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Drawing in the project: image and object

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1. This text relates to our current investigation on the relationship between design and drawing. The text *Design through Drawing* (Pombo and Magalhães, 2005, 61-72) - allows us to demonstrate the possibility of understanding the subject of design through drawing, as the heir of *disegno* of the Italian Florentine Renaissance Culture and as way of projectual action.

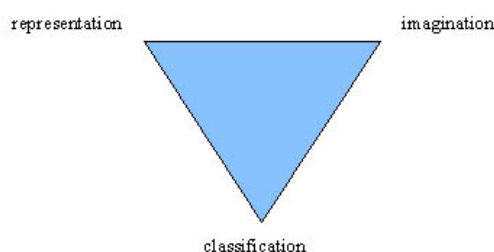
We consider the origin of the *disegno* as proposal of the project since drawing was the subject that was able to bring together the various arts designated as drawing (*arti del disegno*). In Renaissance *disegno* as a liberal art instils itself as a subject deriving from *theoria*; the abstract intellectual knowledge acquired through contemplative observation.

From the 18th century drawing, as an artistic action, starts to conquer autonomy.

Drawing liberates itself from its project function to art (in the *disegno* tradition) and asserting its autonomy by abiding by its own internal rules.

Contemporary drawing, motivated by the action of desire, abandons the artistic *necessity* and becomes an object of art. Drawing is neither history through memory of its past (classical drawing), nor the revelation of the invisible through the visible (romantic drawing), but simply the manifestation of art itself (contemporary drawing).

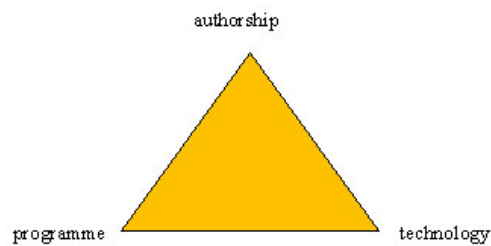
As act of projecting (and not as manifestation of art itself) drawing is the condition of existing for..., drawing exists as a function that gives form to a project. Drawing (pre)exists as a multidisciplinary function: the triangular correlation between *representation- classificacion- imagination*. (Partenone, 1984-1990, 36)



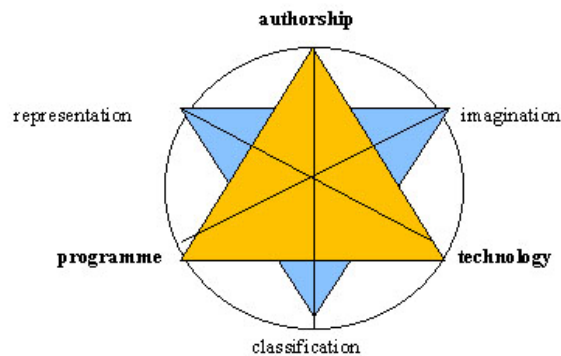


To represent means the possibility of giving visibility to the project's purpose. To classify corresponds to the attribution of meaning in the objects' world. To imagine applies to the continuation of the purpose.

We work with the definition of design as the result of the triangular correlation between *authorship-programme-technology*. (Providência in Calvera, 2003, 199)

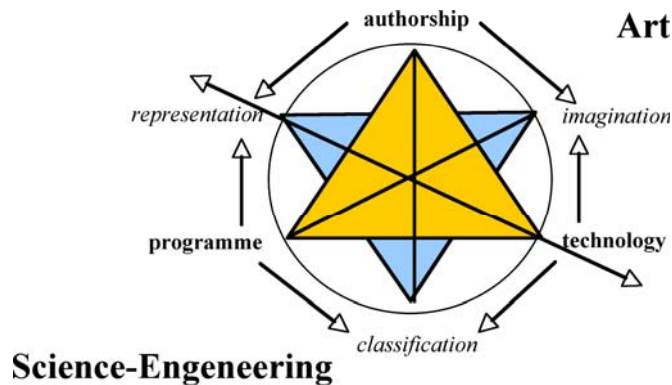


The articulation between the two triangles leads to a polarization of design more from the side of authorship, programme or technology according to a polarization of drawing more from the side of representation, clasification, imagination.



