



THE BRITISH BAUHAUS? JP HULLY AND AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY OF BRITISH MODERNISM

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ABSTRACT

This is the first refereed article that presents the life and work of JP Hully, a British modernist that worked with Gane furniture manufacturers in Bristol. His design life and tenure at Gane overlapped with that of Marcel Breuer. Both historical and historiographical, this article probes the remaining historical shards of JP Hully's work, career and life, while making wider historiographical statements about the gaps, absences and silences of history.

Keywords: Modernism, Marcel Breuer, J.P. Hully, Bauhaus, cultural history, social history, design history, British design

There are people who act and speak but whose gestures and words do not translate out of their moments – and this exclusion, the sweep of the broom of this dustbin, is a movement that in its way is far more violent than any toppling of statues.¹

Greil Marcus

It is a maxim that we do not know what we do not know. Historians do not know what they cannot verify through source material, evidence, references and citations. If documents do not exist or have been destroyed, then they do not appear in footnotes. The absences, gaps and silences in history are wide. Epistemological discussions that

¹ G. Marcus, *The dustbin of history*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 17-18



detail the nature of history have existed since the discipline had a name. Certainly, the impact of women's history and social history has changed the way historical methods are constituted.² The status of 'facts,' 'sources' and 'evidence' has widened. Concurrently though, the historical discipline has also separated into distinct threads, with cultural history and social history distanced from the 'credible' political or diplomatic histories. The hierarchy of historical research has allowed the main sources of evidence to remain parliamentary papers, newspapers, journals of political organizations and diaries.³ The capacity to handle tweets, Facebook posts and YouTube videos remains a challenge, but is producing some fascinating scholarship in public history and GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums).⁴ Instead of asking E.H. Carr's old question 'What is History?'⁵ it is important to rephrase, reconfigure and reassess the mode, shape and form of the discipline, recognizing how the mode of research, engagement with archives and the nature of evidence has transformed. Greil Marcus has captured the tone of this new enigmatic question.

What is history, anyway? Is history simply a matter of events that leave behind those things that can be weighed and measured: new institutions, new rulers, new winners, new losers, or is history also a matter of those things that seem to leave nothing behind, nothing but the mystery of spectral connections between people long separated by place and time. If the language they are speaking, the impulse they are voicing, has its own language, might it not tell a very different story from the one we've been hearing all our lives?⁶

Such tentative questions – rather than definitive answers – peek through cultural history, particularly design history. In recording an era that is not the present,

² Importantly though, hierarchies of 'evidence' still exist, even in social history. Jay Hopley, when researching the literature of contractual murder, tells of her relationship with pulp fiction: "the stories themselves were shallow and formulaic; the characters were cardboard cut-outs that meandered from one almost-sexual encounter to another and, no matter what the plot was or where the story was set, someone inevitably ended up unconscious in an alley behind some strip bar or juke joint ... *The Mammoth Book of Pulp Fiction* confirmed what I had always suspected – pulp fiction was worthless," from "Watching the detectives," *Journal of Social History*, Winter 2002, p. 460. She later realized that by moving away from text-based models of literary criticism and granting the audience of these books a context and space through Cultural Studies methods, the genre gained meaning in a particular time and place. Hopley's article is an outstanding 'journey piece,' capturing how even the most liberal of social historians was able to discount 'evidence' because a history degree provides few skills in audience analysis.

³ Even when utilizing photographic and filmic sources, a notion of cultural value is deployed in a way that excludes other ways of reading visual culture. For example, please refer to Horst Bredekamp's "A neglected tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 29, Spring 2003. This research, while appearing to incorporate a wide range of visual culture, offers singular readings of 'art,' wherever it may be found.

⁴ Examples of this work include A. Sabharwal, "Networked Co-Curation in Virtual Museums: Digital Humanities, History, and Social Media in the Toledo's Attic Project," Vol. 1, No. 4, *International Journal of Heritage in the Digital Era*, pp. 587-610, <http://multi-science.metapress.com/content/125U15POV2W2P1J1>

⁵ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1963)

⁶ G. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989), p. 6



historians do not consider themselves writers of fiction. Indeed they are not: they are writers of empowered fictions. The real becomes a product that is shaped ideologically and politically.⁷ Historical facts cannot be verified, but only checked against other subjective accounts. Historians have access to representations of the past, not the past.⁸

Questions of fact frequently spill into debates about language and interpretation. We need to ask more subtle questions about how knowledge is formed, and why gaps and silences exist in the historical record.⁹ Notions of evidence, truth and verification must shift to incorporate new sources, visions and versions. Flicking through government reports does not display the truth of the events that took place on the colonial frontier. These documents demonstrate how indigenous peoples were 'managed' by the empowered, not understood by the citizenry. The dispossession is mirrored by disconnection and marginalization. Whenever 'history' is neutral, or as Grossberg describes as 'mere change,' we do not have a strategy to reclaim the rage caused by exclusion and the loss of evidence for injustice.

As history loses its sense, it can no longer be a source for the values by which one chooses and validates one's actions ... As history becomes mere change – discontinuous, directionless, and meaningless – it is replaced by a sense of fragmentation and rupture, of oppressive materiality, of powerlessness and relativism.¹⁰

History excludes those whose residues have been swept into the historical dustbin. So little is left of the lives of the majority. Women, as much as indigenous and black communities, gays and lesbians, the working class and youth, have been sliced from time, space and historical evidence.¹¹ But men too have been effected, such as the man

⁷ As Georg Iggers has argued, "the distinction between truth and falsehood remains fundamental to the work of the historian. The concept of truth has become immeasurably more complex in the course of recent critical thought," from *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), p. 12

⁸ To view the importance of these historical representations, rather than realities, please refer to Iain Chambers "Migrancy, culture, identity," in Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 77-81

⁹ An extraordinary piece of research into how indigenous knowledge systems have been valued and judged is David Chambers and Richard Gillespie's "Locality in the history of science: colonial science, technoscience, and indigenous knowledge," *Osiris*, Vol. 15, 2001. Particularly, in terms of the relationship between evidence and indigenous history, the writers explore the "network of exchange and control," p. 231. Such a network demonstrates why some knowledge systems enter the "global information network," and other truths are discarded.

¹⁰ L. Grossberg, *Dancing in spite of myself: essays on popular culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 34

¹¹ The consequences of this silence are seen in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the subaltern speak?" from L. Grossberg and C. Nelson (eds) *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) and bell hooks' *Talking Back*, (Boston: South End Press, 1989). hooks investigates the silence of the weak, less recognized discourses, suggesting that "madness, not just physical abuse, was the punishment for too much talking if you were female. Yet even this fear of



who is the focus of this article.

John Parkinson Hully was a designer whose recognition came from someone with whom he worked. He worked with Marcel Breuer during the famous Bauhaus designer's time in the United Kingdom. Breuer is famous inside and outside of design history. His designs are well documented and survives in photographs, books and design teaching. Yet the records of this relationship and J.P. Hully's work are few. A photograph, some catalogue entries, some handwritten notes and designs are all that remain. Some of these are placed – but uncatalogued – in the Geffrye Museum, the Museum of the Home, in East London. Others have been gathered, and captured digitally, as part of this research project. Our goal was to find shards of the unwritten history of J.P. Hully, and through him, a trace of the British Bauhaus and British modernism.

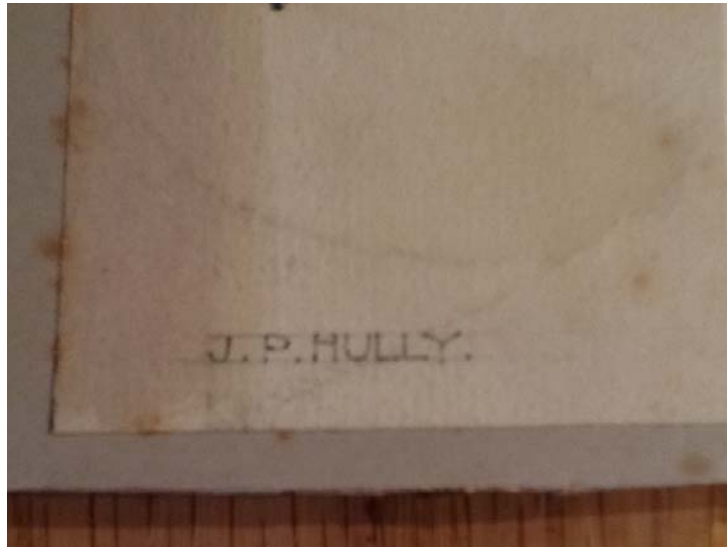


Figure 1 The fading signature (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

This faded signature on a discoloured card captures the challenge of this exercise. The evidence gathered is diverse in form and content. Inevitably, there is a dense and productive array of materials on the Bauhaus and Breuer, but very little on Hully. Nothing in the refereed literature mentions him or his work. The remaining materials in the Geoffrye Museum have been photographed for discussion in this article and for wider dissemination beyond an uncatalogued box in a storage area. Interviews have been conducted with the curators. Personal correspondence has been noted. Yet these are shards, residues of a life. While not writing a definitive history because there is

madness haunted me, hanging over my writing like some monstrous shadow. I could not stop the words making thought, writing speech," p. 7.



insufficient evidence, this short article demonstrates the historiographical challenge of reclaiming a forgotten designer in British history. Familial connections have assisted this process, particularly access to materials. One of the authors of this article, Steve Redhead, is the grandson of J.P. Hully. Therefore, he could and did access Hully's last direct relation: his daughter, Jean (Hully) Redhead.

