

Design, arts and “aesthetics of innovation”¹

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Abstract

This paper explores the relation between art and design shifting it into the relation between aesthetics and innovation. Art, is warm polarity of “aesthetic action”, functions as “agency” in the settlement of innovation, through strategies that can be analysed to define some replicable processes applicable to the design context. The proposal is based on a triad of interactions among aesthetics (art) and innovation (design) that are technological aesthetics, symbolic aesthetics and relational aesthetics, which have respectively as drivers for innovation, new technologies, languages, behaviour and lead to new forms-function, forms-meanings and forms-process, covering the different scales of images/communication, objects/products and spaces/interiors in art/design.

Key words: designart, product design, aesthetics of innovation, symbolic, relational, technological aesthetics.

Resumo

Este artigo explora a relação entre arte e design deslocando-o na relação entre estética e inovação. Arte, na morna polaridade “ação estética”, funciona como “agência” na solução de inovação, através de estratégias que podem ser analisadas para definir alguns processos replicáveis no contexto design. A proposta é baseada em uma tríade de interações entre a estética (arte) e inovação (design) que são a estética tecnológica, estética simbólica e estética relacional, que têm, respectivamente, como direcionamento para a inovação, novas tecnologias, linguagens, comportamentos para levar a novas formas-função, formas-significados e formas-processo, abrangendo as diferentes escalas de imagens/comunicação, objetos/produtos e/espacos interiores em arte/design. o de programas que permitem articular esses dois universos.

Palavras-chave: designart, design de produto, estética da inovação, simbólica, relacional, estética tecnológica.

“C’è troppa arte in giro...”²
(Carmagnola, 2009, p. 45).

Introduction

The relations between arts and design have a long history, especially in the Italian culture (but in the Anglo-Saxon culture too), where a cultural artistic matrix is recognizable in the design theory and practice, for instance starting from the mutual (linguistic, stylistic, formal) influences with the Avant-garde movement in art and design (Burdek, 2005), or with the XX century debate between technique and culture (Maldonado, 1991 [1979]).

Recently the same relations have been often explored using a more mature and cross fertilisation perspective, aiming to provide examples of “creative” processes profitably transferable from arts to design (and vice versa). They interestingly hypothesize mainly an overlapping of the conventional differences from design and art, mixing the *use value*, traditionally associated to design, with the *contemplative value* typical of art, in an “exemplary” design, created to be reproduced, but unique time to time. This trend is well represented by many designers who find inspiration in art for their work pieces³, from the attention that market⁴ and institutions⁵ address to limited series and editions, and in general by an art & craft revival in design, that recognizes the value of the crafts-

¹ Presented at the 2nd International Forum of Design as a Process, 28th-30th October 2010, Aveiro, Portugal.

² “There’s too much art around...” (in Carmagnola, 2009, p. 45).

³ See Hella Jongerius works at <http://www.jongeriuslab.com/>

⁴ See Object Rotterdam Fair, the official side fair of Art Rotterdam about unique or limited edition functional objects, at <http://www.objectrotterdam.nl/en/home/>.

⁵ See Serie fuori serie, 2^o interpretation of Triennale Design Museum (2009-2010), at <http://www.triennaledesignmuseum.it>.

manship knowledge in the industrial production processes (Sennett, 2008).

Taking in account this frame as a background, in this paper, we would like to focus into a more specific approach, trying to give evidence to the concept of “aesthetics of innovation” as the possible design driven result of an innovative integration between arts (aesthetics) and design (innovation). In particular, we want to demonstrate the role of aesthetic and the modalities in which it “functions” in the settlement of the innovation, proposing a systematic and articulated perspective that could be usable and applicable by design processes and forms, at every scale and objective of project. Our hypothesis is based on the three following premises: the convergences between art and design, the value of art as “agency”⁶ for innovation and the shift from arts to aesthetics actions.

Between art and design, aesthetics and innovation: Looking for convergences and analogies

The contemporary art critic Alex Coles uses the term “desinart” (Coles, 2005) to discuss the merging of the two disciplines from the perspective of art, for example putting some function into art or considering potential compromising of design when art is placed on it; at the opposite point of view, anyway, the design approach too, is changing exploiting the “aesthetic function” of objects and environments, and making the final product nearly a work of art: is probably difficult, for example, recognize, in the following image, the boundaries from art to design in the work of the artist Donald Judd (left) or the designer Ron Arad (right).

Such integration between art and design, anyway, has deeply established roots in the design literature. To try to be exhaustive, in this paper, would have been very demanding, and evidently purposeless for the specific aim we have to demonstrate, so we will briefly overview the Italian experience, putting it also in an international context. From this digression we will time to time underline those points that are meaningful precursors of our hypothesis of “aesthetics of innovation”. The reason of this geographical focused choice is that in Italy design historically results to be, as human discipline par excellence, crossing art and technique, culture and science, theory and praxis, an emerging “third culture” in the debate among disciplines and particularly in the resilience between the scientific sciences and the humanistic sciences (Snow, 2005 [1963]) and, as recently Maldonado pointed out, “the tentative to go beyond the dichotomy between hard and soft sciences” (Maldonado, 2010, p. 9). Specifically, in this transversal nature⁷, Italian design recognizes its qualities more in a native artistic and cultural matrix, than in the industrial and manufacturing tradition. According to Brusatin (2007), Italian design is an “object without industry”: is an “industrious bricolage” that defines an apparently anonymous genealogy of design, closer to the artesian model of thinking by hands typical of the craftsman (Sennett, 2008) than a scientific method. In the same time, as Dorfles remarks, a certain degree of aesthetic pleasure is always present in Italian design, which is an aesthetic function associated with the utilitarian one or a kind of ergonomics-aesthetics questioning the taste for the form of objects (Dorfles, 1970). Interestingly Brusatin too writes, in its book “Arts as design”, that the ideas of *pleasurable utility* and *useful*



Figure 1. Complex boundaries from art and design: Donald Judd (left) and Ron Arad (right).

