



ASHTRAY
WITH
A VIEW

THE STORY OF BLEND COLLECTION

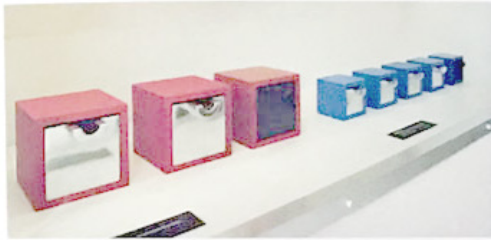


ASHTRAY WITH A VIEW - THE STORY OF BLEND COLLECTION

ASHTRAY WITH A VIEW

Design Museum
London
18 May 1995







the media



CECILIAS VAL

■ I Paris, staden med de verkligt inbudsrika utställningarna. Här jag följt svenska kulturfällets spår och såg utställningar som till exempel Cecilia Ahlander. Cecilia Ahlander är en av de mest kända svenska konstnärerna som vill hälsa med sig till Paris.

■ **UTSTÄLLNING.** På Louvren är det inte bara Mona Lisa som är i fokus. Här finns också en utställning av skulptörer som till exempel Cecilia Ahlander. Cecilia Ahlander är en av de mest kända svenska konstnärerna som vill hälsa med sig till Paris.

■ **ARBENA ÅSKÖPP.** Louise Arben svarar för det svenska rådet i den svenska utställningen. Louise Arben svarar för det svenska rådet i den svenska utställningen.

Expressen, 29 March, 1996

Konst för rökare visas på Louvren

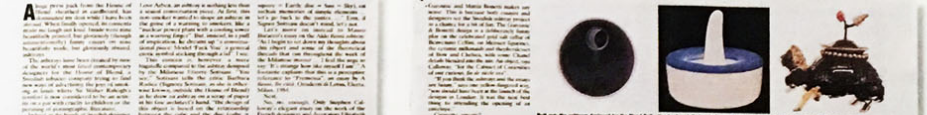
■ Många av de mest intressanta konstverken i världen visas för första gången i Sverige. Det är konst av den amerikanska konstnären Robert Rauschenberg som visas på Louvren i Paris.

■ **Till Mållergården.** Den här gången har en utställning av den amerikanska konstnären Robert Rauschenberg öppnats i Mållergården i Stockholm.

■ **BYGGSÄKER FÖR TIDNINGARNA.** Många av de mest intressanta konstverken i världen visas för första gången i Sverige. Det är konst av den amerikanska konstnären Robert Rauschenberg som visas på Louvren i Paris.

Dagens Industri, 28 March, 1996

Object of the week ashtrays



The Independent, 26 June, 1995

All a matter of taste

THE SATURDAY COLUMN
With questionable good taste, HENRY PORTER sets out to define this most elusive of attributes

PEOPLE care more about being thought of as good taste than about being thought of as either good, clever or amiable. So said Samuel Butler. He should perhaps have confined his observation to the British who, because of our obvious lack of artistic gifts, value good taste above all other attributes.

But, being British, we find we are incapable of talking about good and bad taste coherently, and when called on to judge, commend and define taste we are stricken with doubt and prone to the most terrible self-deceptions. This is because taste in Britain has as much to do with class, property and value as it does with appearance. In fact, that is why any discussion of taste is considered to be, well, in rather poor taste.

Never was this more palpable than at the seminar on taste held this week at The Design Museum in London. Designers and arbiters of style gathered in one large, spartan room and noisily agreed that there was no such thing as good taste, and that pronouncements on taste were little more than rank snobbery. We heard of the deadly put-down of Michael Heseltine of whom it was said — my dear — he had filled his beautiful old house with bought, rather than inherited, furniture. We shuddered at the remark because each one of us subscribed to the idea that one man's taste is as good as another's, and that if, indeed, there was a thing called 'good taste' it was certainly available to high and low alike, new money and old.

