National College of Art & Design

Facutly of Design Department of Industrial Design

Designing the New Age

by

Adrian Durcan

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complimentary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of Design in Industrial Design. 1994

CONTENTS

PLATES

1. Bronx Development Centre, New York, 1976. Exterior View. The client's brief called for a "warm, homelike atmosphere".

2. Bronx Development Centre, New York, 1976. Interior View. The architect's aim was to "create a sense of place that responds to the special feelings and needs of the residents".

3. Michael Quirke. Characters from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings 1990.

4. Christo. Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California. 1972 - 1976. Aerial View.

5. Christo. Running Fence, Sonoma and marin Counties, California 1972 - 1976. Section of the 24.5 mile long, 18 foot high ribbon of white fabric.

6. Eno. Installation series No. 9 Small Pastures San Francisco, 1988 .
   Approx. 2 metres wide.

7. Eno. Installation series No. 2 Venice 2 Venice, 1985.
   One of a group of five pieces each 120cm x 30cm and each independently illuminated by a 20 inch T.V. monitor.

INTRODUCTION

CHANGING ROLES, CHANGING AIMS

Contemporary industrial designers view the 'object' as the sole fruition of the design process. The process itself needs to be redefined in terms of people's experience instead of in terms of objects. There is an apparent public dissatisfaction with the world in which we live in; a world which has been largely shaped by the thoughts of industrialists, architects and designers. Their thoughts however, vastly differ from those of the people who live with work with and experience their design solutions. Instead of resolving problems, the problems are augmented as the designer has become more preoccupied with the creation of critically acclaimed work than with the consumer's wishes and desires. Designs have thus been given awards by the media and design profession which have failed to suit the purpose for which they were initially intended. The most publicised failure of award winning architecture is the Bronx Development Centre, which was completed in 1976. This particular case will be discussed in Chapter One, accentuating the extent to which the designer has divorced himself from his fundamental impetus - the needs and wishes of those who experience his solutions.

Viewing the general public as nothing more than a vast homogeneous market has allowed the designer to assume an objective problem solving role. Industrial Design, the focus of this text, has especially adopted an object oriented approach to design. Such an approach however can never hope to realise designs which wholly suit the many needs and wishes of those who experience them. In order to diminish the gulf which exists between designer's views and those of the public, the designer must redefine his role by

wholly understanding his fundamental impetus - the needs, wishes and many facets of the individual. Chapter One will outline such facets by reviewing traditional world philosophies and New Age beliefs and doctrines, particularly Michael Harner's text The Way of the Shaman. These ideologies will be assessed from a design viewpoint connoting how future industrial designers might fulfil their potential.

Wishing to discover a new approach to design which is more responsive to the individual, it is necessary to look outside the contemporary design profession. The work of woodcarver Michael Quirke and artists Christo and Eno will be discussed in Chapter Two; three particular artists who respond effectively to the needs of those who 'experience' their work. Their methodology and output will be explored throughout the chapter which proves to be particularly instructive to those industrial designers wishing to make the transition from traditional object oriented design to a more perceptual approach which wholly recognises the many facets of man, including those which remain hidden and independent of form.

But how and why has there developed a chasm between designer's views and those of the people who live with their designs? Chapter Three will reassess contemporary design movements which may be seen as reactions (or reactions to reactions) to the process of industrialisation and will determine the extent to which they have or have not helped realise designs that are responsive to the individual's needs. The assessment will connote the apparent divorce of designers from the general public and the necessity for

evolution in design. A more consummate attention to people suggests new more profound dimensions in design many of which are perceptual and independent of form. Chapter Three will outline methods which might be adhered to in order to realise such dimensions, redefining our current conception of object - oriented industrial design, reflecting the ideas of C. Thomas Mitchell and his enlightening text Redefining Designing. This particular book however concentrates on architecture, dismissing Industrial Design which is the focus of this thesis.

The thesis will conclude noting the implications to both people and the world in which they live if industrial designers make an evolutionary transition from object oriented design to a more perceptual and collaborative approach.

CHAPTER ONE

DESIGN'S FORGOTTEN PURPOSE

DESIGNS FORGOTTEN PURPOSE

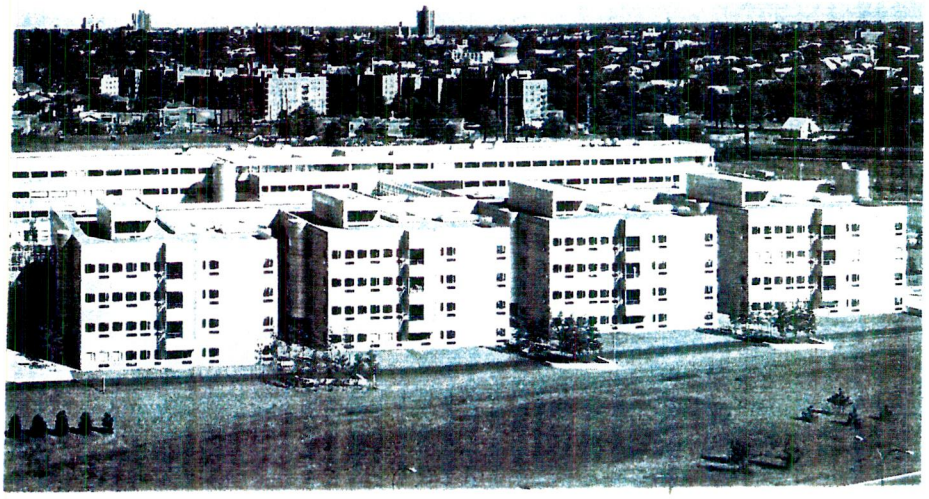
"Technology and capitalism each poses a major question for modern art and culture. Technology has given us the means to reproduce aural and visual materials quickly and cheaply" (O'Brien, P. 1989, p. 15). Capitalism may be viewed as the means to develop such technology, rendering the designer who manipulates this technology as being subordinate to the laws of the market place. Traditionally, designers tend to refer to the mass market. This standardisation of those individuals who inhabit the market place has allowed designers to imagine that there exists a large homogeneous international market, allowing design to simply think about the production of 'objects' which suit everybody. Such a notion is fallacious and there now exists a vast chasm between designers views and the people who live with their designs. This condition has never been resolved by any design philosophy that has emerged since industrialisation.