⁶ The concept of “agency” doesn’t refer to the contemporary structure acting in the commercial or economic system, but derives from the sociological point of view of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) of Bruno Latour. The Latour concept of agency means an “agent” or factor of action which includes human actors and non-human actors, called “actants” (i.e. artifacts, technologies, institutions, rules, and so on). According to the ANT, every social fact corresponds to a network of relations among those actors and actants, which collaborate in process of construction of knowledge and innovation (Latour, 1987, 2005; Law, 1992)

⁷ With a very effective metaphor, Maldonado compares interdisciplinarity to a globetrotter attitude opposite to speleologists (Maldonado, 2010)

quality, dated back to Enlightenment, are still part of Italian design culture (Brusatin, 2007). Dorfles calls the same concept a "psychological function connected with the semantics of object" (1970, p. 84).

So, to make a first point, *the aesthetic function of objects results to appear as one of the first intersection of design towards art practice*. The origin of this poetics of objects can be surely founded farer in the past in the Avant-garde movement of the 20th century (see Guerini, 2008), but, as many scholars notice, the Avant-garde ideology of protest and rupture with the pre-existing, moved that art away from daily life (De Fusco, 2010 [1990]), making it a phenomenon so much compromised with middle-class culture, and therefore the need of a new relation between art and material production emerged (Maldonado, 2010). In this new frame, whose controversy is represented by the Werkbund debate on the forms of products culminated in the Ulm school, art is considered expression of a common sense, together with technology, production and user needs and thus often coinciding with design.

Bruno Munari (1971) can be considered the most famous Italian interpreter of this cross boundary practice between art and design. He is an exponent of an operative point of view, promoting the designer as a figure that is not substituting the artist, but acting like the artist ("designer is who projects with an aesthetic sense, working for the community") with a not subjective approach, because "the goal of the objective designer is aesthetics as pure technique".

Again, aesthetic is the key word. However, this concept of aesthetics has a very different connotation from that one of Fulvio Carmagnola. He argues that, eventually, today the design's aesthetic imperative is corrupted by a kind of mass anesthetization. This is reducing the differences from art and design (and from contemplative to use value) to the new rhetoric of "form follow fiction" (Carmagnola, 2009). Emblematically, Deyan Sudijc also criticizes the way in which MoMA curators try to exhibit the design object like art objects, avoiding any distraction for the visitors with complex captions explaining the use, function and need that the objects solve. With the same precision he refers to Milano Salone del Mobile 2007, where the objects which attracted more atten-

tion were the most distant from real design and at the opposite, more "installation" alike: Wanders, Arad, Studio Job... (Sudijc, 2009). According to Burdek, a similar aesthetic model for design find a historical reference in the 1980s: he quotes the Documenta 8 experience of different Italian designers ("the displayed objects were largely unique pieces and were suited to be neither prototypes nor models for any kind of series production whatsoever", Burdek, 2005, p. 64) that worked on utility objects, even if the possibility of use was not their primary intention: "in Italy the broad definition of culture makes it easy to integrate design and art in shared exhibition" (Burdek, 2005, p. 123).

Evidently, the value of aesthetics in design can be interpreted in a wide range of variations and experimentation. The concept of aesthetics we refer anyway is rather different. It is not an aesthetic draft towards opaque symbols and references, but a way to convey forms of knowledge and relation, more related to perceptive and sensorial experiences and actions, and that concern dimensions like beauty, culture, feeling. For instance, the "aesthetics of the daily life" implies not only a good design of the shape of objects, but the design of cultural storytelling about the meanings of the object and its potential innovation, transformation, appropriation and use by people, in a perspective that is similar to the art dramatization of life. It is the same conclusion that probably Sudijc got, which the demarcation between art and design is not only "utility": as he notices in fact, many designers are able to use the aesthetic driver to experiment, giving to "no functionality" a value in terms of opportunity for research and innovation (Sudijc, 2009). Accordingly, Molotch (2009) points out that the manifestations of industrial system can arise from the light side of expressivity too. And this is a second point we would like to remark: *art/aesthetics is a place for design experimentation*.

Internationally the contemporary debate on design and art seems to focus especially on the practice of doing, rather than in the ideology or theory. As it was mentioned before, recently, the art critic Alex Coles tries to give evidence to this tendency in his anthology "Designart" describing with this term the way in which many artists or art practitioners, from the early 20th century to the present, engaged both art and design simultaneously in



Figure 2. The aesthetics function of objects and daily life in Munari (left) and Sottsass (right).

