

BRUNO MUNARI

DESIGN
AS
ART

Translated by Patrick Creagh

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An artist is a man who digests his own subjective impressions and knows how to find a general objective meaning in them, and how to express them in a convincing form.

MAXIM GORKY

DESIGN AS ART

Today it has become necessary to demolish the myth of the 'star' artist who only produces masterpieces for a small group of ultra-intelligent people. It must be understood that as long as art stands aside from the problems of life it will only interest a very few people. Culture today is becoming a mass affair, and the artist must step down from his pedestal and be prepared to make a sign for a butcher's shop (if he knows how to do it). The artist must cast off the last rags of romanticism and become active as a man among men, well up in present-day techniques, materials and working methods. Without losing his innate aesthetic sense he must be able to respond with humility and competence to the demands his neighbours may make of him.

The designer of today re-establishes the long-lost contact between art and the public, between living people and art as a living thing. Instead of pictures for the drawing-room, electric gadgets for the kitchen. There should be no such thing as art divorced from life, with beautiful things to look at and hideous things to use. If what we use every day is made with art, and not thrown together by chance or caprice, then we shall have nothing to hide.

Anyone working in the field of design has a hard task

ahead of him: to clear his neighbour's mind of all preconceived notions of art and artists, notions picked up at schools where they condition you to think one way for the whole of your life, without stopping to think that life changes — and today more rapidly than ever. It is therefore up to us designers to make known our working methods in clear and simple terms, the methods we think are the truest, the most up-to-date, the most likely to resolve our common aesthetic problems. Anyone who uses a properly designed object feels the presence of an artist who has worked for *him*, bettering his living conditions and encouraging him to develop his taste and sense of beauty.

When we give a place of honour in the drawing-room to an ancient Etruscan vase which we consider beautiful, well proportioned and made with precision and economy, we must also remember that the vase once had an extremely common use. Most probably it was used for cooking-oil. It was made by a designer of those times, when art and life went hand in hand and there was no such thing as a work of art to look at and just any old thing to use.

I have therefore very gladly accepted the proposal that I should bring together in a volume the articles I originally published in the Milanese paper *Il Giorno*. To these I have added other texts, as well as a lot of illustrations which it was not possible to publish in the limited space of a daily paper. I have also made a few essential changes for the English edition.

I hope that other designers will make similar efforts to spread knowledge of our work, for our methods are daily asserting themselves as the fittest way of gaining the confidence of men at large, and of giving a meaning to our present way of life.

Design came into being in 1919, when Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus at Weimar. Part of the prospectus of this school reads:

'We know that only the technical means of artistic achievement can be taught, not art itself. The function of art has in the past been given a formal importance which has severed it from our daily life; but art is always present when a people lives sincerely and healthily.

'Our job is therefore to invent a new system of education that may lead — by way of a new kind of specialized teaching of science and technology — to a complete knowledge of human needs and a universal awareness of them.

'Thus our task is to make a new kind of artist, a creator capable of understanding every kind of need: not because he is a prodigy, but because he knows how to approach human needs according to a precise method. We wish to make him conscious of his creative power, not scared of new facts, and independent of formulas in his own work.'

From that time on we have watched an ever more rapid succession of new styles in the world of art: abstract art, Dada, Cubism, Surrealism, Neo-Abstract art, Neo-Dada, pop and op. Each one gobbles up its predecessor and we start right back at the beginning again.

What Gropius wrote is still valid. This first school of design did tend to make a new kind of artist, an artist useful to society because he helps society to recover its balance, and not to lurch between a false world to live one's material life in and an ideal world to take moral refuge in.

When the objects we use every day and the surroundings we live in have become in themselves a work of art, then we shall be able to say that we have achieved a balanced life.

DESIGNERS AND STYLISTS

What is a Designer?

He is a planner with an aesthetic sense. Certain industrial products depend in large measure on him for their success. Nearly always the shape of a thing, be it a typewriter, a pair of binoculars, an armchair, a ventilator, a saucepan or a refrigerator, will have an important effect on sales: the better designed it is, the more it will sell.

