**Design in the World Around You​**

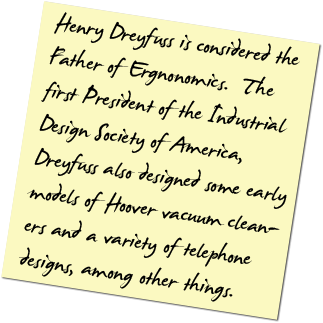
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| C:\Users\ian\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\8-18-2017-image1.jpg  Objects that you use in your everyday life have been designed specially for their specific purposes. |

Objects that you use in your everyday life have been designed specially for their specific purposes.  
  
Take a quick look around. You probably see a desk, chair, textbook, clock, maybe even a car. Have you ever wondered who decided what all of this stuff should look like and how it would function? Perhaps you’ve noticed that your clock has tick marks instead of numbers or discovered that the menu system on your DVD player is difficult to use. The desk you’re sitting at right now, no matter how simple it may seem, had to be designed to ensure it wouldn’t collapse while you work! From the cover of your algebra textbook to every engineered detail of the car you drive, somebody had to decide what those items would look like and how they would function. (Of course, just because something has been designed doesn’t necessarily mean it was designed well. Take that confusing menu system on your DVD player for example!)

**Objectives**

* Define design and differentiate design from art
* Identify the intentions of a visual design, and evaluate how well the design meets these intentions

# Design versus Art

A piece of design is a piece of art. But not all art is design. Confusing, huh? One can go on and on discussing the definitions of art and design without ever actually coming up with a set of definitions that everyone would agree with! Just know that design and art are two different things. For the most part, **art** is the product of human creativity and expression, while design is the purposeful organization or plan of something that may or may not be artful in its execution. Artists create; designers plan.

## Decoration

Now that you have a pretty good idea of what design is and what it involves, let’s take a look at another word: decoration. What is decoration? How is it different from design? Well, **decoration** can be described as eye candy, while design is more like brain food. Decoration usually shows up as swishes and swashes, drop shadows on text, clip art, or animated images, just to name a few examples.

Decoration serves only one purpose: **aesthetics**—the appreciation of beauty or good taste. You can take away these aesthetic things from a design and the design will still achieve its purpose of communication or functionality. Decoration is unnecessary to design; it doesn’t enhance the communication or functionality of a design. As a matter of fact, decoration can be distracting. Have you ever visited a website that used a lot of animated images? Sure, they’re cute, at least at first, but can’t that get annoying after a while? However, that doesn’t mean decoration is always a bad thing. If used well, decoration can really enhance a design.

# Design versus Art (cont.)

## Ornament

Sometimes decoration is necessary. **Ornament** is a decorative element that serves a purpose, such as the niches on the exterior of the Alamo. These niches may look unnecessary, and therefore decorative, but they were created to serve a purpose. The Alamo is a Spanish mission that was built as a church in the 1700s. Its niches were created to hold religious statues. As you can see from the picture below, they are highly decorative, but since they were created to serve a purpose, they are considered ornaments. Also look at the picture on the right below. Columns are ornamental in design when they are decorated with fluting or twisted to add visual appeal. This column serves a purpose by supporting a staircase, but it is decorative as well.



# Design versus Art (cont.)

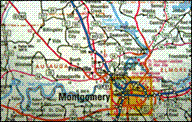
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| C:\Users\ian\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\8-18-2017-image5.gif   This announcement has several decorations that distract the reader from the main message. |
| C:\Users\ian\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\8-18-2017-image6.gif   This announcement is less distracting than the first option. |

## Decoration on Graphics

What about graphics? Are graphics considered to be decoration or are they part of design? Well, that depends on the graphic’s purpose. Is the graphic there simply to add interest, or does it help to illustrate a point? Remember, if it doesn’t enhance the design’s purpose, it’s probably just decoration.  
  
You can see that the announcement on the right is crowded with drop shadows on the text and clip art images, all of which are unnecessary. These elements don’t enhance the message. So, the clip art and the drop shadows are definitely decoration. Is there anything else? What about the thick blue border around the page? That’s unnecessary as well, isn’t it? What about the white box with the black border. Do you think this box is decoration, too? Does the box serve any purpose? In this case, the answer is yes. The white box enhances the message by drawing attention to the most important information on the page, so it’s not considered decoration.  
  
It may be interesting to look at, but all of this extra decoration is distracting; it detracts from the purpose of the poster.  
  