Note: Left, Bruno Munari, lampada Falkland, 1962. Right, Archizoom associati, La superficie neutra, habitable wardrobe, 1972.

their doing, identifying a key methodology in the work of many practitioners and the way they deal with patterns, furniture, interiors, architecture, mixing art and design⁸. If design has always been something more than function and utility, or utilitarian function (when Sottsass, with the Memphis group, brought into furniture the post-modern, he was probably referring to a kind of "emotive utility") it is evident too, that the process of art making is getting always closer to design production and manufacturing: artist have organizational and productive processes distributed among collaborators and a supply chain. According to Kees Dorst, the border is permeable: "once an artist decides on a goal to pursue, his creative process looks very much like a design process. Artists have effectively turned their self-made challenge into a partly determined design problem" (Dorst, 2003, p. 88). "All art is designed even if it endeavors to appear otherwise" (Coles, 2005, p. 8). Opposite, many contemporary designers work with self production and prototyping of small series or unique pieces, applying an artesian and artistic approach to their processes, and attributing to their production the status of work of art. Norman Potter however underlines that a designer, unlike an artist, "works through and for other people, and is concerned primarily with their problems, rather than his own" and that artists are not capable of such detachment (Potter, 2010 [1969], p. 10).

Therefore, even considering these different positions, the third point is that *similarities between art and design concern both forms and processes*. This should take in account the tendency of the immersive nature of art (being it a "condition" and not a profession) to learn to measure with a system of needs and bonds fixed by a design brief.

The conclusion emerging from this excursus it that it is necessary to *challenge any cultural hierarchy that exists between art and design*, aesthetics and innovation of

forms and processes: the permeability is not neither only from art towards design (Coles perspective of artists who make a foray into design to refresh their art) nor from design towards art (Sudijc idea of designers creative and innovative detournement in a more free environment like the artistic one), but a kind of two-ways blurring boundaries. Curiously is Donald Judd, a minimalism artist who made art that was also design furniture pieces, to warn about reasons, like artist authorship and market system, that could make this blurring often confusing: "the mistake I made with the table was to try to make something as unusual as I thought a work of art to be" and "we try to keep the furniture out of art gallery [...] also to avoid the consequent inflation of the price" (Judd, 1993, p. 21). And this economic exchange from art and design is worth considering: incredibly, Marc Newson bookshelf "Voronoi", carved out from a single block of Carrara marble, has been sold by auction in 2007 for a price of more than 1 million of dollars!⁹

Apparently, the question is still open.

About art(s): Exploring the boundaries and roles of art as a designed activity

During the 2009 conference Arts in society in Venice it was impressive the number of presentations exploring the boundaries of art and its role in contemporary society: from creation of visual narratives and digital storytelling through locative technologies (Tremblay, 2009), community and site specific actions (Sheren, 2009, Aman, 2009), urban design (Tipping, 2009), forms of knowledge sharing (De Souza, 2009) or signage and decoration on a children school (Todd, 2010). Undoubtedly, the general and unified idea of what art is, has changed by time and turned in many different forms of art, meaning contem-



Figure 3. Public art examples of spaces appropriation: left, Wild Island, Milano 2002-2003 (by the artist Stefano Boccalini), right, Collective flat in Galata, Istanbul, 1997 (by the artists collective Oda Projesi).

⁸ Historically Coles too bases this disciplines negotiation in Modernism (Ruskin, Morris) and early avant-garde movement (Soviet Constructivism, De Stijl, Bauhaus).

⁹ Newson is not new to this: his Lockheed Lounge prototype was sold by Sotheby's for 968.000 dollars in 2006. There are only 10 pieces of the Lockheed Lounge plus the "artist prototype" (Sudijc, 2009).

porary arts to include investigation into contemporary world visual culture but also engagement with a new kind of anthropology, an immersion in the pleasures of popular culture (the concept of "the everyday" in art), contestatory strategies under the heading "appropriation" aiming at the transformation of the viewers from the role of passive observers into the role of producers, to encourage and produce new social relationships. Germano Celant calls all these different forms of contemporary art, contaminating different languages, non-conventional ambits and overlapping in many techniques (fashion, body art, music...) "art mix" (Celant, 2008).

Given this context, all arts are involved in the shaping of collaborative projects aspiring to progressive social or political changes, through practices and processes that often fuse elements of art, design, and architecture. Public art works often on social integration and community building and acknowledgement, through territorial laboratories and activation actions in which art becomes a social engine of the community: it is a logic that moves the action from a simple location in the community, to an asset for the community with the community, an action that in itself creates community (Toscano, 2004). Interventions use a perspective of social empowerment, with emphasis on self-determination and recovery of individual and collective capacity, "in opposition to a system that requires inspection and approval" (Pietromarchi, 2005; see also Lupo and Postiglione 2010). Examples are the project *Trans: it, art public space and urban aesthetics in Europe* (Pietromarchi, 2005), *Networking city: practices for urban transformation* (Scotini, 2003).

A short detournement into arts is therefore necessary to introduce those aspects that are specific of art and are more relevant for our idea of art as "agent of innovation".

