

Omega Now!

A design competition
for young people
aged 14-18

The competition brief

The Courtauld and Ulster Museum are running a competition for students aged 14-18 to create a surface design inspired by the designs of the Omega Workshops. The winning designs will be manufactured onto a card or textiles product and featured for sale in the gift shops at The Courtauld and Ulster Museum.

Omega Workshops Ltd was a commercial enterprise set up by a collective of artists in 1913, which was active only for a few years. We want you to research the Omega Workshops and bring some of their energy and avant-garde attitude to your designs! How can finding out about the work of this innovative group of artists help to inspire contemporary art and design?

Use this toolkit to help you to find out about the Omega Workshops and consider other sources of inspiration and the audiences for your contemporary design. Submit your entries by 20 April 2022 [here](#).



The winners

The winning entries will be selected by a panel of judges at The Courtauld and Ulster Museum, and the product will be manufactured and launched for sale in the gift shops at both organisations.

Winners will be able to see their design come to life by taking part in the production process and visiting the museum or gallery to see their design on sale.

Judging criteria

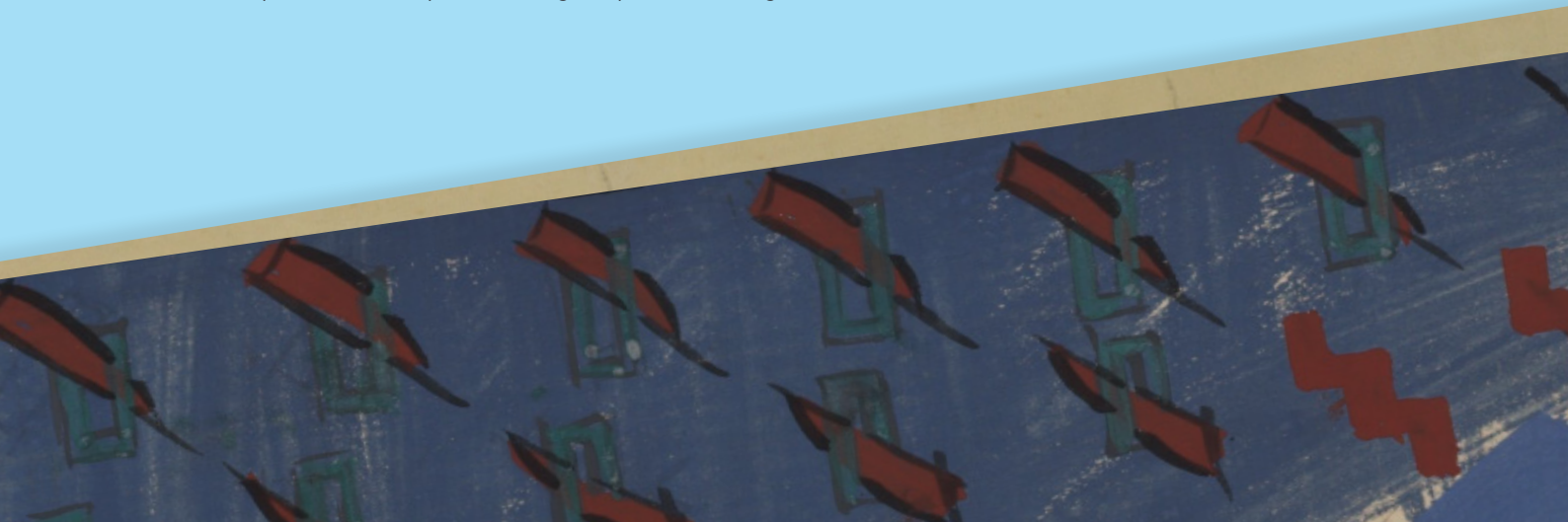
Your submission must be no more than 2 A4 pages plus one high-res JPEG file (or equivalent), including:

Your surface design as a separate digital file or high quality scan (we are not able to accept photographs of design work).

Explanation of how you have been inspired by or referenced work by the Omega Workshops.

Consideration of the target audience and how your design addresses and meets their tastes and needs.

Consideration of how you think you could develop or expand a product range using your design. The winning design will be manufactured into a card or textiles product, but we would love to know how you think your design could be applied to other products, or as part of a range of products using different materials.





Timeline

23 February 2022

competition opens

20 April 2022

deadline for submissions

May 2022

winners announced

June 2022

product launch

Submitting your entry

Submit your entry [here](#) by 20 April 2022.

