

The Design of the Pleasure Aesthetic

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Abstract. Through the analysis of the pleasure aesthetic, to explore the existence form of the design and the identity of the designer in the consumer society. Using qualitative research methods, based on the concept of pleasure evolution, analysis the "pleasure" of socialization and economization. From the perspective of aesthetics, Social and Political Science, economics to point out that the design by using stimulate the senses, metaphor, manufacturing mythology, and other ways to cater to and strengthen the aesthetic pleasure, however, the pleasure design full of desire and satisfaction is fail to bring people the eternal, real and sustainable happiness.

1 Introduction

People nowadays have a growing need for entertainment, aesthetics and consumption thanks to modern technologies, social development, and material abundance. The daily products, from design to production, presentation, marketing, utilization and discard, aim to give customers "pleasure", the source of strength to draw everyone together in a society advocating for consumption.

Traditionally, pleasure is regarded as a result of physiological reaction. However, pleasure is never a pure physiological product, but has something to do with the culture and aesthetics under specific historical conditions. Therefore, the design of pleasure-based product is to endow it with social values rather than beauty in appearance. This paper aims to study the rationales behind the design of products and the positioning of designers based on the identity of "pleasure" in various stages, the aesthetic experience of pleasure and the elements of aesthetic pleasure in the design.

2 Transformation of aesthetic pleasure in the social and economic context

Pleasure refers to the physiological or mental feelings of people as a reaction to the external world. It involves the inner and external world of people, specific reactions, as well as the correlation between the three. The inner and exterior world of people are defined by history and geography. The feeling of "pleasure" is a "specific reaction" that varies with historical stages and traditions. The concept of "pleasure" should be studied under the

three factors instead of one unified standard, requiring scholars to develop a full understanding of its complexity and development.

Back in the ancient times, our ancestors had been caring about themselves due to geographical restrictions and tough environment for survival. It was the initial form of aesthetics, as indicated by their preferences for sweet and smooth staff over bitter and rough materials. The pleasure brought by body is found not only in human, but also among animals as well, because it is an animalistic pleasure (involving senses and emotions) [1]. Plato regarded this pleasure as one of the most natural and important daily needs of people, a primary strength that endows creatures with life and power [2]. Unlike pleasure generated by people's honor of immediate needs in the ancient Greek myths, in the aesthetic world of western enlightenment, the need and desire of the body are no longer aesthetic pursuits free of material gain. There is no place for pleasure in the rationality-centered non-aesthetic world. Pleasure, morality, rationality, and aesthetics have been set as opposed to each other, which is strikingly consistent with the traditional Confucian thought of regulating behavior and lust with ritual and music in China (Neo-Confucianism in the Song Dynasty even proposed to destroy human desires with natural principles).

To certain extent, the history of human being is a process of pleasure from suppression to liberation, in which people's desires are gaining social acceptance, a process of human nature prevailing animal instinct. However, this marks only a temporary victory as in the post-modern age, people are no longer satisfied with the world restricted by rationality, but rather attempt to break through restrictions posed by the physical body and the exterior world to construct a magic world of pleasure. The new capitalism creates a new ethic of pleasure according to "a standardized principle of entertainment

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and hedonism, a social code governing production and consumption” [3]. Unlike the original society focusing on personal experience and feelings, the new "pleasure" is more about self-objectification as a symbol and decoration, in which pleasure is transformed into a cultural value and consumption symbol, a discipline, and appeals to interests. Although pleasure is based on physical senses, it is not limited to the sensory world, but is integrated into the economic, cultural, political, and social context to form a more complex, precise, and magical system. At this point, pleasure has completed the transformation from personal experience to a part of society, culture, and economy.

3 Aesthetics of daily life and the experience of pleasure

Pleasure has become a key word of current aesthetics, closely related to daily life, economy, and social mechanism. As a principle guiding our daily life, pleasure is playing a key role in the aesthetics of people's life. Living in a world surrounded by the beauty from household ware, office supplies, fabulous models to fascinating air, we are enjoying the beauty of “decoration, vividness and experience”, as put by Wolfgang Weksch. Aesthetics means to decorate our world with beautiful elements and package the reality in a fancy dream. The real world is a place of “the most shallow standard of aesthetics advocating for purposeless pleasure, entertainment and experience”[4].

