

# The Philosophy of Design in the Innovation Space of the Postmodern World: Consciousness of Cultural Practices

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**Abstract:** The design ideas of the postmodern era reflect the general trends of socio-cultural reality, namely the loss of traditional moral guidelines, disharmony and destructiveness combined with absurdity, a sense of crisis, abyss and uncertainty conveyed in signs and in spatial coordinates. Design products become installations in which the viewer is a direct participant, sometimes even the creator. Postmodern design denies finitude, noting the plurality, uncertainty and fluidity of the world. The paradox of postmodern design culture is expressed in a combination of diametrically opposite things, sometimes even mutually exclusive. The era of postmodern design culture has recorded the fusion of "high" and "low" art, the emergence of new trends - neo-conceptual art, art installation, lowbrow art, performance art, digital art, telematic art - has affected. It should be noted the immersion in virtual reality in particular, as a result of the perception of the concept of postmodernism. After all, the purpose of designer items and their perception has already been changed in accordance with the needs of a person in the postmodern world. A striking example is the coronavirus epidemic, which has become the central theme of successful design projects. After all, a protective mask as a medical device becomes the object of design solutions that transform it into a means of self-expression (fabric masks, masks with pictures), or the manifestation of social characteristics (inscriptions about social distancing, calls for certain actions), or the result of digital achievements. (the ability to measure temperature and monitor body indicators).

**Keywords:** *postmodern cultural paradigm, art, system approach, means of communication, creativity, postmodern consciousness.*

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## Introduction

The design ideas of the postmodern era reflect the general trends of socio-cultural reality, namely the loss of traditional moral guidelines, disharmony and destructiveness combined with absurdity, a sense of crisis, abyss and uncertainty conveyed in signs and in spatial coordinates. Design items become installations in which the viewer is a direct participant, sometimes even a creator. Postmodern design denies finitude, noting the plurality, uncertainty and mobility of the world.

Postmodern design was reflected in the emergence of new trends - neo-conceptual art, art installation, lowbrow art, performance art, digital art, telematic art. It should be noted the immersion in virtual reality, as a result of the perception of the concept of postmodernism. After all, the purpose of designer items and their perception has already been changed in accordance with the needs of a person in the postmodern world. A striking example is the coronavirus epidemic, which has become the central theme of successful design projects. After all, a protective mask as a medical device becomes the object of design solutions that transform it into a means of self-expression (fabric masks, masks with pictures), or the manifestation of social characteristics (inscriptions about social distancing, calls for certain actions), or the result of digital achievements (the ability to measure temperature and monitor body indicators). The evolution of postmodern design solutions leads to the study of the origins, the philosophical basis for understanding conceptual ideas and the search for new ways of personal development. This is what determines the unconditional novelty of the study.

The purpose of the article is to provide a philosophical reflection of the design culture in the plane of postmodern, since it is postmodern that has become the basis and heart (core) of modern design concepts.

Design in modern society is one of the most popular types of professional and creative activities, covering all spheres of social and personal life. The approach to design in professional and social consciousness is often polar: from the fascination with the achievements of design in the process of transformation of the modern material world and visual environment, to the internal influence of design on human consciousness.

The study of design theories is important for work in the field of production of goods and services. Analysis of the philosophical foundations of design theories involves the identification of basic principles, their relationship with the inner world of man. Philosophy as a methodology

develops various ways to analyze individual scientific theories. In our opinion, design theories are somehow related to philosophical teachings about art, concepts of communicativeness and signification, principles of systems approach and qualitative analysis, as well as the basic definitions of social philosophy - "man", "values", "social system", etc.

English scientist Lakatos (1976), studying the history of any cultural model, focuses on its external and internal functions. You can consider consistent patterns and individual phenomena within the research area, including its evolution, history and personalities. This kind of "self-appeal" is a mandatory moment of any self-reflection, accompanied by immersion in empirical experience, generalization of facts, comprehension of practical steps. This is the theory of design.

On the other hand, the problem can be expanded and provided for its solution not narrowly focused solutions, but the most internal volumetric design: for example, to enter into the model format the philosophical level of the definition of design creativity in the context of general scientific ideas of the creative process. The philosophical level is close to personal search, through which you can see the synthesis of technological and formal factors of different eras and cultures in a single project product, evaluate their own creative activity and combine the form of the project in the interaction of external and internal functions.

