

# Critical Discourse of Postmodern Aesthetics in Contemporary Furniture (I) - The background of New Design furniture in the postmodern era

Sun-Ok Moon<sup>\*1</sup> and Vesta A. H. Daniel<sup>\*2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

---

This study explored the background of contemporary furniture design called New Design furniture, which newly expresses the aesthetics of communication in the postmodern era. Qualitative conceptual analysis as the principle methodology was used to explore the background of the decorative and meaningful contemporary furniture in postmodernism. Thereby, the postmodern concepts of Charles Jencks, Robert Venturi, and Michael Graves were analyzed in terms of their postmodern architecture and furniture. As initiatives of postmodern architecture and furniture, Jencks, Venturi, and Graves explored the pluralism and eclecticism, the decoration, the semantics, and the materials reestablished from the traditions of craft. As a result, their furniture was expressed by various wood and color; the furniture was beautiful, decorative, pluralistic, and eclectic for communicating symbol, metaphor, narrative, and/or humor with people; the furniture has influenced the communicative elements on the contemporary furniture design called New Design furniture design, which shows the blurring of fine arts and craft distinctions.

*Keywords* : postmodern, modern, communication, semantics, symbol, metaphor, narrative, humor, pluralism, eclecticism, decoration, fine arts, craft

---

---

\* 1 Division of Forest Science, Gyeongsang National Univ. Korea

\* 2 Dept. of Art Education. Ohio State University. USA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, furniture design tends to emphasize aesthetics, which can be recognized as beauty "decoration, and/or craftsmanship, through divergent expressions stressing the designers' individual environment, rather than functionality or comfort. Hence, contemporary furniture in Postmodernism is variously called "art furniture," "handmade furniture," "craft furniture," or "studio furniture" (Corbin, 1998, p. 26). Downey (1992) maintains that this work remains unencumbered by the multiplicity that some call chaos. She observes that some furniture designers have suggested that "those who consider functionality the most important element have remained in the most primitive stage of their design development"(Downey, 1992, p. 155). Overall, with the blurring of art and craft distinctions, today's furniture designs tend to be characterized by chaos, biases, and disparities, which are largely expressed in one-of-a-kind works with high art content. This type of furniture is considered anti-functional because of "its use of decoration, quirkiness of form, and towering scale" (Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 146). It appears that furniture designers of the 1980s and 1990s have stressed aesthetics over functionality or comfort in their furniture designs.

The postmodern style appears in anti-Modernism and anti-Rationalism in Modern architecture. Postmodern furniture explores such ideas as 'ornament is no longer a crime' and 'less is a bore,' set against the dictums 'ornament is a crime' and 'less is more' which were explored in Modern furniture. Postmodern

furniture explores ideas from the traditions of craft and represents an eclectic and pluralistic approach based on postmodern ideas. Through his symbolic furniture, Charles Jencks, a postmodern founding father, has revived, reintroduced, and reinterpreted ideas from Egyptian, Greek, and Roman furniture in Gothic and Renaissance styles. The meanings of symbolic furniture play a major role in metaphors of postmodern furniture for everyday life through everyday experience. Likewise, for the beauty or decoration of their furniture, postmodern furniture designers

revive, reintroduce, and reinterpret ideas from traditions such as the Neo-Classical reaction, the Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco. Hence, postmodern furniture emphasizes beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship rather than comfort or function.

Like postmodern architecture, the postmodern aesthetics of contemporary furniture intends to communicate on various levels. New Design furniture designers, including postmodern architects, have developed their ideas from Jencks double-coding concept, which is the continuation of Modernism in combination with architectural styles from earlier traditions. Postmodern aesthetics expressed through contemporary furniture is generally considered as ideas from the aesthetics of postmodern architecture. Through micro-architectural concerns, most of the postmodern architects have created postmodern furniture which is in harmony with the aesthetics of their postmodern architecture. In Modernism "ornament, polychromy, metaphor, humor, symbolism and convention were put on the Index and all forms of decoration and historical reference were declared taboo" (Jencks, 1986, p. 31). However, postmodernists accept and adapt all these elements as the message of their art. Jencks (1986) stresses that definers of Post-Modernism were all "connected with semantics, convention, historical memory, metaphor, symbolism and respect for existing cultures" (p. 35). These architects and furniture designers differentiate postmodernism from Late-modernism, which involves more technical and economic aspects in solving problems.

