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Brazilian Portuguese Words for Design

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1. Introduction

Brazilian Portuguese is the Portuguese spoken in Brazil, which has slight differences from the Portuguese spoken in Portugal. One may try to understand such differences by comparing them with the dissimilarities between the American English and the British English. Although this article does not intend to establish potential differences between Brazilian Portuguese and Portuguese spoken in other countries, such as Portugal, it is important to bear in mind that divergences in meaning of words for Design in Portuguese in different places may happen, following the historical, cultural, social and economic concerns of each place.

Words for design in Brazilian Portuguese are rich in diversity. Naturally, the multiplicity of words has similarities in their denotative meanings, and some of these words are synonyms. Each particular meaning may be considered complementary to another for a closer understanding of what the English term means, for there is no single Brazilian Portuguese word which would translate the complexity of the word design in a precise and succinct way. This is perhaps the main reason why the English word design is largely adopted in Brazil.

This paper is a brief consideration on the etymology of the main words for design in Brazilian Portuguese, in order to have a broader idea of their meanings in the Brazilian context. It also includes the official introduction of the word design in Brazil in the twentieth century and how this fact affected the words for design since then to the present days.

Note: all the translations from Portuguese into English were done by the first author

2. *'Projeto'* and *'desenho'*

According to *'Dicionário Brasileiro da Língua Portuguesa' and 'Aurélio'*, amongst the most popular Brazilian dictionaries of Portuguese in Brazil, design is the conception of a *'projeto'* (project) or *'modelo'* (model). It is also *'planejamento'* (planning) and/or the product of this planning. In more restrictive ways, the word means, for example, *'Desenho industrial'* (Industrial design) and *'Desenho de produto'* (Product design). The two main words are, therefore *'projeto'* and *'desenho'*.

Ferreira (1999), the author of *'Aurélio'*, informs that the word *'projeto'* means launched forward. It comes from the Latin *'projectu'*, which has the same meaning. *'Projeto'* is also:

- *"the idea which is formed from making something in the future, a plan, an intention and a 'desígnio' (from the Latin 'designare')"*. This is, therefore, abstract, remaining in the ideational level, and infers the conception of organized actions. As a synonym of *'desíginio'*, *'projeto'* also means purpose, intention. It can be understood, therefore, that *'projeto'* is a plan with a purpose.

- *"the entrepreneurship to be made within a pre-established schedule; the provisional draft of a text"*. This meaning leaves the abstraction of ideas and indicates initiative in expressing such ideas in tangible ways, prior to undertaking an ideational sequence of organized actions. As it is provisional, it is subject to changes.

- *"the draft or sketch of a work to be made; the conception and planning of the visual graphic characteristics of a publication or group of publication"*. Although restricting the meaning to the visual features with the specific purpose of publishing, it can be noticed that the concept turns from the abstract field of an idea to the concrete reality of materials such as paper. It is extended from the domain of a mind to reach the condition of a work to be shared.

Ferreira (1999) defines the word *'desenho'* (*'designu'*, in Latin) as the representation of forms and surfaces, through lines, points and blots, of a playful, scientific or technical objective. *'Desenho'* is also:

- *"the art or technique of representing with pencil, brush or feather a real or imaginary theme, expressing a form and usually disregarding colour. This is a*

tendency to represent a theme rationally, suggesting its limits, while colour has the tendency to transmit values of emotional kind". This might be understood as a tangible way of expression which demands specific knowledge and skills in the use of particular tools, not only as a way of expression, it also infers a critical mind, supposedly able to perceive and/or conceive reality, evaluate it and make rational and/or emotional choices over its visual representation. As art, it also includes aesthetics, beauty, balance, harmony concerns.

- *"all work of art made according to the conditions above; it is a trace, a scratch, a project, a plan, form, shape, configuration, delineation, sketch, elaboration, intent, purpose, designation".* In this aspect, '*desenho*' is the product of a sequence of actions, of a process. As a synonym of a plan, an intersection with the word '*projeto*' (project) can be easily perceived.

'*Desenho*' also derives from the verb '*desenhar*', which in its turn comes from the Latin '*designare*'. Likewise the word '*desígnio*' mentioned above, also given as a synonym of '*projeto*', a connection between the two main words for design can be made. '*Desenhar*', the verb, means to sketch a drawing, to describe, to present orally and/or by writing, to make something perceptible, to represent, to conceive, to project, to imagine, to form an idea, to present with well defined contours, to highlight, to delineate, to appear, to represent or reproduce in the mind, in the imagination.