Art is a form of knowledge, and therefore of research. It is not a case that, among the modes of inquiry, Deleuze and Guattari place both philosophy (it creates "concepts", or self referential objects that point to possible worlds), science (it creates "functions" or propositions in discursive system), and art that creates percept and sensations. In her book *Method meets art*, Patricia Leavy (2009) explores different artistic approaches and their relationship to qualitative research. Art-based methods range in the domains of narrative, poetry, music, performance, dance and movement, and visual arts as means for inquiry: they are innovatively suitable to different research questions of social and qualitative research because of the "profound possibility of the arts to jar people to see things differently, to transcend differences and to foster connections" (Leavy, 2009, p. viii) or to disrupt and extend the qualitative paradigm. "Arts based research practices are a set of tools used during all phases of social research, addressing it in a holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice art intertwined" (Leavy, 2009, p. ix): narrative methods include among others, the use of fiction, drama as research activity, visual anthropology, interpretative biography, script and performance based research methods, dance as representational form (Leavy, 2009). All these methods have the quality of being participative and creative, that is involving people to envision alternatives and possibilities.

Art is a visionary, imaginative and creative tool. From knowledge to imagination the step is short. Jung says that

"the voyage of discovery involves an immersion in the creative imagination and its uncertain path" and art is used to provide this visionary path. "To art, in every culture, has been assigned the task of creating a different world, facing the daily one, in other words a different reality" (Franclanci, 2006, p. 21).

For Garroni, art is a kind of creative and "constructive" tool for humans in the sense that functions to compensate emotionally the difficulties of adaptation to the environment. He considers art a specialization of creativity finalized to practical knowledge and communication, in a correlation between practical-intellectual behaviors and aesthetic behaviors (Garroni, 2010).

Art is an organized and structured form and process. Art can be approached as a creatively structured process. According with de Monthoux, in art there is no creativity that it is not, at the same time, organization too. In his book *The art firm*, de Monthoux (2004) identifies, in the concept of "art firm", the tight connections between creativity and organization. Many artists, by one side, have developed organizational and productive models inspired by the rationalist paradigm, by the other side, de Monthoux (2004) and Strati (1999) call "organizational aesthetics" an art of managing organizational processes through the aesthetics dimension of social relations. Organization (in its broad sense of process of organizing or group of people working together for an objective) implies *form*: organization is *performed*, organizations can be *transformed*, and resources (human and material) are *formed* and *informed*.

An example of application of the rational paradigm in art is the formal organization of the works of art: according to Markus Bandur, for instance, the "serial thinking" is a technique used to create repetition and variations, contrast and symmetry in the composition. The serial composition derives from music, but is possible to find works of art, whose "form" is realized through scales and intervals, integration and inter-modulation, like Piet Mondrian "Compositions" (Bandur, 2003).

Organization can refer to processes too. Jensen Hines makes a distinction between cooperation and collaboration in arts. Artists *cooperate* together when they confront each other within the same art form. Instead when different arts meet and merge together then we assist to a *collaboration* process among arts. Art processes can be phenomenological studied through Merleau-Ponty philosophy using the concept of lived body, perception and style (Beykal, 2009).

Relatively to the process, the production of the works of art is another aspect whose organization can be structured in wide range of variations. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, "the process of making art gets closer to design, production, manufacturing" (Sudijc, 2009, p. 155). From artists who control and follow the full process from ideation to prototyping and personally realize the work manipulating the matter with the collaboration of craftsmen (the work of art is the piece, with its tangible quality), to artists who, after the conception, rely on a relatively complex supply chain, from materials to final realization, not participating to any practical activity (the work of art is the idea, the conception). One example of the first type is the Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro who owns a work-

shop close to his studio to supervise internally the production of the works of art. Emblematic for the second one is the figure of Maurizio Cattelan, who proudly declares he never manipulates any one of his works¹⁰. The paroxysm of this situation is the idea of the artist himself as work of art, artist who overwhelms and takes the place of art and whose stereotype Maldonado associates to the exuberant personality of Gustave Courbet as a precursor of artistic marketing, or of Joseph Beuys (Maldonado, 2010).

Art is a social system. The sociology of art is a discipline that studies the social aspects of arts. In her close examination *La sociologie de l'art*, Nathalie Heinich (2010 [2004]), identifies three generations, the first essentially speculative about art and society, in which art is the epiphenomenon of collective realities, visions of the world and symbolic forms (called *sociological aesthetics* and whose principal reference are the Frankfurt scholars like Adorno, Marcuse, Horkheimer), the second, focused on art within the society and the relation between art and the social context (of production and reception) that generate it and its value, according to its meaning and practical uses by time (called *social history of art* and whose quality is to integrate the authors and their works of art in the context they live in) and the third, exploring art as society, that is art as a social system of relations and actors in the evolutive process of making art (called *empirical sociology*, whose difference with the previous is to apply the investigation not to the past but to the contemporary present) (Heinich, 2010 [2004]). According to Bonito Oliva, the system of art is a conceptual reality in which live and operate the artist (who makes the work of art), the critic (who promotes the value of it), the gallery manager (who intermediates the artist and the buyer), the collector (the frequent buyer), the mass media (press and other specialized media), the museum (that legitimates contemporary artists through temporary exhibitions or permanent collections), the public (Bonito Oliva, 1975). Being such complex system, art can be examined as a set of activities like production, intermediation and reception that are relations and processes that happen by means of artifact, specifically works of art. Alfred Gell calls "art nexus" the system of relations which connect production, circulation and reception of works of art (Gell, 1998). Since the system is "open" these relations imply a

dependency both from the contents and the context: the value of art production, mediation and reception is sensible and varies (and affects too) in response to technology, languages and behaviors innovative changes. These practices are also strategic factors for potentially creating distinctions (and social disparities) but democratization too.

