“设计之变”展的历史背景

本文的论点是，当代设计要从历史传统中寻找未来的方向。此次设计展的主题是“设计之变”，观众将一睹令人激动。但又令人解读的创造性活动，见证设计如何使到现在全球科技并购地对设计寄予厚望。在参展设计作品中，产品设计和室内设计的影子，也会联想起人类最原始的映象，最重要的，将感受到转与生机的主旋律贯穿整个展览。此次设计展将激发想象，让观众预见未来的种种可能性。当然在不同视角下，他们也会见仁见智。

设计的关注焦点不再是获得笑容，而是提出问题，那么我们如何演进到前卫设计的新阶段？历史的视角是否有助于我们窥见这一批作品前的鼎盛？

首先，我们要提醒自己，传统的“现代设计展”是呈现何种意象？正是因为人们对意象研究的另一张手段，让“设计之变”这样的展览拥有无尽的可能。那么传统的设计展有哪些特点？


在现代设计企业这种突变性的认识下，各国的参展作品也多不相同，从1851年起，首先被会展陈列馆后，然后拥有自己独特的风格，甚至建筑了自己的展览村（如1900年的巴黎世界博览会），其影响更是受到世界文明的发展重复昨日，但欧洲的主要文化应保持本国特色，而各国国内的则有所谓“原教”民族则是保留下来的居民而已。

自上世纪五六十年代以来，世界博览会的帝国主义或社会达尔文主义的意识形态逐渐减弱，但人们仍然相信展览就应展示科技的进步魅力，而且，可以实现人们对科技在发展上更进一步的工业化。上世纪中期的展览“未来之家”，最受欢迎的特征是通过消费，1950-1980年代的民权运动概念，转化为个人对消费生活方式的追求（Horgan 1986）。

站在21世纪回望上世纪50年代那种冲动的单纯的设计实现完全自动化的生活，我们心中不免有一股怀旧之情涌现出来，甚至会得有点滑稽可笑。但与此同时，不同国家的人，无论是斯堪的纳维亚人、美国人还是意大利人，他们对现代精神的理解虽然不同，但无一例外都无法逃脱现代的风格。

那么，怎么办？要改变这种不争的事实，要实现目的？这就是在推动“当代”设计向前发展，答案之一是所有先锋设计文化活动的界限，前一代的进步很总是喜欢以老一代的激进主义为批评目标，以此树立自己的身份。这种精神继续在维也纳的国际香奈儿会仍然是极为血统。60年代的设计充分体现了设计师们对现代主义的批判他们寻求流行文化的最激进，比如包豪斯（1930-1971）的后现代风格化家具。到了70年代，有丹尼尔・里维拉・德・洛伦佐（1923-1996）的倡导下，设计师们从工艺美学的重新评价中获得灵感，注重针对“实际问题”寻找实际的解决方法。

当然，设计界的任何策划活动都要受到外部力量支配（尤其是受到科技水平技术或者突发事件的影响），如1973年的世界石油危机，但设计同样也受到并推动历史的前进。这20世纪初上半叶现代设计达到鼎盛时尤其如此，当时的设计师和这时期的设计自称为大众品位的改革者。到了六十年代初，这种理想似乎开始发生变化，新一代设计师开始质疑，他们把大众文化元素，甚至极端的品味都整合到自己的设计中。让设计回归到功能后现代时代的突出特征，然而，这种做法与商业策略完全不在同一个层面上，从现代主义、后现代主义、50年代的普拉特传统中探索是设计师们的战略选择，也是最值得的选择。在那个进入后现代主义的那一刻，设计便开始处处抵御现代主义。
这就是意大利的孟菲斯设计师小组（1981-1987）成功实践的“休克策略“，该设计小组在我们的故事是设计界的分水岭：在创作仅供人们思考，争论和收集的有限版设计过程中，该设计小组为类似于本次“设计之变”的展览奠定了基础（Radice 1985）。

在早前几十年，像荷兰“风格派”（1917-1931）和德国“包豪斯派”（1919-1933）等先锋运动都创造了很多颠覆性的设计作品，但其初衷仍然是为了大规模生产定制家具，使其成为通往更加美好未来的媒介。相比之下，孟菲斯设计小组的产品虽然没有脱离开社会，因为它们的目标是回归到简单和实用的品位文化，也就是权威时代所界定的所谓的“好的设计”，但他们对于设计的原创性，效率和建设性的怀疑态度使“先锋”设计的整个理念。

