

The Vienna Workshop's Role in Linking Plastic art Aspects with Applied Ones

Abir Arafah *1

*1. Master printmaking

abir.arafah@Damascusuniversity.edu.sy

Abstract:

This article shows the most important tasks of the Vienna Workshop, in linking the plastic and applicable aspects together to unify arts in all fields. These arts had different objects and styles of artists and architectural designers, whose ideas and works inspired the applicable artisan products. An important question arises here: What are the financial or nonfinancial feasibilities of investing the formation aesthetics in the applicable and vocational objects of the Vienna Workshop?

In early stages, the Vienna Workshop heavily sought to develop unique forms of art in an Austrian artistic style to make arts available for all. In the production phases, the steps aimed to merge the designs with applicable crafts in all field, and revealed the aesthetic value of geometrical tendency, strongly explicit in the works. The Workshop linked arts together, and expanded the cultural tasks of the performing arts.

The Vienna Workshop's Book designing art was luxurious. It revived old techniques through artistic portrayed folk stories for children. This stimulated a lot of ideas and tendencies to the Vienna Workshop, years later. They were manifested in geometrical visions; the most important of which are Cubism, Bauhaus, visual Art, and Hard Edge.

In conclusion, the Vienna Workshop heralded to remove boundaries between plastic, applicable or even architectural. In a single art work, we find various concepts, methods and raw materials. This diversity constituted a model for a lot of trends- succeeding the Vienna Workshop- to be followed.

Keywords: workshop, Vienna, design, plastic, applied, craft.

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دور ورشة عمل فيينا في ربط الجوانب التشكيلية مع التطبيقية

عبير عرفة *1

*1. ماجستير قسم غرافيك، فنون جميلة، جامعة دمشق.

abir.arafeh@Damascusuniversity.edu.sy

الملخص:

تستعرض هذه المقالة أبرز مهام ورشة عمل فيينا وسعيها في ربط الجانب التشكيلي مع التطبيقي، لأجل وحدة الفنون في شتى مجالاتها المختلفة، التي حملت موضوعات وأساليب متنوعة من بصمات الفنانين والمصممين المعماريين الذين استلهمت أفكارهم وأعمالهم في المنتجات الحرفية التطبيقية. وبالسؤال الأهم: ما هي الجدوى المادية أو غير المادية من استثمار جماليات التشكيل في الموضوع التطبيقي والوظيفي التي شهدته (ورشة عمل فيينا)؟ سعت ورشة عمل فيينا بشكل كبير في بداياتها لتطوير نماذج فريدة بأسلوب فني نمساوي، مما جعل الفنون متاحة للجميع. في خطوات مراحل الإنتاج لورشة عمل فيينا، تم التفكير في دمج التصاميم مع الحرف التطبيقية في جميع مجالاتها، وكشف عن القيم الجمالية ذات النزعة الهندسية التي كانت حاضرة بشكل قوي في أعمالهم. عملت الورشة على ربط الفنون، وتوسعة المهام الثقافية لمجموعة الفنون الأدائية.

تميّز فن تصميم الكتب لورشة عمل فيينا بالفخامة وإحياء التقنيات القديمة، من خلال أعمال الفنانين في الحكايات المصورة بأساليب شعبية موجهة للأطفال. وهذا شكل حافظاً لظهور العديد من الأفكار والتوجهات المماثلة لورشة عمل فيينا، والتي جاءت بعدها بسنوات، وتميّزت برؤيتها الهندسية ومن أهمها التكعيبية، الباوهاوس، الفن البصري وفن الحافة الحادة. نستنتج مما سبق أن ورشة عمل فيينا بَسَّرت بإزالة الحدود الفاصلة بين العديد من الفنون سواء كانت تشكيلية أم تطبيقية وحتى معمارية، حيث نجد في العمل الفني الواحد حضور العديد من المفاهيم والطرائق والخامات، مما شكّل منطلقاً ونموذجاً يحتذى للكثير من الاتجاهات التي جاءت بعد ورشة عمل فيينا

الكلمات المفتاحية: ورشة عمل، فيينا، التصميم، التشكيل، التطبيق، حرفة.

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developing constantly, in a way that serves the aesthetic and functional purposes.

Research methodology:

The descriptive approach depended on observation, case study, and samples analysis of art works that connect the aesthetic and applicable data together.

