READING PRODUCT DE(SIGN):
AN INQUIRY INTO
DISCURSIVE ASPECTS OF DESIGN CULTURE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
AND
THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS
OF BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

By
Şebnem Timur
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Şebnem TİMUR
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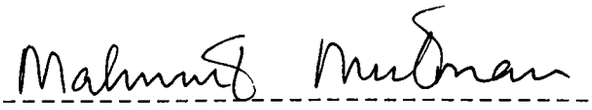

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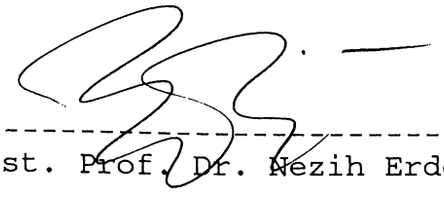

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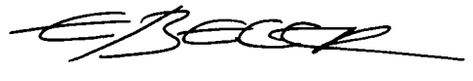

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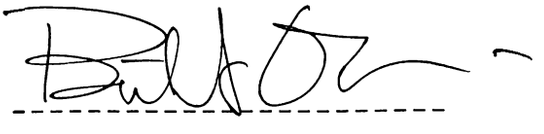

Prof. Dr. Bülent Özgüç,
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ABSTRACT

READING PRODUCT DE(SIGN): AN INQUIRY INTO DISCURSIVE ASPECTS OF DESIGN CULTURE

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M.F.A. in Graphical Arts

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Mutman

September, 1996

Every design can be considered as an expression, and every expression conveys meanings to the receiver, of different sorts. The aim of this study is to demonstrate the ways of meaning production and consumption through the material forms of our contemporary culture, focusing on product and graphic design. The product's discourse is articulated and received both through the material being of the object, and its representations or reflections on graphical forms. Firstly, in order to demonstrate the existence of the discourse of the designed item, the process is conceptualized as a process of communication, assigning the production stage the role of encoding and the consumption, that of decoding. Secondly, advertising is included in the discussion as an intermediary level of communication with its own independent system of signification. Thirdly, the relationship between design and language is explored through the efforts of integrating semantics in the design process as a methodology. Then related with the debate on language, the finished product's functioning as a sign within the system of signification of semiotics is discussed. Lastly, examples of different readings of design is presented with implications for future readings.

Keywords: Product Design, Graphic Design, Discourse, Meaning, Semiotics.

ÖZET

ÜRÜN TASARIMINI OKUMAK: TASARIM KÜLTÜRÜNÜN SÖYLEMSEL YÖNLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Şebnem Timur

Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

Tez Yöneticisi: Assist. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Mutman

Eylül, 1996

Her tasarım bir ifade biçimi olarak kabul edilebilir, ve her ifade, alımlayan için birçok değişik anlam taşıyıcı niteliktedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, ürün tasarımı ve grafik tasarım üzerine odaklanarak, günümüz kültürünün materyal formlarıyla, anlam üretim ve tüketim yollarını sergilemektir. Ürünün söylemi hem objenin materyal varlığında ve onun grafik formlar üzerindeki yeniden sunumu ve yansımalarıyla eklemlenip, algılanır. İlk olarak, tasarlanmış üründeki söylemin varlığını kabul edebilmek için, tasarım süreci bir haberleşme süreci içinde; üretime kodlama ve tüketime, kodları çözme fonksiyonlarını yükleyerek, kavramsallaştırılmıştır. İkincisi, reklam, bu haberleşme kavramsalı içinde kendi ve özerk anlamlandırma sistemiyle bir ara aşama olarak dahil edilmiştir. Üçüncü olarak tasarım ve dil arasındaki ilişki tasarım sürecine bir metodoloji olarak entegre edilmek istenen anlambilim çalışmalarıyla araştırılmaktadır. Dille ilgili bu tartışmayla bağlantılı olarak, bitmiş ürünün göstergebilimsel bir anlamlandırma sistemi içindeki gösterge işlevi incelenmektedir. Son olarak, tasarımın değişik okumalarına örnekler, geleceğe dair okumalara göndermelerle sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ürün Tasarımı, Grafik Tasarım, Söylem, Anlam, Göstergebilim.

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I would like to thank Dr. Mahmut Mutman for enabling me to gain a more diversified look to my subject matter owing to the body of knowledge I compiled through the exciting lectures in his lessons, and for his encouragement at hard times of the study.

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For the technical side, I want to thank my nameless PC for spending the same amount of time with me working, without getting infected or causing problems and also to the last minute printer.

Last of all I want to dedicate this study to my mother, Umran Timur for her invaluable support and friendship all through the years of my studentship.

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CHAPTER 1

1-INTRODUCTION to DE(SIGN)

1.1. An Etymological Inquiry

The play of word in the title of the thesis implicates the two ways of reading design. The use of the sign piece of the word in brackets, aims to express there may be two different readings of the word design. One way suggests to read the end-product on its material being that is; the (design) as a whole, while the other requires a semiotical framework putting the sign function out of the former. Such a reading and writing could only be possible after the enlargement in the meaning and scope of the concept of sign within the realm of the science of semiotics. The double reading in the title gives clues about the scope of this study. In this thesis, various ways of reading design in different contexts due to the transformations it goes through, is investigated, explored and discussed. The reading that will be exemplified, in this study is limited in its scope of product design and its reflections on graphics. The discourse of design is articulated through these two disciplines and many others. This articulation is not a static one, quite the contrary it is constructed by the various snapshots that we experience the products of

design in various contexts. This conception implies that the act of designing is a dynamic activity, so naturally its discourse is to be found in the different forms that design takes in its transformations all through the way. This inquiry is done from the viewpoint of a person standing on a line, able to see both sides of the area that the line separates. Left side belongs to the design and its kitchen, whereas the right to the target, user or say the consumer. The line in fact defines a screen on which the representations of designs can be viewed. The screen is penetrated at the times of use, but at other times it serves to build up images. The meaning constructions are done both by those images and the product itself. This study aims to show the two sides together, by comparing the designers' side to the consumers', and vice versa. This is a total interaction and communication of designers, objects and people through the forms of material culture. This culture of exchange of all sorts; information, meaning, and value, is in fact a design culture, finding its materiality in the forms of design and its transformations.

Having started by focusing on the word design, let us continue then, on the etymology of the term. In his paper "On Transformations of the Term Design with Reference to Mass Produced Objects" Balcıoğlu indicates the mismatch among the words in European languages that is used for design, although the concept has a Western origin. He says: "*Formgebung*, i.e., 'form giving' in German can not

match *disegno* in Italian or *esthetique industrielle* in French (1994, 254)." In the 19th century another French word '*dessin*' which meant simply drawing in English made the terminology more complicated for a long period of time (256).

If we have a look at the Turkish word *desen* that derived from the same '*dessin*' in French and '*disegno*' in Italian we do not see a shift of meaning like in English. *Desen* means simply drawing without color, the overall lines and outlines of the forms (Tuğlacı 1971). The real confusion is in the word that is used in the English sense of design, something more than a drawing that is *tasarım*. The root *tasar* is to plan; *tasarı* is the draft, preliminary plan; *tasarım* is something slightly different that is basically the project and the representations of the mental images of that project. The basic meaningful difference between *design* and *tasarım* is that design is also used in calling a finished product as well as the process that is *designing*, while *tasarım* has always a project-oriented connotation that implies the incompleteness; the process, not its end-product (though it is also used in that sense). Deriving from the very same difference, the Turkish translation of the title of the thesis is inevitably without the play of word, and consequently does not offer a double reading, concerning signs and signification.

We began to see a new transformation, that is *dizayn* for calling the finished product in advertisements, nowadays. This is in fact not a transformation in that sense it can rather be called an adaptation emerging from the need to make it complete-unconsciously-by using the original word. We took the term '*dessin*' properly, but we have trapped in *design,* mixed it with the word that actually meant a project, and in fact we have a word directly adapted as *proje*, but although we had our own word that is *tasarı* for project, we used it instead of design, so there is some kind of gap, or shift of meaning occurred.

May be not a one to one corresponding example, but there is a word created for the term computer that is *bilgisayar*, coming from the act of counting information. This word is widely accepted and being used and there is no need to adapt *kompüter*, I mean literally, but if people are trying to adapt *dizayn*, this indicates the lack of the right Turkish term for that.

1.2 The Framework of the Study through Definitions of Product and Graphic Design

This will be an attempt to try to define the term 'design' for the sake of constructing the framework of the study, because actually there is not a shared statement as a definition, in fact even the sum of all the definitions would not be enough to exhaust the term. The main reason for this derives from the complexity of

the issue, depending on cognitive processes, organization, technology, material, marketing, communication, physical constraints, human factors, specialization, context, etc. The process of design by the addition of these factors that can not be counted altogether all at once, resembles a three dimensional network, the inputs and the outputs do not act in a linear fashion obeying a syntax like in language, so that it becomes harder to define it with a chain of words. Having these in mind, a way out could be to break the process up to its components; each being a different layer defining some aspects.

It will be better to start with a basic definition. Archer says: "Design is a goal directed problem solving activity (Jones 1980, 3)". This definition can be considered pretty broad, because it can be applied to nearly everything that we do in our daily lives. In a way it can be said that we are *designing* our lives, but it is not so. Every act can not be considered as design if we take the keywords residing in the definition; first one is this act should be a problem solving and the second there should be a consciously planned goal in the end. This conception basically defines the borders of the design as an activity in the whole set of human behaviour. It can be considered as the emphasis is on the differentiation, that is why it sounds so basic. Sparke, on the other hand states that:

> "The responsibility for the relationship between industry and culture falls, in the modern world, on the shoulders of design. The product is the mediator between manufacture and the consumer, and its design is the container of the message that is mediated" (1987, 8).

Sparke's definition is extremely important in that it contains the keywords determining the limitations of my study in the wide open area of design. First of all design, has a strategic location between industry and culture, between manufacture and consumer, so it is explicit that we are talking about industrial or graphic design. Secondly the product is defined as the container of the message; that means the whole process of design can be considered at the same time a process of communication.

How can a product communicate? Simply by its physical being; it stands between industry and culture, the product is a blend of the two, so it tells us about both. The second medium it uses is the graphic design whose basic function is communication. Munari's definitions are enlightening in constructing the two disciplines' interrelation:

> "Industrial Design is concerned with functional objects, designed according to economic facts and the study of techniques and materials. Graphic design works in the world of the Press, of books, of printed advertisements, and everywhere the printed word appears, whether on a sheet of paper or a bottle." (1980, 33).

There are basically three ways a product uses graphics. Firstly the product is wrapped up with different kinds of graphics, such as labeling, brand name, logo, various kinds of information written on the switches, knobs, and buttons, for instruction, numbers, icons and many more. Secondly the product uses graphic design in displaying its representations, both in the sense of packaging-that is to say various marketing tools-and also in advertisings in magazines, newspapers or on TV. There is a great difference between the two, because while the first one helps the product to reveal its intrinsic properties, the other uses the product itself as a graphical element, which means carries it to another context and another system of signification.

Now here in the third one lies the paradox. From a very practical point of view, graphics do really help the user to understand what is inside; such as if a pencil needs 0.9 or 0.5 refills; or something about the mechanisms, either to push, pull or turn; we can understand which button to hit from the letters and characters on the keyboard; or judge whether a roll of film is colored or black & white. These are the type of information made legible about a product by the use of graphics as its intrinsic properties, but all the graphic work on a consumer product is not about the inside.

Quite the contrary, most of the labels, logos, brand names can be considered as separate entities that support

the content, but at the same time being free of it. Besides, they may be indicators of something more than the product actually is. The NIKON label on a camera makes the consumer to rank it at a higher level than a COSINA; even though they would look quite similar or identical in function. In this case the intrinsic properties are not important in our reading of the product as a whole. Graphics in a way distort our reading; we assign one of them as more valuable than the other although they are identical in function and quality. It may even be said that product is a label and a packaging of the consumer society itself, as will be discussed in a further section.

If all the arguments and definitions in this section are to be summed up, we reach to another definition of design under the light of the issues discussed above. That is design is a dynamic activity of coping the form with the function in which every stage of the process has its own discourse that deserve analysis singularly. The design, in terms of the finished product, is an item of transformation, seeded inside an idea and revealed differently through the stages of development in the complex and long process of designing, producing, advertising and consuming (not to mention the intermediary stages such as marketing, retailing, selling, buying, using, etc.) Every stage defines a new context to the product and every context defines new meanings that are structured accordingly. These shifts of

meaning also do change the discourse of the product and its transformations. The aim is not to claim that all of the aspects will be handled thoroughly. Rather it will be a description of how these mechanisms are articulated to each other in a process of transformation. All through out the thesis, this fairly large conception will be implicitly seized by the reader whenever he meets the word design.

The second chapter is devoted to the understanding of the design process as a process of production of communication. The analysis will be made starting with the very idea of a product (at the material absence of it), the transformations at that stage. Then the concern will shift towards the production of the materiality of design out of the invisible ideas. That stage of actualization is at the point the whole network of relations' and factors' embodying in the form of a discourse on the product itself that is to be decoded during the act of consumption. The following chapter requires the disappearance of the product the moment it is born, that is the transformation of the product into an object of desire through a transformation named as advertising. The transformation of the product in fact comes to an end by the processes of production, and consumption. The last topic on advertisement is an intermediary step between the two, in which the product is communicating through its absence. The discourse is divided into two all through the transformation. The

first aspect is the objective discourse that is mediated by the material being of the product. The second aspect is the representative discourse of the object as it is in the form of the conceptual drawings of ideas at the project phase; the representation of the product and the accompanying literal discourse through graphics, various devices of media and advertising. The discourse of the product and the definition of design can only be appreciated if the issue is seen as a whole with these aspects consciously or not, in mind.

The fourth and fifth chapters will be on the relation between design and language. The debate on language provides the basis for the analysis of meaning production. Firstly, how semantics is used as a design method, will be discussed. Then the overall design will be handled under the topic of semiotics. This chapter will demonstrate the way meaning and signification is firstly integrated in the work of designers by semantics and afterwards how the designed item can be assessed, evaluated or treated by people in its real life context by semiotics.

The sixth chapter consists of examples of reading product and graphic design together, depending on the theories above, including the discourse of gender, modernity and history, besides the suggestion of future readings questioning the materiality of design. Last of all, the conclusion states that the reason for the concept of

signification's being a problematic (not only this thesis, but also of quite a number of them) lies in the fact of the perfect reading of the encoder's intentions being an utopia.

1.3 Material Culture Created through Mass Culture

Design is a form giving activity to the material being of the cultural items. Material culture deals with the physical, concrete reflections of cultural activity. As Berger claims:

> "The term 'material' comes from the Latin *materia*, matter. Material suggests an object, something that has a physical nature, that can be seen and touched. Objects have shape and size and color and weight. The objects we are interested are artifacts, which involve human workmanship; after all, a rock is material but it isn't an artifact. We use the term material here to contrast it with different aspect of human culture, ideas and beliefs and related considerations. Material culture can be defined to cover everything from a pot to a city..." (1992, 8).

Berger demonstrates how material culture can be analyzed through semiotic, historical, anthropological, psychoanalytic, Marxist and sociological perspectives. These various points of view highlight different aspects of the matter. Contemporary material culture is dominated by the 'culture industry'. Adorno in his essay named "Culture Industry Reconsidered", indicates the difference of the terms 'mass culture' and 'culture industry' (1975, 12-19). He says; in the drafts of the book *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment, that he wrote with Horkheimer, they used the term 'mass culture', later they changed it to 'culture industry', because the former one evokes a false meaning as if the culture produced is the natural outcome of the everyday life of the masses. On the other hand, 'culture industry' implies a programmed production of commodities to be consumed by masses. Ironically, the consumers are not the determiners of the production, they are just the addresses to be reached at the end. The system pretends that it is the other way out, meaning it makes the masses feel like they are the captains of the conscious act of consumption.

The 'cultural commodities of the industry' exist by their value prior to their form and content, because they are the tools to gain profit. In fact the 'cultural forms' become commodities by a transformation. It is a profit based transformation that leads an object the way to the market. Haug, discusses the effects of profit realization on the aesthetics of the products (1983). His arguement depends on the factors brought by the capitalist mass-production. He figures out three main factors having a direct effect on the appearance or the aesthetics of the product. The first one is that the amount of human labour used in production is being reduced all the time over the impact of machinery. The second point is that the time expanded for production of a single item is trying to be decreased. Lastly, the amount of money to be spent on the acquiring of the raw materials of production is trying to

be reduced. These reductions, and other factors that has not been mentioned here, concerning the issue of profit-making out of production (which is a fact of life, not mentioned in most of the glamorous design books), obviously caused a decline in the products. This decline is mostly visible compared to the traditionally produced items. Objects are no more mere products, but they have to be commodities with a profitable exchange-value. It is time for competition in the market that demands not only a good product, but also a clever, cheap and really profitable one (Haug 1983, 22).

Gottdiener prefers to use the term mass culture and he explains it by investigating the relations among producers, objects and users. This triadic relation can be applied not only to material culture items' analysis, but also to television programs, film industries and even to Disneyland (1995, 165-166). A distinction can be made between material culture and culture industry or mass culture borrowing Gottdiener's remarks:

> "The analysis of mass culture involves a three-way relationship among (1) cultural objects that are produced by an industrial process, (2) a set of institutions that produce and distribute such objects on a relatively large scale, and (3) a collectivity(ies) or social group(s) of those who use such objects in contexts that can include use within a creative or connotatively polysemic setting" (1995, 165-166).

The keywords to be taken out of this classification is that mass culture covers the industrial process

(production), distribution, usage and context. Material culture also studies these relations, but the starting point is to take the object, the product, the artifact as the patient on the bed. The production is made by the industry, but also the whole system acts like an industry itself. This large-scale manufacture not only produces objects but also the consumers of these objects as well; that is why it is called culture industry and that is why Adorno prefers to use 'culture industry' not having natural connotations like 'mass culture', instead (1975, 12). It is such an industry that by producing the cultural items, it is producing the people, the ideas and the relations over and over. It is the industry of a new aesthetics that is in Haug's terms the "commodity aesthetics", shaping the objects (1983).

Now, at this point knowing about the structure of the thesis, a question may arise in minds. That is; if the whole system starting from the production to the consumption is controlled and directed by this 'culture industry', how can advertising and media (that are the most powerful tools of the system) be assigned as an intermediary level of signification, in a context that everything is previously determined on a basis of profit, even effecting the aesthetics of the objects? Is not this an ignorance of the fact of design's being a tool of the capitalistic mechanisms of profit? These questions indicate to perfectly true realities and while being asked they become the full evidence for the reasons of

why design is so important and worth examining in terms of signification. Design is "the piece of bread in the soup", that carries all the properties of the context that is in and also reflects the technology in which it is shaped[1].

1.4. Contextual Cycle of Objects:
An Everyday Item, a Commodity or a Piece of Art?

The meaning attributions to unique objects, or hand made items are made according to a similar logic to the industrially produced forms of everyday life in masses. Mass culture creates its own material culture, but while handling it this way, one point should not be forgotten that every produced form of everyday life is in the large set of objects making up material culture. Even though the objects of the capitalist culture industry are produced, distributed and consumed according to a program, they go through a contextual cycle in the course of their physical transportation in practice. This cycle assigns them new contexts with new functions and meanings that were, may be never intended by the first-order programmers. The power of the objects arise from here. They can not be absolutely controlled. They have a certain autonomy and now a "sovereign power" of their own, in their relation with other objects, people and

[1]It is a term used by Mustafa Pultar to explain the relation of culture with the human activity, in one of his lectures in the course "Art, Science and Technology" at the Bilkent University in spring, 1995.

surroundings if thought in a "metaphysical" context (Baudrillard 1990a).

> "Indeed, for years he has been observing the power of objects to overpower and seduce human beings: commodities, capital, fashion, the sexual object, media, politics, information, codes, models. All Baudrillard's dominant themes instantiated the growing supremacy of the object over the subject, and his writings described its growing fascination, seductiveness and ultimate supremacy" (Kellner 1989, 157).

Kellner's states that Baudrillard assigned the power of objects to be created by the powerful tools of our culture industry, but I do not quite agree with this. The reason is that, although the seductive aspect of the mediatic tools should not be underestimated, his view carries a rather negative tone towards the behaviour of objects telling that their strategy is that of a "revenge" after all these years of slavery (Baudrillard 1990b). He implies that the power of objects is a borrowed one. While depicting a very pessimistic scenario, he quite deeply is flattering the supremacy of the system for being capable of such a catastrophic situation. The point that will be brought up is to be that objects or let us say all material culture items, after being programmed, produced, sold and consumed by the society in an intended way, are peeled of those plays and gain a new existential power. This power derives from the fact that they begin to live a life on their own in their new and ever changing contexts.

The way people acquire things is another culturally and historically defined aspect related to the economic structure of the society. There are certain factors to be satisfied for a product or a thing to become a commodity. As Appadurai states:

> "...the commodity situation of any 'thing' be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant future" (1986, 13).

A thing may enter a "commodity phase" during its life-time and exchangeability of one thing differs from society to society according to cultural value systems; this is the "commodity candicacy" of things. There is a third state of things that is the "commodity context" in which the social and cultural situation affects the exchangeability. Dealings with strangers, auctions, bazaar settings may provide things to become commodities (13-15).

The question of context seems to be the important one among the others, because context not only can make a thing a commodity, but also it can turn an everyday object; once being a commodity; to a piece of art. The debate began at the start of the century, by modernism. Actually this was the start of the modern sense in design brought about in architecture, household items, industrial and graphic design. The modernist objects produced in large numbers, were being sold by advertising; using the growing mass mediatic facilities.

