

Redesigning the visual identity of the objects displayed in a museum's gift shop

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ABSTRACT

The relationship of a museum, as a cultural organization, to its gift shop as a commercial product, is more critical than it seems. A contemporary museum, as a recreational space inherent in the consumption culture, asks for the redesigning of its cultural products in order to urgently finalize its fundamental survival plan. The gift shop along with its products, are both an important and a special place that allows the museum's profile strengthening, hence, substantially contributing to the economic development of the museum organization.

In recent years there is a nationwide tendency for the development, even so upgrading, the Greek souvenirs, a request that comes not only from individuals, groups and young entrepreneurs, but also from state agencies. Their demands are apparent in the subject-specific design competitions, as well as in the relevant researches held by academic institutions. The positive side of this

proactive attitude shines in the fact that some of the museum's gift shops align partnerships with professional designers, adjust their prices according to the current data, and increase the range of their products. However, it seems to be a long way ahead to run in order to reach the idea of redesigning properly such a kind of products.

In the present paper we suggest redesigning approaches implemented in some undergraduate works of the Visual and Decorative Arts Section / Department of Interior Architecture, Decorative Arts & Design / Technological Educational Institute [TEI] of Athens. An academic approach regarding the cultural product-design, is developed upon the study of history, thus based on an accurate design research, including the theories of the meaning that come along with the notions of the imaginative and the creative. Then, it presupposes a thorough analysis of interconnected complex systems that by all means it concerns museum organizations. Nonetheless, it provides cues for further inventions. In today's cultural environments, design occupies a central role in the creation and formulation of values, the structure of information flow and the aesthetics of the everyday practice. Moreover, it provides a conceptual framework so as contemporary issues and concepts can be properly addressed.

The point of inquiry here is those works that convey their unique character and purpose in respect of representation, behaviour and form, moreover, their significant power to offer social symbolic meanings. The aesthetic principle has under its skin the authenticity as a value, which, in its turn comes into existence through the systematic approach of the dynamics and effects of material and immaterial. Then, the type of a double-reference can be used and that could be an interesting idea to start experimenting upon.

To design items for a museum's shop consists a cognitive challenge; therefore it is essential to understand all the concomitant aspects. Acumen and the ability to adjust the phenomena of visual culture are presupposed in order to produce design that will not just follow the current but create the new, articulating at the same time a meaningful, complete reflection of our present cultural condition.

Key Words: Redesign, Visual identity, Museum shop, Cultural product, Souvenir

THE 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM

The international, world-wide accepted definition for the notion of 'Museum' is given in 2007, in the content of the Rules of the International Council of Museums (ICOM): A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, preserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (ICOM, 2007).

In this context, museum forms a complex pattern of structures, organized so as to allow the contact between humans and objects through the human senses. The institution of a museum is based upon a set of standards and rules which, in their turn, are based on a system of values such as the safeguarding of a heritage, the presentation of works of art and unique objects, the transmission of scientific knowledge etc. The institutional nature of the museum not only includes the strengthening of its educational role and its authenticity with respect to science and arts, but it also encompasses the idea that museums remain in the service of society and its development (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2014).

Since 1980, museums has began to significantly change from ‘vaults’ of valuables - interiors obtainable only by a few, by the educated and the intellectuals- to spaces that are open and welcoming for everyone (Black, 2005). They adopted a more or less consumption model - through spectacular architecture projects, prestigious exhibitions and festivals etc.- increasing rapidly their popularity (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2014). Meanwhile, new museum functions, which had already been established by the second half of the 20th century, led to specific architectural changes within museum’s structure.

Among these structures –such as, the creation of workshops, the provision of rest-areas and multiple levels of usage spaces- was also the creation of bookstores, restaurants and shops that offer for sale objects related to the museum’s exhibitions. Gradually, the museums turned their attention to every guest, even to the people who do not visit them. Their current communication policy demonstrates an effort to reach a wide audience (Goulding, 2010), claiming a new role of a social action.