Whatever 'style' they champion, designers seem to be more preoccupied with the creation of critically acclaimed work than with the design user; the true impetus for design. The media counts for everything today; most clients and the general public for nothing. This vast gulf is illustrated by the case of the Bronx Development Centre; a four story shiny alluminimum building by Richard Meier and Associates that was completed in 1976. "Many buildings can be judged 'architectural successes' based on their form alone no matter how badly suited they are to the purpose for which they are built" (Mitchell, C.T. 1993 p.28). The client's brief called for a building which was to house mentally deficient children in a "warm, home-like atmosphere". The design was given a wide range of awards

including an Honour Award for design excellence. It should be noted however, that these awards were given before the building was occupied. "The fact that a building for the mentally deficient would be judged an example of 'architectural excellence' - before being occupied vividly demonstrates the divorce of designers concerns from those of design users." (Mitchell C.T. 1993 p.xii). The design also illustrates the gulf which exists between client and designer. The final design was to create a "warm, homelike atmosphere". The resultant design, however, as contended by a group of parents whose children were to be housed in the Bronx Development Centre stated that the building is unsafe, a restrictive environment, and not 'homelike'. "The unsafe features alluded to include items such as open railings, open tread stairs, an open bridge, the use of untempered glass in many areas and some unguarded drops in the courtyards." (Mitchell, C.T. 1993 p.xx).

And so, designers today seem to have forgotten their purpose, substituting the media and profit as an impetus to the detriment of the user. Analogous to the film industry, "either a work is an artistic success and a flop at the box office, or a success at the box office and an artistic disaster." (O'Brien, P. 1989 p.17). The creation of critically acclaimed work has now become so tempting that industrial designers find it almost irresistible. The design task has thus been reduced to the preoccupation with the object.

Designing for an imagined homogeneous market "produces the expected and unchallenging rather than challenge and stimulation". (O'Brien, P. 1989 p.16). How can such an approach to design contribute anything of cultural development as it simply



1. Bronx Development Centre, New York, 1976. Exterior View. The client's brief called for a "warm, homelike atmosphere".

2. Bronx Development Centre, New York, 1976. Interior View. The architect's aim was to "create a sense of place that responds to the special feelings and needs of the residents".

reflects and reinforces a stagnant, capitalist, consumerist culture. The validity of design today is now questionable and must be addressed.

Design for the future will have to be more responsive to user concerns than has been the case in this industrial epoch. In fact it will have "many of the attributes of preindustrial craftwork; high quality, well adapted to its context of use, customisable and in some cases individualised". (Mitchell, C.T. 1993 p.29).

MAN, A MANY SIDED FACE

The designer's lack of response to user concerns indicates that his perception of the 'mass market' is a purely objective one. The production of 'objects' illustrates his solely material conception of the user. In order to be more responsive to users, all the facets of the user must be clearly understood; most importantly those facets of man which remain intangible.

Obsessed by quantification, rationalisation and measurement which tends towards the domination of nature, man has neglected the other elements of his self i.e. his spiritual and immaterial self. Man can be perceived as a complex entity; composed of many different but harmonious elements - the disintegration between those elements is detrimental. Holding to a belief in the certainty of scientific knowledge has led to the worship of technique and to a single minded pursuit of analysis rather than integration. The integration between science and nature; material and ethereal is the key to progressive evolution.

The separation between mind and body; subject and object can be discerned by the 6th century B.C. The mentality which Plato and Socrates tried to destroy is that in which the individual learns about the world through identification and participation. Post-Socratic philosophy can therefore be seen as progressively degenerating its initiates to a state of 'Materialism' which is prevalent today. Attempting to reconnect the body and soul, the physical and divine, it is necessary to review Pre-Socratic philosophy.

The Greeks among others defined that man is a ternary entity. That is to say, man operates on three levels of reality; his spiritual side and his physical, each connected by his psyche (a metaphysical pineal gland!). Consisting of three intrinsic planes it is necessary that these elements be kept in harmony.

However, this triplicity has led man to favour one pole to the detriment of the others. And so for the Western World, the dominant polarity changed in favour for the body; the physical; the material world. Full freedom has in this time been attained for the body to the detriment of the spirit.

For this reason, man has created an opposition between his intrinsic planes. If one pole is good, the other is inevitably bad. Analysis has replaced integration. Such an approach contradicts the essence of man. This approach, which is prevalent today, recognising the triplicity of man, separates and segregates each element rather than integrates them.

Attempting to liberate man from today's material conception of life, he must first of all learn that he is not merely this material body. Man's liberation from material consciousness appears in Hindu, Buddhist, Cabalist, Gnostic and Christian Scripture. It is not however, simply enough to 'change' and 'adopt' such ancient scriptures. Society must instead choose to 'evolve' wholly understanding his essence (outlined in such scriptures) exploring these facets, integrating and ultimately mastering them. Man must once again realise his 'divinity'.

THE FUTURE IN THE PAST

Having outlined the duality of man (mind/body) it is necessary to understand the singularity of this duality. Man today recognises the distinct duality but not the singularity, having led him to favour the body to the detriment of the soul.

This seemingly paradoxical concept is prevalent in many Eastern and Esoteric traditions. Unfortunately traditions breed distinction; being dogmatic in nature they can be segregative in nature. Formulating a philosophy which recognises singularity, that same philosophy must fundamentally recognise the equality of all men. Considering this, many harbingers of the New Age employ the ancient wisdom of the Shaman.

> Shamans whom we in the 'civilised' world have called 'medicine men' and 'witch doctors' - are the keepers of a remarkable body of ancient techniques that they use to achieve and maintain well being for themselves and members of their communities . (Harner, M. 1980 p. xvii).

Shaman's see the dichotomy of reality; material and ethereal, and enter altered states of consciousness - at will - to contact and utilise an ordinarily hidden reality in order to acquire knowledge, power, self healing and the healing of others. By manipulating the spiritual and physical world, integrating both, realising that man is more that this bodily conception, the Shaman has the ability to maintain a healthy equilibrium within himself, his initiates, community and environment.

