

An Analysis of the Design Concept Presenting “Humanistic Spirit”

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Abstract

This article conveys to the readers the idea of the author on how to present the design concept of “humanistic spirit” through a “simple but profound” manifestation mode and proposes the “human center” design concept in the development of the new times. Also, the author makes an analysis of the structure, support and application methods of the design means he has experienced in practice from different design angles from the surface to the center.

Keywords: humanistic spirit, design innovation, environmental communication, connotation of the times

With approaching of the times of information, what human kind is faced with the issues why the human kind exists behind the abundant life embraced by modern industrial commodities and where the sustainable development of human society is going forward. Development of science and technology and rational design has brought to the society continuous progress, development and civilization and the industrial revolution period. Our efforts are targeted at a rational and beautiful living means and we are aimed to resolve the issue of “subsistence right” of clothing, food, shelter and transportation. However, in the contemporary society where the crisis of materials for subsistence no longer perplexes human kind, the natural rule of human nature makes the human demand upgraded from “subsistence right” to “quality of subsistence” and the free and harmonious condition of human kind will become a standard for the subsistence quality of human kind. The concept of modern design will also be changed together with this change and design for poetic subsistence will take the place of design for satisfaction of materials and will become a requirement of the times. Design will adjust the relationship of human’s physiological reaction with the materials under a condition of working and living. It is necessary to change the aesthetic orientation and replace it with a new culture under a new situation. Construction of a new design cultural pattern requires the modern design to have a basic foothold and behavioral norm. That is to say, whether personal pursuit of individualized subsistence or maintenance of the characteristics of the times and the purpose of design, it is necessary to focus on the human oriented design cultural significance. Design is aimed to provide service for the human kind and the realistic demand of human kind, the national sentiment and the characteristics of the times have constructed connotation of new design cultural times. Therefore, the design concept that embodies “humanistic spirit” will become a design theme of the information society and will more and more penetrate into the living space of human kind.

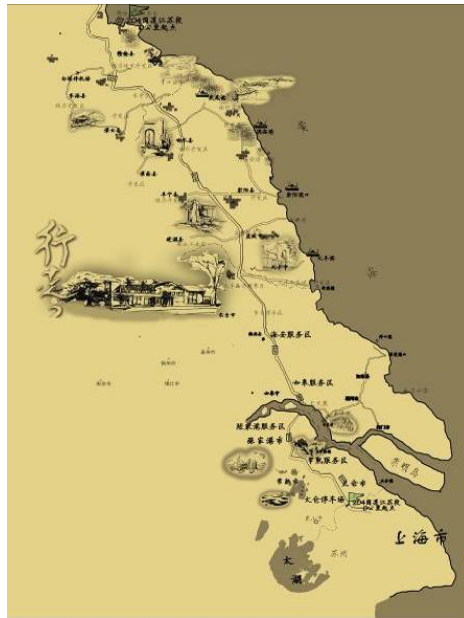


Figure 1. Hand drawn sketch map of the 204 national highway

1. Satisfaction of Human Kind's Demand Is the Critical Construct to Realize Innovation in Design

The essence of the design concept that embodies “humanistic spirit” is a rational method that grasps the design direction on a height of the essential demand of human nature and coordinates deep level problems concerning about human kind in the process of designing and developing commodities, which conducts reflections of design with human kind being the center. Need is the foundation and motive of human behavior and is also the foundation and motive of design. Simonov, the psychologist of the former Soviet Union pointed out, “Need is such a foundation as on the basis of which all the behaviors and psychological activities of human kind are established, including its thinking, its sentiment and its will.” The human oriented design dimensionality has its hierarchy in that it not only takes into consideration of human kind as a society, but also takes into account of the human kind as a group. Meanwhile, it has to take into consideration of the human kind as an individual. At the time when the times of informationization has brought to the human kind enormous material interests, it has also brought about a lot of realistic issues. For example, the competitive pressure has led to psychological burden, change of the value has led to spiritual disappointment, the human kind who live an electronic and digitalized life eager for the simple but pleasant handwork times and the great nature and peace of the countryside life. The cause for the above problems does not lie in the material technical progress and it is exactly the blind growth of the social economy and the anti-human nature behavior that have caused imbalance of human subsistence and conflicts between different cultural elements. Artistic design originates from the demand relationship between human kind and material and involves human kind, technology, industry, life, culture and environment. Its purpose is to rely on technology to push the life of human kind towards a new situation where new objects emerge continuously. However, demand of the society and the requirement of the designers for self-realization are based on human kind being the center. The demand factor which has the most intimate relationship with human kind mainly contains the three aspects of physiological demand, psychological demand and intellectual demand. In practice of design, it is necessary to bring all these three factors relationship into the whole process of design.