Art is an identity consumption practice. Recent studies in sociology put the art system in relation with the consumption system. Art is included within creative economy and therefore subject to different transactions which generate value. The consumption is the last phase of this value chain within the market of art. For the collectors, the possess of art is a communicative medium for an immaterial consumption of social status and prestige. For the general public, the accessibility to art, through museums, exhibitions, events, democratizes and makes possible this consumption practice. For both of them the consumption of art is more than mere and passive fruition but a practice to participate the "aura" of art. Trasforini addresses art consumption as identity practice: works of art are relational objects (Trasforini, 2006). Andy Warhol well knew this and never hesitated to face the link between culture and commerce, to change the way art was perceived by means of the power of commercial images. Nowadays Barbara Kruger collages works criticizes this cultural mainstream of consumerism, thus making art more prone to create critical works than design toward the economic system that makes them possible.

From art to Aesthetics: Promoting art in action as "agency" for innovation

As Carmagnola (2009, p. 45) underlines "there's too much art around": everything seems worth to be promoted to the rank of art, and everybody can act as an artist in contemporary society (Maldonado, 2010).

A possible motivation is a diffuse misunderstanding between art and aesthetics. According to Menna, arts have a "cold polarity", self-referred, and a "warm polarity", that is the one that crosses the borders of social behaviors and worlds. This second aspect is called "aesthetic action" and is marking the difference from art to court, being an aesthetic action prone to expand in a denser and blur effect (Menna, 2001 [1968]).



Figure 4. Art and organization of structure and process: left, Piet Mondrian, centre, Arnaldo Pomodoro workshop, right, Maurizio Cattelan "All"

¹⁰ Sudijc cites also: Jeff Koons, Marc Quinn.

De Fusco too distinguishes between artistic and aesthetic: the first is a kind of experience that implies study and competence, and is therefore “cultural,” the second is independent from culture and preparation, concerns senses and is therefore “natural” (De Fusco, 2010 [1990]). Aesthetics denotes the knowledge that happens through senses: these empirical and sensorial faculties permit also to act within the society, enabling a kind of aesthetic judgment that De Fusco calls “taste.” In this sense aesthetics, according to Saint Girons, differs from the concept of beauty (Saint Girons, 2008): aesthetics judgment is the way to specify the universal rules in the adaptation to the environment (Garroni, 2010).

Coherently, Menna proposes an “aesthetic perspective,” conceived not as a contemplative action, but as a way to act within a situation to understand and transform it, thus in order to make politics, technique and aesthetic dialogue each other (Menna, 2001 [1968]). “Aesthetics appears to be more than a quality intrinsic of transformation of things, a technique: is a communicative and relational strategy in opposition to industrial design and art” (Francalanci, 2006, p. 35).

Being such “effectual practice” (Perniola, 2002) aesthetics become a form of social behaviors which makes no distinctions between high and low culture (Carmagnola, 2009): it is more a diffused practice characterized by an “aesthetics dimension of action” than an elite artistic action. This diffused aesthetics within a “performative society” is a kind of democratization of critical interventions enabled by the “art device”: the capacity and potentiality of a work of art, a performance, an installation, to function as a platform for oth-

ers and different process activated by people participation (Valeriani, 2009).

According to Francalanci, the shift to the diffused aesthetics as an implicit dimension in the behaviors of masses, has been fixed by Benjamin technical reproducibility of art. The diffused aesthetics pertains to the always more simulative character of materiality of things too (i.e. smart objects), caused by the pervasiveness of technology: if, as stated before “art in every culture has the task to build a different world, opposite to the real, this task has been taken by the technological production of the artificial world” (Francalanci, 2006, p. 21).

This aesthetic dimension of action and practice seems more able to dialogue with the social and politic practices than institutional interventions do: for its attention to the process (the performance) and probably being not deliberately addressing the achievement of results but simply the enabling of behaviors, the aesthetic action results to be more effective in *turning performances in performative and conformative actions*, able to produce or permanently change a form or a context, to enable expressions, to create community, to become a cohesion and integration factor.

“Il modo di fare arte, con la sua forza d’urto, rappresenta il modello di sviluppo e lo strumento di liberazione della società e dell’individuo, la funzione di indicare una alternativa radicale alla condizione presente” (Menna, 2001 [1968], p. 49).

Aesthetics appear therefore both as a quality inherent to the transformation of things, and a *technique*: a



Figure 5. Aesthetics as performative and conformative action: left, “Landscape is changing,” Tirana (by the artist Mircea Cantor), right, installation of Add on.

relational strategy “visions oriented” different both from industrial design and art (Francalaci, 2006). In this sense it acts as “agency for innovation”: the practices related to the diffused aesthetic, within the conditions and system of relations provided by art (production, mediation, reception... and the value chain of the art system before presented), can serve to negotiate the meanings and the value of things by the cooperation of different actants¹¹ (human actors and non-human like rules, artifacts, institutions, technologies), in a concept of cultural “transition” of meaning, values, roles (Svasek, 2007).

