

Critical Discourse of Postmodern Aesthetics in Contemporary Furniture (II)-The Characteristics of New Design Furniture in terms of the Postmodern Aesthetics of Communication

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the characteristics of contemporary furniture called New Design furniture design in terms of aesthetics of communication in the postmodern era. Qualitative conceptual analysis as the principal methodology was used to explore the characteristics of New Design furniture, which is accessible to the broadest possible public. Thereby, the communicative elements of symbol, metaphor, narrative, animation, imagination, humor, and/or wit expressed in New Design furniture were analyzed according to the designers' concept and work. As a result, the postmodern aesthetics of communication made New Design furniture accessible to the largest number of people through cultural considerations in New Design furniture as it influences designers' concept and work. However, it showed problems of New Design furniture in connection with postmodern aesthetics affecting mass production. Therefore, the designers have begun rethinking, redefining, and redesigning their furniture aesthetically, functionally, economically, and ecologically.

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Postmodern aesthetics as expressed through contemporary furniture can be defined as the use of symbol, metaphor, narrative, animation, imagination, or humor in contemporary furniture through ideas from the traditions of craft and from fine arts. Contemporary furniture in Postmodernism is referred to as revival, reintroduction and reinterpretation of ideas from historical references as in Neo-Classical reaction, the Arts and Crafts movement, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco, and as an adaptation of fine arts. Contemporary furniture in postmodernism communicates symbol, metaphor, narrative, animation, imagination, humor, and/or wit at a conscious and physical level with beholders or people encountering it in their everyday lives. These elements convey metaphorical meanings, which bring social and cultural contexts to the New Design furniture designers' inventions. Thus, the postmodern aesthetics of these elements are not only communicated but also variously expressed through contemporary furniture by New Design furniture designers. Postmodern aesthetics in contemporary furniture resembles the aesthetics of poetry (e.g., symbolic, metaphoric, narrative, imaginative, humorous, etc). Thus, a poetic space is created as the integration of images of postmodern aesthetics of communication through contemporary furniture. Contemporary furniture is called New Design furniture, and represents the postmodern aesthetics of communication.

Dorner (1987) observes that today there are two areas, New Design and art-craft, in contemporary furniture; however, Downey (1992) sees art-craft furniture as New Design furniture. Currently, the fields of furniture as art or craft and furniture as product design, or industrial design furniture mainly associated with new technology, are developing in opposing directions. In fact, New Design represents postmodern furniture in reflecting the 20th-century traditions of political art, the modern movement, surrealism, expressionism, and the imagery of ethnographic collections (Dorner, 1987). In

other words, each designer is following his or her own inspiration, apparently outside the established principles of design or craft but within the accepted territories of 20th-century art (Dorner, 1987, p. 130). Thus, in distinguishing furniture produced mainly in one-offs or limited editions from industrial furniture mass-produced mainly by an evolving technology, I identify contemporary furniture in Postmodernism as New Design. In this part, based on the background of New Design furniture developed in previous one, I will analyze the content according to postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture in relation to the designers' concept and work and cultural considerations; roles of communication aesthetics in New Design furniture as it influences designers' concept and work and art appreciation in everyday life; and problems of New Design furniture in connection with postmodern aesthetics affecting mass production, materials, and viewer accessibility. I will focus on analysis of the characteristics and roles of postmodern aesthetics and problems in making contemporary furniture accessible to the broadest possible public. Thereby, I will explore the phenomenon of New Design furniture more fully to help readers understand the characteristics of postmodern aesthetics of communication in contemporary furniture.

Here, I will call New Design furniture contemporary furniture, New Design furniture, or postmodern furniture flexibly because New Design furniture belongs to the category of contemporary furniture and represents furniture design through the postmodern era as a reaction against furniture theory and practice in Modernism. And, I will use the term 'Postmodernism' as meaning after Modernism so that I may designate the period as postmodernism or the postmodern era. Thus, the Post-Modernism referred to in Jencks' concept previously in part one is different from postmodernism or the postmodern era I will use here. This is because according to the designers' different interpretations or perspectives, New Design furniture in postmodernism or the postmodern era seems to have apparently developed from Jencks' double-coding in

Post-Modernism; Venturi, Graves, and other architects and furniture designers followed.

