

# History of Italian Design

**Instructor: Franco Pisani**

Credits: 3

Contact hrs/wk: 3

## Course description

Italian design: imagination and exactitude.

The verb “to design” refers to the process of starting and developing a plan for a new object (machine, building, product, etc.). As a noun, "design" is used both for the final plan or proposal (a drawing, model, or other description), or the result of implementing that plan or proposal (the object being produced).

Lately “design” has become an adjective, designating an added quality for objects and attitudes.

“Made in Italy” has been traditionally a brand embodying at once the three aforesaid meanings. As is well known, Italy has always played a major role in the development of design, craft, and style.

This course will focus on the history of design and production in Italy from the industrial revolution to the present, ranging from industrial, to product, to furniture design. In doing so, we will pay attention to the extraordinary blend of imagination and exactitude that characterizes Italy.

During the semester we will trespass into the world of fashion design as well as that of car styling. Particular importance will be given to the parallel production of visual arts, cinema, literature and other fields of culture.

After a brief (and necessary) narrative on the international history of design from the XVIII to the early XXI centuries (the rise of consumerism and mass production, the Arts and Crafts movement, the Bauhaus ethics, etc.) the course will focus on Italy and Italian designers.

Each lecture will focus on one decade of the recent 150 years of Italian design. Each designer and his/her work and each object/family of objects will be presented in their cultural and productive context, together with the technical and semantic background behind their success.

## Goals and Outcomes

The general aim of this course is to understand the role of "design" within Italian culture.

After completing this unit, students should be able to explain and contextualize the work of a designer through a presentation, in which they will develop criteria and create links and comparisons between different objects or pieces of furniture.

Students should be able to analyze similar product types through a comparison of innovative features, function, aesthetic and visual appeal, as well as economic, social and environmental benefits and costs.

## Methodologies

From the presentation of case studies the class will focus on artists, designers, producers as well as actual makers.

Key figures during the semester will be designers such as : Gio Ponti, Richard Ginori, Venini, Albini, Bottoni, Figini e Pollini, Lingeri, Terragni, Giuseppe Pagano and Edoardo Persico, Giacosa, Fiat, Lancia, Piaggio, Olivetti, Marco Zanuso, Achille Castiglioni, Piergiacomo Castiglioni , Gino Valle, Ignazio Gardella, Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Vico Magistretti, Ettore Sottsass, Marco Zanuso, Mario Bellini, Vico Magistretti, Gae Aulenti, Angelo Mangiarotti, Enzo Mari, Branzi, Deganello, Alessi, De Lucchi, Sottsass.

The class consists of three weekly contact hours, divided into two lectures of 90 minutes each.

A detailed schedule of appointments will be made during the first meeting, thus becoming available during the second week of class.

## **Prerequisites and Requirements**

There are no prerequisites. This class is at an introductory, basic level. As such, it is open to all majors. However, a general knowledge of art history (especially XX century) is recommended.

## **Exams and Assignments**

**Presentation:** During the semester, students will work on two short individual papers in form of journal's article.

The first paper (due for midterms on week 7) will be about an object, the second (due for week 14, that is, the end of the semester) about a designer.

For these assignments students must prepare an article in hardcopy + pdf format. To write this article (consisting of at least 10 pages plus notes, images, and bibliography) students will have to put together – in a well-organized format – graphic materials and written criticism on both the general work and a specific object of the designer they have chosen. A complete and rigorous bibliography (citing all the books and essays used to carry out this research) is mandatory. The same is true of notes to the text with reference to books, magazines, journals, and websites.

In grading presentations and articles, attention will be paid to both content (quantity and quality of the issues chosen to develop the topic, commitment to research, capacity to create links and comment on them) and layout (effective presentation graphics to reinforce and explain the main points and to highlight the organization of the presentation; use of graphics that are both easy to see and understand; professional approach; appropriate content graphics such as tables and illustrations; effective use of speech and respect of time limits).

The works will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Completeness and appropriateness of arguments and terminology.

Originality of ideas and support of criticisms.

Spelling, grammar, and absence of mechanical errors.

Clear and compelling graphic format.

Correctness of notes and references.

Students are strongly encouraged to use original material (especially for images and critiques), thus sharpening their ability to analyze and evaluate.

Should issues of academic dishonesty arise (e.g., plagiarism), the teacher will refer the students to the written institute policy on such matters (see ISI Florence Student Handbook).

