

Research Journals on Design: *I+D Diseño* and the definition of a Latin model

Revistas científicas na área de Design: *I+D Design* e a definição de um modelo latino

Nuria Rodríguez Ortega

nro@uma.es

Universidad de Málaga. Dpto. Historia del Arte. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Campus de Teatinos, s/n, 29071, Málaga, Spain.

Sebastián García Garrido

segar@uma.es

Universidad de Málaga. Área de Dibujo. Nuevo Edificio de las Ingenierías. C/ Doctor Ortiz Ramos, 29071, Málaga, Spain.

Abstract

The process of conceptualizing, designing and launching the journal *I+D Diseño: Revista internacional de investigación, innovación y desarrollo en Diseño*, recently introduced in the city of Málaga (Spain), the venue of the journal's headquarters, has brought to the authors, the editors of *I+D Diseño*, the opportunity to reflect on the type of publication devoted to Design that is available to researchers, professionals or students in the field. The conclusions reached, and the guidelines that inspire *I+D Diseño* as a unique, innovative and pioneering contribution to subject of design are the focus of this presentation.

Key words: design research, design innovation, Latin design.

Resumo

O processo de concepção, design e funcionamento da revista *I + D Design: Revista internacional de investigação, inovação e desenvolvimento em Design*, recentemente sediada na cidade de Málaga (Espanha), oportunizou para os autores, diretores de *I + D Design*, uma reflexão sobre o tipo de publicação dedicado ao tema do design, disponível aos pesquisadores, profissionais ou estudantes. As conclusões desta reflexão e as diretrizes que regem *I + D Design*, por sua contribuição singular, inovadora e pioneira em seu âmbito, são o tema central deste artigo.

Palavras-chave: pesquisa em design, inovação em design, design latino.

Origin and aim of the project

The idea of launching *I+D Diseño: Revista internacional de investigación, innovación y desarrollo en Diseño* was born to fill a gap: the absence in Spain of specialized academic-scientific journals dealing with design from an analytical point of view. From the beginning, the journal was inspired by a necessity: to encourage critical thinking and to approach from a theoretic-scientific perspective the wide and complex range of knowledge and activity that constitutes the practice of design in contemporary society.

For a long time, many voices have been clamoring for the need to "reflect on design", expressing the urgency to put in place a theoretical and critical apparatus capable of lending legitimacy to design as an intellectual, cultural and scientific exercise. This new way of thinking focuses on what is to be designed, why

it is being designed and how would link professionals and researchers in the field of design with the academic and scientific domain.

In 1982, Bonsiepe published *El diseño de la periferia: Debates y experiencias*. At the end of his essay, where he considers different aspects of design, Bonsiepe included a glossary. Next to the expression "theory of design", he wrote "It does not exist (yet)". In 1983, Massimo Vignelli wrote a "Call to the critics" where he asserted: "Now is the time to debate, to examine the principles, to analyze the theories that are part of our heritage and to determine their value..." (Vignelli, 2006, p. 328-329). In 1995, the Argentinean Frascara (1995, p. 44) kept calling attention to the lack of a theoretical and critical foundation in the field of design. In 2002, de Fusco (2002, p. 13) indicated that a suitable theory had thus far not been found. More recently, in 2008, Calvera edited a book with the subtitle *Materiales para una estética del diseño* (2008), which

encapsulates the idea that a theoretical and aesthetic approach to design had yet to be attained.¹

Nonetheless, unlike Bonsiepe, it cannot be claimed any longer that a theoretical viewpoint to design has not yet been undertaken for it has certainly flourished during the last decades, though much remains to be done. In particular, it is essential to strengthen the theoretical and critical nature of design, first, as a means to keep moving forward in this field and, second, as an instrument to build the intellectual and epistemological apparatus that all areas of specialized knowledge need in order to advance. Consequently, the main goal of *I+Diseño* is to provide a suitable platform to embark on this project, paying special attention to the Latin cultural context.

Indeed, an interesting fact we noticed when we began looking at the available specialized journals on design was the absence of periodicals devoted to the Latin cultural world; none of the publications we examined dealt with the state of design in the Latin context, as a cultural phenomenon with shared references and capable of finding its own identity. In contrast, in the Anglo-Saxon world design enjoys a clearly defined direction; it is more aware of its own position in relation to other cultural phenomena, more settled and consolidated, and with better mechanisms to facilitate its promotion and interrelation with other fields of knowledge (García Garrido, 2009).²

As a result of the contrast between these two very different positions, a second priority emerged for *I+Diseño*: to become an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon model. In other words, *I+Diseño* wants to reinforce the bonds and to provide a place of interaction between a diversity of geographical areas with a common culture – Hispanic-Italian-Portuguese. At the same time, it has to have sufficient flexibility to be open to other cultural environments in order to find its place in a multicultural global setting.

