

BREAKING IT DOWN: NARRATIVE AND FORM OR: FINDING MEANING. AN EXPERIENCE OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR DESIGN STUDENTS AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF PITTSBURGH

Iconography, The Haptic Experience, Meaning derived via Abstract Elements

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This discussion about arriving at meaning presented in visual imagery employs the following subheadings: iconography, orientation, the haptic experience, and formalism.

Meaning is read via clear images with determinable associations in an iconographic reading. William Hogarth and Rosemarie Beck apply explicit motifs representing certain references. Gesture carries information, as well.

The orientation that the artist constructs for the viewer carries expressive information: Rembrandt and Manet both rely on a potentially existent and emotionally suspended participation of the viewer determined by point of view. This analysis goes beyond the application of perspective as a source of structure, and reviews the dynamism of the gaze as a contributing factor in determining meaning.

The haptic experience is a visceral response that connects the hand and the eye to the notion of touch. Through an artist's mark, and its implication of the tactile, one might discern far more than descriptive textural events. Giacometti, Manet and Lucian Freud are discussed in this section.

Significant Form: the discussion of abstract components and their subsequent organization as it lends to the expression of information is reviewed via Amy Sillman and Leland Bell.

As a means to engage in critical analysis, students are encouraged to hone their discernment by looking (literally) at various agencies of form that have the potential to disseminate information.

FORM FOLLOWS EMOTION

Design, Aesthetics, Ethics, Emotion, Culture, Contemporariness

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Since always, we've been used to relate the word "design" to concepts such as "functional", "problem solving", "operational", "easiness", "utility", etc.

In fact and following the Bauhaus tradition, "Good Design" has been established as the one that follows the principle "Form follows function". Ever since, the main concern of Designers focus on product standardization, maximize production, minimize costs, uniformization, "user friendliness", adequate choice of material facing the object or its distribution and storage. Ornament, beauty, emotion are taken as secondary elements to be regarded only after the former have been assured.

Nowadays, after we've reached the breakeven point on mass production (at least in our industrialised world), producers of consuming products have reached a deadlock. Products must not only be functional and cheap in order to be sold. They must arouse emotions, sensations. We've moved from mass production to mass personalization¹

According to authors as Derrick de Kerckhove, we can even state that we've entered the "Prosumer" era, where each one of us, due to most recent IT developments, participates in the production process (choosing, drawing) of it's, later, consuming product, whereas, simultaneously, is a content producer (blogs, sites, information) for others to consume.²

Aesthetics has grown to have a major role in Design.

Indeed, we're daily confronted with cars commercials appealing to its design, garment that claims it's "Italian Design" or furniture manufacturers assuming itself as "the king of Design".

¹ Bacelar, Jorge; *Terão os designers consciência do que andam a fazer?*, Jornadas de Publicidade, UBI, Covilhã, 2003

² Kerckhove, Derrick; *A Pele da Cultura, Relógio d'Água*, Lisboa, 1997.

3 Norman, Donald; Emotional Design, Basic Books, NY, 2004

But this aesthetics seems to have little to do with pleasure or displeasure, in Kant's terms, obtained through the contemplation of an object, an image or a message. The important issue is the emotion brought on the spectator, and the more intense the emotion the better is the "Design" object. In other terms, it seems as if the "emotion" has become itself a function. The object, in order to "work", needs to provoke an "emotion". Don Norman goes even further when defending that contemporary Design is mainly emotional, dividing it in three levels (visceral, behavioural and speculative)³, being determinate to the success of the object, image or message, which level it affects.

And why not point out world recognized designers such as Philip Stark, whose recent definition of design is precisely "to provoke argumentation".

Or, this movement towards emotion raises an ethical problem. This resettling of Design, focusing its interest on what each individual feels towards a given object, may lead the designer to care only with the emotion to arise, the sensation to provoke. And the more intense these are, the more "sellable" will the object be.

Where to find, in this Contemporary Design, the boundaries to emotion outbreak?

Where is Design ethics?

PAST FOR THE FUTURE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY

Creative Thinking, Paradigm Change, Creative Age, Multidisciplinary Approach, Design

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This year, 2009, is the European Year of Innovation and Creativity. Considering the speed of social, economic, environmental and technological change, the challenge of this millennium is to design a culture of creativity: a culture which is open to all changes and new opportunities and which is able to solve the many serious problems that the world is facing today. A culture in which creative thinking is not only demanded, but also encouraged and stimulated in all professional and private domains and organizations. To better understand this challenge for the future, this paper will describe the evolution of the creativity concept since the 1950's. This will be done in a multidisciplinary approach.

Up to the late 1960s, the concept of creativity was dominated by the psychological foundations of Guilford, who introduced the still current concept of 'Divergent Thinking' as the main ingredient of creativity. Apart from the boom of 'Creative Techniques' in the design field, the 1970s were the years in which creativity became an important issue in the development of organizations and commercial success: it saw the start of consultancy work in creativity and the coaching of teams. The most popular concept of this time was De Bono's concept of 'Lateral Thinking'. From the late 1980s onwards, creativity is no longer a research field for just psychologists and educators, but for researchers in such different domains as physics, biology, neurology, sociology and management. Researchers such as Binnig, Amabile, Csikszentmihalyi or Guntern focused their studies on the evolutionary, social and the systemic perspective of creativity. On a social and political standard, the beginning of the new millennium is characterized by the concept of the 'Creative Age', which replaces a science obsessed era and the focus on marketing. During the mid-1990s, creativity as a broad-based attribute came to be commonplace: terms such as 'Creative Industries', 'Creative Cities' and 'Creative Economy' entered the political and popular vocabulary. In this context, in the last decade, several clustering movements and incubation centres have emerged, including in Portugal.

At the end of the paper we will speculate about the future: Will the creative age survive into the next 40 years? Which kind of concept of creativity will be dominant? What will be the consequences of the new creativity approach for designers and other professionals in the creative economy?

**G ON SECOND ORDER CYBERNETICS AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY:
[GORDON PASK'S EARLY EXCHANGES WITHIN THE DESIGN ARENA AND THE AA]**

Gordon Pask, Cybernetics, Design, Architectural Association, Architecture

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In my previous PhD, realized at the UCL, I provided an account of British cybernetician Gordon Pask's life and career. (It was mainly based on archival research, conducted at his daughter house in 2005, and supported with a FCT/POCI 2010 grant.) In the introductory part of this presentation, I will briefly allude to it and other writings on Pask's career and his exchanges with Art and Design. In the main part of the presentation, I will focus on very specific aspects of Pask's career, including a description of correspondence concerning his early exchanges within the Design arena and the AA school of architecture.

In fact, Gordon Pask's maintained a lifelong engagement with the arts and design; and he was connected with the outstanding AA since the 1960s. During my previous archival research, I noticed that Pask's diary contained details of such early exchanges; including invitations to serve on juries, as well as meetings and appointments. As it will be described, throughout that time, he gave compelling lectures which were characterized by his interest in ideas of self-organization. He also frequently participated in the juries of year-masters with whom he shared interests; visited studios; participated in a panel of consultants and advised students who later remained in contact with him. At that architectural arena Pask came to influence generations of architects.