The term 'designer' was first used in this sense in America. It does not refer to an industrial designer, who designs machines or mechanical parts, workshops or other specialized buildings. He is in fact a design engineer, and if he has a motor-scooter on the drawing-board he does not give a great deal of importance to the aesthetic side of things, or at the most he applies a personal idea of what a motor-scooter ought to look like. I once asked an engineer who had designed a motor-scooter why he had chosen a particular colour, and he said: because it was the cheapest. The industrial designer therefore thinks of the aesthetic side of the job as simply a matter of providing a finish, and although this may be most scrupulously done he avoids aesthetic problems that are bound up with contemporary culture because such things are not considered useful. An engineer must never be caught writing poetry. The designer

works differently. He gives the right weight to each part of the project in hand, and he knows that the ultimate form of the object is psychologically vital when the potential buyer is making up his mind. He therefore tries to give it a form as appropriate as possible to its function, a form that one might say arises spontaneously from the function, from the mechanical part (when there is one), from the most appropriate material, from the most up-to-date production techniques, from a calculation of costs, and from other psychological and aesthetic factors.

In the early days of rationalism it used to be said that an object was beautiful in so far as it was functional, and only the most practical functions were taken into account. Various kinds of tool were used as evidence for this argument, such as surgical instruments. Today we do not think in terms of beauty but of formal coherence, and even the 'decorative' function of the object is thought of as a psychological element. For beauty in the abstract may be defined as what is called style, with the consequent need to force everything into a given style because it is new. Thus in the recent past we have had the aerodynamic style, which has been applied not only to aeroplanes and cars but to electric irons, perambulators and armchairs. On one occasion I even saw an aerodynamic hearse, which is about as far as the aerodynamic style can go (speeding the departing guest?).

We have therefore discarded beauty in the abstract sense, as something stuck on to the technical part of a thing, like a stylish car body or a decoration tastefully chosen from the work of some great artist. Instead we have formal coherence, rather as we see it in nature. A leaf has the form it has because it belongs to a certain tree and fulfils a certain

function; its structure is determined by the veins which carry the sap, and the skeleton that supports it might have been worked out by mathematics. Even so, there are many kinds of leaf, and the leaves of any single tree differ slightly among themselves. But if we saw a fig-leaf on a weeping-willow we would have the feeling that all was not well. It would lack coherence. A leaf is beautiful not because it is stylish but because it is natural, created in its exact form by its exact function. A designer tries to make an object as naturally as a tree puts forth a leaf. He does not smother his object with his own personal taste but tries to be objective. He helps the object, if I may so put it, to make itself by its own proper means, so that a ventilator comes to have just the shape of a ventilator, a *fiasco* for wine has the shape that blown glass gives it, as a cat is inevitably covered with cat-fur. Each object takes on its own form. But of course this will not be fixed and final because techniques change, new materials are discovered, and with every innovation the problem arises again and the form of the object may change.

At one time people thought in terms of fine art and commercial art, pure art and applied art. So we used to have sewing-machines built by engineers and then decorated by an artist in gold and mother-of-pearl. Now we no longer have this distinction between fine and not-fine, pure and applied. The definition of art that has caused so much confusion in recent times, and allowed so many fast ones to be pulled, is now losing its prestige. Art is once more becoming a trade, as it was in ancient times when the artist was summoned by society to make certain works of visual communication (called frescoes) to inform the public of a certain religious event. Today the designer (in this case the graphic designer) is called

upon to make a communication (called a poster) to inform the public of some new development in a certain field. And why is it the designer who is called upon? Why is the artist not torn from his easel? Because the designer knows about printing, about the techniques used, and he uses forms and colours according to their psychological functions. He does not just make an artistic sketch and leave it up to the printer to reproduce it as best he may. He thinks from the start in terms of printing techniques, and it is with these that he makes his poster.

The designer is therefore the artist of today, not because he is a genius but because he works in such a way as to re-establish contact between art and the public, because he has the humility and ability to respond to whatever demand is made of him by the society in which he lives, because he knows his job, and the ways and means of solving each problem of design. And finally because he responds to the human needs of his time, and helps people to solve certain problems without stylistic preconceptions or false notions of artistic dignity derived from the schism of the arts.

