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## The Word "Design": Early Modern English Dictionaries and Literature on Design, 1604 - 1837

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### Abstract

It is normally accepted that Design History starts with mechanization and mass industrialization; however, it is also acknowledged that the word '*design*' was related to the production of artefacts since the end of the sixteenth century. This era concurs with the 'early modern' period of Western history. This coincidence with the progressive constitution of modernity, which is not of course a coincidence at all for the emergence of 'design' as an internal aspect of early modern society that was to become fully existent and further self-defined in the nineteenth century, is remarkable and deserves to be examined. This study's main objective is to clarify the origin and maturation of the word through the revelation that design related to the arts (as project drawing) provided the origin for the contemporary use of the word, as well as contributing to institutionalizing its discipline as a practical and intellectual activity.

The following paper examines the meaning of the word 'design' presented in three English language dictionaries, from different centuries, namely, Robert Cawdrey's *Alphabetic Table of Hard Words* (1604), Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1736), and Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). It then cross-references their definitions or meanings with Shakespeare's works, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1735), Jane Austen's works, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and other texts related to design, specifically Richard Haydocke's translation of Lomazzo's treatise on painting (1598), Sir Henry Wotton's *Elements of Architecture* (1624) and Robert Morris's *Lectures on Architecture consisting of Rules founded upon Harmonic and Arithmetical (...) Designed as an Agreeable Entertainment for Gentlemen...* (1734). The meaning of the word 'design' as project drawing is traced in William Dunlap's *Address to the Students of the National Academy of Design* (1831) and in *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834). By reading these Early Modern Design texts, we can clearly see the gradual emergence to dominance of the modern term 'design' understood as drawing and as representing, also, an intellectual activity over craftsmanship.



## 1. Introduction

The history of design's object of study is usually seen to have originated with the beginnings of industrialization and its consequential division of labour, as a result of the seminal books *Mechanization Takes Command* by Siegfried Gideon and Pevsner's *The Pioneers of Modern Design, from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. The origins of design history are discussed by several intellectuals such as Clive Dilnot, Victor Margolin, Fran Hannah and Tim Putnam, John A. Walker and Jonathan M. Woodham in the texts selected for the 'Foundations, Debates, Historiography' section of the recent *The Design History Reader* (Lees-Maffei & Houze 2010, 262-300). However, it is here proposed that we should acknowledge a pre-history of design, when design activities were performed before the word 'design' was used to describe them; and an early history of design that corresponds to a period in which the word began to be used with reference to artistic activities, but was not yet institutionalized to the point of being used in the names of teaching institutions or to designate a profession. This means that I propose also that the history of design's object of study should be seen to have originated when some institutions were created to teach 'design' as a professional activity using that word in their designation. The following study will focus on the early history of design, recognition of which, it is argued, is vital to understand the nature of the discipline and its intellectual dimension.

Over time design has developed three different definitions: wishful plan; designation; and project drawing. Naturally, in a broader sense, it was this third meaning that gave origin to a discipline, an academy and a profession. Nevertheless, this third meaning - dominant and completely internationalized nowadays - may have had a different foundation from the first two definitions, as well as having evolved as a totally different word. The confusion of these three definitions resulted in an understanding of design that has obscured and confused its foundations. Therefore, this study's main research question is: how did the use of the word become so evidently linked with the artistic preparation and production of objects?

## 2. The Inception of Design in English Language

The word 'design' had appeared in the English language in the 1500's. In this period, the English language was orthographically far from being defined as we now know it. For instance, during the Elizabethan period, the same word could be written with three or even four different spellings. The more important point is, however, that all three 'design'-related meanings noted above derive from French words. Since the 1500s, these three words often appeared in literature, although not, at first, in senses related to the arts.