### **Definitive field of "design"**

Analysis of the subject specificity of design shows that philosophical generalization within the framework of the theory of culture makes it possible to reveal the true essence of design and its specificity as a cultural phenomenon.

The term "design" comes from the Latin verb "designar" (to measure, outline), and in English "design" has received many meanings: pattern, decoration, project, construction, plan, intention, purpose, intention, intrigue (Mueller, 1981, p. 614). The ambiguity of the term is associated with the intensive development of the design itself, and its relevance in all areas of culture.

There is no consensus among professionals today in their understanding of design. By design, different experts mean:

1. appearance, shape of things;
2. the whole thing, including its functions;
3. the process of imaginary creation of a thing - design;
4. organizational activities;
5. professional and service organization;

6. field of activity, including theory, practice, products and service;
7. a special way of thinking as a worldview and even a way of life.

Various author's concepts of "designs" existing in the level of professional ideology were presented already in 1970 by the domestic researcher of Western design V.L. Glazychev. He wrote: "As soon as we free ourselves from the hypnotic belief in the actual existence of one design, we will acquire the opportunity to consider the true nature of various forms of design activity" (Glazychev, 1970, p. 51).

To understand the variety of approaches to design and its definitions, let's turn to history. There are usually two stages: ancient (primitive, unconscious, craft, canonical - based on manual labor), and modern (design, industrial - focused on machine production). The history of modern design begins at the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany, from the desire to improve industrial products, to spread and strengthen in society new ideas about the beauty of objects, aesthetic ideals, generated by rational form formation in industry.

The founders of this movement are German persons: Verkbund G. Mutezius, P. Behrens, W. Gropius and others. They saw in the basis of the new subjectivity three necessary features:

- practical usefulness of products
- its industrial manufacture
- a new aesthetic organization of objects, and ultimately - the subject environment.

The most striking figure who embodies the unity of architecture and design, of course, was Walter Gropius. He believed that "the solution of any formative problem - be it a chair, a building, an entire city or a plan of the district, must be fundamentally identical ...", because every artificially created object must be an organic part of the subject environment (Gropius, 1965, p. 87). The further development of the "classic" design was determined by the real economy. On the one hand, the so-called engineering, predominantly rational design, began to gain strength, sees the beauty of products in their all-round practical perfection (Wartofsky, 1979, p. 57). On the other hand, the market element has actualized the task of intensifying product sales by creating attractive forms for the buyer - commercial design, styling. During the Great Depression, American industry, like European, faced a sales crisis. Artists such as Raymond Lowe, Walter Teague, and Dreyfuss joined the design. American industry over the decades has made a huge leap in design development (Marques, 2021).

Since the 1950s the development of design begins as an artistic and innovative design - art design, where the basic role of the practical function is lost and industrial replication often ceases. The line of artistic research continues most clearly in Italian design, spreading to the whole of Europe. In 1983, Domus Academy was founded as a center for the formation of a new type of professional consciousness, where a number of author's concepts and "poetics" of "weak" design are being developed, the main feature of which is non-axiomativity, the probabilistic nature of the grounds, tolerance, the lack of certainty of the method, position, attitude. The illogicality, anti-system - characteristic features of the design ideology in the postmodern era.

Different types of design gave rise to the corresponding theoretical reflection. However, the fact that design until the mid-1950s was predominantly commercial explains its indifference to theory. Mentions of design theory in the first half of the twentieth century are usually only formal or historical-conceptual, they are fragmentary and unsystematized.

The problem of defining design, its subject and functions remains relevant today. Analysis of theoretical work in the field of design shows that the leading trend is the desire for a broad definition of design (Galle, 2002). In this case, the history of design begins in primitiveness, and the area of distribution is almost limitless, including myth-making, selection activities, science fiction. Design can be defined as "the harmonious structuring of the subject and procedural aspects of the systems" person - subject - environment ", as well as programs for organizing such systems" (Kroes, 2002, p. 291; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska et al., 2020).