2. NEW DESIGN FURNITURE DESIGNERS' WORK AND CONCEPTS

The postmodern aesthetics of communication appears through contemporary furniture designers' work and concepts. I will categorize and analyze the characteristics of postmodern aesthetics in contemporary furniture not by the statements of furniture designers but by the furniture aesthetics the designers have created through various pieces of furniture. Because of the design sources, contemporary furniture is communicative. As one of the major communicative sources in furniture designers' works and concepts, current culture has played a major role in contemporary furniture design to express communicative aesthetics.

However, the terms referring to communication elements such as symbol, metaphor, narrative, and/or humor will be defined in each part according to the intention of the furniture designers visually rather than the meaning of the term linguistically because the furniture in the postmodern era can be interpreted visually according to the viewers' perception. For each communication element, I will focus on pluralism and eclecticism, meaning for interpretation, design source, and materials.

2.1 Pluralism and eclecticism

A time of pluralism, eclecticism, and nervous expectation have created the characteristics of contemporary furniture design in the postmodern era. Contemporary furniture designer individually searches out and expresses all the informative ideas of the past century, which are from Neo-classical reaction, Arts and Crafts movement, Art Nouveau, and/or Art Deco. The aesthetics make sense of any expression contemporary furniture; these random ideas represent an attempt to turn toward the next century. Thereby, a compatible discourse "between the concerns of

the individual and attraction to spectacle dominates, yet new ideas are in the air" (Downey, 1992, p. 9).

Through the new pluralistic and eclectic era established in contemporary furniture design, independent avant-garde designers are creating limited furniture designs which are intentionally handmade. One-of-a-kind or limited-edition furniture presents the creativity and the personality of the individual furniture designer, reflecting the fact that representational painting is no longer the only option for the artist. It [limited furniture design] conveys a sense of 'spontaneous creativity' and reflects the personality of the creator. These designers have not transposed furniture into art, but aim specifically to create poetic, three-dimensional design which possesses aesthetic characteristics similar to those of painting and sculpture.(Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 150)

According to historicism and revivalism, the craft revival movement has continued through Wendel Castel in America and John Makepeace in the United Kingdom, who are re-establishing "the artisan-traditions of furniture-making rather in the manner of the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement" (Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 148). Castel has never intended to produce his work by machine. Makepeace's Ebony and Nickel-Silver chair was laboriously time-consuming to construct, using over two thousand pieces of ebony and drawing on both Gothic and Art Nouveau sources of inspiration for its form and decorative detail. Historically, the Arts and Crafts movement initiated by William Morris insisted on bringing back the Gothic environment, which is decorative and crafty. Thus, Fiell & Fiell (1991) suggest that the use of high-quality materials and labor-intensive techniques in the Arts and Crafts movement meant that Craft Revival furniture remained extremely expensive in both Britain and America, and because of this it has had virtually no effect on the mass-market (p. 148). Contemporary furniture designs with the name of New Baroque deal with themes of revival, discovery, and interpretation of the past Baroque style. Thereby, the designs are

various from the recounting of entire folk tales to Gothic and Renaissance interpretations of Greek myth. In terms of New Baroque over Baroque, Downey observes that Robert le Heros uses fabrics of large repeats and carpets to build new epics of their creation. Often they work as stylists, draping a space, a store window, or an exhibition with their characters, painted heroes, and objets. They put a great deal of emphasis on the collection, that is, the assemblage of designs, patterns, and colors used together to create the fantasy. (Downey, 1992, p. 77)

The following examples of metaphorical, symbolic, narrative, and humorous furniture have been expressed by the designers' interpretation of the new pluralism and eclecticism established through postmodern furniture. I will describe and present their work and concept in terms of such characteristics of contemporary furniture as metaphor, narrative, humor, symbol and myth, according to meaning for interpretation, design source, and materials. Believing that the characteristics of the contemporary furniture reflect the postmodern aesthetics of communication, I will attempt to show a variety of features of postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture as fully as I can in each category.