This second poster, on the other hand, is straightforward, clean, and very easy to read and understand. There’s nothing wrong with using a little bit of decoration; just don’t use so much that it distracts from the item’s intended purpose. For example, the artist kept the thick blue border because it adds a little bit of interest and draws the viewer’s attention to the message without being too distracting.  
  
Which poster do you think communicates the message more clearly? Remember, design is more about communicating a message and less about being attractive or cool. When you focus on communication, the second poster is better designed, even if it may not be as interesting or colorful.

# Is this Design?

**Complete the following activities.**  
  
Look at each of the following images. For each, identify whether it is design and defend your position.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Look at each of the following images. For each, identify whether it is design and defend your decision.

1. Possible response: This business card for Grapple Technologies, Inc., is a great example of design. Remember, design involves planning, and it definitely took some planning and creativity to design this business card. Sure, some might argue that it contains some decoration, such as the large grapple-like shape on the left side of the card. But this shape also provides a nice touch of interest and a sense of balance for the design. It also creates dominance by drawing attention. By making this shape the most dominant element in the composition, the designer created a hierarchy, or an order of importance. The grapple shape is the most dominant feature, making it the most important part of the design without taking away from the design’s purpose.  
     
   The intended purpose for this design is to make the contact information for Grapple Technologies, Inc.’s employees available in a portable format. This card serves its purpose to a tee. It’s professional, clean, and really kind of cool!
2. Possible response: If you’ve ever traveled across the country, I’m sure you’ve seen a sign or two like this one (unless you were asleep in the backseat). You might be wondering, “How is this design? It’s full of decoration!” It’s true. The flower inside the shape of the state and the blue lines in the background are all decoration. Plus, the way each letter S intertwines with the other might be considered unnecessary.

Keep in mind, though, that the purpose of this sign is to make you feel welcome and to let you know which state you’re entering! The repetition provided by the curves in the S letters adds interest and make the design more welcoming. I think these little embellishments serve the design quite well.

1. Possible response: This might be the result of a designer’s effort to solve a problem. This is how I imagine the situation: Someone needed a flagpole, but couldn’t obtain one for some reason. Perhaps he couldn’t afford one. So, what’s he going to do? He looks outside and sees a light pole and gets to thinking. “Hmmm . . . a light pole is almost a flagpole.” And there you go.  
     
   You can argue both ways whether this is design or not, but even those who say it is design will probably agree that it’s not good design. Sure, it serves its purpose and it’s creative, but it looks pretty ridiculous!
2. Possible response: A map is design? Yes. It’s quite a complicated design process, as a matter of fact. This is a great example of a designer creating something in response to a problem. The designer had to think of creative ways to differentiate country roads, highways, rivers, railroad tracks, interstates, and so forth. Choosing which cities to label and which to not, indicating distance between landmarks, visually differentiating between capital cities, and large and small cities are only a handful of the decisions map designers are faced with. Then, on top of all that, the designer has to organize all this information into one small space without crowding it so much that it’s left illegible.  
     
   Designing a map may not seem like such a complicated process to you because you’ve seen a ton of maps in your lifetime. But imagine how the first mapmaker felt having to make all these decisions without any previous maps to look at for guidance.
3. Possible response: Here’s another interesting example of design! The problem the designer may have faced here is how to attract people’s attention as they’re driving down the highway. There are so many billboards, pit stops, signs, traffic, and who knows what else stealing drivers’ attentions . . . not to mention all the activity going on within the vehicles! With all of that other stuff competing for drivers’ attention, it must have been a pretty tough design decision. However, this sign definitely grabs peoples’ attention, so I’d say it’s a pretty successful design.

## Design vs. Art

In your own words, answer the following lesson review questions:

1. What is design and how does it differ from art or decoration? Give an example of art and an example of design.
2. Why would putting up posters in your room, arranging a vase of flowers, and getting racing stripes painted on your car all be decoration rather than design?

# Answers

1. What is design and how does it differ from art or decoration? Give an example of art and an example of design.  
   Possible response: Art is something created as the result of a person pulling his or her creativity together with an idea to create something special or different. Design is the practical application or solution of a plan intended to create something that remembers the purpose and application of the design. The Mona Lisa is a work of art. Including a photo of it in a brochure that advertises a museum containing the original Mona Lisa would be an example of design.
2. Why would putting up posters in your room, arranging a vase of flowers, and getting racing stripes painted on your car all be decoration rather than design?   
   Possible response: Decoration is for eye appeal, while design is to carry a message. Each of these items is more about having something nice to look at rather than about carrying a message to the viewer.