Today, most of the people who are visiting a museum they do not just visit its collections. Factors such as, the easy access, the convenient facility to have lunch and shop, the flexible exhibitions, the participation in various programs and/or activities, provide an important motivation in order to visit a museum. In some cases, the ‘tourist’ visitor seems to have replaced the typical ‘target’ visitor of museum market (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2014), inaugurating thereby several new prospects to the particular area in respect to its future planning.

Nowdays, the museum continues to evolve into a contemporary and socially aware organization, which emphasizes in the interaction between its entity and its visitor, in the way that its experience can be fascinating to most of the people (including children, senior visitors, visitors with disabilities etc.) (Black, 2005). The museum as an expression of cultural diversity, can be useful to society, accessible (intellectually, practically, socially, culturally, economically) to everyone (Black, 2005), inasmuch as it focuses its practices on managing successfully the overall experience of its visitors (Rentschler & Gilmore, 2002). Via those tactics that serve the entertainment of its visitors, it also educates them, offering to the public a complete museum’s experience.

The trend of museum’s activity to ‘turn to the public’, following the growing importance of the visits themselves, as well as the need to take into account the needs and expectations of the visitors, correspond to the so-called commercial trend of museums (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2014).

Accordingly, the development of museum's shop may be a manifestation of such a trend (Theobald, 2000). The museum's shop was originally conceived as a means of financial support to the museum (Lovelock & Weinberg, 1989), fulfilling a significant part of museum's objectives, namely, the one that refers to its educational vision (Theobald, 2000; Mottner & Ford, 2005).

Hence, over the years, the importance of the overall life of a museum has changed, transforming it into an institution with a mission to provide products and services that support the education and the enjoyment of a visitor, even to extend and advance the visitor's relationship with the museum (Theobald, 2000; Kotler et al., 2008; Buber & Knassmüller, 2009). Particularly, a museum's shop embellishes the functional content of a museum, by developing this content towards an educational cause. Further to that, it can decrease psychological barriers such as the 'fear' of entering the museum. In addition, the same effects of the integration of new technologies, also occur with the existence of a museum's shop; it lengthens the visitor's stay, intensifies the exploration of products and gives space for social interaction which, impacts on the quality of visitor's experience of the museum's essence (vom Lehn & Heath, 2005; Buber & Knassmüller, 2009; DeLand, 2015). Nonetheless, the museum's shop enhances museum's brand, by adding a strong element to its identity.

THE MULTITASK OBJECTIVES OF A MUSEUM'S SHOP

A museum's shop is indeed an integrative component of the museum, in a sense that it constitutes the calling card of the organization. Among its objectives included its responsibility to support the achievement of the museum's educative aims and enable visitors to have information about its history and its collections. It also should take under consideration its visitors' expectations, address its activities to the broad public and last but not least, to bear the weight of keeping upright a financial contribution to the museum.

A museum's shop can be seen as a hybrid of a gift shop and a museum exhibit. However, several features distinguish a museum's shop from a gift shop, yet, the most significant one is its educational obligations to the visitor. Let us make this point it very clear, inherent in establishing the goals of a museum' shop should be the thought that the educational mission will often take precedence over its income production (Theobald, 2000; Hata et al., 2012).

Given the specific character of a museum's shop and its important institutional role as an important, public reflexion of the museum (Hata et al., 2012), like the museum itself, it has to deal with a dual objective, financial and educational (Kotler et al., 2008). For the Federal museums, the educational objective on an ad hoc basis might explicitly be put first by law (e.g. Austria) (Buber & Knassmüller, 2009). It is this very reason due to which, the objects displayed in a museum's shop must serve the overall image that the museum wishes to project.