2.1.1 Metaphor

Ron Arad's furniture seems to be metaphoric, symbolic, or humorous and is derived from various design sources such as human, animal, or plant. By using the elements flexibly, Arad tries to bring his furniture to a wider audience by means of mass production. Unlike *Heart & Industry* and *Looming Lloyd*, such chairs as *No Spring Chicken* may be reproduced efficiently in a large factory. Yet his furniture is mainly produced by one-off or limited edition; for example, the work described as *Bricoleur* was conceived and developed in the studio. The materials that Arad has worked with are mainly metal and steel in many forms, which have been reinterpreted in soft upholstered forms. Downey (1992) states that working in the form that covers the metal structure,

cutting the shapes, and playing with ideas of empty and full, soft and hard, and light and heavy can be considered new facets of an evolution of New Design. His furniture seems to roll back in movement, but the furniture is comfortable when one sits in it. In terms of the sense of humor implicit in Arad's chairs, Downey describes the big heart chair, which is molded after the original metal chair *Heart & Industry*, a heart of polished stainless steel with just enough of an indentation at its widest part to create a seat. The tip of the heart is weighted, so that it rises to a vertical and more apparent "heart" orientation when not in use. For *Looming Lloyd*, leaded stainless steel shoes can be clamped onto any chair with four legs; the shoes throw it forward, making it apparently ready to walk away. Other pieces of chairs that split to form two chairs, chairs that roll, seats that bounce are all part of Arad's various experiments and obvious sense of humor. (Downey, 1992, p. 130)

His chairs are transferred into metaphor through heart, shoes, and humor. Therefore, Arad tends to create something out of everything created, touched, and worked on by one-off within his studio. In manipulating every material well out of his hand and head, he makes no division of duty (see Fig.1, 2).

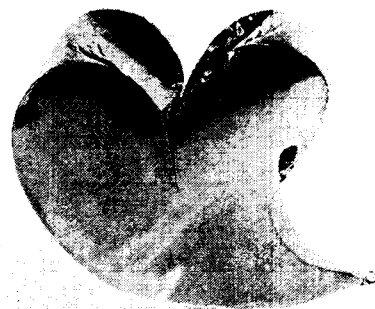


Fig.1. Arad, 1990, Heart & Industry chair

Marco de Gueltz's chair is seen as metaphor for authority interpreted from the use of color, shape, and material from the traditions of craft. His furniture designs

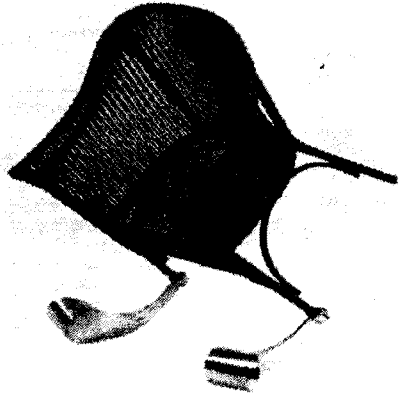


Fig.2. Arad, 1990, Looming Lloyd chair(Downey, 1992).

are formal and can be duplicated in limited series. Marco de Gueltzl works fast and furiously with glass, soldered steel, and junk yard metals. Certainly the furniture he creates as he works is not adaptable to mass production in terms of skillful craftsmanship; nor is it meant to be. For example, according to Downey (1992), the red-colored upholstered *St. Petersburg* chair seems to be skillfully handmade with his trademark green glass wrapped in metal at each arm and at the headrest (see Fig.3). Thus, de Gueltzl's chairs of steel tubes or the buffet and the very baroque-style chair with a quick, fashion-of-the-times look show a mixed interpretation for metaphor and imagination of the traditions of crafts and current culture. Downey (1992) mentions that his steel tube or buffet chairs seem somehow an honest outgrowth of the struggle between art and production (p. 148).

Designs of the three-man team of 18 Aout show rich metaphorical elements; they are smart and simple. The rich metaphors of their design make the user rethink the relationship between the object and him/her. As their important early product design, the hot plate (hot/cold) is metaphorical and narrative by the succinctness of their ideas in interlocking spirals of matte and polished chromed steel. Through their brilliant ideas, a vase is formed from a giant laser-cut flower; a wrapped piece of fiberglass bearing the inscription "the eternal is my light and my salvation"

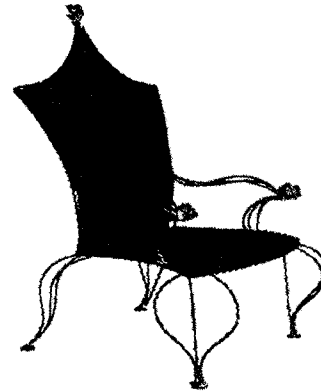


Fig.3. Gueltzl, 1990, St. Petersburg Chair(Downey, 1992).

becomes a lamp (Downey, 1992, p. 139). A trash can transformed in the guise of a bomb shows metaphor and humor simultaneously (see Fig.4).