To construct a design history from the ephemeral – the shadows cast by 'authoritative' source material - requires a range of interpretative techniques that move between the disciplinary parameters of both history and Cultural Studies, but requires a nuanced dialogue between the two.¹² Through changing the genre, mode and modality, a new type of interpretation can emerge. The status of 'facts' will always be problematic. An historian's task is to consider what the past means in – and to - the present. We can only work with the materials that have survived. Unobtrusive research methods have become key to this investigations. We have read letters, photographed designs, and logged the silences in the historical record. In response, scholarly techniques transform and the interpretations offered and applied cannot be definitive. This effacement of a knowable and understandable past demands other skills, such as a pervasive and proactive sense of the present. As Dick Hebdige suggested in the conclusion of *Hiding in the Light*,

We're on the road to nowhere. All of us. There's nowhere else but here for us. No other time but now. This is all there is and it's enough to be getting on with. It's not so bad. In fact it can make us laugh.¹³

Cultural history, and particularly design history, confirms a recognition that there is 'no other time but now.' This awareness changes the selection of topics and source material, generating 'enough to be getting on with.' But definitive answers are not possible.

The subject of this article has been dead for seventy years. Researchers can only pick up the visual shards that remain and probe the potential of their meaning. His unwritten history rides pillion to the expansive, vast and well documented history of Marcel Breuer. Breuer's papers from 1920-1986 are lodged in the Archives of American Art and were digitized in 2005. This collection, which is online and searchable, includes 42,724

¹² For example, in the case of indigenous Australians, an interpretation and negotiation with film is particularly important. Such films as *Radiance*, written by Louis Nowra, (Sydney: Currency Press, 2000), offer a distinct look, accent and inflection on indigenous women's lives in contemporary Australia.

¹³ D. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 239



images.¹⁴ Therefore this article will present some of the (more definitive) history and well worked history of the Bauhaus. Yet from this more established history, the sketches, designs, catalogues and ideas of J.P. Hully will be revealed as both a shadow of scholarship and opportunities for further research.

FORM, FUNCTION AND FAME

The word Bauhaus now functions as a code for metadesign. Beginning in 1919, the 'house of building' was an art school that probed the nature of good design. Their programme and manifesto was written and published in the April of their first year.¹⁵ The idea that both were published simultaneously not only confirmed the link between art and craft, but ideas and building. This small document has remained the frame and impetus for most of the subsequent interpretations of the Bauhaus. As Karen Koehler realized, Gropius wrote for the future: "Gropius had a clear interest in controlling how the Bauhaus program was historically positioned, and therefore he continued to redraft the history of the school throughout his life."¹⁶ Their attention was on liveability and exploring how buildings and furniture transform who live in and on them. The Bauhaus were reformist educators,¹⁷ trying to build a new form of society, modelling student behaviours as a form of ideal communitarian organization.¹⁸ Such a focus seems intensely democratic. The teachers were all practitioners. There was a respect of both art and craft, including bookbinding, carpentry and metalwork. A mastery of form was the focus. Marcel Breuer was a student of the school. His focus was the functionality of furniture, with specific attention on the kitchen. Shape, colour and design were his priorities. Yet one of the propulsions to the Bauhaus's fame was that they were closed down by the police on April 11, 1933, as the first act in the Nazi's 'cultural policy.' Their democratic tendencies were read as both decadent and Bolshevik. Such innovations were framed as dangerous to those who did not gain from creativity, imagination and collectivity.

The Bauhaus matter because they believed that as they reshaped design, they were transforming the world. The goal was to make a break from Victorian design through a commitment to high modernism. Many modernist ideas emerged before 1919 – such as

¹⁴ Marcel Breuer Papers, Smithsonian Archive of American Art, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/marcel-breuer-papers-5596>

¹⁵ W. Gropius, *Bauhaus Manifesto and Programme*, 1919, <http://www.thelearninglab.nl/resources/Bauhaus-manifesto.pdf>

¹⁶ K. Koehler, "The Bauhaus manifesto postwar to postwar: from the street to the wall to the radio to the memoir," in J. Saletnik and R. Schuldenfrei (eds.), *Bauhaus Construct: fashioning identity, discourse and modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 13

¹⁷ The transformative nature of the Bauhaus in arts education is difficult to overstate. Kathleen James – Chakroborty's "Introduction" to *Bauhaus culture: from Weimar to the cold war*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) captures this complex relationship between art and politics.

¹⁸ F. Whitford, *Bauhaus*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 46



san serif type¹⁹ - but the packaging of simplicity, usefulness and economy was innovative. The point of all design is to make the physical environment – buildings and furniture – match the lives of users. Design creates the structures of meaning, the behaviours and patterns, in our daily life.

After the Bauhaus closed, the teachers became influential and famous in the United States. New York's Museum of Modern Art features work from an array of the Bauhaus teachers.²⁰ Marcel Breuer's fame was to extend beyond Germany and the United States.²¹ A designer and architect, a student then teacher at the Bauhaus becoming the master of the carpentry workshop, he went on to design the Whitney Museum and what is now known as the Breuer Building (completed in 1966)²² and UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris.²³ But amidst this well known history, there is an odd and underwritten sojourn into Britain that also holds some significance.

The interwar years in British culture were part of a complex cultural history. Michael Saler states that,

When it comes to the visual arts, 'English modernism' might seem like a contradiction in terms, particularly when one considers the country's veneration of the past, as well as its Protestant bias against images, which continued well into the early twentieth century.²⁴

Breuer, in his British post-Bauhaus phase, was entering a nation still divided between north and south, industrial and pastoral iconography, religion and secularization, formalism and functionalism. Yet both he and Gropius left Germany for England, and away from the Nazis. In an ironic form of colonial revenge, they used this English base to go on to the United States. However there were productive legacies produced while they were in transit between the old and new world.

John Parkinson Hully: A man without history

Where there are facts, it is important to present them. John Parkinson Hully was born in

¹⁹ San Serif Typefaces, *Linotype*, <http://www.linotype.com/795/thesansseriftypefaces.html>

²⁰ These featured teachers, designers and artists include Anni Albers, Josef Albers, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, Marcel Breuer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Walter Gropius, Lyonel Feininger, Gunter Stoltz, Johannes Itten and Marianne Brandt

²¹ Breuer was listed in Josef Straffer's *50 Bauhaus Icons You Should Know*, (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2009)

²² The Breuer Building, <http://whitney.org/About/BreuerBuilding>

²³ UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/unesco-headquarters-paris-marcel-breuer-and-bernard-zehrfuss-architects-pier-luigi-nervi-structural-engineer-872>

²⁴ M. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: medieval modernism and the London Underground*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Vii



1882 and died in 1944. When he died, the National Register of Industrial Art Designers regretted losing "one of its most distinguished designers."²⁵ J.P. Hully was educated at the Friends School in Lancaster and worked for Gillows of Lancaster and P.E. Gane of Bristol and as Chief Designer for Bath Cabinet Makers, who "produced some of the most distinguished British furniture from the late 1890s through to, at least, the 1930s."²⁶ These were the 1930s of British Modernism - of British Art Deco and British Bauhaus. Hully's designs from 1928 were described as 'Modernist', the 'geometrical lines showing he was well up to date with advanced thinking.'²⁷ His designs and papers are collected today for art and design posterity in a small archive at the Geffrye Museum in Shoreditch, East London.²⁸

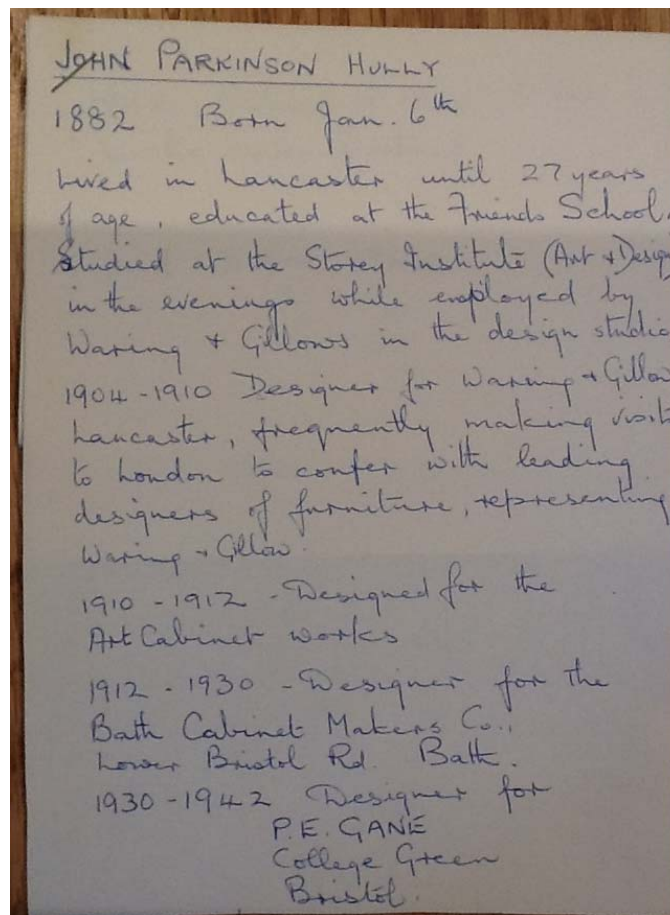


Figure 2 A daughter's memory (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

His daughter Jean Redhead (nee Hully) captured the design life of her father in two sheets of paper.

