

**British Printed Textiles of the 1970s
A Material Culture Study**

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Abstract

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. To facilitate this exploration, two research questions were developed. The first draws attention to the textiles' surface design: What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s? The second reiterates the purpose statement, the goal being to understand how these textiles reflected the changing values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of 1970s Britain.

This paper addresses the different ways different groups of people (e.g., designers, manufacturers, consumers, cultural commentators) viewed British printed textiles in the 1970s. This insight into the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions regarding these textiles contributes to the study of textiles by (a) placing 1970s British printed textiles in historical, social, and cultural context; (b) adding to the information about 1970s textile iconography; and (c) positioning textiles in a broader theoretical dialogue.

Textile design in the 1970s is often dismissed as a dark period in the otherwise bright history of modernism. Findings reveal a thematic and stylistic diversity in textile design, symbolic of the spirit of the "Schizophrenic Seventies." This zeitgeist was manifested as a cultural ambivalence regarding modernity, technology, and progress expressed in terms of revivalist, escapist, ethnic, and nostalgic textile designs or hybrids thereof. In

hindsight, both the zeitgeist and the designs might be termed postmodern: a conscious break from the modernism of the 1960s.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

While scenes of dead rats, garbage heaps, and vagrant fires flash across the screen in the opening minutes of the documentary, *The Filth and the Fury*, John Lydon chronicles the class, race, and economic turmoil of 1976 England. Better known as Johnny Rotten, frontman for the Sex Pistols, Lydon explains:

England was in a state of social upheaval. It was a very, very different time. Total social chaos. There was rioting all over the place. There were strikes on every kind of amenity you could think of. The TV channels would go on and off randomly. People were fed up with the old way. The old way was clearly not working. (Camarata, Temple, & Temple, 2000)

Lydon's bleak memory is echoed by bandmate Steve Jones, who recalls, "No one had any jobs. You couldn't get a job. Everyone was on the dole. If you weren't born into money, then you might as well have kissed your fucking life goodbye" (Camarata et al.).

As unemployment rose to one million, "survival" became the battle cry of the 1970s, according to music critic Griel Marcus (1989, p. 46). In other words, Marcus explains, "one had to live... according to a dictatorship of necessity, not beyond culture but before it" (p. 46). As a result, culture – in the form of pop music – stopped, time stood still.

According to critic Jon Savage in *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond*, "If you spun the FM dial... during that time, it was as if the seventies had never happened. All you heard was a continuous loop of the Beatles, Cream, Fleetwood

Mac, the Beatles” (1992, p. 435). The reason for this, Marcus notes, was that the “chaos in society at large called for a music of permanence and reassurance” (p. 48). Pop music became a comfort, reassuring the hopeless and powerless that, eventually, this too would pass.

Both Lydon and Marcus contend that England’s crippling social situation planted the seed of the Sex Pistols and the punk movement. It was an attempt to overthrow the “old way that was clearly not working;” an attempt to change both pop music and the world. By “destroying one tradition,” Marcus observed, referring to the music of the 1960s, “punk revealed a new one” (p. 39).

The story of punk music is the most obvious example of the way England’s social situation affected the arts of the 1970s, but a careful look reveals its evidence in the fine arts, in film, in literature, and, in textile design. For Pop music, “permanence and reassurance” meant continuing on as if the 1970s had never begun. For textile design, however, “permanence and reassurance” meant looking back to the past, to designs based on traditional British chintz. According to textiles curator Ngozi Ikoku, 1970s textiles brought a “sense of comfort and security to the home at a time of considerable uncertainty” (1999, p. 13). These textiles’ message of reassurance, we are told, was transmitted through nostalgia, to a time before the postwar promises of prosperity gave way to poverty, before the rats and the garbage heaps and the fires.

Prosperity to Poverty: The Oil Crisis

According to textile curator Valerie D. Mendes in her foreword to Ikoku's *The Victoria & Albert Museum's Textile Collection: British Textile Design from 1940 to the Present*, comforting and nostalgic 1970s British textiles illustrate a creative lull, a kind of dark ages that stemmed from the 1973 oil crisis (1999, p. 7). This event, so important to 1970s British history and to the study of that decade's textiles, warrants further explanation.

Postwar Britain enjoyed a period of relative prosperity that coincided with a political period of consensus. According to Thomas William Heyck in *The Peoples of the British Isles: A New History*, "immediately after World War II there emerged in Britain a consensus involving a commitment to full employment, a comprehensive system of state-sponsored social welfare, nationalization of certain industries, and governmental management of economic demand by Keynesian techniques" (1992, p. 260). A key factor of Keynesian economics involved government investment in infrastructure; therefore, industries such as coal, electricity, gas, iron, and steel were nationalized. It was believed that by giving the state control over these industries "for the benefit of society," it could better "plan and direct the economy as a whole" through improved efficiency, capital investment, and industrial relations (p. 266).

Though many countries adopted Keynesian economics after the war, the experiment failed in Britain. Britain's production levels and subsequent share of the world market proved inadequate. As Heyck notes, by 1970, Britain's economic performance suffered

as the country “failed to export as much in visible goods as they imported in” (p. 338).

The rising cost of imports and the lack of government income led to inflation, a problem exasperated by the oil crisis of 1973.

The trouble began with American response to the Yom Kippur War, Egypt and Syria’s attack on Israel in October 1973. After the Americans supplied Israel with weapons, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) instituted an oil embargo in order to force America and its allies (including Britain) to relinquish support for Israel. According to Heyck, because “Britain imported two-thirds of its oil from the Middle East, [it] suffered severely from the more than threefold increase in the cost of oil imports. A worldwide recession swallowed the British economy, and inflation, already a serious problem, became acute” (p. 342).

Unfortunately, “British coal miners chose this moment of crisis to demand higher wages” (p. 342). As oil prices soared, the miners realized “Britain needed all the coal they could produce” (p. 342). In October 1973, the National Union of Mineworkers called for a forty percent pay raise, banning overtime work until their demands were met. The government, unable and unwilling to pay, responded with the institution of a three-day work week. The plan was designed to conserve coal by limiting production; however, as *The Guardian* predicted, for many firms, it would simply not be worth continuing production” (as cited in Wheen, 2010, p. 59). What might follow – a “fall in living standards” and “damage to the industrial structure” – would create “utter social chaos” and “a situation beyond rational contemplation” (p. 59).

This was exactly what happened. In February 1974, the situation escalated – the miners went on strike. What followed was severe unemployment (seven percent), an escalation of strikes, production cuts, and the closing of many industrial firms (Heyck, pp. 338-339). Heyck explains that “by the late 1970s, the British economy had reached a situation that most economists had regarded as impossible: ‘stagflation’” (p. 339). Stagflation was a condition involving stagnant economic growth, high unemployment, and rising inflation, creating “an atmosphere of crisis” (p. 339).

Whereas the same crisis fueled the creativity of bands like the Sex Pistols, Mendes suggests it crippled textile design. It is true that the oil crisis dealt the textile industry a major blow. According to textile historian Lesley Jackson, 245,000 jobs were lost by 1976, which reduced the textile workforce by 25 percent (2002, p. 181). By the 1980s, explains textile scholar Samantha Erin Safer, “domestic textile manufacturing had virtually disappeared” (2012, p. 5). Many small firms “were driven out of business” or absorbed by larger companies who, increasingly, “looked to the Far East for cheaper manufacturing” (pp. 5-6). According to Mendes, these events combined to create a decade of banality in textile design.

Noting that “designers resorted to small-scale geometric prints, often in a safe and versatile beige, and to diminutive all-over ‘cottagey’ florals,” Mendes suggests that 1970s British textiles were as stagnant as Britain’s economy (p. 7). Popular textiles, such as those produced by Laura Ashley (Figure 1.1), drew inspiration from traditional British chintz (Figure 1.2). Other companies, such as Liberty, drew from their own archives,

literally reproducing turn-of-the-century textile patterns (Figure 1.3). This lack of “stylistic invention” meant that Mendes and the Victoria & Albert Museum acquired few 1970s textiles. It wasn’t until the 1980s that economic and designer “confidence had returned,” and, presumably, British textiles were once again worth the museum’s consideration (p. 7).



Figure 1.1: Ashley, L. (1975). *Wild Clematis* [Textile]. From *Twentieth Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, by L. Jackson, 2002, p. 185.

Figure 1.2: Morris, W. (1876). *Honeysuckle* [Textile]. Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (Accession No. P.D.GB.0001), Madison, WI.

Figure 1.3: Liberty (adapted from a design by William Morris). (c. 1970). *Honeysuckle* [Textile]. Private Collection, Tucson, AZ.

Textiles from 1970s are frequently criticized, but by diminishing them, few seem to ask what they meant. In the rare situation where the question is asked, the answer inevitably turns to the oil crisis and the subsequent decline in textile consumption and production (Jackson, 2002; Kerry, 2007; Rayner, Chamberlain, & Stapleton, 2003; Safer, 2012; Schoeser, 2012a). At best, these objects function as comfort, facilitating a retreat into

nostalgia. At worst, they represent a nation's fall into stagnation. But what if there's more to the story?

Problem

Printed textiles are a relatively new innovation. In *5,000 Years of Textiles*, Jennifer Harris explains that examples of printed textiles in the West date back to the twelfth century; however, the medium did not appear as a suitable alternative to woven silk and velvet until the 1670s (1993, p. 224). Once colorfast dyes reached Europe from India, several countries, including France and Holland, set up printing industries (p. 224). But, for the next hundred years or so, the British dominated the printed cotton industry. It was in Britain where so much innovation took place and in fact, according to Harris:

Britain continued to dominate world production of printed textiles into the early years of the twentieth century, both in terms of design innovation and manufacturing strength. The two were not unrelated: a sound manufacturing base in cheap, printed textiles largely produced for export emboldened manufacturers to experiment with more innovative designs. (p. 233)

While innovation was key to the rise of the British textile industry, it also seems to have played a role in its downfall. According to Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton, textiles in the 1960s “became increasingly divorced from the needs of everyday life, as had much of the Modern Movement’s agenda” (2003, p. 82). In the 1970s climate of social unrest, the culture of modernity no longer fit. “The shocks of the

seventies,” notes cultural historian Thomas Hine, “killed this myth of inevitable progress” (2007, p. 20).

The oft-criticized textiles of the 1970s emerged “at a time when the future wasn’t working as well as it used to, and perfection was starting to lose its luster” (Hine, p. 165). In other words, people were beginning to question modernity’s supposed infallibility. According to Hine, this period marks a shift in aesthetics, one that “rejected the hard and the shiny, whose connotations of speed and progress felt wrong for those who saw the society going in bad directions” (p. 165). Hine explains that this new aesthetic:

begins not with a blank slate but with a landscape filled with ruins – the ruins of communities and buildings, and the ruins of failed old ideas. It is based not simply on looking forward but rather on looking all around, to see what was available, to find new uses for what had been left behind. It was an aesthetic of salvage and of juxtaposition. Recycling was becoming an environmental imperative, and it became a cultural one too, as people sought to rediscover and renew what had long gone unnoticed and neglected. (p. 21)

This aesthetic is not about future possibilities; instead, it is about rethinking the past’s role in the present. It is therefore not modern, but built from its ruins.

Hine calls this aesthetic the Great Funk. Others call it postmodern or anti-modern or post-structural or neo-baroque (Calabrese, 1992, p. xii). Some even claim it for modernity, albeit a modernity on life support, forced “to discover new sources of life through imaginative encounters with the past” (Berman, 1982/1988, p. 332).

The textiles of the 1970s are often dismissed, the entire decade's production deemed devoid of creativity, a dark ages in the otherwise bright history of modernism. What if there's an alternative narrative? Might they instead represent a cultural shift of feeling, of taste, of thinking?

Purpose

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- What related trends are evident in visual culture in the 1970s?

Research Question 2

How are social and cultural changes expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward modernity?
- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward technology or progress?

- In what ways do these textiles reflect the concept of postmodernity?

By exploring these questions, I will be able to address the different ways different groups of people (e.g., designers, manufacturers, consumers, cultural commentators) viewed British printed textiles in the 1970s. This insight into the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of these people will also be used to question the conclusions drawn by contemporary scholars, discussed above and in my literature review.

- Do 1970s textiles reflect a need for comfort and security in the wake of economic crisis?
- Do 1970s textiles facilitate escapism in the form of nostalgia?
- Are 1970s textiles devoid of innovation, confidence, and progressive design?
- Are 1970s textiles important to the history of design?

Research Design Overview

This object-based study will be guided by material culture methods, which are designed specifically to examine culture as reflected through objects. Material methods were selected for this study because, according to Jules David Prown, “objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged” (1993/2001c, p. 220). Prown further

explains that “if artifacts materialize belief, then it follows that when a society undergoes a traumatic change, that change should manifest itself artifactually” (p. 229).

The twenty-one artifacts selected for study represent a broad range of British printed textiles from the 1970s, sourced from the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A number of primary materials were also studied, including interviews by textile designers and manufacturers, business records, advertisements, magazine articles, and statements made by professional organizations such as the British Council of Industrial Design. These sources were located in British art and design archives and libraries, including the Art and Design Archive at the V&A, the City of Westminster Archives Centre, the University of Brighton, the British National Art Library, and the Visual Arts Data Source (VADS) Image Collections.

Rationale and Significance

The origins of this study can be traced back to an exhibition held at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 2011. Titled “Optical Effects: 1970s Printed Textiles,” the exhibition was drawn from a 1998 donation of printed cotton textiles created between 1958 and 1977, originating from Heal Fabrics, Ltd., a subsidiary of the British department store Heal’s. According to exhibition text, the ten textiles displayed were selected for their “striking... geometric patterns, bold colors, and repetition of form” (“Optical Effects,”

2011). While “Optical Effects” was indeed visually striking, the exhibition did not provide much in the way of context – historical, social, or otherwise. Subsequent research into 1970s textiles revealed little additional information. I wanted to know what the textiles meant and what they could reveal about their time, place, and culture.

This project will contribute to the study of textiles by (a) placing 1970s British printed textiles in historical, social, and cultural context; (b) adding to the information about 1970s textile iconography; and (c) positioning textiles in a broader theoretical dialogue.

Assumptions

Going into this study, three main assumptions were made based on previous study and training in art, fashion, and textile history. First, a study of 1970s British printed textiles should uncover the domestic textile’s role in the larger artistic paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism. Second, 1970s British printed textile iconography reflects social and cultural changes happening within the country as well as the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of the 1970s British populace. Third, 1970s textiles reflect a cultural ambivalence towards progress and modernity indicating a shift towards postmodernism.

Definitions of Key Terminology

The following terms are used throughout this study as defined below.

textile

This general term refers to a “flat” textile or yardage, a piece of fabric as it comes from the loom or finisher. A flat textile has no hand or machine stitching which shapes or transforms it into a functional object (Creekmore, 1986, p. 48).

furnishing fabric

Furnishing fabrics, as opposed to dress fabrics, are meant for use in an interior setting. They may be used for upholstery or drapery, wall hangings, table coverings, bed coverings, etc. Furnishing fabrics can be made using a wide variety of manufacturing techniques and finishes.

printed

When used in conjunction with the word “textile” in this study, the word “printed” refers to the process of screen printing. Screen printing is a hand or machine printing technique in which pigment is forced through a screen treated with resist. The resist acts as a barrier; only the untreated areas of the screen are printed onto the cloth (Jackson, 2002, p. 219).

British

Although the majority of textiles discussed in this study were designed and manufactured in England (as opposed to Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland), the conventional adjective used to describe English people, culture, and artistic output is “British” (Easthope, 1988, p. xiv).

chintz

Chintz is historically defined as a “dye-patterned cotton cloth with a glazed surface, originally from India” (Phipps, 2011, p. 18). In this context, chintz refers to floral patterned printed textiles industrially produced in England in response to Indian chintz.

modernism

Modernism is an art and design movement predicated on the concepts of change, progress, and innovation. This means that a modern design, in theory, has rejected its history, tradition, and vernacular in favor of novelty. In terms of design, modernism is equated with the concept of “good design,” an ideological construct used to differentiate popular design from a “decorative art object catering for discerning elite tastes” (Attfield, 1997/2007b, p. 187).

postmodernism

In contrast to modernism, postmodernism focuses on “breaking down the barriers between ‘art’ and... commercial entertainment, industrial technology, fashion and design, [and] politics” (Berman, pp. 31-32). Postmodernism deliberately plays with the boundaries of “good design,” embracing popular culture, kitsch, and camp. In general, postmodernism is seen as a marker of “either the crisis or the exhaustion” of modernism “as well as a renewed interest in sampling or quoting from the past” (Adamson & Pavitt, 2011, p. 13).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. To carry out this study, a critical review of select literature was instigated. The focus of this review has centered on the current literature related to this topic and the potential for additional study. The review was ongoing throughout the writing process, with emergent contextual and theoretical information assisting in the interpretation of the selected objects.

This review explores issues pertinent to the study of cultural objects during the 1970s and aims to assist with the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data relevant to the research questions identified in the introduction and restated here.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- What related trends are evident in visual culture in the 1970s?

Research Question 2

How are social and cultural changes expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward modernity?

- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward technology or progress?
- In what ways do these textiles reflect the concept of postmodernity?

In light of this, four major areas of literature are under review: (a) British printed textiles; (b) British interior design; (c) modernism; (d) postmodernism. Throughout the review, important gaps and omissions in particular segments of the literature have been identified.

British Printed Textiles in the Twentieth Century

In the foreword to *The Victoria & Albert Museum's Textile Collection: British Textile Design from 1940 to the Present*, textile curator Valerie D. Mendes praises the book's:

lucid text and revealing photographs [showing] the outstanding talents and versatility of the nation's fabric designers and craftspeople as well as the skill and acumen of its manufacturers and the vitality of its trade associations....The significance of the interplay between the fine and the applied arts is also highlighted.... [It is] an exciting visual promenade through fifty years of pattern, colour, and creativity. (1999, p. 7)

Mendes' text delineates the emphasis of literature surrounding British printed textiles. In general, extant texts on this subject focus on (a) designers and creativity; (b) manufacturers and trade; (c) issues surrounding fine versus applied art; and (d) aesthetics.

Designers and Creativity

In the forward to her groundbreaking text, *Twentieth Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson notes that “surface pattern has so often been marginalized within mainstream histories of 20th-century design” (2002, p. 6). However, rather than bring into focus the cultural and iconographic aspects of these textiles, Jackson focuses on the designers who conceptualized them and the “rich seam of creativity [that] has been unjustly downplayed” in contemporary design history (p. 6). Calling these designers “heroes and heroines,” Jackson identifies “several hundred” of the most outstanding textile designers of the past century, unfortunately, often by name only (p. 7).

Jackson’s text is an important step towards an understanding of 20th century textile design thinking. It serves as a “record of the unfolding of a series of innovative styles,” highlighting the innovative aspects of textile design (p. 7). Each chapter focuses on a decade, its dominant design themes, and the designers who worked to produce those themes. Designers are presented as a group by country.

Expanding on this historical survey, new texts have emerged that focus on 20th century British textile designers identified by Jackson: Laura Ashley (Wood, 2009); Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell (Shackleton, 2012); Shirley Craven (Jackson, 2009); Jacqueline Groag (Rayner, Chamberlain, & Stapleton, 2009); and Zandra Rhodes (Safer, 2010).

This plethora of texts may be inspired by the quality and international renown of British textile designers. As leaders in the field of printed textiles, British designers and designs were heavily marketed to an international audience through publications such as *The Ambassador Magazine* and through trade exhibitions such as Texprint. Of the latter, American designer Jack Lenor Larsen noted:

Perhaps it is not so surprising than exhibition series of this calibre [sic] should come out of Britain. Britain has by far the best colleges with fabric design courses. Britain is training more designers better than any other countries. (as cited in Jackson, 2002, p. 181)

In addition, design and textile history has increasingly become a subject of scholarly inquiry, although most scholars continue to engage in hagiography.

Manufacturers and Trade

For similar reasons, the next most common focus of British printed textile scholarship is on manufacturers. Recent texts concentrate on the following manufacturers: Liberty (Buruma, 2009; Buruma, 2012), Heal Fabrics (Schoeser, 2012a), Sanderson (Schoeser, 2010; Schoeser, 2012b), Laura Ashley (Sebba, 1990; Wood, 2009), and Hull Traders (Jackson, 2009).

British printed textile manufacture and trade is covered extensively in several texts. Themes include: general history (Jennifer Harris, 1993; Schoeser, 1986a; Schoeser & Rufey, 1989), manufacturing techniques (Kerry, 2007; Robinson, 1969), and postwar

industry and collapse (Breward & Wilcox, 2012; Ikoku, 1999; Jackson, 2002; Safer, 2012; Schoeser, 2012b).

Fine versus Applied Art

In her textile history survey *Neo-Classicism to Pop: Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry selected textiles that might serve as “representative examples of the design movements of their time” (2007, p. 7). Though attention is given to designers, manufacturing, trade, aesthetics, and even textile production techniques, Kerry’s main goal is to connect British printed textiles to the broader fine art and design movements of the mid-20th century (her examples include Op Art (Figure 2.1), Pop Art (Figure 2.2), and psychedelia (Figure 2.3)). In the extensive catalogue section, textile designs such as *Volution* are assigned to the art movements that supposedly influenced them, in this case, Pop Art.

It is important to note that textiles are typically positioned in the literature as influenced by, not influences of, the broader art world. Thus textiles reflect innovation rather than innovate. An excellent example of this stance is found in Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton’s *Artists’ Textiles in Britain 1945-1970* (2003) about fine artists’ involvement with textile arts. The impetus for this involvement was the move toward modern art. As art became more dependent on pure form, color, and pattern, it naturally aligned with the realm of graphic design, book illustration, print making, and textile design.



Figure 2.1: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.

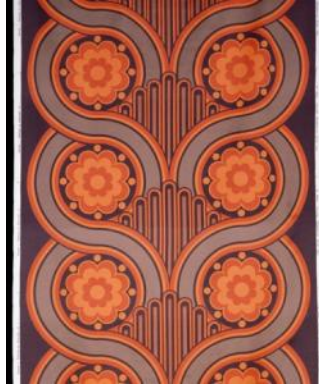


Figure 2.2: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Hall, P. (Designer). (1969). *Volution* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.40-1969), London, England.



Figure 2.3: Hull Traders, Ltd. (Manufacturer), & Harper, L. (Designer). (c. 1970). *Mandarin* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.168:1 to 4-1989), London, England.

Although artists were heavily involved in shaping textile design immediately following World War II, professional textile designers began to emerge in the early 1950s (p. 47). The authors note how, by 1953, these designers had nearly run the industry into the ground. Textile design had become “debased,” and “was in danger of becoming trapped in an aesthetic cul-de-sac” (p. 47). According to the authors, the answer to this problem was artists. An exhibition, “Painting into Textiles” was held at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1953. The exhibition featured original works of art intended to inspire textile designers and manufacturers. It is suggested that artists saved the industry, their efforts providing “great strength and depth to textile design in general for the next fifteen years or so” (p. 47).

Aesthetics

The role pattern plays in printed textile design is simultaneously exalted and dismissed. As arguably the most significant feature of a printed textile, pattern is celebrated in the *V&A Pattern* series, published in 2012. The series is designed to introduce readers to the museum's extensive collection of patterned textiles and wallpapers. Each book features a brief essay and a series of photographs illustrating approximately sixty-five textiles or wallpaper designs. High-resolution images of each object are also included on compact disc. The purpose of the series is design inspiration. The books extend the reach of the V&A's collection, offering designers and manufacturers an opportunity to view samples of this important resource in their homes and studios.

Though clearly meant as an innocuous celebration of pattern, the *V&A Pattern* series, with its minimal text and extensive object catalogue, nevertheless contributes to a general understanding of textiles as superficial, lacking substance beyond the decorative. This perception is not only reinforced, but defended, in earlier texts such as the following by Mary Schoeser:

While we would probably wish not to rely on a “witty” washing machine or an “amusing” airplane, these adjectives are regularly applied to textile... design as a means of signifying approval. It is not coincidence that the words chosen to compliment furnishings are often used to the same purpose towards people. The role of wallpaper, upholstery and curtains has always been to personalize or humanize the space in which they are employed, irrespective of any other function they may perform. (1986a, pp. 6-7)

Schoeser's comments may seem old-fashioned today; however, the sentiment is inadvertently echoed in more recent texts such as the V&A's popular *British Textile Design* series, written in 1980 and updated in 1999 and 2010. Here again, textiles are given little context. While promising a "significant historical survey," the majority of each volume is given over to images presented without context, save for a brief introductory essay.

Unfortunately, these texts constitute the main body of research into twentieth century British printed textiles. As vehicles for presenting the V&A's collection of printed textiles, they are not meant to challenge readers' perceptions of those textiles. Instead, they reflect prevailing notions of textiles as expressions of pattern and color, devoid of content and meaning.

British Printed Textiles in the 1970s

Scant extant literature exists about British printed textiles in the 1970s. Most literature is confined to historical or visual surveys, meaning 1970s textiles receive limited attention.

In the chapter on the 1970s in *Twentieth Century Pattern Design*, Jackson explains that "it is customary to write off the 1970s as the decade that design forgot, but in reality it was more of a mixed bag" (2002, p. 167). Although she spends considerable time addressing the impact of the oil crisis and its negative effects on textile design and the textile industry, Jackson also acknowledges that "design momentum did not stop with the

onset of recession” (p. 167). Instead, it was redirected into design movements she terms ruralism and revivalism.

According to Jackson, ruralism was motivated by escapism and consumer desire to “establish a cosy [sic] domestic retreat in an increasingly disquieting world” (p. 167).

These designs, based on the natural world, were, Jackson claims, also inspired by a burgeoning environmental movement (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4: Textra (Manufacturer), & Wood, N. (Designer). (1972). *Everglade* [Textile]. From *Twentieth Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, by L. Jackson, 2002, p. 184.

Figure 2.5: Liberty (adapted from a design by William Morris). (c. 1970). *Honeysuckle* [Textile]. Private Collection, Tucson, AZ.

Figure 2.6: Ashley, L. (1975). *Wild Clematis* [Textile]. From *Twentieth Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, by L. Jackson, 2002, p. 185.

Revivalism was motivated by nostalgia. Though its origins were rooted in the mid-1960s, revivalism became a dominant force in the 1970s. Jackson notes that revivalism was “originally a playful exercise, part of a process of reevaluation” (p. 168). Highly eclectic, revivalism drew from a wide variety of sources: global influences such as

Islamic, African, and Indian art and historical influences closer to home such as the British Arts and Crafts movement (Figure 2.5). However, Jackson asserts, revivalism soon moved from playful historicism to full-fledged reproduction of period textiles sourced from museums and company archives.

Ruralism and revivalism often went together, as was the case with popular 1970s designer Laura Ashley (Figure 2.6). Jackson explains:

the Laura Ashley phenomenon arose from a backlash against the artificiality and excess of the 1960s. With her nostalgic evocation of a mythical golden age and her soft-focused vision of the countryside, she offered instant escape from the harsh realities of the urban environment. (pp. 185-186)

However, Ashley's designs were inspired by historical print sources, museum artifacts, and chintz, the traditional English textile Jackson explains was "rediscovered" during a 1955 V&A exhibition, "English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste."

Although Jackson frames these design movements in a reasonably neutral light, she also positions them in contrast to and in conflict with textiles of the 1960s. Ruralism and revivalism are, Jackson contends, reactionary movements. In other words, 1970s textiles are characterized by traditional, conservative designs as opposed to modern, progressive designs. Whereas Jackson describes modern textiles as "buoyant" and "confident," she posits 1970s textiles as a binary: not modern, inhibited, and safe (p. 167).

According to Jennifer Harris, however, this tension between “modernity and tradition” is simply a theme of twentieth century British printed textile design (1993, p. 234). Noting that “the period from 1913 onwards saw a growing revolt against traditional pattern-making in favour of abstract and geometric designs,” Harris explains that “the floral tradition in printed textile design has never been fully abandoned” (p. 234). For example, British interest in chintz was rekindled in the 1950s and solidified via an alternative interior design aesthetic based on the traditional English country house.

Sue Kerry contends that modernism was never fully abandoned either. She argues that “textiles of the mid-1970s remained bold and bright, a sign of the sustained optimism of youthful designers” (2007, p. 26). In contrast, Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton contend that modernist textiles had “little relevance in the Post-Modern world beginning to emerge in the 1970s” (2003, p. 82). This comment suggests textile design needed to adapt to a changing cultural situation.

Despite these occasional dissident voices, the prevailing account of 1970s printed textile design follows Jackson’s version. In general, scholarship has focused on the unfavorable comparison between textiles of 1960s and the 1970s, often blaming the situation on the 1973 oil crisis and its negative effects on textile design and the textile industry. For example, Mendes’s foreword to *The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection: British Textile Design from 1940 to the Present*, discussed at length in the introduction, argues that textiles:

from the mid-1970s [illustrated] the downturn precipitated by the 1973 oil crisis. Designers resorted to small-scale geometric prints, often in a safe and versatile beige, and to diminutive all-over “cottagey” florals which indicated a yearning for the rural idyll. For a short while a period of indecision brought a halt to stylistic invention... but by the early 1980s confidence had returned. (1999, p. 7)

This language is echoed in Ngozi Ikoku: “The socio-economic downturn brought about by the oil crisis in 1973 prompted designers to create a series of patterns that were reassuring and brought a sense of comfort and security to the home at a time of considerable uncertainty” (1999, p. 13); Penny Sparke: “the oil crisis had all but destroyed the industry and, as the economic and political situations became increasingly unstable, and the need for escape and comfort increased, a return to traditional patterns became the norm for domestic textiles” (2012, p. 128); Mary Schoeser: “as a result of the recession... these retrospective trends symbolized the search for security. By the late 1970s, the key words in furnishings were ‘country’, ‘cosy’ [sic] and ‘chintz’” (1986a, p. 102); Eddie Pond: “the swinging sixties came to an abrupt end in 1973 with the Middle East War and the subsequent oil crisis... Manufacturers and customers played safe as a need for security represented itself in chintzy cheerfulness and a more and more small-scale co-ordination. From then until now design and colours have been ‘cosy’” (1986, p. 95); and Samantha Erin Safer: “[Laura] Ashley’s designs swept the high street along with ‘Chintz-mania’, which reflected a yearning for a perceived ‘simpler’ era” (2012, p. 5).

British Interior Design in the 1970s

The printed textiles discussed here were designed as furnishing fabrics, that is, they were intended for use in interior spaces. In addition to providing privacy, protection, and comfort, explains designer Jack Lenor Larsen, furnishing fabrics facilitate the fulfillment of a person's "psychological and spiritual needs" (1989, p. 8). In Larsen's *Furnishing Fabrics: An International Sourcebook* the designer explains the "primary function of furnishing fabrics... is to differentiate and personalize spaces and to give them a sense of place" (p. 10). Because of the myriad pattern, color, and texture choices afforded by furnishing fabrics, Larsen claims they offer "the greatest scope for individual expression" in interior design (p. 10). Printed textiles did this in all manner of ways: as curtains, upholstery, bed coverings, room dividers, *portières*, even stretched over frames like paintings.

According to Larsen, contemporary architecture trends toward the generic and the sterile. Furnishing fabrics function as an antidote, designed to "express the tastes and personalities" of a home's inhabitants and to "compensate for the lack of texture, structural expression, detail, proportion, and grace in so many of today's rooms" by "introducing organic rhythms, shade and shadow, lively surfaces, and contact with natural texture" (pp. 8-10).

Larsen, though writing in 1989, nevertheless addresses two themes central to a study on 1970s interior design elements: architecture and individualism. As Larsen notes, late 1980s architecture did not reflect contemporary design values. Here, Larsen refers to

modern architecture. This was an architecture characterized by a rejection of classical ideals. Modern architecture was based on the concepts of “form follows function” and “truth to materials” meaning that unnecessary ornament was eliminated and structural and building materials were made visible. Designs were simple, clean, and often featured new industrial materials as design elements. There was also a strong democratic ideal component.

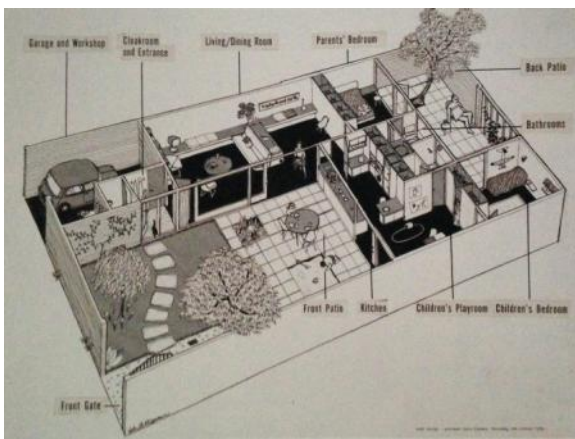


Figure 2.7: “Her House, design for a home limited to 1,070 square feet and a cost of 3,000, John Prizeman, 1959.” From *British Design from 1948: Innovation in the Modern Age*, by C. Breward & G. Wood (Eds.), 2012, p. 32.

Figure 2.8: “Show house at Hatfield new town, 1953, with CoID-approved furniture.” From *Did Britain Make It?: British Design in Context 1946-86*, by P. Sparke (Ed.), 1986, p. 157.

In postwar Britain, where political consensus and the welfare state promised a new democratic lifestyle, modernism was promoted in all aspects of design. Modernist principles guided the new housing developments of the 1940s and 1950s aimed at the working and middle class populations. These houses were characterized by free flowing layouts, with kitchen, dining, and sitting rooms merging into one, more informal living

space (Figure 2.7). This new type of space required a new type of interior design (Breward & Wood, 2012, p. 31).

According to Penny Sparke in her essay “At Home with Modernity: The New Domestic Scene,” these houses “represented a dramatic shift in the British public’s engagement with modernity” (2012, p. 120). Up until this point, design was the purview of the elite; the new homes brought design to the masses. However, the masses were dependant on elite, state-sponsored (e.g., Council of Industrial Design (CoID)) and designer (e.g., professional interior designer) guidance in order to decorate their homes according to “the neo-Modernist themes of functionality, planning and scale” (p. 123). These themes were different from those previous which relied on “superficial decoration, pattern and colour” (p. 123). For example, show or model houses (Figure 2.8) were furnished with modern designs, often with the assistance of the CoID, to help buyers “see the stylistic possibilities open to them” (p. 120).

Modernism, Sparke notes, was based on “elite, idealistic design and lifestyle values” (p. 123). By the time of Larsen’s writing, such values had long since fallen out of favor. In fact, the seeds of dissent were evident by 1968. In his essay, “Urban Visions: Designing for the Welfare State,” Jonathan Woodham notes:

The optimism of the immediate post-war years – when designers, architects and planners strongly believed that they knew what people wanted or needed – was no longer acceptable to the wider British public, who had become increasingly

resistant to what was viewed as unwanted paternalism, accompanied by a mistrust of authority, the establishment and notions of cultural leadership. (2012, p. 91)

Woodham's comment alludes to the political challenges of the late 1960s and early 1970s: government consensus ended and the economy collapsed. The democratic idealism of the 1950s and 1960s proved unsustainable, and mistrust accompanied its demise. Modernist design, as the visual representation of this political era, was likewise met with mistrust, as the population increasingly turned to new modes of design inspiration.

