

THE TRANSFORMATION OF CENTRAL DESIGN ORGANISATIONS IN MODERN BRITAIN, FRANCE AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: modernity, national identity, design organisation, design discourse

This thesis proposes that a conceptual structure of ‘modernity’ and ‘national identity’, interrogated through an analytical model of ‘modernism’ and ‘modernisation’ contributes substantially to decoding the institutionalisation of design as reflected in the transformation of central design organisations. The Preface clarifies the shifting focus of historiography in the field of design in the understanding of the complex significance of design. A historical evaluative context is believed to best embrace varieties and possibilities of this complexity. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of modernity and national identity in order to define the subject of research in respect of design culture. Historical and comparative methods are discussed in this chapter as appropriate approaches to investigate the way design practices are located socially and historically through design organisations. The following three chapters investigate the ways in which different cultures of design are have been informed by, and inform, national patterns of development. Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to surveys and examinations of the institutionalisation of design practices and cultures through design organisations, in terms of goals creating and norms sharing, predicated on the historical watershed of the 1970s. The discursive idea ‘positioning differently’ of British New Design History is developed to build the analytical contexts in Chapter 6. The last three chapters extrapolate previous considerations to the case studies of design exhibitions. Six cases of exhibitions, selected from the United Kingdom, France and China in the pre- and post-1970s periods, are considered in three key aspects of spectacle, organiser and knowledge. National expressions are examined as the key tone for these events in order to explore the changing contexts for the role of design practices in branding ways of life. Through theoretical analysis and case studies, this thesis concludes that a clear sense of self-knowledge, adaptive politics and a responsive discourse to the changing society constitute the way in which different cultures are able to participate in the building of modernity through design practices.

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PREFACE

Since the first publication of *Pioneers* more than sixty years ago the central focus of the history of design as a field of academic study has moved away from such explicit emphasis on the artistic creativity of celebrated individuals towards an evaluation of the wider social, economic, political, and technological climate in which design has been made and used.

(Woodham, Twentieth-Century Design 7)¹

With the shifting focus of the history of design, academic research is questioning not only the intrinsic aspects of design culture, but also the role of design history in informing an understanding of the complex significance of design. It is open to argument that the history of design provides a valuable account of the contextual knowledge of design, and the historical account of design is still essential to design research.

Fundamental arguments are firstly directed to the understanding of design. A definition is commonly considered as an answer to a question; thus researchers are likely to refer to a definition for understanding a subject. It is not difficult to give a definition to locate the discussion, so that a scope is set out to investigate a problem. But as any definition has its contexts, an investigation based merely on definitions is believed to represent one-sided position or one part's interests. Therefore, it is not reasonable to take for granted one definition in the interpretation of conceptions. Only a historical evaluative context would embrace varieties and possibilities. It is with this idea of a historical account for design that the historiography of design has become a field of academic study. As a result, the model of historiography becomes a research focus in the decoding of the complex significance and value of design.

Since the 1930s, academics and researchers have developed two kinds of models for writing design history; each of them illustrates a possible approach, one facet of the whole. The first models were those furnished by the history of art.² *Art And Industry*,

¹ Jonathan M. Woodham, Twentieth-Century Design (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 7. Pioneers refers to Nikolaus Pevsner's text, Pioneers Of Modern Design: From William Morris To Walter Gropius.

² There has always been a widely held view that historical research is the most effective model for understanding human society and its development. In ancient times, literary history was considered as an important means to

which Herbert Read published in 1934, took the theme of the aesthetic quality of industrial products, just as the descriptive subtitle proclaimed: *The Principles Of Industrial Design*.³ It was in fact an attempt to establish aesthetic values by which it would be meaningful to judge industrial products. This road was soon taken by historian Nikolaus Pevsner (1936). This kind of history of protagonists presented, in terms of a linear progress, the artistic creativity of the great figures as the source and the success of modern design. Then another direction was tried, which took its inspiration from different models. It was no longer an heroic tale of designer figures, but an anonymous history which turned its attention to the transformation and mechanisation of handicrafts, to the modification of systems of production, and which analyzed examples and categories of manufactured articles from this point of view. This approach was later adopted by Siegfried Giedion in 1948 in his *Mechanization Takes Command*, the subtitle also being a description of the way the book was written up: *A Contribution To Anonymous History*.⁴ The text constituted an original historical account for understanding the origins and social meaning attached to commonplace things. Focusing on what mechanisation is doing to man, the investigation threw lights on the evolution of mechanisation and its effects on modern civilisation, and its historical and philosophical implications. It was in fact a prelude to the design discourse in the 1950s, which was built on the idea of productivity, rationalisation and standardization.

But in the 1960s when design became an element of differentiation for a product, style was broadly accepted as a significant guideline for the historiography of design. Monographic descriptions have been written on individual designers and practices, running the risk of turning the term ‘design’ into a synonym for ‘style’ or even ‘styling’. Individual histories have been compiled, some of them providing significant insights, laying emphasis on the aesthetic, technological, and ideological aspects of design. Reyner Banham’s *Theory And Design In The First Machine Age* was a typical

achieve this goal. At the end of 18th century, there was a common belief in the intellectual world that art studies were as important as literary studies. Art history has then been thus developed as extension of the history of literature. During the 20th century, design history was discovered to be more effective in providing historical facts of human life so as to offer a more authentic image of human society. Thus, the historical writings of literature, art and design have in fact been developed in a similar vein.

³ See Herbert Read, *Art And Industry : The Principles Of Industrial Design* (London : Faber, 1934).

⁴ See Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution To Anonymous History* New York: Oxford UP, c1948.

illustration of the stylistic model for history of modernism.⁵ Banham was a student of Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, whose 1936 *Pioneers Of The Modern Movement* may be considered as the original historiography of modernism on a basis of style. Although the term 'style' took different meanings in both vocabularies, both works were consistent statements in a modernist logic. Pevsner's text was an argument for a new style symbolising a new age of industrial mechanisation, whilst Banham's book endeavoured to develop a new understanding of modernism not as a style but as a way of thinking about design.

Subsequent to this, explorations have been made of ideological and anthropological aspects of design, its communicative possibilities, semantic values, and its capacity to change society and the environment. For that reason, there have been studies of the institutions that have promoted design, the great universal exhibitions, the birth and the decline of schools, the formation of groups, theories of design, the evolution of its methods, the profile of the profession, and the training of the designer. In this respect, the wealth, diversity, and multiplicity of approaches bring to the forefront the point that needs to be addressed right at the outset: the character of the story which the history of design is to tackle. Beyond the simple task of telling the history of design: to provide an account of facts about a subject, which most people inside or outside the design world are likely to take as a beginning, controversies and problems escalated in a series of questions that could contain no more simple answers within themselves. Historians and readers are no longer satisfied with a single history, for to tell the story of design means to tell many stories: the stories of economics, politics, technology, society, patterns of behaviour, education and so on.

The historiography of design thus brings into question the autonomy of single spheres and series of narrations, and it cannot help but be an inter- or multidisciplinary undertaking, in the sense that it does not emerge out of a juxtaposition of many stories, but out of an encounter between them. Within an increasingly cross-cultural status from the 1970s onwards, design historians realize that it is necessary to know more what design asks from its context. At the same time, in a global context, 'Western' approaches, which are primarily Anglo-European, are put into question,

⁵ See Reyner Banham, *Theory And Design In The First Machine Age* (London: Architectural, 1960).

confronted with ‘non-Western’ approaches. As a result, a new direction ought surely to be taken by historical research now that people are supposed to be living in a global age. For example, Christopher Bailey, Professor of Cultural History at Northumbria University, founding editorial secretary of the *Journal Of Design History*, advocates for this new direction in the global perspective of design history. As Bailey points out, it is a common assumption that modernism constituted a western phenomenon of industrialised societies that privileged mainstream design historians, yet Latin American theorists have offered alternative ways of understanding the meanings of modernism in non-Western cultures.⁶ In addition, geographical boundaries are considered necessary to be broken by world design historians, amongst whom Woodham proposes to redraw the design historical map in order to include developments of design in all five continents, embracing Asia, Australia and South America.⁷

Evidently, a global and interlinked social context is of prime importance to accommodate an open historical account of design. Cultural diversity reclaims the deconstruction of any extreme models of action supported culturally by social groups. A new history of design could be written only when cultural pluralism and heterogeneity are conceived as part of the story. One focus of attention for design research should therefore be the contextual depth of knowledge in the historical account of design, but such a systematic knowledge remains insufficient in the perspective of design research.

Anne Creigh-Tyte reveals some reasons for the insufficiently explicit aspect of this contextual knowledge in her *Design Research Publications In The English-Speaking World* (1998). According to Creigh-Tyte, knowledge that design evolution plays a significant role has been obtained, but knowledge about how that evolution will take place seems still beyond reach. Another way of saying this is that design knowledge has been traditionally developed rather with an emphasis on the aspects, facts and

⁶ Christopher Bailey, “The Global Future of Design History,” *Journal Of Design History* 18.3 (2005): 231.

⁷ See Jonathan M. Woodham, “Local, National And Global: Redrawing The Historical Map,” *Journal of Design History* 18.3 (2005): 257-67.

results of design practices.⁸ This is the reason that the focus of design history shifts in order to explore social and cultural basis for understanding design.

This thesis asks how different countries approach the production and communication of design culture in order to consider the ways in which design practices are situated. It seeks an answer by examining the transformation of central design organisations in the UK, France and China. Based on such an intention of investigation, this research aims to provide a survey of the way in which design cultures are shaped socially through the transformation of design organisations and historically by the formation of traditional ideas such as ‘good design’ and ‘good taste’ in France and Britain before 1970s; to analyse comparatively these different ways of institutionalising design as reflected in the transformation of central design organisations in France, Britain and China after the 1970s alongside their national identities; to establish fundamental frameworks for the examination of different cultures of design within different national contexts.

As a result, design organisations as social and cultural contexts become the subject of this research. This research will be located in the British tradition of design historiography, exploring the building of a philosophical and methodological basis for understanding design publicly, as proposed by design historian and theorist Clive Dilnot, and also interpreting modernity and complexity theories in the examination of modernity and national identity as a means of developing the theoretical ideas of design historian Jonathan M. Woodham. Consequently, this study will draw from these theoretical discussions its own model in order to contribute to the different ways of telling the history of design.

⁸ Anne Creigh-Tyte, “Design Research Publications In The English-Speaking World,” *The Design Journal*. 1.1 (1998): 55.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed 

Dated 14 Aug 2009

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Design Organisations as the Subject of Research

In the modern period, the rise of ‘independent’ design values, the ‘autonomy’ of design, and the changing forms of design organisation should be taken into account.

(Dilnot, The State Of Design History 18)¹

Before exploring the contextual knowledge of design by examining the transformation of design organisations, it is essential to understand the reasons why design organisations are seen as a vital part focus of this enquiry; that is, what is the framework to justify this as the starting point of investigation?

1.1.1 Modernity and National Identity

If, as significant constituents providing a context for design activities, design organisations necessarily fall within the ambit of this research, what advantage may be gained by mapping the territory for design investigation through this identification of organisations as a fundamental research topic? In other words, the analytical context for this research requires a clear conceptual structure. One underlying concept that grounds this analytical structure is that of modernity, a concept that elucidates, essentially, a world in transition, from the traditional to the post-traditional period.

Nevertheless, it remains to be clarified how exactly this term ‘modernity’ is to be understood in contemporary times, especially because modernity itself is an ambiguous word semantically. The words ‘modernity’, ‘modernisation’ and ‘modernism’ are thus frequently confused in their usage. The American scholar Cyril Edwin Black endeavours to explain modernity and modernisation from an angle of causality. For Black, modernity refers to the characteristics that are shared by the most developed countries in technology, politics, economics and other social dimensions. Modernisation is the process during which societies acquire the above characteristics.² Another American scholar, Marshall Berman holds the view that modernisation and modernism are the twins of the project of modernity, both

¹ Clive Dilnot, “The State Of Design History, Part II: Problems And Possibilities,” Design Issues 1.2 (1984): 18.

² See Cyril Edwin Black, The Dynamics Of Modernisation (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

contributing to the outlining of the various aspects of modernity. For Berman, modernity is an experience of two opposing processes: one is that of modernisation in the social dimension (economic and political); the other is that of cultural modernism (in arts and literature).³ There was also a substantial literature developed in the 1950s and 1960s equating ‘modernisation’ with ‘industrial development’, anchored firmly in the ideological conflicts of the Cold War as to the most effective route of economical development, for example, ‘state control’ or ‘free market’. In a sense it is also rooted in Marx’s version of staged development as in the literature on ‘take off’, most commonly associated with Rostow’s *The Stages Of Economic Growth*.⁴ Developing as an offshoot of that was also a literature trying to analyse corollaries between ‘national’ economic structures and political ones like Barrington Moore’s *Social Origins Of Democracy And Dictatorship*.⁵

Among the present conceptions of modernity, it could be argued that the following two concepts, as given by the English sociologist Anthony Giddens and the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, are quite essential in the outlining of the specific aspects of modernity following the interpretations by Black and Berman. In his works *The Consequences Of Modernity* and *Modernity And Self-Identity*, Giddens elaborates his main arguments for the question of modernity. Berman develops a new account of modernity in his *Modernity: An Unfinished Project* and *The Philosophical Discourse Of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Their views are considered as key references in building the analytical structure of this research.

In Giddens’ conception of modernity, the key point is the break of modernity with tradition: modernity is regarded as ‘a post-traditional order’ set up after this break. An ‘institutional change’ is thus embarked upon from ‘tradition’ to ‘modernity’.⁶

³ See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience Of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴ Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages Of Economic Growth : A Non-communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1960).

⁵ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins Of Dictatorship And Democracy : Lord And Peasant In The Making Of The Modern World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

⁶ In his book *The Consequences Of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens develops an institutional analysis of modernity with an accent on discontinuity which separates modern social institutions from the traditional social orders. He identifies three features of these discontinuities. One is the sheer ‘pace of change’ which it sets into motion. A second is the ‘scope of change’ which covers the whole of the Earth’s surface. A third concerns the intrinsic ‘nature of modern institutions’ which are not found in prior history. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences Of Modernity* (London: Polity, 1990) 1-6.

Consequently, 'modernity must be understood on an institutional level'.⁷ This institutional level, considered as industrialised status, could be interpreted in two dimensions: industrialism and capitalism. Industrialism refers to the social relations generated by industrial production processes. Capitalism means a competitive product market and commodity producing systems that contribute to the commercialisation of labour. This institutional change produces distinct social forms such as nation-state and organisation.⁸ Though in instances, like 16th century England, the nation state could, largely, precede industrial development.

Habermas takes 'modernity' as 'an unfinished project',⁹ aimed at replacing medieval models and standards with new ones. For Habermas, the most important question for modernity is its self-understanding and self-justification. When dealing with the issue of self-understanding and self-justification of modernity, Habermas introduces the notions 'cultural modernity' and 'social modernisation'.¹⁰ This issue of self-knowledge did not exist in medieval society, for religious ideology provided all the answers for the, then, predominantly theocratic population. But, since the Enlightenment, a rationalisation of a new system of values needed to be justified, together with the political and economical systems.

With the above summary, it appears evident that the main characters of modernity have been properly outlined by Giddens and Habermas: industrialism, capitalism, changing forms of social surveillance and values. Giddens theorises similar views to Black in terms of an 'institutional change'. Habermas furthers the understanding of the contrary contents of modernity uncovered by Berman, that is, 'modernism' and 'modernisation'. In the light of the views of Giddens, Habermas, Black and Berman, it could be argued that modernity is the post-traditional period of the cultural and social transformation of industrialisation with two crucial experiences of modernism and modernisation. As intrinsic experiences of modernity, modernism and modernisation constitute analytical dimensions of modern transition from the traditional to the post-traditional period.

⁷ Anthony Giddens, Modernity And Self-Identity (London: Polity, 1991) 1.

⁸ Giddens 14-16.

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse Of Modernity: Twelve Lectures (Cambridge: Polity, 1987) xix.

¹⁰ See Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," The Post-Modern Reader. Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy, 1992).

Modernism is considered as a complex term; it is, as Raymond Williams put it, ‘the most frustratingly unspecific, the most recalcitrantly unperiodizing, of all the major art-historical ‘isms’ or concepts’.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is possible to define three primary uses of the term modernism. The first refers to the cultural experience of modernity, marked by change, ambiguity, doubt, risk and continual change.¹² The second describes an artistic movement and style. This artistic modernism endeavored to preserve the autonomisation of art which was constantly threatened by the culture of mass-produced commodities. This artistic modernism thus constitutes the contrary experience of the modernisation, its key figures include Joyce, Woolf, Kafka and Eliot in literature along with Picasso, Kandinsky and Miro in painting or in more general terms has been viewed as a crisis in representation with the retreat from realism to abstraction. It is more appropriate to talk of modernisms in this sense. The third talks of a philosophy of knowledge which asserts the possibility of universal knowledge, basing human progress on Enlightenment reason. Put most briefly, modernism is an experience of modernity in the dimension of thoughts and arts.

Modernisation has been described as the profound changes experienced by human societies since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century: the processes and shifts from a traditional economy, society, politics and civilisation to a modern economy, society, politics and civilisation. Research into modernisation took its starting in the 1950s in America. Studies on modernisation in the 1950s and 1960s laid the foundations for the modernisation theory and were thus considered as the theories of classical modernisation.¹³ These theories of classical modernisation place emphasis on the modernisation process and result, that is, industrialising and industrialised status. Research based on conceptions such as ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ has been conducted in such works as, for example, Talcott Parsons’ *The Social System* (1951). ‘Tradition’ refers to a traditional agricultural society before modernisation, while ‘modernity’ characterises a modern industrial society that has completed

¹¹ Raymond Williams, *The Politics Of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1989) 3.

¹² See for example, Marshall Berman, “The Experience Of Modernity,” *Design After Modernism* (Thames and Hudson, 1988).

¹³ See, for example, Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951); Cyril Edwin Black, *The Dynamics Of Modernisation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Modernisation: Protest And Change* (New Jersey: Princeton Hall, 1966).

modernisation. The models of classical modernisation, such as ‘endogenetic’ and the ‘exogenic’, were advanced. These models of classical modernisation are adopted in the analysis of this thesis as they contribute to effectively defining the development of modern human society. Taking Britain and France for examples of ‘endogenetic’ model and China for that of ‘exogenic’, this research explores the interpretative context for the social patterns of modernity in the West and the East. Nevertheless, this context remains abstract and incomplete as long as the analysis of social patterns does not go beyond the framework of classical modernisation theories, as clarified below.

With classical modernisation completed by developed, industrialised countries, it could be suggested that an industrial society is not the termination of a human society. It is, therefore, difficult for the theories of classical modernisation to examine human development after the age of industrialisation. As a result, different theories of modernisation emerged, in terms of ‘post-modernisation’, between the 1970s and the 1980s, since the term ‘post’ was then applied to different academic trends in the European and American world. Post-modernisation theories do not provide proper theoretical frameworks, as they are only an aggregation of research on post-industrial society, post-modernism and post-modernisation. If modernisation indicates a shift from a traditional (agricultural) society to a modern (industrial) society, then post-modernisation marks the shift from a modern (industrial) society to a post-modern (post-industrial) society. These main ideas have been elaborated in Daniel Bell’s *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) and Jean François Lyotard’s *The Post-Modern Condition* (1979).¹⁴

¹⁴ See Daniel Bell, *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture In Social Forecasting* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974) and Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984). In his book, Bell has described five aspects of post-industrial society: 1. economics, 2. occupation distribution, 3. axial principle, 4. future trends, 5. policy making. With his deduction that meritocracy presumes an ideal of justice and equality of opportunity for all members in a post-industrial society, regardless of their unique backgrounds, Bell continued to promote modern ideas of technocracy. This is why it is Jean François Lyotard’s book, *The Postmodern Condition*, that has started an upsurge of post-modernism, as, in which, he has questioned the legitimation of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. ‘When we examine the current status of scientific knowledge – at a time when science seems more completely subordinated to the prevailing powers than ever before and, along with the new technologies, is in danger of becoming a major stake in their conflicts – the question of double legitimation, far from receding into the background, necessarily come to the fore. For it appears in its most complete form, that of reversion, revealing that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides that knowledge is, and who knows that needs to be decided? In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now, more than ever, a question of government.’ (Lyotard 1984: 8-9). But in his preface to *The Postmodern Condition*, the American scholar Frederic Jameson points out that Lyotard’s approach of analysis was still under the frameworks of traditional concepts: aesthetic and philosophical. ‘Lyotard’s own

While classical modernisation theories offer a limited view on the whole process of social development since the 18th century, post-modernisation theories are unable to include the developments of a knowledge-based economy, network society, and new changes in the future. It follows that new ideas of modernisation were proposed between the 1980s and the 1990s. These new ideas of modernisation include Joseph Huber's concept of 'Ecological Modernisation' (2000) and Ulrich Beck's idea of 'Reflexive Modernisation' (1994). Ecological modernisation is a theory based on intelligent intervention to unify economic development and ecological progress. Reflexive modernisation theory deals with the change of modernity from industrial society to venture society, thus generating a concept of 're-modernisation'.

It is with these new thoughts of modernisation theory that social transition is discussed in a way that transcends political and economic meaning. It is noteworthy that the changing thoughts of modernisation theory feature in fact the multiplicity of modernisation. The industrialisation on which modernisation is based does not merely refer to the industrialising process launched by the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, which is only the early - or classical - industrialisation. Except in Britain, the Industrial Revolution in West Europe and North America did not start until the early 19th century. The majority of the states in the other parts of the world started industrialisation in the 20th century. As a result, industrialisation is not only ahistorical, but also multi-value based. Just as it would be more appropriate to talk of modernisms, it would be more appropriate to talk of modernisations. It could be argued that modern social transition leads to the diversity of experiences of modernity in the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation since the 18th century. In other words, worldwide industrialisation or modernisation is a multiple adoption of dominant values of industrialism and capitalism since the Industrial Revolution. For a better understanding of the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation among different nations and states, a second notion 'national identity' needs to be introduced in this analytical structure in order to put modernity in national contexts. The introduction of 'endogenetic' and 'exogenic' models is not enough to constitute a clear conceptual structure in the interpretation of modern patterns of social

philosophical relationship to the politicised French one has become far more problematic and complex.' As a result, the relevance of post-modernisation analysis to the post-industrial society is in question.

development. National scale needs to be integrated into this conceptual structure in order to uncover the complexity of modernisation in the developing nation states such as China.

It is necessary to discuss diverse experiences of modernity in the perspective of national identity because, not only economists and sociologists such as Adam Smith and Emile Durkheim have chosen the national as the socioeconomic scale of modern social development, but also and especially modernity has produced distinct social forms such as nation-state according to Giddens.¹⁵ Nations as modern inventions are not only political formations but also systems of cultural representation. Three classic statements of Renan, Stalin and Weber enable us substantially to understand nations as cultural entities. In *What Is A Nation*, Ernest Renan identifies the nation as a form of morality, a solidarity sustained by a distinctive historical consciousness. Joseph Stalin claims, in his *On The National Question*, that a nation is a unity of several elements, especially economic life, language, and territory. With *Essays In Sociology*, Max Weber considers the nation as a prestige-based community on a cultural mission. Solidarity, unity and mission thus point to the necessary construction of a unified national identity because of internal divisions and differences. If the notion 'modernity' uncovers the socioeconomic transformation of industrialisation, the concept 'national identity' contributes to clarify the cultural transformation of industrialisation.

National identity is a modern and complex issue, considering that 'national identity' became a globally significant term in the cultural and economic processes of industrialisation since the eighteenth century. There are problems of defining the concept of national identity since there has been no unified historical research on such national phenomenon and there is no generally accepted view of what constitutes national identity. Some researchers and scholars would attach importance to the objective components like language, race, religion or territory, others would think much of subjective factors such as the perceptions of national category. For example,

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that the social and economic sciences and the modern idea of nation were born in the same period, between 1750 and 1900. Adam Smith's *The Wealth Of Nations* was published in 1776; its social equivalent, Emile Durkheim's *Le Suicide* in 1897. The publication of these two books of equivalent importance covered period just before the French Revolution and after the fall of Napoleon Empire, a period so significant for modern Europe in the building of nation state.

Anthony D. Smith, professor of sociology at the London School of Economics, specialist in the theory of the nation, argues that national identity is constructed out of ethnic, cultural, territorial and legal-political when pointing to its complexity.¹⁶ John Stuart Mill, British philosopher, political economist, argues about the perception of group members in favour of the absorption of small nations by larger ones when it is beneficial. He gives as examples the Welsh and the Scots who, seen as originally inferior and backward collectivities, now share, as members of the British nation, the perceptions of a highly civilised people.¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, Professor of International Relations at Cornell University, with his most cited text *Imagined Community* (1983), refers especially to the power of language in shaping national identity. Whether it is an inviting access to the community or a real barrier for the entry to the target community, language is of crucial importance in imagining a particular national community. Language is, without doubt, a fundamental component in the cultural representation of the nation as stated above. The diversity of national cultures needs to be covered through the discourse of the nation by which stories, images, symbols and rituals represent shared meanings and experiences. As a result, a national identity can be understood as an imaginative identification to the imagined community, the nation communicated through symbols and discourses.

1.1.2 Design Cultures and Design Organisations

The concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘national identity’ are of crucial importance in building the analytical structure of this research in that they establish a basis with which one is able to interpret design in a modern cultural perspective. Since the mid-19th century, discussion of design has come to the fore with the launching of worldwide industrialisation. But the absence of agreement about the significance and value of design leads to much confusion surrounding design practice. There have been many terms such as ‘industrial art’, ‘applied art’, ‘decorative art’ and ‘industrial design’. French words ‘dessin’, ‘dessein’ and Italian word ‘disegno’ are debated in order to define the etymologic meaning of the common word ‘design’: a process and

¹⁶ See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).

¹⁷ See John Stuart Mill, *Essays On Ethnics, Religion And Society* ed. Geraint L. Williams (Hassocks: Harvester, 1976).

the result of that process.¹⁸ Attempts of definition have been also made to interpret 'design' as a practice. The most typical statement of this kind is that of Victor Papanek at the very beginning of the book *Design for The Real World*, interpreting 'design' as the human capacity to shape his environment:

All men are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity. The planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process.

(Papanek, *Design For The Real World* 3)¹⁹

Definitions of design are difficult because the word design has so many levels of meaning and its significance and value are also subject to historical change. The understanding of design as a word or a practice therefore depends upon the user, the object of application and the context. As design practice affects everyday life in a diversity of cultures, a key starting point for the understanding of design is not whether definitions are adequate or not, it is rather how one can understand this diversity of human capacity for design manifested in many ways.

This study is based on a hypothesis that a peculiar framework enables the cultural diversity in design to be comprehended and serves better to define the significance and value of design. This is why it is necessary to examine the way of defining design in terms of the age of industrialisation with focus on the social issues of modernity and national identity. Only then, under modern conditions of the cultural formation of diversity, can we start to understand design in a meaningful and holistic sense. Design has always been a means and value of change in the shaping of human environment; the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation only highlights this point. It is during the industrialisation that design becomes a dominant term and the crucial anvil on which a variety of human environments are shaped by the cultural diversity in design. Understanding and practising this cultural diversity in design produces all levels of design cultures in modern age. Designs are not determined by technological processes or economic systems, but by decisions and choices of human beings although those do not take place in a technological or economic vacuum.

¹⁸ See John A. Walker, *Design History And The History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) 22-23.

¹⁹ Victor Papanek, *Design For The Real World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985) 3.

Design organisations are therefore necessary to be created for the management, or to inform the process of managing, of these decisions and choices, that is, the significance and value changes of design.

It could be postulated that the development of modern society also necessitates design organisations as institutional bodies for achieving the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation. Every society or social group aspires to a state or cultural community of its own. The modern world is based on organisations – industrialisation having created for it a set of relationships which are absorbed by these organisations as environmental agencies and social envelopes. The public come to belong to different organisations which are practically made and remade by people on an everyday basis. Thus, organisations become central metaphors for social life. The more industrialised the modern world becomes, the more organisations are becoming a second reality of social contexts. Antonio Strati, a professor at the University of Trento and Siena, discusses this interdependence between organisation and society thus:

In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries organisations have not been regarded solely as the means to certain ends. On the contrary they have also, indeed primarily, been viewed as agents of the civilizing process: this being the focus of the social analysis that searches out their meaning and studies their various dimensions and aspects. Organisations have absorbed society and society has been incorporated into the network of organisations.

(Strati, Theory And Method In Organisation Studies 28)²⁰

Whether design is a skill-based or knowledge-based activity, its presence cannot be detached from its contextual social reality, that is to say its design organisation. Dilnot has claimed the necessity of introducing design organisations into the design research field, for he believes that the value and significance of design will be demonstrated greatly by the study of how design is organised and promoted.²¹ Clearly, Dilnot endeavours to point to the role of design organisations in the management of value change. Design organisations play an important role in

²⁰ Antonio Strati, Theory And Method In Organisation Studies (London: SAGE, 2000) 28.

²¹ See Clive Dilnot, "The State Of Design History, Part II: Problems And Possibilities," Design Issues 1.2 (1984): 18.

contextualising the understanding and realisation of the significance and value of design. It is thus suggested that design organisations should be appreciated enough as a subject of research in their own right.

As a matter of fact, the way in which design research result in knowledge also clarifies the important place of design organisations in design research. By interpreting Bruce Archer's typical position, the American scholar Nigan Bayazit has explained what kind of knowledge to be reached through design research in *A Review Of Forty Years Of Design Research* (2004):

- A. Design research is concerned with the physical embodiment of man-made things, how these things perform their jobs, and how they work;
- B. Design research is concerned with construction as a human activity, how designers work, how they think, and how they carry out design activity;
- C. Design research is concerned with what is achieved at the end of a purposeful design activity, how an artificial thing appears, and what it means;
- D. Design research is concerned with the embodiment of configurations;
- E. Design research is a systematic search and acquisition of knowledge related to design and design activity.

(Bayazit, *Investigating Design* 16)²²

Obviously, the knowledge expected from design research is closely related to design organisations. But the publication outlets for design research appear to be disappointing in this perspective. As a means of revealing this pressing issue, the English researcher Anne Creigh-Tyte has provided a review of traditional academic journals in her article *Design Research Publications In The English-Speaking World* (1998).²³ Though it could be said to be a limited review from a global angle, it is still possible to understand that there is still substantial work to complete for design research to furnish a holistic knowledge of design and value management with relation to modern culture and society. A statistic based on the journals mentioned by

²² Nigan Bayazit, "Investigating Design: A Review Of Forty Years Of Design Research," *Design Issues* 20.1 (2004): 16.

²³ Anne Creigh-Tyte has selected key international journals across English-speaking countries to analyse in order to point to the existence of a significant range of quality outlets for conventional academic research articles in design-led journals. See Anne Creigh-Tyte, "Design Research Publications In the English-speaking World," *The Design Journal* 1.1 (1998): 54-61.

Creigh-Tyte supports this assertion. Three main journals are chosen for data provision: *Design Journal*, an international referred journal for all aspects of design; *Design Issues*, a leading American journal of design studies and the *Journal Of Design History*, an authoritative journal of design history published by Oxford University Press.

Journal	Period	Total number of articles	Percentage of design organisation-related articles
Design Journal	1998–2005	101	3 (2.9%), two issues missed
Design Issues	1984–2005	372	2 (0.5%)
J. of Design History	1988–2005	292	4 (1.3%)

Table 1.1. The state of research on design organisations in key English journals.

Source: Design Journal; Design Issues and Journal Of Design History.

In an increasingly complex world, our awareness of design has been expanding from the making of things to having to think about thinking, as expounded by modernisation research. At different stages of human history, social and cultural changes correspond tightly to those of values. In modern society, studies on design organisations are sorely needed for design to survive or seek solutions in the complex situations of social realities and, as considerations on nations and states, are inescapable. In the building of modernity, it is important for each society to identify through design practices people's values, aesthetic preferences and lifestyles on a global basis. These values, preferences and lifestyles are important devices to construct national sameness and uniqueness on the one hand, and differences to other national collectives on the other hand. Design cultures will be key assets for design organisations to deal with social and cultural changes. It is necessary for design history to extend the spectrum to inform the complex significance and value of design. Nevertheless, it could be asserted that the history of design has not sufficiently explored this domain. The examination of design organizations is therefore one of the promising undertakings in the building of design history on its own terms in a world context.

1.2 Complex Thinking and Combined Methods

With the subject of research defined and the analytical structure built, complex thinking and combined methods are adopted in the conducting of this research. The above rationalisation of the subject and ground components of analytical structure all point to the necessary introduction of complex thinking in dealing with the shifts and variations of significance in the manifestations of design practices and cultures.

1.2.1 Complex Thinking and Design Organisations

Complexity is a science, not only a physical science but also a social science. It will provide a significant way of thinking and living for those in the new century, just as the physicist Heinz Pagels has articulated:

I am convinced that the societies that master the new sciences of complexity and can convert that knowledge into new products and forms of social organisation will become the cultural, economic, and military superpowers of the next century.

(Pagels as quoted in Merry, Coping With Uncertainty 57)²⁴

Moreover, to aid this discussion further, it might be useful to delineate what exactly complexity is. It may be expected that an answer should provide a working definition of what ‘complexity’ might mean. Nonetheless, no one has provided or could provide a distinct conception at both quantitative and qualitative levels. When discussing complexity, people would rather talk about complex systems. As a result, a converse way is proposed as a means of understanding this conception of ‘complexity’. Hence, just as ‘modernism’ can be explained by ‘post-modernism’, so ‘complexity’ could also be understood through a ‘complex system’.

Professor Daniel Stein of the Santa Fe Institute briefly describes three characteristics that distinguish complex systems: nonreducibility, emergent behaviour, and unpredictability and regularity.²⁵ For a nonreducible complex system, there is

²⁴ Uri Merry, Coping With Uncertainty: Insights From The New Sciences Of Chaos, Self-Organisation, And Complexity (London: Praeger, 1995) 57.

²⁵ Merry 59.

unpredictability in the patterns of regularity in the behaviour of the whole system. It could be stated that such a status simply confirms the fact that a complex system has no foundation. This position is important for the investigation of organisational complexity. What the South African scholar Paul Cilliers argues in *Complexity And Postmodernism* (1998), could be said to clarify this point. According to Cilliers, social complexity is usually dealt with within a traditional framework of thinking: to find a secure point of reference so that a foundation can be established upon which to build everything else. Parts are not constitutive of the system but derived from the foundation. This traditional concept of essence as foundation, for Cilliers, is a 'strategy' to avoid complexity. The traditional framework of thinking would consequently make us unable to look at the reality on a basis of social relations.²⁶ The traditional concept thus simplifies the way of thinking in dealing with complex situations. To understand living systems, a change in the way of seeing, a move from the traditional way of confronting complexity in terms of substance and matter to the new way of seeing the social world in terms of relationships, is required.

As discussed above, the traditional way of confronting this complexity was also based on one of the primary needs of human beings, yet this could be said to be in the sense of finding a secure point of reference as a foundation to derive everything else. The way in which Roland Barthes describes how myth works will help to clarify this point. First, myth is constituted, primarily, by removing the historical quality from things. Second, myth compensates for this loss of history by giving things a simple essence to eliminate their complexity, so that things can 'mean something by themselves'.²⁷ Just as myth does, so do traditional ways of thinking try to abolish the complexity of living systems by giving them a simple essence, so that they could mean something by themselves. It is evident that it is inappropriate to introduce the traditional way of thinking into organisational research, for organisations as living systems can never be understood by reducing them to the sum of their ever changing parts. Their history is a continuous shifting of relationships. The French *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* (UCAD) illustrates a complex shifting of social relationships in the cultural and economic perspectives. But before dealing with the complexity of design organisation

²⁶ Paul Cilliers, *Complexity And Postmodernism* (London : Routledge, 1998) 112.

²⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000) 142-143.

and determining what aspects to be examined, the question of what an organisation and a design organisation are needs to be addressed. In his dictionary Roger Bennett has supplied a definition of an organisation: 'Organisations are social entities deliberately created to achieve certain objectives'.²⁸ Based on Bennett's concept, referring to the components of the analytical structure examined in the above section, a definition of design organisation can be thus given: design organisations are social and cultural institutions deliberately created to achieve the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation.

First, just as the word 'social' means communal, common and collective, so organisations are essentially entities that involve people and groups. They are not only social but they also internalise society: this is what makes complexity. Individuals and groups must share common norms of behaviour, perspectives and values to form a social group. It is said to be one of the great human consequences of industrialisation. Just as Ernest Gellner put it, 'modern man is not loyal [...] but to a culture'.²⁹ For design organisations, they are not simply social entities, but social and cultural institutions. Industrial production has enabled human capacity of shaping his environment to extend the spectrum of design in all aspects of life. Modern society is marked by the cultural diversity in design. This cultural diversity is also manifested in the aspiration of design organisations. The *Deutscher Werkbund* in Germany, the Design and Industries Association (DIA) in Britain and the *Société des Artistes Décorateurs* (SAD) in France all formed interestingly different cultural responses to the industrial production at the beginning of the 20th-century.

Second, an objective 'to achieve certain goals' is often a key aspect of the formation of many organisations, but may not always be the case. On the one hand, by being purposefully created, organisations result from the intentions of key individuals. On the other hand, created entities could undoubtedly outlast their creators. To put it another way, the intentions of key individuals could become the guidelines of organisations, and members could also provide shared traditions for organisations. As a result, the original goals and forms of organisations are not always sustained

²⁸ See Graham Birley and Neil Moreland, *A Practical Guide To Academic Research* (London: Kogan Page, 1998) 103.

²⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations And Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 36.

through years of their existence. They are often in flux and undergo changes. 'Deliberately created' might be contextually varied. It is especially so in the case of design organisations. As visual and material expression of the aspirations and identities of modern society, design plays an important role in modern life. It follows that the goals and forms of design organisations are highly subject to social and economic changes. This point is greatly clarified in the transformation of the *Council of Industrial Design* into the *Design Council* in Britain.

Considerations about their definition uncover the complexity of design organisations that are obviously not static entities. Considered as complex systems, design organisations may be oriented by several goals. It is an important field for researchers to study the differences and variations of these goals, and to explore the ways and cultural contexts for the models of emergent organisation behaviours. For those design actors who comprise the organisation, research naturally requires an explanation of why such persons do what they do and think what they think in order to examine the unpredictability and regularity of the design organisations themselves. Hence, this research inevitably requires an elaborate consideration of research methods. As modern agencies of social connectivity, plurality and diversity, design organisations are reproduced not only within 'macro-cultures' such as national cultures, but also within their own uniqueness as 'micro-cultures', that is, organisation cultures. The French case of the *Institut D'Esthétique Industrielle* could exemplify appropriately this point. It results in the necessity of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, between survey and case study. It follows, self-evidently, that historical and comparative approaches need to be introduced in order to carry out research tasks necessitated by a need to understand the complexity, unpredictability or regularity, and emergent behaviours of design organisations. Such investigation and analysis will facilitate an understanding of how design organisations are created to achieve the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation.

1.2.2 Historical and Comparative Approaches

As already noted in the preface, with the shift of focus in design historiography, design historians endeavour to explore social and cultural basis for understanding design. An historical approach is thus at the heart of this thesis, just as Philip Abrams highlighted this point in his *Historical Sociology*, where he argued that ‘sociological explanation is necessarily historical’.³⁰ With historical approach, this thesis seeks to participate in the exploring of design history on its own model, as clarified by Nigel Cross:

Many researchers in the design world have realized that design practice does indeed have its own strong and appropriate intellectual culture, and that we must avoid swamping our design research with different cultures imported either from the sciences or the arts. This does not mean that we should completely ignore these other cultures. On the contrary, they have much stronger histories of inquiry, scholarship, and research than we have in design. We need to draw upon those histories and traditions where appropriate, while building our own intellectual culture, acceptable and defensible in the world on its own terms. We have to be able to demonstrate that standards of rigour in our intellectual culture at least match those of the others.

(Cross, *Designerly Ways Of Knowing* 55)³¹

This thesis supports the positive attitude expressed by Nigel Cross, within interdisciplinary design studies, and endorses his suggestion to establish ‘standards of rigour for the design world’ to ‘match those of others’. Therefore, this investigation will promote the understanding of design ‘in its own terms’; first, in terms of historical change in design organisations; and second, through examination of shared traditions in design activities.

Design organisations are just as complex as societies. The necessity of applying complex theory to the examination of design organisations has been explained and brief characteristics of complex systems are also given above. But it is necessary to go into detailed characteristics in order to know how far it can lead into the investigation of design organisations. Paul Cilliers has offered a description of 10

³⁰ Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983) 2.

³¹ Nigel Cross, “Designerly Ways Of Knowing: Design Discipline Versus Design Science,” *Design Issues* 17-3 (2001): 55.

characteristics of complex systems, of which three are considered, here, to support this historical analysis:

(vii) Complex systems are usually open systems, i.e. they interact with their environment. As a matter of fact, it is often difficult to define the border of a complex system. Instead of being a characteristic of the system itself, the scope of the system is usually determined by the purpose of the *description* of the system, and is thus often influenced by the position of the observer. This process is called *framing*.

(ix) Complex systems have a history. Not only do they evolve through time, but their past is co-responsible for their present behaviour. Any analysis of a complex system that ignores the dimension of time is incomplete, or at most a synchronic process.

(x) Each element in the system is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, it responds only to information that is available to it locally. This point is very important.

(Cilliers, Complexity & Postmodernism)³²

It can be observed through Cilliers' statements that a complex system is characterised by an open system, a history and an ignorance of the whole by its parts. These features offer historical dimensions of analysis. In other words, Cilliers' assertions further the understanding of what can be historical in the studies of design organisation.

First, being open systems, design organisations interact with their social environment. Social and national analyses, such as national identity and social ethos, are beneficial in describing the social and national scope of the development of design organisations. Bruce Berg, professor at the California State University, draws attention to the equivalent importance of items and their environments in the sociological analysis:

Understanding the historical nature of phenomena, events, people, agencies, and even institutions is important. In many ways, it may be as important as understanding the items themselves. One cannot fully evaluate or appreciate advances made in

³² Cilliers 4.

knowledge, policy, science, or technology without some understanding of the circumstances within which these developments occurred.

(Berg, Qualitative Research Methods For The Social Sciences 212)³³

Without such analyses, a framework defining the boundaries of design cultures and practices through organisations as complex systems would be impossible to achieve. This kind of ‘framing’ is essential in modern changing society, because the way of thinking plays a prominent role in modern institutional change, that is, in the transition from tradition to modernity. Governments, distinct social groups may perceive modernity and nationality in divergent ways in building modern society. It is significant to know how national cultures as social environments produce historical conjunctures through the representations and practices by design organisations.

Second, design organisations as complex systems have a history, therefore a survey of organisational development is necessary. Such a survey cannot be the mere retelling of facts from the past, as considered in common parlance. It is a discovery, in which to identify the complex factors such as meanings, events and ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present, since historical and sociological analysis can increase appreciation and understanding of contemporary issues of an infinite array of social, political and cultural dimensions. An understanding of the past provides the necessary information to be used in the present in order to suggest how things may be in the future. In other words, ‘their past is co-responsible for their present behaviour’. This seeking of relationships of events from the past and their connections with the present contributes to the assessment of the cultural achievements of design organisation.

Charles Handy interestingly suggests four types of organisational cultures.³⁴ The ‘power culture’, usually found in smaller organisations, is highly competitive and figure-centred. The ‘role culture’, usually found in larger organisations as stable environments, has a bureaucratic control. The ‘task culture’, usually found in

³³ Berg 212.

³⁴ Harrison calls them ‘organizational ideologies’ in his “Understanding Your Organization’s Character,” Harvard Business Review, May–June: 119-128. Handy proposed the term ‘Cultures of Organization’ to mean a set of norms for an organisation. See Charles Handy, Understanding Organizations (London: Penguin, 1993) 209.

organisations under changing conditions, has a responsive capability to need. The 'person culture', almost an anti-culture, exists simply to serve the individuals who choose to be part of it. Handy examines, in some detail, the contingencies that create these cultures. He divides them into a series of factors – history, ownership, size, technology, goals, environment and people – and suggests a total of 35 causal links between culture and these contingencies. Any organisation, if examined in relation to these factors, would find itself subject to two, or even three, different cultures.³⁵ Handy's suggestions and analyses bring an analytical understanding of 'micro-cultures' in perspective of design organisations. His four types of cultures of organisations underlie greatly the examination of the guidelines and shared traditions in the development of design organisations.

Finally, some parts of the system do not receive complete information about the whole. This very important point specifically rationalises case studies for organisation research into two perspectives. In terms of the internal aspects of design organisations, such case studies will clarify the complex situation of those people who constitute the organisations, their views of the world and understanding of situations, and their shared norms of behaviours, perspectives and values as a social group. In terms of the external aspects of design organisations, these case studies will uncover, historically, changes of their original goals over a period of time and variations of their original forms.

The key points, stated above, for methodological choices, can be defended in terms of what is expected from an historical approach for examining design organisations. In brief, the historical approach in this thesis aims at examining design cultures and practices in three perspectives: the possible contexts, the function of goals and norms in these contexts and the cultural variations of these contexts. Thus, the deployment of historical research as a means of examining the past in order to understand the present is seen as highly significant. In the dimension of time, this research explores the influence of historical development upon cultural formations and ideologies. In social and national dimensions, the analysis of this thesis focus on both the differing cultures of design and the ways in which these have been informed by and, in the

³⁵ See Handy, 191-200.

dialectical sense, informed national patterns of development. As a result, the long historical vista will be adopted to achieve a structural analysis of historical sweep borrowed from what Kondratieff has characterized as ‘long waves in history’.

This analytical ‘long wave’ involves British and French comparison specifically between their design cultures in their transition to modernity. British modernisation achieves a great balance of political democratisation and marketization. French transition to modernity exposes a disproportion between high level of political democratisation and lower motivation of marketization. The similarities and dissimilarities of these two models of endogenetic modernisation shed sufficient light on the interaction of design cultures and national patterns of development in regard to the developed countries. Their geographical proximity, political difference in state formation, economical variation with land and naval based powers, and historical intertwining and cultural rivalry significantly contribute to the investigation of modern design cultures through design organisations. Such a comparative vista is expected to establish standards of vigour for the historical contextualisation of modern design in national dimensions. Set against this background, the comparator of China, as an example of exogenetic modernisation, uncovers the diversity for the developing states to shape their design cultures.

The ‘historical’ and ‘comparative’ approaches are usually considered as one: historical-comparative. Yet, this study attaches more importance to the comparative, while combining both in the analysis. As a matter of fact, ‘historical-comparative’ is normally understood as – or, basically, taken as – ‘comparative’ in sociology, as Professor Vroom articulates below:

For sociologists the use of the adjective ‘comparative’ to qualify the ‘study of organisations’ is something of pleonasm. Comparative study is the fundamental sociological method and has been since Montesquieu.

(Vroom, Methods Of Organizational Research 113)³⁶

³⁶ Victor H. Vroom, Methods Of Organizational Research (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1967) 113.

The English researcher Clive Seale traces the roots of comparative sociology to the Enlightenment:

The origins of contemporary social science lie in the work of eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers, who believed that it was possible to discover the laws that governed social life, just as natural scientists were discovering those that determined natural and biological events. Many such thinkers constructed their theories on the basis of historical comparisons.

(Seale, Researching Society And Culture 76)³⁷

In contrast to the tradition of comparative sociological studies, studies of organisations used to have a single community as its object, as a means of offering a self-evident view of evolution; that is to say, they practised the historical-comparative in a limited dimension of the historical. The development of social research thus enables a greater awareness of this deficiency. Originally, the first major text that applied the idea of evolution in social research was Montesquieu's *Spirit Of The Laws* (1748). Influenced by Montesquieu, a key concept was laid down for the establishment of the social sciences on a solid foundation, that of 'social totality' or thinking of society as an interrelated whole consisting of different levels. This concept was understood similarly in materialist and evolutionary theories. The different levels refer to a succession of stages in evolutionary theory: they refer first to a transition of stages and second to economic, political and ideological levels. Therefore, the incorporative practices of these two theories proved fruitful in the development of the social sciences in the 19th century. Works of the 19th century, such as those generated by the founders of sociology, were a blend of sociology, history, political science and economics, to which the idea of stages and laws of evolution were made central. For example, Comte propounded a 'law of three stages', which explained social evolution by the transition from an initial 'theological' stage, followed by a 'metaphysical' and then a 'positive' stage, that is, scientific. His philosophy of progress – positivism – just took the name of this last stage. Others, like Spencer, proposed an evolutionary vision in which he argued that societies

³⁷ Clive Seale, Researching Society and Culture (London: SAGE, 1998) 76.

gradually moved, through a process of survival of the fittest, to an optimum form of society.³⁸

It should be borne in mind that this convergent trend fell apart as the social sciences separated in the period prior to World War I. Furthermore, between World War I and the 1950s, associated research was seldom performed by two trends of materialist and evolutionary theories. This institutional change can be interpreted as an embodiment of ideological separation, a dual structure not only visible in Europe but also in the whole of the Western world. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the development of the social sciences established a Eurocentric value for the Western world. Positivism, based on experience and empirical knowledge, became almost a religion. It could be said to be, for the Europeans that is, the only credo which is real and complete, destined to replace all imperfect and provisional systems, resting on the primitive basis of theology. In other words, positivism provided the world with an identity of progress that is modern Europe. Yet, because of improved international communication and the break up of colonial empires, evolutionism gradually came to be discredited. The mega-histories and evolutionary schemes propounded by Enlightenment thinkers and 19th century founders of sociology were thought to be insensitive to cultural differences as well as being overly Eurocentric. With a world leadership role for the United States, Eurocentricism gave place to Americanism. Already, in 1937, Talcott Parsons was able to start his book, *The Structure Of Social Action*, with the famous rhetorical question: ‘Who now reads Spencer?’³⁹

European historicity is apparently not the only valid one since, just as Karl Popper claimed, there are many histories rather than one history of mankind.⁴⁰ American society needs to build its own historicity. In 1966, Parsons interpreted this alternative historicity through his publication *Societies: Evolutionary And Comparative Perspectives*, in which he put forward three main stages of the evolution of society:

³⁸ See others works, for example, Alex Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (London: Collins, 1966); Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free, 1960). Their main emphasis was the evolutionary developments underlying all changes in society.

³⁹ Talcott Parsons, *The Structure Of Social Action: A Study In Social Theory With Special Reference To A Group Of Recent European Writers*, Vol. 1. Marshall, Pareto, Durkheim, 2nd ed (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968) 1.

⁴⁰ Karl Popper, *The Open Society And Its Enemies*. Vol. 2: *The High Tide Of Prophecy*. 4th ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) 270.

primitive, intermediate and modern – which had strong parallels with Comte’s ‘law of three stages’: theological, metaphysical and positive. Parsons’ logic of social stages justifies the superiority of the American modern, while Conte’s positivism pointed to the only validity of European historicity. Similarly, American sociological studies are shaping their Americanism.

Interest in worldwide comparative research grew in the 1970s as the American shaping of sociology showed, in turn, its own unilateralism. American and European structural functionalism were both criticised for their static view of society and economic determinism in terms of orthodox Marxism. New theories sensitive to cultural contexts were therefore being constructed by researchers.⁴¹ Aware of dramatic political conflict in the Western world, and with concerns to explain the reasons for undeveloped regions, researchers became interested in the fundamental questions about the nature of society and social change. As a result, researchers such as Perry Anderson and Theda Skocpol realised the limitations of exclusive reliance on a singular and restrictive standpoint. Positivist approaches and quantitative techniques alone were thought to be inadequate.

As a consequence of this change of research consciousness, studies within different cultural contexts grew into a vital force from the 1980s onwards, in this ever-increasing, cross-cultural world where the interpretation of similar ideas in different countries becomes a significant factor in terms of cultural development. For example, as stated in the preface, Latin American theorists offered alternative ways of understanding the meanings of modernity in non-Western cultures.⁴² In addition, it could be argued that it is time for the single greatest barrier to human movement: isolating Western and Eastern worlds, to be broken. Hence, as the Norwegian sociologist Øyen describes, ‘more cross-national studies than ever before are being

⁴¹ Some influential works of this period include Perry Anderson, Lineages Of The Absolutist State (London: NLB, 1974); Theda Skocpol, States And Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis Of France, Russia And China (Cambridge UP, 1979) and Vision And Method In Historical Sociology (New York: Cambridge UP, 1984).

⁴² See, for example, Fernando Ortiz and Julio Le Riverend, Contrapunteo Cubano Del Tabaco Y El Azucar (Caracas: Fundacion Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1987).

carried out, and the need as well as demand for comparisons across countries is formidable'.⁴³

As stated above, 19th century pioneers in sociology were ardent defenders of the comparative method. They made great efforts to create a nucleus of knowledge of international and intercultural validity, a systematic knowledge gained through trans-cultural and trans-national comparisons in order to scientifically solve human problems and improve social conditions. Over time, however, limitations were exposed in the first surges of such universal comparative research. This approach to systematic knowledge had to be abandoned, as it was difficult to reconcile with the growing demands in the social sciences for greater accuracy in scientific analysis. Such abandonment does not point to the abandonment of the comparative methodology itself, but to the requirement of a radical change of attitude, of an epistemological renewal. This growing demand of higher accuracy could be evidently interpreted as an academic self-reflection on Comte's positivist attitude. What Comte considers as the only adequate source of knowledge – empirical sciences – is rather subjective, as it is just from the regional experience of understanding that he abstracted empirical models to gain true knowledge. Comte's contribution to sociological theory construction is limited in the sense that it takes a subjective epistemological stand: that of Eurocentricity and scientific elitism. The accuracy of positivist knowledge was placed in question by the influential works of comparative studies in the 1960s, such as works of Shmuel Eisenstadt, Reinhard Bendix, David McClelland and others.⁴⁴ Most of them were lacking both in breadth and scope in two aspects: neither a selection of cultural and national variables for comparison nor a definition of contextual dimensions of analysis to define are stated. There is no agreement on methods, as these theoretical constructions of trans-cultural and trans-national comparisons hold that all societies can be compared or that each society is unique.

⁴³ Else Øyen, Comparative Methodology: Theory And Practice In International Social Research (London: SAGE, 1990) 1.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Shmuel Eisenstadt, The Political System Of Empires (New York: Free, 1963); Reinhard Bendix, Nation-Building And Citizenship (New York: Wiley, 1964) and David McClelland, The Achieving Society (New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1961).

Realising that traditional methodologies are based on a set of criteria which are concerned with social scientists' own comprehension of a society, research has promoted an epistemological renewal in the 1970s, which changed the focus of interest from the model of traditional or modern polarity to that of global diversity. The American sociologist Melvin L. Kohn interpreted the significance of this change as follows:

I argue that cross-national research is valuable, even indispensable, for establishing the generality of findings and the validity of interpretations derived from single-nation studies. ... I also argue that cross-national research is equally valuable, perhaps even more valuable, for forcing us to revise our interpretations to take account of cross-national differences and inconsistencies that could never be uncovered in single-nation research.

(Inkeles and Sasaki, Comparing Nations And Cultures 28)⁴⁵

Cross-national and comparative research contributes importantly to our understanding of design. Through such mechanisms and the changing of positions and perspectives, it is possible to gain a better view of design practices and cultures. Compared across different cultural backgrounds, the socio-cultural significance of design organisations is better understood. There is a significantly noteworthy parallelism between the changing focus of design historiography and the methodological turn of social studies around the 1970s. It is becoming a common goal for researchers to go beyond unilateralism and one-sided positions and break through theoretical as well as cultural barriers. While cross-cultural comparisons are absolutely advantageous to the studies of design and design organisations, this branch of study becomes especially difficult when researchers fail to understand why the people concerned are living the way they do, or why they think the way they do, because the vast differences of a researcher's own way of life makes it extremely difficult for her/him to understand what is going on. It could be said that the Finnish sociologist Peter Alasuutari has suggested three ways to extract useful 'why-questions' in comparing different cultures.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See Alex Inkeles and Masamichi Sasaki, Comparing Nations And Cultures: Readings In A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective (New Jersey: Princeton Hall, 1996) 28.

⁴⁶ Pderitti Alasuutari, Research Culture: Qualitative Method And Cultural Studies (London: SAGE, 1995) 133-135.

One way is 'to take a hard look at the underlying foundations of his or her own patterns of thinking', so that the researcher will be able to generate different presumptions between the culture concerned and his or her own.⁴⁷ It is necessary to transcend national boundaries for, despite the differences appearing at a superficial level, there are in fact certain aspects that both cultures share. Researchers need to look for cultural and historical similarities while simultaneously searching for their differences. Establishing the generality of relationships greatly extends the scope of research into design organisations to include their social situation as well.

Another way is 'to try to find a point of comparison in a different culture that you do not know so well'; that is, 'to compare different cultures in an attempt to make visible and understandable the unique way in which any given culture perceives the world and to detect and conceptualise the limits to intra-cultural variation.'⁴⁸ It is very difficult to generate questions about one's own culture, as one must be able to see beyond the horizon of self-evident familiarity. In this case, locating a point of comparison in an unfamiliar cultural context is a useful method for problematising the self-evident or for becoming self-reflexively conscious of practice. Similarly, to compare the data in one's study at hand with that drawn from other studies, or to compare one's findings with the findings of other reports, is also an effective means of enquiry from this perspective. If the first way aims to contribute to the understanding of organisations by generalising outside aspects that cultures and organisations have in common, this second way makes visible and understandable the unique way in which any given culture perceives the world or in which any organisation encounters society. It is thus detecting, within the design organisations, the intra-organisational variation in order for the organisations' members to be able to better master their practice on a mutual knowledge base. This way can be understood to be what Alfred Schütz calls the 'stranger viewpoint', 'neither unreflective like the person on the street nor trapped within the narrow vantage point of an academic specialism'.⁴⁹ The vantage point that a stranger as a researcher has here, is the ability to participate in other empirical life yet still maintain a degree of detachment for reflection.

⁴⁷ Alasuutari, 133.

⁴⁸ Alasuutari, 135.

⁴⁹ Mark J. Smith, *Social Science In Question* (London: SAGE, 1998) 16.

The third way could be said to be rather more ethereal, because Alasuutari suggests a comparison to be performed by one's imagination: 'imagine how small things would appear if they were big or vice versa'.⁵⁰ This proposition appears quite elusive at first; but it does not necessarily stand for an 'imaginative comparison' formed outside reality, because many comparisons undertaken in the imagination would have an implicitly real starting point. In explanation of what is meant here, investigators could interpret their presumptions by contrasting what they learn about the given things they actually study with what is known or believed to be true about a number of other things.

It is proposed here that these three ways provide a clever means of exploring how socio-cultural boundaries for the activities of design organisations can be created, as exemplified by the case of the *Council of Industrial Design* (COID). A dozen of central design organisations are examined in this way together with their six exhibitions, such as the *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* (UCAD), the *Société des Artistes Décorateurs* (SAD), the *Union des Artistes Modernes* (UAM), the *Institut d'Esthétique Industrielle* (IEI), the *Centre de Création Industriel* (CCI), the *Valorisation de l'innovation dans l'ameublement* (VIA), the *Design and Industries Association* (DIA), the *British Institute of Industrial Arts* (BIIA), the *Council for Art and Industry* (CAI), the *Design Council* (DC), the *China Industrial Design Association* (CIDA). A cultural comparative approach allows us to treat cultures as variables in the interpretation of design organisations, to consider how design organisations convey and produce different design cultures, and to analyse models of design practices through organisations. Cross-cultural comparisons also enable us to have a clearer insight into design organisations themselves as socio-cultural contexts and institutional environments for design activities. As the original goals and forms of design organisations can change over time and vary across cultures, it is impossible to separate their considerations from deeply embedded cultural values. The comparative approach thus clarifies the contextualisation of these values within design organisations. In this sense, a cultural comparative approach is especially needed to study organisations in developed countries, where immense socioeconomic and

⁵⁰ Alasuutari 135.

cultural resources integrated through organisations constitute source models for developing nation-states to refer to in modern social transition. It is said to be in fact a kind of value management in organisation studies. As early as the 1960s, Vroom had already talked about the underestimation of what today is called ‘culturalism’ – a managerial interest in cultural manipulation – in organisation studies.⁵¹

Through a review of comparative studies in sociology a parallel turn in the fields of design historiography and sociology is emphasised. It clarifies then the reason why the comparative approach in this thesis seeks to transcend national boundaries. In the understanding of different social-cultural conditions of design organizations, this research intends a better view of contextualized design knowledge in respects of the ways of thinking, cultural environments and organizational behaviours. Broadly speaking, the comparative approach enables to analyse differing cultural and political formations over a period of time to emphasise similarities and dissimilarities, analysing value change with respect to design cultures. In the perspective of the cultural diversity in design, the comparative analyses of this thesis require the understanding how people live in different cultural and social contexts. Particularly, they endeavour to explain not only how people live but what they want, thus to identify people’s values, aesthetic preferences and lifestyles in the global age. Relating to design organisations, the analyses will be especially focused on the value management in the cultural and economic transformation of industrialisation in terms of design cultures and practices.

The analytical structure thus built, this research will be conducted at both macro and micro levels. That is to say, it will consider large-scale phenomena such as the role of national identities and cultural politics in explaining transformations in the context of modernisation, as well as small-scale phenomena, that is, case studies, such as substitution of design organisations and design exhibitions. Their research sources will include: primary sources, such as chronicles, governmental documents, annual reports and audio-video materials; secondary sources such as others’ arguments will be used as a historical reference of argument. The examination of sources is based on the analytical approaches of agreement and difference, so as to establish some

⁵¹ Vroom 117-118.

fundamental frameworks for the studies of design organisations in the dimension of contextualised design knowledge. Basically situated in the British academic tradition of design historiography, this research is also trying to devise a new methodological approach by borrowing from a variety of historical practices.

CHAPTER 2. 'CULTURAL FRANCE': BUILDING MODERN CULTURAL BONDS THROUGH IDEOLOGICAL HOMOGENEITY

2.1 Designing Modernity in an Aesthetic Logic

The French have always considered culture to be an intrinsic part of the national profile and, therefore, they have also considered support of the arts to be an essential activity of the State.

(Greenhalgh, *Modernism In Design* 55)¹

In 1959, at the very outset of the Fifth Republic, General de Gaulle appointed the writer André Malraux to take charge of the Ministry of Culture, whereby a real form of cultural politics was born. Seen as part of the mainstream today, cultural politics is often considered as a constituent of *The French Exception*.² Since the Third Republic, it could be said that France has invested its national and social identities in its culture. Culture is the visible territory on which a struggle continues to define and 'defend a certain idea of France'.³ To comprehend this idea of France, it is first necessary to understand what 'culture' means for the French.

In its broadest capacity, the term 'culture' is usually used in the anthropological sense, referring to all human practices in which a community represents itself. At its narrowest, 'culture' is commonly understood in the intellectual sense, its meaning embracing literature and the arts. These two different interpretations are widely used, yet reviewed in debates. Nevertheless, the 'arts and heritage' – high culture, or 'la haute culture' in French – are certainly perceived as the core component of culture. This narrowest sense of culture, high culture, the most restricted meaning of the term, is commonly used in France. However, it has been argued, by Michael Kelly and David L. Looseley, for example, that popular culture started to have a place from the

¹ Paul Greenhalgh, *Modernism In Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990) 55.

² Characterised by anti-Americanism and a Gaullist independence, French resistance to the Anglo-American model of globalisation or the American-style world economy marks the French preoccupation of preserving French uniqueness or exception, that is, France's national and cultural values. In the 1990s, this antiglobalisation sentiment shifted from the economic to political and cultural realms. A concept of 'cultural exception' was thus introduced by France in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations in 1993 – in order to protect its cultural market. In 1999, under the title *The French Exception*, Andrew Jack published his book where he seeks to define this economic, political and cultural state of France with regard to itself and to the outside world.

³ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires De Guerre, Vol. I: L'appel, 1940–1942* (Paris: Plon, 1954) 1. For many decades, a number of studies have portrayed this struggle, such as, Christin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization And The Reordering Of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1995); Susan Weiner, *The French Fifties* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000) and David L. Looseley *The Politics Of Fun: Cultural Policy And Debate In Contemporary France* (Oxford: Berg, 1995).

1920s onwards. This concept of culture extended through the movements of the 1920s, 1950s and 1980s.⁴

Influenced by the historian Roger Chartier, Michael Kelly, at the University of Southampton, a researcher on French cultural and intellectual history, has introduced two notions as analytical dimensions of culture: representations and practices. As he explains:

Representations are the visible signs and symbolic forms, which convey meanings and display identities. ... Practices ... are the processes of production by which representations are constituted. They may be discursive, administrative, legal, educational, military or other practices.

(Kelly, The Cultural And Intellectual Rebuilding Of France After The Second World War 22)⁵

This section will focus its examination on certain aspects of these two notions, which are here believed efficient in clarifying the modern situation of French design.

2.1.1 Political Frameworks and Cultural Attitudes

Traditionally, it has been perceived, the French state has played a central role in shaping the national sentiment.⁶ This state-led paradigm of Frenchness, based on a close relationship between high culture and political power, has basically defined the expressive form of French modern design in different stages. It is of particular interest to this analysis that these different stages correspond to the specific preoccupations at different periods of modernisation.

In France, it has been noted that the monarchy and the state have always used the arts to glorify their power. This tradition of politicising high culture is generally said to

⁴ See, for example, Michael Kelly, The Cultural And Intellectual Rebuilding Of France After The Second World War (New York: Macmillan, 2004) 18-20; David L. Looseley, The Politics Of Fun (Oxford: Berg, 1995) 35.

⁵ Michael Kelly 22.

⁶ See, for example, Suan Collard at the University of Sussex and James Macmillan at the University of Edinburgh. In her contribution to Contemporary French Cultural Studies, Collard gives an historical account of the cultural role of the state in France. Professor Macmillan also examines the relation of the French state and culture in motivating national actions in his book Modern France (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

have begun with the absolute monarchy of François I, in the 16th century, when the king started to politicise a cultural state as a means of building the nationhood, regalia and power.⁷ For example, he invited Leonardo da Vinci and other great Italian artists to France to design and ornament his chateau, and to enhance the splendour of his court. His favourite residence, Fontainebleau, was thus turned into, as Kenecht described it, ‘something of a great European cultural centre’, ‘a kind of new Rome’.⁸

French royal glory and dignity are generally stated to reach their highest point when the ‘Sun’ of France rose; that is, the Sun King Louis XIV, who likened his royalty to that of a Pharaoh.⁹ Louis XIV turned France into a model monarchy, an exemplary state. The age of Louis XIV promoted the classic arts and letters that were considered as symbolic embodiments of the French nation and could be said to represent the main components of the French cultural temperament, continuing to exert an influence up to the present day. This period could be argued to be one of the most important moments that typically represent the inter-relationship of cultural and political life in French history. Similar to François I’s Fontainebleau, Louis XIV’s Palace of Versailles constituted not only the material embodiment of political power, but also a hallmark of the French international reputation for cultural and intellectual life. As a point of importance, Louis XIV created three French academies to support the study of fine arts, languages and sciences: L’Académie des Beaux Arts (1648), L’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (1663) and L’Académie des Sciences (1666). When arguing about the French sense of culture, Michael Kelly, through his research into French cultural and intellectual history, extends literary, intellectual and artistic high culture to include the sciences.¹⁰ In terms of Kelly’s interpretations of French sense of high culture, Louis XIV’s initiative is said to fully institutionalise high culture in a centralised way.

