

MACHINE-MADE PRODUCTS:

A Reflection of Pleasure and The Affection of Form In Visual Design

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ABSTRACT

Our life is always obsessed with and preoccupied by many machine-made and commercial products. Thus, to make our life meaningful, more sound and lively, dynamic and so on, we need to consume various types of objects, tools and instruments. By doing so, we are actually becoming part of possessors and collectors of consumer's machine-made products. We were later imprisoned by them, instead.

At the same time we are quite fussy and selective too, and perhaps, too choosy, to purchase certain items for our own use from the nearby shops/ supermarket shelves. Obviously, when we buy a product, and beside our awareness on its main usefulness / function, we seldom ask ourselves what do we really look into and judge for? We also hardly ever ask ourselves why we choose a particular product and without much realization, would also reject other products of the similar type and function. Do we say that, when we buy something, because of its function alone – as a deciding factor, or perhaps it should be for certain hidden reasons which has relatively influenced or struck our taste and imagination.

Machine-made items / products are no more alien to most people. It is a kind of day-to-day engagement with them. In fact, with rapid mass-production activities by the means of advanced robotic mechanizations, design becomes a high-minded process required by most modern industries or requested by high-tech producers. Together with the advanced and fast delivery system, the manufactured products can be distributed to / purchased by any user-customer-client in the global markets almost anytime, anywhere.

These manufactured products of all sorts of aesthetic properties, indeed, used to become familiar industrial commodities to us. They are regularly shared by everyone, by many people of all cultural backgrounds across the globe. Like many “beautiful” objects found in our natural landscape or environment, some of our personal, commercial, “machine-crafted” and iconoclastic products we possessed, become parts of objects of fondness, affection and admiration. These objects, of which we directly consumed, are being placed / positioned inside our own home or private room. They were displayed, inside our own time-space confinement / personal imprisonment, ready to be contemplated. Is it true, that we actually caught between the function and beauty, or psychologically framed by our inner desire - pleasure and affection – imposed by these imaginative products.

Introduction

There is no exact answer to establish and to distinguish, the name of a country which has produced the most original and beautiful products. Even, we could hardly give any correct answers to name the world's best designers. Or imagine then, which country has produced unique and interesting forms, charming or beautiful electrical products? The unique products may have been manufactured and designed in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan or even USA. The country of origin for any product doesn't influence much of the end-users' choice or customers' buying power. Machine has its ability to provide us with a significant method of mechanical production / reproduction and, extends its ability to mould the many interesting features of aesthetic properties through a product's outlooks – such as identical shape and forms, physical accuracy and perfection, smooth surface and fine finishing, continuous identical patterns and verisimilitude appearances.

Do we think that we don't really go for a nice design when buying any household products or merchandise produced by various manufacturers / industrialists elsewhere in the world? In whatever consequences or whatsoever situations, a consumer needs not to be a designer when he/she has to purchase a good or interesting product. But we also anticipate that, we have to choose a meaningful or interesting product, or to have a “worth” buying concept for a limited budget. In this case, the idea of good design will perhaps become an important deciding factor for consumers.

Design and form are generally parts of aesthetic adventure and enchantment. The visual aesthetic of pyramid structure, or triangle and cone forms, sphere shapes, pentagon and hexagon, or even the visual outlooks of CN Tower in Toronto, Telecom Tower in Kuala Lumpur, or Alor Setar Tower in Kedah, for examples, provide us with a special visual adventure and cultural symbolisms. If we believe that engineering / industrial community does not need any intriguing and seductive designs, as a means to elevate its mechanical functions and engineering utilitarianism, engineers / industrialists later will realize that they will ignore their design-conscious customers/end-users.

Design, form and beauty, exist in its own social environments, and they appear in any cultural situations. They exist within the existence of human desires and life. If we think that our life is getting sophisticated every time, the presence of many magnificent designs and forms in our daily life is certainly unavoidable. As “design being art” (Allsopp, 1977:81), it is natural then, to think about design and forms in terms of philosophical judgment, private/social pleasure.

