DRAWING AND IMAGES OF DESIGN. REPRESENTATION AND MEANING.

Graça Magalhães
Universidade de Aveiro Departamento de Comunicação e Arte, Portugal
gracamag@ca.ua.pt

Fátima Pombo
Universidade de Aveiro Departamento de Comunicação e Arte, Portugal
fpombo@ca.ua.pt

Abstract: Drawing and images of design. Representation and meaning

This abstract is based on the research being conducted on the relationship between design and drawing, whose results have been presented at various congresses.

The aim of the research is to clarify the intervention of drawing in design, by differentiating between “object” and “image” and between the “symbolic character” and the “form of representation” by demonstrating that the efficiency of the project is based on conflict generated by the act of drawing in itself.

Based on the triangular classification of design as author-programme-technology and drawing as representation-classification-imagination, it can be argued that: the object’s identity arises from the confrontation between representation and the image, thus questioning its unity. In other words the way of representing the object through a technical mediation referring to an abstract concept (the act of drawing), of symbolic function, and of attributing meaning to the symbol, insofar as it refers to object.

This paper intends to approach drawing as the language that makes the appearance of the images of design possible. The images of design function as double:

- object of representation whilst represented image (physical representation);
- object of desire whilst promoter of a story of subjective experiences and emotional relationships. Examples will be given. We consider the specificity of drawing through two possibilities:
  - representation as the action of drawing in the object’s presence;
  - representation as the action of drawing in the object’s absence.

Drawing as a project participates in the duality of the images: as representation of the idea (concept) and as action that provokes the emergence of the object before an interested and desiring subject. However, under these conditions, drawing exists as an action that does not dilute itself in the representation, making the relation between the object and the image implicit. Drawing exists as the figuration of a «lie» that is art (the terrain where reality converges).

Modernism empowers art with the possibility to demonstrate the irregularities and the blunders of the system of art. The incoherencies and deadlocks become constituents of art par excellence. Pulsion as legacy of art guarantees its own legitimacy, which turns out to be a pulsional «tranquilizer». (figure 1)

Design as the legitimate representative of modernity (worldly and factual) results in the paradox that its symbolic legitimate existence is connected with its own denial. The “symbolic” denial reveals that a crisis is necessary for its own survival. Design as a discipline arises from the protagonist of this modern paradox. To assert itself design needs to deny its own autonomy, subscribing to, or at least, approaching art or technology.

The continuity of the symbolic in design depends on contradiction of what is denied as acquisition, and in this case with art. The transcendence in design is unveiled in the heteronomy of its possibility to exist.

Contrary to art which is essentially solitary, design is sympathetic towards the instrumentation of fantasy as a guarantee of human legitimacy. The possibility of being-related-to another “newly-arrived” object is liberating and contradicts the breach of confidence in the human-being as a modern reference. (figure 2)
The *medium* – point, line, and blotch – that conveys form formally fixes the object by means of a technical or technological dependency; uses the bi or three-dimensional expression as an internal or external condition of the object, not technically or technologically instrumented.

The representation is ichnographically or formally fixed by means of the *medium*. On the other hand, the images as *media* are autonomous regarding the act of representing. Could this extreme case be regarded as image without representation? And in this case could it be said to be an uncommitment of art?

The modern (according to Baudalaire’s *modernité*) is neither against the old nor the past, but against the classical as that which is transmitted by the processing order, in the continuity of the existence of the object, in the chain succession of cause and effect. When Baudalaire promoted modernity (*la modernité*) in 1849 he did it on behalf of *aesthetics*, thus break away from the continuous element that existed in order of the cognitive world. (Jauss, 2005:332)

The modernist proposal underlines the desire to break away from the neoclassical presence of the 19th century, which idealised the heroic, and giving way to the questioning of the classical images and of Darwin’s and Foutrier’s “scientific” culture. Regarding the aesthetic, the fight against the ornament gives rise to the cult of the necessity to understand the truth and proposing its representation. Modernism aspires to understand reality and the possibility of its representation by substituting the reality which is symbolically interpreted for the symptomatically undecipherable reality. The phrase «less is more» symbolises, in a hysterical fashion, the Modern (imp)possibility. The denial of the symbolic reality as the possible place for the representation, and the possibility of interpretation, therefore, art starts to expressing itself by means of symptom and returning to the figure as the possible configuration of the object of art.