⁷ In her article *French Cultural Policy: The Special Role Of The State*, Susan Collard enumerates three important French authors who hold this kind of view: Philippe Poirrier, Jean-Michel Djian and André Burguière. See William Kidd Siân and Reynolds, *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* (New York: Arnold, 2000) 39.

⁸ Robert Jean Kenecht, *Francis I* (London: Cambridge UP, 1982) 268.

⁹ See, for example, Jones Colin, *The Great Nation: France From Louis XV To Napoleon* (London: Penguin, 2003) and Gerald Newman, *The Rise Of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).

¹⁰ As Michael Kelly put it, ‘the narrow sense of culture was in common use, referring certainly to literature, intellectual and artistic high culture, but also commonly extended to include the sciences’. See Kelly 20. In this sense, Louis XIV’s initiative can be said to fully institutionalise high culture in France.

It has been postulated by Philippe Poirrier, for example, in the age of Napoleon, that the centralisation of culture has placed considerable emphasis on the arts, insofar as the arts – and especially the plastic arts – were seen to exhibit qualities of French greatness.¹¹ It could be recognised that, following the French Revolution, this was seen as a central facet of national ideology. Napoleon believed that every work of genius belonged to France and the Empire. Napoleon not only moved into the Louvre, but he also renamed the latter as the Napoleon Museum. Thousands of tons of art works were transported from conquered nations, libraries and churches to the Louvre.¹² Napoleon is one of those sovereigns in history who are fully aware of the capacity of symbolism to propagate power. According to Western scholars such as Mansel and Bergson, Napoleon built his authority, in a way of systematic publication of his victories, through engaging the best writers and artists of France and Europe to glorify his deeds and picture his victories, and portraying him as the architect of France's greatest glory.¹³

Hence, it could be surmised from the above that the emperor used luxury as a political tool. He placed large official orders with national factories to stimulate luxury industries – he wanted French goods to be regarded by the rest of the world as being beyond compare. The emperor's ambition thus created a special language of decorative arts that communicated the glory of the Empire.¹⁴ It is proposed here that this kind of exemplary glory through works from French luxury industries has

¹¹ With his book Histoire Des Politiques Culturelles De La France Contemporaine, Professor Poirrier, at the Université de Bourgogne, gives an essential historical account of the French state's patronage of arts and culture from the end of the Old Regime to the present day. It is also a widely held view that Napoleon placed political emphasis on the arts, namely Anglo-American scholars such as Douglas Johnson at University College, London, Williams Kidd and Siân Reynolds at the University of Stirling, Krishan Kumar at the University of Virginia and Louis Bergeron at Princeton University.

¹² Philippe Poirrier has interestingly attributed this ideology to the intention based on the liberty legacy of the French Revolution. France, as a nation of liberty, is entitled to conserve the liberal works of Ancient Greece while continuing to create the works of this kind. The conclusion that Poirrier quoted from the report of Grégoire to the convention clarified this republic 'repatriation' of artworks from other parts of the Europe as justified by the legacy of liberty: 'Si nos armées victorieuses pénètrent en Italie, l'enlèvement de l'Apollon du Belvédère et de l'Hercule Farnèse serait la plus brillante conquête. C'est la Grèce qui a décoré Rome; mais les chefs-d'œuvre des républiques grecques doivent-ils décorer le pays des esclaves? La République française devraient être leur dernier domicile.' See Philippe Poirrier, Histoire Des Politiques Culturelles De La France Contemporaine (Dijon: Biblist, 1996) 23.

¹³ See Philip Mansel, Paris Between Empires 1814–1852 (London: John Murray, 2001); Louis Bergeron, France Under Napoleon (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1981).

¹⁴ The catalogue accompanying a travelling exhibition organised by the American Federation of Arts and Les Arts Décoratifs in Paris, edited by Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, curator of 19th-century art at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, offers a remarkable view of Empire style in all its glory. See Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, Symbols Of Power: Napoleon And The Art Of The Empire Style (New York: American Federation of Arts; Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 2007).

evolved not only as a manifestation of French national sentiment but also of its cultural intention, on which the French collective memory is largely based. From the Middle Ages to the time of the Empires, monarchies of the Old Regime dispensed patronage and commissioned art works. The role of kings and queens, royal courts and emperors has been highlighted in the creation of the country's high-culture heritage.¹⁵ High culture finally offered a solution in the search for a national identity, by emphasising French taste – one thing that all Frenchmen might agree to be proud of – also closely associated with a preoccupation with modernisation. The following two examples serve to illustrate the glory of the Empire and the national ideology stated above.

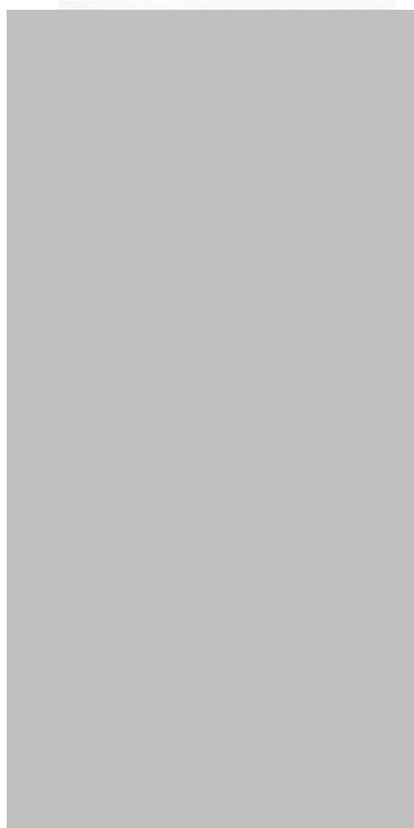


Figure 2.1. Manufacture de Sèvres. Spindle vase 'The First Consul Crossing the Alps at the Great Saint Bernard Pass'. 1811.

Source: Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, Symbols Of Power: Napoleon And The Art Of The Empire Style 73.

'Original in Colour'

¹⁵ See, for example, Pierre Nora, ed., Les Lieux De Mémoire: II La Nation (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), especially volumes 2 and 3; Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, ed., Histoire Culturelle De La France, 4 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1997–8).



Figure 2.2. Manufacture de Sèvres. 'Percier clock'. 1813.

Symbols Of Power: Napoleon And The Art Of The Empire Style.

Source: Nouvel-Kammerer, 223.

'Original in Colour'

If Napoleon did much to modernise the nations he ruled, it was during the Third Republic that France was clearly transformed into a modern industrialised society. Affirmation of French greatness was central to the cultural politics of the Third Republic: France must be regenerated and the French nation should reassert itself and rediscover its greatness. Besides the idea of greatness, unity was also a central issue for the Republic, as there was a fundamental paradox that underlay its whole political history.¹⁶ The Third Republic therefore adopted the politics of aesthetics to deal with the challenges of modernisation. In her book, *Republican Art And Ideology In Late Nineteenth-Century France*, Miriam R. Levin has summarised the theory and practice of the Republican politics of art as follows:

¹⁶ See David Thomson, Democracy In France Since 1870 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969) 75-115.

The Republicans' art theory was an integral part of an ideology which made art a major force influencing public values and economic behaviour in favour of the lifestyle of small producers and entrepreneurs ... The Republicans' aim was to convince the public that middle-class values and ways of life could be secured through the proper integration of science and technology into ordinary working and leisure practices.

(Levin, Republican Art And Ideology In Late Nineteenth-Century France 1-3).¹⁷

Levin's summary offers a clear picture of modern French design in an unfavourable political context. If the modernity of France took its definitive form during the Third Republic, the ideological way in which France builds its modernity will plant, in design development, an inner disharmony between middle-class values and the requirements of industrial production. It has been asserted that during the Third Republic the decorative arts assumed the role of the expansion of taste in the public arena as a means of maintaining a sense of security, unity and superiority. As a result, in France, design as value form of the mass-produced system did not assume the role that the decorative arts had performed for the social elite. Being closely intertwined with high taste, the decorative arts in modern France did not respond to contemporary industrial conditions. The question of how to reform design and instil an awareness of a necessary modern movement in the decorative arts, therefore, preoccupied the French during the years between 1900 and 1930. The *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, of 1925, embodied the difficulty of reconciling design excellence and modern industry. The exhibition of 1925 indicated, to quote Jonathan Woodham, 'the decorative excess of expensive creations ... and the contemporary spirit'.¹⁸

The difficulty for the blending of French historical styles, especially the styles derived from the Louis XVI and Empire eras, with modernity, was due to both the issue of Frenchness and the economic situation at the time. The national preoccupation with maintaining a sense of security in French values and ways of life motivated the distribution of the aesthetic quality through the decorative arts, as did Emperor Napoleon by the stimulation of luxury industries. On the other hand, the

¹⁷ Miriam R. Levin, Republican Art And Ideology In Late Nineteenth-Century France (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1986) 1-3.

¹⁸ Jonathan M. Woodham, Twentieth-Century Design (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 53.

contemporary economic situation reinforced the French belief that their luxury trades could be carried into the 20th century without losing their quintessential Frenchness. Paul Greenhalgh, president of the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, former head of research at the V&A, highlighted the vantage point of French luxury exports, through invoking a statistic from the *Diplomatic And Consular Report 1906–1907, French Imports From the UK*. In 1905, Britain had a rather unbelievable trade with France, exporting £4,151,000 worth of coal, iron and steel for £4,225,000 worth of French hats and feathers.¹⁹ As these figures suggest, the added value of luxury exports encourages the French distribution of the aesthetic quality through the decorative arts in the maintaining of French values under industrial conditions.

When this situation was blended with the democratised ideal of taste, through luxury and the decorative arts, the aesthetic intention of modern French material culture was further confirmed. An unconsciously conservative environment was thus pretending to provide modern French design with the opportunity to undertake new initiatives. Politically, the republican concept found its aesthetic representation of Frenchness, which embodied national integration and greatness; economically, a revival of art industries was encouraged, by the situation of the time, to rely on the French primacy of arts or superior aesthetic quality. As a result, modern French design was to spread in the shape of taste during the very period when taste was taken as a national expression: around 1900.

2.1.2 High Design and Decorative Arts

It is first necessary to comprehend the location of the arts in French culture in order to understand the aesthetic orientation of French modern design. The question to be answered here is: why do the arts have such an exceptional place in French modern culture? Two main cultural perspectives to be analysed are suggested here: orthodoxy and mission. First, it could be advanced that art was believed by many in French society to be something which is independent of social, economic and political events. Such thinking can be traced back to Plato, who taught that the artist's task was to articulate the absolute truths underlying the material world. This idea seemed to be a

¹⁹ See Greenhalgh 56.

natural inheritance for France, a country that considered itself a worthy successor to Greece and Rome, having real artists with the talent to express the ‘essence’ of things.²⁰ This intentional superiority was further confirmed by the politicisation of the arts from François I through to Louis XIV, Napoleon and modern France. Second, since the idea of ‘mission civilisatrice’ is a product of the cult of the nation, it was felt that France should find something to affirm its ‘distinction’, its superior place in the world hierarchy.²¹ In the 19th century, when France acquired a huge empire, it could be said that it was especially important that it should, meanwhile, provide the colonies with the opportunity for the consumption of its national image in order to prevent any cultural debasement by barbarous foreign innovations. In such a context, art was naturally the first choice, as Great Britain had become the world leader for the production of industrial goods and machinery; over the same period, France finally established itself as the world centre for the production of art. Thus, different cultural gravities have naturally set the different models of cultural consumption in their respective imperial contexts.

Art, as an expressive medium for French greatness and distinction, created the aesthetic aspect of modern French design: the decorative arts as a French way of life – the French art(s) of living. In his contribution to the book *L’Art De Vivre* (1989), McFadden has made an analytical review of two centuries of French decorative arts, illuminating the role of the decorative arts in communicating the art of living as an essential character of French design.²²

McFadden’s review commences with the period of the French Revolution. He shows the way the revolution thrust French decorative arts into the modern era: the disappearance of aristocratic clients and patrons, the closure of ateliers and the banishment of guilds. It was Napoleon who promoted the French industries with the perception of ‘the economic importance of the decorative arts to the general health and well-being of France’. For example, the emperor ‘reorganized the porcelain

²⁰ See David A. Bell and David Avrom, *The Cult Of The Nation In France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 109.

²¹ To learn about how the French political elite in the 19th century tried to map out at the centre of a superior culture whose manifest destiny was to civilise the rest of the world, see Edward Said, *Culture And Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).

²² See David R. McFadden, “Two Centuries of French Style,” *L’Art De Vivre* Ed. Cathrine Arminjon, et al. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 13-41.

factory at Sèvres to create a *Manufacture Impériale*'. With the encouragement of new industries, Napoleon brought France into the new century. According to McFadden, Napoleon's successful patronage of industries, especially the luxury industries, was undeniable. On the one hand, the emperor created a favourable climate of economic competition for France by domestically including the traditional decorative arts, such as furniture, porcelain and textiles, into the expansion of the modern decorative arts industries, such as those related to food and wine, haute couture and services. On the other hand, Napoleon established the international reputation of the 'French art of living', which found an 'eager audience' in the United States. As a result of the above, 'from the period of the Restoration of the Monarchy (1815–1830) until the establishment of the second Empire under Napoleon III, France achieved an increasing reputation as the leader in the field of decorative arts and design'. Around the 1900s, the decorative arts were acknowledged as a vital source for dealing with the challenges of modernisation in France, in cultural and economic respects, as stated in the section 2.1.1. While the mass-production systems were tried in the 'art industries' of Emile Gallé and Louis Majorelle, the dialogue, even the conflict between tradition and innovation, production and creation, was embodied in the designs of Emile Ruhlmann on the one hand and Le Corbusier on the other. In the eyes of McFadden, World War II not only constituted the rupture in the social and cultural fabric of France, but also interrupted the decorative arts for a while. But from the post-war years onwards, a new generation of designers, such as Olivier Mourgue and Roger Tallon, in the field of industrial design were faced, later again, with the traditional continuity embodied in the designs of Philippe Starck. To conclude, McFadden claims that 'tradition and innovation have continued their provocative relationship in France in the two hundred years since the French Revolution'.²³

McFadden's review clarifies the high cultural intention of French design as mainstream practice. Roger Tallon, seen by many to be the father of French industrial design, also points to the prevalence of aesthetic quality over materiality in French modern design. Tallon remarks that all social orders in France interpret decoration as a superior expression in respect of the form of design. The French public is not

²³ All quoted from McFadden in *L'Art De Vivre* 15-41.

interested in the form itself because, Tallon thinks, there is not the same tradition in France as in Germany, Britain or the Scandinavian countries.²⁴

These high cultural aspirations of French design are therefore rooted in the national profile of 'Frenchness'. It is noteworthy that French primacy in the arts has not been interrupted since the French Revolution. It is held that the French believe that beauty continues through the ages to be the impetus of design: the controversial tripod *Costes* (1984) and lemon squeezer *Juicy Salif* (1990), by Philippe Starck, exemplify French curiosity in high design. This point will be returned to in the section 2.2.

2.1.3 Decorative Arts and Design Education

The different guidelines adopted for English and French design education are evident. While the Government School of Design was established in Britain, in 1837, specifically for the training of designers, the Free Royal College of Drawing, in France, was transformed, between 1854 and 1855, into an imperial and specialist college for the application of fine arts into industry. It reflects clearly the different attitude of the two governments towards the empowerment of their industries. With the Government School of Design, Britain was determined to train designers for industry; in art-led France, the priority was to seek a solution in the fine arts and transform the Free Royal College of Drawing. As a result, it could be concluded that these two schools, respectively, embodied the genesis and development of design education in Britain and France. The Government School of Design and English design education will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Following the *Great Exhibition of 1851* in London, the fact that Britain was widely perceived to be leader in industry and design aroused anxieties among the French. Yet, the French had full confidence that their superior ideas would give them an advantage as soon as their ideas were applied. The words of Prince Napoleon, in his report on the *Paris Exposition Universelle of 1855*, communicated this sense of

²⁴ See Roger Tallon and Thierry Grillet, *Roger Tallon: Itinéraires D'un Designer Industriel* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1993) 143.

confidence particularly well, as the Prince was sure of the greatness of French ideas when they were applied.²⁵

As can be surmised from this reference, the French capacity for ‘supreme’ ideas lay first and foremost within the arts. As a result, the application of the arts was considered to be a natural solution for building industrial power. When the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l’Industrie was established in Paris, in 1864, it was recorded that the Parisian manufacturers and artists supported the foundation of the union as, ‘the most practical and valuable means for all industries inspired by art’.²⁶ Thus, the application of the arts became the guideline for French design and education. It is significant to mention here that the history of the *École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs* (Ensad),²⁷ just as that of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs to be examined in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, represents a clear interpretation of this guideline.

Founded in 1766 by the painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier, the Ensad took its first name of *L’École Royale Gratuite de Dessin en Faveur des Métiers Relatifs aux Arts*. In France, as in Britain, the teaching of drawing is considered as a means of improving the quality of craft productions and thus contributes to national economic growth. The Parisian manufacturers and artists realised that beautiful objects would sell well and that the development of national industry was dependent on the training of artisans capable of satisfying a growing international customer with refined taste. The painter Antoine Ferrand de Monthelon’s article *L’Utilité Des Arts Du Dessin Pour Les Métiers Mécaniques*, published in 1746, represented similar views.²⁸ Schools of drawing were, therefore, established. This preoccupation with production quality, aspiring to a competitive advantage among neighbouring countries, persists

²⁵ See Prince Napoleon, *Rapport Sur l’Exposition Universelle De 1855* (Paris: Impr. Impériale, 1855) 3.

²⁶ Rossella Pezone, *L’Union Centrale Des Beaux-Arts Appliqués À l’Industrie: Les Origines De l’Ucad Et Du Musée Des Arts Décoratifs*, Maîtrise d’Histoire de l’Art, Université Paris-IV (Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 1989–90) 30.

²⁷ Its narration and analysis are mainly based on the following five articles: Ulrich Leben, *La Fondation De l’École Royale Gratuite De Dessin De Paris (1767–1815)*; Renaud d’Enfert, *De l’École Royale Gratuite De Dessin À l’École Nationale Des Arts Décoratifs (1806–1877)*; Rossella Froissart-Pezone, *L’École à la Recherche d’une Identité entre Art et Industrie (1877–1914)*; Sylvie Martin, *Une École Supérieure À l’Apogée (1914–1941)*; Thierry Chabanne, “Des Mots pour Décrire l’École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Terminologie et Pataquès.” Ed. Christine Colin. Paris: Hazen, 1988. 79-88. There is online access to the first four articles, at <http://www.ensad.fr/accueil.htm>, click on ‘Journal de l’Ensad’.

²⁸ Antoine Ferrand de Monthelon in “Projet Pour L’Établissement D’Écoles Gratuites De Dessin”, *Mercur de France*, March 1746: 67-74.

throughout the history of the Ensad. The establishment of this school was, therefore, extremely significant in an age without public instruction in the field.²⁹

During the 19th century, under the direction of painter Jean-Charles Nicaise Perrin, the arts were applied in the Ensad's didactical project with the following economic and artistic purposes: the improvement of industry and a contribution to the superiority of Parisian manufacture and dissemination of 'good taste', as a means of reinforcing France's leading place in the production and distribution of luxury and semi-luxury products.³⁰ The change of names, stated below, traced the defined relation of the school to industry. Between 1816 and 1844, the school's role was defined in favour of the mechanical arts. In 1854 and 1855, this role witnessed the application of the fine-arts to industry.³¹ When the names are compared, the word 'ornament' is found to be added in 1854. A search for identity was thus under way. In fact, when the third director, Gaston Louvrier de Lajolais, arrived, the first requirement was to change the school's name. In his report, submitted to the Administration of Fine-Arts, de Lajolais rejected the expression 'fine-arts applied to the industry', because of its ambiguity. The school was renamed in 1877 as *L'École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs*. With the change of name, de Lajolais also undertook the reform of the curriculum.³²

The terms 'national' and 'decorative arts' are especially significant, since the third period of the school's life corresponded to the era of the Third Republic. As expressed above, it was during the Third Republic that France was clearly transformed into a modern, industrialised society. The precise definition of the role and place of the school during this period, therefore, produced a definitive influence

²⁹ See Ulrich Leben, "La Fondation De l'École Royale Gratuite De Dessin De Paris (1767–1815)." Le Journal De L'Ensad 2004. Edition Spéciale: Histoire De L'École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs (1766–1941). Ensad. 27 May 2005. < <http://www.ensad.fr/accueil.htm>>, click on 'Journal de l'Ensad' and click on 'Edition speciale: Histoire de L'École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs (1766-1941)-premiere partie'.

³⁰ See Renaud D'Enfert, "De L'École Royale Gratuite De Dessin À L'École Nationale Des Arts Décoratifs (1806–1877)." Le Journal De L'Ensad 2004. Edition spéciale: Histoire de l'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (1766–1941). Ensad. 27 May 2005. < <http://www.ensad.fr/accueil.htm>>, click on 'Journal De L'Ensad' and click on 'Edition Speciale: Histoire De l'École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs (1766-1941)-premiere partie'.

³¹ Thierry Chabanne, "Des Mots Pour Décrire l'École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs." Arts Décoratifs, Arts Appliqués, Métiers d'Art, Design: Terminologie et Pataquès. Ed. Christine Colin. (Paris: Hazen, 1988) 81-2.

³² See Rossella Froissart-Pezone, L'École À La Recherche D'une Identité Entre Art Et Industrie (1877–1914). Édition Spéciale: Histoire De L'École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs (1766–1941). Ensad. 27 May 2005. < <http://www.ensad.fr/accueil.htm>>, click on 'Journal De L'Ensad' and click on 'Édition Spéciale: Histoire De l'École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs (1766-1941)-premiere partie'.

on the development and the situation of French modern design and its knowledge. This national preoccupation with ‘good taste’, as an important ingredient in design knowledge and education, was finally legitimised in 1927, with the definitive name *L’École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs*. In the following half of the century, the production and distribution of design knowledge in France was dominated by the decorative traditions, although from 1929 technical engineering education emerged as having some significance for design.³³ By the 1980s, with the foundation of *L’École Nationale Supérieure de la Création Industrielle* (Ensci), engineering techniques took on an equal importance in design education.

2.1.4 Rebuilding the Nation 1959–2007

With two names – André Malraux and Jack Lang – an approximate map of cultural politics under the Fifth Republic can be drawn. Both were ministers of culture, both were fully supported by Republican presidents, both tenures were close to 10 years and both were mainstays of French cultural politics.³⁴

Malraux’s cultural politics were focussed on making cultural heritage accessible to all citizens. Two policies were devoted to achieve this goal. The first was education and geared to the decentralisation of culture as a means of integrating the nation. What Malraux wanted to do was to fire the national passion from the point of view of national unity. He sought to infuse public art with passion instead of artistic knowledge. The other policy was political: exalting France through its culture as part of De Gaulle’s ‘policy of grandeur’. So the *Mona Lisa*, with Malraux in attendance, was dispatched on a tour of the United States, in 1963, and the *Venus de Milo* to

³³ In 2002, the author visited Mme Arlette Barré-Despond, inspector of French national art education, to consult with her on French design education. As Mme Barré-Despond put it to the author, French design education includes two aspects: decorative and technical engineering. Before 1929, it was a mere education of decorative arts. After 1929, engineering techniques were added to design education to meet industrial demand. It was not until 1929 that France started to have real modern industry instead of only handicrafts.

³⁴ Malraux is the second self of Charles de Gaulle, as the president recalls in his memoirs: ‘A ma droite j’ai et j’aurai toujours André Malraux’. Malraux lays the foundations for French cultural politics, Jack Lang claiming that he is a ‘mitterrandolâtre’ and has greatly modified French cultural politics. In 1986, 51% of the French expressed the wish that he would stay as the minister of culture no matter what the election result. See Philippe Poirrier, *Histoire Des Politiques Culturelles De La France Contemporaine* (Dijon: Biblist, 1996) 48, 82. Philippe Urfalino devoted an interesting chapter in his book to the course of cultural politics from Malraux to Lang: Philippe Urfalino, *L’Invention De La Politique Culturelle* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996). See also Augustin Girard, *Les Politiques Culturelles D’André Malraux À Jack Lang: Ruptures Et Continuités. Histoire D’une Modernisation Dans Institutions Et Vie Culturelle* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996).

Japan, in 1964.³⁵ Philippe Urfalino, in his book *L'Invention De La Politique Culturelle* (1996), defined the cultural politics of Malraux as, 'the philosophy of Aesthetic State'.³⁶ It could be suggested that civic republicanism is still the major constituent of official ideology in the cultural politics of the Fifth Republic.

Until the post-war years, a tradition of strong ideology was the principal means of engendering national sentiment. But the increase in birth rates, beginning in the 1940s, alongside the increase in prosperity, which itself is said to have begun in the 1950s and accelerated in the 1960s, meant that an ever-larger proportion of young people changed the national social composition. In such a context, ideological disagreement on institutional values brought into question the whole concept of social unity. Thus, Emmanuel Todd argued, in his book *The Making Of Modern France* (1991), that, today, France suffers from the reverse situation: an absence of ideological identification brings an uncertainty.³⁷ Todd claimed that, between 1980 and 1990, France underwent a revolution comparable in force to her Revolution of 1789, with consequences of a depth equal to those of industrialisation.

This is of interest to this investigation, since Jack Lang's time at the Ministry of Culture co-exists with this period. Lang's actions interpreted this revolution in terms of cultural politics in the determination to change life not only for the better but also alternatively.³⁸ Lang brought about a revolution through cultural politics in two respects. On the one hand, the cultural dimension was extended, while on the other, there was a remarkable cooperation between culture and the economy. Lang's ideas were full of vigour and novelty. He then released culture from art and eliminated the hierarchy of arts, since he believed that culture was a national matter rather than some ministry's affairs. He thus claimed that all social orders were entitled to the beauty.³⁹ As is apparent from the above, government administration could be said to have thus

³⁵ Poirrier 54.

³⁶ See Jean Caune, *Pour Une Ethique De La Médiation* (Grenoble: PUG, 1999) 25.

³⁷ Emmanuel Todd, *The Making Of Modern France: Politics, Ideology And Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) 204.

³⁸ See David L. Looseley, *The Politics Of Fun: Cultural Policy And Debate In Contemporary France* (Oxford: Berg, 1995) 71.

³⁹ Geneviève Gentil and Philippe Poirrier, *La Politique Culturelle En Débat* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2006) 94.

played a double role, acting both as a ministry for artists and art organisations and for cultural industries.⁴⁰

What Malraux and Lang achieved was to frame French cultural politics, with their successors generally working within the frameworks that they established. In the 1990s, Minister Jacques Toubon followed in the steps of Jack Lang in his work in cultural politics. Efforts were made on the reintegration of cultural territory: that is, the reintegration of public engagement with culture and cultural education at home while enhancing the practices of French culture abroad. The redefinition of the ministry's missions features exactly this double dissemination of French culture at home and abroad.⁴¹ Although the rebuilding of cultural identity sometimes suspended, and was even objected to, it has been the leitmotif of French cultural politics.⁴² In the same way, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, the minister appointed in 2004, reassured the undertaking of the national enterprise in his New Year speech of 2007, that is, to promote French culture and cultural corporations in the world.⁴³

If Malraux made efforts to modernise culture, Lang would bring modernity to cultural life through such feats as promoting modern design in the 1980s. This decade brought a renewal to map French design in the international geography. Compared to Italy, due to corporatism and a certain amount of ignorance, in France there was a 'state of absence' on the part of industrialists engaged in the dissemination of taste and the experiment of luxe series. Thus, the government tried to resolve the 'absence' by

⁴⁰ Jacques Rigaud fully appreciated Jack Lang's efforts to go beyond the limits of cultural politics under the Fifth Republic, and to reinvent new ones, but he did not think that Lang could go, individually, beyond the limits of the ministry, as he felt that 'en réalité, c'est dans son cadre classique que la politique culturelle s'est développé et a réussi.' See *L'Exception Culturelle: Culture Et Pouvoirs Sous La V^e République* (Paris: Grasset, 1995) 114, 129, 130; Philippe Urfalino, in the section of his book: *De Malraux À Lang, De L'Invention À La Dissolution*, claims that actions taken by Lang's ministry result in the dissolution of cultural politics, when there is no longer a conceptual grasp of the whole public politics of culture, when a system of purposes can no more guide and justify the whole action of the cultural ministry. See Philippe Urfalino, *L'Invention De La Politique Culturelle* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996) 325-346; David Looseley, in terms of 'politics of fun', traces a gradual shift from the democratisation of high culture, adopted as a quasi-religious crusade during the De Gaulle era, through to the aesthetic relativism and 'fun' culture which became the trademark of the department during the 1980s and 1990s. See David Looseley, *The Politics Of Fun: Cultural Policy And Debate In Contemporary France* (Oxford: Berg, 1995).

⁴¹ The dissemination of the francophonic culture in the world was added as another mission of the ministry. See Bernard Beaulieu and Michèle Darby, *Histoire Administrative Du Ministère De La Culture, 1959–2002* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002) 71.

⁴² See, for example, Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900–1945*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992).

⁴³ Discours de Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, prononcé lors de la présentation de ses vœux à la presse. 18 January 2007. [culture.gouv.fr](http://www.culture.gouv.fr). 26 February 2007. <<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/index-voeux2007.htm>>.

launching several initiatives, including the creation of the Valorisation de l'Innovation de l'Ameublement (VIA), the establishment of Ensci and the foundation of l'Agence de Promotion de la Création Industrielle (APCI). As a result, the 1980s have been a milestone for French design in the renewal of the French image to a modern, design-conscious state.⁴⁴

2.2 Intellectuals and Aesthetic Discourse

As stated above, a fundamental paradox underlay the French modern political system. It is of particular relevance that unity is also a central issue for the discursive framework for design practices. A constant disagreement featured the French discourse of modern design. Nevertheless, when the unified idea of taste brought a solution to the search for national identity by the beginning of the 19th century, the subsequent vocabulary of design appreciation was dominated by the aesthetic discourse of the intellectuals within society. From the Enlightenment to the present day, the intelligentsia has formed an integral part of French culture, by defining who, and what, is French. They have intervened in public debate and generated controversy, committing themselves to causes at home and abroad. Thus, they have shaped French citizens' understanding of design and consumption. As a consequence, the production and distribution of design knowledge depends on, to a large extent, the French intellectuals.

2.2.1 Superior Aesthetic Quality over Technique

The way in which the French government thinks and acts, in respect of design, can be traced back to the mid-19th century, when the significance of the *Great Exhibition* in London had resonated throughout the world. The Comte Léon de Laborde, French commissioner to the exhibition, was the first important official to warn the government, in his report, in 1856, on the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, he stated that the competitiveness of French industry was already debatable with the progress of foreign countries:

⁴⁴ See Margo Rouard and Françoise J. Kneebone, Design Français 1960–1990 (Paris: APCI, 1988) 46-48.

Our supremacy in the arts and industry will be soon disputable for more than one reason: it is already undermined everywhere ... In order to keep our place, it is necessary to advance through innovation and shake the routine at any price ... yet this routine governs France with an air of superiority and innovation, which does not prevent foreign countries from replacing us in the competition ...

(Le Comte de Laborde, Travaux De La Commission Française 1)⁴⁵

It can be observed from this report that the Comte Léon de Laborde seemed clearly aware of future aesthetic change brought about by the Industrial Revolution, enabling him to offer such wise propositions as, ‘advancing through innovation’ and ‘shaking the routine’. Some French scholars, such as Arlette Barré-Despond and Stéphane Laurent, deeply appreciate the foresight of Léon de Laborde while attributing the French failure to the enjoyment of an unflinching dominance in the field of design and related matters to the narrow-mindedness of government. Prince Napoleon’s 1855 report is usually quoted to support this argument, having been made just one year prior to that of the Comte Léon de Laborde. In his report, Napoleon believed in French superiority of taste that established an added value for France in the competition:

France has its own territory, the taste, where there is no equal yet. We import machines, but we are able to imitate and even to improve them. When foreign countries would fabricate those products valued by taste, they have to appeal to French genius.

(Prince Napoleon, Rapport Sur L’Exposition Universelle De 1855 195)⁴⁶

It is evident that the prince’s words here draw on two assumptions. First, that the French intelligentsia possesses an exceptional or superior aesthetic quality which endows French culture with uniquely universal values. Second, this aesthetic quality can survive all technical developments. In other words, French aesthetic superiority is

⁴⁵ Le Comte de Laborde, Travaux De La Commission Française, VIème groupe, XXXème Jury, Application des Arts À L’Industrie, Beaux Arts (Paris: Impr. Impériale, 1856) 1. The report of Le Comte de Laborde is usually quoted by design scholars in France when discussing the French design situation in the second half of the 19th century. A full examination of the report was given by the French researcher Stéphane Laurent at the Université de Paris I. See Stéphane Laurent, Les Arts Appliqués En France: Genèse D’un Enseignement (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 1999) 51-80.

⁴⁶ Prince Napoleon, Rapport Sur L’Exposition Universelle De 1855 (Paris: Impr. Impériale, 1855) 195.

believed to be able to ensure the upgrade of French industrial competitiveness. Just as at the very beginning of his report, the prince articulated the view that France fell behind Britain in the application of ideas because of political events.⁴⁷ Thus, when France embarked on the realisation of ideas, it had the capacity to ensure that its ideas were ‘advanced’ and ‘increased’.⁴⁸

Prince Napoleon received his early education in Italy, and was profoundly influenced by classical art, exercising such taste as he possessed all his life. Nevertheless, Prince Napoleon’s taste was not only personal, but also symbolised the wider French fascination for Greek and Roman values, which had resulted in French classicism. The ‘classicist’ is quite equivalent to ‘French’. This sense of classical value engendered the second assumption as a belief. Until the Industrial Revolution, this belief in aesthetic quality had not been shaken, resulting in a belief that subscribed to the notion that aesthetic quality will always be superior to the merely technical. As a successor of Greek and Roman culture, modern France has adopted this idea of value in its cultural matters as the term ‘aesthetic state’ indicates. Prince Napoleon was certain of the superiority of aesthetic quality over that of the material. This belief in aesthetic quality evolved finally into the French mainstream discourse of modern design.

This belief in superior aesthetic quality, in the French case, draws its power from primacy in art. What France tried to contribute to modernity is the democratisation of taste embodied in the art of living. Art for the French is not only taste, but also an ideal of a democratic society. In *Modernism In Design*, Greenhalgh brought it to light with a comment quoted from the *Reports Of The American Commission On The Paris Universal Exposition 1889*:

In France there is no quality more clearly apparent than respect for the arts and works of all kinds connected with them. This trait belongs to no condition or class, but pervades alike all ranks of society.

(Greenhalgh, *Modernism In Design* 56)⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See Prince Napoleon 2.

⁴⁸ See Prince Napoleon 3.

⁴⁹ Greenhalgh 56.

The ideal unity in the arts or taste therefore becomes the essential expression of French modern design. It follows that the expansion of beauty can unify all design practices. Antonin Proust, the minister of fine arts in the Gambetta government and the first president of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (UCAD), formulated this tenet of the UCAD in his report *Le Musée Des Arts Décoratifs*. As Proust pointed out, the UCAD constantly pertained to the cause of the unity of art, and it would even not differentiate art from fine arts. Proust advocated the universality of art as the mission of the Museum of Decorative Arts.⁵⁰

From the 1940s onwards, Jacques Viénot devoted himself to the extension of beauty from the field of decorative arts to that of industrial production. In 1948, Viénot founded the design consultancy Bureau Technès. In 1945, he founded the journal *Art Présent*, which later became *Esthétique Industrielle*, in 1951 (the same year in which he created the Institut d'Esthétique Industrielle).⁵¹

In his book *La République Des Arts* (1941), Jacques Viénot defended the beauty offered by industry. According to Viénot, industrial products had the capacity to be beautiful as long as the men of the art world intervened in order to capture this industrial beauty. In short, Viénot endeavoured to establish a unity between the economical and cultural values of design. With his appreciation of the commercial sense of design, Viénot was also concerned with the reduction of design practices to a factor of marketing.⁵² In this respect, Viénot was much influenced by the thoughts of the American industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes – so Bel Geddes claimed, as Viénot had travelled to America in order to seek a solution for French design innovation.⁵³

⁵⁰ Antonin M. Proust, *L'Art Décoratif Et Le Musée National Du Quai D'Orsay* (Paris: Impr. Schiller, 1887) 2,7.

⁵¹ La Bibliothèque Nationale de France holds the issues of the journal *Art Présent* or *Esthétique Industrielle* between the 1940s and 1950s. A recent monographic study on Jacques Viénot was given by the French design historian Jocelyne Le Bœuf. See Jocelyne Le Bœuf, *Jacques Viénot (1893–1959): Pionnier De l'Esthétique Industrielle En France* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006).

⁵² See Jacques Viénot, *La République Des Arts* (Paris: n.p., 1941): 172-173; 208-209.

⁵³ Norman Bel Geddes had claimed that his 'interest in everything in life has never been as a businessman'. See Roland Marchand, "The Designers go to the Fair, II: Norman Bel Geddes, The General Motors 'Futurama,' and the Visit to the Factory Transformed." *Design History: An Anthology*, Ed. Dennis P. Doordan (Cambridge: MIT P, 1995) 104. It is significantly noteworthy that an affinity linked two important works: Bel Geddes' *Horizons* and Viénot's *La République Des Arts*, in respect of their aesthetic views of industrial design.

Cast in French traditional background, Viénot, as with Proust, symbolised the innovative efforts of French modern design. In Proust's view, the significance of the decorative arts is to introduce beauty into the modern, daily environment. The task of Industrial Aesthetics for Viénot is to establish beauty in industrial production. In his *La République Des Arts*, Viénot clearly asserted the necessary correlation between economic activity and Industrial Aesthetics in terms of industrial production.⁵⁴

Viénot's is a pioneering work drawing on the aesthetic tradition in order to introduce beauty into industrial production under modern economic conditions. Only Viénot's practices were still limited in the traditional sense of cultural superiority over technique and materiality, as Viénot claimed that the sense of beauty and taste was associated with the level of thought and culture, not with money.⁵⁵ Viénot thus tried to interpret French innovation of modern design in a traditional script, although he realised the adaptation to the conditions of contemporary life, especially influenced by Bel Geddes.⁵⁶ Viénot's article *Monilisation Du Beau Au Service De La Nation* obviously revealed this traditional continuity in French design discourse.⁵⁷ In 1887, Marquet de Vasselot, officer of public education, had introduced words of a sensitive nature in his report *Esthétique De L'Art Industriel* (1887), maintaining the non-equivalence of utility and beauty.⁵⁸ Art, beauty and aesthetics thus become framing parameters for design practices in French tradition. This may well be the reason why Le Bœuf finds the term 'esthétique' confusing.⁵⁹ As a result, design and style are often confused in the French case.⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that, in 2001, Jacques Attali, the special adviser to President Mitterrand during the whole of the 1980s, argued that beauty is the motive of design in the ICSID congress in Seoul:

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See Viénot 209.

⁵⁶ See Viénot 23; Norman Bel Geddes, *Horizons* (New York: Dover, 1977) 6-7.

⁵⁷ See Jacques Viénot, "Monilisation du Beau au Service de la Nation," *Esthétique Industrielle*, Number 35, Sep-Oct, 1958.

⁵⁸ See Marquet de Vasselot, *Esthétique de l'Art Industriel* (Paris: Impr. Jouaust et Sigaux, 1887) 16, 34.

⁵⁹ See Jocelyne Le Bœuf, *Jacques Viénot (1893-1959): Pionnier de l'Esthétique Industrielle en France* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006) 46.

⁶⁰ When studying at the National Superior College of Decorative Arts in Paris, the author consulted Professor Thierry Chabanne for the French understanding of the term design. Professor Chabanne told the author that the French also used the term design as they would the term style in their saying: this is very design – meaning this is very modern.

It is essential to give an aesthetic dimension to all dimensions of life ... No object will be accepted if it does not express beauty, if it does not seduce. All objects should seduce as if they were living beings. And therefore to achieve beauty with everything that makes up their daily lives... The beautiful must not merely be in material objects, but also in virtual objects and in the main source of wealth tomorrow: time.

(Attali, Trends For Design In The 21st Century 1)⁶¹

In few words, Attali's views outline the French course of modern design development: from craft decorative to industrial aesthetic; from material to virtual, the superiority of aesthetic quality remains the same. The designer Philippe Starck is positioned at the top-end of this line, featuring a substantial level of curiosity on behalf of the French. 'I am curious', claims Starck.⁶² Whether decorative or aesthetic, French design is motivated by the symbolic rather than the functional. This is the main reason why Philippe Starck is considered as a national brand. Starck's thoughts illustrate this point well:

In a way, I think that it has become the job of designers to spend more and more of their time producing signs ... and less and less of it on producing actual objects.

(Carmel-Arthur, Philippe Starck 11)⁶³

In his book *The Semantic Turn* (2006), Klaus Krippendorff offered several reference points for looking into the way designers are motivated, of which one is especially interesting: possibility. Krippendorff interpreted it thus:

Designers are motivated ... by possibilities to introduce variations into the real world that others may not dare to consider, creating something new and exciting – just as poets, painters, and composers do – aimlessly and for fun.

(Klaus Krippendorff, The Semantic Turn 28)⁶⁴

⁶¹ Jacques Attali, "Trends for Design in the 21st Century," Proceedings ICSID 2001 Seoul Ed. LEE Soon-jong (Seoul: Executive Committee of ICSID 2001, 2001) 1.

⁶² Judith Carmel-Arthur, Philippe Starck (London: Carlton, 1999) 21.

⁶³ Carmel-Arthur 11.

⁶⁴ Klaus Krippendorff, The Semantic Turn (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006) 28.



Fig 2.3. Starck, Philippe. 'Costes'. 1984.

Royal Pavilion. Brighton. Personal photograph by the author. 10 September 2005.

'Original in Colour'

Just as Starck's works embody the top-end of high design, Krippendorff's arguments reveal a great deal about the modern tendency of French design development: from material to aesthetic, functional to emotional. French high curiosity or primacy in art can be well reflected in the bold introduction of variations into life, as Starck's conversation with Fornasetti clarifies,

As I often say, I am not interested in architecture or design themselves. I think you can sometimes help people have a better life by creating places for them where they can be more intelligent, sexier, more brilliant, more in love, where they can dream more, have more imagination.

(Fitoussi, Piero Fornasetti 11)⁶⁵

Starck's designed objects offer a new way of being, not only for life but also for the objects themselves. Even the forms of objects are not what others dare to consider, whether it is a tripod or a lemon squeezer. The expansion of taste or beauty through modern design is directed, perhaps overly so, in the artistic or spiritual dimension by

⁶⁵ Brigitte Fitoussi, Piero Fornasetti: A Conversation Between Philippe Starck And Barnaba Fornasetti (New York: Assouline, 2005).

mainstream designers and theorists. In 1999, Télévision France produced a programme called *History Of Objects*, in which Philippe Starck presented his vision of the immaterial future through TV set design:

Today the television set is an archaic object ... There is still too much matter for the use we get out of it, too much form in relation to content. ... One day, we'll just have pure energy, thought and dream, and perhaps then humankind will finally be what it believes itself to be.

(Starck in Stories Of Objects)⁶⁶

The mainstream expansion of taste and dissemination of beauty can find an intensive expression in Starck's designs. From the material environment through to real life, the emotional quality of design now reaches a phase which accords to the dimension of behaviour. Starck's interpretation of his 'nonproduct' toothbrush highlights this point:

I thought that if, first thing in the morning, you had something bright and cheerful sitting on the shelf waiting for you, it would be like opening the bathroom window onto a summer landscape every day.

(Starck as quoted in Morgan 11)⁶⁷

The functionality of objects is turned, by design, into its emotionality. Objects as artificial environment respond first of all to elegance and taste, illustrated by Starck's design practices. It is in this perspective that Starck also interprets French engineering:

French engineering is, above all, poetic, compared to American, German, or Japanese engineering, which is purely functional. French engineering (and Italian engineering, too, in a way), is not about producing the most efficient or most commercial solution, but about producing the most elegant intellectual form.

(Starck as quoted in Morgan 27)⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Stories Of Objects. Dir. Jean-Dominique Ferrucci, 1999. Videocassette. (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2003).

⁶⁷ Conway Lloyd Morgan, Starck (New York: Universe, 1999) 11.

⁶⁸ Morgan 27.

Things are changing, but the visual quality of French design discourse remains the same, just as Starck designs constantly ‘in a French way’, no matter how his design knowledge changes.⁶⁹ Starck believes that ‘beauty is a gift’, it will ‘improve’.⁷⁰ Even when he does not want to talk about design, his activity will not lose this visual quality, as he states in a lecture at the Lisbon Experimental Design Festival:

Design is useless. I am ashamed of being a designer...I am no longer interested in architects or designers and I no longer want to talk about design...I never stop producing but you might say I produce out of sheer idleness. I design in seconds...The only solid thing in life is relations between people and the vibration caused by look.

(Starck as quoted in Erquiola 23)⁷¹

Yet, as a matter of fact, just as there are wars over cultural identity in cultural politics, there is also a discursive objection to the superiority of aesthetic quality over technique.

2.2.2 Industrial Design and Debate about the Aesthetic

There has been a group of critics, designers, historians and theorists set against the mainstream vision of the elegant and aesthetic design. Without their discursive intervention, the renewal of modern French design would be difficult, and the inclusive capability of French design will be reduced as well. Here, the opinions of several figures are collected with the intention of providing a different social attitude regarding French modern design.

a. Gilles de Bure and the Critical Conscience of Design in France

⁶⁹ Philippe Starck as quoted in International Design Yearbook 1986/87 Ed. Emilio Ambasz (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987) 71.

⁷⁰ Philippe Starck as quoted in International Design Yearbook 1990/91 Ed. Mario Bellini (London: Laurence King, 1991) 88.

⁷¹ Philippe Starck as quoted in International Design Yearbook 2007 Ed. Patricia Erquiola (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007) 23.

The introduction of the English term ‘design’ into France is attributed to the journalist and critic Gilles de Bure. The word appeared in France around 1965 and was accepted by l’Académie Française in 1971.⁷² This event could be seen to be a significant event. As mentioned above, artistic and aesthetic values are strongly reflected in the French attitude to design. France has a strong commitment to these values, to the point that the French may find it psychologically and sociologically difficult to change them. Hence, the significance of de Bure’s action in introducing this new term could be said to have the effect of shaking up certain habitual ways of thinking, as well as arousing extensive debates at a later period.⁷³ From the 1960s onwards, de Bure has been devoted to the critique of French design. The preoccupation with his critical practices is well reflected in the words he quoted from Tallon in his work *Roger Tallon*: ‘the style must be created when facing the problem’.⁷⁴ The fact that France inherits a great tradition of decorative arts could be said to have bestowed him with a certain sense of anxiety about design development in France.

These preoccupations also extend to the educational dimension. With his teachings at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs* and his chairing of the Ensci admission jury since 2005, de Bure has made considerable efforts to realise his ‘dreams’ in design education. In his view, if the discipline of industrial design takes only a marginal place, it could be said to be due to a lack of awareness of education. De Bure’s commitment to the dissemination of design involves him in numerous practices at home and abroad. He directed the Galerie d’Actualité at the Pompidou Centre from 1975 to 1997 and curated numerous exhibitions, including *Design d’en France* at the National Museum of Beijing. Considering de Bure’s proficiency in promoting industrial design in France, he may justifiably be perceived as the highly critical conscience of design in France. In a personal interview with him in Paris on 25 June 2007, de Bure examined two issues that he put forward on design development in France.

⁷² See Claire Fayolle, *Chroniques De L’AFAA. No.32*. (Paris: AFAA, 2002) 5.

⁷³ In 1971, at the Fourth Biennial of the French Language, ‘Industrial Aesthetics’ or ‘stylism’ were proposed to replace the word ‘design’. In 1983, to purify the French language, the Official Journal published a group of French words including ‘stylique’ and ‘stylicien’, which were aimed to replace ‘design’ and ‘designer’.

⁷⁴ Gilles de Bure, *Roger Tallon* (Paris: Disvoir, 1999) 27.

The issue of paramount importance for de Bure is of extreme individualism in French culture. In regard to design organisations, de Bure accentuates their individual characters. He believes that, in France, the institutions are of little value, and that it is only individuals who count. Furthermore, de Bure advances the view that the French may be the most individualist in the world, with the inevitable consequence that the French do not like institutions – it is always the voice ‘I do’ that prevails. Whether results can be produced or not is strictly related to the interest of directors and people in charge. Therefore, de Bure claims that design organisations, such as the APCI and the Centre de Creation Industrielle (CCI), perform rather as individual territories of their directors. The VIA is not similar to the latter institutions, but changed following the departure of its founder Jean-Claude Maugirard. De Bure’s views bring insights into the frequent substitution of design organisations in France. This sense of individual territory restricts largely the role of design organisations in the public recognition of design and the building mutual knowledge of design.

This is a difference that de Bure would establish between the positions of Britain and France: while there are structures and institutions in Britain in regard to design, there are only people and individuals in France for design practices. ‘It is not the French way to put something in a structure or an institution’, de Bure asserts. A weak public knowledge of modern design can be well traced to this intention, and is precisely what worries him at a social level: a serious problem for design development in France. Design is closely related to individuality, based on novelty. Taking the TGV as an example, de Bure thought that in Britain and Germany, one of their most proficient designers will be sought out in order to design a new train. But in France, as de Bure remarked, designers or engineers like Roger Tallon are considered as old expressions of forms, their practices are already old-fashioned. An extraordinary designer ‘as a novelty’ therefore needs to be found. It is suggested that design practices in France have a limited opportunities and space because of a dominant framework of art-centred thinking.

The second essential issue at stake for de Bure is the superiority in the aesthetic. In his eyes, due to the long dominance in the decorative arts, France is disappointingly sleeping on their great tradition of the decorative arts. He considers this great

tradition as an obstacle that prevents France from comprehending the fact that the mirage of the decorative arts in fact relies on the crafts – even if it is, in an industrial sense, located in the 20th century, there still undoubtedly crafts. It is important for de Bure to point to the root of superior aesthetic feelings. As he puts it, that this tradition results in two negative effects: first, that ideas are given a high priority and second, that design practices lack a structure for technical promotion. On the one hand, the only duty for institutions or organisations seems to be to produce reports and studies, and, from then onwards, such files remain in a drawer in the majority of cases. De Bure has justification for adopting such a critical attitude. For example, the expected International Design Centre of Saint-Etienne was projected prior to 2002 and was even reported to be established in November 2004, yet it has still not yet been established in 2008. It is thus proposed that a more critical attitude to design should be encouraged in France.

b. Roger Tallon and the Representation of Design

If Gilles de Bure was credited with the introduction of the term ‘design’ into France, he owed the real arrival of this word to Tallon. When talking about TGV – the most representative of his designs, Tallon whispers, ‘it is metal that flows in space’.⁷⁵ Tallon’s words can even provide a self-comparison: when considering industrial design in France, it is Tallon who flows in the space. Indeed, Tallon is the synonym of industrial design in France. It could be argued that it has mainly been Tallon who has helped the French people to understand what industrial design means.

In the catalogue of the 1993 exhibition *Roger Tallon: Itineraries d’un Designer Industriel*, François Barré, president of the Centre Georges Pompidou, considered Tallon as a designer working in all fields of production without hierarchising them.⁷⁶ Barré’s evaluation of Tallon draws the readers’ attention to the proposition that if the mainstream tendency of French modern design is the democratisation of taste, Tallon would rather make the technique accessible to the masses’ life, without hierarchy, without difference. Although he undertook his main design practices at Technès, in

⁷⁵ De Bure 23.

⁷⁶ Roger Tallon and Thierry Grillet, *Roger Tallon: Itinéraires D’un Designer Industriel* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1993) 7.

his early years, he disagreed then with the ideas of Industrial Aesthetics. Tallon does not think that it makes sense to call design 'industrial aesthetics', seeing it as linguistic chauvinism or a misunderstanding in regard to the development of design in France.⁷⁷

The above ideas of Tallon, it would seem, are intended to be carefully examined against the traditional background of the French decorative arts, and then their significance will be fully understood. Two beneficial points for the current French design issue can be obtained from this discourse for the current French design issue: design for the public and design without boundaries. In a personal interview with the author in Paris, on 27 June 2007, Tallon clarified his attitude towards the decorative arts, which encapsulated the fact that he would, 'design for the masses', or, in other words, for daily life. According to Tallon, traditional luxury is a design method for the rich only, not for the public. Therefore, Tallon aims to design 'systems' instead of 'unique pieces'. The luxury or decorative arts are considered to be a limited mode of expression of design – and one which does not satisfy the needs of the public within what could be termed 'popular life'. It is further argued that Tallon is indeed a critic of the current return of French design to the decorative tradition. He advances the notion that the latter generates only a certain narrow idea rather in the same way as he considers the term 'industrial aesthetics' quite strange. It is apparent from this interview that Tallon opposes a chauvinist attitude and therefore advocates a universal design. It is suggested that more attention should be drawn to Tallon's words, since the long debate over the term 'design' has already proved to be obstructive to the development of design in France. Nonetheless, a strong national sentiment continues to define the public dimension for the understanding of design, which affords little attention to the technical side of design practices, as stated in the earlier sections of this chapter.

c. Jocelyn de Noblet and Technical Culture

De Noblet is another designer and theorist in the line of technical practices. In order to examine the technical side of French design practices, this investigation has also

⁷⁷ See de Bure 27.

collected the opinions of de Noblet in a personal interview with the author, in Paris, on 24 October 2007.

Through an analysis of the ideas of de Noblet, a correspondence of views between him and Tallon can be found. Like Tallon, de Noblet also adopts the Anglo-American view of design activity and advocates a design for the public; both appear to articulate a resistance to the strong aesthetic expression of design. It is also of significance to signal here that de Noblet has continually refused to supervise any student's project that incorporates a bicycle, as he professes that he does not uphold the notion that a mere plastic innovation would make sense for the public as the student's project improves nothing technically. Also, in a similar fashion to Tallon, de Noblet accentuates the collective and international character of design practices, and claims his objection to the conventional ways of defining design as 'French design', 'German design' or 'American design'. Besides these commonly shared ideas, it is noteworthy that de Noblet draws his attention to two technical aspects of design: one is the compatibility and the other is the condition of future life.

By this notion of 'compatibility', de Noblet means designing 'compatible objects', that is to say, objects designed to be compatible with the available resources. It is of significance that de Noblet extends this environmental or resource consciousness from nature to society, because he understands resources as both 'material' and 'cultural'. In this sense, design as a problem-solver includes both natural and social problems – not only energy but also conflict. De Noblet claims that, 'design is not to make an object by itself'. A need to reorganise the objects is also important in design practices, since too many objects have been made. Futurology is another preoccupation of de Noblet, that is, the 'becoming conditions for human life'. De Noblet believes that design objects or technology all have their 'time limit', thus life conditions will be changed. Furthermore, technical development also urges humans to prepare for mutations. It is meaningful for de Noblet to put forward the conception of 'educational catastrophe', which is considered to have the effect of inducing humans to think more. As a result, according to de Noblet, design will play an important role for humans in the preparation of abrupt changes, if a new vision, a new conscience and an international language, is to be established for design. This is what de Noblet

strives to disseminate as design knowledge with the journal *Technical Culture*, of which he was one of the founders. Unfortunately, it is not published any more, lacking financial support, much to de Noblet's regret.

Through collecting these peripheral ideas from the French design world, this study aims to uncover some previously uncovered aspects of French design practices or discourse. It is imperative here to contemplate the reasons why this aspect of design knowledge is underestimated in France in respect of public recognition.

2.3 Conclusion

The complex systems of national identity, modernity and discourse contribute substantially to the understanding of events and their meanings, and of people and their perceptions of situations in different countries.

In France, the search for identity in the glorious past forms a tradition of politicising high culture. It is proposed that French academies embody perfectly the state-led paradigm of knowledge production and distribution. The centralisation of culture accentuates the arts, especially the plastic arts, which exhibit qualities of the French greatness. This notion of sensibility, therefore, characterises French design knowledge, and luxury is encouraged in design practices. The intention to use the arts to glorify power results in the decorative tendency in the modernisation of culture. The decorative arts constitute a specific aspect of French design when France was transformed into a modern industrialised society during the Third Republic, where high culture was finally shaped as part of the national expression of taste, which defined the role and function of modern French design in the democratisation of taste. An aesthetic dimension is, thus, created for French modern design in the form of 'high design'.

This aesthetic intention of practice is also reflected in the design education. It is evident that France places emphasis upon the decorative arts in its education, even the Ensci was created during the 1980s as a counterpart of the Ensad. The decorative is taken for granted in French modern culture. Furthermore, the aesthetic intention also clearly features French design critique and discourse. The French design critique is

largely excluded from art critique and can hardly build its own vocabulary. This discursive exclusion accounts for a strong national consciousness of art. Although a technical discourse has developed with such top designers as Roger Tallon, national identity plays a key role in the dissemination of the vocabularies of appreciation, which underestimates the technical dimension of design.

CHAPTER 3. 'GREAT BRITISH SOCIETY': BUILDING MODERN ARRANGEMENTS IN MATERIALITY THROUGH INDUSTRIAL INTEGRATION¹

3.1 Establishing Principles of Modern Experience

'Modernity' can be defined as having to do with the inclusion and representation of the mass of the people in the everyday life of the state. Political constitutionalism was one form of this; mass communication was another. In England both expressed themselves through the idea of 'progress'.

(Colls, *Identity Of England* 69)²

Among several studies on British identity in design, Dutch design historian Frederique Huygen's book *British Design: Image And Identity* is a comparatively systematic examination of British national identity through various aspects of its design.³ Nevertheless, there was a slight insufficiency in Huygen's social and cultural analysis, as she drew her 'unavoidable conclusion' on British design paradoxes from the absence of a 'theoretical design ideology', and consequently did not go further in any real interrogation of ideological context.⁴ As a matter of fact, ideological examination can be said to be at the heart of British cultural studies, because, in fact, in many ways Britain does 'assimilate culture to ideology', to quote American communication theorist James Carey.⁵ It is claimed that ideology is to be identified with a cultural and historical framework instead of being defined in a restricted sense of 'political'. British history has greatly shaped modern British political ideas, as argued by Professor Robert Leach of Leeds Metropolitan University.⁶

¹ English or British? The American professor of sociology Krishan Kumar has given a helpful summary of descriptions to distinguish the terms regarding the UK and its derivatives. 'England' and 'English' have symbolic and emotional contents because of a long history and a large population; 'Britain' and 'British' represent changing forms more neutrally described as evolution of the polity, while 'Britain' as a shorthand of 'Great Britain', covers all isles, the colonial empire and the Commonwealth; 'United Kingdom' is a term of political integrity, most reserved for a passport. See Krishan Kumar, *The Making Of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 1-17. This study relates Britain to 'Great Britain' and 'the UK', and takes 'English' and 'British' as equal derivatives in regard to the UK, but the term 'Britain' will be used in most cases in this study.

² Robert Colls, *Identity Of England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 69.

³ There are also monographs on Britishness from the perspective of art as, for example, Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Englishness Of English Art*; there are also studies of specific periods such as Fiona MaCarthy's *British Design Since 1880. A Visual History*; and there is study of specific topics as seen in John Gloag's *The English Tradition In Design*.

⁴ See Frederique Huygen, *British Design: Image And Identity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 25.

⁵ See Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1990) 182.

⁶ See Robert Leach, *British Political Ideologies* (Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Europe, 1996).

In his book on *The English National Character*,⁷ Peter Mandler claims that Britain has acquired two capacities for liberty in modern times: ‘individuality’ and ‘association’.⁸ These two kinds of self-knowledge are based on changing perceptions of their place and relationship to other peoples in a successively wider society.⁹ He considers this aspect of Britain’s character as an ‘asset in dealing with modernizing forces with which other European countries were coping less successfully’.¹⁰ According to Paul Langford, innovation was the leitmotif of these successes of modern Britain.¹¹

From the perspective of political innovation, institutionalisation forms the first element in the landscape of modern Britain and mass communication the second. Accordingly, modern design, from Britain’s perspective, can be observed through the gradual growth of the awareness of the common good through institutionalisation and mass communication under the conditions of age.¹² In a similar way to that of Habermas’ project of modernity, the British building of modernity, in respect of design, can be examined through the political base, key exhibitions at different periods and design education changes.

3.1.1 Political Culture and Design Attitude

Foreigners came to England, it was said, in search of government, as they went to Italy in search of arts. Later on it was the commercial and colonial character of Britain’s pre-eminence that seemed most striking. Later still, by the early nineteenth century, industrialisation, with all it implied not only for the wealth of the State but for the ordinary life of countless human beings, was fascinating observers.

(Langford, *Englishness Identified* 3)¹³

⁷ Mandler preferred the more essential category ‘national character’. According to him, it is ‘an idea of a cultural, psychological and biological essence that all individuals in a nation share in common, and that directs all manifestations of national life’. See Peter Mandler, “The Consciousness of Modernity? Liberalism and English National Character, 1870–1940.” in Daunt and Rieger, *Meaning Of Modernity: Britain From Victorian Era To World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 120.

⁸ For Mandler, individuality refers to a sense of self and self-worth and association: association to the ability of self-governing individuals to cooperate for common ends. See Mandler 53.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Peter Mandler 119.

¹¹ Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 4.

¹² In the discussion of varieties of modernism, Smith claims that the definition of nations can only be done under the conditions of the age. See Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism And Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998) 27-29.

¹³ Langford 3.

If British design has incoherent expressions of ‘oscillations and eccentricities’ as Huygen put it,¹⁴ this sense of change is very much a traditional aspect of Britain’s character. Unlike France, Britain is unwilling to discover its national character through a centralisation of cultural power.¹⁵ While France endeavoured to base its modernity on cultural memory, Britain managed to promote adaptability to modern changing conditions.¹⁶ As Toynbee pointed out, Britain’s story is a process of encountering other things and other peoples in a successively wider context.¹⁷ And the changes in response to the wider society have never been the sudden ones to breach the social fabric, but oscillations in relation to it. Richard Rose, a pioneer in the application of sociological ideas to the studies of British politics, has made an insightful analysis into Britain’s capacity to preserve its social fabric. As he pointed out, social attitudes are specific to the political culture of a country.¹⁸

The political balance, achieved by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the ‘Settlement’ of 1689, constitutes Britain’s innovation in its early modernity: a parliamentary system, evolutionary reform, ordered freedom and accountable authority. This political culture that may be seen to have invented modern Britain is appreciated by the French sociologist Dominique Schnapper. Britain, she remarked, is the only nation founded on political freedom established through successive stages without destroying the social fabric. Hence, Britain assured concrete liberties, not an abstract liberty,¹⁹ although English radicals would have dissented from that, as indeed would Tom Paine.²⁰

¹⁴ Huygen 27.

¹⁵ This view of cultural France has been supported by French and English scholars. For example, J. Ardagh, La France Vue Par Un Anglais (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1968); P. Daudy, Les Anglais (Paris: Plon, 1989) and J. Meyerscough, Studies In European Politics. No 8. (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1984).

¹⁶ This intention of building a cultural nation for France in the first half of the 20th century is investigated by Lebovics. See Herman Lebovics, True France: The War Over Cultural Identity (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992).

¹⁷ See Arnold Toynbee, A Study Of History, Vol I: Introduction. The Geneses Of Civilizations, Part One (London: Oxford UP, 1956) 23.

¹⁸ See Richard Rose, Studies In British Politics (London: Macmillan St Martin’s, 1969) 1-3.

¹⁹ See Dominique Schnapper, Community Of Citizens: On The Modern Idea Of Nationality (New Jersey: Transaction, 1998) 43-44. In the midst of mainstream arguments of cultural superiority, this kind of introspection, like Schnapper’s in France, has been started in public as early as in the 1890s. See Edmond Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority: To What Is Due (London: Leadenhall, 1898).

²⁰ See Edward Palmer Thompson, The Making Of The English Working Class (London: Penguin, 1968) 33.

British political culture lays an essential foundation of social capability for Britain to become modern.²¹ In the words of Colls, this political culture had two early expressions of its modern institutionalisation: law as common to all and the monarch as the supervisor of its implementation.²² History before the union of England and Scotland can be interpreted as the first stage of this model, that is, a simple, mutual combination. What Kumar has quoted from John Gillingham facilitates the understanding of this kind of mutual recognition when the latter describes the commutative self-awareness between the English and the Irish: ‘just as we are English to the Irish, so we are Irish to the English’.²³ What the historian Toynbee described as a history of concomitance is said to be the second stage of this model, a constitutional growth as, for example, the unification of England and Scotland.²⁴ Interestingly, Lovell interprets this model as an intergrowth of impersonal force: ‘Every state institution added to the power of the monarchy, but, at the same time, subtracted authority from the monarch’s personal office’.²⁵ As a result, the English monarch and the state have not been substituted for each other in the building of political modernity. This finally explains why Britain failed to embrace the ‘nation’ as centrally progressive dimension of social life, as was the case on the European Continent, and why, as Langford observes, ‘England emphasised moral and material progress rather than an intellectual state’.²⁶

Colls traced the source of this tradition to the great Saxon codifications of customary law written in the early 7th century.²⁷ It implied then that ideas about the law and the people became a popular nationalist ideology, essentially different from the French revolutionary ideology that led the French to transform themselves constantly in search of absolute self-knowledge. It can be argued that this ideology on which the

²¹ American economist Moses Abramovitz introduces the idea of social capability, which means that relatively backward economies must reach certain social conditions to be able to adopt the technology of major industrial countries. These conditions include a large, capable workforce and a stable political system. Following Abramovitz’s ideas, a clear self-knowledge is here suggested to be included as another condition of social development for a modern nation.

²² See Colls 15. In later expressions, as post Glorious Revolution, law was also common to the monarch as parliament became sovereign.

²³ John Gillingham, “The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s ‘History of the Kings of Britain,’” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1990–1): 99–118.

²⁴ See Arnold Toynbee, *A Study Of History, Vol I: Introduction. The Geneses Of Civilisations, Part One* (London: Oxford UP, 1956) 23.

²⁵ Colin Lovell, *English Constitutional And Legal History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962) xi.

²⁶ Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 5.

²⁷ See Colls 13–15.

British cultural attitude of continuity is based, has been absorbed into the British social psyche and transformed, in the terms of Henry Buckle, into the, ‘knowledge of their [the English people’s] own resources, and a skill and independence in the use of them’.²⁸ This consciousness of resource is transformed into an awareness in design practices, just as Frank Pick described the character of British design: ‘Modest and not too grandiose in scale ... not too logical in form ... a reasonable compromise between beauty and utility ...’.²⁹ Whether or not there is an articulation of design ideology, British design practice is evidently rooted in its social attitude. Different from the French revolutionary character, Britishness is a character with its roots in law. If nation is revolutionary for the French, nation is law for the British – as Colls puts it, ‘the law becomes you’.³⁰ This ideological argument can be also supported by an historical phenomenon commented upon by Penny Sparke:

Although the Arts and Crafts Movement was perceived as being synonymous with ‘Britishness’, it provided a model for a number of other countries which, in search of their own modern national identities through design, looked to their own indigenous craft roots for inspiration Britain ultimately failed to achieve a strong modern design movement with which to promote itself as a nation.