Design and its journals

During the last few years, the relevant role attained by the digital medium as a means of communication and dissemination of information enabled the emergence of many journals and web sites dedicated to the topic of design. Despite the unquestionable value of such digital publications, the present article will deal exclusively with printed publications, and *I+Diseño* belongs to this group. As a matter of fact, the significance attributed to the physical reality of the journal is one of the distinguishing features of this project.

The publication of journals specializing on design from a theoretical and scientific point of view has had an uneven development in Spain. The 20th century saw the emergence as well as the disappearance of many publications focused on design from a theoretical angle. Though these journals were undoubtedly interesting, as was the case with the *Arte Comercial*, they were unable to survive.³ The scarcity of theoretical and scientific

publications in this field mirrors the traditional irrelevance of design in the curriculum of higher education in Spain. Only recently has the study of design begun to be offered in our universities, though we still lack a properly developed theoretical framework.

The limited availability of specialized publications is not a minor issue for it signals the serious limitations that hamper the continuous progress and development of design: on the one hand, the absence of shared platforms for theoretical and critical thinking about design; on the other, the shortage of channels for the dissemination and exchange of experiences and ideas.

Presently, the majority of publication about design available in Spain are magazines, with large sections of advertizing, in which the latest news and the discussion of the more recent innovations introduced to the market by firms and individual designers intertwine with articles more analytically oriented (See, among others, *Experimenta, On Diseño*). Many of these publications are sold as interior design magazines or are simply aimed at people interested in design generally. Clearly, these kinds of publications are very valuable for the dissemination of the latest innovations, but they do not view design as a field of knowledge that needs to be seen from an analytical standpoint.

Regarding books the situation is not much better. The publishing house Gustavo Gili has a line of books dedicated exclusively to design, but the financial crisis has drastically reduced the number of manuscripts accepted. The company Santa & Cole, specialized in industrial design, has a line mostly devoted to product design that often strides into interesting theoretical issues, particularly in its collection *Los ojos fértiles* (Santa & Cole, 2009). On the other hand, the interesting project of Paidós Diseño could only produce a single issue, *Diseñar hoy. Temas contemporáneos de diseño gráfico (1998-2003)*, written by Pelta (2004) – scientific editor of *I+Diseño* – because it was taken over by the Grupo Planeta, and its more commercial orientation put an end to this project.⁴

In spite of all these shortages, the last few years have seen a number of proposals intended to reconsider the role of design in our country. This effort has been mainly pursued through monographs and exhibition catalogues, which often contain analytical discussions as well as debates and highly ideological divides. Some of the publications that stand out are *El diseño en España: Antecedentes históricos y realidad actual* (Ministerio de Industria y Energía, 1985), published by the Ministerio de Industria y Energía, ADGFAD, ADIFAD, ADP and BCD; *Nuevo diseño español* (Capella and Larrea, 1991); *25 años de Diseño Gráfico Español 1970-1995* (Carrión, 1998), supplement of the Journal *Experimenta: Diseño industrial* (1998), catalogue of the exhibition that took place in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía; *Historiar desde la periferia: historia e historias del diseño* (Calvera and Mallol, 1999); *Signos del siglo: 100 años de Diseño Gráfico en España*, exhibition held at the Centro Nacional de Arte

¹ This idea had already been explored in Calvera (2003).

² As suggested by the superb study of Pelta (2006) in her doctoral dissertation.

³ See the work on graphic design by Ríos Moyano (2005).

⁴ The publishing company Divine Egg, self-proclaimed “the publishing house of designers”, publishes books with a more procedural, technical and educational, mainly aimed to assist professional designers.

Reina Sofía de Madrid (Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Sociedad Estatal para el Desarrollo del Diseño y la Innovación, 2002); *Diseño e Historia: Invariantes* (Baltanás, 2004), *300% Spanish Design. 100 chairs, lamps and posters*, Catalogue of the Universal Exhibition of Aichi (Capella, 2006). In addition to these works, there are those mentioned earlier, and coordinated by Anna Calvera, devoted to the aesthetics of design.

Nevertheless, not until the arrival of *I+Diseño* did the growing interest in thinking about design from a theoretical, critical and historical perspective had an opportunity to materialize in a scientific and academic journal expressly created for this purpose.