Subsequently, we were surrounded by many pleasant or beautiful items or machine-made artifacts of various dimensions and functions, and designed by all specialized breeds of designers, either for home, office or public places. These designs and industrial forms will fulfill our various daily needs or personal requirements. As form and design are very visible, they will induce our aesthetic sense through their many appealing. Because of their highly sensational and seductive nature, design can influence consumer’s tastes.

At the same time, design can be very deceitful or tricky because, according to Allsopp (1977:81) “*design involves origination*”. Thus, good / interesting design will produce good / interesting form, and in which, it tends to be pleasant / beautiful. Out there, in superstores / hypermarkets, the attractive and convulsive, or the outraging forms of design, could easily deceive our visual taste and aesthetic consciousness. Besides the functionality and utilitarian aspect of the industrial products, the design elements – their formal, appearance and functionality properties - may come into customer’s consideration during the purchasing process or any business negotiation. This anticipation will happen before a customer starts buying some products, or will take even take place during his/her dealing process and business conciliation. We will be sometimes enthralled or even seduced by the physical attractiveness of the design. Thus, powerful and seductive designs could easily influence the business / commercial world.

Design and form exist within the objective function of a product. Design is actually a designer’s schematic plan for an intended product. It becomes a standard mechanism before a designer proceeds with his/her further rationalism and technical

manufacturing execution. In our open market systems, the presence of well-designed of industrial and commercial artifacts is visually vibrant and dominant. In any society, design and form are prevailed in its own means and ways.

Furthermore, design is generally based on “styling-zone” and human-centered interests. For example, traditional design is very different from a modern one. The style and taste of design by William Morris in the 19th century art-craft movement in England, for example, is a different style of design compared to the designs produced by modernists such as Otto Wagner (France), Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Scotland), Frank Lloyd Wright (America) and Walter Gropius (Germany).

Product Aesthetic and Visual Pleasure

Design and aesthetic enhance its visual appeals to viewers. Visual design needs a special task to be handled / reconciled by all designers, or by manufacturers, especially in producing their products or artifacts. In packaging design and architecture, for example, their visual and aesthetic properties should be done with all magnetic feelings and “deceitful” design and visual delight/enchantment.

Manufacturing engineers, for example, need to mould into their design work with good form, together with their inner feelings or emotional response, their visual fantasy, and eclectic visual imagination. This needs to be properly done and must be cleverly executed into the products or artifacts.

Beauty lies in good design and attractive / seductive forms. A design should be able to hypnotize the eyes of the consumers and the emotions of business communities and commercial markets. Graphically oriented design, as it is generally being induced in commercial art, is very much viable and practical. Industrial forms and artifacts should display “good design” with all their attractive visual properties, and enhance every pleasant visual. Visual design properties need to accommodate any unpleasant outlooks of some engineering / industrial products, such as a stock of clumsy / gawky parts of automobile engines and so on.

Is it reasonably sound to think, that the “aesthetic” taste and its realm is a kind of “funny,” and at the same time, as a “dead” thing in industrial design, manufacturing technologies and advanced industries? This sort of understatement, misconception and shortsighted ideas, or “misdeed” remarks, need diligent elaborations and justifications. Do we really think that, modern and market-based manufacturing companies and industries, or their commercial and business associates, diligently neglect the aesthetic exponent of their consumers’ product.

How far the truth about the “unspecified” or “unimportant” role of aesthetic pleasure – which includes properties and values - in product / industrial design in manufacturing engineering? Is it true that the realm of aesthetic features or excitement in product design or manufacturing world is becoming too marginal, sub-standard and dead occasion.

The classic principle of ‘form follows functions’ is still valid in any design sector or manufacturing industry, But, with form alone, we will not see the human dimensions of design. They have no symbolic significant. Pure forms are basically derived from geometric and mathematic calculations. We still need to design interesting formal elements to pack engineering product. Form does not really follow function but form can accommodate the functions of manufactured products. The “jet set aesthetic” or aerodynamic form for automobile, locomotive or airplane is still valid. Even the use of many forms with visual symbols for certain products, such as in perfumes bottling and packaging are still necessary and useful. The stylized forms with highly crafted features for packaging of deodorant or perfumed *eau-de-toilet* materials for example, will stimulate our visual sensations to the manufactured products.

