

The following text is part I of a threefold string of lectures I was honoured to deliver at the Academy of Art named after Kamoliddin Bekhzod in Tashkent at the occasion of our short termed affiliation to this school. In September 2000, Ros and I stayed at Tashkent for three weeks in order to instigate the Design department of the academy for a stronger integration into the enormous history of art and craft of Uzbekistan. This first lecture was meant as an introduction into the field for an audience of minor knowledge. It is reprinted here without alteration to the form presented.

## **On the Relation of Art, Craft, and Design**

### ***Preliminary Remarks On an Open Field***

First of all, let me express my gratitude for the challenge to be here, to be able to talk to you about my thoughts and findings, and most of all, to feel the warm welcome you and your institution gave to my wife and me. I am especially indebted with thanks to Professor Abdullaev who invited me here, to Dr. Feruza Rashidova who initiated the idea of this knowledge exchange, to my wife Ros who not only prepared all of these enterprises but will talk to you several times as well, and to my young friend Djamshid Yusupov who has volunteered for the as dreadful as responsible task of interpreting my outings.

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Please, allow me to start today with a few theoretical outlines which may sound far too simple to be taken for granted in any academic context but which will form a red line through most of my talks given here in Tashkent. Emphasizing these propositions I will not express a personal opinion but condense a number of theoretical approaches credited to most of today's circulation of both art and design. This circulation is, as you may well hear from these notes, surely and to a large extend coined by the worldwide economical processes which seemingly do not care too much whether you work and deal in industrial products, social services, software development, art, literature or design. But let me put forward this phrase with the same accent on the fact that it is this development that gives your work a great challenge all over the world and that it is a great lust to take part in these processes, no matter how you will define or name them.

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First proposition: Art is not design, and design is not art. Both art and design rely on craft but with a different emphasis. For explaining these sentences, let me look at the basic trifolium of words:

**Craft** is the oldest creative tradition in mankind and existed long before both art and design. Craftsmanship is a human denunciation, it marks the earliest attempts of mankind in a development further than being well-equipped mammals. Craft is synonymous to traditions with slow changes over centuries as, e.g., the wonderful Uzbekian crafts of dying and weaving silk and other textiles or the long history of ceramics may show. But with a closer look anybody will be able to remark the differences certain motifs or colours had undergone by new interpretations of old forms. This process can be named history but it lacks the certainty of dates and facts – changes in craftsmanship are slow, and they normally are not fixed to names or figures.

**Art**, in the sense that is taught in academies, shown in museums, and distributed by galleries or agents, is merely seven hundred years old. Older and newer objects of craftsmanship – like architecture, ornaments, mural paintings, treasures or sculptural pieces found in human graves – are looked at as art but they lack an important denomination: the name of an artist. This fact grounds the history of art in Europe as within the 14th to the 16th century family names were established by Christian church registers. These names had to be used for all legal actions, and one of the earliest acts of copyright was the artist's signature. Since two centuries, we write art history by looking at the artists' lives and its relation to the aesthetic production.

Art, on the other side, follows similar traditions as craftsmanship, it even relies to a certain extent on the same follow-ups of inventions and forms. The difference between craft and art traditions lies basically in the fact that each artistic development can be traced by historical methods and contains a meaning in itself. Craft and art often share processes in making – as the line-up of sketch, drawing, study or model, outline, one-to-one carton and the final painting or sculpture. Similar working processes can be found in preparing canvases, producing colours, shaping wood or stone as well as in many more fields for which you

will know examples of your own. The line between arts and crafts is drawn exactly between tradition and invention – what serves the first cannot be named art, and what is different to anything known before leaves any tradition.

**Design** has been established with the industrial revolution of the 19th century and conveys its existence to the fact that the English parliament wanted to save its traditional and new textile patterns from being reproduced by companies in other countries. The word design means more than the mere ornamental or beautiful skin of an object produced in industry; its meaning incorporates all inventive processes before and after production: the concept of an idea what people could need, the invention of a construction or a visual appearance, the conception of producing, the marketing and advertising after production. With the growing world of media communication, the word production receives a new, post-industrial meaning to which I will return later in my lecture.

In most academic traditions, design is strongly related to craftsmanship whereas art seems to derive its tradition from historical sources. The relation of craft and design thus has to be defined from another tracks than those implied by academic thinking. Design is looked at and used in everyday life so it tends to fall beyond recognition by most people – a German book on design once carried the title „Design is invisible“. But this does not lower its importance. On the contrary, design influences the style and habits of people far more than art could ever do. Any kind of popular music is design, your living places as well as the areas you like to go to depend on design, a large number of decisions you resolve every day is dependent on questions of design. All of this may be unconscious to you but it is there, without any doubt.

