

DESIGN, DIDACTIC, SCENARIOS OF CONSUME

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ABSTARCT

The world is living in a situation at the edge of normality.

In line to an entropy transformation, design has got bogged to the edge of a process evanescence of the discipline, which informative grade was reduced to public messages that exalt each typology of trash that could be sold in commerce. The meaning of design has been deeply rooted in our culture so that it cannot be perceived anymore. We produce million of objects that satisfy our wishes and that generate needs. Such a big amount of things that evolves itself (Gold). An accelerated creative process that is destined to implode on his own due to the effect of an already established aesthetic obsolescence that escapes to each rule of taste, including it in the concept of luxury what should be necessity.

It's design on demand, where everyone is able to elaborate customized objects; a software program will check the production process; technology will help to use tridimensional printers. The step from design to production is faster. The result: it's a babel of mass-media products (Codeluppi), of concept-objects describing a turbulent, invisible trajectory that embraces each thought-action, weak, changeable, local or universal. Symbolic objects, sensitive to the transformation of taste, for which it follows "the logic of abstraction of fluxes, [reducing the product to] a brand puts on the top of the other like a luminous writing to the mountains of product" (La Cecla). A planetary garbage Rem Koolhaas defines Junkspace. The result is a kind of visual pollution on big scale, that feeds on a supermagic design.

To adhere to a total aesthetic idea of the environment seems the last edge of a discipline seemingly without connotation, tending to a touchable material evanescence choosing to substitute the relation between shape-function with the binomy shape-sense. Nowadays design is conceived as structural aspect in the evolving project of the whole production sectors. It's business culture, capital of company (Bonsiepe).

Today the contemporary culture proposes the figure of the prosumer, that is the cosumer-producer able to suggest business strategies systems of products oriented to the mass customization of the manufactures (Dorfles).

To reach semplicity in design is a must. The good design doesn't originate from an order, but from a series of questions.

To develop ideas and realize products requires a rigour of project and ethic behavior that goes beyond the commercial slogan that pass polluting products off for design. This rigour and ethic imposes to designers, engaged to be freelance teachers, to rethink the creative act as the responsible action that tends to slow down simple illusion disadvantaging to think of the consequences that a uninhibited planning produces on the determined physical environment and on human behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

The world of design is living in a situation at the edge of normality. It is as if it has forgot its own roots and the original principle according to which designer must take care of the environment created by the human being, trying to improve it and transfer it to the future generations. In line to an entropy transformation, design has got bogged to the edge of a process of 'evanescence' of the discipline, whose informative grade has been reduced to public messages that exalt any type of trash that could be sold. The meaning of design has been so deeply rooted in our culture, in our daily life that it cannot be perceived anymore. We live among a lot of things. Every day we produce thousands of objects that satisfy our wishes but at the same time generate new needs. Such a big amount of things that evolves itself, An accelerated creative process that is destined to implode on itself due to the effect of an already established aesthetic obsolescence that escapes to each rule of taste, including it in the concept of luxury what should be necessity.

Many products of our material culture have lost their own reason of being, this means that they are now considered as parasite rather than objects for use and service. Hence, a quite complex situation through which the designer, according to a new philological imperative, turns from the original position consecrated during the fifties to a different direction which is more oriented to an enlargement of the market for goods and to a continuous replacement of objects.

Indeed, this idea was already perceived by Branzi way back in the 1982 when he taught to his students his own reflections developed on the topic ‘Merce and Metropoli’ and subsequently presented in the text ‘*La casa calda*’ in which he likes describing a town through the numbers and types of objects contained in it. ‘*The Super-architecture*’ – he said – ‘*is the architecture of the super-production, of the super-consume, of the super-reduction of the consume, of the supermarket, of superman and of the four-star petrol. The Super-architecture accepts the logic of the production and consume and develops a false action... We saw the urban space not as a set of architectural volumes but rather as an empty space full of furnishing.*’

MUTANT ARTEFACT AND NEW SCENARIOS FOR DESIGN

In such a scenario, we could hazard a guess and transfer to the common people the responsibility of such urban blight because ‘it is the people who determine the production with their own choices.’ In this way they support and spur designers to follow Hollywood behaviours typical of the media architects, of the ‘*archistars*’ as defined by Lo Ricco and Micheli. This is the reason of such a wide diversity and to say it all, of such vulgarity. But this is also the result of a democratization of the design, of a homogenization of the general taste despite the attempt of implementing it through geo-cultural micro-mutations which hide an exasperate the need for research of individuality.