Yet, there are certain guidelines regarding the above issues, especially in those cases where a museum has adopted the so-called Ethics Policies (DeLand, 2015). Within the context of a

museum's foundation, ethics can be defined as an exchange of views in order its core values and principles to be set and in their spectrum, the museum operations will be grounded. The ethic principles are developed and contained within the operational codes of a museum, henceforth, they sustain a moral code agreed and respected by all members of the museum's family, and its function works complimentary to the strict requirements of the law. An example of such an Ethics Code protocol is provided by the Ethics Code of the ICOM.

Following these facts, a museum's shop holds a designated meaning which, encapsulates several important obligations to the public, yet, more and above to ensure the quality and authenticity of its products. It is within the responsibilities of museum shop's involved staff, to be aware of the source, quality, and educational value of all items displayed in the shop, along with their proven authenticity (DeLand, 2015). Misrepresentations or misjudgements, concerning these values, directly reflect upon both the reputation of the museum and the museum's shop, therefore, any reproduction, replica, and relevant products should be meticulously chosen. By all means, any director of a museum's shop, along with the museum's ethics protocol, is required to ensure that the products follow the requirements of excellent quality (DeLand, 2015).

The planning of the number, the kind and the style of the products that will complete the shop's collection is a duty of the sales manager who determines the annual unit and gross-profit plans by implementing marketing strategies; analyzing trends and results. Even so, sales managers and advisors make their choices according to their intuition, adjusting selling prices by monitoring costs, competition, supply and demand, experimenting quite often, so to minimise the risk of low and/or zero sales. In any case, all the products should be examined on a regular basis and reassessed to ascertain the degree of their liaison to museum's collections, exhibitions and programs. The main criterion that they have to reply to, is to remain in alliance with the wider objectives set by the museum (DeLand, 2015).

Another issue that comes forward deals with the necessity to keep in equilibrium the museum-shops sale policies with that which a visitor is looking for or expects to find. The museum's shop should be ahead any visitor's need, and at the same time to embrace all of its visitors desiderata. The visitors; Who are they really? The demographics of museum's visitors vary, depending on the subject matter, the prestige and the location of a museum (DeLand, 2015). Thus, it is true that museum's visitors are changing due to wider societal influence, or due to their personal circumstances, but at the bottom of all these stands always the irrefutable element that the museum's shop director and its sales manager should never stop to try understand visitors and re-evaluate their selling proposition in order to continue to attract the existing and the new generations, if they are to survive (Slater, 2007).

Such an observation, firstly lead us to accept that the process of defining a marketing strategy for a museum shop, involves the 'reading' of the current visitorship (Buber & Knassmüller, 2009). Secondly, it allows us to say that the broad categorization of museum's shop visitors into three groups -the tourist, the enthusiast and the impulse buyer- is no-longer a sufficient source of information.

Eventually, as a result of some wise and brave decisions made by enlightened directors, several museums have become desirable places to spend a leisure time. In addition, the public's idea for the products that a museum's shop has to offer is equivalent to handicrafts of excellent quality and taste (Theobald, 2000). To maintain this exact expectation, the shop should present us with items that they are safe, they pursue an educational purpose and they are characterised by a higher quality (DeLand, 2015). Successful museum-shops offer unique items which, one can not find and buy anywhere else. In this way, they satisfy the visitor who seeks to take with him/her a palpable piece of evidence of the sui generis museum's experience. It is well established that the visitor's route in the museum has as its last stop the museum-shop (DeLand, 2015).

THE GREEK MUSEUM-SHOPS

The progress that has been observed in the development of museums in Greece is also remarkable. There are many, noteworthy, small and large museums, where visitors meet with the Greek cultural heritage. Greece is one of the first countries in the western world that put to a museum's objectives an educational purpose first. The evolution of Greek museums characterised by decisions that made and affected them during several periods, until they reached the last period of critical change (2008 to present) in which, inter alia, new museum spaces created and new museum programs set. At the same time, the long period of economic recession had begun to reflect upon every Greek cultural institution.