What this means is that the 1970s saw the rise of individuality. As noted above, Larsen stressed the importance of individual expression in interior design. This cultural trend was also reflected in politics. In 1989, the year Larsen's *Furnishing Fabrics* was published, Margaret Thatcher had been Prime Minister of Britain for ten years. Her government advocated self-sufficiency, privatization, and individualism. However, the strains of individualism were already evident in the late 1960s. The first signs occurred with a number of art school revolutions in 1968. Students across Britain rallied against "what was seen as the restrictive outlook of the wider art, architectural and design establishment... resulting in subsequent radical revisions of the curriculum, the opening up of fresh horizons and the adoption of a more pluralistic outlook" (Woodham, p. 91).

Following this, the CoID reorganized in 1972, merging with the Engineering Council to become the Design Council. Focus shifted "away from consumer design towards capital goods" such as airplanes, machinery, and medicinal technology (p. 91). This move was

prompted by a “surge of popular values that served to challenge the hitherto fixed social hierarchy upon which the Council had depended” (Sparke, 2012, p. 136). In other words, the British public increasingly came to reject elite culture in favor of popular culture. According to Woodham, “choice and individual taste were becoming the hallmarks of contemporary consumer life” (p. 91). Design no longer followed one ideal (modernism); instead, it followed the whims of the individual.

In contrast to writing on British printed textiles, writing on British interior design is highly nuanced, reflecting a much broader picture of the social and cultural changes that came to define the interiors of the 1970s. In addition to the contextual information provided in the literature above, extensive contextual information is provided by literature that addresses the specific design themes that emerged in 1970s British interior design.

Here three major themes in 1970s British interior design are addressed. The first might be termed revivalist (Figure 2.9). According to Mary Schoeser and Celia Rufey in *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, the recession made a major impact on 1970s interiors:

As fewer people moved home or bought new furniture, there was an increasing interest in modifying interiors, as opposed to redecorating completely; and this was reflected in the design trends of the 1970s, which reinterpreted themes that had already appeared in the previous decades. (1989, p. 213)

Contributing to this was a shift in values away from the disposable culture of the 1950s and 1960s. There was a burgeoning interest in recycling, “ethical living, self-sufficiency and sustainability” (Breward & Wood, p. 36). These interests sparked a do-it-yourself movement which impacted interior design in that design power moved to the homeowner and, as a result, became more personal to his or her own vision.

A subset of this trend was what Schoeser and Rufey term the “baroque-modern interior” (Figure 2.10) (1989, p. 221). This eccentric style relied on “startling juxtaposition” of objects from different historic design periods, cultures, and states of disrepair (p. 221).



Figure 2.9: “In a contemporary, round-the-clock bedroom, spring-leaf, spring-sky colors make a fresh background for new furniture inspired by old favorites.” From “What’s New for Decorating? Effective Needlers for Vitamin-Deficient Rooms,” 1968, *House & Garden*, p. 113.

Figure 2.10: Wilsford Manor, Wiltshire, England, described “as an evolution of baroque-modern, with its startling juxtaposition of Empire-style wallpaper and a soldier-bedecked printed cotton ‘portière.’” From *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, by M. Schoeser & C. Rufey, 1989, p. 221.

Related to this theme was the trend towards ruralism. Ruralism, epitomized by Laura Ashley fabrics and wallpapers, was a return to “simple” and “old-fashioned” style (Figure

2.11). Three cultural changes may be said to have inspired this. First, according to Schoeser and Rufey, was the aforementioned interest in revivalism, namely that of “the ‘new poor’ interiors of the 1920s and ‘30s, which had similarly been based on floral prints and farmhouse furniture” (p. 215). The “new poor” style was itself revivalist, drawing on traditional forms of furniture, textiles, and wall treatments (Figure 2.12). It was somewhat eccentric, relying on the juxtaposition of contemporary and “found” objects or antiques (p. 175).

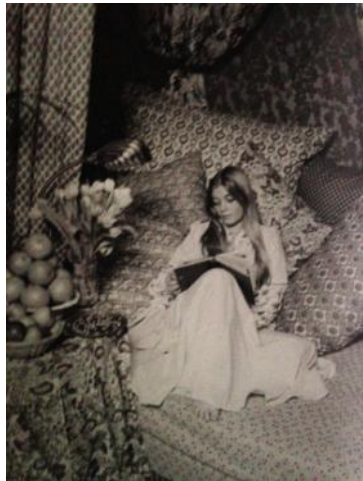


Figure 2.11: Publicity photo from Laura Ashley, showing ruralist patterns from the company’s furnishing fabric collection, c. 1972. From *Laura Ashley*, by M. Wood, 2009, p. 84.



Figure 2.12: “A ‘simple but smart’ scheme for a ‘new poor’ cottage interior of the 1920s and ‘30s.” From *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, by M. Schoeser & C. Rufey, 1989, p. 173.

Second, according to Christopher Breward and Ghislaine Wood in the exhibition catalogue *British Design from 1948: Innovation in the Modern Age*, “the role of the British landscape and countryside as a source of inspiration... came into focus” (p. 36).

Here, the idea of “tradition” or a distinctly British style came to fore in the elevation of country house style (Figure 2.13). In the essay *Nation, Land and Heritage*, Maurice Howard explains the country house was a “clever elision of the late Georgian and Regency periods” (2012, p. 103). From 1950 to 1980, it became “the most powerful message of the British style past” (p. 103). In other words, “traditional” British design is based on aspects of country house style.



Figure 2.13: “Nancy Lancaster’s library, created with the assistance of John Fowler, epitomizes the ‘English country house’ style.” From *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, by M. Schoeser & C. Rufey, 1989, p. 218.

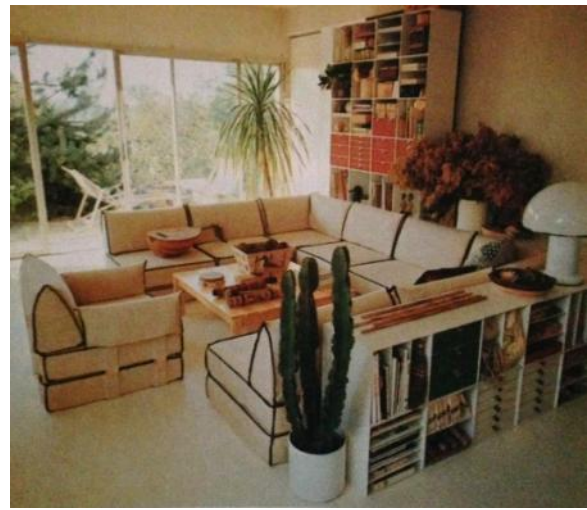


Figure 2.14: This living room, illustrated in London’s Habitat catalogue (1977-1978), reflects the International style’s last phase, when neutral-toned plain weaves predominated. From *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, by M. Schoeser & C. Rufey, 1989, p. 228.

The third reason echoes a familiar refrain. As seen in the discussion of 1970s British printed textiles, economic recession, the oil crisis, and failing industry contributed to ruralism. “In the early 1970s,” according to Sparke, “British society began to feel less at home than it had during the more optimistic climate of the 1940s, ‘50s and early ‘60s,

and a sudden retreat to the safety of the past took place” (2012, p. 136). The result of this turn was not a period of design stagnation, but an irreparable change in the public’s engagement with modernity (p. 136). Sparke explains that the “subtle balance between tradition and modernity” that had characterized postwar British interiors was lost in favor of a more blatant traditionalism (p. 136).

The last trend that needs to be examined is the beige interior, reflecting a revival of the impersonal, stark “International Style” developed in the 1920s (Figure 2.14) (Schoeser & Rufy, p. 225). The foundation of this style is rooted in Bauhaus architecture and furniture. With its glass and steel forms, the International Style was characterized by its “functional and severely geometrical manner, devoid of ornament” (Hamilton, 1993, p. 333). Architects favored the International Style long into the 1980s, but postwar interiors were given over to the more comfortable, organic shapes of what is now termed mid-century modern design. Scandinavian design was also highly popular as a more “middle-of-the-road form of modernist design” (Miller, Berlo, Bryan, & Roberts, 2008, p. 577). Scandinavian modern might be read as a hybrid of International Style and mid-century modern with its blend of “unornamented simplicity” and “accommodatingly soft contours” (p. 577). The “beige interior” trend Schoeser and Rufy note might refer to the natural materials so important to the Scandinavian aesthetic.

Modernism

According to Charles Harrison, modernism is a Western cultural concept characterizing the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, “grounded in the intentional rejection of classical precedent and classical style” (2003, p. 188). In other words, modernism positions itself as the antithesis of the “antique and unchanging” (p. 188). Modernity is predicated on the concept of change: the rejection of the past in favor of “a new type of future” (Attfield, 2000, p. 32). Therefore, notes Henri Lefebvre, “modernity carries within itself, from the beginning, a radical negation” (as cited in Marcus, 1989, p. 24). Modernity is a state of constant flux, where, as Marshall Berman explains, “all that is solid melts into air” (1982/1988, p. 345). While described above in harsh terms, change in modernism is generally seen as positive, a celebration of progress.

Harrison explains that the condition modernism “denotes is virtually synonymous with the experience of modernity” (p. 189). As such, Berman notes, “to be modern... is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one’s world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air” (1982/1988, p. 345).

With *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman, an American philosopher and Marxist, aimed to put people back in touch with their modernity, or to repair the “connection” between individuals and their culture (p. 24).

Noting that “we have mostly lost the art of putting ourselves in the picture, of recognizing

ourselves as participants and protagonists in the art and thought of our time,” Berman rejects the postmodern notions that foster such detachment and hopelessness (p. 24).

Writing from 1971 to 1981, Berman asserts that modernity, not postmodernity, was the condition of the time. Recognizing the political and cultural movements taking place from the late 1960s to the early 1980s (e.g., the New Left, the New Right, recycling), he urges readers to consider them part of a continuous process of modernity: “men and women asserting their dignity in the present – even a wretched and oppressive present – and their right to control their future; striving to make a place for themselves in the modern world, a place where they can feel at home” (p. 11). This stands in contrast to his understanding of postmodern theory in which “all the collective hopes for moral and social progress, for personal freedom and public happiness” are replaced by “futility and despair” (pp. 9, 29). In postmodernism, Berman notes, progress, or change, is rendered impossible by Foucault and others like him. Berman explains that “Foucault’s totalities swallow up every facet of modern life... [he] reserves his most savage contempt for people who imagine that it is possible for modern mankind to be free.... Foucault offer[ed] a generation of refugees from the 1960s a world-historical alibi for the sense of passivity and helplessness that gripped so many of us in the 1970s” (pp. 34-35).

Modernism and British Printed Textiles of the 1970s

According to Breward and Wood, with few exceptions:

the historiography of post-war British design and architecture has... tended to concentrate (albeit very thoroughly) on institutionally-focused case studies couched in the constraining language of Modernism, rather than embracing the vibrant social, aesthetic and material narratives that imbue the terrain with colour and critical relevance. (p. 23)

Here “Modernism” refers not to the condition of modernity but to what Harrison describes as “the modern tradition in high art” and “the grounds on which a truly modern art may be distinguished not only from classical, academic, and conservative types of art but also, crucially, from the forms of popular and mass culture” (p. 191). In terms of design, this means modernism is equated with the concept of “good design,” an ideological construct used to differentiate “between ordinary mass-produced artefacts answering needs and the decorative art object catering for discerning elite tastes” (Attfield, 1997/2007b, p. 187). Modernism, then, is used as an exclusory term to delineate “good design” from popular design.

In this context, notes Harrison, modernism refers “to a supposed tendency in art in which a special, ‘aesthetic’ form of virtue and integrity is pursued at the apparent expense of social-historical topicality or relevance” (p. 193). In other words, modernist art is not about the “social and utilitarian considerations” of modern life; instead, it is about the pursuit of “the aesthetic as an end in itself” (p. 195). The aesthetic of modern design revolves around such concepts as “‘fitness for purpose’, ‘form follows function’ and ‘truth to materials’” and carries with it a “crucial requirement of originality with regard to other – and specifically recent – art” (Attfield, 1997/2007b, p. 187; Harrison, p. 191).

Returning to the Breward and Wood quote above, studies of modernist design are therefore limited by definition (i.e., “good design”) and in interpretation (i.e., aesthetic formalism and progressivism). While there is a significant body of literature discussing 1970s British printed textiles, it is colored by (1) what authors perceive as a lack of modernism or “good design” and (2) a focus on aesthetics rather than context. For these reasons, literature on the subject often positions 1970s textile output unfavorably against modernist textiles of the 1950s and 1960s.

British postwar design culture was based on the tenets of modernism. Britain emerged from World War II hoping to reinvent itself as a “modern democratic partner rather than an imperial power” (Breward & Wood, p. 57). To that end, Britain adopted a string of new political policies that transformed the country into a welfare state with a national health service, public education, and a commitment to full employment. Though one might argue that the British welfare state was based on utopian ideals, the goal was to genuinely improve the everyday life of all British citizens (p. 57). These modern, democratic policies were subsequently “allied with Modernist aesthetics” in terms of manufacturing (p. 31). The reason was related to “the idea, however naïve, that design was democratic” (McDermott, 1986, p. 156).

This idea, Judy Attfield explains, was rooted in modernization. Modern manufacturing or mass production, in theory, would make it easier “to achieve a more democratic distribution of goods” (1997/2007b, p. 187). Through mass production techniques, design would become more affordable, meaning “everyone could participate in design”

(McDermott, p. 158). Thus democratization would occur not only in terms of design, but also in terms of society. Design was seen as an equalizer, a means “to raise the level of public taste and thereby the quality of everyday life in Britain” (Sparke, 1986, p. 2).

According to Catherine McDermott in her essay “Popular Taste and the Campaign for Contemporary Design in the 1950s,” “design became part of the mood of national pride, the sense of common experience and purpose, and the commitment to rebuilding post-War Britain” (p. 158). In addition to improving the everyday lives of British citizens, it was hoped that design might be exported, used to “establish Britain as a manufacturing force to be reckoned with on the world market” (Sparke, 1986, p. 2).

The state’s modern design agenda was introduced in the “Britain Can Make It” exhibition of 1946. Organized by the Council of Industrial Design, a state-funded organization established to promote design, the goal of the exhibition was threefold. First, it was intended to showcase British design and the country’s ability to compete economically in the international market (Bullivant, 1986, p. 146). To that end, exhibiting manufacturers were strongly encouraged to produce products that exhibited qualities of “good design.” In fact, Mary Schoeser notes, the “promotional catch-phrase for “Britain Can Make It” was ‘Good Design – and Good Business’” (Figure 2.15) (1986b, p. 71).

The second intention of the exhibition was to introduce both manufacturers and the wider public to the concept of design and designers (p. 71). This educational component was meant to extol the democratic virtues of design, “breaking down the established idea that industrial design was ‘something beautiful and remote, high-minded and a little

uncomfortable’” (Bullivant, p. 147). Finally, the exhibition was intended to demonstrate why design was important to the British consumer. Britain’s hope for a higher standard of living foretold an increase in consumerism. There was a propagandistic element to the exhibition, as the CoID attempted to “direct and dictate taste” through the promotion of “good design” to “a supposedly passive, receptive public” (p. 147). Breward and Wood note that “Britain Can Make It” and the Festival of Britain (Figure 2.16) that followed in 1951, “support[ed] an interpretation of design in Britain that is in some ways paternalistic, parochial and fiercely patriotic, yet at the same time optimistic, democratic and highly principled; bent on creating a new and better world for its citizens” (p. 16).

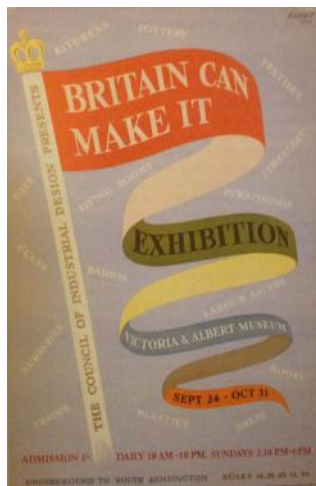


Figure 2.15: “Britain Can Make It” exhibition poster, 1946. From *Did Britain Make It?: British Design in Context 1946-86*, by P. Sparke (Ed.), 1986, p. 24.

Figure 2.16: Festival of Britain poster, 1951. From *British Design from 1948: Innovation in the Modern Age*, by C. Breward & G. Wood (Eds.), 2012, p. 16.

Figure 2.17: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Day, L. (Designer). (1951). *Calyx* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.190-1954), London, England.

The dichotomous nature of this paternalism and optimism of early postwar British printed textile design is epitomized by Lucienne Day's *Calyx* (Figure 2.17). First displayed at the Festival of Britain, the textile represented both "good design" in terms of modernist principles as well as the designer optimism of the early 1950s. Day herself explains there was "a growing feeling of optimism and an anticipation of the emergence of a bright new world and we thought that progressive design could contribute to the quality of people's lives" (as cited in Jackson, 2001, p. 7). Lesley Jackson notes that designers like Day:

responded ebulliently to the freedom of the post-war era, creating dynamic and stimulating patterns inspired by art, architecture, and science... Forward looking and optimistic, designers experimented fearlessly with new idioms, converting the hitherto conservative public to the progressive "Contemporary" style. (2002, p. 95)

Progressive, or modern, design was initially termed "contemporary" to distance it from the modernism of the interwar years, which Attfield explains was regarded as out of date. The term "indicated an overriding attraction to the present," a hallmark of modernism, and perhaps most importantly, conveyed the nation's positive view of the future (1997/2007b, p. 188).

According to Ngozi Ikoku in *British Textiles: 1700 to the Present*, contemporary textiles were based on the sculptural forms and organic shapes of abstract artists such as Paul Klee, Joan Miró, and Alexander Calder (Figure 2.18) (2010, p. 402). They were brightly colored (in contrast to wartime design), dynamic, playful, and highly experimental. *Calyx*, for example, was initially considered too extreme; however, once printed, it

proved a massive success, prompting a plethora of designs based on the “mobiles, doodles, and spasms” of the contemporary age (Jackson, 2002, p. 135).

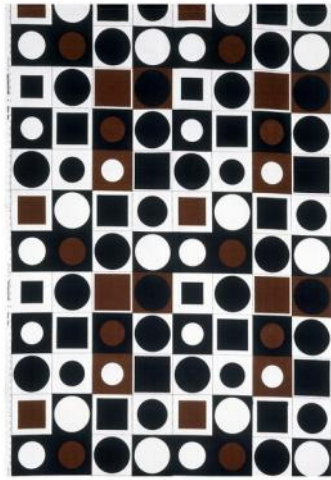


Figure 2.18: Calder, A. (1941). *Mobile* [Sculpture]. Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession No. 42.176a-d), New York, NY.

Figure 2.19: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1962). *Reciprocation* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.656-1962), London, England.

Figure 2.20: “Designs inspired by African, Moroccan, Indonesian, Turkish and American Indian hand-decorated cloths... produced between 1975 and 1979.” From *English and American Textiles: From 1790 to the Present*, by M. Schoeser & C. Rufey, 1989, p. 229.

Recalling the legacy of the Festival of Britain, textile designer Eddie Pond suggests that it and “its influence were a success beyond anyone’s expectations and were to be the guiding spirit for design right through the Swinging Sixties to about 1973” (1986, p. 87).

The same principles that drove Day’s design for *Calyx* also applied to architecture, graphic design, furniture design, and art. Design was light, elegant, spontaneous, charming, and abstract. Lesley Jackson claims that “at the end of the 1950s modern

architecture, painting, and pattern design were more closely allied than at any time since the turn of the century” (2002, p. 96).

The close relationship between the arts was evident in the textile designs of the 1960s. Open plan architecture “emboldened” textile design. Patterns became increasingly forceful and geometric (Figure 2.19), inspired by Op artists Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely (p. 135). Jackson references the novelty and up-to-the-minute quality of modernism when she explains “suddenly mobiles, doodles, and spasms were out, and circles, squares, and chevrons were in” (p. 135). However, abstraction and Op art did not hold sway throughout the decade. By 1965, Pop Art was the newest fashion. Along with it came psychedelic designs, a trend towards historic revivalism, and “a growing interest in ethnic patterns” (Figure 2.20) (p. 135).

The emergence of historic revivalism and “ethnic” textile design in Britain, Jackson explains, marks a rejection of “hard-core Modernism... in favour of soft-focus ruralism and nostalgia” (p. 167). As discussed earlier, this is most frequently interpreted as a loss of stylistic invention and manufacturer and designer confidence (Ikoku, 1999; Pond, 1986) and/or a need for comfort and security prompted by economic recession (Ikoku, 1999; Pond, 1986; Safer, 2012; Schoeser, 1986a; Sparke, 2012). Ruralism and revivalism are also occasionally interpreted as the natural products of an industry losing its base of modern textile designers, advocates, and promoters (Rayner et al., 2003, p. 82). For instance, Lucienne Day found the retrogressive textiles of the 1970s

“particularly hard to stomach” (Jackson, 2001, p. 160). Day ultimately rejected the world of printed furnishing fabrics, turning her attentions to art textiles in 1975.

However, in the context of British design in general, the shift towards ruralism and revivalism denotes a cultural shift towards democratization, individualism, and privatization (Beward & Wood, 2012; Heyck, 1992; McDermott, 1986; Sparke, 1986, 2012; Woodham, 2011; Woodham, 2012). This topic was also discussed earlier, leading to the conclusion that modernism no longer satisfied the needs of the British public who increasingly saw it as paternalistic, misaligned with the very same democratic values such paternalism was designed to foster.

The trend towards ruralism and revivalism also highlights an escalating conflict between tradition and modernism in British design. By definition, modernism required that design turn “its back on the past and its history. This meant relinquishing any vestiges of vernacular, or local, traditions” (Attfield, 1997/2007b, p. 187). However, Beward and Wood note, World War II “had brought to the fore the importance of preserving British traditions and heritage, for which people had fought and lost their lives” (p. 31). Thus “the drive for modernity in the reconstruction of Britain was often mediated by a preoccupation with the past and with British tradition” (p. 31).

Scholars and critics debate the extent of modernism’s popularity and influence. For instance, designer Wally Olins contends that by the 1960s:

Design became less formal, less a minority taste, in a real sense less an arcane series of products for a small, highly educated self-selecting audience. For the first time design in Britain started to become accessible – even popular... The cloistered, rarified and somewhat genteel world of design was shattered. (1986, pp. 61-62)

Others, such as McDermott, explain that “good design” never really caught on, ultimately rejected by the masses as too “middle-class” (i.e., elite) (p. 164). Schoeser notes that the manufacture of modern textiles was actually supported through the sale of traditional textiles (1986b, p. 82). Attfield claims that “design as a practice of Modernity was not necessarily objectified in a recognisable ‘modern’, much less ‘good design’, form” (1997/2007b, p. 187). Her contention is that the lived experience of modernity was not represented by the objects of “good design” discussed here, but in more commonplace objects. In other words, designed objects never became the commonplace objects they were intended to be.

Technology and Progress

Among the most important innovations of the 1970s was the computer. Although the large-scale, exorbitantly-priced mainframe computer had existed in various forms since 1945, the computer’s importance to the average citizen was solidified when the first personal computers entered the market in the late 1970s. Personal computers developed alongside a number of related digital electronics, including video games, pocket calculators, digital watches, video cassette recorders, cable television, and cinematic

special effects (Wolf, 2012, p. 3). As these new artifacts were integrated into mass culture, the digital age was born.

This idea corresponds to Berman's definition of modernity: "to be modern... is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air" (p. 345). Technological advancements had long been an instigating factor in the beneficial transformation of modern society, while at the same time, a source of anxiety and alienation. An oft-cited example of this paradox is Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, a 1936 silent film centered on the plight of a modern factory worker trying to preserve his humanity in a mechanized world (Figure 2.21).



Figure 2.21: Still from *Modern Times*, 1936. Retrieved from <http://crystalbridges.org/blog/charlie-chaplin-laughing-at-modernism/>

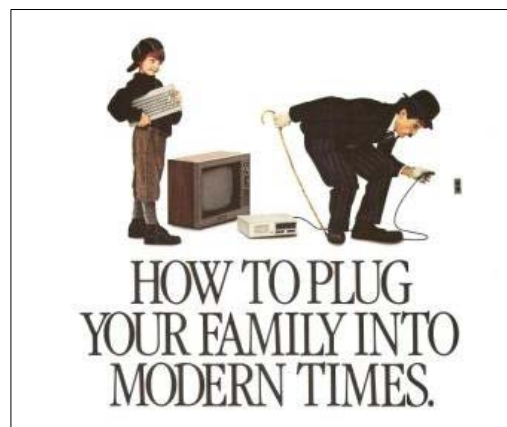


Figure 2.22: IBM's *Modern Times* advertisement, 1984. From amazon.com [Product listing], by AdsPast, retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com/Computer-Little-Family-Modern-Memorabilia/dp/B0086U6ME4>

In August 1981, the IBM Personal Computer debuted, heralded by an advertisement campaign referencing *Modern Times*, designed to reduce the intimidation factor of the new technology (Figure 2.22). Channeling Chaplin's *Modern Times* character, IBM's lookalike actor found himself "caught up in a world of hostile technology," forced to confront and overcome it (Campbell-Kelly & Aspray, 2004, p. 228). The intent of IBM's *Modern Times* advertisement was to humanize the computer by "putting a face on it." However, Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt note in *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990* that most "theorists of postmodernity were inclined to see [technology's] expanding empire as terrifyingly anti-human" (2011, p. 52). Anti-humanism was a modernist concept, as noted by Jane Harris:

The immediate reaction to the arrival of information technology was to imagine its use in terms of furthering existing modernist agendas. By projection, trends such as managerial command and control, productive efficiency regardless of the social cost, deliberate deskilling, replacing people with machines, and so on, were now given just the leverage they needed to deliver the final blow to any humane aspects of work. The circumstances of working with the technology itself would be harmful in their own right: new class divisions, concessions to the technology providers, antisocial working arrangements, worker surveillance, endless mindnumbing technical detail, and overall sensory deprivation. (2005, p. 25)

Such anti-humanist detachment and alienation was expressed by users in an early study (Zuboff, 1988) of computer users in an office setting (as cited in Jane Harris, p. 27). The computing experience caused these early users profound distress. As Harris explains, respondents described "their work as 'floating in space' or 'lost behind the screen.' They

complained that they were no longer able to see or touch their work. Many felt that they no longer had the necessary skills or understanding to function competently” (p. 27).

This sense of alienation is described in J. G. Ballard’s 1975 novel, *High-Rise*. The premise revolves around a single building set within modern high-rise complex akin to Le Corbusier’s unrealized plan for the *Ville Contemporaine* or Contemporary City, proposed in *Towards an Architecture* (1923). Ultimately, the living experiment in *High-Rise* dissolves into chaos as various class conflicts develop and tenants lose interest in the outside world. In *High-Rise*, technology is used as a weapon, symbolizing privilege as well as servitude. The character Anne, representing society’s upper echelon, thought of her servants as “an invisible army of thermostats and humidity sensors, computerized elevator route-switches and over-riders” (Ballard, 1975/2006, p. 72). As vandals systematically destroyed these services, the strain became too much for her, “playing on her huge sense of insecurity, all her long-ingrained upper-class uncertainties about maintaining her superior place in the world. The present troubles in the apartment block had exposed these mercilessly” (p. 72). Technology represented security, physical and social.

Wilder, the resident anarchist, responded differently to the acts of vandalism, believing “every torn-out piece of telephone equipment, every handle wrenched off a fire safety door, every kicked-in electricity meter... a stand against decerebration” (p. 52). Wilder did not consider these elements of technology his servants, but his oppressors, dulling

him to the realities of life. Technology also represented danger, as in the following passage:

The tampering with the electricity system had affected the air-conditioning. Dust was spurting from the vents in the walls... Like a huge and aggressive malefactor, the high-rise was determined to inflict every conceivable hostility upon them. Wilder tried to close the grilles, but within minutes they were forced to take refuge on the balcony. Their neighbours were crowded against their railings, craning up at the roof as if hoping to catch sight of those responsible. (p. 57)

Here, technology is represented as hostile, the balcony with its fresh air a refuge. Yet the tenants became so entrenched in the world of the high-rise that they abandon the outside world, opting to set up siege within its walls and battle for their lives.

This is the problem addressed in British economist E. F. Schumacher's revolutionary book, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (1973/1989). Schumacher, the Chief Economic Advisor to the British National Coal Board, was highly critical of the estrangement caused by overorganized, overlarge modern society. "We are not blind!" he announced. "We are men and women with eyes and brains... and we don't have to be driven hither and thither by the blind workings of The Market, or of History, or of Progress, or of any other abstraction" (as cited in McClaughry, 1989, p. xii).

Small Is Beautiful touched a cultural nerve in that many of the book's "ideas [became] commonplace," especially as regards the use of "appropriate technology" (McClaughry, p. xiv). Appropriate technology was meant to address issues related to the environment,

to the energy crisis, and to economic disparity. According to Schumacher, a technological revolution would provide:

inventions and machines which reverse the destructive trends now threatening us all... We need methods and equipment which are... cheap enough so that they are accessible to virtually everyone... suitable for small-scale application; and ... compatible with man's need for creativity. (1973/1989, p. 35)

Schumacher's theory is not based on socialism, but shares much in common with William Morris' socialist Arts and Crafts ideology of the late 19th century.

The book is predicated on the idea that "an ounce of practice is generally worth more than a ton of theory," that even small steps can lead to big change (p. 40). *Small Is Beautiful* also refers to the idea of a human-scale technology. Schumacher explains:

There is wisdom in smallness if only on account of the smallness and patchiness of human knowledge, which relies on experiment far more than on understanding. The greatest danger invariably arises from the ruthless application, on a vast scale, of partial knowledge such as we are currently witnessing in the application of nuclear energy, of the new chemistry in agriculture, of transportation technology, and countless other things. (p. 37)

Schumacher believed that the distribution of technology was necessary to mankind's survival and well-being. He stated:

What is the meaning of democracy, freedom, human dignity, standard of living, self-realisation, fulfilment? Is it a matter of goods, or of people?... If economic thinking cannot grasp this it is useless. If it cannot get beyond its vast abstractions, the national income, the rate of growth, capital/output ratio, input-

output analysis, labour mobility, capital accumulation; if it cannot get beyond all this and make contact with the human realities of poverty, frustration, alienation, despair, breakdown, crime, escapism, stress, congestion, ugliness, and spiritual death, then let us scrap economics and start afresh. Are there not indeed enough “signs of the times” to indicate that a new start is needed? (pp. 79-80)

Unfortunately, Schumacher passed away before seeing the advent of small technologies like home computers and video game machines.

Such technology became important to postmodernism. In “Coin-Drop Capitalism: Economic Lessons from the Video Game Arcade,” Carly A. Kocurek explains the “history of gaming as practice critically illuminates the evolution of a set of cultural beliefs that have become central in the digital age,” namely a postmodern view of labor practices and financial habits (2012, p. 189). Referencing theorist Fredric Jameson, Kocurek notes that the rise of the arcade in the early 1970s coincided with a shift from a modernist to a postmodernist economy, spurred by the oil crisis and the end of the international gold standard (p. 200). As industrialization declined and spending habits changed, white-collar service industries grew. The computer became essential to this growth. The role of video games was equally important, according to Kocurek, as they “introduced thousands of people to computers as approachable, everyday technologies just as the workplace was entering a period of massive computerization” (p. 193).

Technology and British Printed Textiles in the 1970s

Since its development in the mid-1920s, screen printing has been the preferred method of textile printing. It allows for complex designs as it is able to reproduce a wide range of painterly, illustrative, and photographic effects. It could also reproduce other printing techniques, including batik, tie dye, block, and roller prints (Robinson, 1969, p. 51). The only limit to screen printing was its lack of automation, a problem solved in the 1950s.

Postwar textile design was greatly affected by the mechanization of screen printing technology (Jennifer Harris, 1993; Kerry, 2007; Robinson, 1969; Schoeser, 1986a; Schoeser & Rufey, 1989). First, mechanical screen printing allowed for greater design experimentation. Mechanical screens, no longer limited by the dimensions of the human body, enabled large scale designs in five or six foot repeats (Robinson, p. 52). In addition, manufacturers found they were now able to risk printing an unpopular design. Screens were less expensive to prepare than blocks or copper rollers, meaning shorter print runs were required to recoup set-up costs. This provided manufacturers with a safety net; a failed design was no longer financially detrimental. Mechanical screen printing helped open the market to smaller companies and craftspeople, leading to a plethora of design options.

Second, the production process – both in terms of screen preparation and the actual printing process – was much faster than any previous technique. This encouraged the creation of seasonal lines of furnishing fabrics. As Kerry notes, “the new printing machine helped the manufacturer to keep pace with ever-quickenings changes in taste, a

radical departure from only a few decades earlier” (p. 26). Rapid turnover led to textile fashions that were much more disposable than ever before.

Combined, experimental design and rapid turnover meant textiles were designed with non-traditional consumers in mind. Manufacturers catered to all price points and all ages, including children and young adults. According to Kerry:

cloth was aimed at a new younger clientele, representing the first generation who had a disposable income and could live independently from their parents and families. This younger generation adapted quickly to the new design styles of abstract images, curvilinear lines and blocks of bold colour. Their living style was minimal, with little or no “hand me down furniture.” (p. 22)

Textile technology therefore supported a modernist design agenda. Designers were free to play with form and color on similar terms as modern artists, meaning designs were highly experimental and increasingly novel. The speed of the production process satisfied the demand for the new and complied with the disposability of the era’s culture. During a period of relative economic stability, design was affordable for all classes and promoted as part of a growing British culture.

In the mid-1960s, rotary screen printing was developed, soon becoming the preferred method for textile printing. Here, the screen was not printed flat, but made into a cylinder that quickly rolled designs onto the fabric. Rotary screen printing had several advantages over other available techniques. The machinery took up less space than a conventional flatbed screen printing press and allowed for several colors to be printed at

once (Kerry, p. 26). Screen printing technology had always accommodated large scale patterns (as opposed to block or roller printing) but could now do so faster. Rotary screen printing was not only fast, it was precise, meaning fewer misprints and less “damaged and kept” stock (p. 24).

Although this was a major development in printing technology, it is difficult to determine its design impact on 1970s British printed textiles. In theory, the developments should have further enhanced a modernist agenda, leading to more experimental, disposable, and democratic designs. However, designers and manufacturers were widely accused of playing it safe (Pond, 1986, p. 95). Still, by playing it safe, screen printing remained a relatively stable industry for the British through the 1970s (Schoeser & Rufey, p. 213).

The only hint of technology’s effect on textile design is found in Jackson, who explains:

the idiosyncrasies of hand screen-printing were replaced by the predictability of fully mechanized rotary screen-printing, resulting in fabrics that, while technically perfect, were lacking in tactile expression. Printed patterns had to work much harder to make an impact, therefore, to counter the more polished finish of the medium. (2002, p. 168)

Jackson’s contention is interesting, but as she goes into no further detail, it is difficult to know what to make of it.

Computer assisted design (CAD) is another technological innovation infrequently discussed in textile literature. CAD was developed in the 1960s and while initial

applications in the field of textiles were mechanical, its design significance must have been a topic of discussion. Early proponents of computer assisted textile design, such as Billie J. Collier and John R. Collier, suggested that “textile and apparel designers should see computers as an aid to their artistic skills rather than as a threat to them” (1990, p. 11). However, CAD did generate some anxiety amongst designers who not only saw the technology as a threat to their livelihood, but a threat to design in general. In *CAD in Clothing and Textiles: A Collection of Expert Views*, Winifred Aldrich explains that computers were originally thought to:

detract from, rather than enhance, the design process. [Designers] were worried about a loss of sensitivity and standardization that the very character of a computer seemed to imply. Mechanical aids such as the stylus, VDU screen and plotter seem very far away from the soft lead pencil and the artist’s drawing pad. (1994, p. 158)

In fact, the relationship between technology and the arts has long been fraught with anxiety, the debate originating in Britain with John Ruskin in the early 1850s and developed over the course of the Arts and Crafts movement spanning the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, there was a growing concern for the de-humanization of the industrial worker and nostalgia for the pre-industrial past.