(Sparke, An Introduction To Design And Culture 97)³¹

The Arts and Crafts Movement was only a counteractive movement against the application of mechanical techniques. Cultural movements have never provided a model for knowledge production or communication in such a society as Britain – with its prevalent social attitude tempered by common sense. This also explains the continuity of ruralism as a characteristic thread of British design, and this affinity with the countryside, rather than the city, is said to symbolise the ‘essence of England’ in much design activity before the later 20th century, as Woodham and others have suggested, although ‘ruralism’, as a late 19th century ideology, is evident throughout much of Western Europe.³² In this way, the common sense of law, the consciousness of resources, the awareness of adaptability and the continuity of

²⁸ Henry T. Buckle, History Of Civilisation In England, Vol. I. (London: Longman’s Green, 1902) 499.

²⁹ Pick as quoted in Huygen 19.

³⁰ Robert Colls, Identity Of England (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 13.

³¹ Penny Sparke, An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 To The Present (London: Routledge, 2004) 97.

³² Jonathan M. Woodham, Twentieth-Century Design (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 89.

ruralism were all elements that could be argued to assume modern Britishness and, thus, generate a design ideology in modern Britain.

3.1.2 Industrial Culture and Design for the Common Good

From the *Great Exhibition of 1851* to the years before 1970, design was an important tool to project national identities in international exhibitions and world fairs, although, for the most part, the British government did not want to engage in them and sought, through the international Treaty in 1928, to limit their occurrence.³³ Interestingly, McDonnell considers these world fairs as mega-events that impact on whole economies and societies in the global age.³⁴ It is, therefore, first necessary to understand the industrialisation that serves as global media for these mega-events. As Robert Gray puts it, industrialisation has to be considered as a cultural transformation. It was a process of innovation in employment relations and working lives. As an important part of Britain's historical experience, the formation of the culture of industrial work was associated not only with machines, but also with ways of life as denoted by the term 'industrial'.³⁵

As to the understanding of 'industrial' in the field of design, Sparke makes it clear by interpreting industrial products as consumers' expressions of social aspirations and achievements.³⁶ For example, between 1890 and 1930, the structure of consumption changed significantly in Britain. A prominent increase in salaried workers and a rapid expansion of occupational groups considerably improved the cultural power of these classes. It is a culture of democracy running in parallel with Britain's achievements of a parliamentary democracy, based on the diffusion of new technology and often

³³ See Bureau Internationale des Expositions, Textes De La Convention Concernant Les Expositions Internationales (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931). This convention was drafted by France and signed on 22 November 1928, in Paris. Britain had contributed largely to the improvement of the convention. The correspondence and memorandum regarding the discussions between France and Britain are held in the National Archives in London. Not only had Britain proposed an interval of five years between two expositions, but, also, Britain suggested that all participants were equal in the exposition. See National Archives, International Exhibitions. Correspondance And Memorandum About The Limitations Of Exhibitions. BT 60/9/1.

³⁴ See Ian McDonnell, Johnny Allen, and William O'Toole. Festival And Special Event Management (Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons, 1999) 11.

³⁵ See Robert Gray. The Factory Question And Industrial England 1830–1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996)

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³⁶ Sparke 14-15.

dominated by individuals outside the mainstream of cultural life, as observed by LeMahieu.³⁷

The Industrial Revolution contributed to the growth of Britain's character in two aspects: the continuity of liberty in an industrial culture and the establishment of new industrial links. Kenneth Morgan, professor of Oxford University Queen's College, interprets this liberty as a journey of international capitalism without precedent, through free-trades in manufacturing, transport and service industries.³⁸ In *Britain And Industrial Europe, 1750–1870*, William Henderson of Indiana University offers an account of the important connections between Britain and other countries on the European Continent in the perspective of new machines, new methods and new ideas. A new sense of sharing the world through manufactured goods took a definitive form, giving Britain a head start.³⁹ As a consequence, one can understand, in essence, the celebration of the technical prowess promoted at the *Great Exhibition of 1851* and also make an appropriate evaluation of the latter's form and contents.

So many comments have been passed on the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, laudatory and equivocal, sometimes even contradictory. The centenary album *The Great Exhibition Of 1851*, edited by Gibbs-Smith and published in 1950 by His Majesty's Stationery Office in London, represents the official sanctioning of dominant interpretations that take the exhibition as a symbol of the workshop of the world, or accentuate its aesthetic, scientific and economic significance.⁴⁰ Kumar, on the other hand, offered a more complex reflection on the exhibition's celebration of British industrial supremacy. As he noted, the exhibition devoted half of the total available space to British raw materials and industrial applications, the other half to the exhibits of other nations. This structure defined the British contribution as 'universal' and that of the

³⁷ See Dan Lloyd LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy: Mass Communication And The Cultivated Mind In Britain Between The Wars* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 7-55.

³⁸ See Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford Illustrated History Of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 465.

³⁹ See William Otto Henderson, *Britain And Industrial Europe 1750–1870*. 1954, 1965 (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1972).

⁴⁰ For example, Findling considers the exhibition as a symbol of the workshop of the world. See John E. Findling, *Historical Dictionary Of World's Fairs And Expositions, 1851-1988* (New York: Greenwood, 1990) 3. Davis highlights its significance. See John R. Davis, *The Great Exhibition* (Thrupp: Sutton, 1999) ix.

other as 'national'. Thus, he pointed to the British intentional parade of its industrial triumphs to the whole world in contrast to others.⁴¹

Yet, John R. Davis of Kingston University claims that only an account free of partisanship and moral censure can show that the *Great Exhibition of 1851* was a compromise between its promoters and the wider audience, instead of providing a true image of the Victorians.⁴² Joseph Bizup echoes Davis' view in his book on *Manufacturing Culture*. He would fix the event's meaning as a 'great bond of unity'.⁴³ Thus, it may be argued that the true importance of the exhibition was branding British material progress for the common good by means of trade. Martin Daunton also suggests that, in company with others and as a member of the great industrial society, the exhibition allowed Britain to place herself within the context of international competition brought by the transfer of industrial technology of steam and coal.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Crystal Palace building project also clarified the intention for the common good. First, because of the public objections, the plan for the erection of a permanent exhibition building was rejected in order to avoid the demolition of Hyde Park; second, the exhibition building model changed from a classical model to that of a huge greenhouse, an entirely industrial expression of mass experience.

It is then suggested that the exhibition was a national positioning in industrial culture rather than a nationalist parade of industrial prowess. Organisers, exhibitors and visitors were provided with a great opportunity to experience their positioning in the new industrial world. What is remarkable about the exhibition is just this principle of including something for almost everyone, which explains the historical phenomena of the *Great Exhibition of 1851* such as the negotiation of the organisers with the public on the exhibitionary experience, the initial reluctance of the public to embrace the

⁴¹ See Krishan Kumar, *The Making Of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 193.

⁴² See Davis 1-2.

⁴³ Joseph Bizup, *Manufacturing Culture: Vindications Of Early Victorian Industry* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2003) 15.

⁴⁴ See Martin Daunton, *Wealth And Welfare: An Economic And Social History Of Britain 1851-1951* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 233.

exhibition and the free meeting of ‘the pound and the shilling’ – the upper and lower classes.⁴⁵

Following the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, the *British Empire Exhibition*, held at Wembley in 1924/25, it is suggested, ‘provided an important vehicle for reinforcing or moulding contemporary attitudes’.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Colls argues that the event is to be considered as a political strategy to mobilise and reconstruct popular pleasures that ‘far more people could enjoy’. It was a bourgeois revolution of the time in a ‘modern English style’.⁴⁷ The pyramidal plan of the site could be said to embody exactly the ideal ‘far more’: Palaces of Industries, Engineering, and Arts were at its apex, pavilions of the most important territories of the empire situated below, and pavilions of smaller colonies located at the base and the British government building was adjacent to a large bandstand playing a supportive role. The technical achievements were thus expected to benefit the mass and the larger parts of the world in an imperial style. A significant comparative point can be noticed between this structure and that of the *Great Exhibition of 1851*. This exhibition pictured Britain as a resource on the top of an industrial pyramid, while Industries, Engineering and Arts were at the apex in the 1924 exhibition. Britain only participated in this intergrowth of industrial order as its member.

The manifestation of story and tradition was evident in many parts of the exhibition. Because traditions are effective media for communication whenever building a wider society, such as that of the Empire in the 1920s, Britain called heavily on its traditions to assure the constitutional growth of that wider society. The royal family is a good illustration. Kumar considers the royal family as an effective institutional tool to produce loyalty and respect.⁴⁸ The compromising tone of the *Great Exhibition of 1851* persisted at Wembley with an amalgam of exhibits to promote imperial trade. The communicating role of design also grew in the 1924 exhibition, moving from emphasis on promoting manufacture to that of national projection, including the use of mass media to broadcast the monarch’s speech for the first time.

⁴⁵ See Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition Of 1851: A Nation On Display* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) Chapters 1–3.

⁴⁶ Jonathan M. Woodham 90.

⁴⁷ See Colls 70.

⁴⁸ See Kumar 238.

A wider context of events for national projecting was further explored in the *1951 Festival of Britain*. Exhibits clarified, more than ever, the growing role of design to project national identity, such as the '1851 Centenary Pavilion'.⁴⁹ As a government project, the *Festival of Britain* was involved as 'New Britain's' image was being shaped at a great moment of change, with an improvement in living standards and a cultural recovery. The exhibits, therefore, sought to offer a shared experience of modern material culture, for example, Ernest Race's *Antelope* projected a technical and future welfare state Britain. On the other hand, wider contexts of identity allowed diverse understandings of Britain while still relating to the coherent meaning of Britishness, supported by stories of the past, future and invented traditions such as music and plays of the 1851 season, future knowledge in the Dome of Discovery. From the *British Empire Exhibition* to the *Festival of Britain*, exhibition events served to project a brighter Britain. The *Festival of Britain* was an autobiography of a nation with chapters to be experienced showing the rich diversity of Britain's people, land and products. This constitutive and experiential discourse of Britishness also characterises the exhibition *Great Expectations*, later in the new millennium. The *Great Exhibition of 1851* endeavoured to work out a principle of experiences in the new industrial environment, the *British Empire Exhibition* explored the way to share these experiences. In a similar vein, the *Festival of Britain* tried to reinterpret these experiences in life in post-war years, at the same time, to project a bright future in present.⁵⁰

If the *Great Exhibition of 1851* resulted in the fashioning of international exhibitions as an innovative form of mass communication in a democratic culture, Britain had continued to produce other innovative forms in the mass media to impact on national imaging since the middle of the 19th century.⁵¹ The cheap and readable print

⁴⁹ The Centenary Pavilion was designed by the architect Hugh Casson, its display designer was James Gardner. It was a model of the opening of the exhibition featuring Queen Victoria and Prince Albert with their royal children, as well as the queen's officials. The loudspeaker broadcasted the words spoken and music performed at the 1851 opening ceremony. This mass media reminds us of that at the Wembley Exhibition. Foreign visitors were also encouraged to visit industrial and rural areas, to meet Britain's people.

⁵⁰ See *Festival Of Britain, 1951* Catalogue of exhibition. (London: HMSO, 1951).

⁵¹ There was a significant change in 1867 when France would surpass the efforts of its rival with the bigger and better '1867 Exposition Universelle', as expected. The exposition altered the guiding principle established by the 1851 exhibition – the display of whatever products by all nations. The 1867 exposition tried to integrate nations and products into one coherent system. As a result, it intended not only to be able to display products of all nations

revolution, commencing with books and then with newspapers, contributed greatly in serving the imagined community of the United Kingdom. Mass illustration – colour printing and photography – brought art images to the wider public. For example, ‘no picture paper has ever published such a series as this at anything approaching the price at which you can buy’ the mass British quarterly *Picture Post*.⁵² All these prints, together with cinema, and later television, showed an unlimited power for constitutional growth. Variations in readers’ experience can be in the same line through the same reading consumption.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), set up in 1922, was another major landmark in the British mass media.⁵³ As the world’s first national public-service broadcasting organisation, the BBC gained a monopoly to communicate the voice of Britain as a means of raising national cultural standards. A high-minded national culture was set up as its goal by John Reith, an important figure in the social and cultural history of 20th century Britain. He was convinced of the conflict between ‘high’ and ‘low’ qualities in people’s inner lives. It was, therefore, that he intended to improve the quality of life for individuals. Although many have been critical, few would deny the BBC’s role as a guardian of the continuity and popularity of national culture in mass communication through its wide coverage of arts and sporting events, promenade concerts and Christmas Day broadcasts, as well as its functional extension of national institutions.⁵⁴ The BBC contributes much to the continuity of national traditional culture, evident in the popular recognition of national cultural authority. For example, the BBC magazine programme *Nationwide* has successfully built a mirror-structure of reflections and recognitions in its relation to the audience.

3.1.3 State Branding and Design Education

Compared to King François I of France, who had institutionalised the ideology of instruction by establishing the College de France, Henry VIII of England

but classify results of all human practices, showing the superiority of French knowledge to categorise whole cultures. See Eugene Rimmel, *Recollections Of The Paris Exhibition Of 1867* (London: n.p., 1868).

⁵² Stefan Lorant, “Start Saving Your Copies Of Picture Post.” *Picture Post* October – December 1938. 1.1 (1938): 4.

⁵³ In the beginning, it was the British Broadcasting Company, a private company. Until 1927, partly in the aftermath of the General Strike, it became the Corporation and, hence, the state-endorsed monopoly broadcaster.

⁵⁴ See Dan Lloyd LeMahieu 141-54; 227-228. See also Krishan Kumar 239.

institutionalised the ideology of law by founding the Church of England, a ‘Church by law established’, which, in the words of Morgan, ‘saved England from the religious strife that so sorely afflicted other European countries at the time, notably France’.⁵⁵ And ‘by law’ also, a religious divinity was turned into a civil administration. The significance of Henry VIII’s reform resides in the transformation of a spiritual authority into a modern national or social organisation, thus building brand awareness – as the very name of the Church of England indicated. Each nation can have its own church, such as the Church of Scotland or the Church of Ireland, even its own prayer book: the first English Prayer Book was issued in 1549. And each church has its own character. Kumar has explained the absent expression of English identity by the ‘English dilemma’ in defining its identity in relation to others.⁵⁶ But it can be argued that brand awareness explains this better because Englishness or Britishness are brands rather than identities. From such an outlook, one can understand Aughey’s view that ‘the retreat from the empire’ ... ‘had never threatened the viability of British institutions’ and Linda Colley’s argument about the popular approach of ‘treating empire and nation as separated entities’.⁵⁷

Interestingly, the social attitude of modern Britain underpinned by Henry VIII is reflected well in the relation of the government and universities as that of ‘state’ and ‘market’. As Professor Sheldon Rothblatt at the University of California put it in his *State And Market In British University History*, the binary scheme had oversimplified historical reality; he wanted to provide a more nuanced account of the reciprocal relationships between state and market.⁵⁸ Britain and design education will now be discussed in respect of brand.

With the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, the issue of nationhood was usually, and typically, associated with the question of taste by design historians and critics in the French critical discourse of art. But, it is arguable that this is simply a question of taste.

⁵⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford Illustrated History Of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 266.

⁵⁶ According to Krishan Kumar, ‘the English could not simply celebrate themselves’ as ‘this exclusivity was precluded by their role in the larger structures of which they were part’. See Kumar 179.

⁵⁷ See Arthur Aughey, *The Politics Of Englishness* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007) 89.

⁵⁸ See Stefan Collin, et al. *History, Religion, And Culture: British Intellectual History 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 224.

As a matter of fact, there had been already much discussion at government level about the application of art to industrial products in Britain around 1830. For example, before Henry Cole campaigned for improved standards of design in British industry from the 1840s onwards, Mr Ewart's Select Committee was formed, in 1835, to 'enquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and principles of design among the people'.⁵⁹ The committee made two chief recommendations: to establish schools of design and to encourage public galleries as a means of instilling aesthetic awareness. A school of design was thus established, in 1837, as a product of the British government's decision to make the training of designers for industry a national responsibility.

The school has been given different names: 'Government School of Design', 'Head School of Design', 'National Art Training School',⁶⁰ 'School of Design',⁶¹ 'Schools of Design',⁶² 'Normal School of Design',⁶³ and 'Normal School'.⁶⁴ Yet, paradoxically, this confusion is meaningful, for it clarifies the intention of the British government. Different names signify an effort of exploration. The government, in fact, has accorded a great importance to the school, because it was built on the very location that the Royal Academy had previously occupied. If the story of the school is that of 'a series of attempts to legislate' the way to teach and the way for students and teachers to find their own learning and teaching, Britain surely would develop her own way to deal with art and manufacturing in order to brand her advantage over overseas competitors.⁶⁵ The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had been founded by the government in 1834. And Cockerell, member of the Select Committee, attributed the deficiency to the 'decay of public taste'.⁶⁶ Using the word 'schools', in plural, the government would create a new system, different from the French one, for its schools of design. With the understanding of Henry Cole's reform of design

⁵⁹ Quentin Bell, *The Schools Of Design* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) 52.

⁶⁰ Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College Of Art: One Hundred & Fifty Years Of Art & Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987) 9; *Art And Design: 100 Years At The Royal College Of Art* (London: Collins & Brown, 1999) 7-9.

⁶¹ Frayling 9; John Physick, *The Victoria And Albert Museum: The History Of Its Building* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982) 13.

⁶² Clive Ashwin, *Art Education: Documents And Policies 1768-1975* (London: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1975) 2.

⁶³ Fiona MacCarthy, *All Things Bright & Beautiful: Design In Britain 1830 To Today* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972) 9.

⁶⁴ Penny Sparke, *An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 To The Present* (London: Routledge, 2004) 63.

⁶⁵ Frayling 9.

⁶⁶ Bell 52.

education, aiming at products market for the general public, it is true that Britain made a real effort in terms of design education: over 150 years, the school remains the oldest in design education anywhere in the world. It was also clear that the school did not want to follow the model of the French – a commitment to artistically elevated taste. The question can, therefore, be interpreted as what awareness of design would be necessary to build an effective British design education system.

By 1896, the school was renamed the Royal College of Art (RCA) by Queen Victoria. Nonetheless, as Frayling has suggested, it remains unclear why she granted the change of name at this particular time. Frayling has tried to explain it by referring to details concerning the queen's family, such as Princess Louise having received public education in the RCA, although these remain somewhat unconvincing. But a number of additional reasons may also be brought into play. In his book *A Companion To Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Chris Williams' examination of a number of important biographies and letters of the queen prompted two noteworthy points. The first concerns the queen's family: both queen and prince were actively engaged in matters to the public good, with the queen deeply immersed in a variety of domestic and foreign affairs. The second concerns the monarchy's experience of a republican crisis in the late 19th century.⁶⁷ A third possible line of argument is that the Art Nouveau movement reached its peak around 1895 in France. All three considerations may be posited as an explanation of the queen's concern that royalty should continue to command loyalty and respect. This may be the reason why the queen considered rebranding the Government School of Design, an institution that was originally created for the public good at a time when design was already closely associated with Britain's reputation.

In the 1840s and 1850s, a number of other art schools were created in major cities and towns, often centres of manufacturing industry. Among them, Brighton School of Art was noteworthy as undertaking later initiatives of design history degrees, the Design History Society and depository of the Design Council's archives. From school of art to polytechnic, and, later on, university, Brighton School of Art, together with the Government School of Design, contributed largely to the historical categorisation of

⁶⁷ See Chris Williams, *A Companion To Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) 101-104.

design knowledge in Britain and the world. As a regional hub of art and design education, in 1970, Brighton School of Art became a key constituent element of Brighton Polytechnic. It played a significant role in the development of the educational institutionalisation of design through the development of a curriculum that embraced a range of qualifications, from diplomas to degrees, and through mixed modes of study, from full-time to ‘new route’. Then, moving from a regional to an international recruitment of students, Brighton Polytechnic contributed largely to the regional and concrete awareness of material experience to produce popular resonance to design practice. This kind of growth needs to be explored, as suggested by Woodham, in terms of the varieties of ‘meanings and significances which it had for people personally’.⁶⁸ The most significant is the establishment of the History of Design degree and Design History Society at Brighton Polytechnic. They furthered the understanding of the way in which design knowledge operates in different contexts.

3.1.4 Renewing the National Identity 1979–2007

	USA/UK	Germany/UK
1899	194.8	99.0
1913	212.9	119.0
1929	249.9	104.7
1937	208.3	96.0
1950	262.6	96.0
1958	250.0	111.1
1977	229.6	148.6
1989	177.0	105.1

Table 3.1. Manufacturing output per person employed, USA/UK and Germany/UK, 1899–1989 (UK=100).

Source: Martin Daunton, Wealth And Welfare (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 16.

⁶⁸ Jonathan M. Woodham, From Art School To Polytechnic: Serving Industry And The Community From Brighton 5.

By the 1970s, the continued failure of the political elite to build a privileged economic place of Britain in the world raised questions of legitimacy at home. The period does not mean an absolute economic decline. The average rate of growth is even higher than the second half of the 19th century. But the Conservative government led by Edward Heath, and the Labour government led by Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, were much blamed for Britain's inferior performance in comparison with other developed economies, especially those of Germany, Japan and the United States. Table 3.1 provides some persuasive statistics of the relevant period.

Hence, in 1979, the British people initiated a national economic experiment by electing a Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher was determined then to make a change. But Eric Evans, professor of Social History at Lancaster University, argues that Thatcher's success was also her failure. In economic terms, Britain's relative economic successes during the Thatcher years might be thought of as failures in comparison with those of other successful countries.⁶⁹ When asked to choose between a single European market and British sovereignty, Thatcher went back, one might say, to an ideology more associated with an earlier stage of modern Britain. She reiterated Winston Churchill's view that Britain was with Europe not a part of it.⁷⁰ In respect of design policy, Thatcher's change was concerned with the marketability of design evidenced by a boom in the number of design consultancies in the 1980s, for example, Allied International Designer, WPP Group, Euro RSCG, Havas, Aegis, Gruner & Jahr and Saatchi & Saatchi – of which Allied International encompassed 16 companies with a staff of 600 and WPP Group 54 companies with 22,500 staff.⁷¹ A change reflected the shift in design practice away from an institutional to a corporate footing. Nonetheless, according to Julier, Thatcherite design policy is also confusing, because Thatcher's, as well as the Design Council's, 'emphasis on the development of innovatory products for manufacture' did not match the growing opportunities of the 1980s.⁷² Professor Black, of the University of Exeter, holds the view that government practices

⁶⁹ See Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher And Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 1997) 117.

⁷⁰ See Jeremy Black, *Convergence Or Divergence? Britain And The Continent* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) 236; Margaret Thatcher, "Speech at the College of Europe," *The Revival Of Britain: Speeches On Home And European Affairs 1975–1988* (London: Aurum, 1989) 256-266.

⁷¹ See Mike Jones, "Going Public, Going Bust," *Design*, January 1991: 17-18.

⁷² See Guy Julier, *The Culture Of Design* (London: SAGE, 2000) 16.

during the 1980s did not set a firm direction for Britain.⁷³ Later, Prime Minister Gordon Brown has also commented negatively on the concept of Britishness, as popularised by Thatcher in the 1980s, built on a self-interested individualism, mistrust of foreigners and an unchanging constitution. Brown believes that this represented a ‘misreading’ of the British past, ‘for Britain is enriched by the strength of all these different cultures’, it is ‘a nation in living colour’ – and he himself can comfortably be ‘Scottish or British’.⁷⁴ It could be argued from Brown’s views that Thatcher’s policy of deconstructing society was confusing the social awareness on which British design ideology used to draw.

The confusion was aggravated during the division of John Major’s government as it was under the late Thatcher years. Major’s ‘Back to Basics’ theme and ‘wait and see’ attitude was discredited, and the Conservative government’s position in the public opinion polls collapsed. Even a slight economic recovery did not work to Major’s benefit. The public got lost in a suspicious vocabulary of political principles. As a result, the Conservatives won only 30.7% of the British vote in 1997.⁷⁵ The British felt somewhat lost. What ways forward could Britain take, and what new brand of corporate outlook might emerge? In the past, imperial themes and identities had already been tried. Furthermore, the post-War economic settlement had failed, along with the later free market outlook, which was worn out. The British people then vested authority in the Labour Party as an opportunity to change, for the better, the story of their identity. As a result, like Thatcher, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have endeavoured to project a new vision of the nation, holding the view that ‘coherent and attractive national identities have political and social benefits’.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, for New Labour’s leaders, it has been a hard identity enterprise from the beginning because, as Leonard puts it, the original invention of Britishness is too successful to be updated.⁷⁷

⁷³ See Jeremy Black, *Britain Since The Seventies: Politics And Society In The Consumer Age* (London: Reaktion, 2004) 8.

⁷⁴ Steve Richards, “The NS Interview Gordon Brown” *New Statesman And Society* 19 April, 1999: 18; Gordon Brown, “New Britannia,” *Guardian* 6 May 1999: 22; “This is the Time to Start Building a Greater Britain,” *Times* 10 January 2000: 15.

⁷⁵ See Jeremy Black 143-166.

⁷⁶ Mark Leonard, *Britain™: Renewing Our Identity* (London: Demos, 1997) 10.

⁷⁷ Leonard 71.

In matters of ‘national identity’, New Labour leader Blair favoured the word ‘modern’, as his goal was to ‘modernise’ Britain and advocated the project ‘to build a modern Britain’, drawing on their think tanks’ proposals, such as Mark Leonard’s.⁷⁸ In his report *BritainTM*, Mark Leonard proposed six national stories for renewing Britain’s identity, each interpreting ‘modern’ in a slightly different way: ‘Hub UK – Britain at the world’s crossroads’; ‘Creative island’; ‘United colours of Britain’; ‘Open for business’; ‘Britain as silent revolutionary’ and ‘The nation of fair play’. These are stories that link the past and future, wherein each old idea about Britain is given a modern interpretation.⁷⁹ In tandem with Leonard’s propositions, Blair’s government wished to build ‘a young, dynamic, entrepreneurial’ Britain.⁸⁰ But the government did not accept all such outlooks equally. The strongest accent was given to the ‘creative’ one, an idea that New Labour has oriented around the ‘creative industries’, such as computer software, publishing, music, advertising, design, the arts, the media and so on. In 1998, Secretary of State Chris Smith published *Creative Britain*, emphasising the vital role of creative culture for a ‘Creative Britain’.⁸¹

Blair saw the millennium celebrations as the opportunity to showcase a ‘new Britain’. Becky E. Conekin, a research fellow at the London College of Fashion, was quite critical of the millennium celebrations. With a research background of historical and cultural studies in the fashion field, Conekin seemed to devalue the Millennium Dome from a perspective of taste and artworks.⁸² But according to Penny Sparke, the millennium celebrations linked the design process to the experience of post-modernity.⁸³ Following the examination of exhibitions in the section 3.1.2, it is claimed here that, from the *Great Exhibition of 1851* through the *Festival of Britain* to millennium celebrations, British design culture completed a cycle: Britain made – Britain designed – Britain branded, in regard to goods, events and experiences. With the innovative ideas of the Millennium Dome, Britain tried to go ahead in experience economy as she did in product export economy.

⁷⁸ Design Council, *Creative Britain* (London: Design Council, 1998).

⁷⁹ Leonard 48-62.

⁸⁰ Earl Aaron Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution: Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, And The Transformation Of Modern Britain, 1979–2001* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003) 175.

⁸¹ See Chris Smith, *Creative Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).

⁸² Becky E. Conekin, ‘The Autobiography Of A Nation’: *The 1951 Festival Of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003) 230.

⁸³ Sparke 137.

The creation of new government departments under Gordon Brown in 2007 could indicate that they underwent a more thorough rebrand further down the economic line of modern Britain. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has been overhauled in response to changing demands and opportunities. It was divided into the Department of Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, its replacement body, and the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS). The Design Council, which used to be funded by the DTI, moves now under the wing of the DIUS. As Design Council Chief Executive David Kester interpreted, the importance of design in the development of the economy is ‘recognised now in policy terms’: ‘Design can understand user needs and create marketable propositions for science’.⁸⁴ This recognition in the policy indicated a reform thinking of design.

It is suggested to interpret this indication of design reform in the light of the ‘second modernity’.⁸⁵ If design awareness in relation to designed objects gave Britain a head start in the first modernity, symbolised by the *Great Exhibition of 1851* and embodied essentially in the communication among people and things, design experience in relation to creative industries offers another opportunity for Britain to be branded in the second modernity, which can be interpreted essentially as interpersonal communication around materiality. Just as the anthropologist Michael Schiffer argues, human life consists of constant communications of human and materiality.⁸⁶ It is from such premises that Britain seeks to find a leading place in promoting the institutional growth of the second modernity through her creative industries. What Prime Minister Gordon Brown calls the ‘Great British Society’ is thought to be also significant in this perspective:

⁸⁴ Editor, “Department For Innovation To Fund The Design Council,” *Design Week* 22.28 (2007): 5.

⁸⁵ Modernity, as generally agreed with Anthony Giddens’ claim, ‘refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the 17th century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence’. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences Of Modernity* (London: Polity, 1990) 1. The shift from medieval to modern society has often been described as the result of at least four interdependent revolutions: the scientific, the capitalistic, the industrial and the political. This state of society is generally considered as the first modernity because it is not the end of modern society or modernity. What is being experienced is not the end of modernity, but the transformation of the meaning and significance of the revolutions in the first round of modernity. This contemporary transformation is said to be the second modernity. See also footnote 4 in Chapter 6.

⁸⁶ See Tim Dant, *Materiality And Society* (Berkshire: Open UP, 2005) 6.

I saw Britain as being the first country in the world that can be a multicultural, multiethnic and multinational state. America, at its best, is a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, but America does not have nationalities within identifiable political units in the way that Britain does. We have a chance to forge a unique pluralist democracy where diversity becomes a source of strength.

(Richards, The NS Interview Gordon Brown 18-19)⁸⁷

The DIUS is said to have assumed the task of institutionalising a creative experience of economic practices for which designed objects have laid the foundations. ‘Accelerate commercial exploitation of creativity and knowledge through innovation and research’ is obviously accentuated in the *Mission Statement And Departmental Objectives* of the DIUS, and several reports by the previous DTI all clearly point to this assumption.⁸⁸

3.2 Intellectuals and Discourse for the Many

In the previous section, the roots of British design awareness were examined. This section will render an account of the British intelligentsia’s construction of design consciousness, in order to explore the cultural norms produced by the use of objects.

3.2.1. Defining Design: Reform and Recapture

As Mandler and Toynbee put it above, the British way is to be identified in company with others. Thatcher also claimed that Britain has a tradition of historical liberty, whereas French intellectuals formulated abstract ideas of liberty.⁸⁹ It follows that this way of thinking also embraces an understanding of design for the British. John A. Walker, design historian and theorist, proposed a contextual concept for design, claiming that design makes sense through referring to, and differentiating from, other terms, and thus has more than one meaning.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Steve Richards 18-19.

⁸⁸ See Mission Statement And Departmental Objectives at <http://www.dius.gov.uk/mission.html>; See also Innovation Report, Competing In The Global Economy: The Innovation Challenge (2003) and DTI Economics Paper no.11, R&D Intensive Businesses In The UK (2005) at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/dius>, click ‘Innovation’, then click ‘Research and Development: Find out more about Research and Development’.

⁸⁹ Margaret Thatcher, “Speech at the College of Europe,” The Revival Of Britain: Speeches On Home And European Affairs 1975–1988. Ed. Alastair B. Cooke (London: Aurum, 1989) 257.

⁹⁰ See John Albert Walker, Design History And History Of Design (London: Pluto, 1989) 23.

Walker's concept of design has become a reference for other design historians and researchers.⁹¹ Guy Julier takes his ideas further by broadening the context into an historical overview of the development of the word 'design', based on ideas expressed by Tevfik Balcioglu that summarise the transformation of the term 'design' in three phases. According to Julier, the Italian notion 'disegno' coincides with 'the first phase of design of the Renaissance and Enlightenment'.⁹² It is a phase of an amalgam of design purposes, aims and intentions. The 'second phase' coincides with the 19th century. In this period, the term design lost some of its potential power, because the debate between the English word 'design' and the French word 'dessin' led to confusion. This period was very important in the respect of British design, when Henry Cole's mid-19th century design reforms took place alongside the replacement of the word 'design' by terms such as 'industrial art', 'decorative art' or 'applied art'. The 'third phase' was situated in the early 20th century, with a retrieval of the word 'design', 'in order to separate it out again from art'.⁹³

Sparke traced the roots of the concept 'design' and also the Italian 'disegno'. She interpreted the process and the result of the process by differentiating 'designing' and 'design'. Her study was based on the multiple contexts of both terms and 'their interface with culture' in the 20th century.⁹⁴

Both Sparke's and Julier's positions are brought together here as a means of exploring the reform and the recapture of design awareness in British design history. But in contrast to Julier or Balcioglu, a division of phases based on national cultural values is preferred. In this way, the first phase is considered as Franco-Italian, the second German-Anglo-French and the third Anglo-American. This classification helps as a means of clearly signalling the change of cultural values from elitism to public. And also slightly differentiated from Sparke's position, this section will focus

⁹¹ See, for example, Sparke 3 and Julier 30.

⁹² In his book *Design History And History Of Design*, John A. Walker gave the meaning of 'disegno' which, in practice, was drawing as a tool used in planning. Based on Walker's study, Julier draws attention to the separation of conception and execution in design practice. See John A. Walker, 23.

⁹³ All quoted from Julier 32-33.

⁹⁴ See Sparke 3-4.

on the shift of cultural values reflected in the rhetoric of design from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century.

The Franco-Italian period had two variations of national definitions of design in their languages: ‘disegno’ and ‘dessin’. A division of labour in the studios indicated ‘a hierarchy ... between the planning and making aspects of cultural production’: apprentices would execute some assistant tasks.⁹⁵ Design occupied a minor and menial place in the hierarchy while art occupied a major and master place. As a result, it was not reasonable to take design as means of knowledge distribution.

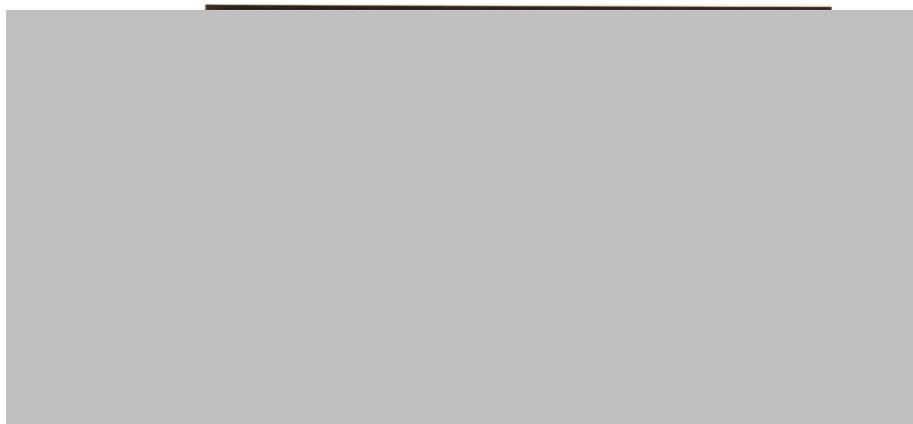


Figure 3.1. The prize-winning tea set designed by Henry Cole.

Source: Elisabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton The Great Exhibitor (London: V & A, 2003) Figure19.

The early experiences of publicist and organiser, Father of British Design, Henry Cole reflected the position described above. In the early years of his reform, Cole studied Etruscan pots at the British Museum for his design of the tea set submitted to the Society of Arts competition.⁹⁶ The tea set won a silver medal.⁹⁷ The success of his tea set led him to the establishment of ‘Felix Summerly’s Art-Manufactures’, with which Cole would realise art in material form, that is, commercialise art. This might

⁹⁵ Julier 32.

⁹⁶ In order to acquire experience in manufacturing and to be cheap to produce and obtain beauty at the same time, Cole studied Etruscan pots at the British Museum. Later, Cole set up his firm ‘Felix Summerly’s Art-Manufacturers’ for commercial experiments in order to be cheap to produce and obtain beauty.

⁹⁷ Founded in 1754, the Society of Arts was properly titled the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce. It became the Royal Society of Arts in 1908. The Society involved itself in various practices of arts, manufactures and commerce by offering grants and prizes for new inventions. Cole entered the society in 1846, when the society embarked on exhibitions of contemporary manufactures. It was in the 1846 exhibition that Henry Cole won a prize with his tea set.

be the reason why he would often quite be attacked as an ignoramus in art matters, for example by Sir Henry Trueman Wood in a letter to the *Times*, in 1909, even though he had become an authority in the art world.⁹⁸ His attackers certainly did not realise that Cole was taking on the task of design reform.

Cole's practices included three steps. First, ornament: to acquire manufacturing experiences through an historical knowledge of ornaments. By studying Etruscan pots, as recounted above, he set out to show that elegant forms could be made costing no more than the inelegant ones in manufacture. Second, alliance: to acquire popular recognition through the promotion of public taste. Cole believed that it could be achieved by forging an alliance between fine art and manufactures. As a result, a bringing together of artists, manufacturers and designers was set up by Cole, and known as Felix Summerly's Art-Manufacturers. Third, agreement: to extend and encourage the appreciation of British manufacturing art among the many. For the Summerly enterprise, Cole chose the designs, issued catalogues and recruited artists in publicity and marketing. Cole's experiments in many ways epitomised earlier national precedents, such as the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce and the Art-Union Society, founded in 1754 and 1837 respectively.⁹⁹

The second issue for Cole was to promote his efforts in design reform. After winning the prize with his tea set, Cole made use of the exhibitions as a start-up of promotion. Fortunately, the President of the Society of Arts, Prince Albert, had just announced, in 1847, the government policy to encourage 'the application of the Fine Arts to the various manufactures of the country'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Cole's personal design reform mission took on a social dimension with royal support. Three annual exhibitions organised by the Society of Arts (in 1847, 1848 and 1849) helped to clarify the significance of such a reforming outlook.

The first annual exhibition was devoted to *British Manufactures And Decorative Art*. Held in London on 13 March 1847, the exhibition attracted some 20,000 visitors. While displaying modern manufactures, this exhibition also included a retrospective

⁹⁸ See Henry Trueman Wood, letter to *The Times* (Monday 28 Jun 1909) 10.

⁹⁹ See Elisabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton 93-98.

¹⁰⁰ Elisabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton 100.

part of decorative art from the 16th to the 19th centuries.¹⁰¹ A second annual exhibition was also held in London on 15 March 1848, attracting some 70,000 visitors. It was devoted to the proportional control of processing material and manufacturing object, for example, the accent of ‘lightness and freedom’ in metalwork and ‘simple and pure outline’ in glassware. On a greater scale than the previous one, the exhibition subjects were more numerous and important, with improved design and quality. The exhibition catalogue comprised approximately 700 subjects.¹⁰² The third annual exhibition was held in London on 7 March 1849. This exhibition, in the number and character of exhibits of metal, glass, pottery and wood carving, was an advance display of specimens of British manufactures following the second one.¹⁰³



Figure 3.2. Black marble lotus cup and tazza, carved by Irving’s patent machine.

Source: The Illustrated London News. 13 March 1847. Vol. X No. 254: 172.

¹⁰¹ See “Society of Arts. – Select Specimens Of British Decorative Art,” Editorial. *Illustrated London News*. March 13 1847. Vol. X No. 254: 172.

¹⁰² “Free Exhibition Of Selected British Manufactures,” Editorial. *Illustrated London News*. March 18 1848. Vol. XII No. 308: 187.

¹⁰³ See “Society of Arts. – Exhibition Of Recent British Manufactures,” Editorial. *Illustrated London News*. March 24 1849. Vol. XIV No. 363: 195.



Figure 3.3. Bread platter.

Source: The Illustrated London News, 25 March 1848. Vol. XII No. 309: 204.

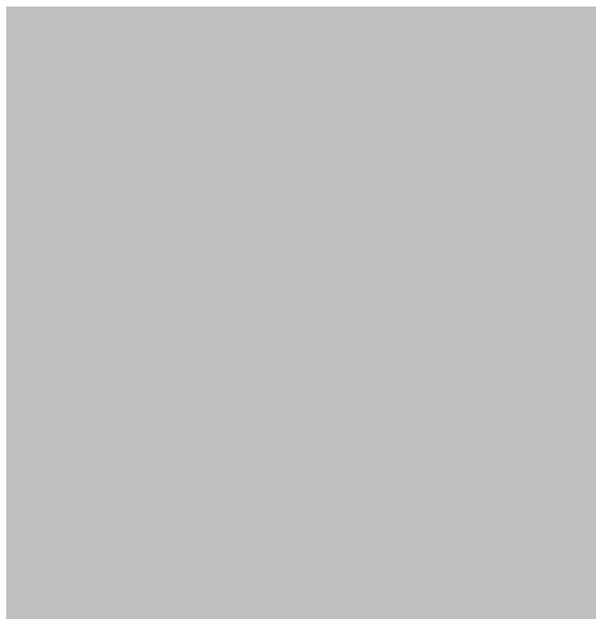


Figure 3.4. Venetian water bottle and wine-glass, not in catalogue.

Source: The Illustrated London News, 17 March 1849. Vol. XIV No. 362: 172.

With these three exhibitions as model variations, Cole was significantly shaping the historical and national dimension for a public understanding of design or, more particularly, British design. The comparative intention of the first was evident with the retrospective part of exhibits serving as a background reference. Vernacular manufactures were contrasted to historical decorative arts. Cole believed that public taste could be improved by ‘viewing the good and the mediocre’: ‘let him praise in

the right place, let him blame in the right place, and the object of our exhibition has been attained'.¹⁰⁴ This element of intentional contrast was transformed into international confrontation at the *Great Exhibition of 1851*. In this context, the excessive position of aesthetic comments on the *Great Exhibition of 1851* only reflected the hegemony of the prevailing Franco-Italian discourse. In the 1847 exhibition, Cole had intended 'to display a rogue's gallery',¹⁰⁵ but there was too much opposition. In the *Festival of 1951*, the BBC had also considered, but finally rejected, Graham Hutton's proposal for 'a series as others see us' and Roger Cary's 'a series on English traits', for example, 'simplicity', 'laziness',¹⁰⁶ although there was, at the Lansbury site of the festival, a mock Tudor house entitled 'Gremlin Grande' – placed as an example of how not to design a house.

The second and third exhibitions offered a national dimension for reform. The second actually dealt with the issue of form and utility, specific to the manufacturing industry. According to Cole, by her mechanical execution of art, Britain was making an art, or 'Art of the United Kingdom', different from 'the universal likeness which pervades the art of all Europe at the present time'.¹⁰⁷ Of the two roles of Britain's Art – design axis, utility has the first place, as stated in the *Journal Of Design*, founded by Cole in 1849.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, as early as 1849, in his lectures delivered at St Marie's, Pugin had proposed 'the two great rules for design': first, no features unnecessary; second, ornament as enrichment of the construction.¹⁰⁹ By uncovering the proportional regulation of material and work, Cole introduced the rule of utility in design. Through exhibitions devoted entirely to art, Cole sought to explore the traditional sense of value in new expressions of mechanical arts.

Additionally, British artists were chosen by Cole for a promotion of noble tradition in British design. For example, in 1848, an exhibition was devoted to the paintings and drawings of Irish painter and illustrator William Mulready. Mulready's works, as

¹⁰⁴ Cole as quoted in Hudson and Luckhurst, *The Royal Society Of Arts 1754–1954* (London: John Murray, 1954) 187.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See Mandler, *The English National Character: The History Of An Idea From Burke To Blair* 210.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Cole, "On the International Results of the Exhibition of 1851." *The Industrial Design Reader* Ed. Carma Gorman (New York: Allworth, 2003) 10.

¹⁰⁸ See John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 20.

¹⁰⁹ A. Welby Pugin, *The True Principles Of Pointed Or Christian Architecture* (London: Academy, 1973) 1.

suggested by Cole, were ‘popular pictures to be read, understood, and enjoyed by everybody’.¹¹⁰ The ruralism represented by Mulready was also reflected in the public preference for simplicity in response to the question of their preferred choice of elaboration or simplicity, as asked by the *Journal Of Design* in 1852.

Put briefly, these exhibitions contributed to a public view of design in respect of ornament, utility and tradition. They also contributed to the examination of variations of design history in forms of decorative arts, industrial design and art, as well as in composition of ornament, technology, utility and beauty as components. In addition to exhibitions, Cole also experimented with other media, such as journals with illustrations for manufacturers. All he undertook was aimed at offering an enjoyable opportunity to express taste to an industrial mass. One may note, as Julier did, that Cole used the term ‘art’ rather than ‘design’. But, as a cultural study, the professional reason given by the work of Julier is a slightly insufficient argument, whether it was for Cole to avoid the narrow connotations or for the designers to be concerned with the status of practices.¹¹¹

Referring to the French case, it is not difficult to find a point on which to base a cultural interpretation. Just as Kumar has relevantly remarked:

It was common for the English in the nineteenth century to compare themselves with Rome ... As they saw it, they, like the Romans were engaged in a mission to spread law and civilization across the globe.

(Kumar, *The Making Of English Identity* 196)¹¹²

The British Empire thus became the agency for good and the agent of mission to educate and elevate the human race. So, according to Martin J. Wiener, the Victorians’ ethos is essentially aristocratic.¹¹³ For Thompson, the encounter of industry and aristocracy led to the gentrification of the Victorians. In his eyes,

¹¹⁰ Henry Cole, “The Mulready Exhibition, At The Society Of Arts,” *Illustrated London News* 10 June 1848. Vol. 12 No 320: 377.

¹¹¹ See Julier 33.

¹¹² Kumar 196.

¹¹³ See Martin Joel Wiener, *English Culture And The Decline Of The Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 11-30.

‘culture meant art, literature, a liberal education, gentility, and good manners’ for the mid-Victorians.¹¹⁴ Mid-Victorian reforms were based on these values in which *Noblesse Oblige* took its British expression. Consequently, for mid-Victorian reformers, art was a cultural signifier of Roman splendour, of national confidence. The gradual elevation of the public level of life, by virtue of manufactures, was the *Art of Britain*. Cole thus explained in an 1852 lecture: ‘certainly the *Industry*, and perhaps even the *Art* of the United Kingdom, took the first place in the race’.¹¹⁵ This was the reason why Cole would be the ‘Art Man’ when Mulready advised him to choose between ‘Art Man’ and businessman.¹¹⁶ The terms ‘Art-Manufactures’ and ‘Art-Union’ can also be also interpreted in this way.

The rhetoric of this art for the public good was best expressed in the *Great Exhibition of 1851*. The exhibition had three themes: progress, equality and unity. Industrialism as way of life, being pregnant with promise, was easily realised in the material wealth that was embodied in the Crystal Palace. It was not the superiority that Britain showed with the exhibition, as most historians and critics believed, although perceptive critics recognised the importance of the American System of Manufactures. It was the principle of the ‘invisible hand’ that Britain would interpret: Britain, in pursuit of her own good, was led to achieve the best good for humankind. The allocation of 50% of the space to Britain’s raw materials and industrial applications clarified the point. It was an order of quality, a fair play. Britain was placed ‘in fair competition with that of other nations’, as put by Prince Albert at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet.¹¹⁷ Free trade tended to contribute to the world unity through fair international commerce. As an extension of cultural exchanges following the exhibition, Cole had advocated a ‘Universal Catalogue’ of bibliography to be compiled by the British Museum. Thus, Cole reinscribed himself in the British tradition of utilitarian positivism to elevate machine efficiency into an aesthetic ideal similar to that embraced by the defenders of the factory system, such as Edward Baines, William Cooke Taylor and Charles Babbage.

¹¹⁴ Francis Thompson and Michael Longstreth, *Gentrification And The Enterprise Culture Britain 1780–1980* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 75.

¹¹⁵ Henry Cole, “On The International Results Of The Exhibition of 1851” 9.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton 98.

¹¹⁷ Prince Albert as quoted in Stewart 8.

But this 'Art of Britain' idea aroused strong opposition. The Old England was seen as a green and pleasant land, but the Industrial Revolution came to plant a modern workshop, which resulted in direct opposition between 'machine' and 'garden'. Cole promoted 'progress', yet John Ruskin felt uncomfortable with 'progress'. Ruskin wondered 'what after that?' ('that' meaning the *Great Exhibition of 1851*). 'Nothing, said Ruskin, but noise, emptiness, and idiocy'.¹¹⁸ When Cole invited Ruskin to comment on the *Great Exhibition of 1851* in the *Journal Of Design*, Ruskin offered politely one word: 'declining'. As Wiener claims, the gradual transition of 19th century Britain to modernity was one of incompleteness, from which the inner tension of modern British culture stemmed: workshop and garden, industrialism and ruralism, utilitarian and romantic and the like.¹¹⁹ Cole and Ruskin merely constituted two opposite expressions of the very British character in the 19th century. British people are 'doers rather than thinkers', said Jeremy Paxman.¹²⁰ Cole was a doer, but Ruskin was more identifiable as a thinker. Their paths occasionally crossed, but were always different.

The anti-industrialism of Ruskin deeply influenced William Morris. With Ruskin as prophet and William Morris as a leading disciple, a powerful crusade launched the British Arts and Crafts Movement, for the purpose of reviving the dignity and self-fulfilment of medieval handicrafts. As a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, their Gothic revival expressed the fear of the soullessness of urbanism and industrialism, and the utilitarian and materialistic habit of mind that these conditions represented. Central to their ideas was a discontent with a national machine aesthetic. Arts and Crafts personnel were concerned with the quality of life, believing that control over the products exercised by the artisan would be lost under factory working conditions. They looked to British craft roots for inspiration in the building of a modern British design identity. As, arguably, the central figure, Morris claimed the pursuit of wealth spoiled the 'art of the world'.¹²¹ He would promote the crafts as the arts of rural goodness in opposition to the art of industrial progress. Morris and his allies would defend 'the art of the world' in a choice 'between the quality of men and the quantity

¹¹⁸ Ruskin as quoted in Wiener 38.

¹¹⁹ See Wiener 7.

¹²⁰ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait Of A People* (London: Michael Joseph, 1998) 1.

¹²¹ Wiener 119.

of production'.¹²² This is the context for understanding the reason why Lethaby strove to defend the superiority of art in his essay *Art And Workmanship* when there was a retrieval of the word 'design' from the wider perspective of art in the early 20th century.

Why was the use of the word 'design' re-established? Julier mentioned the influence of American industrial designers,¹²³ but these were not really in evidence until the later 1920s and 1930s. Most important, it could be argued, is the rise of 'good design' discourse accompanied by the birth of design history that largely justified the British way of talking about design.

3.2.2 'Good Design' Discourse and Historiography

Design, that is the industrial reformation of the British version, gave not only a new content but also a new shape to British cultural and intellectual life. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this facet of design discourse and design history, not only because both were born in Britain, but also for, as Richard Rorty put it, 'changing the way we talk' and 'changing what we want to do and what we think we are'.¹²⁴

According to Stephen Hayward, 'good design discourse' is at the heart of British design history. In his article *Good Design Is Largely A Matter Of Common Sense*, Hayward clarified two senses of discourse: 'one to refer to the texts'; 'the other to sequences of ideas and practices'. In terms of the texts, history may appear to be a vain repetition of texts without insisting on the truth in the eyes of Richard Rorty and Keith Jenkins.¹²⁵ But Hayward thought that the 'recognition of the autobiographical quality of history' would encourage the recognition of the past in the present. The second sense suggests a cultural role of discourse in the organisation of 'social and

¹²² Ruskin as quoted in Wiener 119.

¹²³ Julier 33.

¹²⁴ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, And Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989) 20.

¹²⁵ See Keith Jenkins, *On What Is History* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, And Solidarity*.

psychological processes'. Material culture plays 'a supporting role' in this historical organising.¹²⁶

It is true, as Hayward clarifies in relation to the first sense identified by him, that reflexive recognition is well reflected in British design exhibitions and events, such as the *Festival 1951* and *Wembley 1924* exhibitions as autobiography or as self-portrait. Britain and France are so similar and so different in this respect. Both have rhetoric about the past, but, for the French, the past is part of the present, taken for granted in contemporary life – for the British, the past will be mastered only when it is linked to the future in the present.¹²⁷ The different models of British and French exhibitions echo this differentiation.

But there is a complexity to be examined in regard to the second sense in Hayward's arguments. A discourse is not necessarily able to assume a cultural role in a different logic of society. In the British case, material culture has never been built in a literary logic but in a factory system, as Britain's modernity is much based on the experience of things. A discourse does not function as a cultural entity in the British situation. According to the British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, one of the founding figures of international cultural studies, culture and society are active processes. This is Williams' particular contribution to cultural criticism through the constructing of culture and society as activity, addressing the linguist Saussure's linguistic conceptions. Variations of cultural situations thus cannot be reduced to a relationship of signs in a discursive system.¹²⁸ This might be the very reason why Britain and France are divergent in their ways of shaping modernity through different forms of knowledge: one through design experience and the other through art thinking.

The ways in which these two senses are contained in the idea of 'good design' discourse and how the historiography contributes to and consumes them, is discussed below.

¹²⁶ Stephen Hayward, "'Good Design Is Largely A Matter Of Common Sense': Questioning The Meaning And Ownership Of A Twentieth-Century Orthodoxy," *Journal Of Design History* 11.3 (1998): 217-218.

¹²⁷ This awareness of 'past' is fully examined in A. H. Hanson and Malcolm Walles, *Governing Britain*, 4th ed. (London: Fontana, 1984) 317-327.

¹²⁸ See Raymond Williams, *Marxism And Literature* (London: Oxford UP, 1977) 39-42.

As a body of knowledge in the light of Foucault's terms of the exercise of power, 'good design' discourse is traced back by Hayward to the 'tradition of art worry', which started in the years of Cole's reform.¹²⁹ This was clearly shown, as described above, in the exhibitions of Cole's design reform years, which embodied the ideas of progress. By virtue of Bourdieu's terms regarding 'cultural meaning', Hayward attempted to explain, more cogently, 'why in the context of commodity culture the egalitarian aspirations of good design have been overshadowed by its aesthetic aspects – it has been consumed as cultural capital'.¹³⁰ The modification of cultural meaning through such selective consumption would equate 'good design' with common sense. Yet another conclusion can be drawn from Bourdieu's ideas associated with Foucault's 'governmentality'.¹³¹ In a complex view, the selective appropriation of cultural meaning relates both to personal choice and communal conferring. Whether the consumer is aware or unaware of his selective symbolisation in goods, a promotional evaluation will be produced. Cultural meaning can be turned into the capital of political promotion for France, but into the capital of commercial promotion for Britain. If Prince Albert was concerned with the idea of progress through creating the Art of Britain, Henry Cole was devoted to realise it technically or commercially. Common sense was needed to promote its recognition by the public. The aesthetic aspects provided the best way to build in international common sense at that time. As a matter of fact, 'good design' discourse and design history initially are largely variations of this common sense.

The 1930s, as Nigel Whiteley insightfully put it, was the decade when 'modernist designers rejected any notion of design being dictated by the 'market' as the debasement of standards'.¹³² From this perspective, it was believed that designers or the state should be promoted in an aesthetic as moral way, including design history itself. Pevsner's *Pioneers Of The Modern Movement* (1936) was thus based on a linear, progressive view of design history, stressing the relationship between design

¹²⁹ Hayward 218.

¹³⁰ Hayward 222.

¹³¹ What Foucault calls 'governmentality' refers to the link between the technologies of domination of others and techniques of the self: an intergrowth of governance between one's own and others' conduct. In this perspective, Peter Mandler's themes for his analysis of the English character also echo Foucault's conception. It will be interesting to relate this idea of Foucault to Toynbee's idea of constitutional growth in order to perceive the expression of Britain's character in design practices.

¹³² Nigel Whiteley, *Design For Society* (London: Reaktion, 1993) 10.

and nationhood. For Pevsner, the elevation of aesthetic standards was seen as something that would improve national competitiveness. The Pevsnerean account therefore built a selective and straight-line approach to point to the historical inevitability of modernism. In the foreword of the third edition, published in 1960, Pevsner was still, ‘convinced as ever that the style of the Fagus Works and the Cologne model factory is still valid’.¹³³

The educational background among the elite of German art historians such as Heinrich Wölfflin, Adolf Goldschmidt and Rudolf Kautzsch, encouraged Pevsner to embrace the idea of *zeitgeist* and led to his inevitable representation of national characteristics in art. His sense of aesthetic morality echoed the moral preoccupation of intellectuals about the social and spiritual debasement from the late Victorian years onwards. Pevsner’s progressive view of history also contributed to the construction of a ‘good design’ discourse pregnant with promise of a future based on national qualities of design. Unfortunately, such promise was lost in the different sensibility of the British market-place, which was marked by what Pevsner might have seen as the continuation of Victorian philistinism. For him and others, such as Lord Reith of the BBC, the state of contemporary taste called for educational reform.¹³⁴ As Pevsner looked around for an appropriate vehicle for promoting the cause of ‘good design’, the European Continental ‘good taste’, or way of ‘distribution of the sensible’,¹³⁵ was thus planted in Pevsner’s moral, instructional and aesthetic framework of historiography.

It may be significant to point out that Pevsner’s book was republished in 1949 under the title *Pioneers Of Modern Design*, the same year in which Gordon Russell published his article on *What Is Good Design?* – in the journal *Design*. This coincident attention to design is suggested to be a response to the economic difficulties of the time, and an influence, produced by the creation of the Council of Industrial Design (COID), on the placing of design in the post-war context. The establishment of the COID, in 1944, laid institutional foundations for the attributive

¹³³ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers Of Modern Design: From William Morris To Walter Gropius* 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005) 11.

¹³⁴ See Hayward 224.

¹³⁵ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics Of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

verification of ‘good business’ to ‘good design’. The material consumption of designed goods was thus linked to national competitiveness and efficiency. But this institutional discursive endeavour was seldom reflected in the historiography. It could be surmised that the title change of Pevsner’s work was merely a literal choice instead of a radical discursive turn as the word ‘design’ represented better nationhood and national characters. The narrative Parthenon form of the *Pioneers* had nothing changed in the second edition. It was only a fact that the Parthenon of modernism was opened for a selective collection in the name of design.

It was not until 1960 that a significant revision of Pevsner’s narrative was made by Reyner Banham’s *Theory And Design In The First Machine Age*. Banham’s work exposed the deficiency of Pevsner’s ‘selective and classicizing’ text and claimed the ‘acceptance of machines qua machines’.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Banham’s work has not got fully free of modernist narrative, as his theoretical vocabulary was in essence not different from Pevsner. Both worked in a style model: Pevsner in an individual style while Banham in a ‘thought style’ – as termed by Mary Douglas.¹³⁷ As a result, Pevsner did not think that the discursive alterations of such a kind rocked the structure of his argument.¹³⁸ First published in 1972, MacCarthy’s *A History Of British Design 1830–1970* embodied a narrative turn in historiography in the consumer age.¹³⁹ Centred on British design achievements, the text constituted a specific study of the development of design in a national dimension. Design was no longer examined in the utopian context of the culture of taste, but in that of the first industrial nation to give birth to a democratic material culture, in the close interaction between national identity and material culture. Although design and design knowledge were investigated on an institutional level through national organisation, a design school system and public awareness, MacCarthy’s analysis ran the risk of being seen as design cultural propaganda, through her highly selective representation of official records. As a result, it may be seen as a pale account of design in terms of any demonstration of the integral aspect of political, cultural, social and economic change.

¹³⁶ Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian Of The Immediate Future* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2002) 33.

¹³⁷ See Mary Douglas, *Thought Styles* (London: SAGE, 1996).

¹³⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner 11.

¹³⁹ See Fiona MacCarthy, *A History Of British Design 1830–1970*. Rev. ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979).

Woodham's *Twentieth Century Design*, published in 1997, has been seen as a key text in the new British historiography of design.¹⁴⁰ It is an intelligent dimension 'in the new wave of British design history', signalling a fundamental shift towards the 'texture of everyday life', to quote Richard Buchanan, co-editor of *Design Issues*.¹⁴¹ But Buchanan was concerned with greater emphasis on the part of consumers and users, while simultaneously considering it as an insufficient fundamental hypothesis. This comment is penetrating in respect of the writing structure, but this concentration on this emphasis may overshadow its value of historiography in the history of design.

This promising turn, signalled by the book, has a twofold significance in the way in which the history of design is represented. First, the theme 'texture of everyday life' is an enrichment of British design history, although it reflected currents of thought that had been emerging in the field for some time. This complex theme is a particular British contribution to the central, unifying theme of world history, since design is a specific vision of modern British culture. It marks a turning point in studies of design culture away from the producer (designer, organiser) to the consumer (audience, user). This shift is especially significant when considered in company with the rise of the new wave of British design history. As an academic involved in what may be seen as a new approach to design history, Woodham offers this theme as a core concept for New Design History studies, aiming at an inclusive account of design. Second, Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers Of Modern Design* was 'recognised as the seminal work of design history'.¹⁴² Unfortunately, it was somewhat a bound form, as Pevsner transformed 'high design' into 'high street' in the way of representing design history. New ways of narrations, later on, have not been able to break out of this aesthetic framework, although they have worked in the direction of common culture.¹⁴³ Woodham has endeavoured to propose a greater framework for design history discourse: multi-national background and social, economical contexts. The necessity

¹⁴⁰ See Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997).

¹⁴¹ Richard Buchanan, "Twentieth Century Design," *Journal Of Design History* 11.3 (1998): 259.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ See, for example, Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution To Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford UP, c1948); Reyner Banham, *Theory And Design In The First Machine Age* (London: Architectural, 1960).

for such a kind of discourse value was realised only eight years later in the academic world of design history, as Victor Margolin put it:

Design is an integral component of modern production and a world of history of design should argue for its vital role in economic development. Other issues include the rise of nationalism and the question of race.

(Margolin, A World History Of Design And The History Of The World 235)¹⁴⁴

This theme of Woodham's discursive contribution will be returned to in Chapter 6.

3.3 Conclusion

It has been postulated that the history and culture of both Britain and France have developed within a similar framework, yet different nuances have defined different historical and social means for design knowledge to situate.

Different from France's pursuit of cultural consciousness, Britain's changing perceptions constitute a modern 'asset' of innovation. With the 'settlement' of 1689, Britain builds a tradition of institutionalising the continuity. This institutional configuration then features the knowledge production in Britain. In the perspective of design, it is an institutionalisation of innovation and its continuity. This creativity thus characterises English design knowledge, and an aspect of expertise based on the research and development can be traced even back to Henry Cole's reforms. It is this intention that leads to the divergence of English modern design from that of France in the objects of democratisation. While France adopts the politics of aesthetics, Britain tries to promote the common good through materiality. As a result, a sense of utility generates a dominant form of fitness in the English design. This different attitude characterises British design education. In Britain, motivated largely by the industrial culture, the design schools tried to find their own way of knowledge production since their foundation. The discipline of design history contributes enormously to the educational institutionalisation and undermines the development of the design consultancy service. In this perspective, Britain has an unprecedented and unrivalled privilege in building a social awareness of design. In contrast to France, the situation

¹⁴⁴ Victor Margolin, "A World History Of Design And The History Of The World," Journal Of Design History 18.3 (2005): 235.

for design critique and discourse in Britain is seen to be more favourable. The conception of 'good design' has established some common sense, though the English design historian Attfield points to its danger of aesthetic fascination.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ See Judy Attfield, Bringing Modernity Home: Writings On Popular Design And Material Culture (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007) 37-47.

CHAPTER 4. COMPLEXITY AND THE CHINESE DESIGN AGENDA

4.1 New Society: The Chinese Interpretation of Modernity

The Chinese perceived an overlapping between ‘state’ and ‘world’ both because the criterion of inclusion into the state was not race but culture and because in their known world the Chinese did not encounter any equally established rival culture. Thus, perceptually at least, ‘state’ and ‘world’ and ‘culture’ were meshed with one another, and there was no need for the Chinese to assert themselves as Zhongguoren (Chinese national), which is a modern term.

(Ng-Quinn as quoted in Dittmer and Kim 44)¹

In their passage to modernity, both Britain and France have used their achievements within the field of material culture as a means for consumers to express their social aspirations in modern life. Although different frames of significance have given different ways for design knowledge to be situated, both are clear in their distribution of design knowledge: Britain espoused politics for the many and France promoted aesthetics.

Compared to Britain and France, the Chinese case is rather confusing, for the passage to modernity for China itself is noticeably complex. Based on an amalgam of political experiments with the models of the French Revolution and Britain’s Constitution, China’s early attempts at modernisation failed to build a platform for modern design. To look into the complex situation in which Chinese modern design is located, this study will examine the process of Chinese modernisation through two waves of campaigns. The first covers a period of 100 years, from the 1860s to the 1960s, and is characterised by what could be considered a difficult transition to becoming a modern nation. The second started from the reform of the 1970s.²

¹ Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, *China’s Quest For National Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 44.

² Two texts ought to be required reading for all those who seek the knowledge of Chinese modernisation and its research output: *The Modernisation Of China* and *History Of Modernisation In China*. The first is written by six well-known American scholars, supported by the American National Science Foundation and American National foundation of Human Sciences. It is one of the most complete monographs on Chinese modernisation accessible to Western academics and lays foundations of a referential framework for systematic studies on Chinese modernisation. The second is written by 23 Chinese scholars, applying the modernisation theories originated in the West. It was the first systematic research on Chinese modernisation by Chinese scholars when it was first published in 1995. See, Gilbert Rozman, *The Modernization Of China* (New York: The Free, 1981); Xu Jilin and Chen Dakai, *History Of Modernization In China: I 1800-1949* (Shanghai: Academia, 2006).

4.1.1 The 1861–1895 Reforms and Difficult Situation of Design

In the first wave of campaigns, the most significant movement in respect of design was set in the period of the 1861–1895 Reforms.³ A group of provincial leaders attributed the foreign domination of China to the superiority of foreign military, technology and science. They advocated the need to acquire Western scientific and technological expertise in order to strengthen the old empire. Such reform was, therefore, known as the Self-Strengthening Movement.⁴ However, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 revealed the failure of this reform policy. According to James Wang, a professor at the University of Hawaii, the Self-Strengthening Movement was bound to fail because it 'did not take root' and was 'undertaken on a personal level'.⁵ While Wang's comments are of interest in this context, they need to be a little more profound in order to understand the following 100 years of chaos.

The Self-Strengthening Movement lasted 35 years. However, this first step failed to transform China into an independent, modern, capitalist society. Being at the inception of Chinese modernisation, the movement attracted the wide and intensive attention of scholars. It aroused a controversy, lasting over 130 years, which started at the very outset of the movement. Jiang Duo, research fellow of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, has given a complete review of the research on this movement in his article *Review Of Twentieth Century Chinese Historical Studies: Review Of Studies On The Westernising Movement*.⁶ Jiang classified all relevant comments into two groups: those in Old China and those in New China.

³ This study uses the '1861–1895 Reforms' as a basic and neutral term in order to reveal different attitudes with different defining terms – 'Modernising Movement' on the China Continent and 'Self-Strengthening Movement' in Taiwan and America – in regard to the reform movement of this period. These two terms are regarded as equal titles in this discussion.