Our first and utmost important object of study is the first English 'dictionary', Robert Cawdrey's *Table of Hard Words* (1604) where we find:



[fr] deseigne, (\*synonyms\*) an appointing how any;  
[fr] deseignment, things shall be done (\* synonyms end \*);  
[fr] design, to marke out, or appoint for any purpose.  
(Cawdrey 1604)

We extensively searched through Project Gutenberg's version of Shakespeare's complete works, which is displayed in better-defined English, without spelling variations, and in all occurrences, we found that the word and/or concept of 'design' was related to Cawdrey's three definitions.

At the same time in architecture we begin to see the emergence of a different sense of 'design'. In Inigo Jones's contemporary annotations to his copy of Palladio's *Treatise*, we found the following passage:

p1) on 5th flysheet; "...as in the **designe** I have," (Vicenza, Monday 23.9.1613).  
p11) p43, bk1; "So that when you are to make duple pillors **Desine** them so as ye Abbacos maaye tuch it but not ye Plinth below."  
p19) p4, bk2, in lower margin; "This Vissentint foot is more then Our Inglessh foot by 2 ynches or on 6 partt and the ynch more than our ynch by a 6 part, al the **desine** in this booke ar messured by this foot:"  
p22) p15; "A this part is louer in ye **designe** then in ye worke".  
p31) p69; "...yt is laufull to take ye **designe** of any Partes of Publick buildings wth moderation..." [This refers to a quote from Vitruvius].  
p 31) p71; "The **desines** neuer put in excusion but don at the request of sum frends of his"  
(Glanville 2007)

These examples show that, at that time, the words 'designe' or 'desine' did not mean 'to mark out, or appoint for any purpose'; they meant 'to draw'. By reading this text, one realises that Jones appears to use 'desine' and 'designe' as both a verb and a noun. The first, meaning the act of drawing, and the latter, the drawing itself. Whilst 'desine' is clearly an importation of the French form of the verb *dessiner* ('*Je dessine*', '*Toi dessine*'), the word 'Designe' does not correspond to the French noun 'Dessain' that meant, and still means, drawing. However we can also simply acknowledge that Jones is beginning to twist Cawdrey's meanings closer to his profession.

Note that not one of Jones's 'design'-related words is spelt in the same way as Cawdrey's. One might suppose that Cawdrey's words were founded in the Latin root of 'designatio', and Jones's words originated from another source. I believe that Jones's words were influenced by the Italian concept of *Disegno* – his two trips to Italy attest this idea.



## 2.1. No English Word for *Disegno*

When Jones travelled to Italy, *Disegno* was, for almost 150 years, one of the core concepts involving the Art discourse. Since the early days of the *Quattrocento*, it had become part of a creative/artistic strategy that consisted of uplifting the social role of the artist (Blunt 1978 (1962), 48-57). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, *Disegno* was included in the name of the oldest and most famous art academy of the world, the Florentine Academy of Disegno, established in 1563 (Barzman 2000). *Disegno*, meaning both 'drawing' and 'project', was a well defined concept for almost two centuries; the evolution of its meaning was crystallized by Vasari in his introduction to *Vite...* (Vasari 1986 (1550), 8-88). In Palladio's treatise, *Disegno* is defined as the drawings that anticipate the work (Palladio 1980 (1570), 5-7). We must not forget that Federico Zuccari (1607) also defined *Disegno* as 'God's plan manifested by the angels of Design and communicated externally, in human terms, through drawings'. (Zuccari 1607) Zuccari was a travelling artist who worked in the Escorial and the Court of England, where he had drawn a sketch portrait of Queen Elizabeth I.