Shamanism also teaches respect for the whole of creation - a theme which in our destructive age is of the utmost importance. It also teaches us new approaches to living; ways beyond the liner time lines with which we bind ourselves; ways in which we see without seeing, hear without hearing, touch without feeling - waking our imagination. Shamanism can teach us all of this, restoring a quality to our lives which we have lost.

> Shamanism is a way of working with the self and with the elements from which we are all constructed, and that it cuts across all the self imposed barriers of race, religion and culture. No matter what your religious instinct, shamanism reaches beyond dogma to a point where all are one.
> (Matthews, J. 1991 p.5)

This holistic world view implies no distinction between flesh and spirit, no inferiority between the sexes, no feeling that we command this world and therefore can exploit it as we wish.

One of the remarkable things about shamanic assumpitons and methods is that they are similar in widely seperated and remote parts of the world. Shamanism represents the most widespread and ancient methodology of mind/body transcendental and self healing techiques known to humanity. "Archaealogical evidence suggests that shamanic methods are at least twenty or thirty thousand years old" (Harner, M. 1980 p.40) The widespread universality of this ancient art implies that the ability to experience a more profound and non-ordinary reality is a latent power within us all, waiting to be channelled.

Darwinian logic has been readily accepted in this epoch. One of the most damaging and false aspects of such logic is the idea that the more ancient a culture is; the more primitive it is. Shamanism flourished in ancient cultures which were technoogically deprived. Lacking our advanced level of technology, these so called 'primitive' shamans were motivated to develop the non-technological capacities of the human-mind. Shamanism may once again fluorish in a technologically destroyed world. Shamans realise the problems of the material world and strive to resolve such problems by achieving harmony and an equilibrium between the spiritual and the material.

> Some might argue that the reason we humans spend most of our waking lives in an ordinary state of consciousness is that natural selection intended it that way because that is the 'real' reality and that other states of consciousness, other than sleep, are aberrations that interfere with our survival. In other words, such an argument might go that we perceive reality the way we do usually because that is always the best way in terms of survival. But recent advances in nuerochemistry show that the human brain carriers its own consciousness altering drugs including halluncinogens such as dimethyl tryptamine. In terms of natural selection, it seems unlikely that they would be present unless their capacity to confer some advantage for survival. It would appear that Nature itself has made a decision that an altered state of consciousness is sometimes superior to an ordinary state . (Harner, M. 1980 p.xxi)

These Shamanic powers are an ordinary potentiality of consciousness, and the cultivation of these latent powers is necessary for the whole future evolution of the human race.

A PHILOSOPHY FOR A 'NEW AGE'

A Philosophy for a progressive world begins with unity rather than dualism, which has been the dominat theme of Western Philosophy. The creation of a New Age is based on the premise that all things are intrinsically linked and all form part of a comlex biotic web. The inter-relatedness of all things must be primarily acknowledged. A deeper sense of integration between mind and body is necessary as is the promotion of thought that man and nature are reliant upon each other. By adopting such philosophical thought, working with one's inner self and all those forces which govern existence, the dominat social paradigm, which has failed us wil disintegrate in a constructive rather than a destructive manner.

The relationship between man and the world in which he lives has become a dominant New Age agenda. This 'supposed' relationship, however, reveals a distinct duality. Humans are viewed as being seperate from their environment. Humans are percieved as a dominant force; the source of all value; the environment is ascribed instrumental use.

Warwick Fox, philosopher and author the book Deep Ecology sees the futility of our technocentric culture. Formulating a philosophy for a New Age, he accentuates the need for unity. Man is not an extrinsic part, but a constituent member, among others in a complex biotic community. "The person is not above or outside of nature but is a part of creation ongoing." (Fox, W. 1984 p.194) The intrinsic value of the non-human must be fully recognised and the fact that humans are the source of all value must be recognised as being nothing more than an arrogant conceit.

Man must now concern himself to openly criticise mechanistic materialism and to replace it with a better way of working with the self and all the forces which govern existence. The alternative is that man will continue to accept by default or positively endorse the ideology of economic growth and objectivity which would lead to the apathetic acceptance of the reduction of all values to enconomic and material terms. Existing social, political, spiritual and economic arrangements must be addressed in an attempt to replace today's material ideology.

Warwick Fox's Deep Ecology philosophy is concerned to :

> address existing political, social and economic arrangements and to replace the ideology of economic growth with the ideology of ecological substainability. Key ideas in deep ecology's social, political and economic project include those of a just and sustainable society, carrying capacity, frugality (or voluntary simplicity), dwelling in place, cultural and biological diversity, local autonomy and decentralisation, appropriate technology, reinhabitation and bioregionalism. These last two perhaps require some elaboration. Reinhabitation refers to the process of relearning how to live in place, how to establish a sense of place, how to dwell in and care for a place. A bioregion determines in terms the number of humans that can be supported living at a level of resource use that is adequate for their needs but minimally intrusive on their environment . (Fox, W, 1984, p.195)

In brief the material standard of living should be drastically reduced and the quality of life, in the sense of satisfaction in the depth of one's soul, should be maintained and increased.

CREATING A NEW AGE

Philosophy is more than a verbose ideology, it requires the implementation of thought in order to realise that same ideology. The creation of a New Age, in the hope that the dominant material paradigm will dissolve requires much more than political review. It requires unity and its implementation depends on everybody - architects, laymen, shopkeepers, artists and designers.

The implementation of such thought connotes that our contemporary perception of reality must be constrained; this constraint however doesn't indicate limitations, in fact it reveals a reality much larger than that to which we have been previously accustomed to.

Designers have a role to play in the creation of a New Age. Design today has limited its potential, reaching a point of "advanced social isolation", owing largely to the fact that design has developed without regard for the actual design users. The design task, as the Modernist Movement realised, is to design for an industrial epoch, integrating man into that same epoch, humanising industrial life. Their theories, however, and those of their successors have proven inadequate and impotent in application. We must therefore look outside the design profession if we wish to discover approaches to design that acknowledge and respond effectively to the needs and wishes of design users.