⁴ The leading advocates of these limited reforms were Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. They justified the necessity of learning from the West in order to make changes in such traditional institutions as the examination system and the military establishment. The leading advocate of the late period was Zhang Zhidong, who advocated the adoption of Western methods in order to preserve the dynasty.

⁵ James C. F. Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999) 9.

⁶ Jiang Duo, 'Review of Twentieth Century Chinese Historical Studies: Review of Studies on the Westernising Movement,' 18 February 2004. *China Economic History Forum*. 1 October 2007. < <http://economy.guoxue.com/article.php/2579>>

The arguments in Old China shifted their focus from Western technology to Western institutions. During the movement, two groups of government officials: a Westernised group and a group from the old-school which could be described as fixed in their ways, began the debates for and against the adoption of Western technology and learning. Later reformers, such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao (1873–1929) claimed that what could be considered as more important was the adoption of a Western constitutional monarchy. Finally, Dr Sun Yatsen, a revolutionist and advocator of democracy, espoused his argument in favour of a thorough change of the political and social systems through revolution.

The historiography in Old China also reflected the all of the above arguments. One of founders of the Chinese Communist Party, Qu Qiubai, set a negative tone for these arguments. This negative discourse was mainly based on the position of national industry, attributing the low development of Chinese modern industry to the input of Western industrialism and to the bureaucratic character of Westernised industries. A more positive position, stated systematically by the historian Zhao Erzhan, strongly believed that the movement was the first step in joining in with international practices worldwide, a first attempt at an East-West dialogue. And, it could be concluded that this particular issue has become of wide interest to the academic world on the Chinese continent. Over the course of 16 years (1978-1994), one conference or symposium was held almost every two years and over 1000 articles and 50 monographs were published in the field.⁷ The focal point for these arguments was the contribution of the movement to Chinese modernisation.

Another noteworthy point refers to the state of studies on the movement in Taiwan. It has been argued that the Taiwanese hold this movement and its promoters in high esteem. Furthermore, it is of significance that Taiwanese scholars have commonly highlighted the difference of the terms used in Taiwan and on the Chinese continent. According to Taiwanese scholars Zhang Yufa and Lv Shiqiang, two outstanding

⁷ Ibid. Up to the publication of Jiang Duo's article in 1997, the outcome of academic research on the 1861–1895 Reforms has been encouraging. Unfortunately, since the end of the 1990s, with more investment of the government in higher education, researchers and scholars have been involved in more official undertakings than independent research. As a result, the voluntary symposiums on the topic were held no more. Such cooperative research project embodied in the History Of Modernisation In China has not gone further either. The second volume of this collective work has not been published, to date.

historians in this field, most American and Taiwanese scholars use the term ‘Self-Strengthening Movement’ as a patriotic expression to appreciate the efforts of reformers; scholars on the Chinese Continent use the term ‘Westernising Movement’ as a political expression to explain the inevitable failure of the movement as a cooperation between the Qing Dynasty government and the West against the Chinese people.⁸

Jiang’s review is noteworthy, not because it offers a detailed account of varying studies on the topic but because it highlights a change of attitudes towards the movement. This change of attitude is claimed by this study, considering the social situation between the end of the 1970s and the 1990s, to be more significant for the discussion than the course of the movement itself. In the light of this change, a meaningful comparison can be established between the first wave of modernisation, during the 1861-1895 reforms, and the second one – giving rise to the reforms of the 1970s – which will be discussed further at a later stage. This comparison will allow an opportunity to question the reasons why the 1861–1895 reforms were not on firmer ground and, consequently, why China was a latecomer in terms of modern design development.

There has, as yet, been no agreed consensus as to the conception of modernisation. Citing the examples of England and France, modernisation can refer to the process of improving and modifying traditional, political institutions for the purpose of achieving industrialisation or economic development. The design reforms in England and in France from the mid-19th century onwards can be said to have offered a successful, European endogenetic model. In essence, it, therefore, must be possible for other countries to develop their own patterns of modernisation. These ‘other’ countries, such as Japan and China, are often based on the European example, which thus embodies the ectogenic model. This point will be returned to later, in further detail. Nevertheless, whether it is for advanced or latecomer societies, modernisation is, generally, ‘characterised by mass markets’ for ‘consumer goods’, as Rozman put it,

⁸ Research practices are conducted on a rather individual level in Taiwan. Zhang Yufa and Lv Shiqiang are two main contributors to the research in the field. Zhang Yufa is an academican of the Academia Sinica, who has been prolocutor of one of two symposiums on the 1861–1895 Reforms held in Taiwan. Lv Shiqiang is a research fellow of the Academia Sinica and the professor of Taiwan Normal University, he is the main supporter of the use of the term ‘Self-Strengthening Movement’.

based on the source models of England and France.⁹ Sparke has thus described modern society as being tied up with consumer goods where modern design gathers momentum:

Although the modern concept of ‘design’ did not have any common currency until the middle years of the twentieth century, the idea of goods and images being imbued with aesthetic and functional characteristics as a means of attracting and meeting the needs of consumers and users has a long history and is intrinsically linked to the development of what has been called ‘modern’ society.

(Sparke, An Introduction To Design And Culture 13)¹⁰

A culture of democracy was, therefore, born along with modern design development, although for China the 1861–1895 Reforms failed to give birth to such a culture. When examining the motivation of Yuan Shikai in establishing himself as emperor after the Revolution of 1911, James Wang believed that, ‘all Chinese political traditions and institutions were designed for imperial rule and therefore, were ill-suited for constitutional democracy’.¹¹ It could be said that there is more to this argument than has been outlined by Wang. If China is said to lack innovations in modernity in the past 100 years, it is not a simple question of institutionalisation. To assimilate the problem further, it is imperative to look into the Chinese character or ‘Chinese-ness’. The questions to be asked here are: what is Chinese? and who is China?

The briefest answer is unity, a strong sense of cultural unity, an, ‘unrivalled national cohesiveness’, as termed by the English philosopher Bertrand Russell.¹² It is widely held that the Chinese state and its distinctive core were formed during the period of the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou.¹³ The Three Dynasties period modelled

⁹ Gilbert Rozman, The Modernization Of China (New York: The Free, 1981) 3.

¹⁰ Penny Sparke, An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 To The Present (London: Routledge, 2004) 13.

¹¹ Wang 11.

¹² Bernard Russell, The Problem Of China (London: Allen & Unwin, 1992) 207. The majority of Chinese and Western scholars, politicians and historians hold the view that cultural unity is a primary principle for the Chinese, such as Liang Qichao, Qian Zhongshu, Sun Yatsen, Jiang Kaishek, Mao Zedong, John King Fairbank and John Dewey.

¹³ See, for example, Ding Wei, Chinese Character (Xi’an: Shanxi Normal UP, 2006); Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, China’s Quest For National Identity (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993). Ding’s book collected arguments from a hundred Chinese and Western figures. Dittmer and Kim’s book collected a dozen monographs of well-known Western scholars.

an ideal Chinese national identity: a unified state with a core culture – Confucianism. It is based on this notion of identity that one should understand the term, ‘Middle Kingdom’ or ‘Middle State’ (Zhongguo), as explicated by Michael Ng-Quinn, PhD of Harvard University. The interpretation of the American Sinologist Yu Yingshi, quoted by Ng-Quinn, brings important insights into the traditional paradigm of Chinese social development. For Yu, the term ‘Middle Kingdom’ or ‘Middle State’ does not refer to a central place, but to a central area, the central plain in the midst of the Chinese continent. This is an important point to remember, just as Ng-Quinn is right to consider it as a good base for the Chinese state to preserve its integrity instead of breaking up into several smaller states as Europe did. In history, subsequent to the Zhou dynasty degenerating into the Warring States period, the Zhou dynasty was still symbolically accepted as the political centre. Furthermore, it is recorded that each state expected to order other vassals in the name of the Zhou monarch. Territories of the former Zhou dynasty were, therefore, restored and unified in the end. This is the reason why Ng-Quinn claims that the Chinese ‘state’, ‘world’ and ‘culture’ are terms which are understood as one unified whole that pertained to a traditional identity.¹⁴

What can be concluded from Ng-Quinn’s arguments is the role of Zhou as a ‘symbolic power’ in terms of Pierre Bourdieu, or as an expression of the ‘collective unconsciousness’ in the theory of Carl Jung. It is fundamental here to endeavour to establish a comparison between the East and the West on this particular point. It is suggested that the French idea of a ‘cultural state’ and the English conception of a ‘greater Britain’ can also be understood from such a perspective. This symbolic, traditional model of the Chinese State lasted throughout the feudal age until the end of Imperial dynasty in 1911. It could be pronounced that this is what makes Chinese traditional culture more conservative than progressive. The academic world, however, usually attributes China’s dropping behind in the modern era to its complacency after a long period of stability and prosperity, as expressed by the Chinese historian Zhou Youguang:

¹⁴ See Dittmer and Kim, 38-44.

Chinese culture has been on top of the East for 2000 years and her extreme arrogance is understandable. Hence, Japan's multiplied success after the Meiji Restoration (1868) while China underwent failure after the One-Hundred-day Reform (1898).

(Zhou, Modern Cultural Shock 3)¹⁵

This complacent concept, where only the Chinese culture is considered, generates a blind confidence about the State's external competition. It could be asserted that China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War brought only a sense of shame to the officials, instead of a profound realisation that the defeat did not result from the fact that the munitions were inferior to those of the 'Westerns'. Hence, one of the four leading reformers, Li Hongzhang, believing in the superiority of the Chinese culture, felt that it would claim rivalry with Britain and France through the introduction of Western weapons.¹⁶ This blind confidence in its own culture evolved later into a narrow-minded model of reform thinking – the Chinese modern sickness. Even Kang Youwei, a later-period reformer who criticised the former self-strengthening methods, was still filled with a sense of this kind of cultural superiority, as American sinologist Chester Tan has commented in his book *Chinese Political Thought In The Twentieth Century*:

'China's national doctrines and institutions have been formed and shaped by innumerable sages and philosophers for several thousand years. They have long been practised and well adapted to the needs of the people ...' He [Kang] proposed the establishment of Confucianism as the national religion ... Kang maintained that Chinese was the most elegant and dignified language in the world and insisted that its purity be preserved.

(Tan, Chinese Political Thought In The Twentieth Century 26-27)¹⁷

But, according to Gu Naizhong, professor of the College of the Jiangsu Provincial Communist Committee, Confucianism is, by its nature, a cultural monism. Gu points out that in the most economically developed Asian countries, economic advancement is in proportion to the decline of Confucianism. From his perspective, Confucianism,

¹⁵ Zhou Youguang, Modern Cultural Shock (Beijing: SDX Joint, 2000) 3.

¹⁶ John K. Fairbank, The Cambridge History Of China Vol. 10 (London: Cambridge UP, 1978) 497.

¹⁷ Chester C. Tan, Chinese Political Thought In The Twentieth Century (New Abbot: David & Charles, 1972) 26-7.

as a Chinese core value, should be abandoned.¹⁸ His views are of great significance, given the fact that he is a professor at the Nanjing College of the Communist Party of China. A more open political attitude may be expected of the Chinese government in any new world order. This outlook is symbolised by the new terminal at the Beijing airport, designed by the British architect and designer Sir Norman Foster, and claimed by this study to be the second most important dialogue between the East and the West in architecture since the building of the Mausoleum of Sun Yatsen.¹⁹

It is now possible to clarify, to a certain degree what the Chinese modern sickness is. Compared to the prevailing position in Britain, it could be defined as a lack of changing perceptions of its relationship with other nations; in other words, a lack of comparative thinking. As can be seen in Chapter 3, this perception of relations with other nations is one of the assets that makes Britain a success in modern times. But for China, it was not until the reopening of the doors to the world stage that Chinese, feudal, one-sided thinking was essentially abandoned. The case for Japan serves as an illustrative mirror. China and Japan are both based on an ectogenic modernisation. But Japan's contact with the West began in the 16th century after the Portuguese introduced Western culture to Japan. Accordingly, Japan changed their narrow vision of the perceived 'China-India-Japan' world. The Japanese elite quickly accepted Western, modern knowledge, while the elite of China, as the professor of sociology at Princeton University Rozman penetratingly put it, was resistant to such modern knowledge until the end of the 19th century.²⁰ It is of consequence that, even from the mid-19th century onwards, the Chinese elite were still preoccupied with Confucianism in Sino-Western contacts. As a result, the 1861–1895 experiments of Western material culture did not take root, nor did the rudiments of Chinese modern design.

4.1.2 Self-Strengthening and the Seed of Chinese Modern Design

According to the historian Guo Songyi, a research fellow of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, until late 19th century, Chinese society was still an agricultural-based one. Guo claimed, in his lecture *Agricultural Production and Peasants in eighteenth-*

¹⁸ Gu Naizhong, "The Transformation Of Chinese Cultural Value And Culture." 25 August 2007. [FRChina.net](http://www.frchina.net). 5 October 2007. <<http://www.frchina.net/data/detail.php?id=14989>>.

¹⁹ See footnote 22.

²⁰ Rozman 511.

and nineteenth-centuries China, delivered at the Taiwan National Central University in 1998, that China's peasant population was 90% and there were more than 770,000 hectares of agricultural land in the late 19th century. With the Westernising or Self-Strengthening Movement, especially through sending students abroad, China started to understand Western, industrial technology. The Westernising Movement contributed in promoting the change of an arts and crafts outlook compared to that of design, although it failed to create a modern environment for design in China, as will be argued in this section.

The Westernising Movement underwent two phases. The first was characterised by the state industries: the war industries were funded and supported by the government. The dominant figures were the greater regional governor-generals, such as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. In 1862, the Qing Court ordered that all officers be trained in a Western way, and thus the defence forces of each province started a replacement of new weapons. In the same year, Governor-general Zeng Guofan created the Ordnance Office in Anqing and Governor-general Li Hongzhang founded the Artillery Office in Shanghai. As a consequence, the modern military form of industrialisation was on its way. Following this, in 1864, Li Hongzhang established the Western Gun Board in Suzhou. Subsequently, in 1865, the Jiangnan General Office of Manufacture was built and, in the following year, Zuo Zongtang founded the Fujian Ship Governance in Fujian, and so on. In just a few years, the Westernising Reforms under the auspices of these governor-generals laid the foundations for the modern, Chinese, military, industrial system: guns, canons, ammunitions and steam warships could all be manufactured in China. At this time, extensive changes occurred in China, and it could be said this was the period when industrial capitalism was born.

While building a modern, military system, the Westernising group needed huge capital investment. According to Li Hongzhang, Western wealth was based on industry and commerce, and it was wealth that led to power. Hence, Li thought that the search for wealth would be based on the same premise as that for power. As a result, the Westernising group extended the scope of industry from the military to the civil. Civil industries were thus developed together with business. In 1872, Li Hongzhang established the Ship Merchants Agency in Shanghai to start the search for

wealth. In the following 10 years, coal mines, iron factories, mills, power plants, water works, weaving plants, telegraph lines and railways were built one after the other. These civil industries diminished the monopoly of Western capital in China and helped meanwhile to save a large amount of money on imports for the country. These modern industries required special education in order to introduce Western, advanced technology in various professions. It resulted in the reform of the imperial examination system. The Qing Court began to open schools for professional education, of which Tong Wen Guan (the school of combined learning of foreign languages) was the first modern school. In 1872, the Qing government started to send students abroad – over a period of 14 years, over two hundred students were sent abroad.²¹ This was the starting point for China in learning the principles of Western design. The engineer Zhan Tianyou, who designed the first railway in China, was just one of these overseas students.

In over 30 years, the Self-Strengthening Movement enabled Chinese society to make great changes and provided Chinese modern design with an impetus to establish itself. The early and late phases produced different influences. The early state model restricted the effect of the Western, technological culture on social transformations. The late model of contract-based cooperation of officials and merchants contract contributed not only to the input of Western, advanced industries, but also to the generation of national industries. This was the real basis in which China was able to develop its modern design. Hang Jian, professor of Tsinghua University, outlined this perception in the following:

Following strong arguments, Western machines and goods imported were finally accepted by the Chinese, which was significant for the traditional concepts of arts and crafts to turn into the modern ones. This was an acceptance not only of wonderful machines, but also of the beauty of industrial civilization. Later national industries and new commodities were impossible to come into being without this kind of cognitive base.

(Hang, History Of Aesthetic Thoughts Of Chinese Crafts 161-162)²²

²¹ The first 100 students were sent to America by the Qing Court between 1872 and 1875 to study technology. The second 100 students were sent in 1877 to Europe. The majority studied in Navy schools in Britain. Later, almost all students were sent to Japan.

²² Hang Jian, History of Aesthetic Thoughts of Chinese Crafts (Taiyuan: Beiyue, 1994) 161-2.

Nevertheless, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War suspended the development of modern design. Since the Qing Court had to exculpate its unsatisfactory performance in the war, the Self-Strengthening Movement and the Westernising group were naturally attributed with the responsibility for this defeat.

Traditionally, Chinese society was based on Confucianism, which could be described as basically conservative and establishment-oriented. Traditional Confucian ideology made its greatest impact on the wealthy elite. It is suggested here that this traditional ideology existed as a large barrier that made it difficult for the official ideology to respond fully to the West and its knowledge, institutions and technology. It explains the reason why Chinese political traditions and institutions were, as stated above by Wang, 'designed for imperial rule' and 'ill-suited for constitutional democracy'. Dr Sun Yatsen, therefore, advocated revolutionary change to overthrow both the Qing Dynasty and the conservative way of thinking in favour of a 'new society'. During the period of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution (1911–1937), the Mausoleum of Sun Yatsen, built in Nanjing in the 1920s, was a successful adoption of Western modern technology in Chinese modern architectural design. It was an important East-West dialogue in the development of Chinese modern design.²³

In the 1950s, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong realised the necessity of industrialisation for China and proposed to embark on a rapid industrialisation program. The approach was taken from the Soviet model, which could be defined as a rapid recovery in the heavy industries. With the Great Leap Forward and the Communisation Program, Mao expected the New China to realise its industrialisation ahead of schedule. These programmes were understandable for a country a hundred years behind the advanced countries. A proportion of Western scholars also considered them as having some practicable connotations. For example, as the American sinologist Eckstein pointed out, that 'conceptually, the Great Leap model was not only rational but had some economic validity'. The problem, then, is

²³ On 13 May 1925, the Committee of Sun Yatsen Funerals Arrangement called for the Sun mausoleum project, which required a design based on traditional Chinese architecture. The solicitation of project was open to designers based at home and abroad. It was a real dialogue between tradition and modernity, East and West. A project from an overseas student was accepted in the end. The student was Lv Yanzhi, who had graduated from American Cornell University. He was sent to American by the Chinese government in 1913 and returned in 1920. When Lv died, at the age of 35, he was the 1st person to receive an official design award for in Chinese modern history.

that, ‘there were unrealistic expectations’.²⁴ Cast in the backdrop of design, this rapid industrialisation cost China its traditional crafts. In his article *To Quicken The Socialist Change Of Handicraft Industries* (1956), Mao encouraged handicraft industries to be mechanised or semi-mechanised in order to multiply their production for more foreign exchange.²⁵

Yet, in fact, as has been shown in previous chapters, in the European case of modern design development, both France and England drew heavily on the traditional arts and crafts, albeit in different ways. Continuity and change are inseparable in the shift from the traditional arts and crafts to modern design. But in the case of ‘New China’, handicrafts had been taken as capital goods for developing heavy industries. As a result, the value of handicrafts as forms of traditional life was, thus, completely lost.

It could be surmised that Mao’s choice was fatal for the development of Chinese, modern design. A situational chaos was thus created for modern Chinese design and its knowledge. In the following half-century, China would confuse the way in which design was to be developed through this perspective of Chinese modernity: to improve modern life or to support a utilitarian economic model; to draw from the national legacy or to make use of modern technology for the public good. It is one of the main thrusts of this argument that Mao’s decision to re-close the doors was a fatal decision for modern design, since Mao’s ‘self-reliance policy’ would drive all reactionaries and imperialists out of China. Since the Opium Wars, the world’s doors to China were closed for the second time. Thus, China was deprived of the modern context for understanding design, considering the fact that modernity is a global phenomenon.

4.1.3 Deng’s Reform and Design Education

In essence, the search for wealth and power is said to be an expression of the Chinese national consciousness. This Chinese modern search for wealth and power had started with the first attempts at modernisation during the Self-Strengthening Movement. The

²⁴ Alexander Eckstein, *China’s Economic Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 59.

²⁵ Mao Zedong, *To Quicken The Socialist Change Of Handicraft Industries* (Beijing: Renmin, 1977) 66.

failure of this movement caused China to close its doors on this passage to modernity. With his *Three Principles Of The People*,²⁶ Dr Sun Yatsen restarted the transition to modernity in the name of democracy described in his *Program Of National Reconstruction* (1924).²⁷ The year 1949 brought China, for the first time in the modern era, a strong and effective government in the search for wealth and power. However, it could also be stated that the search was advancing but with the doors closed and this was also in the form of unrealistic projects of the Great Leap. Since the Self-Strengthening Movement, it seemed that it was virtually impossible to bring China into the 20th century. Yet, Deng Xiaoping achieved this very feat. What needs to be addressed here is why this is so. As the Australian sinologist David Goodman has explicated, it is because Deng laid ‘the foundations for the grand transformation idea’ to grow in the Chinese mind.²⁸

One cannot help but ask what is this radical change of idea that Deng made? Deng’s views amounted to an almost complete negation of Mao’s politics of the Cultural Revolution and economic self-reliance. The most important contribution made by Deng, to Chinese modern design was his establishment of the agenda of ‘Four Modernisations’.²⁹ A series of documents were produced by conferences under the auspices of Deng, dealing with problems of economic modernisation, industrialisation and the development of science and technology.³⁰ All these prepared for a new agenda of Chinese modern design and design education reform.

When Deng organised, during 1975, a series of meetings and conferences to discuss the goals and methods of achieving these Four Modernisations, it marked the moment of a shift in design education from the arts and crafts to modern design. In 1974, on the request of the government, a group of educators from the Central Academy of

²⁶ See Sun Yatsen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles Of The People* (Shanghai: Commercial, 1932). The three principles of the people (San Min Zhuyi) refer to the Principles of Nationalism, Principles of Democracy and Principles of People’s Livelihood.

²⁷ Sun Wen (Sun Yatsen), “Program Of National Reconstruction,” 10 March 2005. [Southcn.com](http://www.southcn.com). 7 October 2007. <<http://www.south.com/news/community/shzt/sunys/paper/200503100450.htm>>

²⁸ David S.G. Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping And The Chinese Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1994) vii-viii.

²⁹ The policy agenda of the ‘Four Modernization’ took its cue from Premier Zhou Enlai’s ‘Report on the work of the government’ presented to the National People’s Congress in January 1975. Zhou referred to the very general idea he had articulated in 1964, with Mao’s support, that China should ensure the modernization of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology before the end of the 20th century. Before his death, Zhou has made a lot of efforts to make way for Deng’s reform later.

³⁰ See Goodman 81-82.

Arts and Crafts (CAAC) was combined with that of engineers from the automobile enterprises in order to develop automobile products. A concept of industrial arts was thus born. In 1977, a department of industrial arts was established at the CAAC, which was divided into two departments in 1984: one of industrial design and the other of environmental design. The Hunan University also created a department of industrial design in the same year. Thus, the Chinese design education system was, in essence, basically founded.

The whole of the 1980s is thought to be the foundation and dissemination period of design education. The CAAC in the north and the Guangzhou Art College in the south became the two most important colleges of design in China. The CAAC, having introduced German design educational ideas and a curriculum based on Bauhaus, exerted a great influence over the educational world in China. The Guangzhou Art College, located in the south with doors opening earlier, drew public attention to the market value of design through creating the first design company in Chinese universities. It is rather interesting to note that each college gave prominence to one side of the search for that of wealth and power in design education. From the 1990s onwards, more and more colleges and universities such as Hunan University, Beijing Polytechnic and South East University, created design specialities. In the late 1990s, China's design education underwent a wave of institutional reform and regrouping. For example, the CAAC was incorporated into the Tsinghua University and became its art college. It represents an effort towards the integration of science and art in design education between one of the best polytechnic universities and the most influential art and design academy. On the other hand, foreign institutions of design education started to establish joint programs with Chinese universities and colleges, for example, technological joint programs between Shanghai Tongji University and German universities. A new model of design education has started to be tested in the context of international competition.

In nearly 30 years, Chinese design education has evolved greatly. But the result is far from what was expected. Chinese manufacturing has grown fast and taken a big step forward in realising a high increase in production value while at the same time, the Chinese higher education of design does not fit well with the developing rhythms of

manufacturing. In China, scholars and researchers have discussed the disharmony between design education and industrial growth in every aspect.³¹ In short, it is fundamental, at this point, to draw the attention to the two main points in question here: confusion about design education values and the primacy of art education.

The confusion about design education values has produced a series of unexpected effects with an imbalance between output and need and also a unitary enactment of the curriculum. First of all, only 20 years after the introduction of modern design education, China's design education is considered to have made a 'great leap'. Motivated by the state policy of a 'popularization of superior education' and driven by the requirement of a rapidly growing manufacturing capacity, since the late 1990s, China has now become a country of superior design education with the largest scale in numbers of institutions and students in the world. Developed under a situation of high economic increase and rapid social change, the immature Chinese design education presents an illusionary prosperity. Figures show that there are now 1,400 universities and colleges with design specialities, which recruit over one hundred thousand students every year.³² Universities, polytechnics, agricultural universities, normal colleges, and even geological and financial colleges have established design specialities. It has become a common phenomenon that students who failed their examinations for entry into comprehensive universities would then choose to study art and design. Gerhard Mathias,³³ professor of Cassel University, asserted that Chinese art and design educational institutions have become profitable enterprises, which produce a mass of inferior products with a deficient educational line.³⁴ Secondly, most programs of design specialities are centred on universal design, such

³¹ The discussion of design education in this section is mainly based on the following documents: Peng Liang, 2005. "Reflections On Chinese Contemporary Art And Design Education," at http://design.icxo.com/htmlnews/2006/06/28/869477_0.htm; Cai Jun, 2001. "Adaptation And change: Chinese Design Education Under High Economic Development," at <http://www.dolcn.com>, 2001-12-4/2001-12-14; Tong Huiming, "Reflections On Chinese 20 Years Of Industrial Design" at <http://www.dgida.org/info/ArticleShow.asp?ArticleID=46>; Gerhard Mathias, 2006. "Grand Look: Chinese Design Education 1990-2005." at <http://www.visionunion.com/article.jsp?code=200508260086>; Pan Rusheng, 2007. "Witness To The Course Of Modern Chinese Design Arts Education." at <http://www.panlusheng.com/content.php?id=2094> and Li Yuebo and Qu zhenbo, 2007. "To Reshape Educational Thoughts Of Chinese Industrial Design In The New Era." at http://211.68.23.74/paper.php?serial_number=200701-368.

³² Visionunion. "Full Range Of Interviews On China Design Education," 26 April 2006. [Visionunion.com](http://www.visionunion.com). 15 October 2007. <<http://www.visionunion.com>>.

³³ Gerhard Mathias is a professor of the Art College of German Cassel University. Since 1898, he teaches art in many Chinese universities and is appointed as honorary professor of several Chinese universities. In 2000, Mathias created Mathias International Design College in Chongqing, China.

³⁴ See Gerhard Mathias, "Grand Look: Chinese Design Education 1990-2005," [Visionunion.com](http://www.visionunion.com). 26 August 2005. <<http://www.visionunion.com/article.jsp?code=200508260086>>.

as commercials, advertisements, packages and interiors. China has become a country immersed excessively in advertisements for the last 10 years. On the other hand, industrial design education is disproportionately small in regard to the vast 'world workshop'. As a result, it is difficult for Chinese products to upgrade their innovative quality in order to deal with the anti-dumping issues. Thirdly, practices, such as speciality cataloguing, course programming and curriculum-setting are implemented under a planned-economic model; that is, under the unitary administration of the Ministry of Education. It is of importance to mention here that no institutional innovations in education have been executed in the time following these social changes and regional economic developments.

While the slow response of design education to social changes and market needs can be attributed to the traditional one-sided thinking, the primacy of art education is rooted in the traditional neglect of technical education. Li Hongzhang, the leader of the Self-Strengthening Movement, as discussed above, attributed this technological lag to the imperial examinations in China. The imperial examination system, established since the Tang Dynasty, had transformed intellectuals into intellectual-bureaucrats only. Thus, when Guo Shoujing, the famous astronomer of Yuan Dynasty, passed away, there was no other person in the court who could operate the whole set of astronomic apparatus. In the 1950s and 1980s, art and design was frequently placed under the art department, fine arts department or arts and crafts department of colleges and universities. Until around 1989, educational institutions on the Chinese continent were continuing their contentious debates on the conception of the 'arts and crafts' or 'industrial design'. Subsequent to this, in 1954, the State Department decided to open an office of handicrafts. In 1965, the China Arts and Crafts Society was registered at the Civil Department. These national efforts in encouraging arts and crafts for short-term economic benefits and in political purposes, as stated above, undermined the institutional base and awareness of the public.

With the open policy of the Deng government, Chinese design education must have provided design reform with innovative ideas. These issues discussed above, however, enable the realisation that Deng's transformational ideas are far from having been

fully translated into a reality of design and its education.³⁵ It is imperative to investigate this problem by examining, to a degree, the intellectual discourse of design.

4.2 Chinese Intellectuals and New Design Discourse

It could be advanced that the notion of Chinese modern design can be traced back to Cai Yuanpei, who advocated state building through art education in the 1920s. Considering the fact that Cai worked, for a period, in Paris, his ideas were much influenced by the French decorative arts and modernism. According to Cai, the decorative arts were the universal arts with which people could beautify the environment and, ultimately, their life. Hence, Cai highlighted art education and advocated the applied arts which would supply a high quality to people's material and spiritual lives. As a result, Cai thought that cultural and material lives were equally important. It is evident that Cai accepted the French idea of the art of living and, as a consequence, he greatly appreciated William Morris' claims of joy in art work.³⁶

It is without doubt that Cai's ideas were influential on later generations who promoted the arts and crafts as modern design, thus encouraging Chinese modern design to adopt the aesthetic intention of French modernity from the outset.³⁷ This reaches the crux of the argument and the very reason why the conception of Chinese modern design has been so confused. Since the Self-Strengthening Movement, it has been argued that Chinese design, as an important means of building state power as with the examples of England and France, has followed the French model of high culture and modernism but did not take root. It could be suggested that many arguments on this point of art or design among Chinese scholars partly came from the

³⁵ Deng's ideas generated a vision completely different from Mao's politics of loyalty and unity. He thought that workers and peasants should be provided with material incentives to be able to produce more – relying on ideology and exhortation was not significant. Deng also advocated abandoning of economic self-reliance and encouraged the state to export raw materials and by-products in exchange with technology in order to modernise industries. Deng's vision embodied the aspect of wealth and power in Chinese thoughts (See Goodman 82).

³⁶ See Gao Pingshu, The Collected Essays Of Cai Yuanpei On Aesthetic Education (Changsha: Hunan Education, 1987) 24-25.

³⁷ In his tenure as director-general of education in the temporary Nanjing government in the 1910s, Cai promoted arts and crafts as means of improving social morale and proposed to reform education. Later appointed the president of National Arts College in 1920s, Cai continued to propose the establishment of arts and crafts schools.

lack of comparisons with France and England to see the different contexts for modern design development.

In *Design, The Fifth Way Of Mastering The World For The Mankind*, the writer of the thesis summarised three main conceptions of modern design in China: the arts and crafts, industrial design and culture.³⁸ As stated earlier, the idea of arts and crafts was laid down by Cai Yuanpei, albeit he was not the one to propose the term. This conception was finally established in the 1950s by the state politics of preserving handicrafts and by the foundation of the CAAC. In the 1980s, professors of the CAAC – Tian Zibing and Li Nianzu – endeavoured to define design as arts and crafts in their historical works. They even considered design history as the history of arts and crafts.³⁹ The interpretations of design as, ‘decoration’, ‘beautification’ and ‘form’ generally draw source from the thoughts of arts and crafts. Industrial design is evidently a concept that has been introduced from the West. Jian Zhaoquan, a professor of Tsinghua University, is an active disseminator of this conception. An intention of broad understanding defines design as a culture or new culture. Ying Dingbang, a professor of Guangzhou Art College, pronounced succinctly that, ‘design is a civilization’, ‘a broad activity to build human civilization’.⁴⁰ Lu Yongxiang, director of the China Academy of Science, defines design as the third culture, a similar categorisation to that of John Brockman.⁴¹ For Lu, the academic world has only appreciated the scientific and human cultures of the past, but only design culture is able to realise the unification of technology, art, function and economy.⁴²

Recently, the designer Chen Shaohua proposed the concept of ‘great design’.⁴³ He thinks that the concept of great design will be put forward when social and economic developments reach a certain level, which accentuates the social value and

³⁸ See Qian Fenggen, “Design, The Fifth Way For Humans To Master The World,” *Shantou Univeristy Journal* 20.2 (2004): 40-43.

³⁹ Li Nianzu, *Conspectus Of Arts And Crafts* (Beijing: China Light Industry, 1999) 124.

⁴⁰ Yi Zhongtian, *Human Confirmation* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Arts, 2001) 337.

⁴¹ See John Brockman, *The Third Culture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995). In 1959, C. P. Snow published a book titled *The Two Cultures*, referring to scientists and literary intellectuals. Lu thinks that design is a combined culture of sciences and humanities.

⁴² Lu as quoted in Qian, “Design, The Fifth way for Humans to Master the World”.

⁴³ Chen Shaohua is considered as an important designer in recent years. He is widely recognised with his design works, for example, his corporation with the Hong Kong film director Chen Kaike has won the first of Golden Cock Art Prize in China in 1986. In 2000, he designed the application CI for Olympic Games. He is one of five Chinese members of the AGI. He currently works in Shenzhen, disseminating the idea of state-building through design.

significance of design. Chen further interprets this concept in both a broad and narrow sense. In the broad sense, he summarises it as a problem of, ‘human modernisation’ which includes two key components: aesthetic experience and creative ability. Chen points to a remarkable phenomenon in China that illustrates the fact that even some famous painters are unaware of how to appreciate beauty. And he attributes it to the lack of modern design aesthetics and taste. In the narrow sense, Chen considers design as software while society and enterprise are hardware. He claims that design promotes the added value of brands, which finally change the view of cheap labour. It could be surmised, thus, that Chen appreciates greatly Deng’s ideas on the education of the young generation.

It is of consequence, therefore, to relate Chen’s views to Cai’s. Almost a century ago, Cai advocated state building through art education. And now Chen advocates the improvement of life through design education. Art or design, are, therefore, considered to be one of the means for China to make way for the passage to modernity, and to build a new state during this century. With variations on the terms ‘Self-strengthening’, ‘new society’, ‘new democracy’, and so on, China has experienced difficulties in interpreting modernity. Thus, it is extremely critical for China now to build a full self-knowledge regarding design development.

4.3 Conclusion

The establishment-oriented, traditional Chinese society had a conservative cultural memory in company with a cultural complacency. An intense national sentiment of cohesion characterised the traditional paradigm of Chinese social development. When this strong national consciousness is related to the complacent confidence of China in its own culture, a blind social attitude was evolved into a narrow minded model of reform thinking, which framed disadvantageously the mind of the officials and intellectuals who initiated modern reforms in the second half of the 19th century. The debates and struggles over the meaning of the 1861-95 Reforms also pointed to the difficult experience of innovating this conservative model of thinking. If the 1861-95 Reforms – the Westernising or Self-Strengthening Movements can be considered as design reforms similar to those of Britain and France, they produced no results of

organisations at all without any clear guidelines at the institutional level. Compared to Britain, a lack of comparative thinking resulted in a lack of self-knowledge in modern China. It is a great barrier for Chinese society to respond fully to modern changing situations.

This lack of self-knowledge also reflected in the design education and discourse in the pre-1970s Chinese society. Modern Chinese design education relied long on the arts and crafts and the primacy of arts which also dominated modern debates over design and design education. It follows, thus, that there had never been a design-conscious society in the pre-1970s period, let alone a design-conscious public. The state of the lack of self-knowledge has not been substantially improved from the 1970s onwards. The debates over design education values accompany the expansion of educational institutions and conflicting ideas prevent a responsive discourse to the swiftly changing society from being clearly established. China should be preoccupied with the building of self knowledge in the effective building of modernity through design practices.

CHAPTER 5. SHARED VALUES AND GUIDELINES TRANSMITTED THROUGH THE CENTRAL DESIGN ORGANISATIONS OF PRE-1970S SOCIETY

5.1 From UCAD to IEI: Cultural Memory as a Pursued Knowledge in France

While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.

(Halbwachs as quoted in Coser 22)¹

In his lecture delivered after the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, the chief organiser, Henry Cole, pointed out that ‘the honour of the first idea of an International Exhibition does not belong to England ... it came from France’.² The French, it could be conjectured, aimed to build, strategically, the honour of fostering ideas, and equally that of exporting ideas, as product exports were a far more significant part of the British economy from at least the 17th century. They think that they are a nation of great ideas, because they have what has been discussed in Chapter 2, a high curiosity which results in their decorative arts being one of their foremost strengths in expressing beauty. Great ideas, high curiosity and beauty constitute what could be described as the glorious memory of the French. They have a place to store this memory: the Panthéon; they have a museum to exhibit this memory: the Museum of Decorative Arts and they have a monumental book to historicise this memory: *Les Lieux De Mémoire*.³

5.1.1 Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (UCAD)

In 1864, the establishment of the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l’Industrie was a response to that of the South Kensington Museum in Britain. France found itself threatened by Britain’s prominent progress in industry. It was not only an economic but also a national rivalry between France and Britain. To preserve its assumed superiority of taste and to defend its artistic territory, France launched a form of action with which to pursue beauty in utility. Successive directors of the union had thus promoted creativity through the ‘national worry about losing the

¹ Lewis A. Coser, *Maurice Halbwachs On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1992) 22.

² Carma Gorman, *The Industrial Design Reader* (New York: Allworth, 2003) 4.

³ See Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux De Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

superiority of taste’, as claimed Brunhammer, later conservator of the union.⁴ Therefore, the union undertook its mission to develop the link between French arts and industry and to diffuse the application of art-based knowledge.

In 1877, this mission was given a proper institutional title: ‘la Société dite du musée des Arts Décoratifs’.⁵ It is meaningful to note that, in the same year, the ‘École impériale et spéciale de dessin, de mathématiques, d’architecture et de sculpture d’ornements pour l’application des beaux-arts à l’industrie’ changed its name to the ‘École nationale des arts décoratifs’.⁶ It is claimed that this institutionalisation of the decorative arts with the French national sentiment of superiority was no coincidence.⁷ More significantly, in 1882, the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l’Industrie and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs were merged into the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (UCAD) with the objective to improve industrial production and to apply arts in daily life.⁸



Figure 5.1. The façade of the UCAD.

Louvre. Paris. Personal photograph by the author. 24 October 2007.

‘Original in Colour’

⁴ Yvonne Brunhammer, *Le Beau Dans L’Utile* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992) 11-22.

⁵ UCAD, *10 Ans De Donations* Cahiers de l’UCAD/2^e semestre 1978, No 1, 52.

⁶ Thierry Chabanne, “Des Mots Pour Décrire L’Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs,” *Arts Décoratifs, Arts Appliqués, Métiers D’Art, Design: Terminologie Et Pataquès*. Ed. Christine Colin. (Paris: Hazen, 1988) 81-2.

⁷ Fenggen Qian, “On Decorative Complex Through The Transformation Of Design Organisations In France,” *Art And Design* 6 (Beijing, 2004): 69.

⁸ UCAD 52.



Figure 5.2. A window of the UCAD.

Louvre. Paris. Personal photograph by the author. 24 October 2007.

‘Original in Colour’

This institutionalisation of national sentiment through the decorative arts is closely associated with French primacy in art, as detailed in Chapter 2. With the Great Exhibition of 1851 marking the opening ceremony of modern, economic competition, the French response in design is usually interpreted as a worry about losing their superiority.⁹ However, it could be advanced that this French national fixation was not only related to the loss of a superior perception of taste but also to that of the market for the very French mode of living. If they wanted to apply the fine arts to art industries through the founding of the Union Centrale, the French could be construed as being deeply concerned with the deleterious effect of industrialisation on certain aspects of what they had retained in their memory through the centuries: the destruction of beauty in their lives, their artistic way of living or their aesthetic quality of life. While the British continued to promote the liberty rooted in the history before the unification of England and Scotland, as discussed in Chapter 3, in coping with certain modernising forces, the French endeavoured to structure their memory. There are important insights to be gained from applying the term, ‘cultural memory’ to the transformation of French central design organisations.¹⁰

⁹ See, for example, Stéphane Laurent, *Les Arts Appliqués En France* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 1999) and Arlette Barré-Despond, *Union Des Artistes Modernes* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1986).

¹⁰ ‘Cultural Memory’ is a concept introduced by Jan Assmann in historical studies. Assmann defines two meanings of the concept: one is ‘memory culture’, the way of ensuring cultural continuity by preserving collective

In 1882, the year in which UCAD was created, Ernest Renan gave his lecture entitled *What Is A Nation* at the Sorbonne in order to outline the French idea of a national soul. A parallel approach has been noted between particular sociological theories and practices of design organisations. Sociologists and historians from Emile Durkheim, Maurice Halbwachs to Pierre Nora, have attempted, theoretically, to localise and rewrite this entity known as the soul. It could be said to be an almost simultaneous phenomenon that organisational practices are coextensive with theoretical development. National actions, such as permanent collections, unions of societies and national and regional foundations of art help, in a Foucauldian sense, to produce theoretical ideas that result in concepts such as: ‘collective effervescence’, ‘collective memory’ and ‘collective environment’.

According to Lewis A. Coser, professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, the most inspired pages of Durkheim are those discussing the ‘collective effervescence’ of human cultural creativity. In these discussions, Durkheim opposed the collective root of creativity to the fashionable vision of creativity as individual accomplishment. Coser also quotes Mary Douglas, who highlights the incompleteness of Durkheim’s thoughts as merely being based on periods of effervescence: they lack explanations for the type of bond among the people during periods of calm. It is Halbwachs who has evidently enriched Durkheim’s thoughts with his theory of collective memory, as argues Coser.¹¹ Halbwachs has contributed to the study of collective memory, not only by contributing to the integrity of Durkheim’s theories but also by claiming that memory depends on space. This is contrary to the idea of his earlier mentor, Henri Bergson, who placed time at the centre of memory. This idea that memory depends on space is crucial to the work of Pierre Nora, who writes about the loss of the environment of memory. Nora thus historicises the link between the ‘collective’ and ‘culture’.¹²

knowledge; the other is ‘reference to the past’, the way of ensuring collective identity by supplying an awareness of unity and singularity. See “Cultural Memory,” 12 January 2007. [Cornelius Holtorf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holtorf/2.0.html). 26 February 2007. <<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holtorf/2.0.html>>.

¹¹ Coser 24-25.

¹² See Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, *Cultural Memory And The Construction Of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1999) 16-17.

This national absorption bonded the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie together with the Museum of Decorative Arts. The UCAD was, thus, created to preserve the French notion of the 'collective' and the 'cultural', to assure cultural continuity during periods of calm. François Mathey, chief conservator of the Museum of Decorative Arts, has clarified the fact that this collective knowledge aids reconstruction of cultural memory in the following quotation:

We are ... ready to believe that beauty continues through the ages to be the moving cause of design ... we are tempted to reconstruct ... a way of life in which everything was rare and exquisite, admirably harmonious and impeccably executed, affectionately intended, justly conceived, nobly proportioned, and finely detailed.

(Mathey as quoted in Arminjon 9)¹³

The Decorative Arts, the French expression of creativity and the site of the French collective memory form the great principle for, in the eyes of Mathey, 'the moving cause of design'. The Old Regime of France had fostered the creativity of the French art of life by supporting a cadre of artists and artisans renowned throughout Europe.¹⁴ Following the abolition by the French Revolution of the ancient guilds and the elite market, though it might be contested that the latter was reconstituted under the Empire, economic territory was opened up for craftsmen and entrepreneurs. Through Napoleon's zealous promotion of French industries, craft-based values, such as fine workmanship, respect for quality materials and refinement of detail and finish, were, consequently, integrated into the expanding luxury industries. By the era of Napoleon III, it could be said that works by French industries were regarded as paradigms.¹⁵

¹³ Catherine Arminjon, et al. *L'Art De Vivre* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 9.

¹⁴ The Old Regime of France managed to impose its artistic hegemony on all of Europe. It owed this dominance to a few strong personalities, such as Regent Marie de Médicis, Cardinal Mazarin, King Louis XIV and Marquise de Pompadour, their patronage of an artistic elite from home and abroad provided the arts of the Old Regime with a singular liveliness. This artistic elite included Peter Paul Rubens, Simon Vouet, Charles le Brun, Gabriel-Germain Boffrand, Benvenuto Cellini and François Boucher, to name but a few.

¹⁵ The Second Empire was an immensely rich and innovative era of artistic creation in French history, as revealed by the exhibition 'The Second Empire: Art in France under Napoleon III', held in Philadelphia, Detroit and Paris in 1978/9. Conservator Jean-Marie Moulin considers this period as an era of worldly brilliance in his contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition. See *The Second Empire, 1852-1870: Art In France Under Napoleon III* [catalogue] (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978). Baudet, the author of *Empire Style*, thus claimed that all Europe then was looking and copying what was happening in France. See François Baudet, *Empire Style* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998). Gruber, Doctor of the History of Art in Switzerland, has interestingly looked into the possible reasons for this remarkable success in huge volumes of the decorative arts in European history under his direction. He concluded that it was the equilibrium established between Classicism and Baroque. See Alain Gruber, *The History Of Decorative Arts; V2: Classicism And The Baroque In Europe* (New York: Abbeville, c1996).

Manufactured objects had never held the same kind of public recognition as handmade objects produced in multiple copies.



Figure 5.3. 'Fishtail vase'. Sèvres porcelain, c1765.

Source: Alain Gruber, The History of Decorative Arts; V2: Classicism and the Baroque in Europe 401.

'Original in Colour'

Following this continuity, the Third Republic adopted the politics of aesthetics, aiming at developing this artistic feeling. This politicisation of the aesthetic quality was highly meaningful during the period of the Third Republic, considering the fact that the foundation of the Republic was the most prolonged experiment in parliamentary democracy that France had ever made. In his book *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Jacques Rancière, a French professor of Paris VIII, elucidates his insights on the fact that the distribution of the aesthetic vision contributes to the definition of a common language and experience in a community.¹⁶ It could be said that it was just this successful experiment of the Third Republic in building collective memory that

¹⁶ See Jacques Rancière, The Politics Of Aesthetics (New York: Continuum, 2004) 12.

initiated the Fifth Republic into following the distribution of the aesthetic experience in the post-war period such as tour exhibitions impelled by the politics of Malraux, as stated in Chapter 2. The Third Republic provided France with the aesthetic experience of modernity. This was the divergence between France and Britain on the international stage in that France was seen, in the views of Sparke, to build its modernity with material achievements in the aesthetic way.¹⁷

Cast against this backdrop, it was necessary for the UCAD to assume the role of national pointer in the building of French collective memory. Antonin Proust, minister of fine arts in the government of Gambetta, was its first president. Collections, libraries, galleries, centres and exhibitions contribute to the construction of sites for memory and to the building of environments for memory. For example, two types of collections were established in the Museum of Decorative Arts: a series of objects classified according to their types, materials and origins and groups of works gathered to create a sense of the age. They aimed at diffusing the distinctive appearance and unique story of the art of living *à la française*, that is, by demonstrating the elegance and luxury, in the same way as that achieved by the exhibition *Le Théâtre de la Mode* in America, in 1946.¹⁸ This may be the reason why the majority of these collections came from donations and also why the UCAD refused the economic practices of the previous union.¹⁹

The skill of the artisan had never ceased to appeal to the French public, who believed that their elegance would continue to inspire in the new millennium. These craft-based value forms could be suggested to be the common and exclusive intentions established in the collective identity of French design organisations. It is to be argued in this work that luxury crafts as a cultural complex are the key component in the French designing of modernity.²⁰ This value form was further reinforced by the *Universal Exhibition of 1900* and the foundation of the Société des Artistes

¹⁷ Penny Sparke, *An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2004) 102.

¹⁸ The 'Théâtre de la Mode' is an exhibition created by Paris couturiers and artists such as Christian Bérard and Jean Cocteau in 1845/6, toured Britain, Scandinavia and the USA in order to raise funds for war victims and French fashion.

¹⁹ See UCAD 52-56.

²⁰ See Fenggen Qian, "On Decorative Complex Through The Transformation Of Design Organisations In France," *Art And Design*, 6 (Beijing, 2004). In this article, the author has explored the reason for the frequent substitution of design organisations in France.

Décorateurs in 1901. ‘In a cosmopolitan Europe that no longer considered the Parisian model the unique paradigm of elegance’, as Yvonne Brunhammer has explained in an insightful manner, the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, ‘attempted to promote modernity in the decorative arts and maintain Paris as the world centre of luxury industries’.²¹ Brunhammer’s interpretation of this motivation enabled a wider perception of the deep associations with this anxiety over nationhood and the luxury industries. Driven by such concerns, the Art Nouveau movement sought to create a new style in order to maintain the uniqueness of French production, in response to the emergent competitive productivity from other countries like Germany or Italy where imitations of French styles, using cheap labour attracted inexperienced buyers.²² Nevertheless, at this symbolic crossroads of the arts, crafts and industry in the quest to build modernity, France perhaps drew on an over-abundance of references from its past. In her book *UAM*, the French professor of design at Paris IV, Arlette Barré-Despond, offered some thoughtful remarks on this issue. She believes that historical styles fettered the growth of French emerging modernity in the second half of the 19th century.²³ Relating her remarks to the issue of designing a collective identity, it is possible to understand the unstable course of French central design organisations in building a modern nation.

With the foundation of the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l’Industrie, France officially started to institutionalise the union of art and industry in order to build modernity in the French way. The French aesthetic aspect of designing modernity is in itself thought to be without blame. It could be proposed that there are varieties of culture for democracy just as there are different modes of consumption. What matters in the French artistic way in designing modernity is the relationship that the art industry established between the producer, the product and the consumer. In his *Project Pour Une Société Nationale Des Arts Décoratifs* (1900), the founder of SAD, René Guilleré, had already articulated that national design organisation should draw its attention to the relationship between the artist, the object and the general

²¹ Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise, *French Decorative Art: The Société Des Artistes Décorateurs 1900–1942* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990) 7.

²² The government enquiry into the decorative arts had already described this problem in the 1880s. See *Commission D’Enquête Sur La Situation Des Ouvriers Et Des Industries D’Art* (Direction des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1884) 311.

²³ See Arlette Barré-Despond, *Union Des Artistes Modernes* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1986) 9.

consumer instead of focusing merely on the issues of style and ornament. Guilleré did not think Art Nouveau had answered the new needs of the time with some ‘unique pieces’.²⁴ Unfortunately, by comparison with Britain, the situation proved to be disappointing for France in this respect. The strong collective memory of the artistic superiority and the ideological model of instruction assured by Louis XIV blinded France to the public end of production and consumption. While the British reformers of design in the second half of the 19th century took the decorative arts as a reference point, the French reformers of design at the turn of the century took the decorative arts as their objective, considering it heavily in respect of ‘style and ornament’. The Art Nouveau style was mostly criticised due to the fact that it placed excessive emphasis on the issue of decoration.²⁵ Historicism and eclecticism jeopardised not only French art industries but also French design organisations. Samuel Bing, a key figure in promotion and development of French Art Nouveau, thought that ‘eclectic historicism’ had ruined both design products and the function of style.²⁶ Conflicts and enmities between the Société des Artistes Décorateurs and the Union des Artistes Modernes were fully comprehensible, given this background.

As the first central design organisation, established in France with a national function,²⁷ the UCAD’s efforts in the distribution of this French notion of the aesthetic has never changed. With its change of name in 2004, UCAD’s missions remain the same: collection enrichment, knowledge dissemination, artistic education and promotion of creativity.²⁸ But in fact, less is known about building and

²⁴ See René Guilleré, *Projet Pour Une Société Nationale Des Arts Décoratifs* (Paris: n.p., 1900) 5.

²⁵ As an unstable phenomenon, Art Nouveau arouses intense debates on its definition as a style or movement. With a comparatively complete analysis of this phenomenon and its expressions in his huge book *Art Nouveau 1890—1914*, Paul Greenhalgh, head of research at the V&A, has concluded on this modernist style as being based on decoration. See Paul Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau 1890-1914* (London: V&A, 2000). Greenhalgh is right to point out the premise of decoration in Art Nouveau. This premise reveals the innate deficiency of Art Nouveau, which relies on ornamentation. René Guilleré, the founder of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, deprecated Art Nouveau’s museum-based vision in terms of ornament. See René Guilleré, *Projet Pour Une Société Nationale Des Arts Décoratifs* (Paris, 1900). Even the most ardent supporters of the time, such as the architect Frantz Jourdain, were deeply critical of Art Nouveau as an ivory tower that failed to answer the needs of the general public. See Frantz Jourdain, “Les Meubles et les Tentures Murales aux Salons de 1901,” *Revue Des Arts Décoratifs*. Vol 21 (1901) 212.

²⁶ Nancy Troy, “Toward A Redefinition Of Tradition In French Design, 1895-1914,” *Design Issues*. 1. 2 (1984): 53.

²⁷ It is noteworthy that, although created as a private organisation, the UCAD has always played a national role in French design practices, closely related to politics and politicians. From Napoleon III to Jack Lang, ministers and presidents have branded themselves into the organisation. And the first three presidents of the UCAD were all deputies or ministers of the government.

²⁸ See ‘UCAD’s Missions’ at <<http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/fr/00artsdecoratifs/documentation.html>>.

preserving the French art of living: elegance and luxury. This leitmotif will be returned to in Chapter 6.

5.1.2 Société des Artistes Décorateurs (SAD)

Furthermore, the national design organisation, the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, was founded by René Guilleré in 1901, in the aftermath of the Universal Exhibition of 1900. The presentation of German decorative arts in 1900 aroused French reformers' actions. Guilleré was the one to realise that the German success was based on the organisation of artists like the Werkstätten.²⁹ In Guilleré's views, it seemed that the French decorative arts would be likely to rival foreign competitors with this kind of professional organisation. The union between art and industry, for which French reformers had called for more than half a century, seemed to be becoming a reality. Yet, it could be said that it was regrettable for the French that an event had turned back this institutional effort of modernising the decorative arts and induced the société to adopt a position that was, later, rarely abandoned. As a matter of fact, from the beginning there had been evidence of a persistent disagreement among the members about whether the aesthetic decisions should be determined by questions of economy or utility. When this society was planning its first Salon in 1901, members were divided into two groups owing to a dispute about the theme. One proposed the dining-room of a restaurant, the other suggested a reception room of a ministry. The choice of a tea-room was finally made as a compromise. Brunhammer and Tise concluded that this event was critical for the institutionalisation of elegance in modernising French decorative arts.³⁰

In addition, the cultural recovery after World War I encouraged the choice of traditionally French qualities: classicism and rationalism – which were thought to be the essence of national identity. Between tradition and modernity, French design and decorative arts turned once again to the luxury industries such as furniture-makers, silversmiths, jewellery-makers, and porcelain-makers and textile manufacturers. It is significantly noteworthy that, in the aftermath of the World War I, at a time when

²⁹ It refers to Vereinigte Werkstätten für Kunst im Handwerk (United Workshops for Art in Handicraft), a powerful association founded in 1897 to produce and market designs by Jugendstil artists.

³⁰ See Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise 12-19.

thousands of homes needed to be built, little attention was paid to the reconstruction issue after the war by the Parisian milieu of the decorative arts. It was largely due to the pressure from the government which would show a 'glorious French style' at the international exhibition of decorative arts, expected in 1915 and finally held in 1925, as revealed by the Exhibition *Les Arts Décoratifs: Une Histoire En Images*, in 2006. As a result, the société turned to the eternal values of art and also to the promoting of unique works created for the luxury market.³¹

The société's turn stirred a firm objection from a group of designers, a 'shock unit' according to Charlotte Perriand,³² including Robert Mallet-Stevens, Le Corbusier, Francis Jourdain, Pierre Chareau and Jean Puiforcat who quarrelled with the société over the increasingly elitist attitudes that failed to consider the broader social benefits of industrial production. Relating to the divisions during the société's first Salon, the objections of this group reflected the same ruptures to those of tradition and modernity from the outset of this organisation. The traditional camp claimed to re-establish contact with the French tradition of clarity, order and harmony in order to erase the memory of the disastrous productions of the second half of the 19th century. The 'shock unit' group joined the ranks of the 'moderns' who were less concerned with style than with the living space and its furniture.

The disagreement between the conservatives and the moderns eventually evolved into a conflict during and after the *International Exhibition Of The Decorative Arts* – originally intended to be held in 1915 and finally held in 1925, in Paris. The exhibition had been planned in 1911, by the société, with the belief that industry could respond to art's social aims. The projects undertaken by this exhibition could be considered as part of the actions of the société to find solutions for the modernisation of French art industry and national economy.

Since the middle of the 19th century earlier, the machine and the division of labour had been introduced into production. The French art industries were, thus, placed in a difficult situation because the luxury crafts, as a part reflection of national prestige

³¹ See *Les Arts Décoratifs, Les Arts Décoratifs: Une Histoire En Images* (Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 2006) 18-19.

³² Charlotte Perriand, *Charlotte Perriand: A Life Of Creation: An Autobiography* (New York : Monacelli, 2003) 33.

were in a crisis situation. The question to be answered here, as realised by René Guilleré, is what are the ways in which one could eliminate this crisis situation? The situation was in part due to the lack of a professional relationship between art, object and manufacturer. Again, it is also imperative to ask: what are the possible ways to renew the nation's sources for industry in the 20th century? A more general but difficult problem was that of the national economy. The success of the German presentation in 1900 reinforced France's national concern with its leading position in luxury commerce. With regard to the French inferior position in the production of inexpensive and standardised goods, the exhibition project aimed at promoting the application of art to all branches of industry; that is, for the French art industry to be repositioned with standard products, possessing the same qualities as the luxury ones in the market which is developed by the democratisation of society. Such ideas of making high-quality designs available to all classes of society were developed in a project by Charles Couyba and Roger Marx. The latter explained his kind of 'social art' in his article *De l'Art Social Et De La Nécessité D'en Assurer Le Progress Par Une Exhibition*.³³ To foster progress in industry and generate a French style, everything from craftsmen, industrialists and designers had to be modern at the exhibition. Copies would be then strictly forbidden.³⁴

However, the result of the exhibition turned out to be discouraging as a modern climate for French design because of the mainstream concern of luxury style. Le Corbusier's *Pavillon De L'Esprit Nouveau* was the only French one that embodied the idea of social art, as Le Corbusier wrote in 1925, 'our pavilion will contain only standardised things created by in factories and regulated by the series – in a word, objects in the style of today'.³⁵ Le Corbusier's was considered as a provocation while Melnikov's USSR pavilion received the Grand Prix of the exhibition. It was only with the intervention of Anatole de Monzie, the minister of national education, that the Pavilion could be shown entirely to the public.

³³ See Roger Marx, "De L'Art Social Et De La Nécessité D'en Assurer Le Progress Par Une Exhibition," *Idées Modernes*. 1 January 1909: 46-57.

³⁴ See Article No. 4 of the rules, *Catalogue Général De L'Exposition Internationale Des Arts Décoratifs Et Industriels Modernes, Paris, avril-octobre 1925* (Paris: Impri. de Vaugirard, 1925) 19.

³⁵ Le Corbusier, "Le Pavillon De L'Esprit Nouveau À L'Exposition Internationale Des Arts Décoratifs," *Les Arts Décoratifs Modernes 1925*. Special number of *Vient De Paraître* (Paris: G. Crès, 1925) 107.

5.1.3 Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM)

After the exhibition, more conflicts between the *société* and the ‘shock unit’ group marked their practices. The so-called ‘modern’ was not at all what was wanted by the ‘shock unit’. Dissenting from the *société*, nearly 30 members split with the *société* and founded their own design organisation known as the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM).³⁶ The departure did not end their conflicts with the *société*. The *société* sank its roots deeper into the national tradition while the UAM redefined the designer’s role in relation to the factory system rather than the craft manufacture. In 1934, the UAM published the manifesto *Pour L’Art Moderne, Cadre De La Vie Contemporaine*. The manifesto received differing feedback. Jacques Guenne did not think that the manifesto was in harmony with the ideas of Le Corbusier in his article *L’Art Vivant* published in the same year. But Gaston Varenne considered it as another modernism which would provide the ordinary people with simple, comfortable and cheap conditions, different from the French mainstream modernism ignorant of the improvement of the living conditions of the masses.³⁷ To prepare for the *Paris Exposition Internationale Des Arts Et Techniques Dans La Vie Moderne* in 1937, Paris set up a committee named *Comité D’Études Pour L’Exposition Internationale D’Art Moderne* in Paris. Both the *société* and the UAM were members. Meanwhile, the UAM also set up an organising committee with Mallet-Stevens as its president. The UAM was not only in conflict with the *société* due to the fact that the latter followed the official line of rehabilitating the crafts, but also with the *Comité d’Études*, as the official committee advocated the return of the ornament. Even just before the exhibition opening, Mallet-Stevens still believed that the exhibition of *Art Moderne* should respond to social needs, a new way of life. But the fact that Mallet-Stevens was finally dismissed from the official committee and the UAM was forced to withdraw from the *Comité d’Études*, simply reveals the French stubborn nostalgia for luxury goods and handcrafted objects without being easily reconciled to the requirements of industrial production. In 1955, the UAM was dissolved.

5.1.4 Institut d’Esthétique Industrielle (IEI)

³⁶ For a complete history and reference of UAM, see Arlette Barré-Despond.

³⁷ See Barré-Despond 70-71.

The comment that Yvonne Brunhammer had made on the discursive role of the *Exhibition of 1925* in Paris could be said to be rather thought-provoking, ‘the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs of 1925* focused on the divisions and misunderstanding caused by the term *decorative arts*’.³⁸ In fact, this comment has a twofold indication: that the French have difficulties in branding their industrial modernity and also in unifying their art and industry. When trying to define its cultural and economic modernity, France relied heavily on its national prestige of traditional crafts. The concept of ‘decorative arts’ reflected more the primacy in art rather than the professional relationship established between art, object and industry. As a result, while Britain had already been en route to becoming a leading industrial culture since the mid-19th century, France was still redefining its traditions of design with ‘Art Nouveau’ and ‘Art Deco’ in the first half of the 20th century. Until Jacques Viénot established the Institut d’Esthétique Industrielle, France remained in a state of preoccupation with this problem. According to French art historian Jocelyne Le Bœuf, industrial aesthetics could be defined as, ‘a confusing term which was subject to much controversy’.³⁹

After travelling to the United States and Britain in order to obtain ideas for fostering progress in French industrial design, Jacques Viénot created the first design consultancy Bureau Technès in France in 1948, devoted to technical and aesthetic studies. In 1951, Viénot established the Institut d’Esthétique Industrielle and the first international liaison committee, later known as ICSID.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the use of the term ‘industrial aesthetics’ would result in confusing the understanding of its task, as stated by Le Bœuf. This is mainly because France has a strong craft-based tradition that attaches little importance to the mode of production. As a result, aesthetics is usually interpreted as a ‘visual quality’ and ‘form’. Arlette Barré-Despond, in her authoritative *Dictionnaire International Des Arts Appliqués Et Du Design*, hitherto the most complete dictionary of design in France, describes the institute’s objective ‘to improve French industrial products by means of better visual and commercial

³⁸ Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise 85.

³⁹ Jocelyne Le Bœuf, *Jacques Viénot (1893—1959): Pionnier De L’Esthétique Industrielle En France* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006) 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

design'.⁴¹ The *Admirable Design*, the first site-magazine of design in French, also aligns with this understanding. With the publication on-line of the article by Jocelyne Le Bœuf on *Jacques Viénot: L'Esthétique Industrielle Et Supplément D'Ame* (2005), the editor of the site advanced the notion that the establishment of the institute was an immediate initiative in improving the visual qualities of products.⁴²

Moreover, the interpretation of Woodham offers some key threads to this point.⁴³ As he suggested, considering Viénot's travels to the United States and Britain to look for answers for the French design profession, the establishment of the Institute of Industrial Aesthetics followed to some extent the ideals of the British Council of Industrial Design. Cast in Guilleré's project to build a professional relationship between art and industry, industrial aesthetics can be understood as industrial ethics. Similar to the British Council of Industrial Design, the French Institute of Industrial Aesthetics was trying to institutionalise the design profession. An industrial ethics was, therefore, to be formulated. In fact, in 1952, the magazine *Esthétique Industrielle*, published the laws of the Industrial Aesthetics Charter. There were 13 laws in all, which comprise the following: the law of economy, the law of aptitude, the law of unity and of composition, the law of harmony, the law of style, the law of evolution and relativity, the law of taste, the law of satisfaction, the law of movement, the law of hierarchy and finality, commercial law, the law of integrity and the law of implied arts.⁴⁴ These industrial ethics were later developed into the tasks for design defined by ICSID: a global, social and cultural ethics.⁴⁵ In short, it is possible to understand the confusion arising from the ideas expounded by Jacques Viénot, who claimed that aesthetics was, 'an art form dependent on neither fine arts, nor decorative arts, nor on pure technique alone'.⁴⁶ It would appear that Viénot construed

⁴¹ Barré-Despond, *Dictionnaire International Des Arts Appliqués Et du Design* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1996) 618.

⁴² Jocelyne Le Bœuf. "Jacques Viénot: l'Esthétique Industrielle et Supplément d'Ame." 10 January, 2005. *Admirable Design*. 12 April, 2006. <<http://www.admirabledesign.com/Jacques-Vienot-design-et>>

⁴³ Jonathan M. Woodham, *A Dictionary Of Modern Design* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 442.

⁴⁴ See Jacques Viénot, et al. "La Charte De L'Esthétique Industrielle," *Esthétique Industrielle*. Vol 7 1952. Vol 8. 1953 (Paris: PUF, 1952-1953).

⁴⁵ ICSID. "Definition Of Design." 18 September, 2007. <www.icsid.org/about/about/main/articles31.htm> The ICSID defines four tasks of design: 'enhancing global sustainability and environmental protection (global ethics); giving benefits and freedom to the entire human community, individual and collective final users, producers and market protagonists (social ethics); supporting cultural diversity despite the globalisation of the world (cultural ethics); giving products, services and systems, those forms that are expressive of (semiology) and coherent with (aesthetics) their proper complexity.

⁴⁶ Jacques Viénot as quoted in *Esthétique Industrielle* Number 1 (Paris: S.N. 1951) 1.

the professional relationship between the fine arts, decorative arts and technique as a pure ‘art form’. In this respect, there is no better comparison than that of Robert Musil, who described human practices in supposed invariable frameworks.⁴⁷

In 1953, Roger Tallon joined the Technès, which contributed a great deal to its later development in the unification of art and industry. In the same year, the institute organised the first selections of products with the mark ‘Beauté France’. Then, the Ministry of Commerce made ‘Beauté France’ a French brand. In 1965, Beauté France was renamed Beauté Industrie; meanwhile, the magazine *Esthétique Industrielle* took the new name *Design Industrie*. This firmly suggested that France finally re-embraced a perception of beauty in the industrial sense in the 1960s. But in the next decade, ‘Beauté France’ became ‘Formes et Industries’, indicating a return to the formative tradition.