因此，孟菲斯设计小组乃至整个后现代运动都是将先锋设计运动的激进性在萌芽状态。既然所有风格都一样有存在的合理性，为什么还要展望一个创新的未来？既然设计的世界到底是因文化不同而异，而我们可能设计出客观上“更好的产品”？

“设计之变”就是要向人们展示，先锋设计改变了产品与用户的互动关系，深化了与艺术界的联盟，甚至在某些情况下，使之成为社会发展的象征。总之，当今社会不再纠结于自身的历史传统，而是更多地从与日常生活、用户的感情联系保持一致。自上世纪90年代以来，先锋设计慢慢具备了诗歌艺术气质、深沉意识、十足的魅力和孩童般的好奇心（Mulder和Pruysen 1998）。

这种趋势广泛体现在本次“设计之变”的作品中。为了能清楚历史的来龙去脉，人们重新介绍本次展览的一件作品——于尔根·贝（Jurgen Bey，1965年生）于1999年设计的《重置双人椅》。

俏皮地在别的设计版图中处于尔根·贝的作品，你一定会为他创造性的使用了科技手段，也就是聚氨乙烯涂层，这种材料通常用于收缩膜包装，用作飞机和机械部件的表面的保护膜。然而，要放在“设计之变”的主轴下审视，《重置双人椅》首先是一件非常原始的作品或艺术品。它虽然一个单，也像一件家具。即使放在重新改过的17世纪多层画室，或者放在比利时画家屋内。马格利特（1898-1967）想象的超现实主义回潮内，也丝毫不会让人感觉有任何违和感。这是因为《重置双人椅》散发出一股人气，但也不符合弗洛伊德所说的“怪异”风格。它的魅力让人们回到心灵深处的理性：孩童通常会对静止的物体和某种性格，当他们看到最平凡的材料时，都会联想到某个奇幻王国。因此，该《重置双人椅》足以让人怀念，让人联想起孩童世界的童趣，同时也不乏成人世界较为阴暗的一面。坚硬的塑料表面就像是用生物技术制作，对于那些不正当的性行为的人来说，这张椅子足以引发大量的关注。

当然，于根·贝以其极简主义手法进行创作，传达出丰富的寓意。该设计中的所有要素都取自我们集体的普遍意识，因此观众很容易感到这是天才的设计。设计师本人也是高蹈人或编辑，他让观众成为主动者和参与者，共同创作这件作品。

在展厅里展出这件设计似乎是开创新的，愿为作品本身地不会引起现代艺术作品的注目。观众会自然而然地想到马歇尔·杜尚（1887-1968）在100年前创作的镜像两可的现成物品艺术品；约瑟夫·博伊斯（1921-1986）利用含糊的日常材料创作的装置作品；或者是于根·贝在一件物品上加上外景，让人“重新赋予”熟悉的东西带来的喜悦；甚至是克里斯托（1935年出生）创作的包装起来的建筑或风景。

因此，我们实际上看到的是艺术家与设计创作相融合的产物，但这也引发了另一个问题。在追逐比喻意义上的画廊时，设计的先锋派是否从自己的社会目标（O’Doherty 1986）？

很明显，这次展览中的作品会让人看到不同的生活方式、也对我们传统上的产品及环境的互动方式做出了质疑。这是这些不同的“创见”是否构成了一种新的时代生活方式？在“建筑设计”早期，意大利的Superstudio设计公司（1966-1978）宣布暂停消费主义，提倡没有国界的未来和一种“没有物化的生命”（Ambasz 1972），这理念非常坚定，它发源于上世纪60年代的后现代主义在新兴市场取得巨大成就（如卫星和太空探索）的带动下日益壮大。如今，我们对全球化和进步的感知更加深刻，我们也清楚地认识到，消费文化将不可避免地影响我们对“真实”体验的需求。比如，我们身体无处不在的智能手机就是如此，使用者可以记录、影响、监控，管理自己的个人身份。