Furthermore, the situation is different in our closest cultural contexts of Italy and Latin America, where there is a longer and more developed publishing history, guided by the bigger role that design has traditionally played at the professional, social, political, and university level. Italy, in particular, is the role model for its influential design professionals and theoreticians, among others Bruno Munari, Gilio Dorfles, Enzo Manzini, Andrea Branzi, Alessandro Mendini, Flaviano Celaschi, Patrizia Ranzo, and Luisa Collina. Journals such as *Domus*, *Lineagráfica* o *Il Giornale del Design* are good examples of the diffusion and analysis of design in Italy. In Latin America we can highlight the creation of the magazine *.doc: Publicación iberoamericana para la Innovación de las Comunicaciones*, edited by Joan Costa, but for several reasons it has not been possible to distribute it in Spain.

In her doctoral dissertation, Dr. Pelta Resano (2006) dealt with Anglo-Saxon criticism between 1984 and 1999. Her research is the main source of reference for our analysis of the Anglo-Saxon context, which is also discussed in the editorial page of *I+Diseño* (García Garrido, 2009). At the end of the 70s, specialists, researchers, and academics working in the field of design began to consider the difficulty of finding documentary and bibliographical sources about their subject. Consequently, the Anglo-Saxon experts determined that the first task was to gather a comprehensive collection of sources, and in 1977 Hugo McCauley, professor at the University of Illinois, published the first bibliographical compilation. Two years later, Anthony J. Coulson broaden the scope of this compilation publishing *A Bibliography of Design in Britain, 1851-1970*, sponsored by the British Design Council, in which he assembled about 7,000 titles. In 1987 Victor Margolin published *Design History Bibliography* for ICOGRADA (International Council of Graphic Design Associations), and Ellen Lupton edited *Graphic Design Bibliography: History and Theory*. To these collections of classic documentary sources, Ellen Mazur Thomson added *Graphic Design Bibliography: History and Theory*, edited in 1992 (in Pelta, 2006, p.44).

Journals such as *el Diseño y Encuadre* (Mexico), *Emigre* (California, USA.), *Eye* (England), *Dot dot dot* (Holland) or *Design Issues* (New York, USA) contributed during the 80s and 90s to stimulate an analytical stance that thrust design beyond the business sphere into becoming a legitimate cultural expression.

***I+Diseño*: The contribution of an editorial project**

In the framework discussed above, the relevance of *I+Diseño* lies in being the first international magazine

devoted to researching the field of design from a scientific-academic and theoretical-critical perspective, with a direct link to the university world - though not restricted to it; and with a clear identity, focused on analyzing design as a cultural phenomenon in the Latin world, and on encouraging a theoretical and critical outlook.

(i) The Concept of Design and its Focus

The main idea of this project is entirely captured in the title of the magazine: *I+Diseño*. First, its focal point is obviously design, considered in its multifaceted reality and its multiple aspects. Thus, in contrast to other journals, such as the above mentioned *.doc: Publicación Iberoamericana para la Innovación de las Comunicaciones*, *I+Diseño* is not restricted to any specific area, quite the opposite, it provides a global and comprehensive vision. All sectors are represented: graphic and communications design - concerning material and digital support -, industrial and product design, environmental design and decoration, fashion, integrated systems of identity, strategic design, urban furnishings, etc. This all encompassing approach fosters an integrated view of design as a technical, scientific, and socio-cultural phenomenon that promotes useful synergies and interrelations while preserving the distinctiveness of each sector.

Furthermore, *I+Diseño* undertakes the multiplicity of dimensions implicit in the concept of design, including the functional, semantic, aesthetic, social, and ethical dimensions. It deals as well with the material and/or visual and formal reality of design, resulting from processes of application and/or scientific and technological innovation. Indeed, the products of design satisfy our everyday necessities, but they also fulfill our emotional, communicative, symbolic and social needs. At the same time, they nurture our ethical commitment to environmental sustainability, and to uniting humanity together under the umbrella of universal design. The "utilitarian" character of design, which has been a focus of inquiry since the very beginning, can only be properly understood if the idea of "utility" assumes its more comprehensive semantic scope. Nowadays, design objects - and the term "object" is used here in a broad sense - are used to communicate, to assert group affiliation, to express a particular *modus vivendi*. In addition, design objects convey collective and territorial identity, encourage distinct behaviors, play a role in defining social interactions, shape our immediate visual environment, express and integrate shared cultural values. For all these reasons, *I+Diseño* provides the stage for a variety of multidisciplinary studies that approach the phenomenon of design from different angles: design and sustainability, design and technological innovation, design and new materials, design and aesthetics, design and social communication, design and territorial identity, design and cultural values, design and accessibility, etc.

