted object. Loewy once promised to streamline the sales curve.

For Morris, what he saw as the joy of labour was the key to creating meaningful everyday possessions. He wanted to eliminate the 'lifeless' mechanically applied decoration of the high Victorians, to replace it with simple, direct forms that both harked back to the Middle Ages and set a marker for the future. As a precocious 17-year-old in 1851, he was taken by his mother to see the Great Exhibition, Prince Albert's triumphant celebration of the Industrial Revolution. But so stubbornly convinced was Morris that every manifestation of the machine age was not just aesthetically worthless, but an affront to humanity, that he stayed outside. He refused to enter the Crystal Palace, sure that he would find nothing but meretricious rubbish inside. And in a way he was right: Joseph Paxton's brilliant prefabricated cast-iron and glass structure contained, among many other things, the Venus de Milo carved in butter.

But, despite his progressive social message, Morris later relied on 13-year-old labourers in his carpet factory in Merton Abbey.

Chapter One

He was not just a revolutionary socialist, he was also a wallpaper designer – a combination that might have been the invention of a satirist. And he found that his decorating business depended on what he himself described as pandering to the swinish luxury of the rich. Morris became a libertarian socialist, a pioneer in the struggle for the emancipation of women and in the movement against colonialism, even as he lived on the income of the mining shares left him by his father.

As an alternative to the view of the world represented by the Crystal Palace, Morris offered a romantic retreat into pre-Raphaelite nostalgia. He loved old buildings, the countryside, Icelandic sagas and traditional ways; he loathed machines, railways, big cities and suburbs. His vision has exercised a powerful influence on the English imagination ever since. Morris's rural dream has an uncomfortable echo in the tendency of the newly rich to retreat from the city in which they made their money to Wiltshire rectories, and to react with moral outrage to attempts to build housing estates anywhere near them.

Morris designed beautiful textile and wallpaper patterns that many people still love to use. Raymond Loewy, by contrast, just wanted to help Lucky Strike sell more cigarettes by changing the colour of the packs they came in. Despite his overheated claims to have designed Air Force One for Jack Kennedy, the Coke bottle and NASA's spacecraft, he started his career in New York after the First World War, a penniless French engineering graduate fresh off the boat, working as a fashion illustrator and window dresser.

Loewy offered a slicker and smoother version of what design could be. He turned cleaners, duplicating machines and pencil sharpeners into glossy fetish objects, used as props to define the modern workplace. He designed some of the most spectacularly beautiful products of his time – in particular his cholesterol-rich streamlined steam locomotives that marked the end of the railway age. But he also constructed an idealized version of his office in

Raymond Loewy was perhaps his own greatest creation: the very image of the new breed of designer, in business to streamline the sales curve for anything from locomotives to cigarettes.

the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and hired a publicist to help him get on the cover of the *Time* magazine. He was a brilliant striker of attitudes for the camera, perched on the footplate of one of 'his' locomotives.

Somewhere between these two versions of design is the idea that design is a public service. It's notable that in Britain one of the first industrial-design practices that emerged in the 1940s called itself the Design Research Unit, a name calculated to suggest that it was a branch of the Welfare State more than any kind of commercial activity, even though it was actually started as the subsidiary of an advertising agency.

Not long before that, wartime Utility furniture ranges designed to government specifications had offered newly married couples and bombed-out families beds and sofas and tables that were a model of rational intelligence. They were also very probably responsible for turning a generation of consumers against the whole idea of modern design, a phenomenon that had come to be inextricably associated in many people's minds with shortages, deprivation and the condescending imposition of good taste by the privileged elite on their social inferiors.

Following in Loewy's footsteps today is Philippe Starck. Nobody better encapsulates the contemporary version of the designer as celebrity, capable of transforming anonymous domestic objects with his signature.

For about five minutes in 1984, the most fashionable bar on the most fashionable street in Paris was called the Café Costes. This was in the days when Spandau Ballet were regarded as a serious musical force and turning back the cuffs of your jacket was seen as making a worthwhile fashion statement. It was not the food or the wine list that packed them in at the Café Costes. It was the chance to spend half an hour sitting on a three-legged chair in Starck's very first interior, waiting for a coffee that never came.

Starck called the look of Café Costes 'Budapest railway station

third-class waiting-room circa 1956'. There was a plunging staircase, a gigantic clock filling most of one wall, and that chair. It had a semi-art-deco, faux mahogany plywood shell, held up on three black steel legs 'to help the waiters, because it gives them less to trip over', as Starck put it. Before you could check whether what he said was true, however, Café Costes had faded into an oblivion even sadder than the melancholy of central Europe under Stalin. The fashionable moved on, leaving the chairs to backpackers, and the café soon closed. But it was Café Costes that triggered off the plague of designer kettles, hotels, mineral water, pasta, toothbrushes and all the other useless paraphernalia that now laps around the world, confined for the most part to forgotten drawers and dusty kitchen shelves.