However, in Richard Haydocke's translation of Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's (1598) *Treatise on Painting, Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scultura ed Architettura di Gio. Paolo Lomazzo*, published fifteen years before Jones's annotations and six years before Cawdrey's Table, the word 'design' does not appear. We can, nevertheless, see the word 'disegno' in the original. For example: '*disegno espressivo dell'idea*' (Lomazzo 1844 (1584), 14), is translated as, 'the draught that expresses Ideas' (Lomazzo 1598: 5). Other similar words can also be found: '*disegnare*' (Lomazzo, 1584/1844: 28) which translates as 'drawing' (Lomazzo 1598, 14); '*all' arte disegnatrice*' (Lomazzo 1844 (1584), vol II, 22) means 'the arts of drawing' (Lomazzo 1598, 88), etc. Besides these fascinating concepts, in this treatise we can also see the following passage which sums up the Italian concept:

*acciochè alcuno stitico che mai non vide cognizione nela idea, nè mai seppe che cose fosse adoperar stile per disegnare i concetti, mordendomi come il cane di Esopo, no pensasse che io parlassi fuori di figura probabile, secondo il suo intelletto formato senza disegno*

(Lomazzo 1584/1844, vol II: 27)

Haydocke translated this paragraph as follows:

least some cholericke fellow or other, who never knew what contemplation meant, not ever understood how to deliver the conceits of his mind (like Aesops dogge) snarle at me, imagining this grosse conceit, that I spake at random.

(Lomazzo 1598, 191)

For Haydocke, '*disegno*' was a '*grosse conceit*'. But first, where Lomazzo had written something that we could translate as 'those who never knew how to operate a pen for designing/drawing concepts' he wrote 'deliver the conceits of his mind'. In other words, in this situation, when 'drawing' was not appropriate, he could not find an English word for '*disegno*'.



## 2.2. Design as *Disegno* is Published:

Sir Henry Wotton, the English ambassador to Venice and a patron of Inigo Jones, published in 1623 a treatise called *The Elements of Architecture*. In this text we see the word 'deseignment' (Wotton 1623, 12, 118), indicating an idea of the whole work or the first idea. In order to explain this theory, he quotes from Vitruvius and states that the architect should care about the form and triumph over matter. While describing the circular staircase inside the pentagon of the Farnese Palace in Caprarola, Wotton writes '(...d)esignes of such nature doe more aymeat Rarity, than Commodity' (Wotton 1624, 19), which clearly conveys a sort of basic geometrical disposition, a schemata. Later on in the text he states:

It might here perchance bee expected, that I should at least describe (which others have done in **draughts** and **designes**) divers Formes of Plants and Partitions, and varieties of Inventions; But speculative writers (as I am) are not bound, to comprise all particular Cases, within the Latitude of the Subject, which they handle; (Wotton 1623, 74)

Further on, an explanation is offered:

Therefore first (to beginne with Picture) we are to observe whether it bee well **drawne**, (or as more elegant artisans tearme it) well **Design'd**; Then whether be well Coloured, which bee the two general Heads; and each one of the hath two principall Requisites; for in well **Designing**, there must bee Truth and Grace, in well Colouring, Force, and Affection; All other praises, are but consequences of these. (Wotton 1623, 87)

In this second paragraph, Sir Henry Wotton distinguishes the differences between "*drawne*" (drawing) and "*Design'd*" (design). The difference between the two lies in the distinction between non-elegant and elegant artisans! Thus, for Wotton, designing was something separated from the concept of "colouring", and was very close to the Italian concept of *Disegno*, as expressed for instance by Alberti, almost two hundred years before, in the following phrase:

*Niuna composizione e niuno ricevere di lumi si può lodare ove non sia buona ciconscrizione, cioè un buono disegno per sé essere gratissimo* [No composition nor colouring may be praised where there is not a good circumscription, that is, a good disegno by itself graceful] (Alberti 2008 (1435), 13)

Other occurrences of design are:

(...u)nder Nine or Ten foot high, which will require no ordinary Artizan; because faults are more visible then in small **designes**' (Wotton: 1623: 96). [...] "I am for these reasons unwilling to impouerish that Art (grotesques), though I could



*wish such medlie and motlie **Designes** confined only to the Ornament of Freezes, and Borders, their properest place”*  
(Wotton 1623, 98).

About sculpture in fountains he concludes “*That all **designes** of this kind should be proper”* (Wotton 1623, 111).