2. “Humanistic Spirit” Is the Connotation Construct of Communication between Human Kind, Machine and Environment

As a peculiar spiritual phenomenon, art is a scale for everything on earth, the flower of human’s intelligence, the carrier of humanistic spirit and is specific for human kind as it exists for human kind. It has been an indiscernible and organic component part of human kind throughout the history and has occupied a superior position in reproduction and heritage of human kind from one generation to another. In the reality of human demand and the process of realization of the motive, human kind needs to resort to certain media and carrier. Modern theory of semiotics has set up semantic mode and rule for communication between human kind and commodities and has made commodity become a dissemination means of culture. Application of modeling

language and expressive ability of symbol are the basic quality requirements for a designer and are also an approach to realize conversation and emotional interaction between commodity and human kind. “Application of commodity language helps people to understand what commodity is, how to use it and what taste characteristics it possesses, so as to satisfy the psychological and aesthetic need of human kind.” (Xu Hengchun, 1989, p.135). Commodity language is a sort of symbolic system and this kind of symbol has the following several patterns with different correlation between its media and reference object.

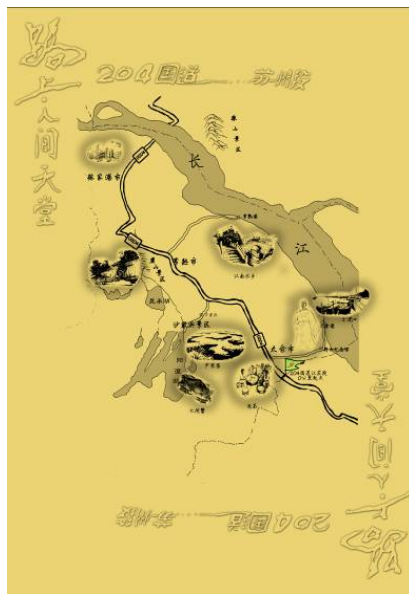


Figure 2. Hand drawn sketch map of Suzhou section of the 204 national highway

2.1 Image Symbol

When human kind comes to contact with commodity, what is presented to them first is a specific picture that has its pattern, color and texture, which manifest its objects by means of simulating its objects or writing its objects in a realistic manner. That is to say, the media and the reference object has similarity in terms of image. For example, an aircraft simulates the pattern of a bird and an corporate logo manifests the production and operation and conceptual characteristics of the enterprise with an image symbol. Furthermore, the interface symbol picture of a computer is the foundation for human and computer interaction and it falls within the crossing scope of graphic design and three-dimensional design. The interface design of Apple computer has pioneered humanized operation of the software system. Therefore, the image language of interface design in humanized design of digitalized commodity has a decisive role.



Figure 3. Brand logo of Gaochun ceramics “Da Dong Fang”

2.2 Indicative Symbol

A certain kind of direct causal or spatial relationship exists between the pattern of the commodity and the reference object. For instance, a relationship of cause and effect is constituted between the function indication button of the remote control and the object of the control, which makes the button become an indicative symbol.