In terms of the distinction Van Doesburg proposed in 1923 between three levels of decorative arts: decorative, constructive and utilitarian, it follows from the above review that French collective representation excludes utilitarian concern. This theme will be further explored later in Chapter 6.

5.2 From DIA to COID: Creative Knowledge as National Awareness in Britain

Since the late 19th century, both Britain’s and France’s concerns over their industrial performance were growing. Although both Britain and France drew their inspiration for improving design from their common German counterpart,⁴⁸ the beginning of the new century marked the difference in their way of precept setting for design practices in industry. Compared to France, with its privileged home market for luxury industry, Britain had to develop a different mutual discourse of design practices to justify its identity to outsiders and to foster a better understanding among the public about what was perceived as good in design. From the DIA to CoID, a creative discourse

⁴⁷ See Centre de Création Industrielle, *Matériau/Technologie/Forme* (Paris: CCI, 1974) 7.

⁴⁸ Just as the United Workshops for Art in Handicraft influenced on the establishment of the French Société des Artistes Décorateurs, Deutscher Werkbund produced a critical impact on the foundation of the British Design and Industries Association.

standing for quality was to engender through practices of Britain's design organisations.

5.2.1 Design and Industries Association (DIA)

By 1912, the failure of the arts and crafts triennial exhibition urged young members to explore a new approach. As a result, a group of English artists and craftsmen, with the question of the future of the Arts and Crafts in mind, travelled to Cologne where the *Werkbund Exhibition* demonstrated the Werkbund's acceptance of this necessity to design for mass-production, a spirit, summed up by this ideal modern factory designed by Walter Gropius and the glass house by Bruno Taut.

These DIA forefathers, back from the Cologne Exhibition, were determined to found a British equivalent of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, as they were convinced, it would seem, that Britain's future lay in design. They seized the opportunity, offered by the Board of Trade's cessation of promoting exhibitions of, 'enemy products', in order to persuade them to hold a further exhibition of German goods, selected for their excellence of design and workmanship. The working committee of the foundation sent a memorandum of the exhibition to the Permanent Secretaries of the Board of Trade, and the memorandum was approved. The exhibition was held in 1915, and also used as a recruiting ground for the projected Design and Industries Association. The DIA was thus established in 1915. The founding members were Harold Stabler, Ambrose Heal, Cecil Brewer, Frank Pick, Harry Peach William, Richard Lethaby and, joining in 1920, Gordon Russell, later director of the Council of Industrial Design.

In *Design and Industry: A Proposal For The Foundation Of The Design And Industries Association* (1915), it was declared that the DIA should discover its own value for Britain instead of receiving passively influence from the European Continent. The DIA's objective was to encourage the demand among the public for what is good design, that is, the soundest for a given price.⁴⁹ Its members strove to propagate 'fitness for purpose', through pamphlets, meetings, lectures and journals,

⁴⁹ See Raymond Plummer, *Nothing Need Be Ugly* (London: DIA, 1985) 1-3.

because they found that British things were designed without efficiency.⁵⁰ The first pamphlet was therefore entitled *A New Body With New Aims* (1915), in order to highlight their novelty, that is, focusing on machine-made objects rather than handicrafts.⁵¹ It is noteworthy, thus, that attention has been drawn to the quality of industrial production by the first design organisation of the 20th century in Britain.

Early exhibitions were confined to printing, textiles and household goods, promoting ‘new aims’ of design in building a modern everyday environment. The DIA section of exhibits, contributed to the Arts and Crafts Society’s Exhibition at Burlington House, in 1916, is said to embody soundly the new aims and mark the intentional departure from the Arts and Crafts by the DIA. The *Spectator* observed:

Perhaps the most interesting part of the whole exhibition ... is that of the Design and Industries Association which has gathered together a collection of pottery and stuffs, which are produced in the way of trade, and taken from ordinary stock ... Here at least we seem in touch with something vital, for the whole question of arts and crafts turns on the possibility of manufacturing things which people want to have because they are useful and which are also beautiful ...

(As quoted in *Design For Today* 180)⁵²

The exhibition of *Household Things*, held in 1920, was the most ambitious one up to that time, including eight model rooms and a series of articles. The catalogue not only described in detail almost every exhibit but also suggested the way in which the exhibits could be improved. Compared to its exhibitions, the DIA’s publications were less influential. Both *Design in Industry* and *Trends In Everyday Life* lasted for only two issues. The situation was only a little better for *Design for Today*, which ran for two years. Besides, the DIA also organised seminars and lectures insisting on the qualities of the machine process. In the fourth propaganda pamphlet of the DIA called *A Modern Creed Of Work*, Clutton Brock stressed the fact that machinery has become

⁵⁰ See C. H. Collins Baker, *Design in Modern Industry: The Yearbook of the Design & Industries Association 1922* (London: Benn Brothers, 1922) 9.

⁵¹ See Noel Carrington, *Industrial Design in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976) 30.

⁵² Hamilton T. Smith, “The Design and Industries Association,” *Design for Today* 111.25 (May, 1935) 180.

a device of human life, and a machine-made object could be well made and without ornament.⁵³

Despite such goodwill of design reform, the committed practices of the DIA had a weak impact as a propaganda machine for British modern design or towards the building of British modern identity. Its history is, just like the comments espoused by Sir Monty Finniston, the former president of the DIA, stipulated in his foreword to *Nothing Need Be Ugly*, ‘inspiring’ and ‘dispiriting’.⁵⁴ Inspiring, since the DIA constitutes a referential practice of design organisation in difficult economic times. It needs to be recognised as the first sign of the Council of Industrial Design, because it established a link with the State. Its members were later important persons in national design organisations or design matters, especially Frank Pick and Gordon Russell. In the perspective of building design awareness, the words ‘design and industries’ were used rather than ‘industrial art’. When discussing Harry Peach and the DIA, Pat Kirkham pointed out that the formation of the DIA encouraged design education in Britain to involve itself with the concerns of trade and industry in order to match the new culture of European design.⁵⁵

But this legacy together with the association’s exhibitions remains at an ideological level to a high degree. Since the foundation of the association, different opinions had been held by the membership in a new approach to industrial design. The principles of Arts and Crafts were opposed to the compliments to machinery between Lethaby’s group and that of Stabler. This is what could be defined as constituting to the dispiriting factor of the DIA’s story. The ties with arts and crafts were strong and the association’s practices were still close to the arts and crafts rather than the marketplace.⁵⁶ As a result, the equivocal or oscillating character is the failure of the DIA to assume either a sufficiently national or a properly industrial role. If the period between 1935 and 1936 is considered to be to some extent successful, with the membership peaking at 865, it was largely due to the arrival of German refugees,

⁵³ See Clutton Brock, *A Modern Creed Of Work* (London: DIA, 1915).

⁵⁴ See foreword by Sir Monty Finniston in Plummer: xi.

⁵⁵ See Pat Kirkham, *Harry Peach* (London: Design Council, 1986) 47-49.

⁵⁶ The different opinions of the two groups were well explained in the *History of the DIA* by Nikolaus Pevsner, and can be referred to two pamphlets *Art And Workmanship* by Lethaby and *A New Body With New Aims* by Arthur Clutton-Brock. See Nikolaus Pevsner, “History Of The DIA.” *Design Action: DIA Yearbook 1975: The Diamond Jubilee Of The Design & Industries Association*. Ed. Raymond Plummer. London: DIA, 1975.

such as Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer of the Bauhaus, to the exhibition *British Art In Industry* held by the Royal Academy and the Royal Society of Arts in 1935, and also to the successful propaganda carried out by such fine periodicals as *Architectural Review* and *Design For Today*.⁵⁷ It was a favourable condition of development for the DIA, as Anthony Bertram put it, involved in promoting such national consciousness of new design which was considered as European culture by the English of the time, who aspired to a new and modern England instead of an old-fashioned one.⁵⁸ John Gloag also pointed, in his *Design In Modern Life*, to this aspiration for England to become again the workshop of the world as a new cultural leader.⁵⁹ The efforts of disseminating national design consciousness by DIA was to be highly estimated, as the designer of the time received little or no public recognition in England. Noel Brooke described the status thus:

In England the designer is understood by the manufacturer to be somebody who is going to earn, say, 35 shillings to 70 shillings a week all his life. He is not going to earn as much as a dentist, or a lawyer, or a doctor...The designer is the journeyman in industry and is treated as such.

(Rooke 260-261)⁶⁰

Unfortunately, the oscillating attitude of the DIA was unable to further develop the contemporary mass market which already aspired to material object as a new cultural manifestation of public interest, as discovered by Judy Attfield.⁶¹

One conclusion to be drawn from this is that, even with the slogan, ‘fitness for purpose’, the DIA failed to keep a coherent and constant discourse that would serve as a guideline within the community and also thus to inevitably make an impact on outsiders.

⁵⁷ See Plummer 41-5; *The Royal Academy Exhibition Of British Art In Industry 1935: Illustrated Souvenir* (London: Royal Academy, 1935).

⁵⁸ See Anthony Bertram, *Design In Daily Life* (London: Methuen, 1937) 97-98.

⁵⁹ See John Gloag, *Design In Modern Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934) 17-26.

⁶⁰ Noel Rooke in discussion. *The Journal Of The Royal Society Of Arts*, 17 January 1936: 260-261. The British Library holds the collection of *The Journal Of The Royal Society Of Arts* from 1908 to 1970. It is noteworthy that lectures, papers and discussions from a generation of important historians, designers as critics and directors such as Noel Rooke and Frank Pick are collected in the journals of the 1930s.

⁶¹ Judy Attfield, *Bringing Modernity Home: Writings On Popular Design And Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007) 97-119.

5.2.2 The British Institute of Industrial Art (BIIA)

Although the DIA was established as a private association, it was in fact created by the impetus of the national preoccupation with improving British design. It was this engrossment with design that encouraged the working committee of the DIA to send a memorandum to the permanent secretaries of the Board of Trade and the Board of Education and the director of the V&A. As a consequence of this action, the committee was invited to a meeting with Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith, the permanent secretary of the Board of Trade and the director of the V&A, respectively. Following these interactions, the government realised the necessity of imparting some organised effort in order to improve British design in industry. The notion of a government body was then in the air. But the board created another organisation without commissioning the DIA. It was because, as Carrington speculated, the board believed that an organisation under its own patronage would be trustworthy.⁶² The BIIA was established in 1918 after being postponed by the World War I, and incorporated in 1920; Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, the permanent secretary at the Board of Trade, was appointed chairman.

As the first national design organisation in Britain, the BIIA has not been given enough attention even by British design historians, compared to the case of the DIA. For example, MacCarthy's *A History Of British Design 1830—1970*, a specific historical account of British national identity and design though, has only one page for the BIIA, while attributing one chapter to the DIA. Richard Stewart, in *Design And British Industry*, makes only a supplementary account of it. And it is only briefly mentioned in Noel Carrington's *Industrial Design In Britain*, a principal history of the DIA who had an affinity of membership with the BIIA.⁶³ Yet, this neglect is arguable. The short existence of the BIIA still contributes to the significant institutionalisation of design in modern Britain. The years of the BIIA are significant due to its more industry-oriented ideas and attention to standardisation.

⁶² See Noel Carrington 74.

⁶³ See Fiona MacCarthy, *A History Of British Design 1830-1970* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979); Richard Stewart, *Design And British Industry* (London: John Murray, 1987) and Noel Carrington, *Industrial Design In Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976).

The BIIA assumed a complex role in its early years in trade schools under the joint auspices of the Board of Trade and Board of Education. These two government departments reflect the relationship between art and industry, since one deals with industry and the other with the V&A. This joint structure generated difficulties for the BIIA in underpinning its practices. For example, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, its chairman, and Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith, the director of the V&A, both adopted conflicting views in regard to the institute's task. The first encouraged the appreciation of industrial products by the public and the latter rejected the idea.⁶⁴ In this respect, the BIIA inherited a somewhat opposing membership from the DIA, which comprised both protagonists and supporters of this institution: Arts and Crafts protagonists such as Henry Wilson and Selwyn Image, and DIA supporters such as Harry Peach and Ambrose Heal.

But, after all, it may be claimed that the late period of the BIIA was the most significant, not for the BIIA itself but for British design history, in two important aspects: agent and advisory. During this period, the BIIA yielded positive results in terms of national projection practices and the aesthetic standardisation of mass-production. Through cooperation with the Post Office and the Ministry of Transport, the BIIA contributed effectively to the nationwide standard of simplicity and utility through collaborative designs of telephone kiosks, road signs and traffic symbols. Through standardising design signs, the BIIA was assuming a real national role in design matters. Additionally, the BIIA's advisory role was taking form with its research practices. Besides collaborative practices in designs and exhibitions, the BIIA conducted considerable research into the relationships between art, design and manufacture. The research was published in pamphlets, for example, *The University Teaching Of Art In Relation To Commerce, Public Departments And Industrial Art; The Relation Between Designer And Producer In Modern Industry; Industrial Art And British Manufacture; The Art Training Of The Middleman* and *The Training Of The Silversmith*.⁶⁵ Farr claimed that this research was successful and laid the

⁶⁴ See Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, Memorandum, 27 April 1914 and C. Harcourt Smith, Confidential. Proposals For A Museum & Institute Of Modern Industrial Art. Privately printed, dated 30 April 1914 in "File kept by Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith containing correspondence, memoranda, minutes of meetings, draft reports, press-cuttings". BIIA/6/1.

⁶⁵ See BIIA Archives at the British Architectural Library, The University Teaching Of Art In Relation To Commerce (London: BIIA, 1923) BIIA/22/6; Public Departments And Industrial Art: Being a Report of a Special

foundations for later investigations, such as *An Enquiry Into The Art Of Lettering And Its Use In Divers Crafts And Trades*.⁶⁶ These studies were not only, it can be said, the foundations for research on design and industry, but also for the important practice of expertise building as design advisory body. The BIIA had already started to explore national design organisations as extended context for industrial promotion when the DIA could not fully develop in this perspective because of its oscillation. Unfortunately, the government had no such concern until at a later date.

The exhibition *Industrial Art for the Slender Purse*, in 1929, was rather noteworthy for the BIIA. That is to say that there was a real emphasis on everyday objects rather than luxury articles in the selection of exhibits. The aim was to reach a wider public rather than an aesthetic elite. This idea of encouraging public concern in the matter of good design had been explored 80 years earlier in Cole's Felix Summerly's Art Manufacturers enterprise, and was explored by other design reformers and reform organisations over the intervening decades. Working along the line of Cole's reforms, the BIIA could be said to assume an important role in the institutionalisation of design with its leverage over art and technical, as shown from the outset in its early exhibitions, such as the *First Exhibition of Modern Crafts and Manufactures*, held at its own exhibition gallery, 217 Knightsbridge, in London, on 31 May 1920. The first exhibition demonstrated that the cooperation between artist and manufacturer already existed and could be extended. All the exhibits, for example, sumptuous three-pile velvets by Sir Frank Warner, hand-woven wools from Ditchling and Armitage's carved and gilded frames, intended to illustrate how 'things of beauty' can be available for the public.⁶⁷

5.2.3 The Council for Art and Industry (CAI)

Committee on the Influence Excised by Public Departments on the Standard of British Industrial Art (London: BIIA, 1923) BIIA/22/7; The Relation between Designer and Producer in Modern Industry (London: BIIA, 1924) BIIA/22/8; Industrial Art and British Manufacture (London: BIIA, 1927) BIIA/22/20-21; The Art Training of the Middleman (London: BIIA, 1927) BIIA/22/18-19 and The Training of the Silversmith. Being a Report of a Joint Conference of Manufacturing and Distributing Silversmiths, Principals of Schools for Training Silversmiths (London: BIIA, 1928) BIIA/22/22-23.

⁶⁶ An Enquiry into the Art of Lettering and Its Use in Divers Crafts and Trades. The Report of a Special Committee (London: BIIA, 1931).

⁶⁷ See "The British Institute Of Industrial Art," Journal Of The Society Of Arts. No. 3525 Vol. LXVIII, June 1920: 492-493.

The DIA, as ascertained previously, was established in-line with the spirit of the Deutscher Werkbund in that it followed this conception of designing for mass-production, to raise the standards of design in British manufacturing. Yet, it could be asserted that the voice and thus authority of the DIA was not widely listened to, resulting in an inability to implement its objectives. The progressive industrial currents in design debate were countered by those of a more arts and crafts persuasion. This is a possible reason why the BIIA would place itself in a position of conflict with the DIA through its 1929 exhibition. According to the designer Gregory Brown, the DIA was considered to be, ‘completely beyond the reach of the general public’,⁶⁸ Although the BIIA came to a close in 1933, owing to external factors of policy change and internal problems of continuing financial difficulties, the experience of the BIIA was put to good use in the formation of the Council for Art and Industry.

In 1932, the Board of Trade, under the chairmanship of Lord Gorell, established the Committee on Art and Industry, also entitled the British Committee on Art and Industry. This committee was composed of Sir Eric Maclagan, director of the V&A; Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, chairman of the British Institute of Industrial Art; the artist and critic Roger Fry; the pottery manufacturer A. E. Gray; the businessman and design enthusiast C. H. St John Hornby; the architect Howard Robertson; the pottery designer Harry Trethowan; Professor E. W. Tristan of the Royal College of Art and the architect and critic Clough Williams-Ellis.⁶⁹ As a British government research committee on art and industry, its task was to report on: ‘the production and exhibition of articles of good design and everyday use’.⁷⁰ The committee’s report, published in 1932, presented a survey of the collaboration of art and industry in Britain during the years of 1754–1914 and also the educational requirements. According to the committee’s findings, British design lacked governmental policy. As a result, the committee’s report forwarded 12 recommendations, such as the

⁶⁸ Plummer 29.

⁶⁹ The members are mentioned here in order to reveal a dual structure of design thinking in early British design organisations. As it was the case of the DIA, two groups were also formed finally among members in the CAI. One group gathered around Sir Eric Maclagan, the other around Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith. As a result, from the DIA to the CAI, a conflict of ideas featured these organisations from time to time. It may be considered as the expression of British issues of tradition and innovation, continuity and change in design development. It may also well be the reason why the organisations under the title ‘art and industry’ should be transformed into ‘industrial design’, and finally ‘industrial design’ into ‘design’.

⁷⁰ See Lord Gorell, Art And Industry: Report Of The Committee Appointed By The Board Of Trade Under The Chairmanship Of Lord Gorell On The Production And Exhibition Of Articles Of Good Design And Everyday Use (London: HMSO, 1932).

necessity of a central body controlling exhibitions.⁷¹ Following the Gorell Committee's recommendations, the British Board of Trade launched the Council for Art and Industry (CAI). Its members were drawn from the industrial, commercial, artistic and design communities as well as critics. The president of the DIA, Frank Pick, became its inaugural chairman. It has been noted that it had a dual structure of two bodies: an English council and a Scottish committee, a model that was followed later by the Council of Industrial Design.

The inception of the CAI was announced in the House of Commons in late 1933 and started its activity at the beginning of 1934. The CAI's *Second General Report* stated its objectives as follows:

Education of the consumer in the appreciation of designs, training in design for those engaged in dealing with it throughout industry and commerce, and encouragement of good design especially in relation to manufacture.

(Farr, Design In British Industry 202)⁷²

The CAI's objectives featured the continuity of promoting national awareness of design, and were preoccupied with trade and industry. Consequently, the objectives of building design knowledge remained consistent in the British way in which changing factors such as the market and consumer were constantly included. Uncomplicated though, the CAI's objectives comprised basic elements of the those of later councils.

To meet its objectives, a series of reports were completed and published by HMSO, for example, *Education For The Consumer* in 1935, *Design In Jewellery, Silversmithing And Allied Trades* in 1937, and *Design And Designer In Industry* in 1937. These were accompanied by several exhibitions such as an exhibition of silverware at the V&A in 1934, a pottery exhibition in 1935, a metalwork exhibition in 1936 and an exhibition of *Scottish Everyday Art* in 1937.

⁷¹ See Lord Gorell 30, 38-39.

⁷² Michael Farr, Design In British Industry (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955) 202.

The council had, from the outset, believed in the educational role of exhibitions for designers, consumers and manufacturers. Special research was conducted in 1934 and 1935 to investigate the notion of education of the consumer in order to understand this concept further. Published in 1935, the report *Education For The Consumer* focussed on the art of education in elementary and secondary schools. With the aim of imparting solid ideas on the subject, the council held, in London an exhibition of educational material to clarify the application of industrial products to object lessons. It was visited by 10,600 people. In order to provide information on conditions of training, the report *Design In Jewellery, Silversmithing And Allied Trades* was published, based on the evidence collected from 12 trades. Following this, several accompanying exhibitions, stated above, were held. The report *Design And Designer In Industry*, published in 1937, is rather noteworthy, because it put forward the suggestion that both manufacturers and art educators should contribute to the interactions not just with art, but with manufacturers and the public alike. Theoretically, the report could be considered as a critique and remedy to the neglect of modernist ideas of design in regard to the ordinary people. Other important aspects of the council's work could be said to be its *Proposal For An Industrial Art Centre* and the recommendation of a semi-official body the National Register of Industrial Art Designers, founded by the Board of Trade in 1936.⁷³ It is claimed that the council's work thus prefigures the model of Design Centres, and lays the foundations for the development of design consultancy in later periods.

Thus, the DIA, BIIA and CAI, in pursuing the principle 'fitness for purpose', pioneered British institutionalisation of creative knowledge, pertaining to the same objectives, which relate to the concern of art, industry and the public in design development. They paved the way for the foundation of the Council of Industrial Design through their grounding efforts to innovate Arts and Crafts knowledge in the industrial culture.

5.2.4 The Council of Industrial Design (COID)

⁷³ CAI, *Proposal For An Industrial Art Centre*, unpublished report, dated 3 December, 1937.

In a similar fashion to past experience, it was thought to be the external and internal factors that pressured Britain into taking another pioneering step in design: the foundation of the Council of Industrial Design (COID). The rapidly disappearing imperial markets put Britain in an increasingly difficult climate of fierce competition. The World War II, led to difficult economic conditions at home, exacerbated by a shortage of materials and labour. This was seen to have a potentially debilitating effect for the British economy in the post-war years, and brought 'design' to the fore of a number of problems that required urgent solution by the government. If design was brought to the fore, then the idea of design as the seed for future economic, social and aesthetic well-being in an industrial society had been recognised since the second half of the 19th century. However, investment in design was considered unable to yield positive dividends unless an organisational framework was created within which all facets of design could flourish. It is especially the case for the producer if he cannot make an effective whole of designers, objects and the consumer. The CAI's reports had already pointed to this outcome. The British government demonstrated its awareness of the necessity to merge previously isolated efforts through the establishment of a state-funded institution. The Post-War Export Trade Committee of the Department of Overseas Trade, under the chairmanship of Sir Cecil Weir, produced a report *Industrial Design and Art in Industry* in 1943 (unpublished). The report recommended that a Central Design Council be appointed to install a permanent centre for the changing exhibitions of industrial design. A complicated situation accompanying this governmental awareness is well detailed in the book *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* by Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham. Furthermore, political concerns like home politicking and external politics added to concerns about industrial performance. In similar vein, the considerations of public morale also encouraged a political edge of industrial performance. In a climate of Labour's nationalisation policies, the government was equally preoccupied with the performance of private industry in the perspective of export performance to compete with the American economic position. Finally, inventiveness and industrial change became contemporary requirements in terms of future prosperity. All these concerns led to the emergence of quangos, such as the Council of Industrial Design.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ See Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham, *Design And Cultural Politics In Post-War Britain* (London:

The purpose of the setting-up of the COID has been interpreted by the five functions it has been assigned in its first annual report, as stipulated below:

- (a) to encourage and assist the establishment and conduct of Design Centres by industries, and to advise the Board of Trade on the grant of financial assistance to these centres;
- (b) to provide national display of well designed goods by holding, or participating in, exhibitions and to conduct publicity for good design in other appropriate forms;
- (c) to co-operate with the Education Authorities and other bodies in matters affecting the training of designers;
- (d) to advise, at the request of Government Departments and other public bodies, on the design of articles to be purchased by them, and to approve the selection of articles to be shown in United Kingdom Pavilions in international exhibitions and in official displays in other exhibitions; and
- (e) to be a centre of information and advice, both for industry and for Government Departments, on all matters of industrial art and design.

(COID, First Annual Report 5)⁷⁵

In contrast to previous organisations, it seems apparent that these specific functions were more clearly and concretely spelt out so as to avoid isolated and sporadic efforts. The following section will examine these goals in respect of the Design Centre, ‘good design’ and the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition.

a. The Design Centre:

The creation of such Design Centres was the foremost initiative of the council, followed by other countries in the second half of the 20th century. From the very beginning of the council’s life, with only 10 staff, the Director Samuel Leslie set up a Design Centres Committee, ‘to work out the possible scope and functions of such

Leicester UP, 1997) 3-12.

⁷⁵ Council of Industrial Design, First Annual Report 1945–1946 (London: COID, 1945) 5.

centres; their method of organisation and government; and the determination of the degree of industrial support which Design Centres must command, and the relation between the industry and the Council as working partners'.⁷⁶

The council's approach to the industries was difficult during the first 16 months of its existence. The negotiations consumed a large proportion of its time and energy with less successful outcome. Of the 60 or so industries approached by the council, only three actually set up Design Centres. They were the Design and Research Centre for Gold, Silver and Jewellery Industries established in 1946, the Rayon Design Centre in 1947 and Crafts Design Centre of Great Britain in 1948. The Design and Research Centre remained in existence longest. But a personality clash, internal and external politics, and the lack of funds conspired finally to lead to the dissolution of the centre in 1977. With the withdrawal of the largest funding party, the Council of Jewellery and Silverware, the initiator Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths reacted by withdrawing its own funding. And the COID's director, S. C. Leslie, made his lack of interest in the research side of the centre quite clearly. On the other hand, the Rayon Design Centre was closed down in 1952, after a three-year trial, as it could not sustain itself. The growth of the Crafts Design Centre of Great Britain was not the preoccupation of the COID as it was structured for mass-production.

Obviously, with these experiments of design centres, the COID was not going to have self-affirmation in assisting 'the establishment and conduct of Design Centres by industries'. With great concern for design and British industry, another initiative would be undertaken by the COID in order to form the Design Centre by itself and manage the centre on behalf of all British industries. In 1956, the Design Centre in Haymarket was opened in central London. The council's delight in the success of the initiative was recorded in its *Twelfth Annual Report*:

The Design Centre for British Industries in Haymarket, London, is the most useful tool that the Council has devised for carrying out its task of promoting the improvement of design in the products of British Industry.

(COID, Twelfth Annual Report 7)⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Council of Industrial Design 12.

If the COID is an initiative specific to Britain, the Design Centre is specific to the council. Four functions were described by the then president of the Board of Trade Harold Wilson in the leaflet *Design Centres*: a technical adviser; an informatory provider in respect of market research and exhibitions; a platform for developing design and products; an educational link between design training and industry.⁷⁸ It follows from the description of the President that the roles of the Design Centre appear to overlap considerably with the council's functions. The centre becomes, therefore, a terminal of the functions of the council. In the same vein, it is claimed to be a kind of medium to keep consumers in touch with new ideas.⁷⁹ So the Design Centre was publicised and promoted under these kinds of names: 'Design Centre for British Industries', 'National Show Room in the Heart of London', 'New Shop Window for Britain', 'Shopping Guide for British Goods' and 'Permanent Exhibition Centre'.⁸⁰

In 1957, the council commissioned Mass-Observation (MO) to perform a survey on the reactions to the Design Centre, as it had done for its inaugural exhibition *Britain Can Make It* in 1946.⁸¹ These findings could be said to be rather encouraging from the perspective of design awareness. This survey indicated that visitors to the centre were younger and of much higher social and economic status considered as the general public. One third was on their second or third visit and had returned with an interest in design and new ideas.⁸² Of the visitors to the Design Centre, the upper-middle class accounts for 38%, lower-middle class 55% and those aged from 25—44 59%.⁸³

⁷⁷ Council of Industrial Design, *Twelfth Annual Report 1956–1957* (London: COID, 1957) 7.

⁷⁸ See *Design Centres* (London: COID, 1946) 3.

⁷⁹ See *Announcing The Design Centre For British Industries* (London: COID, 1957) 6.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Gordon Russell, *Design At Work* (London: COID, 1948); Council of Industrial Design, *Announcing The Design Centre For British Industries* (London: COID, 1956); Council of Industrial Design, *What Is A Design Centre? A Description And Explanation Of Its Function* (London: COID, 1947) and *The Design Centre For British Industries* (London: COID, 1956).

⁸¹ Mass-Observation is a British social research organization. Its archive, held at the University of Sussex, UK, is a unique and invaluable resource for sociologists and cultural historians. It is concerned with ordinary people's lives and experiences, having solicited opinions on topics from wartime rationing to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

⁸² See Design Council Archives, *A Report On The Design Centre* (London: Mass-Observation, 1957) 3-13.

⁸³ See Design Council Archives 5.

This kind of survey shows a great difference of professional attitude compared to the situation of 1930s. It alludes to the emergence of a creative class which would largely contribute to the construction of design expertise and its training in post-war Britain. It is said, therefore, that the Design Centre encouraged the role of design in Britain's overseas competitiveness through pursuing new ideas in design consumption, as motivated also by the suggestions of improvements of overseas buyers.⁸⁴

These accounts of the Design Centre tend to indicate its benefits: the Design Centre as a resource pool, the Design Centre as way of sharing information and the Design Centre as an opportunity for joint exhibitions. The significance of this institution lay in the fact that it created an interface between public recognition of design and the dissemination of design knowledge. Even the council's lack of a clear corporate identity was attributed, by Charles Forbes, the consultant hired to address the issue of the corporate identity crisis of the council, to the popularity of the Design Centre. Forbes reported that the council itself had little public recognition before the centre was opened.⁸⁵ Consequently, the centre was at first fully mentioned in the first and second annual reports of the Council, then received a limited coverage in the ensuing three annual reports and finally remained mostly forgotten for approximately 10 years. This indifference could, as a point of thought-provoking, be related to the early initiatives and attitude of the council.

Only an obvious failure will lead to the council's silence on the 'Design Centres' initiative, as British industries responded poorly to the council's call for the formation of Design Centres. The main reasons why the industries did not respond positively included fear of control, lack of confidence and lack of capital. For example, the Furnishing Fabrics Industry feared control from the council, because some additional conditions had been attached to the creation of Design Centres in the pamphlet, such as goods to display being selected from the council's record, the centre's general policy by the governing body with one or two members from the council, and purchase tax and charges to exhibitors.⁸⁶ The pottery industry was also concerned

⁸⁴ See suggestions in A Report On The Design Centre "Overseas Buyers" (London: Mass-Observation, 1957) 7-9.

⁸⁵ See Charles Forbes, A Report On The Design Council Identification (London: COID, 1977).

⁸⁶ See Announcing The Design Centre For British Industries (London: COID, 1957) and Design Centres: A Cooperative Scheme For The Development Of Industrial Design (London: COID, 1956).

with the restriction imposed by the council on the promotion of goods. What is more, the establishment of a Design Centre was believed to produce more industrial theft among the firms.⁸⁷ The difficult experience marked by the council's approaching industries revealed in one way the central attitude of the COID, which considered itself as a defender of values, as its research was directed to the opinions, ideas and needs of the public rather than commercial market analysis and enquiry into popular designs.⁸⁸ Interesting enough, the dual structure of membership since the DIA is still reflected in the relationship of the council with its centre.

b. Good Design

The definition of, 'good design' is particularly important in regard to the council's second task. Additionally the council also gave awards to 'well designed products'. In order to provide national displays and to publicise British products at home and abroad, the council needed to be able to explain what constitutes 'good design' to industrialists, buyers, retailers and visitors at Design Centres, and also to the public at large, both verbally and through publications.

As with Design Centres, 'good design' is also thought to be a British phenomenon with its endeavour to answer the consumers' needs of the industrial age. The ideas on which a 'good design' was based can be traced back to mid-19th-century England, when reformers advocated a simple, utilitarian approach to the creation of everyday products as an alternative to elaborated and decorated goods.⁸⁹ These ideas were later developed by the BIIA into the term 'fitness', which was in use at the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, at a later time, Gordon Russell, director of the COID, confirmed this aesthetic and functional idea by stating that, 'In short good design is an article that works and looks right', which has been defined as the leitmotif of the

⁸⁷ M. Forsyth, Design In Pottery Industry. A Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey (Nuffield College, 1943).

⁸⁸ See Design Centres: A Cooperative Scheme For The Development Of Industrial Design 4.

⁸⁹ In the debates over the factory question during the 1830s and 1840s, prominent critics such as Welby Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris, although advocating a new life, kept to the execution of modern works in the spirit of medieval art. Between the ecclesiastical and the mundane, they pertained to being concerned with aesthetic culture instead of daily one. Cole's reforms of design could be argued as a proper transition between two values.

council's policy in the early years.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, it would seem that the achievement of the council's objectives in this area retrogressed due to the emphasis on 'contemporary' designs. This, what could be termed as a narrow attitude generated a limited criteria which encouraged only what was perceived as a good 'modern' design. In his article *Managing British Design Reform I: Fresh Perspectives On The Early Years Of The Council Of Industrial Design*, Woodham expounded some insightful comments on the perceived roots of these limited criteria, which were adopted by the council. His research into the membership revealed that the leadership group was 'a cultural elite' who believed in the superiority of aesthetic judgement based on cultural taste. It could also be advanced from Woodham's research that a consciousness of cultural hierarchy or artistic modernism underlies the council's policy.⁹¹

The council was hence said to have acted to 'impose a censorship' when selecting products for exhibitions as showcases of a country's performance of 'good design', in which they are held responsible for creating projects or programmes with the aim of encouraging industrial involvement in running Design Centres. In fact, as Weir remarked, one year prior to the foundation of the COID, State intervention as 'discrimination in matters of taste', had already started both in museums and international exhibitions.⁹² G. H. McEwan, from the furniture trade has commented on this point in explanation of the distance between the council and industries in regard to the modern criteria:

Manufacturers were suspicious of the Council of Industrial Design, whom they considered well-intentioned people devoid of reality ... Designs that were good for London, and which were a success at 'Britain Can Make It', were not good designs for the provinces ... The Council was out of touch with popular taste.

(McEwan as quoted in Woodham 58)⁹³

⁹⁰ Gordon Russell, *Design At Work* (London: COID, 1948) 10.

⁹¹ See Jonathan M. Woodham, "Managing British Design Reform I: Fresh Perspectives On The Early Years Of The Council Of Industrial Design," *Journal Of Design History* 9.1 (1996): 55-65.

⁹² All quoted from Woodham 57.

⁹³ Woodham 58.

‘Good design’, which has been interpreted as good modern design seems to have reduced the possibilities for innovation. This could be said to be the reason why recent British scholars are likely to use the term ‘modern’ instead of ‘modernism’ in their studies in order to avoid a modernist perspective; even the term ‘modernism’ can also be taken as a wider cultural form than artistic modernism.⁹⁴

In another article *Managing British Design Reform II: The Film Deadly Lampshade – An Ill-Fated Episode In The Politics Of ‘Good Taste’*, Woodham commented on a film from the early years of the COID, which revealed a failure in the policy-making of modern design to educate the consumer. This film, entitled the *Deadly Lampshade*, which centred ‘on domestic equipment and interior decoration’,⁹⁵ was one of the council’s earliest efforts in the exploration of the propagandist medium. The film was made by a group called the International Realist Ltd. After four versions, it was finally completed in 1948. Leaving aside the opinions of the officials and members of the committee, a report from an employee, Miss H. M. McCrae, under the title ‘General Opinion’, was found to be rather revealing:

It was felt that the average man or woman who is not educated in design would be unable, or too lazy mentally, to try to visualize a satisfactory lamp, and would learn from the film only what not to buy and not to select the best design for any particular job.

(McCrae as quoted in Woodham: 112)⁹⁶

In response to the above, it could be proposed that the following words, ‘average man or woman’, ‘too lazy mentally’ and ‘what not to buy and not to select’, suggest an apparent resistant attitude to the dictating of taste. Moreover, the alternative title suggested for this film delineates a clearly imposing tone of promotion: *Things We Buy*. Therefore, what has been defined as this ‘reaching the public’ policy ‘by explaining the principles of good design from the consumer’s point of view’ seems to

⁹⁴ See Martin Daunt and Bernard Rieger. Meaning Of Modernity: Britain From Victorian Era To World War II (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

⁹⁵ Council of Industrial Design, First Annual Report 1945-1946 (London: COID, 1946) 21.

⁹⁶ Woodham, Managing British Design Reform I: Fresh Perspectives On The Early Years Of The Council Of Industrial Design 58.

have evolved into what could be described as a rather negative, elitist initiative.⁹⁷ The Council decided to destroy this film, which could be thought to be an advantageous move for this particular organisation. The council moved closer to the consumer and changed its elite attitude based on an imaginary consuming public.

c. The *Britain Can Make It* exhibition

With its character of changing perceptions, Britain never, it seems, responds slowly to any opportunity. In 1942, three years prior to the end of World War II, the government was already considering holding an exhibition ‘to demonstrate to the world goods which this country was in a position to export’.⁹⁸ When the COID was established, in 1944, it was asked to take charge of the exhibition. And it could also be seen as a great opportunity for the COID to seize on the fact that ‘the impact of the Exhibition itself on the manufacturers and the public should, of course, be the largest part of the permanent benefit it brings to the council’s work’, as believed by the council in its first annual report.⁹⁹

Holding exhibitions was one of the major initiatives undertaken by the council. It was the second of the council’s main functions: ‘to provide national display of well designed goods by holding, or participating in, exhibitions’. In order to implement this function, the council staged a number of exhibitions and displays at home and abroad. Some of what have been thought to be the most notable among the exhibitions were *Britain Can Make It* (1946) and *The Festival of Britain* (1951), which, as can be seen, were conducted prior to 1970.

Britain Can Make It (BCMI) was the first major exhibition organised by the council and the first major project to which great importance was attached. It was believed that this exhibition would demonstrate to the world the quality of British design, educate the public on matters of good design and taste and arouse foreign interest and investment in design. The council staff’s time was devoted to the planning,

⁹⁷ All quoted from Council of Industrial Design, *First Annual Report 1945-1946* 20.

⁹⁸ Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham, *Design And Cultural Politics In Post-War Britain* (London: Leicester UP, 1997) 29.

⁹⁹ Council of Industrial Design, *First Annual Report 1945-1946* 21.

organising, staging and dismantling of this exhibition in both 1945 and 1947. Although this was considered by some as a distraction from the council's other projects, the exhibition won the Council public acclaim.

Indeed, it could be said to have achieved the task of raising public morale. The *BCMI* attracted 1,432,369 visitors – about three or four times the original estimate'. The total included over 7,000 overseas buyers from 67 countries and at least 43, 000 British trade visitors. When the exhibition was mounted in Edinburgh in the following year, it attracted '456,000 visitors, including 1000 buyers from 28 countries'.¹⁰⁰ The commercial intention was also clear with the original title *Industrial Design* being changed to *Britain Can Make It*. The influence of the exhibition was especially significant, which is evident when referring to the words of Sir Stafford Cripps, president of the Board of Trade who expounded that:

There was a time when the satisfaction of living amongst beautiful and useful objects was regarded as the monopoly of a favoured few. That time is passing, and it is now becoming recognized that low-priced goods need not be ugly, nor mass-produced articles ill-designed.

This Exhibition gives the answer and shows that despite our losses we have not lost that tradition of good design which has made many British industries famous in the past. Indeed we have done better than that; we have spread out our designing capacity into new industries and improved it in many of the old ones.

(COID, Design' 46 5)¹⁰¹

Cast in the post-war background, this event of the exhibition was critical following the initiative steps of the DIA and BIIA in generating British value form in modern design. It was a continued effort for Britain to foster its social attitude to include the public in design matters. The views of Sir Stafford Cripps clarify the British intention to maintain its competitive nationhood and industry through continued design reforms since Henry Cole. They will be further examined against the backdrop of post 1970 society.

¹⁰⁰ Penny Sparke, Did Britain Make It? British Design In Context 1946–86 (London: Design Council, [c. 1986]) 25-6.

¹⁰¹ Council of Industrial Design, Design' 46: Survey Of British Industrial Design As Displayed At The "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition (London: HMSO, 1946) 5.

5.3 Conclusion

Owing to a strong tradition of the supremacy in art, nostalgia is perceived to persistently characterise the French mode of thinking in its transition to modernity. In the development of design organisations, the issue of the union of art and industry has been a constant preoccupation for the purposes of the democratisation of taste in the pre-1970s period. It is evident that this nostalgia encourages an art-centred position in dealing with the relations between art and industry. The creation of the UCAD in 1882 by incorporating two institutions can be appropriately considered as a confirmation of this position. Privately funded though, the UCAD took a national role affecting decisively the position of organisations such as the SAD and IEI, which resulted in a complete exclusion of the UAM from the SAD as a threat to its national position. This intention of aesthetic knowledge building or aesthetic memory constructing has been affirmed since the outset of the UCAD in the report of its first President Antonin Proust who claimed that France was privileged to have vast superiority over other nations in arts owing to centuries of investigations.¹⁰² It is, therefore, not surprising that Jacques Viénot would promote aesthetics as ethics of design with the foundation of IEI at a later date.

Although Britain was also preoccupied with the modernisation of design knowledge, it succeeded in building a creative knowledge in regard to the production for the public. It is conjectured to be an appropriate knowledge for design practices in industrial society, a 'value of our own ideas' in terms of the proposal for the foundation of the DIA in 1912. What is encouraging in the development of British design organisations is the continuity of creativity through design practices which are directed more to the contemporary social and economic realities than in France. From the DIA, via the DIIA and CAI to the CoID, although the guideline has been a little vague during the early stages of development, a consciousness of the past and future in the present is believed to have contributed substantially in the maintaining of an innovative attitude in the substitution of organisations. It assured, thus, that the overall success of British national organisations in the pre-1970s period is guaranteed.

¹⁰² See Antonin M. Proust, *L'Art Décoratif Et Le Musée National Du Quai D'Orsay* (Paris: Impri. Schiller, 1887) 21.

Until the 1970s, the situation for modern design organisations in China was rather discouraging, not only in the consideration of central design organisation, even what could be defined as a proper modern design organisation was hardly to be found. As a result, there is nothing for China to be compared with the transformation of design organisations in Britain and France in pre-1970s society. With reference to the cases of Britain and France, China is a latecomer in the institutionalisation of modern design.

CHAPTER 6. CENTRAL DESIGN ORGANISATIONS IN POST-1970S SOCIETY

6.1. New Environment: a Consumer Culture and Knowledge-based Society

Just as the 'democratic' society has a foundation in economics, so the knowledgeable society has its roots in epistemology and the logic of inquiry.

(Lane as quoted in Stehr 5)¹

Since the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, concepts such as 'post-industrial' and 'postmodern' society have been in use.² It is essential to mention here that different forms of 'post' thinking also emerged from the 1970s, and which arrived under the name of post-modernisation theory. If modernisation indicates the shift from a traditional (agricultural) society to a modern (industrial) one, then post-modernisation marks the shift from a modern (industrial) society to a post-modern (post-industrial) one. These principle notions, outlined above, have been elaborated upon in the works of Daniel Bell's *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) and Jean François Lyotard's *The Post-Modern Condition* (1979).³

Today, the themes applied to modern society have been overwhelmed by terminological variations: 'another modernity' (Lash, 1999), 'second modernity' (Beck, 1993), 'late modernity' (Giddens, 1990), 'postmodernisation' (Crook, Pakulski and Waters, 1992), 'reflexive' modernisation' (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), 'new modernity' (Beck, 1992), 'extended liberal modernity' (Wagner, 1994) and 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000).⁴ This sociological change is a reflection of the social transformation from the universal modernist model of modernising society to a cultural pluralism. Design has been affected by this period of what could be termed a sociological shift. For the sake of clarity, these two phases of modern society are

¹ Nico Stehr, *Knowledge Societies* (London: SAGE, 1994) 5.

² See Peter Drucker, *The Age Of Discontinuity* (London: Heinemann, 1969); Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970) and Daniel Bell, *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture In Social Forecasting* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974).

³ See Bell and Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984).

⁴ See Scott Lash, *Another Modernity: A Different Rationality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Ulrich Beck, *Die Erfindung des Politischen* (Frankfurt: am Main, 1993); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences Of Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 1990); Stephen Crook, Jan Pakulski, and Malcolm Waters. *Postmodernisation: Change In Advanced Society* (London: SAGE, 1992); Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition And Aesthetics In The Modern Social Order* (London: Polity, 1994); Beck, *Towards a New Modernity* (London: SAGE, 1992); Peter Wagner, *A Sociology Of Modernity: Liberty And Discipline* (London: Routledge 1994) and Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

referred to by the simple terms of ‘first modernity’ and ‘second modernity’ in all chapters of this study.

6.1.1. Changes in Design since the 1970s

In her book *An Introduction To Design And Culture*, Sparke has achieved, to a certain degree, a comprehensive description of changes in design since the 1970s. According to Sparke, by the 1970s, design, ever framed within the modernist context, could now be said to be defined within the notion of consumption in three respects. First, design could be considered as a mode of conceptual consumption instead of a material one. Second, high style, such as Paris’ fashion gives way to street style in fashion design. Third, what has been denominated as a popular nostalgia has, it seems, promoted a ‘heritage industry’, which markets the past. In short, it could be surmised that the monolithic idea of modernity was replaced by pluralism. During the 1980s and 1990s, it is widely held that consumer culture produced full-scale effects on everyday life. In Sparke’s view, the leading sociologists of the 20th century, such as Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieu, Mike Featherstone and Frederic Jameson have examined these particular effects with their works. Design was, thus, placed at the centre of a dominant political, social and economic force, which was embodied in the role of the design material culture. In the shopping malls of that period, by way of illustration, it has been thought that the designer was responsible for everything, from the shopping space to its contents. As a result, in the last three decades of the 20th century, consumption became ‘a postmodern experience’. Designers played the role of identity creators in the marketplace. It has further been suggested that, blended with other cultural and commercial practices, design was understood and practiced in an increasingly wider context of marketing and branding, providing consumers’ social and individual lives with a variety of possible aspirations. As Sparke claims, the manufacturer James Dyson, the ‘no name’ policy of the Japanese company Muji and the American theme park Disneyland are considered to be successful examples in dealing with popular aspirations. ‘Real’ and ‘constructed’ experiences are thought to

be difficult to separate. Design, identified with the mass media, became part of this notion, referred to by Umberto Eco, as a 'hyper-reality'.⁵

Occurring in parallel with these design practices, design discourse also underwent great changes during these years. What was especially controversial at the time was the way in which design history had been written, which was mainly based on the Pevsner model. With the social shift from the first to the second modernity, the reliability of the Pevsner modernist model was put into question. Some design historians, therefore, started to construct a discourse posterior to modernism and in the context of commercial development. The English design historian John Thackara's book *Design After Modernism: Beyond The Object* (1988) was such an example. According to Guy Julier, among the differing attempts at forming a new design discourse, the Italian designer and theorist Andrea Branzi was able to formulate the language of the second modernity with the intention of filling 'the void left by the retreat of modernism'.⁶ This second modernity of design was, for Branzi, a productive system based on, 'flexibility, differentiation but also industrial internationalism'. In this system, it could be stated that design and designed objects promote tastes and cultural characters, which are considered to be, 'independent of ideological and national structures', but 'correspondent to uncontrollable parameters of poetry, psychology and spiritualism'. Branzi's views could be understood in terms of institutional change, as claimed by Giddens: design objects and practices contribute to the establishment of more individual values and ways of life. Branzi's American critics have pointed to this position as interpreting design and the second modernity in the Eurocentric sense of high culture. Furthermore, they considered Branzi's interpretation of this second modernity for design as pertaining to the conventional values of high culture, which they believed would prove impossible in matters of choice making. The American critic Richard Buchanan seems to have wanted to draw the attention away from Branzi's discursive ideology of design and

⁵ All quoted in Penny Sparke, *An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 To The Present* (London: Routledge, 2004) 127-138.

⁶ For Guy Julier, Andrea Branzi is the principal person who has developed a language in favour of the concept of second modernity. Branzi's ideas about the second modernity are mainly expressed in the following four writings. *The Hot House: Italian New Wave Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984); *Learning From Milan: Design And The Second Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1988). "We Are the Primitives," *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*. Ed. Victor Margolin (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989) 37-42 and "Design And the Second Modernity: Theorems for an Ecology of the Artificial World," *The Edge Of the Millennium: An International Critique Of Architecture*. Ed. Susan Yelavich (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1993) 125-127.

direct it instead towards ‘the processes of design as a search for understanding and values’. What is of significance here is the fact that Julier alluded to this Americanising position of Branzi’s American critics yet, at the same time, also highlighting the similarities between Buchanan’s claim of design thinking as an historical subject and the Italian designer’s concept of ‘immateriality’.⁷ Accordingly, common to both, a dematerialising concept was being constructed for design in response to this notion of a ‘hyper-reality’ in its practices.

For the purposes of this study, the above arguments have been elucidated in order to find out appropriate variables that can explicate the reasons behind the transformation of design organisations as well as the threats to these explicative variables. In brief, the above arguments are to be thought of as no more than mere presentations of the changes of the social and cultural environment which are embodied within the design practices and discourses. It seems evident that Sparke’s descriptions demonstrate, in a concise manner, the significant impact of a consumer culture on design while Julier’s statements point to the discursive difficulty in being able to recognise new environmental factors for design practice. These views constitute the literature background for the examination of the transformation of design organisations in post-1970s society, as they are dealing with the changing conditions for design practice. Nevertheless, the perspective from which to draw on this background needs to be further defined.

6.1.2 A Consumer Culture and Knowledge Society as an Environment for Design

Both Sparke’s arguments and Julier’s statements are pivotal in defining these changing environments for design practices. Furthermore, they have been conducive in extracting certain key conceptions as instruments in understanding an area which has been under-examined – that is, design organisations.

Sparke’s analysis is suggested to be further related to earlier theories from the English sociologist Mike Featherstone, in which the latter generates some key nominative tools for the examination of design organisations under change. At the

⁷ All quoted from Guy Julier, *The Culture Of Design* (London: SAGE, 2000) 42-44.

beginning of his book *Consumer Culture And Postmodernity*, Mike Featherstone (1991) briefly defines consumer culture in three ways. First, it is elucidated as a growing consumption, which is said to contribute to an ‘ideological manipulation’, which could mean an instrumental consumption of governing.⁸ Second, he further characterises the ways in which the different ways of consumption generate new social relations, which could mean a sociality of things. Third, he delineates his understanding of the way consumption also produces ‘emotional pleasures’ through imaginations and aspirations.⁹ It is not difficult to discover some parallelism between Sparke’s views and Featherstone’s ideas: conception and conceptualisation, social aspirations and social relations, constructed experience and emotional pleasures. It could be suggested that such parallelism paves the way for an identification of design with consumers in the consumer age. It is, however, further necessary to define the identifying parameters of the social environment for design since the 1970s.

In *The Semantic Turn: A New Foundation For Design* (2006), Klaus Krippendorff, Professor of the University of Pennsylvania, offers the following illustration of the changing units of the social environment:

A summary of the shifts articulated by Krippendorff can be made in three respects: currency, structure and knowledge. In a post-industrial society or the second modernity, it could be said that it is attention rather than energy that gains currency. Structural shifts are considered to be obvious. Under conditions of mass consumption, Krippendorff asserts that hierarchies seem to be being deconstructed by networks or heterarchies. It is his belief that a knowledge shift indicates that a constitution is more a socially based than a scientifically based one. It is noteworthy that there is a certain amount of accord between Krippendorff’s views and those of Sparke and Featherstone. In this way, it seems that conception and conceptualisation are connected to the notion of ‘attention’ in the respect of ‘currency’; social relations and aspirations, however, are clearly issues of structure and ‘constructed’ experience and could be thought to be a simple form of what constitutes social knowledge. It is claimed that the sense of being ‘human-centred’ is resonant within the words of these

⁸ Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture And Postmodernism* (London: SAGE, 1991) 13.

⁹ Ibid.

three respects. As a result of these views explicated above, currency, structure and knowledge can be construed as reference points for examining the transformation of design organisations in post-1970's society.

Industrial Era	➡➡➡	Post-industrial Era
	Primary currencies	
Matter and energy	➡➡➡	Attention by individuals and communities
	Major inequalities	
Economic	➡➡➡	Access to technology, know-how, education
	Dominant structures	
Hierarchies of obligations	➡➡➡	Networks (heterarchies) of commitments
	Conflicts of concern	
Territorial wars	➡➡➡	Market competition, spectator sports, elections
	knowledge	
Scientific theories (of nature)	➡➡➡	Socially constitutive, transformative
	Ontological explanations	
Mechanical/causal	➡➡➡	Ability to create, construct, and realise
	Design	
Technology-centred	➡➡➡	Human-centred

Table 6.1. Shifts in social dimensions from the Industrial Era to the Post-industrial.

Source: Klaus Krippendorff, *The Semantic Turn: A New Foundation For Design*

(London: Taylor & Francis, 2006) 14.

What remains to be found are the guidelines for this examination, as post-industrial society is also considered to be a form of 'knowledge' society.¹⁰ This, thus, leads to the question of what is a knowledge-based society. In a text prior to the following work *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society*, Daniel Bell clarifies this notion of a knowledge-based society within the following:

¹⁰ See Daniel Bell, *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture In Social Forecasting* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974) 212.

First, the sources of innovation are increasingly derivative from research and development; and second, the 'weight' of the society – measured by a larger proportion of the Gross National Product and a larger share of employment – is increasingly in the knowledge field.

(Bell as quoted in Stehr 6)¹¹

In *Knowledge Societies* (1994), Professor Nico Stehr, of the University of Alberta, briefly highlights the role of knowledge while defining a knowledge-based society as its 'constitutive mechanism or identity' which is understood to be 'driven by knowledge'.¹² The structure and culture of modern society are rather matters of knowledge.

According to Stehr, it could be advanced that the essential features of this type of society are also embodied in the changes that a knowledge-based society could bring to the structure of the economy. In the industrial age, John Maynard Keynes has asserted the notion that the economy changes from a 'material economy' to a 'monetary economy'. This transformation has been mainly described in Keynes' *General Theory*.¹³ Moreover, he defines the way in which, in the post-industrial age, the economy takes the form of a 'symbolic economy' as a result of 'the fact that knowledge becomes the leading dimension in the productive process, the primary condition for its expansion and for a change in the limits to economic growth in the developed world'.¹⁴ In the collation of the arguments of Sparke, Julier, Featherstone, Krippendorff and Stehr, it would appear that there exist certain parallels in the way in which that each regard the shifts in post-industrial society; what this points to constitutes, in fact, a symbolic turn made by post-modern culture. This symbolic turn, viewed as a cultural context, could be considered to be the logical context for an examination of the transformation of design organisations in the allotted time frame of the 1970s. Now that the context and perspectives have been established, the question remains as to what aspects should be accentuated during the following

¹¹ Bell as quoted in Stehr 6; See also Bell, Daniel, "The Measurement Of Knowledge And Technology." Indicators Of Social Change: Concepts And Measurements. Ed. Eleanor B. Sheldon and Wilbert E. Moore (Hartford: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968) 145-246.

¹² Stehr 6.

¹³ See Donald Moggridge, The Collected Writings Of John Maynard Keynes Vol. 13. The General Theory And After. Part 1. Preparation (London : Macmillan for the Royal Economic Society, 1973).

¹⁴ Stehr 10.

examination. Two themes that Stehr has developed in *Knowledge Societies* can be said to throw much light on the examination of the following aspects: 'knowledge and expertise' and 'institution and expertise'.¹⁵

According to Stehr, experts and expert knowledge are necessary in two particular cases. First, the increasing growth of new knowledge requires the renewal of definitions and conceptions even though their clarity is not always assured. For instance, the substitution of the old and deficient elements of production is necessary in the manufacturing world. Second, an unprecedented increase in the quantity of knowledge stipulates a need for the existence of groups of experts, especially when the exertion of power becomes a knowledge-based work.¹⁶

Regarding modern institutions, Stehr has explicated the fact that the contexts for institutions remain to be clarified. In an historical and comparative perspective, few insights are gained from the 'changing role' of the expertise in relation to institutions. Stehr has referred to the observations made by Professor Zygmunt Bauman which explain the shift in intellectual roles from 'legislator' to 'interpreter' in post-modern society. Intellectuals could make no more authoritative statements of values. Max Weber has also been quoted due to his explanation of the different functions of expertise between private enterprise and bureaucratic bodies.¹⁷

It is suggested that Stehr's views are instrumental in the fact that they establish good points of reference for the objects being analysed, which has been outlined in Chapter 1; that is, different perceptions and understandings of situations in organisations and also differences or variations in the goals of organisations.

6.1.3 The Texture, Public and Being Multivalent: a New Hypertext of Design History

It is considered here that the point at which design history, as a discipline or as a form of knowledge, emerged in Britain was, first of all, a challenge for academics and researchers to be able to establish a framework in which to situate design. This design

¹⁵ Stehr vi.

¹⁶ See Stehr 163-6.

¹⁷ See Stehr 187-9.

history is not necessarily understood as defined in a literal way. In this respect, Sparke's views seem to contribute to a clarification of this point.¹⁸ As articulated in the personal interview with her, Sparke delineates the way in which, since its birth, design history has developed in many directions and is absorbed by other disciplines when crossing them. As a result, design history, as a single discipline, is somewhat used up.¹⁹ This is the very reason why, it would seem, debates on the discipline of design history or design studies have been provoked.²⁰ Hence, what is most important for the discipline of design history may not necessarily be the disputes about the title but the input of new momentum to design history. In this sense, it is significant that Woodham published his book *Twentieth-Century Design* in 1997, two years after the debates on the discipline in 1995. Woodham offered a hypertext for the survival of design history: texture, public and multivalence.

As stated in Chapter 3, Woodham's *Twentieth-Century Design* embodied the focus of a shift in design history from a 'high cultural ground' to a 'texture of everyday life'.²¹ Such historical accounts on the differing types of practice are especially significant from the perspective of the survival of design history. What Roland Barthes proffered in his *Mythologies* is an elucidation of the significance of the following ideology, which pronounces that: 'myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things ... it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences'.²² Cast in the light of Barthes' analysis, the value of Woodham's hypertext of design history therefore comes to the fore.²³

¹⁸ Professor Penny Sparke was the founding secretary of the Design History Society. Her words are often quoted in the arguments regarding the design history discipline. See, for example, Margolin, V. 1995. Design History or Design Studies, *Design Issues*, Volume 11, Number 1, Spring, p.4; Woodham, Jonathan, M. 1995. Resisting Colonization, *Design Issues*, Volume 11, Number 1. p.28. Therefore, the author would quote her views as a referential standpoint.

¹⁹ See Appendix. Sparke, Penny. Personal interview. 8 November 2007.

²⁰ A special issue of Design Issues recorded these debates with the articles of the topic. See *Design Issues: History Theory Criticism*. Volume 11, Number 1, spring 1995.

²¹ Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 7.

²² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000) 142-143.

²³ The emphasis on 'everyday' things had been explored in design history 'on the ground' in Britain, that is in the design history curriculum for some time. The University of Brighton, with scholars such as Suzette Worden, placed considerable emphasis on such dimensions from the early 1980s. Material culture-influenced works by academics such as Alison J. Clarke and Louise Purbrick have continued to develop this trend. See Suzette Worden, *Furniture For The Living Room: An Investigation Of The Interaction Between Society, Industry And Design In Britain From 1919 To 1939* (Brighton: Brighton Polytechnic, 1980); Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware: The Promise Of Plastic In 1950s America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, c1999) and Louise Purbrick, *The Wedding Present: Domestic Life Beyond Consumption* (Aldershot: Ashgate, c2007).

On the one hand, it seems as if the modernist model of high culture threatens the historicity of design history. The progressive vision of modernism through design history is essentially defined here as a mythic purification, which centres on the myths of individuals, styles and movements. It turns human history into an individual one, thus resulting in the departure of design history from history itself. The focus on the 'texture of everyday life' brings back the historical quality to things. On the other hand, according to Woodham, since the popular cultural turn in the 1960s, 'material expectation and aspiration' through 'consumption as a way of life' have become the 'realities of mass-consumption'.²⁴ Yet, this area of consumption remains unexplored, albeit that 'the conception, production and consumption of design ... is an integral aspect of political, cultural social and economic change'.²⁵ While the historiography of design still accentuates conception and production, the move of design history away from the producer to the consumer signals Woodham's contribution to the enrichment of design history, in the recovery of the complexity of design studies in a global context.

Through building the texture of everyday life, the book *Twentieth-Century Design* is also considered to be rebuilding the texture of design history. These notions are to be explored within the following two aspects: public discourse and multivalent organising.

Here, the term 'consumer' is better understood in the context of a culture of consumption, which can be better interpreted as the 'public' or an 'audience', which can be said to link into the idea expounded by Featherstone that the consumer is not merely a direct derivation of production.²⁶ If an object is to be taken as a discourse, then mass-consumption is thought to be an activity which produces a public discourse. An understanding of public discourse is important because 'particular objects or designs change their meanings when used or viewed in different periods and places'.²⁷ Its historical account is more than necessary in a post-industrial society where 'work, in the main, is no longer the manipulation of things, but of meanings' as

²⁴ Woodham 65.

²⁵ Woodham, "Culture, Politics & Humanities: Designing Design History For The 21st Century." Proceedings ICSID 2001 Seoul. Ed. LEE Soon-jong. (Seoul: Executive Committee of ICSID 2001, 2001) 29.

²⁶ Featherstone 13.

²⁷ Woodham, Twentieth-Century Design 9.

stated by Ernest Gellner.²⁸ Four chapters in *Twentieth-Century Design* are devoted to this topic: *Commerce Consumerism And Design*; *Design And National Identity*; *Pop To Postmodernism: Changing Values* and *Nostalgia, Heritage And Design*.

In a global context, design practices generate a texture of multivalent organising, because the survival of certain aspects of life depend upon, according to the Italian sociologist of organisations Antonio Strati, ‘the connectedness of various parts of the environment rather than their independence’.²⁹ Two chapters in the *Twentieth-Century Design* have dealt with this issue: *Multinational Corporation And Global Products* and *Design Promotion, Profession, And Management*. Since the 1970s, what has been recorded as ‘the growth of interest in the concept of design management’ coextends with the notion of ‘the growth of multinational corporations and the emergence of global products such as Coca-Cola’.³⁰ Corporation identity creation, thus, becomes the development of a texture of multivalent organising, as Woodham clarified through the quoting of Wally Olins:

We are entering an epoch in which only those corporations making highly competitive products will survive. This means, in the longer term, that products from major companies around the world will become increasingly similar. Inevitably, this means that the whole of a company’s personality, its identity, will become the most significant factor in making a choice between one company and its products and another.

(Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* 143)³¹

If the above two aspects of the rebuilding of the texture of design history concern mainly the present, since it is a discussion rather of the period we live in, Woodham’s discursive texture should also be understood to cover the past and the future, in terms of history. Design history can be said to have undergone a considerable struggle in the defining of its subject matters, its aims and objectives. Yet, if a comprehension of design practices is impossible to be situated in a certain way in history, what sense does it make to pursue a definition of this subject? Through positing a change of

²⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Thought And Change* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965) 32-3.

²⁹ Antonio Strati, *Theory And Method In Organization Studies* (London: SAGE, 2000) 76.

³⁰ Woodham 142-3.

³¹ Woodham 143.

meanings of objects when used and viewed differently, Woodham is said to offer a changing position in the interpreting of design history and design in history, which could be termed as being ‘placed differently’. This notion of being ‘placed differently’ is significant in three respects regarding design history.

First is the fact that there is an alternative choice in the cultural representation of historical events. It is in this perspective that some arguments about the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, such as the argument given by Kumar, revealed a modernist position in interpreting the exhibition structure as being based on a nationalist, instructive ideology. With the classification of Britain’s exhibits, the exhibition offered a potential for other nations to be positioned differently in the new industrial culture, referring to the British experience, as discussed in Chapter 3. The exhibition had as its objective that, just as the French commissioner Baron Charles Dupin put it in his letter to the Royal Commissioners and Executive Committee, each nation could participate in the exhibition without losing its own character.³² This official opinion was, as a matter of interest, reflected in the unclassified state of the majority of exhibits.

Second, the crisis of modernist historiography pointed to the weakness of placing design history in a single knowledge-based position. The rise of design history in the UK fostered a multiple experience-based position. As a result, the British experience of writing design history offers choices for those working on their own local design history. It is claimed here that Woodham’s discourse signals the initiatives of New Design History, launched by design historians such as Penny Sparke, Guy Julier and Judy Attfield, in Britain, or social and economic historians of design such as Patrick Maguire.³³ The new design historiography marks essentially the move towards

³² Great Exhibition, *Great Exhibition Of The Works Of Industry Of All Nations, 1851: Official Descriptive And Illustrated Catalogue. Supplementary Volume* (London: Spicer Brothers with W. Clowes and Sons by authority of the Royal Commission, 1851) 206.

³³ To know more about Woodham’s statements on the potential of placing differently on a world map of design history while respecting the own status of design history, refer to Jonathan M. Woodham, “Resisting Colonization: Design History Has Its Own Identity,” *Design Issues*, 11.1 (1995); “Recent Trends in Design History Research in Britain,” *Design History Seen From Abroad: History And Histories Of Design, Proceedings 1st International Conference Of Design History And Design Studies*, Ed. Anna Calvera and Miquel Mallol (Barcelona: Publications de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1999); “Culture, Politics & Humanities: Designing Design History for the 21st Century,” *Proceedings ICSID 2001 Seoul*, Ed. LEE Soon-Jong (Seoul: Executive Committee of ICSID 2001, 2001) and “Local, National and Global: Redrawing the Historical Map,” *Journal Of Design History* 18.3 (2005).

forming new positions of placing subjects differently in the mapping of world design history.

Third, Woodham's discourse is not necessarily to be understood only in the perspective of different schools of thought in British design history.³⁴ What Woodham proposes can be considered as an historical framing of potential subject matters, a contextual encountering of placing 'others' in design history. Woodham's views are therefore rooted in the British experience of being in company with others as a member of a greater society, especially in terms of the global mapping of design history.

Woodham's discourse constitutes an important part of the British undertaking of design history, based on his experience of having been involved in the development of design history in Britain for 30 years up to his publication on the mapping of world design history in 2005.

6.2. Design Council: from Manufacture Assistant to Experience Advisor

Since its conception, two important changes have been implemented by the Council of Industrial Design from the 1970s onwards. In 1972, the council took the new name 'Design Council'. Moreover, in 1994, the council underwent a restructuring.