From these denotations above, it is clear that the words for design '*projeto*' and '*desenho*' express a wide range of meanings. Although complex, these may be summarized as a rational conception of a sequence of actions with a purpose, its expression in a perceptible and clear way, and the product of such ideational creation.

3. More than *'Projeto'* and *'desenho'*

Gomes Filho (2006 p12) summarizes the concept of '*projeto*' and '*desenho*' as synonym of design stating that design is the conception, plan or intention to create or to make something. However, Fascioni (2007 pp67-70) argues that the translation of design as '*projeto*' or '*desenho*' is simplistic and explains that to make sense of the word design it should be seen as a conceived solution for mass/serial production, based on three main aspects: 1) a 'good project', when mass production is possible; 2) a

concept which explains the reasons why the object is made that way and not other infinite possible manners, including its functions and explanations, and 3) aesthetic concern, for commercial reasons. Fascioni's concept of design goes beyond the definitions given by Ferreira (1999) and Gomes Filho (2006), as mass production is a fundamental point associated to the whole meaning. This may be explained when the conditions the term design was introduced in Brazil are taken into account and the effects it had in the Brazilian context.

4. Design in Brazil

The most important reference for design in Brazil is the foundation of the first school of design of academic level, the '*ESDI*', '*Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial*' (Industrial Design University), in Rio de Janeiro, 1963. Pioneer also in Latin America, the ESDI adopted the model of Ulm, in Germany (Cardoso, 2008; Stolarski, 2005), likewise other peripheral countries adopted. Nonetheless, design did not start to exist in Brazil only when the term was officially introduced by '*ESDI*'. The 1920's was marked by the nationalism with the hundredth anniversary of Brazilian independence from Portugal, in 1822. Since 1850, Brazil started to receive a mass of immigrants. As time passed, the immigrants began to settle down together and identify a certain aesthetic common sense. This incipient local taste had its public manifestation in February 1922 at the São Paulo Municipal Theatre where Brazilian music compositors, sculptors, poets, painters and intellectuals gathered together for the event called "*Semana de Arte Moderna*" (Modern Art Week). That was a remarkable occurrence within the Brazilian intellectual scene as it celebrated the Brazilian aesthetic way, a rupture with European culture especially admired in Rio de Janeiro. On this occasion, the absorption of foreign ideas was debated, criticised and discarded to the extreme in an attempt to understand the reality lived in Brazil (Freyre, 1987; Schemes, 2008). It can be noticed that if this was a celebration then it was because there was already a prevalence of ideas considered proper to the country and intended to differ from the foreign. According to Caldas (2004), it was from the 1930's to the 1940's that the first experiences with a national design started to take place in Brazil, in order to attend the demands of modernist wishes in the country. This was also how Brazil inherited the Bauhaus school's tradition and the North American design influences, the later starting from the 1950's.

Niemeyer (1997) argues that, historically, the implementation of the design course in Brazil came together with an industrialization purpose. This may give light to the understanding of design in Brazil on an industrial basis and attached to mass production. In addition, it can be assumed that the wording for '*ESDI*', '*Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial*' and the simultaneous implementation of design as the subject of study had a meaningful impact for the expression '*Desenho Industrial*'. It implied that the kind of '*desenho*' of ESDI was not the usual '*desenho*' from the Portuguese lexicon which means "*drawing*", it rather meant another instance for '*desenho*', more focused on industrialization rather than aesthetics. It also seems to explain why some Brazilian authors, such as Fascioni (2007), stress the importance of including mass production in the words for design, attempting to be loyal to its foundation linked to industrialization.