Therefore, the postmodern aesthetics in the background of New Design furniture can be explored according to pluralism and eclecticism, decoration, semantics, and materials. A content analysis of three Post-Modern furniture designers' aesthetics through the concepts and works explored by their furniture will be presented in part one according to description, interpretation, and conclusion/implication. Charles Jencks, Robert Venturi, and Michael Graves have represented postmodern aesthetics through their architecture and furniture design.

## 2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THREE FURNITURE DESIGNERS' POST MODERN AESTHETICS

### 2.1 Charles Jencks

#### 2.1.1 A definition of postmodern

Charles Jencks, an architect and critic, who has been one of the most prolific commentators on postmodernism, has offered a useful definition of Post-Modernism in terms of double coding:

To this day I would define Post-Modernism as I did in 1978 as *double coding: the combination of Modern techniques with something else (usually traditional buildings) in order for architecture to communicate with the public and a concerned minority, usually other architects*. The point of this double coding was itself double. Modern architecture had failed to remain credible partly because it didn't communicate effectively with its ultimate users the main argument of my book. (Jencks, 1986, p. 14)

For Jencks, double coding means the continuation of Modernism in combination with ideas from Pre-Modernism or traditions like Gothic and Renaissance art and architecture. Charles Jencks' first book, *The Language of Modern Architecture* (1977), "celebrated new post-modern styles based on eclecticism and populism, and helped to disseminate the concept of the postmodern" (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 11).

#### 2.1.2 Pluralism and Eclecticism

With his definition of the double-coding in postmodernism, Jencks explores symbolic furniture according to the idea of 'Classical' inspiration, which ranges from Egypt, Greece, Neo-Classicism, Biedermeier, and the Regency, to Art Deco in the Modern period.

Jencks' *Spring Chair* for the Spring room in his Thematic House has a shell-shaped back with a symbolic idea like Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* in the Uffizi, Florence; as in the painting where "Venus is seen

emerging from a shell, the image [of the chair] also has the connotation of the rebirth of learning. The rear of the chair has an inset Wedgwood shell-shaped plate, which Jencks calls 'a "found" industrial object which is used as a symbolic ornament' " (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 123).

Jencks' *Sun Chair* with a sunburst back shows not only the motif of the Regency and Art Deco styles but a compression of 1980s and 1930s furniture styles as well. One of Jencks' best designs to date, the sun chair with his sun table is most successful in the version without arm rests (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 123).

#### 2.1.3 Decoration

By using and simplifying symbol as decoration in displaying meaning, Jencks furniture explores symbolic and meaningful beauty. Symbolic objects which have been carefully designed and crafted give point to the ephemeral background.

First, the symbolic objects use very simple forms and proportions, the main Platonic solids and such ratios as 1:1:3:5. Second, the simple colors of the objects relate to the background, and minimalist abstraction of the objects by the incised line and flat planes is used as a rhetorical means of contrast. Jencks (1989) explains that "this simplicity is partly sought to heighten the effect of the central symbol the eye-catcher and partly meant to harmonize with other forms" (p. 139). Thus, in his light series, the polished stone, the mass-produced item, or the precious stone is the eye-catcher. Third, the composition focuses on the visual and semantic. One's mind is drawn away from function because of the eye-catchers' role in displacing meaning. Thereby, the eye-catcher shows a different taste and skill. Finally, according to Jencks (1989), the symbolic and meaningful object is beautiful, precious, and inexpensive because it can be made by mass-production of prefabricated parts for daily life.

#### 2.1.4 Semantics (meaning)

Jencks' symbolism is to be expected from a writer on architecture concerned with meaning and language. For

his symbolic furniture, Jencks not only takes inspiration from parts of architecture but also considers furniture a form in 'micro-architecture,' a concept which many other Post-Modernists agree on. Thus, like his Post-Modern architecture, Jencks' furniture explores many different contexts in terms of specific meaning and function:

Jencks has explained his symbolic furniture in the following terms: Usually furniture is designed to be placed in many different contexts, as a result it is often banal, the most elegant furniture of this century, that of Mies van der Rohe and Charles Eames, is so general as to be equally at home in the airport lounge and the executive office: A symbolic furniture, still somewhat general but capable of specific meaning and function, might reassert its rightful place and give anonymous space a place and location. Jencks also asserts that his furniture is meant to have a multivalence lacking in the technosolipistic furniture of our time. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 124)

Thus, in terms of his interpretation of traditional architecture, Jencks' symbolic architecture and furniture convey metaphoric meaning in everyday life.