²⁵ From private correspondence with Jesse Hully, his widow.

²⁶ From private correspondence with Graham S. Gadd.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Geffrye Museum, <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk>

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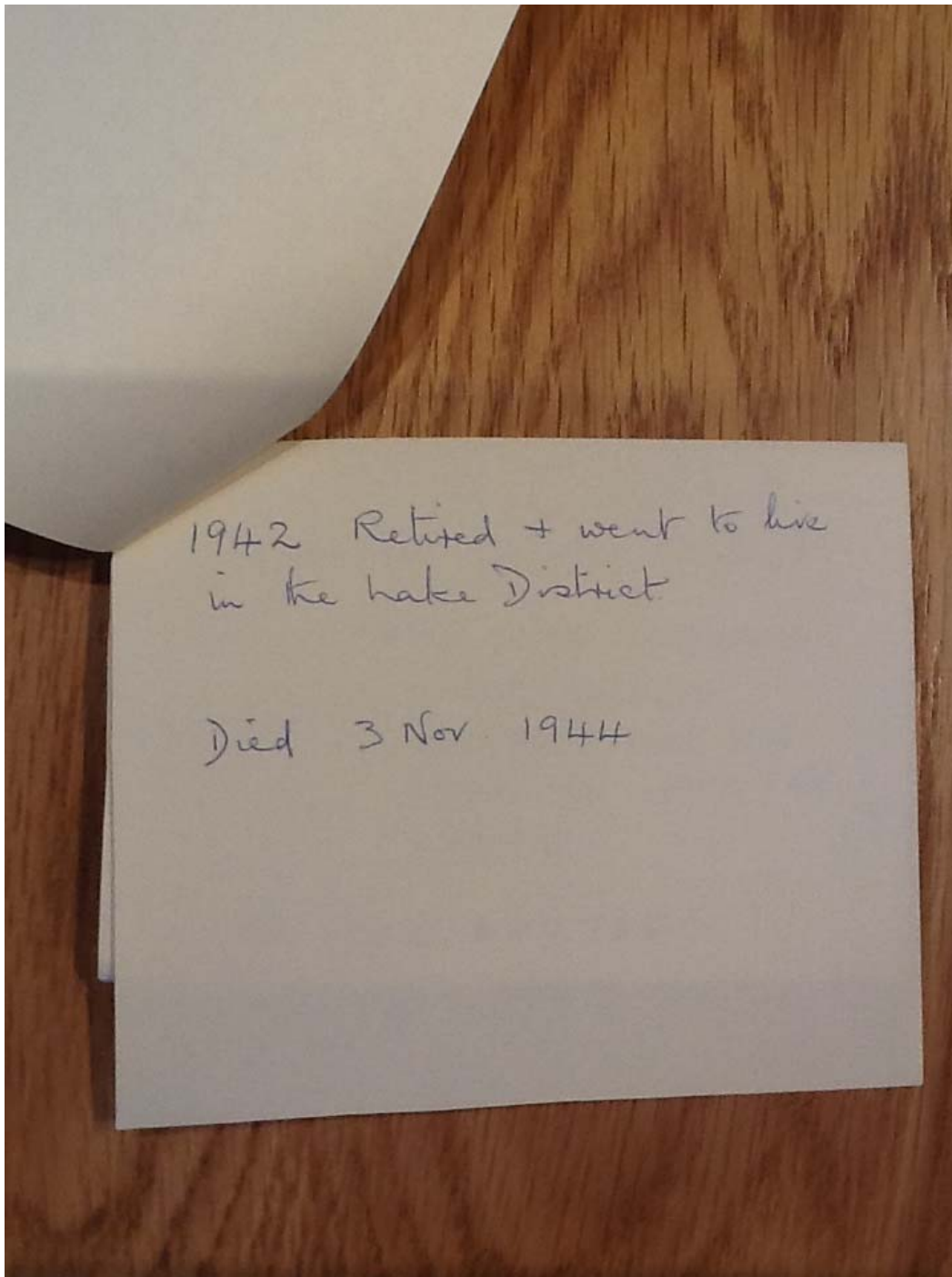


Figure 3 Return to the North (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

From this narrative we learn that Hully went to a Quaker school, was Lancaster born and studied at night while working in a design studio during the day. He worked for Gane for twelve years, overlapping the entirety of Breuer's time in Britain. The tragedy



of the last page is stark. He retired and moved back to the North, only surviving for two more years.

From this written testimony, an array of designs track his journey to Gane. No mention in the note was the type of design conducted by Waring and Gillows from 1904-1910. Upon opening his notebooks, the designs can be seen. These reveal the Art Nouveau movement's attention to the 'total art,' working with shape, ornamentation and filigree, so appropriate to Edwardian England. The attention to objects – object d'art – captured the organic form. The attention to the glass arts, ceramics and jewellery – while welcoming new industrial materials – made Art Nouveau significant not only in its own right, but provided pathways into the Bauhaus. This interest in glass and jewellery – with attention to organic shapes and a commitment to nature while often using industrial materials – built the career of Rene Lalique. Best known now for his glassware, for contemporaries he was known as much for his jewellery. Certainly jewellery did matter to Art Nouveau artists, and their engagement with it was transformative for both art and design. There was the use of semi-precious stones and opals, chosen for colour rather than value. Not surprising therefore, enameling became popular.

Recognizing this historical influence and legacy of Art Nouveau, it is then appropriate to enter the early career of J.P. Hully. This was the moment of his working life where he was attending classes at the Storey Institute in Lancashire.²⁹ The Institute was built in 1898 by Thomas Storey to provide education for the people of Lancaster to encourage innovation and 'forward thinking.'³⁰ The impact of the Storey on Hully is not discussed in the documents that have survived through time, but in his papers is a poster from 1906 celebrating a students' evening. It is unclear if Hully designed it or simply kept it as a record of the event. However what later viewers do notice is the scale of the Art Nouveau influence in The Storey at this time.

²⁹ The Storey Institute is entitled to entire self-standing research project. It is still in existence, but has continued to keep up with the transforming nature of art design and culture (and the policy movements that frame them.) At the time that J.P. Hully attended it was a community-based centre for art and education in Lancaster. Currently – and renamed 'The Storey' – it mobilized the policy initiatives of the creative industries. It is a 'creative hub for businesses and seeks to entice the public into its 21st century vision whilst still maintaining its cultural heritage,' The Storey, <http://www.thestorey.co.uk>

³⁰ "About," The Storey, <http://www.thestorey.co.uk/page/53/About.htm>

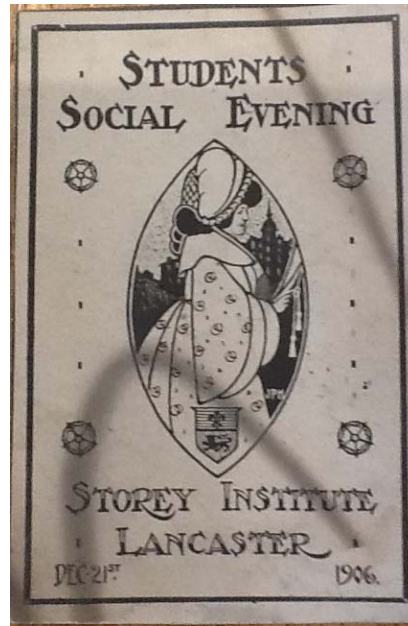


Figure 4 Pamphlet from the Storey (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

The combination of this development of skill and technique, alongside the influence of Art Nouveau and the daily practice in the studio, produced remarkable results. The following photographs have been taken from his sketch book of the time. They are hand drawn and painted, with pencil marks still present in the designs.