Aesthetics of innovation

So, art, or better aesthetics, in the contemporary society, is often perceived and used, in its multiple forms, more than in a dialectic relation with the technique, as an opportunity to explore, tame, negotiate and practice innovation. Art is a platform for innovation being not only a “content” provider but also a “context” provider for innovation, becoming a place for opportunities beside than giving only formal solutions. Art allows exploring and experimenting in a “safe” environment the possible new forms, meanings and uses of different innovations: and this happen indifferently when the change is related or driven by new technologies, new languages, or new behaviors in a social context. Art, in fact, plays a crucial role in the settlement of new paradigms: thanks to different art processes and forms, the aesthetic action responds to the different drivers of change exploring the possibilities of innovation and giving it a socializable meaning. Those art strategies can be analyzed and methodologically framed to define some replicable processes that are already used or can be transferred and applied into the design context. In our design background the drivers of innovation are specifically technologies, languages and behaviors, and they lead respectively to different design driven forms of innovation: forms-functions, forms-meaning, forms-process. So from now on, we will frame in this background also the works of different artists¹², and immediately afterwards, of designers¹³, to compare innovation processes developed by art and design in a model that we call “aesthetics of innovation”.

Our proposal is based on a triad of interactions among aesthetics (art) and innovation (design) that identifies possible replicable processes and new innovative forms that covers the different scales of images, objects and spaces from art to design. These aesthetics of innovation combine each other in a non-linear process, in fact are deeply intertwined (as shown in Figure 6).

- *technological aesthetics*, driven by new technologies and leading to the adoption of new forms-function, through languages and behaviors;
- *symbolic aesthetics*, driven by new languages and leading to the signification of new forms-meaning, through technologies and behaviors;
- *relational aesthetics*, driven by new behaviors and leading to the enabling of new forms-process, through languages and technologies.

In this context, is necessary to better explain the concept of design driven forms of innovation: the first concept of form (forms-function) has a utilitarian dimension, connected with use and performance, and for this is often based on technology. The second concept of form (forms-meaning) has a cultural and psychological dimension linked with the sense of things, that could have an individual (emotional) or social (symbolic) value, and is based on language as socialization media. The third concept of form (forms-process) has a connective and temporal dimension and is diffused by practice and therefore relational behaviors too. So the scale of manifestation (or forms) of the aesthetics of innovation moves from tangible objects or spaces to intangible processes and contexts.

In addition, to each aesthetics of innovation corresponds a “paradigm” (see Table 1)¹⁴, which conceptually includes the specific actions and way of intervention operable to produce innovation forms, within the same aesthetics, shifting from all the domains and ambits of art (images, objects, spaces) to the dimensions and scales of design (communication, products, interiors)¹⁵: objectification, re-contextualization and post-production.

Obviously, these aesthetics are more intertwined among each other and this schematization has only demonstrative purposes: its is possible in fact to combine together processes that starts from a technological point of view and move to relational implications and vice versa.

Technological aesthetics

As said before, the technological aesthetics is driven by new technologies and leads to the adoption of new forms-function, through languages and behaviors.

When technology is the driver for a change, according to De Kerckhove (1996), art is a “corrective” in elaborating new strategies and interpretations (languages, behaviors) of these new technologies and their representations: art will explain how to use the new technol-

¹¹ The term “actant”, or non-human actor, refers to entities which act in a social network for the construction of innovation. It is borrowed from Latour Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005).

¹² It is necessary to precise that the study of the artists’ works is not approached nor with any art critique methodology, neither historical analysis, and without considering the artist intention, or motivation, but only by looking their works as processes and forms.

¹³ In relation to design, we will focus principally on contemporary product design, and especially that one on the cutting edge, which demonstrates a renewed interest in art.

¹⁴ Even if, in the use of tables, it might appear too much structured or already fixed and determined, our hypothesis is still under development and needs to be more articulated and partially verified. Each correspondence among aesthetics typologies, innovation drivers, processes, paradigms and actions tends to seem linear and direct and to not admit confutations and integrations: however, this is not the case. The list of possibilities is not meant to be exhaustive but as an enough articulated draft with some elements of conclusion. So tables, from now on, should be considered more as visualisation devices or rhetoric expedients to illustrate, list and organise ideas than definitive schemes.

¹⁵ Although in theory is possible to find examples for every art domains and design dimensions, as stated in the previous note, in our researches we’ll focus more on the object-product scale.