6.2.1. Re-Designation of the Council

If the establishment of the CoID was a result of English changing perceptions, the transformation of the organisation is another. As established in the 26th Annual Report 1970–71, the council believed in:

The urgent importance of promoting design in the widest sense and of not limiting the Council's practices to any particular or narrow aspect...Britain must lay greater emphasis on design if she is to keep pace with her efficient, imaginative

³⁴ Julier summarises these two schools of thought in British design history as one which focuses on production and the other on consumption. See Guy Julier, "Towards a 'Third Way' in Design History," Design History Seen From Abroad: History And Histories Of Design 112.

competitors ... It is therefore ... [the] proposed change of title from ‘Council of Industrial Design’ to ‘Design Council’.

(CoID, Twenty Sixth Annual Report 1)³⁵

The parliamentary debates also adopted a somewhat positive attitude, as outlined by the following quoted from Mr Ridley, in the official report of House of Commons:

In view of the changing balance of its practices, my right hon. Friend has agreed that the Council of Industrial Design should change its title to ‘the Design Council’ as from 1st April, 1972.

(House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates 19)³⁶

A need for change became a part of the consensus of the government and the council. Britain’s changing perceptions could be said to have responded quickly to the changing social environment at the beginning of the 1970s. But the question raised here is what is it, exactly, that needs to be changed. It seems that there has been no clear answer to this question. It may explain the reluctance of the government in taking immediate action after the council’s proposal of a title change, as the council complained, bitterly, about ‘the reluctant decision of the government’ in a rather frank manner in its 26th Annual Report 1970–71.³⁷ In his book, *The Role of Design in International Competitiveness*, Oyemeka Davidson Ughanwa has attributed the decline in British competitiveness in the 1970s to the ‘unwillingness to change attitudes’, which means ‘sticking to the tradition of according much higher priority to pure sciences and mathematics than the applied or practical arts’.³⁸ In the case of manufacturing or with the council, this unwillingness could mean a primacy in manufacturing. Just as the French primacy in art is thought to accentuate the decorative arts in design practices, the English primacy in engineering has coloured design thinking since the time when Britain started the Industrial Revolution.

³⁵ Council of Industrial Design, Twenty Sixth Annual Report 1970–1971 (London: COID, 1971) 1.

³⁶ House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates Vol. 833. No 78 (London: HMSO, 1972) 19.

³⁷ Council of Industrial Design 1.

³⁸ Oyemeka Davidson Ughanwa, The Role Of Design In International Competitiveness (London: Routledge, 1989) 34-5. Ughanwa was, in 1996–97, an AHRB-funded Research Fellow at the University of Brighton.

In 1968, the chairman of the Council of Engineering Institutions, Hugh Conway, proposed in his report that ‘a national Design Council ... take over the present activity of the Council of Industrial Design ... and that the new Council include a strong Engineering Design Activity...’.³⁹ For a country that pioneered the world’s machine tool industry, the priority of engineering generated an understandable accentuation on manufacturing. Furthermore, Conway, at the very beginning of the report, claimed that ‘The future of the country is intimately linked with the success of British engineering products in overseas markets’.⁴⁰ A parallel structure for the council was thus proposed in Conway’s report, as figure 6.1 shows:

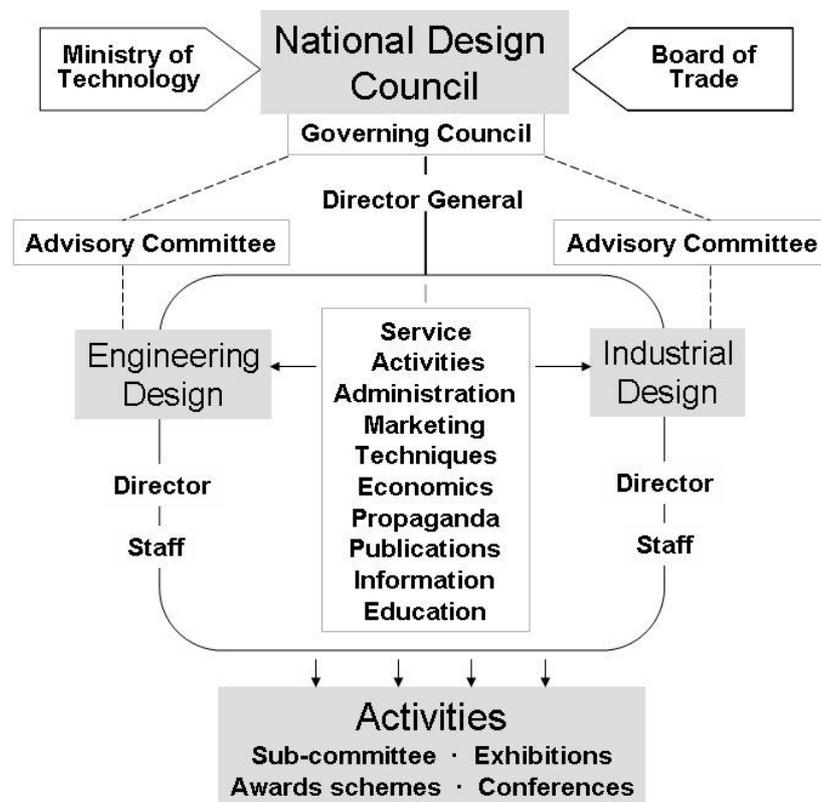


Figure 6.1. ‘A National Design Council’.

Source: C.E.I. *A National Design Council* (London: Council of Engineering Institutions. 1968) 5.

Although Paul Reilly, the director of the council of the time, managed successfully to build a single Design Council on the CoID’s structure, the claim that ‘design is

³⁹ CEI, *A National Design Council* (London: Council of Engineering Institutions, 1968) 9.

⁴⁰ CEI 1.

invisible’ with the inclusion of all aspects of creative practices, stated in the 28th Annual Report, could be simply regarded as a compromise in order to maintain harmony in the council’s practices.⁴¹

As a result, in the first five years of the new council, since 1972, ‘industrial practices’ were replaced by ‘engineering design’ as the first item of the year’s work. And in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, a parallelism between engineering design and (industrial) design was documented in the practices and publications of the council. Cast in the backdrop of the 1970s, a controversial variety of practices under the new name of the Design Council simply reflected a perplexed state of transformation in the post-industrial or knowledge-based society.

	In industry			In the service sector		
	1965	1970	1975	1965	1970	1975
Canada	33.2	30.9	29.3	56.8	61.4	64.6
United States	35.5	34.4	30.6	58.2	61.1	65.3
Japan	32.4	35.7	35.9	44.1	46.9	51.5
Australia	38.0	37.0	33.7	52.4	55.0	59.4
France	39.9	39.2	38.6	38.0	47.2	51.1
Germany (FRG)	48.4	48.5	45.4	40.7	42.9	47.6
United Kingdom	46.6	44.7	40.4	49.6	52.0	56.8

Table 6.2. Civilian employment for selected industrialised countries, 1965–1975. (percentage of the workforce)

Source: Nico Stehr, *Knowledge Societies* (London: SAGE, 1994) 75.

Stehr’s interpretations of Bell’s social theory could be said to be instrumental in the clarification of this perplexing situation. The post-industrial society is a service-based economic structure, as the Table 6.1 shows, with clear changes in the economic structure of industrialised countries around the 1970s. In a society with a service sector as a dominant economic structure, skills and knowledge constitute a ‘new base of power’, to which the mode of access is education.⁴² Education, therefore, ought to

⁴¹ Design Council, *Twenty Seventh Annual Report 1972–1973* (London: Design Council, 1973) 1.

⁴² See Stehr 74.

respond to the new situation of economic structure. Nevertheless, in Britain's case, higher education continued to place emphasis on the domains of manufacturing and engineering around the 1970s, as shown in the Tables 6.2 and 6.4, which reflects a conservative, social attitude that could be defined as 'sticking to traditions'.

Years	Numbers of students			% of total numbers		Place of %	
	Total	SAB	ET	SAB	ET	SAB	ET
1967-68	199,672	39,959	32,348	20%	16%	2 nd	3 rd
1869-70	226,069	45,067	36,193	20%	16%	2 nd	3 rd
1970-71	235,256	47,671	37,126	20%	13%	2 nd	3 rd
1972-73	246,813	52,199	36,892	21%	15%	2 nd	3 rd

Table 6.3. Percentages and the number of full-time undergraduates and Postgraduates: Subjects of Study, Great Britain 1967–73.

SAB: Social, administrative and business studies; ET: Engineering and technology

Source: Nissel, Muriel. Social Trends. (London: HMSO, 1970): 134; (1971): 122; (1972): 134; (1973): 154 and (1974): 159.

Employees in employment (engineering and technology)	% of manufacturing – total	% of employment – total	% of engineering and technology students
2243/year	26%	20%	6%

Table 6.4. Distribution of working population in engineering, Great Britain 1969-1970.

Source: Nissel, Muriel. Social Trends. No2. 1971 (London: HMSO, 1971) 6.

This trend of 'sticking to traditions' is largely responsible for the perplexing situation from which the council was being transformed. Although 'creativity' and 'imagination' have been believed to be 'essential to the economic well-being of Britain',⁴³ in the annual report of 1970–71, the role defined in the first annual report remained the same in the perspective of manufacturing until the 1980s: 'to promote by all practicable means the improvement of design in the products of British industry' regardless of the title change.⁴⁴ In light of the above analysis, Richard Stewart's view of the council's 'appropriate emphasis on engineering' by the mid-

⁴³ Council of Industrial Design, Twenty Sixth Annual Report 1970–1971 1.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Design Council, Twenty Seventh Annual Report 1972–1973.

1980s is controversial.⁴⁵ This emphasis can be traced back to the traditional priority on pure knowledge. It is argued that it will only result in ‘parallel private knowledge’ instead of public knowledge which is ‘mutual’, in terms of Professor Robert Goodin from the Australian National University.⁴⁶ Yet, the efficiency and creativity of organisations is based on mutual knowledge.

6.2.2 The Council Restructuring

In 1994, in a new vision of the future, the role of the Design Council was redefined in the report by the Chairman John Sorrell, which states that ‘the future purpose of the Design Council is to inspire the best use of design by the UK, in the world context, to improve prosperity and well-being’.⁴⁷ Four objectives were also established in its quest to fulfil these future purposes:

- I. The Design Council will be the national authority on the role of design in commercial, economic and social development.
- II. The Design Council will advise and influence Government, industry and other bodies on design policy.
- III. The Design Council will communicate why design needs to be at the heart of decision-making by demonstrating the contribution, value and effectiveness of design.
- IV. The Design Council will contribute to the development of design education and training, and the role of design in education and training, so that Britain can continue to produce world class professional designers as well as successive generations of people with creative and problem-solving skills.

(Design Council, The Future Design Council 17-8)⁴⁸

Compared to the purpose and objectives of the COID, an evident change of role has been taken on by the Design Council. The functions assigned to the COID in the first annual report can be summarised as an assistantship in propaganda (Design Centres and exhibitions), education (cooperation with ‘education authorities’) and

⁴⁵ Richard Stewart, Design And British Industry (London: John Murray, 1987) 207.

⁴⁶ Robert E. Goodin, The Theory Of Institutional Design (Cambridge: Cabridge UP, 1996) 170.

⁴⁷ Design Council, The Future Design Council (London: Design Council, 1994) 16.

⁴⁸ Design Council 17-18.

consultancy ('information and advice'). In his report, *The Future Design Council*, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, the chairman, John Sorrell, projected a new and active role for the council. The role of an assistant in the improvement of products is being transformed into that of a think-tank in response to changing needs of the age. The council should provide advice in design policy-making and design practices: to build a national authority, to influence government, to clarify the decisive role of design and to form a leading class of designers. The government accepted this blueprint for change in March 1994.

It is of great significance that the council underwent this shift in role. An important epistemological step was completed in response to social change. A shift in the way funds were attributed accompanied this changing role. Sorrell later commented on the shift of funds in *The Design Council Annual Review 1995*. He believes that the council's funds should focus on research, education and communication instead of services and commercial practices in order to 'improve the UK's competitiveness'.⁴⁹

In her report in the journal *Design Week*, Gaynor Williams commented, in a rather reproving manner, on the council's failure to address the public. She further states that the restructuring of the council 'is a return to the Council's origins'.⁵⁰ It could be said to be a rather valid conjecture on her part. But, in fact, it is believed not to be a return, but a change of service for the council: from direct services for industry to an advisory service for new industries such as creative industries, which would be well established by the late 1990s. There is, perhaps, some truth in this conjecture that the 'public image' has been problematic since the conception of the council. But Sorrell's initiative, in the Review of the Design Council's practices, appears to be more significant than that of a 'public image'. In developing a vision of the future council, Sorrell established a 'Review Team' for a 'mix of consultations':

In all, 70 individuals, 152 companies, 60 public bodies and 42 design-related institutions were consulted. Over 100 meetings were held including group meetings with designers, managers of design and design businesses. Over 150 written

⁴⁹ Design Council, *The Design Council Annual Review 1995* (London: Design Council, 1995) 3.

⁵⁰ Gaynor Williams, "The Design Council Is Reduced And Restructured," *Design Week* 544 (1994): 6.

submissions were received and members of the Consulting Group met together 14 times.

(Design Council, The Future Design Council 9)⁵¹

Sorrell considers not only building public knowledge instead of the public image of the council, but also producing a knowledge of design shared between the council and the public in order to found a 'national authority' as a 'platform for initiating action'.⁵² Through constructing a base of knowledge power, Sorrell's initiative paved the way for the council's restructuring and branding. Gradually, the creative facet of Britain's character would brand itself into the council's consciousness and then into the national consciousness. It is thus claimed that it is more important for the council to build public awareness than its public face.

In 1998, with the publication of the report *The Creative Britain* (1998), the Design Council supported the UK in branding itself to suit the changing society in the knowledge-based era. If the report *The Future Design Council* provided the blueprint for a new Design Council, *The Creative Britain* redefines and promotes a new Britain. The council's awareness of brand is fully clarified in the preface by the then prime minister, Tony Blair:

A country's identity is central to modernisation. How a country presents itself and how products and buildings are designed are not optional extras but vital to the economy of the next century, in which creativity and knowledge will play an increasingly important part.

(Blair in Creative Britain 1)⁵³

The report pointed to the importance of the national image in the promotion of 'purchasing decisions'. It is a view held by 72% of 200 leading companies in the world.⁵⁴ This awareness of brand is the core momentum of the council's survival. First of all, the council's goal has been clarified to a much greater extent since its

⁵¹ Design Council, The Future Design Council 9.

⁵² Design Council 17.

⁵³ Design Council, The Creative Britain (London: Design Council, 1998) 1.

⁵⁴ See Design Council 3.

change of name. Second, the brand conscious council turns to building the environment.

As expounded previously, although ‘creativity’ has been mentioned in the 1971 annual report, this compromising attitude indicated that the council was lost in a controversial diversity of practices during the first two decades of the council under this new name. Then, the council started to realise that ‘it is not enough to improve the products and services created in Britain’, creativity must be taken as an identity to build.⁵⁵ The council, therefore, constructed a clear goal for its restructuring in the in the public perspective. Competitiveness is based not only on the products themselves, but also on the perception of producers in the public’s mind. Hence, the council proposed, in the report, several important initiatives, such as ‘Budget’, ‘Millennium Products’, ‘Creative Industries Task Force’ and so on.

The Budget is held to be in favour of enterprise reforms, for example, the allocation of £50 million to the University Challenge. It aimed at turning creativity into a reality. Millennium Products is a project to represent Britain’s creativity through a range of 20,000 products and services, it is, in the words of the then prime minister, Tony Blair, ‘to show a fresh face to the world ... to demonstrate that the UK can lead the world by creating products and services’.⁵⁶ The Creative Industries Task Force is a government group, which includes Richard Branson, Lord Puttnam, Alan McGee, Paul Smith, Gail Rebuck, Eric Salama, Janice Hughes and Waheed Alli. The group is assigned tasks in which it has to ‘map the impact of the creative industries’ and look at ‘the relationship between creativity ... and the creative industries’.⁵⁷

Two salient points worth mentioning here are based upon the premise of making judgements ‘on results’. One is that the council treats design matters in the widened dimensions of the creative industries. The other is the economic success brought by creative branding: creative industries and financial services ‘account for 7.3 per cent of annual GDP’, as reported in *Design Week*.⁵⁸ In 2008, the Design Council

⁵⁵ Design Council 3.

⁵⁶ Design Council 10.

⁵⁷ Design Council 12.

⁵⁸ Mike Exon, “DCMS Plays Up Creative Industries With Report Findings,” *Design Week* 22. 27 (2007): 7.

published two strategic plans: *Design Blueprint* and *The Good Design Plan*, subsequent to the publication *The Practical Power Of Design*, in 2004. The advisory role is clearly defined with an accentuation on knowledge base, design education and a wide connotation of good design.⁵⁹

6.3 The Decorative Arts, CCI and VIA: a Variation of Innovation

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, a national memory of the art of living constitutes the leitmotif of the UCAD's practices in pre-1970s society. As a result, it is expected that this leitmotif be transformed into a brand in the post-1970s era. In 2004, the UCAD changed its name to The Decorative Arts.⁶⁰ In 2006, an historical exhibition of the organisation was held to promote this brand, *Les Arts Décoratifs: une histoire en images*. The question that requires answering here is what makes this institution 'unique'? This is, indeed, what the president of 1994, Hélène David-Weill, asked at the very beginning of the preface in the catalogue. It is the permanent search for new talents, the discovery of new visions and the display of the French legacy.⁶¹ For the duration of 150 years, The Decorative Arts worked faithfully in this way, supporting new visions of objects for the establishment of the Centre de Création Industrielle (CCI) in 1969.

6.3.1 CCI and the Modern Public Memory

Created in 1969, at the Museum of Decorative Arts by the Conservateur Général of the Museum, François Mathey, the CCI was integrated into the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1973. The four-year experience of the CCI at The Decorative Arts is significant in the perspective of the transformation of the design organisations in France because the centre was the first public design centre in France, but it was also established as a part of The Decorative Arts. The CCI symbolises the conflict between two memories: elite and public.

⁵⁹ See Design Council, *The Good Design Plan: National Design Strategy And Design Council Delivery Plan* (London: Design Council, 2008); *Design Blueprint: UK Design Industry Skills Development Plan* (London: Design Council, 2008).

⁶⁰ The author would like very much to consider this plural conception as a base for understanding design in France, as Jocelyne Le Bœuf, the French historian of art, prefers the plural term 'designs' to the single term 'design'. It is quite a good example of the way modern knowledge is situated in the French context.

⁶¹ Les Arts Décoratifs, *Les Arts Décoratifs: Une Histoire En Images* (Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 2006) 4.

Whether at The Decorative Arts or at the Georges Pompidou Centre, the CCI constitutes a constant part of these institutions. Its objective is said to be the same yet presented differently by two alternative institutions. The Decorative Arts expects the CCI ‘to promote the understanding and the development of industrial production, presenting a coherent research of structure and form’, and the Georges Pompidou Centre wants the CCI, ‘to make known the relations between individuals and spaces (city planning and architecture), objects (industrial design) and signs (publicity, graphics and all visual communications)’.⁶² The practices of the CCI have this industrial dimension because, as the French design historian Barré-Despond points out, the CCI draws its inspirations from the model of English design centres.⁶³ For the accomplishment of its task, the CCI undertakes mainly two kinds of practices: exhibitions and publications, largely because it works in the framework of a museum.

During the period at The Decorative Arts, the CCI held many exhibitions – 33 in four years before its departure from this institution. *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?* was the first exhibition that the CCI held, in 1969. This obvious effort to make design known in public is thought to be rather important considering the fact that it is a presentation of not only design but also of the centre itself to the public. In *Le Design* as the introduction of the catalogue, Henri Van Lier, a French doctor of philosophy and letters, explained this in respect of semantics, functions, aesthetics and morals. Lier considered design as a complex activity which projected human qualities and proposed, therefore, to explore the dimensions of design from a multiple perspective.⁶⁴ The semantic interpretation in terms of ‘dessein’ and ‘dessin’ is considered at a later date by English design historians as the French definition of design.⁶⁵ Furthermore, it remains to be answered what is the CCI? It is to be defined as a new department of the UCAD, selecting industrial products to be sold in the French market and providing a full documentation on each product for public

⁶² Réjane Bargiel et al. 35.

⁶³ Arlette Barré-Despond, *Dictionnaire International Des Arts Appliqués Et Du Design* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1996) 115.

⁶⁴ See CCI, *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?: Joe C. Colombo, Charles Eames, Fritz Eichler, Verner Panton And Roger Tallon* (Paris: Centre de Création Industrielle, 1969). The original catalogue of the exhibition has no page numbers, so the author has put the name of the part or section to locate the citation. ‘Le Design’ is in the first part of the catalogue, therefore the author refers to it as the introduction.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Penny Sparke, *An Introduction To Design And Culture: 1900 To The Present* (London: Routledge, 2004) 3 and Guy Julier, *The Culture Of Design* (London: SAGE, 2000) 33.

consultation. Furthermore, the CCI explained its practices and intentions in *What Is The Centre De CrÉAtion Industrielle*, the epilogue of the catalogue.⁶⁶

Documentation as public instruction could be stated to be the proper description of the CCI. Documentation for instruction is also a French tradition in authority building. This tradition can be traced back to King Philip II (1165–1223), whose government was the first to make systematic efforts to preserve documents that served as instruction for the future, that is, to picture the king as an exemplary figure.⁶⁷ Documenting was thus transformed into memory building. This memory as instruction later evolved into a ‘sense of distinction’, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu.⁶⁸ Documentation of objects takes another function: cultural categorisation. For example, in the Napoleonic Age, quantities of objects were transported from other countries back to France to be put into the Louvre Museum where they were labelled and categorised. In the view of the Palestinian critic Edward Said, it points to the self-confidence of French academics who believed to be able to categorise whole cultures in this way with a superior knowledge and understanding.⁶⁹ A hierarchy of cultures was thus built from the beginning of the 19th century. With regard to design, permanent collections constitute documenting efforts in the building of a cultural hierarchy. After the integration into the Centre Georges Pompidou, the CCI pursued its efforts in this categorical documenting of exhibitions, publications and collections, just as Woodham articulated, ‘the CCI posed some fundamental challenges, suggesting that the significance of design might be better understood through design documentation’.⁷⁰ For example, the exhibition *MatÉRIau/Technologie/Forme* (1974) endeavoured to categorise design in the perspective of a technical culture. The exhibition *L’Objet Industriel* (1980) interpreted objects within a system of conception, distribution and consumption. In 1991, with the exhibition *Design Français 1960–1990: Trios DÉCennies*, the CCI tried to build a national memory of design in the framework of a ‘cultural, economic and social life’.⁷¹ Accordingly, it

⁶⁶ Same as the endnote 56, ‘What Is The Centre De CrÉAtion Industrielle’ is the last part of the catalogue, therefore the author takes it as the epilogue.

⁶⁷ See John W. Baldwin, *The Government Of Philip Augustus: Foundations Of French Royal Power In The Middle Ages* (California: U of California P, 1986) 355-93.

⁶⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique Of The Judgement Of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984) 260.

⁶⁹ See Edward Said, *Culture And Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993) 116-132.

⁷⁰ Jonathan M. Woodham, *A Dictionary Of Modern Design* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) 73.

⁷¹ Margo Rouard and Françoise J. Kneebone, *Design Français 1960–1990* (Paris: APCI, 1988) 11.

could be said to be of consequence, when the CCI itself was categorised together with the National Modern Art Museum by the Georges Pompidou Centre in an ever-larger cultural order, which would further confirm that, yet again, Paris was a centre of great knowledge on material culture.

As a matter of fact, The Decorative Arts was at the point of discovering the human venture of material culture. With its museums of decorative arts, fashions and textiles and publicity, The Decorative Arts attempts a demonstration of, from the Middle Ages to the present times, all that human beings have created for their well-being, whether they are furnishings, textiles or objects. The Decorative Arts is, thus, considered as the 'Louvre of industry'.⁷² The CCI has also held exhibitions with this perspective in mind, for instance, *Lumières, Je Pense À Vous* (1985) gave prominence to the forms of the daily environment: lighting. Yet, the question remains to be answered as to why the CCI took its departure from 'The Decorative Arts' since they both worked towards the building of memory for the material environment.

Considered, generally, as one of the earliest French theorists on nationalism, Ernest Renan argued that a nation requires a spiritual dimension, that is, a 'soul'. This important component of the national identity was thought to pertain to a shared historical memory. Following Renan, the French historian Pierre Nora has emphasised the importance of the 'sites of memory' in constructing the French national identity. Similarly, Dominique Schnapper, one of the leaders of the third generation of the French post-World War II sociology, accepts the key role of historical memory in the construction of national identity. After all, the French national memory is that of 'great men of France's past', as embodied by the Parisian landmark of the Parthenon.⁷³ The decorative arts, as stated in Chapters 2 and 4, is just such a kind of elite memory: a memory of French taste, the art of living and high culture. Evidently, the CCI would not promote such a vision of objects in the sense of this high curiosity. The exhibition *L'Objet Industriel* summarised the CCI's vision of objects in a consumer society. The new vision of objects that the CCI would

⁷² Les Arts Décoratifs 9.

⁷³ David A. Bell and David Avrom, *The Cult Of The Nation In France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 107.

communicate to the public has been formulated by the young Baudrillard. The significance of objects has evolved from the changing relationship between art and industry. Objects make sense only on a basis of relations which qualify the conception and role of objects in space.⁷⁴ Apparently, the CCI is encouraged ‘to promote the understanding of industrial production’ since The Decorative Arts has its own goal ‘the discovery of new visions’. But, in fact, the CCI’s documentation of objects is to communicate a public memory of the ephemeral material environment, of which ideas were already roughly stated in its first exhibition: ‘the form and the disposal of components of an object is never absolutely defined’, ‘design is not luxury’.⁷⁵ Thereafter, in the quarterly publication of the CCI *Traverses*, Baudrillard described, succinctly, the features of objects in consumer society: ‘it is not enough to produce objects for use, it must produce objects which can die, and one should know to get rid of objects’.⁷⁶ Obviously, the CCI’s thoughts and actions go beyond the artistic framework of The Decorative Arts. And this public memory of ephemeral objects threatens the elite memory of the high objects of The Decorative Arts. It may exactly pinpoint the reason as to why The Decorative Arts, after the departure of the CCI, ‘shifts more and more to the arts and crafts’, and would even go as far as unifying the fine-arts and other forms of art by the creation of the Centre du Verre in 1982.⁷⁷

In 1992, the CCI lost its independence, however, and was placed once more in the framework of a museum. Its permanent collection is simply an alternative version of the elite memory with ‘global design classics’, as Woodham argues.⁷⁸

6.3.2 VIA: A Discoverer, Promoter and Disseminator of Innovation

The establishment of the Valorisation de l’innovation dans l’ameublement (VIA) is important and significant in the perspective of the change in French design

⁷⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths & Structures* (London: SAGE, 1998) 69-86.

⁷⁵ The original catalogue of the exhibition *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?* has no page numbers. These two phrases are quoted respectively from the first part of ‘Le design’ and the last part of ‘Qu’est-ce que le Centre de Création Industriel?’.

⁷⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “Le Crépuscule Des Signes,” *Traverses* 2 (1975): 36.

⁷⁷ Claire Fayolle, *Chroniques De L’AFAA*, No.32 (Paris: AFAA, 2002) 134.

⁷⁸ Jonathan M. Woodham, “Establishing A Permanent Collection: The Centre De CrEation Industriel,” *Journal Of Design History* 6.1 (1993): 55.

organisations from the decade of the 1970s. The VIA was created in 1979 by the Ministry of Industry with the objective to ‘disseminate a contemporary image of French furniture across France and the world’.⁷⁹ Hence, the innovation of the VIA is especially worthy of attention with regard to these three factors: being at the beginning of post-industrial era, pertaining to a national status and being part of a traditionally powerful field.

The examination of the birth of the VIA uncovers its origins in the contemporary attempts of the furniture industry and its enterprises. Furniture is considered to have been a powerful industry in French history. But monarchs and courts have limited this industry to the demands of a conservative and traditional national market. As a result, not only is a larger market to be developed, but also the image of the industry is to be renewed. At the same time, the decline of the furniture market, owing to the abuse of plastic material, glass, chrome and steel in the 1970s, obliged consumers return to wood furniture. The VIA is thus believed to have been born in this context. In fact, the preparatory changes are held to have already started by the 1960s. In 1966, the Union nationale des industries françaises de l’ameublement (UNIFA) founded the Centre de recherche esthétique de l’ameublement contemporain (CREAC). The change of conceptions was encouraged with publications and national awards and competitions: the ‘furniture of yesterday’ should not be produced for the ‘people of today’.⁸⁰ This aesthetic exploration is to a certain degree, confirmed and institutionalised by the creation of the Comité de développement des industries françaises de l’ameublement (CODIFA) in 1971. The committee is composed of 12 members, of which six industrialists were recommended by the UNIFA, the president was also to be elected among them; furthermore, six people were appointed by the Ministry of Industry, coming from differing financial institutions, industries and distribution sections. The CODIFA has five main objectives: understanding the market; vocational education; aesthetic research and creativity; research and technical assistance; and promotion and communication. Aesthetic research, promotion and communication will be largely undertaken by the VIA.⁸¹ Under such situations, the

⁷⁹ Chantal Bizot, *Les Années VIA: 1980-1990* (Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 1990) 58.

⁸⁰ See André Vincent, “L’UNIFA Et La Recherche Esthétique,” *Les Années VIA: 1980-1990* Ed. Bizot 27.

⁸¹ See Paul Jordery, “Ce Qu’Est Le CODIFA,” Ed. Bizot 28-29.

Minister of Industry, André Giraud, commissioned Jean-Claude Maugirard to create the VIA in 1979.

Considering these economic ways of the renewal of French furniture industries, it appears evident that the Ministry of Industry has accentuated these innovations. This decision, featuring a cultural component, highlights the historical aspect of French taste, on which the French contemporary cultural and economical innovations, which respond to the changing society, are largely based. Roland Stutzmann, a director in the Ministry of Industry, explored, in-depth, the cultural roots of these governmental actions in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Les Années VIA: 1980–1990*:

Creation is an essential investment for industry. It is more so than for the French industry which holds in this field an important capital based on the reputation that the French aesthetic sensibility has acquired through centuries: its art of living, its culture of the daily environment ... the aesthetic research ... can produce an element of differentiation in regard to the more banal products. It can turn the competitive war from the price to the product.

(Stutzmann in Bizot 30)⁸²

Stutzmann draws some valid conclusions on the source of French thinking of design reform. His views propose a recapitulative examination of the French, cultural memory, the art of living and the politics of aesthetics regarding the perception of design. This aids an understanding of the Frenchness in creative practices.

Through briefly examining the origins of the VIA, the need for modernising the taste of the popular market in French industries, embodied by the furniture section, is better understood. During the 1980s, with Jack Lang as the Minister of Culture, the French government made great achievements in the promotion of modern design in France. The presence of the VIA in this decade aids an evaluation of these institutional accomplishments.

⁸² Roland Stutzmann, "VIA Et Le Ministère De L'Industries." Ed. Bizot 30.

In the eyes of Maugirard, the founder, the course of the VIA is a venture. This venture is conjectured to be based on history in which it is held to be possible to reconstruct a creative image of France: a venture of diversity and opening. It is an opening to all actors of design; an opening to all producers and distributors; an opening to traditional manufacturers to consider utility in the global perspective; an opening to the most traditional and advanced techniques and an opening to commercialisation in forms of events.⁸³

It is suggested that this venture has affected the perceptions of design in France. In my personal interview with Maugirard in Paris on June 25 2007, Maugirard himself has commented on this. His remarks shed light on the problems connected with the changes of French design organisations around the 1970s in three respects.

The first issue of these three respects, mentioned above, is considered to be of great concern to Maugirard. In design practices, as in education, it would appear that Maugirard recognises a large gap between the processes of conception and the practical aspect, which he postulates in the following, ‘a dichotomy between technique and drawing’, that is, ‘those who fabricate do not draw and those who draw do not fabricate’. This is the very reason why Maugirard created the department of furniture at the Ensad, which promotes an interaction of practice and thinking. Maugirard believes it is in the practising that one commences an understanding of objects. It is significant to note that this issue could be described, in fact, as a deficiency of the French modern design knowledge, which is reflected in design practices, education and organisations. A dichotomy is thought to mean a parallel knowledge, or even an isolated territorial consciousness. Therefore, the significance of the venture of the VIA can be understood and also have far reaching implications when set against the background of the dominance of sensibility in design practices. What is a real regret is that this venture is only undertaken within a limited space.⁸⁴

The breakthrough of the traditional model of problem solving constitutes another focus for Maugirard’s innovation. By abandoning the traditional way of competition

⁸³ See Jean-Claude Maugirard, “L’itinéraire Du VIA Est Une Aventure,” Ed. Bizot 17.

⁸⁴ All quoted from the author’s interview with Jean Claude Maugirard. Personal interview. 25 June 2007.

in order to find appropriate people for a committee, Maugirard creates a new structure for the promotion of design through the gathering together of designers, distributors and manufacturers. Thus, a good awareness of survival is introduced in design organisation, as Maugirard has pronounced in his idea, which denotes the fact that to create the VIA is to live. As a national organisation in a traditionally powerful field, the VIA highlights this issue, set against the surveys of other organisations in Chapter 5. The third aspect to be revealed about this particular venture is thought to be simple but significant, especially considering the intention of modern French design. Simple, because Maugirard claims that he has achieved nothing other than 'bringing persons who put things in question'. Maugirard's views are thought-provoking, considering the politics of aesthetics adopted in the development of French modern design. In other words, his ideas can be understood in the line of de Bure, Tallon and de Noblet. It could be advanced, thus, that instead of producing merely beautiful objects, design should be directed to the public and also to the environmental and social problems. Hence, insights are likely to be obtained from examining the case of the VIA, regarding the changing perceptions and transformation of design organisations in France since the 1970s.⁸⁵

6.4 CIDA: An Experiment of Institutionalisation of Design

Set against the backdrop of Britain and France, the development of Chinese design organisations is seen to be a real venture: no history, no tradition and no frameworks. It follows that design organisations, even the national one, can only have a peripheral place regarding the functions and the roles. This aspect, which has a negative impact, ought to be examined from three perspectives. First, as stated in Chapter 4, Chinese modern society has experienced difficulties in interpreting modernity. From politicians to founders and decision-makers of enterprises, a limited understanding of modernity leads to the failure of the industrial world in bringing a favourable situation to ensure the survival of design organisations, because the majority of people involved in manufacturing are simply focussed on the Western products. The decade of the 1980s could be said to be extremely illustrative. Second, scholars and researchers have not endeavoured to obtain a thorough understanding of the complex

⁸⁵ Ibid.

situation of Chinese modern society, which resulted in their neglect of practical issues and their confusion in the interpretation of Western conceptions of design. For example, these intellectuals often pertain to having ideal views in regard to the reality of Chinese society. Thus, a proper theoretical framework is consistently difficult to establish in the development of design organisations. Third, and most importantly, following the previous two points, design organisations themselves are considered to lack clear guidelines and suitable self-positioning in the economic environment of entrepreneurship. The Chinese Industrial Design Association (CIDA) is a typical example.

6.4.1 1979–1999: Twenty Years in a Pursuit of Self-Knowledge

In 1978, a national symposium on radiogram form, structure and technology was held in Fuzhou, Fujian Province. A proposal of a national design organisation was thus put forward by the 76 attendees. Whether in Britain or in France, the first design organisations were all established with a project in dealing with the issue of crafts and products. For example, René Guilleré's *Project pour une Société nationale des arts décoratifs* in France and the DIA's *Design and Industry: a Proposal for the Foundation of the Design & Industries Association* in Britain. But in the case for China, the proposal of a national design organisation is far from constituting a project in which it could examine the varying situations on the same lines as the French and British. It was only a general idea of a necessary organisation, as expounded in the following proposal:

Industrial design is an issue not only of beautiful form, but also of product visualization embodied in good use and reasonable manufacturing craft. It therefore presents aspects of the material culture of our country ... radio, TV, watch ... car, plane, TGV ... conventional arms, space tools ... all are related to the issue of design.

(CIDA, China Industrial Design Annual 2006 39)⁸⁶

The 'Industrial Arts' is mentioned as a Western experience in the proposal for the solution of the issue of form. Following the examples of the DIA, JIDA (the Japanese

⁸⁶ "A Proposal For The Association Of National Industrial Artistes," China Industrial Design Annual 2006. Ed. CIDA. (Beijing: Intellectual Properties, 2006) 39.

Industrial Design Association) and SID (the Society of Industrial Design), the attendees proposed a 'National Association of Industrial Artists'. The intention of the application of the arts to industry is evident. Of the 76 attendees, 58 came from manufacturing factories and 10 from art and design colleges. Although, it is essential to mention here that, the organisation is only intended for, 'communicating practices in all fields, attending international symposiums, exchanging technical information ...'.⁸⁷

In the following year, 1979, a working committee was established in Beijing. In the founding session of the committee, Zhang Ding, the president of the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, produced an important report where the scope, objective and structure of the Association were explained. Zhang's interpretation of the scope was largely based on a conception of the 'arts and crafts'. The arts and crafts is a new discipline which 'combines art and modern scientific technology with a modern manufacturing craft', according to Zhang. The scope of the association includes 'product art and design, commodity packing and commercial art and design, architecture decoration and interior art and design, and other practical art and design based on modern technology'. The association has its objective to, 'edit and publish journals and books, hold exhibitions, organize awards, recommend professionals to undertake design tasks from national departments, organize research on industrial art and international symposiums'. The structure of the association is held to be a combination of trade and regional organisations. The regional association will be in charge of the majority of practices.⁸⁸

As China could be perceived as experiencing institutional changes from the 1970s onward, the CIDA was functioning much as a national administrative institution during its first two decades. It was considered, at the time, that the CIDA had hardly any clear guidelines and objectives for proper design practices. All it had were the general ideas interpreted in the report published by Zhang, even after the change of name in 1987 from the Association from the National Association of Industrial Artists to China Industrial Design Association.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ All quoted from "Proceeding Of The Formation Of Organization Committee For The Association Of National Industrial Artistes" Ed. CIDA 45.

6.4.2 Institutional Change from the Year 2000 onward

Between 1979 and 1999, the practices undertaken by the CIDA were mainly limited to symposia and conferences, quite separate from the industrial world.⁸⁹ It was not until the year 2000 that the CIDA incorporated significant changes in its transformation. First, Zhu Tao, the deputy director of the National Office of Light Industry, is appointed general director of the CIDA. This appointment is claimed to be significant for the institutionalisation of design practices in a Chinese reality, with regions developing at completely different levels, and with enterprises established in variable environments. It could be suggested that the balance between centralisation and decentralisation is always of first importance for the Chinese economic development. Second, the CIDA turns away from close academic practices to social and enterprising ones. For example, in 2003, the CIDA sent a delegation to visit Germany and France with the intention of developing international cooperation in 2003. In 2004, a symposium on industry policy was held by the CIDA and the National Committee of Development and Reform in Beijing in 2004. Third, with the establishment of the CIDA's rules by the third congress of the association members in 2002, CIDA started to build a form of self-knowledge that would contribute to the institutionalisation of design knowledge. The rules have stated the objectives as such:

Organizing design communication at home and abroad, and develop a variety of design practices ...

Accepting governmental commissions, and conduct research projects ...

Organizing national design competition and awards; undertaking design education and training; developing design consultancy and service agency ...

Disseminating industrial design and its knowledge to the whole society ...

(CIDA, Association Rules)⁹⁰

The most significant activity is thought to be the *China Industrial Design Week*, first held in Wuxi in 2004. It is a further opening for China to provide an international

⁸⁹ See CIDA 61-67.

⁹⁰ CIDA. "Association Rules," 9 March 2007. [China Industrial Design Association](http://www.chinadesign.cn/detail.php?articleid=83) 9 October 2007. <<http://www.chinadesign.cn/detail.php?articleid=83>>.

environment for industrial development. At the first exhibition of the *China Design Week* in 2004, 83 enterprises from 16 countries and areas were present.⁹¹ A thorough comprehension of these changes can be attained from the personal interview with the general secretary of the CIDA in 2006.⁹² The most significant change is said to develop design awareness in an international context, as indicated in the sessions of the summit: ‘World design innovation and future development; design innovation and competition ability for China; international design communication and cooperation’.⁹³ The address by the director of CIDA, Zhu Tao, at the opening ceremony communicates the intention of CIDA in its quest for self-knowledge within a national function and enterprise activity, as he expounded in the following:

Industrial design is essential for the transformation from technology, art and culture to productivity ... The worldwide competition in the economic and cultural field focuses more and more on the development of technology and economic innovation ... a creative economy has been set as a strategic objective for countries in the world.

(CIDA, *China Industrial Design Week 2004 Directory* ii)⁹⁴

Zhu’s concise address signals the willingness to locate self-awareness in the international context, which is profoundly different from the one-sided attitudes of the leading reformers of the Westernising or Self-Strengthening Movement. At the same time, CIDA endeavours to promote a national awareness of design through mass media such as the television.⁹⁵

6.5 Conclusion

It will be very interesting to note that, in post-1970s society, Britain, France and China, despite being in rather different situations, all three experienced, at the beginning, a detour in the institutional change of design. That is to say, countries with a long history and a strong tradition are likely to encounter some difficulty in the

⁹¹ Arting365tm. “List Of Exhibitors Of 2004 China Industrial Design Week & Wuxi Industrial Design Expo,” 29 September 2004. [Arting365tm. 28 August 2006 <http://www.arding365.com/htmldata/2004_09/25/33/article_614_1.html>](http://www.arding365.com/htmldata/2004_09/25/33/article_614_1.html)

⁹² See appendix: Huang, Wuxiu. Personal interview. 14 August. 2006.

⁹³ Organization Committee of China Industrial Design Week 2004, *Directory* (Wuxi: Organization Committee of China Industrial Design Week 2004, 2004) 6-9.

⁹⁴ Organization Committee of China Industrial Design Week 2004, *Directory* ii.

⁹⁵ In March 2008, CIDA produced several programs shown on China Central Television in order to promote social awareness of design in China.

swift shift of knowledge intention. During the 1970s and 1980s, the British Design Council is considered to have undergone a struggle between parallel or mutual knowledge building because of a successful manufacturing history. Two factors are important in the solution: director as consultancy and government intervention. In post-industrial society, neither of two factors should be an independent pole in practices. Instead, there is suggested to be rather a cooperation of both in conducting organisation practices. The joint-practices between the DC and the government during the 1990s illustrated this rather succinctly.

Similarly, the French government also intervened in design organisation practices at the end of the 1970s. The creation of the VIA clarifies the effective cooperative model among the government, the director and actors of an organisation. In other words, any part of the whole system needs to respond more to the environment and situation. The conducting of organisational behaviours is based, in fact, on a kind of multivalent combination, just as the government commissioned the VIA to find creative persons, innovate the excellent traditional industry and disseminate a new image of France. Another similarity between Britain and France is the accentuation on the creative aspect of design knowledge whether in practice or theory. It is of significance to mention the difficulty encountered by another example of the French case, the CCI's situation in the dissemination of design knowledge. The loss of the independence of the CCI simply explains the impossible existence of a design organisation as a pure body of knowledge independent of social conditions.

China is considered to be a good case to interpret the situations of both Britain and France. In the perspective of multivalent organising, a clear self-knowledge is of prime importance. Since its foundation, during the first twenty years, the CIDA was searching for a self knowledge because of the lack of it in pre-1970s society. Hence, its practices as a design organisation during these twenty years can be hardly said to satisfy the social changes in post-1970s China. It is not until the new general director is appointed in the year 2000 that the CIDA started to undergo institutional change with the inclusion of design events. On the other hand, the new general director also symbolises the cooperative model among the government, the director and actors of the organisation.

In brief, in post-1970s society, design organisations in different parts of the world share increasingly more common norms in the conducting of their practices in knowledge production and distribution.

CHAPTER 7. FRANCE: EXHIBITIONS AS A MIRROR OF MEMORY

The institutions comprising ‘the exhibitionary complex’ ... were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society.

(Bennett “The Exhibitionary Complex” 82)¹

As discussed in the previous chapters, French culture accentuates the construction of aesthetic memory for two reasons. One is to preserve a sense of superiority in taste; the other is to prevent the loss of beauty in life. As a result, the national preoccupation with the construction of aesthetic memory establishes the model of knowledge production with respect to art and design. Considered as a knowledge signifier of this memory, French exhibitions function quite clearly as a mirror of knowledge. Constituting a historical reconfiguration, French exhibitions allowed the public to be a subject of, and subjected to, this knowledge of aesthetic memory in the language of Foucault.² Through the exhibition *Design, Miroir Du Siècle* to that of *Design D’En France*, France constructed what could be perceived as two bright mirrors at home and abroad.

7.1 *Design, Miroir du Siècle*

In 1993, the Délégation des Arts Plastiques (DAP) of the French Ministry of Culture produced the exhibition *Design, Miroir Du Siècle* held at the Grand Palais. The exhibition seems to supply an answer to the previously posed question *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?*, in 1969 – when the Centre de Création Industrielle (CCI) was established.

With the rise of modern design, the French knowledge system is seen to be continually concerned with the cultural categorisation of design, as enunciated in the catalogue of the exhibition, *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?*. This concern requires new

¹ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” Ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne. *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996) 82.

² See Michel Foucault, *Discipline And Punish: The Birth Of The Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991) 57-58.

ways to interpret the environment which is now composed of industrial rather than craft objects.³ As the first public design centre in France, the CCI had a clear objective to contribute to the public knowledge of design. A decade later, however, the CCI continued to experience difficulties in making the public aware of design. It was difficult for the public to establish any real link between their traditional taste representations and the new environment of industrial objects. As a result, when the CCI formulated the same question 11 years later – ‘What is design?’ – its answer in its exhibition catalogue, *L’Objet Industriel* (1980), was ‘for the public: a misunderstood subject’.⁴ A need for another ‘discursive formation’ comes, therefore, to the fore.⁵ After several years of striving, the French Ministry of Culture was able to celebrate, to certain degree, an historical categorisation of design with the exhibition, *Design, Miroir Du Siècle*, in 1993. Just as Emmanuel de Roux commented in *Le Monde*, it is an ambitious exhibition that would revive the history of industrial society through objects. It is therefore considered as the first large exhibition of design in France.⁶



Fig 7.1. ‘Design, Miroir du Siècle’ exhibition at Grand Palais. Paris, 1993.

Source: Arlette Barré-Despond, Dictionnaire International Des Arts Appliqués Et Du Design (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1996) 161.

‘Original in Colour’

³ See CCI. Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?: Joe C. Colombo, Charles Eames, Fritz Eichler, Verner Panton And Roger Tallon (Paris: Centre de Création Industrielle, 1969).

⁴ CCI. L’Objet Industriel: Empreinte Ou Reflet De La Société? (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1980) 79.

⁵ See Michel Foucault, The Archaeology Of Knowledge. Trans. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972).

⁶ See Emmanuel de Roux, “Design, One Century Of Consumer Society,” Le Monde 21 May 1993.

It is significant to note that the English translation of the title is *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century*, and a foreword written by a leading English designer and design publicist, Terence Conran, has been added to the English edition of the catalogue. The English title and the foreword written by Conran represent a continued effort in locating this new construction of 'design'. The English term 'industrial design' had been directly adopted in the 1969 catalogue to differentiate it from the mere object, and to categorise it in the continuity of a historically recognised added value: an aesthetic connotation.⁷ Subsequently, this new way of categorising design in a symbolic environment was further justified through the presenting of Baudrillard's ideas in the CCI's magazine, *Traverses*. Baudrillard asserts that an object makes sense only in the relations to its environment, because this relation defines the shaping and role of an object in the space.⁸ This semantic enlargement in terms of 'relations' was confirmed in Terence Conran's foreword to the *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century* catalogue. Conran asserts that the message of social change is communicated by the design of objects with which daily life is shaped and filled.⁹

Objects of art, industrial objects, objects of mass production and objects of high taste are thus consciously integrated into an authoritative discourse of significance. The documentary track of this object system of significance was proposed by the then director of the CCI, Françoise Jollant Kneebone, 10 years before the exhibition, *Design, Miroir Du Siècle*, in the Design History Society's 1982 autumn conference on 'Design and Public Collections'. She claimed that 'it was perhaps possible to gain a fuller understanding of the material, even cultural, significance of design through the gathering of a wide range of related documentary evidence'.¹⁰ This may also be the reason why the plural term 'designs' has been proposed in recent years in France; for example, the French art historian Le Bœuf would rather discuss 'designs'.¹¹ With

⁷ See CCI.

⁸ See Jean Baudrillard, "Le Crépuscule Des Signes," *Traverses 2*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, (1975): 27, 31.

⁹ See Jocelyn de Noblet, *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century*, English ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 1993) 8.

¹⁰ Kneebone as quoted in Jonathan M. Woodham, "Establishing A Permanent Collection: The Centre De CrÉAtion Industriel," *Journal Of Design History*, 6.1 (1993): 55.

¹¹ Gérard Caron. "Jocelyne Le Bœuf: Design Et Art," 27 July 2005. *Admirable Design*. 18 September 2007. <<http://www.admirabledesign.com/Jocelyne-Le-Bœuf-design-et-art>>.

the change of terms from ‘objects’ to ‘designs’, the attempts to interpret ‘relations’ in an order of knowledge remain the same.

The execution of categorisation is evidently embodied in the structure of the exhibition and the catalogue. The exhibition designer François Seigneur proposed a structure that possessed similar qualities to that of a backward voyage in time. Thus, the visitor would be led to a chronological documentation of objects through a narrow passage – like a doorway. The objects-exhibits were to be displayed on the floor, which was a vast platform in a ship form. An enormous inclined mirror (1200 m²) would create a dreamlike tone with its distorted perspective.¹² Such a space amplifies that memory. The spectator is thus not only subjected to the ‘relations’ of designed objects but also placed in a position to be easily ‘turned’ into the subject of this mirror of knowledge, as long as he or she is able to link objects. In short, this is what the exhibition intended as the catalogue states: ‘there should be cross views from different angles’.¹³ This objective brings to mind the first sentence of the 1969 catalogue *Qu’est-Ce Que Le Design?*: ‘the form and the function of an object are never absolutely defined’.¹⁴ If the 1969 exhibition failed to build an environmental order of industrial objects, the catalogue of the 1993 exhibition evidently assumed the role of an order builder.

The first part of the catalogue is devoted to the history of industrial design from the *Great Exhibition* to the present day, presented in the same chronological order as the exhibits: 1851–1993. The comments made by John Hewitt, professor of art and design history at Manchester Metropolitan University, about this format are rather sharp and critical:

There is nothing surprising in this trajectory as we move from the Arts and Crafts and Art Deco to the Bauhaus, Constructivism, and Streamlining in order to end in the present via Ulm, Memphis, and Postmodernism. The strong sense of déjà vu is reinforced by the choice of some of the contributors. Gillian Naylor’s comments on the Designer and the Arts and Crafts Movements, Jeffrey Meikle’s survey of

¹² See Jocelyn de Noblet 12-13.

¹³ Noblet 13.

¹⁴ See CCI.

Streamlining in the USA, and Catherine McDermott's summary of Post-modern Design in the 1980s and 1990s have all been done before by the same authors at greater length. There appears to be little that is new in their contributions.

(Hewitt, Industrial Design: Reflections Of A Century 319)¹⁵

Hewitt postulates that the 'structure' and 'emphasis' of the first parts of the catalogue are 'old-fashioned'. Yet, this study will pursue these ideas in a rather different way. This sense of 'little that is new' is important in the understanding of order building: objects are classified comfortably with the contributors' categorising expertise. This is considered to be where the intended discursive power emerges. On closer examination of the first part, it is not difficult to discover the classificatory intentions behind the structure of this catalogue in regard to the objects-exhibits. Among the seventeen contributors in the first part, three are directors and researchers from certain knowledge production authorities, nine are historians from known educational institutions, two are designers, two are journalists and one is a philosopher. It is evident that they need to collate information in order to construct a knowledge category. It could be suggested that they naturally impart a sense of 'little is new' because industrial objects are not thought to be different from artisan objects in their essence, only that a new alternative connection with the environment is required. The five sections of the first part are composed through a categorisation of style. They can be even considered as a form of knowledge styles that are to be established.

The authoritative intention is also reinforced in the second part and in the choices of 'Design Classics'. The work of the contributors in the second part echoes that of the first part. Furthermore, it is proposed to be a normative knowledge activity with authoritative figures in design and history, such as British design historian Jonathan Woodham and Italian designer Ezio Manzini. Not only do these contributors support the inclusion of different historical parts in parallel, but they also contribute to structure these parts as simple variations of mainstream history of industrial design. It is, therefore, suggested that the catalogue is almost a realisation of Foucault's discursive vocabulary: memory, subjectivity, order, knowledge and power. As a consequence of this high level of subjectivity, it may go some way in explaining what

¹⁵ John Hewitt, "Industrial Design: Reflections Of A Century," Journal Of Design History, 8.4 (1995): 319.

Hewitt meant by the ‘failure effectively to relate image and commentary’.¹⁶ Held at the prestigious Grand Palais, based on a core collection of ‘Design Classics’ and accessed by around 200,000 visitors,¹⁷ this high culture spectacle of *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century* can hardly be said to be a ‘public arena’. It is rather a state-led spectacle of cultural categorisation. Hence, the objects are seen to be somewhat isolated in their abstract displaying order because of the distance between their universal order and the public daily life. This imposing abstract order might not be easily accepted in other cultural contexts. For example, British interior designer David Hales argued in *Industrial Design* that the objects were detached from their economic or cultural context and were thus difficult to understand. Furthermore, he considered the exhibition as a confusing image, because the layout of the exhibition was believed to make the exhibition similar to a flea market. It was not good policy to display all the objects on the floor as small objects such as pens would be ignored. The layout contradicted the industrial zeitgeist.¹⁸ It can be claimed that Hales’ views point to the maladjustment of French cultural categorisation to the industrial context.

Nevertheless, the exhibition effects a continuity of purpose in promoting everyday objects, though limited, as just one aspect of its principal objective set by the designer Seigneur, which is that, ‘designed objects are not art objects but objects intended for use’.¹⁹ Moreover, the production and consumption of everyday objects in the 19th and 20th centuries were given prominence. In the catalogue, a dozen chapters (out of 20) were dedicated to discussions about everyday objects and materials. Only four chapters dealt with stylistic and ideological issues. Nonetheless, due to the powerful sense of the spectacle display by both the exhibition and the catalogue, the history of industrial design constructed in the first part of the catalogue is marked by some narrowness. As Hewitt has construed in the following:

There was a systematic attempt to contextualize design in the time chart that preceded each of the identified periods. It consisted of a year-by-year listing of key

¹⁶ Hewitt 319.

¹⁷ Data provided by the Delegation of Plastic Arts of the French Ministry of Culture, in 2003.

¹⁸ See David Hales, “Design Expo Or Flea Market,” I.D. 40.5 1993.

¹⁹ Seigneur in De Noblet 13.

historical and cultural events. Most frequently these events referred to the discoveries or publication of particular individuals. (Hewitt 319)²⁰

The particular cultural feeling of objects is further intensified by the list of classics. Seventy-four items of design classics listed in the catalogue revealed brand loyalty, without exception, whether a market brand, such as the Coca-Cola bottle, or a conceptual brand, such as the Red and Blue Chair. Such a spectacle of established knowledge, which is perceived to be closely related to memory, becomes more prominent when one considers the British exhibition, *Great Expectations*, mounted by the Design Council seven years later and which toured the USA, Australia and other countries.

Both exhibitions are based on platforms, one a huge one and the other a small one. The exhibition design by François Seigneur introduces the spectator, in a very concise and clear manner, to an established memory. Through a narrow passage without light, the spectator is led to what could be described as a ‘voyage of memory’ situated on the larger platform – the nave. With a huge mirror offering a distorted perspective and reflecting both daylight and artificial light, the exhibits are turned into memory components. The catalogue articulates this in the following words about the designed objects: ‘placed on the floor, deprived of their use value, they convey unexpected messages about what they once were’.²¹ The spectator, it seems, is subjected to or a subject of this memory, depending on his/her active or passive participation in the exhibition: actively as a link builder or passively as a receiver of ready order. This tone of ‘he/she’ is in strong contrast with that of ‘I’ in *Great Expectations*. In *Great Expectations*, the exhibits are placed on a long platform, that is, a table for a ‘banquet’. ‘I’ is able to enjoy them in the same way as a banquet. It seems evident that the interchange or interaction between the spectator and the exhibits is intended, as opposed to a mere visit of designed spectacle. *Great Expectations* is, in essence, a simple display of products. Considering the fact that this exhibition is aimed at sharing experience, it offers a ‘lucid’ and ‘familiar’ tone of the narrative in the first

²⁰ John Hewitt, “Industrial Design: Reflections Of A Century,” 319.

²¹ De Noblet 16.

person.²² Following a similar structure, the exhibition *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century* communicates a reflection of cultural or environmental order thus presenting a different national consciousness reflected in the politics of modern design in this case.

7.2 *Design D'En France*

In 2004, *Design D'En France* was held as the opening exhibition of the Year of France in China at the National Museum in Beijing. Further to this, the exhibition moved to Nanjing and Shenzhen in China. If the exhibition, *Design, Miroir Du Siècle*, is an indirect mirror of design that France has created at home, then the exhibition *Design D'En France* could be defined as a direct one abroad. When interviewed, Alain Lombard, the French general commissioner of the France-China Years, explained the mission of the exhibition as promotion of French culture abroad. The exhibition was also reported as such in *Le Monde*.²³ This exhibition displayed French cultural particularity in design. The address of the president of France, Mr Chirac, perfectly presented a century of French practices in design:

The exhibition, *Design D'En France*, refreshes the rich dialogue between the beautiful and the useful, and will, I hope, be resonant with the Chinese public who will realise how France explores the daily territory through design.

(RGC, *Design D'En France* 7)²⁴

There are some key words that capture the attention: 'beautiful', 'useful', 'design' and 'territory'. These words, in fact, could be postulated to reflect the exact French trajectory of design in the 20th century, as elaborated in Chapters 2, 5 and 6.

The question that needs to be addressed here is: what is the exhibition like? It could be defined as another voyage relating to *Design, Miroir Du Siècle*, but this time one that resides in the French design history. Rik Gadella, the French general commissioner of the exhibition, describes it, in what appears to be a rather affectionate tone, as a memory: a memory of France, or rather a tour of France, of its

²² See Design Council, *Great Exhibitions: International Tour Exhibition* (London: Design Council, 2000) 4.

²³ See Marie-Aude Roux, "Trois Questions...À Alain Lombard," *Le Monde* 13 November 2004; Béatrice Gurrey and Bruno Philip, "30 Millions Of Euros For The Year Of France," *Le Monde* 12 October 2004.

²⁴ RG Consulting and the authors, *Design D'En France*. Catalogue (Paris: RG Consulting and the authors, 2004) 7.

temperament and its particular vision.²⁵ It is significant to note that Gadella's description seems to mirror the words of François Mathey, when the latter commented on the French decorative arts. Commenting on the French 'art of living', he stated:

With the passage of time, we are tempted to reconstruct from those documents, furnishings, household objects, and paintings that have come down through the years a way of life in which everything was rare and exquisite, admirably harmonious and impeccably executed, affectionately intended, justly conceived, nobly proportioned, and finely detailed. It is a nostalgic view of the past, as though we could never again aspire to a world so steeped in art.

(Mathey in Catherine Arminjon et al. 9)²⁶

This description seem to conjure up a rather nostalgic view of the past, or, more specifically, a nostalgic consumption of a reconstructed past, or even still a nostalgic export of the past. There is an implication that there is a soul of beauty to recover or even that there is a greatness of mind to rediscover, which seems to impart the message that France can afford to be worthy of attention owing to her knowing how to 'break through'. As the French poet René Char believed, one who comes to the world without breaking through anything is not worthy of attention.²⁷ *Design D'En France* could be described as a portrait of the French breakthrough into modern design, a design which builds landscapes of the soul.²⁸ The gradual growth of institutional change in modern life and different modes of communication constitutes the landscape of modern Britain's design, while the breakthrough in the art of living reflects the notion of the noble soul in the French landscape of modern design. In a space of 3600 m² at the National Museum of China, more than 220 pieces featuring the French soul of modern design (in five parts and two themes) were displayed.

As a project of cultural dissemination under the patronage of the French Ministry of Culture, the exhibition characterises the continuity of French cultural politics in design: making design a cultural legacy, accessible to all as part of the 'mission

²⁵ RG Consulting and the authors 20.

²⁶ Catherine Arminjon, et al. *L'Art de Vivre* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 9.

²⁷ See Quotations from René Char, *ABC Lettres* 20 January 2009 <<http://www.abc-lettres.com/rene-char/citation/auteur.html>>

²⁸ See RG Consulting and the authors 20-1.

civilisatrice’; this could be said to be exalting France through its culture as part of de Gaulle’s ‘policy of grandeur’. When concluding the closure of France-China Years in Beijing, the French ambassador Philippe Guelluy just confirmed this kind of cultural politics with his interpretation of culture as identity and soul of the nation, and he believes that France was undertaking an avant-garde initiative in this field.²⁹ Guelluy’s vision can be traced back to Ernest Renan. Just as the *Mona Lisa* was dispatched on a tour of the United States in 1963, and the *Venus De Milo* to Japan in 1964, *Design D’En France*, a legacy of the foremost choices of French design from the Pompidou Centre, Les Arts Décoratifs and the Musée d’Orsay, was on a tour in China in 2004/05. It was the first time that France held such a large-scale thematic exhibition of design in the world, with the clear intention of highlighting the ‘bests’ of modernity in order to communicate the ‘best’ image of French fashion. Fan Di’an, the Chinese general commissioner of the exhibition, tried to define these ‘best’ experiences as a sense of design culture:

Here are the collected works of the best designers, architects and fashion designers, from industrial products and daily objects to vehicles, architectures and fashions. They trace the cultural course of French society, illustrate the quest and invention, give evidence of the relations among the disciplines of design, life and the human.

(Fan as quoted in RGC 22)³⁰

Fan seems to want to highlight French cultural memories as part of the development of world brands in relation to design. All of the exhibits were directed to communicate a creative and elegant France through a century of design practices. *Design D’En France* constituted the portrait of a creative and elegant France. Changing styles can be said to be reflected throughout a century through the following means: serious and romantic, grace and novelty, lightness and massiveness. In this respect, Gadella lays bare the stylistic source of the French ethos. Gadella believes that objects are nothing for the French – only intention and purpose count. The French national character finds no better expression than in several of their behaviour traits: ways of speaking, ways of doing and ways of seeing.³¹ It will be noteworthy that both Alain Lombard and Philippe Guelluy, although emphasizing on

²⁹ Philippe Guelluy in *Pli D’information De L’Ambassade De France En Chine* (PiafChine) N°193 October 2005.

³⁰ RG Consulting and the authors 22.

³¹ See RG Consulting and the authors 20.

the communication of cultural diversity through the Year of France in China, described the French cultural image in terms of French way of living, that is, ‘romantic’.³²

It could be asserted that Gadella, in the same way as are the French, communicates the French confidence in the supremacy in art, which in fact runs through the exhibition as it does throughout the century: ‘Going in the 20th Century (1900–1924)’, ‘Invention of the Modernity (1925–1949)’, ‘Leisure and Consumption Age (1950–1979)’, together with ‘the Decades for Creators (1980–2000)’, and, additionally, from ‘the Year 2000 Onwards’, comprise five parts of the exhibition that all work towards defining the superior quality of French culture and life.



Figure 7.2. Hector Guimard. ‘Entrance of Metropolitan’ underground station. 1900.
Paris. Personal photograph by the author. 23 October 2007.

‘Original in Colour’

The first part of the exhibition, ‘Going in the 20th Century’, is full of novelties, 20–23 pieces announce what could be defined as a new way of life. The first two pieces are especially significant as they are by Hector Guimard, one of which is the ‘Métropolitain’, the entrance of the French underground system. It was the first exhibit in the *Exposition Universelle De Paris* of 1900, so-called ‘Exhibition Of The Century’, which captured the attention of more than 50 million visitors. From the first helicopter, the first Reno car to culottes, or a Santos watch, this new technological awareness was interpreted by design in the way in which it laid the foundations for

³² See Alain Lombard in Marie-Aude Roux and Philippe Guelluy in *PiafChine*.

certain aspirations to a new life. The feeding-bottle heater was a significant expression of modern life, the Chanel N° 5 perfume shaped modern fashion and the Michelin Map of Roads provided a new way of locating information. These designs paved the way, partly, into the 20th century, and into modernity.

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, in France's transition to modernity, two tendencies have been in tension – one of luxury and elegance and the other is the popular and everyday. Yet, it could be stated that elements of luxury and the decorative have kept their superior place in the building of the French prominent modernity, that is, the democratisation of the aesthetic value in life. The *Exposition Internationale Des Arts Décoratifs Et Industriels Modernes*, in 1925, confirmed, primarily, the aesthetic orientation in design. In continuity from such a position, this resulted in the later exclusion of the UAM from the SAD. In the second part of the *Design d'en France*, two parallel lines of pieces contrast both the luxury with the everyday. The second part, the 'Invention of Modernity', is significant from the perspective of design history, because it displays an aspect often overlooked in the mainstream discourse of French modern design. But it is noteworthy that everyday objects are still presented in an aesthetic way, rather like items of fashion such as Moulinex, Lacoste, Kelly and Bikini.³³

The third part, which refers to the 'Leisure and Consumption Age', offers an aspect of the French approach to design in the consumer age. On the one hand, French modern design started a significant association with mass production: designers, such as Tallon and Courrèges, disseminated the way of popular life. On the other hand, Dior, Chanel, Mourgue, and others, promoted the aesthetic tradition in a variety of forms. Although almost an equal quantity of pieces is exhibited in both orientations, their presentation continues to be, to a certain degree, aesthetic: the objects do not count, only the intention does, as it has been mentioned above by Gadella. The commentary of the ballpoint pen is typical in this respect. It is presented as an expression of modernity rather than as a tool.³⁴

³³ See RG Consulting and the authors 94-123.

³⁴ See RG Consulting and the authors 130.

The fourth part, which links to the ‘Decades for Creators’, reviews the years of reform 1980-2000. French design consciously tries to situate itself in the wider context of a global perspective. It is widely understood now that not only is the importance of design recognised in public, meaning that designers are called creators, but also that design itself starts to break through traditional frameworks in order to enter into the field of high technology and the future life of diversity. A variety of magazines and annuals were created during these years in favor of the public understanding, such as *Azimuts*, *Références Design*, *100% Créateurs Années 90*, *Design Chronique*, *Design Recherche*, *Graphic Studio*, *Jardin Des Modes*, *Médias*, *Guide Design* and *Annuaire Des Designers Industriels*. What is even more noticeable is the emergence of the design community, such as the Radi Designers and Elium Studio. Radi Designers gathered a group of young designers who aimed to break through traditional order of taste in design practices while Elium Studio endeavoured to innovate in regards to the historical preoccupation of art and technique. Consequently, new design communities strive to reform French design discourse.