Since the official implementation of design in 1963 with the '*ESDI*' there is a recurrent confrontation between Brazilian peculiarities and international models in the design area, particularly the European model, a struggle in order to impose the Brazilian identity to the Brazilian design, with positive results nowadays. This is not different for the Brazilian words for design. To understand part of this complex wording trajectory, it is important to understand the Brazilian cultural interaction system which provides patterns for thinking, feeling and acting, expressed in Brazilian Portuguese language. For a better idea of what this means, the words of Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta about Brazilian culture in general become fundamental. DaMatta (1984 p41) states:

*"Brazil is not a dual country which operates only with the logic of the in **or** out, right **or** wrong, man **or** woman, married **or** separated, God **or** devil, black **or** white. On the contrary, in the case of our society, the difficulty seems exactly to apply the dualism of exclusion character; an opposition which determines an inclusion of a term and the automatic exclusion of other, as usual in the American and South African prejudice and we, Brazilians, consider as brutal."*

Taking into account DaMatta's reasoning, it may be expected that the words for design in Brazil would not be restricted to its original English meaning or the meanings found in the lexicon and would welcome additional meanings. Caldas (2004) already noticed that in Brazil design is not a well delimited field. Recalling the original English meaning, which includes mass production, Caldas states that the word design, in Brazil, became also associated with handcraft and other not industrialized activities as well.

The word design is very popular in Brazil nowadays, most of the times applied on a daily basis as a synonym of skilled work, which implies theoretical knowledge, technique, good quality and aesthetic concern, as for example in the expression "eyebrow design".

5. Brazilian design

The trajectory of design in Brazil since its official implementation, strongly influenced by the European and American ascendance, has valued the product's technical and functional qualities. In association to a minimalist aesthetic of simple geometrical forms, it acquired convenient characteristics for globalization and has developed significantly. However, the awareness of the need of imprinting distinguishing characteristics to products to keep growing and being competitive is perceptible nationwide. Brazilians have tried hard to develop a national worth for design by looking at their cultural diversity and country's natural resources, allied to the firm basis already incorporated along the decades after the *"ESDI"*. It is not easy to leave behind the colonized tendency of thinking that the best always comes from richer and more developed countries. Nonetheless, the importance of learning from the example of such countries in order to apply this knowledge according to the Brazilian own reality has increased significantly. This has had a deep impact on Brazilian design, as it has incorporated the Brazilian way of seeing the world. The words of DaMatta, as seen above, give a fair idea of what can be expected from Brazilian design, and this is complex.

5. Brazilian design characteristics

Brazil was discovered by the Portuguese in 1500. As a colony of Portugal, the colonisers did not intend to remain in the colony. During centuries of the colonial period, local native Indian monuments gave place to improvised villages and cottages, outspread through the land. There is no architectural history other than the Portuguese Baroque in Brazilian territory, which differed from the Portuguese for the use of materials such stones and wood only found in Brazil, what brought together the Portuguese way of thinking and attributing symbolic values to constructions, although without its tradition. The hybrid style of Brazilian Baroque influenced the most

expressive name of contemporary Brazilian architecture, Oscar Niemeyer (1907), to whom "*form follows beauty*". Attracted by the sensuality of the free curve line found in Brazilian mountains, in the sinuosity of rivers and in the beauty of the Brazilian woman's body (DeMoraes, 2006), Niemeyer's original architectonic ideas, concurrently local and universal, became known internationally. Figure 1 shows one icon of Niemeyer's architectonic project, the Cathedral of Brasília, the capital city of Brazil.

Figure 1 –Niemeyer's Cathedral (1960) at the right, and the bells tower at its left.

The lack of architectural tradition, in addition to the usual improvisation of villages and the non-structured creativity collaborated to the formation of a culture which tends to cherish non-material values. This differs from the European culture view, which is more inclined to value permanent values, such as the stability of building processes of collective interests of a whole society.

Work on what already exists or is built, modifying its signs, aesthetics, expressivity, until its meaning and interpretation is changed, without creating a new style, may be considered what became the most genuine Brazilian tradition and originality in design, in all areas (Branzi, 2006).

Figure 1 also shows a partial view of "Esplanada dos Ministérios" at the left. The top left shows a view of two from three arcs of Juscelino Kubistichek Bridge (2002), designed by Brazilian architect Alexandre Chan, winner of the Gustav Lindenthal Medal at the 2003 International Bridge Conference in Pittsburgh, USA