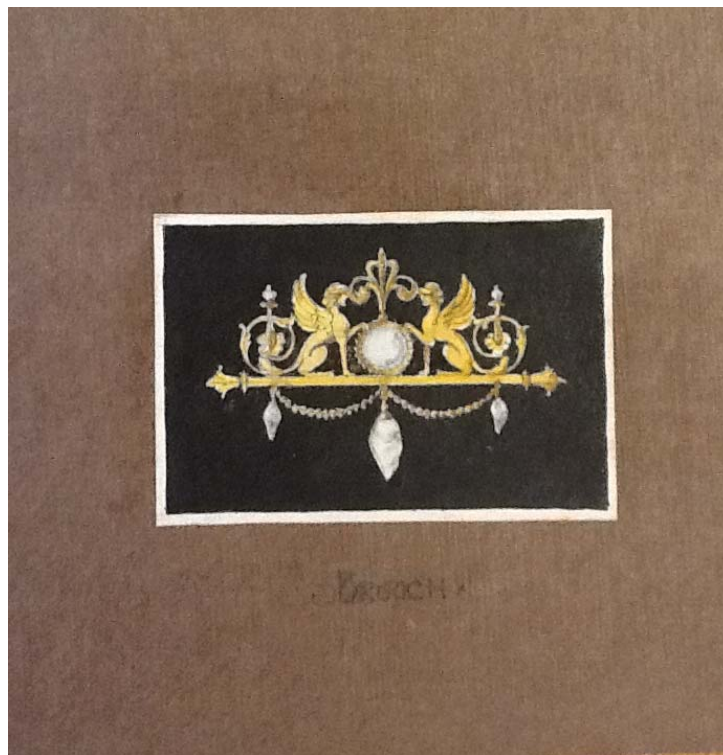


Figure 5 Brooch 1 (Photography by Tara Brabazon)

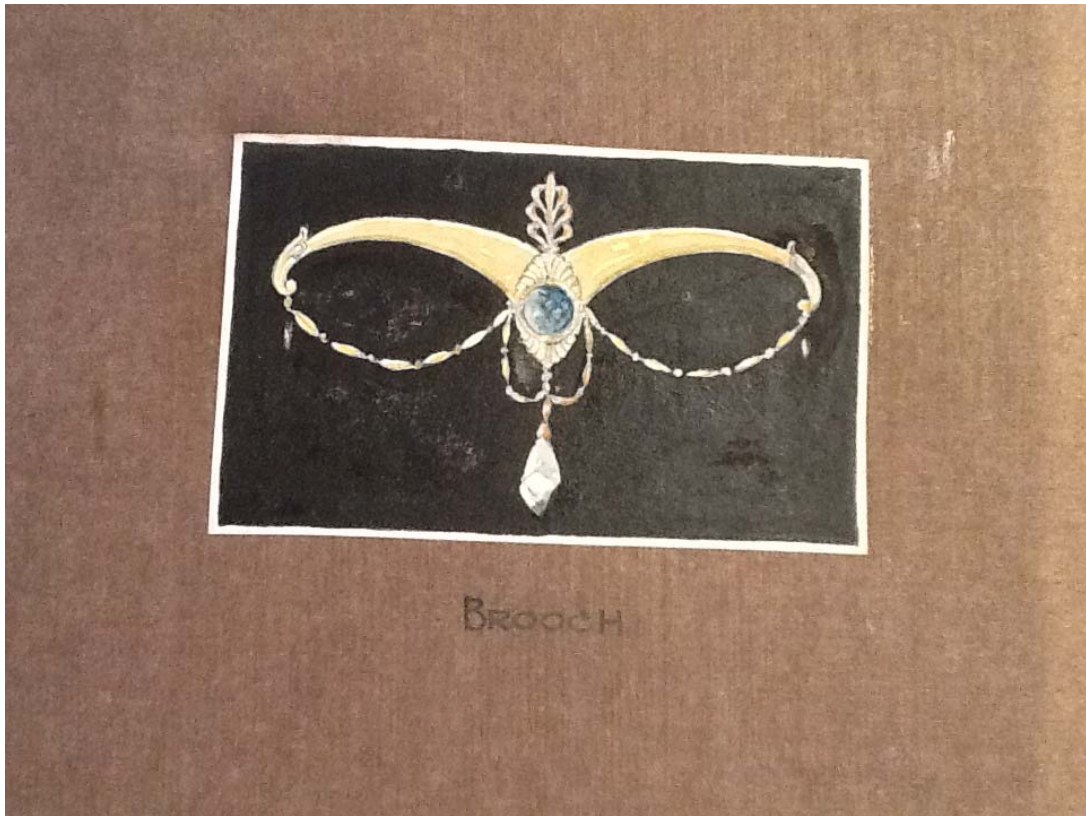


Figure 6 Brooch 2 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)



Figure 7 Brooch 3 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

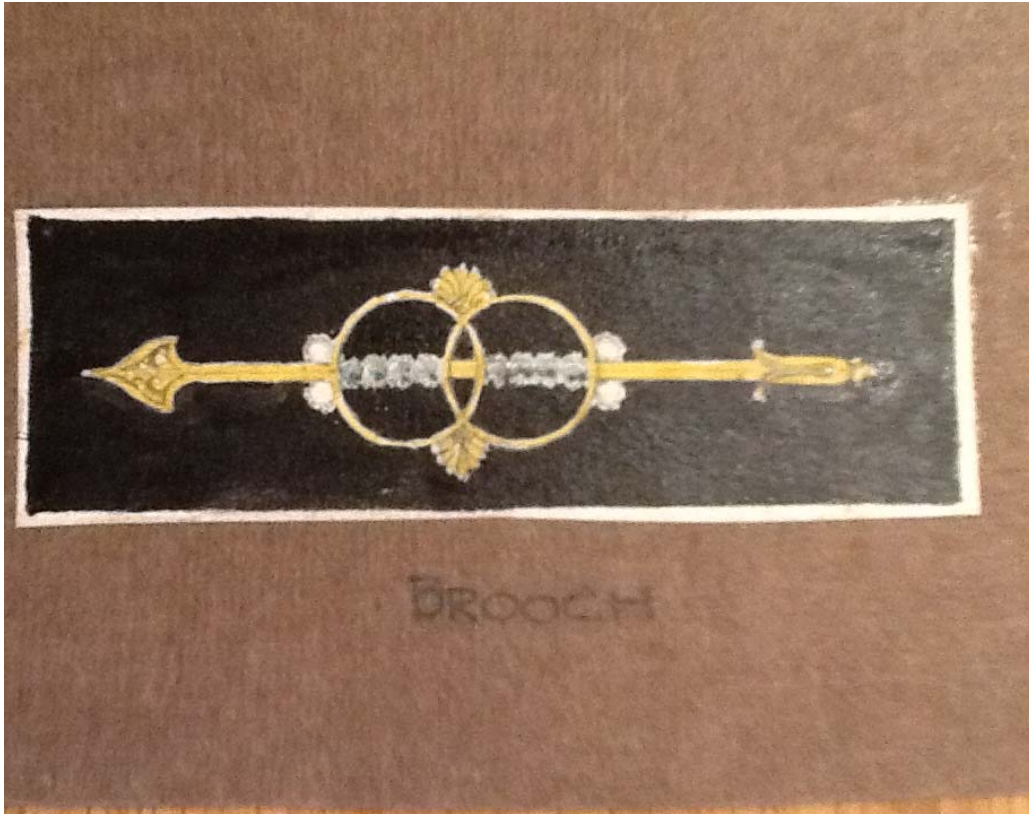


Figure 8 Brooch 4 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

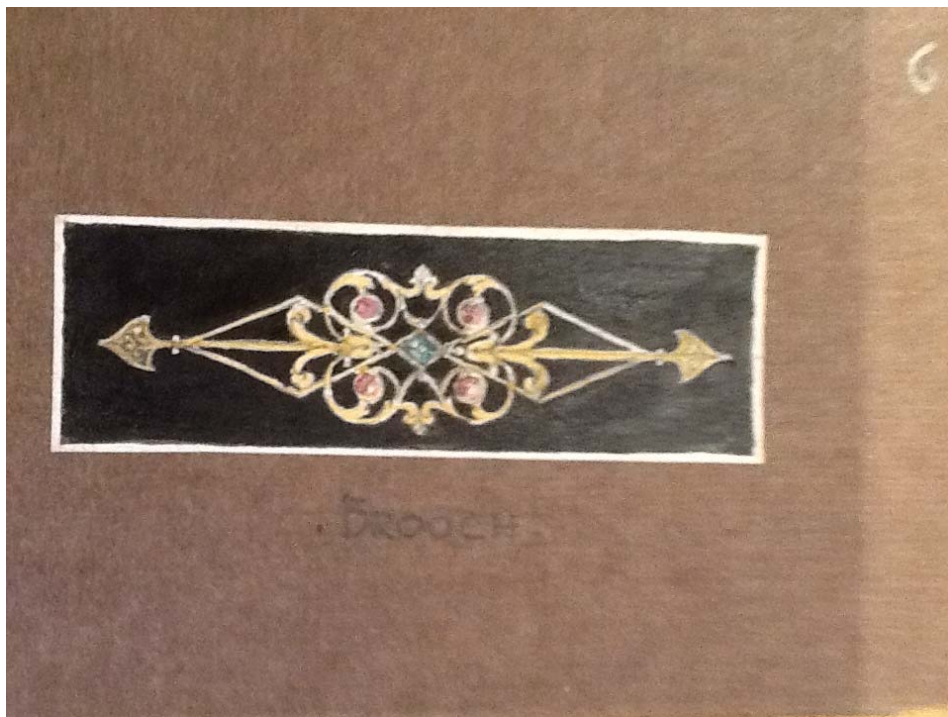


Figure 9 Brooch 5 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)