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Art and design share the pledge for innovation or, at least, invention (which is a paradigmatic term as well in science as in art). The common word for the ability to produce things unexpected or thoughts uncommon is creativity.

**Creativity** goes far beyond craftsmanship as it gives up the values of tradition in order to find new methods, ideas, or forms. In most cases the

innovations of art and design can be described as aesthetic ones but this does not necessarily mean that their qualities do not go beyond these limits, too. Any society needs creativity in nearly any field but often enough just this creativity is viewed as a threat to traditions and social commonplaces. There is no reason for this fear if it is looked at from appropriate angles. On the contrary, creativity is a service to society only recently recognized by industry and politics as far more important than, e.g., plain capital or production capacity.

Creativity is a property of both individuals and their social background. The copyright law was invented for design, not for art, literature, or music for which it has been made suitable only a hundred years ago. Design copyright therefore fits as well for the needs of a nation, a company, a workshop as for the individual inventor. Before and besides laws which have to guarantee the economics of art, craft and design the importance of creativity aims at different directions for artists and designers.

**Art is what the artist makes.** This sentence attributed to Marcel Duchamp describes a long line of social and aesthetic relations used for criticising art and writing its history. This sentence defines that being an artist is a self-denomination. The day you decide to be an artist your work is art. This rather redundantly sounding sentence has a number of implications.

a.) With an excuse to all teachers in this room – you do not need any training for making art. This fits to most curricula in art: Art is unteachable. Under a different heading I will return to this point later and will give relief to all of my colleagues present and absent.

b.) As mentioned before, art is strictly connected to the name of an artist. When I drop words like Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Michail Wrubel etc. then you almost certainly combine certain subjects, colours or formats with this name. Even if there are stylistic conventions within a given time and place – mostly in the form of 'isms' like French Impressionism or Cubism, Russian Symbolism etc. – most of the stylistic allusions are given to a singular person, to a name, to an individual. All aesthetic theories of the 19th and 20th century praise the inventive genius as a lone creator, despite all efforts in the diversification of labour

which had reached art as well as any other social area.

c.) The self-definition as an artist is a complex process emerging from psycho-social foundations rarely aware to the individual defining itself as an artist. And: This self-definition has to prove right. There is no romanticism involved – society has to accept your work, your ideas, your way of life. If nobody knows about you and your work, you are not existing as an artist. Or, to change the initial phrase: Art is what the artist makes in the public named art world. As this public is growing and getting more and more attention by the media it is becoming an open space. Being an artist therefore means to be in the public but any of your actions is strictly connected to your name and appearance.

Design works exactly the other way round. Whatever is designed has to prove its public quality in everyday life. This means that its acceptance by people using it makes any designed object (or software, idea, concept, proposal) more and more anonymous. The designer is hiding behind his design, and if she or he is really successful people tend to forget his name. Who knows Karl von Drais, the inventor of the bicycle? There was even a hand-driven railroad vehicle named after him – the draisine – but he himself fell into total forgottenness. You might recall the name Graham Alexander Bell for the successful introduction of the telephone as there still is a company named after him operating world wide – but do you remember his profession and what it had to do with his design? [He was a teacher for deaf and dumb children and hoped to improve their speaking abilities by a machine transferring sounds into visual action.] Examples like these can be found in the history of each country – often you know that this or that design comes from the Ferghana valley or from Buchara but it would take enormous efforts to find the people behind its creation.

The anonymity of its makers is shared by both craft and design but there is a difference: Design is far more active within time and space. Designers do not only conceive ideas, proposals, or objects for future uses; they also set trends of fashion, production, or economy. Thus their time scale is a short-lived one: tomorrow's interests are the businesses of the day after tomorrow. If you

think of today, you are of fashion, business, trendiness. But if you think too many years ahead, nobody will understand you. One of the reasons for this time-boundness of design will be discussed later on.

Of course, designers are as well known among their colleagues as artists are. Sometimes designers gain a similar social status as artists and sign their work or sell it by their name. But there is a difference to art: It is far more dangerous to do so as a commercial failure can never be attributed to a genius, except for being laughed at. Treating design like art and treating art like design has been a sign of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the Western world but today these fields are separating again. And this has to do with the rise of information technology and all of its post-industrial services and production.

Art lives on the fact that people recognize an artist and her/his work as an important contribution to society. Design lives on its everyday use and the quality of life achieved with it – not only in the sense of life-style but as well in standards of ecology, health, and nutrition. Craft had been there and will be there but cannot add important contributions to society except for its stability and convention which is a value in its own. So I will concentrate on both art and design within the next minutes.

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Second proposition: Art and design do not exist without social communication about it; craft does. Means of communication are media, and each medium changes not only the distribution of art, craft, and design but its basics, too. Again, let me start to handle this subject by an explanation of the word.