#### 2.1.5 Symbolic Objects:

##### Example 1: Architecture

In ancient times, symbolic architecture always united the cosmos and the everyday world, made a few basic themes various, and made papyrus, lotus, and palm open, closed, and composite in various ways for enhancing the beauty and function of the three plant orders: "how the papyrus bundles were tied together at the top, how the stalks flared out under the weight and curved in to meet the ground" (Jencks, 1985, p. 25). When Greeks, Romans, and Christians transformed Egyptian architecture for their own symbolic system, the architecture was always at the same time aesthetic, functional, and symbolic in an attempt to make daily life and the cosmos meaningful. Thus, the symbolic architecture, "which mediates between the personal and the public, the transitory and the eternal," has meaning conforming to the plot of the transformed

architecture (Jencks, 1985, p. 26). If people do not trust the content or meaning, the symbolic building is diminished into a kitsch form. Thus, the content of the symbolic architecture is as significant as the form or shape

In considering Jencks' interpretation of the significant content of symbolic architecture, there are five major areas, i.e., "traditional social use or the function of the building type, literature, religion, scientific discoveries which inspire wonder, and personal history" (Jencks, 1985, p. 34). Jencks (1985) suggests that the each area may appear as the pretext for a symbolic programme, story or scenario about traditional architecture.

The symbolic design of architecture in terms of abstraction or aesthetic or functional architecture gives architects the advantage of motivation in something behind the making and perceiving of the work. Creativity transformed by such motivation extends the meanings of the architecture. It functions beyond just the understanding of the wider audience. Jencks (1985) addresses the effects of this motivation and suggests that "such a combination fundamentally deepens the seriousness and integrity of the architecture itself" (p. 34). Additionally, symbolic design gives enjoyment to human beings in exploring the meaning at both trivial and profound levels. In our lives, we read and perceive everything we see and know and care about through our five senses. The various plots, the local meaning, the conventional stories of society might be good pretexts for symbolic architecture. However, we may be "frustrated when our environment does not fit together and reward our expectation that life is meaningful" (Jencks, 1985, p. 35).

Therefore, according to symbolization, transformation, and meaning in ancient times, this analysis of architecture may be valid for that of a piece of symbolic and metaphoric postmodern furniture. First, symbol in the past must be reconstructed and retransformed into elements of symbol systems that can be understood in contemporary terms. According to architects' interpretations, the retransformed symbolic architecture with beauty and functionality has a symbolic programme, story, or scenario. Second, the meaning or content of retransformed

architecture makes the symbolic architecture explicitly denotative and implicitly connotative in conveying the metaphoric meaning. These two general kinds of meanings

and concepts are essential for understanding the nature of metaphor literally or nonliterally. Finally, the visual metaphor of symbolic architecture functions beyond the fact of the architecture in communicating with people. Thus, people enjoy symbolic architecture and enrich their everyday lives as an extension of the metaphoric meaning.

#### Example 2: Furniture

Through symbolism, Jencks explores the meaning of postmodern furniture. For example, Jencks' *Colosseum* chair and stool seem to be a form of micro-architecture derived from several different prototypes of architecture in ancient times (see Fig.1, 2). The chair and stool appear ambiguous in function because of the connection between door and chair back. According to Jencks' interpretation, the *Colosseum* architecture was retransformed into a symbolic chair and stool. As Jencks (1989) describes his chair and stool, "the round-backed chair is a traditional form stemming, I suppose, from two sources: the idea of the circle, and resting one's arms and back against an embracing shape" (p. 140). The chair and stool show simple colors, shapes, proportion, and materials, and, thereby, minimal articulations such as the layered overlapping of flat planes. Jencks (1989) states that in putting the stool inside the chair, an enigmatic object with several overtones is created. Thus, the chair is intended to be understood as functional, symbolic, and aesthetic according to Jencks' interpretation of the traditional building. In sitting in it and closing the gate, people may imagine themselves imprisoned, while enjoying comfort or functionality in reclining. The visual and semantic focus of the composition tends to draw our minds away from comfort or function. Through the semantic focus, metaphoric meaning can be interpreted according to the viewer

s' or users' perspective. The chair and stool will communicate the metaphoric meaning with viewer or user. For some, the *Colosseum* chair and stool may be a vivid metaphor for the life situation within the circle of the earth.