It is amazing to think that sometimes we use to ponder about the function of a device, machine, an object, or product we bought. And, it is very awkward too if we are not considering our thinking about the pleasant or “beautiful” outlooks of each product. Thus, we may not keep things that are not “beautiful” or useful in our possession. Or should we keep all the beautiful items with us even though when they become ineffective, deteriorate, or uncomfortable to our feelings and emotions.

However, it is very obvious that when we purchase a product at a supermarket stores or groceries, we have to consider many things. Besides its cost that may influence our taste, we also seriously think about the benefit and usefulness, the ergonomic and comfortability, safety and health aspects of the product. We will feel very contented, whenever we buy things or products which can best suit our needs and quality expectations.

Anyhow, we are bound by our own budget awareness, as a common sense, that we have to maximize the value and worthiness of our *ringgit* and cent spent. Certainly, for all the money we have to spend, we would go for “all-out values” of the products. We choose to buy if they have all the good functions and satisfaction of the products we purchased. We may perhaps look for the function first before thinking about its overall satisfaction. Quite frequently, the selection of products were sometimes determined by our psychological enthusiasm and emotional craze .

Besides the usefulness of the products we bought, we may also think about the value-added qualities of the consumer’s that we look for. The idea of good’s satisfaction may also influence our judgment. Moreover, the idea of quality may become another major factor when a person buying a product. Since this term of quality reference may also refer to many values which can be achieved through various levels of private, cultural or psychological basis - such as branding, fashion and trend, symbolism, meanings, some emotional relationships or even psychological reflections may influence the purchase.

Why do we purchase and possess many types of products in our life? We may have many reasons to do that. Consequently, either we notice it or not, we are actually living in a global and modern-industrial society and have exposed ourselves to such countless choices of industrial products. From time to time, we are confined our living and family life in a sphere of consumer’s goods and machine-made environments – especially, in the domain of modern buildings and interior design, various forms of transportation, plethora of services and diverse telecommunication systems, and so on. We bought and posses many artificial objects of various kinds for our living needs and discourse – pens, pins, writing pads, kitchen and garden utensils and so on.

If we look around us we will notice that, we were indeed equipped ourselves with machine-made products, and were surrounded by countless numbers of many artificial things or artifacts, especially factory-based and manufactured artifacts, stuff / paraphernalia – tools, kits, equipment, apparatus or instruments. Going along with them, we have in our possession some additional bits and pieces of all sorts of industrial instruments and reproduction. Subsequently, we seem to be confronted, with some psychological comforts and technological controls, and with many different mechanisms of machine-made / consumer's products. This domination of machine-based instruments and our immediate confrontation with machine-oriented paraphernalia in our immediate social environment, could almost be found, almost everywhere. They exist, either near our home or domicile, or appear at any other amenities and neighbourhood, in a massive or splendid volume. We are, then, living to be part of the ordinary machine-made users, clientele and regulars, of technology-based gadgets, devices and by-products. They come into our life and environment in numerous types and models, and in the form of various machine-made goods and merchandise. We, then, actually lead our daily and family life into a consumer-conscious creature, into the modern consumerism world, and industrial oriented society.

To consume or to purchase a product, very frequently, we will have a desire / a special taste towards it. We will choose it according to our own wishes - needs. We seldom buy things without any rational or practical reason. And rarely, we buy things without any intention or unnoticed purpose. For all these situations, do we prefer to have unpleasant forms or to possess ugly products to be used in our home / immediate environment?

In our day to day of experiencing machine-made products, we will discover that they were many available products being introduced into the markets by various manufacturers. They come into the market in abundant forms, with significant functions and multitude numbers. In our very own sense of consumption, we acquire and use these products for some rational and special purposes. But, very seldom we question ourselves about the hidden reasons why we select them. Other than knowing

about the practicality / functionality of the products, consumers sometimes never ask themselves in details why they purposely choose those particular products.

On the other hand, just imagine that what will happen if we live without any machines to accommodate our life at all. Life will be certainly in total hazard and peril. In present-day global market and high-tech social situations, where daily life activities are active and dynamic, machines become human's best friends and tools. Thus, machines are part of our basic production tools. It is impossible for the modern consumer-society not to deal with any machines! Thus machines, of whatever sizes and functions, are designed to do specific jobs and accomplish our needs. They are required most of the time, as to accommodate and accomplish the making of various types of products for our life.