There were 70 of us in that room, which made exactly 70 incoherent and deluded hypocrites. I suspect — in fact I know — that everyone attending that seminar had a very clear idea about good taste. Publicly we chant *chacun à son goût, mon brave*, but

privately we recoil at the awfulness of our neighbour's aspiration, his terrible sense of colour and his oscillating pursuit of fashion and novelty.

André Putnam, the distinguished French designer, captured our democratic mood: "The idea of good taste is an absolute nightmare," she said. "I hate that we use it so much. It is a stupid invention of the arrogant. She went on to talk about style, but naturally enough did allow herself to admit she was still talking about taste. "Style is a cocktail of things. It's freedom. If you don't have freedom to do what you want, you don't have style. Style is a certain bias in your life, a certain sympathy, all of which seems to me a very good starting point to define good taste."

I believe in good taste, chiefly because I don't possess it and no amount of earnest poring over back copies of *House and Garden* magazine or descriptions of Vita Sackville-West's garden at Sissinghurst will cause me to develop the originality, the sharpness of eye, the instinctive composition, the love of surface and the brave experiment which good taste demands. I believe in good taste because I have seen it in people I know well, seen how they place colours, shapes, periods and textures together, either in their dress or their sitting rooms, in ways I imagined would be incongruous, but which turn out perfectly apt. There is not the exercise of one type of taste which is different, but equal to all other types of taste; rather, it is a gift like Matisse's unerring line or Schubert's

obvious fraud, even though none of us these days is prepared to admit it. So it is hopeless to resort to the Colfax and Fowler catalogue or the Armani *pret à porter* collection in your bid for good taste. Indeed, you will find that good taste actually consists of things that are far more jaded, puffed, faded, rusted, cracked, frayed, faded and worn than any catalogue or designer allows. You cannot buy it, not even if you are the American fashion designer Ralph Lauren who fell in love with the English country house 'look' and sent home container loads of Old Vicarage bric-a-brac to dress his store on Madison Avenue. The hunting boots, salmon rods and lacrosse sticks propped against an allocated Welsh dresser look silly, whereas in their natural surroundings they look just fine.

There are no rules to good taste, no bulk purchases, no feverish imitation. Rather it is the operation of an individual eye upon an object or fabric, and deciding on its place among things that have been chosen by that same unfettered eye. Other than permitting yourself the freedom to select what you like, this is not a self-conscious exercise because you should never be distracted by the notion that you are somehow giving rein to your inner self, the mistake of many an interior decorator. Any expression resulting from this process comes naturally and cannot be dreamed up beforehand.

There is, perhaps, one final requirement, and that is knowledge. Without the knowledge of what colours and shapes and textures are available, and indeed their histories, usages, places of origin and techniques of manufacture, you are limited in choice — not paralysed, but certainly restricted. Knowledge contributes to good taste, as does freedom, energy and curiosity. In one word, it is an effort, which is why it is not available to everyone.

Daily Telegraph, 20 May, 1996



Appointing Sir Terence Conran with a glass vase identical to the one he presented to the Princess of Wales



Garouste's ashtray, left, was not chosen by Conran but Delphine Caillaux liked Newson's offering

Nothing is naff in good taste guide

THE most good taste is never made, good taste is what is the personal opinion of the beholder.

... Rebecca Pike investigates

... people who do not want to risk having things which could make them look as if they are aiming for good taste. In a sample of kitchen items, for example, the most popular was a simple white ceramic jug. The most popular ashtray was a simple white ceramic one. The most popular vase was a simple white ceramic one.

... Sir Terence Conran, the designer and restaurateur, picked his favourite and best. Referring to a phallic pink ashtray by Venini, he said: "It is a phallic attempt to be interesting for housewives but it doesn't work."

... His favourite vase was a glass vase by Philippe Starck, similar to one he once gave to the Princess of Wales. "It is a beautiful shape and would look wonderful with a bunch of flowers in it," he said. Asked about an ashtray by Garouste and Bonetti, he said: "I don't like it as an object. I find it sort of fashionable white, having no real taste. More general examples of bad taste were Elizabeth Hurley who lost her credibility by acquiring mass appeal, and the 'hopelessly ornate' four Trussardi.

