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**Listen to an interview with John McMaster, an industrial designer, talking about industrial design as art or science.**

**Optional exercise** Listen to the audio and complete these sentences using the correct form of one of the verbs in the box.

approach argue attract back credit doubt flatter praise
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1. Jonathan Ive has been \_\_\_\_\_ for the simplicity of the iPod design.
2. McMaster \_\_\_\_\_ that industrial design is an art.
3. McMaster \_\_\_\_\_ against the view that design is the product of one person's skill.
4. We are \_\_\_\_\_ to objects that look beautiful.
5. Philippe Starck is often \_\_\_\_\_ by people who want him to design things.
6. McMaster would not be \_\_\_\_\_ by the idea that he is an artist, not a designer.
7. Visual design has to be \_\_\_\_\_ up by technical expertise.
8. Alec Issigonis is usually \_\_\_\_\_ for having designed the Mini.

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**Interviewer:** We are often asked to see things such as the Mini, the classic Coca Cola bottle or – more recently – the iPod, as objects which are as likely to be exhibited in an art gallery as praised for their technological features. John McMaster – an industrial designer himself - argues against this point of view. John, so, industrial design – art or science?

**JM:** Well – I think that's not really a fair question...It's not that I doubt that the objects you mentioned are actually quite beautiful things in themselves – but what I want to ask, is why is it that we regard these things as being attractive?

**Interviewer:** Go on...

**JM:** Well – I'm a great believer in the saying "form follows function."

**Interviewer:** Which means?

**JM:** That things are attractive – their form is beautiful – because they have a function. A designer has to think of the function first, of how the object works, and how to make it work, and from that, the simplest – and best – form will follow. The idea that a lot of industrial design is a form of art is at best misleading, and at worst, dangerous!

**Interviewer:** Why do you say that?

**JM:** There are a lot of people being attracted to the field without the kind of knowledge necessary...

**Interviewer:** How do you mean?

**JM:** Well, for example, I've been approached by one manufacturer to help design a car.

**Interviewer:** That's good...

**JM:** Well, no it isn't really...of course I'm flattered by the attention, but all my work has been with computers. I know how they work, and therefore the best way to design them. I know next to nothing about automobile mechanics – so wouldn't really know where to start designing a car.

**A:** The skills aren't transferable?

**JM:** Design skills are transferable, but they have to be backed up by technical expertise.

**Interviewer:** But what about a designer like, say, Philippe Starck? He's designed everything from motorbikes to skyscrapers to teaspoons...

**JM:** Yes, but he's not really an industrial designer in the classic sense. He designs the *look* of objects – after someone else has done all the hard work! Alec Issigonis – who designed the first Mini – trained as an engineer, not a designer. That was why it was such a revolutionary car. Jonathan Ive is often credited for having designed the iPod, the digital music player, but he actually worked with a team of hardware engineers. The Coca-Cola bottle we know and love today was actually pretty different at first – it went through a lot of changes before it became the iconic piece of design that it is now.

**Interviewer:** So you'd say it's more science than art?

**JM:** I think – the reason why I think industrial design is so fascinating, and such a great area to work in – is precisely because it blurs the boundaries between science and art....it's neither – and it's both!

**Interviewer:** John McMaster, thank you.

**JM:** Thank you.

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**Answers:** 1 praised, 2 doubts, 3 argues, 4 attracted, 5 approached, 6 flattered, 7 backed, 8 credited