Fig.1. Jencks, 1984, Colosseum

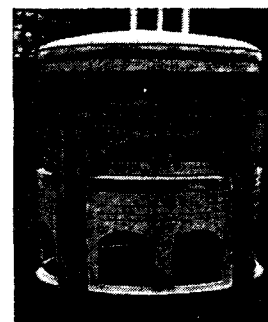


Fig.2. Jencks, 1984, Colosseum (Collins & Papadakis, 1989).

Therefore, Jencks' retransformed *Colosseum* is denotative explicitly according to the symbolized shape and connotative implicitly as it reminds the viewer of the meaningful *Colosseum* of the past. Perhaps, the *Colosseum* in Rome has kept its own metaphoric meaning in Jencks' chair and stool, a dramatic linking between the cosmos and everyday life. The denotative and connotative communication through the piece of retransformed symbolic and metaphoric furniture makes a connection between reflection on our legacy of the past and our present. The symbolic furniture conveys metaphoric meanings according to the designers' perspective or interpretation. The transfer and interpretation of meanings in postmodern furniture has the capability to communicate with people. The meaningful

furniture draws our attention, and invites us to understand, communicate, and appreciate the retransformed symbolism. Because the symbolic furniture retransformed according to the designers' interpretation can be interpreted according to the viewers' or users' perspective, we rediscover our tradition from a different and more personal perspective. Thus, our experience or use of the symbolic and metaphoric furniture reminds us of mediation between everyday existence and eternity in our significant tradition. The symbolic and metaphoric furniture is meaningful, memorable, and imaginative in the ways it is integrated with the current culture.

## 2.2 Robert Venturi

### 2.2.1 A definition of Postmodernism

Robert Venturi like Charles Jencks, one of Post-Modernism's founding fathers, as an architect and critic, has defined Postmodernism as the new concept 'less is a bore' in response to the credo 'less is more' in Modernism. In terms of the new concept, Collins & Papadakis mention that

historicism and eclecticism are used extensively by Venturi and Jencks. It was, therefore, somewhat ironic that it was MOMA which published Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966. This broke the mould of dominant Modernism in his plea for complexity and contradiction: elements which are hybrid rather than pure-messy vitality over obvious unity. I prefer both-and to either-or. Significantly it was Robert Venturi who hit the International Modern Movements credo of less is more on the head by countering it with less is a bore in the same publication. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 103)

### 2.2.2 Pluralism and Eclecticism

Through his concept 'less is a bore,' in the postmodern era, Venturi has created highly ornamental chairs and revivals reflecting ideas "from the Queen Anne style of 1730 through to Hollywood Art Deco of 1930," and the nine chairs revive chronologically "Queen Anne, Chippendale, Gothic (k), Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Empire,

Biedermeier, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco" (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 104) (see Figure 3).

From a concern with the history of ornament and design, as well as the Pop Art, Venturi has written extensively about the use of decoration and symbolism:

Our current definition of architecture is shelter with symbols on it. Ornament and symbolism certainly applied ornament and the simple uses of association have been ignored in architecture, or condemned ornament equated with crime by Adolf Loos as long ago as 1906, and symbolism associated with discredited historical eclecticism. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 104)

Venturi is certainly aware of history, to which the 'Post' in Post-Modern indicates their debt

edness. His ornament may remind one of "Sir Henry Cole's design group of the 1840s, which attempted to relate ornament to function" (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 104). In fact, Venturi's chairs are all shown as rechauffes of stereotypes from history, although one could make an issue that originality is difficult today. Hence, Post-Modernism may become aware of the issue as interpretation.