During this time, as Colomina writes about in a beautiful article; Le Corbusier and Ozenfant began to publish a magazine called *L'Esprit Nouveau* (1988, 57-99). It was about architecture, painting, sculpture, music, sports, cinema, theater, etc., and it was a critical magazine. Le Corbusier was clashing the power of images of industrial objects by the text, and seeking the place of architecture and arts in the age of reproduction. He is so effected by the products appearing everywhere, in catalogues, magazines, etc., and he took those images and placed them in his art journal with other captions. By this way he was exploring the modern man's perceptions. One of the objects he chose, was a an image of a bidet with "Other Icons: The Museums" written underneath.

> "The Maison Pirsoul bidet is an everyday object, an industrial product, an Le Corbusier never intended it to abandon this status. His statement that it should be in a museum-to be precise, in the museum of decorative arts-means to Le Corbusier that the bidet speaks of our culture, as the folklore of a certain place spoke of that place's culture in other times. But in the places where the railway had already arrived, as Le Corbusier realized, after Loos, folklore could no longer be preserved. The industrial product had become the folklore of the age of communications" (Colomina 1988, 77).

Colomina compares Le Corbusier's use of an advertising image of an industrial object, the bidet within the context of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, to Duchamp's *Fountain by R. Mutt* in an art gallery. The distinction is clear enough when both artists' intentions are examined. Le Corbusier's aim is to indicate the reflective nature of

objects so that he proposes to put them into museums, because he believes that the best museum is the world itself, whereas Duchamp offers a new point of view by changing the context of a product by putting it into a museum, although he could not manage to do so (because it could not be exhibited, but printed in a magazine).

This arguement in fact implies that an object's existence is sufficient to be put in a system of signification. Although our concern starts and ends in the borders and definitions of design, this is to understand the current situation of producing and consuming things. It should be clear that after the objects are given birth by going through this cycle of design, they are included among the other items that have been there for quite a long time. The world and the things produced on it are, by nature classified firstly by an order of chronology in the course of history. Every period's and society's meaning constructions and attributions both in producing and consuming was different. On the other hand, if today we are assigning values in this way, this is also constructed through the knowledge and memory of both history and society, inherited to us.

CHAPTER 2

2. DESIGNING IS AN ACT OF TRANSFORMATION: A CONCEPTION OF THE PRODUCT DESIGN PROCESS AS A PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The act of designing, as a process is at the same time an act of transformation. Firstly the ideas concerning a determined problem are turned out to be product concepts; solutions are symbolized and made visible through a selected medium. This medium can be a drawing, a computer generated image, a rough sketch or in the form of a model, but whatever medium the ideas are presented they are there to communicate an idea. These ideas find actualisation in their real contexts, and materialised for a definite purpose in a second transformation. Thirdly, that will be called an intermediary level of communication, the products disappear for the sake of creating an entirely new kind of signification, that is called advertising. At this stage, the products are transformed into objects of desire that are represented in a dense symbolism. Although objects are solid in their material beings, they fluidly move and change meaning in different levels of production, representation and consumption.

2.1 The Project Phase

Design on the paper, or on the computer screen which is a pro-ject is a signifier, whose referent does not physically exist at that stage. It means the signified is a mental picture. This relation fits the definition of the Saussurian linguistic sign, but it is not as easy as it is in language. A sketch or a drawing do carry much more than a word, or a statement. More often it corresponds to an organization of function, an interaction of an object with a user. The methods and combinations of the possibilities of solutions to a single problem is endless, so the designer constructs a cycle between his mind, the image he is producing and the tool he is using. This is the stage of the designer's communication with his own mental pictures. Hand produces the image of the mental picture on the paper, only and only after this representation the ideas are visible both to the designer and the others. The image is then processed by the cognitive mechanisms and the changes are made on the image. The materiality of the design begins on the paper as a realization of ideas. The decision for the best solution is made after trying quite a number of possibilities.

The baby (the design) is born out of a simulation of his future life. Like a mirror image, the storyboard of a life is constructed by the developing of the product. The surface of the mirror corresponds to the product here,

because like the shiny surface of the mirror, the product is used to project something through. The product at this stage acts like a virtual mirror reflecting a virtual scenario, from the future to the present. All the representations of this future life is done to simulate it as close to reality as possible. The challenge of the project phase lies in the true statement of the problem with a true transformation of ideas of a simulated reality.

2.2 The Product...

When the projects are put in action, they turn out to be products. Here, the scenarios become real life incidents and the concrete product takes place in a new order of signification. The problem is twofold in this stage. The problem being talked about is a communication problem. What kind of a communication is this? (a) the product's communication with the user, (b) product's function as a sign. The first is like looking at the object under the magnifier; concentrating merely on the artifact. This happens usually at the time or instant the product is being used. The designer's intentions about the expressions of function come into being. The latter, on the other hand, deals with the product within a context. A complete part is devoted to the semiotic analysis of the object.

The product's use value can only be appreciated by its function's legibility; so the product should carry its function to the user through either using a system of labeling, packaging, color coding, etc., or through its form. It is similar to our experience within the city or a building. We are informed by the signs on the roads to where to go, at the same time we know that we have to use the road and directed by the architectural forms. The actual poeisis of the product can only be possible when we use it, when we get in an interaction, although the hints are on and within the product itself. It is always ready to open itself to us, even if the cues are hidden consciously. Our relationship with products depends on how they communicate with us and where we do put them in our entire system of signification.

2.3. PRODUCTION: Encoding, CONSUMPTION: Decoding

Previous introduction stated that the design; in the sense of the finished designed product, has communicative aspects, but similarly the whole process of design can be accepted or taken as a process of communication. The reason is that if the outcome of the process is a signal, then the production of the signal worth examining for the sake of understanding the signification mechanisms throughout the process. It is explicit up to here that the ideas and the projections regarding the design go into a transformation all the way through just like it

happens in the basic communication model provided by Kroehl:

> "A very simple yet precise idea of the communications process is provided by the basic model of mathematical information theory concerning the electrical transmission of news. There is a transmitter sending signals through a channel to a receiver. The nature of the signals is determined by the characteristics of the channel, for example sound waves in the air, electrical impulses through a cable or printing ink on paper. News must always be transformed in such a way that it can be transmitted, for example from alphabetical characters into a Morse code for telegrams. This process is called coding. It is always based on a repertoire consisting of the signals possible in a given channel. The signals available in the repertoire are given meanings by means of a code, whereby they become signs. It is always the case that they are signs only for the human sender or receiver, while for the technical equipment they always remain signals" (1987, 13-23).

This information theory helps us to interpret the product as a coded signal in which the medium it travels is the physical materiality. The sender is the interpreter of the technology, sometimes the designer, engineer or both of them. The receiver is basically the user. The decoding of the user is generally at the level of function. The amount of information encoded in the object is fairly much more than that is interpreted. It all depends on the point of view, context, cultural conditions; so it is obvious that the information theory is not sufficient for such a complicated analysis. The relations can be put forward by using the terms sender, receiver, signal and channel, but it would be merely a reduction for the sake of a simplified abstraction. A more developed model of

communication is offered by Shannon and Weaver in Fiske's *Introduction to Communication Studies* (1990, 29):

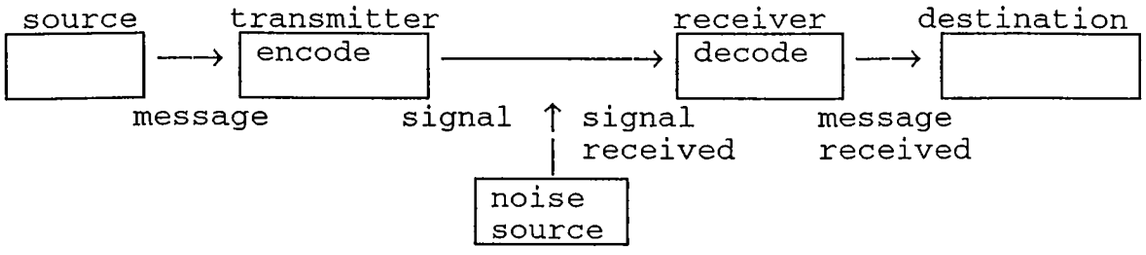


Figure 2.1

Fiske divides the schools of communication into two; one dealing with the process, that is what is important is the accurate departure of the messages from the senders to the receivers. These two models; the information model and the Shannon and Weaver model are examples of this type of approach which is a rather mechanical view of communication. There is a flow, a transmission; but it does not deal with who is communicating, why, where or under what circumstances. It is a magnified model of the process, but only the process; not deeper. There lacks the aspect of human factor; consequently cultural and social considerations.

The other school on the other hand studies communication under the heading of semiotics, as Fiske states dealing with "production and exchange of meanings" (1990, 2). The framework of the definition or understanding of communication is different in semiotics. Culture is an important input; such that the reasons of the inaccordance between the sender and the receiver are

usually labeled as defects in the communication by the process school; semiotics handles this mismatch quite independently from the study of communications, relating it with the cultural differences between the sides. These kinds of factors are squeezed under the topic of noise by the first group that is obviously a very limited and narrow classification. Another point that Fiske makes is that the decline in the importance of the sender in semiotics. What seems more essential is that how meaning is structured in the text or work and how it is deciphered by the receiver. The modellers of communication draws the charts of the process until it reaches the receiver, and the semioticians deal with the remaining part of the story. Colon puts out the difference between communication science and semiotics very nicely in a web page:

> "Communication is defined as the transfer of information from a source to a receiver. The goal of a communicator is to accomplish this process efficiently and effectively. Hence, communication theorists are committed to find and provide models by which communication can be enhanced. The challenge is to come up with the right combination of codes, media and contexts in order to make the transfer of information fast, cost effective, and accurate. This process can not be separated from the fact that humans are the ones that decode the information they receive through a particular medium in a specific context and make meaning out of it. This is where semiotics comes into play" (1996,1).

The process of my getting this piece of information out of the net fits perfectly to the model of communication. There are two addresses, one where the information is,

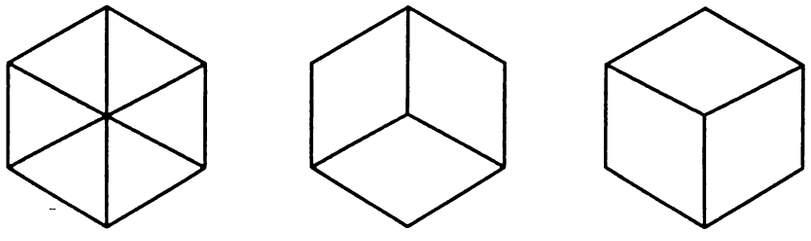
and the other; me and my computer. In fact there are two layers of communication here, one being between the reader and the author; and the other between two systems of computers. The seekers of information firstly finds the address of it and then the coded signals are decoded as words and images through the system. The first receiver is again the computer, and after the transmission is completed technically, the second layer of decoding occurs. The reading of the ideas out of the text. The mechanisms of producing and reading a narrative is another story in itself, but information transmission in the net has another aspect that is the instant feedback. The number and the addresses of the people contacted to a particular page can be detected.

Communication theorists would be interested in the processes of information transmission through the Internet; but semioticians would be dealing with the appearance of the pages, the significance of colors, the style, the whole system as an entity. Semiotics can cover anything as its subject matter even though they are not produced, or simply even if they are not there for the sake of communication. It is a method teaching how to look at the world. The aim of this distinction is not to state one approach is better than the other, but to distinguish the levels of analysis both being under the topic of communication. As Leach states in his *Culture and Communication*: "Human communication is achieved by means of expressive actions which operate as *signals*,

signs and *symbols*" (1976, 9). By definition we know that semiotics is the science studying signs and symbols, but Leach emphasizes the difficulty of separating the three actions, as they are not fixed, defined and stable. He gives the example of Pavlov's dogs that respond to the bell which becomes the signal, although it was the index of the presence of food by producing saliva. He makes an analogy of the human behavior with this as the common responses to everyday symbols or acts are alike of the dogs, because of the shifts of meaning by conditioning (Leach 1976, 23-24). The green light in the traffic which is a sign makes the driver take it as a signal to go automatically or as Leach suggests the reader treats the "syntagmatic chain of signs" in a book as if they are "signals" (24). A whole section will be devoted to the definitions regarding semiotics, signs, symbols and indexes, so let us take the concern back to the relation between design and communication. Fry's discussion helps to understand the relation extensively although he is using the terms of a basic communication model:

> '...Design is used to order, organise, make operational, make visible, and to promote the 'modern' world. Design is essential in the economic and cultural production (the encoding) of our world as well as in its economic and cultural consumption (the decoding). These two moments are not separable poles, they are, in fact, brought together all the time, they exist in a relation to each other and in the same moment. Design, therefore, is implicated in how our cultural and economic circumstances are reproduced" (Fry 1988, 17).

He ties this view to the capitalistic order of the economy and its close links with the idea of design, how they feed each other; their dependency. As a nonverbal element of communication; the designed object's paradox lies here. In its material being the object is the transmitter of the messages, but its very nature denies any kind of connotation attached to it anytime it is being used. It all depends which way to take or look at.



the signal, message & channel: ***the designed product*** | encoding: ***production*** | decoding: ***consumption***

Figure 2.2

The cube illusion as an analogy of the unified elements of encoding and decoding on the designed product.

Production's and consumption's realization occurs at the same place; on the object; within the object; by the object. The first implies the aesthetics (outlook, apperance); second, technology (how and what it is made, the inside); third, use (the instant the function is in motion). This overlap makes the reading both difficult and easy at the same time; just like a cube of illusion in which both positionings can be seen consequently. Two of them are present inside a single image, but only one can be viewed at a single look (Fig. 2.2). Both of them

can not be seen at the same time. In order to make things easier firstly the two cubes should be separated from each other to have a clear vision. The method offers to handle the processes of encoding and decoding as separate processes; unifying them under the process of design activity. The outcome is the conception of the analysis of the process of design as a production of communication.

CHAPTER 3

3 ADVERTISING AS THE PRODUCTION OF THE NON-EXISTENT: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PRODUCT

Advertising stands as an intermediary level in the conception of the product design process as a process of communication, in terms of the designed object. It is assigned an intermediary status located between production and consumption. Actually the product's transformation reaches its climax, the moment it enters the signification system of advertising. The transformative character of the system derives from its' being a system of representation. The product and its material being can only take place in the system by its representations. In fact the most important thing that is represented in the system is usually not the product itself, but its proposed consequences and connotations, implying the disappearance of the product. The way advertising produces the non-existent about the object through its discourse will be examined in this section.

3.1 Product Discourse through Advertising

As a branch of promotion management and marketing communications, "advertising is recognized as performing the following five functions: (1) informing, (2)

persuading, (3) reminding, (4) adding value, (5) assisting other company efforts" (Shimp 1990, 295-296). To indicate the location of advertising in the broader marketing activity covering the both promotion management and communications, an informative table can be constructed through Shimp's definitions and terms.

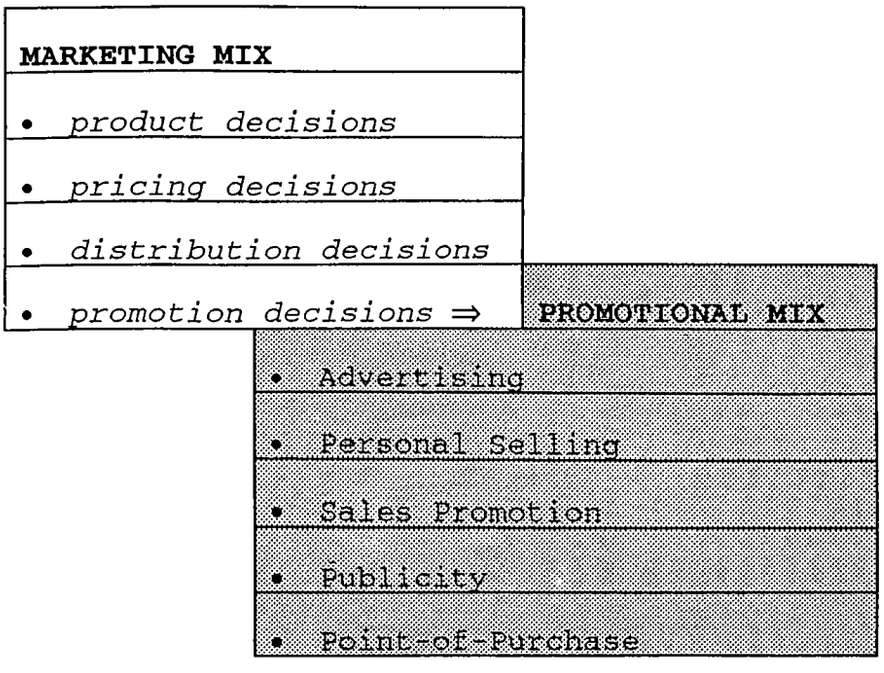


Figure 3.1

As demonstrated in the table, the last item of the marketing mix, that falls into the broader area of marketing communications, determines the profession of the promotion management studied under the topics of promotional mix (Shimp 1990). All of the promotional activities, in which advertising also resides, aims to invoke the buying attitude inside the consumer. All effort is to motivate them to motion, that is the motion of purchase. at the first sight, advertising as a tool of

the marketing system of communications, may seem too simple and to the point. The aim is to sell, firstly they have to decide what to sell, the features of the product. Then they think about the cost of the decided item. Third party deals with the channels of distribution. Last of all they have to popularize it by informing and persuading people that there is a product with this and that features, available at these corners of this price to buy. Marketing is a rather complicated process with lots of other factors effecting, so having been defined the place of advertising in the activity, let us try to explain the features of product discourse.

Figure 3.2

By the presentation of the product to the market, factors of packaging and branding gains vital importance, as distinguishing elements of a product among lots of similar firms, producing similar items. These also play a great role in the discourse of both the advertisements and the products as well, constituting another layer, on top of the object's communicative aspects coming from its material being, discussed in the previous chapter. There are two dictionary meanings of 'brand' according to *Longman*; (a) a class of goods which is the product of a particular firm or producer; (b) to mark by as if by burning, esp. to show ownership. Now, it is seized that the first meaning has been derived from the second, as illustrated in the LEVI'S advertisement (See Figure 3.3), humorously. The cowboy's distinctive metal burns of animals' consisted of letters, has transformed into the distinctive label of LEVI'S. The illustration is so informative of the consumers' psychology towards the act of branding. They recognize the certain logo among the others, and feel comfortable and easy in being included to the group of other people appropriated that same identity. Branding can be considered a way of socializing, becoming a member of a group and acting accordingly, in the modern consumer society.

Figure 3.3

Packaging is a component of a product, sometimes indispensibly integrated in it. Even the product itself can be considered to be a package itself. It not only contributes to the marketability of the product in terms of transportation, it also acts as a point-of-purchase salesman, giving the instant information about the inside. This info is both in the form of words, typographic expression and by color codings. Besides these, it is the conveyor of the branding information. If paid attention by the consumer at the market to these criteria counted, it can act as a piece of advertisement itself, carrying the image and the knowledge of various kinds through.

Figure 3.4

Figure 3.5

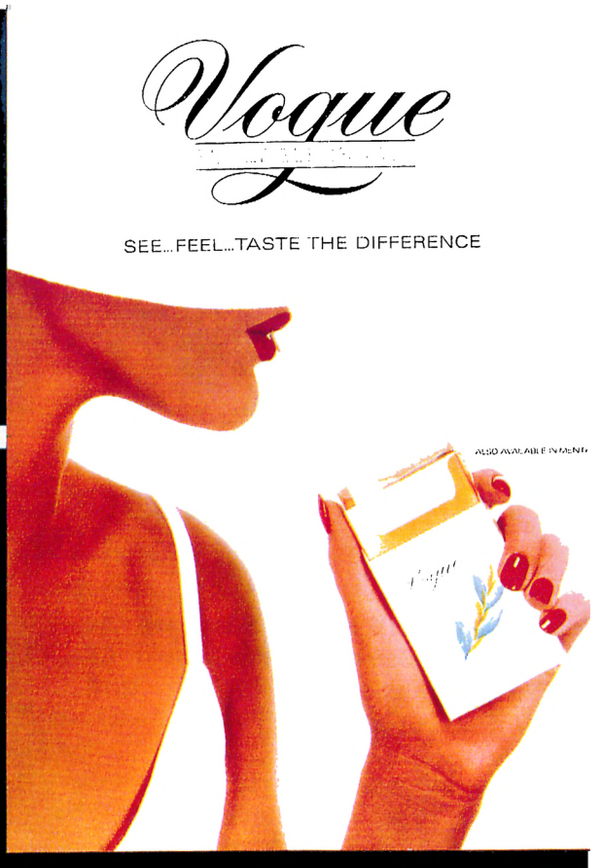
Packaging and the branding are the vital components of the advertising message, but it should be taken as a whole, if to be talked about a discourse. Barthes, in his "Rhetoric of the Image" (1977), nicely puts out the layers of meaning and its constituents in an advertising.