In an attempt to articulate the triangle described as the result of a project in design (as the relationship between *author-programme-technology*) with drawing via which the project is fulfilled (as the relationship between *classification-representation-imagination*), this would result in a figure whose authorship would arise from the interval between *representation-imagination*, the programme from the interval between *representation-classification*, and technology between *classification-imagination*.

Considering the representation of the project in design as the relationship between these two triangles, then design is closer to science-engineering by the representation of the semi-circles defined by peripheral movement between the representation and technology touching the vertices of programme and classification. Nonetheless, it is closer to art when it comes to authorship and imagination; the peripheral movement of the semi-circle.



However, design appeals to drawing either when the programme is a priority or when the “artistic need” is predominating. Drawing as the possibility of construction of the idea, determines the appearance of the object’s form, while representation of the object. Drawing is *for* design the projectual instrument that enables the visible appearance of the idea.

In this context drawing is as the axis that marks the possibility of design to maintain itself open, during its course of projection, to possible executions that have not been predetermined. Drawing while product of representation allows the project to be open to different interpretations. Disquietudes, interrogations, hybrid suppositions are inscriptions of drawing in the project that allows for the compatibility between knowledge and proposal, reflection and practical implication, thought and action.

Furthermore, we argue that drawing *in* art is different from drawing *in* design in that the drawing is still committed to the project by the idea that promotes it. Drawing *in* design “associates itself” with drawing *in* art as a visible representation of the uncertainty of the object of design as an artefact of desire, but only as a “passing” formulation and not as the inevitable finality of design.

2. Based on the suggestion that the implication of drawing can be found in the project of design, two questions arise:
 the first: How does drawing manifest itself while a representation in the project in design?
 the second: What is the formal result of this manifestation in the configuration of the object?

2.1. We have approached the first question by considering the possibility of imagery action of the drawing to summon the indecision of the object of design. Contemporary drawing implied in the project of design is no longer a mere material resolution at the service of design, neither its materialisation as its image. Drawing inscribes itself as a confluent, intermittent, vague and/or dense place, which possesses itself of the matter and with it transforms into action.

In the act of drawing, the “desire” that presides over the project as a symbolic action, reveals itself in its willingness to act with the matter that is the drawing, recognising in the action of drawing its transformation in



object of drawing. Drawing does not drain itself in its representation with the action that reveals the idea but “contacts” with the “real of the thing” and in that “contact”, which is always partial, punctual, accidental... with the “thing”, transforming itself in a drawn object whilst «thing» of the drawing.¹ It aspires to the real of the «thing» with the certainty that its conquest will always be postponed, since the real corresponds to the totality of the «thing» cannot be represented. So, “thing” corresponds to the Lacanian concept of real as entity that can not be represented, different from the Lacanian concept of reality as construction symbolically represented. The proximity of the drew object to the «thing» occurs as formal derivation of its vocation as symbolic interpreter. In this sense, drawing is the symbolic manifestation of “thing”, i.e. symbolizes reality as manifestation of the part that can be interpreted and not the whole that corresponds to the real (that can not be represented).

Having this in mind, cannot drawing, within the realm of design, announce the possibility of this one revealing itself beyond the factuality of the constructed/produced object through industrial or other means?

Only a partial understanding of design could exclude the widespread consideration of drawing (artistic condition included).² Reducing drawing only to the project plain, doesn't it correspond to an imposition of limits or barriers within the subject realm of design? While making use of drawing to think the project, isn't design using it, also to think its own subject of design? And in this case, does drawing serve as the act of exercise and experiment of the thought of what wants to come into sight/occurrence? Design uses drawing to reveal itself as an artefact, even when it does away with the materiality of the object, its revelation as an immaterial form depends on drawing. In this case the drawing faces the possibility of being the means and the end, and by revealing itself as the end it *represents itself* as the object.

Some of the design of the 21th century – at least the idea of design of the 21th century that recognises in the design a course through *disegno* as project matter – seems to run out in the idea of itself. The post-modern representations of the object of design excessively symbolic whose purpose is no other than to reveal the precariousness of the object of design whilst a symbolic representation. (figs. 3. e 4.)



3. Isabelle Leijn, relax carpet, 2000

¹ The «things» based on the lacanian concept as the existential resolution that cannot be represented, similarly drawing, whilst participant in art can never, entirely, represent. Isn't it this incomplete condition that allows it perpetuate?