CHAPTER TWO

HARBINGERS OF A NEW AGE

HARBINGERS OF A NEW AGE

One of the key thoughts in the redefinition of design is the transition from a focus on object oriented design to an approach which responds to the needs and wishes of the design user, including those which are perceptual and therefore intangible. These key ideas necessary for design evolution are still underdeveloped. They have been much more thoroughly explored by some artists whose work is explicitly intended as a catalyst to perceptual experience. Each of these artists have rejected traditional, object oriented art in favour of more perceptually oriented approaches.

MICHAEL QUIRKE

Michael Quirke is the son, of a Sligo butcher. For years he worked by his father's side, mincing beef and dicing pork. However that was a job which ended at six every evening and every night the young butcher mastered his art. He doesn't know why he sculpts, all he knows is that he has always done it. From the age of four, he rolled and pinched plasticine into such childhood heroes as John Wayne. He then progressed into woodcarving, carving mythical heroes of lore. In time he started selling these wood carvings alongside trays of bleeding meat, and so from such humble beginnings, Michael Quirke, still known as the butcher's son in Sligo town has earned the respect of many. In Paul Durcan's recent anthology of poems Daddy, Daddy, the woodcarver from Sligo town has earned mention. Brian Keenan, after his recent release, was deeply touched and moved by one particularly carving which depicted a squatting man, in a foetal position connoting the misery and solitude of captivity.

And this is the purpose of Michael Quirke's artwork. The nature of his art as action, not simply object is reflected in all his work. From it, one, like Brian Keenan, can experience emotion. The physical artifact is therefore a part, but only a transitory part of the art experience. This resultant experience is reflected in his entire approach to his work. Quirke has no preconception of what artists should create and what people should like. With his wood firmly clamped between the jaws of a vice grip, he begins to chisel and gouge, not knowing where his hands will take him and whom they shall create.

He allows his subconscious to drive his chisel and his material to halt or speed its progress. A shape begins to emerge from which he deciphers. Like a surrealist, here in the wood he sees a helmet, there a hand or a sword. In time he has unveiled great warriors and gods of lore, a subject which he knows a good deal about. He himself doesn't know why such stories bewitch him so, all he knows is that they do. He does feel however that the idea of legend and myth, which trace man's progression from humility to godliness and immortality, is a subject which seduces all men.

Although a glance at his carvings would indicate that the artist is obsessed merely with the representation of Irish mythology, he would refute this, feeling that his work is of a universal nature as all legends are universal in nature. He maintains that all legends stem from a collective subconscious reinforcing Carl Jung's theory on the subject who declared that "the human psyche is homogenous".

3. Michael Quirke. Characters from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings 1990.

As all myth therefore is comparable this may explain his popularity. His art therefore reaches out, crossing self imposed barriers of sex, race and creed. This could explain his incredible popularity. Michael Quirke creates work for people to enjoy. His wife constantly nags him to charge more for his work. Even if he did he'd still sell, but he feels to a wrong clientelle. This he thinks would bastardise the purpose of his work, rendering it an object, nothing more in worth than a coffee table magazine. He wants his work to live, believing that wood when cut remains alive for seven years, but with handling and cherishing will never die. And so Michael Quirke's artwork lives, not as an objects, but as catalysts to a wondrous perceptual experience.

CHRISTO

Christo, once described as a 'visionary artist' studied in many Fine Art Academys, searching for something, some muse which constantly eluded him. It was only when he left such Academys that he began to see a pupose which his art might fulfill.

> Among the better known of Christo's large scale environmental interventions is Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California 1972 - 1976, an 18 foot high 24.5 mile long ribbon of fabric that crossed rolling hills on property belonging to fifty-nine different ranchers before dropping into the Pacific Ocean at Bodega Bay . (Mitchell, C. T. 1993 p.101)

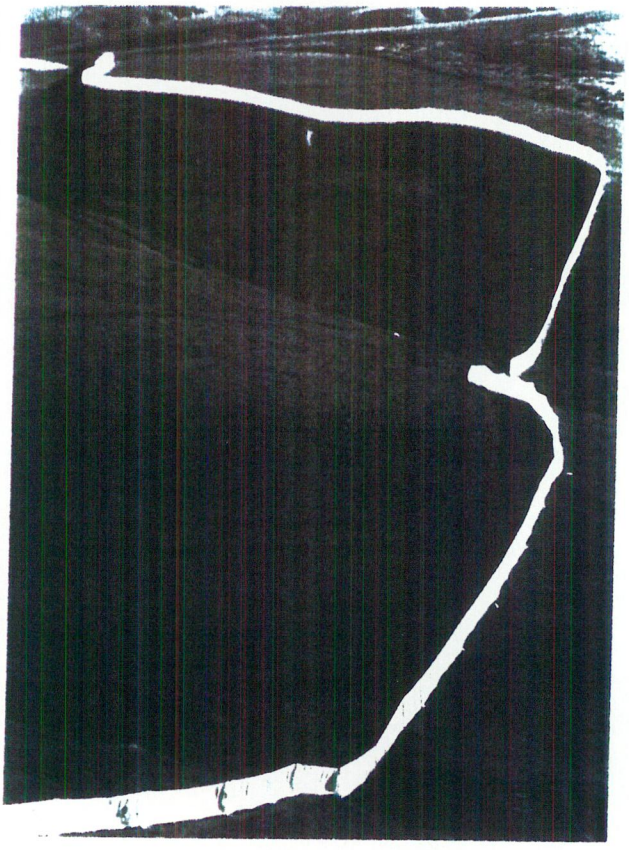
Christo sees art as action, experienced by all those who survey the work. His thoughts echo the words of William Morris; "I don't want art for a few any more than education for a few, what business have we with art at all unless all can share it?" Christo's Running

Fence project encapsulates this notion. Physically the project is nothing more than a barrier 6 metres tall and 30km high, in a landscape outside San Francisco. The project however is not the immense canvas ribbon, it's not the rods which support it; much more than this, it is the landscape, the ocean, the sky, the land, the farms, the farmers. The purpose of the project has an intangible nature. Rooted in a rural setting inhabited by a small community, the project's purpose is the introduction of the work into people's lives.