Figure 10 Brooch 6 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

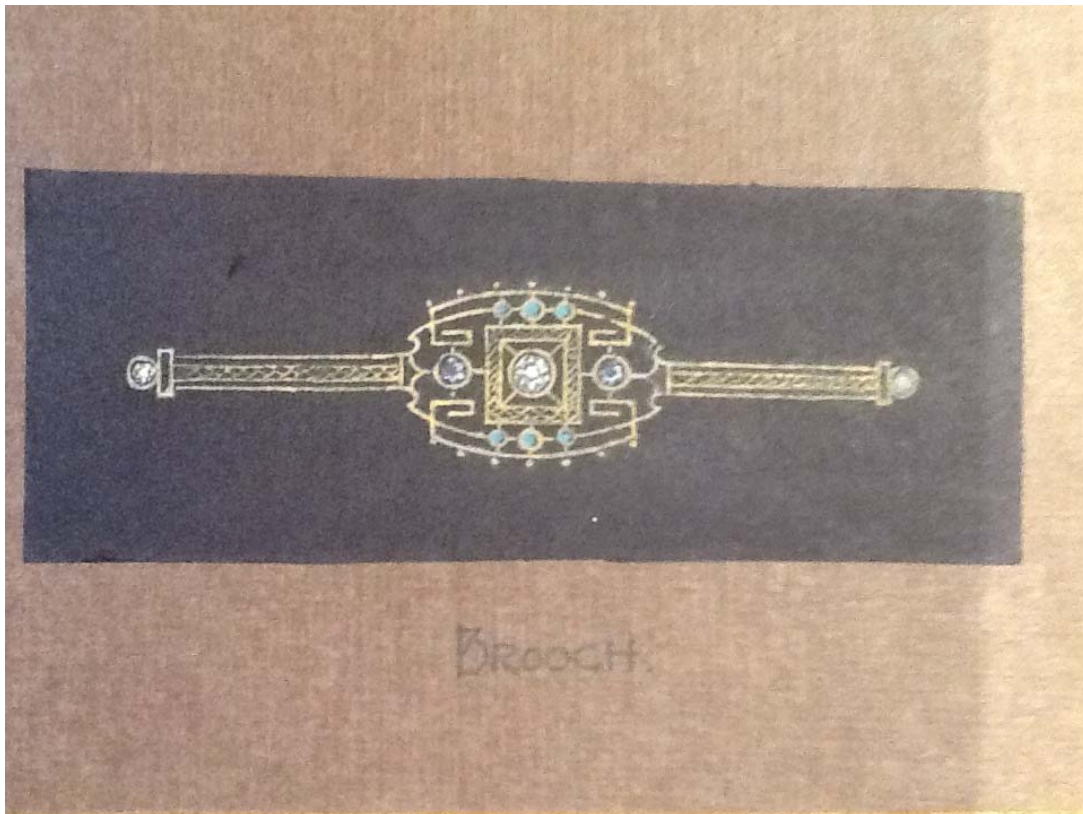


Figure 11 Brooch 7 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

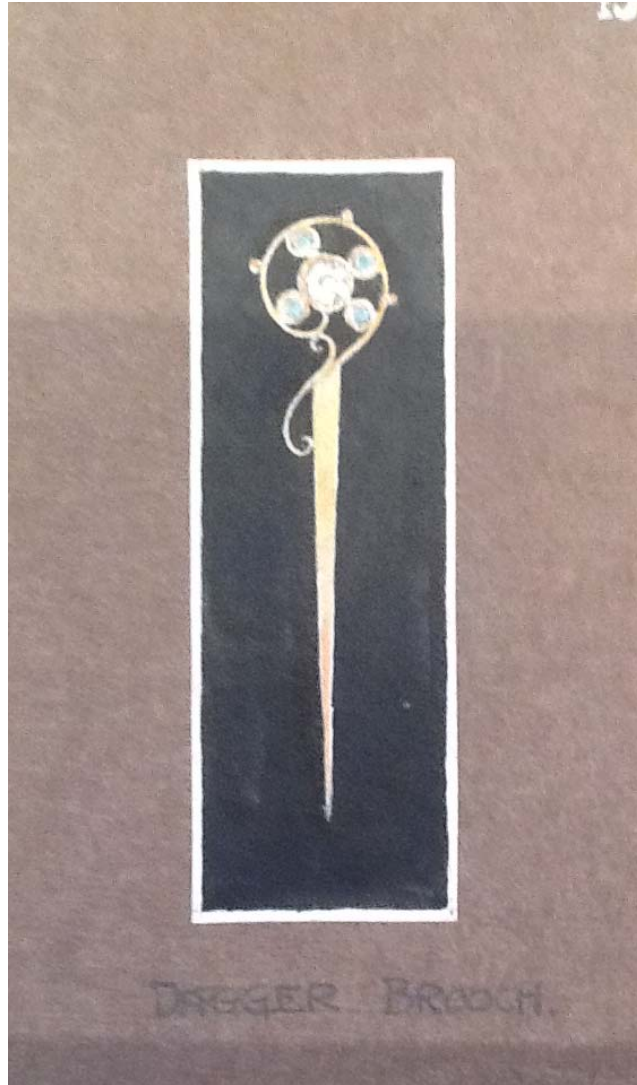


Figure 12 Brooch 8 (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

These delicate designs capture the influence of Art Nouveau on J.P. Hully. The use of circular iconography, semi-precious stones and organic shapes is highly stylized. It is unclear if any of these brooches were made – there is no evidence that they were - but it is clear that Hully's design education was emerging and being influenced not only by Lancaster community-based arts education, but also the design movements from Europe.

Two other designs from this period survive. Firstly, a subtle necklace design, this time composed of precious jewels and metals, survives on cloth-like, torn black paper. The degree of detail ensures that white and gold paint were used to express this design on textured black paper. The photograph captures that this document has been damaged

through time.

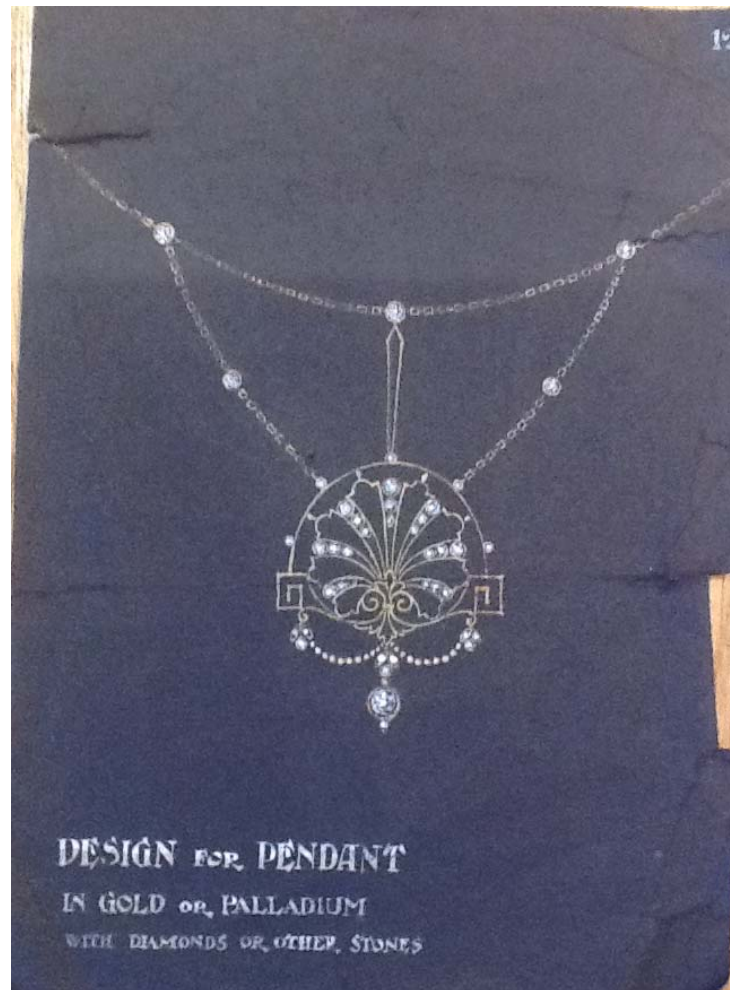


Figure 13 Necklace design (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

While damaged, the document survives and it conveys the balance and delicacy. The organic formation of Hully's Nouveau designs of this period are clearly revealed through this more elaborate detailing.