The Daily Telegraph, 19 May, 1995



While and coffee are just some of the subtle culture in the...
... Conran is Clifton Harbour when it gained a Michelin star. He was seen at the...
... The menu includes interesting configurations of...
... Presentation is painstakingly detailed. My...
... Mable of Berlin...
... Conran describes his cuisine as a 'terribly...
... Conran chef Stephen Terry was head chef at The...

ashtrays like giant fruit gums, green glass table vases,

Australia Vogue, February 1996



Le Figaroscope, 10 April, 1996

Cendriers de rêve

Pas de fumée sans feu, pas de cendrier sans cigarette. Pour lutter contre la disparition sociale programmée de l'objet de leur industrie, fabricants et marchands, qu'ils aient ou non un monopole, ne laissent pas passer une occasion de faire parler de leur activité par des moyens détournés. Le mécénat culturel est appelé en renfort, les musées annexés comme bureaux de tabac temporaires, et les artistes mis à contribution. Après la dissertation graphique sur le thème « Nouvelles Gitanes blondes » au Centre Georges-Pompidou, qui affichait les recherches de vingt créateurs internationaux sur l'emballage (Le Monde du 4-5 février), c'est le Musée des arts décoratifs qui expose, au Pavillon de Marsan, une collection de cendriers commandés par une entreprise suédoise. Blend, un fabricant de cigarettes, a demandé à huit designers et architectes connus pour leur travail sur les formes de la vie quotidienne de travailler sur le sujet.

Toutes les questions sont bonnes à poser : pourquoi pas le cendrier, objet usuel dont la fonction pratique est simple et la symbolique, ouverte à toutes les interprétations ? Comme en témoigne la palette de projets présentés là, dans de précieuses vitrines, elles-mêmes rassemblées dans une sorte de contenant, un cylindre long et blanc où pénètre le visiteur. Libre à lui de reconnaître - ou pas - qu'il s'agit peut-être d'une représentation agrandie de ce qu'on ne veut pas nommer.

Ces prototypes ont pour vocation d'être fabriqués et mis sur le marché (en France, à partir du mois de septembre). Même si certains modèles sont destinés à une production en série, d'autres, par leur prix, rejoindront le camp des collectionneurs. Mais déjà, en soi, la sélection d'auteurs due à Torbjörn Berner est intéressante, car elle offre un panorama exact des tendances actuelles. Entre ses deux pôles nettement affirmés, purisme et baroque.

Poser une cigarette sur le bord d'une coupe, en recueillir les cendres, cacher - ou pas - les épaves abandonnées aux yeux du « coupable » et de ses proches, voilà le programme de base.

Les puristes répondent avec des lignes minimales, en métal (aluminium ou acier anthracite pour le Japonais Tooshiyuki Kita), en faïence (blanc fantôme pour le Britannique Jasper Morrison), en cristal (de couleur pour l'Autstralien Marc Newson), en opaline (pour le Suédois Love Arben).

Les Italiens, choisis parmi les vétérans, ont bardié sur leurs thèmes favoris : Ettore Sottsass propose un « monument » de marbre, à base de cercle et de carré imbriqués ; Aldo Rossi construit une boîte à tiroir, solidement cubique, noire et bleu ou rouge, qui rappelle les anciens moulins à café. Mais celle-ci est surtout une déclinaison des obsessions formelles de l'architecte milanais, qui dessine immeubles et cafetières avec le même chapeau conique et pointu.

Le palme de l'originalité revient aux Français. Côté baroque, Elizabeth Garouste et Mattia Bonetti ont signé une extravagance à la façon des bonhommes en porcelaine du XVIII^e siècle, avec figure féminine et couvercle en dos de tortue.