2.1.2. Narrative

Narrative elements like metaphor, symbol, humor, and myth are characteristic of the communicative elements of postmodern aesthetics in the idea of New Design furniture in postmodernism. The designers express a narrative or story through their furniture. A narrative or



Fig.4. 18 Aout, 1990, Sol/Sol garbage can (Downey, 1992).

story in New Design furniture communicates on multiple levels as it explores the current culture: "It is this layering of a narrative on the origins c

twentieth-century design that marks the birth of the New Design” (Downey, 1992, p. 9). Thus, New Design furniture conveys a message through a story or narrative in order to communicate with a broader spectrum of people. The message which conveys the metaphorical meaning in New Design furniture has a hundred interpretations according to people’s perspectives.

In terms of the message of communication of postmodern aesthetics, Syniuga’s work *Hotel Ukraina chair and sofa* (1985) is a good example of a narrative with a message of political satire (see Fig.5). Dormer (1987) states that “the easiest work to assess ought to be Siegfried Michail Syniuga’s, since it has a narrative” (p. 131). The chair and sofa, to convey messages through “easy-to recognize imagery,” use the USSR’s hammer and sickle and the USA’s stars and stripes, symbols from the flags of each country(p. 131). Dormer (1987) describes the back rest to Syniuga’s sofa as a representation of the two superpowers apparently sodomizing each other (p. 131). The work conveys the meaning of the image clearly: “The hammer choking in the throat is the repression of freedom by tyranny, or the obliteration of argument by ideology; the sodomizing of America by the USSR could be a nice illustration of the uneasy, or hostile, yet intimate relations between groups of men who horse trade in power” (p. 131). Syniuga’s work might fit different interpretations, but it would be discussed through a similar approach.

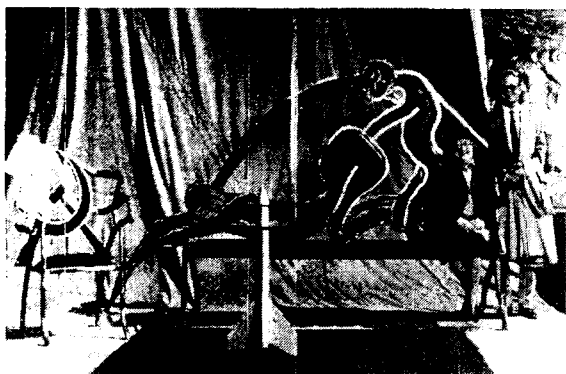


Fig.5. Syniuga, 1987, Hotel Ukraina chair and sofa (Dormer, 1987).

Thus, on the one hand, Syniuga might intend to cause argument through the strong and clear message of the images of his work. On the other hand, Syniuga might intend to catch the attention of the media in part to make us laugh and to make us look at the work, but allows us imagination in our perspective. Thus, we can invent a story or narrative through an imaginative situation or message. The work might upset or offend some people as a piece of oppositional design. In fact, the work can be considered a work of art rather than furniture. Syniuga expresses political messages in his work as other artists do in their art works. The chair and sofa, which express a message of political satire, communicate with beholders physically, visually, and literally. Through the communication of the work, they might reflect on their opinions and communicate with each other. Dormer (1987) observes: “In this circumstance, Syniuga’s principal strength stems from unexpectedness of using a sofa and chair as a vehicle for political satire” (p. 131).

2.1.3 Humor

Jasper Morrison makes jokes in the harmony and composition of his work. In fact, his chair and hat stand have no references from the past symbolic order. The wing nut chair and the hat stand show lively and animated feeling. As their most important characteristics, a decorative language is acquired in his works through observation of what lies around us now. Morrison has stayed alert to the possibilities for imagery that exist before our eyes (Dormer, 1987). Somehow, he tries to show us something new and different.

Cherif shows humor through such works as *Antinea* console, a glass-topped table, and his bench and stool. The design source tends to express his passion by using animals humorously. As the *Antinea* console is a taut wooden shape, both unapproachable and instinctively familiar senses come to us (see Fig.6). But, in spite of the fact that it is a stool, one may wonder whether one should sit on it or if it is a sculpture. Through his

works, he tries to draw natural sensuality from animals so that their forms are similar to primitive carvings of animals such as the antlers, gazelle, and ancient animal skull, but look more graceful (see Fig.7). Each piece exhibits skillful craftsmanship through the use of various materials such as wood, glass, thread, leather, steel, and metal. His furniture expresses an originality that is like a breath of fresh air from a natural and peaceful world (Downey, 1992, p. 39).