An example of this originality is Brazilian fashion design, only considered as such from the beginning of the 1990's. Although it can not be generalised to the point of establishing a definitive Brazilian style in fashion, Brazilian fashion designs are the product of certain strategic and aesthetic decisions that are influenced by the materials and their potential uses, and the way Brazilian designers engage within these aspects, given their cultural background, and this is what gives Brazilian design a particular Brazilian quality. Figure 2 shows a design from 1995 of one the most well known and representative contemporary Brazilian fashion designers, Lino Villaventura. The dress top is basically made of cotton cord strings and the skirt of Buriti palm tree straw. Villaventura says: "*I am not afraid of mixing fine and rustic fabrics; that gives a strong identity to my work.*"

Figure 2 – Lino Villaventura design

It is important to highlight that those aspects are not only particular to Brazil but faced by designers in many countries, particularly by those on the edge of the developed world where design emerges from a handcraft tradition, an amateur tradition or a small production scale tradition. What is significant to the identity of Brazilian design is that even though some or all of the strategies that the Brazilian designers use are not peculiar to Brazil, it is rather how they use them, the choices they make, the way they manipulate materials, shape and colour that enables their creations to be demonstrative of and clearly rooted in the Brazilian culture. Also at times the reflex of the tensions in that culture between: the local and the growing national; the periphery and the emerging centres, such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; an increasing global industry and the local traditions; modes of manufacture; the amateur and the more high powered industrially based; the amateur skill developed at home and the more developed design schools and design education can influence culture and resulting design.

Figure 3 and 4 are other examples of a work on what already exists, modifying its use, changing it creatively and with no restriction according to new needs. It shows a discarded car wheel used as a base for a metallic picket. Figure 3 shows it filled with concrete and used to hold a plastic net protection in a building in the city of Brasília; Figure 4 shows the same device without concrete, used to establish a border for the parking area on a street in Goiânia city, 200km far from Brasília.

Figure 3   Figure 4

Historically, Brazil is a hybrid, mixed nation, whose religious activities used to define the social life calendar. This promoted the interaction between differing social layers, a phenomenon which also had aesthetic consequences. There are many different ways of interpreting this process shortly presented above. Schwarcz (2005 p15-17) states that "*it is not possible to believe in a unique definition. Brazil is so many things! We are more complex*". Brazilian sociologist Freyre (1987 p55) affirms that "*we are a*

*kind of '**eurotropical**' civilisation, perhaps the most ample miscegenation in human kind history*".

Beyond these strong multiethnic and multiracial cultural characteristics is the dynamism imprinted in it. Along its trajectory Brazil has developed a culture of festivities, spectacles, where Carnival is its greatest expression, including its music, dance, football, and entertainment industry. This is in constant transition and never completely stable. It can be expected that the Brazilian cultural patterned system has imperatives that would constrain the choices and shape the character of Brazilian design. An example of this festivities' economy culture could be experienced in September 2009 in Recife, the capital city of Pernambuco state, in the Northeast, at the Guararapes International Airport. There, while collecting their luggage on the carousel, passengers were welcome with a presentation of "*Frevo*" dance and its typical music (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5 – A "Frevo" presentation at the Guararapes International Airport

"*Frevo*" is part of the Pernambuco's popular culture, mainly seen during Carnival, which takes place in February. It is an example which may be easily associated to the influences this festive culture may have on design 6 holds.

Figure 6 – "*Frevo*" performance

Figure 7 shows a trash box of a hotel room in Joinville, a city in the countryside of the Paraná state, South of Brazil. Divided into five grouped parts for the selection of garbage materials, revealing an attitude of quick adjustment to actual environment concerns, the bin has a shape and colours which can be easily related to the umbrella the dancer seen on Figure 6.

Figure 7 – Bin for garbage selected collection in a hotel room

6. Conclusion

The two main words for design given by the Portuguese lexicon which are closer to the English original meaning are two: '*Projeto*' and '*Desenho*'. However, after the official introduction of the word Design in Brazil in 1963, it has been largely accepted and incorporated in the Brazilian Portuguese vocabulary as it is in English. The word Design also achieved other meanings in its trajectory to the present day in the Brazilian context, following Brazilian culture identity patterns and adjusted to global wording for design. Words for design in Brazilian Portuguese can be summarized as a rational conception of a sequence of actions, its expression in a perceptible and clear way, and/or the product of such ideational creation, with or without an industrial purpose.

Brazilian identity in design developed mainly from the 1920's. Nowadays, how the designers use the design elements and how they resolve the tensions, and how they engage with the material needs is what adds meaning to the Brazilian nature which results in a particular look evidenced in the design products.

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