At this point it is clear that Wotton anglicized the concept of *Disegno* by using similar words that in English, according to Cawdrey and Shakespeare, had no relation to drawing. It is also clear that, in his words, ‘Designe’ is only an elitist way of saying ‘drawing’; a subject probably reserved to sketching things that are to be constructed, sculpted or painted - but linked to the ‘*Designment*’ of an Idea as a whole, as defined by the Italian Art theory of the time.

Wotton seems to be more grammatically coherent than Jones. From the word ‘*Designe*’ he defines the verbal forms of ‘Designing’ and ‘Design’d’ (Designed). He never uses ‘dessine’ as a verbal form for ‘Designe’ as Jones did. Although he does not write ‘Design’ as a verb, he anglicizes the word by using the gerund and the past perfect.

Based on the present data, we can at this point, posit an inception for ‘design’ based on three different origins:

- a) Directly from Latin (Cawdrey’s definitions) from the word ‘*Designatio*’.
- b) From the French word ‘*Dessain*’, meaning drawing, as we see in Jones’s annotations.
- c) And from the Italian word and concept of ‘*Disegno*’. A new concept modern enough to embrace some new characteristics of artistic production

### 3. Parallel routes for different Designs

The Artist himself was at that time busy upon two great **Designs**; the first, to sow Land with Chaff, wherein he affirmed the true seminal Virtue to be contained, as he Demonstrated by several Experiments which I was not skilful enough to comprehend. [...] He advised great Statesmen to examine into the Dyet of all suspected Persons; their times of eating; upon which side they lay in Bed; with which hand they wiped their Posteriors; take a strict View of their Excrements, and from the Colour, the Odour, the Taste, the Consistence, the Crudeness, or Maturity of Digestion, form a Judgement of their Thoughts and **Designs**.

(Swift 1735)



In Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1735), we find the use of the word *Design*, in plural, in his description of the Royal Academy of Lagado; an academy of projectors. In the first paragraph, 'Design' is used to signify 'a project', a case of 'scientific' nature. In the second paragraph, 'Design' is a wish or a scheme. Swift's irony stresses a notion of projection and design, normally risible and unpractical, in which we note a fake objectivism or a pure subjective whim, worthy of further studies, particularly related to the political transformations of the emerging mercantilist England.

This is the first time we detect the word 'Design', spelled as such, and with relatively new meanings. 'Design' is defined as a project, i.e., a sequence of actions that accomplish an expected result. This is discrete relative to Cawdrey's meanings and the drawing meaning in Inigo and Wotton.

### 3.1. Design in Art and Science is Isolated from Other Meanings:

Let us, now, take a look at Nathan Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, printed for the first time in 1721:

**Desi'gn** [dessein, Fr. disegno, It. Desinio, Sp. Designatio, Lat.] 1. Intention, purpose, resolution, enterprise, or attempt. 2. Contrivance, project, scheme, plan of action. Is he a prudent man that lays designs only for a day? Tillotson. 3. A scheme formed to the detriment of another. A sedate settled design upon another man's life. Locke.

Design [respecting arts and sciences] denotes the thought, plan and the geometrical representation of any thing.

Design [in painting] the first draught or sketch of a picture, or, in general, it is the thought that artist had about any great piece; whether the contours and out-lines, be only drawn, or whether the piece has the shadows, or the colours; so that if there appears much skill or judgment, it is common to say, the design's great and noble. In the designs of several Greek medals, one may often see the hand of an Apelles or Protogenes. Addison.

Design [in painting] is also used to signify the just measures, proportions and outward forms, which those objects ought to have, that are drawn in imitation of nature, and may be called a just imitation of nature.



**To Desi'gn** [designer, dessiner, Fr. Desegnare, It. Designàr, Sp. Of designo, Lat.] 1. to draw a design of any thing, to plan, to form in idea. Observe whether it be well drawn, or, as most elegant artisans form it, well designed. Wotton.

