

Accomplice Design or Ethical Design

By Rodolfo Álvarez

How long are the designers going to keep collaborating with a system which leads us to an Earth disaster?



The responsibility of the designers facing the last events happening in the world is vitally important. Like many professionals of other disciplines, our ethical position leads us to get involved in the changes that have been developing in the post industrial era, the climatic

change, the pollution, the environmental destruction and their consequences, as well as in the effects of the overwhelming and self-destructive economic system in which we have been involved by force, which must generate profits at all costs in a short period resorting to wars and hunger in order to reach their targets; and to get involved as well in a forthcoming and contaminated technology of the system. All this implies that our vision of the project of designers might be useful to create a more human and sensible world, which is more concerned about an immediate present rather than about an uncertain future.

When I took part in the 10th Conference de ALADI, in Santiago de Chile I suggested:

«The design must be the plan. The projection of positive and constructive ideas for communicating visually as well as meaning messages, and the consistent and designing method in order to produce useful objects for humanity making use of ethic and intellectual designs and making use of material resources as well which are compatible with the environment and life. The communication design and the production design mustn't harm the ecosystem. In the same way they will not be able to invoke or to favor in defense of violence, war, ethnic, religious or political differences, abuse, lies and legal falsity, neither the genetic manipulation nor the human poverty, neither diseases or destruction, nor the consumption and redistribution of poisonous substances which destroy and pollute the environment. Fulfilling its original creative sense, design must benefit the human being and its environment in order to achieve a better quality of life and a spiritual growth».

Otl Aicher said in «El Mundo como Proyecto» («The World as a Project»):

«Designing means to establish between thinking and doing a mutual report. Aesthetics without ethics is closed to fraud, and not only its external form. The criterion of use includes social and ecological effects [...] and also with invitations to enjoy everything today. The postwar is behind, as well as the Paris 1968 May Revolts and the times of social movements. We settle in the beauty even knowing that we will drown in the trash, and that the world is about to burst. Utopias of a new society are left behind too [...]. The supreme merits of the meritocratic society are the embellishment, the styling and the design. We live so far in a society of a dressing design [...]. Design consists in adapting products to the circumstances which are assigned to, and this means adapting them to the new circumstances. In a changing world products also need to change. The most serious is the situation of the world the most beautiful must look...»

Yves Zimmermann, 1991:

«We can also understand the world as a project, in other words, to the extent that the world is increasingly man-made world, is capable of being projected, that is, designed».

Queries

The quality of the projects is the quality of the world and they should be the questions we should ask:

- What should we do about an imminent climatic disaster with the spaces, messages and products we design?
- How can we help to speed up or to slow down responsibly, leaving this state of hypnotic dream of fake virtual worlds that imposes us with technology, without worrying of the high-energy consumption?
- What does our ethic professional vision provide in the projects in order to be responsible with the environment and the humanity?

If we contribute the least to help saving fishes from the rivers avoiding the excesses of printing inks from packages, the excessive use of paper to save the trees lost irrationally in Amazonia and the great amount of biodegradable materials that we use, we will be responsible with our earth and environment.

On the other hand, human values are also destroyed when we contribute with our messages the consumption of harmful substances, the commercial manipulation which benefits obscure interests, the falsity and hypocrisy of esthetical models that encourage to confer profits to traders who generate poverty without social behavior. They are the same who pay their raw material and manufactures at expense of hunger and poverty of the poorer countries. We refer to the great iconic brands from the First World that set their factories in the poorest areas and which pay poor wages, without neither social services nor safety. The ones that with their values of endless days don't even represent the 1% of the cost of their products in the markets, contaminating with their materials where there are no regulations that protect neither the human habitat nor the natural one, of course.

Providing the minimum of consciousness in every project, deflecting those messages subliminally with more information and culture, we will be headed to preventing the destruction, since only a reasonably ethic shared from every place, however humble however small; and joined in a great global convention with a committed education with new study plans which are not subordinated to the interests of companies, it will bring us in a responsible position of not being accomplices of the world we are destroying.

In the time we take to read this article, an equivalent to 120 football fields of forests are being destroyed and more than 120 tones of CO₂ are being emitted to the atmosphere, and this is not a fantasy, but the reality of the world we live.

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1. The swastika is a thousand-year-old symbol that represents the light and the creation. Michel Angebert:

«The origin of the swastika gets lost in the night of the times, of luck that can consider him to be the most remote symbol used by the humanity ».

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