² Right from the start this interdisciplinary consideration of design will reflect this possibility.

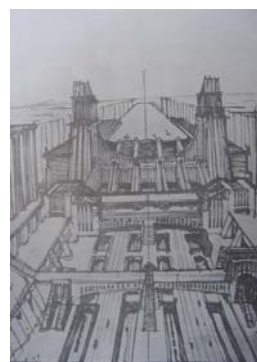


4. Emmanuel Dietrich, pilable fruit-basket, 1999

The survival of design depends for sure more on its capacity/necessity for comprehension - and all that exists implied within that need – as the conflicting action that reveals the object, origin of its affable affective relationship with the world, inevitably understood with the brevity of time.³

In this case will the proximity/comparison with the artistic vanguards of the 20th century occur? Lastly, doesn't the artefact of design pose once more a problem of representation of *I* and *the world* as a problem of representation through the image?

The beginning of the 21st century the project realises itself as an immaterial intention. The assumption of the image overlaps many times the material intentions of the realisation of the object. The immaterial projects exit as work that leaves marks and are referred by others that succeed them in project. The importance of the work, whose reference is immaterial and that influence and determine the appearance and presence of other objects, is undeniable. Since the beginning of the 20th century that many immaterial objects become determining project references such as projects of futuristic architecture. (figs. 1. e 2.)



1. Sant' Elia, "Aeroplane Station", 1912

³The short period with which we relate to contemporary objects depends hugely on our investment in "affectiveness". As we reduce the world of its pleasure, we exclude ourselves from it affectively, denying the action necessary to survival. Objects reduced to the idea of pleasure run out rapidly, consuming themselves, denying the possibility of being refused, excluding themselves from a presence that survives.



2. Sant' Elia, "New City", 1913

These examples show that much more than the realisation of the object it is its image that is in question and in some cases it substitutes its own reality, i.e., the object is pure image. The resonance that Modernism has brought to the world through the fragmentation of the object in multiple images, gives rise to the presence of the image as a double: the ready-made of Duchamp.

The meanings of the objects multiple themselves whilst existence and interpretation causing the oscillation in meaning to remain. The duality of the image starts to exist as an evoked object and represented image, avoiding the presumed unique place of the images.

The distancing of the object from its image has been progressive, to the point where the latter seems to want its *uniqueness*, substituting the object. Nowadays, we have access to the object through its image and in many instances the image passes itself off as the object.

2.2. Moving on to the second issue: what is the formal result of the manifestation of the drawing whilst representation in the configuration of the object?

The images are no longer entities through which we perceive the world but forms through which we make considerations about the world. It is no longer the effort of perceiving the things but the possibility of *how we perceive them* and which place we attribute them. According to Gianfranco Neri [in Partenone (1996)]:

... life like the exterior world isn't in an image or a concept; it's more in a bond, in an imperfect adherence that gives away to the symbolic, to the intermittent, to the transcendent, to the inexhaustible potential of the images. (p.20)

The identification between the image and the *object-thing* does not correspond with what is real. What is real corresponds to the totality of the «thing» that cannot be represented while the image interprets a subjective



reality of the *object* as a formal derivation of the «thing».⁴ The thing and the object are different entities. The «thing» cannot be reached it is distant and cannot be touched, contrary to the object, which is defined. We project ourselves on the object but never on the «thing»; when the latter is charged with symbolic value it transforms in the object. Therefore, knowledge of the «thing» does not exist only knowledge of the object.

Having a representation of the «thing» is impossible in that it escapes the conceptual domain; the conceptual schemes that give rise to the domain and the exercise of the matter can never refer to the «thing». Thus, it can never be completely copied or evoked; in this case the images denounce the presence of the *other* that cannot be represented.