In the 19th century the proliferation of the taste by means of the superfluous expression that multiplies itself factually and historically by means of the cumulative diversity of the objects, establishes the presence of the object of art as the waste of the system of art - a place where existence is confined to uselessness. (figure 3)

What is left of the historical perpetuation of the artistic as a projected “adjustment”; that is, the desire (taste) of the material structure of things is then autonomously referred to as the discipline of design.

An object produced industrially and its reproduce beauty, defined by structural existence of the object. In this case beauty pre-exists to the physical reality of the object, inscribing itself there and then in the proposed project by means of the drawing. An industrial object “of beauty” resorts to projection as the characterization of beauty. On the contrary, a hand-made object – similarly applying to art - inscribes beauty on its act of technical production/technical action. In this case the technical action exists committed to beauty, not being able to separate from it. In design beauty can pre-exist to the production of the object by means of the author, who as the operator of the drawing is able to “recover” the dimension of beauty1. (Vitta, 1996:37)

---

1 about the nature and inscription of beauty on the object of use and in its differentiation from the object of art mentioned by Vitta will always require defining which beauty (or ugliness) is being referred. If it’s true that for art the reference to “beauty” or “ugliness” is an acceptable definition, for the object of design the most acceptable concept is “good taste” or “bad taste”, which on its own is symptomatic of some determinism. Nonetheless, which “good” or “bad” taste will have to be specified. Whichever aesthetic “filtering” used on the object of design, it always refers to the authorship of the work by means of the author’s instrumentation of drawing, and not the serial
The issue of reproducibility can arise from the reproduction of a model (in design) or from a similar pre-existence (artistic series). In the first case, beauty inscribed on project by means of the drawing reproduces a similar object. In the second case beauty surfaces by means of the technical act of doing/producing the object reveals what is not similar by the reproduction of the object.
The series like work methodology in art relate to the search for the “industrial” interpretation of the artistic object and paradoxally verify the dissimilarities these contain.

2. the nature of the problem

The nature of the problem in art and design differ. With regards to art it deals with a resolution which is strictly formal, present and related to the time of the work. The resolution of the problem relates the action, fixes the work, and establishes itself as the worldly reference in the constructive process of the work. Whereas in design the problem precedes the action, it comes before the form, and its evocation derives from the programme and amply perpetuates itself in a game that outdoes the author of the form. On the contrary, art not considering the problem as something outside itself, suggests a “remake”, strictly within the artistic field, obliging a “reproduction” of itself. Disregarding its exterior surroundings art cynically evokes its own self-destruction; hence promoting the “emptiness” of art that we have grown accustomed to.

In a positive way, design seems to occupy the “emptiness” of art by reflecting on its own condition by means of the other; that is, by means of the founding permissive of the utility of the object. The current manifestations of everyday objects (more reflexive and humanised) are probably those which are closer to the artistic as a means of existence of use, by means of the consideration of the project, as an inaccessible consideration of the other.

The object arises from the project and this one is responsible for the form in the strict relation with reality in which the object is born, grows and is utilised. The project “is not only responsible for the formal identity of the object but also for its way of being and the context it was born from and it should act in.” (Vitta, 1996:15). As Christopher Alexander wrote:

“the final object of projection is the form.... each problem of projection arises from the effort to reach a correspondence between two identities: the form in question and its context. The form is the solution of the problems and the context defines the problem. In other words, when we talk about projection the essence of the discussion is not only the form but all that is related to the form and its context.” (Vitta, 1996:14)