Many philosophical excursions into the field of design are based on the idea of it as a form of creative activity of man, which has its results. The specificity of the obtained products and, accordingly, the method of obtaining them is duality, the combination of some opposite concepts: benefit - beauty, technology - art, material - spiritual, utilitarian - aesthetic, practical - artistic, natural - socio-cultural, rational - intuitive, instrumental - symbolic, available - transcendent. All these categorical pairs express the multifunctionality of the concept of "design" and its derived elements. In other words, it means a constant and obligatory desire for comprehensive improvement, which creates a feeling of beauty. But such a striving is immanent to man, it permeates all spheres of activity (Popper, 1974). The authors expand the subject of design to include environment and life situations, but exclude industrial production, which distinguishes design from applied art.

Today in the literature there is no definition of design, which convincingly reveals the essence of this phenomenon, its nature and specificity. This can be done only by rising above the empirical chaos to the philosophical level of cultural theory.

### **Problems of design theory and practice**

The polarization of design ideas is due to the peculiarities of this type of professional and creative activity, the strong influence on the emotional world of man in combination with pragmatic orientation and market character, as well as insufficient conceptual development of design as a cultural phenomenon for several reasons.

First, the specifics of the situation in the humanities for a long time objectively did not contribute to the conceptualization of this model among researchers, although there is a large historical layer of sources on the theory and practice of design. This is due to the fact that design as a phenomenon of mass culture was an ideologically alien phenomenon for domestic practice, although in the 20s of the XX century the ideas of industrial art were actively developed, there was a well-known school of design at that time Higher artistic and technical workshops (HATW), it was possible to put next with German Staatliches Bauhaus and others.

Secondly, it is impossible to philosophically analyze and substantiate the essence of the project outside the cultural and historical context. The emergence and development of design is closely related to the emergence of the era of mass culture at the end of the 19th century. In the works "Revolt of the Masses", "Dehumanization of Art", the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset refers to the basic principles of the doctrine of "mass society". According to this concept, society is a dynamic combination of an active minority and a passive majority, or mass (crowd) (Ortega y Gasset, 1968, p. 52). If there are persons in the minority who have certain individual characteristics, then the composition of the mass is a set of persons who are not defined by anything special. In overcoming these contradictions, "the masses have taken full power," but such activities were intended for homogeneous people who are on the same level and it is not art, but "a bunch of life itself" (Archer, 1979, p. 17).

Third, the change in cultural paradigms in the twentieth century was so rapid that it took at least some time to understand the logic and laws of cultural change. If in history for centuries cultural cycles lasted much longer than the existence of one generation, then in the twentieth century the situation changed dramatically, and during one social cycle several cultural

paradigms changed (Reich, 1996). Understanding the cultural changes taking place at such a pace and reflecting their general direction is complicated by the constant theoretical development of such philosophical concepts as postmodern cultural paradigm, postmodern consciousness, etc.

A scientifically grounded analysis of the social life of design, its role as a tool for modeling culture, involves a systematic study of the main characteristics of this phenomenon.

There are various versions as to when design emerged as a professional and creative activity. The first version is based on a broad interpretation of design and treats it as a phenomenon with a thousand-year history. At the same time, "modern" design differs from "traditional" only in terms of modern production technologies that have changed as a result of successive scientific and technological revolutions. The turn of the 1930s. - the last since the appearance of design, when the Frenchman R. Lowy and the Americans W. D. Teague, G. Dreyfuss, N. B. Geddes, almost all of whom previously worked in the field of commercial graphics or decorative and applied arts, helped the American industry to overcome crisis in the sale of manufactured goods caused by the Great Depression. They noted the possibilities of design as an activity aimed at creating tangible objects that are used in everyday life, but at the same time have nonmaterial, emotional and ideological significance and value for the consumer (Dreyfuss, 2003).

According to the dictionary, the English noun Design has six meanings: 1) plan; 2) intention, purpose; 3) project, drawings, construction; 4) drawing, sketch, pattern; 5) composition; 6) intent (Mueller, 1981, p. 614).

In the modern interpretation, a sufficient number of definitions of design as a type of professional and creative activity is possible. In our study we will focus on the following.

