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Original article



## Culture of Object Perception and Image Plasticity in the Art of Design

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### Abstract

**Introduction.** The topic of the research is dictated by the need to clarify values through cultural understanding of the role of design in modern society. The development of didactics of design education in the direction of covering the largest toolkit is the result of progressive acceleration of technology improvement and global digitalisation. The problem of formation of cultural authenticity of the specialist who creates plastic concepts in the field of visual and object design of habitat for all mankind is no less urgent. The aim of the article is to reveal the cultural aspect of professional perception of the object in the context of plastic tasks of the designer's visual activity.

**Materials and methods.** The study was conducted using theoretical and empirical methods: observation, comparison, generalisation, analysis. Materials of scientific and practical conferences and fundamental research were under study.

**Results.** The author has studied works on the psychology of object perception by a person who forms images, creates visual concepts and object world. It was revealed that civilisation preferences of a person and focus of interest, visual selectivity in perception of the surrounding world and as a consequence – intentional translation of personal preferences in creativity are connected. The study includes the retrospective analysis of educational approaches that form the culture of object perception in the future specialist in the field of design. The researcher has identified factors of influence of this competence on the plastic properties of imaginative, iconic and spatial-communicative systems.

**Discussion and Conclusion.** The coverage and justification of this phenomenon actualises its significance. In the modern professional community, the problem of designer's design culture, which distinguishes him from others, is acutely marked. Educational approaches that teach the future specialist to selective perception in the conditions of the author's task and application of the tool of its plastic embodiment need to be popularised.

**Keywords:** perception of object, problem of image plasticity, artistic vision, transformation of object features, school of design

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Научная статья

## Культура восприятия объекта и пластика изображения в искусстве дизайна

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### Аннотация

**Введение.** Тема исследования продиктована необходимостью уточнения ценностных установок через культурологическое осмысление роли дизайна в современном обществе. Развитие дидактики дизайн-образования в сторону охвата наибольшего инструментария – результат прогрессивного ускорения совершенствования технологий и мировой цифровизации. Не менее актуальной является проблема формирования культурной аутентичности

специалиста, создающего пластические концепции в области визуального и предметного дизайна среды обитания для всего человечества. Цель статьи – раскрыть культурологический аспект профессионального восприятия объекта в контексте пластических задач изобразительной деятельности дизайнера.

**Материалы и методы.** Исследование проведено с применением теоретических и эмпирических методов: наблюдение, сравнение, обобщение, анализ. Были изучены материалы научно-практических конференций и фундаментальных исследований.

**Результаты исследования.** Изучены труды по психологии восприятия объекта человеком, который формирует образы, создает визуальные концепции и предметный мир. Выявлены связи и взаимовлияния цивилизационных предпочтений человека и фокуса интереса, зрительной избирательности в восприятии окружающего мира и, как следствие, намеренной трансляции в творчестве личных предпочтений. Проведен ретроспективный анализ образовательных подходов, формирующих культуру восприятия объекта у будущего специалиста в области дизайна. Выявлены факторы влияния данной компетенции на пластические свойства создаваемых им образных, знаковых и пространственно-коммуникативных систем.

**Обсуждение и заключение.** Освещение и обоснование данного феномена актуализирует его значимость. В современном профессиональном сообществе остро обозначена проблема проектной культуры дизайнера, отличающей его от прочих. Образовательные подходы, обучающие будущего специалиста избирательному восприятию в условиях авторской задачи и применению инструмента ее пластического воплощения, нуждаются в популяризации.

**Ключевые слова:** восприятие объекта, проблема пластики изображения, художественное видение, трансформация признаков объекта, школа дизайна

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**Introduction.** All spheres of material and spiritual life of mankind are embodied in the cultural layer, the subtle matter where the experience of civilisations is accumulated. According to some scientists, appealing to it as a resource is not relevant today, because it is pointless to rely on culture, which is ending its existence as a phenomenon. But no matter how our contemporaries predict the collapse of cultural reason, it seems impossible to imagine the process of education in the field of arts and professional maturation in the sphere of design without education, forming spiritual values, moral guidelines of a person. Culture of scientific labour and production are related categories. They are united by the concept of “professional culture”, which besides special knowledge, skills and abilities implies the development of moral and ethical, attitudinal and psychological aspects of personality. There are a number of requirements for a designer on the labour market, among which the first positions are occupied by: the presence of artistic taste and the ability to generate ideas and concepts, and only then – others.