Nevertheless, Greece is widely known as the land of the Archaeological museums -maintaining archaeological collections that are valued among the most precious in the world- and their visitors are long familiar with the particular kind of museums. Yet, during the last few years, museums that differ in style and content have also been developed, giving a plenty of choices to any possible visitor. The Greek museums, archaeological and others, are now compared with the ambitious international museums, on the level of the number of their visitors, their programs, events and exhibitions (Dalakoura, 2008). Still, there is a considerable undertaking that remains to be carried in order to fulfil their social vision, especially regarding its dynamics that can be further thrived, placing at the centre of their endeavours the substantial participation of their visitor.

Similarly, Greek museum's shops, particularly those that are hosted either in the Private or in the great Public or Governmental museums, are following the international standards of products and services quality, highlighting local characteristics along with a ruling design. Other, mainly the smaller Governmental museum-shops pass their management to the Archaeological Receipts Fund (TAII, 2017)¹¹ which, organizes in museums and archaeological sites shops that sale the exclusive TAII products, ie. casts, replicas, copies of ancient artefacts, etc.

¹¹ Public Organisation under the auspices of Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports. It is mainly a fund-raising organisation that administrates the income deriving from the management of the archaeological sites to the benefit them back.

The majority of the aforementioned museums is keeping a low commercial profile, highlighting only the value of their exhibitions along with their educational attribute. Though, since 2000, the sales of the Private or the large Public or Governmental museums-shops constitute an important source of revenue, in smaller Governmental museums, archaeological sites and monuments, the shops are operated by obsolete procedures, resulting to raise a rather dull income. Despite the different managerial tactics, there is a broad tendency for developing and upgrading the Greek souvenirs not only from the visionary individuals, groups and young entrepreneurs, but also from governmental agencies and academic institutions, which announce relevant research and creative projects.

In order to define the identity and upgrade the function of Greek museums, it is drafted a national pilot-program which, among others, included the extension of the museum's visiting hours, the employment of qualified staff, the renovation and reopening of the affiliated shops and reassess the policy regarding the collections displayed in their museum-shops, by launching competitions and collaborations with Fine Arts Universities (Figure 1). The above activity brought into light some interesting outcomes; certain museum-shops sign partnerships with professional designers, re-adjust their prices and increase the range of their products. Yet, all the involved parties agreed with the indisputable fact that there is a huge unexplored field to delve into, regarding the process of re-designing objects for a museum's shop.

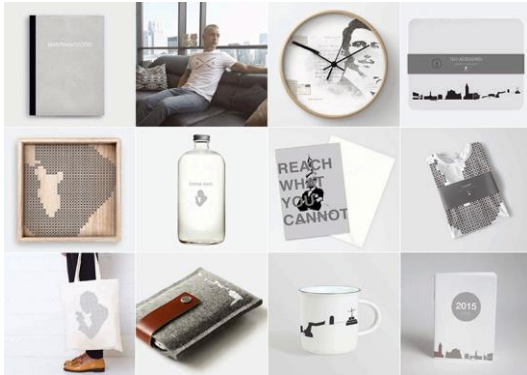


Figure 1: M. Roussaki, Designing Products for Kazantzakis Museum's Shop, Final Year Project, 2015

RE-DESIGNING MUSEUM'S PRODUCTS

In this paper we present certain re-designing approaches realized in the Visual and Decorative Arts Section at the Department of Interior Architecture, Decorative Arts & Design, within the context of undergraduate works, dissertations and final projects. Here, the goal is to show the essential presence of design along with its efficient use. The academic study regarding the design of a cultural product, which takes under consideration its commercial features, additionally allows for the profound analysis of complex systems such as museum organisms. It includes the study of

history, design research and the creative effort, providing some valuable suggestions for further investigation.