1. The beginnings of the Vienna workshop:

The Vienna workshop is an organized company for the production of arts and crafts of various kinds in addition to being part of Vienna Secession. A group of artists from Vienna Secession began to think about Austria's situation regarding the lack of handicrafts. Some of these artists decided in 1903 to form the Vienna Workshop, which was called the (Producing Community of Vienna Artists) in order to gather and unify the best craftsmen in ideal working conditions, it continued its activity until 1932.

The artists of the workshop were basically following in the footsteps of the development that began with the Arts and Crafts Movement in England all of which led to a similar development in thinking. At the same time, The Deutscher Werkbund was founded in Germany, in 1907 and later Bauhaus in 1919. (Charles & Carl, 2014, p149)

The Vienna Workshop's objectives were clearly expressed by the Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) in an article he wrote in 1904, in which he stated: "We want to establish an intimate connection between public, designer, and craftsman, to create simple articles of household use. Our point of departure is purpose, utility is our prime consideration, our strength must lie in good proportions and use of materials... The work of craftsmen must be measured by the same standard as that of the painter and the sculptor." (Utley, 1986, p7)

Introduction:

The Austrian arts flourished in the late nineteenth century and witnessed a great development that paved the way for different arts and crafts of a specialized design nature, and this is what the Vienna workshop carried in its quest, which assumed a leading role in creating new fields of work of aesthetic value in addition to their functional feasibility. Understanding this role will be useful in drawing new ideas and potential steps.

Research significance:

Identifying the real period that witnessed the ideology of fine art's standards in approaching the applicable ones, and the value of this ideology through taking the leading experience of the Vienna Workshop -that preceded the Bauhaus's- into consideration.

Research questions:

-How to connect the applied aspects with the plastic ones in a single art work or product?

-What are the financial and nonfinancial feasibilities of investing the plastic aesthetics in the applied and vocational objects in the Vienna Workshop?

-What is the aesthetic value of approaching the plastic aspect with the applied one in the experience of the Vienna Workshop?

Research Hypotheses:

-The Vienna Workshop's concepts are taken from ideas, that defied the prevailed standards in the domain.

-The plastic art values contributed in supporting the products. These products played a role in revealing and promoting the aesthetic values of the artists' works.

Research objective:

Revealing the connection between plastic art and functional applied one. This connection is

craftsmanship, the market for these products was limited and tremendously expensive. (Heathcote, 2017, p71).

Vienna Workshop issued publications, printed books and postcards, and manufactured all kinds of internal elements such as furniture, wallpaper, fabrics, carpets, and types of household goods such as silverware, glassware, ceramics, in addition to jewelry and fashion design. The Vienna workshop ran its own retail outlets not only in Vienna, but also in other European cities. In the 1920s in New York, its modern designs were sold to an increasingly art-invested audience.

The Vienna Workshop adhered to the principle of the production process shared by design artists and craftsmen. Artist Koloman Moser drew clear geometric shapes and implemented the most striking designs, (Whitford, 1993, p40). Such as chairs and desks. (Figure. 1)



Figure (1) Koloman Moser, Armchair, (70×60×60cm), made by Caspar Hrazdil, Thuya wood, inlaid with satinwood and gilt metal feet, 1903.

His ideas made a major contribution to Viennese modernity in the 20th century. Moser left the Vienna

The Vienna Workshop program clearly reflected the secessionist group's intention to seek the unity of art, which is the most important idea for the Vienna Workshop in bringing together the work of craftsmen, artists and designers. Despite the Vienna Secession being a strong source of inspiration for the creators of the Vienna Workshop, their projects tended to define the new trends, the geometrization. The Arts and Crafts Movement participated in the Eighth Secession Exhibition in 1900 with furniture and interior designs that were admired by the Vienna audience. Hoffmann continued to reach out to Scottish artist and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) to promote the liaison between the English and Austrian design movements. Many of the new design workshops became similar to those in other European cities. (Id). We find that the concepts of Vienna Workshop followed the ideas and standards of the Arts and Crafts Movement in developing the aesthetic side as well as the functional side to create a modern artistic vision that carried unique Austrian topics and methods.

The leaders founders of the Vienna workshop are the Austrian architects and designers Koloman Moser (1868-1918), and Joseph Hoffmann, in addition to the Austrian industrial and banking businessman Fritz Waerndorfer (1939-1868). (Virag, 2012, p24).