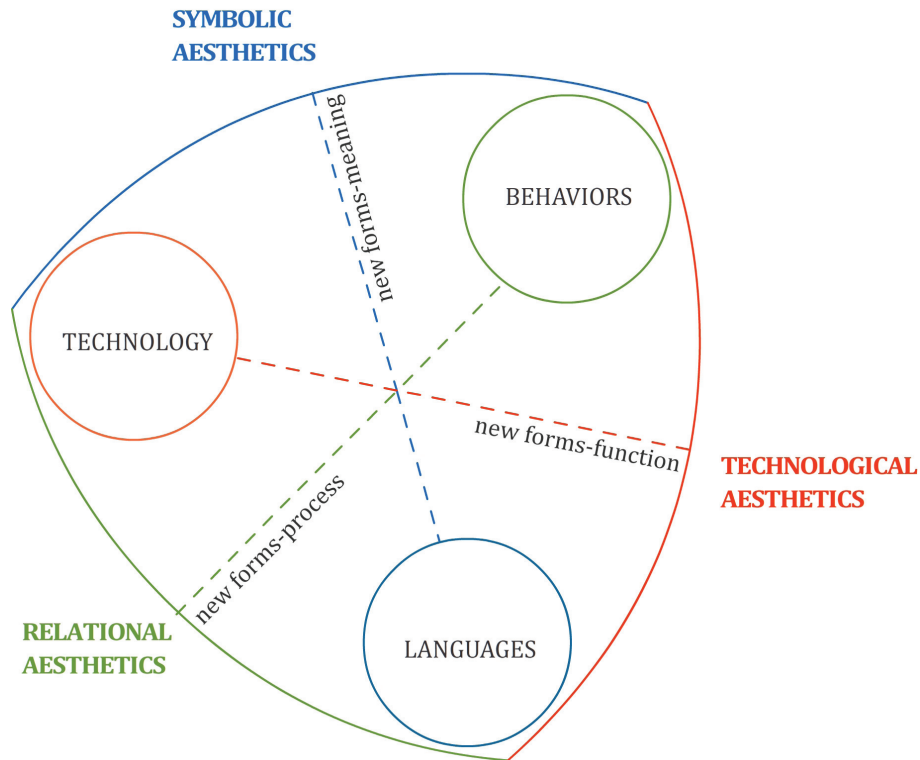


Figure 6. Aesthetics of innovation.

Table 1. Aesthetics of innovation features.

Aesthetics of innovation	Driver of innovation	Design driven form of innovation	Innovation Process	Paradigm: actions
Technological Aesthetics	New Technologies	New forms-function (utilitarian dimension, connected with use and performance)	Adoption (through languages and behaviors)	"Objectification": Alteration Hybridization Substitution Deconstruction-reconstruction Deformation Transformation Reparation ...
Symbolic Aesthetics	New Languages	New forms-meaning (cultural and psychological dimension linked with the sense of things)	Signification (through technologies and behaviors)	"Re-contextualization": Citation Simulation/fiction Camouflage/mimesis Approximation Narrations Translation/interpretation Intermediation ...
Relational Aesthetics	New Behaviors	New forms-process (connective and temporal dimension, diffused by practice)	Enabling (through technologies and languages)	"Post-production": Incorporation Addition Recombination ...

ologies. Similarly, according to Carmagnola art “translates in forms the technological essence of our time”. In some artists works, the new technology (that can range from a physical or manufacturing technique, a new material, and so on, to a complex digital platform or system) allows some interventions and actions that drive to alteration, transformation, hybridization, deformation or reparation of the existing, to provide it with a new form-function (often a-functional in the strict sense, but evidently addressing emotional, critical functions, and so on, see Rachel Withered or Gordon Matta Clark works of alterations of spaces).

In the design perspective, this logic results in new opportunities and processes of configuration of the shape of both information and products and interior environments. At the scale of product design, it's a sort of “super-design” (Petroni, 2010) or hyper-design characterized by an interrelation with art for the proposal of new languages (that suggest new uses too), but permitted fundamentally by the possibilities of new manufacturing: Jurgen Bey Kokon hybrid furniture, for example, is a result of the Droog design group experimentation on materials conducted during the “dry tech” project in 2007: “furniture is combined and disguised to produce new forms, functions and identities. By using the so-called spiders’ web technique, desolate furniture is wrapped with synthetic fibers creating a smooth, elastic skin”¹⁶. Among others, Pieke Bergmans shapes his lamps and bottles with the deformation of drops, the Campana brothers use the possibility of hybridization of materials in their “transplastic” chairs collections, Anna Ter Haar and Alexander Pelikan work altering and substituting parts of their chairs inserting different materials, Peter Marigold deconstruct the surface of his table, Liliana Ovalle furniture use the logic of repairing.

In the technological aesthetics, we assist to processes of “objectification”¹⁷ of technology, to push its own adoption or find new applications, through the adaptation and innovation of languages (styles) and behaviors (uses) too.

Symbolic aesthetics

The symbolic aesthetics is driven by new languages and leads to the signification of new forms-meaning, through technologies and behaviors.

When the drivers for changes are new languages, “art creates a language to which design answers” (Sudijc, 2009, p. 170). In their practice, artists make use of systems of references to signs, texts and forms of expression in order to elaborate new forms-meanings, through strategies like citation, simulation, camouflage, narration, translation... and so on, aimed at the production of signification of the new languages: thus focusing more on how it means than on what. In *The return to real*, Hal Foster (2006 [1996]) represents the critique of neo-avant-garde to conventionality through the use of ready made, assemblage, repetition, anti-aesthetic, transgression... and so no, authorizing any possible interpretation. For Foster the artist should work as an ethnographer to encourage the participative observation of the audience. Contemporary artists like Matthieu Laurette, John Armleder or Liam Gillik, operate the strategy of displacement and de-contextualization, to invent stories and narrations by the use respectively of images, objects and spaces.

In the field of design, and especially product design, new object languages find meaning through citation (Marcel Wanders lamp, Paolo Dubini sofa, Joris Laarman heater), camouflage or mimesis (Alessandra Bardeschi and Nacho Carbonell second skin covering for chairs) approxi-



Figure 7. Technological Aesthetics in art (left) and design (right).