Barthes distinguishes "three messages: a linguistic message, a coded iconic message and a non-coded iconic message" (36). He adds that the linguistic message is sort of self-standing and independently existable in producing meaning, but the iconic one with the coded and the non-coded, signify different meanings using the same source, that of the image. Similarly in "The Advertising Message", Barthes points to the linguistic utterances in the ads, such as in the slogans of "*Cook Gold with Astra*", or "*Gervais Ice Cream-You'll Melt with Pleasure*", there are two levels of meaning (1994, 173-178). One is the denotative level related with just to get the sentence, the second level on the other hand requires to decode the metaphors created by the use of language. Just lile the linguistic metaphors, visual metaphors may be used in ads in order to give the second level of meaning dominantly by a visual utterance. In the advertisement for the *Vogue* women cigarettes, and the XS perfume for men, the visual pun can be viewed (See Figures 3.6 & 3.7). The woman whose face we can not see, is taking a cigarette out of the box that she is holding. The slogan says: '*See... Feel... Taste the Difference.*' At the first glance the connotation may not be understood, that is in fact the woman is holding the box as if she is holding a glass, drinking something like a cocktail or a refreshment that could only be drunk by a pipette. The box of cigarettes completely disappear by the introduction of the new meaning into the image, that is Vogue cigarettes are actually not like bad smoking

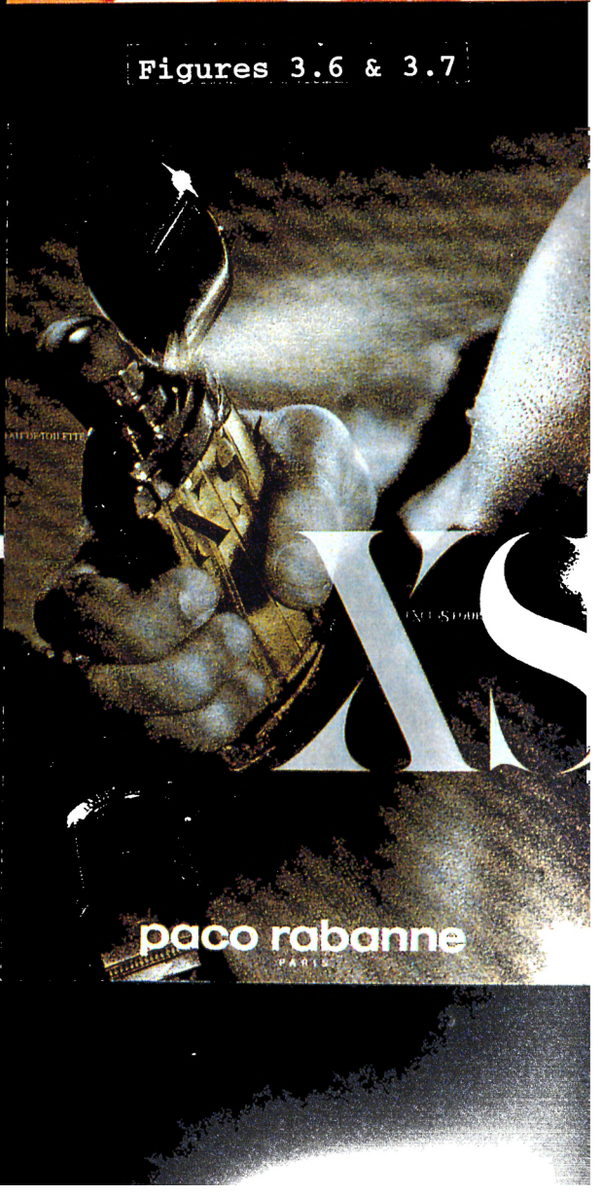
cigarettes, but "*Also Available in Menthol*" are refreshing, light and cool.

The XS perfume differs in creating its metaphor. Here the metaphor derives from the design of the bottle that looks quite like a ZIPPO lighter. The top cover of the bottle opens up to the side with a joint and stays there when opened, just like it is in ZIPPOs. Instead of lighting a fire, he is pressing the lid for spraying. In this case the product is melted and disappeared through the sexual implications and the lighter metaphor of the image. The most interesting thing about these two ads is that they are not the typical of their kinds. I mean cigarette advertisements do not use women with cigarettes in their mouths, that is the image assigned for men. Similarly, men do not appear spraying perfumes, that is in fact a feminine act (See Figures 3.8 & 3.9). The typical of the cigarette and perfume advertisements are given at the left hand side of the two columns, by the Marlboro man and the Tocade woman. The Vogue woman and the XS man, on the other hand although seem to smoke and spray perfume, they actually connote different acts, functions and objects. They symbolize what the object wants to be and invoke a feeling for posession, promising that it is not only the product itself people are buying, but also the context created through the image, and its implied consequences and preceedings. The only way to build up this image is to destroy the poor and insufficient

Figures 3.8 & 3.9



Figures 3.6 & 3.7



reality of the product, to make it invisible in the system of signification of advertisement.

3.2 Product as the *objet petit a*

The discourse of the advertisement conceals and excludes the real product and turns it to an object of desire; "the *objet petit a*" (Lacan 1981).

> "OBJET PETIT a. The 'a' in question stands for '*autre*' (other), the concept having been developed out of the Freudian 'object' and Lacan's own exploitation of 'otherness'. The '*petit a*' (small 'a') differentiates the object from (while relating it to) the '*Autre*' or '*grand Autre*' (the capitalized 'Other')" (qtd. from Translator's Note, Lacan 1981, 282).

For an 'Other' to be constituted, firstly there should be an awareness of the self. The constitution of the 'I' in Lacan, depends on a visual experience. When the baby is born, up to 6 or 18 months, he can not differentiate himself, his body from the lots of fragments he sees and experiences through sight. He is like an "*homellette*", does not have a motor-capacity to stand still or control his bodily movements. He even confuses his body with the mother's. The moment he catches his image in the mirror, causes him to give out a "jubilant cry," caused by two reasons that of Imaginary and Symbolic structures of Lacanian unconscious. Firstly he identifies himself of the image in the mirror, because it is complete, unified and whole. He wants to be what he sees in the mirror. This is an imaginary combination of the self with the

perceived image, that constitutes the Ideal-Ego. It is his ideal, because it is what he is not, the perfect. There is an imaginary sameness created through the Ideal-Ego, combining the subject and the object. On the other hand the Symbolic that is structured on difference denies this sameness created by the Imaginary. According to the rules of the Symbolic, the sign must be different and other than what it represents (Williamson 1978). So there occurs a split of personality between the Ideal-Ego and the Ego-Ideal trying to cope with the unified image that remains to be 'Other' to himself. This is the cause of desire and aggression, because the subject wants to be the object in the mirror, but can not attain it. The mechanisms of desire are in fact different. Lacan makes a differentiation between "need, demand and desire" (Zizek 1991). When a need is satisfied, it turns out to be demanded. Desire is created through the course of this need's turn into a demand. Demand is not the satisfaction of the need, it is a future reservation to fulfill another need.

> "Lacan's point is that the real purpose of the drive is not the goal (full satisfaction) but its aim: the drive's ultimate aim is simply to reproduce itself as drive, to return its circular path, to continue its path to and from the goal. The real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit" (Zizek 1991, 5).

Advertising's main function is to build up a mirror image of the self through its discourse. It offers an imaginary self and constructs the system as such that it implies

there is a way to become like that, but in fact this is impossible, so the desire keeps alive. Even if it happens then the image in the mirror would inevitably be replaced by another, because the subject always desires to be the 'Other', that who he is not. The constructed space of advertisement is in fact a blank space to project fantasies on to, "as in Lacanian theory, fantasy designates the subject's 'impossible' relation to *a*, to the object-cause of desire" (Zizek 1991, 6). In 'reality', *objet petit a* is an ordinary object, it is at the moment it begins to carry something more than itself, it is assigned as such. Advertising's signification system as a fantasy space gives way to the ordinary product to become so. How? Firstly by stating a lack to be desired and fulfilled. Every advertisement is an announciation of a certain lack. Secondly by using it as a signifier of its signification system, it assigns it the role of the 'other', that is being other than itself. By using a very clever and tricky tactic it clashes the Lacanian 'Real' and 'reality' in the same system. The statement or offer in the ad belongs to the realm of Imaginary, constituting the mirror image of the desired self. The desire is centered towards this 'Other', that is impossible to attain. Consequently, the other agency of the ad's utterance is the product. The product which in reality an ordinary item is assigned a surplus value. The discourse although seems to inform people of the product, in fact always postpones the process of information, by excluding and hiding the product through

the constructed surplus. That is why I call the advertisement system, the producer of the non-existent, in which the product disappears, quite contradictory to the views on assuming the system as the meaning producer for the identical mass-produced objects (Sezgi 1994, 126). The contemporary advertising as a signification system is a fantasy space constructed to produce desire for an impossible object. Impossibility derives from the fact that such an object does not exist, belonging to the 'Real', outside the scope of the Symbolic, the language including everything that can be told, explained, perceived and ruled by language. The paradox lies in the fact that this impossible object is projected on the image of the 'real' one, belonging to the 'reality.' The discourse of advertisements function to distort our gaze from the innocent product to fantasize and desire the 'other', to the ***objet petit a*** that can not be viewed by a normal look.

3.3 Identity Construction through Objects

Having been stated the role of advertisements in the process of identification, by referring to Lacan's mirror stage, the identity construction through objects can be handled under the light of this psychoanalytic analysis. The advertising message while constructing Ideal-Ego's for people to identify themselves, every brand in fact defines the outlook of this image of the unified self. From this last argument branding steps out as a separate

field of inquiry, but there is more, which is the concept of choice and consequently the construction of identity through buying. As there is a whole story about the messages that a product conveys through various mediums, either by itself or by visual or verbal communication means; there is also the other side of the medallion that is the consumer gets some kind of information from all of these things surrounding him in the market and he makes his choice accordingly. What he buys reflects him to a certain extent, surely not only one item, but a series of them would give an idea of one's identity.

> "As a contemporary example, consider the following collection of products: A Rolex watch, a Brooks Brothers suit, New Balance running shoes, a Sony walkman, and a BMW automobile. While these goods bear no relation to one another via function, form, mutual corporate identification, etc., many consumers might nonetheless group them as a symbolic whole. The owner of one or two of these items might be predicted to own the rest, and all when taken together may be used to define the currently pervasive role of 'yuppie'. This collection of products exemplifies the interdependence of product symbolism, as well as the social pattern etched by the joint consumption of diverse products and brands" (Solomon and Assael 1987, 192).

While Solomon and Assael name these collection of products as "*product constellations*-clusters of complementary products, specific brands, and/or consumption activities used by consumers to define, communicate and enact social roles (1987, 191)", Mc Cracken calls "these patterns of consistency 'product complements' and in honor of their observer, 'Diderot

unities'" (1988, 119). The story depends on Diderot's essay named "Regrets on Parting with My Old Dressing Gown." It is about a real life incident that happened to Diderot. One day he receives a dressing gown as a present from a friend. This new gift was the reason for the old one to be replaced. Consequently, his study that he worked with his gown, began to get effected from this change of dressing. Following the order of the desk, tapestry on the wall, chairs, engravings, bookshelf, clock were changed by new ones that were defined by the gown (Mc Cracken 1988, 118-119). Just one dressing gown caused the effect; changed Diderot's psychological mood and like a chain reaction all the set of objects forming the study are substituted by a new set in which the gown also resides. Although the change was motivated by an item of dressing that has a direct impact on one's psychology, the objects one has, just like clothing or food may evoke similar responses. The reason derives from the fact that all of these items of objects, food and clothing are singularly signs, that construct one's social codes (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993).

By the combination of these codes, one constructs a personality that can be read visually. The objects one owns, uses, and lives by are the encoded evidences of one's identity that is decoded by the observers. The paradigmatic and syntagmatic combinations are important in this construction, because as discussed earlier, the meaning production can not be achieved on a single item,

but by a series of them. This construction resembles a linguistic coming together of monemes that are the basic meaning conveyers. Pamuk beautifully describes the power of objects in one to one relationship with someone in an identity construction:

> "The clerk wrote that for this ten years, the Sultan's son not only struggled with the books that effected, but also with the objects -as much as the books- that surrounded him. Because all those furniture, tables, chairs, stools by giving a person necessary or unnecessary feeling of peace or unpeacefullness were taking him out of subject; because he could not concentrate on the thought that would make him himself as his look was being attracted by all those ashtrays, and candle holders; because the oil paintings on the walls, the vases on the stools and the puffy pillows on the sofas were taking the Sultan's son to such moods that he did not want to be in; because all those watches, bowls, pencils, and old chairs were loaded with connotations and memories that did not let the Sultan's son to be himself" (Pamuk 1995, 404. Quotation trans. by Şebnem Timur).

The interesting point in the life of this imaginary Sultan's son is that he is trying hard to get away from his life in the palace and everything about royalty; but while doing this he has to get rid of the objects belonging to that environment. The depicted interior draws a picture of a rich and delicate life, but the paradox here is that the objects he owns and uses are the outcomes of the kind of life he has lived, so in a way they carry the traces and signs of what he actually is, although he tries to run away from that. The furnishing; once it has been created begins to act like the template of the life he has to lead; so if he wants to find who he

really is, he has to get rid of everything about who he really was.

One of the basic distinctions to be made throughout this study is that it may seem to be a clash between the designed object with its brand, against the one that is devoid of it. If we have only focused on the case of branding, that is dealt in detail in another section, we should have reduced the arguement to the identity construction through advertisements. An implicit effort of this thesis is, while explaining the mechanisms of design, consumer culture, advertisements, branding and the impact of graphic on these issues, to put out the undesigned or already-existent, unadvertised, non-brand items into the debate. The reason is that after a consumer product is purchased through the capitalist mechanisms of buying, it becomes an everyday item with the cups of coffee inherited from the grand mother, or the handkerchief that a wife emroideried, that had no relationship with the act of branding. That is the reason why the topic is called design culture, instead of consumer culture. By this way, as discussed in the gender and design debate in a further section, the borders of design studies may be extended and dealt with, taking into social, psychological and other factors into account. If not, everything can be explained and ruled by the advertising profession controlling the buying and acquiring behaviour of people. The danger lies in the fact that this may be a reduction of design and

signification into a mere play of production and representation. To see the design process as a process of communication both widens the borders of the items that is included under the topic of design, and also helps to frame the issue from a specific viewpoint, giving way even to guesses on the faith of objects in the future.

CHAPTER 4

4. LANGUAGE AND DESIGN

Reading de(sign) requires to put out the relationship between language and design properly. The basic conception here is that design is a tool for communication; it is structured as language and convey meanings that can be read in various ways. It has been demonstrated that how the process of design can be assumed as a process of communication earlier. Getting deeper in this issue of communication we reach to the realm of language. There are basically three aspects of design and language relationship that I want to handle in this study. They are, the computer-based use of language in design generation; product semantics; and the product's analysis by semiotic theories. Each of these items tries to exhaust the issue in the complex areas of language, design and signification.

4.1. Computer Based Use of Language in Design Generation

The first approach regarding computer applications during the process of designing, suggests to break the elements of design into its components. The commonly used examples are from architecture. The functional spaces of kitchen, dining room or the bedroom are assigned as the basic

components of a linguistic utterance (that is the design).

> "Design grammars are predicated on an analogy between language and design. In the same way that we have rules governing how words may be strung together to form sentences, there are rules governing how a vocabulary of design elements can be combined to form designs" (Gero, J.S. and R.D. Coyne 1985, 351).

Besides the functional spaces, the basic architectural elements such as windows, doors, or separations are also treated as the vocabulary of design elements. These design grammars defining how the elements should be brought together are also supposed "to define a particular architectural style" (Coyne 1985, 95). Stiny's "shape grammars" about the transformations of the geometry of shapes causing different perceptions of them, beautifully demonstrates the importance of syntax in visual literacy (Week 1991). Similarly, Alexander developed a pattern book that works quite the same with the logic of playing and transforming shapes, geometries and all other elements of design to put out the potential in seeing the variations and controlling them in the process of design (1977).

The way that computer systems' make use of this linguistic analogy depends on the fact that if a design/utterance can be represented in the form of rules, then it would be able to reach to new combinations, leading to new designs/utterances. This rather

mechanistic way of designing suits the logic of artificial intelligence that of robot actions. The logic works with the aid of "production systems", that firstly describe the current state of the world, and then gives an ordering to change it with a new set of definitions that are stated in terms of "production rules" (Coyne 1985). If the result does not satisfy the design goals, then the actions are undone and repeated for another set. This conception of language as design and its application in the process as described require a logical thinking related to the syntactical dimension of language. The important point here is that, the semantic side of the problem has two dimensions. Firstly the design knowledge should be expressed in terms of the user, not of the system for a healthy and easy communication to occur. Secondly, it acts like some sort of control mechanism, by defining the problem and at the end checking if the desired result is accomplished or not.

This first discussion regarding computers rises because of the mismatch of the logic of artificial intelligence with the human logic of design. The problem is to talk in terms of the computer, just like learning a foreign language. The ultimate effort of the system programmers' is to overcome this difficulty of meaning transfer in the design applications of computer systems. The design process described here begins and ends in the screen whereas the results take their places in the real world. The analysis of this method is useful as a start because

it provides us to see the pure application of grammar, language and semantics into the process of design in a purely artificial environment.

4.2. Semantics as a Method of Design

Language can be used as a tool or a structure; in representing and communicating design ideas; in making designs as demonstrated in the previous debate on computers; and lastly in transferring meaning through the designed items. This last conception regarding meaning and design is described by Krippendorff as:

> "The etymology of *design* goes back to the Latin *de+signare* and means making something, distinguishing it by a sign, giving it significance, designating its relation to other things, owners, users, or gods. Based on this original meaning , one could say: design is making sense of (things)" (Krippendorff 1989, 9).

His basic conception depends on the fact that every design is perceived cognitively within a context and by the meaning created through the use of the very same context. Before going any further on the relationship between design and meaning, it is better to define how meaning is produced in language. I will quote a series of definitions from Condon (1966); (a)"Semantics is the study of meanings."; (b)"The study of semantics is the study of how persons respond to words and other symbols."; (c)"Semantics is an attitude toward language, reality and human behavior."

The study of meaning in a language is called semantics. Condon takes semantics as an activity and describes the way that language and semantics effect our perception of the entire world. He says everybody is born into a language. We learn to think and perceive in terms of language. There are two dimensions of language. The first dimension is the convention of naming. A child firstly learns that everything has got a name. The relationship between the thing and the word that it stands for is quite arbitrary. The dog is called 'a dog' because that's what it is. The second level of language comes into being when the child learns that a dog can be called a pet or an animal. This is the point where he learns that all of the names can refer to the same thing, but that of the words include many other things as well. The words are on different levels of abstraction. This is the way how we perceive the world and live in terms of language accordingly (Condon 1966).

Then how a semantics of objects and design can be possible would be a natural question to be asked, after stating that semantics is a field of study in language. The crucial point here is that, although stated in the computer debate as design could be written and conceptualized in breaking it up to its components and represented as basic grammar rules and understood in an analogy of language, this is a quite mechanical way of thinking. The meaning production through objects are done quite instinctively, unlike the logic of computer. This

kind of breaking up could only be applied during an analysis, not the process. The integration of semantics in the design process and as a method is maintained by an emphatic thinking of matching the encoded meaning materialized by the designer on the object, to the activated meaning produced through the use of the consumer in a certain context.

> "Product semantics also deals with the study of meanings, but as they are communicated in manufactured objects. In a manner similar to the written language, product semantics uses a kind of alphabet, albeit a more visually complex one in its use of line, color, shape, form and texture. The visual alphabet of signs and symbols provides the basis for a type of statement made through the two- and three-dimensional qualities in manufactured objects." (Giard 1989, b1).

In this quotation Giard states how the linguistic semantics can be integrated and applied to a conception of a design language. Product semantics offers a method of analysis of the design in terms of how the vocabulary elements counted above such as; line, color, shape, form, material, texture are brought together. That method also defines the analysis of a certain style, but "product semantics is not a style, program or a movement as Krippendorff states and defines the term for the first time with Reinhart Butter in a 1984 issue of *Innovation*, introducing:

> "...product semantics as a study of the symbolic qualities of man-made forms in the cognitive and social contexts of their use and the application of the knowledge gained to objects of industrial design" (Krippendorff 1989, 10).

This definition raises questions in mind such as: why all of a sudden the symbolic properties of man-made forms gained importance; was it been neglected in ancient or previous times; or is it something that belongs to only mass produced items, so other man-made forms should be exceptional to the study by being unique? The answers lies in the fact that no, any kind of man-made form can be analyzed through semantics, because consciously or not every produced form conveys meaning of any sorts. The rise of product semantics concerning the mass-produced object is because of the decline in symbolism and meaning in the technological black boxes of our age. While at the machine age or before that the production depended on a mechanical based technology yielding to products of a clearly legible function depending on physical mechanisms. Today the electronics technology produced lots of boxes operating with only a touch of hand, sometimes even it is not needed, like the photo-sensitive devices. The ordinary uneducated user can not know or even have an idea of what is going on inside. The only communicative aspect of the design has become the interface of it, leading the user to programme or activate, instead of the pleasure in the prediction of an outcome of a system by observing the mechanisms of a mechanical paradigm.

This new technology might be said to have wrapped things up and reduced them to mere interfaces in terms of visual communication of the internal functions. Our physical

relationship with the machines had to be reconsidered in terms of ergonomics. New design philosophies bringing new understandings in the conceptual developments of machines of an environment ordered by sight, "affordances", and meaning had to emerge (Gibson 1986). The term "affordance" is explained in Gibson's *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* and is related to the environmental features of the composition and the layout of the surfaces (1986, 127-143). According to him, the values and meanings of things could be perceived directly by the animal or human. The theory offers to measure the physical properties of an environment and the value assignments, relative to the animal. An example can be given such as the same rigid surface may afford sitting to a child, whereas it may afford climbing to a cat, among the many other affordances it may provide. Gibson's theory was a good source in developing new products in terms of meaning and it was a new arguement in human perception claiming that it depended not on logical rational processing, but rather depending on sensory mechanisms (Smets 1989, 86-99).

