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Industrial design and the environment: person, nature, economy

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Abstract

The modern design industry defines itself as a business in the service sector, but the business is socially and environmentally irresponsible. How proportionate are the ambitions of "design as usual" to solve the problems of modern society and the challenges that it is experiencing?

Keywords: consumer society, environment, industrial design, sustainable design, economic growth

The problem of the impossibility of doing "business as usual" is noted by Klaus Schwab (2020) and Naomi Klein (2015) — authors with diametrically different views on the development of the modern socio-economic system. In turn, "design as usual" also requires new conceptual approaches to the production and consumption of the commodity mass. However, traditional industrial design, which finally developed during the heyday of consumer society, is not ready to solve the contradictions associated with the problem of maintaining economic growth, on the one hand, and the increasing environmental burden, on the other hand.

The "overheating" of the consumer society of the second half of the twentieth century led to an increase in waste and harmful emissions into the atmosphere with an increase in the mass of goods and a decrease in the service life of mass consumption products, as well as to environmental and technological imbalances in the development of the global system of division of labor.

The initial optimism is replaced by pessimism and wariness. The mass introduction of innovative technologies and the emergence of a new type of devices, for example, personal computers, smartphones, tablets, gadgets, etc. and their constant updating in the existing waste disposal and recycling system has led to an increase in the burden on the environment. The appearance of plastic, which has become an indispensable and constantly improving material, has caused the problem of plastic pollution of soil, air, water resources and climate change.

Analyzing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the existing model of capitalism, Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret raise the question of serious institutional changes in the

economy and society that will lead to a global reset. The COVID-19 pandemic put the economy "on pause" and simultaneously hit the services sector, which accounts for up to 80% of the economy and employment in developed countries. Schwab and Malleret single out "green" energy and deep processing as a source of future economic growth. The quality of economic growth comes to the fore, which is more important than its speed (Schwab, Malleret 2020).

The field of design is automatically included in the innovation discourse, which has become dominant in the modern economy. The pathos of change and innovation permeates most areas of consumption and production, naturally including design. However, the social and innovative rhetoric of modern design often does not correspond to the depth of the problems of modern society. In the most critical and visual form, the degree of participation of the designer in solving real problems and needs of society was expressed by Victor Papanek (1991).

Service design functions within the framework of corporate policy, taking into account external criteria and trends that project managers rely on when drawing up technical specifications. For example, modern industrial design in the service of marketing finds itself in a conceptual dead end, because it can be integrated into the algorithms of production systems only at the final stage—directly in front of the consumer. Similarly, the methodology of modern design thinking and service design thinking stops at the stage of consumption without further project development of the product.

Sustainable design allows us to rethink the production and consumer model of industrial design that developed in the second half of the twentieth century. A significant part of the concepts that modern design operates with, and designers can no longer describe the complexity of the modern world. The conceptual platform for sustainable design is the Green New Deal policy, aimed at systemic reforms to address climate problems and economic inequality. Changing the consumption model will radically change the design. Paradoxically, it is the design and marketing of consumption that, in order to survive in a post-capitalist society, must do everything possible to promote the development of sustainable design and the principles that underlie it.

The growth of the design market is directly related to the introduction of the environment and nature into its conceptual apparatus and design contour, which allows us to establish a new horizon for the development and growth of design, the expansion of the designer's project activity. In practical terms, from the point of view of media policy, the design industry needs to develop an ecological and waste-free frame as an important element of communication with society.

Modern design, therefore, can be conceptualized in a triad:

- technologies (breakthrough and green technologies, new materials and production cycles);
- society (equal access to social benefits, solving real social problems, maintaining economic growth and improving the quality of life);
- environment (minimization of harmful effects on nature).

The designer becomes an agent of change and the subject of the formation of a new technological and socio-economic formation. Designers need to form a language of interaction in the rapidly changing world of new technologies and social relations that were not previously possible.

References

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International Academy of Design (IAD) together with the Association of Industrial Designers (IDA) and Korean Institute of Spatial Design (KISD) presenting an online public international event within the framework of the World Industrial Design Day 2021.

On June 29, 2021, 13:00 (Moscow), an international round table was held to current trends in design, global challenges and their solutions will be held. Design experts from Russia and the Republic of Korea will make their reports in online format.

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