In our contemporary cultural environments, design holds a central role in creating and articulating values, in structuring and transmitting information and in shaping everyday practices (Julier, 2006). Moreover, it can provide a conceptual framework to address contemporary concerns and concepts. In the projects that we will present, students have chosen small museum-shops, yet, their targeted design addressed to young people, having in their mind their peers and following their own mode. With the exhibited works of art in those museums as raw models to inspire them, they re-moduled old motifs and themes, giving to old works new shapes, venturing sometimes subversive and entertaining applications.

During the early phase of the planning process and in order to develop the fundamental familiarity and the concomitant understanding of their subject, they investigated their subject through a systematic research, applying to their research qualitative and quantitative research tools. In this context the students have studied the cases of ten museums in Athens¹² and two of the Region museums¹³. It was made a use of a mixed design research: questionnaires completed by nine museum vendors in Athens, interviews replied by representatives of five Athens and regional museum's shops, behavioral observation and questionnaires.

The main reason for the foundation and the overall existence of museum's shops was and still is the financial support of the museums. An exception is provided by few museum-shops which, they have no commercial but informative and educational orientation. Such a strict policy results to limited sales, that, in their turn, lead to a collection of a small range of products, which works rather negatively for their visitors.

Withal, the percentage of museum's visitors who visiting the shop is quite high and there is also people who visit exclusively the shop. However, the sales are moderate, mainly due to a large percentage of visitor's belief that the products are expensive and for that they do not appeal to their preferences. The sale directors and the managers in both the small and the large Private have identified this precise matter or Governmental museum-shops, consequently, they are geared towards including in their collections more economical products. Thus, they aim to broaden their purchasing audiences, especially, the younger audiences.

Almost all museum's shops display cultural products, aiming to contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and the interpretation of the exhibits, moreover to convey an experiential type of experience for the visitor. In addition, their intention is to introduce the exhibits to a wider audience, as the aforementioned products are offered for personal and/or business gifts. The cultural products are genuine copies of significant and representative exhibits of the permanent

¹² Benaki Museum, Byzantine & Christian Museum, Acropolis Museum, Numismatic Museum, Museum of the History of the Greek Costume of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women, B. & M. Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music, Museum of Greek Folk Art, Museum of Cycladic Art, Herakleidon Museum, National Museum of Contemporary Art

¹³ Kazantzakis Museum, Historical Museum of Crete

collections of museums, as well as the periodical exhibitions. The target group of these products is mainly refers to senior visitors.

Most of the museum-shops feature contemporary, original, decorative and usable items, inspired by museum's exhibits. A tag caring specifications about their characteristics and their creator usually accompanies these products. Visitors are asking the managers of museum-shops for all sort of information; they are interested in getting familiar with the history of the objects, of how they are made, or even, information about their creator.

The creators of the objects that are displayed in museum-shops are artists, designers and craftsmen, to whose, the large museums in particular, invite their works in order to expand their shops collection. Also, there are cases where creators were discovered among workshops of social organizations. In addition, relevant competitions and partnerships with educational institutions are being carried out. Most museums collaborate exclusively with Greek artists to support the domestic production. Further to this, some museums aim to maintain and highlight traditional techniques that tend to disappear, and to support the craftsmen who are still working with those techniques.

The main criteria that are enforcing the selection of the objects have to do with their consistency of the relevance with the exhibits that belong to the permanent collection of the museum and their overall museum's identity, the innovation in their conception and design, as well as the assessment on their marketability. In their attempt to renew and update their collection -thus to attract young visitors- some shops are orienting towards enriching their collections with objects made with new, innovative materials and manufactured with the use of new technologies.

In alignment with their educational objectives, museum-shops also feature selected editions, from both Greek and international literature, and museum's printed or digital and multimedia publications. The items that are displayed in museum-shops are designed to fulfill their purpose as objects found exclusively in a museum's shop. Indeed, the products presented in a museum-shop are usually designed and manufactured to be as such, while existing commercial objects are rarely selected on the basis of their compatibility with the orientation of the museum's aspiration.