2. Practical steps in the workshop production phase:

The activities of the Vienna Workshop are broader than what was announced. The Vienna Workshop was interested in the idea of beautifying daily life, improving the general taste of people, and enhancing well-being by paying attention to the topics of modern design. The founders were sure that they would be able to create a market for their elegant goods, but despite the beauty of their designs and their

the textile industry and was the patron of Macintosh and Hoffmann.



Figure (2) Koloman Moser, poster announcing the opening of The Vienna Workshop, Neustiftgasse showroom, 1904–1905.

The initial financial support of Waerndorfer allowed Hoffmann and Moser to design model workplaces, gather the best talent, and accumulate high-quality materials and equipment, such was the case with the design workshops for the English arts and crafts movement. The purpose of this process was to be self-sufficient, but this required exceptional commercial success and good management, none of which was achieved. The period from 1904 to 1906 saw the transition from abstract engineering to a more complex style. (Varnedoe, 1986, p88). In the above. (Figure. 2)

4-Fledermaus Kabarett and Post Cards:

In 1907, the Vienna Workshop, with the joint support of Waerndorfer and Belgian architect Adolphe Stoclet (1871-1949), built itself a theatre, a restaurant and Fledermaus Kabarett which was inspired by the Kabarett of Paris and Munich artists. Fledermaus Kabarett was intended to expand the cultural mission

workshop in 1907. He was dissatisfied, with the management of the workshop, and growing financial problems; however, he was being largely financially independent. (Smola, 2018, p13)

Moser, Hoffmann and Austrian architect Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867-1908) were mainly responsible for the field of architecture and furniture; they also contributed to all the other areas of work including glassworks, jewellery, fashion, ceramics, textiles and plastic arts in addition to their overall participation in the work of the workshops. Furthermore, they carried the burden of success and failure in their project. (Charles& Carl 2014, p155)

One of their goals was to translate the innate moral power of good and professional design along with commercial appeal. The statement written by Hoffmann and Moser for the Vienna workshop was remarkably devoid of mythical decorations and secessionist spirituality, and they dealt more realistically with the matters of product value.

In a speech, the founders of the Vienna workshop addressed the sons and daughters of the Ringstraße generation, and appealed to them to restore the progressive power of the middle class; they invoked the historical fate of the artistic leadership that had not yet been done by the modern bourgeoisie. What was mentioned in the speech represents the avant-garde and middle-class values in which everyone should be partners, not enemies. It was in that spirit that Hoffmann and Moser urged their sponsors to avoid vulgar temptations in terms of the value of the raw materials or the quality of the decorations applied. From the beginning, the Vienna workshop did not succeed in establishing a large number of clients or creating widespread designs. This whole endeavor was through the support of Waerndorfer, a descendant of the wealthy Anglophile family that practiced

sign of 1,000 ceramic tiles to decorate the Kabarett. Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980) probably participated in the design of the stage and hall, and supervised the design of the decoration of the Fledermaus Kabarett, which was designed by the Vienna Workshop. According to Austrian author Werner J. Schweiger (1949-2011) Kokoschka's work was committed to the idea of Gesamtkunstwerk. (Strobl & Weidinger, 1994, p18).

The first season of the Fledermaus Kabarett included a performing program that combined avant-garde dance and surreal masquerade plays with fairy tale performances through puppet plays and old military songs. For Kokoschka, the Kabarett was an avant-garde theatre in central Vienna. The first week of the Fledermaus showcase included Kokoschka's only and partly successful attempt to show sequential images of his Indian fairy tale *The Speckled Egg*. It represented a part of the graphic prints of the Vienna workshop as well. Kokoschka played a pioneering role within few months in the avant-garde of Vienna; his success was seen as the success of a bad boy. (Varnedoe, 1986, Pp92-94).

In the field of graphics of the Vienna Workshop, the first steps were taken to reform the applied arts in Vienna at early twentieth century. The graphic arts moved towards flat, linear art, basic geometric shapes and concise color palette. One of the main distinguished features of the Viennese modernism of the reform artists was in the field of graphic creations. Graphic arts are cheap to try new design ideas, and make them available to the largest audience. (Döring & Staggs, 2017, p34)

Kokoschka's work on the printed works of the Vienna Workshop (1907-1908) was closely related to the artistic developments through his professors. Creating a famous series of postcards was tasked to Ko-

of the Performing Arts Group, and to provide an informal management of the Viennese avant-garde. The Kabarett was a memorial to the spirit of the Vienna Workshop era, which opposed the symbolic seriousness that had governed the *Sacred Spring Magazine* for years. (Varnedoe, 1986, p92). (Figure. 3).