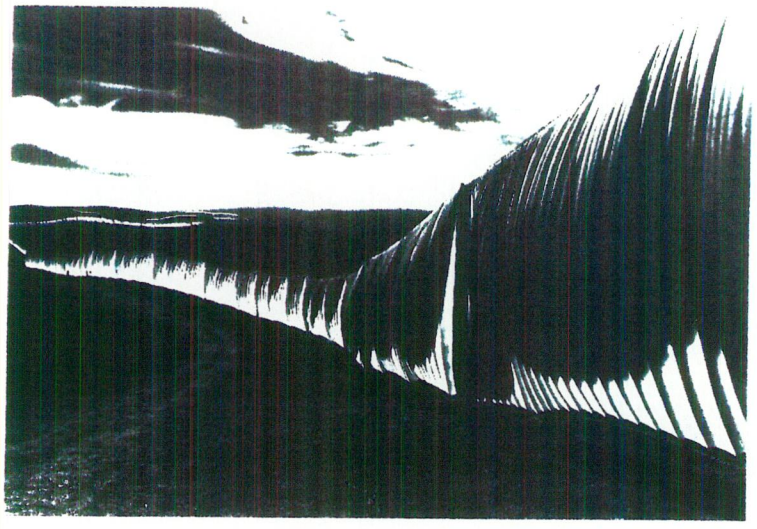
> The project is truly lived by an enormous number of people who include sixty farmers, hundreds of workers, the engineers, the lawyers, but also a whole group of people from the communities of Sonoma and Marin counties who have been engaged in the work in an almost subconscious dimension . (Christo, 1975, p.54)

The whole operation of Running Fence is a collaborative work, in the sense that it has been created and experienced by a vast number of people. They therefore play a dynamic role in the work, they are not spectators in front of a work of art, they are responsible for making a work of art.

Running Fence remained in place for fourteen days and when removed no evidence of the work remained on the land; what did remain however was the vivid memories of all those who experienced and participated in the work. Despite the beauty and inventive nature of his work, Christo sees this, the physical artifact as a part, but only a transitory part in the art experience. "In other words, for those who experienced the project, Running Fence will live on long after the physical barrier, the art object, has been removed." (Mitchell, C.T. p. 107)



4. Christo. Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California. 1972 - 1976. Aerial View.



5. Christo. Running Fence, Sonoma and marin Counties, California 1972 - 1976. Section of the 24.5 mile long, 18 foot high ribbon of white fabric.

The nature of Christo's work is, perhaps, best summed up by Jonathan Fineberg:

> With a Christo project, the directness of the experience, the feeling of participation, the visual beauty, all heighten the viewer's sense of being alive. Through the art work, he experiences the landscape, the politics, even people in a new and more profound way . (Fineberg, J., 1979, p.99)

Christo's work is particularly instructive for designers wishing to make the transition from an object oriented approach to a more perceptual approach. An object may therefore exist but only as a catalyst to perceptual experiences.

Christo's dedication to such an approach was accentuated when NASA asked him if he would like to do a project on the moon. He rejected the proposal because as there are no people on the moon to experience the project there was no reason to do it. Designers today have divorced themselves from the needs and wishes of their design users. Adopting Christo's successful approach which endorses collaborative and perceptual design, designers may redefine their design approach, realising their true impetus - the design user.

BRIAN ENO

It is quite difficult to categorise the work of Brian Eno, an artist preoccupied with the creation of full-scale multimedia installation intended to induce a sense of heightened perception in those who experience them.

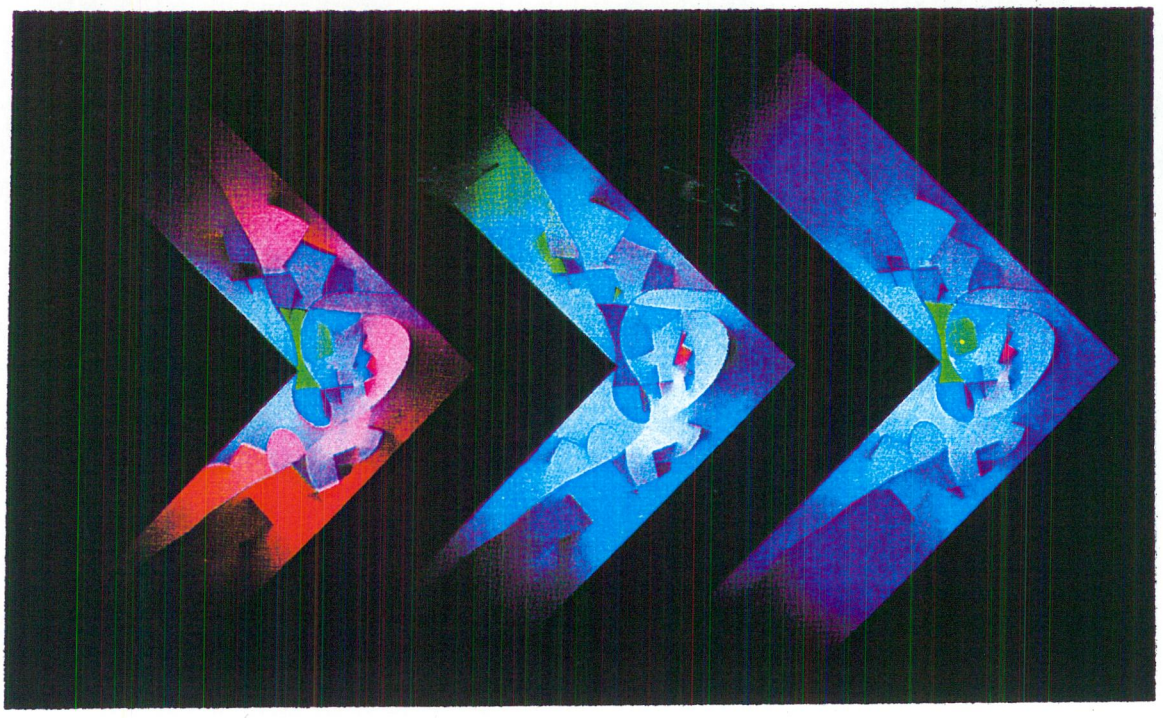
> The main feature of the installations are "light sculptures", a hybrid media Eno created consisting of three dimensional forms in a varity of shapes and sizes, either mounted on the wall or sitting on the floor. These forms are illuminated by gradually changing patterns and shades of light, most often from a television monitor concealed behind or below them. The visual effect of the light sculptures is of ever-evolving, luminous abstract paintings. The light sculptures are presented in darkened, cool spaces, that resonate with the quiet sound of Eno's ambient music . (Mitchell, C.T., 1993, p.108)

Eno's interest is in creating environments and situations which induce the audience to enter a heightened state of consciousness and a sense of well-being.