Côté puriste, André Putman s'est souvenue d'une soirée où elle s'était brûlé les doigts en attendant trop longtemps un cendrier qui ne viendrait pas dans cet appartement new-yorkais qui ne comportait plus cet ustensile condamné et oublié : elle a conçu un « portable ». Une boîte ronde comme celle des Cachou, en titane, avec fermoir, préleuse et plate, qu'on pourrait glisser dans une poche et emporter avec soi. Au cas où.

M. Ch.

* « Blend Collection, projet pour un cendrier ». Exposition au Musée des arts décoratifs, 107, rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris, de 12 h 30 à 18 heures, sauf lundi et mardi. Jusqu'au 14 avril.

Le Monde, 7-8 April 1996

in brief

Ashtray design is hardly a 1990s growth industry, but the possibly controversial brief to create one at the key artefacts of the smoker's world was taken up by the usual suspects - Andreu Putman, Jasper Morrison, Garouste and Bonetti, Marc Newson, Toshiyuki Kita, Lars Arben, Aldo Rossi and Ettore Sottsass - for a show at the Design Museum, "The Blend Collection" presents the results. "I liked everything about this project very much"

says Putman, a keen smoker whose portable design (third from left) acts as a counter-attack to the increasing intolerance of public smoking. Morrison set about producing an ashtray that looked good when it had

been used (second from left), and Arben - who is ardently anti-smoking - has devised the "fuck-you" model, complete with gesture (first). While Sottsass rages that the ashtray is "the ill-stored object that has come to

symbolise mortal sin in the modern world's conflux of obsessive syndromes", Kita has tried to calm things down by producing an understated, an object as possible in cast aluminium (below right).

Thomas Sandell and Peter Hellen, invites visitors to walk inside giant modules to examine the designers' drawings and the finished products, which are all available for purchase. Design Museum, London SE1. Until 18 June



20 BLUEPRINT JUNE 1995

Blueprint, June 1995

ART MARKET

SMOKE SCREENS IN THE SALES

"An ill-starred object symbolising mortal sin" is how designer Ettore Sottsass describes an ashtray. None the less, collectors can still be found for smoking paraphernalia - as long as it is sold as something else. John Windsor reports

IT'S ONE of the pasting principles of collecting that the value of an object is determined by its use. In the case of a cigarette, the value is determined by the number of cigarettes it can hold. This is the logic that has driven the market for ashtrays. In the past, ashtrays were often made of silver, and their value was determined by the weight of the metal. Today, they are made of a variety of materials, and their value is determined by their design.



Damen Hirst paid for Sarah Searcy's paper mill for cigarette makers for a dog's head.



John Windsor reports

The market for ashtrays is a curious one. It is a market that has been largely ignored by art historians and collectors. Yet, in recent years, it has become a hotbed of activity. This is due to a number of factors. First, there is a growing awareness of the value of design. Second, there is a growing interest in the history of smoking. Third, there is a growing interest in the art of the object.

One of the most interesting examples of this is the work of Ettore Sottsass. His ashtray, which is made of cast aluminium, is a masterpiece of design. It is a simple, yet powerful, object that has become a symbol of the modernist movement. Another example is the work of Jasper Morrison. His ashtray, which is made of cast aluminium, is a masterpiece of design. It is a simple, yet powerful, object that has become a symbol of the modernist movement.



A 1984 oil by a British Pop minimalist, David Lauder, is a masterpiece of design. It is a simple, yet powerful, object that has become a symbol of the modernist movement.