本次展览上所展出的作品都是反消费主义的产物，有的颠倒形式，有的颠覆传统，有的趣味盎然，它们都吸引观众驻足思考，甚至让他们获得一种心理治疗的体验。当我们质疑自己的生活条件时，我们也就变成了社会变化的推动者。要说这些作品将产生什么更广泛的社会影响，那要取决于它们所体现的消费信仰变成社会的“福因”（即文化基因），也取决于它们如何为文化对话带来新思路，并最终定义社会认识。
参考文献


The Historical Context of the Trans-Design Exhibition

The following article makes the case for an historically informed approach to contemporary design. The focus is Trans-Design, an exhibition that documents a moment in creative endeavour that is both exciting and perplexing. It is a show that combines the promise of the latest global technologies with a celebration of indigenous materials. There are references to genetic engineering, together with objects that trigger primitive superstitions. Above all there is the feeling of transformation and emergence. In Trans-Design there is the promise of many futures. A different future for every visitor!

So how have we arrived at a point in which progressive design is more concerned with questions than answers? And how might an historical perspective help to clarify the situation?

To begin with we need to remind ourselves of the ‘conventional’ modern design exhibition, for it is this underlying sense of an orthodoxy that enables exhibitions like Trans-Design to appear avant-garde. So what are the key features of this tradition?

The idea that a significant exhibition should showcase modern technology comes from the first of the international exhibitions, the one held in Joseph Paxton’s prefabricated cast iron building in London, in 1851 (Greeninglea 1988).

The selling is important, for another feature of the classic expo is the idea that the modernity of the exhibits should coincide with the symbolism of an iconic monument. For instance the Eiffel Tower at the 1889 Paris Universal Expo, the Trylon and Perisphere from the 1933 New York World’s Fair, and the Atomium that formed the centrepiece of the 1958 Brussels international Expo (Allwood 1977).

Within this overarching sense of a modern manufacturing enterprise, were the various national exhibits, first arranged in sections (from 1851), and then housed in their own distinctive pavilions and even villages (as first seen at the 1900 Paris Exposition). The subtext was that civilisation was set on a common path of development, with the indigenous cultures of Europe sustaining the national character, while the so-called ‘primitive’ peoples of the different empires functioned as exotic survivals.

Although the imperial or social Darwinist aspect of the international exhibitions receded in the 1950’s and 60’s, there was a continuing belief in scientific progress. Moreover the technologies that would realise this dream became more domestic in scale. One of the most popular features of the mid 20th century expo – the ‘house of the future’ - translated the 19th and early 20th century idea of national prosperity via trade into the personal pursuit of a consumer lifestyle (Horrigan 1986).

In the 21st century, the push button, fully automated fantasies of the 1950’s are apt to seem nostalgic, or comical, while the different nationalistic interpretations of the modern spirit; the Scandinavian, the American, the Italian etc, have become just so many retro styles.

So what has happened to the unwavering faith in progress and what now provides the driving force in contemporary design? One answer lies in the dialectical tendency of all avant-garde cultural movements. How the progressives of one generation tend to define themselves in opposition to the radicalism of their forebears. This pendulum-like motion is very evident in the sort of design that won international acclaim in the 1960’s and 70’s. While the former is characterised by the optimism of the space race and the playfulness of Pop culture, think of the plastic modular furniture of Joe Colombo (1930-1971).

The latter takes it cue from a reappraisal of a craft sensibility and the ‘real’ approach to ‘real’ problems, that was advocated by the pioneer of sustainable design, Victor Papanek (1923-1996).

Of course the machinations of the design world have always been subject to external forces (most notably the impact of new materials and technology, or unexpected events, like the 1973 oil crisis), but in keeping with its avant-garde position, progressive design has invariably remained aloof from the mass market.

This was especially the case in the heyday of modern design (the first half of the 20th century), when the advocates of function and simplicity saw themselves as the reformers of popular taste. The situation seemed to change from the 1960s and 70s, when a new generation of designers, came to assert their independence, by incorporating references to popular culture and even bad taste. And yet this return to ornament, a distinguishing feature of the Post-modern era (the 1970’s and 80’s), was of a different order to commercial practice. The references to the past, to Hollywood culture, to 1950’s kitsch, were strategic and knowing. In its first flush Post-modern design set out to offend Modernism.

This was the ‘shock strategy’ brought to fruition by the Italian design group Memphis (1981-1987), an enterprise

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that in the context of our story marks a watershed; for in producing limited edition designs that were primarily intended to be contemplated, argued about, and collected, the group paved the way for exhibitions such as Trans-Design (Rados 1985).