'The form follows the function.' (*Jean-Baptiste Lamarck*)

The designer works in a vast sector of human activity: there is visual design, industrial design, graphic design and research design.

Visual design is concerned with images whose function is to communicate and inform visually: signs, symbols, the meaning of forms and colours and the relations between these.

Industrial design is concerned with functional objects, designed according to economic facts and the study of techniques and materials.

Graphic design works in the world of the Press, of books, of printed advertisements, and everywhere the printed word appears, whether on a sheet of paper or a bottle.

Research design is concerned with experiments of both plastic and visual structures in two or more dimensions. It tries out the possibilities of combining two or more dimensions, attempts to clarify images and methods in the technological field, and carries out research into images on film.

Pure and Applied

Once upon a time there was pure art and applied art (I prefer to use these terms, rather than 'fine' and 'commercial', because 'commercial art' does not really cover enough ground). At all events, forms were born in secret in ivory towers and fathered by divine inspiration, and Artists showed them only to initiates and only in the shape of paintings and pieces of sculpture: for these were the only channels of communication open to the old forms of art.

Around the person of the Artistic Genius there circulated other and lesser geniuses who absorbed the Pure Forms and the Style of the Master and attempted to give these some currency by applying them to objects of everyday use. This led to the making of objects in this style or that style, and even today the question of Style has not been altogether disposed of.

The distinction between pure art, applied art and industrial design is still made in France, a country that at one time was the cradle of living art. What we call design, the French call 'esthétique industrielle', and by this phrase they mean the application to industry of styles invented in the realm of the pure arts.

It therefore comes about that in France they make lamps

inspired by abstract forms without bearing in mind that a lamp must give light. They design a Surrealist television set, a Dada table, a piece of 'informal' furniture, forgetting that all objects have their exact uses and well-defined functions, and that they are no longer made by craftsmen modelling a stylish shape in copper according to their whim of the moment but by automatic machines turning out thousands of the things at a time.

What then is this thing called Design if it is neither style nor applied art? It is planning: the planning as objectively as possible of everything that goes to make up the surroundings and atmosphere in which men live today. This atmosphere is created by all the objects produced by industry, from glasses to houses and even cities. It is planning done without preconceived notions of style, attempting only to give each thing its logical structure and proper material, and in consequence its logical form.

So all this talk about sober harmony, beauty and proportions, about the balance between masses and spaces (typical sculpture-talk), about aesthetic perfection (classicism?), about the charm of the materials used and the equilibrium of the forms, all this talk our French friends go in for, is just a lot of old-fashioned claptrap. An object should now be judged by whether it has a form consistent with its use, whether the material fits the construction and the production costs, whether the individual parts are logically fitted together. It is therefore a question of coherence.

Beauty as conceived of in the fine arts, a sense of balance comparable with that of the masterpieces of the past, harmony and all the rest of it, simply make no more sense in design. If the form of an object turns out to be 'beautiful' it will be thanks to the logic of its construction and to the preci-

sion of the solutions found for its various components. It is 'beautiful' because it is just right. An exact project produces a beautiful object, beautiful not because it is like a piece of sculpture, even modern sculpture, but because it is only like itself.

If you want to know something else about beauty, what precisely it is, look at a history of art. You will see that every age has had its ideal Venus (or Apollo), and that all these Venuses or Apollos put together and compared out of the context of their periods are nothing less than a family of monsters.

A thing is not beautiful because it is beautiful, as the he-frog said to the she-frog, it is beautiful because one likes it.

'The basic teaching error of the academy was that of directing its attention towards genius rather than the average.' (*Bauhaus*)

A Living Language

'Good language alone will not save mankind. But seeing the things behind the names will help us to understand the structure of the world we live in. Good language will help us to communicate with one another about the realities of our environment, where we now speak darkly, in alien tongues.'