These were the conditions prepared the reason for the study of Product Semantics. These developments in technology and consequently the product design corresponded to the developments in a new discipline that is called HCI; the Human Computer Interface (Hasdoğan 1993). Hasdoğan claims that HCI is considered by most of the ergonomists as a part of traditional

Ergonomics that reduces the user to a paralyzed person, only able to do certain tasks, but quite the contrary, just like it is in the product semantics' conception, the attitude toward the user in HCI is an emphatic one, trying to form a more collaborative and interactive conception of a user, that unite in the idea of "user-friendliness" (1993, 33).

Product semantics aim is not to make only user-friendly interfaced designs. Krippendorff states that product semantics' ambition is to go beyond the surface of design that is maintained by understanding the meaning lying under the surface (1990, a4). He clearly distinguishes the term from, traditional "ergonomics" (that we have discussed previously); "being a mere marketing tool;" and "traditional semiotics" (Krippendorff 1989, 10). Blaich who is a designer of the Dutch firm PHILIPS, on the other hand, points out to the economic success it brings, if semantics as a design method, is applied in new product developments (Blaich 1989).

The term was firstly theorized by Klaus Krippendorff and Reinhart Butter in their paper "Product Semantics: Exploring the Symbolic Qualities of Form.", in which they are challenging to semiotics and even to traditional semantics. The reason for this is important to understand the underlying philosophy and the relation of the issue of semantics, if considered as a term of semiotics. The

conception depends on the application of the semantic triangle they take from Ogden and Richards'.

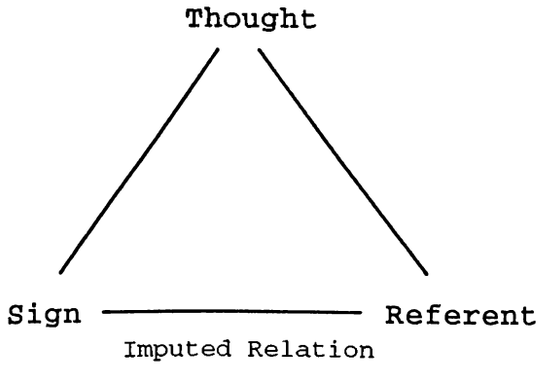


Figure 4.1. Semantic triangle

The beholder of the thought combines the sign, "something that is intended to represent" with the referent, "that is represented thereby," but things are different in terms of the object:

> "An object's form says: first, something about the object itself; second, something about the larger context of its use; and both to the user who interacts with it and develops the conceptual connection. An object's form does not say what it is. Rather, the object is what it says to the user: A push button, when recognized as such, suggests 'Push me,' and its place in the configuration of parts or its label may suggest what consequence pushing it will have. The push button refers to itself and to the whole of which it is a part. Thus, in product semantics, the sign and referent in Figure becomes one, the imputed relationship largely disappears, and the remaining links between the object and its user form a circle" (Krippendorff and Butter 1984, 4).

It is natural though in such a conception of sign including its referent does not give way to a semiotic analysis of the object. Sign, in product semantics is reduced to the signal of the communication process, that

is the product itself. The sign in the form of the product only desires to contain the information concerning itself, no other. The product semantics' conception tries to fill the sign and the signal with the physical and material being of the product. According to the same paper, product design has four symbolic channels to communicate meaning, that are;

(a) information displays;
(b) graphic elements or two-dimensional markers;
(c) product's form, shape and texture;
(d) indications of a product's internal states.

Product semantics chooses the last two of them as its field of study and concern. They give the reasons for this exception as the only semiotic concern about a product could be its surface graphics, labels, literal instructions or pamphlets, or other sign systems on the object, exterior to the object, that stand other than themselves (Krippendorff and Butter 1984). While putting forward these reasons in a later paper, Krippendorff uses Peirce's triadic conception of sign as a reference of the stand-for relationship (1989). Although having been stated the importance of context and symbolism in producing meaning, he assumes any semiotic application of method in the design process would yield with insensible items. This fear of a semiotic misinterpretation derives from a very right anxiety, because some of the designers, taking everything on the layer of the surface, may have a

tendency to spoil the meaning business by taking namely, a frog as an icon for a telephone design, and say that it has ecological connotations. Surely, this exaggerated example is to demonstrate the issue at the extreme. Product semantics as they introduce, is the isolated effort of coping the perceived meaning of an object to the presented, on the object. Besides, the meaning is strictly tied to the context it is being used, and is cognitively produced. By stating this, they are in fact referring to pragmatics, that is one of the dimensions of semiosis (the process in which something functions as a sign), which is the pragmatic level, dealing with the relations of signs to their users, among the syntactical and the semantical (Morris 1938). These notions are also not applicable to product semantics, because of the very same reason that there is no sign in the conception of this semantic structure. The sign function of the product is reduced to its functional symbolism, i.e., the signifier element of the sign is filled up by its signified that does not want to tell anything more than its signifier. The signifier in the product semantics, desires and wants to signify itself that is the product.

Krippendorff and Butter brings up "four semantic infelicities in design" (1984, 7-8), that they argue to be resolved by the development of new models provided by product semantics, that are; (1) user may not distinguish or identify a product; (2) user may be unable to manipulate a product, because of the inefficiencies in;

(a) visual or tactile differentiation of component parts; (b) spacial arrangements; (c) easy and manipulatible indication of the internal states of the product; (3) user may be prevented from exploring the nature of a product; (4) product may not fit the symbolic environment.

It still remains as a question in my mind that, trying to achieve a clear and true understanding of the object overcoming the counted obstacles, rejects the referent and the sign to be two liberated components instead of one. Although referring to symbolic properties of the products in the context of others in an environment, the base of their theory rejects any stand-for relationship. Similar responses may have been evoken in others' minds that semiotic models were offered by many names such as; Teixido (1995); Krampen (1996); Vakeva (1990); Vihma (1990).

At this point I want to introduce to the argument a famous name, that is Roland Barthes, by his very nice essay "The Semantics of the Object" (1994, 179-190). In which he was firstly speaking of this matter twenty years before the term was "coined for the first time by Butter as product semantics" (Blaich 1989, 3). Barthes in his so called essay, that will be briefly summarized in the following paragraph, firstly states the field of his study is objects, that constitutes a very large set of things including consumer products inside. Secondly he

says in the contemporary world, everything is mixed up with language in some way, just like the product's packaging, labeling and graphics. Thirdly he differentiates between the connotations of the objects in order to define what an object is, because he could not find a definition sufficiently explaining the object within itself, devoid of a subject. That means object can only be defined by its connotations, that are according to Barthes, existential and technological. He gives Sartre's *Nausea* as an example for the existential being's depending on the fact of being against and exterior to the subject. Technological one, that constitutes our primary concern here, indicates the object's primary association as a meaning is its function. He gives the example of a telephone, that seems to be purely functional, but he states an object even a strongly functional one like telephone can signify at least one signified. It may be the sign of bureaucracy, luxury, or femininity. This state of the object having various connotations at the same time refers to its metaphorical coordinate. The other coordinate is ordered by a cognitive mechanism that is classification. The first instant we see a thing, Barthes says, we immediately try to match it with a set of paradigmatic things in our memories (Barthes 1994, 179-190). This is quite similar to the arguement regarding the naming behaviour created through the learning of language.

Then the product semantics argument theorized, creates a paradox with the Barthes' semantics of the object. The

reason derives from the fact that Krippendorff and Butter argue that the function of the product that is the mediator of the meaning in a particular context denies the role of signification other than this function. In fact they do not deny, but imply the danger of losing the pure reading of the pure object with a pure function among the other meaning attachments or connotations. This is a fallacy, because...

> "...the object which suggests a meaning nonetheless always remains in our eyes a functional object: the object always seems functional at the very moment when we read it as a sign" (Barthes 1994, 189).

That creates the paradox in the purely semantic conception of the product, denying any kind of semiotic analysis in Krippendorffs' theories. Simply they may say that the product's sign function is not applicable to the study of industrial design, but this would only remain as a pure reduction, and neglection of the inquiry of meaning in design. For an adequate formation of a system and method of designing through language, semantics and semiotics should be taken together and collaboratively.

> "When the first generation of American industrial designers attempted to 'create a coherent environment for what they self-consciously referred to as *the machine age*", the streamlined esthetic was the result. It is a style fondly remembered today as a Zenith in American design, and one that spoke of its Americanness to the rest of the world. Handled with care, product semantics could be the designed expression of what we equally self-consciously refer to as our *information age*" (Aldersey-Williams 1988, 29).

Aldersey-Williams beautifully states that product semantics, although neither being a style, nor a design language, but a system within which design languages can express themselves clearly; may not escape the faith of being assigned another function that is being a *sign* that stands for something else.

Now let us have a look at a few examples, carrying the discourse of product semantics and of the information age. The first example page puts two computers in contrast to each other (See Figures 4.2 and 4.3, next page). To state at the first place these series of objects should not be considered as the best designs of their kinds. They are randomly chosen as being the best representatives of their age by carrying that specific discourse. The reason for the semantic paradigms' being colorful photos are not to flatter, or put them in a higher rank. It is due to the available source material.

The Olivetti M24 personal computer is designed with a sense of sculpture, not of an organic kind, but rather architectural with separate volumes and planes. The styling on this piece of design is of having ergonomic contributions for the work place, such as the movable monitor and the flattened keyboard (Dormer 1993, 80-1).

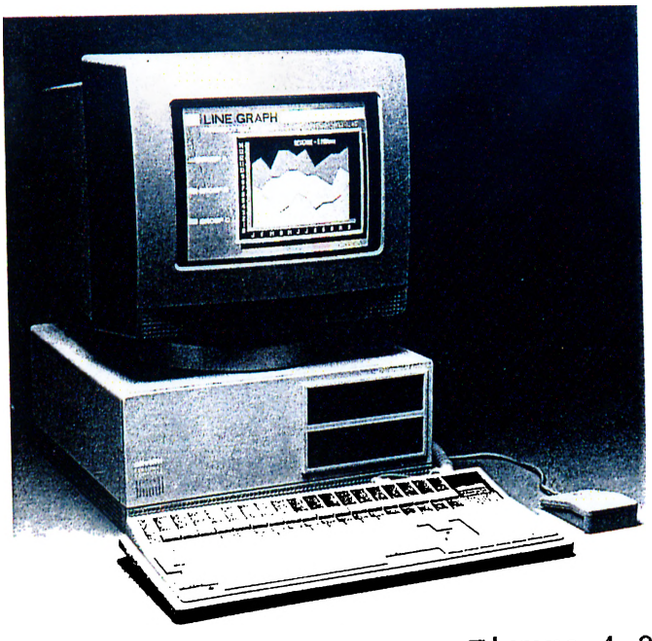


Figure 4.2

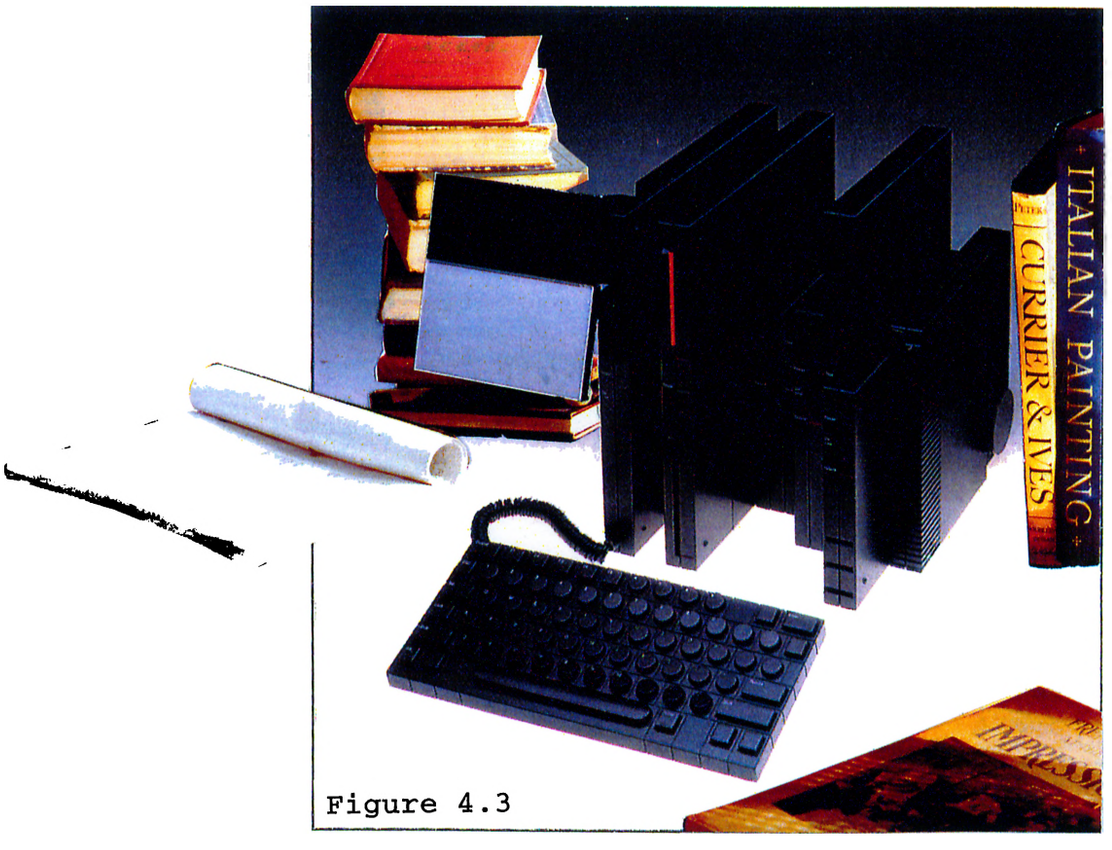


Figure 4.3

The other computer (fig. 4.3) is a design of Gresham from the firm Design Logic, at the graduate program of Cranbrook Academy of Art (Aldersey-Williams 1988, 54-7). I personally find it a very good and nice example of taking the whole issue of designing in terms of its lively context. The idea resides in the simple fact of designing for the desktop which is usually covered with pile of books, papers and stuff (like the additions of my pictures of books to the photo to emphasize the expression of the pure object in the original photograph.) There are obvious pitfalls in starting with concepts of this sort such as; eclecticism, non-sense additions, or unidentifiable objects, but in this example Grasham seems to overcome all these. The particular success of this design lies is in the true objective analysis of the inner components of the machine, that are the cards of graphics, video or memory. The system maintains its enlargement through the addition of these cards inside the gray boxes. In order to have an idea of the capacity of the computer, one has to open it up to see the number and kind of cards inside, or start the computer to have a look at the software for the answer. In this design, the potential of the putting the cards side by side is matched with the logic of the books. This makes the system both more accessible in technical terms and more enjoyable and integrated in the context of the study environment.

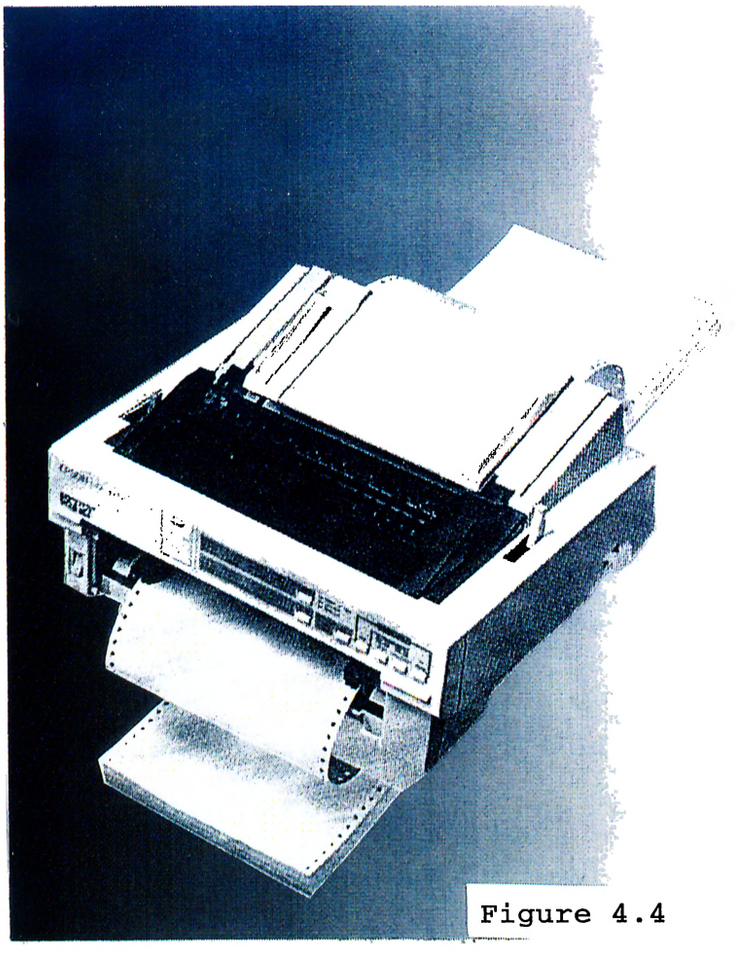
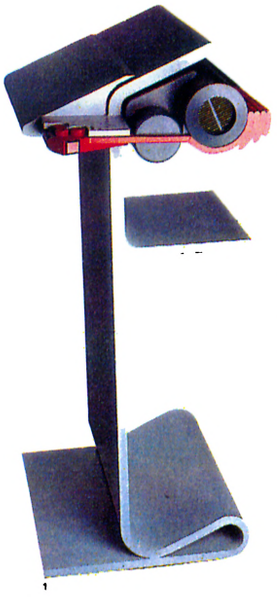
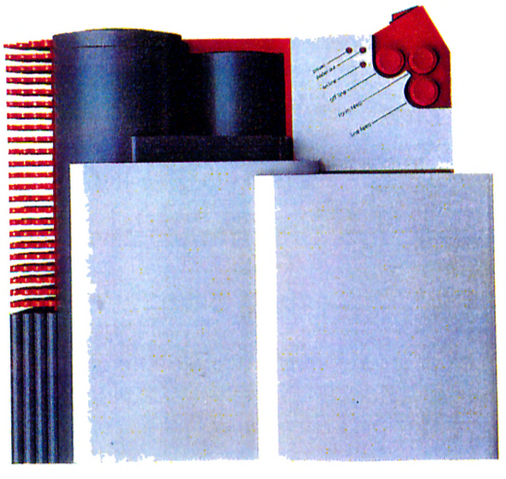


Figure 4.4





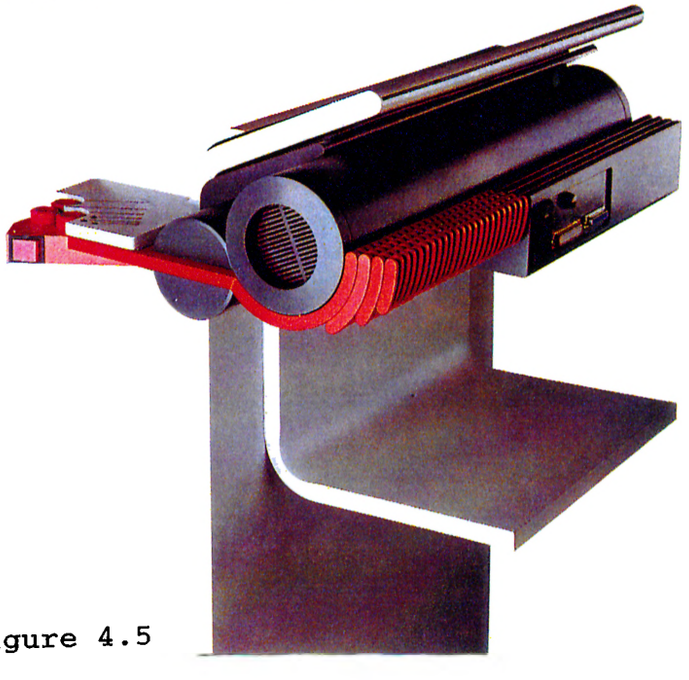


Figure 4.5

The next example sheet consists of printers, one being an EPSON continous form, with a common and familiar typology that can be met various places (fig. 4.4). The other belongs to Technology Design, named 'Elaine printer', raising questions such as: "Is a printer the sort of product where the use of designed signs of its function are necessary or desirable? Or should the design accept only a background role, the conventional solution seen in..." EPSON example (Aldersey-Williams 1988, 128)? I will not attempt to answer these questions, but may add a few. The degree of expressionism of function can be discussed here. Elaine is a example to be considered pushing the limits of the kind of analogy between the form of the paper source and the form of the machine itself. Is it really essential to force the expressionism to these limits of metaphorism? Although being a very nice, elegant and beautiful example carrying feminine qualities implicit in her name, 'Elaine' seems to be standing at the limit to ask the question of "Where is this thing going to stop, or if everything will be filled up by these kinds of images of resemblance, where will connotative meaning reside?" It seems to be that this kind of one to one metaphoric approach is similar to Barthes' caption explaining the content of the photograph. He says: "The closer the text to the image, the less it seems to connote it [...]" (Barthes 1977, 26). It is true that the drive for product semantics does not lie in connotation, but quite contrarily in denotation. Then another question bears in minds: "How

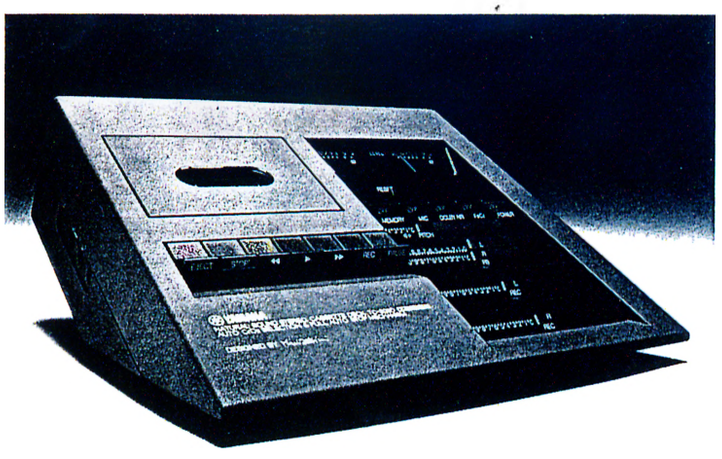


Figure 4.6

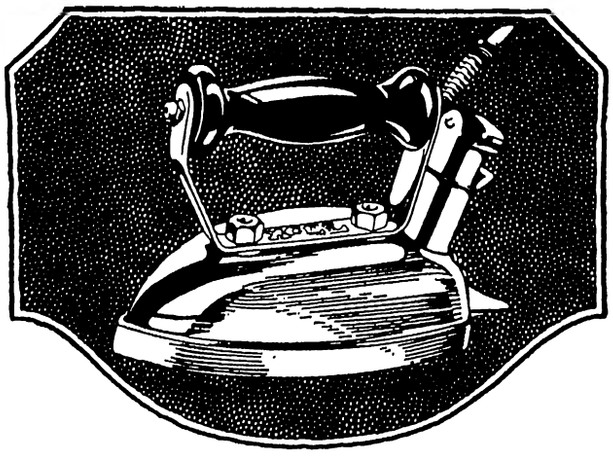
Figure 4.7

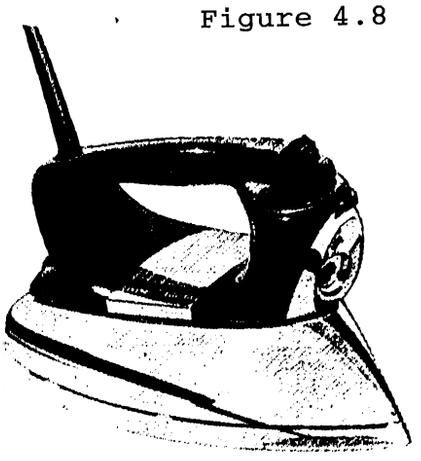
about objects that will not give way to expressionism on themselves, for some kind of reasons, such as dimensions or ergonomics, etc.?" The Zebra Design's digital audio tape player is a good example to this question in being so small than the cassette itself (See Figure 4.7). Then the semantic component has to reside in the wavy edges to give the expression of water-proof nature of the machine. The 'TC-800GL' cassette-recording deck by Bellini, on the other hand is a representative of the style in consumer products in 60's and 70's.