Undated designs that were bundled with these early jewellery cards were more unusual objects, that provide a transition between Hully's Art Nouveau period and the Bauhaus inspiration that would emerge the following decade. Instead of precious and semi-precious stones, the products of everyday life started to attract his design interested. Rather than a necklace with diamonds, a belt buckle drew his interest.

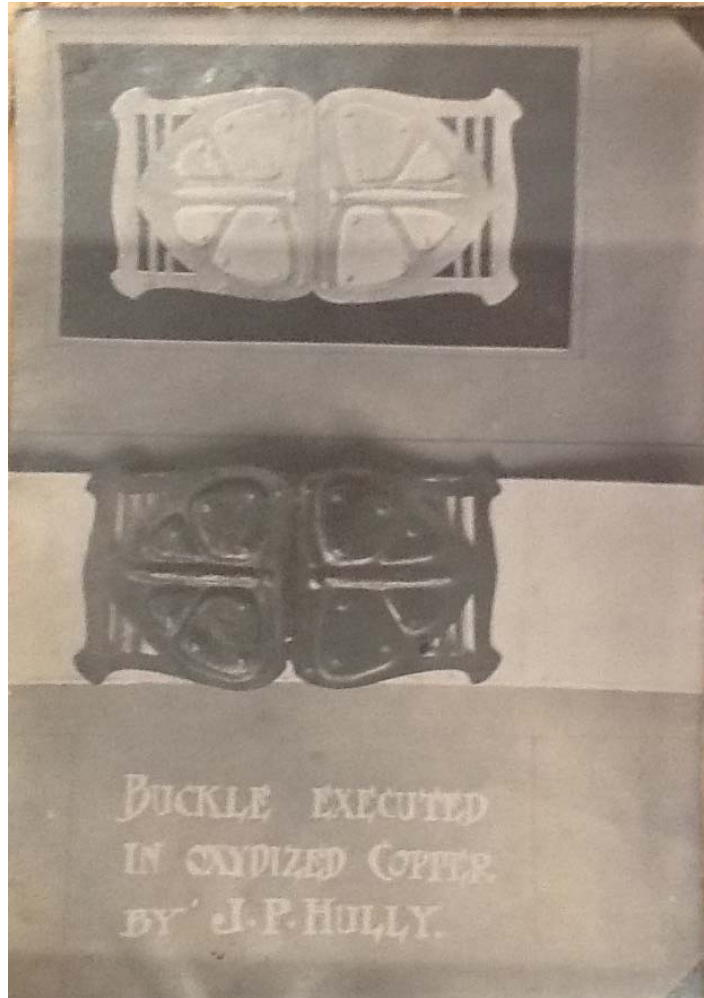


Figure 14 Belt Buckle (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

The medium used was oxidized copper rather than the semi-precious stones in a woman's brooch. A utilitarian object was of focus. Similarly, and from the same period, Hully designed cutlery – spoons – and a toast rack. While the shape and ornamentation demonstrate a continued allegiance to Art Nouveau, the movement from high fashion to the kitchen suggests that some wider challenges and changes in approach and perspective were emerging.



Figure 15 Spoons: domesticated design (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

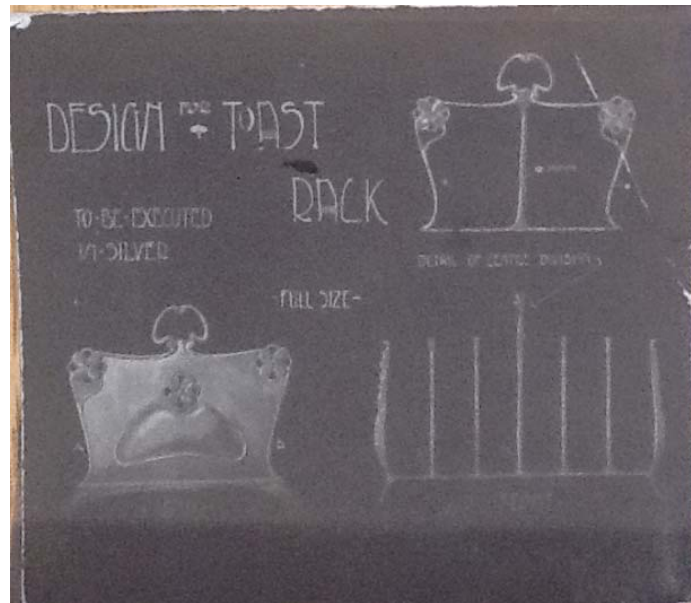


Figure 16 Toast Rack: domesticated design (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

Another object that survives through this period, is the design of a letterbox. What these images from this period show is that the attention to affluent objects – jewellery – is transforming into everyday household objects, even including a letterbox.

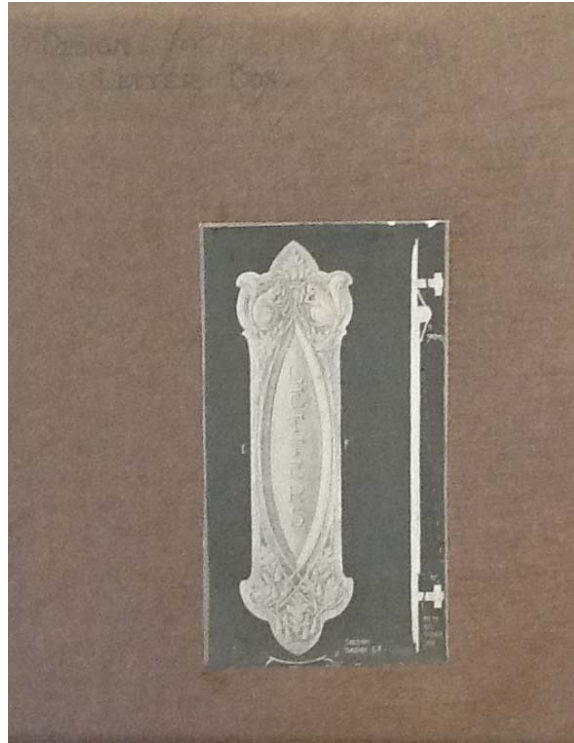


Figure 17 Letterbox: domesticated design (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

While these household objects demonstrate a transformation in his personal interests, Hully though was part of a bigger narrative. For eighteen months, after the Nazi onslaught against the Bauhaus, Marcel Breuer, the legendary designer of the Bauhaus, worked with J.P. Hully at P.E.Gane Ltd at College Green in Bristol.³¹ When reviewing the Breuer Papers, digitized in the Smithsonian, the key 'reel' is Box 1, Reel 5709, Frames 858-923.³² In this reel, Breuer moves from Budapest to London, while many of his colleagues have moved to the United States.

Gane's place in the Breuer story is small but important. In 2010, there was an event commemorating "Breuer in Bristol"³³ at the Architecture Centre. This event acknowledged the strange but timely collaboration between Crofton Gane, a Bristol furniture manufacturer, and Marcel Breuer. Without the persecution from the Nazis, it would not have emerged. But from this period, there are lasting online and offline residues. The (temporary) Gane Pavilion was built in 1936 designed by Breuer, but with the aim of providing an appropriate backdrop and frame to Gane's modernist furniture, including that designed by Hully. The Pavilion is recorded in Breuer's

³¹ *News of Gane*, No 4, November 1937

³² Correspondence of Marcel Breuer, Box 1, Reel 5709, Frames 858-923, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/-179063>

³³ "Breuer in Bristol," October 2010, http://www.architecturecentre.co.uk/assets/files/press-area/Breuer_Press_Release.pdf



papers³⁴ and has a page – and discussion - on Flickr.³⁵ So while the Gane and Breuer relationship has been recently celebrated in an exhibition and lectures, the focus is on the building, rather than the modernist furniture that was housed within it, or the long-term influence of Breuer on Gane's workforce. Significantly, none of these documents mention Hully. He remains outside history. He remains outside of the internet. There is only one digital reference to his work – compared to the fully revealed Smithsonian archive dedicated to Breuer. We will return to this digital shard at the conclusion of this article.

There is an historiographical point to make about evidence, digitization, class and source material through this study. J.P. Hully was a designer who worked for Gane. Yet his name has disappeared inside the company for which he worked. While we have found his name mentioned in an array of analogue documents, which we have digitized for presentation in this research, other digital records of his life and work have disappeared. While much of the discourse of digitization refers to the democratization of information, particularly through the creative commons movement, the challenge is to capture the depth, texture and width of the past so that working class history in particular is captured and maintained.

Catalogues of the time present his name and designs.