The title of the magazine, *I+D: Research, Development and Innovation*, makes reference to a second topic related to the outlook of the magazine which, as it has been already mentioned, is a key factor in setting the uniqueness of this editorial project against the backdrop of other specialized journals on design.

In Spain, and particularly among scientific and academic milieus, the sequence *I+D* is easily understood

because it is identified even visually with strategic policies of research, innovation and development. *I+D* stands for the projects, guidelines, and strategic actions approved and funded by the MICINN (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, Ministry of Science and Innovation) to encourage scientific research, development, and technological innovation.

Consequently, *I+Diseño* is a journal devoted to research in the field of design. But there are two aspects to consider when engaging in design research: first of all, design is an area of professional development, with its particular procedures, techniques and methods as well as its own set of problems, principles and proceedings; and, at the same time, it is increasingly becoming an area of specialized knowledge *per se*, with its own theoretical, epistemological and *meta-proyectual* apparatus.

As a result of this duality, *I+Diseño* integrates studies on scientific and academic research that deepen our theoretical, critical, historical and aesthetic knowledge of design. In this respect, the mission of *I+Diseño* is to contribute to the advancement of design as a discipline of knowledge, and to act as an energizing mechanism for the creation of the theoretical and methodological equipment needed to achieve that goal.

At the same time, *I+Diseño* brings in articles dealing with new venues in the field of design: new technologies, innovation in materials, innovation in business, implementation of new ideas, policies, and strategies, while tackling these issues from a critical and reflective point of view rather than as mere current events.

Therefore, *I+Diseño* represents – in the words of Raquel Pelta – a “bridge” between these often disconnected worlds. The editorial objectives of the journal have the potential to foster a dialog between theoreticians and historians of design, usually far removed from the professional and practical reality of design as well as among designers themselves, bound to assume a critical and auto reflective attitude towards their own work.

(ii) Freedom from Advertisement

Still other factors give its unique character to *I+Diseño*. In contrast to other journals about design, *I+Diseño*, as it is expected in a scientific and academic publication, does not have advertisement. Even though this might seem an irrelevant factor, it is absolutely essential for the independence of opinion of the journal's editorial and for the role of *I+Diseño* as an instrument of critical reflection.

(iii) Image and Visual Projection

Unlike most periodicals within the sphere of scientific and academic publications, *I+Diseño* pays special attention to its visual aspect and presentation. Being a magazine devoted to design, it seems natural to regard the visual, formal, and material aspects as an essential part of the journal's identity. Nevertheless, this approach underlies a particular understanding of how the theoretical discourse is built, one in which text and image coalesce. According to Foucault, knowledge of a subject is the set of all texts and discourses that has inspired throughout its history. Without any desire to “correct” this famous thinker, we have to point out that studying visual culture raises our awareness

about the visual nature of thought; in other words, it reveals that what we see is intimately interwoven with a particular way of understanding and thinking about reality.

(iv) Latin Identity

As mentioned previously, another priority of *I+Diseño* is to become an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon model, and to play an important role in spreading and consolidating the notion of design throughout the Latin world. The strategy to achieve this goal is based on the idea that there is a common and shared cultural context, which we call “Latin,” made up of different territorial and cultural areas but intimately linked together. As the editorial of the magazine asserts: “different nucleus of the same culture: Hispano-Italo-Portuguese, increasingly identified with its natural links to the main sources of design in the rest of America” (García Garrido, 2009, p. 4).

The idea of a “Latin” cultural focal point, based upon the foundation of Classical culture and Latin civilization, with mutually understandable languages as its main manifestation, seems more global and coherent than the far more restricted model centered on the Mediterranean. *I+Diseño* takes for granted the existence of an undeniable link between the Hispano-Italo-Portuguese region and the American context. Notice, furthermore, that the scope of the American context cannot be limited to what it is conventionally called Latin America because today the Latin community has expanded throughout North America and Canada. *I+Diseño* puts forward a view of the notion “Latin” as a global cultural model, and as a bridge between diverse territorial contexts. The idea of “bridge” between two worlds is not new. The mythical Pillars of Hercules – not coincidentally located near the place of birth of this project – that watched over the known world, and were later regarded as the gates of communication between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic are an integral part of the visual allegory that illustrates the cover of the first issue of *I+Diseño*.

This consciously sought Latin identity implies that the contents of the journal will be primarily focused on the validation and reflection, study and criticism of the objects of design produced in the Latin cultural context. Hence, *I+Diseño* gives “Latin” design a unique opportunity to assume, for the first time, its proper role in the international arena, and to give voice to its own criticism.

Embracing the Latin identity entails that the languages of *I+Diseño* are Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, and it is hoped that this factor will contribute to the recognition of these languages as languages of scientific communication, in opposition to the almost absolute supremacy of English.