Machine-made products can be purchased almost everywhere. They were produced by the means of machines through various levels of manufacturing processes. This production of machine-made things, such as our household belongings, electrical goods, automobile or modern furniture, is generally distributed through vendors and distributors. They were sold at various shopping plazas and business malls. And these products have dominated the space of many commercial markets.

As the Industrial Revolution started to embark in the Western world and Europe in the late 17th century, the production of consumers' products or merchandized goods were entirely produced by the means of machines. Hence, the production of consumer goods through handicraft and conventional methods was replaced by machine-driven devices. The physical and aesthetic features of these artifacts are established by the mechanization process. The idea of taste and aesthetic values in consumer products has gained a new philosophical dimension. Hence, materials used were also expandable into new technology-based properties and substances, such as steels and plastics, or composite materials. As our society progressed, especially in Malaysia, the needs for new and high quality products were greater. The exploration of new industrial materials – such as glass, plastics, fabrics and stainless steels, and with sophisticated production techniques, will provide designers a chance to create consumer artifacts with new visual appeal and sensations.

According to Nuttgens (1983:9), the nature of architecture is always “*attractive, useful and beautiful.*” And these features become a standard norms for aesthetic values in the designing architectural artifacts. Thus, building is part of our visual, social and communal experiences which exists in our social environment and cultural life, and is used for certain functions and pleasure. Modern architecture, for example, employs many methods, approaches and design techniques for the architectural work. The work of Kisho Kurakawa (KLIA), Caesar Pelli (Petronas) Alexandre Gustave Eiffel (Eiffel Tower), Joseph Paxton (The Crystal Palace), Zara Hadid (post-modern architecture and industrial product), provide us a great structure, visual forms, and aesthetic experiences. Even the hotel buildings of Barj Al Arab in Dubai, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, or Putrajaya International Conference Centre (PICC), creates a strong sense of symbolisms, visual delights and aesthetic pleasure to viewers.

In modern and global society, visual pleasure of a product has no aesthetic and social boundary. Since objects can be purchased almost everywhere through global outlets / open market system, a design can be shared in various geo-economics regions by many users. Actually, a design becomes a universal experience. The cultural forms and values are commonly shared by consumers / most users. Stylish and versatile, cute and sophisticated designs become a global attraction, and it will be known to most peoples around the globe. As a result, there is no clear demarcation between the East and the Western tastes / values. A latest design of Porsche, V8 Vantage or Lamborghini or of any streamlined form initiated by Mazda, Ferarri, Mercedes-Benz, or Volkswagen, will be shared by most peoples /users. Hence, the sexy and stylish design is very much shared by many admirers.

Conclusion

The social environment of our modern time is always associated with the commercial or consumer products. The consumer society lives in an environment which is surrounded by many machine-made objects or commercial products. We cannot avoid

and escape from them. If engineers deviate their attention from the idea of good design - beauty and pleasure - in their work, they tend to have produced things or products in a stereotyped features or backward way. If they may think that industrial / commercial products solely as the outcome of mechanical or technological processes, they will definitely disregard our taste for a spiritual need.

The attractive physical qualities of machine-made products may influence our psychic, psychological feelings and emotional contents. Beautiful artifacts generally project a combination of various forms of harmony and human spiritual qualities. They transcend the power of spiritual balance, stimulate environmental harmony, and pacify our inner souls into our mind. Beautiful products will have their own eclectic features and strength, by the means of creative imagination and, thus, extend their own identity to the consumer world. Generally, they will become unique products, where their diversity of forms and visual outlooks will form their own product signature and brand.

When we talk about commercial products we use to associate them with a series of manufacturing automations and the mechanical production / reproduction. The machine-made items, consequently have become a major part of aesthetic reality of our day. They exist in the form of industrial paraphernalia in our social surroundings. The plethora of their industrial forms produced by many forms of man-made intelligent / robotic machines, found in our surroundings, have been seen as parts of our social and aesthetic experience. Product manufacturers and entrepreneurs, designers and industrialists should have looked and encountered for products which could function perfectly, and at the same time, which could signify the sophistication of visual properties, and aesthetic quality of the consumer/industrial artifacts.

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