

# Phenomenology of contemporary design: challenges for the design in the open field, fuzzy and diffuse design

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## Changing scenery in art and design

Different periods and diverse historical references over time can exemplify the ruptures that have occurred in the arts and in design. In the arts, as we know, due to their millennial tradition, this phenomenon has always come first and more often than in the design activity.

Design, if we take as reference the process of industrial production in serial format, starts as a professional activity only as of the 18th century. Notwithstanding this, we all know that design had existed for many centuries as an instrument for designing artifacts, objects and utensils of everyday use within our material and civilizing culture.

It is curious to note that only in the 20th century, within the so called “Modern” period, art and design (through their protagonists and pioneering masters) begin to dialogue more frequently as interface and frontier, and also as confrontation and rupture.

Among the diverse and comprehensive artistic movements that foreshadowed modern art in the twentieth century, several have promoted encounters between art and design. An example came through the insertion of anonymous objects, chosen by the artists themselves to be converted into works of art or become part of them. These interventions, known as ready-made, eventually aided in the deconstruction of the “sacralization of art” and approached the material culture produced through the precepts of design.

Some specific movements such as Dadaism, Futurism, Surrealism and Cubism composed the European artistic avant-garde in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and were the ones which better promoted the aesthetic and interpretative changes in the arts. This reality, in a way, also contributed to the dialogue between art and design.

Among the various works carried out in this period of rupture in the arts, which contemplated the use of everyday objects as part of their narratives, messages and ultimately aesthetics, I shed light on some which, in my opinion, better mirror and represent this reflection.

Taking as a first reference Marcel Duchamp’s (1887–1968) “Bicycle wheel”, it is perceivably a plain bicycle wheel mounted on a wooden stool (FIG.1). As a piece of art, it gives a sense of complete uselessness, being in itself a provocation inherent in art. On the other hand, as a design part, which has functionality among its curbs, it would only be of value if the

two parts that make it up were dismembered, that is, the wheel and the seat that, separately and in their actual contexts of use, would have suitable practical and functional utilities: one as part of a product for locomotion (the bicycle), and the other as a place where to sit (the stool). These two industrial design objects, once inserted in a context outside what was initially thought, become an instigating work of art, thus defying, in 1913, the traditionally preconceived ideas about the definition of art and design.

Duchamp's intriguing combination, as he removed the objects from their usual setting and original conception, and placed them in a hitherto uncommon new context, performs at the same time the rejection of a design object made on industrial scale and the rejection of art as previously known, thus opening the concept of ready-made in practice by Dada artists of that time.



FIGURE 1– Bicycle Wheel. Source: MARCEL DUCHAMP, 1913.

Similarly, another work by Duchamp brings the same concepts applied in the “Bicycle Wheel”. It is “Fountain”, also known as “Urinal”, which was created by the artist in 1917 (FIG.2). It is basically a urinal produced industrially in white porcelain and conceived in its origin as a product for men’s toilets. By the way, it appears to be an excellent design

solution for male public restrooms, since it allows quick use as an alternative to the toilet that requires the construction of a surrounding cabin.

The urinal, in turn, out of its context of use as a utensil of men's toilets, has a completely different interaction than originally thought. When exposed in an art gallery or museum, the urinal gains the dimension of an artwork. This work has been even vandalized by a visitor when it was exposed at the George Pompidou Center in Paris: attacking it with a hammer, he called it an artistic performance (this time by the observer) who wanted to interact and participate of the work of art.

Converted into a work of art in a museum, the urinal leaves its original function to become a design solution. A user of the urinal in a bathroom would hardly be stimulated to destroy it with a hammer, because there it fulfills a function different from the art that stimulates and provokes. In the bathroom, the urinal communicates in a natural and direct way its use and affordance<sup>1</sup> function to the user.



FIGURE 2 – Fountain. Source: MARCEL DUCHAMP, 1916.

In 2019, René Magritte's (1898–1967) "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" will be 90 years of its first public presentation (FIG.3). This has caused a series of celebrations in several countries through contests of re-reading and reinterpretation of the work crystalized in manifests, posters and *deplians* of this remarkable work first exposed in 1929.