The relationship of cause and effect indicated with the graphic symbol is used to indicate the mode of usage. For example, the style design of knob switch makes use of the visual pattern of the amount and thickness of the concavo convex slot on the edge side to convey whether the knob should be adjusted in terms of thickness or made a rough adjustment of the great spinor. Secondly, similarity of the visual symbol can be used to determine the mode of usage. For example, the knob design of the advance and retreat blade on the paper knife is designed according to the negative pattern of the thumb and is designed with an element rest, which is not only convenient for the advance and retreat operation of the blade, but also implies its mode of usage. Handles of a lot of fruit knives or vegetable knives are designed as a negative pattern so as to indicate the position of hand grip. Thirdly, the surface texture and color of commodity are used to imply its mode of usage and warn people's attention. When people find a certain friction irritability between the vein of the handprint and the gripped object, they would design the contact area of hand into a thin groove pattern. This sort of manifestation means called texture design makes the commodity obtain an implication of holding with the hand. Likewise, color is of great importance in the sensible connection between the commodity and human kind. For instance, the appearance color of a displayer is mostly a neutral color. Considering the visual characteristics of the person who receives the information and the coordination between the picture and the interface, it is convenient for communication and exchange between human kind and the computer.

2.3 Symbolic Symbol

Symbolic symbol means that the media and the reference object have no similarity or relationship of cause and effect, but are established by usage. In the first place, it is visual language that reflects the technical symbol and the grade of the commodity as well as the property and enjoyment of the commodity. Technical symbol is the unification of commodity function and internal quality and is manifested through the pattern of the commodity to embody the excellent quality of the commodity and exquisite technique and make people appreciate the accuracy of the technique. Specifically, in design of the commodity, it is to deal with the relationships between transition of different parts, the surface texture and color allocation and grasp well the perceived precision of the commodity. In the second place, it is the visual language that makes one grasp the grade symbol of the commodity. The grade of the commodity indicates its level and its distinction from other commodities, which is usually embodied by means of the mark of the commodity, the frequent local and typical modeling and color method, material and even price, etc. In the third place, it is the visual language that reflects the security symbol of the design. Sense of security is of great importance in commodities of electrical equipment, mechanical equipment and hand tools. Sense of security is embodied in psychological and physiological aspects of the users. An excellent design is usually full in pattern, light in color and luster, excellent in technique and makes one feel safe and relieved in psychology. Accordingly, compliance with the usage characteristics of human kind, reasonable scale, convenient operation, and accurate indication symbol will, without doubt, bring a sense of security to people in psychology.



Figure 4. Brand logo of Gaochun ceramics “Da Dong Fang”

3. The Design Concept of “Humanistic Concept” Has a New Connotation of the Times

Humanistic ontology is the core of humanistic spirit. The core of humanistic ontology --- humanistic spirit is the key to distinction between the concept and connotation of humanistic spirit under different times and different historical backgrounds. Thus, in different times, the characteristics and emphasis of humanistic spirit are different and what it reflects is the concentrated reflection of the values, the concept of human nature and the spirit of the times under a particular times background.

Throughout the history, different times and different human groups have different knowledge in the design

connotation that is centered with “human”. “Human” emphasized by the handicraft times were an extreme small number of individuals, and due to sparseness of materials and backwardness of technique, the designed goods could only satisfy the needs of a minority of rulers and powerful families and honorable clans. As a result, the significance of the commodity was only embodied in symbol of class and culture of a few groups. For this, Mr. Zong Baihua had such an incisive statement that “Since demand of human kind on the scale of goods is a social demand, so it is not purely demand of physiology. It is said in the ancient Chinese books that “machine” and “ceremony” should not be separated. What the sovereign used, what the dukes or princes used, what the literati and officialdom used, and what the common people used indicated that different classes of people had different patterns, scales, colors and texture that marked their different social status, which has strict stipulation on class.” The mechanization and mass production mode in the great industrial era determines the “human centered” concept is centered with the material requisite of a large majority of people. Emergence of modernization design is a revolution in the real sense of design. It is through this revolution that design is able to serve the public. Its representative figures believe that they can provide assistance to the people through the design, improve the social life level and improve the total social level. However, these well-known designers are self believed that they are the elites among the common herd and are the design mater for salvation. Yet, considering the production condition, stream-lined line of mechanical production and the requirement of reducing costs confine the production mode of goods and also confine the particular demand of an individual. Technology in an era of information makes the implication and efficiency of production take a qualitative change and development of science and technology and intellectual production makes input and output of production quite automatic and simple. The ideal of personal demand is quite likely to be fulfilled and the working style, life style and thinking mode of the information era have great differences from those in the past. Satisfaction of the common demand of human kind is no longer the core of pattern design and individual and human nature first will occupy the thinking concept of human kind. Demand of an individual or a small group will become the key priority of a designer and a common design will be replaced by a personal design. The designer will be faced up with a particular design requirement of an individual or a group and the property of improvement of productivity will also take a qualitative change in which the high efficiency of production of the same kind of goods is switched to the realization efficiency of the production category of a new kind of goods. “Human center” will transfer from “group center” to “individual or small group center”, the value and dignity of an individual will be really embodied and the ideal condition of human orientation will be attained.