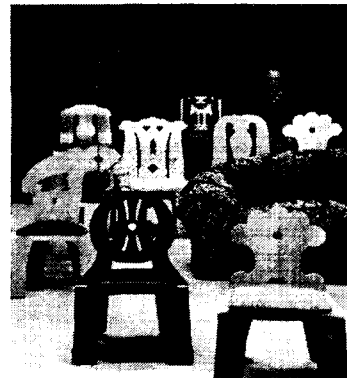


Fig.3. Venturi, 1984. The Venturi Collection (Dormer, 1987).

### 2.2.3 Decoration

Inspired by the new concepts 'less is a bore' and 'ornament is no longer a crime,' Venturi explores color or surface ornament. His chairs express various bright finishes with, "in addition to a blond

plywood finish, a red Chippendale or a yellow Art Nouveau. It reminds one a little of the penny plain, tuppence colored principle of nineteenth-century prints, with the obvious scaling up of today' s prices" (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 107). In attempting the revivalism of polychromy and a return to ornamentation, Venturi explores the ornament of the chairs in relation to Victorian chromolithography and color in architecture and design.

For example, the polychromatic Sheraton chair adapted from the Sheraton and Art Deco styles, an appropriate polychromatic silk screen applique of decoration shows the Neo-Classical history of ornament as in the column decorated with egg and dart; nineteenth-century color theory is adopted as the inspiration for Post-Modern color use (Collins & Papadakis, 1989).

The most interesting surface decoration, the 'Grandmother' pattern, which is distinct from the other floral pattern on the couch, comes from a "favorite tablecloth belonging to the grandmother of Robert Schwartz, an associate of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown" (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 107).

The diagonal lines in the Queen Anne chair are very possibly related to those in Jasper Jones paintings (see Fig.4). In terms of the floral and grandmother pattern, Collins & Papadakis mention that

Venturi has written of this that it is characteristic of Post-Modernism to use familiar and conventional patterns a floral pattern you might find on a faded tablecloth that belonged to your grandmother, and a typical screen pattern used in commercial art but made much bigger. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 107)

#### 2.2.4 Materials

As the materials for his postmodern chairs, Venturi uses bent plywood which is molded and laminated as Modern furniture designers did. The chairs can be mass-produced and at the same time

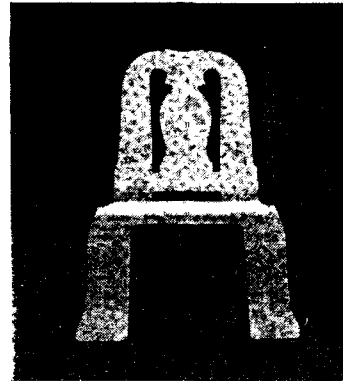


Fig.4. Venturi, 1984, Queen Anne Chair (Dorner, 1987).

bring a degree of economy. In the 1930s Alvar Aalto or Marcel Breuer, architects and furniture designers, experimented with plywood shaped by new technology for their Modern furniture. Therefore, Venturi's postmodern concept on the materials useful for his chairs includes not only the obvious Neo-Classical materials such as Queen Anne, Chippendale, Gothic (k), Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Empire, and Biedermeier, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco, but the most modern laminated plastic as well.

### 2.3 Michael Graves

#### 2.3.1 A Definition of Postmodernism

Like Jencks, Michael Graves, a famous Post-Modern architect, gradually turned back to polychromy as it was used in the nineteenth century.

Based on the historical references to decoration in architecture and furniture, Michael Graves, the most innovative and publicly known of the New York Five,

came into prominence with a highly decorative architectural language that stressed allusions, historical reference, and spatial complexity. Because of his militant rejection of the purist forms of Modernism, Graves was a major influence on interior design in the 1970s, first through his symbolic use of colors and later through the Post-Modern Classical ornamentation of his architecture, furniture, and housewares. (Spencer,

1991, p. 140)

### 2.3. Pluralism and Eclecticism

In Graves' furniture, Art Deco meets Empire or Regency, which can be considered a meeting of the memories of 1930s' and 1830s' furniture. His blond wood stool for Diane Von Furstenbergs' boutique in New York has an ebonized leg rail, and is topped by a cushion with tassels at its corners. The 'sabre' leg was popular in the British Regency and the American Empire period, which are popular sources of inspiration for Post-Modern furniture. The piece brings to mind an appropriate sense of luxury (Collins & Papadakis, 1989).

