UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN, CLUJ-NAPOCA

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HYPERMODERNITY AND DESIGN
PhD THESIS SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTIVE SPECIFICATIONS

Analysing the present times we are currently transiting, the past years made professional communities look again towards the concept of social responsability. This comes as an essential tool for improving contemporary society's lifestyle and also as an adequate way of development for the three disciplines of design: industrial, interior and graphic. But what are the means by which design can be sustained and emboldened, giving the fact that the circumstances of the globalised world are highlighting the mercantile and hyperbolic aspect of hypermodernity?

This research paper holds a speech on the following main hypothesis: due to rapid socio-cultural climate change and modern human needs, design and other ascendant artistic domains are headed at high speeds towards a new historical phase known as hypermodernity, some theoreticians argue.

Secondary hypothesis:

1.   At a vertiginous speed, modernization leads towards a hypermodernization marked by hypertechnology (electronical, informatical), hyperproduction and hyperconsumption.
2.   Design is build in terms of consumption.
3.   Design is looking to insert itself in every aspect of the contemporary individual's life. The arts are developing an irreversible bonding with real life.
4.   Consumer society tries to find its own marks by blending all the existing artistic styles and expressions and creating new ways to construct reality. We are the living witnesses of the retro culture.
5.   Design tends to become an authentic cultural research, a way of living (*modus vivendi).*

The first two questions the PhD thesis debates on are: *are we still living in a postmodern society or have we moved on?* and *where are the arts and the contemporary*

design heading? In our struggle to overcome the artistic crisis that threatens the contemporary creative environment, I think we find ourselves in an era which revives forms characteristic to the 20th century movements because it tries to restate a set of values suited for the new contemporary society. *Does this tendency bring out any positive or negative aspects?*

This study implied difficulties in choosing the representative figures, their design or achitectural projects, and their theoretical papers, documents or writings for each artistic movement. This is why, this PhD thesis is a theoretical support opened to improvements and addends, on which readers can grow their tree of knowledge.

From a methodological point of view, this doctoral thesis shows a diachronic approach and it is designed to interdisciplinary discuss the hypermodern phenomena in design. From a chronogical perspective over proposed design aspects, the study will be moulded as a crescendo process which will often make references to recorded historical events.

Within this process it will be axiomatic that history, aesthetics and phylosophy are the best tools to describe the concepts of "hypermodern" and "hipermodernity" in the context of modern world and contemporary art.

The current research paper has been structured on three main branches, as it follows:

PART I - THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT
OF MODERNITY AND DESIGN

The Ideological Context of Modernity and Design is the theoretical foundation for subsequent observations and conclusions, starting from The *Great Exhibition* in 1851 at The Crystal Palace (London) and ending with the birth of the first professional design centers in Romania (c. 1970). It is also a vision upon the artistic modernity in the first half of the 20th century shedding light over the favorable factors for postmodern movement and the source of inspiration in hypermodernity.

1. THEORETICAL MARKERS

The first chapter of this PhD thesis focuses on the theoretical (Eug*è*ne Viollet-le-Duc, Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos) and aesthetical (Louis H. Sullivan, Henry van de Velde, Philip Webb) parts of rationalism, because its ideology represents the backbone of the modern industrial design development and of the modern architectural structures. The cultural context

is given by modernity, its values - change and novelty, and its specific movement - modernism.

Also, this section brings forward the clauses and circumstances which many of the great historical events depended on: the industrial and technological revolution, the display of the rationalist and functionalist movement, mass mechanization, the emergence of associations and groups such as the association of architects, of designers and the decorators, Arts & Crafts groups (C.R. Ashbee, C. Voysey, R.N. Shaw).

In the end, the chapter underlines the architects' and designers' effort to conceive new forms adapted to new materials, through modern creation techniques.

2. MODERN WAYS DESIGN CAN SOLVE PROBLEMS

This chapter analyses the new rule system in the creation process mainly of the industrial form mainly, the junction between art and technique, industry and creativity, engineers and artists. Considered as a foundamental part in the modern arts synthesis, Bauhaus artistical movement receives special attention. Besides Bauhaus philosophy, this study debates other movements and their representatives who are significant for the history of design: Deutcher Werkbund, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Streamline, and Machine Age.

At the beginning, the modern concepts and artistic language are illustrated by the way they have evolved as a result of the numerous possibilities created by the industrial revolution. Therefore, this research shows different aspects reflected upon building original products and architectural structures - building's flexibility, mass product's functionality, environment's comfort, etc. We have to also take into consideration that mass production is quickened by the discovery of the new materials which shows the importance of the new means in the creation of the artistic expression.

Inventions and scientific discoveries strengthen the international economic and socio-cultural area, showing the first signs of standardization and industrialization.