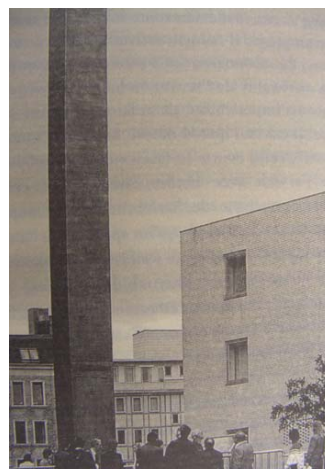
The contemporary consideration of the images that identify them as the *thing in itself* and transforms them in *objects* whose reference is the images themselves, and diffuses them as coincidence between the «thing» and the image. By annulling the distance between the perception of the *thing* and its transformation into a subjective image, the query about the *thing* is annulled: a state necessary to its survival as a projected entity in reality. Sartre [in Partenone (1996)] refers to this issue as follows:

Propose/present an image implies constructing the object at the margin of what is totally real, thus keeping what is real at bay(...). An image is not a denied-world from a certain point of view. (p20)

The contemporary proliferation of disperse images upon the *thing* does not allow the necessary alternation to the survival of the *object-thing*. The conceptual duplication substitutes the representation and the latter starts to exist as a model of itself. The *object-thing* starts to exist as a copy of itself and so on until loses sight of its own reality. As Zoffoli refers [in Partenone (1996)], “the multiplication of the copies gives rise to the progressive de-realisation of the world and with this the affirmation of hyper-reality. Therefore, everything has already been reproduced”. (p.20)

By inaugurating the presence of the image as a double Duchamp’s ready-made has given the object a double meaning regarding its relationship between reality and representation. As is referred by Carolina Vacarro [in Partenone, (1996)] “the ready-made is none other than a celebration of the identity of the object upon itself” (p.42). The meanings of the object multiply themselves whilst existence and interpretation, the oscillation in meaning remains. The duplicity of the image becomes the evoked object and the represented image, avoiding the presumable univocal place of the images. In the project, the understanding of the images as the physical place of the representation of the idea is rendered impossible, and these become the starting point for projective action. The images (drawing) which was the last acquisition of the project, as images that revealed the idea, have now become process “arrangements”, successive collages that allow for the appearance of the idea. The finality of the projecting activity as a useful action, fixed on the representation of the form, ceases to be true when the project is considered the “communicative” reason par excellence. The operating dematerialization of the 21st century is the result of this understanding. (figs. 5.e 6.)

⁴ We assume the lacanian concept of the «thing» and this instance, «thing» and object are entities that are not identifiable with the same image.



5. Esther e Jochen Gerz, The monument against facism, 1986



6. Esther e Jochen Gerz, The monument against fascism, 1991

At present, the images of the project have acquired their own value, which is not just related to their representation appeal. The contamination is no longer interdisciplinary but within its own discipline and within the possibility the images themselves evoke.

Gianfranco Neri [in Partenone (1996)] refers to the issue of representation as follows:

We have been witnessing a vast hybrid process that via the ways and means employed it has operated a substantial change in the nature and phenomenology of representation. A change that in short could be outlined as such: if at first the image (drawing) configured as the full stop of a complex procedure where the creative energy used to produce it was directed at achieving the “objects” endowed with a strong innovative value, currently the image (drawing) marks the initial

The object derives from the «thing» but without it being its representation.



point of the work, as a preliminary and pre-existing “fact”, as a granted fact. The image is no longer the result of the laboured inspection of the artist’s inner nature but its pre-existence like an operative horizon that prefigures itself to its “manipulation”: penetrating the context, extracted from its reference environment, relocated and related in another way. From production it slides into reproduction, from the materiality of the things to the immateriality of the relationships, from representation to “manifestation”. (p.69-70)

Thus, drawing is the revelation and comprehension matter of design, referring to representation as the thought process and constituting itself as the founding and cognitive nucleus of design. According to Partenone (1996) “ drawing is not a mere means of communication of a formal idea but its integrate part” (p.70). Its outcome is a subject matter that refers to the uncertainty of the *object-thing* recognised as a cultural presence that is bound to human existence, unable to fix itself to a sole meaning. On the contrary, it is in a perpetual movement and subject to the tensions of the culture it belongs to, as defined by Maurizio Vitta (1996):

the vicissitude of the objects of use is proposed as an experience that penetrates profoundly in the secret of history: in reality they do not present themselves as an aspect of the culture that sustains them – like verbal language –, they are the culture in their contradictions and acquisitions. This implies that cultural status of this objects of use are substantiated by the multiplicity, the provisional and the uncertain but it also means that this instability and mobility give rise to the conducting thread and defines – within its labyrinth logic – our relationship with world. (p.14)