#### 2.3.3 Decoration

With a symbolic approach, Graves uses colors in his architecture, and then marvelously turns the old patterns of the nineteenth-century palette, which was full of earthbound reds, sky blues, and gold, into elements of his work, applying colors of light pink and blue (see Fig.5, 6). This kind of device, familiar since the time of the Renaissance, has been brought back in the postmodern era. This is a unique breakthrough, since color was basically abandoned by artists of the International Style in Modernism, when people favored only white or neutral tones and an emphasis on texture rather than color. Extending the concept of his architecture, Graves has created furniture in postmodernism as well. He applied in his upholstered lounge chair and other chairs a similar elegance in form and color. Graves reinterprets Art Deco for his chairs (Collins & Papadakis, 1989).

#### 2.3.4 Materials

Through the use of blond wood, Graves Postmodern furniture explores furniture styles of the 1830s and 1930s. Graves armchair, table, and stool reinterpret Art Deco,

with a hint of Biedermeier, in the contrast between large areas of blond wood and

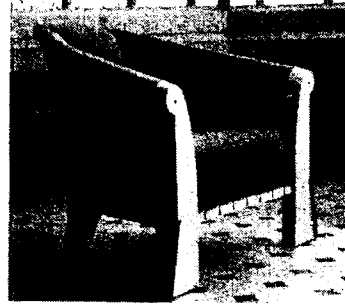


Fig.5. Graves, 1984, Lounge chair

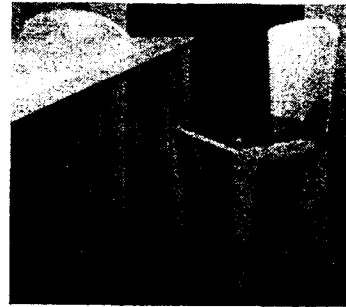


Fig.6. Graves, 1984, Side table and chair (Dormer, 1987).

dramatic ebonized sections. The wood was usually birdseye maple, and his armchair and accompanying side chair, with wedge-shaped legs, delight the eye. The same may be said for his circular table for Sunars London Showroom, with its square blond wood base and ebonized drum pedestal. The whole reminds one of Regency, or more particularly of Biedermeier loo and library tables of about 1820. A similar elegance was allied to his upholstered lounge chair for the same firm. Some of these splendid designs are still produced in Milan by Sawayi and Moroni. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 127)

## 3. INTERPRETATION

### 3.1 Pluralism and Eclecticism:

As in Jencks, Venturis, and Graves' furniture and concepts, the pluralistic and eclectic approaches to furniture design reestablished in postmodern furniture are characteristics of the work of the 1980s. These



three Post-Modernists have explored Modernism and pre-Modernism simultaneously through Jencks double coding concept, the continuation of Modernism usually in combination with traditional architecture. This is exemplified in a simultaneous multiplicity of design in contemporary furniture styles. Furniture designs of these styles reinterpret and reintroduce the motives of decoration and craftsmanship from historical references such as Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-Classical, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and combined them with Modern furniture styles, which favored mass-production by new technology.

### 3.2 'Double-Coding' : The Continuation of Modernism in Combination with Traditional Architecture

Although Jencks, Venturi, and Graves explore their postmodern furniture according to the concept 'less is a bore' in reading to the principle 'less is more' in Modern furniture, their furniture clearly includes the continuation of the Modern:

In fact this admiration for columns and Classicism, like so much else, emerged from Pop Art. Post-Modern Classicism is, however, only one development in the Pluralism of the 1980s. There are as many architects and designers who extend the tradition of the Modern, pay homage to the International Style, or refine it to the level of High Tech. Included in the continuation of the Modern is the production revival of nearly all the famous Modern chair designs of Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand, Eileen Gray, Marcel Breuer, and Guiseppe Terragni, to mention only a few. (Collins & Papadakis, 1989, p. 69)

The pluralism of part Modernism and part Postmodernism was possible as a kind of cross-breeding in the 80s. But some designers never include Classicism in their work at all. In the twentieth century, Modernism tends not only to be maintained but also to challenge and intimidate Post-Modernism through evolving technology (Collins & Papadakis, 1989).