(Bailey 1736)

In the second and third paragraph, Bailey isolates the words 'respecting the arts and sciences' and 'painting'. There is also an increasing value attached to the notion of representation, as we see in the second paragraph. As a verb, he defines design as drawing and planning. Note that the words 'deseigne', 'deseignment', 'dessine' and 'designe' disappeared from the English Language, thus all the different meanings were compacted in one word only: 'Design'.

When comparing Bailey's quotations with Wotton's original text we can see that where Sir Henry had written: '(or as more elegant artisans **tearme** it) well Design'd', Bailey wrote: 'as most elegant artisans **form** it, well designed'. It is clear that these two sentences have different meanings. Wotton's sentence refers to the word itself and defines it as both drawing and design. Bailey, on the other hand, proposes that 'Design' could signify 'giving form'. By accident, or influenced by the current use of the word, Bailey went to the root of design's signification in years to come.

### **3.2. The Disciplinary Use of the Word "Design" versus the Literary Use:**

If we look at the titles of two contemporary books on Architecture, for instance *Lectures on Architecture consisting of Rules founded upon Harmonic and Arithmetical (...). Designed as an Agreeable Entertainment for Gentlemen...* (Wiebenson 1988, 134), written by Robert Morris in 1734, and William Chambers' *A treatise on Civil Architecture, in which the Principles of that Art are laid down, and Illustrated by a great number of plates, accurately designed, and elegantly engraved by the best Hands* (Wiebenson 1988, 143), of 1759, we find that the word 'Design' began to be associated with both concepts of project and drawing.

For instance, in Sir John Soane's House and Museum in London, on the upper floor, one can see project drawings of Soane's proposed new Houses of Parliament. The captions in the frames are eloquent: in one of the elaborated drawing in perspective (from the observer's point of view), one can read 'Design for the Houses of Parliament and Law Courts. Sir John S. 1796' whereas another drawing of the plan is entitled 'Ground plan of the above design, Sir. John S. 1796'. From this example, we can draw the conclusion that in some cases a 'design' was a constructed and coherent image of what an object would look like in observational terms, over and above more abstract representations.



Therefore, from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the word seemed to be used in two different realms: on the one hand, it was defined as a wish or a desire to change things; and on the other hand, it was described as a professional discipline that merged the concepts of project and drawing together. This dichotomy is evident if we turn from architecture to literature. A search of Jane Austen's contemporary literary work in Project Gutenberg, showed that from 86 occurrences of the word 'design', we found only two related to the arts and sciences, painting or drawing. From *Northanger Abbey* (1803): 'Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil – she had no notion of drawing – not enough even to attempt a sketch for her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the **design**.' (Austen 2010) And in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), chapter 10: 'Tell your sister I am delighted to hear of her improvement on the harp; and pray let her know that I am quite in raptures with her beautiful little **design** for a table, and I think it infinitely superior to Miss Grantley's.' (Austen 2010)

Most of the uses are related with what we could call premeditation. The words 'designedly' and 'undesignedly' are, in consequence, used commonly to express the notions of 'on purpose' and 'by accident'. Not surprisingly, in Austen's work the word 'design' is often connected to intentions of marriage. But there are others. For example, I cannot resist transcribing a quote from *Persuasion*: 'Mr Elliot is a man without heart or conscience; a **designing**, wary, cold-blooded being who thinks only of himself'. (Austen 2010)

While in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* we might expect the use of the word 'design' to be related to electric devices, we see instead that it is used to communication a wish or premeditation in all thirteen occurrences. Significantly one of the creature's last lines is: 'The completion of my demoniacal **design** became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended; there is my last victim!' (Shelley 2008 (1818))

The word 'design' had a totally independent life in novels and salons from the main disciplinary concept of 'Design' that, in the future, would originate schools and professions. However, premeditations carried calculations that would, in the future, become vital for 'scientific design'.