However, the consideration of the objects of everyday use as entities that belong and form the culture of their time was not always passive one. Its existence cast aside by a train of thought unable to give it sense of value of a culture, or reduce the objects their mere technical dimension, qualified in the light of the industrial enclosure. This did not prevent Aby Warburg in 1927 [in Vitta (1996)], which founded his history of culture on the broad view of the object outside the restricted circle of the Great Art, from referring to them in such terms:

The work of applied art is misfortune in that it is considered products of inferior of *homo faber* and are relegated to the basement of the museum of intellectual history, where the best change they stand is to be presented as creations of technical interest. Who would with ease have the idea of coming into tune with these precious pieces, considering them to be sensitive organs of perception of the exterior and interior life of their time? (p.12)

Although Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin never met and thus never had the opportunity to discuss and clarify the train of thought of their time, both ventured in giving their perception of the universe of the objects as being both thought and culture generating entities and their capacity to reveal themselves as universal entities. Walter Benjamin, in his fragmented and incomplete writings *Passages*, exemplifies above all that the objects of daily use bear a latent presence whose revelation arises from the assertion that “ it’s the objects that think us up”. Furthermore, according to Theodor W. Adorno [in Vitta (1996)], the *Passages* by W. Benjamin should above any treaty about *the essence of being* by joining the sense of the things with the collective existence:



he wanted to reach the essence where it does not allow itself to be introduced as an automatic operation, nor be contemplated in a precarious way. He wanted to decipher it methodically using the configuration of elements with different meanings. The enigma became the model of his philosophy. (p.12)

According to W. Benjamin value and meaning should not be sought in the logic of abstraction but in the network of connections between the objects and their users. His consideration does not derive from the objective reality or the subjective truth but in the mobile meeting point of both, necessary for the vitality of the world which appears as an enigma to in the network of all connections. Maurizio Vita (1996) regards W. Benjamin's enigma as follows:

The image of enigma is the one that best expresses the mobility the object demands from the thought so as to exist; if not defined at least an intuition. In the apparent incongruity between the figures and the readings by which the value of the enigmatic game is substantiated reside the secret relationships that owing to their variation allow the hidden meaning to surface. The same is valid for the objects. The way they give themselves up to the human experience is never univocal: quite the contrary it should be sought in the countless relationships that they establish with the world. It goes without saying that we introduced in the object all its symbolic load but it is in that introduction that we find ourselves; and in that reflection - through we sometimes are taken on the role of the instrument or the plain middleman - we should seek the meaning of our culture. (p.12-13)

Therefore, it is this nature of enigma that provides the object with the possibility of asserting itself as *truth of being* and with the reason and meaning of a culture.

The notion of historical object is for W. Benjamin (1986) a place of redemption, "the present determines the object of the past to grab the heart of the issue, the point where its pre-and post-history separate". (p.618)

The W. Benjamin's writings concede a way viewing and thinking; to use the authors own words (1986), "in the field to which we dedicate ourselves, we merely give rapid knowledge. The text is the tone that continues afterwards and for a long time with resonance." (p.591)

3. Through the exposition of issues 1 and 2 we conclude that drawing is implicated doubly in the project: as *image* and as *object-thing*. The drawing does not run out in the representation, on the contrary it reveals the multiplicity of the symbolic interpretation that exists in the non-determined possibility of the object of design. The configuration of the object of design occurs with act of drawing, which represents the symbolic possession of the immediate images in/for the conflict they represent. The objects of design besides the "functional representation" open through drawing to multile possibilities of symbolic interpretation.



Without the representational nature, the object would be thrown away from the symbolic reality that exists in it. On the other hand, to fix it to a symbolic universe would be denying it the possibility of existing as a form. Drawing will be to design the guarantee of a symbolic possibility consummated in the object. The idea of the object of design separated from drawing would represent the fictitious manner of its existence, i.e., the dependence on its function. The object of design is the *object-thing* even when it is a symbolic artefact and so as derived from drawing. The “invention” as a result of seeing and thinking makes use of the drawing to access the object of design. In this case the intention of Elio Zamponi [in Brunetti (2003)] is true when referring that, “if you have a pencil in your pocket, before or after, you’ll be tempted to use it (if you’ve learnt how to write and you’ve got something to say)” (p.167). The urge of the drawing that “before or after” sets the symbolic contained in the “desire” reveals a possibility to the latent *thing* existing in the *con-figuration* of the object of design.

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