The last part, serving as a conclusion, invites the spectator to hold onto a memory of a modern, promising and attractive France in the second Industrial Revolution. From the CFM 56 engine to the N4 nuclear power station, from the C-Airdream to concept phones, a promising France is based on new technology. Yet, whenever ‘hard’ technology is developed, continuity of the ‘soft’ human taste is never interrupted. This is what France would communicate, just as was indicated by the views of George Courteline a century ago. Courteline divided the world into two classes; those who go to the café and those who do not. He thought that the mentality of those who go was superior to that of others.³⁵ As a matter of fact, this superior sense of elegance appears to be subtly planned in the method of presenting exhibits. In each part, with a diversity of objects exhibited, some of the points which are highlighted are only the aesthetic ones. For example, *les Quatre pièces d’orfèvrerie* in the first part, *le Normandie* in the second, *les Souliers de Vivier* in the third and *le Café Français* in the last. Moreover, these points are enlarged into two themes: architecture and fashion, that is, creation and taste. These two themes provide special occasions for the spectator to experience the French cultural intention of branding quality and curiosity.

³⁵ See RG Consulting and the authors 300.

From the 1970s onward, in the newly developing age environment of a knowledge-based economy, France shifted the accent from, or rather enlarged, the conception of the artistic to the aesthetic, as a means of social transformation. In other words, the attention is diverted from individual care to the responsibility in respect for others.³⁶ It could be suggested that a ‘social dimension’ has been given to the aesthetic experience.³⁷ Hence, architecture is the natural choice in the questioning of the conventional social space and the best expression of a visual and spatial ‘breakthrough’ in society, aiming to promote social morale and public attention. The Centre Georges Pompidou (1977) is a typical example of this type of shock gesture. Figure 7.3 communicates what could be described as a perfect vision of ‘shock’ in contrast to the landscape of old blocks of buildings, figuring a seed of cultural novelty.

The centre is therefore a promotion not only of cultural vision but also of political attention. French President Georges Pompidou just wanted the centre to be a cultural one in order to promote French creativity in confrontation of American success in cultural expansion.³⁸ It could be interpreted as one of clashes between French and American ways of discovering modern world through design practices, because both nations claim the universalist vocation. Gilles de Bure, the scientific commissioner of the *Design D’En France*, has presented the story of the transformation of the centre, in somewhat vivid terms:

All started exactly on February 1, 1977. On that day, the bawling crowd became quiet. Yet, since several weeks, not a day passes without a protest around the future Pompidou Centre... And then, it is opened to the public. It will need no more than twenty-four hours for the Parisian to digest the breaker and accept the Centre ... In 1997, twenty years later, it is another kind of shock. This time, it is the new national library, named Library François Mitterrand, built by a young architect of 36 years old, Dominique Perrault.

(de Bure in RG Consulting and the authors 187)³⁹

³⁶ This kind of discussion can refer to the article Cultural Identity and Political Responsibility by Noelle Burgi-Golub, the research fellow of Centre de Recherches Politiques de la Sorbonne, Université Paris. See Noelle Burgi-Golub, “Cultural Identity and Political Responsibility,” International Conference on Cultural Policy Research. Radisson SAS Royal Hotel Bergen, Norway. 10 November 1999.

³⁷ Jean Caune, Pour Une Ethique de la Mediation (Grenoble: PUG, 1999) 217.

³⁸ Germain Viatte, Le Centre Pompidou: les années Beaubourg (Paris: Gallimard, 2007) 11.

³⁹ de Bure in RG Consulting and the authors 187.

This is what has been construed as the mind adventure that de Bure has described, that is, it requires only 'twenty-four hours for the Parisian to digest the breaker'. The



Figure 7.3. 'The Centre Georges Pompidou' among the buildings
Source: Germain Viatte, Le Centre Pompidou: Les Années Beaubourg 1.

'Original in Colour'



Figure 7.4. 'Musée du quai Branly' in progress
Paris. Personal photograph by the author. 27 June 2007.

'Original in Colour'

national cultural adventure continues in 2007. The Musée du quai Branly, suggested by President Jacques Chirac, appears to play a game between the real and the virtual. Located on the west arc bank of the Seine, the museum's objective is to collect items of culture and art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and America.

Thus, the exploring and establishing of boundaries characterised French culture in defining and embodying world culture. The French presidents were considered to be no exception: Georges Pompidou with the Pompidou Centre, François Mitterrand with les Grand Travaux and Jacques Chirac with the Musée du quai Branly. This is to be viewed in stark contrast to British prime ministers in promoting design.

Fashion, which is perceived here as one of the permanent themes of French life, is another sector closely related to the French ideal. Paris, perhaps considered to be the capital of fashion in the world, attracts fashion designers from all over the globe. Fashion becomes, therefore, a most exhilarating spectacle of French life. During the *Exposition Universelle 1900*, a special pavilion was devoted to the exhibits from 20 Parisian houses of 'haute couture'. Since this time, 'haute couture' has established its everlasting place. Fashion, therefore, could be said to symbolise France, with its beauty and high level of curiosity. It is considered here to be the best expression of the French art of living. This is the reason why Pamela Golbin, the French commissioner of the fashion section of *Design D'En France*, claimed, in the top forum for the exhibition in Beijing, that the fashion exhibits show true designs in France.⁴⁰

It is asserted that fashion shows a true France because it fully embodies the French sense of values, as Gadella expounded when she claimed that the French like to celebrate fashion as an eternity.⁴¹ Interestingly, it is essential to mention here that what is eternal in fashion is just an 'innovation', as Goblin quoted Gilles Lipovesky in the catalogue: the couturier is an artist for whom the innovation is the imperative.⁴²

⁴⁰ Sina Inc. "Forum Records of Design d'en France," 13 October 2004. [Sina.com.cn](http://eladies.sina.com.cn/2004-10-13/116403.html). 8 February 2005. <<http://eladies.sina.com.cn/2004-10-13/116403.html>; [2004-10-13/116408.html](http://eladies.sina.com.cn/2004-10-13/116408.html)>.

⁴¹ See RG Consulting and the authors 20.

⁴² See RG Consulting and the authors 241.

Novelty could be said to constitute the essence of French design practices. Tallon confirmed this viewpoint in my personal interview on 27 June 2007 in Paris. He thinks that in Britain the best person will be found for a campaign project, but in France, a new person will be commissioned for the project.⁴³ Fashion, thus, embodies the changing ideas of French creativity: Christian Dior, André Courrèges, Pierre Cardin, Yves Saint Laurent, Chanel and many other new names present a frequent substitution of ideas and an endless creative experiment in new materials and styles that all help to contribute to this French creativity. Maintaining novelty is what stimulates the French curiosity in design practices.

In contrast to the *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century*, *Design D'En France* is much like a self-dialogue, one where the dialogist talks to the spectator in the mirror, as if against a nostalgic historical background. This background is composed of many stories related to real life, which is said to be typical in the two themes of the exhibits – creation and taste. With similar structures of narration to that of *Industrial Design*, *Design D'En France's* history is composed of several parts with variations of two themes. But two exhibitions are rather different in the communicative perspective. As mentioned previously, the divorce of the text from the image in the catalogue and exhibition – the *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century* – categorised the design knowledge in a rather subjective way, so that the public knowledge which it produced could be described as being largely uncertain. It may explain why François Barré, the exhibition's producer, claimed that the exhibition said nothing because it wanted to say everything.⁴⁴ Whereas, in the *Design D'En France*, stories closely related to the exhibits not only interpret the titles of the parts, but also to assimilate the spectator in the 'mirror'. It could be surmised, from this, that mutuality has been successfully produced. The exhibition is truly 'resonant with the Chinese people' who have realised the efforts that France spent in modern life through design.⁴⁵

7.3. Conclusion

⁴³ In 2003, the author went to a fashion fair near the Charles de Gaulle airport, in Paris. When asking a business Parisian of fashion to summarise the success of the fashion profession, the author was told: novelty, that is, new material and style.

⁴⁴ Jocelyn de Noblet 1.

⁴⁵ See Wang Yanping, "Design D'En France: Daily Life Changed Through Imagination," Youth Times N° 1 2005.

Whether Fairs are international, national, thematic or multilateral, it is postulated that national expressions constitute the key tone for these various events. National identity is a worthy framework to deal with the issue of modernity in exhibitions of different countries, if national is not to be taken narrowly as nationalism. Different people tend to set up different boundaries for their practices.

French exhibitions feature undoubtedly a cultural preoccupation in French transition to modernity, that is, this intensive involvement with cultural norms or categorisation. The Enlightenment idea of progress has been a typical mode of thinking in the exhibiting arena. From *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century* to *Design D'En France*, French events of exhibitions presented historical and cultural experiences in a linear format of metanarratives. Grand narrative is conceived to continue to characterise these stories in order to sublimate the way of presentation which definitely communicates an aesthetic value. In the *Industrial Design: Reflection Of A Century*, the exhibition design turned the exhibiting space into a dreamlike art world. Visual creativity dominated the exhibition, enhanced by the dull passage to the exhibits and the space distorting mirror. The exhibits themselves became secondary, hence the divorce of image from text in the exhibition as in the catalogue. As a result, exhibition design becomes an exhibit of media.

The objects do not count for the French, only the way of approaching the objects is of importance, according to Gadella. The French character is perfectly embodied in the exhibitions. In *Design D'En France*, the linear itinerary is still adopted to sanctify the classic exhibits of modernity. Some changes have occurred in the content, for example, detailed stories are added to the images. But these stories are perceived to have simply reinforced the pleasures of the art of living: they enjoy the way they are told as they communicate a complacent memory. The sense of cultural diversity is introduced in two highlighted themes: architecture and fashion both of which highlight Paris as a centre of creativity. The communication of national aesthetic sentiment is strong and direct in the French exhibitions. In another perspective, it seems difficult for design practices to break up the museum frameworks, that is, traditional ideology of instruction. The aesthetically based cultural memory provides

France with the potentiality of communicating her cultural brand through exhibitions, but restricts the expansion of activity parameters for design at the same time.

CHAPTER 8. BRITAIN: EXHIBITIONS AS SHARING EXPERIENCES

The Crystal Palace reversed the panoptical by fixing the eyes of the multitude upon an assemblage of glamorous commodities. The Panopticon was designed so that everyone could be seen, the Crystal Palace was designed so that everyone could see.

(Graeme as quoted in Bennett 87)¹

Discursive representations characterise both Britain and France in their design practices, but their cultural scripts could be claimed to be rather different. In France, due to the market of home luxury and the supremacy in the arts, French modern design strives to justify its orthodoxy to the domestic public. In Britain, the export market pressure and the sharing vision of material environment lead to the justification, for modern British design, of its identity by the outside audience.

8.1 *Britain Can Make It*

8.1.1 Origin and Objective

Britain Can Make It (BCMI) could be said to have been a quick response to a particular situation but a hard task to complete. Once more, this response accounts for the changing British perceptions which have accompanied the growth of British design and industry in the post-Second World War period. Breaking through the European Continental model carved out by the French luxury industries from the 18th century, the British industrial context encountered the questioning forces of America and Germany from the late 19th century. And so, in a position of reliance on America for recovery, Britain started to question itself by facing the unsatisfactory industrial and financial performance demonstrated by the war.² By means of *BCMI*, Britain endeavoured to communicate its forward-looking performance of updating material environment to the home and overseas public.

¹ Graeme Davison as quoted in Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," Ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne. *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996) 87.

² Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham, *Design And Cultural Politics In Post-war Britain* (London: Leicester UP, 1997) 30.

The exhibition was, thus, gestated, essentially, in a cultural and political perspective as a means of preserving the British share of the modern world market. It is because the American power came to ‘dismantle Britain’s global structure of commercial interests’, as commented Dr Patrick J. Maguire simply but insightfully when he talks about *Patriotism, Politics And Production* in post-war Britain.³ *BCMI* thus illustrated the present British concern with the future. According to James Gardner, the chief designer of *BCMI*, it was this kind of concern that encouraged Sir Stafford Cripps, president of the Board of Trade, to support to a large exhibition with future products on display. *BCMI* was consequently expected to boost British social morale and re-establish the British share of exports.⁴

Thus, the goal of *BCMI* was to signify the first steps toward the British industrial recovery in the post-war world, as stated in the exhibition catalogue.⁵ In the survey made by Cripps after the exhibition, he claimed that the improvement of British design meant the increase of British export markets.⁶ It could be said that the exhibitionary intent of export as the modern British way of sharing experiences was reset by *BCMI* for later exhibitions. While no one doubted Cripps’ belief in the role of industrial design in the future of Britain’s manufacturing industry, there were debates on the what, how and why of the organisation of the exhibition, as stated in the following section.

8.1.2 Issues of National Projection and Product Selection

In his article *The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The Britain Can Make It Exhibition* (1997), Woodham presents, in some detail, the chaotic shaping of the *BCMI* exhibition in terms of its origin, plan, national projection and product selection.⁷ The primary problem is postulated to be the lack of exhibits in the post-war situation. Gordon Russell, a member of the COID of the

³ See Patrick J. Maguire, “Patriotism, Politics And Production.” Ed. Maguire and Woodham 29-30.

⁴ James Gardner, *Elephants In The Attic. The Autobiography Of James Gardner* (London: Orbis, 1983) 9, 11, 47.

⁵ COID, *Britain Can Make It Exhibition Catalogue* (London: HMSO, 1946) 4.

⁶ COID, *Design '46: Survey Of British Industrial Design As Displayed At The 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1946) 5.

⁷ Jonathan M. Woodham, “The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The Britain Can Make It Exhibition,” Maguire and Woodham 45-60.

time, was extremely concerned with the lack of materials when he wrote to the director, Leslie, about the serious situation of the exhibition.⁸

While Britain is considered to have rationalised its productivity through facing the American power of ‘dismantling’, there are, indeed, no goods to exhibit.⁹ When Gardner was commissioned to package this exhibition, he raised further question in the following adage: ‘how to design a show which will look complete in every detail if we don’t get exhibits?’.¹⁰ But Cripps wanted Gardner to ‘give the public a lift even if we got no goods at all’.¹¹ Under such conditions, Gardner had to be innovative in his exhibition design. When interviewed by Velarde, the exhibition designer at the Geological Museum in London who had worked for a time with Gardner, Gardner explained his innovation as this:

I concocted a new kind of layout plan. Instead of presenting the goods to the eye as one would in an open market – and that is what exhibition have evolved from – I tucked them round the corners, behind screens, and in little enclaves, so at first the visitor would see lots of ‘decor’ but no goods at all – wouldn’t even notice if there were no goods at all.

(Gardner as quoted in Maguire and Woodham 21)¹²

Moreover, new products ‘were targeted for export, as was apparent at the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition of 1946 at the Victoria and Albert Museum’.¹³ The question thus arises as to how to promote Britain at home and abroad through *BMCI*. Emphasis was placed on the tradition of industrial design in Britain, but there was a continuing debate on the inclusion of crafts. It seems that ‘good design’ was commonly considered as a counterbalance to the American influence as well as a measure to

⁸ Woodham 46.

⁹ It was not solely a question of politics. Not only did the British designs lag behind the American ones because of low productivity, but also the product range was a narrow one in the post-war situation. As a result, the lack of goods even led to the cancellation of the event ‘buy British’ in New Zealand in 1946. See Patrick Maguire, ‘Patriotism, Politics and Production.’ Ed. Maguire and Woodham, 29-43.

¹⁰ Gardner quoted in Penny Sparke, *Did Britain Make It? British Design In Context 1946-86* (London: Design Council, c1986) 11.

¹¹ Gardner 47.

¹² Jonathan Woodham, ‘Britain Can Make It And The History Of Design,’ Maguire and Woodham 21.

¹³ Cheryl Buckley, *Designing Modern Britain* (London: Reaktion, 2007) 92.

reduce the space for the American penetration in industrial design.¹⁴ The title was also a concern for national projection. In the list provided to Leslie by the council's librarian, Mesling, 31 titles were suggested.¹⁵ Mesling's two preferred titles were 'Power for Peace' and 'British Made', the latter being the closest to that of the final. The slogan '*Britain Can Make It*', proposed by Leslie, was eventually adopted.

Problems, and even conflicts, were encountered in the selection of goods, because of the aesthetic oppositions between elitist cultural values and provincial manufacturers' preoccupations. For example, furniture as a subject closely related to public life was a focus of the debates over the selection of the exhibits. Sir Raymond Streat, a leading figure in Lancashire textile manufactures, had suggested including cheap, ordinary consumer goods for a significant manufacturing boost. But from a total submission of 1,170 articles from 91 firms, only about 14% were selected by the Furniture Selection Committee. As a result, a high rejection rate was embodied in the selection of furniture: 86% of the submitted articles and 75% of the firms were rejected, which could mean that the majority of the exhibits submitted were supposed to be of uncertain worth. If this suggestion carries any conviction, then it could only imply that the council's design message to industry had not been effective. It has been recorded that Leslie reassured the council that there was little interference during the selection process. It could also mean that the Council's selection mechanism was faulty in some way, just as Hewitt, of Copeland & Sons Ltd, declared in his correspondence to Sir Thomas Barlow, chairman of the COID, that 'a different attitude' is requisite in order to adopt a position of success for the council.¹⁶

Nevertheless, as the then chairman of the COID, Sir Thomas Barlow, explained, the organisation of the *BCMI* exhibition in the immediate post-war era was a real

¹⁴ See Jonathan Woodham, "The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The Britain Can Make It Exhibition," Maguire and Woodham 51-4.

¹⁵ Suggested names for BCMI: Power for Peace, Good British Goods, The Best in Britain, Plan for Production, Made in Britain, British Made, Britain's Shop Window, Britain's Victory Show, The Lion's Share, Britain's Production Plan, The Lion on the Label, Passport to Peace, Victory in Industry, Good British Goods, Design for Efficiency, Design for Production, Design for Peace, Designed for Peace, The Design for Trade, Peace Effort, Arms for Peace, Industry for Action, Industry on Parade, Hallmark – British, Trademark – British, British – Trademark, Design for Reconstruction, Design for the Future, Designs of Industry, Designs of British Industry, Britain Creates. See the documentation "List Of Suggested Titles For The 1946 Exhibition." Maguire and Woodham 145.

¹⁶ See Jonathan Woodham 51-4.

challenge to the council.¹⁷ And the event is quite significant in the way in which it showed that design knowledge is situated socially through organisational practices. What Maguire explores, in relation to the difficult situation for the organisation, structure and function of the exhibition, is rather thought-provoking. In his chapter, *Industrial Design: Aesthetic Idealism And Economic Reality*, Maguire relates the situation to the embittered experience of the inter-war years and interprets it as a structural antagonism between, for example, design organisations and industrial bodies, high-cost products and the mass-production market.¹⁸ Maguire's observation is significant in the wide context of the cultural production of design and modernity. The *BCMI* exhibition has a substantial value as a pioneering essay on modern British politics of consumption in a changing world.¹⁹

On 24 September 1946, the *BCMI* exhibition was opened by his majesty, King George VI.²⁰ The council's attendance register showed that a total of 1,432,546 people visited the exhibition between 24 September 1946 and the end of December 1946; that is, 14,618 people, on average, per day. This statistical data contributed largely to a positive evaluation of the exhibition in the works of the British design historians, such as Woodham, MacCarthy and Carrington.²¹ As a result, this statistical data adds to the appraisal of the exhibition. Since the number of visitors was three or four times more than anticipated by the organiser, there could be insights gained from reviewing the appraisal of the organiser himself.

8.1.3 The Appraisal by the Organiser

¹⁷ COID, *Design '46: Survey Of British Industrial Design As Displayed At The 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1946) 8.

¹⁸ See Patrick J. Maguire, "Industrial Design: Aesthetic Idealism And Economic Reality." Maguire and Woodham 111-121.

¹⁹ To know more about the logic of British politics of consumption regarding design in the post-war period, please refer to Maguire, "Utility And The Politics Of Consumption," *Utility Reassessed: The Role Of Ethics In The Practice Of Design*. Ed. Judy Attfield. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999) 221-32.

²⁰ It has been British tradition to have the royal family to serve as a cultural component of the British social brand. Just as the presence of King George VI added to the social impact of *BCMI*, King George V's speech was broadcast by the BBC at the Wembley Exhibition of 1924. On 10 September 2007, the author went to attend the Commonwealth Youth Programme 'Investing in Youth'. In the opening ceremony, The Prince of Wales' Video Message was played. In another perspective, this is an embodiment of cultural resource consciousness in practices on design and by design. But in the new century, for exhibitions, the creativity is rather more highlighted as carrier of British cultural brand.

²¹ In their book *Design And Cultural Politics In Post-War Britain*, Maguire and Woodham give several examples of these kinds of historical accounts, including Fiona MacCarthy, *All Things Bright And Beautiful: Design In Britain 1830 To Today* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972) 145; Noel Carrington, *Industrial Design In Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976) 172; Jonathan M. Woodham, 'Design Promotion 1946 And After,' *Did Britain Make It? British Design In Context 1946-86*. Ed. Penny Sparke. (London: Design Council, 1986) 25.

In the souvenir volume of the exhibition *Design '46*, published by HMSO, Cripps considered the exhibition to be a proud signal of British industry after the destructive years of war.²² In the same souvenir volume this effort in design promotion has been interpreted by Sir Thomas Barlow as a perceptible, design conscious response to the requirements of a better standard of living:

We firmly believe that when the present and immediate post-war difficulties of reconversion are overcome the quality and eye appeal of British commodities will steadily improve.

(COID, *Design '46* 8)²³

In its second annual report, the COID was 'particularly glad' to report a rising interest in industrial design among the producers and the public, and attributed this result mainly to the impact of *BCMI*. Based on such an evaluation of its performance, the COID wrote:

By and large, considering the many difficulties and shortages, not least the shortage of time, the Council feels that it can look back with full satisfaction on the outcome of its first great public venture, and it has had no hesitation in recommending the continuance of the policy of holding annual selective exhibitions of designs from 1948 onwards, on a similar scale to 'Britain Can Make It', in most years, but with an occasional full-scale reception, for which the 1951 celebrations may provide the first occasion.

(COID, *Second Annual Report 1946–1947* 5)²⁴

The council further defended such a self-assessment by reporting that its recommendation of continuous policy for exhibitions was quickly accepted by the government, which decided to hold an exhibition in 1951 as a centennial of the *Great Exhibition*. As a result, a substantial work on the *1951 Festival Of Britain* exhibition was commissioned to the COID.²⁵ In fact, there were other design exhibitions such

²² COID 5.

²³ COID 8.

²⁴ COID, *Second Annual Report 1946–1947* (London: COID, 1947) 5.

²⁵ COID, *Third Annual Report 1947–1948* (London: COID, 1947) 4.

as *Design At Work* (1948) and the council's aesthetic policy in the *Festival* was much criticised by the Treasury.

In spite of the council's positive self-assessment, the *BCMI* exhibition has been criticised by the British design historians such as John Heskett in a number of ways.²⁶ The obvious criticism derived from the unavailability of exhibited products. Because of the shortage of materials and labour, a significant percentage of the products on display were not produced and, therefore, were unavailable in the market; additionally, quite a number of other goods on display were prioritised for the export, rather than the domestic, market. The easiest conclusion to be drawn from this points to the COID's conjuring up of a prestigious, design aware image that the *BCMI* would promote overseas through its optimistic portrayal of British industry and well-designed products in the aftermath of War. The council's positive self-assessment could be said to be based on the need to retain the annual grant-in-aid from the BOT, its paymaster. This ensured that the economic and political value of the exhibition could be positioned in the post-war situation. However, the cultural facet of the exhibition was, to a certain degree, regrettably under-estimated or neglected in the drive to export. This cultural significance of sharing the idea of design in a didactic manner through design discourse, a *modus operandi* established by the British, could be re-evaluated through the mass response to *BCMI*.

8.1.4 Mass Response to *BCMI*

It remains to be answered how it is possible to comprehend the public response to the exhibition held 60 years ago. It is important to mention here that the Mass-Observation (MO), a social research organisation established in 1937, completed a survey on *BCMI* for the COID, which recorded a number of responses by the public to the exhibition. Another specific study on the public response has been made by Woodham in *The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The Britain Can Make It Exhibition* (1997).²⁷ The above two references will serve as the basis for an examination of the public response to the exhibition.

²⁶ See John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 186.

²⁷ "The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The Britain Can Make It Exhibition." 45-63.

The investigation by MO on the *BCMI* exhibition has its main purpose embodied in the following four questions:

1. Who comes to the Exhibition and why?
2. How do they react to it in general, and over particular items?
3. How far are their pre-existing tastes influenced by the exhibition? (How far is it a spur to future definite action in terms of purchase?)
4. What are their detailed reactions to specific exhibits and types of item in detail?

(Mass-Observation, 1946)²⁸

Four questionnaires were, subsequently, formulated on the basis of the above four principal questions, of which the third is seen as pivotal in the evaluation of the exhibition's impact, in comparison with the conclusion made by Barlow in *Design '46*.²⁹ Barlow drew attention to the willingness of the wider public to recognise the important role of design in rising standards of living after the exhibition.³⁰

Woodham has created a concise and comprehensive presentation of the practices of MO regarding the *BCMI* exhibition, including the investigation results and quiz analysis, which serves as a key to the essential problem. A general impression of the exhibition by the public is thought to have been quite positive, as the overwhelming majority seemed to offer their approval, see Table 8.1.

However, on closer inspection, the case of changing taste yielded little results: '29 per cent believed that their tastes had altered; 15 per cent that they had perhaps a bit; but 51 per cent thought that the experience had exerted no change and 2 per cent very little'.³¹ See Table 8.2.

²⁸ M-O A: TC *Britain Can Make It*. 26/1/A, Report on the 'BCMI', London, 1946.

²⁹ See the questionnaires in the appendices.

³⁰ COID, *Design '46: Survey Of British Industrial Design As Displayed At The "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1946) 8.

³¹ See Jonathan Woodham, "The Politics Of Persuasion: State, Industry And Good Design At The 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition," Maguire and Woodham 58.

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GENERAL REACTION.

Table

What Did You Think of the Exhibition.

Very good	Good	Disappointing	Bad
64	16	17	2
<u>Approval</u>		<u>Disapproval</u>	
80%		19%	

Table 8.1. The general reaction of visitors to 'BCMI'.

Source: M-O A: TC Britain Can Make It. 26/1/A. Report on the 'BCMI' exhibition.
London. 1946.

Table

Extent of alteration	Percentage ^{saying} thinking they have altered to this extent among			
	Men	Women	Under 40	Over 40
Tastes altered	29	30	27	31
Perhaps a bit	15	12	12	15
Irrelevant	2	4	3	3
Very little	2	5	4	4
Not at all	51	49	54	54
Don't know	1	-	-	-

Table 8.2. 'Change of taste'.

Source: M-O A: TC Britain Can Make It. 26/1/A. Statistics of 'Change of taste'.

It is noteworthy that approximately half of the exhibition goers were encouraged to think and reflect on the exhibition. It could be argued further that the public outlook was very different from the more intellectual approach of the Design Research Unit (DRU), in terms of recognition. For example, it has been recorded that the didacticism of the DRU display failed to gain any significant public response. The exhibitions, *Design d'en France*, discussed in the previous chapter, and *Great Expectations*, to be discussed in the following both exemplify similar characteristics.

Nevertheless, this very act of thinking and experimenting may elucidate *BCMI's* true impact because the growth of industries in the post-war period was situated in such a

context. Similarly, the Design Council itself had been achieving the same kind of thinking and experimentation before contributing more evidently to the economic prosperity of the last 30 years of the past century. Table 8.3 provides an observation into the impact on the general public as a consumer audience from another angle. It is significant to note that the ‘unskilled’ was a large part of the consumer public that altered their taste after the visit.

Extent of attraction	Middle	Artisan	Unskilled
Taste altered	21	39	47
Perhaps a bit	11	15	2
Irrelevant	5	2	10
Very little	5	4	-
Not at all	58	49	39
Don’t know	-	-	2

Table 8.3. Class differences marked in the ‘Change of taste’.

Source: M-O A: TC Britain Can Make It. 26/1/A. Statistics of ‘Change of taste’.

What MO’s survey reveals is significant. The fact that the artisan and working class was the most widely represented class at *BCMI* presents the exhibition as a communicative idea of design. The idea of design as an intrinsic part and experience of modern culture was rediscovered in the council’s first major exhibition and would be further communicated in the council’s latest major exhibition, *Great Expectations*.

8.2 *Great Expectations*

8.2.1 Creative Britain as an Export Product

Despite having the intention to promote creativity as a brand of design consciousness, Britain was, in the later 1940s, still tied into a chaotic post-war situation, hesitating due to the conflict between commerce and culture, which was, as Maguire has expounded, ‘a constant tension throughout *Britain Can Make It*’.³²

³² Maguire and Woodham 13.

In *Great Expectations* it is clear that the notion of creativity is conceived as an important export of a British speciality in the global context. Hence, the commercial sense is accentuated:

This exhibition is aimed at a business audience, to generate successful long-term partnerships and collaborations between UK and local companies. This exhibition is about business, for business, to create business.

(Design Council, *Great Expectations* 4)³³

Yet, the business that was conducted through the *Great Expectations* exhibition cannot be seen as strictly and merely commerce; there is more to ‘expect’ than ‘can make it’. It is an interchange of creative ideas as promotion, just as the great English writer Charles Dickens wrote of the *Great Exhibition* 150 years ago:

England communicates with the world and prospers. Its prosperity depends on interchange—a steady flow of goods and information both within and beyond its borders.

(Design Council 4)³⁴

Indeed, this is a tour of interchange all over the world where a creative Britain was shown from the West to the East and from Europe to America. The exhibit tour included: New York (2001), Ontario (2002), Montreal (2002), Shanghai (2002), Tokyo (2002), Melbourne (2003), Brisbane (2003), Sydney (2003-04), Beijing (2003) and Shenzhen (2003).³⁵

Making a statement about the UK as a modern, innovative nation becomes the essential objective of this world tour show. In the *Tour Manual West*, the council clarifies the exhibition’s intention to visualise the quality of an outward-looking partner that is Britain.³⁶ It is worth mentioning that the cultural significance of the

³³ Design Council, *Great Expectations: International Tour Exhibition In New York* (London: Design Council, 2000).

³⁴ Ibid 4.

³⁵ Design Council, *Great Exhibitions Tour Schedule* (London: Design Council, 2000).

³⁶ Design Council, *Great Expectation Exhibition: Tour Manuel West* (pdf). (London: Design Council, 2002).

show is also important, as evidenced by the support of the British Council in a number of these exhibition venues. *Great Expectations* could be said to just confirm, at the turn of new millennium, the cultural tone of the earlier tour exhibition *Lost & Found* held by the British Council in 1999.³⁷ Both of them picture significantly the cultural image of British inclusive design.



Figure 8.1. The 'Great Expectations' tour map

Source: Design Council. *Great Expectations Tour* (London: Design Council, 2000).

8.2.2 A Creative Britain

When both the Secretary of State, Chris Smith, in 1997, and the Design Council, in 1998, published their views on *Creative Britain*, the creative role of culture was redefined for a modern Britain. It provided a great opportunity for Britain to promote the notion of creativity as an economic 'commodity' in its own right. *Great Expectations* is an excellent example of a presentation of British innovation in products. And this presentation was made in a creative way: a hundred exhibits were

³⁷ See Birkhauser and Design Council, *Lost & Found: Critical Voices In New British Design* (Basel: Birkäuser; London: Design Council, 1999).

positioned on a table 21 m long and 3 m wide. The idea here was for the spectator to be able to enjoy this ‘creative meal’ as much as possible.



Figure 8.2. ‘Great Expectations’ Exhibition Grand Central Terminal. 2001. New York.

Source: Design Council. Great Expectation Exhibition: Tour Manuel West (pdf).

(London: Design Council, 2002) 2.

‘Original in Colour’

The Design Council explained this initiative fully in its *Apple G4 Computer Directory Illustrating All 100 Exhibit Stories* (2000):

The Design Council’s brief for the exhibition was to develop an experience that would stop visitors in their tracks and instil a contemporary vision of design in the UK. The exhibition needed to deliver a rich and compelling story about innovative design business through a sensory and interactive experience that challenges, persuades and convinces. In order to achieve this, the Design Council invited Casson Mann, a company with award-winning experience in exhibition design, to oversee the response to this brief, the result was *Great Expectations, New British Design Stories*.

The preparation of a new design is like the preparation of a meal – the same search for the finest ingredients, the optimum method of development and the right guests to eat it. With this in mind, Casson Mann not only brought together the consortium of experts needed to create this feast of innovation and excellence, but also used the analogy to set the tone for the exhibition as a whole. Based on the notion of a grand

banquet caught in mid-flow, the exhibition design is a banqueting table on which the cornucopia of selected exhibits unfurls and around which conversations about British design arise.

(Design Council, Apple G4 Computer Directory Illustrating All 100 Exhibit Stories)³⁸

Such a detailed description has been supplied here in order to offer a textual experience of the way in which the spectator interacts with the significance of the design on display. This interactive way has proved effective in that it can ‘stop visitors in their tracks’. According to the impact assessment made by the DVL Smith Ltd. in Melbourne and Sydney, a fair, positive impact is produced by this kind of experience. Table 8.4 supplies a good explanation:

British products tend to be particularly ...	Net agree		Net disagree	
	Baseline	Exit	Baseline	Exit
Base: all	500	503	500	503
	%	%	%	%
... innovative	42	52	23	19
... stylish and fashionable	52	61	25	11
... good quality	71	67	10	5
... dull and boring	26	11	50	65
... poorly designed	13	9	62	69

Table 8.4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

Source: Citigate DVL Smith, Great Expectations Impact Assessment Research, Summary Report: Melbourne and Sydney (2003) 9.

It is evident that the opinions of the majority of visitors have been altered substantially by their ‘interactive experience’. This form of design impact is seen to be in significant contrast to the indifference of the spectator in the ‘What Industrial Design Means’ section at *BCMI*.

³⁸ Design Council, Apple G4 Computer Directory Illustrating All 100 Exhibit Stories (London: Design Council, 2000).

It is indisputable that *Great Expectations* aimed at portraying a creative Britain, from the perspective of the British creative industries, including design, culture, technology and science, with the clear intention of demonstrating how design extracts maximum value from ideas. Such an objective, which stipulates this notion of establishing itself as ‘a valued business partner’ for other nations, reveals Britain’s capacity for an ‘outward’ mode of thinking in order to rebuild the growing relationship between business and the creative industries, in which Britain seeks to be a design-conscious spirited core. Andrew Summers, chief executive of the Design Council, states, in reference to the grand project:

Britain continues to come up with great ideas, but we also have the innovative vision and design skill to translate them into commercial success on the international stage and apply our creativity in a global context.

Great Expectations demonstrates that Britain’s most successful businesses realise competitiveness comes from a never-ending cycle of innovation rather than contentedly resting on laurels. These companies foster a culture where new ideas are valued, and they manage those ideas to create products and services which connect strongly with their markets, meeting needs that not even customers knew existed.

(Design Council, Great Expectations Brochure 3)³⁹

The exhibition expresses a concern with the past, but also has a confidence in its changing perceptions. It is thus noteworthy that the tour schedule is considered to communicate Britain’s capacity to respond. Once more, Britain is able to react to these novel circumstances around the Pacific. It is conjectured that Britain is in the process of building a new way of sharing through the business of survival by design. As the British design consultant Rodney Fitch has pointed out, ‘only one company can be the cheapest. All others must use design’.⁴⁰ The Scottish designer Janice Kirkpatrick also echoed these thoughts in the following, ‘tomorrow’s business must innovate or deteriorate’.⁴¹

8.2.3 A Redefinition of the Design Council as a Form of Media

³⁹ Design Council, Great Expectations Brochure (London: Design Council, 2003) 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The exhibition *Great Expectations* is also important from the perspective of the institutionalisation of design with regard to the changing role of the Design Council. For more than half a century, and with its change of name in 1972, the Design Council has been concerned with its national and international profile. If the council's role underwent considerable changes during the 1990s, then the issue of its role has been constantly re-evaluated since the foundation of the organisation in 1944. In fact, it is held that latent conflicts were planted before, during and after its first major public exhibition, *BCMI*, which itself constituted a number of rather confusing notions as to whether they were advising on design matters or marketing manufactured products. Owing to the immediate post-war situation, the manufacturing and exporting in the council's practices were given precedence.

However, it could be argued that post-1970/80s society affirms the decrease in manufacturing production. The founding objective of the Council, which stipulates that, 'to promote by all practicable means the improvement of design in the products of British industry', was put into question. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, the role of self-knowledge is considered to be absent from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. First, the title change of the council did not bring a deep consciousness of the changing role of the council; second, the dual structure of engineering design and industrial design, together with the compromising equal distribution of funds in two fields, added to the perplexed situation of the council and third; until the appointment of Chairman John Sorrell, the director as guideline was a puzzle. It was not until 1995 that this role was defined to, 'inspire the best use of design, by the UK in the world context, to improve prosperity and well being'.⁴² A clear self-knowledge of this very purpose was expressed in *Creative Britain*, a Design Council report on behalf of the Prime Minister, some three years later:

In an age of instant communication, it is not enough just to improve the products and services created in Britain – we have to be seen to have an economy which is based on innovation and creativity. A sustained, positive image can help to provide British

⁴² Design Council, *Financial Statements 1994–1995* (London: Design Council, 1994/95) 3.

companies with a competitive edge as well as contributing to national confidence and international relations.

(Design Council, Creative Britain 2)⁴³

A year earlier, the Design Council commissioned a report from Demos, the New Labor think-tank: *BritainTM: Renewing Our Identity* (1997), as the council did not think that the government sufficiently drew upon, ‘the nation’s well-established strengths in creativity and design’.⁴⁴

In his report, *BritainTM*, Leonard has succinctly expressed such views in a similar manner: ‘Britain’s industries are still seen as less innovative and committed to quality than our competitors’.⁴⁵ Thus, since 1995, the Design Council has worked mainly as an adviser in order to ‘provide practical support for the promotion of a modern face of Britain’, both at home and abroad.⁴⁶ In order to promote of Britain’s creative strengths and to display the leading role in creativity, the council proposed the Millennium Products initiative. As products, they are properly located as part of an innovative message by the media in a knowledge-based society. Thus, in 1997, the Prime Minister Tony Blair launched the Design Council’s Millennium Products initiative, interpreted its motivation in the report, *Creative Britain*, as follows:

I believe it is time to show a fresh face to the world and reshape Britain as one of the 21st century’s most forward-thinking and modern nations. I challenge companies to demonstrate that the UK can lead the world by creating products and services that exemplify our strengths in innovation creativity and design.

(Design Council, Creative Britain 10)⁴⁷

As a result, the Millennium Products initiative provided an excellent source for the *Great Expectations* exhibition. From a perspective of state branding, the Millennium Products initiative represents what could be conceived as a fresh public face because these products bear little relation to the British traditions other than her long-standing

⁴³ Design Council, Creative Britain (London: Design Council, 1998) 2.

⁴⁴ Design Council. Proposal For A Programme To Promote A Modern Image Of Britain In The USA (London: Design Council, 2002) 2.

⁴⁵ Mark Leonard, BritainTM: Renewing Our Identity (London: Demos and Design Council, 1997) 1.

⁴⁶ Design Council, Proposal For A Programme To Promote A Modern Image Of Britain In The USA (London: Design Council, 2000) 2.

⁴⁷ Design Council 10.

reputation for innovation. Set against a backdrop of modernity, these products embody the continuity of the public well-being, since they explore and realise varieties of available objects-resources in the daily life for the masses. The following are some representative exhibits of *Great Expectations*, which embody the British innovative ideas for the public well-being.



Figure 8.3. Freeplay Energy Group. 'Ranger Self-Sufficient Radio'.

Source: Great Expectations Exhibit Briefing Document (London: Design Council, 2001).

'Original in Colour'

The 'Ranger Self-sufficient Radio', provided by the Freeplay Energy Group, is said to symbolise the principle of 'making energy available to everyone all of the time'.⁴⁸ This British consciousness of resources characterises such types of designed object. The radio can be powered in three ways: via a mains adapter, a winder crank and a solar panel. The radio is, therefore, self-sufficient and ready to use anywhere by everyone without being disturbed by a lack of energy supply. The democratisation of technology and design for the masses are well encapsulated by this small radio.

The flexibility of objects with regard to the user characterises Tom Dixon's exhibit, entitled 'Jack light'. The British spirit of changing perceptions is supposed to be absorbed into this design, a variation of designing for the public well-being. An awareness of these resources is realised not only in its functions, but also in its relation to space: the adaptability and release of space. On the other hand, everyday

⁴⁸ Design Council, Great Expectations Exhibit Briefing Document (London: Design Council, 2001) Article 12. As there is no page number, the reference is traced to the article number.

life as a design brand epitomising modern Britain is appropriately interpreted by this simple object produced by ‘the simplest of manufacturing technologies: rotating moulding’.⁴⁹ ‘Jack light’ stands for British simplicity in design.

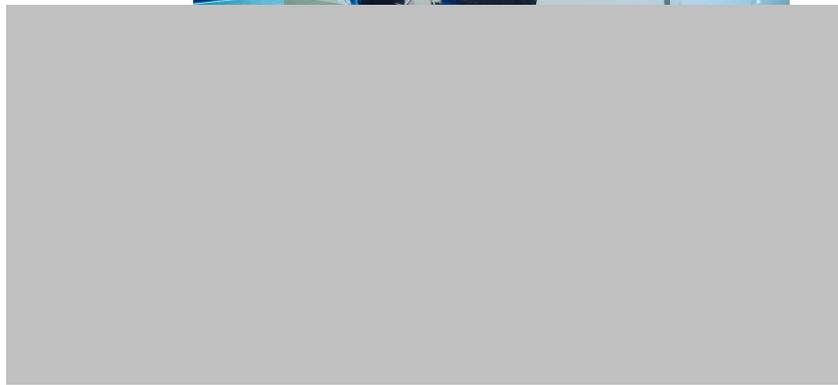


Figure 8.4. Tom Dixon, ‘Jack Light’.

Source: Great Expectations Exhibit Briefing Document (London: Design Council, 2001).

‘Original in Colour’



Figure 8.5. James Dyson, ‘DC06 Vacuum Cleaner’.

Source: Great Expectations Exhibit Briefing Document (London: Design Council, 2001).

‘Original in Colour’

Dyson is a familiar name, a byword of British innovation in product design. Since its invention by James Dyson in 1979, the Dyson vacuum cleaner has passed through many different stages. But, innovation is always the theme of this product. An interesting comparison can be drawn between this product and the asset of the British modern mind. As stated in Chapter 3, the British character of changing perceptions is

⁴⁹ Design Council Article 57.

considered to be an ‘asset in dealing with modernizing forces’.⁵⁰ If the British historian Mandler has summarised Britain’s modern success, the DC06 vacuum cleaner interprets what this asset is: ‘constantly reading and interpreting its environment’.⁵¹

From *BCMI* to *Great Expectations*, continuity and change are conjectured to be perfectly embodied in these two exhibitions. Exhibition design always accentuates the interaction with the exhibition space, from home visitors to international audiences. And creativity is a constant theme in the expression of these exhibition practices. Furthermore, an awareness of the future from the present is thought to be suggested in these exhibits.

8.3 Conclusion

From the perspective of national expressions as the key tone for design events, Britain’s character is also clearly embodied in Britain’s exhibitions as a way of thinking in exhibition design. Although *Britain Can Make It* and *Great Expectations* are rather different in their kind, the accent on products is always clear. Products, as media, appear to characterise British exhibitions. Therefore, products are always considered to take a prime role in these exhibitions. Even in the case of the *BCMI* where products were in shortage because of the post-war situation, the richness of products was communicated by the visual effects. This result later accentuated the material interaction in design.

In *Great Expectations*, products start to present themselves instead of being presented. Time is usually an ignorable component in the exhibition design, because the present is accentuated and highlighted in the product design. As a result, an interactive experience is intended by the products. Moreover, British daily characteristics are consciously transformed into the products: simple, flexible, innovative, popular. Millennium products draw a good conclusion of the modern design developed by Britain for the modern world. For example, the ‘Ranger Self-sufficient Radio’

⁵⁰ Martin Dauntton and Bernard Rieger, *Meaning Of Modernity: Britain From The Late-Victorian Era To World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 119.

⁵¹ Design Council Article 78.

prominently embodies this notion of British modern design: for the many, that is, to 'make energy available to everyone'. The all-purpose product, 'Jack Lamp', is conjectured to almost symbolise the British brand of environmental experience: changeable, flexible and responsive. The product, 'DC06 vacuum cleaner', with its constantly innovative character constitutes an icon of British design innovation. More interaction with materiality instead of symbols contributes significantly to the contextualising of the British modern experience in design practices. *Great Expectations* pictures quite clearly Britain's placing differently and adaptively in modern environment instead of pursuing eternal newness, just as Robin Day put it, 'People often think that mere newness is innovation, but it isn't'.⁵² Nevertheless, *Great Expectations* may also be too localised in innovation without communicating British experience in a full sense.

Through products, environmental industrial objects and the communication of the idea of design, British design exhibitions build design events as intrinsic experience of modern culture in a didactic manner through sharing the idea of design in both economical and cultural perspectives.

⁵² Robin Day as quoted in Birkhauser and Design Council 5.

CHAPTER 9. FROM 1910 TO 2010: A CENTURY DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO IMPORTANT STEPS TO RETURN TO WORLD COMMUNITY

The world expositions are just mirrors, reflecting the distance between modern China and other countries.

(Shanghai Library, *China And World Exposition* 55)¹

Participating in world's fairs has been a necessary step for China to become a part of the contemporary design and cultural world, and, constituting the basis for change in the Chinese vision of the transition to the modern world. This participation resulted in significant design reforms enacted in China, during the second half of the 19th century. This period could be defined as the onset of the China's emergence from a period of comparative isolation to one moving into a realisation of how far it lagged behind the rest of the modern, industrial world. World expositions thus provide a historical window into the Chinese social changes of modern, material culture. Nevertheless, this historical aspect has been often disregarded in modern China itself.

9.1 A Buried Experience of China at the 1851 Exhibition

For a long time, it has been conjectured that Chinese official departments, academic institutions and the medium of the press have been unclear about the history of China's presence in World's Fairs. The first links between China and world expositions are believed to have been established by two people. One is the intellectual, Wang Tao, who visited the *1867 Exposition Universelle* in Paris and recorded his impressions of the place², and the other is the customs deputy, Li Gui, who took part in the *1876 Centennial Exposition* in Philadelphia and wrote a book on it – *New Notes On Travel Across The Earth*.³ The propaganda for the application of

¹ Shanghai Library, *China And World Exposition: Historical Records (1851-1940)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Science and Technology, 2002) 55.

² It is significant to note that Wang Tao, one of the earliest modern thinkers in China, considered modern international exhibitions as display of curiosities. As an advocator of reform in late Qing Dynasty, Wang visited Britain and France in order to escape from government arrest. He later helped Sun Yatsen make proposals to the government. But Wang did not realise the role of modern knowledge in the promotion of social change through exhibitions. The case of Wang therefore contributes to the understanding of Duan Fang's initiatives in holding national exhibitions later in China, as discussed in the following.

³ The visit to the '1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia' exhibition offered wide-open views to Li Gui. Later, Li described the exposition in his book *New Notes On Travel Across The Earth*. Unlike general travel notes, Li added observations of the West and reflections on China in his book. The title is significant with the introduction of the new word 'earth', and there is a map of the Earth at the beginning. It could be seen as a sign of

the World Exposition to be held in the year 2010, in Shanghai, China, was initially based on these documents. But, in March 2002, the China Xin Hua News Agency publicised to the world that, as early as in 1851, the Chinese businessman Xu Rongcun, from Shanghai had been an exhibitor of silk in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and won gold and silver prizes.⁴ The literature referring to this episode has not even been collected by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE).⁵ It can be assumed that China's first experience at the Great Exhibition is buried because of China's isolation from the world.

In the *Great Exhibition Of The Works Of Industry Of All Nations, 1851: Official Descriptive And Illustrated Catalogue* (1851), the exhibits from China were classified as raw materials, animal and vegetable materials and chemical preparations:

Those characteristic productions of China, the great porcelain vases, jars, and other vessels of this material, are illustrated by some fine specimens. The lanterns, screens, elaborate carvings of every description, the lacquered and japan ware, paintings, and other articles, which had long been known to our merchants, and which recent commercial intercourse has brought to our doors, are here exhibited.

(Great Exhibition, Great Exhibition Of The Works Of Industry Of All Nations 1418)⁶

From the description gleaned from the exhibition catalogue, China was only able to offer some agricultural and industrial raw materials – that is, primary products with a low added value – and antique crafts lacking utility. China had no modern industrial products to display in this exhibition, let alone the notions of invention and technology. In the following hundred years, the Chinese presence at various World's Fairs disclosed a sharp contrast to that of other countries by way of their exhibits of industrial technology. It is evident that China is lagging behind in this aforementioned arena, as discussed earlier. The 'hidden' experience of China at the

efforts on presenting new ideas to the Chinese of the time. See Li Gui, New Notes On Travel Across The World (Changsha: Yuelu, 1985).

⁴ See Great Exhibition, Exhibition Of The Works Of Industry Of All Nations: Reports By The Juries On The Subjects In The Thirty Classes Into Which The Exhibition Was Divided (London: Spicer Brothers with W. Clowes and Sons [for] the Royal Commission, 1852) xlix, 163.

⁵ See Shanghai Library 49-54.

⁶ Great Exhibition, Great Exhibition Of The Works Of Industry Of All Nations, 1851: Official Descriptive And Illustrated Catalogue (London: Spicer Brothers with W. Clowes and Sons by authority of the Royal Commission, 1851) 1418.

Great Exhibition of 1851 is revealing in the following two supposed perspectives: that closeness leads to oblivion and opening enhances survival.

As discussed in Chapter 4, this notion of an open and closed door policy represents two rather distinct faces of China. This idea of opening the doors to foreign ideas and trade, which commenced in the 1860s, gave China an opportunity to grow at the same rate as the modern world. But the traditional influence of old China, which had the effect of closing the doors to international intercourse, was fatal for the 1861–95 Reforms. Furthermore, the fact that China, in the pre-1970s period also closed itself off to outside influence and possibility placed itself on the edge of survival. It follows that opportunities and growth were considered to have been severed from the world stage. It could be stated that not only the history of China was almost excluded from the world's knowledge exchange platform, but also that China was believed to have been forgotten by itself in the international exhibition arena.

On the other hand, it is essential to underline the fact that the opening the nation's doors created opportunities. The success of Xu was closely related to the rise and development of the city of Shanghai in mid-19th century as an abundance of foreign trade was established in Shanghai at that time. It is further suggested that 'commercial intercourse' finally built the way for Xu to enter the Great Exhibition. Shanghai, for instance, opened its doors to the Western trade of Chinese silk and tea, with exports increasing annually after the 1840s.

Closeness not only buried this knowledge of a Chinese exhibitionary contact with the world stage in mid-19th century, but also suspended the course of Chinese international exhibitions since the beginning of the 20th century, launched by the *South Seas Exhibition*, the first step for the institutionalisation of modern design knowledge in the 20th-century China.

9.2 A Forgotten Effort: 1910 *The South Seas Exhibition*

In many ways, the *Nanking South Seas Exhibition* is worthy of attention as it is the first Chinese World's Fair and also the first national exhibition in China.⁷ It is a good example of China's clearly stated intention to open the doors to modernity.

The *Great Exhibition of 1851*, in London, is considered to be one of the foremost fairs in the world. Since its opening, such large-scale expositions have been held frequently in Western countries in order to promote production and trade. From the 1860s onward, owing to frequent exchanges between China and the West, the Qing government was invited to participate in numerous expositions. In such a situation, the government started to realise the role of expositions in promoting the country's economy and trade. Regarding the fact that China wanted to develop and modernise, a need for it an exposition was growing. The result was the *Nanking South Seas Exhibition*, which opened on 5 June 1910. See Figure 9.1.

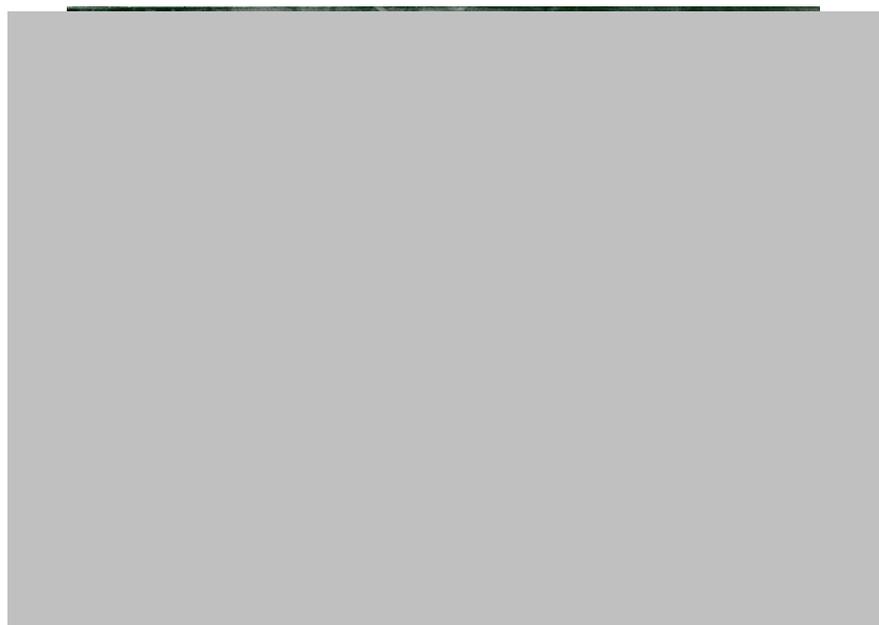


Figure 9.1. Indoor scene of the ceremony hall. 5 June 1910.

Source: *The Souvenir Volume Of South Seas Exhibition* (Nanjing: South Seas Exhibition Office, 1910).

The original proposal for this exposition can be traced back to Zhang Zhenxun, an overseas Chinese, who put forward the idea for this exposition to the government in

⁷ 'Nanking' as the old name of the city will be kept in the quotations and titles of the exhibition. In the discussion the new name 'Nanjing' will be used according to the rules of Chinese PinYin.

1904 with the goal of educating the public and modernising the national economy. However, plans for such an exposition are generally attributed by the Chinese and Western scholars alike – such as Wu Bojun, professor of the China East Polytechnic, and Michael R. Godley of Clark University – to the Governor-General Duan Fang, of the Liang-jiang provinces, one of five ministers sent abroad by the government to investigate the source of European and American wealth and power.⁸ During his visit to Europe and America, Duan also made several observations regarding these expositions. After his return, with the discovery of the value of exhibitions, Duan forwarded a proposal of an exposition to the government believing that a world fair would stimulate the success of national products and encourage necessary reforms. Duan's ideas were finally subsumed as the very objectives of the exhibition, as presented by Chen Lanxun, the managing director of the exhibition, in the following aims: (1) to promote national industry; (2) to build up the Nanjing area and (3) to begin necessary educational and social reform.⁹ Six months later, the proposal was approved. It could be considered a willing action of the government. By the time of the *South Seas Exhibition* itself, conservatives or reformers in the government both laid claim to the competitiveness with which to protect national sovereignty. Consequently, the exhibition offered an opportunity for the government to justify its traditional leadership in the modernisation of the country, especially after the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95. The defeat in the war violated the public trust on an efficient government in dealing with foreign powers. The Qing government needed a public event in order to promote social morale and to appease domestic criticism on the government leadership.

Although the exhibition was not at all comparable in scale and effect to the Western ones of the same era, it remained an important event in the Chinese transition to modernity. It is a 'landmark', as asserted Godley. Based on periodical and monographic sources, Godley has supplied a thorough account of the *South Seas Exhibition* in his article, *China's World Fair 1910* (1978).¹⁰ However, it appears that

⁸ See Shanghai Library 98. Michael R. Godley, "China's World's Fair Of 1910: Lessons From A Forgotten Event," *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (1978): 506.

⁹ Godley 507.

¹⁰ Main Chinese sources used by Godley include: periodical sources, such as "Duan Fang Zaji," *Eastern Magazine* (Shanghai: Shanghai Commercial, 1905); Shen Bao (The Eastern News), a monographic report, *Nan-*

the article bears a slight accent on the political perspective rather than on social consciousness. For example, a narration has been provided, in detail, of the conflicting background between ‘modern national consciousness’ and ‘traditional regionalism’ of the officials.¹¹ Nevertheless, Godley’s study of this exhibition is considered to be a reliable and informative Western academic reference on the topic. In reference to this particular investigation by Godley, and also to recent Chinese monographic sources, it is perceived to be of significance for the purpose of this study to pursue Godley’s idea of the ‘institutionalisation of the fair’.¹² The following statements of Duan’s practices will further this understanding of the institutionalisation of an exposition event.

Duan is one of those Qing Dynasty’s high officials who are thought, by Li Changli, research fellow of modern Chinese history at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to be captivated by Western values. His visit to Europe and America initiated his belief that Western wealth and power were based on commerce and industry. As a result, Duan discovered an answer to the long-sought issue of national strength: the exhibition could considerably promote national unity and healthy competition among industries and provinces. In other words, advance in one province could inspire another. These ideas or visions of certain values were clearly reflected in his plans for a state exhibition to further modernise the economy.

It is important to note, as in Chapter 3, that Henry Cole utilised exhibitions as a way of promoting design reform, and thus to disseminate new design knowledge. Similar ideas were adopted by Duan in the promotion of Chinese industries. In the light of Gogley’s comments, Duan’s efforts are here to be understood as the institutionalisation of modern knowledge in commerce and industries. In his proposal to the government, Duan firmly explained that the search for wealth and power should be based on the development of industries. According to Duan, Japan started to follow the West in this idea of holding expositions. Agricultural and industrial

yang Quanye Hui Lu Zhi (A Description Of The Nanjing Exhibition) (Shanghai: n.p., 1910) and so on. See Godley, Michael 503.

¹¹ Godley 509.

¹² Godley 515. Relating to the above footnote on Wang Tao as one of early modern intellectuals, Duan’s initiatives in promoting exhibitions are of great significance, as he realised the effect of exhibitions as a means of the dissemination of modern knowledge.

products were collated in order to be placed in a context of contrast within these expositions. A market consciousness was intended to promote a relationship between producers and the public. As a result, commerce grew rapidly alongside healthy competition between agriculture and industry. These notions are underlined in the following quotation: ‘any plan for wealth and power should aim at developing industries. And the promotion is best realised through competition in company with others’.¹³

Duan’s intention was clearly embodied in the architecture and structure of the exhibition. There were a total of 26 buildings and pavilions at the fair site. They strongly communicated a Western style overall because the government aimed at recreating the ‘well-known Western expositions’. Hence, the majority of the buildings were ‘modernistic in design’.¹⁴

Of these 26 buildings, two exhibition halls were the highlights: the Pavilions of Education and Industry. These two buildings set the tone for the exposition as a whole. Not only were they the largest buildings at the site, but they were also positioned in the most important place. They were situated just inside the main entranceway, so that every visitor would encounter these two buildings first – one to the right and the other to the left. This could be said to be part of the explicit intent of the organiser, in that it would enable visitors to witness a new view of Western culture. A hall of Cantonese Education was located just beside the Education Pavilion. Canton, a close contact to the West, was similarly arranged in space that demanded attention from the viewers. Past these buildings, the main road diverged creating a large oval area in which were built a fountain, a clock tower, the Assembly Hall in the middle, the Administrative Offices and, finally, a two-storey Fine Arts Building. A side gate was built across the second wide avenue intended for the visitors’ exit. The overall ground plan of the fair could be considered rather symbolic with its typical European design, three large stone arches and orientation facing west.

¹³ Duan Fang and Chen Qitai, “A Proposal For The First South Seas Exposition By Governor-General Duan And Governor Chen,” *China And World Exposition: Historical Records (1851-1940)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Science and Technology, 2002) 203.

¹⁴ John E. Findling, *Historical Dictionary Of World’s Fairs And Expositions, 1851–1988* (New York: Greenwood, 1990) 213.



Figure 9.2. Plan of the 'South Seas Exhibition' Site.

Source: The Souvenir Volume Of The South Seas Exhibition (Nanjing: South Seas Exhibition Office, 1910).

'Original in Colour'

9.2.1. Detail of the plan of the 'South Seas Exhibition' Site.

Referring to Chapters 2 and 3, it could be stated that it is not a difficult feat to recognise a structure of modern Western culture in such a layout. From the Education and Industry Pavilions, the Assembly Hall and through to the Fine Arts Building, it seems apparent that this central architectural plan embodies modern knowledge at its core; it further seems that this notion was adopted by China's fair officials as a modern symbol of success. From the material to the spiritual and from the production of knowledge to its dissemination, this has been represented via the Assembly Hall through public lectures on sciences and human progress; moreover, this knowledge

core, when placed in the centre area of the exhibition, radiates a glow which shines over the rest of the event areas.¹⁵

However, this initiation of creating modern knowledge was not in a favourable situation to encourage its growth. The fair was, it seems, inundated by the messages of traditional thought, which have been indicated as such by the great quantity of traditional exhibits. The exhibits included not only modern armaments and machinery, but also traditional arts and products such as handcrafts from Hangzhou, ceramics from Hunan and damask from Nanjing. Traditional and modern products may have been used, in contrast, to promote the better products – as many exhibitions of design reform did in the second half of the 19th century. Yet, there was an excess of traditional items, as mentioned in the *Shen Bao* newspaper (Shanghai, 7/8 November 1910):

Although the exhibits on this fair are of a great variety, they are largely raw products, seldom inventions or manufactured. And there are more luxurious and decorative goods than simple and practical objects. For those that draw attention, such as embroidery, carving, painting and calligraphy, striking albeit, have nothing to do with utility. As for daily objects, they are in a least number ... Just a look at the exhibits makes us know that our country is still as in a close state as in the past.

(Shanghai Library 213)¹⁶

This presumed difficult situation is also reflected in the architectural structure of the exhibition. The unchangeable nature of orthodox ideas was embodied in the main entrance facing the south. The main gate was designed in a traditional style, which was in strong contrast to the white, Westernised buildings. Yet, even this obviously Westernised architecture contained distinctive Chinese ornamental features. The Hall of Agriculture was a typical example: a basic exterior of Western construction with an interior design that could be defined as strictly Chinese with a rich display of

¹⁵ The structure bore evident similarity to the Western model. The exhibition was thus reported as an ‘imitation of the West’, for example, in *Times*. See *Times*. 1 July 1910: 5.

¹⁶ Shanghai Library 213. The newspaper *Shen Bao* was created, in 1872 in Shanghai, by British businessmen F. Major, L. Woodward, W. B. Pryer, J. Wachillop and so on. In 1907, the newspaper was taken over by the Chinese financier Xi Zhipei, and later by the newspaperman Shi Liangcai. The newspaper ceased publication in 1949. *Shen Bao* had been published for the longest time in the history of modern China. It was, thus, a significant research reference for modern Chinese social, economic and cultural changes.

wood and jade carving. Additionally, pagodas were placed on the four corners of the roof and the hall was located near a pool as a Western element planted in a traditional Chinese Feng Shui landscape. The prevailing disadvantageous situation was also rooted in issues of funding and policy making, just as Godley has expressed:

Almost all of the early industrial efforts had one thing in common: they were sponsored by officials and consequently designed to serve official ends ... It was this vigorous opening of the interior to traders and engineers which pressed the Chinese government to reappraise traditional attitudes.

(Godley, *China's World's Fair of 1910* 510)¹⁷

These conflicting factors explained above further emphasise the difficulty facing the exposition. They indicate a difficult situation for its intellectual officials such as Duan Fang. The compromising features of the fair indicate the challenging circumstances in which modern knowledge finds itself in the fields of industry and commerce. These frameworks are conjectured to have finally resulted in the revolution in 1911 as an expression of the difficulties of institutional modernisation.

Yet, the exhibition could be considered as a qualified success. Rather than a statistical comparison, this study is focussed on the original ideas of Duan Fang. For the promotion of national unity, it is important to note that, from the opening until the closing, the exposition went smoothly without the occurrence of any emergencies. The exposition was reported in friendly terms through the eyes of foreign visitors as reported in the *Times* newspaper.¹⁸ It can be suggested that the Fair was able to serve as a peaceful way of bring about social cohesion. As for the promotion of national industry, these primary endeavours to invite a Western comparison deserve a mention, particularly considering the fact, that the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai*, will soon be a reality. Xiang Ruikun, general director of the Department of Industry and Commerce of the Republic of China in the 1910s, commented on the influence of the *South Seas Exhibition*:

¹⁷ Godley 510.

¹⁸ See Correspondent, "Nanking Exhibition Opened," *The Times*, 6 June 1910: 7.

Since the *South Seas Exhibition*, producers are ready to produce, different from those in the past who would not produce until they got widely known. Why? They become competitive and creditable ... It is a pity that this is the foundation period of the Republic, the economy thus is to be recovered instead of being supportable to expositions. When will the second exposition take place?

(Xiang as quoted in Shanghai Library, 219)¹⁹

Xiang obviously appreciated the positive impetus of the exposition to the economy while regretting the unfavourable social economic situation.

9.3 An Expected Event: *World Expo 2010 Shanghai China*

It is postulated that it will be some considerable time in the future before China is able to hold its second comprehensive world fair. It is estimated that there will be century's gap since the *Garden Exposition*, which was held in Kunming on 1 May 1999. This exposition was only a single thematic exposition specifically devoted to gardening and tourism and aiming at promoting tourism in the south-east of China, especially in the Yunnan province. It could be seen as a mere practice run before the next world exposition in 2010 in Shanghai. *World Expo 2010 Shanghai China* is considered to be more historically related, than the *Kunming Garden Exposition*, to the *South Seas Exhibition*, the first World's Fair in China. It is, hence, suggested here that the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* is the second most prominent World's Fair for China in terms of modernity in that country.

The choice of dates for the Shanghai Exposition is also thought to be significant. The period from 1910 to 2010 defines a century gap which China needs to bridge in order to be able to participate fully and equally within the next world exposition. Considered against the background of the Self-Strengthening or Westernising Movement, this century gap could be construed as a century of lagging behind. Following the reopening of the country's doors to the outside world in 1979 and the realisation of this somewhat limiting vision of the past, it would seem that China reassessed its position and chose to accept the changes and stand before the world's

¹⁹ Xiang Ruikun as quoted in Shanghai Library 219.

leading cultures – even to be evaluated by world standards, as this application of holding *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* suggests.

If the *South Seas Exhibition* provided the first invitation for a Western comparison, the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* will be the second for a world comment. Both projects have the purpose of constructing wider interaction across regions and nations on the lines of Duan Fang's earlier initiatives. As a matter of fact, in his proposal, it would seem that Duan had not even initially contemplated such a notion of an exposition but simply proposed creating an exhibition as the first step to follow in order to promote the institutionalisation of modern knowledge in respect of regional development.²⁰ It is, therefore, intended that the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* will provide the context for the continuation of this narration of a world fair, which has been in action since the beginning of the 20th century. It is suggested to be in this perspective that China sent the proposal of the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* to the BIE, ensuring an attendance of some two hundred countries and international organisations.²¹ It can be suggested that the intention is to build Shanghai as part of a wider international context for world events in the history of world expositions. On 22 March 2007, the Chinese government sent out invitations for the Shanghai World Expo to the world, signed by the premier, Wen Jiabao. As of 18 August 2008, an estimated 221 countries and international organisations have confirmed their attendance.²² These figures speak to the world's acceptance of China's place in the global community.