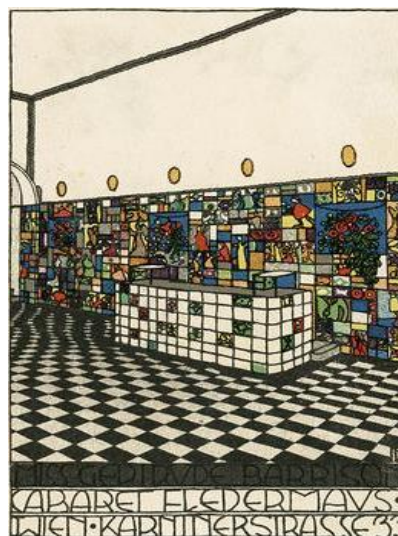


Figure (3) Josef Hoffmann, postcard Cabaret Fledermaus, 11,8x 8 cm, colour lithographic, 1907-8, published by the Vienna workshop.

Shows the walls of the Fledermaus Kabarett room covered with thousands of glazed ceramic tiles. The ceramic tiles are decorated with a variety of combinations such as caricatures, portraits, human figures, animal images, abstract shapes, decorative patterns and single colors. We can note that the ceramics arranged on the walls followed a pattern of partition and repetition. (Arpak, 2013, p189).

The Fledermaus Kabarett represented the first clear achievement of the Vienna Workshop's quest to connect the arts. According to Austrian journalist and writer Ludwig Hevesi (1843-1910), many young artists from the Hoffmann and Carl Otto Czeschka (1878-1960) group participated in the de-

The postcards easily combined art and everyday life through a relatively inexpensive medium of a postcard, while most other products of the Vienna Workshop were categorized as luxury and extravagant ones. (Varnedoe, 1986, p95).

5. Book Design of the Vienna Workshop:

The book art of the Vienna Workshop was fancy and revived an old technique such as cutting and weaving leather book covers. Kokoschka and many other artists presented children-oriented works in the field of book art. Kokoschka's most important work in this field was the illustrated book *The Dreaming Boys*. His consciousness was flowing, in a narrative style, with all that took into account and reinforced his strange vision of the magical garden in which the schematic and organic forms floated blatantly and frankly, in a direct connection with the lucid sources of a child's imagination, in uncertain space fields. (Varnedoe, 1986, p94) (Figure. 5).



Figure (5) Oskar Kokoschka, he Sailors Are Calling, from an illustrated book the Dreaming Boys, colour lithograph, (24 × 23 cm), the Vienna Workshop, 1907-08.

Historians consider Kokoschka's illustrated book to be an important artwork showing the best transition from Jugendstil design to Expressionism, a selective design of early twentieth century in Vienna. The

Kokoschka and his colleagues. These postcards were then called Bilderbogen, which are broad, funny and sometimes odd prints, and followed a new and refreshing approach to coordinating traditional images. The responsibility for creating posters, decorations and illustrations for *Fledermaus Kabarett*. (Stuhlpfarrer, 2017, Pp5-6). Was Kokoschka's colleagues. Kokoschka designed and executed a color lithography of Stag, Fox, and Magician (Figure. 4).



Figure (4) Oskar Kokoschka, Stag, Fox, and Magician, Illustration for the shadow play The Speckled Egg, colour lithograph, (24,2 × 23,4cm), from the First Theater Program of Kabarett Fledermaus, 1907.

It is part of his play *The Speckled Egg* mentioned above. In the printed work, Kokoschka's tendency for geometry is appeared in his illustrations. It is revealed in the triangular shape of the shepherd's body at the top, and in the special part around the deer.

In1908, the postcards showed the huge production of the Vienna Workshop and *Kabarett Fledermaus* that carried a kind of dance between the peasant style and the Punch style in printed forms .Illustrated fully in the Comedy that was expressed in caricatures and animations through the style of the epic and the new Viking ornament. These examples were parallel to the power of imagination and were free of guided imitation to shape a bolder world.

considered the values of local and private realities as ideals of universality.

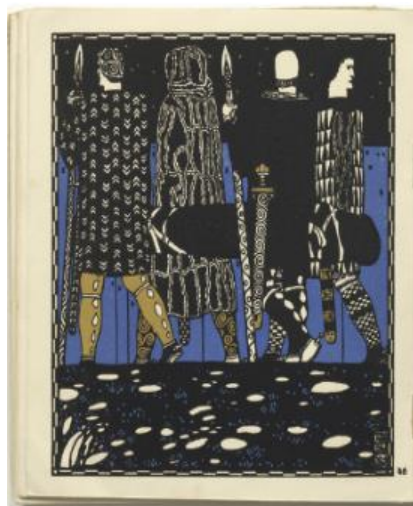


Figure (6) Karl Otto Czeschka, The Nibelungs, one page from an illustrated book the Nibelungs, colour lithograph, (14 x 13.5 cm), the Vienna Workshop, 1908.