A sort of design on demand, where everyone ideally is able to elaborate customized objects. The result is a Babel of mass-media, of concept-objects which describe a turbulent, invisible technological trajectory that embraces each thought-action, whether it is weak or changeable, local or universal. Symbolic objects sensitive to the transformation of the taste, for which it follows ‘*the logic of abstraction of fluxes, reducing the product to a brand which is put on the top of mountains of garbage and ineptitude piled up during the years*’. A planetary garbage which Rem Koolhaas defines as ‘*Junk Space*’.

There is also a new condition of sensorial and aesthetic involvement among the user, the object and the context which suggests the idea of a product which is no longer conceived as durable, static and unchangeable but rather as fluid, dynamic and adaptable to the changing conditions both of the physical context and the psychological space. So, the adjectives which better express the new dimension of the design are transition, changeable and immaterial, whose artefacts transform themselves into a nervous system characterised by sensitive entities with which to interact and feed what Branzi defines as the Architectural Link. Genetic metropolis which reflect the idea of reversible and crossed constructive systems which at the same are perpetually imperfect and incomplete but yet apt to contain spaces made of networks, service and relationships capable of activating and transferring information from the inside to the outside our way of living.

There is a new trend for the affirmation of a deeper view of things, a dream dimension that fuses the structure with the surface and transforms it into a sensorial filter able of networking and processing encrypted texts. The visual approach becomes the privilege means of contact with the object. ‘A coincidence of vision among object, subject and system which introduces to a new definition of the metropolis considered as a big genetic deposit’, in which the architecture and the design are nothing but ‘*weak systems connected to complex mass of human presence, relationships, interests, exchanges which fill in totally the space.*’

To sum up, design aims at the creation and production of changing artefacts ‘*whose main destination is new pattern of aesthetic practise*’ through which the user/consumer interacts with thanks to a global networking system which is able to interpreter the individual latent need. What was impossible or far from the design codes, now it has achieved scenarios of Distance Manufacturing on Demand and e-manufacturing.

Generally speaking, since the human being has started to modify his/her environment, many of his/her creations – from the handicraft of the past to the present design, from the product of the material culture to the immaterial future artefact of the new soft-technology – he has always tried in the best way to please his/her own senses according to the changing fashion trends.

DESIGN, AESTHETIC AND CONSUMERS

Today, we are conscious of sharing a strong crisis of the object whose old concept of aestheticism, which escape from any rule of taste and communication, is exchanged with ‘necessary luxury’. The object is more and more having a representative function, so providing solutions which prefer the contemplation without its use more than a functional response. A sort of impoverishment of goods, as Carmagnola would say, in which the brand becomes a product discount.

Yet, the idea of an aesthetic of the environment – peculiar to the post-modern society – which stimulates the development of a sixth sense and privilege the symbolic aspects of the product-artefact rather than its related

contents is now the final frontier of a discipline apparently free of tightly functional connotations. It is a new discipline which replaces the simple and didactic relationship form-function with the binomial form-sense.

To this end, the essential condition for a successful marketing of a product is to perceive the consumer's trends in advance, to understand the actual changes of the society transforming the requests into needs for an ever more segmented demand. Today design is and it will be more in the future, a structural aspect of the developing process of entire sectors of goods production (both material and immaterial ones). *'It is corporate culture and shared capital.'*

The task of the design is now to coordinate, integrate and arrange factors which may appear away from each another (technical-constructive, economic, functional, symbolic, cultural and systemic) yet complementary from a structural point of view. Thus stressing the importance of the single product rather than of system of products towards a new and more demanding request of widespread quality.

During the post-industrial age, the consumerism determined a reversal of the values from the user side by favouring the purely hedonistic, formal aspects of the object regardless of the intrinsic ones. The present culture, instead, propose a new figure, the 'prosumer', a consumer-producer who is able to suggest, corporate strategies and system of products oriented to a mass customization of the artefacts through feedback and feedforward actions. But today achieving the simplicity in the design is an imperative. Good design does not come from an order but rather from a sequence of questions. Recently, on the cover page of *Domus* magazine (July 2006) the writing '*Super Normal*' appeared. It was the manifest with which Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa showed their idea of what design should have be: the project of objects which are measured with the daily life.

'I think it is quite easy to understand things and situations which can be defined as normal' Morrison said. *'It happens when we saw a thing and we think: it is really normal. It deals with objects which have permeated our daily life, it is about things which have nothing to do with the concept of design. Or it happens when a new product absorbs the essence of something which everybody perceives and recognises as normal.'*

This assertion suggests another idea: designers think that they are the only ones to create beautiful things but the world of normality, in many cases, achieves this better. The aim of the design is to create durable but most importantly visual, social, cultural and environmental things. We would say a complex question which recalls another important reflection.