The chairs of Tusquets and Arribas are animated and humorous. Their design sources are animals in nature. Although the collection is in an animalistic and humorous mode, the interests and sensibilities of the designers differ. According to Downey (1992), Arribas is well known for his dramatic interiors for restaurants and clubs, such as the Velvet Bar and the bar Torres de Avila in Barcelona (p. 120)

Tusquets uses real nature particular to his environment. His Gaulino chair manipulates natural wood honestly in respect to the sources of his inspiration from nature. Tusquets naturalism offers enough richness and inspiration through his interpretation and reinstates nature into the



Fig.6. Cherif, 1990, Antinea console

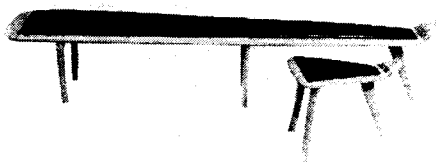


Fig.7. Cherif, 1990, Bench and stool.
(Downey, 1992).

habitat sufficiently to give the most divergent ideas a meeting place with people (Downey, 1992).

2.1.4 Symbol and Myth

Andrea Branzi's furniture is symbolic and mythical in terms of the use of design transformed by primitive archetypal symbols and the use of natural materials such as tree branches. His furniture looks alive and immediately recognizable in the most abstract or reconstructed images. His furniture is made half by machine and half from tree branches, which is in conformity with a canon of myth and produces human, emotional effects. Thus, the strength of each piece lies in the striking contrast between brute gestures and emotion from the balance between machine and nature (Downey, 1992, p. 93) (see Fig.8).

Andre Dubreuil transforms symbols of animals and plants in his furniture. The symbolic furniture conveys metaphoric meaning mythically in a symbolic transformation. His exquisite and meticulously manipulated furniture of



Fig.8. Branzi, 1985, Domestic Animals collection exhibition(Downey, 1992)

hand-forged iron, gold, and copper is created by his skillful hand as in the spine chair, a curving ladder of forged iron which is his best design; his imprint in a console or a candelabra is immediately recognizable (Downey, 1992, p.57)(see Fig.9). In some part Dubreuil creates his pieces for the individual so that each work is expensive as a one-of-a-kind piece like a work of art. To him contemporary furniture design tends to be seen as limited in the use of mass-produced materials. Thus, Downey (1992) suggests that there is a gap to be filled

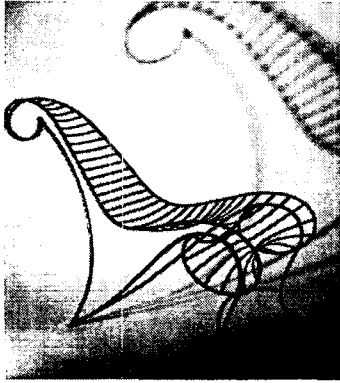


Fig.9. Debreauil, 1989, Spine chair

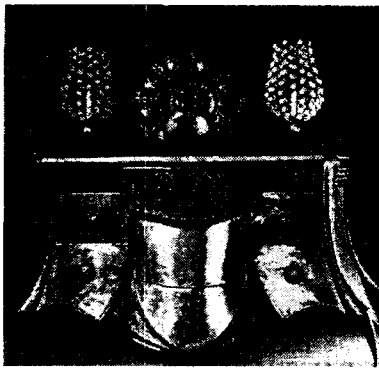


Fig.10. Debreauil, 1989, Copper and steel chest (Downey, 1992)

between the homogeneous and disposable, and the well-built, original, and artistic (p. 57) (see Fig.10).

Riccardo Dalisi's furniture is symbolic, narrative, metaphoric, and animated as Dalisi investigates and transforms the idea of decoration as design. His designs are inspired by flowers, a butterfly, a peacock, and birds from which Dalisi such whimsical furniture as a bird chair, a butterfly bench, and a zoological fantasy for the interior or the garden. Brightly painted metal creatures, blue steel wings, and green metal vines curling in romantic tendrils on a headboard are created in his beautiful furniture. As a one-of-a-kind work series, they look like sculpture which has life so that a chair becomes a bird, a flower, a peacock, and a butterfly. Thus, the furniture represents "beautiful objects, and a desire for something more, something to bridge the gap between real life and expectation" (Downey, 1992, p. 99) (see Fig.11).