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The Original Butlers Bell & Bell pull

Victorian Dolly Switches

Traditional Trading

FINE ANTIQUE DINING TABLES

John Windsor reports

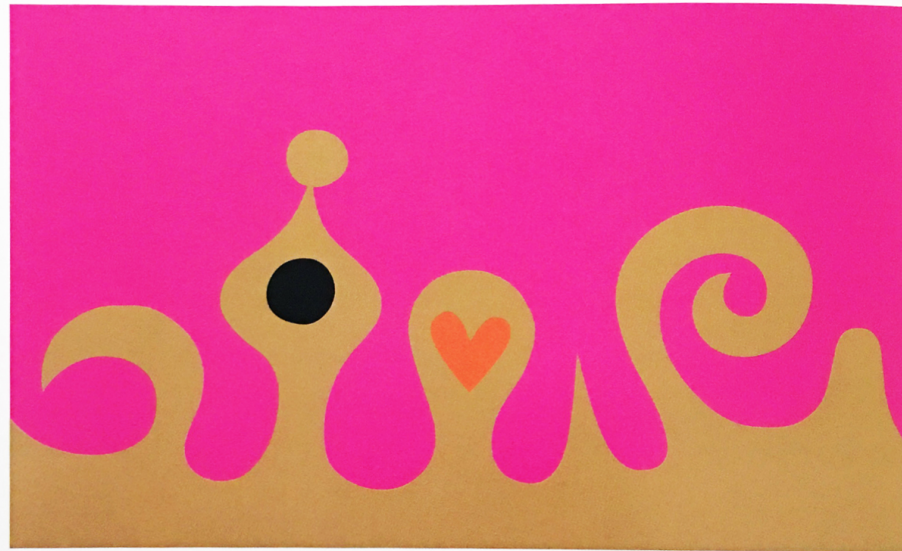
OUTSIDE EYE - INSIDE EYE

DILYS BRYON

LEE LEE CUBANUS

Taste

BY TOBY YOUNG



Taste is a difficult subject to tackle in 800 words. Immanuel Kant devoted a whole book to the subject (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*), while Beau Brummel, the 19th Century English gentleman, devoted his whole life to cultivating it. In addition, I should confess from the outset that I am generally regarded as not having any.

Does that matter? It's not very often that someone admits to having no taste – most people believe themselves to be in possession of impeccable taste. Taste, like beauty, is commonly regarded as being in the eye of the beholder, so how can anyone not have it? The answer is that neither taste nor beauty are wholly subjective qualities, at least not in the sense in which that is usually understood. Taste is not something that a person cultivates by himself, in a vacuum. Rather, it is a manifestation of some aspect of society, whether it is class, the collective unconscious or the zeitgeist. The most obvious candidate is social class. How a person dresses or decorates their home is certainly

as reliable a guide to their place in society as what school they went to and what accent they have. When people say something is in bad taste, they usually mean the taste they associate with someone of an inferior class. People reserve their greatest scorn for the taste of those in the class directly beneath them. In this light, the social function of taste, particularly in England, is to preserve the class system.

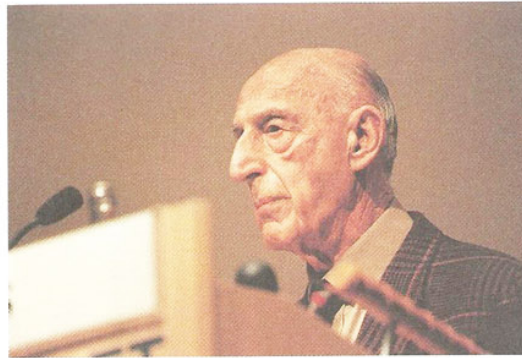
Insofar as taste is a largely conservative force, maintaining rather than disrupting prevailing social conditions, it is similar to other cohesive forces such as religion and ideology. One view of taste, particularly taste in high fashion, is that it has taken the place of religion for the social elites of the developed world. It's certainly true that many of the key concepts in the sociology of religion can equally well be applied to fashion. For instance, the latest Manolo Blahnik shoe is an object of such intense worship in certain circles it has become a "sacred object", much like



Nicholas Blincoe, John Hart and Toby Young in London. "Is there anyone here with free taste?" Toby Young flung the question from the podium. The place was London; the occasion, the première of Blend Collection. Modern Review, the arts magazine founded by Toby Young, had organised a well-attended seminar on good versus bad taste - and the discussion was a lively one. The word, "taste", has been a recurring theme of the project and the exhibitions ever since.