First, design is defined as a purely utilitarian phenomenon, that is, one that has practical significance and application. According to V. Glazychev (1970), design is a form of organization of art and design activities that creates the consumer value of material and spiritual mass consumption, and therefore the most important characteristics of design are its strength and real economic significance (Glazychev, 1970).

Secondly, at the level of philosophical generalization of the meaning of the term design is complicated. We give an example of the following definition: "Design is the unity of material (external) and spiritual (internal) transformations of form and content, their harmony." This interpretation reflects the process of unity, coexistence, interaction of matter and the laws of its internal construction (Ceschin & Gaziulusoy, 2016, p. 143). In modern philosophy, design is defined as one of the ontological properties of being

with space, time and development. Each historical moment represents the implementation of an earlier cultural project and at the same time already contains a design of the future historical moment. For example, modern Western civilization, built on a competitive struggle, could not exist as it does today, if the principle of the agon of ancient culture was not applied, that is, a deeper unity of the parties and the harmony of the social whole to which the opposites directly belong.

In the philosophy of design can be distinguished anthropological, axiological, artistic and aesthetic, hermeneutic components. Anthropological implies self-determination of man as a carrier of design activity and consumer of its products in the unity of his creative abilities in the things generated by him (Bhamra & Hernandez, 2021, p. 188). In this case, the thing itself is interpreted as "doubling yourself." Axiological is related to the main socio-cultural dominants of the era. A thing created by a designer works not only as a carrier of function, but above all as a carrier of cultural meaning. Aesthetic transforms an object endowed with a function into a thing that has expressiveness and, consequently, the possibility of harmonizing the human world. It brings this special kind of creative activity to the level of art, filling it with harmony. Hermeneutic is focused on creating a system of rules and models of interpretation, which allows you to identify internal meanings, to consider not individual signs and meanings, but to cover all semantic systems.

Thus, the philosophy of design in its cultural understanding allows to determine the social and cultural place of design, with its originality and uniqueness. Such strategies reveal the reflexive and creative abilities of the designer; determine the unity of material (external) and spiritual (internal) transformations of the form and content of the object, their harmony; lead to the emergence of an innovative process in design ideas, the creation of a qualitatively new object, the properties of which cannot be observed, but the essential features of which become more clearly visible.

### **Design theories: communicative concepts**

Many concepts consider design in relation to art. An important place in the design methodology is occupied by the theory of J. Lotman (2009), who considers art to be one of the important means of communication. According to Lotman (2009), any system used in the communication process can be defined as language. In the same context, a special language is theater, cinema, painting, music, and so on. However, if we consider art as a



language, it is necessary to take into account the basic principles of this aspect.

In any language there are appropriate signs that make up its "dictionary" or "alphabet", the language has certain rules for combining signs. It follows that, according to J. Lotman (2009), it combines natural, artificial and secondary languages, i.e. communication structures that are built above the natural language level, such as myth, religion. Art in Lotman's interpretation is a secondary modeling system that includes the languages of music, painting, design (Lotman, 2009). However, the relationship between different languages and linguistic texts in this multifaceted system is quite complex (Schon, 1983). The system-forming principles in this case are the nature of language and the culture of society.

By its structure, language affects the psyche of people and, in general, social life. Secondary languages are modeling communication systems in design by the type of language. This does not mean that they reproduce different facets of natural languages. Music differs significantly from natural languages by the absence of obligatory semantic connections, but now the regularity of the description of a musical text as a special linguistic structure is obvious. Arguing his point of view, Lotman (2009) refers to the works of M.M. Langleben and B.M. Gasparov in music, to the identification of syntagmatic and paradigmatic connections in painting in the works of L.F.Zhegin, B.A. Uspensky, to the analysis of language films in the works of S.M. Eisenstein, Yu.N. Tynyanov, B.M. Eikhenbaum, K. Metz. This makes it possible to trace semiotic objects in various types of art - systems built according to the type of languages. Since human consciousness is a linguistic consciousness, all types of models built on top of consciousness, including art, can be defined as secondary modeled systems built according to the type of languages.

