

## Consumption Postmodernism

### LE POST-MODERNISME DE CONSOMMATION

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**Abstract:** The domination of Modernism has expired, numerous and complicated pluralistic trends in design of Postmodernism have effectively taken over. Of them, conceptual design approaches philosophy the most. In a word, this is the criticism made by Postmodernism to Functionalism and the criticism to the modern society representing Modernism.

**Key words:** Functionalism; Postmodernism; Concept; Criticism

**Resumé:** La domination de modernisme a expiré, nombreuse tendances pluralistes compliquées dans le design de Post-modernisme ont été efficacement chargés. Parmi eux, le design conceptuel s'approche de la philosophie le plus. En un mot, c'est la critique faite par le Post-modernisme au Fonctionnalisme et à la critique de la société moderne représentant le Modernisme.

**Mots-clés:** Le Fonctionnalisme; Post-modernisme; Concept; La Critique

The function of a chair in the traditional concept is to sit on, so it should be stable and solid in its form. Nevertheless, Design One shows us a very dangerous object: the fragmented glass piles on together and makes a form of a chair.....

Does this embody a kind of crisis in design? In the eyes of some conservatives, the orthodox and rigorous concepts of modern design, the exquisite functions pursued by Modernism and initiated in Germany are being questioned, criticized. Concise, form being in conformity with function, clear and distinct beauty of sequence is ceasing to be in force. It seems that someone opened Pandora's box, all of a sudden, variously absurd, weird, even hideous objects flood everywhere. The whole world is in chaos, nothing is steady and the old fashioned standard seems invalid in measuring the reality.

However, in the sight of the radicals, this is a novel and splendid new world where is abundant with chances and challenges, everybody could be the master of himself and could find the way to express himself, or he could find a reason for what he does. The past outdated conventions and detestable customs are not adaptable for the present, the rebellious spirit in the circle of design extends its territory.

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This is the conceptual design of Postmodernism which germinated in the 1960's and flourished in the 1980's in the west.

## **CHALLENGES AND QUERIES**

At first, this rebellion reflects a kind of distrust in the traditional and established concepts, in other words, it is a kind of challenge and doubt to the rational spirit of Modernism. The typical characteristic of industrial society is the industrial civilization sweeping the globe produced by standardized production. Modernism is bred in this womb. Machinery is the substance which the most represents industry, so the form of machinery is the visual language symbol which the most represents the industrial society and which is a sort of aesthetics ideology—machinery aesthetics. Modern design seeks being realistic and democratic, it hopes that a perfect society of equal opportunities could be established through designing. They see a spirit which has no class distinction and which has the real democracy from the abstract form of machinery aesthetic. Therefore, Modernism provides a pure and absolute designing norm—form follows function. Up till the 1960's, from architectural design to product design, it forms a standardized design in the global scope. For a very long period, people pursue this standardization without complaints and they create a kind of mode which marks the modern civilization.

Indeed, since the industrial revolution, capitalism has created surprising material wealth for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The progress achieved in less than 3 centuries by the mankind overdid the sum total of the human progress from primary society, slavery society and feudal society. Industrial civilization makes mankind realize the magnificent power of science and technology. Production, life, traffic, transportation and communication are unprecedented convenient and rapid. Abundant material comfort brings optimism and self confidence. All of a sudden, it seems that industrial civilization creates a perfect human society. However, modern society not only brought purely the positive factors due to the progress of the industrial civilization, but also brought new diseases, crimes, race discrimination, feminism, wars, poverty and earth crisis provoked by environment pollution and natural resource exhaustion. “Everything disperses, there is no more centre, the world is suffused with confusion” . This is the ingenious and superb evaluation made by the symbolism poet William Butler Yeats referring to the disintegration of middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century society. Science and ration on which mankind depends are questioned, the present social system, moral concept, ethic standard, even aesthetic standard are unexceptionally under suspicion. The old fashioned values therefore have changed and the people need a set of new codes to evaluate this society.

## **IRRATIONAL IDEAS GAINING GROUND**

The complex and volatile of the social phenomenon makes ideas and cultural concepts pluralistic. Rationalism is questioned. All sorts of irrational ideas come into stage. Of them, we can trace the revival of Existentialism which holds the opinion that Rationalism could not make a feasible explanation about the sense of human's existence. What's more, Voluntarism, Neo-Kantianism, Post Structuralism, Intuitionism and others make different criticism from their points of view. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, German idealism philosopher, thought that man's outlook was chosen freely by himself. We use concept to describe the static image, so we only could have very limited concept. The concept of motion is not motion itself. Without perception, we will never know what motion is. Natural science and general knowledge make us only observe the externals of things. However, we must get knowledge from internals of objects, which can merely be achieved on our own.

Under the guidance of this kind of philosophy, the philosophy of post modern design mainly manifests the infiltration of irrational factors. Its basic goal is to realize the return of human nature, that's to say, abandon the concept of human nature, take the individual as a core, starting point and destination of production of work of arts. “Postmodernism preaches human interest and express its spirit and connotation by using Contextualism, Metaphor and Symbolism in order to meet the aesthetic sentiment.” (Quoted from Zeng Jian “Design concept of contemporary world pioneer architectures” Page 56.)

