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COMPOSITION AND METAPHOR IN DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

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The Report refers to the conceptual and speculative design. It examines connections between disciplines in different scientific fields. Linguistic culture is expressed in the plastic art form and can be found in the material environment. Experiments in different directions are prone to happen while visualizing an idea. Language and Form coexist in composition, as two diverse essences, yet connected by a number of creative intersections of cooperation. Metaphor as a stylistic tool in language is intertwined with the idea of a form in design. Transformation and movement are analysed as categories of composition in language, art and design. Conveyance of different meanings created by metaphor can originate new possibilities for plastic solutions in the form. The Aim is to uncover alternatives in the design of innovative products.

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Keywords: Art, Conceptual design, Form-forming, Theory of composition

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1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Conceptual and Speculative Design

In this dynamic world of ours design challenges us in a number of ways. The multiple demands towards the products, as form, environment and technology set the search for new methods of realization. Speculative design comes as one of these new possibilities, asking questions in order to initiate discussions, forecasting the future in a broad frame. Different aspects of products availability and need for products are projected, as well as their potential evolution in a future environment. "Speculative Everything" [1] is meant to be eclectic and idiosyncratic journey through generated cultural landscape of ideas, ideals and approaches. This is a point of view that illustrates the art installation as an illustration of the quests of the individual and the society, searching the fields of design for possible solutions. Critical view is in depicting new details and discovering connections between the seemingly different.

"Let's call it critical design, that questions the cultural, social and ethical implications of emerging technologies. A form of design that can help us to define the most desirable futures, and avoid the least desirable."

- Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby

Speculative design can ease the sights into the future, taking into consideration hidden influences, effects and future environments. Leading in the concepts of different authors is the freedom of expression and accentuating future and new technologies. During their education in Industrial Design students acquire new techniques for creating user profiles, scenarios for application and development of interface prototypes as part of their tasks in the subjects of Ergonomic design, Software ergonomics and Technical Efficiency. Classical user analysis approaches and the tasks in the process of developing interface are based on the approved international standards. Systematic preliminary planning of interface usability is applicable in this case as it considers new systems. Thus potential problems can be identified at a very early stage, saving the substantial costs of re-design. [6]. Innovation sparks in the process of designing future scenarios, identifying and assuming future problems prior to their arising. New ways of transportation in the urban environment are amongst the most developed scenarios. The new solutions need to preserve the feeling of freedom of motion. Nomad characteristics of mobility, adaptability and close contact with the environment are crucial in the design of the electric urban motorcycle - „Nomad“. [5]

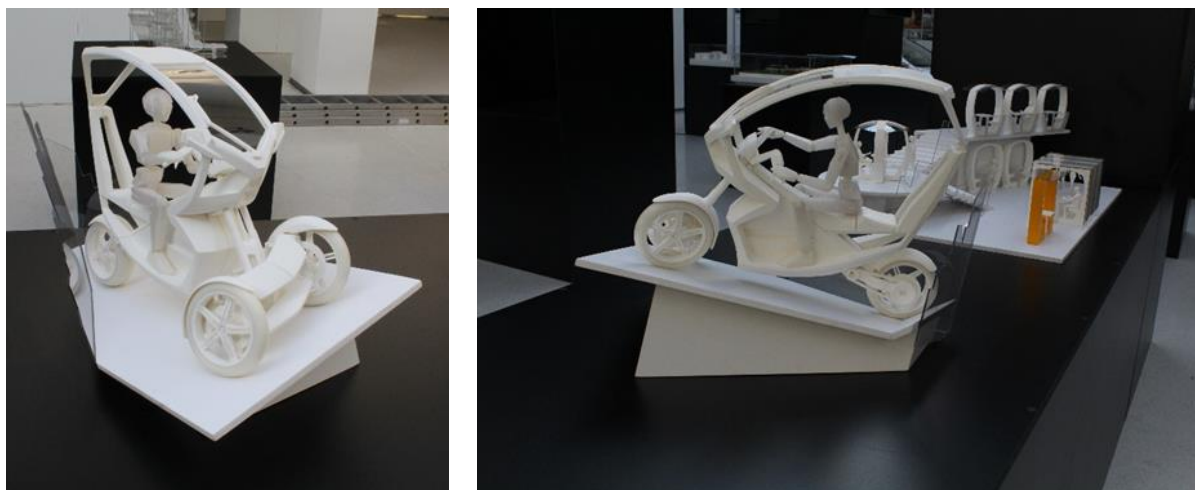


Figure 1. Photos from a 1: 5 scale model at the International Architecture Week 2016 Festival in Prague, design by Chervendinev, G[5]