> Eno's work, which is at once esoteric and accessible seeks to unify experience and perception, body and mind, the analytic and the intuitive, the sensual and the spiritual. The audience is not a seperate entity but an integral part of his conception, an active element . (Apple, J., 1989, p.52)

His work is intense and stimulating, it is about direct interaction between art and audience.

Eno's work is therefore comparable to Christos's and Quirke's. All three reject the traditional concept that the object alone is the fruition of the artistic process.



6. Eno. Installation series No. 9 Small Pastures San Francisco, 1988

Approx. 2 metres wide.

7. Eno. Installation series No. 2 Venice 2 Venice, 1985.

One of a group of five pieces each 120cm x 30cm and each independently illuminated by a 20 inch T.V. monitor.

REDEFINING DESIGN

There is much to be learned from the work of Eno, Quirke and Christo. All share an interest in conveying an intangible perceptual experience through their work. They have rejected a purely object oriented art tradition, abandoning the concept that the physical object is the principal outcome of the creative process. Instead, they recognise the importance of the physical artefact but only as a catalyst to perceptual experiences.

Christo adopted a non-conventional approach which involved collaboration with the general public. He has engaged non-designers into his design process; not only in the construction of his large scale projects, but has given them an intrinsic role in the purpose of his projects i.e. the perceptual experience of art in people's lives.

Such approaches to art establish an interaction between people and art. Today there exists a vast chasm between designers' views and design users. In an attempt to reconnect both, the designer must realise his new purpose. Design for a New Age should concern itself with an interaction between people and this technocentric world - the designer's role is designing the means of interaction, the interaction itself is therefore the purpose.

CHAPTER THREE

A NEED FOR TRANSITION

A NEED FOR TRANSITION

Each of the artists previously discussed has a background in art, craft and design but all have rejected traditional object oriented art in favour of a more perceptually oriented approach. Such an approach reveals their particularly effective acknowledgement and response to the needs and wishes of the general public.

Design today, unfortunately, still favours the object oriented approach. This particular approach is blatantly revealed in the design of a recent Japanese concept car. This particular car however was conceptualised and produced solely by a computer. The only human input into the design was the keying in of certain parameters. Keeping within those parameters the computer locially solved the problem. What the computer thus produced was nothing more than an 'object' which solved a particular problem. The problem solved however was only the quantifiable one. The perception of the design user was in no way appraoched or even considered during the design process. By continuing such an approach to design, the chasm which exists between designers' views and the design user will be accentuated to such an extent that calls into question the validity of design. A new approach is needed which redefines design, viewing the object, the physical artifact as a part, but only a transitory part of the design experience. The design experience should have a perceptual impact, heightening the user's sense of being alive accentuating his experience of life in a new and more profound way.

Such a transition will have profound consequences, throwing into question most traditional notions of what design is and what designers do. "New technological developments are making it possible for design to become much more responsive to the cultural, social and personal needs of design users than had been the case in the industrial era". (Mitchell C.T., 1993, p.1) Designing for a New Age will assume an approach which is much more focused on the dynamic nature of user experience than on physical form.

It might be instuctive to now determine the extent to which the principal design appraoches of the recent past and present have failed in producting true user responsive designs, and to determine the extent to which they have or have not helped realise designs that are responsive to the needs and wishes of design user.

MODERNISM

> Contemporary design movements, whatever their ideological differences, can all be seen as reactions (or reactions to reactions) to the process of industrialisation. In this sense modernism, postmodernism, late modernism, deconstruction, and the second modernity, though vastly differing approaches, are all attempts to come to terms with a world that is, at least potentially, dominated by the machine. (Mitchell, C.T. 1993, p.5)

Modernism was the first reaction of the design community to the industrial revolution. The movement was heavily influenced by the work of William Morris who had written, "I don't want art for a few, anymore than education for a few, what business have we with art at all unless all can share it?" Unlike Morris, however, the Modern movment was willing to accept technology to realise their

ideals. The Modernists realised that the industrialisation of life unburdened man's existance from much unnecessary tasks leaving him free to develop on a higher plane, allowing him to acquire maximum personal freedom and independence. This in itself is a noble ideal but one which they failed to realise through design.

Le Corbusier, wrote that the designer :

> by his arrangemet of forms, realises an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationship which he creates he wakes profound echoes in us, he gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty . (Stephens, S. 1977, p.61)

The idea that the manipulation of physical form into "beautiful" compositions will inevitably have a beneficial effect on those who experience it is a reccuring theme of the modernists. And thus the gulf between designer's views and the needs of the user widens. Aesthetic beliefs led to impusles which interfered with the designer's purpose as he became more concerned with design as an art form than with the needs and wishes of the design user. Instead of designing for people, as was their purpose, the modernists instead chose to re-educate humankind (which they viewed as an homogenous mass).

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism was a movement which sought to directly challenge the premises upon which modernism was based. The postmodern movement realised the divorce of the designer who created a world in which the design users inhabited. Realising the problem, they failed however to resolve it.

The postmodern designer did not change the way in which the modernist designer worked, nor did he change his relationship with clients and users. What the postmodern designer did was to acknowledge the 'taste codes' of the general public as a source for inclusion in the design process. The process itself remained as it was, however, as the designer continued to distance himself from the user, creating two-dimensional designs on drawing boards.

