

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN: THE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION IN SPECIFIC DESIGN

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Abstract: *This article investigates the different aspects of practice of specific design concerning the informational phase and the sources of inspiration in terms of creating a supporting approach for designers in order to improve creativity during the creative process. In the industrial context, creativity has gained in importance, being considered the basis of innovation within the process of engineering design of the products and which launched the development of specific creative methods. A study conducted among a large number of practitioners lead to obtaining data for creating a starting point in conceiving an alternative method within the exploratory phase. Through this empirical study we obtain necessary data to further sustain research pointed towards creating a creative method of exploration based on combinatorial reasoning. This thesis is supporting researchers that are focused on creating sustaining instruments for the process of creating.*

Keywords: *creativity,source of inspiration,exploration phase,design practice.*

INTRODUCTION

In the industrial context, creativity has gained in importance, standing at the basis of innovation within the engineering design process of the products and which triggered the development of specific creative products. These types of stressful tasks are placed first and foremost on design research, directed towards discovering and creating proper methods and instruments to the different specific activities that the process of creative conception is based upon. As a tendency, using unique strategies in dealing with the issues of creative exploration of possibilities stands outside the concept of creative thinking through divergence providing diversified options that is necessary to obtain new and creative ideas [Cross,1982].It is important to highlight the importance of creating flexible methods through multiple configuration based on which it would be

easier to create suitable work methods to use in specific design practice. But it is known that, in specialized literature, the way of approach, the work style and chosen strategies by the designer in terms of creativity are decisive in favouring or blocking the work flux[Cross,1982].

These information aim to stand at the basis of understanding the necessity to obtain the level of flexibility in creating and using alternative methods through personal options in creatively dealing with sources of inspiration. Thus it is considered important to study “the real life” of practitioners, through obtaining concrete data considering the designer as a person seen in this case as a user of the supporting methods of the efforts of obtaining creative results.

The objective of the thesis lies in the context of creating an alternative method of exploration in order to enrich creative creativity. This comes in

favour of the contributions pointed towards optimizing the creative phase of exploration. The present thesis aims to identify aspects concerning sources of inspiration in the design practice in terms of furniture design as a necessary support in understanding the creation of work patterns destined for designers.

THE STATE OF THE ART

In specialized literature, the exploration phase called [Schneiderman,2000] as the “collecting” phase and which is understood by [Amabile,1983] as being an essential phase for designers through which we can get to “building knowledge about the issue” studied.

Until the present, there is little research that approached the source of inspiration of designers in the informational phase as a subject of study [Pasman, 2003; Restrepo, 2004, Keller, 2005, Bouchardet al, 2008] .

Essentially, language based on visual representation is something common both among designers, as among architects and artists [Gonçalves et al,2012].

Basically visual representation in design is considered as a stimulus when it is present in the initial activity of exploration of the designer, [Goldschmidt,2006]the phase in which: "the consumption" of visual representation is essential and specific to itself within the creative process.

In the present thesis, the area of interest is that of the phase of informing designers through visual representations (images) in order to obtain the state of ideation, as the best work state for creative conception.

Through their nature visual representations can facilitate both the act of documentation in order to complete the image of the subject and the act of exploration in order to create the state of inspiration.

Documentation has the role of creating an overall perspective upon the already existing artefacts in their different formal approaches and which has the role of putting the designer on the orbit of updating and grounding a concrete base of knowledge, entitling him to help create new ones.

Exploration has the vital role of finding stimulus as triggering factors of inspiration, being responsible for conceiving the unique and the diversity of creative concepts. Explorarea are rolul de vital de a gasi stimuli ca declansatori ai inspiratiei, fiind raspunzatoare de conceperea unicului si diversitatii din conceptele creative.

THE DOMAIN OF THE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

A source is considered as intra-domain in the case in which with no ambiguity it proves to be in the category of the object that is aimed to be designed (target-object). A source is considered as close inter-domain if it holds only certain features of the target object. A source is considered as farther inter-domain when, obviously, is not a part of the target object category.

EXPERIMENTS

The context in which this session of questionnaires and observations takes place is that of the conception of the furniture, in the exploration phase with reference to the source of inspiration. By selecting the theme it was intended to observe the design practice in the phase of inspirational exploration, with reference to a sample of accomplished projects, following in the first place aspects related to the ways in which sources have been used, the domain in which the source belongs in terms of the target, its utility but also referring to the creative strategy used while working with sources.

Thee participants of this experiment were 3 furniture designers with experience. This thesis makes reference to dealing with experts in design practice from the furniture area, which has the condition to be integrated in the structure of the company for many years through a continuous practice in the field. Participants have been met in their working environment, at the design office of each one of them.

THE PROCEDURE

The procedure, the meeting with each designer took place in two sessions; in the first phase the conditions and details were discussed that were of interest for the success of the session, and in the second phase the session of interrogation and observation was carried out.

It has been agreed that this session should be conducted in the designers' working environment, so that participants take part in a comfortable meeting.

Participants were asked to choose, review, and present a set of 5 concepts, their favourites, which they designed uniquely, and to describe their work tasks within the company. A brief presentation of the projects was asked of them followed by a questionnaire based on a pre-established common set of questions, for all the participants. They received in the initial phase the necessary explanations and clarifications, and also during the unfolding of the session.

The set of questions applied makes reference to the aspects of conception in which sources of inspiration were involved in the presented projects.

- the sources of inspiration used come from personal knowledge, from the collection of images created personally along the way or from the creation of contextual collections to each new project.

- the domain to which the source that was used in the project belongs in terms of the distance from the project's target. These could be from the target's domain, from the domain close to the target or the domain that is far from it.

- the sources were used to provide forms for concepts or elements (details) or both at the same time.

RESULTS

The results of the questionnaire session emphasize that participants consider that the first source of inspiration is the basis of knowledge that they own, used in combination with the archive created in context on the occasion of

launching each project. The work collection which is contextual to the theme is made up based on the images from the domain of the design target (intra-domain). If for example, the domain of furniture is the classical style then the collection has pieces and details mainly from this field. Sources are primarily used to obtain detail and not so much for the shape of the concept. Following the observation of data referring to the strategy used by designers in the generating ideas phase we reached the conclusion that in a decreased proportion of the cases they used the principle of expanding the existing concepts, but the major proportion of cases was oriented towards an approach through combinatorial reasoning.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the present article information was obtained concerning sources of inspiration in the context of design practice, based on results obtained due to real design projects, information gathered from practitioners that were personally involved in their conception. This could show a real state in approaching the source of inspiration issue in the specialized design practice. For the future the research is intended to be carried on in order to create a method of improving creativity through sustaining the exploration phase.

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