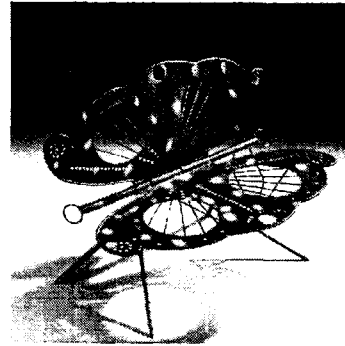


Fig.11. Dalisi, 1989, Mariposa bench (Downey, 1992).

3. CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

New Design furniture designers are becoming increasingly involved in current culture in terms of "media, difference, exploitation, and rising social consciousness" (Downey, 1992, p. 9). The designers are adapting and using these current cultural elements in their furniture. By using the current culture, they convey their thoughts or ideas through New Design furniture for communication with beholders or people using their furniture.

First, media in current culture are seen as means of conveying messages with meaning through images which can reach an international audience all over the world. Major markets for New Design furniture "became globally interrelated through the rapid development of advanced communications" (Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 145). New Design furniture designers use mass media as the method of communication with the television generation. The message with image and content is the central focus of the New Design furniture. Downey (1992) claims that in the meaning of the visual image, there is a duality through narrative or story in New Design furniture. A message can be shocking or seductive. There can be a cultural or political message, or the message may be to satisfy the desire to indulge, to drown oneself in what looks and feels good. Downey (1992) maintains that through the meaning of the message, New Design furniture designers are "using

furniture to communicate at a conscious and physical level” (p. 11). Through the message, a strong metaphoric image may have power beyond that of the actual image of New Design furniture. Hence, the media's visual reproduction of images replaces the assembly line. A chair with a message is more powerful than one with no message mass-produced in a number of examples. Thus, the chair communicates with people through the message of image through the mass media.

Second, in adapting culture of the past, the tendency of New Design furniture is to differentiate between the current reinterpretation in luxury materials and crafty objects and the original styles (Downey, 1992). For example, New Design furniture designers have embraced the idea of the Baroque from past styles as an important element in New Design furniture. The ideas from the past style are related to “self-indulgence and a return to spectacle” (Downey, 1992, p.15). The designers use the baroque style to express their ideas of self-indulgence in their own environment. A baroque environment is created by the designers of New Design furniture, leading the public to become involved through the media without critical awareness. New Design furniture designers differentiate between the viewpoint of the historic baroque and New Baroque according to the definition of the individual designer. Under the name of New Baroque, the designers' furniture not only takes the ideas of the baroque but also opposes them in its growing concern for the point of view of the individual designer. In terms of the difference, the New Baroque is formal, vigorous, and human. Most people enjoy the differences of the New Baroque environment. However, in the past “the Baroque Age had little or no understanding of the importance of interior existence” because of its focus outside on landscape, which is spectacle (Downey, 1992, p. 15). Thus, some designers of New Design furniture explore their furniture by focusing on the exterior urban environment without any match with the interior space, which the “New Baroque is indeed making much more personal, precisely because of the baroque embrace of differences,” which emphasizes the individual

environment (Downey, 1992, p. 15). Thus, the New Baroque furniture is diverse, concerned with spectacle, and divergent with much that the Baroque style was in the past the past culture.

Third, New Design furniture designers more than before exploit other media. Exploring other creative fields, they have often worked in music, clothing and jewelry design, video production, and set design (Downey, 1992). Thus, New Design furniture is viewed as an activity: movement, change, and fantasy. The designers' intention is to make images for communication by working with other media. The images become inseparable from the communication with the public. New Design furniture designers have adapted and exploited other media, considering shape, color, and detail in their furniture to be in fashion. Today, New Design furniture designers use fashion in their furniture in order to create and strengthen their own image. Thereby, the “trend towards light, pleasant interiors, furniture made of natural materials, and textiles with clear patterns in strong colors, remains” (Schwab, 1995, p. 48). These various fields have produced a means of communication that has fused the New Design furniture with the current culture - exploitation in which the designers use and match other media with New Design furniture.