3. ARTISTIC AVANT-GARDE IN ROMANIA, NATIONAL STYLE, AND DESIGN CENTERS

Firstly, this part leans on the Romanian inter-war period influenced by avant-garde movements and the National Style; secondly, it highlights the first Romanian forms of design education from the 20th century.

As the avant-garde aesthetic programme is being described at a macro-social level, the value of the abstractionism becomes obvious for modern art and design. It is being shown how Romanian architects elaborated a modern, authentic architectural language adapted to the utilitarian and aesthetic requirements from those times. G.M. Cantacuzino, Horia Creangă, Duiliu Marcu, Petre Antonescu, Haralambie Georgescu are only a few names associated inseparably with the Romanian inter-war architecture and National Style.

Between the end of World War II and the mid 50's, Romania is being literally and artistically suppressed. The intellectual and practical contribution made by Marcel Iancu, Paul Bortnowski, I. Hainoroc Constantinescu, Vladimir Şetran, Ion Bitzan and others in Romania, has paved the way for the first institutes of design: first named department of industrial aesthetics and form (Bucharest 1969, Cluj-Napoca 1971), and then – industrial design.

PART II - CONTEMPORARY DESIGN PHENOMENOLOGY

The contemporary design query (industrial, interior, graphic) is approached at the second part of this thesis. These chapters condensed in this stage look for discovering, ranking and exposing new design tendencies due to technological changes and expansion of the virtual universe (edible design, ultra-recyclable design, smart design, computer-aided graphics, 3D rendering, augmentative reality etc.)

One of the attitudes ecology is interested in is playing with the object's feature of becoming useless, their always-faster ageing nature, the overgrowing need of replacing them.

4. CONTEMPORARY PRODUCT DESIGN

This section is dedicated to industrial design and it follows *the object* through a social, aesthetical, economical and cultural perspective. The creation process, promotion and consumption of consumer goods represent the main focus for the current analysis. Moreover, the subchapter *Old objects, new objects* presents the relationship between individuals and objects along the 20th and the 21st century in the context of multiple artistic phenomena which contributed up until present days to the connection between the contemporary individual and the surrounding objects.

In a consumer society, consumption becomes a compulsory value. Production follows the outcome of consumption. Hyperconsumption is being mantained through constant show performances.

This chapter describes the contemporary tendencies of product design and the designer's endless creative possibilities - ecological design, recyclable, design for dissasembly, multifunctional, edible, ludic etc., celebrating the object's diversity but keeping in mind the responsable consumption and sustainable education of consumer societies.

5. OBJECT ABSORPTION IN CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENT

All the subdivisions of this chapter are aimed to present and classify new relational typologies between human, object and environment due to technological change and development of the virtual space. The discourse evolves around the connection of urban space with the merchandise-object, the art-object and the show-object.

Therefore, the duo *object-contemporary environment* extends itself to the modern person: the concepts of order, structure, development, natural simulcrum (*Willow Chapel*, Germany; *25 Green*, *Vegetal Cathedral*, Italy) have their rise in the society's need to bring back the natural state in its immediate vecinity.

Describing and studying different temporal and environmental experiences are standing proof of the past years reality, as they expose new cultural ideologies and phobia (Anish Kapoor's projects).

6. COMMUNICATION AND VISUAL MESSAGES

The main idea behind this division consists of the existence of an interrelation between cosumerism and contemporary graphic design, a subordination of visual communication to present philosophy.

Concurrently, the subdivision follows the identification of modern values in the contemporary society, born after the technological growth (smart mobile phones, digital compact cameras and DSLRs, camera equipped drones, digital tablets etc.) and the cultural democratization through the mass media communication. By examining the modern, ultra technologized and personalized products and their advertising image, the educative role and the mesmerizing effect of the visual material becomes obvious. Hypermodern graphical architecture exists today along its main form of contemporary communication: graphical user interface, the Internet's shell.

Last but not least, the marks of hypermodernity appear also in the trademark's empire, the celebrity worship, sensualism and hedonism, viral marketing and online

community platforms. All of these aspects *re-shape* the interests and the dreams of our modern society.

PART III - HYPERMODERN SYMBOLS OF DESIGN

The third section of the study aligns the hypermodern clues in culture and design. Describing the major factors which led to changes in the modern ideology and the discovery of the basic atributes of the consumer's society, have been an important part of the research document.

7. HYPERMODERN GENESIS

Mainly, the division lays out the antithesis of the artistic multifaceted phenomena of the postmodernism ('70-'90) and the antitraditional modernism. It defines the notions of postmodernity, postmodern philosophy and postmodernism. Further, this chapter states the question of modernism continuity through postmodernism and analyses theoretical studies that debate the differencies between the two ideologies (*Modernity, postmodernity; theoretical background* and *Information age. Postmodernism and postmodern ideology*). At the end of this chapter, the document illustrates representative postmodernist projects in arts, architecture, and design: *Vanna Venturi* - Robert Venturi*, Teatro del Faro* - Aldo Rossi, *Paltrona di Proust* - Alessandro Mendini*, Rover Chair* - Ron Arad, Studio Alchimia, Memphis, Superstudio collections etc.