Amazingly, Starck, once the most overexposed designer in the world, who has built a career as much on his own force of personality as on the objects he designs, has not changed. He is still working to the same formula, based on a well-worked decorative palette, surrealistic jumps of scale, cute anthropomorphic styling, and a cloying habit of trying to attach absurdly unpronounceable names to everyday objects. Inviting us to walk into Dixons to ask for a transistor radio named Moa Moa, as he did, is cruelty on a level with Frank Zappa's when he named his daughter Moon Unit. But, at fifty-something, Starck still has the persona of a small boy, constantly seeking to amuse the grown-ups with his daringly naughty tricks, and still looking over his shoulder for their approval.

And they do approve. The Pompidou Centre, just around the corner from the long-gone Café Costes, staged a Starck retrospective in 2002. The show had all the egotism of mid-period Michael Jackson, when the singer took to floating giant effigies of himself down the major rivers of Europe. Inside a darkened circus tent, Starck positioned a ring of neoclassical laurel-wreathed heads standing on fibreglass plinths 10 feet high, mocked up to look like marble. The heads all had the alarmingly lifelike features of

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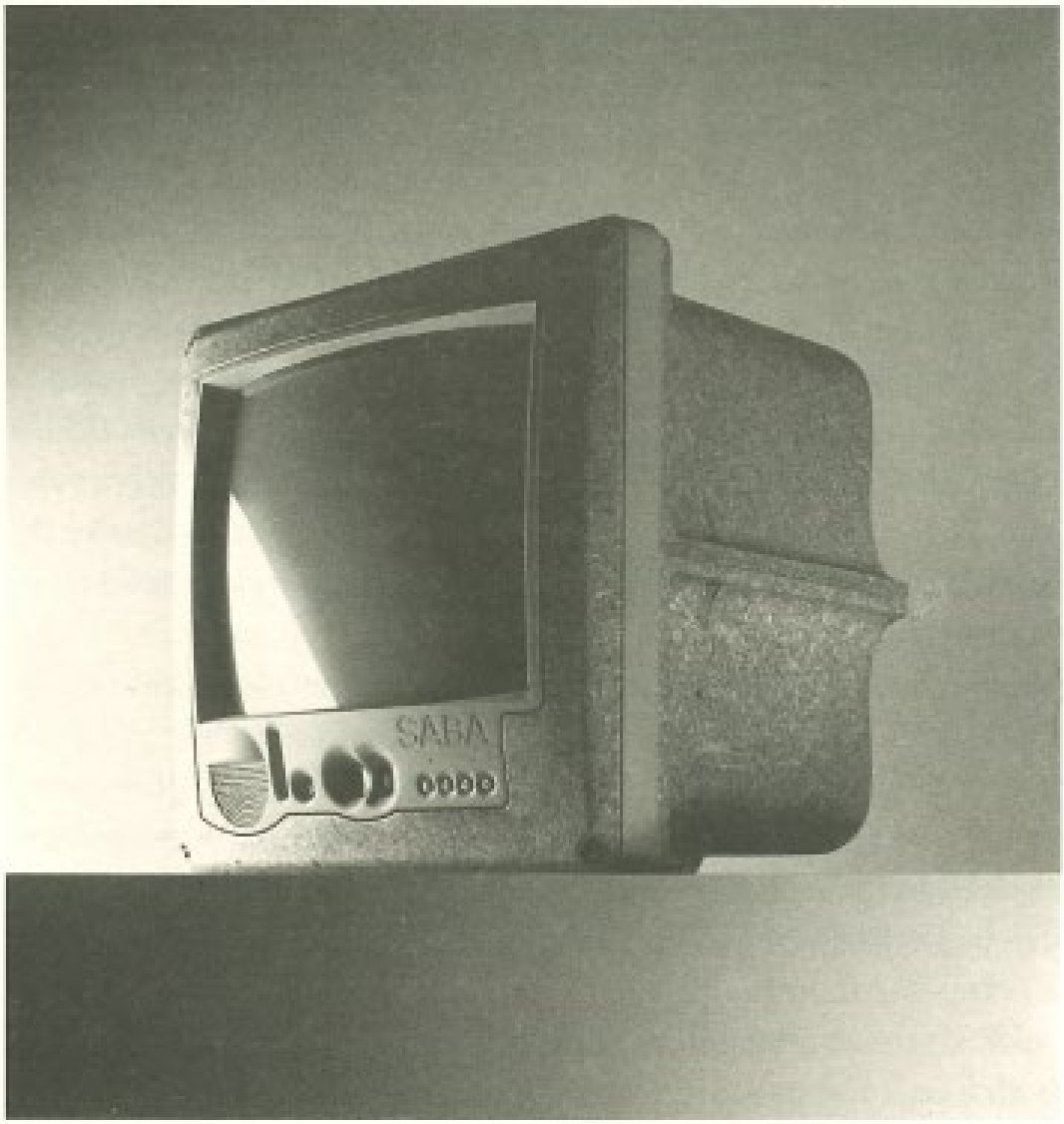