(*Stuart Chase, The Tyranny of Words*)

'... And after when ye han examined youre conseil, as I han said before, and knowen wel that ye moun performe youre emprise, conferme it than sadly til it be at an ende.' Can one now address the public in the language of the fourteenth century? It is most unlikely that the public would understand.

Just as there are dead languages, it is natural that there should be modes of expression and communication that have gone out of use. It is a well-known fact that to get a message across we can use not only words, but in many cases also images, forms and colours, symbols, signs and signals. Just as there are words which belong to other ages, so there are colours, forms, signs and so on which in our time have come to mean nothing, or would convey a wrong meaning.

What does a blacksmith's sign mean to the children of today? To children in 1900 it meant a lot: it meant excitement. When they saw it they ran to watch the blacksmith hammering the glowing iron on his anvil, heating it every now and then in a furnace that threw off sparks like a firework display, nailing the finished shoe to the horse's hoof. Imagine the pungent stench of the hot iron, and the huge impassive horse tethered to an iron ring set in the blackened wall of that smoky cavern. . . .

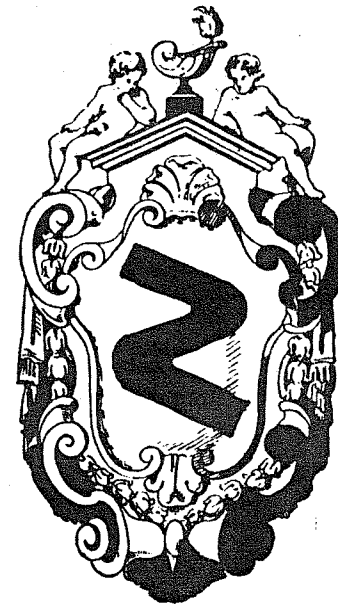
Maybe a city child of today doesn't even know what a horseshoe is, and for this reason an object that was a symbol and a sign that evoked many images and meanings is now reduced to the status of a lucky charm.

We can point out similar changes in the colours used for visual communication. Looking into the past we find certain periods dominated by certain colours and forms: periods in which all the colours are earthy and the forms hard, some in which the whole range of colours is put to use, others in which everything is done with three or four colours. And so on down to our own times, when thanks to chemistry, plastic materials and other inventions, the kingdom of colour is governed by total chaos.

Certainly if we now used the colours of the 'art nouveau' period for road signs, these would fade magnificently into their surroundings. At that time they used some really refined combinations of colour. A faint idea of them can still be had from Roberts's talcum powder boxes and the labels on Strega bottles. They used to put pink and yellow side by side, or brown and blue, coffee and chocolate, pea-green and violet. Then they would make unexpected leaps from one shade to another, putting red with pale blue (instead of dark) and so on. Can we imagine a 'No Overtaking' sign with a coffee and chocolate car on a violet background? Well, yes. We can imagine it for fun, but we cannot use it for a road sign in real life.

At some times in the past a certain series of colours, let us say all of dark tone, were indiscriminately adapted to all branches of human activity. The colours used for furnishings did not differ much from those for clothes or carriages. But today different colours have different uses. For road signs we use only red, blue and yellow (apart from the green light at

traffic lights), and each colour has its well-defined meaning. In advertising we use bright brash colours or very refined ones according to our purpose. In printing we use the dull four-colour system which reduces all colours to a norm, while women's fashions make use of all the colours in rotation.



A double-bend sign in the style of Louis XIV. There have always been dangerous double bends, even in the time of Louis XIV, but then there were no road signs. They had heraldic arms instead. As the speed and volume of traffic increases, decoration is proportionally reduced, until it reaches the bare essentials of our present-day signals. Visual language changes according to the needs of the day.

In the past, images were nearly all painted, drawn or carved, and they reproduced visible and recognizable reality. Now we can even see the invisible. We have a host of machines exploring for us what we cannot see with the naked eye. We have X-ray photos, the world of the microscope, and the abstract inventions of artists. We have machines that enable us to see music and sounds in the form of luminous waves, machines that show us photo-elasticity in colour by means of polarized light, machines that slow up pictures of motion until we get as it were a blow-up of each instant. Then there are the lights which already form an accepted part of the night-scape, fluorescent lights, neon, sodium vapour lights, black light. And we have forms that are beautiful and exact because they are true forms: the forms of aeroplanes and missiles are dictated by the demands of speed, and were inconceivable in the past. These are forms we see every day, the colours and lights of our own time. To accept, to know and to use them is to express oneself in the language of today which was made for the man of today.