**Medium** is a grammatical term adopted in Europe through the Greek language [what we have is, in fact, the Roman translation of it]. This term describes a status between active and passive, a change in between time and place. The term was re-invented by medieval alchemists [mythological practitioners of material conversions] for any device which changes the quality or status of certain materials but not itself while doing so – today's technical term in chemistry is a catalyst. This term was still in use when the important inventions for the basics of industrial life – like

steam engine, railroad, photography and such – were found [and each of these inventions had more than one creator at the same time]. The pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood named the clay mixture for the composition of his famous Jasper ware [the mat blue series] a medium; his son Thomas Wedgwood searched for a method of copying painted motifs onto a series of plates for Tsarina Catherine II. and eventually became one of the pre-inventors of photography.

The word medium arose into its current meaning by the growing importance of communication in the industrial world of the late 19th century. In 1895 the French anthropologist Gustave Le Bon published his pamphlet 'Psychologie des foules' in which he suggested that images are accepted by masses of people faster than words. For the contiguous follow-up of images in people's minds while mass movements he used the verb 'mediate' and the adjective 'immediate' which was taken up by later authors to form the phrase 'mass media'. By the 1920s 'mass communication' and 'mass media' were used more or less as synonyms; they received political importance after the Soviet revolution and within the American society as basic to advertising and the communication industry.

Film and broadcast became the first technical mass media – and they needed rooms as cinemas or devices like radios for the transmission of their communication. With the growing impact of technical communication onto society – and, historically seen, there is no difference in this importance to both Eastern and Western ideologies throughout the 20th century – the design of all tools for information exchange turned rapidly more crucial to the survival of large companies, national economies, and social systems. Without information exchange tools like the telephone, the telegraph, and the wireless broadcast none of the World Wars could be named as such. Within the Cold War era, each time a new weapon threatened the survival of mankind there had to be a new spy tool that guaranteed early warnings. and: The military interests gave birth to technologies which nearly nobody would trace to the these origins – or do you recall that stereophonic transmission was designed for German bomber pilots to find their

targets in Great Britain? Rock music as we know it is an outcome of military technology.

The strongest impact of design so far has emerged from the introduction of computers into society. From calculating devices used since centuries – remember the Abacus – and only developing in the speed of operation the 1970s and 1980s saw an explosion of software applications applicable to almost any instrument or household good. It is a question of design to conceive tools that replace mechanical parts in cars, washing machines, photographic apparatus, wrist watches, and so on.

The future of computers lies in their average use within nearly any device of everyday life. Today's motor cars normally contain four to five complete personal computers for engine management, gear optimization, steering aids, air condition, central locking, and so forth. On the other hand, the number of mechanical parts in a gear shift has been reduced by more than fifty percent within the last few years. Similar developments could be exemplified for thousands of other uses – and let me give you one more idea before I return to the fields supposedly better known to you.

A general shift for the meaning of the term design has occurred by the fact that – despite the great modernist phrase coined by the architect Louis Sullivan – **form does not follow function** anymore. This is due to the fact that the term function is a mechanical one: The form of a computer has nothing to do with what it does – counting and processing, storing data and distributing information.

These processes are immaterial, at least invisible in the sense of the average human eye-sight. The last necessities within the design of a computer which could be described as functions are the interfaces between the human being and the calculating machine: monitor, keyboard, mouse, and printer. Laptop and notebook computers can only be minimized as far as human hands are able to work on them. For those people who not need to write texts on a computer most applications can work from the mouse or a graphic tablet. Again, these examples could be named by dozens, and I only hinted at them here to interest you in the changed role of design as a whole.



Media and design therefore have linked so far that they are nearly indiscernible. This development is the background of a world wide hype named **Multimedia**. According to politicians and economists in the Western world, no curriculum in art or design can survive without the integration of multimedia courses. To my opinion, this is only half the truth. From the origin of the word, from its history and shifts of meaning, it is clear that media never are the ends of a creative process but nothing but tools, means, devices or instruments which help to reach more people, which help to optimize a conceptional notion of society, which will be part of everyday life everywhere in the world.

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Third proposition: Art is not arts. Craft is not crafts. Design is not designs. This sounds like a word puzzle but it is not. Up to this point of my lecture I have carefully avoided the plural form of these words, and my interpreter has done so as well. On the other hand, media are more than the sum of the specifications of each medium. Without further investigation into deep areas of linguistic denominations I can assure you that within all European languages – and the Japanese has acquired it from them, e.g. – the singularization gives the meaning of any term a transcendent shift. Design surpasses the number of designs given to objects and ideas; craft comprises both the abilities of craftsmen in workshop and the mastery of their production; art is the unreachable quality of all efforts by artists, as well in conception as in creation.