According to Lotman (2009), when analyzing secondary languages, which include the language of design, it is necessary to take into account the conventionality of language, which allows sign systems to display the same content, but with different structural components (Parsons, 2016). The usual system of expression in art, which is characterized by special semantics, has a certain arbitrariness in relation to the object of reflection, and so on. The Chinese viewer does not notice strange things in the use of calligraphic text in the form of inscriptions or prints. In Japanese puppet theater, the actor directing the puppets is accessible to the audience, but is not perceived by them as an actor, the audience is mentally taken out of the artistic space.

In the aesthetics of different periods and peoples, there have always been norms of creativity and perception, norms of comprehension and

understanding of a work of art. Moreover, one or another artistic culture often proceeded from the idea of the only possible norms of correct art, which is subjectively felt as a norm of common sense and social consciousness.

Thus, Lotman (2009) points to the qualitative specificity of language in art in comparison with non-artistic communication systems, in which the structure of language is a clear and informative message, not the language itself, while art systems may include information about the language itself. For design, it is important that the signs used in art have a varying degree of convention according to the criterion of their arbitrary use outside of art and the semantic load that they acquire within the artistic system (Marcuse, 1994). In art, symbols, mythological signs, literary images, metaphors, etc. already developed by society can be used. Elements primary in relation to it can be added to the structure of the sign, for example, a document in literature and cinema.

Different types of art differ in the nature of the formalization of language. Fine arts tend more to iconic symbols, and sound arts use conventional signs more widely. Iconic and conventional characters are differently determined by a particular system code. For iconic signs as a code are direct visual, auditory impressions, life and domestic skills, (Baljon, 2002, p. 338). Their conventionality within a particular culture is not realized. Conventional signs with their clearly separated plans of content and expression imply a clear understanding of the conditionality of these codes.

For design theories, the concept of sign communication, developed by J. Baudrillard, is of great importance. He uses the term simulacra, that is, signs whose main function is to refer the subject to other objects, processes, social institutions or signs (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 117). In this sense, they act as simulations. Baudrillard names three types of simulacra: copies, functional analogues, and actual simulacra (Cross, 2006). Most of the phenomena and processes involved in design activities belong to the simulacra of the third type. According to J. Baudrillard, this group includes values, public opinion, money and fashion (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 120). Art as a side of design activity performs primarily a critical function in relation to consciousness, making it more adequate in relation to the real world.

In Baudrillard's concept (1998), the main attention is paid to the problem of the relationship between the real world and its symbolic reflection (Trott, 2002). Regarding design, his proposed approach allows to solve the problem of the relationship between design as an art form and as a practical activity aimed at meeting the needs of people, the problem of

retransmission of true and false values through the prism of the design object.

### **System-forming factors of design activity**

The design also uses a systematic approach that allows you to explore the result of design and the design activity itself within the social system. The systems approach in design theories has different directions. Since the design activity itself is multidimensional, therefore, the systemic principles that are used in design theories are ambiguous. A systematic approach to design was developed primarily on the basis of design practice. A design subject is always an element of an open system. When creating an object, the designer cannot fully determine its future fate in society, which depends on consumers, advertising, the nature of the relationship between sellers and buyers and other factors (Camburn et al., 2017). Assessments of the subject change in the process of historical development of society, due to the emergence of new activities, new information, changes in various forms of social consciousness, psychology and motivation.

In the practice of design, there are processes associated with system formation, in which details and nuances are able to combine, disturbing the balance in the image, and can qualitatively change the overall picture and the principles of perception of the object. The systems approach used in design is developed within various disciplines: aesthetics, art history, social philosophy, design theory, psychology, ergonomics.

In Herbert Read's concept, the system-forming factors in design are the principles of art (Read, 1974, p. 91). He does not deny the utilitarian properties of a design object, but believes that design comes from art, and not from production or marketing. The combination of formal, expressive and intuitive elements in the creation of works of art is an aid that enables the introduction of utilitarian objects into the system, which allows to apply to the analysis and evaluation of design objects the whole set of professional tools (Harfield, 2007). Read (1974) believed that the qualities associated with the practical use of the subject are perceived by aesthetic sense as an object of abstract art.