Your entry must include your final design as a high resolution scan (at least 300dpi), as well as your presentation demonstrating how your design and ideas meet the judging criteria.

Your design can be hand drawn or painted, or it could be produced using digital software. It is very important that you submit your design as a scan as we are not able to accept photographs of designs.

When you submit your entry you will be asked to provide the name and contact details of your teacher and school. This is so that we can contact the winners.

If you have any questions about the competition email nationalpartners@courtauld.ac.uk





Toolkit

Research: Omega Workshops

The Omega Workshops was an experimental design collective established in 1913 by the painter and influential art critic Roger Fry. Their members included Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Wyndham Lewis, as well as other artists of the Bloomsbury Group.

Well ahead of their time, the Omega Workshops was a laboratory of bold, experimental design ideas, creating a range of objects for the home, from rugs to ceramics, furniture and clothing, all boldly coloured with dynamic abstract patterns. These contrasted sharply with the heavy Victorian interiors of the time, which they were reacting against. At the time it was very unusual for a person to literally wear their own aesthetic in the form of printed textiles and clothing.

In spite of criticism that they lacked the radical social aims of other movements such as the Bauhaus and the Russian Constructivists, they are recognised for their attempts to blur the boundaries between fine art and decorative arts, bringing art in to everyday life. Some have said that the Omega Workshops designs suggested hints of Cubism and Fauvism in their influences.

The name of the Omega Workshops came from the last letter of the Greek alphabet, Ω (Omega), which in the late 19th century was considered to mean 'the last word'. All works were produced anonymously and marked with this symbol to encourage the buyers to value the beauty of the object itself rather than the reputation of the artist.

The artists involved in the Omega Workshops often created interiors and objects for friends and members of their social circles and the company

itself was active for only a short time. Although the workshops did not emerge into a commercially viable business, the way in which these artists blurred the boundaries continues to influence art and design today. In contemporary culture surface design and decoration is part of our everyday household aesthetic, and wearing individual style and clothing through print and fabric choices is a normal part of consumer style.



Attributed to Duncan Grant and Roger Eliot Fry, Plate with overglaze geometric design enclosing Omega symbol (1913), glazed earthenware with printed decoration © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2022. Photo © The Courtauld

The images included here are mostly of works on paper or fabric, and some of the original designs have faded over time, so we need to imagine how the bright colours contrasted with the dark Victorian interiors. What do you think the original colours might have looked like? Take a look at some of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's textile designs to get an idea of the original colours.

Find out more about Omega Workshops Ltd from Tate and about the work of the Bloomsbury Group at Charleston, the former home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

Read about how contemporary designers are inspired by the Omega Workshops.



Using art history approaches

Art history can help us to understand the methods and techniques artists use, as well as the social context of their work at the time it was made, and this includes artworks that are made now. Using art history to analyse an artwork from multiple perspectives, we can draw parallels and contrasts to contemporary work and contexts, and use this information to inspire our own artworks.

What is it made from?

When was it made? Why?

What or who was it made for?

What is its function?

Where was it meant to be displayed or used?

What are the key characteristics of designs by the Omega Workshops?

How do they use colour and geometry to create patterns and abstract prints?

Are there any other forms and subjects in their designs?

How do their designs relate to textile design and surface decoration that we have today?

Inspiration

The design of The Courtauld's Art Café has taken a lead from the Omega Workshops' textiles and interior designs, with a large-scale reproduction rug based on a design by the group, and another bright, distinctive design that has been scaled up and printed on vinyl across the walls.

Your inspiration does not need to be as literal as this. Many contemporary artists and designers apply surface designs to products for interiors including wallpaper, textiles, stationary and ceramics. Either by creating repeat patterns or one-off designs, their intention is to enhance products and surfaces within interior design schemes.

Take a look at the contemporary designers listed here.

What, if anything, do these designers have in common?

What are some of the characteristics of their styles and approaches?

Cambridge Imprint - cambridgeimprint.co.uk

Naomi S. Clarke - naomi-clark.com

Dimore Gallery - dimoregallery.com

Yinka Ilori - yinkailori.com

Laurence Leenaert - lrnce.com

Jane McCall - bloomsburyrevisited.co.uk

Nigel Peake - patternpeople.com/profile-nigel-peake

Camille Walala - camillewalala.com

Creating a repeat pattern

Some of the designs by the Omega Workshops were for simple repeat patterns that could be applied to textiles and interior products. These were sometimes created as corner sections that could be rotated and fitted together, or more simple or complex forms of repeats.