The demands and aspirations of the visitors, the association with museum exhibits, the uniqueness and originality of the object, are some of the targets that students are called to reach, when they are about to draw their first forms. The information and knowledge about the exhibited works of art, along with the design values (form, color, composition) comprises the elements they use in order to create an item for the former purpose. A vendor product links the past to the future and works as a mediator between the museum (as an institution) and its final recipient, the public. Students recognize that these products have to 'tell a story', to be a living reminder for the visitors, so every time they see or use the product to recall their museum visit.

In order to control the quality of their results, the students made formative evaluation for each project, using low-fi prototypes. The process was developed upon a group evaluation technique. Specific group of five evaluators, observed by tutors as coordinators, examined the design results

according to the specifications set by the working group in the analysis phase. Such specifications included the relevance of the object to the exhibit, the brand and the values of the museum, the suitability of the style according to the tastes of specific target group, the consistency and the uniqueness of the design innovation, thus the usability in cases where their design included changes that arrive with the use of smart materials and/or smart technologies. The members of the evaluation group completed calibrated questionnaires, on a scale of 1 to 10, which the tutors had drawn up.

Additionally, all students attended the phase of evaluation, supporting the designing process with comments, thoughts and suggestions. Each working group revisited and analyzed the results of the evaluation. These results have composed their guide to shape, furnish and finalize their proposals (Figure 2, 3). In conclusion, the evaluation process has highlighted that students understood the fact that the study of a system, such as the museum organization is, requires a complex analysis.

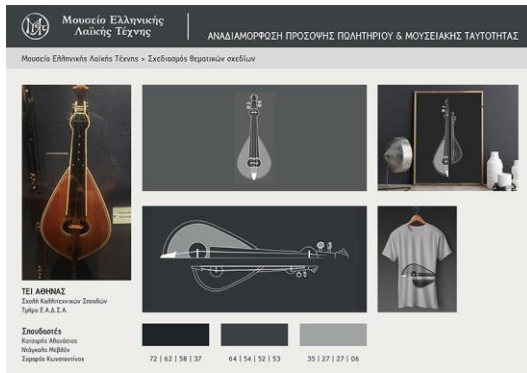


Figure 2: A. Katsaris, M. Dagala & C. Samaras, Decorative Arts: two-dimensional design, Proposal for the Museum of Greek Folk Art Shop, 2016



Figure 3: C. Varlamou, E. Konnari & C. Tsakiri, Decorative Arts: two-dimensional design, Proposal for the Museum of Greek Folk Art Shop, 2016

In their work, most of their data was obtained through research, in terms of the standard operation and requirements of the shops, the preferences of the target group, etc. However, it observed by the evaluation team that some relevant territories were under a deficient study or no study at all, as for example the history of certain periods and/or the history of the exhibits. We shall mention

once again that the design of objects that are going to be placed at a museum's shop has to have cultural content and to bring with it the important obligation for quality and authenticity. For that reason, in the course of designing any cultural product, designers should be committed to a keen observation and sufficient study of the history in order to understand a(ny) culture.

They should also design objects to whom the target-market can recognize and appreciate their value, so to increase the power of communication of object's cultural message, thus to enhance its cultural authenticity. Yet, designers should be consistent with the requirements of cultural creativity and not to focus exclusively on the market needs (Chang & Wen, 2011), or, in other words, to design a cultural object requires to make palpable the best possible balance between market needs and cultural authenticity.

Aesthetics and creativity could circumscribe a gray area for the cognitive functioning of cultural authenticity, hence, designers should really work persistently upon this matter. To enhance the perception of cultural authenticity requires not only an adequate interpretation of a culture under quest, but also an emphasis on the quality of design itself. Such an emphasis makes visible the connection between the object and the cultural elements it incorporates.