"The major weakness of Postmodernism is that it does not go far enough in its acknowledgement of the wishes of users; it does not actually address the faults of modernist practice, but rather tacitly accepts them." (Mitchell, C.T., 1993, p.17). The postmodernist remains on elitist, as Venturi, one of the first to champion the movement wrote: "Learning from popular culture does not remove the architect from his status in high culture".

A NEW DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

The chasm which exists between designers' views and those of the people who must live with their designs is a condition common to all design philosophies that have emerged since industrialisation. The issue which prompted these philosophies, which is the attempt to humanise industrial life and smooth the relationship between man and machine is still unresolved. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of much recent design which is product oriented it is now time to redefine our concept of industrial design; considering the effects we wish to achieve and how they might be achieved. The design process must thus be turned inside out - from the production of a physical form to a new design approach which considers the different nuances of user experience. Designers must therefore become more preoccupied with the individual, dismissing the current attitude that there exists a vast homogenous mass market. The preoccupation with the individual implies that industry must therefore adapt to society and not vice versa. Is such a notion feasible?

Technology has developed and will continue to develop to such an exten that it will be possible to produce profitably in extremely small lots - even lots of one! Such a concept connotes that products may be individually tailored in the production process to the specific needs of purchasers. The devotion to the individual will thus ultimately produce designs which respond effectively to the needs and wishes of the purchaser.

The impact of this on design will be revolutionary as even the most technologically advanced products may assume the character of handcrafts - high quality, well adapted to their specific use and even customised. "As technology becomes increasingly sophisticated it ironically becomes less rigid" (Mitchell, C.T. 1993, P.3)

The advance of technology to such a point does not only liberate and sate the consumer but may dually free the designer. As products may assume a more craft-like nature, technology and its development may liberate the designer. Becoming increasingly aware of the consumer's individual needs, technology will dually restore and acknowledge the industrial designer's own individuality. As it is now possible to conceptualise and design on any personal computer and forward that same information by telecommunication networks to any place in the world, the designer is now enabled to work in an environment and at a pace which the designer is most comfortable with. The transition to such an approach to design is imminent. But while technological development is necessary, a redefinition of the design process is fundamental.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

One of the key aspects in reforming design is to envisage it as a process through which all people affected by design can become intrinsically involved in the design process. This ideally would view the designer and design user as equal partners collaborating in a previously elitist profession.

The intent of such collaboration would be to open up designing - making it a public process. With such interaction the gulf which exists between designers and design users would be significantly diminished. Whereas previous design philosophies have failed in realising their ideologies, it is necessary to clearly define the concept of collaborative design and derive a way in which it might be implemented. C.T. Mitchell, a contemporary architect who favours such an approach has developed quite a satisfactory collaborative approach to design.

His particular process begins with an interview in order to determine the client/user's particular desire/problem which is to be resolved through the final design. After this inital meeting, the user's particular requirements are analysed and large scale models of the environment and product specified by the client are prepared. A second meeting is then arranged in which the user acts out the activity in the simulated environment. Problems can thus be determined allowing the designer to suggest possible solutions which reflect the user's wishes and needs. At the conclusion of the session, the user is then asked to again simulate the activity with the generated concept, making adjustments as necessary.

C.T. Mitchell who developed and employs this particular collaborative approach to design believes in its success, as reflected by his clients comments. It is an effective means through which they, the non-designers can collaborate in the design process, giving them an opportunity to see what is being decided before and not after the main decisions are made.

The experience of collaboration and a more consummate attention to people's activities, wishes and desires suggests new, more profound dimensions in design, many of which are perceptual and independent of physical form.

PERCEPTUAL DESIGN

> In endeavouring to design things that will not harmfully disturb the user's mind, the designer will find himself measuring and taking account of each and every effect that the environment can have on the senses. Pattern, texture, absorption and reflection of heat or sound, smell, psychological effects of enclosure, exposure and every intermediate stage, all these and many more would be considered and allowed for in the design of every part of every article or building. (Jones, J.C., 1958, p.44)

The use of light, colour, pattern and texture all affect our perceptions and feelings about particualr objects and environments. Such perceptual affects are therefore design considerations. Such considerations however have been relatively unexplored by contemporary design methods, the reason being that most designs are executed by means of 2-dimensional graphic representations. Through such an approach, the "objective" qualities of the design are stressed at the expense of the "subjective" qualities of the object. Because subjective perception affects the quality of a product, the introduction of perceptual design connotes a new concept of quality and user responsivness.

The Modernists and successive design movements believed that the fundamental quality of a product lies in its correctness of structure; the subjective nature of the object was therefore considered secondary. The truth is that the subjective and objective quality of a

product are intrinsically linked; the concentration on one will be to the detriment of the other.

So how can one design for something as intangible as the senses? "To design colour, lights and decorations, instruments different from the traditional design ones of pencil, square and compass are required". (Brani, 1984, p.100) As such a design approach hasn't been explored, it is necessary that new instruments for a new design purpose should be invented and information should be garnered regarding perception and human response. A New Age will dawn with exploration. Exploration connotes acceptance of man's divinity, the fact that he is more than this bodily conception.

Through collaborative and perceptual design, people's experiences and actions, rather than technology, profit and exploitation become the basis for designing. Such an approach will ultimately realise a successful design process which requires an understanding of the technology, the person, and their mutual interaction. This redifined design approach has been implemented to a limited extent in practice.

In Japan, Kiyoshi Sakashita, Director of Sharp's industrial design department, writes:

> Sharp's designers are moving from hardware role to a software role - what we call humanware. The idea of humanware is an appeal to the aesthetic sense, emotions, the cultural values of human beings. By considering the human feeling and mentality we aim to promote the development of merchandise than can really satisfy people's needs.
> (Mitchell, C.T. 1993 p.120)

Another Japanese company pursuing this approach is Mazda. An article in the Economist recently reported:

> Physical and emotional responses to different colours, shapes and even smells inside the car are now being measured. Cameras have been used to follow the eye movements of people looking at new designs. Synthesizers have been used to reproduce various sounds in order to try and determine the most desirable engine noise for people of different ages and backgrounds . (Mitchell, C.T. 1993 p.121)

These two companys are pioneers in the emerging field of 'sensory engineering' - the development of products which appeal to the human as a whole, acknowledging her perceptual as well as his physical facets and their specific needs. The development of 'sensory' or 'humanware' engineering hearlds a design approach which suitably responds to a user's many needs, wishes and desires. A more consummate attention to the individual and the acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of all things could have profound implications, not only for industrial design but ultimately for a whole new way of life.