A Rose is a Rose is a

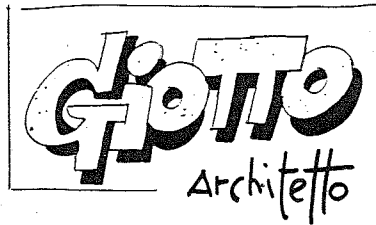
And then you go up to it and see, for the sake of argument, that it is an artificial rose. Then you become aware of the material it is made of, cloth or plastic or paper. But at first glance you were certain of one thing only, that it was a rose. This apparently insignificant fact is the subject of careful study today, for it is vital to the problems of visual communication.

All over the world psychologists, designers and research workers in other fields are trying to understand and establish objective rules that will enable us to use these means of visual communication with increasing precision.

The growing use of symbols such as road signs and trademarks on a worldwide scale demands absolute clarity of expression. It is no longer possible to confine oneself to local tastes. If a visual message is going to get across to people of different languages and backgrounds it is essential that the message does not lend itself to wrong interpretations. Another point is the speed at which signs can be read, though now we are pretty well trained to take them in in the blinking of an eye. Reading them is a matter of conditioning, and we do it without thinking, as when we put our foot on the brake when we see a red light. We are surrounded by countless

visual stimuli, posters that flash past the car windows, lighted signs, blinking lights, images that crowd in upon us on every side, and all intent on telling us something. We have already made a catalogue of stimuli in our own minds, and the process goes on without pause. Almost without realizing it we arrange these images in order, rejecting those that do not interest us. We already know that road signs occur at a certain height above the ground and have exactly those shapes and colours and no others.

Putting things in pigeon-holes like this helps us to make snap readings of signs, and today it is important to have quick reflexes, so as not to waste time, or worse.



All over the world this kind of lettering conveys an immediate message: 'strip cartoon'. Even before we read what it says. It goes without saying that an essay on Giotto as an architect ought not to have a title in such lettering. I know this is an exaggeration, and that no one would in fact think of using lettering like this for such a subject, but exaggeration often throws light upon the negative aspects of a problem (in this case a problem of graphic design). Between these letters and the right kind for the job there is a vast range of letters to choose from, both printed and drawn, and countless ways of arranging the title. Often a firm unwilling to call in a graphic designer will use lettering suited to cheese to present a book of famous artists, and we may see an advertisement for the Bible which looks at first sight as if it were trying to sell us beer.

So we all have inside us (naturally with some variation from person to person) groups of images, forms and colours which have exact meanings. There are masculine forms and colours and feminine forms and colours, warm colours and cold colours, images of violence and images of gentleness, images connected with culture and the arts and others that are just plain vulgar. It goes without saying that if I have to publicize a cultural campaign on behalf of works of art I must not use vulgar colours, lettering associated with ads for canned foods, or a brash method of composition. On the contrary, I must immediately convey the idea that here we are dealing with something lofty and not to be compared in any way with commonplace things. A lot of people think that the public does not understand such matters, but it is not a question of understanding. There is a whole mechanism already at work on its own, quite independent of logic or reason. It is true that a badly designed poster will have some effect if the walls are smothered with it, but a good poster would achieve the same results less wastefully by giving more pleasure.

Unhappily there is a lot of confusion and waste in these messages that surround us. They often weary us with their petulance, their insistence on cramming things we don't want down our throats, and (what is worse) doing it clumsily.

There is one American catalogue that gives a choice of one thousand two hundred colours, and that's not all of them. In the face of this one simply cannot go on using the same red as a background for quite different products, for car tyres, perfumes and foodstuffs, as if one had no other resources. The eye of the beholder is hopelessly muddled, and his first impression, which will determine whether he is interested or not, is a vague and indefinite one.