> "An evolution rather than an upheaval in the styling of the consumer electrical products began with the introduction of transistorized and micro-electronic technology in the 1960's. Shapes and forms became small and refined but remained essentially as boxes or sheats around innards. More artistic approaches were possible, but would conflict with functional requirements" (Dormer 1993, 76).

The impact of technical innovation and stylistic change go hand in hand forming the discourse of consumer products as can be seen in the DAT of Zebra Design. Some products on the other hand do not seem to get effected from those changes preserving their typologies over time, technology and stylistic change (See the irons in figures 4.8 and 4.9). Although there are radical changes in material, functioning and technology used in the production of these irons, the 'Steam Ship', of Smart Design modestly satisfies with the metaphor of the color blue of the sea. The shipness is already inherent in all three of the irons. This is a contribution to the question asking about the degree of expressionism.

Figure 4.8





125–6 Siemens 'Xcel' electric iron of 1926 was one of the earliest to use design as a marketing device. In the General Electric steam- and spray-iron of 1957, the moulded plastic handle has to perform additional functions that influence its form

Figure 4.9

The last two sheets of examples takes the classical black 'Combined Headset' designed by Dreyfuss in 1937, for the Bell Telephone Company (Heskett 1980, 108), as a base image for the telephone answering machines designed by Logic Design of the late 80's (See Figures 4.10-4.16). The point here is that the function of the telephone has also changed due to the changes in technology. Now the telephone can talk back when there is nobody to pick it up, so in fact we are talking about two different items; a telephone and an answering machine. It is in complete contrast with the previous iron debate preserving its typology over the years. In the case of telephones, the object has gone into a transformation itself, so there can be two approaches to the design of the new item called answering machine. One is to create a wholly new discourse, independently coded in itself, without resembling anything, like an abstract art-work, speaking and transforming the codes in its own way according to a particular logic. The examples of this approach is figures 4.11, 4.14 and 4.16. The second one requires to take references from common items associated with telephone, communication and of memory perhaps (as the machine is recording and keeping data in itself). Lisa Kroehn with her 'Phonebook' again done at the Cranbrook Academy of Art is the representative (See Figure 4.15). In this particular design the references are taken from a telephone book and the functions are organized and operated just like by turning the pages of the book-object. Another example of this second paradigm can be

Figure 4.10

Figure 4.11

Figure 4.12

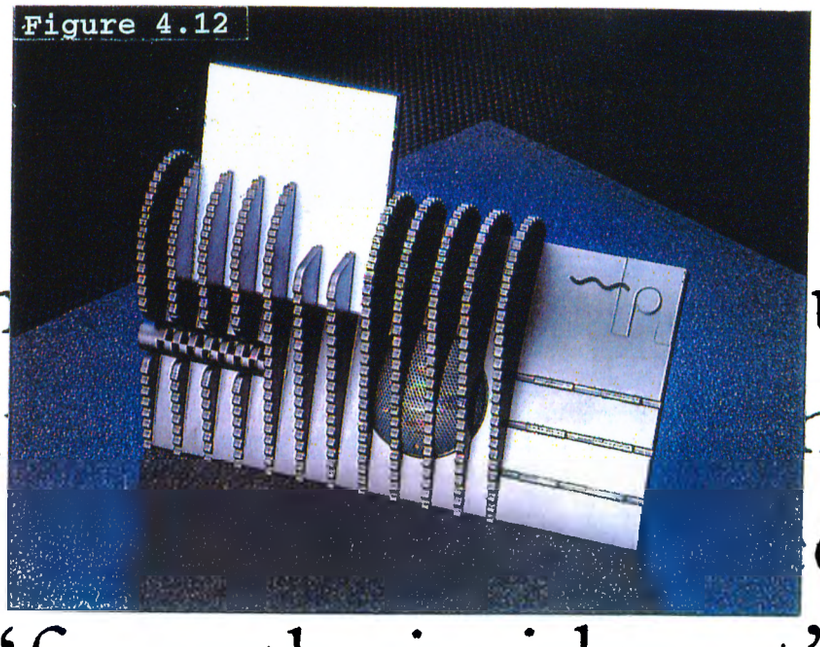


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Figure 4.13

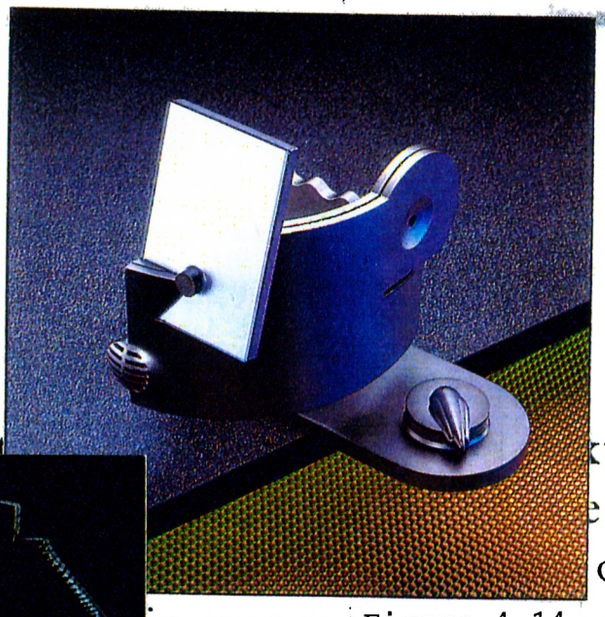

Figure 4.14

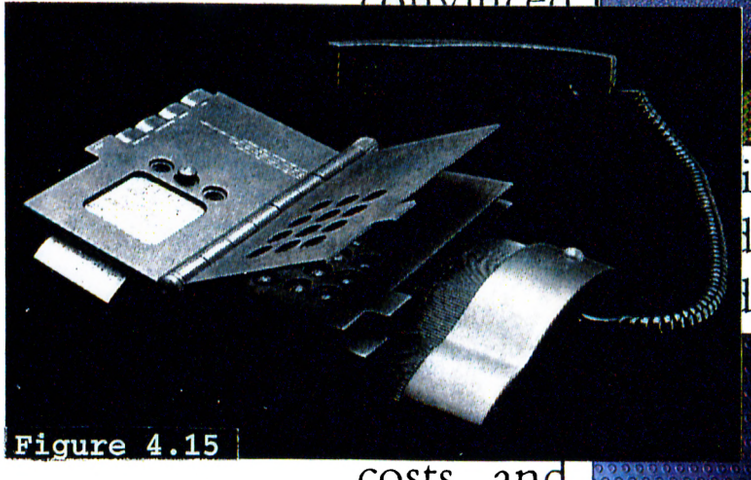

Figure 4.15

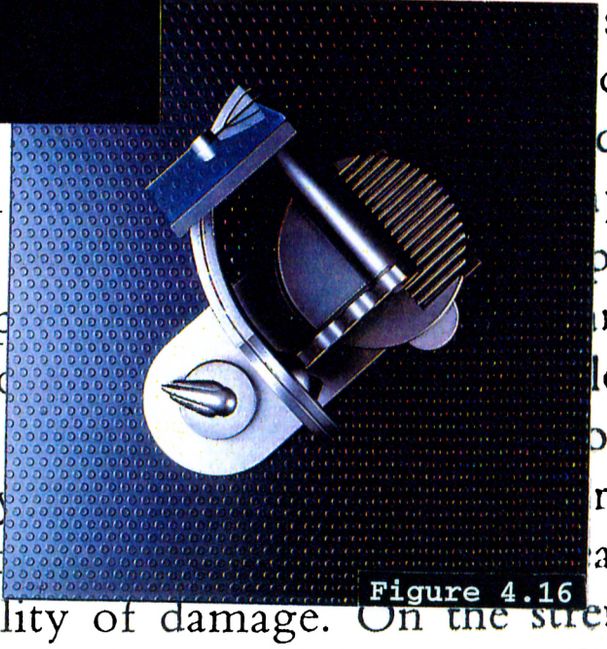

Figure 4.16

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seen in figure 4.12, is claimed to take a traditional mail box as its icon, but as myself, is not so familiar with that object and image, can not read and transform the piece of information needed to identify it as such. It remains to me a another self-speaking object.

The examples can be verified and increased in number, but as a last word on this issue, whether a particular piece of design is made with semantic anxieties or not, it is interpreted and read in various forms resulting with some kind of meaning.

> "...; in short, the telephone itself is susceptible of belonging to a system of objects-as-signs; similarly, a pen necessarily parades certain sense of wealth, of simplicity, of seriousness, of whimsicality, etc.; the plates we eat on always have a meaning, as well, and when they do not, when they feigh to have none, then precisely they end up by having the meaning of having no meaning. Consequently, there is no object which escapes meaning" (Barthes 1994, 182).

CHAPTER 5

5. SEMIOTICAL ANALYSIS OF DESIGN

5.1. Meaning: Denotation and Connotation

Meaning is what is evoken in the mind of a receiver that is conveyed in the form of a piece of information with an act of communication. This information comes through the codes of the medium that it is transmitted; for example it can be a film, a literary piece, an image, etc. Meaning is constructed through these structures. Barthes' famous article "The Photographic Message" examines how meaning is conveyed through press photography dealing it within the context of a newspaper (1977, 15-31). He says that the message is conveyed through a channel of transmission that is the newspaper itself from the emitter that is the staff of the paper to a receptor that is the reader. The photograph takes its place within this context, together with the text, the layout, the caption and the name of the paper. The point is that although the photograph has got an autonomous meaning deriving from being a perfect analogon of the reality it tries to represent; the meaning of it changes by the text written underneath when it is in a newspaper. Although Barthes insists in saying that the "photographic image is a message without a code"; it is seized from the expression

that he is implying the power of the image (17). Surely, the photograph itself is a coding, as he states further in the article by the terms "trick effects, pose, objects, photogenia, aestheticism, syntax"; all referring to the *nature* of the technique (21-25). Can photography be natural? That is exactly what Barthes tries to imply by the absence of the code. A pure abstraction of photography leads a way to make it a frame out of reality. Can a photograph be thought as an empty frame filled with reality itself? Surely not. It is a transformation, a projection, a distortion unlike Barthes states (17). The photographic image is so real and perfect in imitating what it sees, there seems to be no place for a second meaning in itself. It is what it is, nothing else, but whenever some editor puts a caption under, there occurs the distortion, the crack, out which the connoted, the implied, the second meaning flows. If it is accepted without any doubt at this point, now the untouched naturality of the photograph begins to be cultural at the moment it is being read and deciphered.

Two distinctions can easily be inferred up to here; the denotative meaning of a photograph is the meaning derived from the content. The lines, shades, color, forms and contrasts appear as a visual statement and the receptor basically reads what is it about; say a man is playing the piano in a concert. If the image is accompanied by a caption saying: "Pianist found dead at concert night in

hotel room."; the reception will be different by this additional information forming a second layer of meaning on the natural and happy pianist implying there is something more about that instant, may be the murderer is among the audience; the eyes scan through the faces of the people; the questions arise; the meaning has changed. This is the connotative level of meaning in a press photograph created by the text.

This image-text relationship can be found in other places where the two come together. The perception of a painting can differ according to the name written under it. The title and the name on a book, cassette or a CD will affect our decisions about the cover and consequently the content. A question may evoke in minds due to this discussion up to now that is whether the impact of the written word is a subordinate one compared to the power of the image. The answer may be found in Eco's argument in "The Revenge of the Books":

> "It is thanks to the computer that relations with the audiovisual image have been overturned, since, on the computer screen there are words...The civilization of the computer is that of the alphabet just as civilizations from the pyramids to the baroque church were those of the image...To speak of a war between the visual and the written is totally passe'. We now must, on the contrary, analyze the synergy between the two..." (1996, 1).

In fact the text does not always need a two-dimensional image to stick onto, it may take place on any kind of

thing; buildings, shops, streets, planes, shoes, boxes, pencils; meaning on anywhere needing to say something more than itself. The aim of this study is to show that a three-dimensional entity, an everyday object, a consumer product has communicative aspects like every other medium conveying messages. Photography was a starting point to get into the subject and clarifying some terms, so it should not be thought as a one to one analogy. The relation between the three-dimensional entity and the graphical (both visual and verbal) worth examining, because the meaning constructions differ by the introduction of the third dimension to the scene. The denotative meaning in designed items lies in the function of it, the connotation occurs if it is put in a difference relationship in a system of signification. Now it is time to explore this connotative side of design that is the sign function, already inherent in the word.

5.2 Product as Sign: DE(SIGN)

The science that studies signs was first conceptualized under the name of semiology by Saussure and of semiotic by Peirce. The two agents were not aware of each other while claiming their theories in their lessons and papers, later to be compiled in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, and Peirce's eight volume *Collected Papers* (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). Saussure's definition of sign depends on a dyadic relation that of the signifier

and the signified. In his theory, the concept of sign resembles to a sheet of paper, one face being the "sign-vehicle" and the other "meaning," in which two of them are inherent (Eco 1976, 14). Peirce, on the other hand constructs his conception on triadic relations that of representamen (the sign), object and interpretant (Nöth 1990, 42-3). The representamen can be considered as the signifier or the sign-vehicle in Saussure. The object is the thing that the representamen represents or indicates. It can either be a material being or a mental concept. The interpretant is another sign evoken in the mind of the interpreter. By this concept of interpretant Peirce enabled an "ad infinitum" (qtd. in Nöth 1990, 43), or as Eco called it an "unlimited semiosis" in the world of meaning, objects and signs (qtd. in Silverman 1984, 5).

The basic distinction between the sign conceptions of Saussure and Peirce is offered by Eco:

> "It is not by chance that all the examples of semiological systems given by Saussure are without any shade of doubt strictly conventionalized systems of artificial signs, such as military signals, rules of etiquette and visual alphabets. Those who share Saussure's notion of *sémiologie* distinguish sharply between intentional, artificial devices (which they call 'signs') and other natural or unintentional manifestations which do not, strictly speaking, deserve such a name.[...], but Peirce's definition offers us something more. It does not demand as part of a sign's definition, the qualities of being intentionally emitted and artificially produced" (Eco 1976, 15).

Eco, on the other hand prefers to define the sign as "*everything* that, on the grounds of a previously established convention, can be taken as *something standing for something else*" (1976, 16). Deriving from the rules of linguistics, enlarging the boundaries, semiotics may deal with *everything*, if is interpreted as a sign by some meaning producer or interpreter. This scope of semiotics leads the way to the conception of products as signs. In the second chapter, the communicative aspects of the designed products were explored and it was said that the encoding done by the production of the item is decoded through its material being during consumption. This one to one relationship demanded the actual interface with the object itself. The difficulty of the three-dimensional entity being the signal of a communicative act derived from the source of the information coding and decoding being done on the object itself. On the product, the channel and the signal united and materialized on the product. This caused the two components of the communication act to be unseparably integrated to each other, demonstrated by the two pieces of the cubes in the illusion. Now, in the case of semiotics and the sign function of the product, the signal function of the object does not disappear, but just like the cube conception, they are united, depending on the receiver in the case of communication, and the interpreter in the case of signification.

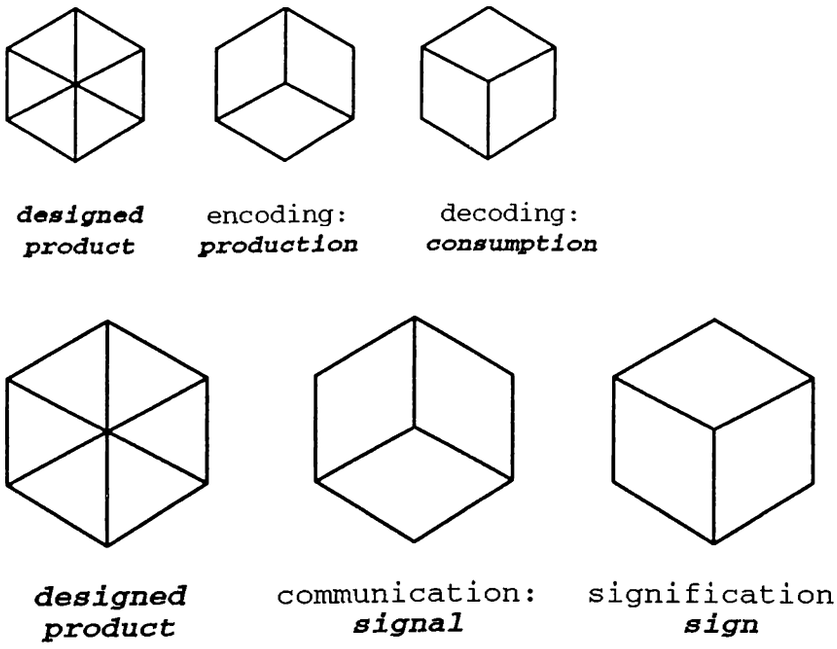


Figure 5.1

That is the reason of the objection of the pure semantic conception of Krippendorff and Butter disregarding this semiotic component inherent in the object (1984). It is all a problem of the look of the reader. This is not for the sake of imposing a certain point of view, but to make aware the reader to be conscious of the other component of meaning and signification while being focused on only one position of the cube. To remind of the concealed sign function in the signal of ***de(sign)***.

To tie the arguement to the first part, let us turn back to the denotation and connotation principles of Barthes' that we started with. His conception schematized in the following figure (qtd. in Silverman 1984, 27), seems to be closer to the cube paradigm exploring the sign function of the object within the other meaning constructions.

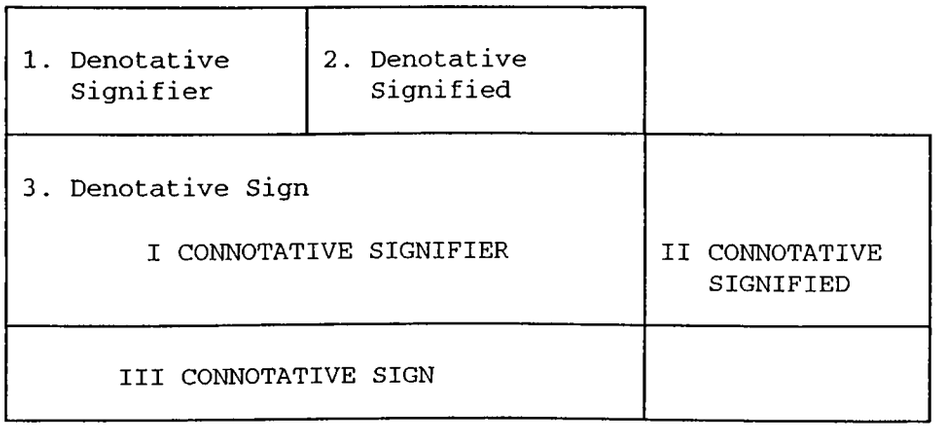


Figure 5.2

Just like it happens in the case of reading photographs, firstly the object's denotative layer of meaning is deciphered through its function. It is identified and classified among the similar objects performing similar tasks. Then over this identification, any other connotative meaning can be activated by the interpreter, or as in the case of advertising, by the author. In the first chapter, Gottdiener's remarks on mass culture were given on producer/object/user distinction (1995, 165-191). His socio-semiotic approach to these relations will help to understand the sign function of objects in society ruled by the norms and hegemony of mass culture.