In the 1970s, Britain saw the rise of a craft revival movement, spurred perhaps by a similar “nostalgia for the pre-industrial past” (Jennifer Harris, 1993, p. 235). Supported by the government-appointed Crafts Advisory Committee (today, the Crafts Council), established in 1971, the movement was introduced to the wider public with the opening

of an influential V&A exhibition, “The Craftsman’s Art,” in 1973. The exhibition featured nearly seventy textiles by British craftspeople, many of whom were unknown outside of smaller craft circles (Sutton, 1985, p. 6). The exhibition helped to humanize the making process.

Craft textiles, in this context, are those designed and produced by the same individual. In contrast, an industrial textile is one that is designed by a trained designer according to a manufacturer’s specifications and produced by a skilled artisan or team thereof.

Craftspeople bypass these intermediaries and print their designs by hand or via borrowed equipment, again, made possible by the efficiencies of mechanized screen printing.

Although amateur work abounded during this time, small, professional workshops producing furnishing fabrics, such as Timney Fowler, also fall into the craft textile category, making this topic relevant to the study at hand.

There are few explicit links in the literature that suggest a relationship between the craft revival of the 1970s and the development of microelectronics and computers. However, the “traditional” nature of craft associates it with a pre-industrial ethos.

Craft is also sometimes associated with the do-it-yourself movement of the 1970s, countering the feeling of de-humanization noted in the general design literature. The do-it-yourself movement was associated with self-sufficiency and sustainability, two important elements of 1970s individualist culture (Breward & Wood, p. 36).

Craft scholar Peter Dormer notes, craft is often perceived as “rural, reactionary, hidebound, skill-orientated and rooted in the ethics of toil and conservatism” (1988/2012, p. 78). Schoeser explains that these interests are also linked to ideas about ecological preservation (1986a, p. 102). In addition, “the role of the British landscape and countryside as a source of inspiration... came into focus” (Breward & Wood, p. 36). Environmentalism and recycling were notable responses to the rise of technology, as discussed in the previous section.

Postmodernism and British Printed Textiles in the 1970s

In *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, Gilles Lipovetsky notes that designed objects follow a modernist trajectory, rejecting the past “in favor of a hypercontemporary presence” whereas fashion is more fluid, open to historical influences (1994, p. 141). Lipovetsky claims that “from the Bauhaus on, in fact, design has been directly opposed to the fashion spirit, to the gratuitous play of the decorative, of kitsch and aesthetic superfetation” (p. 140). That is until the concept of postmodernism came into being.

The concept behind postmodernism focused on “breaking down the barriers between ‘art’ and other human activities, such as commercial entertainment, industrial technology, fashion and design, politics” (Berman, pp. 31-32). The ideal postmodernist was open “to the immense variety and richness of things, materials and ideas that the modern world inexhaustibly brought forth” (p. 32). Therefore, postmodern design eschewed the

formalism and myopia of modernism, relying instead on open-mindedness. Decoration and ornament replaced the idea of “form follows function” and progressive aesthetic style was fractured into multiple, simultaneously occurring movements. In this age of pluralism, the concept of “good design” no longer held sway. As such, postmodernism is seen as “explicitly antagonistic to authority” like the CoID (Adamson & Pavitt, 2011, p. 9). Instead of embracing “good design,” postmodern design embraced popular culture, kitsch, and camp.

Though closely aligned, kitsch and camp are two distinct terms often used when describing postmodern art and design. According to art historian Patricia A. Morton, the term kitsch references Clement Greenberg’s 1939 essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” in which the critic claimed that kitsch is “a debased product of industrialization antithetical to avant-garde art” (2011, p. 118). Not merely popular culture, kitsch is *inauthentic* popular culture that “imitates the effects of art, evoking artificial sentimentality and vicarious experience” (p. 118). In other words, kitsch’s imitative quality means it is not “real” and the emotions it produces are likewise not real. According to Greenberg, kitsch is “the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times” (p. 119). Writing in the late 1930s, at the height of interwar modernism, Greenberg thus positions kitsch as “bad design” in relation to the era’s emphasis on “good design.”

The reason for this stems from the manner in which kitsch references the past. A condition of modernism is progression, a movement away from the past towards something new. Having done so, the past is sealed. Kitsch actively appropriates the past,

but in doing so, removes it from its original context, thus rendering it fictitious.

Greenberg considers this a harmful practice; kitsch takes advantage of cultural tradition, using it to evoke sentimentality for false culture and to generate the false experience of connecting with that culture.

If kitsch is artificial culture, camp, as defined by Susan Sontag in the 1964 essay “Notes on Camp,” is the celebration of that artificiality. Camp aesthetics position the “world as an aesthetic phenomenon,” meaning camp art is acutely aware of its artificiality (as cited in Breward, 2011, p. 167). Camp art is about style, not substance. It is often decorative, exaggerated, sentimental, awkward, or “off.” In other words, camp does not comply with prescribed notions of taste or aesthetic judgment, i.e., modernist design. Sontag notes that “camp doesn’t reverse things. It doesn’t argue that the good is bad, or the bad is good. What it does is to offer for art (and life) a different – a supplementary – set of standards” (p. 168).

Tapping into these cultural modes of expression, the postmodernist plays with the boundaries of “good design.” Whereas kitsch and camp were once posited as “other,” that is, bad design, postmodernism challenges such “regulation” by “remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of identity or transcendent value” (Bhabha, 2003, p. 439). As such, the postmodernist opens a critical dialogue about the very foundation of design.

For these reasons, postmodern aesthetics are considered self-aware and critical, wry and ironic. These are the qualifications Lesley Jackson uses to identify postmodern textile design. For Jackson, to be postmodern, a textile must display irreverence, subversion, detachment, irony, wit, and/or playfulness (2002, pp. 205-209). However, Jackson uses these qualities to exclude, to distinguish the postmodern textile from its less self-aware counterpart.



2.23: Timney Fowler. (1986). *Statues* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.206-1989), London, England.



Figure 2.24: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1975). *Cote d'Azur* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.278-1990), London, England.

Jackson considers postmodernism a phenomenon of the 1980s and positions the aesthetic against a continuing revivalist trend toward period design. Jackson makes it clear that period design is “blindly respectful” and unimaginative, not irreverent or subversive and, therefore, not postmodern (p. 203). Describing British textile design firm Timney Fowler

(Figure 2.23), Jackson explains that the company “helped to popularize a more witty and ironic approach to period design” through their “playful sampling of historical ‘ready-mades’” (p. 205). Although Timney Fowler’s source material and appropriation technique is the same as that for period designers, it is somehow imbued with a self-awareness and purpose lacking in the designs of other firms such as Laura Ashley.

Moreover, Jackson seems to equate the critical aspect of postmodern design with negativity. For instance, when describing Collier Campbell’s design *Cote d’Azur* (Figure 2.24), Jackson suggests that it was so “positive, life-affirming, and celebratory” that postmodernism “did not enter into the equation” (p. 205). This ambiguous “positive” quality of *Cote d’Azur* was made possible because “there was no hint of irony in the work” (p. 205). This suggests that, for Jackson, design is still hierarchical; the utopian, “life-affirming” idealism of modern design is afforded higher status than the popular postmodern and revival movements.

Overall, Jackson’s survey of British printed textiles is biased toward modernism. In addition, postmodern textiles are characterized in limited terms. As a consequence, the large body of textiles that do not correspond to her versions of modernism or postmodernism are dismissed as “reactionary,” “soft-focus,” “blindly respectful,” and “revivalist.” As a whole, textile scholarship echoes Jackson’s story, placing the textiles of the 1970s, especially, in this no-man’s land.

In reality, postmodern aesthetics are far more varied and nuanced than Jackson's definition implies. The curators of "Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990," Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, "do not believe that postmodern practice was ever carried out with precise parameters in mind" (p. 10). Such limited definitions persist because the literature surrounding postmodern aesthetics has been limited in scope. Like the literature on 1970s British printed textiles, literature on postmodern aesthetics commonly takes the form of survey and hagiography (p. 10).

In their catalogue, Adamson and Pavitt explain that the 1970s saw a "postmodern turn" for many fields, such as film, dance, and literature. This postmodern turn marked "either the crisis or the exhaustion" of modernism "as well as a renewed interest in sampling or quoting from the past" (p. 13). The rejection of modernism is well documented elsewhere, but the cultural interest in the past has only been discussed thus far as a negative. In postmodernism, the relationship between the past and the present is significantly reframed.

In the 1970s, Berman claims, "modern societies abruptly lost their power to blow away their past. All through the 1960s, the question had been whether they should or shouldn't; now, in the 1970s, the answer was that they simply couldn't... they had to learn to come to terms with the world they had, and work from there" (p. 332). What happened involved "the combination of inflation and technological stagnation... plus a developing world energy crisis," which forced the re-evaluation of the collective "vision of the modern world and its possibilities" (p. 330). Because "modern society seemed to

lose the capacity to create a brave new future,” Berman explains that it was forced to look backwards, “to discover new sources of life through imaginative encounters with the past” (p. 332).

Although Berman considers this a continuation of the practice of modernism, cultural historian Thomas Hine proposes it as something different, beginning:

not with a blank slate but with a landscape filled with ruins – the ruins of communities and buildings, and the ruins of failed old ideas. It is based not simply on looking forward but rather on looking all around, to see what was available, to find new uses for what had been left behind. (2007, p. 21)

This shift in perspective inspired a new aesthetic, one “of salvage and of juxtaposition... as people sought to rediscover and renew what had long gone unnoticed and neglected” (p. 21). For both Berman and Hine, creation in the 1970s paralleled the process of recycling; the neglected rubble and ruins of the past could be recycled or repurposed into something new.

Though they do not use the term, both Berman’s and Hine’s description of creation in the 1970s reflects the concept of bricolage. Bricolage, a term coined by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, is also a practice of creation akin to recycling, or as Victor Buchli explains, bricolage makes use of “the detritus of the given world which, contrary to rationalities that would insist on such matter as waste, is treated as a ‘resource’ to be reworked through cunning juxtaposition” (2011, p. 113). The practitioner of bricolage, the bricoleur, is described as anti-modern. As Buchli notes:

the bricoleur accepts the world as it is and reconfigures it, rather than anticipating a new world and inventing it. In this respect the bricoleur has a different concept of time compared to the modernist: one that is retrospective, based on the continuous reworking of the received elements of the world, as opposed to prospective and filled with imagined new conditions and possibilities... The bricoleur is thus primarily concerned with some sort of inventive displacement, rather than inventive novelty. (p. 113)

Bricolage was not concerned with the future but with understanding and accepting the present. In this way, the concept of bricolage helps situate postmodernism within design history. It is not the hallmark of something new – an era or a movement – but a period of rediscovery and transition.

As Homi K. Bhabha explains, postmodernism is a “breakdown of temporality” (p. 439). It is the repetition of the past – not the anticipation of the future – that drives present-day artists. The future of art, when it does emerge, will be one of freedom and choice, not proscribed, based on a need to distance oneself from one’s history (p. 439).

Conceptual Framework

This paper is influenced by the idea of a textile as a space where discourse can take place. This position is shaped by three texts: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “The Smooth and the Striated” (1987), Deleuze’s *The Fold* (1988), and Pennina Barnett’s “Folds, Fragments, Surfaces: Towards a Poetics of Cloth” (2012/1999).

Deleuze and Guattari, French postmodern philosophers, wrote “The Smooth and the Striated” as part of a larger work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Their philosophy has been used and written about by a multitude of design scholars, including those in the field of textiles (e.g., Barnett, 1999/2012; Doy, 2002/2012). *A Thousand Plateaus* explores and promotes the idea of “multiplicity” or the concept of multiple truths. The authors argue against the concept of sedentary, unitary points of view from which history and culture is written, or more precisely, traced and retraced and traced again. The product of such tracings is an imitation of the world, according to those who held the pen. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the world cannot be imitated.

The key to “reality,” according to the authors, lies in anti-culture and anti-history – nomadism. Instead of tracing the world, nomads invent maps (performances) of a world that exists “aparallel” to reality. This world is not reality; it is an assemblage of connections, multiplicities of meaning, experience, understanding, objects, subjects, and points of view. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, these connections come and go, but never start or stop.

In “The Smooth and the Striated,” the authors discuss two concepts of space – smooth space and striated space – and how those spaces might be created. Smooth space is free form, amorphous, informal, unlimited, and dynamic. Striated space is controlled, scientific, measured, limited, and static. The authors use textiles as metaphoric illustrations of these different spaces. Felt, patchwork quilts, and crochet represent

smooth space; weaving, embroidery, and knitting represent striated space. While seemingly posited as a binary, the authors argue that the creation of spaces, like the creation of textiles, is rarely so easily categorized. Space is constantly being transformed. The authors align the process of creation with the process of thinking about and understanding space.

“The Fold” is based literally on the concept of a fold of paper or cloth. The concept is used as both “a pictorial and representational device” and as a way of thinking and understanding the world which is different from Enlightenment art and science... The fold permits a different kind of perception, creativity, and knowledge” (Doy, p. 23).

The concept of the fold is derived from Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz’ concept of the monad. Leibniz, a 17th-century pre-Enlightenment philosopher, explained that a monad is another word for an idea. Every idea, or monad, “contains the image of the world” (Doy, p. 32). In other words, the world exists as a set of ideas; the world is a virtual space that Deleuze suggests exists “only in the folds of the soul which convey it” (Doy, p. 32).

This is the basic tenet of Pennina Barnett’s essay, “Folds, Fragments, Surfaces: Towards a Poetics of Cloth” (1999), based both on “The Smooth and the Striated” and *The Fold*. Though poetic, Barnett’s explanation of Deleuze’s concept makes clear the possibilities of using it to think about textiles as spaces. She writes:

The Deleuzian fold is a virtual, even cinematic image – of “points... referrals, spaces”; an infinity of folds always in motion, composing and recomposing without inside or outside, beginning or end... It is a universe more than a world... Here, folds double back on themselves like ocean waves, withdraw, and almost cease to generate. Yet within the hollow of the fold, and despite its closure, a leap may still be possible: not a leap “elsewhere (as if another world would open up) but rather leaping in place... and thus distorting or displacing the ground (the foundation, or its ungrounding).” (p. 184)

In other words, the concept of the fold is really about the postmodern concept of multiplicity, of experiencing familiar objects or texts in new ways from different points of view. The sturdiest foundations can be ungrounded by exploring new ways of thinking. The “hollow of the fold” might seem like a limitation, a closure, or the proverbial “box,” but as creativity experts suggest, limitations often allow for more creativity. In other words, thinking “outside” the box is not possible. There is no other box, or world, in which to exist. It is important to think within the box, within this world, and see what we might be able to do to change it, upset it, unsettle it.

While Barnett enthusiastically endorses Deleuze’s ideas, Doy claims they are based on “weak philosophy.” She suggests that the text is simply an amalgamation of “suggestive and imaginative metaphors” that lend themselves well to discussions of textiles (p. 37). However, one of the most interesting points these essays raise is that a textile can exist as a “space.” The textile constitutes a place where ideas merge and diverge and merge again.

Postmodern Literature

This study might be termed postmodern in the sense that it will consider the making of textiles from multiple theoretical perspectives. This means it will likely write “over and against what has been written,” participate in “subscribing and, simultaneously, questioning other forms” and will express “the new through the old and the already known” (Alfaro, 2005/2012, p. 186). This is the “essence” of postmodern literature, according to María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, and by participating in it, this study will explore postmodern elements such as: play, irony, repetition, parody, flux, heterogeneity, plurivocity, ambiguity, inapprehensibility, instability, otherness, disjunctivity, difference, disruption of borders, and nesting (stories within stories) (pp. 186-188).

There are no binaries in postmodernism, but instead a constant stream of negotiations and transformations, flux, instability, and ambivalence. Here the postmodern concept of authorship comes into play. Whereas making is directly related to meaning in modernism – the artist or maker determines the object’s meaning – the maker is deemphasized in postmodernism. The reader/consumer/owner determines the meaning, according to Attfield (2000, pp. 1, 5). More inclusively, one might suggest, based on Deleuze and Guattari, that meaning is continuously negotiated and renegotiated as the object moves in space and time.

Related Studies

This section details three case studies related to modernism or textiles that utilize material culture methods. Each study reveals how material objects can help inform our understanding of society and culture.

Judy Attfield

Attfield's research is postmodern in nature, centering on the deconstruction of the design canon. Noting the narrow scope of objects qualifying as "good design" and therefore studied by design historians, Attfield considers the broader range of material objects produced, including those that might be termed "non-design" or "wild," that is uncomforming and ordinary. Her research has expanded the concept of design, suggesting that material culture can contribute much to the study of the designed world, mainly by highlighting the relationship between people and their things.

Like other postmodern scholars and artists, Attfield's engagement with material culture reveals the popular origins and interests behind the aesthetic, acknowledging "the importance of portraying symbolic value in an accessible idiom and subsequently produced highly expressive stylistic forms derived from popular culture" (2007a, p. 15). In a way, this relates to all material culture, as it too portrays symbolic value in an accessible idiom in addition to being highly expressive.

As relates to modernity, Attfield's studies, including "Design as a Practice of Modernity: A Case for the Study of the Coffee Table in the Mid-Century Domestic Interior" discussed here, shows "how design as a practice of Modernity was not necessarily objectified in a recognisable 'modern', much less 'good design', form" (1997/2007b, p. 187). The coffee table, for example, might be an example of "good design," but most often it was not. Attfield explains the often novel shapes coffee tables came in, suggesting that despite the design education afforded the public through voices such as the CoID, the public did not always select appropriate examples of design.

The appeal of the coffee table, however, was not necessarily aesthetic or functional, and as such the design did not matter. The coffee table was "used to encode Modernity and mark a new type of informal leisure" (p. 194). Attfield describes this form of leisure as conviviality – an idea expressed in more recent vocabulary as the Danish word *hygge*. Attfield's argument is based on the context of the open-plan interior endemic to postwar spaces. The informal space generated by such concepts reflected a general cultural informality wherein leisure was no longer the purview of the upper classes. In breaking down the traditional space of the home, centered on the hearth, the open plan relied on a new center – the coffee table and the television – around which social life was reimagined. As Attfield notes, "the coffee table offered in theory a non-hierarchical space free of the gender or class connotations associated with the traditional values of the hearth" (p. 196).

While both coffee table and open plan was promoted as new symbols and spaces of modernity, the open plan did not become popular. In contrast, the “coffee table succeeded by managing to cohabit comfortably with traditional domestic arrangements less permeable to change” (p. 196). Therefore, no matter the design quality, the coffee table managed “to bring a measure of Modernity into the heart of the British home” (p. 199).

Regina Lee Blaszczyk

Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s research focuses on design, retail, and advertising related to the social and cultural history of business. In *Imagining Consumers, Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning*, Blaszczyk’s goal is to “explore how manufacturers and retailers figured into the creation of consumer society” (2000, p. ix). Instead of focusing on heavily advertised big businesses such as Coca-Cola and General Motors, Blaszczyk delves deep into American “home furnishings companies – firms that made and distributed the most commonplace and meaningful artifacts of the American consumer revolution” in order to craft an alternative to the “coercion thesis” (p. x). Essentially, this thesis states that “advertising shapes desire and creates demand” for consumer products (p. 2). This thesis assumes the population is homogeneous and can be trained or manipulated to want the same things. While this may be true for disposable goods such as cigarettes and candy bars, Blaszczyk argues that durable objects such as pottery and glassware were designed to satisfy the desires and demands of the heterogeneous

consumer (p. 2). Savvy companies studied consumers, “responding to their desires rather than trying to build markets by creating new needs” (p. 2).

In her chapter on Fiesta tableware, Blaszczyk demonstrates how a study of this particular aspect of material culture leads to a dramatically different understanding of the history of design. Blaszczyk explains that the majority of design historians focus on “high-style craftsmen, self-appointed reformers, and high-profile ‘name’ designers” when, in reality, much of 20th century industrial design innovation was spearheaded by “fashion brokers,” “astute consumer liaisons whose jobs entailed studying markets, evaluating tastes, and making product recommendations” (p. 12).

The “fashion broker” or art director for Fiesta’s manufacturer, the Homer Laughlin China Company, was Frederick Hurten Rhead. Rhead was a careful scholar of consumer preferences and “saw himself in opposition to slick ‘art evangelists,’ such as [Walter Dorwin] Teague, Raymond Loewy, and the younger Russel Wright. These [designers] attempted to create a public image of the designer as tastemaker,” an image promulgated by design historians still today (p. 133). Such modern designers felt strongly that they could “uplift taste” and “precipitate social change” by preaching about “good taste” and “style,” telling consumers what they should buy (p. 129).

In contrast, Rhead “believed that only consumers... could ‘tell the manufacturer what to make’” (p. 141). He realized that “no catholic fashion would succeed in a pluralistic society like the United States” and that streamlining, the modern design buzzword of the

1930s, “was far too monolithic, technocratic, and utopian for American consumers” (p. 133). Debuting in 1936, Fiesta tableware was “futuristic yet quaint,” appealing to modernists as well as to “audiences that otherwise rejected modern styling” (pp. 127, 159).

Fiesta is today considered an example of Art Deco, “a stylized modernism toned down with historicist references” (p. 159). Blaszczyk explains that the tableware’s molding decoration, concentric circles “meant different things to different audiences.

Traditionalists equated the rings with marks left by the old potter’s wheel, while modernists recollected the futurist imagery from the Worlds of Progress Expositions” (p. 159). “Its imaginative mix-and-match colors” contrasted the austerity of hard-core modernity and also “suggested sunshine, merriment, and brighter days to come” for those hard hit by the Great Crash of 1929 (p. 127). In this way, Rhead’s Fiesta tableware “captured the mood of Depression Era America” by offering contemporary consumers a modern design of their own (p. 127). Like Attfield’s essay “Design as a Practice of Modernity” discussed above, Blaszczyk’s *Imagining Consumers* demonstrates how material objects reveal alternative design narratives, reflecting a nuanced, pluralistic cultural history.

Dinah Eastop

In “Outside In: Making Sense of the Deliberate Concealment of Garments within Buildings” (2006), textile conservator Dinah Eastop explores the long-forgotten cultural

practice of hiding worn garments inside walls. The founder of the Deliberately Concealed Garments Project, Eastop has catalogued the numerous caches of well-worn clothing discovered within the walls of centuries-old buildings in North America, Northern Europe, and Australia.

According to Eastop, no documents exist to explain why these garments were concealed; however, the garments themselves act as form of “material memory,” memorializing “their concealment and something not known about the intention of the concealer” (p. 251). Thus material culture research techniques are employed to better understand the beliefs that motivated this particular cultural practice. For this paper, Eastop examines the concealed objects using spatial, metonymical, and metaphorical analysis, determining that “these finds provide a means of exploring how space was conceived and experienced in the past, and how these deliberately hidden garments mediated, and continue to mediate, the relationship between people and the spaces they occupied, and may continue to occupy” (p. 239).

Spatial analysis revealed a pattern in the places garments were concealed, suggesting that they “were made at the juncture of old and new parts of a building, in voids, and at points of entry or access (doorways, windows and chimneys)” (pp. 246-247). Metonymy refers to a rhetorical device in which a thing is not called by its own name, but instead, by the name of something closely related in meaning to the thing in question. Garments, Eastop notes, retain the shape of the person who wears them, and thus function metonymically in the sense that they substitute for the wearer. Metaphorical analysis identifies a

connection between the home and the body, for example, “the hearth is the heart of the home” (p. 248). Eastop hypothesizes that “if the concealed objects are understood as material metaphors, this metaphorical association may suggest that the concealing of garments was a way of clothing (and possibly thereby protecting) the body of the home” (p. 248).

On their own, each of these analyses does little to explain why the garments were hidden. Combined, however, an interesting theory emerges. Placed at vulnerable junctions in the home – within voids or at points of entry – garments were protective agents, imbued with the power of their wearers. Eastop’s analysis demonstrates the potency of material culture for recovering memory, in this case, a long-forgotten practice that nevertheless informs contemporary Western cultural beliefs about vulnerability, garments, and the home.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the current literature relevant to a study of British printed textiles of the 1970s. The literature reviewed centered on four major areas: (a) British printed textiles; (b) British interior design; (c) modernism; and (d) postmodernism. The goal was twofold: to provide contextual background for this study and to rationalize its undertaking. The literature review was followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework that informed this study, namely postmodern ideas of multiplicity, ambiguity,

and instability of meaning. The chapter ends with an examination of three material culture studies that focus on the ways material objects help to reframe traditionally held beliefs about modernism and the ways in which people interact with objects in their homes.

Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. To facilitate this exploration, two research questions were developed. The first draws attention to the textiles' surface design: What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s? The second reiterates the purpose statement: How are social and cultural changes expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s? In other words, how might textiles reflect the changing values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of 1970s Britain? Material culture methods – designed specifically to examine culture as reflected through objects – will guide this object-based study.

This chapter includes an overview of material culture – its definition, purpose, and rationale – and the manner in which it is used to conduct research. This brief introduction is followed by a careful look at the individual aspects that comprise this study: its research questions, research sample, research design, methods for data collection and data analysis with rationale, credibility, limitations, and delimitations.

Material Culture as Method

The term “material culture” refers to any “material object... that people perceive, touch, use and handle, carry out social activities within, use or contemplate” (Woodward, 2007, p. 14). Material culture can be a work of art, a drinking glass, a game, a car, or a textile.

Though disparate, each of these “things” functions as “cultural expression” or a “medium through which all the values and practices of society are enacted” (Howes, 2005, p. 56).

Simply put, material culture is the physical manifestation of culture.

According to Jules David Prown, “objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged” (1993/2001c, p. 220). Therefore objects can be studied to “understand culture, to discover the beliefs – the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time” (p. 220). A material culture study is designed to facilitate social and cultural understanding using objects as primary sources.

Objects are considered important primary sources for a number of reasons. According to Prown, they “can make accessible aspects, especially nonelite aspects, of a culture that are not always present or detectable in other modes of cultural expression” (1982, p. 4).

Two conclusions may be drawn from this statement. First, objects can broaden traditional views of culture and illuminate alternative or pluralistic cultural narratives.

Second, objects can communicate that which is not communicable in any other form.

Christopher Tilley (2006) explains this phenomenon as follows:

the artefact through its “silent” speech and “written” presence, speaks what cannot be spoken, writes what cannot be written, and articulates that which remains conceptually separated in social practice. Material forms complement what can be communicated in language rather than duplicating or reflecting what can be

said in words in a material form. If material culture simply reified in a material medium that which could be communicated in words it would be quite redundant. The non-verbal materiality of the medium is thus of central importance. (as cited in Bristow, 2007/2012, p. 62)

For this reason, material culture is often “read” through the lens of semiotics: metaphor, metonym, and simile. In this light, objects represent or symbolize culture; they “materialize belief” (Prown, 1993/2001c, p. 229).

Prown contends that there are two kinds of material culture studies: hard and soft. Though both seek truth, each defines truth according to a different perspective. Facts constitute the truth in a hard material culture study, whether they be “in the artifact itself as a surviving historical event, in written records and comments, in experimental proof, [or] in statistical data” (1995/2001b, p. 239). In a soft material culture study, truth “resides in neither the physical object nor contextual data, but in the underlying belief structure of the culture that produced the object” (p. 239). In other words, truth is constituted by the interpretation of the object. This interpretation is subjective and subject to change. It is “conditioned by, indeed limited by, the interpreter’s own cultural givens” (p. 239).

This study utilizes aspects of both schools. It begins with a careful study of the material culture in question. Though several methods of material culture data collection exist (e.g., Fleming, 1974; Prown, 1982), the first step typically focuses on empirical information regarding the objects’ history, construction, materiality, function, and

iconography. Additionally, objects are compared to one another as well as the broader canon. This constitutes a study of style, the shared formal characteristics of a group of objects.

The next step is to collect contextual data. Contextual data informs both empirical and interpretive study. Here, research moves away from the object in order to place it within a broader cultural scope. For this study, contextual data comes from extant literature on British printed textiles, textile designers, and manufacturers, and the British textile industry. Primary documents serve as another source of data. These documents include magazine articles, advertisements, photographs, trade print material, and other ephemera.

The third step of a material culture study is the collection of theoretical data. Theoretical information provides the lens through which analysis takes place. As material culture analysis is inherently interdisciplinary, theory may be drawn from any number of fields, including sociology, history, anthropology, and psychology. According to Prown, the researcher can take any approach to analysis, the goal being to apply “the perspectives and insights of our time and place... to arrive at new understandings” (1995/2001a, p. 256).

Finally, object-based, contextual, and theoretical information is synthesized, resulting in interpretation. Interpretation is inductive, grounded in empirical fact, but ultimately subjective, dependent on the researcher, audience, time, and place.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed in response to the research purpose identified in the introduction: the purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- What related trends are evident in visual culture in the 1970s?

Research Question 2

How are social and cultural changes expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward modernity?
- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward technology or progress?
- In what ways do these textiles reflect the concept of postmodernity?

Research Sample

Research was drawn from twenty-one British printed furnishing fabrics manufactured by Laura Ashley, Heal Fabrics, Hull Traders, Liberty, Textra Furnishing Fabric, and Warner

Fabrics. Textiles were selected from the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia), Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), and the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (HLATC) based on the following criteria:

date

Selected textiles were created between 1968 and 1982.

function

Selected textiles are classified as furnishing fabrics (as opposed to dress fabrics). The reason for this is researcher preference and a desire to compare like with like.

typicality

Selected textiles are representative of their time period. In order to determine what types of textiles were produced during this time, the literature was consulted prior to the selection process. Therefore examples were chosen that reflected typical 1970s design, such as the revivalist and ruralist movements (Ikoku, 1999; Jackson, 2002; Kerry, 2007; Safer, 2012; Schoeser, 2012b). A number of outliers were selected as well, in order to inform as broad a picture of 1970s textile choices as possible.

prevalence

Selected textiles include those commonly featured in related literature. Certain textiles, including *Ikebana*, *Mandarin*, and *Cottage Garden* appear in multiple

sources relating to British textile design of the 1960s and 1970s. This information helped inform the criterion of typicality.

variety

Selected textiles represent a range of manufacturers and designers. This is a study focusing on 1970s textiles in general. Therefore, it was important to study textiles from multiple manufacturers and designers. For example, Mia's collection is from a single manufacturer: Heal Fabrics. As such, the objects studied at the V&A were necessarily more varied.

The above criteria was developed in order to gain the broadest picture of 1970s British printed textiles as possible, working within the constraints of time and the availability of resources present at these two museums. A full list of selected textiles is included in Appendix A.

Research Sites and Design

Selected textiles were studied at the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion at the V&A in February 2015. Additional textile study took place at Mia in November 2015, AIC in December 2015, and HLATC in November 2015 and September 2016.

Additional primary sources were gathered at British art and design archives and libraries, including the Art and Design Archive at the V&A, the City of Westminster Archives Centre, the University of Brighton, the British National Art Library, and the Visual Arts Data Source (VADS) Image Collections. These sources included interviews by the designers and manufacturers of textiles included in the research sample, business records, advertisements, magazine articles, and statements made by professional organizations such as the British Council of Industrial Design/Design Council. Data collection was ongoing throughout the writing process.

Preceding the actual collection of data, a selected review of the literature was conducted to study the contributions of other researchers and writers in the broad areas of printed textiles, interior design, modernism, and postmodernism. The focus of this review centered on the current literature related to this topic. Review continued throughout the writing process, and emergent contextual and theoretical information assisted with the interpretation of the selected objects.

Data Collection Methods

This study employed two data collection methods for (a) material culture and (b) primary documents. A description of each follows, along with step-by-step accounts of the data collection processes as completed.

Material Culture

The material culture method selected for this study is E. McClung Fleming's model for the study of artifacts (1974). Fleming's model (Figure 3.1) is highly structured, helping to ensure a holistic approach to the study of the object and providing a conduit between empirical and conceptual research. According to Fleming, every object is comprised of five basic properties: (1) history, (2) material, (3) construction, (4) design, and (5) function (p. 156).

1. History refers to where, when, by whom, for whom, and why an object was made. This property also includes information such as changes in ownership (provenance), changes in condition, or changes in function.
2. Material refers to what an object is made of.
3. Construction refers to how an object was made, including skill of craftsmanship. Individual parts of the object are also considered, in terms of the way those parts are organized to influence an object's function.
4. Design refers to traditional art history methods of understanding objects, by studying their structure, form, style, ornament, and iconography.
5. Function refers to how the object was intended for use as a functional object as well as the unintended function or role it served in its culture. These unintended functions might include utility, delight, or communication.

The objective of Fleming's model is to aid the researcher in performing a series of four operations on each of the object's five basic properties (p. 154). Operations are designed

to ask questions and seek answers regarding the properties. The four operations, explained in greater detail below, are identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation.

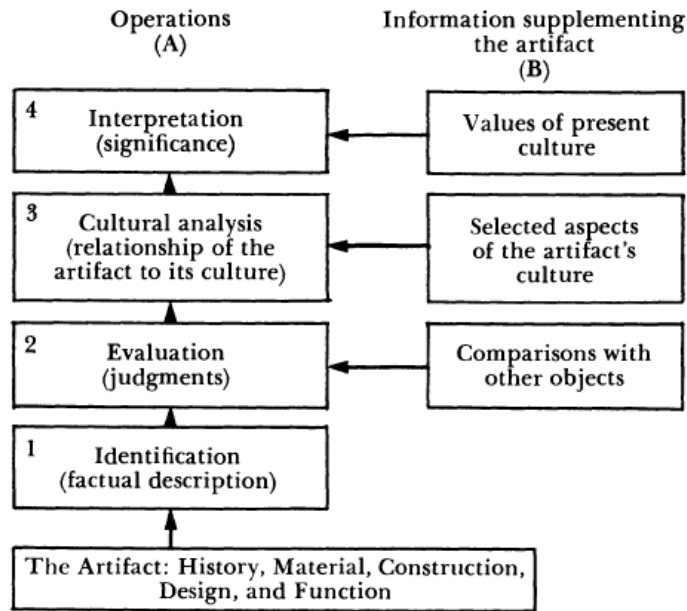


Fig. 3.1: Fleming's model of artifact study. From "Artifact study: A proposed model," by E. Fleming, 1974, *Winterthur Portfolio*, 9, p. 154.

The data collection used for this study is explained in the following step-by-step account.

1. Prior to data collection, a digital data collection matrix (Appendix B) based on Fleming's method was prepared for each object of study. Each matrix begins with the object's title, museum identification number, and image to facilitate ease of sorting and identification. The matrices were created to facilitate a step-by-step approach to data collection, beginning with identification. For each operation, a table was provided, offering space to note details regarding

each property. Matrices were saved on a Dell Inspiron laptop computer connected to a back-up Lacie external hard drive and synced to Dropbox.

Because the first two operations – identification and evaluation – were performed in a museum setting, the matrix was modified slightly. The modified hard-copy matrix (Appendix C) featured ample space to make handwritten notes regarding each of the five properties.

2. The first operation, identification, is designed to gather empirical data such as that which might be found on an exhibition label: what is the object, who made it, who owned it, when and where was it made, what it is made from, how it was made, and what it depicts in terms of iconography (p. 156). This information was gathered from both the object itself (e.g., iconography) and the museums' online catalogues (e.g., provenance).