Speculations in design can initiate collective re-defining of our approach to reality. Malpass has identified three main categories in the framework of contemporary critical design, defining them according to area, range, visual story and topic: Associative Design, Speculative Design and Critical Design (Malpass, 2012, p.183). These three represent a substantial diversity of projects using different methods and contexts though sharing the same critical position towards the present situation or its potential development. Associative design has its roots deep into the everyday, connecting the conceptuality of art with set habits of using things. Questioning the incorporated assumptions for products, using the conventional discipline boundaries it defends and disrupts norms. This report reveals a creative experiment in the framework of Associative design focusing on transition of meaning through the use of metaphor.

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2. Interdisciplinary connections- Phenomenology

To present the idea one needs to remark the interdisciplinary nature of design. The connections between different disciplines and how entangled they can be. With the help of formalistic approach it would not be difficult to encounter parallels in the formal elements of art compositions. Dot, line, shape are basic items in design but their analogues could be found in music, dance and of course language. Courage for such connections lies in the need a man has to understand and represent reality in its depths. In literature and arts these analogies have always reflected immediate experiences and creative imagination, whereas in the fields of science intuitively captured phenomena were more difficult to be proven and nominated. Often formal, outer logics differ but internal, hidden meanings follow identical paths. Ever since early times applied arts and crafts have narrated stories in shapes. Language of Folklore is expressed in ornaments and embroidery. Simple geometrical shapes (triangles, squares, diamonds) in basic combinations with straight lines, curves, waves, spirals and shapes of everyday life objects, plants, animals, human figures, etc. Patterns and their structure can be described not only as pictures and their colorings (really diverse in Bulgarian embroidery) but also as intricate compositions. [7]

Meanings are defined by different philosophical movements. They set the frame and legitimate thought constructs which lead to deeper understanding of man and its being. Phenomenology as a philosophical movement originates in the beginning of 20th century, created by Edmund Husserl and later on developed by its followers in the universities of Göttingen и Munich in Germany. It spreads in France, the United States, etc. often in contexts different from the early work of Husserl [3]. Philosopher's task is to describe the structure of experience, in particular consciousness, imagination, relations with other creatures and how person is situated in society and history. Phenomenological theory of literature sees art as a mediator between author's and reader's consciousness or as an attempt on revealing the different aspects of human beings and their worlds. Heidegger reminds the old idea of interpretation of texts being fundamentally circular, as understanding of details is always based on the assumption of a unity. Thus, part depends on the whole and vice versa, creating the so called "Hermeneutic circle" The first scientist in the field of the theory of phenomenology of literature is Roman Ingarden [4]. His point of view is basic for this article since it is the foundation on which design is connected through analogy.

Ingarden finds the literature piece of art schematic as a whole, since there are gaps of unidentified in between the layers, which the reader needs to fill in. For him a successful piece of literature combines the four layers in one whole unity, which he calls "polyphonic harmony of the created". He finds layers in every piece of literature. Each of these layers has its characteristics: Linguistic sounds, Semantics, Schematic aspects, which represents the different perspectives to see the world of the piece. The fourth layer is the Presented Objects. We can analogically see these reflections in the field of project design and perceive the products as pieces of literature. Speculating like this will help us feel the different aspects of the objective world. Ingarden identifies the differences between the perception of an art piece and the piece itself. This is the fundamental difference between artistic and aesthetic. The piece of art per se is an artistic object but situated in the frame of the reader's perception it becomes an aesthetic object. The same could apply to the designed piece/ product. Actually, not only readers/ users with different expectations perceive the piece/ product in different aesthetic frame but the piece/product itself is an inter-temporal event that cannot be fully perceived in any single moment. That is why it is so difficult to find an exact definition of design. Different layers cannot be understood simultaneously and in whole. For example, while reading most of the time we do not notice the sounds. In the same way, looking at an object we do not notice the elements in it. We aim at understanding the meaning and characters, focusing more on one layer than another. In this plan the possibility to see from a different perspective becomes crucial. The piece/product is developed horizontally through the bunch of ongoing views with different perspectives.