8. THE XXI CENTURY MARKED BY HYPERMODERNITY

The 8th chapter is divided in two parts. On one hand, the part named *Favorable factors for hypermodernity* studies the conditions that caused the appearance of hypermodern attitude: globalization, capitalism, and their attributes - political democratization and cultural values marketing. On the other hand, the subchapter *New horizons* brings forward: 1. theoretical studies that comment upon the end of postmodernism and suggest the endorsement of a new set of strengths complying with the present reality; 2. hypermodern artistic and cultural hints.

9. DESIGN AND HYPERMODERNITY

Finally, this section investigates the design product, from the consumption, the new materials, and the high technology points of view. While the subchapter *Sustainable*

consumption looks upon the ecology movement and illustrates design solutions to global plastic overcrowding. The second subchapter *More, more, always more* keeps an eye on the current state of local and global product design as it reviews numerous product design events: exhibitions, saloons, fairs and festivals spread in many of the globe's cultural centers.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this research I tried to track the way economic growth, social and Internet evolution have reconfigured design's journey. I analysed how modernism and postmodernism led to a new cultural attitude in a globally informational society: hypermodernisation, marked by hypertechnology and hyperconsumption, and contemporary design put in the context of late capitalism. Hypermodernity is not interested in glancing at regaining new guide marks utopia. No. Hypermodernity dreams about one change that doesn't seem to show up, but it can not predict this change in its own artistic discourse. A real life presents itself as heteronymus, written-out and implemented in virtual space, an increase in the contradictions inherited from postmodernism.

The postmodern tendency of re-shaping retro forms is multiplied and diffused in hypermodern ideology, bringing a set of benefits: it shows new collage techiques, original mixes and, through technological contribution, it gives birth to new working techniques.

How can we define the progress and evolution in the design area? What are the tendencies which contemporary art and design are headed for? A first answer: design follows the dialogue with linked domains. The emphasis is laid on interdisciplinarity, multifunctionality, shape pluralism, mass customization. It is also taken into account imediate gratification of human's needs and pleasures. Second, the hypermodern tendency in design is being marked by inter-connectivity: by modern means of mass communication and interaction. Besides media, design becomes a powerful social modeling tool which can supply beliefs and set out behaviours.

The fact that design makes use of the highest forms of technology is well-known and has been proven by projects from past years. This liability has been modifing everyday's language in order to display the meanings and the aspects that preoccupy the modern individual: aesthetical/superficial side of things, ways of spending free time, hedonism, (hyper)individualism.

Why should we talk about hypermodern design? From a consumption point of view, design industry can now be compared with the cinematographic or the game industry. Not on rare occasions these industries overlap and support each other. Sometimes, the inter-crossing

of the film with video games and design makes it difficult to establish the boundaries for each discipline. Modern man buys from the pleasure he gets from buying in the same way he watches a film story or engages in a video game. Design is build in terms of consumption, and in my opinion, I might add - an increased consumption, a hyperconsumption.

Looking at the main key points product design follows nowadays for building a better sustainable future, we can record: 1) multifunctional design; 2) design for dissasembly and modular design; 3) ecological and recyclable design; 4) intuitive design; 5) interactive design; 6) multimedia design. This last design department is the new art of integrating multiple forms of media: animation, print and advertising, illustration, graphic design, video digital, sound production, web design, modeling and rendering, interactive media design, game design etc. There is an increase tendency in the multimedia design careers in the last 5-10 years. This job opportunities often come from advertising agencies, film and game producers, etc.

In addition to the list, other two aspects have great importance for the design-technology pair. Firstly, it's about a so called wearable technology: *Solar t-shirt*, *Up Bracelet*, smart watch, *Google Glasses*, *Sound Shirt*; secondly, we can mention the interconnected things or objects. The mobile phone becomes an universal remote control, while the electronic products communicate between themselves through wi-fi Internet connection, giving rise to a world of interwined objects, an *internet of things.*

Only by classifying Romanian design events and the ever growing number of design studios and groups in the past five years, did it become clear for me: there is local and national interest for product design. Nevertheless, we can not talk yet about a Romanian industrial design identity. As a way of design development and the public education, more exhibitions, workshops, initiation and vocational trainings, conferences and a stronger interaction of the developing designers with senior ones would be welcomed. Therefore, the existance of a platform which sums up both local creation workshops, organizations and other forms of cooperation among designers and individual artists, would serve as a basis in designers' evolution and would strengthen the professional community by solidarity and constructive exchange of opinions.