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For this assessment, I confirm that I have NOT used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings.

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Introduction:

The exhibition *From Stone to Scroll* explores how graphic design and visual communication have changed overtime and how people experience design differently today. In the past, design was physical and harder to access, which meant people had to go out of their way to see it and experience it, so it begged for their full attention. However, today, design is everywhere. It updates constantly and there's always something new to look at. This exhibition looks at how changes in media have shifted the way people see and interpret design, shifting from something slow and focused to something fast that competes for attention.

The exhibition is imagined to be inside the British Museum in London, where the Rosetta Stone is already held, this makes it a fitting place to start the journey. Visitors start in a quiet gallery space with carved stone, but as they move through the exhibition the atmosphere

slowly changes. Printed pages appear is calmer spaces, modernist design pieces are placed in open gallery displays, and the final room becomes a dark immersive digital installation that feels like endless scrolling. Sound also changes as visitors move throughout the exhibition, beginning as a quiet voice and gradually becoming more distorted and harder to listen to. This shift reflects how design has moved from something people stop and study, to something they see and hear constantly without really processing it.

The Rosetta Stone

Figure 1. Rosetta Stone fragment inscribed with hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Ancient Greek scripts, 196 BC (British Museum, 2017).

From Stone to Scroll begins with the Rosetta Stone, with the intention of slowing people down and controlling their attention. It's placed in a quiet space with soft lighting so that visitors naturally take their time with it. Carved in 196 BC, the stone shows the same message written in three scripts: hieroglyphs, Demotic and Ancient Greek. This shows how early design was mainly about purpose, communication and translation rather than just decoration

(British Museum, 2017). The surface is dense and worn, which makes it quite difficult to read quickly, viewers have to move closer and almost inspect it, adjusting their physical position to try to make out the text, this physical movement is important because it makes the viewer have to actively work to understand the stone.

From a semiotic standpoint, the stone acts as more than just a piece of carved text. The weight of the material, the carved surface and the effort needed to read it, all communicated ideas of permanence and authority. The viewer leaning in and focusing becomes part of the experience of meaning, instead of information just being instantly understood it has to be discovered. This reflects ideas from semiotic theory, where meaning is produced through the relationship between the sign and the viewer interpreting it (Barthes, 1977). This sets the tone for the exhibition, right at the start, showing how communication once required time, patience and physical engagement from the viewer.

The Rosetta stone represents a form of visual communication that existed long before modern design movements like modernism and postmodernism, this piece purely focuses on clarity, authority and permanence, with the message physically carved into the stone, which does in some ways link to modernist ideas, that also focuses on valuing clarity and structure. However, the Rosetta Stone is a pre-modern design where meaning feels stable and physical, rather than flexible or open to interpretation.

The Gutenberg Bible

Figure 2. Page from the Gutenberg Bible (42-line Bible), printed in Mainz, c.1455 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026).

After the Rosetta Stone, the exhibition moves into early print with the Gutenberg Bible. This section feels a bit more packed, with multiple pages being displayed to show repetition and consistency, as Gutenberg's printing method made it possible to produce text in large quantities, which changed design from a single carved object, into something that could be repeated and shared to a range of locations (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026). The layout is structured and clear and the typography starts to feel more organised and standardised, as a viewer, you still need to slow down to read it, but the experience feels more accessible than the Rosetta Stone, sitting between slow, fixed communication and the faster work that appears later on.

There is also a shift in how meaning is experienced, with the printed page beginning to feel less like a unique piece and more like its part of a system, with the repetition of letters and layouts it creates this sense of order and control, by guiding the viewers eye across the page. Also, the audio in this space could be a soft, almost mechanical rhythm, like a printing press looping in the background, reinforcing the idea of production and repetition. As the viewers look at the pages, they will begin to notice not just the text itself but the creation behind it.

The printing press helped introduce ideas that later became important in modernist design. Because books had to be printed many times, the layout and letters needed to stay consistent. This meant pages were organised carefully, so the text was clear and easy to read. Over time this created a more structured way of designing pages, where order and clarity were important, and these ideas later became key parts of modernist graphic design, which also focuses on clean layouts, structure and clear communication.

