Designed to Inspire

A HISTORY OF DESIGN EDUCATION IN DUNDEE
Text by Matthew Jarron

Produced by the University of Dundee Museum Services to accompany the exhibition Designed to Inspire in the Lamb Gallery, July-October 2018.

The quotation by Myer Lacome on the following page is from Richard Carr's unpublished history of Duncan of Jordanstone College (1992), held in the Art College Library.

Front cover: Design for printed fabric by John Symington, 1951 (University of Dundee Museum Services, DJCAD Collection)

Above: Examples of enamelled metalwork by students, 1890s (DJCAD Library)
In 1978, Myer Lacome became Principal of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. Having previously been Head of Design at the College, one of his first initiatives was an attempt to persuade the local and regional authorities to support his dream of establishing a major contemporary design museum on Dundee’s waterfront:

“I believed that Dundee had a unique opportunity to have a great architectural landmark on Riverside Drive which could take the form of a museum/gallery housing a collection of internationally acclaimed 20th century masterpieces of design and craft... In my view the Tay estuary needed - and still needs - a major architectural landmark at the entrance to the city, one comparable to the Sydney Opera House, for example.”

40 years later, Lacome’s vision has finally been realised with the opening of the V&A Dundee, and again the starting point was Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, this time through former Head of Design and Dean Georgina Follett. With Dundee having been designated a UNESCO City of Design in 2014, an exciting new chapter has begun in the story of design education in Dundee.

Poster design by A E Horne, student at Dundee Technical Institute, 1890s (DJCAD Library)
Furniture designs by students Tom Petrie and George Wilson, reproduced in *The Studio*, 1902 (DJCAD Library)

The teaching of design formally began in 1856 with the founding of Dundee School of Art, based at the High School. At that time art and design were taught as one subject, from a syllabus set by the Science & Art department at South Kensington, London. Most of the course involved copying from classical casts and other models, with little original design being undertaken. Several smaller art schools also operated in Dundee in the second half of the 19th century but all of them were disbanded in 1901 following a nationwide review of technical and art teaching by the recently established Scotch (later renamed Scottish) Education Department. Instead, the Dundee Technical Institute was named one of the four Central Schools in Scotland with a remit to teach advanced-level art and design.
The Technical Institute was founded in 1888 on Small’s Wynd (the building still survives next door to the Tower) but proper design teaching only commenced with the arrival of Thomas Delgaty Dunn as art master in 1892. He introduced a wider range of subjects, including “Technical Design for Embroidery, Painting, Lithography, Engraving, Pottery etc”.

In 1910 the Institute (now renamed Dundee Technical College & School of Art) moved to larger premises on Bell Street, allowing Delgaty Dunn to aim towards teaching the full four-year Diploma course in Design recently introduced by the Scottish Education Department. Approval of that was eventually granted in 1915 and Dundee’s first two Design graduates were Winifred Hean and Louise Milne one year later.

Embroidered panel for screen by Louise Milne, reproduced in The Studio, 1917 (DJCAD Library)
As the Art School expanded new staff were employed and a separate Design department was established in 1922, headed by Alexander L Russell, who would remain until 1960. With the support of Francis Cooper (Principal 1927-1953), Russell sought to make the work of Design students and staff central to the public life of Dundee, winning important commissions for murals, stained glass and church decoration.

Above: Sign-writing, 1929
Right: Graphic Design, 1932
Facing page (top): Fashion Design and Graphic Design, c.1932-3
(University of Dundee Archive Services)
Facing page (bottom): Poster by Graphic Design tutor John Greensmith, 1938
(University of Dundee Museum Services)
you can rely on

TAYSIDE overalls

Poster design by Laura Sinclair, c.1945 (private collection)
In the 1930s the renamed Dundee College of Art planned to move into new accommodation on Perth Road but the war and other delays meant that the building was not begun until 1953. The basic Design & Craft Diploma syllabus remained much the same throughout that period – a two-year General Course followed by two years of specialist study in either Graphic Design (including Illustration), Textile Design or Silversmithing & Jewellery. A separate Diploma in Interior Design was introduced in the 1960s, after Myer Lacome took over as Head of Design in what was now called Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art.
In 1972 the General Course was shortened to one year and separate departments were established in Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Illustration & Printing), Decorative Design (Printed Textiles, with Woven Textiles and Embroidery as supplementary courses) and Three Dimensional Design (Silversmithing & Jewellery, Product Design and supplementary courses in Pottery & Ceramics). All led to a general Design & Craft Diploma, with Interior Design still a separate discipline not involving the initial General Course.

In 1976, the School of Design successfully applied for validation of its Diploma courses from the Council for National Academic Awards, ultimately paving the way for academic degrees.

Above: *The Ormolu Clock* - book illustration by Peter Stevenson, c.1967
Below: Final-year Illustration students photographed by Walter Simms, 1973 (University of Dundee Museum Services)
Under Atholl Hill in the 1980s, Product Design temporarily disappeared but pioneering new post-graduate courses were started in Public Art & Design and Electronic Imaging. Diplomas were replaced by BA and BA (Hons) degrees awarded by the neighbouring University of Dundee. In 1994, the College became a faculty of the University, and Georgina Follett took over as Head of Design, with degrees being awarded in Animation & Electronic Media, Ceramics, Graphic Design, Illustration & Printmaking, Jewellery & Metalwork, Constructed Textiles, Printed Textiles and Interior & Environmental Design.

In the 2000s, the Ceramics department closed but Product Design was reintroduced along with a new course in Interactive Media Design. These as well as Animation, Graphic Design, Illustration, Interior & Environmental Design and Textile Design remain as degree courses today, supplemented by a range of innovative postgraduate courses such as Design for Business and Comics & Graphic Novels. Find out more at [www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/)
Dyed textile sample by Robyn Nisbet, 2018
(University of Dundee Museum Services)

www.dundee.ac.uk/museum