In Paris, Stephen Calloway spoke with great insight about the respective designer's ashtray. The subject was not directly that of taste, but it is nonetheless the case that the audience often had completely different views of what they saw in the exhibition. And perhaps one might be permitted to refer to this as taste.



In Stockholm influential architects and designers had been invited to treat the subject in a variety of ways. "Where are we headed in a society dominated by media and communication?" asked Gaetano Pesce, who was hot news this summer with his massive exhibition, *Le temps des questions* (Time for questions) at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris.

The speeches which, apart from the one given by artist and architect, Pesce, were given by Gillo Dorfles (top picture), Professor of Aesthetics, Stephen Calloway, writer and museum curator, Mauro Baracco (bottom picture), architect and Professor, Mattia Bonetti, designer, and Lionel Lambourne, museum curator, led to a wide range of reflections on the subject. The titles of the talks included *Everyone's right and no one's possession*, *Taste as behaviour*, *Beyond taste and after trends*, *Leaders and followers in the creative press*, and *Kitsch as deliberate bad taste*.

Most of the designers and architects taking part in the project are not interested in taste. And particularly not in the division into good and bad taste, which many regard as a social invention - a way for one group to oppress another. The word "taste" can, however, be replaced with such words as beauty or culture, or as Andrée Putman would have it, style. In London, she said, "Style is a cocktail of things. It's freedom. If you don't have the freedom to do what you want, you don't have style. Style is a certain bliss in your life, a certain sympathy," All of which would seem to be a good starting point for defining taste.

a religious relic. Those who are in fashion, who exhibit exquisite good taste, conduct themselves with such self-assurance they could be said to be in a "state of grace".

However, taste differs from religion in that it is in a constant state of flux. Jesus Christ has been the principal object of worship for practising Christians for the last two thousand years, whereas fashions change on an almost daily basis. If taste does play a part in demarcating different social classes it does so by requiring members of each class to constantly revise and update their furniture, their wardrobes and the paintings they hang on their walls. That is to say, if taste is a fundamentally conservative force it only achieves this by appearing to be in a state of permanent revolution.

This is the most fascinating aspect of taste: it is paradoxical. Another paradox is that, while taste may not be a matter of individual choice it nevertheless must appear to be so from the point of view of the person being influenced by it. For instance, the real reason someone buys red tag Levis rather than orange tag Levis is because they are supposedly in better taste, but in order for taste to work its magic it must appear to be an autonomous choice uninfluenced by prevailing notions of good taste. "I just happen to like them better," a person might well say, temporarily forgetting that everyone he knows also happens to like them better as well.

In the fashion industry, this paradox is expressed by the supposed difference between "style" and "fashion". The real art of promoting a brand like, say, Calvin Klein, is to persuade people that it is both in fashion and a reflection of their own, unique personal style. Oddly, the fact that these two qualities are so different as to be blatantly contradictory doesn't seem to trouble people. It is a bit like regarding your blood type as something expressive of your individuality, even though it might be something you have in common with 50% of the human population.

This is the answer to the question I posed at the beginning: taste is an objective, quantifiable, social phenomenon but, in order to exercise the power over us that it does, it must appear to be wholly subjective from our own internal perspective. When I say I have no taste, what I mean is I refuse to entertain the illusion that my taste is in any meaningful sense "my" taste. I like to think I recognise that I am merely a puppet dancing as society pulls the strings. However, in truth, when I do buy a pair of red tag Levis I can't quite dismiss the idea that they just happen to suit me better than orange tag Levis.

In this respect I am like everyone else when it comes to taste. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, I am like a leaf being blown about in the wind saying to myself, "Now I'm going to go this way, now I'm going to go that way."

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POETRY IN FORM AB FOR SWEDISH MATCH AB, SWEDEN

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ASHTRAY WITH A VIEW

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