A list of libraries in Florence will be given, as well as a list of design shops where students will have the opportunity to see and touch design objects which are currently produced.

Assignment topics will be given during the first week of classes.

## **Test**

Students will take a written test on the topics discussed in the lectures. This test will cover four different sessions, during weeks #3-6-11-14 of the semester. It will consist of a series of 5X4=20 quizzes and open questions on topics (object and designers) addressed in weeks 1-13 and on mandatory readings (see point 9 below for details). The students' answers will be graded as follows:

0 points: no answer or totally wrong

1 point: weak and partially incorrect answer

2 points: correct answer

## **Criteria, Grading Method, and Standards**

Assignments must be completed on time. Late submissions will not be graded. This is a design class; therefore, the quality of your work is of utmost importance.

Final grades will be calculated according to the following breakdown:

Midterm (Assignment1)	20%
Final article (Assignment2)	30%
Test (4x10%)	40%
Participation	10%

Grading scale:

A\_ excellent

A- \_very good

B+ \_good

B\_ average

B- \_fair

C+ \_Satisfactory

C\_ Poor

C- \_Very poor

D\_ Barely passing (earns credit but may not fulfill requirement for a major)

F\_ failure

### **Attendance, Participation, and Behavior**

Attendance is mandatory (10% of final grade).

You are required to attend every class. If you cannot make it to class, always notify your instructor in advance. Should you be unable to attend a lesson because of health issues, please show the teacher a doctor's note when you return to class.

Two missed classes will lower the final grade; more than three unexcused absences can result in automatic failure of the course.

Chronic tardiness (3 times) will be regarded as one absence.

Lateness, excessive coming-and-going, and leaving early are disruptive, disrespectful, and unacceptable.

Make-up classes, site visits and trips are always mandatory, as they are part of the course program. If there happens to be a time-conflict with another class, the student is required to inform both instructors in advance. The instructors will then share a written justification for the class that is going to be missed.

Please refer to the main school rules and the conduct code that you find in the ISI Florence Student Handbook. Students are required to behave properly on the school premises. Classrooms are to be left in order and clean. Students must take care of available equipment and materials and promptly report any damage or loss. Students are required to read and respect the specific studio rules, especially during open-studio time. Active and responsible participation is an important component of student work. Be efficient and learn to develop good time-management skills. You are expected to participate actively in all discussions and pin-ups.

Unless required by the teacher for learning activities, students are not allowed to check their iPhones, Smartphones, cell phones, and laptops while in class. The same applies to wearing earbuds or headsets of any sort. Students who do not respect this rule will be considered absent from class without any reasonable justification.

### **Textbook, Bibliography and Sources**

- Luca Cottini The Art of Objects. The Birth of Italian Industrial Culture, 1878-1928 University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division 2018

- Franca Santi Gualtieri A Trip Through Italian Design Edizioni Corraini, 2007
- Giampiero Bosoni, Paola Antonelli Italian Design The Museum of Modern Art, 2008
- Enrico Colle, 500 Years of Italian Furniture: Magnificence and Design Skira, 2009
- G. Cogeval, G. Bosoni Il Modo Italiano: Italian Design and Avant-garde in the 20th Century Skira 2006
- N. Bornsen-Holtmann, Italian Design, Taschen 1995
- Bernhard E. Burdek Design: The History, Theory and Practice of Product Design Birkhäuser, 2005
- Stephen Bayley, Terence Conran Design: Intelligence Made Visible Firefly Books, 2007
- Andrea Branzi, Introduzione al design italiano. Una modernità incompleta, Baldini e Castoldi, 2008
- Renato De Fusco, Storia del design, Laterza 1985
- Karl Mang, The History of Modern Furniture, Harry N Abrams, 1979
- Alberto Bassi, Design anonimo in Italia, Electa 2007
- Paola Antonelli, Steven Guarnaccia, Achille Castiglioni Corraini 2000
- Sergio Polano, Achille Castiglioni 1918-2002, Electa 2006
- Gio Ponti, In Praise Of Architecture F.W. Dodge Corporation(1960)
- Peter Lang Life without objects Skira 2003

### **Required Readings**

In addition to the required readings indicated in the weekly schedule (below), handouts and readings on each topic will be distributed on a regular basis. Students are expected to read and study them carefully.

