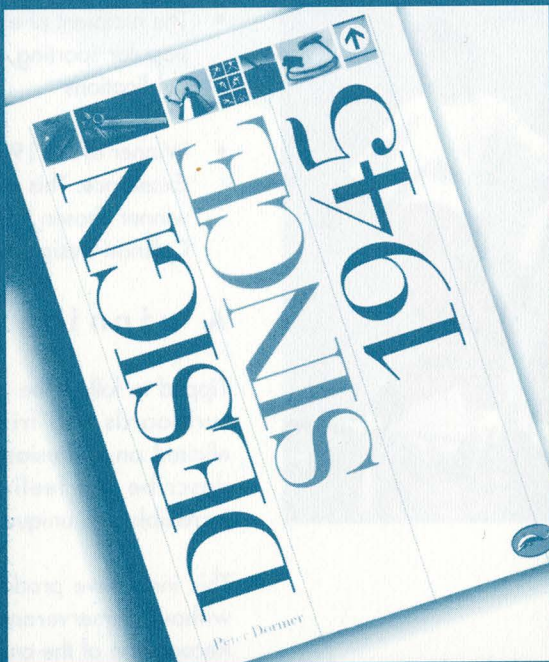




Design since 1945 by Peter Dormer.

1993. London: Thames & Hudson, 216 pp., illustrated, part of Thames & Hudson World of Art series, R53.99.

Reviewed by Jeanne van Eeden

The historiography of both the history of art and the history of design seem to be undergoing similar methodological and existential problems at present. Within the framework of the 'new art history', contextualisation has become of primary

importance. This has entailed a movement away from traditional elitist concepts pertaining to the genius and the original, unique work of art. The ramifications of these and many other ideas have impacted upon art history. Emphasis has been deflected away from the idea of the masterpiece and has rather been placed on the totality of art production as well as lesser (or fringe) activities and artists. Coupled with the Postmodern broadening of paradigms has been a concomitant inclusion of fringe areas such as craft and other fields not traditionally included in the 'fine arts'.

Contemporary art history has been enriched by including Marxist, Feminist and many philosophical approaches, and it is interesting to note the same tendencies in writings on the history of design. Some recent history of design books written in a revisionist vein include I Anscombe's *A woman's touch: Women in design from 1860 to the present day* (1984), B Forty's *Objects of desire: design and society 1750 - 1980* (1986), H Conway's *Design history: a students' handbook* (1987), J A Walker's *Design history and the history of design* (1989) and P Dormer's *The meanings of modern design* (1990). Although a valuable contribution to updating design history was made by M Collins in *Towards Post-modernism, design since 1851* (1987), this book maintains a more traditional approach. Books dealing with the history of a decade or theme rather than the chronological unfolding of a whole style

period seem to be popular, and reflect design history's concern with design as an integral 'piece of history', which functions as a social document.

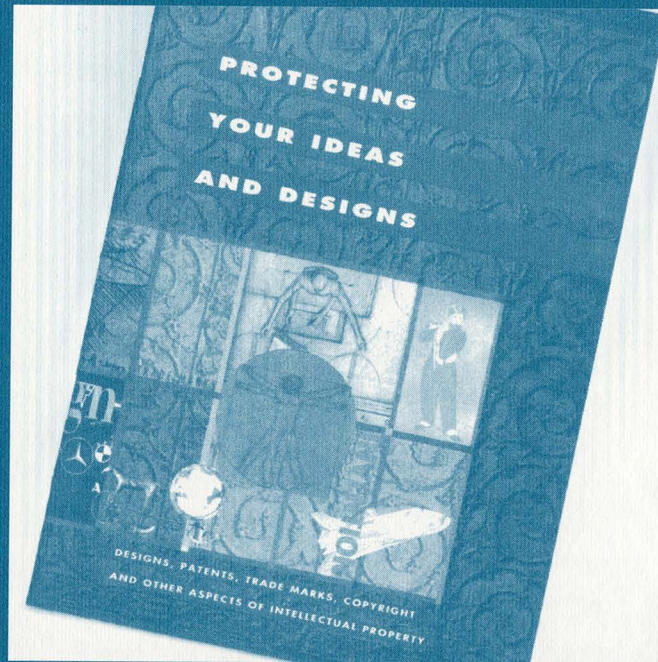
In *Design since 1945* Dormer does not choose the straightforward chronological approach but rather divides his book into chapters dealing with subjects such as graphic design, product design and domestic ware. Each of these topics is looked at in an historical framework, and special emphasis is given to the impact of technology and other formative influences. Dormer does not seem to give preference to any one methodological approach, but chooses that which is the most applicable to a certain component of design. There are times when his contextualisation could be more extensive, for example, in the sections dealing with Pop Art's influence on design and society. At the same time he does not resort to a simplistic one-to-one correlation between art and design: 'a parallel between product design and art does not explain why a particular look is popular for a period' (p 74).

Dormer starts his book with an introductory chapter which deals mainly with the role of the designer and how the 'job of the designer' and design profession have emerged and changed since the Second World War. This chapter is counterbalanced by a concluding chapter which offers some insights and opinions as to the future of design and the design profession. He examines concepts relevant to contemporary

design such as 'design for disassembly' and 'design for recycling', and closes his arguments by stressing that he feels design ought to be a strategic, problem-solving activity.

Throughout the book the sections dealing with the impact of technology on design possibilities and the resultant lifting of constraints impress the reader. Due attention is, however, also given to the impact of the craft revival, which Dormer often seems to interpret in a political light. Coverage is given to technological developments such as virtual reality, but Dormer does not become embroiled in the ramifications of 'the more intellectually opaque "deconstructivism" - a literary discipline that was clumsily transposed into architecture and, to a lesser extent, industrial design' (p 64).

Although probably not revisionistic in the strict sense of the word, this book gives fresh insights and new perspectives on design since 1945. The illustrations are well chosen and are often relatively rare examples that add to the usefulness of the book. There is a comprehensive year-by-year chronology of design landmarks at the end of the book, as well as a select bibliography. This book is highly recommended for the interested reader as well as the student of design as it gives a cogent yet concise overview of the topic.



Protecting your Ideas and Designs. *Edited by Chris Rein.*

Pretoria: Design Institute of the South African Bureau of Standards. 24 pp. R10.

Reviewed by Alan Dunlop

The editor is to be commended on aiming to fill a serious void in the South African public arena, namely, to supplement the level of awareness and knowledge about Intellectual Property Law and to foster a design culture in our country at a most opportune moment in its history.

The presentation of the booklet is attractive and attention grabbing. The layout itself emphasises the importance of design and contributes to the central objective of this publication - that of bringing this esoteric topic in an understandable way to the ordinary South African, whose track record shows an above average creativity, but a sad failure to profit from it.

The content is comprehensive, spanning Intellectual Property Law topics such as patent, trademark and similar rights, to product liability and taxation. The legal information is generally accurate; it is reasonably detailed, considering the large canvas painted. Minor lapses in accuracy are unimportant, for example the use of the word 'goods' in place of 'articles' when referring to designs. However, a listing of what a trademark may consist of is misleading as it owes more to the new Act not yet in force rather than to current law. A review of the new trademark law is a weak area of the booklet.

The tabulated presentation across a double page spread achieves some success in summarising this difficult field of law. There is some repetition, this is, however, a defect which does not detract from the profound potential benefit of this publication to the uninitiated.

A listing of 'useful addresses' concludes this commendable effort to assist the inventor, innovator and entrepreneur walking that difficult road to product success.

Protecting your Ideas and Designs may be obtained directly from the Design Institute, SABS, Pretoria.