In earlier decades avant-garde movements like De Stijl (1917-1931) and the Bauhaus (1919-1933) had produced controversial prototypes, but these were intended as blueprints for mass production; they were to become the objects of a better tomorrow.

By contrast, the products of Memphis could only claim to be socially engaged in the sense of attacking an entrenched taste culture - the 'good design' of the establishment - while their scepticism towards originality, efficiency and construction, undermined the whole concept of 'progressive' design.

To this extent Memphis, and the Post-modern movement more generally, might have brought the avant-garde agenda to a juddering halt. What was the point of envisaging an alternative future, when all styles were equally valid? How was it possible to design an objectively 'better' product, when the very notion of performance was culturally specific?

Trans-Design shows how the avant-garde escaped the impasse of relativism by changing its relationship with the user, and deepening its connection with a particular Romantic, or irrational strand in art. In short, contemporary design became less preoccupied with its own history, and more attuned to the everyday life, and emotional needs of the user. From the 1990's avant-garde design embraced poetry, a sense of place, a feeling of enchantment, and a childish curiosity (Mulder and Pruyssen 1998).

This tendency is widely represented in the Trans-Design show, but in order to clarify the historical parameters I will concentrate on just one of the exhibits, Jurgen Bey's Kokon Double Chair from 1999.

In a different sort of design exhibition Jurgen Bey's (born 1965) piece might be praised for its innovative use of technology. Namely the PVC membrane, which is more usually found as a shrink-wrap protective covering for aircraft and machine parts. However in the context of Trans-Design, the Kokon Double Chair is first and foremost a ghost, or fetish object; a conundrum, a piece of 'furniture' that would not look out of place in an updated version of the 17th century Wunderkammer, or a Surrealist interior conceived by the Belgian painter René Magritte (1898-1967). This is because the Kokon Double Chair exudes a living presence; it conforms to Freud's idea of the 'uncanny'. It is a throwback to a time in our psychological development when inanimate objects would literally take on a personality, as when a child conjures up a magic kingdom from the most mundane of materials. Hence there is a nostalgia, fairy tale aspect to the Kokon Double Chair, as well as a darker, adult dimension. The tight plastic surface is reminiscent of fetish gear. The Kokon Double Chair could be the focus for some perverse sexual ritual.

And of course Jurgen Bey achieves this metaphorical richness with the minimum of means. There is little sense of a presiding genius, when the elements are plucked from the collective unconscious. This is the designer as curator, or editor, and it enables the viewer to personalise, or co-produce the work.

The technique seems entirely at home in the context of a gallery space, because it is so firmly rooted in the history of modern art practice. One thinks of the ambiguous roomboxos of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), which are now a 100 years old; the use of indeterminate, everyday materials in Joseph Beuys' (1921-1986) installations, or referring to Jurgen Bey's method of shrouding an object in order to 're-enchant' the familiar, the wrapped buildings and landscapes of Christo (born 1935).

So we are effectively witnessing a convergence of fine art and design practice and this leads to another question. In colonising the metaphorical 'white cube' has the avant-garde in design forsaken its social purpose? (O'Doherty 1988).

Clearly, the projects included in Trans-Design point to the possibility of different ways of living; they question our conventional interactions with products and environments. But do these 'insights' constitute a coherent alternative? In an earlier phase of so-called 'radical design', the Italian group Superstudio (1966-1978) could declare a moratorium on consumerism, and advocate a 'life without objects' in a future without borders (Ambasz 1972). It was a remarkably uncompromising vision, stemming from the idealism of the 1960's counter culture, urged on by the excitement of emerging technologies, such as satellites and the space programme. Today we have developed a far more nuanced understanding of globalisation and progress, and we can appreciate how consumer culture will inevitably appropriate any need we may have for 'authentic' experiences. I am thinking of those omnipresent devices: primarily the smart phone - which enable the user to record, shape, monitor, and
manage a personal identity.

The projects featured in Trans-Design operate in this age of reflexive consumerism. They employ ambiguity, metaphor, and playfulness to engage the user in a consciousness raising, even therapeutic experience. For by reflecting on the principles we live by, we become co-agents of change. If such work can be said to have a broader social impact, it lies in the extent to which the concepts become memes, how they inform a cultural conversation and shape a climate of opinion.

References