3. language and form

Main literature terms could be used to fully present an idea or provocation in design. Linguistic culture is expressed in plastic art and could be found in the surrounding material environment. Experiments in many directions can occur during the pursuits of visualization of an idea. Language and shape meet in composition. Two different cores, yet a majority of creative connections for collaboration. Everything that could be understood, can be placed in the field of hermeneutics [8], including material objects-carrying their own story, meaningful to a single person or a group, they can also be seen as texts. Hans-Georg Gadamer is part of the movement in the 20th century. He states that every age sets a different meaning of a text and reading is always a collision between the messages from the past of the piece and the present within the reader. Hermeneutics proves that new understandings of the piece, unforeseen by the author or the audience of his time, occur during the journey of a piece through ages. The present is understood through the past and this creates the vivid bond between them

Metaphor as a stylistic figure in language blends with the idea of shape in design. Transfer of meaning of a word in another word is a stylistic instrument that compares seemingly unconnected terms. The simplest definition of metaphor is connecting distanced for the usual logic ideas (expressed in words) based on a newly found resemblance between them. In poetry metaphor provokes strong emotional effect with few words. Outside the theory of rhetoric the metaphor is seen as a stronger trope than analogy, though similar. Their distinction is based on the fact that the implication within the metaphor blends both categories, whereas they remain different within the simile. Characteristics of an object are projected onto another one based on similarities, connecting literal and figurative.

4. Metaphor and design

Author's project will visualize the above reflections on speculative design, philosophical discourse and linguistic stylistics. Table is a common piece of furniture. Its use is connected with multiple meanings both in cultural and applied aspects. The project „Table“(Figure 2), starts from a sketch, where language is the means conveying meaning. Man the Maker, Creating person, (Homo Faber) is situated on one side of the table. On the other is the Playing (Homo Ludens), Speculating person. The circles surrounding openings in the table carry the meaning of the word "table". Thus every spectator or user is a co-creator of the product, implying their own understanding and filling in the gaps. The author uses sheets of tin to realize the project. The material gives the feeling of precision and detail. A single plane is bent to shape the functional volume. The openings are filled with balls of wool and a bunch of ceramic pods is placed in one of them. Metal, wool and ceramic are the elements that metaphorically represent "Homo Faber".

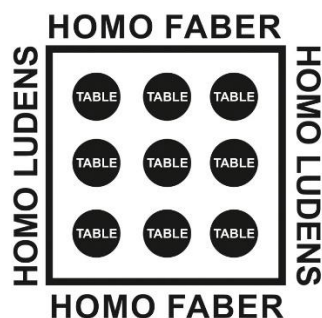


Figure 2. Project „Table“

The different components build the composition in a way that prevents the use of the object as a product, making it solely an object of observation. We could say that observation is like game- intuitive. In his magnificent study of „Homo Ludens“, Johan Huizinga [9] without much ado states that play is a ‘basic human function’. Game is ‘one of the fundamental spiritual elements of life’. However, it is also a main cultural factor, element of every culture, so essential that it makes culture go as a game.

„Culture is played in its early stages. It is not born in game, separating from mother’s body, it is developed in the game as a game, revealing aspects of „Homo Ludens” [9]

Every real play implies imagination and is based on imagination, which is the same foundation principle essential for every culture. Science, not only mythology, religion and art, needs imagination to be created and to function. The future perspectives for development are also implied in the nature of this imagination.

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4. CONCLUSION and EVALUATION

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Speculating, or more precisely using the approaches of Speculative design, TABLE becomes a metaphor of dialogue between classic (rational) forms and forms of game (speculation). Blending these two categories in one object opens new opportunities. Metaphor in design allows contrast to be seen in a specific way, in their linguistic semantic forms and plastic expression, through materials and constructions. This phenomenon approach opens new perspectives in design that will enrich future projects.

In conclusion, we can say that looking from different points of views and perspectives we can forecast the future as individuals with freedom of choice. The presented project Table can also be seen as a standard functional piece of furniture, (Figure 3). The possibilities to speculate with associations of space and functions modifies the object.

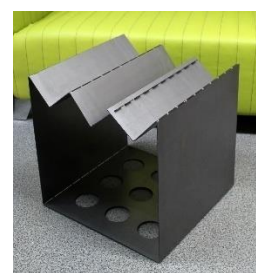




Figure 3. Table

This creative experiment brings more questions than answers. We enter in the fields of forecasting and designing by following the connections of meaning in the discourse of metaphorical order. On the other side, there is a glimpse of conceptual art and analogies it creates in design. It is a challenge and a game of connections and interpretations, leading in all possible directions.

We could discover new diversity, preserving our own individuality by destructuring forms through thoughts and emotions, expressing them and shaping them in different ways.

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