THE GREY AREA OF AESTHETICS, REGARDING THE OBJECTS DISPLAYED IN A MUSEUM'S SHOP

'If we work with the surface image without understanding the underlying rationale, the results can look wrong. Sometimes they are only subtly wrong, but this can still leave us with the vague feeling that something is not quite right – even if we cannot say exactly what it is. We are subconsciously aware of how things should be, an awareness acquired over the years', says the engineer John Thornton (2005).

A shop that is related to a museum, it is ultimately related to the managerial strategies employed by the Board that runs its operation. Since the present paper investigates the association of the objects in the shop to the pieces of art exhibited in a museum, it certainly asks for definitions and methodologies of the design practice needed to maintain such a relationship. The design of an object is a dynamic process in all respects, yet, the specific context raises a question that is fundamental to the kind of the objects presented in a museum's shop. Do the object that residue a museum shop should convey a reference to the museum experience? If yes, for those designers who seek to relate their designs to the public, the challenge of designing for a museum's shop is huge. Not only they have to process periods of art and worlds of culture, but they also have to think of how they will translate that processed information into objects and symbols that are visual and more or less functional.

Hence, the most difficult aspect to convey or reveal in the aforementioned objects is the aesthetic value. The prospect of realizing ideas into forms is a transition during which some qualities are gained and others are lost, however, a reference to museum's permanent and/or temporary

exhibition seems to be for a designer an essence of a great importance. Thanks to the post-modern thinking, a reference does not offer us a rigid point of view; there is always the type of a double-reference that can be used and that could be an interesting idea to experiment upon regarding the notion of re-designing objects. A double-reference generates a period of investigation, experimentation and discussion, even in a world that constantly seeks for the new, for the different, interested in altering and changing.

It is a principal necessity to position this change in a broad context of theory, culture, history and craft, by means of to re-design necessitates to re-think about the aesthetic line that runs through our culture to now. Paul Willis (1990) in his *Symbolic Creativity* discusses the concept of grounded aesthetics which is *'the creative element in a process whereby meanings are attributed to symbols and practices and where symbols and practices are selected, reselected, highlighted and recomposed to resonate further appropriated and particularized meanings'*, and that is one thought that is worth visiting it. If equipped with a critical understanding of his/her subject, the designer will approach this transition with reliance and adapt to change accordingly.

The knowledge of the aesthetics and the experimentation upon aesthetic principles can establish the stimulating practice of designing of objects for a museum's shop as a territory to instigate rather than a space to present charming ideas. The particular practice comprises a cognitive challenge; therefore it is essential that all aspects of what is emerging from this shift are examined. The point of inquiry here is those works that convey their unique character and purpose in respect of representation, behaviour and form, moreover, their significant power to offer social symbolic meanings. The affiliated terms involve the projection of pleasant feelings, a spiritual reflection, the sense of identity, the social and intellectual sense of acceptance and/or the sense of power. Referent visual elements to the above include the shape, the size, the colour, the lines, the ornamentation and the texture of the object that aim to trigger and/or provoke a sensory experience to the potential user (Bloch et al., 2003).

By all means, any museum's managerial strategy that makes decisions upon the products displayed for sale in their shop, holds a deep understanding of the aforementioned parameters that regulate their aesthetic quality. Acumen, to use a term by Bloch, Brunel and Arnold (2003), and the ability to adjust the phenomena of visual culture are presupposed in order to produce design that will not just follow the current but create the new, articulating at the same time a meaningful, complete reflection of our present cultural condition. *'But precisely: is there an active syntax? Do objects instruct needs and structure them in anew way? Conversely, do needs instruct new social structures through the mediation of objects and their production? If this is the case, we can speak of a language. Otherwise, this is nothing more than a manager's cunning idealism'*, says the philosopher Jean Baudrillard (2002) in *The System of Objects*.

