

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/open-arts-objects>

Teaching Support Sheet

Presenter: Dr Clare Taylor

Work: Anonymous designer, vinyl wallpaper, 1960s (collection of the presenter)

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/resource/open-arts-object-1960s-vinyl-wallpaper>

In this film Clare Taylor looks at an object made in the 1960s, a vinyl backed wallpaper in a floral design. She explores the design and its manufacture and speculates about how it may have been intended to be used. The film also contextualises the wallpaper as part of wider trends in 1960s design, and the associated activities encourage students to explore this aspect further.

Before watching the film

Questions to ask your students before watching the film (students to complete on the attached form)

1. What do you know about the 1960s?
2. What do you think this object represents?
3. How do you think it was made?
4. What function do you think the object serves?

After watching the film

Questions to ask your students after watching the film.

1. What effects (aesthetic, social, political etc) do you think the designer was trying to achieve in this work?

This wallpaper is designed for dramatic aesthetic effects; less a background pattern than a clear statement of a taste for bold and vibrant patterns. It also reflects wider social and cultural trends in that the flat printed floral recalls associations with the counter culture, especially youth movements, of the 1960s, including the hippy movement's 'Flower Power'. The vibrant palette also references an interest in psychedelic colours seen elsewhere in 1960s designs for textiles and interiors.

2. Has the film helped you define some of the formal elements of the object? Consider scale, subject matter, medium, and other formal elements

The pattern's repeat is noted in the film; at 61 cms it is very large. Clare also explains that it makes careful use of a restricted range of six warm colours to overprint and create variety within the design, which is based around three large flowers with different numbers of petals. The process of manufacture is also outlined; paper is coated in a vinyl, which gives the colours a matt effect and also strengthens the wallpaper (and makes it 'wipe clean'). One well-known brand of vinyl wallpapers was ICI's 'Vymura' range,

launched in 1961. The flat floral subject matter is also a radical departure from the careful observation of natural forms characteristic of designers such as William Morris, and is more akin to developments in Pop Art.

3. Does it have a recognisable purpose or function? Does this relate to the time period in which it was made? This design would be very large on a domestic wall.

Clare suggests it may have been intended to be hung in a building designed with large areas of glass, perhaps on one wall such as the fireplace. She also notes that pink is a colour we often gender as female, so this paper may have been aimed at young women as part of 1960s design attempts to appeal to the youth market. However, vinyl papers were also marketed as suitable for kitchens and bathrooms due to their resistance to damp.

4. How has this film helped your understanding of 1960s design?

Although the film points out some key trends in 1960s design, it also notes the association with Art Nouveau, which flourished in continental Europe during the early 1900s and was revived in the 1960s. There are also links to open plan living, another trend, in the reference to the airy spaces of 1960s architecture.

5. What is its relevance for today?

Wallpaper gives us insights into how trends in contemporary design were made available to a mass market; and this example shows how that was achieved in the 1960s. In the past, everyday items such as wallpaper would not have been kept. This roll is unused, so the colours are unfaded. It is also associated with memory, in that it belonged to a female relative of the presenter and wallpaper often evokes strong memories of place.

Comparative analysis

A comparative analysis with a wallpaper designed for Morris & Company (see grid below).

You could also compare the design with another you have found through doing one of the online activities below.

Students could also look at examples of prints in paper or textiles; the work could even be linked to practical projects for A Level Art. You could make a comparative analysis with a wallpaper designed for Morris & Company, the 'Daisy', 1864. Museum no. E.443-1919, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (see grid below). <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O248431/daisy-wallpaper-morris-william/>

You can find more information about William Morris and his work on the Victoria & Albert Museum website here: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/w/william-morris/>

You could also compare the design with another you have found through doing one of the online activities below.

You could also look at examples of prints in paper or textiles; the work might be linked to projects for A Level Art, DT, Textiles and so on.

Online Activity

1. To help you get a sense of the wider context look up some 1960s wallpaper and textile designers and manufacturers online: such as Terence Conran/Conran Fabrics, Shirley Craven/Hull Traders, John Piper/Sandersons, Vymura, Eddie Squires/Warner's, Isobel Colquhoun/Simpson & Godlee

2. Chose an institution with wallpaper in its collections (see links below) to explore similarities and differences with this design: Whitworth Art Gallery, Geffrye Museum of the Home (currently closed for redevelopment), William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, or the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Bibliography

Lesley Hoskins (ed) *The Papered Wall*, Thames & Hudson, 2nd ed 2005, Chapter 12: Mary Schoeser, 'Off the Shelf: Design and Consumer Trends since 1970'

Lesley Jackson, *20th Century Pattern Design: Textile and wallpaper pioneers*, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

Resources online

Whitworth Art Gallery wallpaper collection

<http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/collection/ourcollection/wallpaper/>

Victoria & Albert Museum wallpaper collection <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/w/wallpaper/>

Geffrye Museum of the Home: 1960s Period Room https://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/explore-the-geffrye/period_rooms/living-room-1965/

Design Museum, London <https://designmuseum.org/?gclid=CN6BsYy0utQCFUSeGwod-1UEmA>

Comparative Analysis Table

Anonymous designer, vinyl backed paper, machine printed	William Morris <i>The Daisy</i>, wallpaper hand printed from wood blocks
1960s	1864 (pattern registered)
Unknown manufacturer ?ICI Vymura	Jeffrey & Co
Large scale repeat	Smaller scale repeat
Floral pattern based around three flowers with varying numbers of petals, inspired by Art Nouveau forms and 1960s art and design	Floral pattern based around two plants on a background imitating grass, inspired by Medieval manuscripts
Owned by presenter	In V&A Collection: E.441-1919, part of pattern book
Never hung	Pattern still in production