Information was recorded directly on the prepared hard-copy matrices. In certain cases, digital photographs were taken to illustrate detail such as weave structure, printing quality, and iconography. These photographs were named using a combination of the object's title, the museum's name, and the date.

Photographs were saved according to the methods described in step 1.

3. The second operation performed, evaluation, is designed to compare the object under study to similar objects in the world. If a single object were

studied, evaluation would function as connoisseurship, helping the researcher value or rank the object. However, this study focuses on a large group of objects, meaning the purpose of evaluation is to “isolate characteristics common to the group” (p. 158). In other words, the purpose of evaluation is to identify style. During the cultural analysis operation, style will “enable the researcher to make inferences of a general nature about the society that produced and/or used the body of artifacts” (p. 158). Information was recorded on the prepared hard-copy matrices.

4. Handwritten notes were typed into the original digital matrices. Typed notes were saved according to the methods described in step 1.

The two remaining operations required to complete Fleming’s model are cultural analysis and interpretation. The purpose of the cultural analysis operation is to move the study of objects “beyond description toward explanation” (p. 158). It does this by drawing upon other fields and disciplines “to examine in depth the relation of the artifact to aspects of its own culture” (p. 157). For this study, qualitative research methods were selected to analyze the data.

The last operation to be performed, interpretation, provides a rationale for the study. Rather than begin the study with the rationale – the reason the research should be conducted – Fleming’s method directs the researcher to end with rationale – the way the research contributes to our understanding of the world. To do this, the researcher relates

the object to a “key aspect of our current value system” (p. 161). Thus an object from the past is made relevant for an audience of the present.

The relationship between past and present is not necessarily factual. It is drawn from fact; however, as with cultural analysis, interpretation is dependent on the researcher’s perspective. Here it is also dependent on the audience and their ideological interests. Therefore, there is no “one ‘correct’ interpretation, but many” (p. 161). Interpretation, as a final step, will be revealed in the dissertation’s conclusion.

Primary Documents

In order to provide context and support for the material culture data collected, analyzed, and interpreted, a number of primary sources were consulted. In contrast to the secondary sources consulted during the literature review, primary sources constitute documents and visuals produced co-currently with the material objects under study. The data collection used for this study is explained in the following step-by-step account.

1. Prior to data collection, a list of potential archives and print sources was compiled. Archives were selected from a pool of textile manufacturers identified in the literature review. Print sources were identified in the literature review as containing information (articles and advertisements) related to textiles. Sources included such publications as *Design*, *House Beautiful*, *Ideal Home*, *House & Garden*, and *Moebel Interior Design*, etc.

2. Catalogues for Heal Fabrics, Liberty, and the Design Council archives were requested from each appointed repository. These catalogues were consulted and from them a list of materials for further study was compiled. This list was then carefully prioritized based on the materials' relevance to the study.

Relevance was determined based on the materials' relationship to the research questions guiding this study. Because information needed to answer said research questions needed to pertain to iconography, British society, or British culture, materials were prioritized that might feature descriptions or interpretations of 1970s printed textiles such as magazine articles, press releases, sales catalogues, or correspondence with designers. Additionally, materials related to textile consumers were of great importance, such as advertisements featuring 1970s textiles, press releases, price lists, or photographs featuring textiles *in situ*. Thus, publicity files related to textiles were deemed of greater importance than miscellaneous correspondence of a (potentially) non-textile nature.

The final lists were saved on a Dell Inspiron laptop computer connected to a back-up Lacie external hard drive and synced to Dropbox. Hard-copies were created for use as reference during archival research.

3. Library catalogues were consulted to determine where print sources were held. Sources were discovered in hard and digital format.

4. Photographs were allowed in all but one archive or library. Relevant documentary material was photographed using an iPhone 5c, iPhone 6, or an iPad Air. Before any document was photographed, either the box or file folder with the archive's finding number or the magazine's title page was photographed first. Any photographs following were of documents from the noted box, file folder, or magazine. These photographs were not renamed. The original names reflected the order the photographs were taken. They were, however, organized in nested files according to archive name and date of access, device used (e.g., iPad Air), and archival finding number. Photographs were saved according to the methods described in step 2. Notes were taken throughout, in order to record general thoughts, feelings, and ideas generated during study.

In the case where photographs were not allowed, notes were taken. For each document examined, the finding number was noted, along with any information relevant to the study. For instance, if the document was a letter, the name of the sender, recipient, and date of the letter was recorded along with the pertinent information at hand. Upon return, these notes were typed and saved in the manner noted above.

5. When digital copies of primary documents were consulted, relevant material was downloaded and saved as noted above.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data gathered with the described material culture method was easily managed. Because there were only twenty-one textiles consulted, all made in a similar way for a similar purpose, there was a limited amount of unique data for each object. This data was organized into 26 thematic categories based on iconography, style, emotional response, material, and technique. Findings based on this data are presented at length in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data gathered from primary documents was extensive and required a more complex system of analysis. Because most of the data consisted of photographs of textual documents, each of these photographs had to be read and “transcribed.” A simple data analysis chart was devised to help organize this data (Table 3.1). Microsoft Word was used, because of personal preference. The document’s name and archive identification was recorded. A description of the original archival material was provided. If the original material featured an image of note, a description of the image was written. Any interesting quotes were recorded with great care taken to preserve differences in British spelling and punctuation. Context was provided wherever it was thought necessary.

During the data entry process, an audit trail was kept. The audit trail is a detailed record of the decisions made during analysis and synthesis and functions much like a journal. Observations were made regarding emergent themes, surprises, and contradictions. Because one of the goals of this paper is to challenge the common perception of 1970s

Table 3.1: Data Analysis Chart

Document Name	Archive Identification	Description (Images)	Interesting Quotes
073.JPG	V&A Design Archives 2-3-15 iPhone AAD/1994/16/1337 <i>Moebel Interior Design, 3</i> 1968, März	magazine	regarding Tom Worthington: “That he was at the beginning of the year awarded the ‘Order of the British Empire’ for his services to export confirms our opinion that Heal Fabrics has for a long time belonged to those few companies in Europe who have the courage to produce furnishing fabrics of avant-garde design and colours”
077.JPG	V&A Design Archives 2-3-15 iPhone AAD/1994/16/1337 <i>Moebel Interior Design, 3</i> 1968, März	magazine color photograph of Heal Fabrics on assembly line (Petrus by Peter Hall, 1968)	
079.JPG	V&A Design Archives 2-3-15 iPhone AAD/1994/16/1337 <i>Moebel Interior Design, 3</i> 1968, März	magazine black and white photograph of Heal Fabrics being printed using flatbed printer	

British printed textiles, notes were recorded when data corresponded to themes identified in the literature review.

Once all data was recorded, it was coded according to its relationship with each individual research question. The main thematic trends were identified within these pools. Relevant quotes, observations, and images were then copied into a list of supporting data for each theme. Findings based on this data are presented at length in Chapter 5.

Limitations of the Study

For the purposes of this study, certain delimitations were required. In order to narrow the scope, the research purpose focuses on furnishing fabrics designed in Britain in the 1970s. Surveys of printed textiles and British printed textiles already exist; therefore, the goal is to help facilitate an in-depth understanding of a body of textiles that has traditionally been underrepresented in the literature. However, such an approach produces a number of limitations, detailed below.

1. Sample size was restricted based on time and availability of objects; therefore the sample may not be large enough to make generalizations.
2. Sample selection was based on researcher preference, the available literature, and museum holdings which may provide a skewed perception of 1970s printed textiles. Museums only collect items that are (a) available to them;

and (b) deemed important. This means the pool of potential textiles is limited. The inclusion of uncollected textiles may affect interpretation.

3. The scope of this paper changed after data was collected, placing a newfound focus on revivalist and ruralist textiles. This study would have benefitted from a visit to the Laura Ashley and Liberty Art Fabrics archives.
4. The material culture method selected results in a subjective interpretation; another researcher may follow the same procedures to reach a different conclusion. In general, qualitative research is limited by researcher subjectivity.
5. The premise of a material culture study is that objects can reveal culture. This is not necessarily guaranteed; some objects are better conduits than others.
6. A great deal of expected archival material was “missing” from archives, most notably publicity materials at the Heal Fabrics archive and Design Awards and Design Index listings at the Design Council archives at the University of Brighton.
7. Archives generally reflect the interests and biases of those who collected it initially as well as the archivists at each repository. This means conclusions drawn from these materials as a whole are filtered through a number of subjective lenses, including that of the researcher.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of material culture method and details the specific model to be used in this study. Fleming's model of artifact study provides a holistic view of an object based on its five properties: history, material, construction, design, and function. Four operations are performed – identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation – on those five properties to ensure the object has been considered from as many perspectives as possible. The outcome of this study, i.e., final interpretation, will be subjective, based on researcher and audience.

Chapter 4: Findings Related to Iconography and Style

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from a material culture study of twenty-one objects. Each of the findings corresponds to the first of two research questions identified earlier and restated here.

Research Question 1

What is the nature of iconography featured in British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- What related trends are evident in visual culture in the 1970s?

The major findings that emerged are:

1. The iconography identified in British printed textiles of the 1970s thematically represents one or more of the following modes: nature, technology, architecture, and highly-abstract, non-representational design.
2. The stylistic trends found in 1970s British visual culture (e.g., fine art, architecture, graphic design, industrial design, illustration, advertising, television, film, fashion, and textile design) include Pop Art, revivalism, minimalism, and ruralism.

The following represents a discussion of the findings with details that support and explain each. The emphasis throughout is on the material culture itself. When appropriate, primary documents from British archival sources are used to augment and solidify the discussion.

In many ways, these printed textiles are identical, material-wise. Each is made from cotton, most from high quality, finely spun fiber. Most are printed on simple plainwoven poplin or broadcloth, though some are made from sateen or crepe woven fabric. All cost approximately the same amount per yard. And all are screen printed. For the most part, registration is precise and colors are well saturated. Along with the manufacturer, the textile's designer and its title are listed on the selvages. In situations where pattern orientation is important, arrows are also included on the selvages to indicate top from bottom.

What sets the fabrics apart from one another are the designs printed upon them. While a great deal might be said about the other material qualities, many of which will be addressed later, the most significant aspect of these printed fabrics are the printed images themselves. The act of studying these images (or motifs) is called iconography: the science of identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. Symbols, themes, and subject matter are treated differently from artistic style (i.e., an artistic movement such as impressionism, cubism, etc.) and as such will be treated separately in this study.

Finding 1

The iconography identified in British printed textiles of the 1970s thematically represents one or more of the following modes: nature, technology, architecture, and highly-abstract, non-representational design.

While many textiles selected for this study fall neatly into one category, it should be noted that some textiles are difficult to categorize. For instance, it could be argued that *Gemstones*, a design comprised of a cityscape made of jewels and roses could fall into either the nature theme or the architecture theme.

Nature

Laura Ashley's dress (Figure 4.1) and Collier Campbell's *Cottage Garden* (Figure 4.2) are examples of floral prints or chintz. While both designs feature recognizable flowers (cherry blossoms, roses, bluebells, poppies, pansies, etc.), Ashley's design is highly stylized whereas *Cottage Garden* is more naturalistic. It depicts flowers as they might appear in nature, or, more specifically, as they might appear in the English countryside. Most of these are flowers native to Great Britain and, in a 2002 campaign, many were established as official county flowers of the United Kingdom.

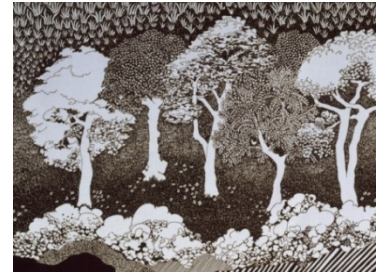


Figure 4.1: Ashley, L. (1972-1975). Untitled dress [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.279-1988), London, England.

Figure 4.2: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1974-1977). Cottage Garden [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.44-1978), London, England.

Figure 4.3: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Foley, J. (Designer). (1976). *Country Walk* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.1-1976), London, England.

Country Walk, *Vista*, and *Salad Days* are examples of landscapes, or artwork depicting an area of land and its features. For example, Jennie Foley's *Country Walk* (Figure 4.3) shows a traditional landscape divided into foreground (trees and bushes), middle ground (field bordered by a fence), and background (hills). It could be argued that the bushes of the foreground also serve as the clouds in the background. The black and white design resembles a pen-and-ink drawing or cartoon. The hills are stylized and patterned with diagonal stripes or delicate curlicues. It is not possible to identify the type of trees depicted, for example. However, the image is the most realistic of the three.

Diane Bell's *Vista* – a synonym for the word landscape – is distinctly more abstract, featuring brown and tan bubble-like hills dotted with circular orange flowers that are reminiscent of poppies (Figure. 4.4). Another colorway (Figure 4.5) features green and olive hills dotted with red flowers, reinforcing the idea of poppies. In this way, *Vista*,

like *Cottage Garden*, may also reference the English countryside – poppies are native to the United Kingdom. However, it should be noted the description published by *Vista*'s manufacturer, Heal Fabrics, does not specify the flowers' variety, saying only that the design is "based on a colourful landscape of flower filled fields" ("Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection," November 1975, p. 2).



Figure 4.4: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Bell, D. (Designer). (1976). *Vista* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.3), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.5: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Bell, D. (Designer). (1976). *Vista* [Photograph]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1997/16/2880). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

Figure 4.6: Textra (Manufacturer), & Politowicz, K. (Designer). (1973). *Salad Days* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.350-1973), London, England.

On the surface, Kay Politowicz' *Salad Days* appears to depict a white bureau or dresser with open drawers. Inside the drawers are painted blue. They overflow with lettuce leaves, sliced tomatoes, hard-boiled eggs, olives, cucumbers, and pickles. Upon closer inspection, a small landscape is revealed, hidden among the lettuce leaves (Figure 4.6). A blue lake with steep white banks appears directly above the right hand knob of each drawer. Above it stands a tree with a red trunk. The blue interior of the drawer now suggests a sky with three white birds flying over a yellow rising sun.

Technology

Textiles with technological iconography can be placed into the following subcategories:

space, computers, and machines.



Figure 4.7: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1969). *Lunar Rocket* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.45A-1970), London, England.

Figure 4.8: Apollo 11 launch from the Kennedy Space Center, July 16, 1969. Retrieved from <http://www.history.nasa.gov/ap11ann/kippsphotos/Apollo.html>

Figure 4.9: *Earthrise* photograph from the Apollo 8 mission, orbiting above the moon, December 24, 1968. Retrieved from <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/home/earthrise.html>

Lunar Rocket and *Space Walk*, both designed for Warner Fabrics in 1969, seem to depict the 1969 Apollo 11 mission to the moon. Both textiles are rendered naturalistically with imagery likely deriving from widely circulated photographs documenting the historic event. Eddie Squires' *Lunar Rocket*, for example, depicts a rocket ascending into space surrounded by its glowing exhaust (Figure 4.7). The rocket looks similar to the actual Apollo 11 rocket and is even inscribed with "USA" and "United States" in the correct locations. This image could have been based on any number of photographs or film stills showing the Apollo 11 rocket leaving the Kennedy Space Center (Figure 4.8). The Apollo 11 spacecraft is shown floating above the earth as it would have looked after the Saturn V rocket was ejected, though the rendering is not entirely accurate. Squires also

included an image of the earth and the moon as they might have appeared to the astronauts in their spacecraft. The imagery of the earth in particular is reminiscent of one of the most famous images taken during the Space Race (Figure 4.9). As the astronauts approached it, the moon was in its waxing crescent phase, exactly as it appears in Squires' design.



Figure 4.10: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1969). *Space Walk* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.2b), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.11: Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission, July 21, 1969. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/oct/23/astronauts-vintage-space-photographs-sale-bloomsbury>

Figure 4.12: Detail of *Lunar Rocket and Space Walk*. (1991). [Postcard]. Object Records, Textiles Department (Accession No. 1990.552.2b). Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Sue Thatcher Palmer's *Space Walk* (Figure 4.10) is rendered in a more imaginative manner. Initially, it appears consistent with images of Neil Armstrong's historic moon walk. The astronauts seem to wear the same space suits and the lunar module looks similar. On closer inspection, the astronauts do not wear the large backpacks that Armstrong and fellow astronaut Buzz Aldrin wore which would have contained vital life support equipment (Figure 4.11). Thatcher Palmer's lunar module retains the circular landing pads and ladder of its American counterpart, but features a fanciful conical element and cylindrical extensions not present in the real example. According to the

designer, in a statement given to the Art Institute of Chicago in 1990, “this design shows a solar powered space station, with three astronauts on either side, walking in zero gravity over the moon (or a planet, eg earth [sic])” (“Space Walk,” c. 1990). In fact, records indicate that this design was created April 21, 1969, three months prior to the Apollo 11 mission.

In 1991, however, a postcard featuring *Lunar Rocket* and *Space Walk* (Figure 4.12) was printed indicating that these two designs were marketed and sold as complementary fabrics, “designed in 1969 to commemorate the MOON LANDING” (“Postcard,” 1991).

Colourtron, *Microchip*, and *Highlight* all represent technological developments related to the computer. *Colourtron* and *Microchip*, both designed by Eddie Squires for Warner Fabrics, resemble microscopic elements called integrated circuits or microchips. According to the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), *Colourtron*'s design (Figure 4.13) was “based on an integrated silicon circuit” (“Colourtron,” n.d.). Although the design does not resemble the microchips so familiar in modern imagery and the title *Colourtron* does not seem to refer to any specific technology, the textile was included in Warner's “Programmed Pattern” range of furnishing fabrics, verifying the V&A's assertion that the design relates to computer technology.

Microchip, designed thirteen years after *Colourtron*, more obviously resembles its namesake object (Figure 4.14). In a statement given to the Art Institute of Chicago, Squires' explained, “this design follows a strong interest in the progression of electronics

in the second half of this century. It is based on the geometry of an integrated silicon microchip enlarged to giant proportion” (“Microchip,” c. 1990). The background to this circuitous design is dotted with gray, seafoam green, pink, and gold “confetti.”

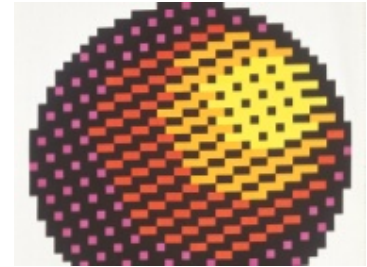
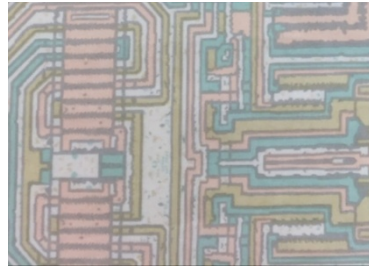
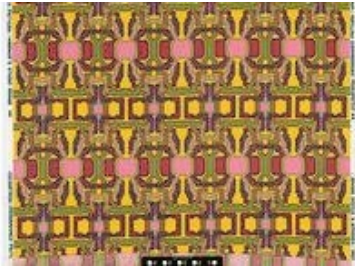


Figure 4.13: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1968). *Colourtron* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.801-1968), London, England.

Figure 4.14: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1981). *Microchip* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.3), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.15: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Phillips, P. (Designer). (1973). *Highlight* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.13), Minneapolis, MN.

Peter Phillips’ *Highlight* depicts a sphere rendered in squares and rectangles in a manner similar to the way a sphere would be rendered using 8-bit computer graphics (Figure 4.15). In this sense, the squares and rectangles become “pixels,” the building blocks used to generate computer imagery. The title may refer to the lightest area of the sphere which, along with the darker areas, suggests a three-dimensional sphere instead of a two-dimensional circle. The term “highlight” also refers to a high point or pinnacle, which perhaps refers to the invention of 8-bit graphics technology.

Spiral, *Automation*, and *Precision*, all designed by Barbara Brown, represent machinery. *Spiral*, the earliest of the three textiles, is a depiction of an abstract, geometrical form,

which may or may not exist in real life (Figure 4.16). It resembles a magnified view of a screw, where a spiraling layer of material is either wrapped around or carved away from another cylindrical-shaped layer. Much like an engraving, *Spiral* is rendered in vertical lines. For example, thin lines are spaced close together to form dark areas or far apart to form light areas. Solid black and solid white areas represent the darkest and lightest areas of the object. These dark and light areas are carefully gradated to suggest a three-dimensional cylindrical form.



Figure 4.16: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Spiral* [Textile]. Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (Accession No. 2007.11.004), Madison, WI.

Figure 4.17: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Automation* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.5), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.18: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Precision* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.12), Minneapolis, MN.

Automation also depicts an abstract, geometrical form resembling an industrial object: a gear (Figure 4.17). Like *Spiral*, *Automation* is designed in a way to suggest three-dimensionality. Unlike *Spiral*, *Automation* is so precisely rendered it resembles a technical drawing for an actual gear. Brown confirmed that *Automation* was based on “engineering drawings – the two big screws” (“Heal’s ReDiscovers,” 2010). The title also alludes to machinery. The word “automation” refers to the automatic control

systems used to operate machinery with minimal human involvement. These systems are frequently used in factories, for example, to facilitate efficient mass production.

Precision may also be a reference to automated machinery (Figure 4.18). Although it is a highly abstract design and can only truly be characterized as depicting a cylinder bisected by a series of circles, it resembles a machine that might be used to cut or stamp discs. A solid black line frames each repeat. The entire expanse of yardage resembles a film strip. Each rectangle might represent a film still, each still representing successive stamping motions and the formation of subsequent circles. The title *Precision* also alludes to the accuracy afforded by machine technology.

Architecture

Chrome City, *Gemstones*, and *Metropolis* are all examples of the man-made landscape or cityscape. Sue Thatcher Palmer's *Chrome City* seems to depict a chrome-plated gate or pathway leading to a series of tall structures (Figure 4.19). These structures are reminiscent of skyscrapers or, perhaps, a refinery (Figure 4.20). The curved structures marking the path's entrance resemble a ship's ventilator cowl or chimney (Figure 4.21). Above these structures is an orb, filled with gray circles and kidney shapes that may represent an abstracted moon. It could also represent a cloud of smoke. The sky beyond is also highly reflective, almost as though it too has been chrome-plated. According to the Art Institute of Chicago, "Sue Palmer wanted to create a design that was complementary

to the growing use of steel and glass and other reflective materials popular in architect and contract designed interiors at this time” (“Chrome City,” c. 1990).

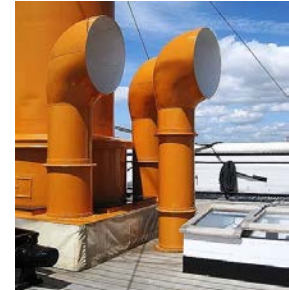


Figure 4.19: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1970). *Chrome City* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.3), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.20: “Anacortes Refinery (Tesoro) on the North End of March Point Southeast of Anacortes, Washington,” by W. Siegmund. Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Figure 4.21: Ventilator cowls on a ship. Retrieved from <https://wargamingmiscellanybackup.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/29-01-12cowlventilator01.jpg>

Eddie Squires’ *Gemstones* depicts a fanciful city made from cut precious stones and acid green roses (Figure 4.23). According to Squires, “the design was first made up of a collage of jewels from books on minerals and gemstones. The structure rests on a platform of grass and green agate. The whole floating in space like a temple” (“Gemstones,” c. 1990). Although the city is created from natural materials – flowers and jewels – it does not suggest nature in its natural form but nature in a highly modified form. Here, the gemstones have been skillfully cut and polished and the roses bred or dyed an unnatural color.

David Bartle’s *Metropolis* might also be categorized elsewhere, in this case, as non-representational design (Figure 4.24). Although the design is geometric, the elements are

arranged to suggest a cityscape with skyscrapers at the center, ringed by smaller and smaller buildings. The design's title, *Metropolis* or "big city" lends credence to this interpretation.



Figure 4.22: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1971). *Gemstones* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.2), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.23: Textra (Manufacturer), & Bartle, D. (Designer). (1973). *Metropolis* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.355-1973), London, England.

Highly Abstract, Non-Representational Design

The remaining textiles can be classified as non-representational. Janet Taylor's *Arcade* (Figure 4.24) is a study of sharp geometric shapes (triangles, circles, rectangles) and crisp lines. Although the title *Arcade* is suggestive of the Parisian arcades (covered pedestrian walkways lined with shops), the corresponding design is in no way visually representative of such a space. However, *Arcade* might represent an architectural ornament as arcades were often decorated profusely.

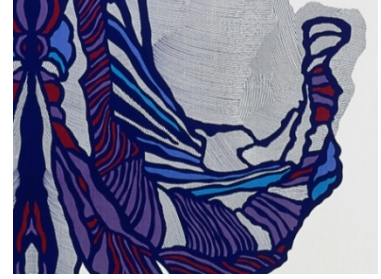


Figure 4.24: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Taylor, J. (Designer). (1969). *Arcade* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.30-1969), London, England.

Figure 4.25: Hull Traders, Ltd. (Manufacturer), & Harper, L. (Designer). (c. 1970). *Mandarin* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum Nos. T.168:1 to 4-1989), London, England.

Figure 4.26: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Holzer, H. J. (Designer). (1975). *Strata* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.4), Minneapolis, MN.

In contrast, *Mandarin*, *Ikebana*, *Bauhaus*, and *Strata* are softer. Linda Harper's *Mandarin* (Figure 4.25) and Hans J. Holzer's *Strata* (Figure 4.26) feature meandering lines and organic shapes. While *Mandarin* is clearly non-representational, *Strata* seems to depict an iris or a human head wearing a scarf or turban. Neither explanation stands up to careful scrutiny.

Barbara Brown's *Ikebana* (Figure 4.27) is a study of lines and circles. Strong purple horizontal lines converge at the textile's center to form an undulating line running the length of the fabric. A red circle is nested behind each curve of this center line. Lavender and pale purple "bubbles" and "marbles" seem to burst from the center of each red circle. The "bubbles" float upwards while the "marbles" spill out along the horizontal lines. The title *Ikebana* is a Japanese word meaning, roughly, "flower arrangement" and is used to describe the formal art of flower arranging. In this sense, Brown's title is symbolic, perhaps alluding to the formal qualities of design.

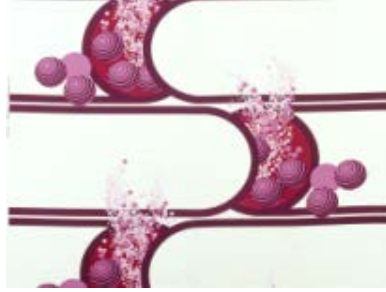


Figure 4.27: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.



Figure 4.28: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1972). *Bauhaus* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.447-1977), London, England.

Collier Campbell's *Bauhaus* (Figure 4.28) is another textile with a suggestive title. *Bauhaus* refers to the art school renowned for its innovation in architecture and the decorative arts. The textile does not reference the Bauhaus as a place but its philosophy. As Edward Lucie-Smith explains, the school's "bias was toward the study of abstract form, and particular emphasis was placed on the way in which form interacted with color (1996, p. 126).

This finding shows that, in terms of iconography, textiles of the 1970s were more diverse than the literature suggests. The critical stance held by scholars such as Valerie D. Mendes is that 1970s textiles illustrated "the downturn precipitated by the 1973 oil crisis. Designers resorted to small-scale geometric prints, often in a safe and versatile beige, and to diminutive all-over 'cottagey' florals which indicated a yearning for the rural idyll" (1999, p. 7). Aside from Laura Ashley's cherry blossom dress fabric and *Cottage*

Garden, as a whole, this group of textiles does not match the description offered. In general, these textiles demonstrate that designers in the 1970s worked with large-scale patterns, bold colors, and a wide range of motifs – natural, man-made, and geometric.

However, it is important to put these results into perspective. Mendes’ statement is not applicable to the 1970s as a whole; it only describes those textiles made after 1973.

When the thematic groupings are analyzed by date, as seen in Table 4.1, an interesting pattern emerges. The chart below shows that all themes were present in 1973, but the nature theme had only emerged in 1972. The technology and highly abstract, non-representational themed textiles continue to be produced after 1973, but only just. In general, it appears that Mendes’ statement is partially true. Nature was the dominant theme of textiles made after 1973.

Table 4.1: Iconographical Themes Organized by Year

technology	■																	■	
architecture			■																
highly abstract, non-representational		■																	
nature					■														
	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981					

However, the chart raises three important questions. First, what themes are characteristic of textiles made in the late 1970s? The answer reveals the acknowledged problem with the data sample. No textiles were chosen for study dating 1978-1980. While this

limitation was noted in Chapter 3, it should be mentioned that few textiles from this period were even available for study. For example, the V&A’s collection of British printed textiles from 1968-1976 outnumbers its textiles from 1977-1981 ten to one. It is also notable that the V&A did not actively collect any British printed textiles between 1978 and 1981; the examples featured in their collection were only acquired as part of the larger Heal’s archive, given to the museum in 1999.

A close look at the textiles that were (a) potential candidates for this study and (b) photographed, helps fill the gap. Of the six examples, only one, *Nectar*, depicts nature (Figure 4.29). Even considering their titles, the remaining five are highly abstract and non-representational (Figures 4.30-4.34). None feature the “small-scale,” “geometric,” and “beige” iconography Mendes describes, although the motifs in *Sirocco* (Figure 4.31) and *Maze* (Figure 4.32) are designed in a smaller-scale than the others featured in this study.



Figure 4.29: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Gibson, N (Designer). (1977). *Nectar* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.35-1978), London, England.



Figure 4.30: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1977). *Side Show* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.36-1978), London, England.

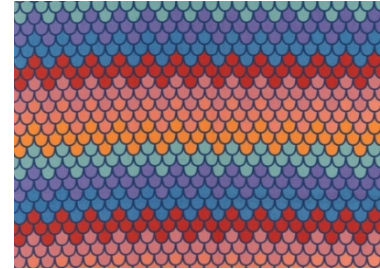


Figure 4.31: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Spender, H. J. (Designer). (1978). *Sirocco* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.484:6-1999).

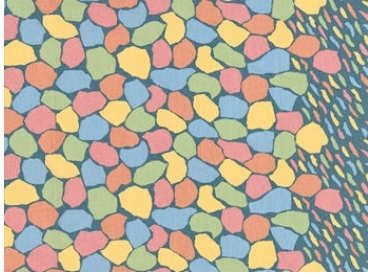


Figure 4.32: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Ralphs, A. (Designer). (1978). *Maze* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.474:2-1999), London, England.



Figure 4.33: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Holzer, H. (Designer). (1980). *Square Dance* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.415:2-1999), London, England.



Figure 4.34: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Miller, F. (Designer). (1980). *Mystique* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.446:2-1999), London, England.

This new information alters the timeline significantly, showing that highly abstract, non-representational designs are the dominant theme of the late 1970s (Table 4.2). Mendes' assertion that both geometric and natural designs dominated British printed textiles beginning in 1973 can now be confirmed. However, with a few exceptions, the iconography does not follow the pattern she describes.

Table 4.2: Iconographical Themes with Additional Examples from the V&A

technology	1968-1971															1981
architecture			1970-1973													
highly abstract, non-representational			1969-1975							1976-1980						
nature					1972-1977											
	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981		

Here, another question emerges. Why does Mendes say what she says? At least one magazine clipping in the V&A Design Archives do attest to the idea that floral prints and

beige were commonplace in the mid-1970s. According to an article on household textiles in *Fashion Weekly*, 1977 spring textile collections promised “plenty of new-looking geometrics” that would finally give “the florals a rest” (“Household Textiles,” 1976). The article also assures readers that “brown at last is a little less prominent” (“Household Textiles”). It is highly probable that Mendes had this article on her mind as she wrote her foreword to Ikoku’s *The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection: British Textile Design from 1940 to the Present*; this article was given to the V&A as part of the Heal’s archive in 1999, the same year the publication debuted.

Yet Mendes is not the only scholar to make this claim (see Ikoku, 1999; Jackson, 2002; Pond, 1986; Schoeser, 1986a; Safer, 2012; and Sparke, 2012). Unless all of these scholars are guilty of misinterpretation, it seems likely that the issue lies instead with this study. The results are skewed because the sample is not representative of the whole of British printed textile design. This is, unfortunately, a consequence of museum practices. The museums consulted here collected or accepted textiles that fit their collection criteria.

The second question raised by Tables 4.1 and 4.2 involves technology. Why does the theme disappear in 1974 only to return in 1981? It should be noted that technology was, up until 1974, the dominant theme of the selected textile designs. Significant developments in computer technology, especially, happened throughout the 1970s. *Colourtron*, *Microchip*, and *Highlight* all represent technology related to developments in integrated circuit technology. Integrated circuits – or microchips – grew increasingly powerful and complex in the years between Eddie Squires’ *Colourtron* and *Microchip*.

Colourtron could represent either a small or medium-scale integrated circuit containing up to 500 transistors. *Microchip*, on the other hand, represents a very large-scale integrated circuit containing between 20,000 and 1,000,000 transistors. Likewise, the 8-bit computer graphics *Highlight* seems to represent were only made possible by microchips.

According to Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray in *Computer: A History of the Information Machine*, “between 1965-1975, the introduction of integrated circuit electronics reduced the cost of computer power by a factor of a hundred” (2004, p. 198). This allowed for mass consumption of electric calculators, digital watches, and video games. By 1976, Atari, an American firm, was recording annual sales of \$40 million (p. 204). Video game consoles were becoming staples of home entertainment, having moved from the arcade into the home in 1975. The first personal computer, Apple II, was introduced in 1977. Far from disappearing, technology became more accessible and more ubiquitous between 1974 and 1981.

It is difficult not to draw a connection between developments in technology and developments in textile design. Several examples in this study, including *Space Walk*, *Lunar Rocket*, *Colourtron*, *Highlight*, and *Microchip*, commemorate or otherwise reference contemporary technological achievements. If technology continued to advance, it makes sense that textile design would continue to reflect those advances.

The reason this does not happen, according to Mendes, can be traced back to the oil crisis. She implies that its destabilizing effect on the economy meant that consumers wanted textiles that were “safe and versatile.” This corresponds to Mary Schoeser and Celia Rufey’s assertion that the recession meant that “fewer people moved home or bought new furniture,” the result being that “there was an increasing interest in modifying interiors, as opposed to redecorating completely” (1989, p. 213). Mendes suggests that beige, small-scale geometric textiles were the solution proposed by designers. My interpretation of this statement is that small-scale, geometrics were safe (modern, but not too modern) and versatile (the premise being that beige “goes with everything”). From here, it might be suggested that textiles depicting technology would quickly become dated and need to be replaced. Going further, it could be theorized that a need for stability could not be reconciled with the ever-changing momentum of technological developments in the 1970s.

The other textiles borne from the oil crisis, Mendes explains, were traditional, “cottagey” textiles. These were said to satisfy a collective cultural “yearning for the rural idyll” (1999, p. 7). This refers to the romantic (i.e., idealized) belief that pastoral life was simpler and, therefore, happier than life in the industrialized world. This “yearning” is also equated with sentimentality and, of course, nostalgia. The conclusion drawn from this is that an interest in nostalgia cannot co-exist alongside an interest in technology.

But further exploration indicates that these conclusions are too simplistic. The information that will emerge in the following section and subsequent chapter makes it

clear that a study of iconography alone cannot explain how social and cultural changes are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s.

Finding 2

The stylistic trends found in 1970s British visual culture (e.g., fine art, architecture, graphic design, industrial design, illustration, advertising, television, film, fashion, and textile design) include Pop Art, revivalism, minimalism, and ruralism.