It is interesting to note two rather curious facts in this artwork that is pointed out as being pre-modernist: the first is the negation of art as hitherto known, bringing to the

1. The *affordance* theory "implies that values and meanings" of things and environments can be directly perceived, adding that such values and meanings are external to the recipient [...] the information contained in the environment becomes expressions, signs, of which sense and meaning become an action leading to an effect (ZINGALE, Salvatore. *Le inferenze nem design*. In DENI, Michela, PRONI, Giampaolo (org.). *La semiótica e il progetto: design, comunicazione, marketing*. Milan, Ed. Franco Angeli, 2008, p. 63).

interlocutor, that is, to the visiting observer, the role of interpretation and participation in it, that no longer belonged only to the artist. Magritte, stating that a pipe was not a pipe, “betrayed the image itself”, after he had presented it and, now, shared the conception of his work with different interlocutors. These interlocutors are observers with diverse perceptions and interpretations, which may even be contrary to his statement. Another curious fact, also subsequent to previous occurrences in other works by Duchamp, was the insertion of an artifact in Magritte’s work of art, because, by inserting an object produced on an industrial scale, that is, a product of design in his work, likewise Magritte inserts an object of technical-artistic-functional conception in the free universe of the arts.



FIGURE 3 – “Ceci n’est pas une pipe”. Source: RENÉ MAGRITTE, 1929.

Still in this same line of reasoning, we have in Andy Warhol (1928–1987) another timely example of insertion of objects of daily use in the arts. This time it is commercial and popular objects directed to the great mass of consumers, as the packages of powdered soap or soup cans. In fact, in 1962, as a Pop Art exponent, Andy Warhol removes the packages of Campbell’s Tomato Soup and the Brillo Soap Box from the supermarkets and elevates them to the art condition (FIGS. 4 and 5). This is what Stephen Farthing (1950) tells us:

In the United States, the year 1962 was crucial with the first exhibitions of future Pop Art exponents such as Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), Tom Wesselman (1931–2004) and Andy Warhol (1928–1987). At first, Lichtenstein’s cartoons, such as *Whaam!*, and Warhol’s silkscreen reproductions, such as the Campbell’s Soup can, were received with much misunderstanding (FARTHING, 2011, p. 485).



FIGURE 4 E 5 – The Campbell’s Soup (1962) and Yellow Brillo Box (1964). Source: ANDY WARHOL.

It should be noted that this “positive contamination” between art and design can also occur in reverse, that is, from design to art. In this sense, the Italian designer Achille Castiglioni (1918–2002) stands among the previous protagonists. Obsessed with anonymous objects, Castiglioni devotes his interest to the universe of everyday products with no signature or brand of professional designers. He cites the multitude of scissors, hammers, umbrellas, folding chairs and a wide range of common products and objects that fulfill an important function of social use, but whose design and conception authorship cannot be determined.

The most thorough and careful analysis of the work and method of Castiglioni’s work is made by the scholar Sergio Polano (1950), who describes it as follows:

That typical design itinerary that takes as a reference the artisan and industrial components, already present in the material culture of the objects, to reassemble them in new possible combinations, to direct them to the mass production: a sort of Dadaistic assembly of the ready-made poetics which is no stranger to the ironic intention and the demystification of the excessively solemn and, in a way, 'hostile' valences that often accompany the activity of designers (POLANO, 2001, p. 122).

Among the various products designed by Castiglioni in this line, figures the Mezzadro stool, created by the designer for the *xi Triennale d'Architettura and Design di Milano*, in 1957, that well represents Polano's narrative discourse, since Castiglioni makes use of a tractor seat with only three other components (these also destined to other previous uses and functions), to design a stool that, in 1971, began to be marketed by Zanotta, the Italian company (FIG. 6).

In the same period as the Mezzadro stool, Castiglioni developed the Sella stool also in 1957, taking the milking bench with a single support rod that goes from the seat to the ground as an inspiration and reference. For this work, Castiglioni connects a bicycle saddle to a metal tube that rests on a semicircle base made of cast iron (FIG.7). For Sergio Polano, in this work Castiglioni also presents:

The ironic and surreal exasperation of the idea of *object trouvé*, made with industrial elements for the telephone seat that translates into a 'semi-standing' seat based on dynamic balance, a shape projected for those objects 'that are always standing' (POLANO, 2001, p. 123).