The same can be said of form. There are things on sale that demand a tremendous effort to guess at their proper use. With the confusion of form that persists today a brush can look like a cat, a lamp like a weighing machine, a home like an office and an office like a drawing-room, a bank like an electrician's workshop and a church like a stand at the Earls Court Exhibition.

The Stylists

One of the commonest aspects of design, and one of the most facile, is styling. It is within the scope of all those who have artistic stirrings, who sign their work with a generous flutter of calligraphy as if setting their mark on a romantic masterpiece, and whose lips are constantly laden with the words Poetry and Art.

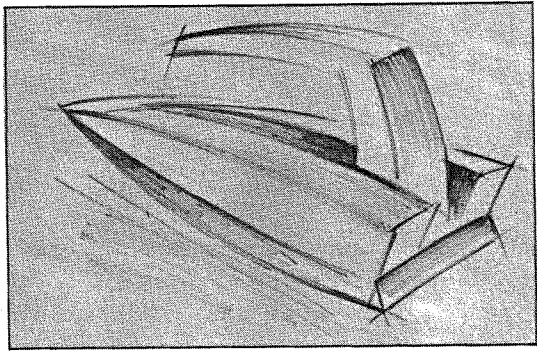
Styling is a kind of industrial designing, and of all branches of design the most ephemeral and superficial. It does no more than give a veneer of fashion, a contemporary 'look', to any object whatever. The stylist works for the quick turnover, and takes his ideas from the fads of the day. The 'aero-dynamic' period was the Golden Age for stylists.

What most interests a stylist is line, sculptural form, a bizarre idea. A little science fiction does no harm and a sense of elegance is basic.

The project (let's say a car body) is first sketched out with coloured pencils. The stylist strikes while the iron is hot, perhaps making a thumbnail sketch on the back of a cigarette packet. The great thing is to get it down before inspiration cools. Then it is worked out in more detail and on a bigger scale, using artists' charcoals. This second sketch is always done with a great flaunting of perspective and with dazzling

highlights: the car is shown by night on a wet road so as to make the utmost of these highlights. One sees something similar in those drawings of seaside and suburban villas in which the clouds behind and the tree before the house make ever such a nice picture.

They then make a plaster model, as sculptors do, and the joints and relative volumes are studied. While the stylist is at work he feels all the great artists of the past breathing over his shoulder, and he wants his design to be worthy of standing beside the Venus de Milo or a Palladian villa without looking foolish: indeed, these styled cars often are photographed standing confidently in front of some masterpiece of the past.



Is this a flatiron or a speedboat? Someone turned up this sketch by the famous American stylist Bernard Tettamanzi (it was he who created that fabulous car for Peter Zunzer), but there is no scale marked on the drawing. There is no way of knowing the life-size of the object sketched out in such a masterly fashion with the point of a Flomaster. It could be an iron, it could be a speedboat. Opinions vary. Maybe it's simply a handle with a handle on it. In any case, it's got *style*.

In the United States stylists are responsible for giving a new look to a car or other object that has flooded the market and is no longer selling. Leaving the vital parts inside the car alone, they dress it up in a new suit, launch a new fashion and spread the word that the old style is Out. So everyone who sets great store by his dignity rushes out to buy the new model for fear of being thought old hat.

What does fashion actually do? It sells you a suit made of a material that could last five years, and as soon as you have bought it tells you that you can't wear it any longer because a newer one has already been created. The same principle can be used to sell anything. The motto of styling is 'It's Out'. As soon as one thing is sold they must invent another to supersede it.

The stylist therefore works by contrasts. If curves were In yesterday, square corners are In today. Out with delicate colours, in with bright ones. It is well known that women's fashions work the same way. A fashionable colour reaches saturation point and everyone longs only to see its opposite, so that an excess of violet produces a desire for yellow. After a season of violet, then, one can fairly reliably predict a season of yellow.

Obviously this way of carrying on is quite different from the true designer's working method, for the designer takes no notice of the styles and forms of 'pure' art for the simple reason that a statue and a car body are two distinct problems, and the colours of a painting have nothing in common with the colours of mass-produced plastic objects.