In the literature, the only textile trends noted were ruralism and revivalism. This finding reveals a more diverse picture of 1970s British printed textiles, corresponding to what are sometimes referred to as the Schizophrenic Seventies. Coined by Georgina Howell in *In Vogue: 75 Years of Style*, the term meant to convey something of the dizzying array of fashion choices made available in the 70s. Howell explained, “if clothes are modes of expression, fashion had become a vocabulary. In London you could find the whole range of fashion within a stone’s throw – tweedy, ethnic, Hollywood, classic, glamorous, executive, nostalgic, pretty or international” (1975/1991, p. 196). Although the phrase derived from fashion studies, the concept applies to the visual arts of the 1970s in general.

In her book, *Twentieth Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson claims that “at the end of the 1950s modern architecture, painting, and pattern design were more closely allied than at any time since the turn of the century” (2002, p.

96). This idea is supported by Italian theoretician Omar Calabrese who suggests that the gap had closed not just between the arts, but between all forms of mass media starting in the 1960s (1992, p. ix). In 1992, Calabrese embarked on a search “for signs of the existence of a contemporary ‘taste’ that links the most disparate objects, from science to mass communications, from art to everyday habits” (p. xi). He felt that the “culture of an age speaks... in all our work. It is precisely by not producing hierarchies and ghettos among texts that we can discover recurring trends that distinguish ‘our’ mentality (in this case our ‘taste’) from that of other periods” (p. xii). What he discovered was a “spirit of the age” he termed neo-baroque and defined as “a search for, and valorization of, forms that display a loss of entirety, totality, and system in favor of instability, polydimensionality, and change” (p. xii). If Calabrese’s claims are to be believed, it makes sense to study the whole of visual culture to help understand the part, in this case, textiles.

The name neo-baroque was not inspired by the visual relationship to baroque art of the early 17th century. Instead, it was chosen to suggest the baroque’s breaking away from a classical understanding of the world: one based on stability and order. A baroque model upsets and “excites” order (p. 26). It is a destabilizing force that creates “turbulence and fluctuations within” a system and suspends “its ability to decide on values” (p. 26). This lack of judgment based on artistic value is what makes it possible to compare monumental architecture to a baseball card or a movie trailer.

This also explains why there are so many stylistic trends in the 1970s and why most of them overlap in some manner. Because it is difficult to classify and organize visual culture into distinct styles, several textiles will be shown to represent one or more stylistic trend.

Revivalism

This stylistic trend is also known as historicism and Victorianism, retro or vernacular design. Philip B. Meggs and Alston W. Purvis explain that the term “retro” was short for “retrograde, implying ‘backward-looking’ and ‘contrary to the usual’” (2012, p. 475). In graphic design, artists looked back to the Victorians or the Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Russian Constructivists of the early 20th centuries. Graphic designers also experimented with vernacular design references – “artistic and technical expression broadly characteristic of a locale or historical period” that borrowed from graphic ephemera “such as baseball cards, matchbook covers, and unskilled commercial illustrations and printing from past decades” (p. 475). The retro movement reached graphic designers in the 1980s; however, it might be said to have started with architects in the 1960s and 1970s.

Architecture had long been dominated by the International Style, pioneered by Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier in the years leading up to World War II. Architects like Mies van der Rohe succeeded with the style postwar, creating sleek skyscrapers such as the Seagram Building (Figure 4.35). According to art historian Marilyn Stokstad:

the dark glass and bronze were meant to give the Seagram Company a discreet and dignified image. The building's clean lines and crisp design seemed to epitomize the efficiency, standardization, and impersonality that had become synonymous with the modern corporation itself – which, in part, is why this particular style dominated corporate architecture after World War II. (2002, p. 1154).

While this new breed of architect was not exactly anti-capitalist in the sense of the hippies, they did decide “it was no longer sufficient that beauty be expressed through a super-rational, machinemade, industrial structure” (Craven, 1994, p. 523).



Figure 4.35: Mies van der Rohe, L. (1958). *Seagram Building*. From *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, by A. L. Miller, J. C. Berlo, B. J. Wolf, & J. L. Roberts, 2008, p. 581.

Figure 4.36: Johnson, P. (1973-1984). *AT&T (Sony) Building*. From *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, by A. L. Miller, J. C. Berlo, B. J. Wolf, & J. L. Roberts, 2008, p. 628.

According to Stokstad, the American architect Robert Venturi argued that “the problem with Mies and the other modernists... was their impractical unwillingness to accept the

modern city for what it is: a complex, contradictory, and heterogeneous collection of ‘high’ and ‘low’ architectural forms” (p. 1155). With that in mind, Venturi began to mix these high and low forms in his work, drawing from vernacular and historic sources. Other architects such as Philip Johnson, Michael Graves, and Thomas Beeby followed suit, “determined to bring art and popular culture together again” (Craven, p. 522). As American art historian Wayne Craven notes, these “postmodern” architects:

did not like the disassociation from the past, from longstanding cultural traditions that modernism had insisted upon in order to forge its brave new world. A younger generation of artists and architects yearned for the inspiration of historic styles that had been taken away from them. And so they returned to them, not in the same spirit of turn-of-the-century Beaux-Arts historicism, but in invention evocations of cultural heritage, as preserved in historic styles. (p. 523)

One of the most frequently cited example of postmodern architecture is Philip Johnson’s AT&T Building (today, the Sony Building) in Manhattan (Figure 4.36). Built 1978-1984, the building is a pastiche of Renaissance, Rococo, and Art Deco ornamental styles. In fact, the building resembles an 18th century Chippendale highboy. Far from the rigorous “glass box” of the Seagram Building, the AT&T Building is slightly humorous and, as Angela L. Miller, Janet C. Berlo, Bryan J. Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts note, “unapologetically flamboyant” (2008, p. 628).

Fashion also borrowed from its past. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the so-called “mods” and “hippies” adopted clothing inspired by the Edwardian era, the 1930s, and art movements such as Art Deco, Art Nouveau, and De Stijl. According to Phyllis G.

Tortora and Keith Eubank, women adopted floor length “granny dresses” featuring “design elements that harked back to earlier historical periods” such as billowing sleeves and blouson tops (2010, p. 553). Valerie Steele notes the hippies’ interest in thrift shops and vintage clothes, especially “long crêpe gowns from the 1930s with tiny fabric-covered buttons” (1997, p. 283). The appeal of these gowns appeared to have been their romanticism as they “were certainly not practical” (p. 283).

The style most commonly associated with the hippie subculture is psychedelia, a mid-1960s and early 1970s spin on Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau, a term meaning “new art” in French, was an art movement that found popularity in Europe beginning in 1890. It was known by various names across the continent including “Jugendstil” (Youth Style) in Germany and “Stile Liberty” (Liberty Style, after the London-based department store) in Italy. Although the movement was known by different names, it shared a common goal. According to George Heard Hamilton, this goal was reformist in nature, the artists driven to:

discover a new decorative style... devoid of the servile historicism and eclecticism which had corrupted both machine-work and handicraft. From this it followed that such a system of design must be original rather than imitative, and “natural” rather than “artificial.” (1993, p. 131)

For this reason, artists working in the Art Nouveau style frequently took their inspiration from nature. Art Nouveau, however, is not considered naturalistic or realistic but, instead, stylized. It is most frequently characterized by its delicate, sinuous forms and whip-lash curves that explore the “expressive properties of form, line, and colour” (p.

131). Practitioners were interested in movement, “in long-stemmed flowers and aquatic plants stretched and distorted by the continuous pressure of wind and water. Dank and listless blossoms also expressed to perfection the *fin-de-siècle* mood of despondency, introspection, and ennui” (p. 131).

These “expressive properties” and “graceful and attenuated linear designs” are evident in *Strata* (Figure 4.37) (Stokstad, 2002, p. 1042). While it certainly suggests a floral design, it seems more concerned with form, line, and color to create the somewhat somber and melancholy mood of much Art Nouveau work. *Mandarin* (Figure 4.38) shares many of these same characteristics; its design is essentially a series of sinuous lines, some “decorated” with polka dots, paisleys, stripes, bulls-eyes, and sunbursts. However, with its “free-wheeling shapes, exaggerated acid colours and pervasive formal entropy,” *Mandarin* can also be classified as psychedelic art (Grunenberg, 2005, p. 13).

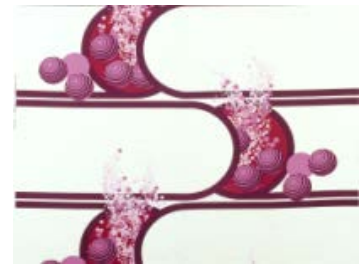


Figure 4.37: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Holzer, H. J. (Designer). (1975). *Strata* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.4), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.38: Hull Traders, Ltd. (Manufacturer), & Harper, L. (Designer). (c. 1970). *Mandarin* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum Nos. T.168:1 to 4-1989), London, England.

Figure 4.39: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.

Psychedelia shared the same ideological principles as Art Nouveau. According to Christoph Grunenberg, it too was based on ideas of reform – “abandoning the perfections of industrial production and the appealing efficiencies of capitalist seduction... adopted by those in opposition to technocratic and profit-oriented systems” (p. 13). Just as the antiestablishment hippies embraced the psychedelic drug LSD, they embraced the psychedelic aesthetic with their clothing and the posters and album covers that promoted their favorite bands (Meggs, p. 449).

Psychedelia also appropriated “exotic” imagery, such as the ubiquitous Indian paisley motifs found in *Mandarin*. Psychedelic fabrics for clothing or the home might also be inspired by African or Indonesian designs. International textile traditions such as West African *adire* cloth were filtered through a psychedelic lens, leading to rainbow-colored tie dye. Elsewhere, more mainstream designers took their inspiration from a wealth of diverse cultural sources ranging from Native American dress to Eastern European folk costume (Tortora & Eubank, p. 543).

As mentioned above, *Ikebana* refers to the Japanese art of flower arranging. *Ikebana* (Figure 4.39) seems to reference *japonisme*, a French name for the “widespread fascination with Japan and its culture that swept across the West in the last half of the nineteenth century” (Stokstad, p. 1020). Western artists found inspiration in the simple, flat, decorative elements of Japanese art and critics of industrial design saw it as a model for design reform. Japanese influence in the decorative arts can be seen in the late

nineteenth century art movement known as Aestheticism, which emphasized the need for beauty in everyday life and advocated simplicity and refinement of style.

However, *Ikebana* is one of the few designs in this paper that has been explicitly linked by its contemporary audience with a historic movement. In its May 1971 “fabric report,” *Interiors* magazine profiled the new Heal Fabrics collection, describing *Ikebana* as “one of two Art Deco cottons by Barbara Brown.” This description is somewhat problematic. First, according to the collection’s promotional materials, Barbara Brown designed four textiles for 1971 collection: *Ikebana*, *Precision* (Figure 4.40), *Ondine* (Figure 4.41), and *Gyration* (Figure 4.42). Second, not one of these textiles seems to make a clear reference to Art Deco.

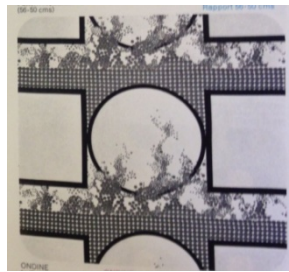
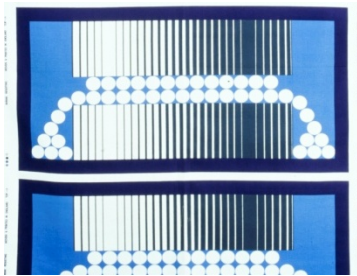


Figure 4.40: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Precision* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.12), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.41: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ondine* [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2875). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

Figure 4.42: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Gyration* [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2875). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

According to Alastair Duncan, Art Deco can be described as:

a range of early 20th century decorative styles that includes disparate influences ranging from the ancient past to the distant future – from King Tut to Buck Rogers and beyond – plus those inspired by the functionalist mass-produced materials of the 1930s, which began to phase out the terracotta and stone age in architecture, as it had already done to traditional materials in the decorative arts. (c. 2009)

In other words, Art Deco can be difficult to characterize. Geometric shapes – chevrons, arcs, sunbursts, zig-zags – as seen in *Arcade* (Figure 4.43) are perhaps the most obvious features of an Art Deco design. But, as Duncan explains, Art Deco imagery might also include “maidens, fountains, floral abstractions and ubiquitous biche” (c. 2009). It is also associated with new ways of looking at the world. Streamlined aesthetics reflected the speed of trains, planes, and automobiles; asymmetrical, syncopated pattern reflected the rise of jazz music; and man-made materials such as steel, chrome, and Bakelite reflected the so-called machine art of the 1930s. *Chrome City* (Figure 4.44) makes a clear reference to machine art with its architecture of “steel and glass and other reflective materials” (“Chrome City,” c. 1990). Perhaps the best-known examples of Art Deco design are actually buildings – the Empire State and the Chrysler Buildings in New York. In this way, *Chrome City* references Art Deco architecture and seems especially inspired by the shimmering Emerald City seen in the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*.

In this light, the Barbara Brown design most likely to fit the definition of Art Deco is *Precision*. The gleaming production machinery and precision-cut orbs helps to convey the Art Deco idiom of “unbridled optimism for machines and human progress” (Meggs,

p. 297). Brown's monumental *Automation* (Figure 4.45) also features machinery.

Together, both might be references to machine art, a term coined by a 1934 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition was filled with “a variety of industrially produced springs, coils, boat and airplane propellers... ball bearings... household appliances, hospital supplies, and scientific instruments” (Miller et al., p. 543). The intent was to expand the definition of art to include the rigorously formal platonic forms of machine-made products as well as the machines themselves.



Figure 4.43: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Taylor, J. (Designer). (1969). *Arcade* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.30-1969), London, England.

Figure 4.44: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1970). *Chrome City* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.3), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.45: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Automation* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.5), Minneapolis, MN.

Machine-made materials such as metal and glass also inspired teachers and students at the infamous German arts school, the Bauhaus. Today, the Bauhaus may be best known to lovers of architecture; the school itself was designed by architect Walter Gropius. The building was completed in 1926 and, with its “functional and severely geometrical manner, devoid of ornament,” it became the foundation for International Style (Hamilton, p. 333). But the building itself was also symbolic of the ultimate goal of the Bauhaus

according to Gropius: to produce a “*collective* work of art... where there is no distinction between structural and decorative art” (as cited in Hamilton, p. 332). Gropius recognized, notes Hamilton, “that ‘the loss of creative unity which has resulted from technological development’ had been caused by ‘the much too materialistic attitude of our times’” (p. 332). In other words, proponents of the Bauhaus philosophy were more closely aligned to reformists like the Aesthetes and, later, the hippies, than the proponents of machine art.



Figure 4.46: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1972). *Bauhaus* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.447-1977), London, England.

Figure 4.47: Stölzl, G. (1927-1928). *Red-Green Slit Tapestry* [Textile]. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, Germany.

Collier Campbell’s textile *Bauhaus* (Figure 4.46) certainly reflects the geometry of Gropius’ architecture; however, it is actually a direct reference to a tapestry by Gunta Stölzl (Figure 4.47) (Jackson, 2002, p. 186). Stölzl’s dazzling *Red-Green Slit Tapestry*

(1927-1928) was woven at the Dessau Bauhaus, where Stölzl was an instructor. In contrast to the Bauhaus motto “Art into Industry,” Stölzl’s studio became a place for “speculative experimentation” (“Wall Hangings,” n.d.). In other words, weavers were encouraged to experiment with the artistic possibilities of textiles rather than focus on their functionality.



Figure 4.48: Textura (Manufacturer), & Politowicz, K. (Designer). (1973). *Salad Days* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.350-1973), London, England.



Figure 4.49: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1971). *Gemstones* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.2), Chicago, IL.

The last historic art movement represented by this group of textiles is surrealism. The surrealist textiles in question, *Salad Days* (Figure 4.48) and *Gemstones* (Figure 4.49), feature bizarre, dreamlike imagery. According to Andre Breton in his Surrealist Manifesto of 1924:

surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association neglected heretofore, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to destroy definitively all other psychic

mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in the solution of the principle problems of life. (as cited in Hamilton, p. 389)

In other words, according to Hamilton, surrealism is an attempt to free “the imaginative life from the arbitrary limitations imposed upon it by reason and the social order” (p. 388). Like all good surrealist works, *Salad Days* and *Gemstones* each convey a somewhat radical political message, hidden amidst seemingly innocuous fantastic imagery (discussed in-depth in Chapter 5).

Pop

Although the artists most often associated with Pop Art are American (e.g., Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein), the movement actually originated in Great Britain. In 1952, a number of artists, architects, and art critics calling themselves the Independent Group held a series of discussions at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts. According to Lucie-Smith, the members of the Independent Group:

were all fascinated by the new urban popular culture that was manifesting itself in America after the deprivations of World War II, and their sensitivity to what was taking place in the United States was heightened by the feeling, deeply implanted in a British society pinched by rationing and economic austerity, that America was an Eldorado of all good things, from nylon stockings to automobiles. (p. 257)

The results of these early Pop forays were decidedly different from the movement as interpreted by the Americans. Artworks from British Pop artists Richard Hamilton, Peter

Blake, David Hockney, and R.B. Kitaj are described by Lucie-Smith in terms such as nostalgic, traditional, revivalist, narrativist, and romantic (pp. 257-259).



Figure 4.50: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1969). *Lunar Rocket* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.45A-1970), London, England.

Figure 4.51: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1969). *Space Walk* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.2b), Chicago, IL.

Figure 4.52: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1969). *Space Walk* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.2b), Chicago, IL.

Lunar Rocket (Figure 4.50) and *Space Walk* (Figure 4.51) are the most obvious examples of textiles in this study influenced by the Pop Art movement. However, both find models in American Pop artists. *Lunar Rocket*, a collage of pop culture imagery, is reminiscent of Andy Warhol's large-scale silkscreen paintings of celebrities, car crashes, race riots, and electric chairs derived from appropriated publicity and news photographs. It also makes direct reference to Pop illustrators such as Peter Max, Milton Glaser, and Heinz Edelman, noted for their bubble-like forms, bold colors, and penchant for surrounding figures with unearthly halos of light. Likewise, *Space Walk*, with its quasi-realistic astronauts and lunar module, seems to be based on images derived from news media. Its use of benday dots (small dots used in newsprint to mechanically reproduce color), in

particular, links it to Roy Lichtenstein’s paintings inspired by “lowbrow advertisements and comic books” (Figure 4.52) (Miller et al., p. 593).

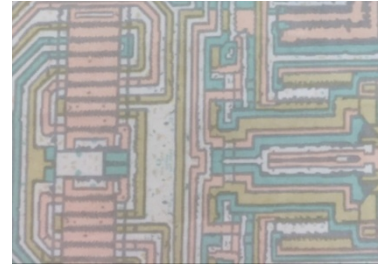
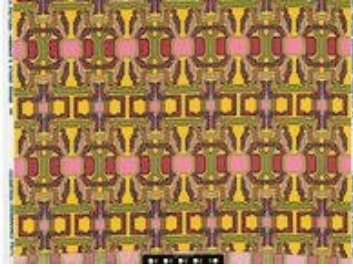


Figure 4.53: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Phillips, P. (Designer). (1973). *Highlight* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.13), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.54: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1968). *Colourtron* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.801-1968), London, England.

Figure 4.55: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1981). *Microchip* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.3), Chicago, IL.

Vernacular art such as the “lowbrow advertisements and comic books” that influenced Lichtenstein, also influenced textile design. One example centers on the computer imagery and graphics as seen in the designs for *Highlight* (Figure 4.53), *Colourtron* (Figure 4.54), and *Microchip* (Figure 4.55). The earliest computers had minimal graphic interfaces. However, their novelty status meant that “people would flock to watch them whenever the opportunity arose” (Graetz, 2001, p. 44). According to early computer programmer J.M. Graetz:

Whirring tapes and clattering card readers can hold one’s interest for only so long. [Computers] just did the same dull thing over and over; besides, they were obviously mechanical – at best, overgrown record changers – and thus not very mysterious. The mainframe, which did all the work, just sat there. There was

nothing to see. However, something is always happening on a TV screen, which is why people stare at them for hours. (p. 44)

Programmers began developing simple computer programs that could be played on the computer's built in screens so as to satisfy the public's desire for them to "do" something. The first computer game, *Spacewar!* was designed in 1962.

Just ten years later, video game arcades were widespread and the first in-home video game console, Magnavox Odyssey was already on the market. The next ten years saw video games gain exponential popularity, "pushing the development and evolution of computers, microprocessors, artificial intelligence, programming languages, video display technologies, virtual reality, compression technologies, [and] broadband networks" (Burnham, 2001, p. 23). Video game historians such as Van Burnham consider this time period the golden age of video games, based on "the fact that the aesthetic of games permeated everything all at once – video arcades, movies, fashion, television, technology, music, and media" (p. 22). Some critics felt that this widespread use of computer imagery amounted to a "fetishization of technology," and derided the aesthetic as a "naïve and anachronistic" attempt "to inflect the modernist utopian project with pop culture" (Adamson & Pavitt, 2011, pp. 15-16).

Pop Art influences are also visible in Op Art, sometimes referred to as abstract Pop Art. Op Art, or Optical Art, was an extremely popular art movement in England in the early 1960s. Artists made use of the physiological processes of seeing to create illusory, or

even hallucinatory effects. Explained by Cyril Barrett in his treatise on the subject, *An Introduction to Optical Art*:

an Op painting is like an arena in which visual activity takes place. The Op artist wants something to happen on the canvas. He does not present the spectator with a finished composition but rather with a situation which requires the spectator's reaction for the full development of the work. (1971, p. 20)

With this quote, Barrett outlines the criteria for Op Art, perhaps best illustrated by the McKay figure (Figure 4.56). Here, simple black and white lines are transformed by the eye into a “blaze of light... ‘shock-waves’ seem to detach themselves and radiate outwards from the centre” (p. 11). The author notes that it is difficult to look at this image for any length of time as the “assault on the eye becomes almost intolerable” (p. 11).

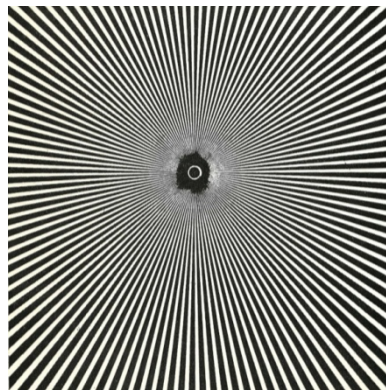


Figure 4.56: McKay figure.
From *An Introduction to Optical Art*, by C. Barrett, 1971, p. 10.

Figure 4.57: Heal Fabrics
(Manufacturer), & Brown, B.
(Designer). (1966). *Expansion*
[Textile]. Victoria & Albert
Museum (Museum No.
CIRC.269-1967), London,
England.

Op Art, in particular, proved an inspiring influence for textile designers. In the early 1960s, Op Art pioneer Victor Vasarely designed a line of textiles for Edinburgh Weavers, sparking a wave of successive designs for a number of other British textile manufacturers, including Heal Fabrics.

In contrast to her earlier design, *Expansion* (Figure 4.57), Brown's *Spiral* (Figure 4.58) is quieter. Although *Spiral* successfully alludes to a three-dimensional shape, it does not seem to pulsate like *Expansion*. In this sense, it is more aligned with "abstract-illusionist" works such as Vasarely's *Photographism Ibadan* (Figure 4.59). Here, three-dimensional shapes seem to project from a flat plane, but the optical effect is slight, making it easier to look at.

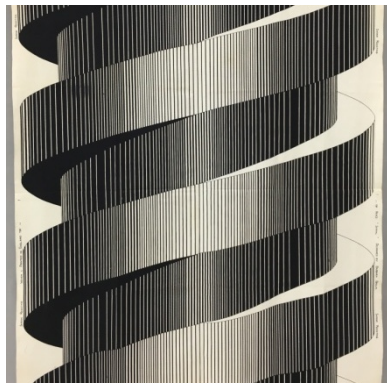


Figure 4.58: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Spiral* [Textile]. Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (Accession No. 2007.11.004), Madison, WI.

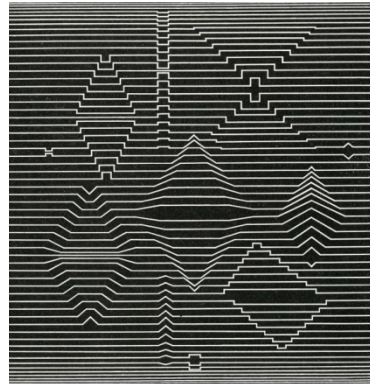


Figure 4.59: Vasarely, V. (1952-1962). *Photographism Ibadan* [Painting]. From *An Introduction to Optical Art*, by C. Barrett, 1971, p. 54.



Figure 4.60: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Holzer, H. J. (Designer). (1975). *Strata* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.4), Minneapolis, MN.

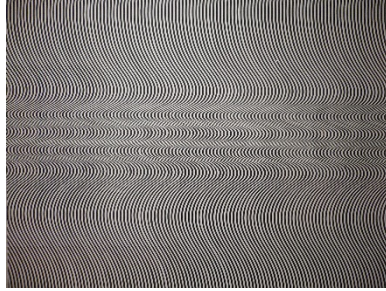


Figure 4.61: Riley, B. (1964). *Current* [Painting]. Museum of Modern Art (Object No. 576.1964), New York, NY.



Figure 4.62: Textra (Manufacturer), & Bartle, D. (Designer). (1973). *Metropolis* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.355-1973), London, England.

Pop and Op Art are also important influences on psychedelic art. Though Art Nouveau inspired the style's "flowing, sinuous curves," Op inspired "the intense optical color vibration" of psychedelic art while Pop inspired the genre's "recycling of images from popular culture or by manipulation (such as reducing continuous-tone images to high-contrast black and white)" (Meggs, p. 449). Psychedelic works, such as a *Mandarin*, are essentially hybrids of different styles. According to Grunenberg, "what unites these styles is excessive form expanding uncontrolled into space, providing instant sensual gratification through spectacular special effects" (p. 13). Likewise, Dave Hickey explains that these movements share an emphasis on "complexity over simplicity, pattern over form, repetition over composition, feminine over masculine, curvilinear over rectilinear, and the fractal, the differential, and the chaotic over Euclidean order" (1997/2005, p. 64). Other examples of the hybrid style psychedelia include *Space Walk* with its acidic color scheme and trippy kaleidoscope imagery and *Strata* with its obvious Art Nouveau influences and less obvious strobing Op effect (Figure 4.60).

David Bartle's *Metropolis* also resembles Op Art, especially the work of Bridget Riley, for example, her painting *Current* from 1964 (Figure 4.61). *Metropolis* seems to depict an expanse of high-rise towers positioned on an undulating landscape of hills and valleys. The illusion of waves is obvious in a photograph of *Metropolis* from the side (Figure 4.62). Though the textile is perfectly flat, it appears to be falling in a fold down the center.

Minimalism

Though minimalism's roots might be traced back to earlier experiments with abstraction, it shares a link to Op Art. Both emphasize geometry, but whereas Op depended on illusionary effects, minimalism was about stripping away such conceit. As minimalist painter Frank Stella explained, "what you see is what you see" (as cited in Miller et al., p. 598). According to Stokstad:

minimalists sought to purge their art of everything that was not essential to art. They banished subjective gestures and personal feelings; negated representation, narrative, and metaphor; and focused exclusively on the art work as a physical fact. They employed simple geometric forms with plain, unadorned surfaces and often used industrial techniques and materials to achieve an effect of complete impersonality. (p. 1146)

Works that epitomize the minimalist aesthetic and ideals include the numerous untitled galvanized steel and aluminum boxes by Donald Judd (Figure 4.63) and delicate monochromatic paintings such as *Untitled #7* by Agnes Martin (Figure 4.64).

David Bartle's *Metropolis* (Figure 4.65) can be considered a sort of two-dimensional rendering of a Judd sculpture. Its geometric imagery evokes a series of three-dimensional rectangular cuboids. Each cube is dramatically "lit" from the left, rendering one face bright and one incredibly dark. In this way, the cubes in *Metropolis* seem reflective or metallic. While this quality is reminiscent of Judd's untitled boxes, it also suggests the reflective glass and metal façade of many mid-century skyscrapers (Figure 4.66).

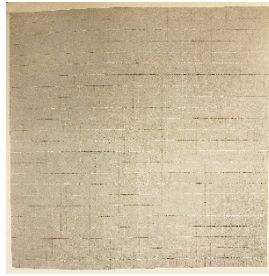


Figure 4.63: Judd, D. (1969/1982). Untitled [Sculpture]. From *Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole: Walker Art Center Collections*, by J. Rothfuss & E. Carpenter, 2005, p. 305.

Figure 4.64: Martin, A. (1977). *Untitled #7* (Painting). From *Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole: Walker Art Center Collections*, by J. Rothfuss & E. Carpenter, 2005, p. 377.

Figure 4.65: Textra (Manufacturer), & Bartle, D. (Designer). (1973). *Metropolis* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.355-1973), London, England.

That *Metropolis'* cubes resemble skyscrapers places it at odds with minimalism. Pure minimalism is not representational. The same problems plague Barbara Brown's *Ikebana* (Figure 4.67). Although *Ikebana* is, like *Metropolis*, comprised of pure geometric shapes, the shapes are placed in a way so as to suggest a narrative. Here, plain white tubular forms seem to slide open, revealing a red chamber full of circles. The circles float upwards in a spray not unlike a wave hitting a rock near shore. Other circles seem

to bounce away like playground balls. However, according to Miller et al., critics in the 1960s and 1970s routinely commented that:

Minimalism did not truly evade referentiality as its champions claimed. The industrial idiom and repetitive serial arrangement of the work “referred” to many aspects of contemporary American culture: the repetition of factory production, the technophilia of the military-industrial complex, the banalization of the built environment through urban “superblocks” and suburban “little boxes.” (p. 601)

In this way, *Metropolis*, especially, may have more in common with minimalism than initially thought.

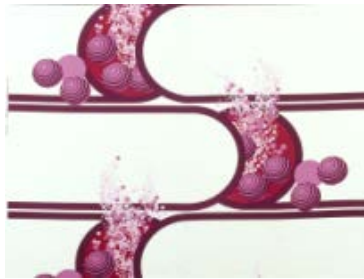
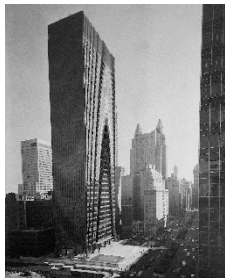


Figure 4.66: Mies van der Rohe, L. (1958). *Seagram Building*. From *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, by A. L. Miller, J. C. Berlo, B. J. Wolf, & J. L. Roberts, 2008, p. 581.

Figure 4.67: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 4.68: Ashley, L. (1972-1975). Untitled dress [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.279-1988), London, England.

It may seem “incorrect” to label *Metropolis* or *Ikebana* “minimalist” works in step with the extreme simplicity of Donald Judd’s cubes or Agnes Martin’s linear paintings. However, these textiles do share much with minimal art in general. Both designs feature forms reduced to their elemental state. Both are monochromatic. In fact, the original

version of *Ikebana* was printed in black and white. *Metropolis* might be described as organized or orderly with precise arrangements of cuboids echoing the rigorous display requirements for Judd's untitled boxes – they must be hung in a perfect line, the space between each the same as the height of each box. Despite *Ikebana*'s disorderly circles, the design's inherent repetition seems to create an order in the spirit of Judd: “not rationalistic and underlying but... simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another” (as cited in Rothfuss & Carpenter, 2005, p. 306).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the title *Ikebana* refers to the Japanese art of floral arrangement, a simple definition for a complex artistic philosophy. An ikebana artist's goal is to “communicate the essential character of living floral materials by removing them to a new environment, where they are cut and shaped to become more beautiful than before” (Singer, 1994, p. 44). In much the same way as minimalism, ikebana's goal is to communicate the essential aspects of their materials. By arranging rather than creating, an ikebana artist works in much the same way as an artist like Judd. In this way, ikebana and minimalism also evoke something of the austere beauty of Zen Buddhist art. For example, the “dry garden” at the temple of Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, essentially a series of rocks and gravel, is a meditation on arrangement and material.

Minimalism was also prevalent in fashion and music during the 1970s. *Metropolis*, with its cascading waves evokes minimalist composer Steve Reich's work with phasing techniques in the “Pulses” section of *Music for 18 Musicians* (1978). Laura Ashley's dress fabric (Figure 4.68), with its monochromatic color scheme, soft floral print, and

simple, unfussy silhouette, is also reminiscent of minimalist fashion designers, such as Halston.

Ruralism

Ruralism, like revivalism, is not a true style, though Lesley Jackson lists these as the two main 1970s British textile design movements. Still there is evidence to suggest that an interest in the countryside, nature, and natural materials influenced much of 1970s visual culture in Great Britain.



Figure 4.69: Ashley, L. (1972-1975). Untitled dress [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.279-1988), London, England.



Figure 4.70: Lauren Hutton for *Vogue*, December 1974, “the highest paid model so far... make-up-less, gap-toothed, tousle-haired.” From *In Vogue: 75 Years of Style*, by G. Howell, 1975/1991, p. 197.

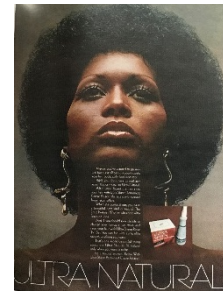


Figure 4.71: Advertisement for Ultra Sheen hair relaxer, 1970. From *All-American Ads of the 70s*, by J. Heimann, n.d., p. 433.

Though leaders of fashion in the mid- to late-1960s and early 1970s, British fashion designers maintained a relatively low profile in the mid-1970s. Tortora & Eubank explain that British fashion returned “to classic tailoring and [the] promotion of high-quality cotton products from firms such as Liberty of London and Laura Ashley” (p.

546). Natural fibers in neutral colors “replaced the brightly colored manufactured fibers so often seen in the 1960s (p. 562). Apparel fabrics were soft and drapable and many were knitted, including the Laura Ashley dress in this study (Figure 4.69). Personal styling, i.e., hair and makeup, was meant to highlight a woman’s “natural” beauty. Steele notes that fashion models were “healthy-looking... like Lauren Hutton, who were made-up in sheer lip gloss and other minimalist cosmetics” (Figure 4.70) (p. 292). For African Americans, the natural look – most apparent in the popular Afro hairstyle – was political, representing pride in a cultural heritage that for so long had been denied (Figure 4.71).

The “pastoral look” took this fresh, natural aesthetic a step farther, “romanticizing... the rustic, peasant-girl version of 70s femininity, which also hinted at hippiedom and bohemian tendencies, and included Liberty/Laura Ashley-inspired florals, gingham checks, smock tops, A-lines with ruffles and ruched blouses” (Gregson, Brooks, & Crewe, 2001, p. 7). The Laura Ashley dress selected for this study resembles a smock with its ruffled sleeves and large, practical patch pockets. The purpose of a smock, of course, is to protect one’s clothes from work. In other words, the dress is meant to convey something of the idealized peasant, hard-working, cheerful, and pretty.

The pastoral or rural aesthetic was fairly widespread. According to Penny Sparke, writing in 1983:

retailers like Laura Ashley, Designers’ Guild, and, to a certain extent, Terence Conran for Habitat, have provided us with country-inspired fabrics, wallpapers and reworked versions of “peasant” kitchen equipment – from butter moulds to

pestles and mortars – while the second-hand market is the main source for stripped pine furniture. (1983, p. 35).