As much a storyteller as anything else, Starck's way with words got him noticed, along with his enthusiasm for three-legged chairs. His moulded chipboard TV for Thomson brilliantly disrupted the conventional language of consumer electronics.

design and the signs that it uses to signal status and price. Instead of encasing the TV in moulded plastic, of more or less sleekness, Starck went back to wood. In the early days of television, the set that occupied the corner of a room, sitting on top of its own stand, perhaps covered with a linen cloth when not in use, would have been finished in a lacquered veneer. Starck used chipboard. It was an extraordinary deconstruction of the language of materials and the signals of luxury.

There is another view of design, the polar opposite to that represented by Starck. It is the idea that design is concerned with the pursuit of some sort of inner truth and meaning, a view most recently characterized in the person of Dieter Rams. As was William Morris, Rams is driven by a sense of the moral purpose of design, though he does not share Morris's antipathy towards the machine age.

Rams devoted enormous effort and patience to designing perfect objects that could defeat fashion and overcome the passing of time by defying visual redundancy. He dreamed of objects that became timeless by eliminating the superfluous, reflecting intellectual rigour rather than trying too hard to please. Rams made the perfect calculator, with the most carefully considered radiused corners, the neatest buttons, and the clearest sequence of operating functions. But, with almost unbearable pathos, his most cerebral and high-minded attempt to put design beyond fashion and time ended in the creation of objects with a life expectancy no longer than one of Raymond Loewy's streamlined steam locomotives. The radio and calculators and record players have each of them been supplanted, not just by newer, younger models, but by entirely new categories of object.

And, in the end, even such an apparently intellectually rigorous designer as Rams is still concerned with what an engineer might characterize as superficial styling. Just how innovative is the technology needed to produce an electric shaver after all? Did Rams have a genuine grasp of the developments in recording technology that

he housed in the first Perspex-topped domestic record player, Snow White's coffin, which defined the type for two decades? Probably not. But then the physicists and programmers and engineers who between them made the iPod and the MacBook possible for Apple would never have managed to produce a commercially seductive product without Jonathan Ive. And Ive would never have made the MacBook the way it is if Rams had not existed. What Rams did with the Perspex top was to define how audio systems would look right up until the moment when the record was supplanted by the compact disc.

In the end, design cannot be understood by looking only at the world represented by Rams, just as it is not adequately encompassed by the perspective of a Raymond Loewy. Design is about the creation of anonymous mass-produced objects, by people who spend a lot of time worrying about injection moulding, or about the precise degree of curve needed to blunt the sharp edges of a monitor screen. It is also about making objects that feel good to touch and to use.

The old definitions of design, and the skills that realizing them demanded, are being marginalized by the rapidly changing nature of objects. The most noticeable change is the way that so many artefacts are converging. There was once a separate category of object known as a telephone, which existed alongside another, entirely separate, category called the camera. And the printer was not the same as the copier or the fax machine. Now a phone and camera, with an MP3 player, a radio and an email communicator, are all subsumed into a single object, as are the printer, the copier and the fax machine.

At the same time, the decline of low-cost manufacturing in the West has transformed the nature of the design process. Ask an industrial designer to 'design' a new bike or a watch and it will very likely involve a trip to China to select from a hundred different alternatives off the shelf for most of the components, then assembling

Task two. Big Life Fix

Inclusion' is a hugely important area in design – how can we design products and services so that all users in society can access them?

1: Inclusive design sparks creativity. Discuss.

2: watch the BBC Big Life Fix about designing a prosthetic leg for ballet:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/big-life-fix/zmkbjhv

3: On a single sheet of A4, use notes and some sketches to describe the manufacturing journey of the prosthetic leg. You should describe:

- the specific design needs of the user
- the ideas that have been considered – add some sketches
- an analysis of the prototypes that have been made
- how testing has been used to refine the design
- consider how 'iterative design' is relevant here – suggest some next steps

As an extension you could consider other problems that prosthetic leg users might encounter – and ideas for solving them!

Task three. Product Analysis

Designers often use the work of others to help inform their own ideas, from the aesthetic quality of the work through to considering the use of materials and manufacturing techniques. Being able to gain confidence in communicating visually using notes and sketches is also a crucial skill at A-Level.

1: Take some photographs of some favourite objects/furniture you have at home. Arrange them into a collage, annotating them to say what the form/function is of the object and why you have included it. **You can do this digitally using Ppt or similar and upload it rather than printing pictures out?**

2: Make some drawings/sketches of one or two selected objects trying to show different angles or views of the product and details that could help describe how the product has been manufactured/how it works. NOTE: you MUST have some sketches for this task.

3: Produce an illustrated product analysis of a chair or sofa you have at home. Use ACCESSFM to help you!

Good luck!