In the works of John Gloag (1934), a systematic approach to design tries to overcome the one-sidedness of pure design due to the objective need to pay attention to the difference between design and applied art and at the same time emphasize the connection between design and industry (Gloag, 1934, p. 118). Artistic activity is important for design, and there are no boundaries for improving the body in an aesthetic sense. However, artistic design, according to Gloag (1934), does not practically affect the utility of

the subject. Gloag (1934) emphasized that in system design, the design of form, structure and material is of paramount importance, aimed at creating the maximum possible conditions for the consumer. In his opinion, design should be considered in close connection with the trade in design items. Design can become the most important item of goods in the future, as it arises from the effective combination of human imagination and practical skill. In the Gloag concept, successful design is always closely linked to its commercial benefits (Dorst & Cross, 2001).

Philip Ashford's theory combines design as an artistic and constructive activity, as well as a focus on the trade in design products. The designer has an artistic method that is creative and free in nature. As a result, the product of design activity is not evaluated on the basis of precise scientific criteria. A system-forming feature in Ashford's design concept is the consumer function of the design object, but it is not reduced to extreme utilitarianism. Thus, Ashford calls the system of activities of the designer multifaceted, tracing the path from product creation to its ultimate goal (Dorst & Cross, 2001).

In Gio Ponti's concept, design activity is considered in the context of artistic focuses, and the main system-forming factor is creativity. The main function of the designer is to create a cultural, subject-spatial environment in which a person lives and develops (Bignami & Nezzo, 2019, p. 55). The criterion for the success of the designer is the spectacle of the objects he creates. He emphasizes the artistry and artistic and creative nature of the designer. However, the task of creativity is the ability to achieve commercial goals. According to Ponti, the designer must express the unique richness of the world through the means of artistic design (Dorst & Cross, 2001). The subject of design should attract attention, emphasize novelty.

J. Nelson's concept deals with the relationship between the designer's work and the need to create a civilization of super-comfort, (Nelson, 1979, p. 102). In itself, the formation of such a civilization is an objective socio-cultural process. Nelson points to the connection between the designer's activities and the interests of business. He notes that in modern conditions, a designer who is deeply committed to artistic and constructive principles, but must work for business and entrepreneurs. The main system-forming principle in design, according to Nelson (1979), is the consensus of interests of all market participants in the sale of design products - consumers, businessmen, traders (Dorst & Cross, 2001). Design is a process of active interaction of the artist with society. At the heart of Nelson's systematic approach is the designer's performance of professional design activities to solve the problems of civilization of super-comfort.

Issues of a systematic approach to design occupy an important place in the works of Thomas Maldonado - a famous Italian designer, painter and educator (Maldonado, 2009, p. 98). He examines the problems of the role and place of the designer in society and the essence of the design profession.

A systematic approach to design is built by Maldonado on two different levels: 1) design as a professional activity; 2) design as a sociocultural phenomenon that functions in society and has a worldview aspect (Dorst & Cross, 2001). The designer must use all forms of communication and all possible methods: social, utilitarian, commercial, artistic (Maldonado, 2009, p. 98). But the main factor in the system is the cultural and humanistic goal of design and the social responsibility of the designer. These factors and directions are considered by most authors who develop a systematic approach to design. The differences are only in the separation of different system-forming principles that are considered basic for design.

## **Conclusions**

Thus, for designers, a systematic approach to the quality of the consumer, which is developing in such sciences as commodity science, social philosophy, psychology, marketing is important. The subject of design is considered in the system of various human needs: consumer, cognitive, communicative, the need for self-realization and spiritual, creative development.

With regard to design, a philosophical methodology of analysis can also be fruitful, which allows you to build a hierarchy of qualities of a design subject. This approach is traditionally used in dialectics, where the main concepts are "quality", "quantity", "measure", "social qualities of the first and second kind", "natural qualities". The prospect of this approach is due to the allocation of levels of social qualities of the design subject, the definition of the mechanisms of the functioning of the design subject in the system of social relations, in culture.

The paradox of postmodern design culture is expressed in a combination of diametrically opposite things, sometimes even mutually exclusive. The era of postmodern design culture has marked the fusion of high and low art.

The analysis methodology makes it possible to consider the features of a design subject in a hierarchical subordination, which in turn opens the way for the development of design strategies in practice. The artistic value of many design items must correspond to socio-cultural norms, and innovativeness - to the social criteria of creativity adopted in society.

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