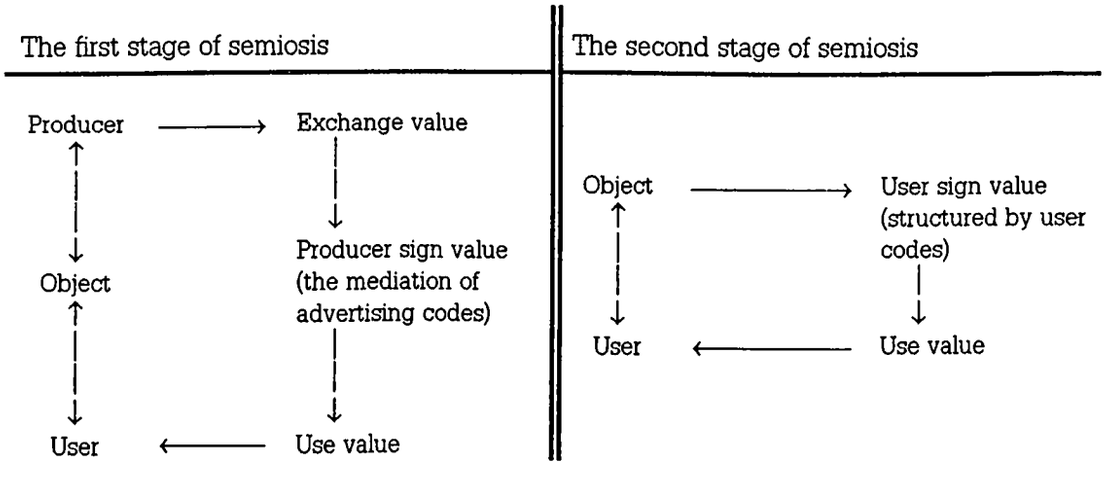


Figure 5.3

According to the first stage of semiosis, the object that is produced for an exchange value is wanted to be consumed by its use value. The relation is located between the producer and the user. The object is turned out to be a sign in the discourse of advertising to achieve to evoke the desire to purchase in order to match the two intentions. The second stage is related with the user's side of the story, that is the relation in this case is between the user and the object. Consumers do make certain objects act like their cultural codes within society to differentiate themselves, either as individuals or groups. Mods, punks, or rockers are some examples of these kinds of subcultural groups, having common objects associated with them.

The three stages of semiosis

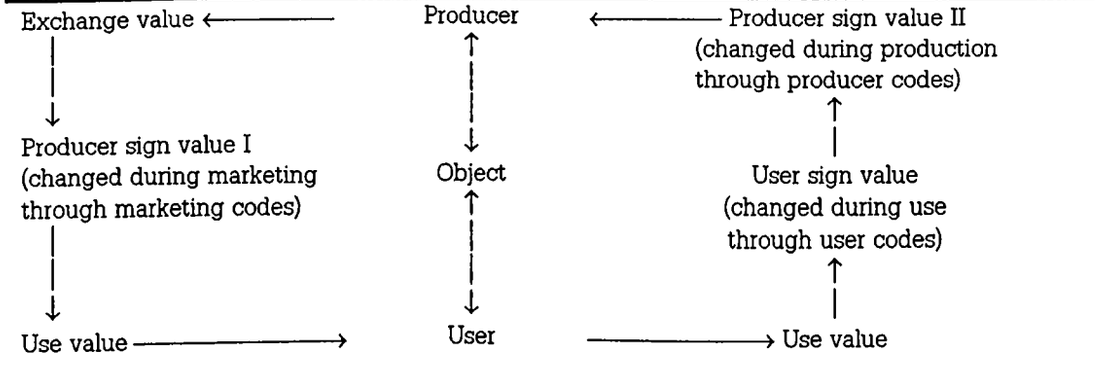


Figure 5.4

The third stage defines the relation between the producer and the object. This is the more sophisticated and complete model in accordance with the former two, because here the producer uses the outcome of the user's transformations of the objects as cultural codes as their point of departure of newly coded products for the

market. Surely this adaptation causes a shift and decline in meaning, "for example, the signifier 'punk rock' was sanitized by the Top 40 radio industry and changed to 'New Wave.' Whereas the former connotes a revolutionary counterculture, the latter is a marketing statement utilizing the power of stimulus 'new' to indicate a change in product" (Gottdiener 1993, 183). Gottdiener's remarks and models of *mass cultural semiosis*, beautifully states the components of the issue in a system of capitalistic mass production, communication and consumption.

Baudrillard is the key thinker to this debate of the status of objects, having been treated the issue thoroughly, from a view-point combining the Marxist conception of the object as commodity with exchange and use values with the sign function of being the signifier of a signified, in his *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981). His basic arguement depends on the fact that an object could only be an object of consumption if it is freed from its other functions, except being a sign. He classifies the other functions and the sign function of the object as such:

A functional logic of USE VALUE	operation	***utility***	INSTRUMENT
An economic logic of EXCHANGE VALUE	equivalence	***market***	COMMODITY
A logic of SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE	ambivalence	***gift***	SYMBOL
A logic of SIGN-VALUE	difference	***status***	SIGN

Figure 5.5

This logic of sign value derives from and closely linked to the contemporary concept of consumption. Baudrillard claims that the people living before industrialization were not consuming, they were furnished by objects of symbolic properties satisfying their needs in their material beings (1996). On the other hand, he defines the contemporary object as being "*nothing* [...], but the different types of relations and significations that converge, contradict themselves, and twist around it, as such [...]" (1981, 63).

> "The systematic and limitless process of consumption arises from the disappointed demand for totality that underlies the project of life. In their ideality sign-objects are all equivalent and may multiply infinitely; indeed, they *must multiply* in order at every moment to make up for a reality that is absent. Consumption is irrepressible, in the last reckoning, because it is founded upon a *lack*" (Baudrillard 1996, 205).

This theory of consumption regarding and producing the *sign-object* is closely linked to the arguements in Chapter 3 of this thesis, related to advertising. Contemporary mechanisms of turning the object into a sign could only be possible by the object's transformation of a product by being the outcome of a company, a brand and profit, consequently advertising. Through the codes of advertising the object is disappeared in the idea of the perfect and desirable product, turned into a sign to be consumed among the other examples or sets of items. It is turned into *nothing*, but a mental image of a mirrored discontinous self to be completed by the lack of it, in the discourse of the advertisement. That is the reason of

why we are consuming sign-objects instead of the real ones and that is the reason for the object's inevitable transformation of a sign in order to be consumed. Gottdiener on the other hand finds Baudrillard's assumptions on the sign-object as a "radical reductionism", in terms of his claiming on the 'sign value's *domination* over the relation between individuals and material objects (1993, 178). Gottdiener's remarks derive from his view named as socio-semiotics, a synthesis of material culture and symbolic processes:

> "According to socio-semiotics, any material object constitutes the intersection between social context and the codified, connotative ideologies of social practice, on the one hand, and the material, objective, production or design practice which produces the object world, on the other. It is the latter's relation to the former that has been neglected by both semiotics and symbolic interaction" (Gottdiener 1993, 56).

As I stated in the introduction of this thesis that this study is done from the point of view of someone able to see both sides of the issue. Then the definition of socio-semiotics fits perfectly well with the aim of this thesis; to cope, match and integrate the meaning as a tool for making the objects, as a design practice and methodology, by taking the various readings of them in social and cultural practice as informative inputs. This inquiry of meaning in design may lead to a socio-semiotic design methodology.

CHAPTER 6

6. READINGS OF DE(SIGN)

This chapter consists of ways of reading supported by visual documents. The theories that has been discussed in previous chapters are tried to be handled in the analysis of design in terms of gender. This first analysis is made both exploring how the information of gender is united in the objects using semantics as a tool, and also by deciphering the meanings of advertisements touching the issue of representation.

6.1. Design and Gender

Some objects are for the use of only either men or women. These are explicit in their function, but there are lots of other objects that both sexes use. This group of common objects differ by their form, material, color or style as referred to men or women. Product discourse gives clues on the gender of objects.

Gender can be dealt within the realm of design in basically two ways. Firstly, the objects are separated naturally by their sexual differences. There are objects for men that women can not, by nature, use and vice versa. Secondly, from a social and cultural perspective,

there are roles assigned for men and women in a society, and these roles define the objects to be used, devoid of any physical need or capability. In both cases, the discourses of objects reveal hints of the user's sexual identity. Sometimes it does not, then those objects are named as unisex.

Apart from the first group related with the physical properties of the user, all objects can be called unisex. The thing that makes them belong to any sex is the social and cultural structures of a society which basic ergonomics clearly demonstrates. Design is usually made according to a conceptual user and an object in the mind, and that user, most of the time is not a he or a she. This is an androgen, an average person; a mix of the man and woman outline drawings' of the human factors books (See Figure 6.1). This blend is obviously a conceptual or cognitive one, because while designing, one does not always differentiate the sex of the user; of course if it is not a specific design. The designer has someone, in his mind. That someone is a conceptual user, able to perform average tasks with average dimensions. The precision and detail provided by the human factors engineering is not completely inside the designer's head while sketching. These data are to be used at the stage of product refination and dimensioning, the time when concepts turn out to be real products. Up to that time according to the target user, the designer develops a conceptual user in his mind.

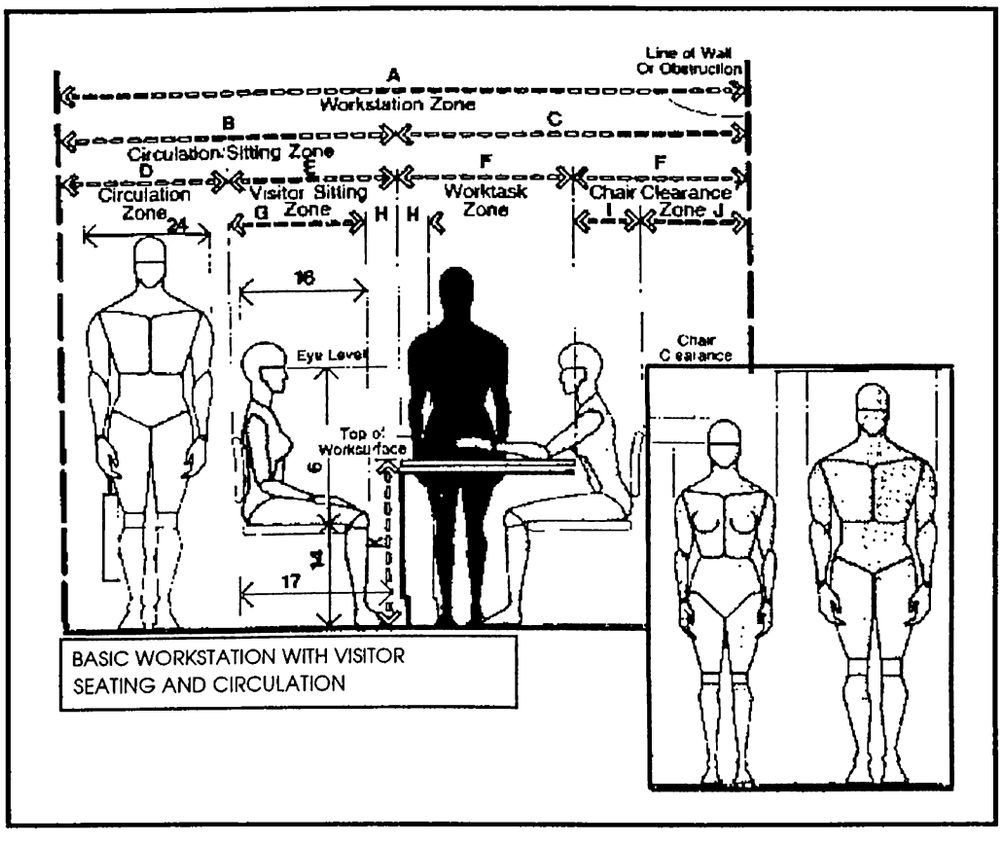


Figure 6.1

This kind of study perfectly matches with the "form follows function" echole named by Louis SULLIVAN at the start of the twentieth century in architecture (Heskett 1980, 62). The motto was the hard-core of the system logic of modernism that is firstly institutionalized by the foundation of the Bauhaus. The design philosophy of modernism still accepted and currently taught in most of the design schools depends on the pure, detached, and isolated conceptual user mentioned above. The only context defined for him is the context of use. That is

the conceptual space of one to one relationship constructed between the subject and the object.

The definition of gender in modern design can not be found on the object as an ingredient of a visual or discursive contribution. The reason is that modernism rejects every kind of excessive information apart from the function in an object's form. This should be sought in the social life of an object besides its representations. The discourse of gender is constructed outside the object, by the function of the same object. That is the paradox of modern design; in trying to free the object of any kind of messages and emphasize on the purity of function by loading it on the shoulders of form. The function that is supposed to be non-expressive becomes the connoter of the gender identification. Contemporary designers realized that they can not escape from being speechless (including any kind of utterance, not only gender information), so they started to control the language of objects in terms of their symbolic and discursive possibilities. This control implies that the form does not strictly have to follow function any more, but more likely they proved that form may follow culture, too.

By going over the example of modern design, we reach a conclusion that classifying the ways of dealing with gender in design under two topics creates an artificial separation, because at the end there is the object

unified with its form, function and discourse as a whole. Even though we are talking about a purely women's item, it can not get away from the cultural touch in its design. From now on; our task is to understand this touch, in a culture that is ruled by consumerism, media and images.

At the start, it is better to clear out the relationship between women and design. Buckley views the written history of design and historians from the point of their exclusion of women in the process of design (1989, 251-262). While criticizing the design historians, she defines the place of women in a patriarchal society. She deals with the issue by dividing it into two. Firstly, she explains the difference between the two sexes, in terms of their design qualities, features and characteristics. She makes this evaluation under the light of the literature, that design historians have compiled and developed with a patriarchal view point. Secondly, she defines the place of women both created and represented through advertising as consumers and objects. This second analysis, she argues is neglected by the historians, as they do not take into account the various ways of interaction of women with design, but only represent women as designers.

Buckley's argument on the male/female opposition in design can be demonstrated in a chart as follows:

male	female
culture	nature
logical	emotional
intellectual	instinctive
market-place	home, family
industrial design	fashion/textile design
universal truth, good taste	relativism in beauty
technical, functional	delicate, decorative
experimental, innovative	traditional
mass production	hand crafts
bold, assertive, calculated	weak,spontaneous,unrational

Figure 6.2

As this differentiation shows that both sides represent opposite values in design, the basic distinction starts by the nature/culture dichotomy. All the other keywords can be considered as the outcome of this opposition. The patriarchal ideology assesses the work of women designers' under the influence of the place previously assigned for them. Buckley gives a nice example on the work of men fashion designers such as Christian Dior, Karl Lagerfeld or Yves Saint Laurent being outstanding for their high creative skills, marketing abilities and charismatic character attributes. Women designers on the other hand, although working in the same fashion design area, are assigned to be accomplishing a natural task that is the natural outcome of their feminine intentions. This distinction exemplifies how the same kind of design work can be assigned as a cultural success and a natural activity (Buckley 1989, 253).

The modernist manifesto's description of the good design required a functional object, proper with its form. This included certain functional objects in the list and excluded any other non-functional objects that automatically left women design and designers aside (Attfield 1989, 206-7). The difference in the value judgements of male and female under the influence of the modernist rules, go to such an extreme point that fashion is not included in most of the design books of theory and history. Buckley's criticism demands to be aware of this situation and offers a new approach to the history of design with a wider look at the issues concerning women.

Buckley's second point regarding the relationship of women and design is about their indirect role. Women are the consumers of the man-made objects, in which they are assigned a fairly inferior status in terms of the process of design. The patriarchal society, while identifying the place of the female in the domestic environment, it also reinforces this statement by surrounding her with the necessary equipment. During the time the woman is safely settled in her castle, she is unaware of the fact that she is being turned to an object herself (See Figure 6.3). To sum it up; men have put out the rules of the game so cleverly that even though it seems to be the designs are made for women consumers in mind, in the end all of the design work turns back for the benefit of men, reinforcing the patriarchal ideal.

The role of advertisements and media is to support this game by supplying the make-belief of the system. The main tool of them is the power of representation that gives way to a clear definition of the ideal user. While the female is being given a sense of freedom among the household objects she commands, by the mechanisms of the trapping power of the look, she becomes one of the beautiful objects that is being looked at.

Now it is time to blend the notions of form, function and gender by taking the concept of look as the center of the debate. Although mentioned before as the motto of the modernist ideal clashed with the gender construction through objects, Attfield beautifully states how form and function are attached social and cultural meanings according to a feminist point of view:

> "The dominant conception prioritizes the machine (masculine) over the body (feminine). It assigns men to the determining, functional areas of design- science, technology, industrial production- and woman to the private, domestic area and to the soft, decorative fields of design. It places form in the feminine realm where its role is to reflect the imperatives of the 'real'. According to this kind of aesthetic theory then form (female) follows function (male)" (Attfield 1989, 201).

This conception can also be seized out of the keywords figured out in the previous chart of male/female distinction. The assignment of industrial design as a male profession and fashion or textile design as a female concern was given as an example. The former as the design


L'ESPRIT
d'aujourd'hui
LE MAGAZINE
DES GALERIES
LAFAYETTE
n°2 oct.95
GALERIES
Lafayette
HAUSSMANN

Figure 6.3

of the functional, technical and industrial belonged to the men, whereas fashion was considered to be the paradigm of female inspiration, beauty and style. It should be noted that the modernist ideal denied any kind of stylist approach in design. This was the reason for making the function the preceding element, so Attfield's metonymy fits perfectly well to the hierarchy of gender within the modernist philosophy. That is supported by Buckley's criticism on the focus of design historian's neglect of one aspect of the issue concerning the feminist side.

The whole patriarchy is constructed on the neutralization and objectification of the female in the course of design. It would be a misconception to regard that this is only a problematic of the design profession. The patriarchal mechanisms are at work in other forms of representation such as cinema and TV. In fact, they are the most powerful devices that constitute the male look over the female body.

An evaluation of the role of gender in design will be suggested by applying the theories of cinema; concerning the representation of women in the screen. Mulvey, in her well-known essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" describes the pleasure in looking, taking the psychoanalytic theories as the base (Mulvey 1989, 14-26). Her arguement depends on the fact that the narrative cinema represents the woman as the object to be looked at

and the man who looks. This turns the woman into an image whereas the man becomes the capturer through sight. The form/function duality is repeated in Mulvey as the split between active/male and passive/female (1989, 19). The look in the narrative is a two-fold one. The first one belongs to the male protagonist watching the female. Secondly, the narrative is structured in such a way that the spectator watching the movie identifies himself with the male actor and gains possession over her.

Mulvey also distinguishes between two modes of looking in the cinematic discourse, both stemming from the woman's lack causing the castration anxiety. They are the "voyeurism" and the "fetishistic scopophilia". The former is related with the possession of the female, resolving the problems about her and revealing her secrets within the course of the story, resulting with punishment or forgiveness. This mechanism enables the male to get control over the guilty female (guilty, because she is causing a castration anxiety, a threat) and also the process of overcoming the unease perfectly matches with the sequence of the film. The second way again neutralizes the threat but this time by turning the woman into a fetish object. This time there is no need for a continous narrative to create the effect. To focus on the woman's body detached from any information of space, time and context is enough for the victory (Mulvey 1989, 21-22).

While describing these mechanisms, Mulvey gives Hitchcock as using both mechanisms and Sternberg for using fetishism in their films as examples. Taking the image of Marlene Dietrich in the Sternberg films as the central concern Mulvey comments:

> "...The beauty of woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of the guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look" (Mulvey 1989, 22).

This arguement on fetishism can be tied to the representation of women in a consumer culture through the images of product advertisements, linking the issue to the hard-core of design. An example may demonstrate the issue more clearly and provide visual support to the previous quotation. Here (See Figure 6.4) in this advertisement for RAY-BAN, the sunglasses are used as a metaphor of the woman's body. The discourse of the page layout is prepared in such a way that that there is nearly no emphasis on typography, except the logo of RAY-BAN on the object. There is no additional slogans or anything else, just the name and the address of the distributor. In that sense, by the purity and the simplicity of the photography; by the white background killing every trace of distance or space perception; by the product is turned out to be an object of desire.