FIGURE 6 E 7 – Banco Mezzadro (1957) and Banco Sella (1957). Source: ACHILLE CASTIGLIONI.

## Interpretive and conceptual changes in art and design

The semiologist Umberto Eco (1932–2016), who since the 1950s had devoted himself to studies on the theory of information and semiotics, in his well-known essay “Open Work” of 1962, states that every artwork can be open once it involves several interpretations, and where, in turn, the interpreter participates actively in the final construction of the object or artistic action.

Still according to Eco, to the extent that the observer/interpreter is invited to participate in discovering and decoding the work, a dualism is created between the closed work and the open work. The concept of open work is also an attempt to approach the author in search of an understanding of contemporary art in its most comprehensive and variant conceptual strands. For Eco, the closed work alone is no longer able to deal with the plurality and multiplicity of the world. For this reason, the concept of open work brings the possibility of promoting the interpreter to participatory and interpretative agent of the art, which is now increasingly decentralized and pluralistic.

It is worth mentioning that the translation in Brazil of Umberto Eco's book “*Obra Aberta*” was made in the 1960s by Giovanni Cutolo (1939), while he was still living and working in the country. Later, Cutolo returned to Italy and became one of the great exponents in the cultural environment of Italian design, author of several books, director of the design magazine *MODO*, manager and entrepreneur in big companies like *Artemide*, *Natuzzi* and *Vitra*. Cutolo is currently Vice-President of the *Fondazione Compasso D'Oro* and the *Associazione per il Disegno Industriale* – ADI of Italy.

Another important reference in the research on the interpretive, philosophical and conceptual changes occurred in art, architecture, urbanism and design in the twentieth century is also very didactic in the surveys and studies of Giulio Carlo Argan (1909–1992). For this scholar, art alone as physical matter, loses more and more its importance as the exclusive result of the artist and, in the same line of reasoning as Umberto Eco's, points to a possible opening for the participation of the observer. In this sense, Argan writes:

Totally diverse: matter has, undoubtedly, extension and duration, but it has not yet or no longer has a spatial and temporal structure. Its availability is unlimited; by manipulating it, the artist establishes with it a relation of essential continuity, of identification. It is true that it does not, nor can it acquire a definite meaning, that is, to become an object; however, precisely because it is and remains problematic, the artist identifies his own problematicity, uncertainty about his own being, the condition of estrangement in which he is put by society (ARGAN, 1995, p. 542).

We can see that Argan and Eco also speak the same language when they refer to the question of the sign in art. While Eco, through the information theory, seeks to understand the relationship between the observer and the observed work, Argan in turn, sticks to the search for meaning, and thus writes:

The notion of sign emerges in European art at the very moment when semiotic and structuralist research is outlined in other disciplines, especially in glottology, that is, when each discipline, in order to develop its methodology, feels the need to analyze and elucidate the meaning of signs. In art, sign research is also the beginning of the requirement to requestion the reason and the institutional function of art itself (ARGAN, 1995, p. 551).

Interestingly, for the Italian Attilio Marcolli (1930–2010), a scholar and theoretician of visual perception and colors, author of the book “Theory of the Field”, it was no accident that Argan concluded his research on Modern Art with two exponents of American Pop Art as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. According to Marcolli, in his memorable lessons at the Politecnico di Milano, it is precisely a message from Argan about the end of art, at least in the molds hitherto known. In fact, this is how Argan describes the work of Lichtenstein in his well-known essay “Modern Art,” in the chapter entitled “From the Age of Enlightenment to Contemporary Movements.”

Lichtenstein's operation is accurate as a laboratory analysis. The object of analysis is the structure of the image in comic strips, one of the most consumed mass media. These images, published in millions of copies by the daily and periodical press, are not intended to be works of art: they communicate visually and synthetically a narrative content. Their structure must meet two requirements: to be reproducible with normal typographic processes and to provoke in readers (if they can be called so) a certain emotional impact (ARGAN, 1995, p. 646).