¹⁶ <http://www.droog.com/store/studio-work/kokon-furniture/>

¹⁷ Objectification is the process by which an abstract concept is treated as if it is a concrete thing or a physical object. The paradigm of *objectification* is a process for incorporating function and meaning in the form of artifacts. Excluding the conventional references to the denial of autonomy or subjectivity, according to Nussbaum (1995) the process of objectification is characterized, among others, by instrumentality and fungibility: as an interchangeable tool for one's own purposes.

Type of action (paradigm: <i>objectification</i>)	New forms-functions			
	from art...	images	objects	spaces
		Rachel Withered Gordon Matta Clark Monica Sosnowska ...
	...to design	communication	products	interiors
		...	Pieke Bergmans Jurgen Bey Fernando&Humberto Campana Anna Ter Haar Peter Marigold Liliana Ovalle Andrea Pelikan Bratkovic



mation (Jo Meester unfinished-like vases), simulation (Tom Price and Anke Weiss other object-like chairs), narration and storytelling (Anna Tomas clothes hanger, Studio Oom glass-like lamp and 5.5 table lamp fire alike).

In the symbolic aesthetics, the paradigm of "re-contextualization" of languages serves to their signification in order to permit their appropriation by technologies and people use.

Relational aesthetics

The relational aesthetics is driven by new behaviors and leads to the enabling of new forms-process, through languages and technologies.

When the drivers for change are new behaviors, art uses its participative and diffusive skill to empower a community to adopt those techniques and languages more suitable to enable the new behaviors and processes. According to Bourriaud, relational aesthetics is a set of artistic practices which take “as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than the affirmation of a symbolic autonomous and private space” (Bourriaud, 2010 [1998], p. 14). Artists produce social models for actions: collective elaboration of meanings and “domain of exchanges” through audience participation and sociability. In the works, or better performances like dinners, shops, installation, of Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Daniel Spoerri,

Table 3. Symbolic Aesthetics (actions and works from artists and designers).

Type of action (paradigm: re- contextualization)	New forms-meaning			
	from art...	images	objects	spaces
	...to design	communication	products	interiors
Citation Simulation/fiction Camouflage/mimesis Approximation Narrations Translation/interpretation Intermediation		Matthieu Laurette ...	John Armleder Gordon Matta Clark ...	Liam Gillik Jimmie Durham Jorge Pardo ...
		...	Alassandra Bardeschi Nacho Carbonell Paolo Dubini Simon Hasan Richard Hutten Jo Meester Nucleo Tom Price Anna Thomas Marcel Wanders Joris Laarman Anke Weiss 5.5

Felix Gonzales Torres, Douglas Gordon, art functions as a relational device to explore the same theoretical horizon: the sphere of interhuman relationships and with the works of art. These relational practices are a repertoire of forms for action in which objects and languages are vectors of relations too. Grant H. Kester (2004) calls this performativity conversational art, or dialogic aesthetics, because in contrast with the art work entirely produced by the artist is the result of an interactive process. In this perspective, the concept of originality (to be the origin of) and creation (to create from nothing) of art fades within the paradigm of post-production, making the artist a sort of director who mixes, selects, combines, assembles, programs existing forms. "We recognize that is no longer helpful to pretend that artists originate the product they

make, or, more importantly, that they have control over the values and meanings attributed to their practice: interpretation has superseded intention" (Cummings, Lewandowska, 2000, p. 15) write the artists Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska in their work "The value of things" where they explore the dissolving museum experience and museum effect through the complex mechanism of accumulation and display.

In parallel, designers produce forms and objects informed by other objects, working with incorporation, addition, and re-combination. Carmagnola defines this *modus operandi* "meta": a production of production (Carmagnola, 2009). Massimiliano Adami, Tom Vinke and Frank Willem furniture use incorporation strategies, Bram Boo wardrobe is an example of addition and Peter Marigold makes use re-

**Figure 9.** Relational Aesthetics in art (left) and design (right).

Table 4. Relational Aesthetics (actions and works from artists and designers).

Type of action (paradigm: <i>post-production</i>)	New forms-process			
	from art...	images	objects	spaces
		Douglas Gordon ...	Daniel Spoerri Felix Gonzales Torres ...	Jorge Pardo Rirkrit Tiravanija ...
	...to design	communication	products	interiors
		...	Massimiliano Adami Frank Willems Tim Vinke Peter Marigold Bram Boo Tomas Alonso ...	Studio X Group ...

combination, all of them create new products using and mixing existing objects: all of them are possible by the manufacturing technologies and identify new styles and languages.

In the relational aesthetics, the paradigm of "post-production" (Bourriaud, 2002) enables creative behaviors and processes of decoding and re-structuring languages and technologies.

Conclusion

The aesthetics of innovation, even if results to appear tangibly in objects, are focused on paradigmatic actions in which art is a source of a repertory of possible new forms-function, forms-meaning and forms-process for design. The listed works and authors are a collection of approaches whose exemplarity values and means in the methodological frame provided. This methodological frame in fact, giving coherence to a set of practices already in use, serves in the analysis of the settlement of innovation and in the envisioning of innovative forms, in a context where technologies, languages and behaviors are always more intertwined drivers for complex changes. The inspiring relation between art and design, aesthetics and innovation, perfectly fits in the contemporary world cultural production and is the next challenge in the aesthetics of use and development of our material culture.

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