Yet, design is indeed a context-informed practice (Julier, 2006), hence, to address to a museum's shop as a designer can itself become an immense resource for ideas, experimentation and research. Hitherto, the aesthetic value has under its skin the authenticity as a principal which, in its turn comes into existence through the systematic approach of understanding the dynamics and effects

of the material and immaterial, the visual and cognitive and their relationships that grow into the interdisciplinary field of Design. With it, a designer may develop skills equal to his/her repertoire of representational skills and knowledge regarding the aesthetic of materials, mediums, manufacturing processes and details that derive from concepts. Thereafter, s/he can trespass the desire to extend the boundaries of the possible and move from a world of personal intentions to the public domain.

CONCLUSIONS

Museums, as well as museum-shops form a complex pattern of structures, organized so as to allow the contact between humans and objects through the human senses. The affiliated terms involve the projection of pleasant feelings, a spiritual reflection, the sense of identity, the social and intellectual sense of acceptance and/or the sense of power. Referent visual elements are the shape, the size, the color, the lines, the ornamentation and the texture of the object that aim to trigger and provoke a sensory experience to the potential user.

The museum's shop was originally conceived as a means of financial support to the museum, fulfilling the museum's objectives, namely, to provide products and services that support the education and the enjoyment of a visitor, even to extend and advance the visitor's relationship with the museum. Its essential institutional role is described as an important reflection of the museum itself.

As such it encapsulates some crucial obligations to the public, more and above is to ensure the quality and authenticity of its products. Successful museum-shops offer unique items, which, one cannot find and buy anywhere else. In this way, they satisfy the visitor who seeks to take with him/her a palpable piece of evidence of the sui generis museum's experience. By all means, a museum's shop should be ahead any visitor's need, and at the same time to embrace all of its visitors desiderata.

Then, to re-design objects for a museum's shop means that you are aware of creating and articulating values, structuring and transmitting information and shaping everyday practices. Moreover, the process of re-designing can provide a conceptual framework to address contemporary concerns and concepts. Our obligation to run a workshop aiming to re-design cultural products for a museum's shop, brought to light some interesting issues regarding the demands of such a practice.

The information and knowledge about the exhibited works of art, along with the design values, comprises the elements that a designer uses in order to create an item for the former purpose. These items have to 'tell a story', to be something like a living reminder of the museum's experience for its holder. Therefore, designers should take under consideration several aspects, such as, the relevance of the object to the exhibit, the brand and the values of the museum, the suitability of the style according to the tastes of specific target group, the consistency and the uniqueness of the

design innovation, thus the usability of the object in cases where their design included changes that arrive with the use of smart materials and/or smart technologies.

However, in the course of designing any cultural product, designers should be committed to a keen observation and sufficient study of the history in order to understand a(ny) culture. Since the objects displayed in a museum's shop should also 'speak a current language' (in order 'to tell a story' to the public) we proposed the use of double-reference, by means that designers should process periods of art and worlds of culture, but they also have to translate that processed information into objects that should be contemporary.

Hence, the most difficult aspect to convey or reveal in the aforementioned objects is the aesthetic value. The aesthetic value has under its skin the notion of authenticity, which, in its turn, comes into existence through the systematic approach of the dynamics and effects of the material and immaterial. We proposed to revisit the theory of 'grounded aesthetics' since it opens a field for further investigation, especially to the cases that dial with the cultural tradition of a community. The point of inquiry here is those works that convey their unique character and purpose in respect of representation, behaviour and form, moreover, their significant power to offer social symbolic meanings.

The last point we called attention to, is to re-think if to design an object for a museum's shop, as process and result, suggests a language; if objects instruct needs and structure them in anew way. In the core of this, lies a suggestion to inaugurate interdisciplinary workshops dedicated to the study of re-designing objects for a museum's shop. In it, a designer may develop skills equal to his/her repertoire of representational skills and knowledge regarding the aesthetic, history and tradition along with details that derive from contemporary concepts. It also will provide the necessary space for experimentation and discussion regarding the design, which addresses to a world that constantly seeks for the new, for the different, destined to alter and change.

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