The ad is attractive to both sexes, but in different ways. Men are used to view their objects of desire by

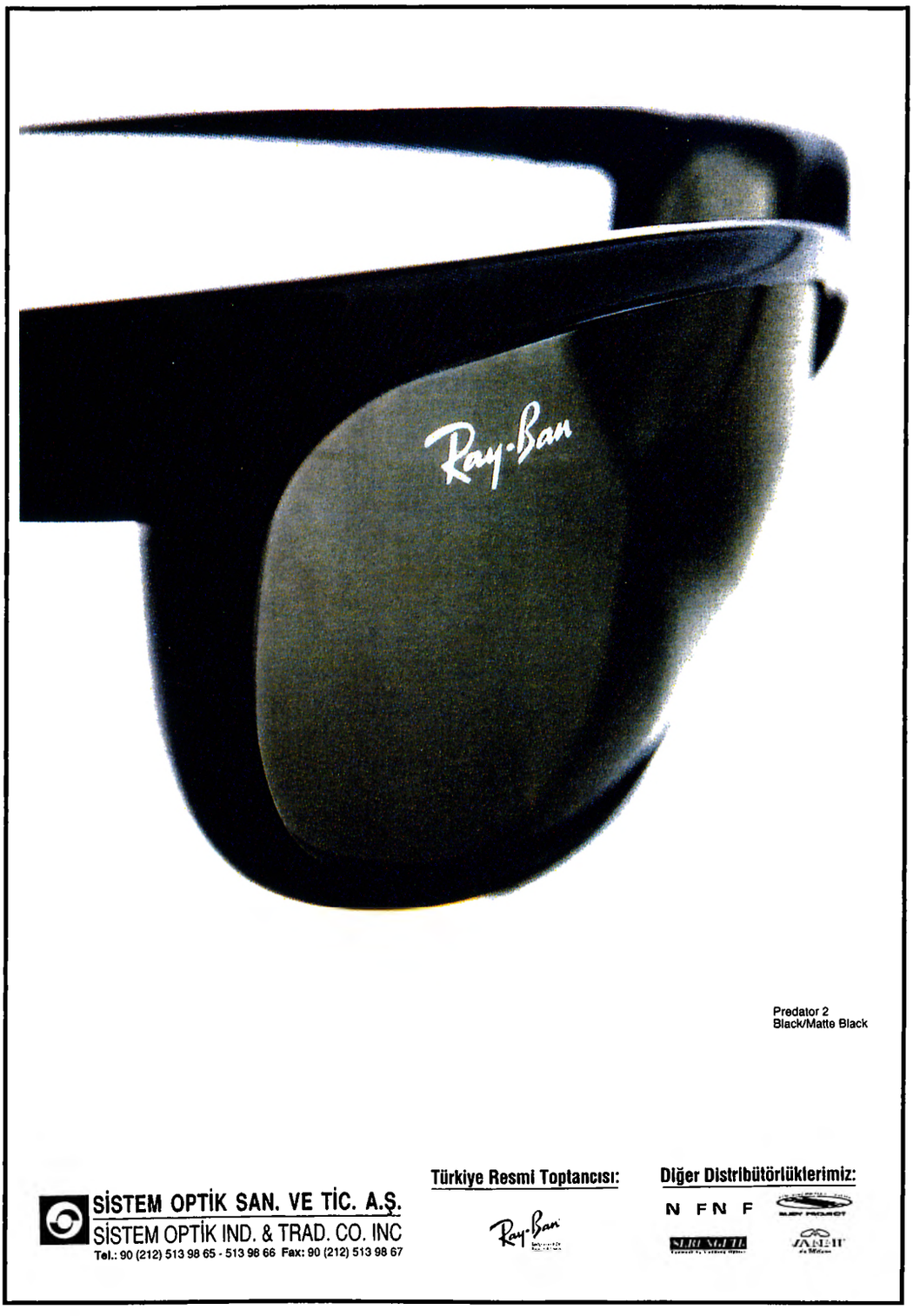

Ray-Ban
Predator 2
Black/Matte Black
SİSTEM OPTİK SAN. VE TİC. A.Ş.
SİSTEM OPTİK IND. & TRAD. CO. INC
Tel.: 90 (212) 513 98 65 - 513 98 66 Fax: 90 (212) 513 98 67
Türkiye Resmi Toptancısı:
Ray-Ban
Diğer Distribütörlüklerimiz:
N FN F

Figure 6.4

this kind of extreme close-ups, fragmentary compositions from their experiences of films, media and other images. There is no problem for the male part, they will surely want to possess the perfect object. Women on the other hand, also used to watching and viewing the world and its representations from the eyes of the male. They know how to interpret the images of other women as objects of desire. Their task is to be one and protect their power over the dominant sex, knowing she is or will be defeated by the same mechanism in the end. Both sides know there is no other way, but the dynamics of pleasure created both by looking and being looked at, blend in the materiality of the image of the perfect product represented in the photograph. The pleasure of the look will unite on the product they will consume in order to look at the world through, and also to be looked at.

If we go on using the paradigms of sunglasses as examples, we can deal with other aspects of the gender design relationship. Sunglasses is a type of object, that in terms of its function, is identical with a male or a female. The thing that assigns it to either sex is their design of form, color and material (See Figure 6.5). This pair of glasses appear in an advertisement of a woman's fashion magazine. It is used as a metaphor of a woman, symbolizing the type of reader that the magazine is targeting as consumers.

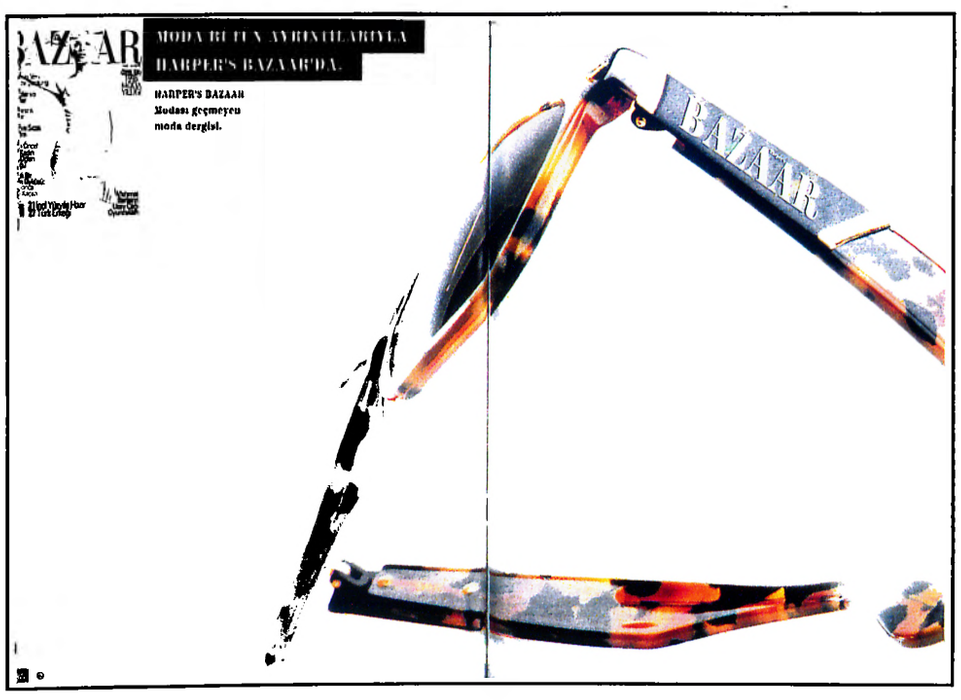


Figure 6.5

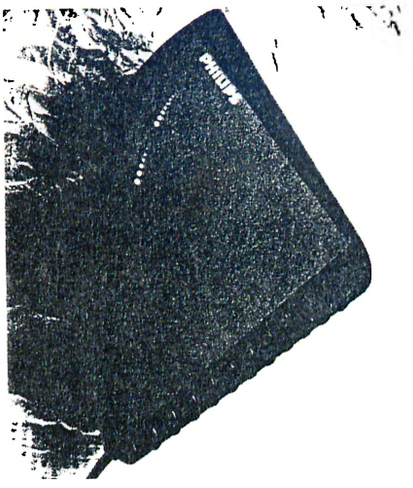
The BAZAAR logotype used at the side of the object as the name of the glasses maintains the magazine's identification with fashion, clothing, accessories, a higher class of people, etc. The cover of the magazine showing a nice lady's photograph explicitly puts the last feminine label to both the object and to the magazine. Besides all these feminine connotations, the glasses are absolutely made for a woman. The reason derives from the facts of the yellow-brown tiger mapping; the thickness and the soft transparency of the material used; the logotype at the side by its scale and meaning. In that particular BAZAAR sunglasses, the facts of the feminine design and its feminine representations can be clearly observed.

The second paradigm that will be put in contrast to the BAZAAR one is the OAKLEY's (Look at Figure 6.6). The man figure appearing as and outline is the famous NBA player Michael Jordan. He is associated with the male qualities of the extreme that are talent, power, technique, profession, etc. The slogan of the ad is, "The technology that does not submit to rules." One more time the male-technology-function identification is viewed, whereas the former one was the female-fashion-form paradigm. One more thing about the OAKLEY one is that the male appears to be only consisting of a pair of glasses, so consequently a pair of eyes. This unites with the formulation of the male gaze and the female form. Male uses the glasses to look at, while the female uses them to complete her overall form to be looked at. The Jordan silhouette is a very neat and nice male form. The fact is, that form is for the sake of the identification of the beautiful male figure with the technology's glamorous magnificence, just like the metallic glasses he is wearing. Man, himself is a machine, too, both by being the maker and user of the objects. The discourse of technology in the OAKLEY glasses finds materiality in the flow of the metal, just like the seamless cloth of Jesus and the science-fiction space ships made up of a whole metal body without any visible junction (Barthes 1990, 120). The flow of the lines on the object is emphasized by the analogy of the human form that finds its being in the Jordan silhouette.

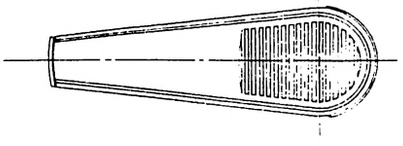

KURALLARA BOYUN EĞMEYEN TEKNOLOJİ.
Size: Oakley'den Full Metal Jacket'ı sunuyor. Üstün optik teknoloji. Kursursuz tasarım. Ve, asla önüne geçilemeyen bir kurattanımazlık
OAKLEY
TURKIYE TEMSILCISI INTERTEK LTD.
ANKARA
AYDIN
BURSA
ISTANBUL
ANTALYA
IZMIR
MUGLA

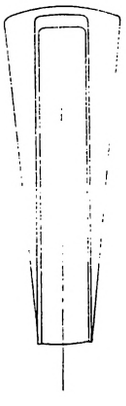
Figure 6.6

Dormer (1990) gives two other examples in demonstrating the difference of gender in design (See Figure 6.7). The first hairdryer is a work of a Danish designer named Alexander Groenewege done for PHILIPS. His approach was to go deep into the concept of wind at the first place. The next step he followed was to put out the relationship of the object with a woman. This feminine connection was inspired by the Spanish ladies fans, an analog of a bird's feather. The relationship set up like this was quite different from the typologic hair dryers resembling a gun shooting one's head while drying (Dormer 1990, 98-105). The design philosophy is much different from the modernist manifesto of "form follows function". Here form is quite inspiring, leading and controlling the function. This is one of the basic distinctions of design in a post-industrial society. The emergence of that particular form depends on not a mere and isolated matching of form to the function, but it demands a more symbolic, metaphorical and conceptual relationship between the two. The other hairdryer is produced especially for men. The use of flowing metal is similar to our previous discussion of the sunglasses. This time the flow signifies the Streamline period of stylization, that reminds one, of an old machine aesthetic, whereas the glasses speak of a futuristic use of metal. In the end both serve for male consumers.



The simile of the gun is present in a surprising number of domestic tools – but then the gun is a naturally *useful form. However, such imagery was rejected by Alexander Groenewege in this 'Fan' hairdryer designed for Philips. He wanted to elicit the allusion to hand-held fans, to grace, flight and air.*





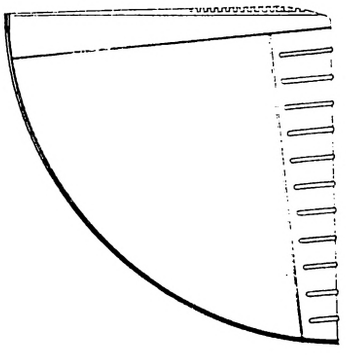


Figure 6.7

Hairdryer for men by Atlantic Design (U.K). It is clearly masculine in its bulk and machined imagery, taking its finesse from the styles of the 1930s.

6.2. Product is a Sign, Label is a Sign then Product is the Label

There is an act of symbolism and representation in product design through graphics. Their relationship is a mutual one as graphics live on products and products demand the support of graphic design to reveal themselves. Akın and Weinel gives the "two dictionary definitions for the verb to 'represent'; a) 'to express or designate by some term, character, symbol or the like,'and b) 'to present or picture to the mind'" (Akın and Weinel 1982, 1). There are several kinds of symbolism in the relation of products and graphics. First is; graphics on a certain product symbolize the inner qualities. Secondly packaging, if taken as a graphical element, represents the product and most importantly; the brand. Another interaction is to be found in the mediatic representations of the product that is related with the tele-visual or printed material of the advertisements, that is completely ordered in another system of signification. In fact in this consumer society the product can be considered as a packaging itself: a packaging of a certain function, an evoken need (it is evoken by the desire mechanisms of the advertisements), a natural need, a promotion campaign, a technology, etc. The act of designing is an act of covering, shaping or realizing a certain concept. Which one we consume, the product, its label or merely the packaging is a question to be raised without an expectation of a clear answer.

All of the representation and symbolism regarding the product is combined in the brand image of a product, where the two are seamlessly articulated.

6.3. An Inquiry into a Collective Memory

It can be said that there is a collective memory of images, brands and firms that people living in Turkey have. A certain age limit can not be put, because of the variety of the products and their existence in different time limits or places. Surely, people living in different countries may also have such a collective unconscious. To indicate in the first place that this study does not depend on a statistical analysis, but more than a conceptual illustration of the supposition.

The idea is to compile a number of brands that have left their traces in our memories; not only of objects but also of concepts and brand names. Every person has experienced a number of these items in different ways; either passing them by in the supermarkets; or watching the ads on TV; or using them somewhere; or just having been owning them for quite a long time, even not knowing the date of acquiry. One comes into contact with the product both by its material being and its meaning together. The meaning is produced largely by the branding of the product. The label, by its typography, color, form and ordering is represented on the product and also like a "negative afterimage," at its absence (Rock 1975, 34).

A negative afterimage is the negative outline of the image one sees with his eyes closed after staring at something. The brands evoke a similar experience in people's minds functioning as constructor of recognition and categorizes of information out of the logo, brand name, the product, the firm and the totality of the knowledge, prejudices, experiences as a whole. The construction of meaning through branding can be considered as a cognitive chain reaction processing all of the factors counted and many more.

The basic point emphasized in this illustration is that the invisible line separating the Turkish brands from the foreign ones. The collective memory works in such a way that it combines and articulates all of the brands in one pool; so the origin gets tangled up and blended with each other. There remains no difference between the Turkish and the foreign. That is because of the fact that we are so accustomed with those images that the threshold of this kind of differentiation becomes so high. The result is supposed to be that the people do assign most of the foreign brands or firms as local made and vice versa.

Why should there be a clear distinction in between the two classes of brands? The answer may be that there is no need, because they are both the outcomes of the same capitalist system of production, distribution and consumption. That is true, but the emphasis here is on the consumer's misconception about the classification of

the brands. Most of the Turkish consumers when asked, may not identify the difference. The whole collective memory is what rules the cognitive chain about a brand, because every brand is classified and categorized in the pool among the others. This gives every brand a rank in the classes. Although there is an invisible line between the two, they are articulated to form up the whole pool. That is why it is called a collective memory.

This study may be the evidence of the possibility of a product's virtual existence which is maintained by the image, personal memories and photographic recordings of the labels and the brand names. This may be considered as another contribution to the debate on the materiality of design. The logotype used for a particular brand conjures a mental image of the product itself. To put it in another way, the product is symbolized in the graphic(s). This symbolism provides the virtual existence of the product inside the brand, by motivating the chain of the material beings coming to one's mind paradigmatically. For example when looked at the logotype of the firm ARÇELİK (See Figure 6.8 or 6.9); the images of the refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners etc. are flashed in one's mind. This symbolism is sometimes so powerful that the name of the brand or firm becomes the product itself. A common known example is all the foreign tissue papers are known as KLEENEX and the local made ones are known as SELPAK. The examples may be varified in the case as, people do not tile ceramics in their homes,


Rowenta
Daima öndesiniz
TEFAL
Sen her şeyi düşünürsün
Coca-Cola
Paşabahçe
BEKO
dinarsu
KARAMÜRSEL
Eldivenden merdivene
PAMUKKALE
RENAULT
YAŞANACAK OTOMOBİL
ÜLKER
kent
Kalo
AKBANK
Güveniniz Eseri
Marmara Bira
Vita
VESTEL
MİS
Maltepe
TOPRAK SERAMİK
RAKS
BEYMEN
BMC
Rama
E.C.A.
"Yıllarca Beraber"
ARKO
TAMEK
PİYALE
Kuşaklar Boyu Güvenle
PAMUKBANK
YAPI KREDİ
ARÇELİK
Boğaziçi
Limon Kolonyası
ÇAYKUR
Rize
Turist Çayı
Dök Dök Yel
igs
Çanakkale Seramik
TOFAŞ
tat
VakıfBank
Pilsen
PARİZİEN
Mido
Selpak
PINAR
Sasal
SAĞLIKLI MEMBA SUYU
1,5 L.
Eczacıbaşı
VitrA
SAMSUN
filtreli
SİSECAM
TÜRK HAVA YOLLARI
DÖRTEL
Çay-Yıldız
CORN FLAKES
Mısır Gevreği
Ford
burda
Birlikte hep daha iyiye
PHILIPS
VISAGE
Lee
YOUTH WEAR
FIAT
adidas
KÂMİL KOÇ
BP
Levi's
SONY
GOODYEAR
PIRELLI
NIKE
Gillette
SERIES
PARLIAMENT
AEG
Lufthansa
ASPİRİN
20 tablet
500 mg Asetilsalisilik asit
büyükler için
BAYER
Reebok
Alpella
Fanta
Mobil
Dünya bizimle dönüyor.
TOKALON
SWISS COSMETICS
FLIP-TOP BOX
Marlboro
200'T.M.
CIGARETTES
SAF YENİ YÜN

Figure 6.8

they tile KALEBODUR. Here the importance lies not in the name, but the reputation that specific brand has gained over the other competing brands. The Turkish name for razor is GILLETTE (pronounced and written as it is in Turkish). Also, when FRIGIDAIRE first entered the Turkish market in 1940's, people were not asking each other whether or not they had refrigirators, but had a FRIGIDAIRE. The glue is commonly known and used under the name of UHU, although it is far off from its real content.

One of the main reasons for the foreign/local confusion of the Turkish consumer derives from the shift that took place during the invasion of foreign trademarks over the traditionally hand produced items and the little shops they are being sold. As Pamuk writes in his novel that the little shopkeeper and his customer did not have the chance to see the Turkish version of the industrially produced and labeled soap of clay. They were all of a sudden introduced to LUX. Similarly, they met the German UHU before the classical white wood glue was institutionalized (Pamuk 1994, 122). So, conceptually, the brands and the products provided a perfect match. The technological paradigm did not give way to the Turkish tradition to create its own labels and trademarks. It was faced by the invasion of foreign ones and had to take this situation for granted, without any choice and the customers accepted the new, strange, but proper names as their own. Even me, while preparing this sheet of

illustration had to think of whether a certain brand had a foreign origin or not.

The mapping of the brands is as the vertical ones being the foreigns, whereas the diagonals are the Turkish ones. At the first look one can not distinguish the difference. This is the reason for the slight shift in the second frame (See Figure 6.10), indicating the invisible line separating the two classes. The choices of brands are made randomly out of the popular and well-known names and firms. Surely the chosen ones are also the representatives and connoters of the ones that are, by chance, excluded in this collage. If analyzed one by one, the brands will conjure new ones up and the collective memory will be activated centering around the images and names seen in the layout.

The formal organization's being a collage is an on purpose choice. It signifies the arbitrariness of the bringing together of the labels, as they are stored in our memories. The collective memory can be considered as the metaphor of language being a big pool of words that while speaking, words are picked out of. It could be created by using completely different logotypes as well, but this should be taken as a visual guide to help expressing an idea with all its coverings and exclusions. Yet, the cuts of the labels at the limits of the verticals and horizontals of the paper imply the continuation of the compilation.


Rowenta
Daima Ondeniniz
TEFAL
Coca-Cola
Paşabahçe
BEKO
dinarsu
KARAMÜRS
Eldivenden merdivene
PAMUKKALE
RENAULT
ÜLKER
kent
AKBANK
Güvenilirin Eseri
Marmara
Bira
Vita
TÜRK HAVA YOLLARI
SAMSUN
VESTEL
MİS
Maltepe
TOPRAK SERAMİK
RAKS
BEYMEN
Rama
Yıllarca Beraber
PINAR
Sasal
1,5 L.
Selpak
Mado
PARİZİEN
ARKO
PİYALE
CORN FLAKES
Mısır Gevreği
Boğaziçi
Pilsen
TOPAS
ÇAYKUR
Rize
Ford
KAMİL KOÇ
LEVI'S
BP
SONY
GOODYEAR
PIRELLI
NIKE
Gillette
AEG
burda
PHILIPS
Lee
YOUTH WEAR
FIAT
Lufthansa
ASPİRİN
20 tablet
FLIP-TOP BOX
Marlboro
Mobil
Dünya bizimle dönüyor.
TOKALON
Fanta

Figure 6.9


Coca-Cola
Rowenta
TEFAL
RENAULT
Paşabahçe
BEKO
dinarsu
KARAMÜRSEL
Eldivenden merdivene
PAMUKKALE
ÜLKER
kent
Hale
AKBANK
Güvenin izin eseri
Marmara
Bira
Vita
VESTEL
MİS
Maltepe
TOPRAK SERAMİK
RAKS
BMC
Rama
Yıllarca Beraber
TÜRK HAVA YOLLARI
VitrA
Eczacıbaşı
SAMSUN
PINAR
saşal
1.5 L.
Selpak
ARKO
YAPI KREDİ
PAMUKBANK
Hizmette sınır yoktur
ARÇELİK
Boğaziçi
igs
Pilsen
PARİZİEN
Kuşaklar Boyu Güvenle
PİYALE
ÇAYKUR
Rize
tat
TOFAŞ
Dök Dök Ye!
KAMİL KOÇ
CORN FLAKES
Mısır Gevreği
Ford
burda
PHILIPS
Lee
FIAT
Reebok
Fanta
Mobil
Dünya bizimle dönüyor.
TOKALON
Lufthansa
ASPİRİN
GOODYEAR
SONY
PIRELLI
NIKE
Gillette
adidas
BP
PARLIAMENT
AEG
FLIP-TOP BOX
Marlboro

Figure 6.10

Surely Turkish traditions have traveled quite a way from the time that Pamuk has depicted, in terms of branding, under the influence of Western norms. May be that is why the two classes fit perfectly well to each other. They have to be torn apart in order to be recognized separately. Now is the time to ask the ultimate question that if it is possible for a discourse of nationality integrated in a profession like graphic or industrial design. This question opens up another debate that can be subject for a further study, far beyond the scope of this thesis.