See how to create a simple repeat pattern in this [In Focus Courtauld resource](#) for young people inspired by the Omega Workshops.

Another useful resource for creating one off and repeat patterns using digital technology are the tutorials on Spoonflower.com





Target audience and user

Shops in museums and galleries carefully curate the products on sale to appeal to their target audiences and to make clear and considered links to the works on display in permanent and temporary exhibitions. Think carefully about the target audience for your design and how you can design for them.

People who buy products in museum and gallery shops are often those who enjoy art and visit exhibitions. They might buy something for themselves, or as a gift for someone else. Museum and gallery shops tend to plan for a range of audiences, including adults and young people, families, and those with a particular interest, or who work or study, in the fields of art and art history.

Who do you think is going to buy your product?

How will your design appeal to them or the people they might give it to?

If you can, you could go and visit the Ulster Museum shop or another gallery or museum near you to research products and target audiences. Take a look at [The Courtauld shop](#) to see the kinds of products on sale, and the shop at [Charleston](#), the former home of some of the Omega Workshops artists, is another great source of inspiration for this project.

Design and product development

The winning designs will be manufactured into a card or textiles product, but we also want to hear about your vision for your surface design. Taking inspiration from the Omega Workshops who applied their designs to a wide range of objects, think about how your design might be used on other products.

What other products do you think could be suitable for your surface design?

How might your design become a range of products for sale in the museum and gallery shops?



Omega Workshops, *Rug design* (1913-1915), gouache and pencil on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
Photo © The Courtauld



Frederick Etchells, *Full-scale design for one corner of the Ideal Home Exhibition rug* (1913), gouache and pencil on paper © The Estate of Frederick Etchells. All rights reserved. DACS 2022.
Photo © The Courtauld



Duncan Grant, *Design for embroidered chair seat* (1913), gouache and pencil on paper © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2022.
Photo © The Courtauld



Omega Workshops, *Pattern design* (1913-1914), gouache and pencil on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
Photo © The Courtauld



Omega Workshops, *Tray design* (1913-1919), gouache on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
Photo © The Courtauld



Duncan Grant, *Design for an embroidered cushion or seat cover* (1913), gouache on paper © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2022.
Photo © The Courtauld



Attributed to Roald Kristian, *Design for lampshade (dragons)* (1913-1917), gouache on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
Photo © The Courtauld



Attributed to Duncan Grant, *Rug design* (1913-1915), graphite, bodycolour and collage on tracing paper © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2022. Photo © The Courtauld



Duncan Grant, *Rug* (1913 or later), hand-knotted wool with a jute or hemp warp © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2022.
Photo © The Courtauld



Attributed to Frederick Etchells and Roger Eliot Fry, *Two designs, one a sketch for Mechtilde carpet or rug* (1913-1914), gouache and pencil on squared paper © The Estate of Frederick Etchells. All rights reserved. DACS 2022. Photo © The Courtauld



Roger Eliot Fry, *Design for Lalla Vandervelde's Flat* (1916), gouache, watercolour and pencil on cardboard, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust) Photo © The Courtauld



Omega Workshops, *Rug design* (1913-1915), gouache and pencil on paper (newsprint), The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust) Photo © The Courtauld



About us

The Courtauld is a small, specialist university that focuses on Art History with a world-famous art gallery. The collection includes paintings, drawings, prints sculpture and decorative arts that spans over 800 years ranging from the medieval period to the present day.

As part of The Courtauld's National Partners Programme we work in partnership with, and have loaned a number of important art works to, a number of museums and galleries across the UK. We have worked with Ulster Museum on a number of exhibitions and events which have been viewed by more than 50,000 people.

Ulster Museum in Belfast is the largest museum in Northern Ireland, and forms part of National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI). It cares for

important and wide-ranging collections, including 12,000 works of fine and applied art, as well as natural sciences and objects relating to the history of Ulster from 1600.

Ulster Museum and Omega Workshops

In summer 2022 Ulster Museum are exhibiting seven works from The Courtauld's Collection, alongside a selection from their own fine art collection, showcasing artists working in the Bloomsbury Group and Omega Workshops.

Including works by Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, the exhibition will explore the ways in which this unique group of artists collaborated and experimented to develop a new aesthetic for art and design.