Sparke explains that the pastoral look “represents nostalgia for a way of life” that “grew of a longing for a pre-industrial utopia” (p. 35). In this way, ruralism encompasses an interest in nature, as seen in *Cottage Garden* (Figure 4.72) and *Vista* (Figure 4.73), as well as a romanticized interest in a more “natural” lifestyle – simple, unpretentious rural living without the mechanizations of the big city.



Figure 4.72: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1974-1977). *Cottage Garden* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.44-1978), London, England.

Figure 4.73: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Bell, D. (Designer). (1976). *Vista* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.3), Minneapolis, MN.

Another art movement that paralleled ruralism was Earth Art. According to Lucie-Smith, Earth Art grew out of minimalism; it was “minimalist thinking expressed on a gigantic scale” (p. 276). Projects like Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (Figure 4.74), a huge earth and stone mass built on the then-barren bed of Utah’s Great Salt Lake, recall monumental stone structures such as Stonehenge and link contemporary art to an ancient past.

Lucie-Smith contends that Earth Art’s “direct connection with nature... exercised a far greater appeal in Great Britain than other aspects of American Minimalism” (p. 278). British artists working in this mode (e.g., Richard Long) were also less apt to undertake “the massive works favored by Americans” opting instead to romanticize nature (p. 278). Long, for instance, described his sculptures as “art made by walking in landscapes” (“Richard Long,” n.d.). In works like *Connemara Sculpture* (Figure 4.75), for example, Long positioned a series of rocks in concentric rings, transforming a patch of Irish countryside into an ancient, Celtic-inspired design. Unlike the massive earth-moving project that was (and continues to be) *Spiral Jetty*, Long’s rock formation is transitory, his alteration of the landscape purely ephemeral (Lucie-Smith, p. 278). Photographs become the only surviving evidence of his work.



Figure 4.74: Smithson, R. (1970). *Spiral Jetty* [Sculpture]. From *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, by A. L. Miller, J. C. Berlo, B. J. Wolf, & J. L. Roberts, 2008, p. 616.

Figure 4.75: Long, R. (1971). *Connemara Sculpture* [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.richardlong.org/Sculptures/2011sculptures/connemara.html>

Figure 4.76: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Foley, J. (Designer). (1976). *Country Walk* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.1-1976), London, England.

The British propensity for the romantic is evident in textiles like the wistful *Country Walk* (Figure 4.76). Like *Connemara Sculpture*, *Country Walk* seems to exist as the only evidence of a quiet, reflective walk through the countryside. Self-expression,

subjectivity, and individualism are the hallmarks of romanticism, notes sociologist Bernice Martin. She explains:

romanticism seeks to destroy boundaries, reject conventions, undermine structures and universalise the descent into the abyss and the ascent into the infinite. Its matrix is material prosperity that releases people from the immediate disciplines of survival and that concentrates their attention on their “expressive” needs – self-discovery, self-fulfilment, experience and sensation. (as cited in Breward, 2004, “Swinging Stereotypes,” para. 8)

The expressive, introspective character of romantic visual culture stood in contrast to unemotional, unsentimental modernism. As such it is frequently derided by critics like Mendes and Ikoku who equate it with a need for nostalgia and escapism at a time of economic instability.

Others argue that, while romanticism does represent fantasy and escapism, it also represents a pervasive cultural shift away from the functionalism and cold aesthetic of modernism. Manifested in the form of the Laura Ashley aesthetic as well as the fashion and music of the New Romantics, romanticism was a style, a feeling, and a mood that permeated all of British culture. Centered on the British post-punk musical stylings of bands such as Ultravox, Human League, Simple Minds, and Adam and the Ants, the New Romantics were indicative of a “general shift in pop culture back toward fantasy and escapism” (Reynolds, 2005, p. 301). This cultural “mood of washed-out and washed-up melancholy” was, according to Simon Reynolds, a response to the “dehumanization and decadence” of the 1960s (pp. 300-301). In fact, the New Romantic style was a complex

and ambivalent blend of the futuristic and retro, fantasies of both modernism and postmodernism.

This finding shows that, in general, the diverse manifestations of 1970s British visual culture reflected similar stylistic trends. These styles can also be found in music, both popular and classical. While these four major styles consistently appear across numerous platforms, 1970s visual culture is often criticized for its lack of consistency. On the surface, this finding seems to lend support for the idea that 1970s visual culture lacks stylistic conviction.

That visual culture should reflect such a variety of stylistic trends was to be expected. As noted earlier, the decade has been nicknamed the Schizophrenic Seventies (Howell, p. 193). However, according to Steele, Howell's *In Vogue: 75 Years of Style*, first published in 1975, originally ended with a chapter titled "The Uncertain Seventies" which was changed to "The Schizophrenic Seventies" in the revised 1991 edition (1997, p. 280). Howell's original claim of "uncertainty," it seems, was directly related to style. Pop Art, revivalism, and minimalism were all rooted in the 1960s, though it is clear they continued to affect the visual arts throughout the first half of the 1970s. For some artists, like textile designer Eddie Pond, this simply meant that the "swinging sixties" extended into the 70s, coming to "an abrupt end" only with the onset of the oil crisis (p. 95). Along these same lines, novelist Edmund White notes, "For the longest time everyone kept saying the Seventies hadn't started yet. There was no distinctive style for the

decade, no flair, no slogans” (as cited in Steele, p. 279). In other words, the 70s seems to have started on a hesitant note, uncertain of its identity.

The phrase “the Swinging Sixties” conjures a clear image of British culture: mods, miniskirts, go-go boots, dance halls, Twiggy, Carnaby Street, crushed velvet, Nehru jackets, mop-tops, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones. The decade belonged to the young, in fashion and movies and music and textiles. In the foreword to... Mendes explains:

In the swinging sixties a new generation of lively designers destined to invigorate textile design emerged from British art schools. The new wave fabrics were closely allied to movements in painting and sculpture and in many ways represent a high point in British textile design. Assertive and powerful, these fabrics appealed especially to the young. (1999, p. 7)

In contrast, Mendes suggests the Uncertain Seventies was a “period of indecision” that “brought a halt to stylistic invention” in textile design (1999, p. 7). The problem with uncertainty wasn’t that the decade was left without a distinctive style and a slogan, it was there wasn’t anything new to celebrate.

This interpretation is problematic because it resulted in the idea that textile design in the 1970s was the result of a lack of designer confidence. Designers didn’t invent, they “resorted” to tried-and-true designs in “safe” colors and “diminutive” scale. Worse still is the interpretation espoused by Pond and Ikoku: the “chintzy cheerfulness” of 1970s textile design masked an almost apocalyptic uncertainty relating to Britain’s very future (Pond, p. 95). These patterns were created, according to Ikoku, to bring reassurance and

“a sense of comfort and security to the home at a time of considerable uncertainty” (p. 13).

Others had a different interpretation of this “period of indecision,” White even going so far as to suggest it was not a period of indecision at all. He explains:

The mistake we made was that we were all looking for something as startling as the Beatles, acid, Pop Art, hippies and radical politics. What actually set in was a painful and unexpected working-out of the terms the Sixties had so blithely tossed off. (as cited in Steele, p. 279)

In this interpretation, the 1970s were not so much the last gasps of the 1960s as they were an opportunity to resolve the ideas from the previous decade, to reconcile its unfinished thoughts. According to Steele, this involved a process of diffusing the “cultural radicalism of the 1960s... throughout the wider society” (p. 280). The 1970s were not “a period of calm after the ‘uproar’ of the 1960s,” but a reconciliation between the counterculture and the mainstream (p. 280).

This process, as White notes, was “painful and unexpected” (as cited in Steele, p. 279).

This echoes Marshall Berman’s claims that, in the 70s:

modern societies abruptly lost their power to blow away their past. All through the 1960s, the question had been whether they should or shouldn’t; now, in the 1970s, the answer was that they simply couldn’t... they had to learn to come to terms with the world they had, and work from there. (1982/1988, p. 332)

Berman explains that, “at a moment when modern society seemed to lose the capacity to create a brave new future,” it was forced to look backwards, “to discover new sources of life through imaginative encounters with the past” (p. 332). Thomas Hine is in agreement with Berman, the challenges of the 1970s inspired a new aesthetic, one “of salvage and of juxtaposition... as people sought to rediscover and renew what had long gone unnoticed and neglected” (p. 21).

Salvage and juxtaposition – these were key elements of 1960s counterculture style. According to Steele, hippies turned to thrift stores, seeking old, outdated, and vernacular garments, mixing them with abandon. While thrift store fashion was most certainly a byproduct of hippie anti-establishment and anti-capitalist values, it was also the hallmark of a new way of looking at the world. Steele explains that the retro or revivalist style:

in retrospect,... is one of the most important stylistic features of postmodernism. The elements of pastiche and irony, the mixing together of different and often wildly clashing elements into a form of bricolage, is crucial to the late twentieth-century aesthetic sensibility. (p. 286).

Steele notes that retro style “has frequently been criticized on the grounds that it represents either a loss of creativity on the part of fashion designers, or a perverse ‘nostalgia’ for the past... It all seemed ‘vulgar,’ in ‘bad taste,’ ‘kitsch’” (p. 285). This attitude echoes Mendes, as we have seen, but also some of the contemporary criticism of 1970s textiles, some of which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Today, the 1970s are playfully termed “The Decade That Taste Forgot” and the subject of many an amusing coffee table book (e.g., Turner, 2006).

Perhaps what upsets critics about this counterculture style is that it represents an end to mainstream fashion. Paraphrasing fashion historian Marlène Delbourg-Delphis, Steele explains that “prior to 1963, women automatically followed fashion; during the 1960s, fashion shook people up... but in the 1970s public opinion rendered fashion ‘optional’” (p. 283). In other words, Steele explains, “fashion was not in fashion” (p. 280). If fashion was not in fashion, it follows that fashion wasn’t in fashion for textiles either. People wore and decorated with what they liked.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored two major findings pertaining to the nature of iconography in British printed textiles of the 1970s and related stylistic trends evident in 1970s visual culture. The two findings reveal a definite spirit of the age or zeitgeist which permeated the arts despite those same arts displaying an incredible thematic and stylistic diversity. This suggests, simultaneously, a more unified and a more fractured society, an ambivalence characteristic of postmodern thinking. This idea will be expanded on in the following chapter, which deals with the very question of social and cultural change as expressed through the concepts of modernism and postmodernism in textile design.

Chapter 5: Findings Related to Social and Cultural Changes

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from a material culture study of twenty-one objects as well as primary source material from five archives and libraries. Each of the findings corresponds to the second of two research questions identified earlier and restated here.

Research Question 2

How are social and cultural changes expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s?

- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward modernity?
- In what ways do these textiles show evidence of a cultural attitude toward technology or progress?
- In what ways do these textiles reflect the concept of postmodernity?

The major findings that emerged are:

1. Modernist principles, especially the concept of “good design,” influenced the design, production, promotion, and critique of British printed textiles in the 1970s; however, signs of ambivalence towards these ideas became increasingly evident as the decade progressed.

2. British printed textiles of the 1970s that represent technology have a cold, unsettling quality whereas those that represent nature have a tranquil, meditative quality, reflecting a cultural ambivalence towards technology and an investment in nature.
3. The designs for British printed textiles of the 1970s were influenced by new developments in architectural and textile printing technology. Technology affected the longevity of a design and brought textiles into the realm of fashion.
4. Revivalist, escapist, ethnic, and nostalgic styles evident in British printed textiles of the 1970s reflect ambivalence towards modernism and display characteristics of a change in design thinking that might retrospectively be termed postmodern.

The following represents a discussion of the findings with details that support and explain each. Though much of these findings are based on the material culture itself, support is given from materials discovered in the Heal's, Liberty, and Design Council archives, contemporary magazine and newspaper articles, and critical literature.

Finding 1

Modernist principles, especially the concept of “good design,” influenced the design, production, promotion, and critique of British printed textiles in the 1970s; however, signs of ambivalence towards these ideas became increasingly evident as the decade progressed.

In Chapter 2, it was noted that modernity is predicated on the concept of change. In this context, change is generally equated with progress and innovation. In other words, modern means the most advanced and the most novel. New ideas are generally considered improvements on old ideas. Old ideas are rejected as part of the not-modern past. A modern society has, in theory, rejected its history, tradition, and vernacular. So too has a modern art.

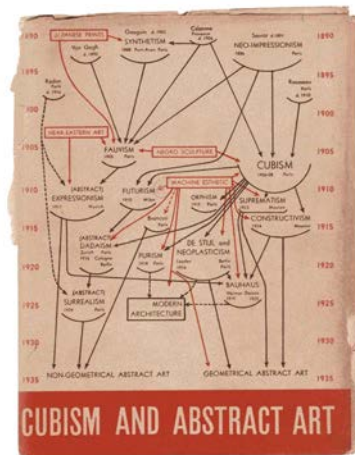


Figure 5.1: Barr, Jr., A. H. (1936). *Cubism and Abstract Art* [Book cover]. Retrieved from www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2748

Unfortunately, the rapid turnover that defines modern art makes it difficult to characterize in terms of style or iconography. Drafted by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, this chart (Figure 5.1) shows the diversity of modern art movements from 1890 to 1936. For instance, the rich impasto and vivid colors of Vincent van Gogh’s landscapes share little in common with the stark, orderly canvases by artists of the De Stijl movement. What links these movements is a shared interest in the new and a desire to “blow away their past” (Berman, 1982/1988, p. 332).

What we are left with, therefore, is the idea that modern art is modern until it isn't, until it is replaced by something new. "To be modern," Marshall Berman notes, "is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air" (1982/1988, p. 345). This idea is perfectly illustrated in Barr's chart, where the only "solid" definition of modern art lies in its transience.

To determine if the textiles in this study were designed according to modernist principles, an attempt was made to classify as modern or its opposite, not modern. If all that defines a modern textile is that it aligns with a modern art movement, a case might be made for the following delineation:

Modern	Not Modern
<i>Colourtron</i>	<i>Arcade</i>
<i>Lunar Rocket</i>	<i>Chrome City</i>
<i>Space Walk</i>	<i>Bauhaus</i>
<i>Spiral</i>	<i>Salad Days</i>
<i>Mandarin</i>	<i>Cottage Garden</i>
<i>Automation</i>	<i>Strata</i>
<i>Gemstones</i>	
<i>Precision</i>	
<i>Ikebana</i>	
<i>Laura Ashley dress fabric</i>	
<i>Metropolis</i>	
<i>Highlight</i>	
<i>Country Walk</i>	
<i>Vista</i>	
<i>Microchip</i>	

However, if one follows a more rigorous approach based on the idea that a modern textile would have rejected its history, tradition, and vernacular, we might classify the textiles in this study as follows:

Modern	Not Modern
<i>Spiral</i>	<i>Colourtron</i>
<i>Gemstones</i>	<i>Lunar Rocket</i>
<i>Precision</i>	<i>Space Walk</i>
<i>Ikebana</i>	<i>Arcade</i>
<i>Metropolis</i>	<i>Mandarin</i>
<i>Country Walk</i>	<i>Automation</i>
	<i>Chrome City</i>
	<i>Bauhaus</i>
	<i>Laura Ashley dress fabric</i>
	<i>Salad Days</i>
	<i>Cottage Garden</i>
	<i>Highlight</i>
	<i>Strata</i>
	<i>Vista</i>
	<i>Microchip</i>

This results in only six modern textiles. These textiles are not easily linked to traditional or vernacular iconography or historical art movements. The remaining fifteen textiles are, by default, not modern. They are either (a) based on a historical art movement (e.g., Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and surrealism) or school (e.g., the Bauhaus); (b) traditional iconography (e.g., florals); and (c) vernacular iconography (e.g., references to popular imagery such as computer graphics or photos from space).

There are several issues with this initial categorization. For example, the psychedelic textile *Mandarin* (Figure 5.2) could be considered either modern or not-modern.

Psychedelic art might be considered a modern art movement if scholars place more

significance on its relationship to Op Art and its visual references to modern mind-altering substances such as LSD. However, psychedelia could also be considered in terms of its relationship with Art Nouveau and be placed in the not-modern category. In this case, *Mandarin* could be either modern or not modern.

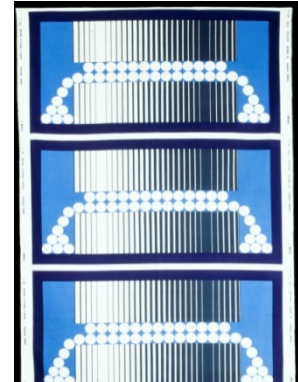
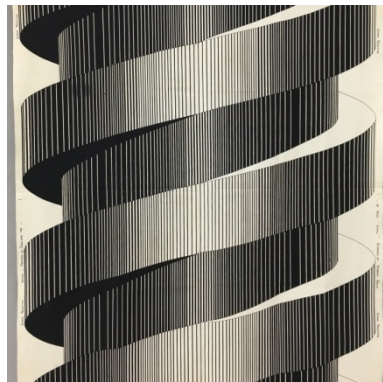


Figure 5.2: Hull Traders, Ltd. (Manufacturer), & Harper, L. (Designer). (c. 1970). *Mandarin* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.168:1 to 4-1989), London, England.

Figure 5.3: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Spiral* [Textile]. Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (Accession No. 2007.11.004), Madison, WI.

Figure 5.4: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Precision* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.12), Minneapolis, MN.

In fact, a number of textiles besides *Mandarin* might be described as ambiguous in the sense that they do not fall neatly into either category, modern or not. While *Spiral* (Figure 5.3) shares several characteristics of Op Art, it does not seem to pulsate like a true Op image. Like *Precision* (Figure 5.4) and *Automation* (Figure 5.5), *Spiral* may be making a reference to machine art of the 1930s. *Ikebana* (Figure 5.6) may or may not reflect the 19th-century obsession with *japonisme* and Aestheticism, but its clear ties to minimalism render it modern. Furthermore, while *Ikebana* references the traditional

Japanese art of flower arrangement, it is not a reference to a traditional British art. This keeps it in the modern category.

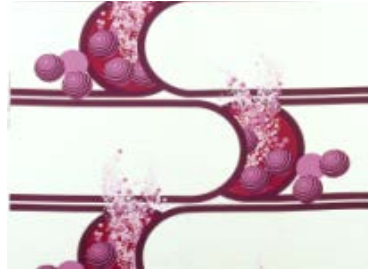
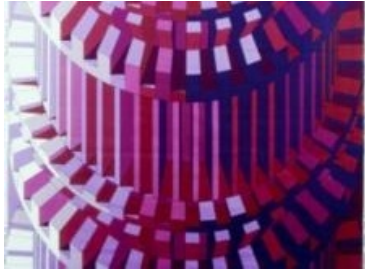


Figure 5.5: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Automation* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.5), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.6: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.7: Textra (Manufacturer), & Bartle, D. (Designer). (1973). *Metropolis* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.355-1973), London, England.

Metropolis' (Figure 5.7) foothold in both Op Art and minimalism seemingly makes it modern. But both movements were initiated in the 1960s. *Metropolis* is dated 1972. By this point, Op Art was long dead and minimalism was, depending on the scholar, dead or just beginning to die. This raises the question of how long a modern movement lasts before it is declared not modern.

Another question surrounds the idea of the vernacular. *Lunar Rocket* (Figure 5.8) and *Space Walk* (Figure 5.9) are obviously playing at Pop Art, but Pop is known for its interest in the vernacular. Can the vernacular be both modern and not modern? For example, Laura Ashley's dress fabric (Figure 5.10), *Cottage Garden* (Figure 5.11), *Country Walk* (Figure 5.12), and *Vista* (Figure 5.13) are all classified as not modern

because of their nature-themed, vernacular iconography. Laura Ashley's dress fabric does not appear overtly historic, traditional, or folksy; in fact, its pattern is comprised of a highly stylized, minimalistic representation of a cherry blossom. Yet, because Ashley was known for her interest in historic textiles, it might be reasonably assumed that this cherry blossom design was based on a historic textile.



Figure 5.8: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1969). *Lunar Rocket* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.45A-1970), London, England.

Figure 5.9: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1969). *Space Walk* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.2b), Chicago, IL.

Figure 5.10: Ashley, L. (1972-1975). Untitled dress [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.279-1988), London, England.

Cottage Garden features an extremely dense, extremely colorful design in a large pattern repeat that could have only been designed and printed with 1970s technology. Yet it is traditional in the sense that it reflects Britain's printed chintz industry. The fabric also references traditional British flowers and the tradition of the British cottage or country house.

Country Walk and *Vista* both have a certain 1970s *je ne sais quoi*. Of all the textiles in this study, they seem the most of their time, yet they cannot be considered modern,

according to our definition. Both textiles are vernacular – “folksy” or “country” – in the sense that they seem to refer to the British countryside or offer a vision of a rural idyll. But they also share characteristics with vernacular illustrations, such as those by Peter Max.

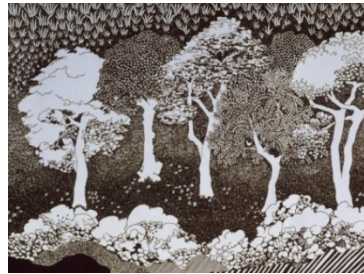


Figure 5.11: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1974-1977). *Cottage Garden* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.44-1978), London, England.

Figure 5.12: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Foley, J. (Designer). (1976). *Country Walk* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.1-1976), London, England.

Figure 5.13: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Bell, D. (Designer). (1976). *Vista* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.3), Minneapolis, MN.

Reviewing archival materials related to *Country Walk* reinforces its ambiguity, the way it straddles the line between modern and not. In a press release, Heal Fabrics promoted *Country Walk* as the epitome of its 1976 Country Collection (1975, p. 1). This collection “mark[ed] a departure” from Heal’s previous collections of bold geometrics, so much so that the company felt the need to explain its uncharacteristic theme (p. 1). The press release explains that the 1976 collection features “softer nostalgic designs” based on a prediction by designer Peter Hall, who “feels strongly that furnishings are taking a turn to a softer, textured look” (p. 1). Heal’s has also positioned *Country Walk* and the 1976 collection as modern, albeit in a contradictory way. The designs might have been

“nostalgic” but they were also very new. They were softer and more textured and this marked a “turn,” a new design direction for a very old tradition. Essentially, “nostalgia” had become an element of the most modern designs.

The new movement was called “country,” but it is important to note that Heal Fabrics’ “country” is not Laura Ashley’s “country.” In the press release, Heal’s explains that designer Jennie Foley, like Ashley, “is mainly involved in designing small-scale, delicate dress fabrics” (p. 1). However, “‘Country Walk’ marks a new departure in her work,” presumably a departure from the small-scale delicate dress fabrics Ashley is known for (p. 1). The scale and bold quality of *Country Walk* represents a modern design, one that Laura Ashley has no place in.

This “modern” approach to “country” is visible in a promotion for *Country Walk* (Figure 5.14). Here, Heal’s suspends a length of fabric from the branch of a tree growing on the periphery of a rather desolate field. On first glance, however, it almost seems to rise from the ground, like the monolith from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

Whether a conscious decision or not, the image implies that the landscape in *Country Walk* is a revelation, an improvement over nature. It is always summer in *Country Walk*, there is always a good view, there is always a fox running through the fields. Another image, a cutting from an unidentified magazine found in the Heal’s archives, shows *Country Walk* used in a modern space (Figure 5.15). The fabric covers the large plate glass window and visible wall and one might image it covering the walls not visible as well. The curtains, stretched into flat, sliding panels, might be drawn closed to block out

the view of the building outside. The inhabitant of this apartment would then be surrounded by the rolling hills and forests of Foley's design. *Country Walk* reflects a "modern country" aesthetic at home with the most modern architecture and furnishings.



Figure 5.14: *Country Walk* [Promotional material]. (c. 1976). Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2881). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.



Figure 5.15: Photograph of room decorated with *Country Walk* fabric. (c. 1976). [Clipping from an unidentified magazine]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/1501). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

Country Walk was the breakout star of Heal Fabrics' 1976 collection, receiving the Award for Good Design 1976 from *Living* magazine. This award is important because it confers the status of *Country Walk* – it is a "good design" and, as we will see below, this means it is modern. *Country Walk* thus illustrates the folly of classifying the textiles in this study according to a modern/not modern binary. The binary produces an overly simplistic, highly problematic reading.

Because classifying textiles according to the ever-changing principles of modernism proves problematic, it follows that classifying textiles according to the principles of “good design” will be equally fraught. According to Harry Cressman in the 1980 Design Council Awards booklet, “clearly, good design is something that is very obvious when you see it as an end product but is, in fact, a most elusive quality to capture” (p. 1). And as Judy Attfield notes, “design as a practice of Modernity was not necessarily objectified in a recognisable ‘modern’, much less ‘good design’, form” (1997/2007b, p. 187).

According to Attfield, “good design” is an ideological construct used to differentiate “between ordinary mass-produced artefacts answering needs and the decorative art object catering for discerning elite tastes” (1997/2007b, p. 187). “Good design” is typically linked to modernism in the sense that it reflects modernist principles such as “‘fitness for purpose’, ‘form follows function’ and ‘truth to materials’” (p. 187). Its most “crucial requirement,” however, is “originality with regard to other – and specifically recent – art” (Harrison, p. 191).

The official, government-sanctioned criteria for “good design” was outlined by the Council of Industrial Design (CoID), an agency formed in 1944 for the promotion of British design. The CoID seems to have made a concerted effort to articulate this criteria, updating them as appropriate in their annual booklet honoring CoID Design Center Award winners. Unfortunately, the Council’s archive does not contain a complete set of Awards booklets. In 1965 (the most relevant of available booklets to this aspect of the study), the Council notes that they examined “some 500 actual objects, from the point of

view of both fitness for purpose and new thought in design” (p. 6). In other words, objects were considered from a modernist perspective. “Fitness for purpose” describes.... An award for “good design” must necessarily focus on functionality, being “particularly well suited to their purpose, bringing benefits to both manufacturer and consumer,” and be made with suitable materials (p. 6). Products might also receive an award for “originality of conception” or “attention to detail and use of colour” (p. 6).

Based on the archival materials at hand, it seems that only two textiles in this study received a Design Award – *Spiral* and *Automation*, both designed by Barbara Brown for Heal Fabrics in 1970. While the 1970 Awards booklet was not archived, the results were printed in *Design* magazine, a monthly periodical published by the CoID. Still, it is difficult to determine what made these textiles stand-out examples of “good design.”

Based on the criteria discussed above, it seems the decision was made based on “originality of conception” and “fitness for purpose.” *Design* magazine emphasizes Brown’s unique approach to textile design:

Miss Brown says quite firmly that she never consciously designs with either fashion or the commercial market in mind, but works more like a painter, in that her designs – all of which have a characteristic three-dimensional quality – evolve and develop over a period of time. (“Furnishing Textiles,” 1970, p. 49)

Because “fitness for purpose” was such an important aspect of “good design,” the magazine emphasizes its use potential, explaining that the designs would be appropriate in a commercial or domestic setting. Of the latter, Brown suggests “a big repeat in a small room can form an abstract decoration in its own right” (p. 49).

Heal Fabrics was proud of its Awards and celebrated the achievement with advertisements (Figures 5.16-5.17). It is unclear, however, if these advertisements were meant to promote sales of *Spiral* and *Automation* or Heal Fabrics as a whole. The first ad boasts, “Heal’s have won a CoID award for fabrics for the third consecutive year” (“Heal’s Hat-Trick,” 1970). The second claims, “Heal Fabrics has firmly established itself as a leader in the field of modern printed fabric design” (“Heal’s Choose,” 1970).

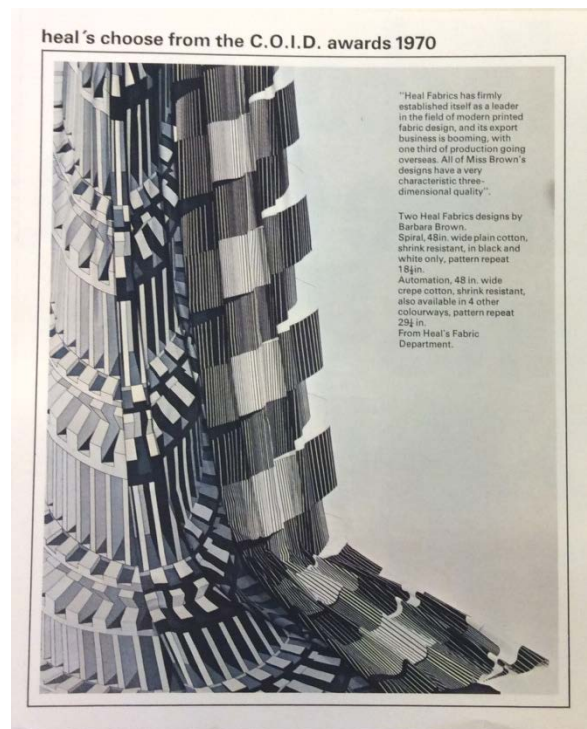


Figure 5.16: Heal’s Hat-Trick. (1970). [Advertisement]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2138). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

Figure 5.17: Heal’s Choose from the C.O.I.D. Awards 1970. (1970). [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2874). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

The second ad is designed as a magazine insert. Over the course of four pages, quotes were taken from the CoID panel of judges regarding a number of award-winning

products if not designed by Heal's, available for purchase at Heal's. It can be assumed that these quotes are taken from the Awards booklet, which provides further insight into the criteria for a "good design." The panel notes that "we have recognised the fashion element which so strongly influences areas of design by giving awards to a number of products which reflect the liveliness of much current design thinking" ("Heal's Choose," 1970). In other words, the Awards were distributed based on fashion.

In April 1972, the organization changed its name to the Design Council to highlight an increased focus on British engineering industries. At this time, several of the Council's awards criteria changed. Though the "main criteria" still involved "innovation, fitness for purpose, ease of use and good appearance," to win an award in 1974, an object now had to meet all of these criteria ("Design Awards," p. 35). According to Awards Secretary Tony Key, no longer would an award be given to products "for outstanding performance alone" or "simply because they have an aesthetic appeal" (1973, p. 4). Suddenly, awards would no longer be given based on fashion.

This new criteria seems to have had immediate adverse effects for textiles and other decorative arts. Textiles did not receive any awards in 1974, their absence explained by *Design* magazine as follows:

The definition of the phrase "consumer products" has changed over the years. This year's range of award winners can perhaps more properly be defined as products which involve the consumer, rather than products to be found in retail shops. The panel hoped to discover high quality domestic furniture, pottery and

glass. Instead they found that the outstanding design contributions of the year included industrial light fittings as well as three products for leisure purposes, an all-season ski slope, a compass attachment and a hi-fi amplifier. (“Design Awards,” 1974, p. 35)

The problem continued throughout the 1970s. In 1979, the Design Council Awards committee complained that “given the slight improvement in the economic situation, and the fact that the number of awards is two up on last year, the continued absence from the prize list of such mainstream products as fabrics, furniture and wallcoverings is both surprising and depressing” (p. 16). It was only in 1980 that textiles returned to the Council’s Awards scene. A Scottish firm, Donald Brothers Ltd., produced two woven upholstery fabric collections meeting the “amalgam of excellence” criteria.

Critics like Mendes would cite this as evidence of a design “downturn precipitated by the 1973 oil crisis” (1999, p. 7). But “the slight improvement in the economic situation” did not seem to inspire even a slight improvement in textile design. It is clear there is more at stake.

The concept of “good design” was increasingly being challenged. In a lecture titled, “The Morality and Management of Design,” Brian P. Smith explains that, while he is “a keen participant in and supporter of” the Design Council, he acknowledges that “better defined criteria would help its cause” (1977, p. 204). In preparation for his lecture, Smith attempted to define “what is good design or bad design,” explaining:

in the last twelve months I have found it most difficult to get definitions from various authorities of what those terms mean. I started by trying to find out what *good* designs were, to find illustrations and get people to tell me why they were good. But my greatest difficulty has been trying to find bad ones, because almost every bad example I find has a staunch defender. (p. 206)

In other words, design authorities were no longer able to come to a consensus as to what did or not constitute “good design.”

In the catalogue for a 1983 exhibition titled “Whatever Happened to ‘Good Design?’”, essayist Penny Sparke explains that:

official bodies, like the Design Council, are feeling their way forward in [a] tentative way, unsure, ultimately, about the nature of “good design” today and conscious that the new design may emerge as easily from the streets as from the design studio. (p. 1)

In other words, it was clear that the principles of “good design” had changed, increasingly determined by popular taste instead of that of an elite group of Council members and professionally trained designers.

Sparke attributes this to a “loss of faith” in modernism, namely that the movement neglected “human values” (p. 2). These values are reflected in the majority of the textiles in this study which reject the values of good design by looking to “popular imagery and meaning for design” (p. 9). As Sparke explains, “by the end of the 60s,” designers started to respond to “public fantasy rather than to a manufacturer’s idea of ‘high style’... As a

result, design is redefined... as a popular rather than an elitist idea” (p. 3, 9). Writing in 1983, Sparke terms this the “‘Anti-’ or ‘Counter-’ Design movement,” but today we would term it postmodernism (p. 9).

Finding 2

British printed textiles of the 1970s that represent technology have a cold, unsettling quality whereas those that represent nature have a tranquil, meditative quality, reflecting a cultural ambivalence towards technology and an investment in nature.

The technological-themed textiles identified in Chapter 4 include *Lunar Rocket* and *Space Walk*, which commemorate the 1969 Apollo 11 mission to the moon; *Colourtron*, *Microchip*, and *Highlight*, which reflect contemporary developments in computer technology; and *Spiral*, *Automation*, and *Precision*, which allude to industrial machinery. While these textiles can all be interpreted as monumentalizing or celebrating technology, a closer look at each suggests the necessity of a less straightforward interpretation.

With its triumphant blaze of rocket fuel, *Lunar Rocket* (Figure 5.18) celebrates technology, commemorating what some have called man’s greatest technological achievement: landing and walking on the moon. In this textile, however, Apollo 11 and the lunar module are dwarfed by the earth and moon. The way these two celestial bodies are positioned in *Lunar Rocket* resembles *Earthrise*, one of the most famous photographs of all time (Figure 5.19). *Earthrise* was taken on December 24, 1968 by Apollo 8

astronaut Bill Anders during the first manned orbit of the moon. According to a 2012 interview, Anders explained “the hair kind of went up on the back of my neck” at the sight of the earth rising above the moon (“Apollo Astronaut,” 2012). The photos were later beamed back to Earth during a televised Christmas Eve special as the astronauts read the opening lines from the book of Genesis. Anders noted “we came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth,” he said (as cited in Granath, 2016). Fellow astronaut Jim Lovell explained, "The vast loneliness is awe-inspiring and it makes you realize just what you have back there on Earth" (as cited in “Earthrise,” 2013). While *Lunar Rocket* is clearly celebratory, the celebration is tempered by the unnerving message of *Earthrise*. Earth is but a fragile thing, alone in the desolation of space.



Figure 5.18: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1969). *Lunar Rocket* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.45A-1970), London, England.

Figure 5.19: *Earthrise* photograph from the Apollo 8 mission, orbiting above the moon, December 24, 1968. <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/home/earthrise.html>

Figure 5.20: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1969). *Space Walk* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.2b), Chicago, IL.

There is something unsettling about the way movement is used in the remaining technological designs. *Space Walk*'s design, is, perhaps, the least insidious (Figure 5.20). The rolling and rippling sense of movement suggested in *Space Walk* only serves to

reinforce the unearthly aspect of space and to highlight mankind's determination to conquer the unknown.