And as for Andy Warhol, Argan follows a very close critical analysis of the fabric in Lichtenstein's work, and in the same essay he analyzes Warhol's work:

Like Lichtenstein, Warhol removes the image from mass information circuits, but displays it worn out, undone, consumed. It is the image that, as the daily press goes, made the news: the car accident, the electric chair in which the famous assassin died, the main characters of the day (Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, Che Guevara). Images published in the daily media: the same image is seen several times, printed in small or large scale, in black and white or in color, in the newspaper that is flipped in the morning with a sip of coffee, or which the person sitting beside you reads on the bus, which is hanging on newsstands (ARGAN, 1995, p.647).

The examples above provide a clear demonstration of the possibilities of intersection and interaction between art and design, which feedback on the transformations arising from the encounter of these two areas of knowledge, which, although different, dialogue. It is not by chance that design is identified as a space where "art and technique" meet and promote new languages and new forms of artistic and material culture. If, more and more, art ceases to be a matter to become a language, design, on the other hand, can be said to migrate between "material and immaterial", increasing the complexity of its understanding and making it difficult to demarcate its limits and boundaries of performance. This reality, on its turn, makes its terminological uniqueness increasingly challenging, as well as its precise definition as a discipline of applied social area.

It is engaging to perceive that, within contemporary art, we constantly speak of “non-art”, that is, whatever does not follow the plastic precepts for the realization of a work as form, balance, beauty, matter, color, texture etc., and, interestingly enough, today we also discuss “non-design” or at least “non industrial design”, as Flaviano Celaschi puts it in his book “Non industrial design: *contributi al discorso progettuale*”<sup>2</sup>. In this same line, Vilém Flusser (1920–1991) brings the principle of “non-thing”:

Non-things now penetrate our world-environment in all directions, supplanting the others. These ‘non-things’ are called information [...] Information has always existed and, as the word suggests, has much to do with the ‘inner forms’ of things. All things bear information: books and pictures, packaging and cigarettes. It is just a matter of knowing how to read them, ‘decoding’ them, in order to bring the information to light. It has always been like this, there is nothing new about it [...] but the information that now invades our world-environment and replaces the things contained therein, is of a type never seen before: it is immaterial information. Electronic images on the television screen, data stored on a computer, all films and microfilms, holograms and programs are so ‘soft’ (software) that any attempt to catch them with our hands becomes non viable (FLUSSER, 2003, p. 93).

But I point out that the theorist and design philosopher Andrea Branzi (1938) was one of the first European scholars to question the term “industrial design”, even mentioning that the withdrawal of the industrial term would be for him as an emancipation, like removing a straitjacket from the activity itself:

Design is no longer that activity focused on the mass production of objects. Yet, it deals with problems of dwelling, quality and material culture; from the beginning of primary design and the relation man/object, it is committed to intervene in the context of the transformation of the artificial environment [...]. In the common understanding of the term, industrial design is defined as the production of industrially reproducible objects. This extremely linear definition constitutes a historical error in the design debate; to see this activity linked

2. CELASCHI, Flaviano. *Non industrial design: contributi al discorso progettuale*. Boca/Novara, Luca Sossella Editore, 2016.

to the project as a process that transforms the existing objects into anything that can be reproduced in ten... a thousand... a million copies implies the confusion between the purpose and the means of the design [...]. Design, then, is at the center of a major general problem, in which industry is an instrument, a segment at hand, but it is not the only benchmark (BRANZI, Andrea *in*: SINOPOLI, Nicola, *Op. Cit* 1990, p. 181–202).

In this sense, Andrea Branzi proposes design as a cultural gesture and inserts it into a complex theorem where anthropological and social issues stand, as well as the issue of consumption, of transformations of industrial productive means, multiplications of different languages, constant interactivities and possible hybridizations. Therefore, Branzi has always argued that the subjects inherent in the project were seen as part of a larger process within the design culture.

In denying rational functionalist dominance in architecture and design, as a logical model thought for these disciplines in the Modern period of the twentieth century, Branzi brings to light fuzzy thinking, which for him is what most resembles our contemporary reality, where the constant scenario of chaos establishes itself as an apparent normality. Within this logic, Branzi expresses:

The term fuzzy, almost untranslatable, means literally indistinct, intermediate, hybrid, unfocused, smoky and blurred, and was first used in the sixties by the logician Lofti Zadec and more recently by Bart Kosko. It belongs to that particular tradition of modern science which has moved towards the unexplored frontier of overcoming the rigid dual logic upon which science itself is based [...]. This evolves as an indistinct (fuzzy) thought which, if it no longer represents the purity of geometry and the precision of mathematical pathways, does represent this blurred (fuzzy) reality of galaxies, of their evolutionary states, nebulous, dairy, intermediate between mass and energy. Figurative metaphor of a new time of our science, as a positive way out of its methodological crisis and underway to a new naturalism (BRANZI, 2006, p.18–19).