In this case, as Maurizio Vitta refers, “this statement confirms the primacy of the object but at the same time it defines its nature by means of its ways of existence guaranteed by its projection.” Can’t this be the question of design: by means of its form define the context of its appropriation? Does design then identify itself with the project? And the latter with all the understandings/presentations of the object? In this case the complex articulation network of the project will reveal itself to the presentation of the object of design as an uncertain form, revealing itself with the contradiction that is inherent to the act of existing. Can’t this uncertainty, revealed by the project of design, constitute the motto for mobility of the discipline itself? In actual fact, the question of series that defines the object of design – at least what stipulated as its definition in the first days of production of the work, whereas in an object of art the issue is directly implied in the production of the work.
its assertion as a discipline – is not only a repetitive and egalitarian series of a chain of production, but also a worldly series that allows design to be discipline of method and thought that considers the pre-existences and the alterations thereafter. (figure 4) It would be absurd to fix the objects as it would be to stop the world. In actual fact the more design “grows” as a discipline of project (of the object) the more vulnerable it becomes, which is subjected to the non-fulfilment of its structural coherence, when the designer is denied the possibility of technical and material control in the production of the object. In actual fact, the more the project grows the greater this possibility seems to become... and can this be once again a symptom of disciplinary growth? To conceive design as the presentation of the object as a stable and singular presence would fall into contradiction with the presence of the object itself, and in this case design is desired according to the object it represents. Even if it is based on an uncertain relation with itself, facilitated by a mirror and result of its «interdisciplinary».

The question of design is the nature of the project in its condition of representation by the concept of the figure in its nature of the word and image.

The word exists implied in concept, in the content of the idea, whilst the image implies the perpect of the imagination. Thus, the project derives from the concept and the perpect articulated by means of the word and image.

Art as an historical event, breaking away from the symbolic, by denying the “evolutionary/explanatory unity” of history, nonetheless, “expressing itself” as an action (producing a piece of art) defies itself as the action in search of mankind’s knowledge (philosophy). Regarding a possible transcendence, which is not at all religious, must refer to acquiring human knowledge. Humanised art “self-diminishes” as a practice giving rise to new doings - new activities. Among which, the possible and desired, design?

3. representation and meaning: configuration and presence

The representation which enhances the idea sighted the object of use, while the representation which enhances the process (the procedural action) places the work of art as an image of itself.

The representation of the idea as the symbolic representation of the wish/desire, via the senses, uses the image as a symbol in the configuration of the object as an image that derives from the idea (object of use/object of design). On the contrary, the representation that focuses on the process as a contradictory and symptomatic uses simulacrum to acquire a proximity of meaning of object of art as identification of the unobtainable reality. (figure 5)

The representation that derives from the image that becomes of the object of art recognises the procedural action the real mediation as factor of contradiction and paradox. Contrary, a representation that derives for the metaphorical idea that organise the concept, as a symbolic representation of the senses, and recognises the subject as a mediation of the object of use.

The modernism institutes design as visual discipline via the representation that symbolises the desire in the configuration the object. In its industrial beginning the designer was called upon to “formalise” the symbolic character of the universal object, whose understanding was merchandise. The drawing transformed the object-merchandise in a private object. In this case, the drawing of the object is tangible, rational and deductive by being a programmable project. Nowadays, the designer elevates the object in such way that from it derives the possibility of a symbolic discovery, and in this particular case the private object is returned to a universal context
on account of its possibility to discovery of the private. Drawing itself also starts to refer to the sensitive, the unpredictable and chance. Arts only possibility is the contradictory representation. Art as a double - image and simulacrum - is the identity that comes closer to reality, but its inability to represent reality it is a mere lie. As a lie art identifies with... as Álvaro Lapa refers quoting Nietzsche proverb, “we have art not to die or go mad when faced with the truth; therefore we don’t have the truth, we have art to stop us from going mad or dying of terror before the truth.”(Lapa, 2006:158)

In this context the images of Art Brut while fantasy reconstructions of reality incarnate a fundamental fantasy that cannot be interpreted but only reconstructed, which is defined by Lacan as the “acephalus” knowledge, delirium, hysteria, or yet a body without organs, or at least without functioning organs, and therefore, a body that is not an organism as Gilles Deleuze defines it- and in this case the work of art is constituted of an apparition, dream, a shadow, images without sensorial mediation, only a greatness of the senses. (figure 6)

Apparently, the art institutionally produced for contemporary museums also lack sensorial mediation. On the contrary the images of Art Brut are depurations of the senses, images that serve as exemplary. The appeal to the senses is cerebral resulting from the inversion of the artistic process considered up to now as natural - the direction being from the senses to the brain via the desire. The representation considered the desire in its closeness to the senses and the object resulting from the figuration of the image. Whereas the representation as an expression of the cerebral will recreate images that apparently present themselves as objects.

As figurations of the presence of art in the work of Art Brut survive without context, contrary to many contemporary work of art that out of context run the risk of not existing as work of art.