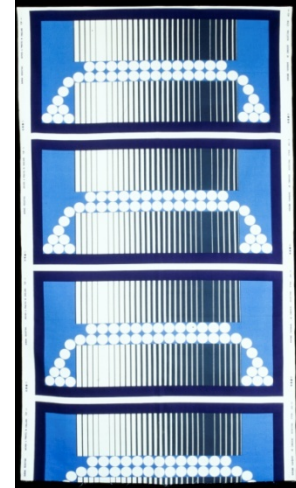
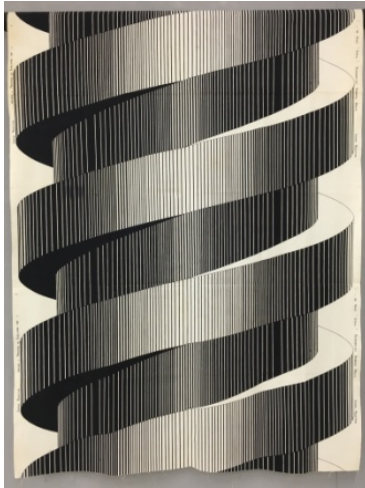


Figure 5.21: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Spiral* [Textile]. Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection (Accession No. 2007.11.004), Madison, WI.

Figure 5.22: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Automation* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.5), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.23: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Precision* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.12), Minneapolis, MN.

However, movement, as seen in *Spiral* (Figure 5.21), *Automation* (Figure 5.22), and *Precision* (5.23), is unyielding and relentless, the movement of tireless machines. The endless turning of the screws in *Spiral* and *Automation* or the stamping of the machinery in *Precision* seems to suggest the drudgery of industrial production. The textiles only show the screw or the stamped discs, rather than the finished product, akin to the assembly-line emphasis on the part versus the whole. The three-dimensionality of *Spiral* and *Automation* is also unsettling. Their imagery seems to project from the flat plane of the woven fabric. In a domestic setting, the protruding presence of this giant machinery

would likely feel oppressive and uncomfortable, an almost literal reminder of the daily grind.

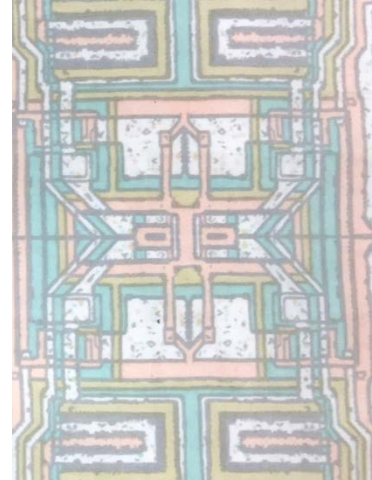
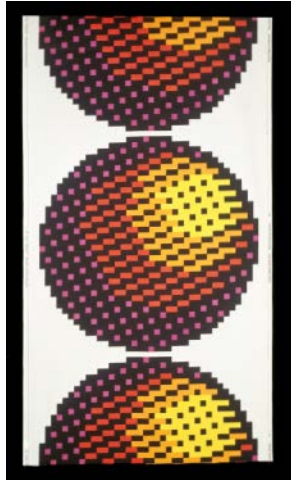


Figure 5.24: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Phillips, P. (Designer). (1973). *Highlight* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.13), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.25: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1968). *Colourtron* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.801-1968), London, England.

Figure 5.26: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1981). *Microchip* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.3), Chicago, IL.

Even the seemingly innocuous *Colourtron*, *Microchip*, and *Highlight* feature unsettling aspects. Like *Spiral*, *Automation*, and *Precision*, *Highlight* (Figure 5.24) too seems to project into space. In a metaphorical sense, the pixelated spheres' command of their physical space mirrors the way computer imagery dominated visual culture of the 1970s, appearing even in textiles, among the most traditional of mediums. Although neither *Colourtron* nor *Microchip* share this three-dimensional presence, they are nevertheless disconcerting in their own way. Here, invisible currents of energy seem to zig, zag, and

zoom along a maze of circuitous tracks (e.g., Figure 5.25). The electricity almost sizzles in *Microchip*, visible in confetti-like flecks of gray, seafoam green, pink, and gold that add visual punctuation to the textile's white background (Figure 5.26). Visual unease is achieved in *Colourtron* with the use of eye-jarring acidic colors.

Each of these textiles has what might be termed a “cold aesthetic.” They lack warmth and emotion; instead, they evoke an unfriendly, indifferent, and forbidding quality. This may be because of the iconography. Each textile depicts a man-made object: a lunar module, a screw, a machine, a pixel, a microchip. Even though *Space Walk* features the human figure, it is encased inside a space suit. Notably, this space suit does not include a life support backpack such as those NASA astronauts wear. Perhaps the astronauts in *Space Walk* aren't human after all, but robots.

This “cold aesthetic” with its sense of foreboding is shared by two other textiles in the study: *Chrome City* and *Gemstones*. Both might also be said to depict technology. *Chrome City* (Figure 5.27) strongly resembles an oil refinery (Figure 5.28). Above the gleaming pipes and distillation towers in this environmentalist's nightmare, smoke clouds a chrome-plated sky. Is *Chrome City* a real place or is it a premonition? *Gemstone* suggests technology of a different kind (Figure 5.29). Here, technology is used to modify nature: to cut and polish rocks into gems, to create synthetic gems in laboratories, and to dye flowers unnatural colors. These engineered materials have been used to create a beautiful floating temple. However, this temple floats across the horizon of an emerald green sky, an alien sky. Is this simply fantasy – the depiction of an imaginary world?

Or, like *Chrome City*, does *Gemstones* depict our own world as it might one day look, polluted and corrupt?

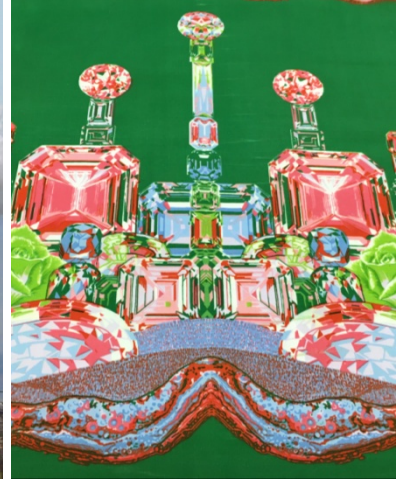


Figure 5.27: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Thatcher Palmer, S. (Designer). (1970). *Chrome City* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.552.3), Chicago, IL.

Figure 5.28: “Anacortes Refinery (Tesoro) on the North End of March Point Southeast of Anacortes, Washington,” by W. Siegmund. Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Figure 5.29: Warner Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Squires, E. (Designer). (1971). *Gemstones* [Textile]. Art Institute of Chicago (Accession No. 1990.553.2), Chicago, IL.

The nature-themed textiles in this study stand in stark contrast to these unsettling technological textiles. Laura Ashley’s dress fabric and *Cottage Garden* exude tranquility – the dress fabric with its crisp, orderly cherry blossoms and *Cottage Garden* with its calming pastel color palette. *Cottage Garden*’s pattern is dense and crowded; however, it is not claustrophobic in the sense of *Automation*. The design is flat and unobtrusive; the floral imagery is soft rather than hard and unyielding. Though both *Country Walk* and *Vista* convey a sense of movement, it is a gentle movement quite unlike the visual

dynamism of a textile like *Space Walk* or the implied electric rush of the circuitry in *Microchip*.



Figure 5.30: Ashley, L. (1972-1975). Untitled dress [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.279-1988), London, England.

Figure 5.31: Liberty (Manufacturer), Collier, S., & Campbell, S. (Designers). (1974-1977). *Cottage Garden* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.44-1978), London, England.

Figure 5.32: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Foley, J. (Designer). (1976). *Country Walk* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.1-1976), London, England.

Unlike the technological-themed textiles, Laura Ashley's dress fabric (Figure 5.30), *Cottage Garden* (Figure 5.31), *Country Walk* (Figure 5.32), and *Vista* (Figure 5.33) do not protrude into space, or batter the senses. They are harmonious, quiet, and meditative. Even *Salad Days* with its bizarre, surrealist imagery shares this quality. At a glance, the textile appears to be a set of drawers, each open and filled with salad. It is difficult to see the landscape hidden amongst the hard-boiled eggs and olives. Kay Politowicz's design seems to send a message, though that message is hard to articulate. Perhaps it is critical: we have become blind to nature. Perhaps we always hold a place for nature despite our attempts to control the world through organization (the drawers) or cultivation (the salad). Perhaps our attempts to control our world simply lead to chaos. We try to put a

square peg (the salad) into a round hole (the drawers). The antidote may be nature, calm and serene, waiting to be discovered at the heart of our chaotic modern world. Or perhaps *Salad Days* is, like all good surrealist works, an expression of the unconscious. Perhaps nature is something we unconsciously wish for or yearn for, even when we try to close it in a drawer. It may be out of sight, but not out of mind.

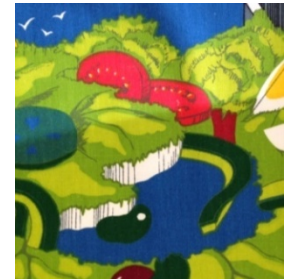
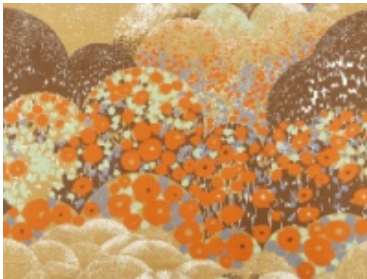


Figure 5.33: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Bell, D. (Designer). (1976). *Vista* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.3), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.34: Textra (Manufacturer), & Politowicz, K. (Designer). (1973). *Salad Days* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.350-1973), London, England.

Figure 5.35: Textra (Manufacturer), & Politowicz, K. (Designer). (1973). *Salad Days* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. CIRC.350-1973), London, England.

This finding reveals a deep ambivalence towards technology within British culture in the 1970s. This result was, in some ways, to be expected. As noted in Chapter 4, technology-themed textiles dominated the early 1970s while nature and highly abstract, non-representational textiles dominated the late 1970s. Also, as noted, various scholars (Ikoku, 1999; Mendes, 1999; Pond, 1986; Safer, 2012; Schoeser, 1986a; Sparke, 2012) claim this is the result of economic instability caused by the oil crisis. According to Sparke, “as the economic and political situations became increasingly unstable, and the

need for escape and comfort increased, a return to traditional patterns became the norm for domestic textiles” (2012, p. 128).

In an article titled “Heal’s in Step with Mood of the Nation,” the London *Times* wrote:

tracing the development of Heal’s design is like taking a course in social history – the advent of picture windows, which demanded the huge pattern repeats of the early sixties, the geometrics and stylized florals influenced by the influx of Danish furniture, the automation-inspired mechanical shapes of the early seventies and the rustic beiges that went with the passion for all things natural during the rest of the decade. (1982)

Like Sparke, *The Times* dismissed the mid-to-late 70s “passion for all things nature” as a symptom of the “need for escape and comfort.” According to Norman Colgate, general manager of Heal Fabrics, *The Times* explains, “we always return to florals and traditional designs in times of insecurity... hence the recent concentration of small flowers and pale flower tones” (1982). Certainly, a collective national “insecurity” may have contributed to a passion for nature, but what is it about nature that suggests “escape and comfort?” In his lecture, “The Morality and Management of Design,” Smith quips: “nature is a cannibalistic jungle, where the strong, aggressive and numerous survive at the expense of the others” (p. 201).

As a modernist, Smith believed technology was the key to Britain’s future, and that designers needed to pay more attention “to its opportunities rather than its threats” which included “energy, pollution, population, and the rest” (p. 201). For Smith, “life has

always seemed... to be something of a health-hazard” (p. 201). Alternative energy sources and computers would go far to mitigate some of these health hazards. On the other side were those Smith terms “the anti-materialists.” Along with Ralph Nader, these “anti-materialists [are] essentially, the young, who in recent years have questioned the whole material society of the second car, the week-end boat and packaged potatoes, and who want to be self-sufficient in a stationary or even regressive world” (pp. 195-196). In other words, there was a growing population who questioned the morality of progress.

As discussed above, *Earthrise*, an image of the earth as seen from the moon, became one of the most famous environmental photographs of all time. The photographer, Bill Anders’ astute comment – “we came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth” – is frequently associated with the early stages of the environmental movement. The most profound aspect of the photograph, according to Anders, is the contrast between the earth and “this ugly lunar surface,” an almost cruel alternative to the beauty of Earth (“Apollo Astronaut,” 2012). Shortly after *Earthrise* was taken, Americans experienced the first Earth Day and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts.

Environmentalists in England were no less busy. According to historian Andy Beckett, “Britain at the beginning of the seventies was fertile ground for green politics” (2009, p. 37). The first British environmental magazine, *Resurgence*, was started in 1966 and a second, *The Ecologist* was started in 1970. By 1971, the British government had created

a Department of the Environment and, “for the first time, green concerns, for presentational reasons at the very least, became a regular factor in government decisions” (p. 38). For example, a proposal for a new London-based airport to be built in a pretty, pastoral corner of rural Buckinghamshire was rejected at the urging of environmentalists. New plans were drafted for an airport (plus an accompanying suburb, railway, and highway) to be built on the desolate Maplin Sands, but only on the promise that this new infrastructure would be “built to the highest environmental standards” (p. 41). Though the plans were eventually set aside in the wake of the oil crisis, it is symbolic of the environmental movement that captured the attention of the British people.

Among the most influential environmentalists, E. F. Schumacher, published *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* in 1973. In it, he explains: “the changes of the last twenty-five years, both in the quantity and in the quality of man’s industrial processes, have produced an entirely new situation – a situation resulting not from our failures but from what we thought were our greatest successes” (1973/1989, p. 19). Concerned about limited energy resources, scientists developed nuclear power, “solving one problem by shifting it to another sphere – there to create an infinitely bigger problem” (p. 20). Even more dangerous is the government, creating a false sense of security by pointing out, “have we ever had it so good? Are we not better fed, better clothed, and better housed than ever before – and better educated?” (p. 20).

Schumacher advocates for a “new life-style, with new methods of production and new patterns of consumption; a life-style designed for permanence” (p. 21). His practical

ideas include the development of alternative (a) agriculture and horticulture techniques, (b) technologies, and (c) economic systems (p. 22). In response, according to co-director of the American E. F. Schumacher Society, Kirkpatrick Sale, dozens of British and American groups formed and took action:

not just the Lindisfarne [Association], but those groups like the New Alchemy Institute, Farrallones, and TRANET working in intermediate (or alternative) technology; those who practiced economics “as if people mattered” like the Institute for Community Economics, the Council on Economic Priorities, and the Association for Workplace Democracy; those with environmental concerns like Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and Worldwatch Institute. Then, into the eighties, building on this base... groups like the Fourth World Assembly, the Rodale Press’s Regeneration Project, the Institute for Food and Development Policy, Co-op America and the Co-op Bank, the North American Bioregional Congress, the Green Committees of Correspondence, TOES (The Other Economic Summit, both U.S. and U.K. branches), the Soil Remineralization Network, Global Warming Network, and myriads of others. (1989, pp. xxi-xxii)

Schumacher became “a sudden hero, almost a cult figure,” notes John McClaughry, and “‘small is beautiful’ became a rallying cry” (pp. xiii-xiv).

While Schumacher advocated for a “new life-style,” many, including Theodore Roszak, the writer of the introduction to *Small Is Beautiful*, considered it a return to tradition: “communal, handicraft, tribal, guild, and village life-styles as old as the Neolithic cultures” (1973/1989, p. 5). It might be more accurate to discuss Schumacher’s

philosophy in terms of recycling: salvage and juxtaposition, a rediscovery and renewal of “what had long gone unnoticed and neglected” (Hine, p. 21). Schumacher wasn’t advocating for a “stationary or even regressive world” in the vein Smith suggests, but neither did he want to “blow away” his past in the modernist sense (Smith, p. 196; Berman, p. 332). Though it inspired it, *Small Is Beautiful* also reflects the cultural ambivalence towards technology, as Roszak notes, “how strange that this renewed interest in ancient ways of livelihood and community should reappear even as our operations researchers begin to conceive their most ambitious dreams of cybernated glory” (p. 5).

Finding 3

The designs for British printed textiles of the 1970s were influenced by new developments in architectural and textile printing technology. Technology affected the longevity of a design and brought textiles into the realm of fashion.

In 1971, the British Broadcasting Company published a guide to interior design titled, *What’s in a Room?*. Written by Elaine Denby, the book taught readers the principles of good design using historic British homes as examples. Rooted in tradition, the book nevertheless notes that “many of the methods” interior designers used in the past were “inappropriate today in the changed circumstances of modern life and technology” (p. 1). Advancements in heating technology, for example, meant that it was no longer necessary to design a room around the fireplace. Denby notes that “there remains a real challenge

in finding new ways of creating interest... we must find other features to take the place of the fire” (pp. 1-2).

While the television is, perhaps, the most obvious “fireplace” of the 20th century, several other candidates were suggested. According to the *London Times*, the advent of the picture window “demanded the huge pattern repeats” found in curtain fabrics of the 1960s and 1970s (“Heal’s in Step,” 1982). In *Living*, homeowners were encouraged to think of these bold fabrics as a room’s centerpiece: “bold patterns used with simple furnishings take pride of place in rooms large and small” (“Living with Pattern,” 1969). Boldly-patterned fabrics were also the solution to rooms lacking the warmth of the fire: “splash out with bold patterns and make a cold, empty room look lived in” (“Living with Pattern,” 1969). These fabrics were challenging to work with, however. In reference to curtains, the German magazine *Moebel Interior Design* noted: “this area is so dominating in the room that if one decides on colour and design, everything else has to be subordinated to it in order to avoid something ‘horrible’” (Giachi, 1971).

To avoid encouraging “something ‘horrible,’” salespeople were advised in *Selling Furnishing Fabrics* that curtains with “larger bolder patterns” should be used for large windows or in rooms with high ceilings (Council of Industrial Design, 1971, p. 51). They would also be suitable for very large rooms (e.g., hotel lobbies) or rooms that would not be used much (pp. 51, 56). The book notes that “in a dining room a more startling scheme can be used, because people are not generally there for any great length of time.

In a living room a more restful scheme using blues, greens or browns is usually better” (p. 56).

Technological developments in architecture influenced the designs for British printed textiles as did new textile printing techniques. Most importantly, this technology impacted the number of designs a manufacturer could offer at any one time. Heal Fabrics produced 12 new designs in 1959, but their 1969 collection included almost 30. This influx of new designs was made possible, according to the company, by improvements in “printing and dyeing techniques” (“Heal Fabrics 1969”). By 1971, a brochure boasted that Heal’s range of printed fabrics – of their own manufacture or others’ – were “available in 600 designs and up to seven colourways each” (“Heal’s in Hotels”).

A number of sources noted the influence of technology on textile design. *Selling Furnishing Fabrics* explained that “designers have to bear in mind production techniques” while drafting new designs (p. 50). Furnishing fabrics were produced in certain widths. The width was determined by the dimensions of the printing machinery, meaning designs must be scaled accordingly. Liberty’s chairman Arthur Stewart-Liberty notes that, because the printing method could change, depending on “economics,” “design styles,” and “the sort of cloth and price range being aimed at,” designers needed to take a great many things in mind before even setting pen to paper (Stewart-Liberty to Miss M. Jubb, August 16, 1969). In another letter, Stewart-Liberty explained, “there is a limitation on fineness of line and detail, governed by the capability of the machines used” (Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse, July 30, 1970). Finally, designers must keep

color in mind because “there are limitations to do with drying and fixing mechanically the dyestuffs on the fabrics after printing. Some desirable colours are not fast to washing and light” (Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse). Stewart-Liberty ended his letter explaining that everything he noted “changes constantly owing to constant new technical developments” (Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse).

Indeed, some of the technological factors mentioned above were becoming obsolete. In the past, Stewart-Liberty noted, Liberty might print fabrics using blocks, copper plates, or screens, depending on the circumstances (Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse). Since opening in the late 19th century, the company was especially well-known for the block-printed fabrics made at the historic Merton Abbey Mills. By March 1966, the company had made significant changes, noting in a press release:

Until quite recently block-block printing, demanding very special craft skills, co-existed with screen printing at Merton. Today block-printing is no more, and it is Merton screen-printing which has just been technically revolutionised. The most important introduction consists of a fully automatic Meccanotessile screen-printing machine, installed and for some weeks supervised by the Italian engineers, which is able to take up to a 60 inch width of cloth, to use up to 18 colours, to print almost all dress materials and furnishing fabrics (whether natural or man-made fibres)... and which only demands the attention of two men and a boy! (“Merton Printers,” 1966)

This incredible technology was more versatile, meaning designs were no longer limited by the machinery's dimensions, amount of colors it could print, or materials on which it could print.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to understand how the technology discussed so far impacted each of the textiles in this study. While there is slight variation in fabric and printing quality between manufacturers, it would take a connoisseur to identify the differences. All in all, Heal Fabrics used the finest cotton and exhibited the highest-quality printing techniques. Of the Heal Fabrics selected, several (*Ikebana* and *Vista*) are printed on cotton sateen, which creates an exceptionally smooth surface with a slight sheen (Figures 5.36). *Mandarin*, manufactured by Hull Traders, is also printed on sateen. With *Automation*, Heal Fabrics experimented with a highly textured crepe fabric (Figure 5.37). The result was a thick, heavy, blanket-like fabric instead of a crisp, smooth fabric. As a whole, however, most of the textiles in this study are plain woven.

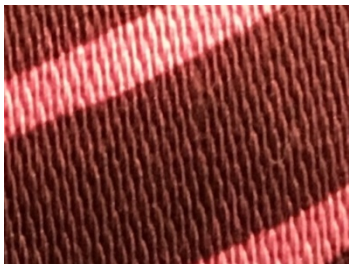


Figure 5.36: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1971). *Ikebana* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.8), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.37: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, B. (Designer). (1970). *Automation* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.150.5), Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 5.38: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Phillips, P. (Designer). (1973). *Highlight* [Textile]. Minneapolis Institute of Art (Accession No. 98.273.13), Minneapolis, MN.

With the exception of *Highlight*, all of the textiles are made from cotton. *Highlight* is printed on a screen-like voile made from cotton and Terylene (Figure 5.38). On a museum wall or study table, *Highlight* appears opaque. It has a stiff hand and a slightly yellow tint, perhaps a result of age. Terylene fabrics were eagerly endorsed by reviewer Alice Hope of the *Daily Telegraph*. In her report from the textile trade exhibitions in London, Hope noted that “some of the prettiest fabrics which we may expect from the manufacturers next year are voiles, either cotton, or Terylene... or a mixture. Machine-printed... they will give an entirely new look to the window” (Hope, 1971). In 1972, Heal Fabrics released three “light and sheer” 100% Terylene printed fabrics that were successful enough to warrant the manufacture of four new designs in 1973, including *Highlight* (“Heal Fabrics ‘72”). This time, instead of 100% Terylene, Heal’s offered customers a cotton/Terylene blend and actively promoted the innovative nature of these fabrics – the innovation being that they required “minimal” ironing (“Heal Fabrics 1973”).

Better known in the United States as Dacron polyester, Terylene is a British invention patented by John Rex Whinfield and James Tennant Dickson for the Calico Printer’s Association of Manchester in 1941. It is among the most popular variants of polyester. This is just one example of the challenges posed by the new synthetic fabrics. The customer might know how polyester behaves, but would she know that Terylene was polyester?

This concern was apparently quite real, enough so that, in 1971, the British Council of Industrial Design published a manual, *Selling Furnishing Fabrics*. The manual was designed to teach retailers and salespeople about the various fibers, weave structures, and printing techniques available at that time “because the way in which a fabric is made affects the way in which it is sold” (p. 5). In other words, textile sales were increasingly dependent on the salesperson’s technical knowledge. The reasons for this are best explained by the introduction to *Selling Furnishing Fabrics*:

The making of furnishing fabrics has been revolutionized since the introduction of man-made fibres. Before that, the situation was relatively simple for the customer and for the retailer. There was a well-known range of natural fibres whose properties were household knowledge. Nowadays there is a bewildering variety of different fibres whose qualities vary widely.... More choice means more care in choosing. It means more advice for the customer, more explanation of why one fabric is the most suitable for a particular purpose. (p. 5)

Advances in textile technology led to a barrage of new fabrics, each more fantastic than the next. However, the proliferation of new materials meant that the average customer, armed with outdated “household knowledge,” would experience bewilderment during her next shopping trip.

By 1971, according to the “Materials & Methods” chapter of *Selling Furnishing Fabrics*, “man-made fibres have ousted cotton, wool, linen and silk from many of their markets” (p. 8). The reason synthetics dominated the market were economic: “the price of a natural fibre tends to fluctuate, whereas the price of man-made fibres is under better

control and changes are more easily foreseen” (p. 8). The benefits were then passed down to the customer, meaning textiles that would once have been considered luxuries were now “made available to everyone” (p. 8).

According to trade show reviewer Alice Hope, there was still room in the market for fabrics made from natural fibers. In her *Daily Telegraph* article, she explained “it’s not that we’ve turned against synthetics; some of them are wonderful. But how often now do you hear people saying ‘You can’t beat the real stuff’” (Hope, 1971). Hope noticed a definite trend towards the use of natural materials, e.g., wool, cotton, and jute. She also made note of two additional trends, first that natural materials were often found undyed, in their original neutral colors of “white, oatmeal and brown” because that is how they “look best” (Hope, 1971). Second, the use of natural materials corresponded to a “revival of ‘home-spun’ things” (Hope, 1971). It is also interesting to note that these natural fibers were found “at the *haute couture* end of the trade” (Hope, 1971).

Despite its upscale appeal, cotton remained the fiber of choice for many printed textile manufacturers, including each of those represented in this study. According to Hope, cotton’s positive attributes can be summarized as follows: “cotton is crisp, cotton is clean” (Hope, 1971). Cotton was also an important fiber in the history of British textile manufacturing and printing.

Heal Fabrics sometimes including statements promoting the “made in Britain” appeal of their fabrics, for example: “printed on 100% cotton, plain, crepe or satin finish, they are

spun, woven and screen printed in the British Isles.” In the press release for their 1975 collection, Heal Fabrics actively denounced synthetic fibers, “convinced of cotton’s advantages” (“Heal Fabrics 1975 Collection”). They noted the falling standards of many fabrics (it is unclear if they meant all fabrics or only those made from cotton) and boasted of the rising level of quality in their materials. They explained “finer better quality yarns are being used which not only improve the printing surface and therefore the final printed image but the draping and wearing qualities as well” (“Heal Fabrics 1975 Collection”).

Quality was important to Heal’s, even in the midst of national economic crisis. In an internal memo dated April 15, 1975, managing director R. F. Coker encouraged the development of a new store display, building on the idea that “Heal’s offer good value for money, not the cheapest but always good [because it is] ultimately expensive to buy cheap stuff” (Coker, 1975). This attitude was not unique to Heal’s. In 1977, the *British Journal of The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce* printed a transcribed lecture by Brian P. Smith called “The Morality and Management of Design.” Smith began his lecture stating “there can be few more important subjects in the situation of this country to-day than that of our lecture tonight” which focused on the subject of good and bad design (p. 193). Smith encouraged quality design, because:

These days, morality pays... it is becoming a marketing disadvantage for British companies to be seen as irresponsible, deliberately down-market, with low-priced low-quality products which appear to satisfy no real needs.... with high added-value exports our need, the trend must be towards high quality, high

craftsmanship, high conversion content – and these call for deep design thought.
(p. 202)

Despite the idea that offering high-quality products was the most moral route for a manufacturer to take during the economic crisis facing the British market in the 1970s, it was also a trend. Smith notes that, “particularly in our British markets, there is a trend against the throw-away society, a trend towards high quality. We should be aware of this and, if we are good businessmen, we should get ahead of it and lead people that way” (p. 206).

There is an interesting dichotomy in the 1970s between the idea of quality and the idea of a “throw-away culture.” Manufacturers like Heal Fabrics knew that their customers were only “expected to furnish their homes twice, once when they get married, and a second time when they are refurnishing their homes, between the ages of 40 and 50” (“Interview,” 1968). This meant that curtains might need to last upwards of 20 years. This idea was reinforced in an “advertorial” in which *Living* magazine advised their readers on the best way to purchase their new Heal Fabrics. The reader is cautioned: “don’t rush when you’re buying fabrics. Remember, treat them kindly and they’ll live with you for years, so take your time and make sure you pick a winner for every room” and “best stick to subtle colors you won’t grow tired of” (“Living with Pattern,” 1969).

However, the same article also encourages disposability. Fabric was an easy way to update the look of a home, “to breathe life into jaded furnishings” (“Living with Pattern,” 1969). The reason for this ambiguous message might be that the industry was

experiencing massive change brought about by technology. New materials, new printing techniques, and new dyes meant that textiles could be made quickly and cheaply.

“Television, films, magazines and newspapers” as well as foreign travel worked together to make “people generally more fashion conscious,” according to *Selling Furnishing Fabrics* (p. 52). Fashion and taste go hand-in-hand and, because “public taste is constantly moving forward,” the book notes, “the market for furnishing fabrics moves with it” (p. 3).

In other words, the public’s “attitude towards furnishing fabrics” was in flux (p. 52).

Selling Furnishing Fabrics outlines what salespeople and buyers needed to know about this transition:

Permanency is no longer the overriding factor. Colour and an attractive design have become more important selling points in recent years... Ironically, the life expectancy of a fabric may be longer in material terms than ever before, but as a design in a fashion conscious market it may be shorter. Curtains, for example, may be perfectly serviceable after several years’ wear, but if they look old fashioned there will be an incentive to change them. (p. 52)

Technology, therefore, made it possible for both a better quality, long lasting fabric and a disposable one.

Coming full circle, we return to the idea that manufacturers like Heal’s could now offer many hundreds of fabrics at one time as opposed to a dozen. The reason for this is based on technological advances that made short runs possible. Tom Worthington, managing

director of Heal Fabrics, explained the benefits of these short runs in the March 1968 issue of *Moebel Interior Design*:

The longest production time ever for a fabric was 13 years; some of them run for a year only. But thank Heaven this applies to very few of them. Now and then we even put a design on the market as a pioneer which we know from the very beginning will not remain in our collection for longer than a year. In this case, the particular design because it is novel and striking, is exhibited in the shops and publicised in journals, but people do not buy it. During the next year and the year after it does not sell either, as it is then already considered “stale” (one has seen it all too often). Now the time has come for launching a similar fabric on the market and, following the footsteps of its predecessor, it will become a positive hit; the buyers having in the meantime adapted their taste. (“Interview,” 1968)

Technology made it easier for manufacturers to experiment, even at the risk of failure. This attitude continued even through the darkest years of the economic crisis. In an early 1980s article by Peter Liley, Heal’s new design director notes that “70 to 80 per cent of the merchandise that we have... must be strong selling merchandise... Of the remaining 20 to 30 per cent, half should be experimental. It should be new stuff, and if it sells well, we’ll keep it, and if it doesn’t sell well, we’ll drop it. The other half is not required to sell” (p. 10). Liley felt this design direction was “right,” explaining “there’s a new confidence in spite of the appalling economic prospects nationally” (p. 8).

Finding 4

Revivalist, escapist, ethnic, and nostalgic styles evident in British printed textiles of the 1970s reflect ambivalence towards modernism and display characteristics of a change in design thinking that might retrospectively be termed postmodern.

Earlier in this chapter, I attempted to classify the textiles in this study as modern or not modern, based on the idea that a modern textile would have rejected its history, tradition, and vernacular. The results suggested the majority of 1970s British printed textiles in this study are not modern, as listed below.

Modern	Not Modern
<i>Spiral</i>	<i>Colourtron</i>
<i>Gemstones</i>	<i>Lunar Rocket</i>
<i>Precision</i>	<i>Space Walk</i>
<i>Ikebana</i>	<i>Arcade</i>
<i>Metropolis</i>	<i>Mandarin</i>
<i>Country Walk</i>	<i>Automation</i>
	<i>Chrome City</i>
	<i>Bauhaus</i>
	<i>Laura Ashley dress fabric</i>
	<i>Salad Days</i>
	<i>Cottage Garden</i>
	<i>Highlight</i>
	<i>Strata</i>
	<i>Vista</i>
	<i>Microchip</i>

While a few of the textiles in both categories were specifically characterized as “modern” in the archival materials consulted for this study (e.g., *Spiral*, *Automation*, *Ikebana*, *Country Walk*), the textiles bearing the hallmarks of not modern design were never termed “not modern” or, as I will suggest later in this section, “postmodern.” However, the fifteen not modern textiles do correspond to the four most commonly mentioned

design styles in archival materials: (a) revivalism; (b) fantasy and escapism; (c) ethnic; and (d) nostalgia. These styles, as described in the literature at hand, directly oppose the principles of modernism, suggesting the development of an alternative to modern design in the 1970s.

Revivalism

Revivalism was discussed in Chapter 4 in reference to *Arcade*, *Mandarin*, *Ikebana*, *Automation*, *Precision*, *Chrome City*, *Bauhaus*, *Salad Days*, and *Strata*. The revivalist trend began in the 1960s and continued through, at least, the mid-1970s. In 1968, *House & Garden* magazine published an article, “What’s New for Decorating?” that explained:

The brightest new happenings in today’s rooms break away boldly from the humdrum, the too-familiar, the rigid... But not for a moment does welcoming the newcomers mean saying goodbye to our old favorites. We still have the pleasure of their company, and enjoy it the more because it is refreshingly cast in today’s mold. (p. 106)

This suggests that revivalism was about drawing inspiration from the past, using it to create something new. Revivalist designs were combined with modern principles and materials as a “means of bridging the gap between the old and the new” (p. 112).

Examples listed in the *Home & Garden* article include: “paisley motifs in a never-before scale seem like a new creation” and “ancient patterns [are] transformed into this-minute wall coverings” (pp. 112-113). The concept presented is not reproduction, but on new designs based on inspiration from the past.



Figure 5.39: Liberty (adapted from a design by William Morris). (c. 1970). *Trent* [Textile]. Private collection, Tucson, AZ.



Figure 5.40: Morris & Co. (Manufacturer), & Dearle, J. H. (Designer). (c. 1891). *Daffodil* [Textile]. Victoria & Albert Museum (Museum No. T.623-1919), London, England.

This was also the philosophy behind Liberty. In a letter from Arthur Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse dated July 30, 1970, the chairman notes:

The general nature of Liberty print designs is based on a mixture of the following ingredients – Paisley designs (a great many of them old documents from English and European sources, museums, books, old printers’ blocks, etc.)/Art Nouveau designs (mostly our own original designs and modifications of them, produced about 1900 to 1915)/Multi-coloured small, fine drawn florals/Chinese and Indian printed designs (mostly old)/Modern designs, purchased or commissioned from freelance or retained designers, the purpose of which is to keep in line with fashion. (Stewart-Liberty to Mrs. T. M. Whitehouse)

Textiles such as *Trent* (Figure 5.39) demonstrate the Liberty “recipe.” *Trent* is based on *Daffodil*, a textile designed by John Henry Dearle for Morris & Co. in 1891 (Figure

5.40). It is a miniaturized version of Dearle's design, updated in a serene 1970s palette of browns, blue-greens, and maroons. A reissue of several William Morris and Morris & Co. fabrics in 1975 saw huge success, with 5,000 meters of one design, *Golden Lily*, sold monthly ("A Full History," 1970s section).