A PERFECT WORLD

It is now quite apparent that the Western passion for material wealth is more damaging than we may have realised. We have been corrupted; fallen from the realms of the spirit we have become incomplete. New Age philosophy indicates that man must become free from this 'material' conception of life. Once this is realised we can once again hope to enjoy a far richer life.

This does not imply an outright rejection of modern technocentric culture. We have, through industrialisation, discovered many good things, which have unburdened man's existence from many unnecessary tasks. These benefits should be preserved but we should discard the material consciousness which has resulted. Regaining the ancient wisdom which we have lost, we may come to realise that what most people describe as 'reality' only barely touches the grandeur, power and mystery of the universe.

During the last decade, a public has emerged all over the world which realises the impotency of life today. They have adopted the ancient wisdom of the shaman in an attempt to free themselves from today's material conception of life. This New Age belief in the existence and essential importance of the occult is much more than a verbose philosophical ideology. Both science and religion seem to be agreeing that there is a periphery of the mind, beyond which we cannot see. Mystical experiences are fast becoming scientific realities. The Unknown, the occult is now becoming known in the sense of its existence.

A New Age is beginning to dawn which recognises the existence and importance of those immaterial things which we cannot touch, see or taste. Such an age will realise and sate the needs, wishes and desires of all those who dwell on this planet, re-establishing a lost feeling of worth in many who have become consumed by the futility of our current 'material' age. The realisation of such a 'utopia' depends on everybody and their collaboration.

CONCLUSION

MAGIC - SCIENCE OF THE FUTURE

This thesis began by remarking at the extent to which designers have divorced themselves from the people who live with and work with their design solutions; solutions which are unattentive to consumer needs and wishes. It is quite apparent, in view of the number of award winning designs that have failed the test of use (eg. The Bronx Development Centre) that the design community's criteria for successful design radically differs from the public's criteria. Designers have adopted an objective problem solving role, judging their work according to static geometrical rules, while the people who use their designs are more concerned with the dynamic experience of using things.

The design movements which have emerged since industrialisation have all proven insufficiently responsive to the needs and wishes of design users. There is an urgent need for transition, which realises that the article is not the sole fruition of the design process. Designers must redefine their role and begin to resolve those problems which will allow man to exist harmoniously in an industrial, mechanistic world.

> Design itself needs to be redefined in terms of people's experience instead of in terms of objects. This static geometrical criteria of the design of the industrial era must be abandoned in favour of a focus on the dynamic, multisensory experiences of design users. Design must shift from a focus on products to a concern with processes'. (Mitchell, C.T. 1993, p.131)

Chapter Three details a number of methods which might be implemented by industrial designers in order to realise a more successful design approach. User experience, rather than physical form, becomes the impetus and focus for design, while the object becomes a transitory part. Adopting a more collaborative approach to design, the general public has a major role in the design process, having an opportunity to see what is being decided before and not after the main design decisions and specifications have been finalised. This consummate attention to people's activities, wishes and desires suggests new, more profound dimensions in design, many of which are perceptual and independent of physical form. Because subjective perception affects a person's concept of the quality of a product, the acknowledgement of an individual's perception and its consideration in the design process connotes a new concept of quality and user responsiveness.

Through Collaborative and Perceptual design approaches, people's experiences and actions, rather than the fruition of physical forms applauded by contemporary design movements, become the impetus for industrial designers. Such an approach will ultimately realise a successful design process which assumes its purpose because of people, not in spite of them.

The collaboration between designer and design user in order to realise designs which fulfill both the user's physical and non-material needs implies a singular approach to a seemingly distinct duality. This unitarian approach reiterates the essence of New Age philosophy; a philosophy intent on liberating man from this current material conception of life, reinstating the importance of

that which is beyond quantification. Philosophy, however, is more than a verbose ideology; it requires the implementation of thought in order to realise that some ideology. The creation of a New Age, in the hope that the dominant material paradigm will disintegrate depends on everyone.

Recognising the interrelatedness of all things implies the possible progression of not only the industrial design profession. Science, obsessed by rationalisation and quantification may also recognise the existence and importance of those realms which remain hidden and undefinable. Scientific exploration of such occultic matter like thaumaturgy and telekinesis may help man develop his latent powers, augmenting his potentialities. The reinstatment of the spirit, the idea that man is more than this material conception and the belief in the interelatedness of all creation may instigate a progressive world, evoking peace, quashing futility and reinstating a feeling of hope and worth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPLE, Jacki "Spotlight Review" High Performance
Spring 1989 p.52

BRANZI, Andrea The Hot House: Italian New Wave Design
London Thames and Hudson 1984

CARR-GOMM, Philip The Druid Tradition
Dorset Element 1991

CHAMBERS The Occult
Edinburgh W&R Chambers 1991

CHRISTO "On Running Fence Project" Domus
August 1975 p. 54

FINNEBERG, Jonathan "Thoughts on Christo" Art in America 67
December 1979 p. 99

FOX, Warwick "Deep Ecology" The Ecologist
Vol. 14 No. 5 - 6, 1984 pp. 194, 199

HARNER, Michael The Way of the Shaman
New York Harper Collins 1980

JONES, J. Christopher "Automation and Design 5" Design
February 1958 p. 44

MATTHEWS, Caitlin The Celtic Tradition
Dorset Element 1989

MATTHEW, John The Celtic Shaman

Dorset Element 1991

MITCHELL, C.Thomas Redefining Designing

New York VNR 1993

O'BRIEN, Paul "Art and Technology" Circa

No. 44 Mar / Apr. 1989 pp. 15, 18

O'BRIEN, Paul "Post modernism and Beyond" Circa

No. 48 Nov. / Dec. 1989 pp. 17, 22

STEPHENS, Suzanne "Richard Meier" Progressive Architecture

May 1977 p. 61

WILSON, Colin The Occult

London Hodder & Stoughton 1971