The reconstruction of aesthetics refers to the reconstruction of an aesthetic life, an integration of the beauty of both art and life as well as a compromise of rationality (if not falling apart) to perception. It relies on modern information technology and mass media for dissemination. However, the transmission is not only about the outer appearance and materialistic aesthetics in the real world, but more about the transformation of people's attitudes and values toward life. People started to experience pleasure in a faster, stronger and novel way with the support of ever abundant resources. It has in turn boosted the desire of people for more and better staff. The cycle of "desire-satisfaction-new desire-new satisfaction" is the foundation of the consumption-oriented economy, and the driving force sustaining the generation, consumption, and experience of pleasure. The so-called trends and fashions, which are adapted to the realization of pleasant sensation, have continuously introduced new admission standards through constantly updated forms and series of symbol rendering, and through advertising, film and television, shopping malls, networks and other means of communication to distinguish people, thus accelerating consumption and

production, stimulating desire, satisfying desire and strengthening pleasant sensation. When people are immersed in the aesthetics of objects and emphasize the projection of desires, pleasant sensation experience becomes the motive force of production and reproduction, a living state of people and a basic economic form. The integration of pleasure into economy is forcing fashion to update more frequently in new forms and symbols and disseminate via advertisement, movies, shopping malls and internet so as to identify the target market rapidly and accurately, thus accelerating the cycle of pleasure. When people have a stronger desire for aesthetics, the experience of pleasure would serve as the driving force of reproduction, an indispensable part of people's life, and the foundation of economy.

It's worth noting that in the consumption-oriented society, the generation of pleasure relies not on instant sensational satisfaction but the presentation of the consumed product (a symbol and fantasy) that works under the consumer's belief in the product. The consumption of products is not limited to its utilization value, but extend to the symbolic value it carries. By the ownership and consumption of the symbolic value of products, people distinguish themselves and their class from others. In this sense, the status of the product in terms of symbolic value corresponds to the consumer's social class. The relationship between people is represented by the relation between products presented by them [5]. The symbolized aesthetics means everything is sequenced in a system, where the product, advertisement, the show window, and decorations in the mall function as a point in the aesthetic chain. The experience of pleasure is created by the appearance of things and their ties with the outside world, thus complicating the pleasure-oriented design of products.

4 Pleasure-oriented design and the design of pleasure

In the manufacturing of pleasure, the designer plays an essential role, who, on the one hand, is driven by pleasure while creating pleasure, with the two processes intertwining and affecting each other. The variety of pleasure experiences (sense, emotion, thinking pattern, behavior, and related experience) [6] and the types of pleasant sensations (pleasure from purchasing, aesthetic pleasure of the goods themselves, pleasure of identity symbols, desire of dreams, etc.) also complicates and enriches the means of designing “sensual pleasure”, including stimulating the senses with surface aesthetics, arousing psychological pleasure with metaphor, and creating myths with dream situations, etc. (Figure 1).

Consumer	Performance technique	Designer role
Purchase pleasure Fantasy pleasure	Scene create	Culture tutor
Power pleasure	Symbolic coding	Interpreter
Aesthetic pleasure	Form shaping	Artist

Figure 1. Consumer Pleasure - Design Relationship

4.1. Stimulating sensational aesthetics at the surface level

Human beings are biologically visual and sensory creatures. Sensory stimulation is the most important, direct, and real part of the design. Especially in the design of products for ordinary people, decoration compensates the dullness brought by the blank. Beauty can bring pleasure to the senses. The appearance of the product is no longer a mere decoration of the function, but has its own set of values. Novelty and aesthetics aiming at sensory stimulation has come to the top priority of design. The design of color, texture, form and sound that target vision, hearing, touch and kinesthesia is essential to people's life.

In the pursuit of sensory stimulation, designers can "mix" any means of expression and materials of

historical, exotic, playful, solemn, technological, local, gaudy and luxurious features. Italian designer Alessandro Mendini designed the Proust 066 armchair (Figure 2) in 1972, which adopted the decorative technique of point-and-color painting for the surface. The stunning color and exquisite pattern along with multi-layered structure and rich decorative effects brought strong sensory impact to people. The design is neither modest and restrained like a gentleman nor flashy, but stressed decoration and sensory feelings with emphasis on the multi-sensory relationship between products and users (not limited to practical functions), thus shortening and disintegrating the distance between products and users. This kind of design process is more about the shaping and strengthening of emotions than discovery, analysis and solution to problems. The designer was a pure artist, with his work a genuine piece of art.



Figure 2. Proust 066 armchair designed by Alessandra Mendini

4.2. A set of hints arousing pleasure

If surface aesthetics is used to satisfy the consumer's individual desires for material in the form of decoration and experience, awakening pleasure through a set of hints is a kind of social and cultural control. Each kind of pleasant sensation experience needs to be placed in the entirety, and conveys and strengthens the carefully planned concept. As Jean Baudrillard put it, "They are no longer a series of simple commodities, but a series of meanings, because they imply more complicated high-

grade commodities but rather a series of meanings because they serve as mutual hints of fancy and more complicated things that stimulate a series of motives in consumers"[4]. The design of articles has evolved into a process of symbol repetition and expansion, eventually forming a consistent form of expression, namely style.

