



今天我們所認識的「設計」是個相對近代的現象，源自戰後產能的急速發展。今時今日，我們活在充斥著科技與奢侈品的個人主義時代，每樣事物盡是標榜著品牌、流行風格與個人化。倘若說戰後時期的設計師是為大眾服務的公僕，那麼，今天的設計就是為了滿足個人慾望與幻想。包括香港在內，所有已發展的社會都給寵壞了。在香港，我們的摩天大樓比紐約還要多，每天都有新的商店、新的餐廳開張營業。這些變更背後的力量真是銳不可當。可是，我們所創造出來的設計，真的能啟發思維、激發思考、影響生活、歷久不衰，甚至改善生活嗎？

設計在全球都由品牌與市場銷售所支配，因而演變成包羅萬象的通用詞彙，亦變得有點含糊不清。所有設計活動都是由經濟、政治與社會力量塑造而成的。現代主義在工業革命中冒起，是一種影響藝術、政治、社會架構與宗教的文化運動，在第二次世界大戰後再捲土重來。「形態由功能而生」是現代主義的真理，使簡約設計應運而生，並且為工業化的世界帶來塑膠產品，從特百惠塑膠盒、電腦以至安全套都是塑膠所製。一九八七年經濟蕭條，無論是公司還是家居都需要易於組裝運送的精簡傢具；宜家傢俬便在那時冒起，風靡歐洲。

設計是思想 Design is ideology

Design is many things — but 'lifestyle' is not one of them, writes Carl Gouw

設計是包羅萬象，但卻絕不是「生活風格」

PHOTOGRAPHY 攝影: TIM KWONG / DESIGN TOO MUCH

Design as we know it today is a relatively modern phenomenon, beginning in the post-war period of rapid production. We live now in the age of individualism, flooded with technology and luxury, everything overwhelmingly branded, styled and personalised. If post-war designers were like civil servants serving the collective whole, design today is all about fulfilling individual desires and dreams. In developed societies, including Hong Kong, we are spoilt. We have more skyscrapers than New York, and new shops and restaurants opening every day. The energy behind the changes is unstoppable. But do we create designs that inspire, provoke, influence, last, and improve lives?

Dictated globally by brands and marketing, design has become universal and inclusive, if not somewhat confused. Every design movement is shaped and created by economic, political and social forces. Modernism, which began during the industrial revolution as a cultural movement impacting art, politics, social structure and religion, had a second wind after World War II. With its mantra of 'form follows function', it gave rise to minimalist design, filling the industrialised world with plastic from Tupperware and computers to condoms. Ikea took off in Europe after the 1987 economic crisis, when companies and households wanted furniture to be lean, and could be assembled and transported efficiently.

The counter forces against Modernism began emerging in the 1970s to question whether consumerism is democracy or decadence. Designers like Philip Starck, who related human emotions and 'touch' to toothbrushes and lemon squeezers, made personality and taste available to mass consumer products starting in the 1980s.

Design therefore is about ideology. It is not about marketing, branding, style, or just about quality or function. It involves creative ideas and innovations underpinned by critical thinking about the world and humanity. Many today describe design as 'lifestyle', but this is a word overused by marketing. 'Lifestyle' suggests something manufactured, dictated and manipulated. It is a person's clothes and make-up, not his heart, soul, or body. Like art, a design should express the world view or fundamental cognitive orientation of the designer and producer.

Design is not a process that involves just designers, but all stakeholders. In the case of architecture, it encompasses the neighbourhood and even the public. Design is not about market research, or following or differentiating from competitors. Design, like art and culture, must be nurtured, cultivated and critically evaluated. In order to create breakthroughs, businesses – including property developers – need to first appreciate the value of design, foster horizontal environments avoiding bureaucracies, and be humbly involved in the processes.

In pre-modern times, artists were commissioned. In the capitalist world, we appoint or employ designers where we should collaborate with them. Creative processes, organic and experimental in nature, require time as well as physical and metaphysical space. Time-conscious businesses stand to gain much by embracing this counter-cultural attitude.

抗衡現代主義的力量於七十年代漸漸出現，質疑消費主義究竟是民主還是墮落。設計師 Philip Starck 把人性情感與觸感，注入牙刷與檸檬榨汁器中；他與一眾設計師們於八十年代起，讓大量生產的消費品也擁有個性與品味。

故此，設計就是思想及主義，而不是市場拓展、品牌與款式型格，亦不只限於品質和功能。設計包含創意思維與創新事物，而這些是建基於對世界、人類及人性的批判思考。現在很多人把設計說成「生活風格」，但這只是被市場拓展所濫用的詞語。「生活風格」暗示著的是被製造、被操控、被支配的東西；那是個人身上的衣服和臉上的化妝，決不是身心和靈魂。有如藝術一樣，設計應要表達出設計師或創作者的世界觀或基本認知取態。

設計過程並不只涉及設計師，而是有關所有的持份者。就建築以言，設計牽涉到鄰里街坊，甚至社會大眾。設計不是市場研究，亦不是要抄襲競爭對手，或在同業間標奇立異。設計如同藝術與文化一樣，要栽種、培育，再經嚴苛的評價。要創造突破，包括地產發展商在內的商界都要先學懂欣賞設計的價值，促進一個同一階層的環境來避免官僚化，亦要虛心地投入於設計過程之中。

在前現代時期，人們委託藝術家去創作。在資本主義的世界，我們在應該與設計師合作的範疇內委任或聘請他們。創作過程在本質上既是自然演變，也是實驗和探索，需要時間之餘，亦需要實質與抽象的空間。商界在分秒必爭的情況下，若能擁抱這種反文化的態度，將會獲益良多。E



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