The traditional foundations of Mediterranean culture came in the early 20th century challenging Western art, and dominating the works of Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) in his years of residence in Munich. These primitive currents were crucial sources of emerging expressionism that would lead us in divergent directions. The subject of the dispute was the reimagining of the basics of art sources, as they promoted the conservative current associated with reactionary policies, opening the way to new and more radical energies in folk art and allowing some unusual methods.

Moser and others of his generation followed in the footsteps of the Swiss artist Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918), namely in assuming the existence of an objective and orderly system in nature, that goes beyond the vague impressions of our senses. They used art to reveal this system by imposing the high abstractions of geometry, but for the younger genera-

Dreaming Youths includes graphics, and was printed using lithography technique. The pages of the book were large, with narrow and dense marginal columns on the right side of the page. (Berland, 2008, p26). The creation of children's drawings was the subject of intense scrutiny by educational reformers and psychologists throughout the nineteenth century, and by French artist Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and many avant-garde artists in Europe and by the Vienna Workshop.

The creation of children's drawings is part of a larger research done by early contemporary artists who were frustrated with the debilitating decadence of innateness, which prompted them to search for a raw source of inspiration. This new interest in folk style represented the rural culture itself where popular patterns were seen as the convergent harmony of unconscious individualism with the traditions that were devoid of similar monotony and the forced elegance of civilized expression. Attention to folk culture was associated with a phenomenon of a larger dimension pertaining to the primitiveness in Europe and in the Austrian society; the emergence of rural minorities coincided with political changes in the empire. We find that the plastic values have strengthened the functional applied aspect followed by Vienna Workshop in expanding its cultural and artistic tasks, which appeared through posters, books and postcards; all of which led to the disclosure of aesthetic values, which appeared through the works of artists Czeschka and Kokoschka.

The illustrated book (Figure.6). The Nibelungs by Czeschka was one of the most impressive works designed by the artists of the Vienna Children's Workshop. This book represents the art of (Provinz Kunst), which was drawn from the provinces. Due to the overlap of folk admiration with nationalism, they



Figure (7) Camillo Cerri, 1928, Cubist armchair, (108x75.5x75cm). And detail from: Stoclet Frieze.

In the above figure, one could find applied works with a geometrical vision like the one adopted by the Vienna workshop where we see a chair of wood in a cubic geometric form; however, the fabric is embroidered with snails like the one designed by Gustave Klimt in Stoclet Frieze, which was implemented by the Vienna workshop and the artists of the secession group.

In the same context, the geometric vision, we see the Bauhaus School, an art association, appeared in the German city of Weimar (1919), founded by the German-American architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) in 1919, and was composed of the School of Arts and the School of Crafts. The word Bauhaus symbolized the need for art and industry to be linked together in design. (Chen & He, 2013, p323) Gropius announced his intentions in his speech when he said: "Architects, sculptors, painters-we all must return to the crafts! ... Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen, without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist".(Forlano, Steenson & Ananny, 2019, p25) In 1923, Gropius called for the reconciliation between creative artists and the industrial world, shifting the focus of design theories from aesthetics to practice. (Chen, & He, 2013, p323).

tion it was through self-intuition, initial exaggeration and unmodified colors that seemed better suited to express the basic primitivity of the artistic activity. (Varnedoe, 1986, Pp 94, 95)

6. The impact of the geometrical vision correlated with applied arts on some of the trends that came after the Vienna workshop:

Many ideas and trends emerged, thinking in a similar fashion to what the Vienna workshop had previously carried out. For example, an artistic movement in Paris called the Cubism came years later. The Cubism played a main role in the birth and growth of non-representational art; and soon became widely used to describe the formalist innovations in painting, such as the one created by French artists Georges Braque (1881-1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) in 1907 and until 1914. Other artists presented their own distinctive cubic patterns that were influenced by the work of both Picasso and Braque; who also presented new ways of working with color, geometry and abstraction elements. Cubism affected not only sculpture, architecture, poetry, music, literature but also painting and applied arts. (Kolokytha, 2019)

We see in the armchair designed by Camillo Cerri (Fig. 7), that it is not just an ordinary armchair, but rather a unique one, considering its shape.

