

Essay on Art and Design in Everyday Life

The very desk and chair that I am using when writing this essay must have been designed by somebody. The designs are simple and crude, and can hardly be called works of art. Nevertheless, these humble desk and chair serve their purpose well enough.

Looking around me at the classroom, the school and in fact the whole world, I come to realize that almost everything has a certain design of its own, especially man-made things.

My school was built long before I was born and the designers of those days must have had very different views about how a building should be like. The walls are a foot thick, the pillars enormous and the elaborate curves and angles on the building are so markedly different from recently built buildings. By contrast, the school's new science block looks so fragile and bare. Modern school buildings are designed to be functional only. There are no fancy artwork nor Greek-style pillars. Only the barest minimum prevails. The old pre-war building has a certain charm of its own. The new cheaply made science block seems so cold and lifeless.

Simplicity seems to be the trend for modern buildings, as compared to the elaborate designs of yesteryears. The old Kuala Lumpur railway station stands out distinctly among the ultra-modern high-rise buildings surrounding it. Although dwarfed by these skyscrapers, the railway station still retains its beauty and antique identity. It is always pleasant to look at its various structures and designs and wonder why we do not make such buildings anymore. Maybe it is too expensive or maybe it is because it has become unfashionable to do so.

The clothes that we wear are also the result of the efforts of

clothes designers. While most of us would go around in simple clothes, there are others who would spend a fortune on designer-clothes, that is, clothes specially designed by certain well-known designers. These clothes do not come cheap. However, for the price paid, the wearer gets to “stand out” from the crowd. I, for one, cannot distinguish between a ten ringgit shirt and a hundred ringgit one, unless of course, I see the labels. Still, I must admit that some of the outfits sported by some daring souls look very nice indeed, on the other hand, some of them look absolutely outrageous. I am no hero, so I stick to more conservatively designed clothes.

Book’ and magazine covers are designed with one thing in mind, that is, to catch the eye of the reader. So nowadays we see most books and magazines with glossy artwork on their covers. The covers make extensive use of colors so as to be as attractive as possible. Some of these covers are indeed beautifully designed. The artists must be congratulated for their good work. The same cannot be said for the contents of some of the books though.

In other areas of human enterprise, design again plays an important role. Cars are designed to look beautiful as well as functional. Towns are designed for better living and convenience. Roads are designed for faster and safer traveling. Shoes are designed for durability and comfort. Development projects are designed for progress, etc.

All these man-made things are designed for specific functions. How much can these things be considered “art” depend solely on the beholder. Other than paintings and other specially created art-objects, most man-made things are not meant to be art. They are meant only to serve a purpose.

If we want to look at works of art in everyday life then we will have

to fall back on good old mother nature. Golden sunsets and deep blue skies can never be created by any man. Deep red roses, fluttering butterflies, chirping birds, and rolling thunder never fail to impress me. Nature's perfection and malformations, regularity, and spontaneity are really works of art. They occur every day for us to behold. All we have to do is look.