For all this, one can point out the significant and constant interpretative and conceptual changes that took place both in the arts and

in design as of the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st century. But one can also perceive the approximation of these two areas of knowledge that seek answers to the fuzzy demands in a hybrid society, always in transformation, where the reference models are always the inconstancies and instabilities themselves.

### **Epistemology of contemporary design**

From the crisis of the rational-functionalist movement, much alongside the Modern model for most of the twentieth century, different currents of thought and theories emerged seeking new directions for the project disciplines, among them design. For several authors, these changes occurred, among others, as of the decisive participation of the consumer/user who, after the 1960s and 1970s, abandoned a passive position to become an active agent that influenced aesthetics, the mode of use and even the price of industrial products. On this, Andrea Branzi shares this instigating reflection:

In the midst of this profound transformation, design has changed its own project epistemology. This derives from the Bauhaus as a research activity for definitive objects (the old standard products), capable of solving, once and for all, the basic needs of an egalitarian society. On the contrary, from the 1960s and 1970s design started to create objects no longer destined to the nonexistent and gray majority, but rather products capable of being chosen by the consumers themselves, aimed at specific market niches, objects that used varied and minimized figurative codes, but with a strong metropolitan identity. Guiding design out of this mass grave in the seventies came the youth vanguards, radical movements and experimental design that blasted around the world (BRANZI, 2014, p.247).

It is worth noting that, similar to what happened in the arts, where the observer happens to be an interpreter of the work, this time the consumer/user achieves an important role in the design and commercialization of industrial artifacts. By wishing or rejecting the product during acquisition, in their manner and taste, the consumer also becomes an interpreter of design. The real possibility of meeting to the consumer's

wishes, therefore, gave rise to new possibilities of production and consumption and, consequently, new aesthetic meanings, codes and languages that were decisive for the composition of design in the molds we know today.

On the other hand, the free circulation of raw materials, the constant and rapid technological advance with the factory production, the miniaturization of components, the customization of products (often done by the customer) and, finally, the dematerialization of objects have corroborated to put an end to the term “industrial design”, which is definitively “design”. According to Alessandro Biamonti:

This demonstrates how serious the understanding generated by the industrial revolution is that design is a technical discipline. Therefore, the debate on the adjective ‘industrial’ that, for almost the whole of the twentieth century has followed the term ‘design’, is decidedly out of the question and out of place, but whoever has dedicated and dedicates to professional life in this activity knows very well how much design is a cultural phenomenon, being a broader part of material culture. An activity through which Man, in said evolutionary and historical course, has produced those signs that today allow us, for example, to understand ancient societies through their habits and customs, pleasures and weaknesses. We, in fact, know missing civilizations through what they have left us from their everyday lives. Vases, jewels, tools, weapons, tombs...etc. point out to us how deep the anthropological roots are in the relationship between the human being and the context of life itself (BIAMONTI, 2015, p.18–19).

The stoic “Ulmian” attempt to conceive a work format through the institution of own teams of designers within the companies, following a logical and objective methodology for the conception of industrial products, was replaced by the signature design, where the individual talent and the poetics of each professional come to the fore, which in a sense brings designers closer to the work model practiced by artists. Andrea Branzi himself, while weaving an interesting comparison between the understanding of design in Italy and Germany, reflects:

We can say that its original philosophy was not that of design applied to industry, but rather of industry applied to design. The policy of Adriano Olivetti did not foresee that society should identify with the factory model, but on the contrary, it should be the factory to mediate the logic of society. In other words, if Dieter Rams thought of Braun as a logical model of a monological world, Olivetti thought that it should resemble the complexity of society. This cultural contraposition was also evident in the logistical and operational plan. In Germany, designers worked physically within the companies, integrated in the various corporate hierarchies, responsible for the entire phase of the product technical detail (from the whole productive cycle to the mere screw). In Italy, designers worked in their offices, with a freelance relationship with respect to the entrepreneur, and interacted creatively in the development of the prototypes for production [...] (“BRANZI, 2014, p.131).