If the market of goods rapidly becomes a sort of old fashion artefacts; if the archistars accept and share the ever growing arrogance of the power employed by Medium TV, proposing unlikely and unsustainable possible worlds; if common people prefer participating in this global world; who is to blame? To whom we could ascribe the causes of this? A possible answer lies in the education system which, because of the variety of specialisations, tends to keep away teachers and students from a global vision of the design, away from a general approach which should be considered as '*means of transformation of the entire society.*'

DESIGN AND DIDACTIC

Today, the students of the Design Schools are encouraged to produce ideas and communicate them as fast as possible according to the market's demand. They create 'nice' and beguiling objects, They dream of working models in which they can manage global and digital instruments. Their only concern is the visual and aesthetic aspect of the industrial object. They think they can manipulate a project by producing romantic, formal and stylistic ideas which most of the time do not reflect an intellectual honesty nor an ethical behaviour. They only have good ideas and that's it. So it is correct to assert that marketing departments and mass media are responsible for this distorted perception of design.

'The sales of products in a highly competitive worldwide market is appealing to the shape of things, shape which becomes the means of a pure logic of the profit, thus misleading the conventional definition of design as project and reducing it to a simple function of styling, an aesthetic cover of the product/logo.'

A mechanism applied to the world of goods, because the objects need to go out of style. This is the reason why the marketing sector is exclusively interested in '*using the design as a corporate added value, but design has nothing to do with it. The result is a form of a visual widescale pollution.*' Moreover, the growing interest of the society in design does not correspond to a specific market demand. In this uncertain scenario of the demand, schools of design and designers wallow in the belief that creativity represents the only necessary diversity to be taught to students. This generates the misunderstanding for which designers themselves believe that they are the only ones who can create beautiful things (which are often cheap and impractical). But as claimed by Munari '*Creativity does not mean improvisation without method: in this way we create confusion and we mislead*

students who feel they are free and independent artists. The sequence of a planning method is made of objective values, recognised by everybody as such, which become operational means in the hands of creative designers.'

Munari's reflection forces us to think about a pre-established didactic model which, dividing the culture of the project into different scientific domains, produces as main result a distorted vision of the project in which students, designers and architects become the very centre of an accidental universe devoid of any contact with the tangible world of the objects.

CONCLUSIONS

The design presupposes a global approach, far from the fragmentation of the knowledge. Design must have an ethical attitude which tends to the change of things as potential energy for an innovative process of the whole society. A good designer is able to think in a circular way, comparing the internal and external components of the project. He acquires an operational method and experiences it first hand, he adopts, changes and implements it from time to time according to the different perspective of the development of the product. He starts from the unexpressed needs of the community and gradually he verifies hypothesis, materials, technologies. He never establishes a formal hypothesis. He first tries to define the different components as they are and then draws, sketches, outlines technological solutions, he develops model study and he verifies the feasibility in terms of technologic, economic and linguistic complexity.

Thus, it is quite clear that schools, academies and universities have the task of redefining the game rules of the entire discipline. Education and research are to start a trend through which design can recover the prototypical processes of the planning, from one hand, and thanks to an update methodology, which confirms the traditional operational models, they can realise and set up the dynamics of the contemporary project from the other hand.

However, a method is never absolute and definitive but it continuously changes because it is intimately related to the designer's personality who often transform its structure in order to upgrade, adapt or simply renew it. The rules of the method does not stop his personality but rather they stimulate the discovery of new ideas which can be useful to him and to the others as well. The development of new ideas and products requires, today more than ever, a rigorous planning method and an ethical behaviour which go behind the simple commercial slogans. In fact, these pass off products as design, but in reality they pollute our environment. This new method encourages designers, who are often freelance teachers, to revise the creative act as the principal moment of the project, and they transfer it to the new generations. It is an act of responsibility which restrains the idea of easy earnings to the detriment of a serious reflection on the consequences that a distorted project produces not only on the environment but also on the human and social behaviours. Today, to teach and to be a designer means to share the cultural, economical and political point of views among those who develop innovative paths as well as sustainable developments and those who are far from the normality. Munari would say a 'tailor's work' which imposes the rediscovery of new values and a new collective consciousness which should realise possible spaces of dialogues and discussions in a system of parallel and melting worlds.

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