

What world events influenced design in this period?

The Great War (**World War I**) raged across Europe from 1914-18. It is ironically also sometimes referred to as the War to End All Wars (which of course it wasn't).

Before the war had ended, the first of two revolutions broke out in Russia in February 1917. The country's mismanagement of their economy and their war effort drove soldiers and civilians to revolt. The later October Revolution was masterminded by **Vladimir Lenin**. With the help of the Bolshevik (red) army he took over rule of the country and appointed himself the first head of the newly created USSR.

What were the key scientific/technological influences?

In space: 1915 – Albert Einstein published his **theory of general relativity** (of space and time); Karl Schwarzschild discovered the **Schwarzschild radius**, leading to the identification of black holes. 1924 – Edwin Hubble discovered that **the Milky Way is just one of many galaxies**. 1925 – Erwin Schrödinger published his **Schrödinger equation** (Quantum mechanics); **Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin** discovered the composition of the Sun and that Hydrogen is the most abundant element in the Universe.

In medicine: 1922 – the research of Frederick Banting, Charles Best, James Collip and John Macleod led to **the isolation and production of insulin to control diabetes**.

Technological inventions: 1915 Pyrex; 1916 electric power drills; 1919 pop up toasters; 1920 Band-Aids and electric hair dryers; 1922 electric kettles; 1923 self-winding watches; 1924 loudspeakers; 1925 modern can openers and Quick Freeze Machine flash frozen foods (invented by Clarence Birdseye). 1921 saw the invention of the modern polygraph (lie detector). In 1924 an office machine manufacturer in New York State changed its name to **International Business Machines Corporation (IBM)**.

What were the key design and literary influences?

Wartime military efforts around the world relied heavily on the support of the public. Posters were used to call young men to join up, and to encourage families to buy war bonds. Their messages were critical, but their design was mostly unremarkable. **Alfred Leete (U.K.)**, **James Montgomery Flagg (U.S.)**, and **Joseph C. Leyendecker (U.S.)** are among the most well-recognised Allied poster creators. British artist **Savile Lumley**'s poster **Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?** is a poignant example of the pressure the public was under to do their part for the war effort. German posters mostly chose neo-classical designs, often featuring heavy gothic type.

Lucien Bernhard, Hans Rudi Erdt and Ludwig Holwein all created posters for the German war effort, while Edward Penfield designed posters for the U.S. government. After the war, the predominantly traditional pictorial approach to advertising and poster design continued in the U.K. and the U.S. One notable exception was **Edward McKnight Kauffer**, an American artist working in the U.K. His 1918 poster, for the **Daily Herald**, reflected his experiments with cubist painting.

Magazines flourished throughout the 1920s-30s. In 1923 Time Magazine first appeared in the U.S. alongside successful magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post, Life, Harpers, Vogue, McClure's and Vanity Fair. The America artistic legacy of Edward Penfield inspired a new generation of artists that included **Clarence Coles Phillips** and **Norman Rockwell**.

Through a family connection to the cartoonist Clyde Forsythe, Norman Rockwell sold his first cover painting (Mother's Day Off) to The Saturday Evening Post in 1916. He went on to produce 323 original covers for the magazine over 47 years. Another of Rockwell's long-term clients was the Boy Scouts of America—the organisation that gave him his commercial start.

At this time artists who worked creating posters, magazine advertising, logos, etc. Were known as commercial artists. A term that is still occasionally used to this day. In 1922, **W.A. Dwiggins**, an American artist and writer, coined the term **"graphic design"** in a journal article.

A very different commercial artist style called **constructivism** emerged in Russia after the revolutions of 1917. It was inspired by the sparse geometric style of the suprematist art movement. Constructivism was art that served the people. One of its key influencers was the Russian artist and architect **El Lissitzky**. He believed that the artist could be an agent for change. His motto became **"das zielbewußte Schaffen", goal-oriented creation**. El Lissitzky left Russia in 1921 for Berlin, while artists **Vladimir Tatlin** and **Alexander Rodchenko** used their work to promote the messages of the new Russian government. Constructivism communicated through abstract geometric forms, photography, bold expressive type and a stark colour palette of mostly red, black and white. **Varvara Stepanova**, **Lyubov Popova**, and **Alexandra Exter** were among the women who expanded the movement in the areas of fashion, textiles and theatre design.

What were the key cultural influences?

W.W.I touched millions of lives. About 10 million military personnel and just as many civilians were killed. Over 200,000 Canadians fought in the war, including over 4,000 Aboriginal people. Although over two-thirds soldiers made it home, many did so with broken bodies and broken minds. Families received all their news from "the front" through letters and newspapers. The **"Golden Age of Radio"** didn't begin until the 1920's. Radio had a huge impact on society's access to news and information, as well as entertainment in the home.

Indigenous culture across Canada was irrevocably changed in 1920 when **residential school attendance was made compulsory**. Over 76 years (ending in 1996), more than 150,000 children were forcibly separated from their families and sent to one of 130 church-run schools across the country. Many never went home again and the separation prevented the transmission of cultural beliefs, practices and languages to future generations. The impacts of this are still being felt today.