We also saw the beginning of the mismatch between the old project methodology, which was proposed as a precise universal model, and the emergence of the metaproject as a methodology of complexity and disparate responses as solutions to the project’s constraints. In fact, the old marketing responses with all its market segmentation by social class, age, sex and economic power give way to a transversal model of consumer profile in a scenario where the constant behavior change predominates, or both user and design leave a static scenario for a terrain where change happens to be the only constancy.

Another point not to be overlooked, yet to be highlighted, is the issue of the boundaries of design that, when constantly opened and extended to other experiences and contaminations (not always positive), become fluid, amorphous and unshapely<sup>3</sup>. Alberto Bassi, referring to the fluidity of design in an expanded field, explains:

There seems to be a process of “*designification*”, characterized by a diffuse extension of the term and an omnipresent presumed practice. Better yet, taking as a reference what art is in the words of the

3. “I do not know if Chris Anderson’s statement ‘we are all designers now’, in his programmatic *Makers*, is actually the present advanced in reality or simply a fantastic paradox (since paradoxes are always an elliptical form of reality), yet this we can be sure of: design is not, and will not be as before.” (BOLELLI, Franco, In BIAMONTI, Alessandro. *Design & Interni: riflessioni su una disciplina in evoluzione tra formazione e professione*. Milano, Ed. Franco Angeli, 2015, p. 9.)

philosopher Mario Perniola, the boundaries have extended so much to the point that the concept comprehends anything, it is worth saying nothing as well: similarly, today design seems to be whatever one decides it to be (BASSI, 2017, p.49).

The always attentive Gui Bonsiepe (1934) provokes us to the necessity of design's own contours or, at least, easier identification like a discipline of projectual design. According to Bonsiepe, in this way, design would be more likely to be recognized as a field of own knowledge, distinct from other correlated activities. Still observing the complex definition of identity for design in the present times, Ezio Manzini (1945) shares a reflection that seems to us quite timely:

In the solid world of the past, there were 'safe disciplinary containers' in which anyone could be positioned, feeling well defined with their own professional identity (and therefore in the broad sense, also in the personal sphere). Now it is no longer so: in today's fluid world, containers have been opened and their walls are no longer protected, professional and disciplinary definitions dissolve, and anyone must daily redefine themselves and their own baggage of ability and competence [...] it is in this context that we will put our observations on the theme that interests us the most: what a product really is, what it means to design and, finally, what designers will do in a fluidizing world (MANZINI; JÉGOU, 2004, pp. 10–17).

### **Challenges to design teaching in the 21st century**

The epistemological reality, added to the great transformations that have taken place in the design activity – such as the emergence of new concepts of life based on socio-environmental sustainability, the evolution in the industry mode of production that has gone from mechanics to electronics, and which becomes more digital as well as the new formats of commercialization via web – have made the designers deal more and more with new modes of relations, new experiences of consumption and new lifestyle proposals than with the actual conception of new products which, for a long time, was the reason and first cause of design.

On the other hand, the strong dynamism of the global market economy has abolished other previously existing frontiers such as morality, politics, economics and the environment. That said, the great power of consumption and disposal now coexist with the complexity that surrounds design, making it increasingly difficult to be practiced where ethics should prevail in the design of new products and even precede their aesthetics.

The reflections of the scholars Fúlvio Carmagnola and Vani Pasca, in the manuscript “Minimalism, formal ethics and new simplicity in design”, bring an instigating proposal:

A common movement of reduction between form, values and natural resources. May design interpret this disturbing cultural circumstance as a return to a new simplicity without being understood as impoverishment, but rather as a contemporary neo-rationalism (CARMAGNOLA; PASCA, 2017, p. 67).