A designer with a personal style, arrived at *a priori*, is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as a personal style in a designer's work. While a job is in hand, be it a lamp, a radio set, an electrical gadget or an experimental object, his sole

concern is to arrive at the solution suggested by the thing itself and its destined use. Therefore different things will have different forms, and these will be determined by their different uses and the different materials and techniques employed.

Mystery Art

The children come out of school happy and laughing, strolling contentedly along or running at full tilt, shouting good-byes to one another and snapping their books shut in each other's faces, pushing and shoving and thumping backs. They go home on foot or by bike or in the vast black limousine chauffeured by a peaked cap and a pair of white gloves.

But meanwhile an idea has been implanted in their minds that will be difficult to change for the rest of their lives. Among other things, they have learnt that art is confined to painting, sculpture, poetry and architecture. . . . That painting is done with oil on canvas, that sculpture is three-dimensional and made of bronze or marble, that poetry is language made to rhyme, that architecture. . . . That the most beautiful art is that of the distant past, that modern art stopped being good after the Impressionists, that visual art imitates nature, and that in painting and sculpture there must be a meaning (that is, a literary content) or it is not art.

And in fact you only have to go to a proper museum to see what visual art really is, and how paintings and pieces of sculpture have to be made, with due allowance for different styles and periods of course, and of course with the exception of our own period.

Then perhaps these children happen to see an exhibition of modern sculpture, and come face to face with a perfectly flat statue, a statue with no profile and no third dimension, or a painting with coloured things stuck on to its surface, in which the *bas relief* effect is of the greatest importance. A painting in three dimensions. And yet the three-dimensional picture is behind glass in a gilt frame and the two-dimensional statue is on a pedestal. How are they to come to terms with these contradictions?

But this is nothing compared with what they might meet with later on. For example, a huge painting expressing social protest, with poor peasants being kicked to death by capitalists (a very expensive painting, such as you will only find in the drawing-rooms of capitalist country houses on the shores of Lake Como). But this picture is done in Impressionist-Cubist style, using strong colours and a very simple pictorial design, because although it is a unique piece and very expensive it has to be readily understood by everyone. Or take another kind of protest picture, made of rubbish, rags and old iron (there are pieces of sculpture like this too) all thrown together into a frame, though naturally by the hand of an artist. This is a work of art, a *unique* work of art, and very nice it will look — such an artistic contrast — among the cut glass and shining silverware of a prosperous middle-class home. It will bear witness to how indulgent we solid men are towards the wicked artist.

How is it that our times are producing such works of art? A realistic monochrome picture of a lavatory seat. A transparent plastic box full of second-hand dentures. A tinned blackbird signed by the artist. Ten one pound tins of the same. A tailor's dummy painted white, a canvas bundle tied with 100,000 different pieces of string, a machine that does your

doodles for you. A picture made by pouring on paint at random. A postcard of Portsmouth twelve feet by six. A toothpaste tube twelve yards long. A blown-up detail of a strip-cartoon.

Is this not perhaps the mirror of our society, where the incompetent landlubbers are at the helm, where deceit is the rule, where hypocrisy is mistaken for respecting the opinions of others, where human relationships are falsified, where corruption is the norm, where scandals are hushed up, where a thousand laws are made and none obeyed?

But what about the art critics whose job it is to explain these things and make them clear? What have they got to say about it? They say that here we have a lyric poem in pure frontal visuality that avoids three-dimensional language in order to reinstate man in the field of semantic-entropic discourse so as to achieve a new dimension that is quite the reverse of Kitsch and exists on the plane of objectivized and reversible Time as Play. . . .

That is why young people are all in love with the Beatles and live in houses with good solid nineteenth-century pictures, like the pictures they are taught about at school.

Why have we become like gods as technologists and like devils as moral beings, supermen in science and idiots in aesthetics — idiots above all in the Greek sense of absolutely isolated individuals, incapable of communicating among themselves or understanding one another? (*Lewis Mumford*)