#### 4. Design on the Road to Maturity

The aristocracy of nature is composed of the nobles who are stamped such by their Maker, and are in principle and practice true democrats – lovers of their fellow men, and supporters of equal rights for all. I trust that such aristocrats will be formed in this Academy [...] This Academy, of which you have been worthy students, and as I hope, will be honourable members, being composed solely of artists, will strive to maintain that dignified station which belongs to the arts of design and their professors.  
(Harrison et al. 2001, 268-269)



These words were read in 1831 by William Dunlap, Vice President of the National Academy of Design of New York, as well as Professor of Historical Painting, and author of the monumental 1834 book *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (Harrison et al. 2001, 266, 267), during an annual prize-giving ceremony on the subject of 'Drawing'. The National Academy of Design of New York was founded in 1826 by a group of independent New York artists, who had, the previous year, organized a society called the Drawing Association. Unlike the older American Academy of Fine Arts, which promoted patronage art, Dunlap was a strong defender of the independent nature and social value of art.

As far as we know, the National Academy of Design was the first teaching institution to cite 'Design' as its core subject, eleven years before the Government School of Design in London was founded (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). The transition from England to early industrial America is, therefore, justified. However, this article does not extend to a discussion of the cultural differences between the European country and its former colony. Neither can we fully evaluate how the English language evolved in both countries. Nevertheless, it is important to note here an evolution, which provided Noah Webster with the need and reason to publish in 1828, the first American English dictionary:

**“DESIGN**, v.t. [L. To seal or stamp, that is, to set or throw.]

1. To delineate a form or figure by drawing the outline; to sketch; as in painting and other works of art.
2. To plan; to form an outline or representation of any thing. Hence,
3. To project; to form in idea, as a scheme. Hence,
4. To purpose or intend; as, a man designs to write an essay, or to study law.
5. To mark out by tokens.
6. To intend to apply or appropriate; with for; as, we design this ground for a garden, and that for a park.

The word design may include an adapting or planning a thing for a purpose, or mere intention or scheme of the mind, which implies a plan. The father designs his son for the profession of the law, or for the ministry. It was formerly followed by to, but this use is now uncommon.

**DESIGN**, n.

1. A plan or representation of a thing by an outline; sketch; general view; first idea represented by visible lines; as in painting or architecture.
2. A scheme or plan in the mind. A wise man is distinguished by the judiciousness of his designs.
3. Purpose; intention; aim; implying a scheme or plan in the mind. It is my design to educate my son for the bar.



4. The idea or scheme intended to be expressed by an artist; as the designs of medals.
5. In manufactories, the figures with which workmen enrich their stuffs, copied from painting or draughts.
6. In music, the invention and conduct of the subject; the disposition of every part, and the general order of the whole.”

(Webster 1828)

This hierarchy of meanings underlines the fact that that drawing or drawn objects are the main generative motive. As a verb, Webster defines ‘design’ as the purpose or intent that derives from an outline, a drawing and a scheme. Although not etymologically sustainable, this interpretation emphasizes that Design as linked to the Arts for its primary meaning. So let’s go back to Dunlap’s address and try to establish what were for him, the Arts of Design:

The uninstructed labourer in civilized society is nearly dead to those objects [the sculpture of Phidias and the paintings of Raphael] which fill us with delight, as the savage. But the man who reads – who delights in books – the educated man – feels the want of the works of the poet, the painter, the sculptor, the engraver, and the architect.

(Harrison et al. 2001, 267)

Since the National Academy of Design was originated in a ‘Drawing Association’, we must recognise that, for Dunlap, the Arts of Design were painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving (drawn from the 1600’s Roman Academy of Disegno’s list of disciplines). This suggests that at the National Academy of Design, the artistic and academic use of the word ‘design’ was clearly related to the Italian concept of ‘disegno’.