The last words to be said about this issue will be relating to the concept of materiality again. As stated earlier people do not have to encounter the objects in their physical beings in order to develop an image of them in their collective unconscious. Eventhough they do so, the objects may be dead, lost, stolen, or worn out and thrown away, but the meanings attached to them live in our collective memories.

6.4. *The Antiques Roadshow*

The Antiques Roadshow (1996): This is the name of a programme on BBC PRIME. It is a quite interesting programme in terms of reading objects. Every week people from all around Britain bring their old objects that they think valuable and experts analyse them. The expert and

the owner sit across a table and the expert begins to 'read' the object starting from its history, age, significance of materials and production techniques and finally he assigns a price to the artifact mostly evoking a shocking but pleasant reaction at the owner. The pronounced amount of money for the value of the item is usually surprisingly high and shocking. People generally can not believe that old, but preserved thing, that has been living with them for quite a long time would make that much of money. The reason for this is that people, although seizing something out of the objects' age and resistance to years a value of an antiquity, they usually have taken them for granted for all their lives. Obviously the ones that are been mentioned are not those who are professional antique collectors or dealers. The thing that is more interesting than the items' value is that the way the expert's reading it. It is just like a detective's look at the crime scene. The expert is not as lucky as the detective, because he does not have the chance to observe the original context of the object. He handles every detail with great precision, and investigates every mark as a sign. He can easily judge the item has been repaired after production and the date, by looking at the rivets, bolts or screws. The age of the materials is judged by their decay, rust or patina that is visible on the surface. If a part is worn out by the original pieces used, it is easily distinguishable from the fake.

There are lots of other cues of judgment, but the act of reading the object in this way fits perfectly to our argument up to here and forms a nice example. Firstly, the object itself is the communicator of its function on the denotative level. This is important, because there appears rather different and weird items that most of us have not ever seen in their lives. Some of them are even new for the experts, but as soon as it is handled to get operated, it reveals itself to the user. This is the object's communication through its material language. The other aspect underlying the object language is the reading of the context, the maker, the culture, the technique, even the geography or the climate of the production environment. In one of the programmes the expert even depicted the carpenter's workshop of 18th century. During the analysis of a very beautiful piece of wooden cupboard, the expert turned one of the drawers upside down and from the wood that has been used, it became obvious that he was using a piece that had a draft of another item etched on it. Then he took the other drawer out and the two pieces completed the draft. That is why reading antiques is a detective work, but a much harder one. Reading design is not as hard as antiques, because we are living in the contemporary conditions of production, but it would be hard for the ones living at the carpenter's period of wooden furniture of nail and hammers, because design is losing its materiality and shifting to the intangible and virtual side day by day.

6.5. Materiality and Design

Moles discusses the relationship between design and immateriality in a post-industrial society by pointing out the importance or dominance of the material aspects versus the intangible and virtual side of the information age (1996). His argument depends on the fact that in order for a network or a software to operate there should be a hardware or material base supporting it. Depending on this assumption, he declares that the first job of the designer is to maintain the reliability of this hardware or material being in order to work the system or even to make it possible. This is because the complexity of the technology that is being used is much more developed than what it was at the beginning of the century. The smaller it gets, the more function it gains (Moles 1996, 269-70).

The second point that Moles makes is that the information age changed the design process itself (1996, 270-72). He says by the facilities of the computers; the designer does not have or need to draw drafts for production or make scaled models. The claim here is that the representation of the ideas does not occur in the limits of pen and paper any more. The computer provides not only the tools for representation, but also the ability to work it in 3-dimensions, fragments and also it makes us able to experience the finished design by traveling inside with all its variations. These all effect and

alter, both the design processes and consequently the production environments.

Moles concludes by turning back to the concept of 'reliability,' linking it to our perception of the material being of the immaterial that is the moment of disorder, fracture or malfunction. It is at that moment of imperfection that we become aware of the material; so Moles suggests that the task of the designer in the information age is to maintain the 'reliability' of the hardware before trying to create something new for people to enter into the immaterial by forgetting about the material (273-74).

The critical question has not been answered: What does the material side of design implicate? Teymur discusses the materiality of design by raising up a criticism to the gaps in research and education in dealing with the issue (1996). He claims that people dealing with design, research and education oversimplify the process by reducing it to a mere designer and user issue. In fact; the materiality of design is realized in the production stage where the economic, technical, cultural, social factors come into being. He suggests that in order to examine the materiality of design, one must take into account the five topics that are; the political economic, physical/technical, institutional, epistemological, discursive aspects of the problem (Teymur 1996, 149).

The political economic materiality of design implicates the criticism, that during the design process although it includes production, labor, organization of materials, resources and technologies, it is also isolated from them. Teymur says that design research and education takes them for granted (1996, 151). The physical/technical materiality of design is quite linked to the former one and Teymur makes out two main claims here. The first one being that the designer should be responsible of every line he draws on a blank sheet of paper, because it will be real and effect people's attitudes, perceptions, behaviors or circulations. The second one is that; apart from the physical or technical responsibility of the design, the designer should be aware of the non-physical and non-technical aspects of the thing he is putting forward. A physical entity defines its non-physical consequences (152-154).

The third aspect is the institutional materiality of design in which the ideas are shaped; relations, resources or people are organized. They are the kitchens of design and Teymur says that designers, researchers and educators should be well aware of the power of the institutional materiality as a "context" of design (1996, 156). The fourth one is the epistemological materiality that gives clues about the fact that in order for something to be done, there should be a reservoir of knowledge. This is one of the critical topics of the paper, because the reason for the isolation of the design

process from the production lies in the fact that the knowledge that is produced by research and education can not be integrated to production; as well as the knowledge of production is kept aside by the design theoreticians (Teymur 1996, 156-60).

The last aspect inquires the discursive materiality of design that is directly related to the aim of this thesis. Teymur combines the previous four topics of economic, technical, institutional and epistemological aspects of the design activity, through the mechanisms of discourse (1996, 160). He says by the mechanisms of discourse; these conditions are revealed, expressed and communicated. Firstly the drawings, drafts, plans are representations of something material, some portion of reality and as they themselves have a reality; the medium of representation has a great impact on the perception of the represented (161). Discourse not only means drawings or lines, but it is a whole with visual media, text and speech; as well as the object's language, deriving from its material being. That is why it is essential to study discourse for researchers as Teymur states:

> "The primary objective of design research is not to produce designs, or to lend uncritical support to the dominant design ideologies, but to understand the complex and contradictory reality of design activity largely by a critical study of how that activity is socially constituted and how it is made intelligible through its discourse (1996, 162)."

These two articles demonstrate two different viewpoints to the notion of materiality. Their approaches can be considered articulated in the sense of highlighting the two aspects of the problem. Moles' argument is an analysis of the situation of design in a digital environment as the bearer of technology. The 'telepresence' as he calls it (268), implies an actual lack. If looked through the screen, the machine becomes invisible. On the contrary, Teymur's notion of immateriality is about the design researchers' ignorance of other factors in the realization of an object. While Moles is trying to pull the issue from the virtual to the material, Teymur wants to reach or open the debate up to the invisible side of design. That is why they are complementary.

One more point to be opened up is the notion of invisibility. Rapaport, in his essay named; "On 'The Invisible in Architecture': An Environment-Behaviour Studies Perspective," defines what can be assigned as invisible in design (1994, 66-73). He says that the design of the environment is maintained by "organizing four variables that are space, time, meaning and communication" or organizing the "relationships between people and people, people and things, things and things (68)." These definitions can be applied to other design disciplines, or it can be said that design is the manipulation of these invisible concepts for a pre-defined purpose.

The paradox of design in the information age is that there are two aspects of the problem that are quite blended in each other. Firstly there is the design of the hardware, and then the design of the software. Hardware is the beholder of the software that is usually concealed and revealed partially through the screen. Software can be considered relatively invisible compared to the hardware, because the real movement, or the flow of information is concealed by the nature of the system. The thing that meets the eye is so much distorted, changed and shaped for the sake of communication. Hardware hides the software; as much as the software is to hide the hardware. This is the paradox of design in the information age that gave rise to new visions and understandings.

6.6. Future Readings: On Virtual Objects and Design

The concepts of invisibility and immaterialty find their actualization in computer interfaces that enable the viewer to work the system. Although they are altogether called as interfaces, their symbolic character change according to the tasks they perform. A very common example is the waste box icon; when activated deleting the unwanted files or information. This semantic match provides the user to find his way in the digital and electronic environment of chips. It is a direct reference from the real world, overlapping exactly with the type of

work being done. Obviously it is not a physical, but a semantic overlap.

Computers in their concrete being provide the user with a number of virtual objects; such as a CD player, telephone, an agenda, clock, radio, a paint brush, fax machine, etc. They are not only represented by icons of the real objects, but also the their logic of function is similar to the actual ones. In fact these are all interfaces appearing on the screen, their hardware or material being is somewhere inside the computer, or they are only attached; but they are operated through virtual images. The future of objects lies in this perfect overlap of pure image and function in the monitor requiring a double reading.

A more sophisticated example than an icon is, the CD player interface that appears in the screen to play a music CD. This interface is the exact copy of the facade of a real CD player.

Figure 6.11

The user can touch and control the play, stop, rewind buttons and the tracks by clicking the mouse. The cover once seen as a closed CD feeder, can be turned into a

digital LCD screen showing the number of the song that is being played and the name of it,

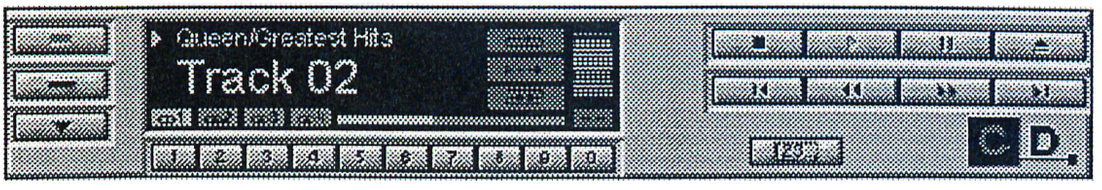


Figure 6.12

or the track and information of time about the song can be viewed with another click of the mouse.

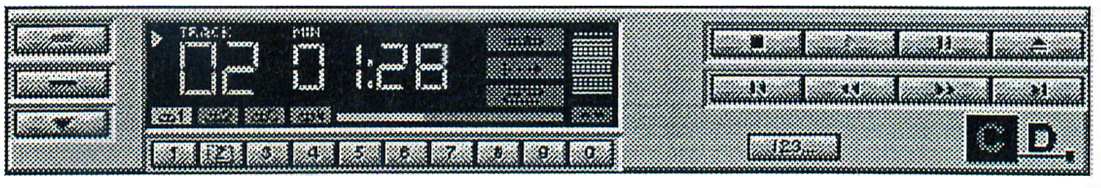


Figure 6.13

All of these controls could have been organized and formed quite differently, but they are preferred to take the direct references and the result is a simulation of a real CD player. This is the same for the remote control device, the MIDI player and the wave studio interfaces. The striking thing about these is that, although they are called interfaces in fact they are virtual objects. Virtual; because they are free from materiality if we do not take the electronic equipment working out the computer into account. The device is virtual and also illusory, because the real CD is inside the hard-disk, but it pretends that there is one behind the image. This is the point where an object is reduced to a pure image, but also controlled and activated by and through that same image. If the faith of objects is to lose their

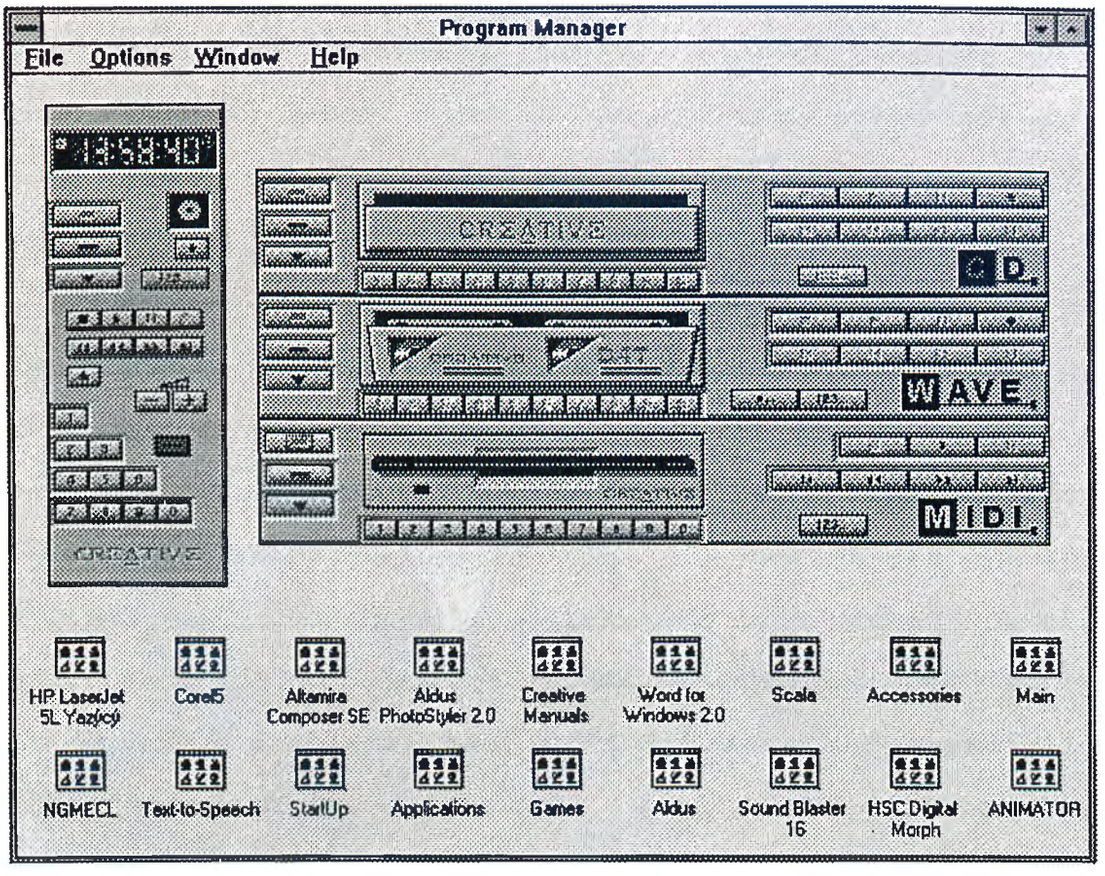


Figure 6.14

materialities, it can be possible only by this way, because without that image one can not operate the device to play. There are no actual buttons to push or pull. The only mechanical input is to put the CD in and take it out, except clicking the mouse or using the keyboard. In fact, only the input activities are mechanical. The intermediary steps are invisible, immaterial. In order to control the inner motion, one needs at least an image of something that looks like a CD player. Today, the need is such; but future changes may bring different expectations of one's understanding of a CD player device; then the image will be transformed accordingly. The process is so much similar to the first car designs that looked like coaches to be pulled by horses. People were so accustomed

to the form of the coach that even though powered by a completely different kind of energy they could not get away from their former experiences effecting their expectations.

The virtual objects are at their infancies, that is why they are so alike of the real ones. If the pace in the development of computer technologies is considered, then in a very short period of time the potentials of the digital environments will be taken as an advantage by the new coming virtual devices. Today, because of some memory or capacity problems, most of the images and especially interfaces are two-dimensional. In the near future they may turn into three-dimensional entities, such that the interfaces may pop out of the screen as re-defined virtual tools of the user.

Up to now, the effect of the information technologies' impact on the change of the context of design is discussed, but there is another aspect of the issue. The designer's responsibility of objects gone far through the screen, covering the soul of the machine that is the software. Now, the question is: What can be the effects of the electronic age on the design of the hardware? One answer is by the rise of a concept of product semantics that is dealt in chapter 4. Another answer can be found in Eisenman's folded architecture reasoned by the changes in the visual culture.

Eisenman, in his paper named "Vision's Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media"; critically evaluates the role of vision and visuality in the design of the buildings (1994, 144-149). The most important question he brings up is about why architecture has not been affected by the changes in the visual culture and preserved its monocular, Cartesian perspectivalist, stable look at the buildings. He explains the reason for this as the architecture's problematic is between the subject and the space to be constructed; so sight is about how the subject perceives the space both from inside and outside. Things begin to change when architecture is thought to be like a "Moebius strip" (147), where there is no difference of the inside from the outside. He folded the buildings as if folding a piece of paper with grids drawn on it. By this way he broke the chains of perspective of grids; assigned with the mechanical paradigm and created a new space that has indefinite, undefined dimensions that "look back" (149). This new point of view he argues is the result of the electronic paradigm that cracked the absoluteness of vision and supplied to be critical about it.

Eisenman demonstrates in the Lacanian sense of the word the "gaze" could be "intelligible" (borrowing the word from Teymur) in a building. As discussed earlier in this section, the paradox of the electronic age concerned with objects was said to be the hiding of the software the hardware and vice versa is also a problematic of vision.

If it is possible to make legible the multiplicity of functions, the potentials of the soft and hard wares, then the machines would not be black boxes containing magic inside. Eisenman's critique of the lack of application of visual developments in architectural design is similar to industrial design, but while architectural space is more suitable for an uncanny "gaze" in terms of scale, objects still preserve their power to be the silent "Other" (Lacan 1981).

The concept of being virtual in architecture is practically applied in the area of demonstration, representation, experimentation and evaluation of the design before it is being produced. It is similarly applied in other design disciplines, but architecture makes well use of this opportunity, because of the difficulty of production resulting from its scale. The virtual demonstration of virtual spaces are successful in being close to reality as a visual experience. Apart from this, Orwig states that virtual reality is being used in the Internet sites to inform the viewer of the spatial features that he has linked to (1996). His main arguement depends on the fact that people in the World Wide Web not only visit sites but also the connection is done by real machines at the real places. Due to the developments in the software, may be, he says, there will be no more textual scroll bars or blue lettered words. Instead, the simulation of the real spaces, the buildings or the like will be controlled by just passing through. This

conception, regarding the future design of web sites in terms of architecture, is quite similar to our conception of virtual objects. The basic difference is that virtual objects, although they are named as virtual, will still keep their location and silence of being the exterior "Other". The virtual space of the screen, on the other hand will keep the real space apart, no matter how close it makes the biggest distances. The virtual architecture seems to keep being intangible, while the virtual objects will go on gaining materiality in the screen.

"The End."

Figure 6.15

CHAPTER 7

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Last Words on *the Role of the Reader* and *the Death of the Designer*

Depending on a textual analysis, Umberto Eco defines the concept of *The Open Work* dividing the texts into two, as open and closed (1989). His concept of open text demands an active reader cooperating in the production of the text at the moment of interaction. The open text, by nature is not finished. Its task is to be reproduced many times through different readings and interpretations. The closed text, on the other hand is complete, in its content to offer to the reader. It is closed, because the author required at least one way of reading it, that is the way he wrote it, at the level of content, the story. Eco's main arguement appears at this stage. He claims that, in fact there are no closed texts; every text is an open one to be interpreted by the reader. The emphasis shifts on the reader, because he is the one to decode the metalanguage to be constructed over, say; Ridley Scott's *Alien* to be the implicit critique of capitalism. This analysis for texts, films or literary pieces, I find too much applicable to design depending on the body of analysis and inquiry compiled up to this point, relating

the issue with communication, language and meaning production. A piece of design can be considered an open work. Open; in the sense of being incomplete by itself. It needs the user to operate its function, that is composed by the designer. The circuit is closed at the moment of interaction with the user. A piece of design can also be considered as closed. Closed; in its material being. As every closed text is open to interpretation, the design in its material finality is open to both operation and signification. The aim of this thesis was to propose there could be various readings of design, as the reader is the user, like Barthes says: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." (1977, 148). In this case it is "The Death of the Designer" (Richardson 1993), because interpretation is devoid of intent. Surely this death is purely metaphorical. Supplying the reader the material, the designer should be alive and conscious of the fact that the perfect reading he is intending to accomplish through his design is an utopia. The reason for being no perfect reading is that, there are endless readings of the ***real*** producers and designers. They are users, the other end of the string, the right hand side of the scene, belonging to life and its course. As Eco puts it: "In short, it is an 'open' situation, in movement. A work in progress" (1989, 23).

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