

Tradition and Design

(and related questions raising from the point of view of the designing artist's way of teaching)

„An artist either as a teacher or as a tutor can only be equal to the task if he spans by his mind and senses the whole perspective of his era, the heritage of the *past*, the challenge the *present* and the promise of the *future*.“ (by György Kepes)

The responsibility of the designing artist as well as of the art teacher is huge and rather complex.

The purpose of education and its most important tasks

- is to develop a kind of aspect and attitude of design that enables the creator to reach and produce the essence of hand-made article design: balance and harmony,
- function, material, form and structure,
- among present, past and future,
- either non-series, craftsman-made or industrially duplicable objects,
- that enables the creator to reveal the real human demands and their progressive, humane solutions,
- the importance of designing the objects from an eco-design point of view,
- developing a complex visual aspect is most important, so as to become able to form the objects together with his surroundings,
- our goal is to educate intelligent, open-minded and creative creators, who know the traditions as well as the latest achievements of the artistic and scientific researches,
- a sort of communicational ability must be learnt that makes our students suitable for co-operating with the specialists for the sake of better realising their plans,
- they have to learn those both artistic and technical ways of expression that make them able to represent and present their plans (drawing, modelling, computer-technique).

My more restricted field is the University for Hungarian Applied Arts (MIE), Department of Textile, Clothing Section, Leather Division

I have been the Head of the Division since 1993 and lead the design and practical work of about 20-25 students.

We educate designer-artists the design of leather or imitation leather objects of clothing as well as of our surroundings:

- designers who can easily cope with the design of objects in the fields of industrial design and the unique non-series design,
- after acquiring the basis of the profession the education becomes highly personal: its purpose is to develop the own direction and style of the student before getting a diploma,
- for the sake of acquiring special historical knowledge our institute has been closely related to some museums (Museum of Ethnography, Museum of Applied Arts, National Museum, Museum of Military History etc.) Thanks to the studies at the museums and the reconstruction works our students are able to get to know more directly the craft- and ethnographical traditions.

Being aware of our economical situation I think that instead of high-tech there is a bigger chance to produce high-quality products of small amount.

That is why in the past years greater emphasis was put on the education of non-series design of small amount besides the design itself.

Our recent days can be described by the diversity of styles and directions. Intensive efforts for researches have been made over and above the new experiments, inventions, towards the traditional values both in the fields of creative art and science.

So as to develop a constructive attitude of design there is a great need for points of reference and models.

What are these points of reference?

- *Nature* – as a harmonious unit: you find everything in there, forms, structural solutions, systems of proportion, colour-moods, etc.
- *Lasting artistic values*: objects of artistic value are bearers of harmony that have an effect not only on our mind but also on our senses.
- *Traditions*: people are born among traditions. Traditions of many sort exist: objects, working processes, habits of clothing, religion, etc.
Traditions are values accumulated during the years that stand the test of time and thus became our common heritage. Traditions alter by place and era. We must know the traditions both of our more narrow and wider surroundings.
Countries where the continuity of traditions was assured (Great-Britain, Scandinavian countries) developed faster and more even.
The dynamic balance of past and present is characteristic of every healthy culture.

“Nowadays our task of vital importance is the work of art that embodies past and future simultaneously.” (by Kenzo Tange)

From the point of view of designing objects the interpretation of traditions is amenable/accessible from more sides:

- *Cultural history* – universal artistic values and styles;
- *Ethnography* – unique local habits, characteristics;
- *History of the development of design* – the activity of creators, designers, schools that recognised the importance of design during the time of the development of industrialisation, mass production, technology (Morris, Macintosh, Bauhaus);
- From the point of view of our more narrow specialised field the *knowledge of the history of leather objects, cloth-accessories from the earliest civilisations until our days* is highly important;
- The knowledge of the high-standard *culture of producing leather objects at nomad nations*, where the severe conditions of nature helped the development of some resourceful functional solutions (Eskimo leather kayak, anorak, Indian moccasin).

Models

who showed us through their works how to connect tradition with new demands so that a lasting artistic value can be born.

Károly Kós

Devised such a unique art – deriving from folk-traditions – to us that is still up-to-date and modern, such as the Zebegény-church, the pavilions of the Budapest Zoo, Wekerle-district)
“Modern art must spring forth nature.”

Finland

Tradition and modernity were able to create an ideal combination of social demands, by setting an example to the world. In their architecture and applied arts elements of nature attain to symbolic rank (glacial crystal, pine forest granite rocks etc.).

Alvar Aalto

One of the greatest architects and designers of the 20th century. His art can be described by being lasting and by the use of natural materials deriving from his deep humanism. His artifacts still have been produced.

Tapio Wirkala

His irregular, exciting, original objects reflect the forms of Lapland and the spirit of Lapp culture.

Japan

Design is the ideal creative field of Japanese aesthetics:

- Elaborating one single structure that is capable of providing many functions. This has a crucial importance for the Japanese population that must cope with territorial problems. The values of the ancient Japanese culture live on – in miniature radios, cameras, etc. (small size, precise elaboration, extraordinary accomplishment, energy-saving aspect).

Issue Mijake

His exciting clothing plastic art follow the principles of ancient Japanese paper-folding with the use of modern materials and techniques.

Shiro Kuromata

Designer's furniture

Denmark

Arne Jacobsen

Architect, who played an important role in furniture design. He designed his humane pieces of furniture by renewing the rustic forms and structure of popular furniture. His chairs can be described by organic shapes, refined architectural elegance.

Just a couple of more words about education

Those students who know traditions as well as novelties easier and better resolve their design tasks. After studying old techniques, forms, structures, ornaments experiments brought modern solutions; some of them are invention-like. Success achieved at national and international competitions justify the correct direction and quality of the education.

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