Nonetheless, *I+Diseño* is open to the global world, and its mission is to place Latin design and its theoretic and critical reflection in the context of worldwide design. Thus, while stressing what it is essentially Latin, *I+Diseño* also signals interferences, contaminations and cross-cultural influences.

The structure of the journal

This presentation will be closed with a description of the structure of the journal. The structure of *I+Diseño*

fully matches the plan that guides this project, and that we have described above. Its macrostructure is organized around three main units: *Innovation*, *Development*, and the sections about current events and agenda.

The unit *Innovation* includes specific studies that either constitute a contribution to design as a discipline of knowledge; by adopting a theoretical, critical or historical perspective; or analyze specific cases that represent an innovation in the field. At the same time, this unit is subdivided in *Study*, which contains articles on scientific and academic research with important contributions from doctoral dissertations, *Promotion*, *Training*, *Sustainability*, *Universal Access*, and *Business*.

The unit *Development* seeks to explore the ways in which our cultural context institutes, develops, and practices design. This unit contains the following sections: *Trajectory*, which records the professional careers of well-known professionals in the history of design, *Novel*, devoted to promising new designers with well-regarded projects in the international arena, *Interview*, *Miscellaneous*, *Trends*, and *Technology*.

Finally, the sections dedicated to news and current events are: *Report*, *Library*, *WWW*, *Agenda & News*. And the journal ends with *abstracts* in English of all the articles published.

References

- BALTANÁS, J. 2004. *Diseño e historia. Invariantes*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 207 p.
- BONSIEPE, G. 1982. *El diseño de la periferia. Debates y experiencias*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 271 p.
- CALVERA, A.; MALLOL, M. 1999. *Historias desde la periferia. Historia e historias del diseño*. Barcelona, Universidad, 374 p.
- CALVERA, A. (ed.). 2003. *Arte ¿? Diseño. Nuevos capítulos en una polémica que viene de lejos*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 247 p.
- CALVERA, A. (ed.). 2008. *Lo bello de las cosas. Materiales para una estética del diseño*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 224 p.
- CAPELLA, J. 2006. *300% Spanish Design. 100 chairs, lamps and posters*. Catálogo de la exposición Universal de Aichi. Barcelona, Electa, 315 p.
- CAPELLA, J.; LARREA, Q. 1991. *Nuevo diseño español*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 255 p.
- CARRIÓN, C. 1998. *25 años de Diseño Gráfico Español 1970-1995*. Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para el Desarrollo del Diseño y la Innovación, 119 p.
- FRASCARA, J. 1995. *Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science? In: V. MARGOLIN; R. BUCHANAN, The Idea of Design. A design Issues Reader*. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 285 p.
- FUSCO, R. de. 2002. *Storia del design*. Roma-Bari, Laterza & Figli, 324 p.
- GARCÍA GARRIDO, S. 2009. Editorial. Identidad y proyecto de la revista. *I+Diseño. Revista internacional de investigación, innovación y desarrollo en Diseño*, 1:3.
- MINISTERIO DE INDUSTRIA Y ENERGÍA. 1985. *El diseño en España. Antecedentes históricos y realidad actual*. Madrid, Ministerio de Industria y Energía, ADGFAD, ADIFAD, ADP y BCD, 185 p.
- MINISTERIO DE ECONOMÍA Y HACIENDA, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Sociedad Estatal para el Desarrollo del Diseño y la Innovación. 2002. *Signos del siglo. 100 años de Diseño Gráfico en España*. Madrid, Centro Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía de Madrid, 621 p.
- PELTA, R. 2004. *Diseñar hoy. Temas contemporáneos de diseño gráfico (1998-2003)*. Barcelona, Paidós, 201 p.
- PELTA, R. 2006. *Diseño y diseños gráficos 1984-1999. Quince años de debates ideológicos. El ámbito anglosajón*. Barcelona, Spain. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Universidad de Barcelona.
- RÍOS MOYANO, S. 2005. *La crítica del diseño gráfico en español en las revistas de arte comercial y publicidad*. Málaga, Spain. Doctoral dissertation. Universidad de Málaga, 658 p.
- SANTA & COLE. 2009. Available at <http://www.santacole.com/catalogo/>. Access on: June 2009.
- VIGNELLI, M. 2006. Llamado a la crítica. *Graphis Annual*, 83/84. In: M. BIERUT; J. HELFAND; S. HELLER; R. POYNOR, *Fundamentos del Diseño Gráfico*. Buenos Aires, Ediciones Infinito, p. 328-329.

Submetido em: 21/12/2009
Aceito em: 26/02/2010