The image and content of culture of modern society is expressed in the continuous generation of new artistic forms that actualise the processes of society and the individual [1]. Experiments in the field of constructing a multicultural environment of interpersonal communications optimise the meanings of everyday, scientific and artistic entities [2]. The generation of a new language of an artistic statement is a consequence of the evolution of meanings [3].

The main features of the work of the mechanism of culture are especially accurately expressed in the art of design. In the studies of Y.M. Lotman, B.A. Uspensky we find the understanding of art as an accurate model of culture. They refer to the later work of M. S. Kagan, where the author considers art as a self-consciousness of culture [4, p. 131]. The analysis of scientific works by M. Barkhin, G. Borisovsky, A. Gabrichevsky, V. Glazychev, A. Ikonnikov, A. Rappaport, A. Strigalev, V. Tasalov, A. Tits confirms the opinion that the value of an object of medium communication as a work of art is related to the semantic meaning imprinted in it, the iconic message, which determines the uniqueness of the subject’s culture in the context of active temporal interaction with it. The aim of the article is to reveal the cultural aspect of professional perception of the object in the context of plastic tasks of the designer’s visual activity.

**Materials and methods.** The author has studied the material of scientific and practical conferences and fundamental research of culturalologists and art historians on the cultural phenomenon of meanings and social interactions. A systematic analysis of literary sources describing design research, which only in 2000 received the status of fundamental scientific works in the field of applied design and professional self-reflection. The methods of generalisation of pedagogical and creative experience, observation and comparative analysis contributed to the identification of characteristic regularities that allowed us to formulate theoretical conclusions at different stages of the research.

**Results.** The study of the culture of perception and creation of a visualisation object is a subject of research in psychology, anthropology, art history and design. The peculiarities of the psychology of object perception in different

cultures may differ depending on what aspects of perception are considered more important in a given culture. This may be due to historical, social and ethnic factors. More recent research on design product perception in the context of a multicultural society belongs to Y. Zhang and a group of his co-authors. Based on the results of online surveys, they managed to identify fundamentally significant differences in preferences for plastic forms, colour, symbols, understanding of status and quality among representatives of different cultures. Thanks to these studies, the markers of high responsibility zones for professionals creating the object world, including the product of design, were identified [5]. Studies by A. Manzaripasha and A. Stanislavsky allowed to identify the fundamental differences in the cultures of the peoples in the world that have a special impact on the perception of design objects, identified risk zones and pointed out possible ways to mitigate this factor in the development of design projects [6].

The relevance of this problem is evidenced by in-depth studies of the last century and contemporary scholars. In 1954, R. Arnheim studied the processes of perception and analysis of visual art objects, including painting, architecture and design, and gave a detailed analysis of how artists use such elements as form, colour and texture to convey certain ideas and emotions [7]. In 1966, anthropologist C. Lévi-Strauss explored the differences in perception and visual interpretation of objects of pictorial symbolism and religious sign systems. Cultural differences in the perception of colour, shape and space are devoted to the works of M. Chaldevy. S. Bernhard develops the theory of R. Arnheim, correlates the concepts of “visual perception” and “communication”, delving into the study of the relationship between the peculiarities of the culture of perception and the formation of meaning-forms in design, explores the methods of using plastic elements for the translation of ideas and values, as well as techniques of visual communication aimed at forming an emotional response. The psychophysics of object perception was investigated by H. Heckhausen. In 2004, he identifies several basic patterns of object perception of significant importance. One of these, the figure and background principle, is that our brains separate objects based on their contours and colour schemes, as well as the relative sizes of the objects, but the categories will differ slightly depending on the visual task at hand. For example, in some cases the background may be seen by the artist as more important than the figure itself or as an integral part of the depicted situation, equal in importance to the object itself [8]. The principle of Gestalt laws that our perception of objects depends on their context and structure. In different cultures this principle can be manifested in different ways. The reason is the different degree of significance of details or structural properties of an object in the meaningful context of ethnic traditions or aesthetic preferences, which affects the focus of perception of visual information. The third principle is the perception of motion. It works differently in various cultures and is conditioned by stereotypes in the perception of plastic images of actions and feelings: approval, resistance, freedom, anxiety, rest, restraint, i. e. visualisation of emotional states.