4. image and object
symbolic condition of design and simulacrum (as symptom) of art

The images of design have a dual function: object of representation, when it is a represented image (physical representation) and as object of desire, when promoting a story of subjective experiences and emotional relations whose organisation is symbolic. When the meaning of the object is arises from a desire its presence is interpreted as functional, technical and subjective. Therefore, it is an object whose meaning is symbolic and in this capacity it represents. In this case the representation of the object of design is done in the presence of... which implies a latent proximity to the object, a chance of a sensory and physical perception, relating to a desirable, meddling and “interested” presence. A representation by means of a symbolic presence implied in the image that it figures. The possibility of the project in design to take shape of the object through drawing it is the guarantee of the project that allows design to be the object that formalizes the symbolic.

The act of drawing as a representation in the proximity of... manifests within the possibility of the project being the symbolic interpreter. The representation in the absence of... not establishing itself as a precept of the action, hence not implying a condition referring to ... it will thus be a projection distant from the object, refers to it ideally as a construction of the mind that positions the object at a distance, «disconnected» physically and circumstantially of its symbolic condition. The object that is born from the absence of drawing conceals the symbolic from which it
Fussli’s assertion that “Religious people produce relics as art, warriors produce trophies and the bourgeois commercial articles”, (Cerezo, in Calvera, 2003:26), it seems evident from the XIX century causing the drift away from the artistic concept. Thus, art recognises its need to assert its uselessness, reclaiming its disciplinary autonomy, wanting to escape the aesthetic function. Consequently, the aesthetic function rests on the ornament’s side provided it derives from the symbolic function of the beauty of the object. The object of design will be “submissive” to the symbol concept that organizes beauty, while this one was rejected by art.

The recovery of the organizational order of beauty conceding it a political position in the organization of the world, it has always been the path taken by the objects in and out of art and the artistic realm. In the Renaissance the organization of the objects via a politics for drawing, put into action by the creation of Accademia del Disegno di Firenze, with maximum functionality, whilst symbolic entities that organize the world, making of the drawing a discipline of representation of the world by means of the ornament. In this case the ornament is the place of the significant image that organizes and expresses the organization of the objects and the world. The theoretical substance that organized itself to confer power to that was designated as Disegno had as its interpreter the artist Giorgio Vasari, whose artistic expression was imminently decorative, guaranteeing at once the twofold possibility to ensure the conviction of a power that establishes itself interiorly, and thus reinforcing its efficiency and the presence of an image domain that will lead the objects to designate the symbolic, which the power needs.

Modern design in its quality of project is proposed as a functional sign, being against the symbolic ornament. In the 70/80 design in its quest to liberate itself from the function becomes symbol of itself. Can we consider design in the 21st century as a practice that aspires to be a sign of itself, not only as a projected action, but also as a discipline? In this aces design interprets the sign through the symbolic comprehension of the image that derives from the representation that aspires the figuration of the object.

The symbol as a sign that acts, and capable of a communicative exchange, is transformed into a symbolic efficiency. The symbol as a communicative inscription limits the efficiency of the action of the sign universe. That is, the symbol favours other symbols that are associated to it, while the sign is a fixed entity that generates an imitation. The images as symbolic representations appeal to the mobility of the symbol. Outside this mobility, they become sign imitations of the symbol fixing the image as a reality, expressed in what was the Modern artistic claim.

The symbolic evocation of design is/can be made through drawing. The Design that lacks drawing is a symbolically “diminished” design. Too see/perceive design through drawing is to admit in its practice:

- memory;
- disciplinary past (through disegno);
- aesthetic reference;
- style;
- value of the image.