1997), was a pioneer of the movement that was described in the sixties as a: “modern art movement emerging in 1960s; it tries to reflect the optical perceptions of people geometrically and benefits from severe contradictions especially black and white contrast and geometric patterns.” (Onal, 2012, p655). All of this was aimed at creating optical illusions that seek to present the two dimensional image as three dimensional, moving and vibrating with visual effects. Thus, Op art became more common in sculpture, ceramics, architecture and applied graphic arts. (Onal, 2012, p656)

And so, one comes face to face with a geometrical vision with visual deception that carries the ideas and steps of the artists of the Vienna workshop; as seen in (Figure. 14), the artist Tobias Rehberger (1966) linked the op art between the aesthetic plastic reality and the literal applied reality in a modern vision.



Figure (9) Tobias Rehberger. Home and Away and Outside, Ausstellungsansicht, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, 2014.

In a model of the Bauhaus School, we see a baby's crib designed by German architect Peter Keler (1898-1982) (Figure. 13). We find that it is impossible to overlook the influence of Kandinsky on Keler. In accordance with Kandinsky, the circle, triangle, and square were the basic elements of a flat surface, while the sphere, pyramid, and cube were the basic components of three-dimensional structures. Keler's work demonstrated the same principles of Kandinsky in furniture. We see that the crib is made up of blue circles, yellow triangles, and red rectangles. These principles are not the main reason that made the cradle unique, but rather the practical application of these basic principles. Blue wheels support the body of the cradle, whose yellow end boards mark the center of the lower point of gravity, making the crib swingable. Holes in the red wicker side boards allow air and light to enter it from both sides. (Cantz, 2009, Pp120-121).

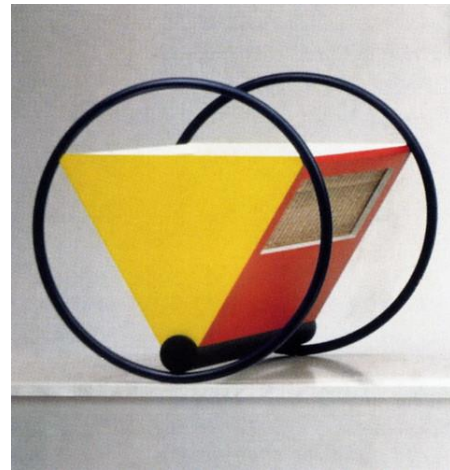


Figure (8) Peter Keler, Cradle, (91,7x 91,7x 98 cm), wood, colored, rope weave on a frame, 1922.

As for the geometric vision, it was carried by Op Art: an abstract art form consisting of non-representational geometric form that create different types of optical illusion.(Hajela, 2017,p2) The French Hungarian artist, Victor Vasarely (1906-

-The Vienna workshop promised to remove the boundaries between many arts, be they plastic, applied or even architectural; thus one might find the presence of many concepts, methods and materials in the same artistic work. This formed a starting point and a model for many of the trends that came after the Vienna workshop.

-And while the subject of the interconnectedness of the arts may seem familiar now, it was something avant-garde at the beginning of the twentieth century. The geometric tendency is strongly present in the overall work of the artists of the Vienna workshop. This tendency preceded all the proposals that came afterwards, including the cubism that was presented years after the Vienna workshop.

-All this development would not have reached its technical and applied status without the vision of the Austrian artists about the need to link the plastic reality with the artistic/crafted reality. The events and circumstances of the Second World War and the emergence of post-modern trends contributed to the development of this vision.

In the 1960s, a kind of abstract drawing in (Hard Edge) form spread in a geometric vision that was different from its predecessor; it was done through the influential, simplified, and sharp/hard geometric shapes spread over the surface of the painting, where geometric abstraction with hard edges was used to describe the works of artists such as Joseph Alborz, Frank Stella (1936), and Ellsworth Kelly (1929-2015).

Hard Edge Painting (n.d.). This is something that we see in a lot of applied art products such as furniture and the likes.

7. Research Results:

-Many functional applied products were popular during the prime period of the Vienna workshop due to the evident fingerprints of famous artists such as (Koloman Moser, Oscar Kokoschka, Joseph Hoffmann and Carl Otto Czeschka) whose works or ideas were inspired in the making of applied crafts products.

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Source Figure:

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