The title of Dunlap’s masterwork, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1965 (1834)), was clearly inspired by Romano Alberti’s *Origine e Progresso dell’ Accademia del Disegno* (Alberti 1604), which describes the governance of Zuccari over the Academy. However, it is organized according to Giorgio Vasari’s *Le Vite...* (1986 (1550)) and contains biographies of artists who worked in North America since the early 1700’s. In the book’s introduction, Dunlap provides us with an elegant definition of ‘design’, and clarifies what we have examined:

Design, in its broadest signification, is the plan of the whole whether applied to building, modelling, painting, engraving or landscape gardening; in its limited sense it denotes merely drawing; the art of representing form (Dunlap 1834, Chapter 1, introductory, John Watson)

As we can see, Dunlap’s ‘drawing’ is unmistakably linked with the Italian Renaissance theory; i.e., it was used as the artists’ instrument of expression, as well as serving as an intellectual tool to enhance the New Republic’s artists, as it had been in the past. However, in Dunlap’s opinion, the uninstructed ‘labourer’ was a new reality, hypothetically



full of savagery. According to this author, the uninstructed labourer had to learn the various arts: Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture. If we take a look, once again, at Webster's definition of 'Design', we now realise that he acknowledges this new reality in the fifth meaning: 'In manufactories, the figures with which workmen enrich their stuffs, copied from painting or draughts'.

It becomes clear that, for Dunlap, the painter, sculptor, engraver and architect had to possess the same type of qualities that would later be amalgamated in the designer. Thus, Design as a profession was born of the importation of such aristocratic (yet democratic) artistic qualities. By incorporating with these various artistic projects, an exploratory phase conducted through drawings, the artisan is transformed into a designer. Drawing, as an intellectual tool that used geometry, as well as explored graphic expression, and promoted clear anticipatory descriptions) - that produced knowledge within Design - was the key process that allowed the word to gain its social meaning as predictive and contributed to the recognition of designers as those skilled in practice.

## 5. Conclusion

Our conclusion is, therefore, that design, designers and design schools should claim their origin in the most esteemed and culturally-elevated early modern concept of 'Disegno'. This concept was 'Englished', as Haydocke would put it, contributing to the intellectual emancipation of the artist.

Although, in those days, 'Design' was a term used by artists which referred to objects as well as drawings, the profession and discipline had not yet been instituted and defined (for instance, as Architecture was) until the design schools were established. During this period, roughly from the early 1600's to the mid 1800's, the word 'Design' (meaning 'drawing') had completely different uses than the 'Design' more commonly used in literature and common parlance.

The foundation in 1837 of the Government School of Design, the origin of both the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal College of Art, in England, associates the Victorian epoch with the birth of Design as a profession and thus the object of study for the history of design. This opens a field of comparative studies between artistic discourse and literary works that we hope to engage in the future.

The genealogy of design that has been established here contradicts, or at least alleviates, the published conviction that the word and concept of 'design' derives from a non-reflexive and poorly intellectualized arts and crafts tradition (Friedman 1997, 54-56). The word 'Design' was chosen to signify the intellectual process behind the development of different types of knowledge, namely those that border aesthetic perception and ethical utility. The supportive framework used to produce this kind of knowledge predominantly consisted of the visual objects which



result from a process based on linearity. Sometimes called drawings, sometimes called sketches (the Vasarian 'schizzi'), diagrams, schemes and schemata, sometimes framed by geometry and sometimes as intuitive as a glance, these constructed images were the systematic way of 'displaying form in space' (Dunlap 1834, Chapter 1, introductory, John Watson). In those days, we believe that Design was hardly, as one author quotes, 'to [devise] courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones' (Simon 1982, 129). Design, as a discipline, academy and profession, was (and still is?) 'courses of action' based on constructed images devised to display forms (mostly objects of use) in space as a way of 'changing situations'. In the shift from *Disegno* and *Dessine* to Design we see the development of a purely intellectual activity that created a new type of objects, a new profession and new institutions.

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