Finally, rising social consciousness has attracted New Design furniture designers to mass communication through collaboration with artists in other fields. The current culture merges media, event, art, and action. The worlds of music and magazines, fashion and furniture design have begun to cross over (Downey, 1992). Lovine (1995) suggests that “perhaps that kind of collaboration is the ideal marriage of new technologies and old crafts” (p. 60). In order to give the public access to their work, New Design furniture designers have shown the ability to deal with other media such as fashion, music, video production, and the print world in an effort to collaborate with other artists. Through the effort, they have created furniture design with mass communication capabilities. In an attempt to communicate with the public instantly, many of the

designers have started their careers with projects such as clubs, restaurants, and boutiques. It is intended that by means of these shops, New Design furniture will communicate with a broader public. The designers have tried to draw the public's attention to their furniture to create a new culture through communication with the public.

Here, the cultural expressions of New Design furniture are referred to as valid because the furniture has shown accessibility to the public by using the current culture. The public may appreciate New Design furniture from the museum piece to the shops. New Design furniture designers are attempting to create new ways to communicate with people. Their expressions may appear chaotic, but they try to break down stereotypes about design by using the current culture differently and/or newly. Downey (1992) claims that "just as the world is facing change and redefining the function of its borders, design, which must reflect its culture, will break through its own isolation and join with other creative fields to communicate. Communication is the only true structure within the New Design" (p. 15).

4. PROBLEMS OF NEW DESIGN FURNITURE IN TERMS OF THE POSTMODERN AESTHETICS

4.1. Mass Production

In New Design furniture produced by one-off or limited-edition processes, there are no constraints needed in mass production. The designers in their work are able to express themselves more freely through designs explored in diverse forms and materials. Craft in one-off or limited-edition makes contemporary furniture unique and different; handmade furniture shows good and elaborate workmanship and craftsmanship, which makes a good deal in the consumer market, which can make a commitment to or remain skeptical about craft styles (Dorner, 1987). Thereby, in producing furniture with creativity by the craftsmanship, Charlotte Perriand, an architect and furniture

designer, suggests that

we can anticipate a return to a more primitive form of craftsmanship not in the sense of going back to the techniques of the past, but a return to smaller scales of operation, making use of all the potential offered by present and future technology. There may still be a need for manufacture on a large scale to meet some needs, but more and more will be produced by individuals, by artisans. The impact on creativity could be enormous. (Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 146)

Thus, the progress of an art-based New Design furniture design emphasizing craftsmanship reminds us that commerce is intrinsic to furniture design as much of the new design is an art-based adjunct to mainstream activity. Some designers and manufacturers see new design and its independent designers as a strong commerce of the future (Fiell & Fiell, 1991). An important part of the designer's art depends on the solution of its method of manufacture, which considers the quantity needed for the size of the intended market as it influences the costs involved. In fact, it is difficult for a manufacturer to devise a good solution for production of art-based furniture, even though the balance of these variables is significant to the furniture design with art. In the integration of art and design, the pursuit of the one element may lead the furniture designers to miss the significant point of the other.

Most avant-garde designers are not interested in searching for definitive design solutions for mass production but prefer a short process for a smaller operation. The avant-garde created furniture can be produced by the designers or manufactured in limited quantities by specialized workshops. Dorner (1987) observes that the short route solves the design problem set by the fixed brief provided by a manufacturer to enable him to use his existing machinery and skills to increase his sales (p. 137). By adopting the short route, a designer can get a more immediate response from people, envision

his/her experiment instantly, and challenge him/herself with the creativity of the furniture. The short route can provide the flexibility necessary for the production of low-volume, avant-garde designs. In terms of the avant-garde designer, the designer-craftsman as carpenter or manufacturer, Fiell & Fiell mention that

using simple, labor-intensive techniques, such as woodcarving, metal-bending and welding, these small-scale enterprises offered greater specialization, thereby allowing the designer more scope for personal creativity. (Fiell & Fiell, 1991, p. 146)

Thus, the mass manufacturing system by the long route referred to as the traditional approach increasingly tends to be replaced by the smaller system because designers can quickly deal with the consumer market of supply and demand. Design by the longer route, which requires a huge investment to be mass-produced by a manufacturer, offers an approach to an almost limitless range of materials and ways of treating them. The designer can get at one time one resolution by resolving all the variables of a product's manufacture with the concept of its final appearance. As inexpensive furniture for the mass market, the more anonymous and inoffensive a design, the greater its public appeal (Dormer, 1987).