It is significant to refer back to the location of the first China's World's Fair emphasises the continuity of Duan's initiative in trying to institutionalise Fairs in favour of modern Chinese economy and culture. According to Godley, after a careful study of *Duan Fang Za Ji (Duan Fang's Miscellaneous Notes, 1909)*, two reasons could be suggested for the choice of Nanjing as the exhibition site. The first reason is that the Nanjing Exhibition could have Shanghai as economic backbone. Nanjing is also very near Shanghai but not believed to be as dominated by foreign business as

²⁰ See Duan in Shanghai Library 204.

²¹ BIE refers to the Bureau International des Expositions.

²² 2010 Expo Shanghai China, "List Of Exhibitors At 2010 Expo Shanghai China," 21 December 2007. [Expo2010china.com](http://www.expo2010china.com). 30 September 2008. <http://www.expo2010china.com/expo/sh_expo/czsw/gjcz/userobject1ai46150.html>.

Shanghai. The second reason is that Nanjing is on the Yangtze River, which is easily accessible from the sea. Believed to be acting in the role of parochialism in the realisation of these national objectives, Duan also sought support from the Chinese overseas. Most importantly, the latter were considered to be free to respond without needing to bow down to mandarin pressure. As a matter of fact, the overseas Chinese connection was postulated to be an impressive aspect of the *South Seas Exhibition*.²³

Therefore, three crucial factors can be drawn from Duan's reasons for Nanjing as the exhibition site. First, Nanjing was a place to keep some safety for Chinese inferiority from the competition; second, Nanjing could look to Shanghai – a commercial centre – to raise sufficient funds for the exhibition and third, a wide cooperative vision was also expected to be established through the varied exhibition practices in the lower Yangtze River area where Nanjing and Shanghai were two key cities. In a similar vein, Zhou Qinchen, the president of the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce, advocated country-wide mutual assistance.

In considering the three key factors for the *Nanking South Seas Exhibition*: its location on the Yangtze River, its proximity to Shanghai and its overseas Chinese connections as reliable private funding, Duan's idea was deployed. Taking Shanghai as its financial backbone, Duan situated his promotion of modernisation in the lower Yangtze River region, a traditionally privileged area in Chinese history which he endeavoured to transform into a modernising vector, while incorporating overseas Chinese sources. It is interesting to note that this structure is reflected in the early reform and opening experiments of the 1970s, based on a 'triangle' connection between Shenzhen, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese. Since the 1990s, Shanghai has been projected as the new modernising vector of China, with its national place of finance and trade in the middle of the industrial Yangtze Delta. Considered as the backbone of home sources, Shanghai is also defined as a natural seaport allowing access to these overseas Chinese sources. The choice of Shanghai city as the site of the world's fair demonstrated China's steps towards participating in the world economy since the millennium but, more importantly demonstrates China's efforts to join the world once more. If the *South Seas Exhibition* is the first step to introduce

²³ Godley 511-8.

modern knowledge into China through fairs, the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* is the second. This second step is more significantly noteworthy because it breaks through the conservative attitude of the small-minded. Shanghai is, after all, an arena directly open to the world trade and competition. Shanghai is also open to world cultural events having, for example, hosted international motor racing – Formula I Grand Prix – for a couple of years. Further, in *World Expo 2010 Shanghai China Registration Report* (2005), the rationale for this choice of venue accentuates the condition of the city as a sea gateway of China.²⁴



Figure 9.3. Plan of 'World Expo 2010 Shanghai China'.

Source: China official website of 2010 expo: <http://www.expo2010china.com/download/00004.pdf>

'Original in Colour'

Compared to the *South Seas Exhibition*, China's *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* is conjectured to change substantially in terms of form and content. The layout of the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* shows an open structure with parts of the exhibition site situated at both sides of the Huangpu River. The course of the exhibition could be

²⁴ 2010 Expo Shanghai China. "China 2010 Shanghai World Expo registration report." 5 April 2006. [Expo 2010China.com](http://www.expo2010china.com). 26 February 2007 <http://www.expo2010china.com/expo/sh_expo/zlzx/zcbg/node1726/>

embedded into the growth of the city alongside the river as shown in Figure 9.3, which is the way many such cities are born. This kind of form is especially meaningful as the theme of the exhibition is the city being. *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* explores the localisation of urban culture in an international trade context.

In respect of the exhibition content, continuity and change can also be detected between the Nanjing's World's Fair and that of Shanghai. Nanjing's is evidently based on the universal modernist model with the introduction of core knowledge of industry, education and beauty, which is typical of the period of the first modernity. In the Shanghai's project, an understanding of social change is intended in a global context. It is, therefore, with a quotation from Shakespeare 'What is the city but the people?', that the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai China Theme Vision* presents the objectives as follows:

- Display challenges that global urban development encounters in the 'urban age';
- Promote the preservation and protection of the urban culture;
- Exchange and disseminate sustainable ideas, successful experiences and technological innovations in the urban development; search for the way of healthy urbanization and offer interactive experiences and examples of cities and towns;

Promote the communication, cohesion and understanding of human society.

(Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination, World Expo 2010 Shanghai China Theme Vision. 4)²⁵

These objectives are embodied in the human and urban issues elaborated in the *Theme Vision* manual as the 'multinational corporations, disparity, comfortable housing, traffic planning, climate change, clean energy, resource city, intangible heritage, preservation, human right urban agriculture, creative economy, cyber shopping and so on', as shown in Figure 9.4.²⁶

²⁵ Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination, "World Expo 2010 Shanghai China Theme Vision," 4 July 2007 at <<http://www.expo2010china.com/expo/shexpo/zlzx/xzxx/userobject1ai42498.html>>, click English version.

²⁶ Ibid.

All of these issues will be approached and classified in five themed Pavilions: the City Being, Life, Earth, Footprint and Future. Not only will these considerations be introduced in this exposition, but they will also be combined with rich exposition events in order to explore new urban experiences in a global context. For example, a variety of domestic and international days, festivals and cultural customs practices will be included during the exposition.

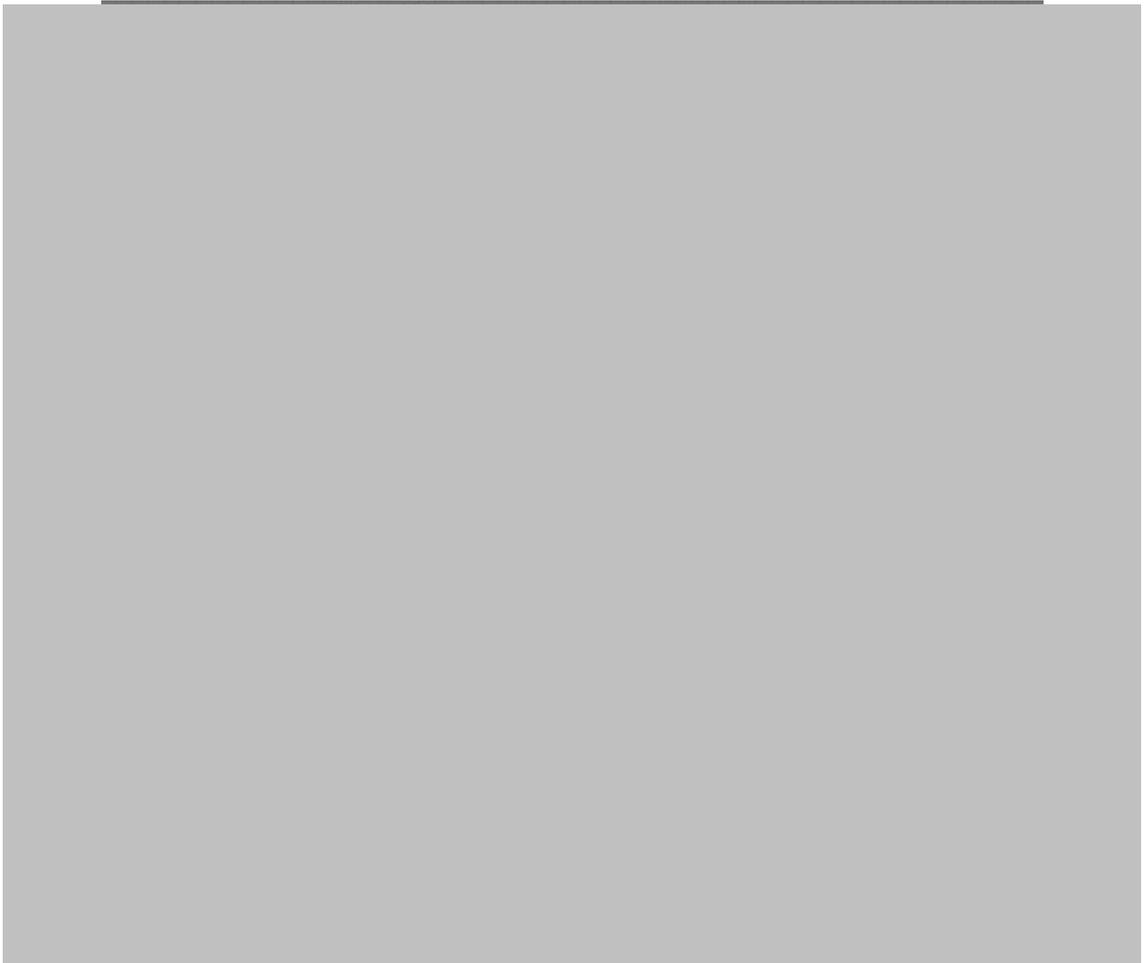


Figure 9.4. 'Human and urban issues'.

Source: World Expo 2010 Shanghai China Theme Vision, 5. at <
<http://www.expo2010china.com/pdf/zpmt.pdf>>, click English version.

An unprecedented effort thus will be made by the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* to explore the complex transition of China to modernity. At the same time, Shanghai is also conducting a practical investigation of the rebuilding of the city in a global age. This kind of urban experience is to be expected. In summary, the *World Expo 2010*

Shanghai seeks to promote an important event for global exchanges of economy, technology and culture in order to pursue the Chinese interrupted steps, following the *Nanking South Seas Exhibition*, with which China has endeavoured take in order to join the modern world as it advances. It is noteworthy, in understanding the *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* initiative, to mention, once more, Xiang Ruikun's comment made in Shanghai 90 years ago: 'Expositions generally aim at: first, competitive survival; second, world education; third, country's celebration; fourth, international exchange'.²⁷ This initiative of returning to the world community will encourage China to weave herself into the world broadband in her own way instead of merely modelling herself on Western precedents. It is this century gap caused by its history of closeness that China must bridge to acquire her own experiences of modernity through design practices.

9.4 Conclusion

Considering national identity as a worthy framework to deal with the issue of modernity in exhibitions of different countries, China's case has been complex since the 19th century, especially since the second half of the same century. Two issues are greatly reflected in the exhibitions as design practices: resistance of tradition and lack of self-knowledge. The Self-Strengthening Movement has offered an opportunity for world contact and the introduction of modern knowledge and ideas. However, the resistance of tradition to changes resulted in a difficult situation for advanced ideas to be rooted in modern Chinese society.

The structure of the *South Seas Exhibition* explains, in a clear manner, the limited development of the idea of modern design in a traditional context. Hence, the compromise was one of the conjectured outstanding aspects of the *South Seas Exhibition*. Similarly, the lack of self-knowledge in modern industrial or design practices leads to the unsatisfying performance of providing sufficient modern exhibits at the fair. The fair's overstatement of traditional objects is perceived to have undermined the public understanding of new ideas. Therefore, the disseminating efforts of Western core knowledge in the fair appeared closed and isolated. These

²⁷ Xiang in Shanghai Library 218.

efforts, then, served more as a political showcase than as a practical means for social changes.

The *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* project displays a strategic thinking in the Chinese transition to modernity. In the perspective of design and its culture, the exhibition contents aim at a more profound discussion on current issues closely related to urban life. In terms of the form and plan, the exposition project emphasises the dimension of innovation and continuity because the process and the result of the Fair is postulated to become a part of urban growth. This forward-looking planning, in relation to the British experience of urban transformation which is necessary to develop urban character, points to the distance Shanghai has to travel. This *World Expo 2010 Shanghai* will be an important case study for China to incorporate modern design ideas into its practices. The successful interpretation of abstract modern ideas in the Fair is what the audience expects: that is, how China will bridge a century's gap to return to the world community.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Through the course of this study, the proposed conceptual structure of ‘modernity’ and ‘national identity’, and the analytical model of ‘modernism’ and ‘modernisation’ have been utilised to clarify the complex significance of design practices and cultures in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. The defining and redefining of national identity in the transition to a programme of modernity, a cultural script for design practices and the cultures of different nations in the modern age. The interaction between national patterns of development and design organisations results in the different ways of value management in the formation of modern culture and the concomitant diversity in design.

Modernity, National Identity and Design Cultures

The influence of historical development upon cultural formation and ideologies is clearly involved in the establishment of cultural diversity in design practices in modern France, Britain and China. This cultural diversity in design is thus informed by, and informs national patterns of development in the building of modernity.

In France, the understanding of culture as ‘high culture’ has led to a close relationship between the arts and political power, and consequently creates a tradition of using the arts to glorify political power; this was frequently visualised through such figures as François I, Louis XIV, Napoleon, De Gaulle and Mitterrand who communicated the image of French greatness through the arts. This state-led ideology has been associated itself with high culture in France. As a result, it established a new paradigm in which the political frameworks contributed to the construction of an instructive ideology with a sense of mission. The luxury and arts industries have been thus heavily promoted as examples of French manufacturing goods as being beyond comparison in the modern world. This understanding and practising of design in an aesthetically logical manner took its explicit form of cultural politics of ‘taste’ during the Third Republic. The decorative arts, a variation of the primacy of the fine arts, became a logical expression of modern design in France, being deeply rooted in this idea of an aesthetic elitism.

The solution – French taste – that high culture offered to France in the search for a national identity rationalised the aesthetic logic in the building of modernity when taste was taken as a national expression around 1900. It follows that this aesthetic logic establishes an elitist cultural script which has framed design practices in modern France in a prominent way. The creation of the UCAD just before the founding of the Third Republic was especially significant as the UCAD, although privately created, played a national role in the field of decorative arts during the Third Republic. The history of the UCAD, with its communicating of the quintessential Frenchness, that is, superior aesthetic quality, typifies the fact that French design culture is informed by and informs the national pattern of development. The problem uncovered in this interactive course of design practices and aesthetic politics is a deficiency in the basis of French modern design. France restricts herself in the understanding and practising of modern design by substituting modernism for modernisation in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. This building of modernity through aesthetic superiority was also confirmed by two situations at the time. The cultural politics of the Third Republic relied essentially on the communication of aesthetic superiority to affirm French greatness. On the other hand, as has been previously demonstrated through the work of Greenhalgh cited earlier, the economic situation around the 1900s reinforced the vantage point of French luxury exports. The practices of the decorative arts during the Third Republic thus assumed the role of the expansion of taste as expression of French modernity in the public arena. The Fifth Republic sustains the aesthetic logic of French modernity.

It was not until the end of the 1970s that the French government instituted the policies necessary to reform the aesthetic logic of French modernity. Efforts were spent on the extending of the cultural dimension to embrace modernism and modernisation by means of promoting a remarkable cooperation between culture and the economy. The innovation of the VIA is an interesting case in point because it was a national initiative in the understanding and practising of design beyond modernism. The national pattern of aesthetic elitism, that is, the modern script of high culture, is to reform design practices. The reforms of the VIA not only overthrew the traditional ideology of instruction in response to a changing society, but also reconstructed a

certain market to the public end. It is considered to be unfortunate that the reforming initiatives of the VIA were undertaken in a limited dimension, relating to the traditional industries and conducted on a rather individual level.

In contrast to the French state-led paradigm of politicised high culture, the political innovations of constitutionalism in Britain has defined a political freedom, occurring through successive stages, which has not destroyed the social fabric. Hence an experiential ideology was established with the purpose of creating a cultural script of continuity and change. This clarifies the reason why Britain has not adopted the revolutionary, national pattern as exemplified in mainland Europe, but instead has emphasised the concept of materiality as a principle of improvement for the many. This kind of social attitude accentuates further a sense of materiality in modern life as the means for the mass to express their social aspirations. As a result, the frameworks, as created by British politics, led to popular and commercial expressions of design in modern Britain. By means of industrial goods, through initiatives such as the *Great Exhibition*, mass communication has become a feature of British design practices. British design is associated with the mass media in contrast with French design which is associated with high taste. French design culture is limited in its experience of modernism in the building of modernity whilst British design practices are by way of contrast based on the experience of modernisation. British modern design practices are therefore directed to a modernity of a broader sense in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process.

The cultural script of continuity and change fosters a changing perception of British design in a daily logic. As a result, innovation features British design practices that seek to change for the better in order to contribute to their own and other communities' lives. The institutional attempts of this innovative attitude of design could be traced back to Henry Cole's reforms. Finally, the foundation of the COID in 1944 took the definitive form of the institutionalisation of design on a national level. The British character can clearly be recognised through design practices in its building of modernity. The promotion of public awareness of design and common welfare situates British design in the aesthetics of daily life. The institutionalisation of this everyday aesthetic is an important signifier of cultural diversity in design in the

cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. In modern design history, the COID provides a complete and well-documented national experience in the institutionalisation of modern design with its success and failures. It constitutes an excellent interpretation of social and economic significance of design in the world transition to modernity. Interestingly, the COID found itself in a state of confusion in its later years, losing any deep-seated sense of changing perceptions in design practices. The reason for this is thought to be its earlier adherence to the politics of cultural elitism, showing its perplexity in responding to the changing pattern and ideology of consumer behaviour and expectations from the mid-60s which gave a more transient –‘pop’ –intonation both to design practice and to designer commodities. Similar to the position in France, this is an issue of understanding of modernisation by modernism in design practices.

Accordingly, the change from the COID into the Design Council significantly projected the national character in the beginning of the 1970s. The reluctance shown by the government in changing the organisation’s title pointed to a conservative aspect of the national character, which only served to extend this state of confusion further. Data of social trends at the time also displayed a lack of self-knowledge as represented by the dual structure of the council over two decades. It was not until the mid-1990s that the council reassumed a position of some authority with a real awareness of the tasks facing it as had been the case fifty years earlier at the end of the Second World War. Initiatives, such as the ‘Millennium Products’ and ‘Creative Industries Task Force’ reminded the council of the part that it was able to play in the British, cultural script of design innovation in a wider context.

It is difficult to make a finite and meaningful comparative examination of China and Britain, or France in respect of modern design practices, mainly because the variables derived from the British and French cases have no equivalent in China, a latecomer to modernity. Nevertheless, cultural and historical similarities reveal the difficulty facing the Chinese in undergoing an institutional change in their transition to modernity, especially due to the fact that the country’s late imperial system was hostile to such a change in the modern world. It follows that the understanding and practising of design was then specifically limited on a state-led economic level. The

reform movements in design introduced into China did not result in similar results to those of other countries in terms of organisations and guidelines that were created in order to establish an institutional framework. Furthermore, such hostility to the institutional change was endorsed by a sense of complacency evident in the national character. China was far from a design-conscious society in the pre-1970s period, owing to the difficult social transition to modernity due to an old, conservative national pattern. Thus, from the perspective of modern design, it is understandable that the Westernising Movement did not result in the institutionalisation of design. By way of contrast with reference to the politics in design in Britain and France, the lack of self-knowledge in China is thought to be one of the most oppositional factors in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. Any understanding and practising of design culture was only based on a farrago of modernism and modernisation on a superficial level.

It is noteworthy that the experiment of institutionalisation of design did start at the end of the 1970s, as shown by the foundation of the CIDA. This is partly because an institutional change was being experienced by the country itself. The fact that twenty years were needed in the search for self-knowledge also points to its difficult positioning in the building of modernity through design practices. Hence, it had been enormously difficult for the CIDA to complete a quick change alone, without being aware that it was positioned in an old cultural script. However, significant changes have since been made in its structure and practices from the year 2000 onwards as the association's practices are largely directed toward the social transformation. It is a real step forward in the institutionalisation of design in accordance with the changing perceptions of national pattern of development.

It is important to note that Britain, France and China all encountered an issue of self-knowledge in regard to cultural diversity in design. With her changing perceptions and participating awareness based on the experience of modernisation, Britain could mostly practise design in a full sense of modernity. Although sometimes reluctant to change, Britain was able to recover quickly her self-knowledge in practising cultural diversity in design. This is what gives Britain a lead in terms of institutional change in modern design history. Relying heavily on a powerful self-knowledge allied to

modernism, the French national pattern largely disregards cultural diversity in design in order to promote modernity through aesthetics. The replacement of modernisation with modernism brings to France a rather more logical interplay of design culture and practices. In the case of the Chinese, a lack of self-knowledge simply prevented reformers from being able to institutionalise design practices in their building of modernity in pre-1970s society. Clear self-knowledge in relation to cultural diversity in design is essential to generate the effective interaction of design practices and national patterns of development.

Design Organisations and Value Management in the Cultural Diversity

Given the increasing institutionalisation of the modern world, design has been an agency for change in the shaping of the human environment. However, exposed to the inherent problems of human environments, people, groups and nations think, feel and act differently in relation to the modernisation process. The understanding and practising of cultural diversity in design produces numerous strata of design cultures in the modern world. Design organisations are therefore important in dealing with the conceptual possibilities of norms and goals in the context of design practices. Understanding these different procedures for value management is essential to the shaping of human environments as a means of seeking worldwide solutions. Using the analogy of the way in which computers are programmed, design cultures can be called value programs while design organisations are considered to be the application of software in design practices.

Britain's modern design practices are closely interlinked with a broad cultural sweep, insofar as they are concerned with the contextualisation of modern life in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. As such they are closely associated with a cultural logic of a mass-based, industrial capitalism. When Henry Cole commenced his programme of design reform, the key terms that Britain adopted were the same as those adopted in France such as 'art' and 'taste'. Yet the way of building modernity enabled Britain to expand this Continental modernism into a British dimension of modernity. Traditional values of high culture were experimented with and redefined, on an industrial basis, and ultimately associated with

manufactured products of everyday life. Accordingly, British design culture intended to contextualise the experience of modernisation through the exploration of a daily environment in modern life. From the creation of the DIA, through the BIIA to the COID, design organisations adopted a rhetoric of promoting design in everyday life alongside equivalent cultural and economic determinants. Their development was fully involved with the Board of Trade and the Royal Society of Arts, suggesting there was a full understanding of design in its promotion of an interaction between the arts, manufacturers and the public. With regard to the broadening of culture in design practices there has been an intrinsic value change since the foundation of the first design organisations. The changing of British design organisations maintains design practices across a wide cultural spectrum to include not only patterns of thinking, feeling and acting, but also the ordinary things in life. The Design Council preserved this particular character of innovative value management through the changes that were occurring in the 1970s, and began experimenting further with the guidelines for the future, in tandem with different brands and also the consumer as indicated by the restructuring and blueprints of the council from the 1990s onwards.

In the British case, this clear adherence to the innovative value management within design organisations relates to the developing of a powerful software of design discourse, taking primarily the form of design history. On the one hand, royal members, reformers and directors such as Prince Albert, Henry Cole and Gordon Russell offered prominent conceptual possibilities for design practices in Britain; on the other hand, from Nikolaus Pevsner, through Reyner Banham, to Jonathan M. Woodham, generations of academics and historians have contributed to the establishment of discursive frameworks for design practices in modern Britain.

Design history in Britain contributes substantially to the value management of design practices in organisational context since the 20th century. Initially, the work *Pioneers of Modern Design* by Pevsner as a form of discursive foundation is a mere contextualising of modernism in modern Britain, as shown by the title of Pevsner's work when first published. Banham later explored the boundaries of modernism in the historical account of design history. The publication of *Twentieth-Century Design* by Woodham embodied a real expansion of script parameters from modernism to a

pluralism of shifts, from production-objects to consumption-effects, which was able to situate a variation of contextual encounters in design discourse as illustrated by Britain's design historians such as Judy Attfield, Penny Sparke and Guy Julier and social and economic historians of design such as Patrick Maguire. The conceptual possibilities of value management through design organisations are largely interwoven in line with this discourse formed in Britain. Supported by Prince Albert, Cole's reforms effectively defined the practical dimensions of what could be termed a 'good design' discourse in later organisations. Furthermore, Utility design was explored by the COID under Russell. He enriched this particular discourse by exploiting it even in the difficult post-war situation, although in Attfield's view, the history of Utility needs to be reassessed. In contrast to the French conception of 'good taste', which encapsulates modern life in a modernist utopia, the British view of 'good design' provides modern life with opportunities to change something for the better. The endeavours of British design historians in the discursive placing of subjects differently, relating to the cultural diversity in design, are significant since what is termed 'global' today is not essentially different from what was understood as 'national' in the 19th century. Design history is neither a single history nor a single knowledge of design, but one of the cultural expressions of value management in modern Britain.

To a great extent France relies on modernism in modern design practices because of its preoccupation with preserving this notion of a superiority of taste. It is an aesthetic logic of a modernising society that is built on the principles of differentiation. Although not the sole creation of France, modernism is the special expression of modern French design, based on high culture and the primacy of the fine arts. Consequently, French design practices follow a symbolic program of distinction, creating something new and exciting. A cultural memory of superiority in taste persists as national awareness which results in the pursuit of beauty in the utility. This aesthetic memory has become the brand image and routine in the transformation of French design organisations. The UCAD was thus created to preserve this idea of the French art of living. The SAD was founded in order to pursue the eternal values of art and promote unique works for the luxury market. The indifference of the SAD towards the need for thousands of simple houses in the aftermath of the World War I

projected its priorities as well as its high norms to the public. As a result, there was no intrinsic value change in the changing of French design organisations in the pre-1970s period. It is understandable that the UAM and the CCI as forms of new value in design were excluded from the SAD and the UCAD.

Examined from another angle, the feature of high taste in French design practices appears to allude to a weak - or even to a lack of - design discourse in France. If there is one, then it is conceived to be an aesthetic or even an artistic one. From Prince Napoleon, through Antonin Proust, Jacques Viénot, to Philippe Starck, an aesthetic discourse has been fostered by generations of officials, directors, enterprisers, designers and critics and has been said to dominate design culture in France. Thus, in regard to cultural diversity in design, the aesthetic discourse usually excludes expressions of materiality and technique. The building of modernity through design is substantially reduced to an aesthetic practice that explores forms and introduces curiosities. Although other designers, historians and critics such as Le Corbusier, Roger Tallon, Raymond Guidot and Gilles de Bure embraced the new scientific ethos in French modernism, their individual efforts failed to nourish a mainstream design discourse for any French central design organisations. This therefore rationalises the leitmotif of 'good taste' which did not bring modernity home but enhanced a memory of artistic superiority in the changing of design organisations. French modern design organisations remain in the position of being unable to break through modernist frameworks. French design organisations act rather as artistic individuals, their practices being considered to be motivated by styles of taste.

Compared to British and French patterns of thinking, China has experienced great difficulties with modern institutional change. These difficulties, for the most part, are rooted in the lack of a comparative thinking and a clear self-knowledge. On the one hand, modern design practices in China had to be conducted through reforms during the second half of the 19th century because of their adherence to an imperial script; on the other hand, the difficulty of institutional change led to inevitable revolutions in the first half of the 20th century, which broke any cultural programs for design practices. It is in this way that the building of modernity was interpreted by the 1861-95 Reforms as a mere introduction of Western technology and the rapid

industrialisation that ensued cost China its traditional crafts in the first decade of being New China. Acquiring an appropriate program for design practices is the urgent issue for contemporary design culture in China. This lack of self-knowledge also characterises the situation of design discourse in modern and New China. Being deeply rooted in an imperial system, modern Chinese society excluded any other conceptual possibilities for the organisational practices of design. Duan's unfinished project uncovered the necessity of promoting social and public awareness through institutionalisation and discourse as well as political factors. Furthermore, a modernist design discourse in modern China failed to promote the institutionalisation of design in the cultural and economic transformation of the industrialisation process. The CIDA can be considered as immature software in this perspective. Because of an inherent deficiency in relation to design culture, China should be preoccupied with an agenda of design politics and discourse to promote social awareness.

Exhibitions as practices in Britain, France and China also reveal the way of value management in the cultural diversity in design. British design exhibitions such as the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, the *Festival of Britain* and *Great Expectations*, provide the modern world with participatory experiences in the cultural diversity in design. French design exhibitions such as the *Paris Exhibition of 1867*, *Design, Miroir du Siècle* and *Design d'en France*, continue to construct aesthetic memory in order to preserve a sense of superiority in taste and to prevent the beauty from being lost in modern life. In terms of the Chinese case, the *Nanking South Seas Exhibition* symbolised a lack of self-knowledge in modern value management in design and the *2010 Shanghai Exposition* will indicate a return to the worldwide community in the building of modernity.

Design understanding and the practice of design by different nations – or, expressed in other words, cultural diversity in design – in fact constitute ways of branding life in the transition to modernity. From the perspective of modern institutional change, the search for worldwide solutions through different patterns of thinking, feeling and acting results in different life brands. Understanding or comparing such similarities and dissimilarities in thinking, feeling and acting results in possible solutions to common problems. Design cultures and practices thus point to the value change that

is the most important for people around the globe to participate fully in the modern world. Pursuing the homogeneity of human environments, British design practices accumulate different participatory experiences in order to shape a coexistent network underpinned by mutual understanding. Believing in the idea of a cultural homogeneity, French design practices persist in the superiority of taste based on hierarchy. Caught up in, and overshadowed by, an imperial perspective, China encountered difficulties in the institutionalisation of design with regard to value change. Having re-aligned herself with the rich diversity of the contemporary world, China is now endeavouring to communicate her own understanding and practice of design. As a result, a clear sense of self-knowledge, a more flexible political system and participation in a discourse more responsive to the needs of changing society constitute the way whereby different states are able to undertake value management through design organisations in their transition to modernity. The new methodological approach to modernism and modernisation devised by this study helps to uncover a structure that provides a multivalent framework for a historical account of design.

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Websites

www.culture.gouv.fr

Has a brief history of the Ministry to celebrate its 40th anniversary and many links to other sites of cultural interest (events, collections, history and archives etc.) and specialised search engines.

www.ensad.fr

Has a special study on the history of the École National Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, published in its electronic journal at <http://www.ensad.fr/accueil.htm>, click 'Journal de l'Ensad'. Four articles cover a period from the 1760s to 1940s, under the titles: *De l'École royale gratuite de dessin à l'École nationale des arts décoratifs (1806-1877)*; *L'École à la recherche d'une identité entre art et industrie*

(1877-1914); La fondation de l'École royale gratuite de dessin de Paris (1767-1815); Une école supérieure à l'apogée (1914-1941).

www.brighton.ac.uk/designarchives

The University of Brighton Design Archives comprise fifteen collections that enhance the understanding of the environment, profession and practice of British design in the twentieth century, of which the collection The Design Council Archive charts the history of the Council of Industrial Design through its redesignation as the Design Council and its restructuring in the last decade of the century. A description of each of the collections in the archive is given at the site.

www.chinadesign.cn

Has rich news and info about the China Industrial Design Association, its activities, rules and policies, publications. It is a worthy website to visit in order to know more about the only national organisation of industrial design in China.

APPENDICES

A 1. Questionnaires of the BCMI

(Source: M-O A: TC *Britain Can Make It*, 26/1/A, questionnaire, London, 1946)

Questionnaire A

- 1a. Have you heard about the BCMI exhibition?
- 1b. (If yes) Have you been to it yourself?
- 1c. Are you thinking of going?
- 1d. Have you come across anyone who has been?
2. What they say about it?

Questionnaire B

1. What made you decide to come to the exhibition?
2. Where do you come from?
3. How many rooms are there in your home?
- 4a. Have you and your family a home or a flat for yourself?
- 4b. If not, how many other people live with you?
- 4c. Are they relations of yours or not?
5. Are you looking for a new home yourself or not?
- 6a. Is there any special exhibit that you want to see?
- 6b. If 'yes', what one?
- 6c. Why do you want to see it?
7. What is your occupation?

(Source: M-O A: TC *Britain Can Make It*, 26/3/A, questionnaire, London, 1946)

Questionnaire D

1. What did you think of the Exhibition?
2. How did you first hear about it?
- 3a. Which part of the Exhibition interested you most?
- 3b. What did you specially like about it?
- 3c. Do you think that you will ever (have/live in-applicable word) anything like that yourself?

- 3d. Would you like to (have/live in) it yourself?
- 4a. What thing in the whole exhibition would you most like to own yourself?
- 4b. (If answer to a. is a room or section of the Exhibition, ask informally what single item in the whole Exhibition person would most like to own)
- 4c. Roughly what would you be prepared to pay for it?
- 5a. Was there anything in the Exhibition which you dislike?
- 5b. (If yes) what?
- 5c. What did you dislike about it?
- 6a. Quite apart from what you have been here, what are the things you most want to buy yourself when they are available?
- 6b. Did you see any (specify item mentioned) in the Exhibition which would suit you?
- 6c. (If not to b)what is wrong with the (specify item) in the Exhibition as far as you are concerned?
- 7a. Do you think you will come to the Exhibition yourself again before it closed, or not?
- 7b. Will you or won't you recommend your friends to go?
8. Are you looking for a new home yourself or not?
9. Can you tell me how long you have been in the Exhibition?
- 10a. Can you tell me who has organised the Exhibition?
- 10b. (If yes to a) who?
11. Do you feel, after seeing the Exhibition, that your idea of the sort of home you want, or the thing you want for your home have been changed at all, or do you feel your taste have not been altered by what you have seen today?

A 2. Personal Interviews

A 2.1 Sparke, Penny. Personal interview. 8 November. 2007, Kingston University, UK

QIAN

Your views on design history are often quoted as you have ever been the founding secretary of DHS, for example, in the debate of English and American scholars about design history. Would you please define the English discipline of design history in the world academic context, its role, its subject, and its past and future?

SPARKE

I think it's changing all the time. It grew up really in the 1970s, I supposedly, 1960s and 1970s. And in the first period, it grew up, linked to art history, and linked to architecture history. Then, I think, the next stage is linked to social history and economic history, it's probably in the 1980s, social and economic history more early 1980s. Then it became more linked with cultural studies in the late mid-1980s, something like that, very linked to writings on consumption and gender, and things like that. So it has changed and evolved as a discipline, and in the way it is still a single discipline, but it moved into many directions and touches other disciplines. And I think also perhaps history activities got stronger, so it is a branch of history. And then in the America of course, it's a move on design studies, something different, because it doesn't have history in the same way. It's more seen design as contemporary phenomenon.

Do you think it's more linked to the cultural roots?

I think in England, it's linked to historical culture, changing from the Renaissance to twentieth century. Whereas in America, it is linked more to design practice maybe, and more a sort of interest in the role of design in contemporary society, I would say. Then in England, it has developed in new universities. The new universities are formed of old polytechnics in the 1990s. Art schools were part of polytechnics. When the polytechnics became universities in the 1990s, art and design became part of them.

And design history has grown up next to design. So it is not grown up in the humanities context, hasn't grown up next to the English and languages. It's grown up next to design practice.

So it is a little different from the European tradition of humanities.

It is, European tradition is much more humanities, whereas design history developed, because designers needed history of that subject when they've been educated. So it is a different route.

Does it mean that constitutes the character of British studies of design?

Yes. I think so, it's linked to design practice. Whereas in France, it may be more linked to philosophy, to theories, but here it is more linked to designers.

I may notice there is some, for example, change of design history centre or section into some kind of RD centres, as it is RE here, in English universities.

How would you interpret this kind of phenomenon, it's a new form of expertise or it simply means a decline of design history discipline?

I think it is two separate things. I think design history, I think there is a little bit decline. But I think the reason of decline is not what you said. It's because every other discipline, architecture history, art history, social history, cultural studies have taken design history into them. They've seen design history as being part of them, anthropology, material culture. So if you like, design history has grown very very big, but it becomes invisible, because it is absorbed into all those different subjects. The narrow design history is quite small, it looks it has declined. But if you look at anthropology now, you will find some issues of design history, if you look at architectural history, some issues of design history. They have all taken a little bit and absorbed it. So design history really goes out.

Maybe it looks like a core of content, like philosophy, many things have been taken from it.

Exactly, cultural and theoretical studies have taken a lot from philosophy.

But still, I think it is a special invention of Britain.

Yes definitely, in 1970s.

I have been always interested in your term quoted from Foster in your book Introduction to Design Culture, you would propose a 'political economy of design'. And what would you propose with that kind of term?

Well, I suppose what I am saying there is that you can't see design in isolation. It's part of big context. It always links to agendas, often political agendas, maybe business agendas which are economic agendas. So I think that governments have used design to develop maybe national identity, for example. Businesses have used design to be competitive, to have something extra from the competitors maybe. So design is always used in a context, political or economic maybe cultural.

So you think now it's a more appropriate context for design to practice or to conduct its activities, this context.

Well, I think it is born of that context, born of it, and remains part of it, can't be separated from it. It's intrinsic, if you like.

Because I am doing research on design organisations, if I can know as you are a specialist of design history discipline, how can you define the role of design organisation in design history? I mean how it is helpful in the understanding of design?

Well I think it is very important, because I think that's very much the political end. It depends on what kind of organisations you are talking about because there are different sorts. Obviously there are government agencies, who want to promote design. And they may be doing it for different reasons. They may want to be national identity, they maybe want to try to do that. They may want to encourage consumption, they may want to build a consumer base in the country. They may want to develop exports. They may have a different agenda. They may want to develop cultural identity to give to the country, for example, they use design to define themselves as a culture. So organisations are very important, because they provide an agenda for design, if you like.

So does it mean that Design Council has realised somewhat this kind of objective?

No, because I think in the end, the organisations have to work in a big context which is the economics and culture of the country. And they can try to fulfil their objective. But maybe the culture goes to a different way and doesn't accept. Or they don't understand what consumers want. They might get it wrong. And I think very often they get it wrong, because they can't dictate, they can only try and reflect what people want.

So in that sense, can I consider British studies of design history in the perspective of consumers, for example the works of British design historian Jonathan Woodham, are very valuable for understanding the public as we now define them as the audience in the dissemination and understanding of design?

Exactly.

I think, from what you said just now, design can be established as an identity from its beginning. Do you think creativity is also a brand of English design organisation or education?

Well, that's very interesting. I wouldn't say just design. I would say that creativity is very important, but it is bigger than just design. It covers art, it covers performing arts, music and drama. I think it is indeed very strong in what we might call creative industries, but design is only one part of that. And in some way it's not the most pure part. If you want to have a pure creativity, then it's more like music or poetry.

Artistic?

Artistic yes. Design has creativity, but it is constrained creativity, it is constrained by economics, and by business. So it is always limited creativity.

Yes, it is always a part of other activity.

Exactly. It's never free, except you are talking about design pieces in the galleries, which are kinds of fine arts really.

And I think it's very interesting, you see, while other national design organisations in other countries, they are turned into private ones, it remains still national in Britain. What do you think about it?

I think that's the difference between the one that is politically motivated and the one that is business oriented. And I would say that Italy is a good example, I know a lot of

about Italy. Their organisations, much like France, are quite weak. They have made a group of manufacturers working together. So really, they support the trade. And it depends on whether you have a centrally driven economy or whether you have a highly fragmented economy. And Britain has always had a centrally controlled, a kind of controlled capitalism. So the government has always tried to control things, while in Italy and France, they don't do it the same way.

So do you think this kind of central control is of some value? In the case of China, it may need some central control, because development levels are so different in regions.

It is always a balance, I think. It is very interesting. I just come back from Dubai. What is interesting there is because they have what they call benevolence, a tribal politics. It's a little bit like China, there is central control and then the market.

Yes, sometimes, I find just my country now is in a cross-road.

Exactly, that's what I mean, you have a controlled but you have a market. And I think it's important for the market to become strong. And that's quite difficult things to control.

According to Max Weber, expert knowledge of private body is superior to expert knowledge of the bureaucracy, but I don't think it applies to the Design Council?

No, it doesn't. Very difficult. The Design Council ...

I think it has greatly contributed to the expertise.

Yes. But you have to remember also that Design Council is situated politically, not in the culture, in the trade. In a way, Design Council has much more authority back in 1950s, much more authority. In 1950s, the world is changing and the consumption is growing, and central control has still a place. They can dictate taste, because I think design and taste are very closely linked. And taste is a very difficult concept. You can't impose taste on people, they know what they like. And design and taste, I see the other side of the same coin, in the consumer context. So really, when you are working with design, in some way, you are working with popular taste. And popular taste has a life of its own. And designer is a kind of anticipating future taste, if you

like. And I think the most interesting thing is in the 1960s when Design Council had a crisis, a big crisis.

Crisis of what?

Because of the emerging pop culture. Because essentially the Design Council was modernist, in the sense it believed in 1920s' modernism, that is, form follows function. It had very pure definition of design. And pop culture came from no where and had a different value. That's why the market began to be more powerful than the government. So things like pop music, pop culture, pop fashion, I think that's where England is strong, nothing termed necessarily of the organisations. It's more the creativity that comes from the street. And Design Council would like to control that, but it's impossible. I think Design Council used to play central role, now plays a role to one side. It has to define its role very carefully.

Do you think, because you have just talked of modernism, that the English way of institutionalising design comes to an end in knowledge society? Or what is its sustainability?

I think it comes to an end. I think some end in the big way. I think in the small way, it still has a role to play. But I think it's very a defined role. And the role Design Council plays today is to bring together people, bringing together education, design practitioners, politicians, business people. Its role is to bring people together. That's a very important role, but I don't think it is the role of the 1950s. The 1950s, it was definitely, it could say to people, these objects are good design and come to buy. But now Design Council can't tell what good design is. It's impossible, because there are so many models of design. Do you think China will develop in this way?

Yes. You see, China has governmental cooperation with Britain in this perspective, I think it is in creative industries. And I just wonder if creative industries are the enlargement or include the process of design?

Well, I think creative industries are just bigger than design. I think it's very very big. It's museum, it's advertising, it's book publishing, it's music, it's theatre, it's drama, it's architecture, it's product design, fashion design ... many areas. It's very very big

creative industries. It's mostly made up of small companies. It's difficult to describe because it's so broad.

Does it mean that creative industries try to establish connections in the whole cultural and economic context.

Yes. The economy is made of manufacturing industries. And creative industries are all of these small things trying to cluster together to function in the similar kind of way. So many small things come under the umbrella around them, creative industries, so trying to equal to the manufacturing industries and service industries.

Talking about modernity constructing, which is a topic in your book, in the knowledge-based society, how do you evaluate the English and French models in the perspective of art and design development?

Very different, very different. It is difficult to generalise. I would say England has two contributions. One is what I call design reform, which is William Morris. That continues to the present day. And that is design reform, in another words, good design and design value. And then there is what I call creative popular culture, which is more to do with the taste. And I think design is somewhere in the middle of these two things. And creative industries owe more to this than do to that. And lots of it has just to do with art education system.

Does it mean that Britain has developed a special model of modernity parallel to French modernism?

Yes. But the French was much more avant-garde. England always has tradition, very traditional. Even it is something new, it will have something traditional in it. So the French, probably in the early twentieth century, always embraced modernity. We always have a little bit pull, pull back I think. It's very interesting you compare the French because it is so different. And the French they have the luxury area, they have decorative arts. We don't have that thing, decorative arts, luxury. We come from different places. We are Anglo-Saxon, it's a completely different mentality from Europeans.

Maybe in the perspective of post-modern societies, Britain has, in this sense, made big contribution to the life culture or the material culture.

Yes. Especially about class I would say, because the French are dominated by bourgeois culture. In France, bourgeois culture is really important. In England, we

don't have such a big bourgeois culture. We have an aristocratic culture and we have a working class culture. And the middle class is not as thick as France. And creativity in England comes from the tension between the two classes. Are you conscious of that?

Yes. I am just doing the comparison. Thank you very much for your ideas and your talk. That will be a great help for my research project. Thanks.

A 2.2 Huang, Wuxiu. Personal Interview. 14 August 2006. Beijing.

Having fortunately got permission from Lay Huang Wuxiu, Secretary-General of the China Industrial Design Association (CIDA), PhD student Qian Fenggen, from the Faculty of Arts and Architecture, at the University of Brighton, interviewed Lady Wang in Beijing, on 14 August 2006.

QIAN

I am really grateful for your offer to be interviewed in the midst of pressing affairs. I am looking forward to collecting your comments and ideas throughout this interview. First of all, I would like to know what your main achievements are since CIDA was set up in 1979?

HUANG

The China Industrial Design Association was officially established in 1987. Yet, its foundation is usually traced back to the year 1979 when the working committee was built. In fact, CIDA's proposal was first made in 1978. That year, the attendees at the National Symposium on Radiogram Form, Technology and Structure, who were from various art academies, submitted a jointly signed *Proposal for the Foundation of the China Industrial Arts Association (CIAA)* to Li Xiannian, Vice Chairman, and Fang Yi, Vice-Premier. Granted the permission from Li Xiannian and Fang Yi, the foundation of the CIAA was authorised by the China Association for Science and Technology in 1979.

That is to say, from the very beginning of the reform and open period at the end of the 1970s, professionals and educators in this field have adopted a forward-looking approach in which they promoted the development of industrial design.

Yes. The awareness to promote the development of industrial design has been produced by these reforms and the open policy. But there wasn't a clear conception then, because what was proposed was an association of industrial arts, whereas the industrial design association came into existence only after a difficult time. In 1979, the working committee of the China Industrial Arts Association was set up. The first

session of the working committee was held in Beijing in August, 1979. Eight years later, the working committee applied to the China Association for Science and Technology and the National Department of Light Industry to change its name from the CIAA to CIDA. On October of the same year, the application was approved and CIDA held its first conference on the 14th of October, in Beijing.

The establishment of CIDA is a great event in China. Thanks to this organisation, the individual attempts of industrial design in different parts of our country are finally able to join together in the promotion of industrial design in China. The activities of this working committee have had a significant impact on the institutional level of Chinese industrial design, similar associations have been founded in different provinces and cities. Up until the establishment of CIDA in 1987, the awareness of industrial design had grown greatly in China. Since its official foundation in 1987 and in collaboration with the national and educational sectors, CIDA has undertaken a series of important and significant events to promote Chinese industrial design. You may refer to the first volume of the China Industrial Design Annual for details. The compilation of the annual is also a great event for CIDA. It traces and summarises the course of CIDA as well as Chinese industrial design. There is a historical account for CIDA, and there is a review of traditional Chinese civil products as well. Generally speaking, before 2000, CIDA still had a narrow scope of activities, such as academic research, exhibitions and professional standardisation. A lot of changes have taken place after 2000.

That is to say, after 2000, CIDA started to move extensively into society, isn't that right?

Absolutely! On entering the new century, CIDA was trying hard to grow outward, establish enterprise links and go into the world. On the one hand, the Association was playing an active role in making Chinese industrial design known in public, such as compiling the yearbook, creating the web site. On the other hand, the Association was devoted to branding itself and supporting the development of Chinese industrial design; for example, undertaking the event of the China Industrial Design Week, building design agencies and founding new training centres. Among them, the 2004 China Industrial Design Week has particularly promoted Chinese industrial design in

both respects of quality and quantity. It had, thus, a significant influence at home and abroad.

As for 'the China Industrial Design Week', could you tell me about this event? How much influence has it exerted? And what role does the Association play in this event?

Firstly, the Association is the organiser of the event. In 2002, the Third Conference of CIDA decided to hold the *China Industrial Design Week*, which received substantial support from the Ministry of Science and Technology, the China Association for Science and Technology and several domestic key media. The first *China Industrial Design Week* was organised by CIDA and the Wuxi Municipal Government in Wuxi, 2004. It was titled, '*the 2004 China Industrial Design Week & the China Wuxi International Industrial Design Expo*'. CIDA was in charge of its plan and execution. The Wuxi Municipal Government offered human and material resources. This first *China Industrial Design Week* had various activities, including a design summit, design exposition, awards, and thematic competitions. It has been a magnificent event for Chinese industrial design. In 2006, the second *China Industrial Design Week* will soon be held in November, in Wuxi. You may go to the event if you wish to personally experience its impact.

The first *China Industrial Design Week* has a particular resonance at home, opening up new prospects of cooperation between the Association and local governments in the promotion of industrial design and the economy. It has had a chain reaction in several cities, such as Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Dongguan and Ningpo. The local governments of these cities have considered joining CIDA in order to undertake such kinds of events. Owing to these ever-growing influences and effects, the *2006 China Industrial Design Week* has received wide support from further national sectors, such as the National Development and Reform Commission and the State Intellectual Property Office. There will be more activities as well in the future.

I imagine that an event of this scale must have drawn a great deal of attention from the world.

The initiative *China Industrial Design Week* has had the intention of summarising the course of Chinese industrial design while, at the same time, presenting it to the world and introducing an international and advanced form of awareness as well as a successful experience of design into China. As a result, this event has drawn much international attention, and also contributed to the exchanges and cooperation between China and the world. Several experts in the field of industrial design and over twenty famous experts at home and abroad were invited as keynote speakers to the *2004 China Industrial Design Week*, including Luigi Ferrara, the President of ICSID; Michael Thomson, the Principal of Design Connect, U.K., and Member of the Executive Board of ICSID; Chul-ho kim, the President & CEO of the Korean Institute of Design Promotion (KIDP); Bruce Claxton, the Director of Design Integration Motorola; Masayuki Chikazoe, the Director of the Japanese Design Foundation on external assignments in the Asian Pacific Design Network; Yang Mianmian, the President of the Hairer Group; Ilona Tormikoski, the President of the Association of Finnish Industrial Designers TKO; Ralph Wiegmann, the President of the IF International Forum Design GmbH. The *2004 China Industrial Design Week* attracted over 200 top industrial design organisations from 30 countries all over the world. Over 36 domestic and foreign industrial design institutions, such as Medilink, West Midlands, Design3 Produktdesign, KIDP, Millot Design, Studio Sano, Nova Design (Shanghai) Ltd, have set up their own exhibition stands, showing the current focus in the field of world industrial design.

Such an event is rather worthy of high estimation with its unprecedented scale, its presentation of the latest achievements and enhancement of cooperation. This event clarifies the importance of the role of CIDA in promoting the development of Chinese industrial design. Further to this, I would be interested to know exactly how close the links are that have been established between CIDA and the local governments?

Before 2000, as mentioned earlier, our activities were still limited in the fields of academic research, exhibitions and professional standardisation. It could be said that the relationship between the Association and local governments tended to become

closer as CIDA gets more involved with society after the year 2000. In 2004, the Chinese Industrial Design Week illustrated a close cooperation between the Association and local governments. Motivated by CIDA, local, industrial design associations have been gradually established in provinces and cities. These local associations are taking an active part in promoting local industrial design. At the same time, CIDA is also devoted to help build close links between local associations and governments. Of recent years, local governments in such cities as Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing have further understood the role and place of industrial design.

As a professional academic body, is CIDA less involved in the decision making of central government? In other words, in contrast to the close links with local governments, does CIDA have a less important role in urging the state government to make a design agenda?

The truth is just the reverse. As the only national organisation in the field of industrial design, CIDA assists, substantially, the Central Government in framing trade development and supports local governments in carrying out/ in implementing national, industrial policies. Zhu Tao, the Director of CIDA, has written to the State Council and submitted proposals to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in order to promote state policy-making on industrial design. Meanwhile, the Central Government has also sought collaborations with CIDA. For example, CIDA assists the Department of Industrial Policy in National Development and the Reform Commission in drawing up Chinese industrial policy on industrial design. At the same time, CIDA is also trying to promote a collaboration among national sectors in regard to the policy-making of industrial design. Moreover, CIDA seeks links with other design organisations in the world, for example, CIDA has signed a Cooperation Memorandum with KIDP in the exploration of strategies for industrial design development.

You have just mentioned KIDP, I wonder if CIDA has looked internationally for administrative models of design organisation. Is it possible for CIDA to adopt the models of the East Asian design organisations, like KIDP and the Japanese Industrial Design Association (JIDA)?

These Japanese or Korean design organisations have been worthy references in the institutionalization of design especially in regard to the Asian situation. Take Japan for example, with an export-based economy, it attaches, therefore, great importance to industrial design. It follows that Japan has built a perfect administrative system of industrial design: there are special officers in charge of industrial design matters from provinces, cities to counties. Obviously, this is the reason why Japanese industrial design can develop at a high level. The management of industrial design in Korea is fully centralised with a high level of state funding. Korean's outstanding industrial design has largely resulted from a fruitful collaboration between design companies and enterprises. Design corporations provide enterprises with a first-rank research platform in respect of the design development. Moreover, the government grants considerable fund allowances to design companies, which is as much as one third or even two thirds of operation funds for a company. Design companies in Korea, thus, are able to be fully devoted to the research and development of design without being worried about their survival. As for the institutional model of design, the situation is different in China, Japan and Korea. Neither is the administration in China as perfect as that in Japan, nor is the support from the government as substantial as that in Korea. There are not yet enough institutions established for the cities in China, as in Japan; needless to say about the counties. KIDP has got a staff of 100 people, while CIDA has only 9. So we have to refer to both Japan and Korea for a proper model to follow. On the one hand, CIDA is trying its best to get more support and funds from the government. On the other hand, CIDA is also seeking the possibility of raising funds through holding a series of events, like the Sino-Korean Design Exhibition in Seoul, Korea. Such activities are likely to improve the awareness of industrial design and encourage the Central Government, especially local governments, to allocate more funds.

It is really appreciated that you have done a lot although with such limited staff. Nowadays, it is a hot topic as to whether China is able to lead the way in industrial design. It may not be realistic to talk about it yet. For the moment, it is, first of all, necessary for China to greatly improve its design education in order to reach an excellent level of performance in world industrial design. Due to the actual situation in China, vocationalism is the

main driving force in Chinese design education. In the transition from the 'made in China' to the 'be designed in China', the intellectual level of design education is considered to be much improved. Has CIDA considered any plans in the promotion of a national design education?

Yes, creative industries and technology are much discussed today. But it is impossible to innovate and influence with a weak level of cultural awareness. It is with such a consciousness in mind that CIDA holds seminars and symposiums. Talking of design education, CIDA is too short of time and people to take part in it for the moment. Fortunately, quite a few of the directors of CIDA are experts in the education world or in charge of educational institutions. They are, themselves, investigators of design education. CIDA expects to intervene in national design education through their efforts.

It is a long way for design education in China to go, because there are still lots of problems with primary education. There is a remarkable difference of levels between Chinese education and those of developed countries due to the (arguable- arguable in what way?: what could be stated to be our dubious? Developing?) system of education. Since you are studying in the UK, you may note a distance of one hundred years between the UK and China regarding education. It is not an issue which can be solved in a short time, for the educational (chain- what do you mean here?) is still in serious crisis. From primary schools, middle schools to universities, quality is underestimated. CIDA has constantly strived (to draw the attention of the education world- unclear?) to this?? innovation and improvement, especially regarding design education.

Finally, I would mention the views of Philip Dodd, the President of the British creative institution 'Made in China'. He thinks that creative China will soon be fashionable in the world? As Secretary-General of CIDA, with frequent contacts design world, what do you think about this?

Indeed, China has become a hot topic of world media in these past few years. Many reports about China have spread widely around the world, some of which are not exactly true, though. It can only be said that the world is paying close attention to the

development of China in all respects. For example, a topic that is frequently mentioned is whether there is a possibility of a Chinese leadership in design in the West. Personally, I find it too early to talk about a Chinese leadership in design, since Chinese design still lacks strength. But we may build our confidence in the long term. I think human civilisation is a historical continuity, a continuity of historical value. Europe and America have driven civilisation in the modern world in their own ways, and China has also contributed to its continuity in the past. I hope that every nation can pave the way for world civilisation in its own way when it is able to do so, in order to complete its cultural responsibility. CIDA will still continue to be actively involved in the development of a world design culture.

Many thanks for your comments. I think, with your endeavour in management, CIDA will receive more support in the promotion of design, industry and economy in China, and even in the world.

A 2.3 Guidot, Raymond. Personal interview. 25 June 2007. Paris.

QIAN

You have published a book on design history in France. In your view, is there a discipline of design history in France?

GUIDOT

In fact, the first person to be published on the subject of design history was my friend Jocelyn de Noblet. Jocelyn is the first person to have substantially published anything on international design in France.

Is this to say that he is to be considered somewhat of a pioneer in explaining exactly what design in France is?

Yes, but in a general sense. Although, I can't say that I have ever really specialised in design history in France.

But, I was under the impression that your book had a particular emphasis on French design or not?

No, honestly, it doesn't. The writing focuses more on Great Britain and Germany, instead. For me, I think that the word design describes a state of mind in France and Britain. An attributive is often added to the word design in order to indicate the precise field associated with it, for example, industrial design and graphic design. It is a state of mind. It constitutes something that takes a long time to transmit. If France had started to talk about design, it would have been under the influence of Italy. At that time, design became a synonym of furniture design or style. One talked about design as style. In France, one still talks about it as style.

Yes, it is therefore closely associated with an artistic sense.

Certainly, and with fashion as well.

Yes, it is very interesting; because, when I studied at the ENSAD, the College of Art Deco, one of professors conveyed the notion to me of using the word design as an adjective, in the sense of 'being modern'.

Oh really? I taught at the College of Art Deco for sixteen years, and I left in 1981 when the Ensci was created; so, I went there after. But, going back to the word design, it is true that the word design is easily taken for an adjective in France. One can say, a 'design' interior.

And when you went to the Ensci, what was expected from you in your teaching?

Obviously, it is the knowledge of design history, of industrial creation, of the Industrial Revolution; that is to say, putting the practice of design into this industrial context while, at the same time, giving a lot of attention to technology, as well as talking about the influence of technology on a form.

I see. Does it mean that the movement 'Useful Forms' is to be understood in this perspective?

Exactly. In fact, in France, there has been a continual effort made towards developing Industrial Aesthetics, which is centred on this conception of 'useful forms'.

Would you say that the practical or pragmatic side to things was a little late in developing in France?

Yes, take me for example, I am first and foremost an engineer. I studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Métiers. Then, I left for Algeria and stayed for over two years because of the Algerian War. One day, a librarian gave me a magazine, saying 'this may be of some interest to you because you are technician, there are those who are engaged in making beautiful and industrial objects'. That was in 1959. The Goddess 9, which appeared in 1955, was presented in the magazine. And, it really was a typical object. Also there was such kind of a small camera, and it was

very beautiful indeed. Therefore, it gave me the impetus to make contact with the staff of this magazine that was called Industrial Aesthetics. It was in this way that I came, after retiring from the army, to work in this consultancy, of which Roger Tallon was the technical and artistic director. I have worked there for ten years now, with Roger, until the Centre de Création Industrielle was established by François Mathey, François Barré, Yvonne Brunhammer and Yolande Amic. In 1969, I joined this institution.

That is to say, with people, such as Roger Tallon, you have been able to establish some kind of norms in the work of design?

Sure, Tallon is the first industrial designer in France. Many people worked independently then, in the 1950s. The consultancy Technes was founded by Jacques Viénot in 1951, where Tallon worked. A year later, Raymond Leowy opened the Industrial Aesthetics Company. I think it has been traced back to the year 1929, when the Union des Artistes Modernes was created by such architects as Le Corbusier, Robert Mallet-Stevens and René Herbst, who played a main role in its creation. With regard to everyday objects, the UAM has specialised in the making of furniture. Strictly speaking, it was not yet classified as industrial design then. It is true that France has had a 'belle époque' at the beginning of the twentieth-century, with the Art Nouveau movement, it was a great moment for France. Then came the reaction. Art Nouveau created a sort of microcosm where everything communicated with each other. There was a tremendous influence from the far east, of which France is really, I think, one of the most influenced countries. One can find this oriental influence on the Art Nouveau movement, and then, in turn, on the Art Deco.

Could we say, then, that this period until 1929, is when France was at the fore of design?

To a certain extent, in Art Nouveau, one can find complex furniture designs by Guimard, which combined several different functions and yet became true sculptures at the same time. In the Art Deco of the 1920s, people, such as Ruhlmann were, as it

is commented today, fortunately, able to revisit ancient themes. One may also refer to that great Exhibition of 1925, where the Asian influence was as important as it was at the beginning of the century. In the great Exposition of 1925, in Paris, many young designers were excluded, and they therefore set up the Union des Artistes Modernes (UAM). Anyway, it is where a lot of things got started.

But it is a pity that the UAM has finally dissolved. Since you have written in France one of the first histories of design, can you give some reasons why associations or institutions, such as the UAM, where industrial design was born should fight against the decorative arts? Is it because of tradition or not?

I don't think there has been much of the institutionalisation of design to talk about in France. The first big exhibition *Useful Forms* was held at the Museum of Decorative Arts by the Useful Forms that was not an institution. Since then, the exhibition *Useful Forms* has become an instructive showcase, in other words, a means to sensitise the industrialists and the users, held by Salon des Arts Ménagers every year.

If the UAM could have survived until now, do you think it would have created a favourable context for the development of design in France?

If it has survived? If it has continued? I don't know. It is difficult to say, because contrary to what has happened, France was not a driving force in design any more in the 1950s, especially at the end of the 1950s. The objects then came from Germany, with the Ulm Academy, which is the great founder of the functionalist ideology. Besides, there is also Italian design.

Then, is there a consensus in France to accept the German model?

Yes, the issue of functionalism has been very important in France, but there hasn't been any collaborations between design and industry as in Germany or in Italy. In Italy, where great designs were born, largely because there have been intelligent industrialists who established a network of processors that makes the best price, not

for the finished products themselves, but for the components. This method of working has not been established in France.

Do you mean that French design was not fully developed due to a weak force of industry?

Weak and ill-adopted. And, one should not always blame the producer. There is also the consumer. You see, what's funny for me is to read the IKEA catalogue. What you find in the catalogues of IKEA is just what people, such as Tallon or others proposed in the 1960s. I think, today in France, there is a reaction against novelty.

Being a French historian, you have written on the subject of design history; there are Anglo-American historians who have also written on design history. I would like to know if there is any difference between French and Anglo-American historians in regard to the writing of design history.

No, one must realise, it was the Anglo-Saxons who were the first to be interested in the history of design. Nevertheless, if I don't quote Americans, it is because this has never been a problem for them. One always quotes the same Americans who have been great designers. One is likely, for example, to talk about Charles Eames, Raymond Loewy, George Nelson or firms, such as Knoll, but one should realise that there has not been any important ideological trend in France as there is in Germany or Italy.

Your great designer Roger Tallon has certainly been a brand of design in France?

He had the opportunity to be able to achieve it, but it has been a long way for him. I have already worked with Roger Tallon on the TGV in 1965. It was necessary for Tallon to break into the SNCF in order to put into execution all of his projects. I think that the importance of Tallon's work has been recognised from then on. If he is now considered as a furniture designer, with his furniture pieces in aluminium, furniture is,

however, only an epiphenomenon in his whole design production. But as I stated earlier, only furniture designers are considered to be designers.

It's very interesting to note that you distinguish the French term 'design industriel' and the English term 'design'. What are your reasons for this?

As I have said, the word 'design' without qualification describes a state of mind for the Anglo-Saxons. If one talks about 'design industriel', one is talking about products, in which form really follows function. Therefore, it may be helpful to, refer to the definition of the ICSID by Thomas Maldonado. I think that it clarifies all the directions that France has been willing to follow.

Are you saying that industrial design in France is rather an international pursuit, I mean, for example, that of 'new design'?

Yes, absolutely. And it is true that, in the 1980s, this new design was applied to comparatively simple objects: to furniture, and basically objects that were not classified as instruments. When the VIA was created in 1979, the first products produced by the VIA were exact replicas of this new Italian design, especially Memphis. Nevertheless, the colours and vocabulary could be said to be somewhat ridiculous as they, were not at all in the French tradition.

At the Pompidou Centre, there has been a personal exhibition of Philip Starck.

Yes, but it wasn't convincing at all. This exhibition has often been misunderstood.

Really? Does that imply that there was too much artistic experimentation in their methods of working?

No matter how one works in industry, there are manufacturing imperatives need to be respected. When one works on a craft object, anything is possible. There are no restrictions. When one is working on an industrial production, there is a machine that one must work with. Today, it is necessary to manufacture goods by computer. The

great difference between industrial and craft production is that, when machines and techniques are involved, they must be able to be applied. Craft constitutes a personal possibility, which will become an industrial possibility. Craft is, thus, a laboratory of experimentation, which would lead effectively to mass-production by industry.

Talking of design history, I find it noteworthy that, besides your books and those of Jocelyn de Noblet, there are not many works on design history. Design history is rather ignored in France in comparison with art history. Could you give some reasons as to why this is so?

In France, there has always this term that one can't find in Far East: the major arts. With regard to the minor arts, in France, there is always this discrimination between the major arts, fine arts, minor arts and applied arts. The applied arts, as they are embodied today by design, have received little attention at the Pompidou Centre, because the Centre is traditionally dominated by plastic arts.

Can this attitude about major arts being very strong be conveyed in order to understand why it is difficult to go beyond this discrimination of major and minor arts?

Yes, there have been some attempts made in France. Take, for example, the exhibition, managed by François Mathey, who was the chief conservator of the Museum of Decorative Arts. It was a large exhibition which asked artists to intervene in the style of objects. Their participation was generally in the area of furniture. It was an attempt to show that some artists might be interested in the applied arts. But it really was just an attempt. But it is true that today many plastic artists have received design training in order to become designers and vice versa.

Curiously, I consider it as a complete enigma as to why the French should have such a strong motivation towards the plastic arts?

France has been saturated by this phenomenon, and is also the leading country in this field for a long time. But France has since been overwhelmed by the USA in the

1950s. I think that she has never fully recovered from this. Yvonne Brunhanner has discussed this deep differentiation between major and minor arts that still exists in France. In one sense, there is a public refusal to be interested in industrial design. Yet, the CCI has already had some influence in this respect with its exhibitions at the Museum of Decorative Arts. It has gained public attention toward industrial objects.

In this case, can I say that design is still considered as a plastic art, because the public appreciates it from an artistic perspective? Being outside of this system, perhaps? The public finds it difficult to understand designed objects. As a result, the public takes design for an expression of fashion. Is this a basic attitude of the public towards design?

Sure. I think it is basically like that. But one must realise that the post-war youth didn't want these cultural legacies at all, especially the legacy of furniture design that passed from generation to generation. What they wanted were objects with which they could play with, and that they could also throw away when they lost interest. I think there has been a big conflict between old-fashioned clients who were able to buy Art Deco in the 1920s and those in the post-war generation who completely disassociated themselves from traditional objects. I think what were originally considered as design objects then became elitist objects as well. There was not any contact with the masses. Design has become synonymous with fashionable objects, very expensive luxury objects.

Thus, is this able to explain the importance of intellectual discourse in this field? Besides you and Jocelyn de Noblet, can you give some names that have contributed to the development of certain discourse in design in France?

Yes, before us, one could name the likes of Jacques Viénot. A little earlier, one could surely quote the people from the movement 'Useful Forms'. But, in the end, France doesn't want to theorise. The only manifesto to mention is that of the UAM in 1934. There have never been any others since then.

Is it always in this tradition, because France rather prefers movements to events?

Yes, it's true. There has been a lot of turbulence in France, but not many theories. So in the field of design, great trends come from the outside.