Regarding the object of design’s relation with the viewer/consumer because of its resolution and presentation as a symbolic property it has the power to attract due to its capacity to provide “identification” from an economic and rational point of view, both being added-value for the emotion. The image as power of signification, as an identity that liberates us from the order of significant representation - a quality of art- is “inspired” by what we know does not belong to the order of representation. The act of
drawing summoned by the representation of the object of design is inevitably implied in the state of existing for drawing and the latter for its gestalt dimension, brief, light, ignorant, potentially “out of control”, reveals the absent that which symbolically shows itself in an unexpected manner as a new presence. (figure 7)

The issue regarding the symbol and its association with design besides posing the question of knowing whether the symbol comes before or after the form of design, it also poses the question of how the symbol interferes with the discipline of design. If the first question requires a methodological analysis, which owing to this work’s theoretical restriction is not going to be approached, the second requires reflection. Can the symbol thus be considered an ordination of the thought related to the manifestation of the unconscious? Or simply an ordination of the idea by means of a content? In both cases what is in question is the formal relation between form and symbol. As it so happens this relation is still connected with the project that is, an action that manifests itself in the desire of the event, refer to as desirably constructive action. Therefore, differentiated from art that does not configure the project but the way of acting - while pure expression of the action. In Pollock’s work the manner of action, for example, the spilling of paint does not conform to a project. As the action starts to take shape the further away the projected character drifts, and the work becomes a formal expression of its anxiety to the extent of suicide being its dead end.

A further example of projectual desertion in art with dramatic consequences was Rothko’s work, which tread a path of return to non-existence. His work became formally “purified” to the extent of becoming chromatically equivalent to his earlier paintings. His work undergoes a process of a formal and chromatically simplified where his late chromatic path meets up with his initial chromatics. This meddling of reality with art does not occur with design. That is, the significance of the symptom, which is the condition for the existence of contemporary art, excludes the idea of project. Design as a discipline of the project can only accept the symbolic movement that provides meaning the object, which in this case is contrary to art.

5. the desire of design and the purpose of drawing

The object of design resulting from drawing is an object which relies on the creativity to become its own-object. The object of design deals programmatically with innovation, but ultimately results from the author’s creativity which is expressed by the material and technical operation of drawing. Drawing is implied in design as an essential instrument in the development and figuration of the functional relations implied in the project (the sketch) as a trustee of the perception and the figuration of the non-visible. (figure 8 / 9)

---

3 Innovation and creativity are two different ways of understanding production/configuration of the objects.
Innovation is grasped as the strategy of the productive process in its utilitarian role that gives rise to technological and organizational development. Innovation in its utilitarian role-the production of the object- aspires the idea of the recovery of a particular result by means of utilitarian and programmed rules. Creativity is an act of originality and it is revolutionary which is not programmed by the rule and thus it is not combinable.
Acknowledged as not fulfilling the utilitarian role, not sacrificed to the rule but a proof of satisfaction, which favours the process and considering the result to be inscribed in the process.

4 Even before its consideration as register the “magic” dances in honour or as a offering to some pagan god can be considered as manifestations of the corporal drawing.
The representation in its trilogy -symbolic-real-imaginary - refers to the symptom as the means by which the figure reveals itself: the ghost as an operation by means of the symbol; the imitation as the presence of the imaginary. In this case art breaks away from the artistic that derives from the representation of the concept according to the deductive model established by the object by means of the symbolic image. Art belongs to the spectrum of the symptom as long as it glows and carries visual intensity, deriving from an inductive model that results from the figuration of the art substance. Art is a place of rupture in the interpretation chain, it decrees the non-interpretable. Thus, art dissociates itself from the aesthetic function embracing the anthropological dimension. The anthropological understanding of art allows it to exist in the object which belongs to art, as if it were a “magic” event. Being of the art substance, the first instrumentation of drawing is “magic”, as the manifestation off the purpose of origin.\(^4\) The second is decorative and didactic whilst an expression of desire and the third is projectual manifestation of the possible transformation.

The drawn objects (of design) are like aesthetic formulations that priority was registered/classified as artistic interpretations. The discipline of design results from aesthetic function which before was considered to be of artistic terrain that promoted the appearance of artistic objects by means of its representation. The prefix re of re+presentatio means intensification. Re + presentatio is presentatio (= image) + re (= idea). That is, image + idea, image (= presenatio) is more than reality it is an augmentation of it by means of the idea of reality. Thus, it represents itself always by means of the absence in both the duality and division of desire. The symbolic drawing that operates and interprets the duality of desire realizes the concept of the symbolic image. The symptom implied in the unity of the purpose allows the appearance /con-figuration of the idea. (Nancy, 2002:63-70)

Can it thus be concluded that the purpose of drawing is achieved in the desire of the object? In this case, the unit of the symbol is present in the object of design by means of the drawing provided by the act of drawing. In this case the differentiation of the object of art is circumstantial inscribed in the symbolic presence in the case of design and symptomatically in the case of art; both referred in the presence of the object. Thus, it can be concluded that the difference between drawing as the project of things of usage and drawing as an artistic project is as follows: the enunciation of the project of design is ethical, social and political, acquired through the concept of work, whereas the enunciation of the artistic project is philosophical, evoking the absence in its epistemological image of technique.