Therefore, on the one hand, the avant-garde designers independently produce short batch runs of exclusive or 'one-off' furniture. On the other hand, they work with an established manufacturer and design furniture within a fixed brief. However, unlike the designer-craftsman as carpenter or manufacturer with his factory, the designer is free to work in any way. Thus, the designer can take advantage of and mix various facilities by sub-contracts to achieve a good and fast result for his/her furniture. Thereby, as the new designers take advantage of the multiplicity of skills available, they can design and produce with a versatility that cannot be matched by a single approach but is accomplished by collaboration among the designer, manufacturer, and craftsman (Dormer, 1987).

5. INTERPRETATION

Through the new pluralism and eclecticism in contemporary furniture design in the postmodern era, the designers have been challenged, and experimented with their concepts and works in relation to historicism, craftsmanship, or fine arts, which represent the characteristics of New Design furniture. Because of their consideration for communication with people, they have emphasized numerous elements of postmodern aesthetics such as metaphor, narrative, humor, symbol and myth, collaboration, fashion in upholstery, and cultural considerations through the revival of craft and the adaptation of fine arts. The revival and reinterpretation of the individual designer have given people new understanding of New Design furniture in the context of art appreciation in their daily living spaces. The role played by New Design furniture in daily life has created an awareness that the furniture designers intend to convey their message or meaning through images because the aesthetics of postmodern furniture communicates with people. Unlike the three Post-Modernists, Jencks, Venturi, and Graves in the background, the New Design furniture designers have the tendency not to create their furniture by mass-production. New Design furniture by found objects, or with an emphasis on craftsmanship or aesthetics intends to communicate with the public and draw their attention in their everyday lives, even though the furniture is often not comfortable or functional. The Bricolagers, using a mix of found and produced materials, enjoy the search, the accumulation, the making, and the event of the final use and display; they have gone beyond society's need to amass objects to the actual act of generation (Downey, 1992). Often their creative experience is a combination of industrial design, sculpture, and interior design. It is the ability to see inspiration in everything that forms the reality of contemporary society, from refuse to precious materials, that defines the Bricoleur. They are perhaps true Renaissance men, brought to full potential by the

challenge of a world equally rich in new technologies and old throwaways (Downey, 1992, p. 123).

Therefore, through the 1980s and the 1990s, numerous interiors with New Design furniture intend to communicate with and satisfy people on various levels have influenced people's lifestyles. However, according to Fiell & Fiell (1991), while New Design furniture mainly appeared

“sculptural and highly aesthetic, it cannot be considered sculpture - fine art is created according to a different, not higher, set of aesthetics” (p. 151).

6. CONCLUSION / IMPLICATIONS

The wide variety of New Design furniture is diverse in its styling and mainly created outside the industrial process. Today, some designers may commit themselves to lovely materials and a thousand hours of labor and are subversive or even questionable designers. But, this is seen as the Achilles heel of craft. As Jasper Morrison is skeptical about the creation of handicraft furniture, he has observed: ‘Poor materials imaginatively applied can make a product more desirable than a design which relies on rich materials.’ Morrison believes that contemporary craft decoration and elaborate handwork has no meaning and has no role in contemporary design. ‘The wasted hours spent in achieving craft decoration are either deducted from the time spent designing or reflected in the final price of the artifact or both’ (Dorner, 1987, p. 142)

Hence, through the decoration or description by the craftsmanship, New design furniture tends to be associated with fine arts such as painting or sculpture because of the elements of postmodern aesthetics of communication such as metaphor or narrative. Thereby, Dorner (1987) suggests that

it is dangerous for furniture makers to start building in metaphorical or descriptive content to their work, though some do try. It is dangerous because they are then inviting comparison between their work and that of the best art in narrative sculpture and painting. (Dorner, 1987, p. 144)

In fact, descriptive or metaphorical aesthetics, New Design furniture conveys its message or meaning to people, who can enjoy and appreciate the furniture in their everyday lives. However, the emphasis on aesthetics tends to discourage people from approaching New Design furniture because it doesn't strike a balance between aesthetics and comfort or function; moreover the furniture is too expensive to make itself accessible to the public. Although a concern for design and function is necessary for furniture, this depends on furniture designers who challenge, experiment, and innovate. Therefore, the designers have begun rethinking, redefining, and redesigning their furniture aesthetically, functionally, economically, and ecologically in order to make it accessible to the largest number of people.

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