Figure 18 Gane Catalogues (Photographs by Tara Brabazon)

³⁴ "Gane's Pavilion Interior," <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/ganes-pavilion-interior-12175>, "Gane's Pavilion, Bristol," <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/ganes-pavilion-bristol-england-12005> and "Gane's Pavilion in Bristol,"

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/ganes-pavilion-bristol-england--southwest-view-8202>
³⁵ "Gane," Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/59918484@N03/6800842457/>



A history of Gane was published in 1954 and a record is available from Google Books, if not the content.³⁶

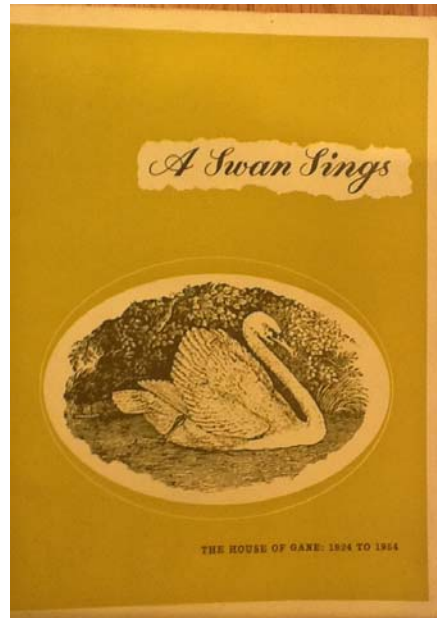


Figure 19 The official history of Gane (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

Through these documents, it is clear that the influence of Breuer and Hully was overt. Gane's were seen as very fortunate³⁷ to have working with them at the same time, both "the simple contemporary elegance"³⁸ of the modern design work of J.P. Hully and the "epoch-making"³⁹ work of Marcel Breuer:

The firm was very fortunate when J.P. Hully, one of Britain's best designers, offered his services to the company. This true artist and charming man was equally at home with traditional and modern work, and he had the knack of designing gracefully just what any particular house required. He knew that good contemporary design can indeed live in the same room with Sheraton or Chippendale. In 1936 after the brilliant experiment of the Bauhaus at Dessau had broken up under the pressure of Nazi reaction, its famous leaders Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer came to England and Crofton Gane at once secured Breuer as consultant designer. Breuer decorated and furnished Mr Gane's new home, and the Gane craftsmen had the eye-opening experience of making to Breuer's design some remarkable new furniture for a flat at "Highpoint" in Highgate, London. At

³⁶ A Swan Sings: The House of Gane, (Bristol: C.E. Gane, 1954), (http://books.google.ca/books/about/A_Swan_Sings.html?id=h-ZEAWEACAAJ&redir_esc=y)

³⁷ *A Swan Sings: The House of Gane: 1824 to 1954*, p. 22.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.23.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.24.

the Royal Show at Bristol in 1936 Breuer built as a setting for Gane furniture a pavilion in Cotswold stone – the first demonstration in Britain of the intense stimulation produced by a revolutionary design in an ancient material. All this work was given nation-wide publicity by the architectural press.⁴⁰

The company's history also features photographs from Hully's work.

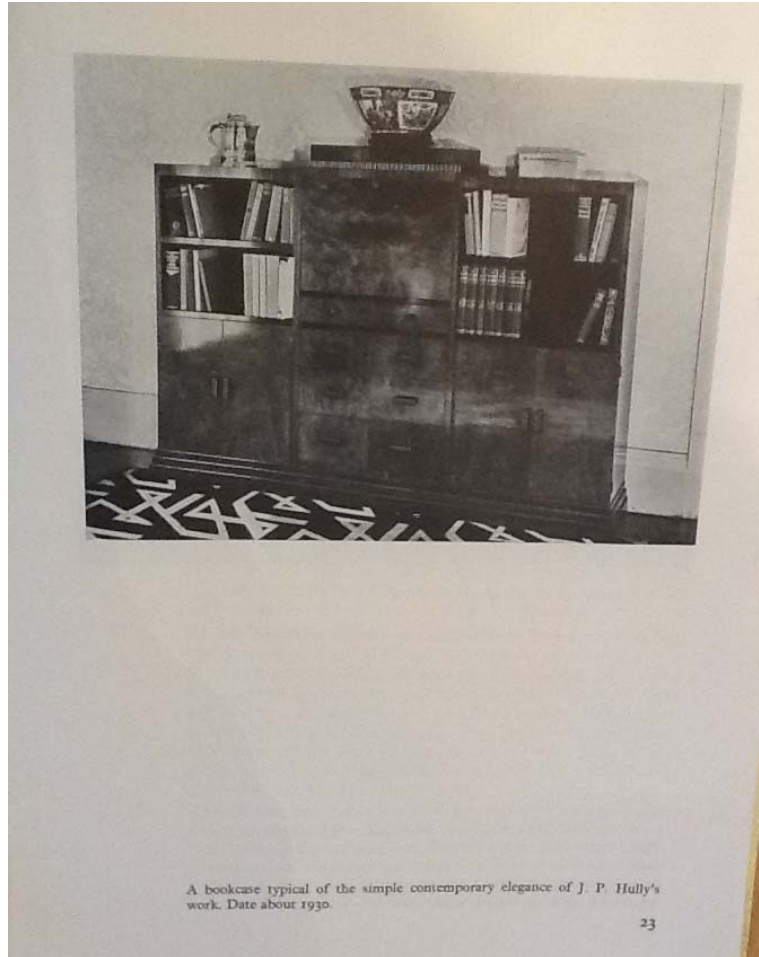


Figure 20 A record of design: contemporary elegance (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

This 'simple contemporary elegance,' has lost much of the ornamental detailing of his Art Nouveau period. Form follows function. The influence – and by inference, the popularity – of such designs is confirmed by the photograph and presentation of his designs in the history of Gane. In his personal documents, preliminary sketches of his furniture emerge.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