However, classicism, as an alternative, is legitimate

again today, comparing part of the pluralism. By means of the ideas offered from classicism, architects and furniture designers could work out and put forward experimental methods, forms and styles which have raised the current issues on Neo-and Post-Modernism. An awareness of tradition and the lure of the unknown are seen in their architecture and furniture designs. As a result, it seems that Post-Modernism must dominate the design field. The Post-Modern architecture and furniture design reflect perfectly the whole gamut of the pluralism in the 1980s as well as some of its Post-Pop and micro-architectural concerns (Collins & Papadakis, 1989). Architects and furniture designers, as their basis, have adapted the most hierarchical, traditional materials such as gold; they have returned to creating well made and expensive items. Thus, in the 1980s, the new pluralism made any gesture possible in the architects and furniture designers work in competitions, events, and gatherings of collections.

Therefore, through symbolism, meaning, decoration, and materials based upon historical references, Jencks, Venturi, and Graves have attempted to create their own interpretations in Post-Modern furniture. Jencks use of Medium Density Fiberboard (Mediate) for his Sun Chairs, Venturis use of plywood for his furniture, and Graves use of blond wood, ebony, and maple for his furniture express their interpretations of the traditional wood in a pluralistic and eclectic period, which reflects both the traditional view and the Modern perspective which was not in favor of the traditional uses of wood. The use of oak, ebony inlay, blond wood, and birds eye maple in postmodern furniture tends to emphasize the ornament of surface and the context in relation to the meaning of symbol from historicism.

## 4. CONCLUSION / IMPLICATION

Although Jencks, Venturi, and Graves explore postmodern furniture as a reaction against Modern furniture, which was shaped by the terms of the credo less is a more and

ornament is a crime, they, as Post-Modernists, attempted to create simple, cheap, and beautiful furniture accessible to new technology in terms of the concepts less is a bore and ornament is no longer a crime. The 1980s pluralistic and eclectic approach in postmodern furniture has continued into the 1990s. However, the furniture from these approaches may need to be handmade rather than made by new technology. For example, some furniture designs in postmodernism are highly decorative and individualistic; others involve many dualities wavering between functionality, comfort, and aesthetics (Downey, 1992). Thus, contemporary furniture designers tend to return to and reinterpret the craftsmanship and form of Arts and Crafts furniture from 1900 to 1930.

As a matter of fact, it remains an interesting phenomenon that architects, before, during, or now after Modernism, have tended to prefer designing furniture to designing other products. Through the micro-architectural concerns of architects rather than furniture designers, their Post-Modern furniture gives one a sense of metaphor or humor. Thereby, influenced by the Post-Modern furniture through the three Post-Modernists, contemporary furniture called New Design explores not only metaphor or humor but also symbol, narrative, animation, etc, in relation to current culture as a means to convey meaning, and, thus, communicates with people on various levels. Therefore, contempora

ry furniture designers through the concept of New Design attempt to achieve their own personal experimental style and links, drawing on traditional objects, techniques, materials, and forms. Such phenomena raise a multitude of questions with a dangerous sense of expressionism and something rather surrealistic and affect contemporary furniture design.

## REFERENCES

1. Best, S., & Keller, D. 1991. Postmodern theory: Critical interrogations. New York: Guil]ford Press Collins, M, & Papadakis, A. 1989.
2. Post-Modern design. London: Academy Editions Corbin, K. 1998. Concept versus comfort: Studio furniture in the 1990s. Art New England. 19: 25-27.
3. Dormer, P. 1987. The new furniture, trends, and tradition. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
4. Downey, C. 1992. Neo-furniture. New York: Rizzoli.
5. Fiell, C., & Fiell, P. 1991. Modern furniture classics since 1945. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
6. Jencks, C. 1989. Symbolic objects. in Michael Collins & Andreas Papadakis. Postmodern design. London: Academy editions.
7. Jencks, C. 1986. What is Post-Modernism? Art & Design.
8. Jencks, C. 1985. Symbolic architecture. New York: Rizzoli.
9. Spencer, D. 1991. Total design. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.