It is interesting to note that, with the opening of design frontiers for new experiences, with more or less correlated activities, today we are talking about global brand memory design, dematerialization and service, digitization, virtualization, no-name design, non-design, design as sense-making, design for democracy, low fashion, fast fashion, new craft (the design for the new millennium), which allows us to a personal factory, interaction design, hybridity and motion design, prosumers (consumer-producers) and makers (self-producers), as well as shared forms of funding such as crowdfunding design. Most of these business models come in digital and virtual format within the constellation of e-commerce. According to Bassi:

Likewise, we witness the birth of a hybrid economy where, on one hand, we have the capitalist market, and on the other the collaborative market, in which the capitalist market will not disappear but will no longer remain as the only force able to dictate the civil development economic agenda [...]. In fact, Rifkin argues that we move from a market economy to an economy of common and, preferably, immaterial interest: the *COMMONS*, where shared and community use prevails to the detriment of individual consumption (BASSI, 2017, p. 96).

All this makes design reach another exploratory level, where the experiences have not yet been fully exhausted, but, on the contrary, a new field of experimentation and reflection begins for the practice in design. Today we also talk about open production, collaborative and continuous generative design via the web, a design with a purpose, but with no end programmed, with variations that expand from the collaboration of different individuals and social actors. In fact, with the increase in computer knowledge, the immaterial possibilities for design increase, always generating new structures which, on their side, continually generate other new structures in an ad-infinitum participatory mode. On the immaterial tendency of design and its possible aspects, Branzi describes:

In market civilization there is no difference between what exists, what does not exist, and what can exist. The dream is part of the physical and metaphysical reality, the world of the media is a built world, where reality and the “reality” are equivalent. Human existence has always fed on the great metaphysical, mediatic narratives, historical events, myths as well as physical experiences. The built architecture has lost its charisma and has great difficulty in entering this complex system, where ‘non-architecture’ fulfills an equivalent role. The projects of the aristocrats are born precisely from this loss of a definite role, which is replaced by a hyper-figuration within an abstract society and indifferent to the physical monuments, since it is immersed in the amniotic liquid of the market, this maximum mediator between physical product and dream product (BRANZI, 2014, p. 188).

Today, it all refers to the concept of open design, open source and open innovation, as well as open production, which allows the collective contribution of different actors as often occurs in FAB Labs and open productive laboratories, which reinforces and legitimizes, at least in principle, the relevance of the terms: diffuse design, open design and expanded design.

## **Conclusion**

As an attentive observer, I have been following the difficulties of design schools in their desperate attempts to remain as the major formation

space for designers. In the words of Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017), the training route in design, in a model of fluid modernity where a diffuse and fuzzy open field predominates, demands of our schools a similarly fluid, open and diffuse teaching.

Today we can attest that the questions of aspiring designers may not be entirely answered in school but in contemporary art galleries and museums, spontaneous documentaries filmed by our cell phones, experimental music downloaded via applications, in temporary shows and performances, in ephemeral architectures, in the hybrid provocations of fashion, in new aesthetic experiments from faraway peripheral countries, in cinema and dance, and in alternative theatrical spectacles.

With regard to formal education practiced in our schools, it is highly unlikely that there is a method or model of training that is universal and applicable vis-à-vis the breadth of the expanded territory of design. This is an area where operational options are vast and always changing, depending on each context and relevant interaction. In my understanding, the metaproject is the design model which most closely approximates this complex reality; this is due to the fact that the metaproject does not provide us with a readymade response, but often presents as final result new questions for the issue posed.

After these preliminary considerations, we reflect on some points that seem to me very pertinent: which teaching model could indicate a north for design projects today? How to balance a rational aesthetic and an aesthetic with an emphasis on emotionality and the theory of sensitivity? If we must also project the meaning and significance of commodities, that is, seek to give them meaning in an ecosystem full of continual excesses, one wonders, which road would lead to such a great deal? When it comes to an open and unlimited global market, we turn to other important reflections that are also to be put: what signs and meanings are considered today for products destined to the global market? Would it be the hybrid design model, with hybrid identity, to be considered for the design of global products? Which local cultural references can be used in the making of artifacts, objects and goods destined for global consumption? And, ultimately, would our schools be prepared to train new professionals, considering all these challenges for design in the 21st century?

It is worth mentioning that, despite the wide opening of borders, with all fluidity and hybridization, design continues to be design and art

continues to be art. That is, two fields of own knowledge that interact and dialogue among themselves.

Lastly, it should be emphasized and always remembered that because Man is at the center and reference of design, the conditionings, criteria, links and limits that marked the beginning of the design activity still present themselves as legitimate references and pertinent challenges within the concept of open, expanded, fuzzy and diffuse design.

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