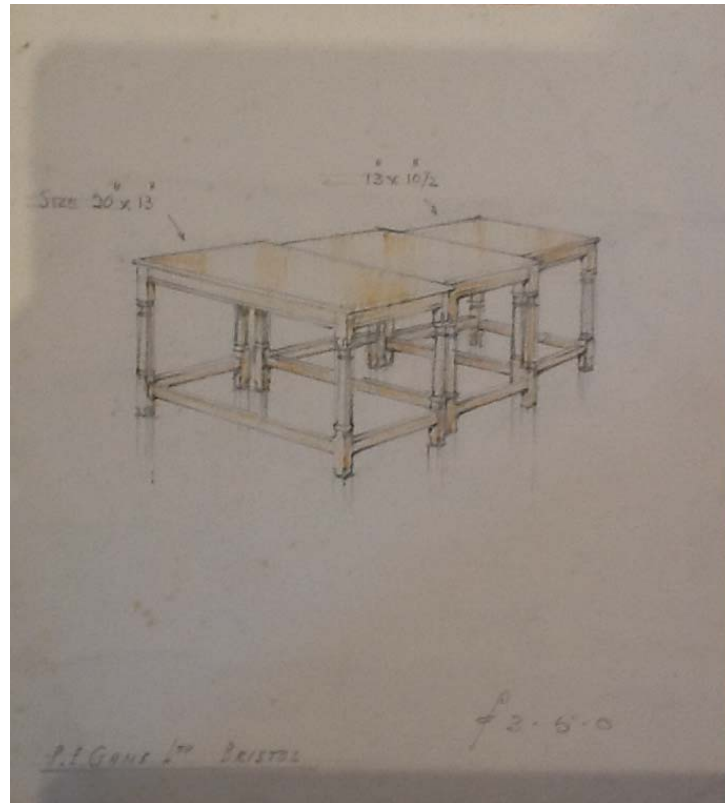


Figure 21 Hully sketch (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

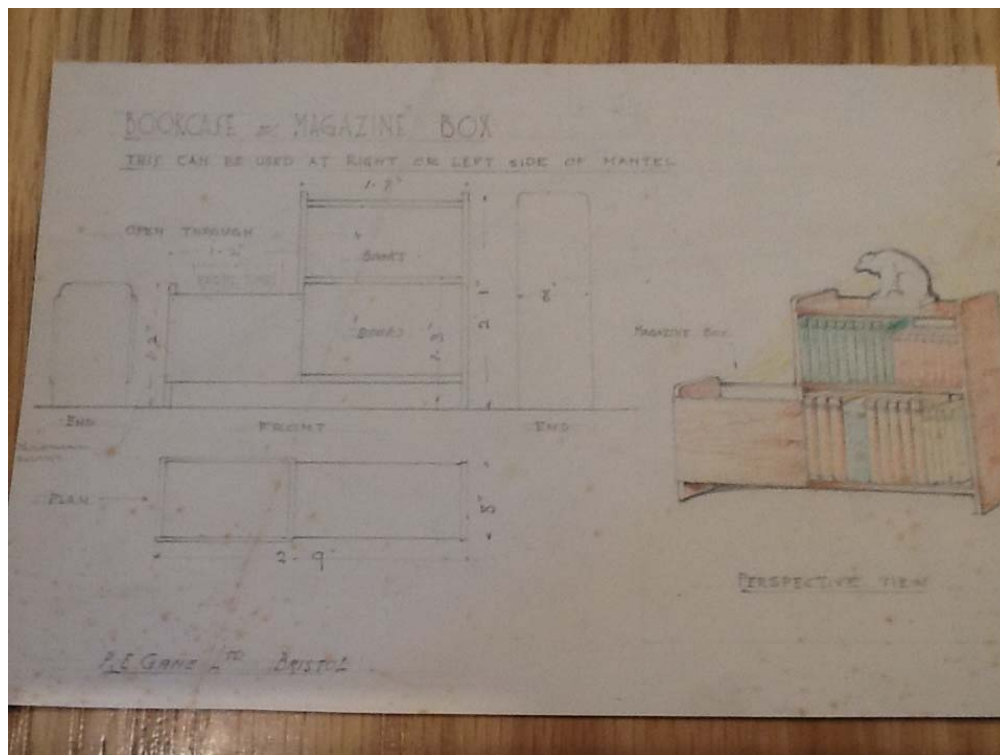


Figure 22 Bookcase design (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

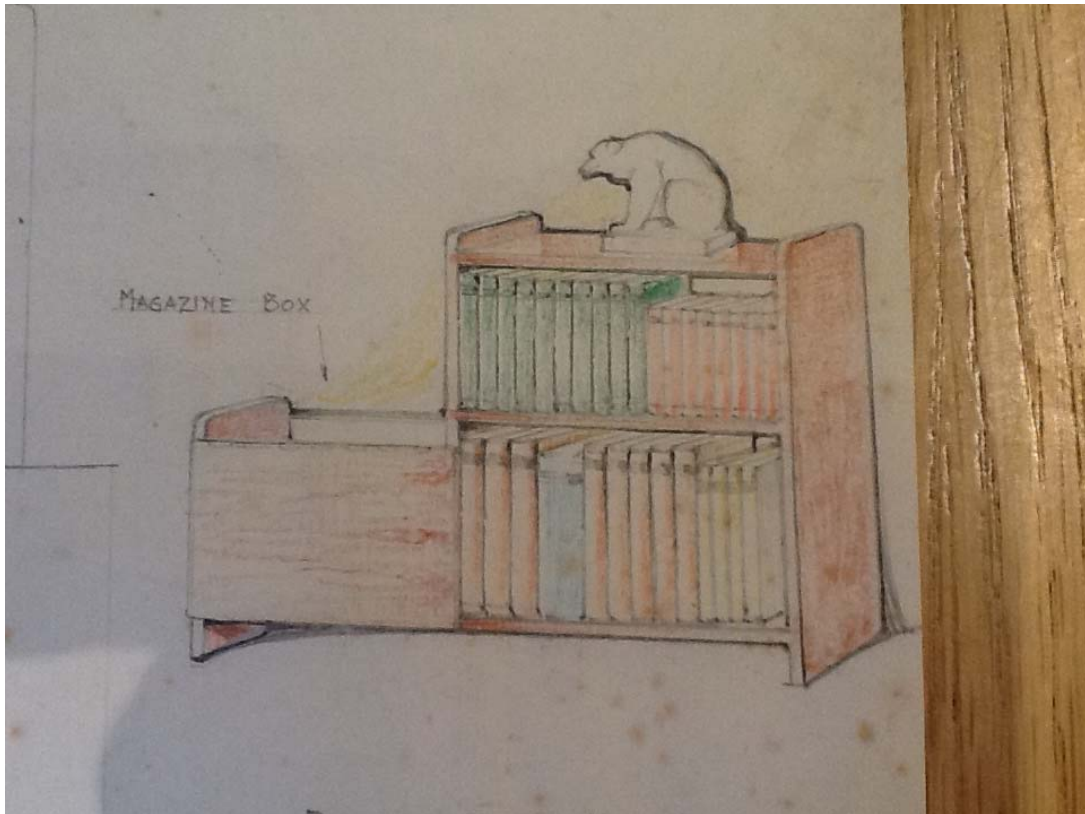


Figure 23 Magazine box (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

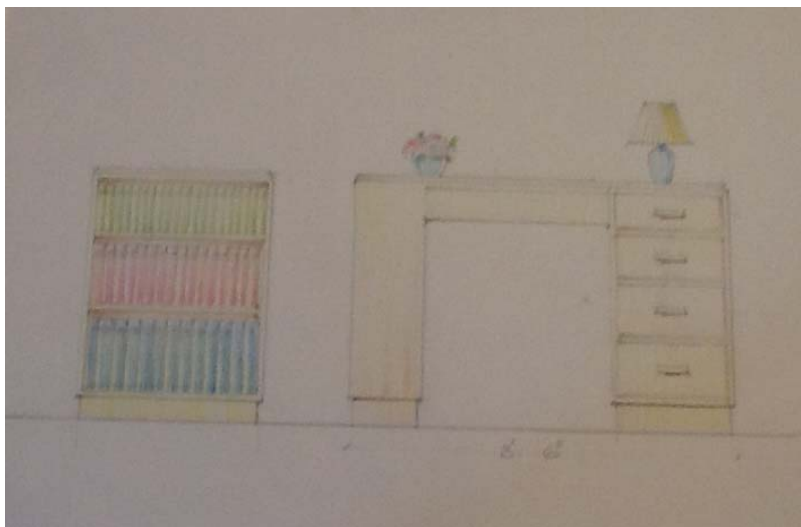


Figure 24 Clear shapes (Photograph by Tara Brabazon)

The style of design – including clear shapes and functional rather than ornamental handles – foreshadows his developments and goals through the 1930s.

These sketches show the direction of his design, yet the relationship between Breuer and



Hully is unclear. There is no definitive linkage or mention in the available documentation. They were contemporaries at Gane. The changes in Hully's practice from the influence of the Bauhaus maxims is clear. Yet as shown by his early work with jewellery, he was influenced by the design cultures around him. The impact of modernity during this period was even recognized by Gane's clients. A property owner in Highgate, Mrs Ventris, remembered this period.

It was very fortunate for me that Mr Breuer came over to England because I had long admired photographs of the beautiful house he built at Wiesbaden. I felt that I was obliged to live in the limited space of a modern flat it would be an architect and not a decorator who could organize that space and make it serve the ends of work and pleasure. And to Mr Breuer's gift of originality as architect and craftsman (it will be remembered that he was the inventor of tubular steel furniture) is added the colour-sense of the painter...seeing these clean and lovely lines, and appreciating the perfection of workmanship to which they are allied, I realize that the "modern" is not something to be enjoyed only at exhibitions and between the pages of magazines but that it is practical, stimulating and essentially good to live with.⁴¹

Such a statement conveys the Bauhaus project, modern design for everyday life, and everyday living. The relationship between art and craft, art and architecture, is captured by Mrs Ventris. She clearly recognizes the point of such work is to create objects and structures that are, 'essentially good to live with.'

The status of the Bauhaus in Britain remains ambiguous and tantalizing. As Jeffrey Saletnik and Robin Schuldenfrei realized, "The construction of the Bauhaus as concept is akin to a palimpsest, having been repeatedly and at times strategically erased and rewritten."⁴² A completely absent footnote in this history is J.P. Hully, with some mentions of Gane. The relationship between the British and the Bauhaus, and Breuer's three years in the south of England, are minor moments in the major narrative. Art and design history must always rewrite and reconstruct, being reshaped by the movements that travel through time.

There is one online residue of J.P. Hully's life and work. His connection with Gane has not facilitated the survival of his archive. His connection with Breuer did not furnish the

⁴¹ *News of Gane*, op.cit.

⁴² J. Saletnik and R. Schuldenfrei, "Introduction," *Bauhaus Construct: fashioning identity, discourse and modernism*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 2

required attention. His life and work remain only in a few uncatalogued photographs, sketches and catalogues that are presented for the first time in this article. But there is one mention of him online. The National Trust has preserved one chair.



Figure 25 JP Hully and the National Trust (used with permission)

On the National Trust site, he is the named designer.⁴³ The influence of the Bauhaus is clear. The chair's skeleton is visible and the smooth arm rests tuck gently into the rocker. Form follows function. Bristol follows Berlin. It is visually efficient, using texture, proportion and silhouette to confirm style, rather than ornamentation and excess.

J.P. Hully has no archives in the Smithsonian. He does not maintain a Facebook memorial page. He has no page in Wikipedia. He has been excised from analogue history. But one stoic image remains via the National Trust to testify that this man had a life and is part of the history of design. Bernhard Rieger once stated that, "few historians manage to progress beyond the state of the obsessive hunter and gatherer."⁴⁴ This project has demanded that we progress from facts to interpretation, from finding data to logging absences, from thinking about 'the what' and considering 'the why.'

⁴³ "Chair: JP Hully," <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/768243>

⁴⁴ B. Rieger, *Technology and the culture of modernity in Britain and Germany 1890-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)



Perhaps through such a process, a different history of the British Bauhaus may start to emerge.

BIOGRAPHY

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