Far from the harsh post-war realities F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby* portrayed a very different picture of "**the roaring twenties**". The 1920s saw the imposition of alcohol prohibition and the appearance of **speakeasies** (illicit bars and nightclubs). Drinking was banned in British Columbia from 1917-1921. In the U.S prohibition lasted from 1920-33. It was the brainchild of the international Temperance Movement—a social and political campaign believing that drink was responsible for many of society's ills.

Prohibition launched **the Jazz Age**. Speakeasies were places to drink, but they were also places where black and white people could openly associate for the first time. Black jazz musicians could perform in front of white audiences. Black performers eventually became accepted more widely, with bands like King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. Welcomed into the fanciest venues around the world, these performers were not treated as equals.

Fashion:

With jazz music came **the Charleston**—a very popular dance involving fast-paced swinging of the legs as well as big arm movements, that would previously have been unseemly. Shorter, looser **flapper dresses** were needed to make this dance possible.

French couturier **Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel** revolutionised fashion in the 1920s. Her ground-breaking designs brought the liberating concept of **casual chic**. Her designs led the trend for a **corset-free** bust and **trousers** for women, along with the **little black dress** and "flats". In 1921 Chanel launched her trademark perfume **Chanel No. 5**. She also popularised inexpensive costume jewellery. For those who could afford it, French jewellery designers such as **Raymond Templier** and **Georges and Jean Fouquet** were bringing a simplified, more modern aesthetic to their Paris stores. French fashion and interior designer **George Barbier** documented 1920s style through illustrations he created for magazines such as *Vogue*.

Architecture:

The post-war era saw a boom in construction. Skyscrapers with neo-classical designs were enhanced by new technologies, building techniques, and construction materials. In 1922 the **Chicago Tribune** announced a design competition for the building of its new headquarters. Howells & Hood won the competition and became the architects for the 36-story tower, completed in 1925. The art deco style had yet to make its mark.

What were the artistic influences?

In Italy Futurist artists such as Marinetti, **Fortunato Depero** and **Ardengo Soffici** embraced advertising commercial art as part of the future and incorporated it into their art. The cut-up existing posters and used the elements to collage new art (today we'd call it a mash-up).

In Russia artist **Kazimir Malevich** started the non-objective **suprematist** art movement. His art was inspired by the Greek philosopher Plato who believed that **geometry was the highest form of beauty**. Malevich rejected functional and pictorial representations and made his art devoid of all objectivity. He did not believe art should perform a practical function, other than to make the viewer think. **Non-objective art** is a type of

abstract, often geometric, art that aims to convey **universal truth through simplicity and purity**.

The senseless suffering and loss of life during the war sparked the **dada** movement in Europe. Its guiding spirit was Romanian poet and performance artist **Tristan Tzara**. Dada was first expressed in the anti-establishment **Cabaret Voltaire** in Zurich, Switzerland. It was a rebellion against the horrors of war, the decadence of European society and (in complete opposition to the Futurists) society's blind faith in technological process. The dadaists saw how inadequate modern society's old religious and moral codes were failing to help people cope with the new reality. Their art mocked a society, in their view, gone insane.

Dada artists include **Hans Arp** (German-French), **Sophie Taeuber-Arp** (Swiss) and **Marcel Duchamp** (French). In Berlin a group of artists formed their own Dada group. They included **Max Ernst**, **Hannah Höch**, **George Grosz**, **John Heartfield** and **Raoul Hausmann**. Together they further developed the Futurists' use of photomontage. Another German artist wanted to be part of their group. In 1919, **Kurt Schwitters** was refused entry into the Berlin dada movement because they considered him too bourgeois. Not defeated, he created his non-political offshoot that he named **Merz**. It was a one-man art movement using collage and found materials. Schwitters combined dada's elements of nonsense with typography and a strong design sense. In the 1950s the American artist Robert Rauschenberg became famous for his **combines**. Artworks and installations that mashed-up found materials and advertising messages.

Surrealism emerged on the heels of dada. It was founded in Paris by **André Breton**—a French writer, poet, and anti-fascist. Stylistically the movement was heavily influenced by the earlier work of Italian artist and teacher **Giorgio de Chirico**. The surrealists were searching for the **more real than real world beyond the real**. It explored the concept of the unconscious mind through strange dream-like imagery. Artists include **Jean Arp** and **Max Ernst**, **René Magritte** and **Salvador Dali**.

The Dutch **de stijl** (the style) movement appeared around the same time. Artists include its founder **Theo van Doesburg**, painter **Piet Mondrian** and furniture designer and architect **Gerrit Rietveld**. Like suprematism it was an abstract geometric style. De stijl artists sought to express the mathematical structure of the universe and the universal harmony of nature. They were looking for balance and harmony in the hope it would lead to a new social order following the upheaval of the war.

In the 1920s the Toronto-based Canadian art movement **The Group of Seven** emerged. Working as commercial artists during the week, **Franklin Carmichael**, **Lawren Harris**, **A. Y. Jackson**, **Frank Johnston**, **Arthur Lismer** and **J. E. H. MacDonald** would sketch and paint en plein air during their free time. They explored the unique character of Canada's wilderness. **Emily Carr** and **Tom Thomson** were not part of the group but were actively painting unique Canadian landscapes over the same period.