Sensible design is a core element that embodies the concept of “humanistic spirit”, and is penetration and complement of human ergonomics. The most critical motive in human ergonomics is how to play effectively the energy of human body, how to make human adapt to the machine, and how to make the machine suit with the psychological and physiological characteristics of a large majority of users. The volume production in the great industry and the group centered design requirement decide that the parameter in human ergonomics is always based on the average value of the group and what it is aimed to suit is the generality of the group of users. Therefore, the individual has to make himself adapt to those commodities which might not be the most suitable for his scale and demand and collaboration between human and the machine has not really realized rationality. The sensible design emphasized by the information times on the basis of human ergonomics bid farewell to the mode in which one kind of commodity has to satisfy demands of a variety of people within a certain scope and application of human ergonomics will be based on satisfying the personal demand. When the designer takes into consideration of the feeling towards the commodity, he should also study the quantity of sensibility and make it quantified. He should make use of scientific means and speculation method to make the sensible research have its evidence and find out quantified quality of sensible elements. It is necessary to quantify a sensible object and make it become a standard for rational upgrade. It is the design art that upgrades random and sensible design to scientific data test and deduction, which will be the in-depth research method of rationality of the feeling of human kind, object and environment. Thus, sensible design will become evidence for personalization and humanized design and goods will really become goods for an individual. And the design of the designer that is centered with his personal physiological demand and psychological demand will become a major application form of sensible design in the process of design.

We have to acknowledge that development of information technology has propelled expedition of human civilization pace. However, no matter how the society is developed, human is always the essential rule of human kind and the design concept that embodies “humanistic spirit” always occupies a predominant position of the design. Human is supposed to be a part of the nature and the natural nature of human makes human kind pursue the ideal of “integration of human and the nature”. Yet, psychological demand and the socialized life have an indivisible connection, which also makes the design concept of “humanistic spirit” really become an eternal realistic theme. The German designer Stegmann ever pointed out in 1975 that, “What has gone wrong for

modern design at the past stage is not the rationality itself, but is insufficient penetration of rationality. The new theme of modern design is to make the rational method break through the technical scope and enter the field of human nature and its psychology.” It is the realization means of this kind of concept that exactly proves the rational core of humanized idea in contemporary design. Attack brought by the informationization society to the design might thoroughly change our cultural ideology in design and led to re-construct of the design concept and the design method. However, the essence of design will not be changed and design will always be dedicated to improvement of human living means and the subsistence environment. Therefore, discussion on the new idea and new method of commodity design that embodies “humanistic spirit” in a transitional period helps to construct and practice the multiple innovation theory of design and realization that human kind pursues the significance of the value, and is more helpful for recovery and protection of human kind’s cultural and ecological environment.

4. Concluding Remark

In one word, humanistic spirit is not only the central content of spiritual civilization, but also affects construction of material civilization. It is the core content in constructing the cultural nature of a nation and a region and is an important scale to measure the civilization degree of a nation and a region. The purpose of design is to facilitate social progress and let different groups of people appreciate the tangible benefits brought by the design instead of affecting the quality of the current life as a result of the design and is designed for all.

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