In 1970, Liberty designer Bernard Nevill was interviewed on Radio Birmingham's "Women at Home" program. In the interview, he describes the inspiration for the popular Jazz and Tango Collections he designed for the firm in the 1960s. "At that time," he notes, "I was becoming very excited in the whole period of the twenties and thirties, particularly from about 1915 to 1929 and I soaked myself in research of that period, looking at painters' work and graphic designers' work and so on" (Nevill, 1970). This research was revelatory for the designer, who found the art of the early 20th century "to be far more relevant and far more new looking than stuff that was being produced at the time" (Nevill, 1970). In other words, Nevill felt the most "modern" designs were not those produced in the modernist mode of 1970, but those produced a decade earlier.

Revivalism continued as a design trend well into the 1970s. Heal's was a name equated throughout Great Britain with "classy modern furnishings" ("Two Chances," 1976). In 1980, the store began adding "more traditional designs to their excellent selection" ("Heals Have Added," c. 1980). These designs were aimed at those "interested in reviving the past" ("Heals Have Added," c. 1980). In 1981, Heal's mounted an exhibition of "Classics," defined in the exhibition catalogue as designs "'of the first class, of acknowledged excellence, outstandingly important, little affected by changes of

fashion” (Liley, 1981, p. 1). For inclusion in the exhibition, the design had to “be currently in production, virtually unchanged, though a degree of evolution is admissible” (p. 1). Reproductions of “erstwhile classics” were prohibited.

All references to revivalism attempt to clarify that the movement is about inspiration from the past rather than direct reproduction. In this way, perhaps, revivalism might be defended as “good design,” whereas reproduction was “bad design,” according to John Weiss, Head of Furnishing and Interior Design at the London College of Design. In 1977, Weiss attended Smith’s lecture, “The Morality and Management of Design.” During the question and answer portion of the lecture, Weiss explained that the College’s would-be students “don’t want to be able to design furniture but to produce reproduction furniture” (p. 207). Smith’s reply to the baffled Weiss was no doubt unhelpful. He said:

It worries me that repro is not looked upon with favour by designers... It seems odd to me that the attitude is that we mustn’t copy old furniture but we must maintain it and admire it and pay to go and look at it. That doesn’t seem to make much sense.... I don’t see why one has to say “It’s only good if it is new.” (p. 207)

Clearly, there was some ambivalence towards revival and reproduction furnishings in 1970s Britain.

Fantasy and Escapism

Elaine Denby's 1971 interior design manual, *What's in a Room?* featured a chapter titled, "Fantasy and the Use of Decoration." Decoration, or ornament, was most often considered not modern; ornament was considered by modernists to go against their principle, "form follows function." Denby's comments suggest her views on fantasy are no less disapproving. Fantasy, she says, "is an indulgence" of the "luxury class" (p. 14). The motives for creating fantasy interiors include a need for "contrast, surprise, humour, exhibitionism or the desire to create an unreal world as a retreat from the real one" (p. 14). The result is most often "strange," and because the "impulse to escape out of reality into these fantasy worlds is a recurrent one," she predicted further "strange" design movements would materialize (p. 14).

Denby's prediction seems to have come true in the form of the "country look" of the mid-to-late 1970s. In the Heal's archive, a clipping from an unidentified magazine titled "Country Fabrics" proclaimed that "the mood of your home need have no relation to where you live. You can capture the soft, floral and tweedy atmosphere of the country just by choosing the right fabrics for blinds, curtains, cushions and covers" ("Country Fabrics," c. 1976). The article featured a large image of *May Morning*, a fabric from Heal's 1976 Country Collection that also included *Country Walk* and *Vista*.

Whereas *Space Walk* and *Gemstones* appear the most fantastic, perhaps, to a 21st century perspective, it seems that, in the 1970s, that honor went to the likes of Laura Ashley's dress fabric, *Cottage Garden*, *Country Walk*, and *Vista*. If Denby's logic applies to the

country look when used in an urban environment, then it would be considered indulgent, escapist, and strange or incongruous with the times.

Ethnic

Textiles featuring ethnic or non-Western designs were hugely popular throughout the 1970s. Design inspiration came from all over the world, but Mexico, India, China, and Japan are most often cited. China and Japan are referenced in two textiles in this study: *Mandarin* and *Ikebana*. These textiles do not reflect Chinese and Japanese art or design so much as they might reflect a related mood or philosophy, authentic or inauthentic.

Other sources of ethnic inspiration were more generic and included the jungle, the Orient, and the East. References were also made to “folkweave style” and the gypsy, which suggests designers were also looking to the folk traditions of Europe.

These so-called ethnic designs were sold as fashion fabric and positioned in contrast to traditional florals. In November 1976, *Household Textiles International* published a review of the 1977 textile collections called “Curtain Fabrics: Fashion Will Capture the Young.” The article assures textile buyers they are “in for a pleasant surprise” (p. 41). Though “curtain fabric in tones of brown” and “natural florals” are “still with us in force,” the article notes that the new collections feature “definite signs of a fresh approach to design aimed at capturing the interest of the young and fashion-conscious home decorator” (p. 41). These fresh approaches included “ethnic patternings in rich

colourways,” which provide a “welcome relief” and “add some spice to the florals and naturals which are featured in the majority of ranges” (pp. 41, 44).



Figure 5.41: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), Fieldsend, J., & Fieldsend, M. (Designers). (1977). *Raffia* [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2874). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.



Figure 5.42: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Connor, R. (Designer). (1977). *Crystalline* [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2874). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.



Figure 5.43: Heal Fabrics (Manufacturer), & Brown, H. (Designer). (1971). *Alhambra* [Promotional material]. Heal & Son, Archive of Art and Design (Box AAD/1994/16/2874). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England.

In addition to providing a contrast to the neutral-toned floral designs, ethnic prints also provided a foil for the large-scale designs of the 1970s. In a listing printed in *Household Textiles International* in October 1976, Heal Fabrics highlights the diversity of their 1977 collection, “Lifestyle 77.” The listing notes that “designs range from patterned and textured stripes with the ethnic look, tiny Indian-style repeats to large-scale show stoppers such as giant thumb prints and a huge panel repeat in bright primary colours” (“Lifestyle 77,” 1976). Their lengthier press release calls these textiles out by name:

Raffia by Jeanine and Michael Fieldsend, a cane-like small repeat, sparked with bright colour, is reminiscent of the recent fashion for Indian prints. Crystalline [sic] by Rozz Connor also follows through this Eastern mood with a lattice screen design interlaced with sun-dried leaves. (“Heal Lifestyle ’77”)

Raffia (Figure 5.41) and *Crystalline* (Figure 5.42) are, perhaps, the least obvious ethnic prints featured in any of Heal Fabrics’ 1970s collections. Without the descriptions, it would be difficult to recognize the Indian and Eastern influences, whereas earlier Heal Fabrics, like 1971’s *Alhambra* (Figure 5.43), instantly reveals its source.

Alhambra also reveals that the ethnic trend was not new for 1977. In 1969, *House & Garden* magazine published several articles touting ethnic design. The excitement about these prints seems to be that they were both “fresh” and “romantic” (“Patterns Now,” p. 102). Ethnic patterns were about “total coverage” with “small-scaled” patterns, “saturated with color and crammed with design. Pattern crowded with pattern can fill a whole room with the romance of the gypsy or the East” (p. 102). “Fiery gypsy patterns,” the magazine states, “dance over walls, ceiling and furniture, giving a glowing, tented feeling” (p. 104).

House & Garden seems to suggest that ethnic textiles can be used to create a fantasy look, but a closer look reveals a more complex idea. This trend expressed something fresh and fashionable, romantic and fantastic, “or it can express your own personal feeling” (p. 102). This statement hints at a cultural shift; consumers were beginning to ascribe their own meanings to their design choices.

Nostalgia

According to google.com, nostalgia is defined as “a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.” The word is taken from the Greek words *nostos*, meaning “return home,” and *algos*, meaning “pain.” The term was coined in the late 17th century to describe acute homesickness, considered a potentially fatal disease. Throughout this study, the concept of nostalgia has been raised in terms which seem to liken it to a “disease” of design and culture. Take, for example, Jon Savage’s essay, “The Age of Plunder” (1983), in which he discusses the concept of nostalgia in pop music:

This nostalgia transcends any healthy respect for the past: it is a disease all the more sinister because unrecognized and, finally, an explicit device for the reinforcement and success of the New Right... The Past is... turned into the most disposable of consumer commodities, and is thus dismissable: the lessons which it can teach us are thought trivial, are ignored amongst a pile of garbage. (as cited in Adamson & Pavitt, pp. 65, 68)

According to Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, it was common for critics like Savage to equate “postmodern quotation” of the past with “an admission of creative paralysis” or a “form of surrender” (p. 65).

While nostalgia suggests an interest in revivalism, it also contains elements of fantasy and escapism, and the romanticism of ethnic design. Yet it is more than a hybrid of these previously discussed trends. Nostalgia as a design trend reveals a complex set of ideas and emotions at work. For instance, the previously discussed “country look,” sometimes

called the “Laura Ashley look,” can be described as a “soft-focused vision of the countryside [that] offered instant escape from the harsh realities of the urban environment (Jackson, 2002, p. 186).

In the catalogue for Heal’s “Whatever Happened to ‘Good Design?’” exhibition, Sparke notes that the “Laura Ashley look” was a product of Britain’s “nostalgic mood” (1983, p. 37). Sparke indicates that this mood was very much alive and well in 1983; however, it was identified by textile manufacturers as early as 1975. In a press release dated November 1975, Heal Fabrics launched the Country Collection, discussed at length earlier in this chapter, “with softer nostalgic designs replacing the bold geometrics of previous years” (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”). The company notes that “social commentators today are talking of a return to the nostalgia of the past and its designs” (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”). The Country Collection was Heal’s “own interpretation of the present mood in modern designs with a new softness of feeling which will probably prove to be around for a long time to come” (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”).

A close reading of this paragraph reveals a number of issues at stake:

1. “Nostalgic designs” seem to be commonly understood as designs associated with the country.
2. They are revivalist, but also a sort of revivalist revivalism – “a *return* to the nostalgia of the past and its designs” (emphasis added).

3. These designs are “softer” than the textiles from the early 1970s; they carry with them a “softness of feeling.”
4. Although they are revivalist designs, Heal’s explains that they should be interpreted in a “modern” manner.
5. While the textiles reflect a “present mood,” the text suggests that the mood and the textiles that reflect it are not a fad, but are likely to be a relevant trend for “a long time to come.”

In other words, the “country look” does not simply reflect a cultural interest in nature and the countryside. It reflects an interest in the rural idyll, but an idyll as understood by the Victorians. A clipping from an unidentified magazine found in the Heal’s archives reads: “Think small. Think flowery. We present a clutch of mini prints to prove that you can’t beat the charm of the miniature. Victorian nostalgia plus 1976 colour flair make an irresistible combination” (“When It Comes,” 1976). The idea, so beautifully aligned with the environmental movement, is actually a reference to Victorian floral designs.

Victorian floral designs were themselves the result of a nostalgic mood. The “country look” is, therefore, “Victorian nostalgia” reborn. A “return to the nostalgia of the past” means a return to the same “nostalgic mood” that inspired the likes of William Morris, the Gothic revivalists, and the Arts and Crafts movement.

Sparke notes that “by the second half of the decade William Morris and Victoriana had been revived as pre-Modern sources of decorative inspiration” (1983, p. 3). In other words, the “Victorian country look” was consciously disassociated from modernism.

Designers such as Laura Ashley looked to like-minded Victorian designers who themselves challenged the onslaught of modernism with alternative perspectives. The “Victorian country look,” Sparke notes, involved a “set of alternative design standards” that attempted “to imbue designed objects with new meanings, expressed in new ways” (1983, p. 3). This statement is vague, suggesting those new meanings and expressions were not quite understood. Sparke herself explains, “over a decade later, we are still trying to come to terms with them” (1983, p. 3).

The anonymous writers of the various 1970s press releases and magazine articles found in the Heal’s archives realized that nostalgic textile designs were different than modern designs. They used many terms to describe them: “softer,” “easy,” “livable,” “adaptable,” “pleasing,” and “romantic.” They used descriptions that would be out of place in a discussion of modern textiles: “gentle pastoral quality,” “subtle textures,” “soft color,” “delicacy of drawing,” and “softness of feeling.” The word most often used is “soft.” In this context, a textile’s “soft” quality references a “nostalgic mood” for a slow paced, gentle, quiet lifestyle.

This “soft” style did not pair well with modernism. In the late 1960s, *House & Garden* printed an article, “What’s New for Decorating? Effective Needlers for Vitamin-Deficient Rooms.” The article discusses “the feminine, exotic, romantic atmosphere we still like so much,” lamenting that it is not “compatible with contemporary furniture” (1968, p. 106). In fact, “frills and furbelows are anathema” to the modern home (p. 106). The press release for Heal Fabrics’ Country Collection clearly states that while the

textiles are an “interpretation of the present mood,” the interpretation resulted “in modern designs” (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”). Heal’s thus emphasizes the novelty of the collection – “a *new* softness of feeling” (emphasis added) – rather than equate it with ruralism (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”).

Heal’s was well-known for modernism, but at this time, “in a search for increased turnover, it tried to popularise” (Liley, c. 1981, p. 8). According to internal memos from 1975, “the economic climate and some of the Government’s measures have hit particularly hard that class of customer upon whom we have traditionally depended” (“Unsigned Letter to Heal’s Managers”). In an effort to “safeguard our future,” L. Thorpe claims, “we should direct our attention additionally to those with lower incomes and/or less capital who now feel they cannot afford our prices” (1975). So, by explicitly noting that the “country look,” while new and novel, “will probably prove to be around for a long time to come,” Heal Fabrics tried to assure potential customers with less capital that the new textile designs were safe investments that would not look dated in the years to come (“Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection”).

Heal Fabrics continued to build on this idea. Their Lifestyle ’77 collection embodied safety in all its qualities, good and bad. No longer merely a safe investment, Heal Fabrics were safe in other contexts. Each new design, the company claims in a brochure, “will take its place in an interior, enhancing without dominating it – an undemanding quality much needed in these strident times” (“Heal Lifestyle ‘77”). Again, the idea of “soft” comes to play, though in an almost derogatory sense. As opposed to “strident,” meaning

harsh, rough, loud, or shrill, the Lifestyle '77 fabrics were soft and quiet. So soft, in fact, they could be hardly noticed if one wanted, wallflowers in a literal and figurative sense. They were also safe in the context of security. The designs, Heal's explains, were designed to eliminate fear, "to match the current need for reassurance" ("Heal Lifestyle '77"). Heal's had somehow made the leap from a textiles being a safe investment to textiles creating a safe haven in an otherwise overwhelming world.

By 1983, these marketing gambits seem to have been canonized as fact and feature of the late 1970s. In the "Whatever Happened to 'Good Design?'" exhibition catalogue, Sparke explains that the "contemporary styles and themes displayed in this exhibition have been isolated, artificially, so that their individual messages can be emphasised. Each one fulfills a different psychological need" (1983, p. 43). Revivalism and nostalgia, she explains, fulfill a need for security (p. 43). Taken out of context, this seems to support Ngozi Ikoku's claim that 1970s textiles brought a "sense of comfort and security to the home at a time of considerable uncertainty" (1999, p. 13). In fact, Sparke notes that revivalism and nostalgia are "symptoms of a contemporary search for variety, complexity and symbolism and provide a level of security for an age which no longer believes in a universal rule of thumb for design" (1983, p. 35).

This idea seems to have originated in a search for permanence. The condition of modernity was fleeting, or as Marshall Berman claimed, "all that is solid melts into air" (1982/1988, p. 345). But over and over again, Heals emphasizes that the "country look" would "be around for a long time to come" ("Heal Fabrics 1976 Country Collection"). In

1981, Heal Fabrics explored this idea with an exhibition titled “Classics.” The exhibition was a celebration of designs proven to have withstood the “changes of fashion” or having the potential to “endure” those changes in the future (Liley, 1981, p. 1). Yet, it is interesting that, hidden deep within this language, is a sense of deep ambivalence.

“Classics” included acknowledged pieces like Harry Bertoia’s “diamond chair,” but it also made room for paper clips and clay flower pots. These “unrecognised pieces, often of unknown origin,” were deemed “so right for their purpose that they are taken for granted and have become almost ‘invisible’ as designs” (p. 1). The hallmark of a classic design is invisibility, the ghost of a design. The exhibition may be an attempt to resurrect those ghosts, the modernist concepts like “fitness of purpose.” What is classic is safe, but it is also the best of modernism, a way to keep it alive. In a sense, classic might be equated with nostalgia, albeit of another type.

This idea is expressed in the catalogue entry for *Ikebana*:

It is typical of the best of a more confident period than the present with its bold brilliance, its thrust and drama, its juxtaposition of two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms, its Japanese quality of strong, luxurious shapes broken across each other, its plain areas contrasted with concentrated, fizzing, bubbling richness, and its large scale. (p. 41)

Unlike the soft, undemanding textiles so popular in the present, *Ikebana* is bold, brilliant, and big. It is noisy with its “fizzing” and “bubbling.” It is dynamic, dramatic, with shapes thrusting and breaking free from linear constraint. The language suggests that

nostalgic textiles cannot be “classics,” possessing none of the brilliance of *Ikebana*, “the best of a more confident period” (p. 41). Classic designs now become nostalgic; Heal’s longs for the confidence of the early 1970s and the exhibition attempts to revive a happier, modern past.

Classic is also a concept very much associated with postmodern design. The term “postmodern” is not used in any of the archival materials consulted for this study, except for one. In the “Whatever Happened to ‘Good Design?’” exhibition catalogue, it is used in reference to American architecture. The catalogue notes that terms like postmodern “have been so widely used by the media that, like all other styles today, it has become just one of the symbolic options” (Sparke, 1983, p. 35). However, the principles of good design *a la* 1983 coincide with the principles of postmodernism as we understand them today.

The catalogue opens with a segment of Robert Venturi’s infamous “gentle manifesto,” *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1977). Here, the American architect wrote:

I like elements which are hybrid rather than “pure”, compromising rather than “clean”, distorted rather than “straightforward”, ambiguous rather than “articulated”, perverse as well as “impersonal”, boring as well as “interesting”, conventional rather than “designed”, accommodating rather than “excluding”, redundant rather than “simple”, vestigial as well as “innovatory”, inconsistent and

equivocal rather than “direct and clear”. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. (p. 1)

In other words, Sparke’s essay posits that concepts like hybridity, ambiguity, perversity, redundancy, inconsistency, equivocality, and messy vitality have become the new principles of “good design.” This is translated today into language used to describe postmodern movements: “rejection of high Modernism... embrace of the popular, the ‘low’ and the kitsch... prioritization of surface over depth, style over structure... use of quotation, metaphor, plurality, parody” (Adamson & Pavitt, p. 13).

In this “‘Anti-’ or ‘Counter-’ Design” – or postmodern – movement, Sparke explains, what constitutes “good design” is really up to the individual consumer (1983, p. 9). She says:

How are we to consider, let alone judge, the new objects which surround us? The answer lies in trying to understand them on their own terms. If, for example, they set out primarily to please the consumer, one measure of their success or otherwise, is the level of pleasure they invoke. The solution is perhaps more simple than ever before, but makes more demands of the individual consumer who is thrown back on his own responses. This is the essential problem of much contemporary design – it’s up to the consumer to make it a reality. (p. 2)

In other words, meaning is made at the individual level. This has resulted not in a collective style, but a proliferation of styles each with complex meanings. An object, once it arrives in the home, mixes “freely together” with other objects “and their messages intermingle. The result is the ‘messy vitality’ that Robert Venturi likes so

much. It forms an essential feature of today's environment and provides the base-line for a new approach, or set of approaches, to design" (p. 43).

Throughout the 1970s, the attitude was "anything goes" (p. 29). "Whatever Happened to 'Good Design?'" co-opted the sentiment, but it was present throughout the decade. In 1968, *Moebel Interior Design* magazine explained that "everything is 'en vogue' today: Op and Pop, ornamentation and ornament style of the 19th century, neo-romantic style as well as 'Flower Power'" ("En Vogue," 1968). In 1970, *House & Garden* published an article by Kenneth Clark in which he defends the idea of "inclusiveness" in art. He notes:

This inclusiveness is sometimes taken as a sign that we lack any real stylistic conviction. I think that this misinterprets an important development of our mental outlook. We have lost a great deal in the last fifty years, but one thing we have gained is a wider horizon. We have a better understanding of the past, a firmer conviction of the unity of mankind, and a realization that the appreciation of art cannot be limited to a small section of society. (p. 68)

All in all, the idea that design is no longer the purview of the elite is an important takeaway from the archival materials consulted for this study. As Laura Herrmann notes in her essay, "What Next in Textiles?", "the most important 'trend' is that the dividing lines are changing" (1973, p. 1).

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored four major findings related to the ways social and cultural changes are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. The findings reveal a collective ambivalence regarding modernism, technology, and progress pointing towards a cultural shift towards a postmodern mindset. Although the term “postmodern” might be contentious and certainly was little used at the time, the themes, styles, and ideology at work in these textile designs reveal a distinctive break with modernism and relate to postmodern concepts such as “hybridity” and “quotation” as they are understood today.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The story of punk music is often used to illustrate social and cultural change in 1970s Britain. Punk was a challenge to pop music and to the world, to overthrow a system that was no longer relevant. By “destroying one tradition,” critic Griel Marcus observed, referring to the music of the 1960s, “punk revealed a new one” (1989, p. 39). Though it is revealed in beige tones and florals instead of thrashing guitars and anarchic lyrics, the story of textile design is no less radical. The story might be written as follows: by destroying one tradition – modernism – postmodern textile design revealed a new one, and a couple of old ones too.

The purpose of this material culture study is to explore how social and cultural changes in Britain are expressed through British printed textiles of the 1970s. Findings paint a picture of thematic and stylistic diversity in terms of design, symbolic of a spirit of the age or zeitgeist. This zeitgeist manifested itself in a cultural ambivalence regarding modernity, technology, and progress expressed in terms of revivalist, escapist, ethnic, and nostalgic textile designs or hybrids thereof. Both the zeitgeist and the designs might be termed postmodern, according to a 21st century understanding.

The secondary purpose of this study was to address the different ways designers, manufacturers, consumers, and cultural commentators viewed British printed textiles in

the 1970s in order to question the conclusions drawn by contemporary scholars regarding the meaning and value of 1970s British printed textiles:

- Do 1970s textiles reflect a need for comfort and security in the wake of economic crisis?
- Do 1970s textiles facilitate escapism in the form of nostalgia?
- Are 1970s textiles devoid of innovation, confidence, and progressive design?
- Are 1970s textiles important to the history of design?

British printed textiles of the 1970s are indeed discussed in terms of comfort and security in the wake of economic crisis. For example, Heal Fabric's Lifestyle '77 press release claimed their textiles were designed "to match the current need for reassurance" ("Heal Lifestyle '77"). Norman Colgate, general manager of Heal Fabrics, told the *London Times*, "we always return to florals and traditional designs in times of insecurity" ("Heal's in Step," 1982). And Penny Sparke claims that revivalism and nostalgia in design fulfill a need for security (1983, p. 43). Though damning, each of these statements is actually something of a marketing gambit, each instigated by Heal's. Sparke's comment, excerpted from Heal's "Whatever Happened to 'Good Design?'" exhibition catalogue, is actually taken out of context. Here Sparke suggests the question of security is tied to cultural change; the consumer looked to revivalist and nostalgic textiles as solid examples of design consistency in the wake of great cultural transition (p. 35).

Nostalgia and escapism are complicated terms, appropriately ambiguous as befits a postmodern study. British printed textiles of the 1970s are frequently described as nostalgic, romantic, and escapist, in language that associates those words with something perverse, a disease. This makes sense. Nostalgia is considered perverse in a modernist society, one predicated on change and necessarily unsentimental. The main problem with nostalgia is that it is based on emotion. Expressive designs do not conform to the principles of “good design” and are, in fact, anathema. Sparke explains that:

many designers have tried and found wanting, in our media-dominated, mass-production, mass-consumption age, the well-worn principles of “form follows function” and “truth to materials”. Now they are moving on, experimenting with the “expressive” rather than the “useful” properties of objects. (1983, p. 1)

The resulting objects “respond to psychological rather than functional requirements” and must be understood “on their own terms” (p. 2). The answer to the question of whether or not British printed textiles of the 1970s facilitated escapism in the form of nostalgia would necessarily depend on the person asked.

Those who judged 1970s British printed textiles according to their innovative or progressive qualities based their decisions on modernist principles and criteria espoused by state-sponsored entities like the Council of Industrial Design/Design Council. As shown, very few textiles of the 1970s received Design Council Awards. In the literature, this was attributed to a lack of confidence on the part of the designer; however, in the 70s, “confidence” was most frequently used in terms of Britain’s economic situation to describe the consumer. There is a notable exception. In the Heal’s “Classics” exhibition

catalogue entry for *Ikebana*, the design is posited as “the best of a more confident period than the present” (Liley, 1981, p. 41). This statement reveals a profound nostalgia, manifested not in a pre-modern past but for modernism. In this sense, the lack of confidence is revealed to belong to the design authority (e.g., Heal’s, the Design Council). Sparke explains that these “official bodies... are feeling their way forward in [a] tentative way, unsure, ultimately, about the nature of ‘good design’ today” (1983, p. 1).

It is clear that 1970s British printed textiles are important to the history of design, even for no other reason than they reveal the deep-seated bias towards modern design inherent in the current body of literature on the subject. They also make clear a transition in social and cultural feeling, taste, and thinking, highlighting problems we are still working to solve. The film *Vintage Tomorrows* (2016) chronicles the contemporary art movement steampunk to explore how 21st century “human beings think about themselves in relationship to their past” and how this informs their future (McDonald, Hutchinson, Winston, & McDonald, 2016). Deeply nostalgic, romantic, and sentimental, steampunks want to “live in a reality that’s slightly different” (McDonald et al.).

The movement grew out of the cyberpunk movement of the 1980s, itself an offshoot of 1970s punk. The idea that inspired the first example of steampunk literature, *The Difference Engine* (1990), was the proliferation of the computer. The authors, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling wanted to study “the effect of computation on society, taking the effects of the world that we were seeing around ourselves in the 1980s and – bang! –

projecting them onto an imaginary 1850s” (McDonald et al.). The goal was to “use the... cultural density of the past to make it clear to contemporary people what the stakes were of an industrial revolution” (McDonald et al.). Steampunk is revisionist, but not recreationist. The point is to “look back in order to look forward. When you are capable of seeing that connection then you... see the threads and how to unravel them in order to... rethread them” (McDonald et al.). The goal being to “create something better for the future” (McDonald et al.).

Much of steampunk ideology centers on technology and on changing the way people see and use technology. By revisiting the Victorian era:

a time where, instead of people looking at technology and seeing it in such a negative way, that it was incredibly optimistic... There was this idea that we were on the cusp of greatness... whereas the science fiction of the last 20 or 30 years has been more to the tune of “we’re going to destroy ourselves with our technology.” (McDonald et al.)

A profound dichotomy exists in steampunk culture, at once a rebellion against technology that is both addicting and frightening and a celebration of technology and “just how miraculous it all is” (McDonald et al.). In other words, steampunks grapple with the same ambivalence towards modernism, technology, and progress that challenged designers in the 1970s. And the process they use to solve these problems is much like postmodernism: to combine the “magical and the practical” in order to humanize design (McDonald et al.).

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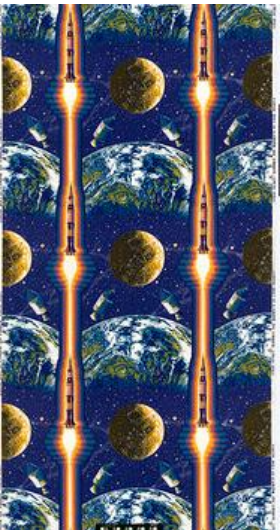

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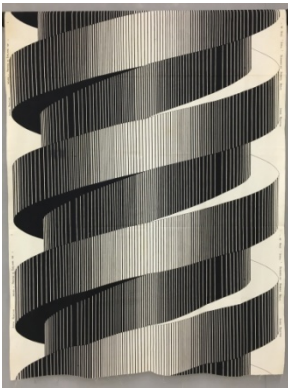
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Appendix A: Textiles Selected for Study

	<p>Eddie Squires (1940-1995) Warner Fabrics (manufacturer) Colourtron, 1968 Victoria & Albert Museum Given by Warner Fabrics CIRC.801-1968</p>
	<p>Eddie Squires (1940-1995) Warner Fabrics (manufacturer) Lunar Rocket, 1969 Victoria & Albert Museum CIRC.45A-1970</p>
	<p>Sue Thatcher Palmer (born 1947) Warner Fabrics (manufacturer) Space Walk, 1969 Art Institute of Chicago Gift of Sue Palmer through Warner Fabrics, plc 1990.552.2b</p>



Janet Taylor
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Arcade, 1969
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by Heal Fabrics Ltd.
CIRC.30-1969



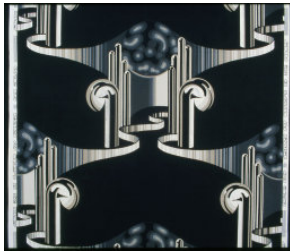
Barbara Brown, born 1932
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Spiral, 1970
Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection
Gift of Liz Askey
2007.11.004



Linda Harper
Hull Traders Ltd. (manufacturer)
Mandarin, c. 1970
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by the makers
T.168:1 to 4-1989



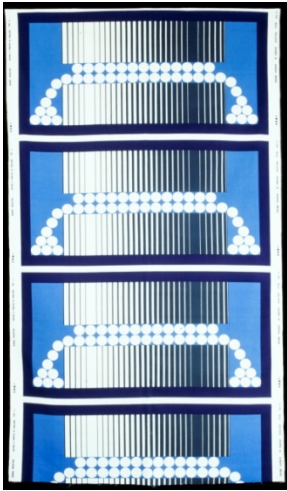
Barbara Brown, born 1932
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Automation, 1970
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard L. Simmons
98.150.5



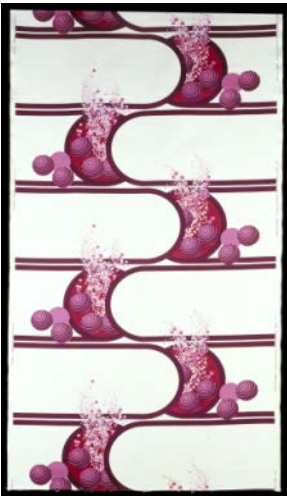
Sue Thatcher Palmer, born 1947
Warner Fabrics (manufacturer)
Chrome City, 1970
Art Institute of Chicago
Gift of Sue Palmer through Warner Fabrics, plc
1990.552.3



Eddie Squires (1940-1995)
Warner Fabrics (manufacturer)
Gemstones, 1971
Art Institute of Chicago
Gift of Eddie Squires through Warner Fabrics, plc
1990.553.2



Barbara Brown, born 1932
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Precision, 1971
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard L. Simmons 98.150.12



Barbara Brown, born 1932
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Ikebana, 1971
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard L. Simmons
98.150.8



Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell
Liberty (manufacturer)
Bauhaus, 1972
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by A.I. Stewart Liberty, Esq.
T.447-1977



Laura Ashley (1925-1985)
Laura Ashley (manufacturer)
Dress, 1972-1975
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by Mrs Valerie Mendes
T.279-1988



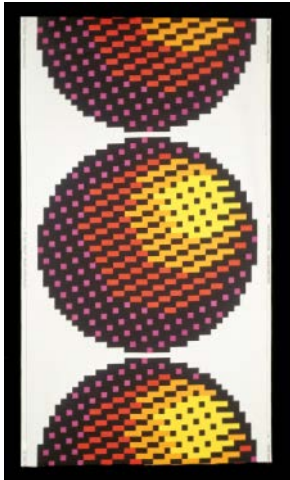
David Bartle
Textra Furnishing Fabric (manufacturer)
Metropolis, 1972
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by Textra Furnishing Fabric Ltd.
CIRC.355-1973



Kay Politowicz
Textra Furnishing Fabric (manufacturer)
Salad Days, 1973
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by Textra Furnishing Fabric Ltd.
CIRC.350-1973



Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell
Liberty (manufacturer)
Cottage Garden, 1974-1977
Victoria & Albert Museum
T.44-1978



Peter Phillips, born 1939
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Highlight, 1973
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard Simmons
98.273.13



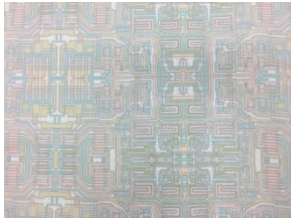
Hans J. Holzer
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Strata, 1975
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard Simmons
98.273.4



Jennie Foley
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Country Walk, 1976
Victoria & Albert Museum
Given by Heal Fabrics Ltd.
CIRC.1-1976



Diane Bell
Heal Fabrics (manufacturer)
Vista, 1976
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Gift of Richard L. Simmons
98.150.3



Eddie Squires (1940-1995)
Warner Fabrics (manufacturer)
Microchip, 1981
Art Institute of Chicago
Gift of Eddie Squires through Warner Fabrics, plc
1990.553.3

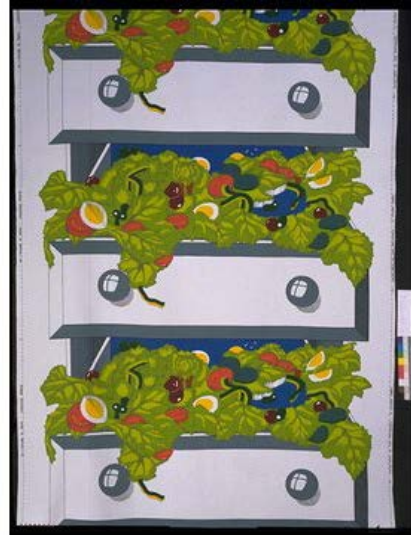
Appendix B: Sample Digital Data Collection Matrix

Salad Days CIRC.350-1973

Identification

History	
Material	
Construction	
Design*	
Function	

* what it depicts in terms of iconography



Evaluation: compare to similar objects

History	
Material	
Construction	
Design	
Function	

Cultural Analysis: describe relationship to culture

History	
Material	
Construction	
Design	
Function*	

* how it functions as a tool, an aesthetic object, mode of communication (status, ideas, values, feelings, meaning)

Interpretation: what is the object's significance according to present-day cultural values

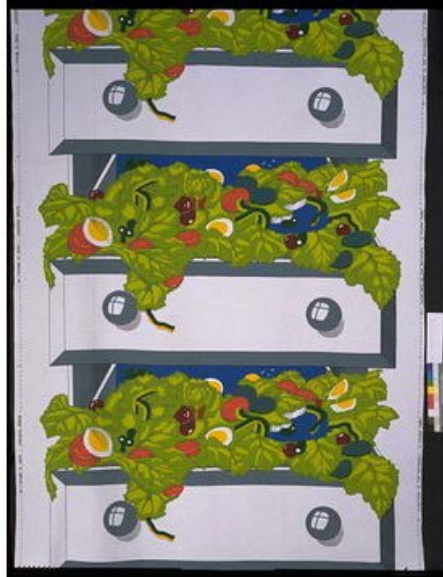
History	
Material	
Construction	
Design	
Function	

Appendix C: Sample Hard-Copy Data Collection Matrix

Salad Days CIRC.350-1973

Identification

History	
Material	
Construction	
Design*	
Function	



* what it depicts in terms of iconography