This is an era of inflation of individuality, an era of striving for ego and preaching personality. People criticize and question the established concepts by many kinds of ways. They express their opposition to the tradition by appearing novel, unique, unconventional and unrestrained. One of the demonstrations of this idea in design is to design for notions—neglecting the materiality in designing and social restrictive factors, exaggerating human's instinct, pursuing egoism, ignoring the objective authenticity of the designing objects. On the contrary, they consider the designing objects as a media of expressing ideas and spread their points of view.

## **DESIGN FOR CONCEPT**

Design for concept is not for use, but for spreading a sort of emotion or notion, it is the reflection of soul. The goal of modern design is to complete a kind of function which is the spirit of modern production of work of arts and the main aesthetic basis. Postmodern design makes this goal a media which challenges the tradition. Function is treated with contempt, the designers of Postmodernism take no consideration that Modernism views design as the highest criterion of function. They regard this function as a clown, scribbling on his face, even they deface him with their graffiti. This behavior is the mock and ridicule to Modernism. From the surface, it appears humorous, sad, dispirited, even indifferent. But under this disguise, it is the focus on the society and the human beings. From the outward appearance, it is the portrayal true to life of the Postmodernism spirit and the doubt of the rationality.

With the pluralism of postmodern ideas, all kinds of design trends seek for the philosophy basis for their own theories. As a result, the aesthetic standards of postmodern design appear multiple trends. From the aesthetic point of view, conceptual design always departs from traditional aesthetic standards. It concerns more conflict, fragmentation, whimsicality and other denial aesthetic category. Conceptual design does not care any more about the universal and everlasting beauty. Nevertheless, it does exactly the opposite, it inputs fragmentation, decadency, humor, even vulgarity into design and creates exaggerate, ridicule forms. It is eager to see the collision between design and settled ideas, so it evokes concern and attention. Imperfection is the reality, postmodern design brings the design to the civilians, makes the relationship between people and design much closer or more contradictory, this relationship presents the contradiction and conflict of people and society, people and people, people and themselves.

Therefore, postmodern design dismembers Modernism, then picks up all pieces and draws Easter egg pattern on them, then put them along two sides of highway of the industrial civilization. Everything appears to be eccentric and unintelligible, every piece of postmodern work of arts could arouse the intense resonance, thoughts through through people's mind.

Despite having the exterior characteristics of a sofa, the sofa of Design Two looks like a monster, there is an absence of softness, comfort and the coziness of the family atmosphere. On the contrary, it is tough and cold because of its material: molded out of concrete, held up by reinforcing steel bar. The whole work of arts is abundant with coldness, indifference and awkwardness which always give others the cold shoulder. Reinforced concrete is the symbols of modern cities. We use it to build numerous skyscrapers which envelope us and create distance between us and others, between human and nature. Reinforced concrete represents hardness, standardization, invincibility, isolation, firmness. Its negative side is coldness, lack of sympathy and destruction of nature and human nature. Therefore, the function of this sofa is not to "sit on", but to "speak". It criticizes and condemns the lack of sympathy of the city culture. The artist means to make a vivid contrast of the coziness and comfort expressed by the original concept of a sofa and the firmness of this work of arts, so this comparison can impel us to think profoundly.

The rise of postmodern design is not fortuitous. None of the systems, ideas and schools of arts could dominate the world forever. The abundance of material life must arouse high level spiritual needs. Religion and arts are the bridge to the spiritual world. Due to the closer relationship between design and people, mankind could directly feel the artistic spirit from designing work of arts and therefore feel the spirit of their era.

## CONCLUSION

The emergence of Conceptual design not only means the challenge to Modernism, but also suggests the arrival of a new era. Peter Behrens thought that the establishment of real civilization includes the complete understanding of a material life, furthermore, it should include all the progress in ideology sphere and in arts. This new era undoubtedly regards the multiply values as its goal and creates a splendid a civilization of “the 3<sup>rd</sup> tide” .

However, this method of design has its own limitation. Purely aiming at conveying concept on neglecting the factor of human makes it far away from the people and therefore deviate the basic goal of design, this makes it a kind of production of ideology sphere. So, rather than say that it is a design, it would be better to say that it is an art. The author thinks that pluralistic design breaks the layout which modern abstract form dominates. It makes the postmodern society present more regionalism, nationalism and pluralistic culture. It makes our life more individual and more colorful. The above is the positive points of postmodern design. The reason of the prosperity of postmodern design is the inflation of self consciousness and postmodern perceptiveness of ideas. Human nature and self existence consciousness become unprecedented strong. If we merely go after the expression of concept, rather than consider the right which human should have as a bearer of design. This design will definitely be put on the self, so even the most profound philosophy could not make it animate. Therefore, we should combine human’s physical needs and psychological needs into together and create a kind of high taste and quality design.

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