Bauhaus — B35 Armchair

Figure 3. Marcel Breuer, B35 Armchair*, tubular steel, wood, and canvas, 1928–29 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016).*

Next is Marcel Breuer's B35 armchair from the Bauhaus movement. Unlike the earlier pieces in the exhibit, visitors can sit on it, which changes how design is experienced. The chair is made from steel and canvas, it's clean, minimal and functional, reflecting Bauhaus ideas about simplicity and mass production (Griffith Winton, 2016). The chair doesn't demand attention in the way the previous pieces do, it's simply just familiar and comfortable. Sitting on it makes design something you live with rather than just look at, making it a part of everyday life. This way, the chair shows a shift from meaning being read, to meaning being felt. It's not something to analyse, it's something to be felt and experiences. The industrial materials and lack of decoration suggest that function alone is enough, this is why the audio in this section will be simple, maybe sounds of light chatter, making if feel real, and lively.

The B35 chair is a clear example of modernist design, where form follows function and decoration is removed. It's exposed steel frame and simple structure shows the modernist belief that design should be efficient, rational, and accessible to everyone. By being practical, minimal, and usable, the chair moves design from something rare, or distant, into something normal and constant, showing how modernism changed the way we interact with the objects around us.

Interface design and the user

Figure 4. Apple iPhone (1st generation), 2007, displayed as a mounted interface object. Image source: Macworld (2007).

This section focuses on the first iPhone from 2007, displayed at hand height so it feels natural to interact with, the phone will show swiping and scrolling motions, or invite the viewer to scroll. Which shows how design becomes interactive. Using the Design Museum's Designer Maker User idea, the iPhone makes the user central to the design (Design Museum, N.D). In this case, meaning comes from using it rather than just looking at it, and attention becomes more broken and habitual. The design starts to blend into everyday life, bridging the gap between physical objects and digital spaces. The interface is so smooth and intuitive that you barely notice it, so the audio in this section will be small sounds like clicks or notifications, to reflect how interaction is automatic, rather than thoughtful.

The iPhone sits between modernist and postmodernist ideas, it's clean, simple interface seems like its modernist, where form follows function, but its meaning depends on the interaction, making the user part of the design process. As Jeffries (2021) notes, Steve Jobs' approach was both modernist in visual simplicity and postmodern in creating experiences that shaped how users interacted with technology, basically mixing function with playful, almost ritualistic engagement. This shows how design has evolved from something fixed and studied to something that's integrated, constantly changing and shaped by everyday use.

Endless scrolling installation

Figure 5. Immersive digital projection installation used to represent infinite scrolling and visual overload. Image source: ISP Integración (2021).

The final piece is an immersive projection that surrounds you completely, with images moving across walls and floor with no clear start or end, nothing staying still long enough to focus on, everything overlapping and repeating, causing a sense of overload. This mirrors scrolling through digital content, like social media, where design is endless and often ignored (Feinstein, 2021). By removing structure and hierarchy, the installation makes design background noise, rather than something meaningful, showing how engagement has shifted from careful attention to constant, fleeting exposure.

The sound will later voices and loops until there is no clear message, just overwhelming noise that's impossible to process. This piece reflects postmodern ideas of fragmentation, while also going beyond them into a kind of hyperreal space, where design in constant, immersive and overwhelming. The installation doesn't just reject hierarchy, it simulates the endless, saturated flow of digital media, where images and sounds exist for themselves and their meaning is almost irrelevant. It's a glimpse of what design feels like when its everywhere, unavoidable, and experienced more as overstimulation, rather than understanding.

Conclusion

From Stone to Scroll shows how design has changed not only in how it looks, but in how we experience it. Moving from carved stone to printed pages, everyday objects, and finally digital screens, the exhibition shows a shift from slow and focused interaction to something

fast and constant. Design becomes less about studying a single object and more about navigating a continuous flow of information and design.

Rather than presenting this as a simple progression, the exhibition is quietly asking what we might have lost along this journey. In a world full of visuals, attention itself starts to feel rare. By the end, the contrast is clear, what starts as quiet and intentional becomes loud and overwhelming, making the viewer more aware of how quickly we move past things and rarely stop to really look. In that sense, the exhibition is not only about design history, but about how we live with design now.

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Figure List

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Figure 3. Marcel Breuer, B35 Armchair, tubular steel, wood, and canvas, 1928–29 (Griffith Winton, 2016).

Figure 4. Apple iPhone (1st generation), 2007 (Macworld, 2007).

Figure 5. Immersive digital projection installation representing infinite scrolling (ISP Integración, 2021).