The disegno transforms into design by adding an ethic-political element to the philosophical dimension of disegno when it is a project. the project in design when deprived of ideology it becomes an exercise of style, which was proved by Modern rationalism as well as the «radical» consideration in the late 20\(^{th}\) century. (Vitta, 1996:126)

Drawing as a representation participates in the duplicity of the images as a instrument of the project arising from the idea (concept), and as the process (action) arising from the appearance of the object in the presence of an interested and desiring individual. However, in this case drawing exists as the action that does not drain itself in the representation because the object and the images relate to each other despite being differentiated and implicated entities. It’s in the drawing that the object’s necessary differentiation and uncertainty find the space to manifest themselves, where, if only provisionally, it is possible the differentiation between the identity and the meaning.
The purpose of drawing is fulfilled in the desire to draw; thus, making the appearance of the object possible by means of the symbolic (re)presentation more or less predetermined - in the case of design - or by means of the symptom in the (con)figuration that presides over the appearance of the object – in art. In this case, the meaning of the object of design and of art is different. Submitted to a programme arising from the supposition of the technique, the object of design reveals its autonomy by means of the drawing, even if the desire is “imprisoned” in the act of drawing, in the production of the specific drawing in tune with the object. On the contrary, art does not take into account the object’s peculiarity and the object as a supposition of the technique is only a means of access to art. In this case, the sequential condition in design is from the start structural, while in art it is subsequently sequential. In design this condition is the defined and programmed, thus having an optional quality, whereas in art sequence is inevitable in that the processing of the object is never-ending. Drawing is not a fixed entity, neither by determination nor by construction. On the contrary it’s fascination lies in its encounter with the constantly unequal and in mutation. It is only possible to fix an image/a drawing by means of the act of drawing, and not the drawing itself. In this case, what is fixed is a drawing in the passing of time of drawing.

The progression of drawing in time is made through mapping - a defocused perception (reading) - by means of progressive arrangements of images which imply other images as a shape and power of suggestion: the certainty of the appearance and the false and deceiving visibility.

The memory that reflects and that (re)produce drawing twofold: the memory of the past, of the pre-existences, and the one which projects the future. Yet the one that belongs to the project is a «false» memory, a projected memory, which is factually absent. During this memory period the drawings are produced from the object’s absence. The drawing of the object arises from the contingency of what cannot be definitely fixed but only reflected by its register, in the intervals of... what could be the essence of the object regarding its concept. The figuration that derives from the drawings is the only stable condition for the object - confined to the choice of the moment, but nonetheless a possibility that is present.

It is no longer through the object that time is fixed by through its representation. In this case the power of representation overcomes reality. Drawing returns to the representation despite rejecting or overcoming the project. It represents itself despite nominating the world.

The purpose of drawing is fulfilled in the desire to draw which facilitates the appearance of the object by means of the symbolic (re)presentation more or less predetermined - in the case of design - or by means of the symptom in the (con)figuration that presides over the appearance of the object – in art.

In this case, the meaning of the object of design and of art is different. Submitted to a programme arising from the supposition of the technique, the object of design reveals its autonomy by means of the drawing, even if the desire is “imprisoned” in the act of drawing, in the production of the specific drawing in tune with the object. On the contrary, art does not take into account the object’s peculiarity and the object as a supposition of the technique is only a means of access to art. In this case, the sequential condition in design is from the start structural, while in art it is subsequently sequential. In design this condition is the defined and programmed, thus having an optional quality, whereas in art sequence is inevitable in that the processing of the object is never-ending.

References

1. Malevitch, Black Cross, c. 1913  
2. J. Hoffman, Bottle and glasses project, 1912  
3. Great Exhibition, 1851  
4. Gaetano Pesce, Table and chairs, Cassina, 1978  
5. Sarah Lucas, The sperm thing, 2005
6. August Walla, Without title, 1970