Specialized texts and a wide range of international journals are available in the institute library, serving as supplementary information to the teacher's explanations and as references for student papers.

### **Visits and Trips**

Some mandatory site visits will be organized during the semester; related details and itineraries will be available soon after the beginning of the semester.

Other visits (e.g., visits to temporary exhibits) can be arranged during the semester.

When a visit is scheduled, make sure you know the exact meeting point and how to get there. Also, be aware that there might be changes in the visit schedule. Please don't be late at the meeting point, as the class will not wait for you to start the visit. A late arrival will be regarded as an absence. Finally, make sure you always have your map with you and know where to go.

Please note that sometimes lectures are not held at the institute and the meeting point might not be in class!

Make sure you know the exact meeting point for each class and how to get there. Students cannot be excused for missing lectures/visits because they got lost! Likewise, delays are not admissible!

If attendance is taken at the end of a visit, no excuses will be accepted for not being there.

Students will get a 3 HOUR ABSENCE even for missing only the very last 10 minutes of a visit.

### **Schedule**

Week 1 Jan 13 - 15  
Intro to History of Italian Design  
Class discussion: Design noun or verb?

Week 2 Jan 20 - 22  
Designing on the Edge  
Reading: Alberto Alessi - Borderline  
The Moka  
Reading: Andrea Branzi - The Seven Obsession of Italian Design

Week 3 Jan 27 - 29

Between Craftsmanship and Industry: The Early years of Italian Design Part 1

Reading: Irene de Guttry, Maria Paola Maino - From Artist-Artisans to Architect-Designers

Between Craftsmanship and Industry: The Early years of Italian Design Part 2

Reading: Giampiero Bosoni - What is Italian Design? Part 1

Test # 1

Week 4 Feb 3 - 5

1910 - 1920 Futurism

Reading: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti - The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism and Antonio Sant'Elia: The manifesto of futurist architecture

Class Discussion: An Object made my day!

Reading: Norman Potter - What is Good Design?

Week 5 Feb 10 - 12

1920 - 1930 Stile Novento & Razionalism : Two Identities of Italian Design

Reading: Giampiero Bosoni - What is Italian Design? Part 2

Giuseppe Terragni

Week 6 Feb 17 - 19

1930 - 1940 Between the wars: Design Consolidates

Reading: Giampiero Bosoni - Of the Modo Italiano and its ways

Gio Ponti

Reading: Gio Ponti - In praise of Architecture

Test # 2

Week 7 Feb 24 - 26

Mid-term Presentations

Week 8 Feb 28 - Mar 8

Reading: Karl Mang - Chiavari 'S "CAMPANINO" or, How to Improve on a Traditional Form and Vittorio Gregotti - Architectural Culture and Industrial Design in Italy

Week 9 Mar 9 - 11

1945 - 1955 Afterwar and Reconstruction

Vespa and Fiat 500

Reading: Fiat group - Fiat 500 50 years

Week 10 Mar 16 - 18

1955 - 1965 The Boom

Reading: A Fondazione Adriano Olivetti and Patrizia Bonifazio Paolo Scrivano - Olivetti: Products and Image

The Castiglioni

Week 11 Mar 23 - 25

1965 - 1975 Italian Design: New Domestic Landscape

Reading: Giampiero Bosoni - What is Italian Design? Part 3 and Gianni Pettena - Radicals

Radicals

Test # 3

Mar 27: Field Trip - Milano, Triennale Museum, Casa Studio Castiglioni

Week 12

Mar 30 - Apr 1

1975 - 1985 Postmodernisms

Reading: Giampiero Bosoni - What Is Italian Design? Part 4

Enzo Mari

Week 13

Apr 6 - 8

1985 - 1995 Italian Design Spreads

Reading: Alchimia Manifesto and Officina Alessi

Class discussion: Change by Design, Paradigms for Sustainability

Reading: Michael Braungart - Is sustainability boring?

Week 14

Apr 13 - 15

1995 - 2005 No Design

Reading: Dejan Sudjic - Archetypes

Class discussion: Design exclusive or inclusive?

Test # 4

Week 15

Apr 20 - 22

2005 - 2011 New Trends in Italian Design

Reading: Dejan Sudjic - Language

Philippe Stark

Week 16

Apr 27

Final Presentations Comments and Feedback