The design covers a complete set of elements involving corporate culture, consumption motivation, narration of experience instead of the pure display of the designer's individual artistic talent. The designer undertakes the responsibility of conveying messages of collective consciousness in an attempt to "open up the

road of temptation, induce people to shopping in the commodity network, and guide people's shopping activities based on commercial logic until the maximum investment is obtained"[4]. The process of creating business atmosphere demands the participation of designers and capital to oversee the overall adjustment of production, service, and goods to the needs of consumers. Advertisements, trademarks, spokesmen, corporate culture, shop windows, shopping malls, exhibition halls, movies and TV programs, as well as the Internet are the key control points of this integrated network. The traditional concept of product design has been eliminated and transformed into a broader integration design. Ironically, the "complete set of elements" must have clear features to distinguish itself from the "non-original" ones, and obtain and strengthen its indicative meaning, thus transforming the product into the "symbol of status".

Products of Apple have built a platform of friendly experience through similar idea of symbols and unified closed software system. Meanwhile, the Apple products have distinct features in material, color, form, design, texture, experience and culture compared with products of other brands, thus distinguishing itself from others. On the one hand, the complete set of hardware and software of Apple is promoting the company's pursuit of perfection and originality; on the other hand, it also provides users with an affordable luxury and a kind of experience that belongs exclusively to Apple users through various channels. The role of the designer is not so much about the function of products as coding formal symbols to guide consumers unconsciously into abyss of desire, where they experience the dream world they have longed for. Here, design is more of a concept, aesthetics, and style symbol than the display of material.

4.3. Giving consumers a world of fantasy

If we describe the sensory stimulation as aesthetic and arousing pleasure as political, the creation of a fantasy world is an economic behavior. In a consumption-oriented society with abundant material resources, capital promotes consumption and increases profits by abolishing outdated designs, stimulating desires through information dissemination, and leading fashion and trends. Designers, along with users and media, have created one myth after another that is both accessible but beyond the reach of the public. Through the psychological elimination mechanism, they have aroused dissatisfaction with existing products among consumers, who were urged to abandon the present one in pursuit of new dreams and desires.

Designers create various "mythical worlds" through media such as networks, newspapers, movies, exhibitions, etc. to convey the effect of products in a world of elegance and taste. The products are juxtaposed with features symbolizing beauty (economic, cultural, political, moral, etc.), and are added with attributes to satisfy the illusions of viewers and users. Nike, a sports brand, claims to be an organization that conveys the concept of "transcendence". Starbucks claims itself a new class, a "third living space", with its products serving as

sacrifices to myths and rituals. The designers were priests who aroused the rituals. Despite the fact that Nike does not mean transcendence and Starbucks cannot become a class, people follow the slogan and imagine that they are living in a mythical world. What designers need to do is to skillfully handle the relationship between products and consumers "to remove the burden of their reality and bring them into the illusion of pleasure" so that they "fall into the imaginary world" [7].

5 Satisfied desires and happiness

Creativity has always been serving to meet people's needs, which, in the due course, has stimulated even more demands. When people step into a consumption-oriented society of pleasure, the transformation from biological pleasure to social, cultural, and economic pleasure has become an important feature of the economy today. Rationality gives way to perceptual experience, as evidenced by people's growing needs for aesthetics. As a reflection of life and society, the design of products must follow the trend and present product in the corresponding form. However, the design based on consumer's sensory pleasure also aims at political and economic gains through metaphors of desire, systematic and distinctive symbols, as well as the creation of myths. In this sense, pleasure is consciously objectified. Here, the pleasure experience of consumers is liberated and alienated into a tool of communication. Design activities play an important role in this process of alienation by decorating skin, coding symbols, manufacturing myths, spreading culture, and educating consumers.

Designers profit from their efforts to change people's life. However, did designers bring real happiness to people in the process of creating pleasure? We are not sure. Even if the pleasure has not been alienated, the experience of pleasure is only a moment in myth, accompanied by greater emptiness. Just as the saying goes, "the desire is as insatiable as it looks, because it is based on poverty, and could never be satisfied by partial self-direction in goods and continuous demand". What's more, pleasure experience has been alienated into economic and cultural behavior, which is more ambiguous and packaged as an excuse for the satisfaction of desire in a symbolic sociology system. People, accompanied by consumption (or the other way around) form a comprehensive and integrated symbolic system, whose happiness is defined by their position in the system, with the consumption serving only as a symbol of happiness. This kind of happiness marked by symbols is far from intrinsic happiness [8]. Not to mention the environmental problems brought about by the tremendous waste of resources caused by the accelerated replacement of products under the pleasure-oriented economy, threatening the overall survival of mankind.

Designers cooperate with producers, sellers, and consumers to create the consumption-oriented society of pleasure. Designers act as beauticians, cultural excavators, consumer tutors and myth creators. However, the designer's economic success does not mean that it

brings people real happiness. Obviously, designers need to do better in the face of complicated daily life aesthetics.

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