The creation of visual communication objects requires an important competence that distinguishes a professional working with images. First of all, we are talking about the peculiarities of object perception as a source of plastic motive of visual activity and in this context they are directly related to the ability to analyse and graphically interpret the source [7]. It is important and extremely necessary for a designer to have a deep understanding of the plastic properties of objects and to be able to use various means of visual activity to convey information about their shape, colour, texture and other characteristics. Newly created objects and forms of visual and functional environment are ideally the result of the most effective solution of design problems. When creating a design object in the planning conditions of the potential consumer always take into account the specifics of its socio-cultural features. When creating design solutions, the aesthetics of preferences of the target audience, the peculiarities of its culture of perception of colour, symbol, sign significantly affects the visualisation of meanings and conceptual settings in the project. The culture of object perception is also related to the designer’s ability to analyse and interpret trends and innovations in the field of environmental and visual communication, as well as to predict trends and directions of development in this area. In general, the professional culture of object perception is an important competence that allows a specialist to create effective and innovative solutions that meet the demands of modern consumers of visual content.

The tool of embodiment in the image of the experience of visual perception is a special language of symbols, metaphors and plastic architectonics, endowing the object with deep content. The emphasis on the significance of the problem of plasticity, its compositional structure and artistic conventionality as the main property of any form and image became the basic attitude for all disciplines of the BAUHAUS and VKHUTEMAS schools of design. They were among the most influential educational institutions and trained many leading experts in the fine arts of design and architecture who became iconic figures in the professional community. These schools were founded in Germany and the USSR, respectively, and represented the best experience of applying author’s methods of teaching formal composition, solving the problem of the plasticity of the image in the art of design, the plasticity of forms of the new conceptual aesthetics and their interaction with space.

The Bauhaus School was founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, under the leadership of Walter Gropius, and aimed to combine art and industrial design. Involving great artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy,

they popularised the school's basic principle that art and design should be combined in a single work and solve a single problem. Their pupils learnt to work with materials, creating designs and models of mass consumption objects for widespread production.

Founded in 1920 in Moscow, USSR, the VKHUTEMAS School was also aimed at uniting art and industrial design and was created to train specialists capable of forming a new concept in the art of design and its implementation in industrial production. To realise this mission, such great artists as Vladimir Favorsky, Alexander Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova and Lazar Lissitzky were involved, who laid the foundation for the educational systems of two world-famous Russian universities: Moscow State Stroganov Academy of Design and Applied Arts (Stroganov Academy) and Moscow Architectural Institute. Graduates of the last years were quickly incorporated into the staff of the country's leading industries and were actively engaged in the development of design of industrial products, means for mass education and agitation; architectural and design activities, realising the new environment and object world of the new Russia.

Both schools were based on the principles of functionality and minimalism, which was reflected in the works of the successors of this tradition. They made extensive use of geometric forms, abstraction and bright colours, solving three problems in their works: plastic image, practicality and functionality. A key factor in the success of BAUHAUS and VKHUTEMAS was their ability to combine the arts in solving the plastic embodiment of a design object, thus optimising the idea of the unity of form and content.

The direct relationship between the perception of reality and the ability to create an original plastic image of a design product is undeniable and it is impossible to ignore the fact that the intentional comprehension of situations and objects of the surrounding world is dictated by the plastic task set by the artist [8]. Setting a plastic task each time develops his compositional thinking and expands the arsenal of his pictorial means, thus helping to overcome the usual automatism of superficial looking at the external features of the object. The formation of the plastic image of the image through the transformation of the features of the object of pictorial interpretation occurs in several stages:

1. Perception of the object. In this stage, the designer receives information about the external world through the senses, which react to various features of the object, such as shape, colour, texture, etc.

2. Analysing the attributes of the object. The designer analyses the information received by breaking it down into individual attributes and identifying the most significant ones.

3. Synthesis of the object features. At this stage the designer combines the selected features into a whole form (composition), defining the plastic image of the image.

4. Transformation of object features. Depending on the task, the designer can transform object features by changing their shape, colour, texture, etc. to achieve a certain effect.

In fact, this process is a key algorithm for the development of creativity and professional culture in general in a designer, as it allows to master the techniques of selective vision of the object features and the methods of its plastic embodiment in the images of narrative and abstract compositions, in the conventional sign systems of information visualisations of design projects. This skill as a tuning fork actualises professional reference points, optimises the meanings of creativity, and is a key competence of a specialist in the field of design art.

There are many approaches to forming the culture of a future designer's special vision of the object of interpretation and creating its plastic image. Among the leading foreign design schools, we can highlight such as the Royal College of Art and Central Saint Martins in London, Parsons School of Design in New York. Each of them has its own unique programmes of formation of artistic perception in design students, which include theoretical and practical classes. For example, at the Royal College of Art, one of the key courses is «Visual Thinking and Communication», in which students learn the basics of design, visual communication, composition and proportions. At Parsons School of Design, students are trained in design, art, technology and business, enabling them to develop an integrated understanding of artistic culture. Central Saint Martins in turn provides the student with opportunities to experiment with a variety of materials and techniques, which helps students broaden their perspective on art and design.

All these schools are united by a special attitude to the theme of visual image plasticity and its special role in the culture of modern information society. Modern Russian design education emphasises the formation of professional culture of object perception in the context of solving a design problem. Domestic methods are presented in the scientific community by many authors. E.V. Rudneva focuses on methods of analysing works of art, observation of the object world and natural phenomena, methods of working with materials and forms that develop creative abilities. N.V. Shikhirintsev presents methods of using fine art techniques to develop perception through applied activities.

Special attention is paid to compositional and rhythmic tasks based on the observation of nature and image objects, which are the basic support of a design project. A.M. Lebedev's methodology is based on the use of restrictive conditions of design tasks and cases to develop practical skills and abilities to analyse and solve specific design problems that require

concentration on research and concept formation. The problem of the plastic problem of the author of the project is present in it as a red line. V.I. Abramov's educational methodology is based on the development of general cultural competences, such as understanding of philosophical and aesthetic principles of a multicultural community, on the analysis and synthesis of information to implement the integration of the new and traditions.

**Discussion and Conclusion.** All educational methods combine science and applied technologies that contribute to the development of human nature (vision, thinking, feelings) and provide a tool for expressing intentions and implementing ideas in the connection: perceiving – realising – acting. In turn, it is the design of the environment and social communications that presents us with this process as the generation of thought-forms and language through the culture of selective perception of the natural and object world, creating objects for various kinds of human-human interactions.

It is important to note that the very notion of perceptual culture combines the artificial and the natural. The contradiction comes from the traditional definition of culture as an alternative to natural nature, but it is the process of perception that is its integral part. It is part of human physiology and psycho-emotional nature. In the creative context of the designer's professional activity, there is a metaphysical fusion of traditions, perceptions and experience of reality. A symbiotic relationship of subjective philosophical experience of selective vision of external and structural features of the object and aesthetic preferences is formed, this is what defines the culture of perception as a professional competence. The deep process of integration is hidden from the viewer, but its external signs are available to the observer as the author's plasticity, individual plastic handwriting, style: the result of a complex synthesis of emotional and sensual worldview and technologies of project task realisation. Undoubtedly, the formation of the culture of perception affects the content meanings of the personality, determine the vector of development of professional goal-setting and, undoubtedly, are a trigger that actualises the creative potential of the designer.

To summarise, this article presents an overview of fundamental interdisciplinary research aimed at studying the peculiarities of object perception in the context of the tasks of its interpretation, as well as the influence of many social factors on this process. There is a description of specifics of project image formation based on the analysis of reality and creative transformation of the signs of the object of interpretation. The article reveals peculiarities of this process, which determines the professional culture of artistic vision in the designer. The evolution of design education is presented: the first institutions that proclaimed innovative approaches in solving the problem of plasticity and modern schools that have become successors of traditions, developing this concept. The concept of perception culture as a key professional competence of a designer is substantiated.

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