Media, on the other hand, are all communication means used for human understanding, from voice over language to lyrics – think about the shift of literature when it changed from the oral tradition to written or even printed texts. Here the plural presents the abstraction of all tools, instruments, and means past, present, and in the future. As a whole this is equally unreachable as the singular forms or art, craft, and design, but it aims at different goals: Media stay in between humans, in between devices and will form interfaces of all types between man and machines. But media never will reach the end, will have meanings in themselves except for the quality of transmission. Taken for granted, this leads to a definition of **what can be taught and learned** – and that

is the reason why we are all together here. You might have guessed from this introduction that the contents of any education in these fields are to be found within the arts, the crafts and the designs as well as within each medium. Curricular work has to concentrate on abilities, facilities and techniques – and on the hope that all teaching methods will open minds and brains of those who start to work within this area. Of course, the methods will differ from field to field, and I will end my lecture by giving brief accounts of some of them.

The oldest training is the one given in crafts. The master works and the apprentices help him, look at him, and slowly start to learn by copying him. There is nothing to be learned beyond the master's limits, and there is no allowance of trying anything besides the workshop's earned reputation. No ornament may be changed, no colour or handle might be different to the ones made yesterday.

There is nearly no word spoken or written about the craftsmen's qualities; craft education is entirely **learning by doing**. Theory would lead to abstraction, and reflection on the craft's purposes would stop its imminent values. Craft is a family affair, at least one son of a craftsman should become his successor – and in medieval Europe the first journeyman of a workshop had to marry the master's widow within a few months time when there was no son available. Continuity was and is the most important inherent quality of crafty work; any education in this area has to obey this rule first.

Training in the arts was often organized in similarity to craftsmen's workshop but differed in its consequences. Once an apprentice was accepted for his abilities he would receive minor tasks in the production of murals, paintings, prints, or sculpture. These tasks were conceived to be of lesser importance to the whole work but of individual freedom in execution for the young artisan.

Academic education in the arts was introduced when there were not enough qualified workshops to fulfil the needs of their feudal clients. So academic training started with crafty skills but left these behind after a relatively short period within the individual study. From then on, each artist learned to work on his name and fame; this could

be named a secondary education according to the founder of the Dusseldorf academy, Wilhelm von Schadow, who might have been the first to say that art cannot be taught. But you may gather from a short look at Russian painting in the 19th century that Schadow was a very successful founder of an academy and surely knew what had to be instructed to the students.

The abilities necessary for any free use of each medium can be taught or trained: drawing, painting, printing, sculpturing. Academies were open enough to integrate all accepted media for making art: engraving, lithography, typesetting, photography, film, and today they should be open enough for video-taping or computer rendering, html programming, animation, or leveling of Virtual Reality. This is the quality of any academic training in the arts and in design as well: It needs teachers who not only know how to handle a technique but have curricular methods at hand to instigate students to a free use of all these media for their own purposes.

This freeness – the autonomy of art is a two hundred years old debate worth several lectures on their own – has a technical background to be considered in all curricula of both art and design. Media of communication have their own histories and differ significantly in their importance to society at a given time. Woodcut printing was the illustrative medium of the 19th century, photography took over from 1890 to 1970. Since then the primary medium of visual information is the television – and this will be replaced by internet and multimedia applications within the next five to ten years.

Any medium that lost its primary importance as a transmitter of news and information receives a certain amount of freeness in use that stimulates artists of all kinds. Photography arose as an art form of worldwide recognition not earlier as the 1970s, the first academic professorship in Germany (again in Dusseldorf) being installed in 1976.

Design and media have a different connection: As designers serve their society by finding conceptions, ideas and objects for everyday life, they have not only to be technically well-informed but on the peak of media developments. Any new medium is designed and therefore will be welcomed by other designers immediately. The

time-line is a lot shorter than in the fields of arts and crafts: Designers may trace their origins from very long backgrounds in history and anthropology but their aims lie in the presence or the near future. A year is a long time in a designer's life.

Teaching design comprises some skills hitherto unknown in academies and workshops alike. The immateriality of information exchange processes leads to the development of conceptual qualities which up to now were thought to be part of economic, legal, or literal studies. The advantages of media technologies call for competences in these fields, so a growing number of designers is currently recruited from backgrounds in architecture, engineering, and computer sciences. This development even threatened the artistic grounds of design education in Germany for a while (in the early 1990s).

But as with most of other fields, you recognize after a few years of technical revolutions – which the introduction of computers brought to the 1990s – that there are basic crafts and abilities nobody can live without in these areas. Some of the best designers of computer games and Virtual Reality applications that visited my classes were excellent illustrators in either pencil, charcoal, or watercolours. Some of our best graduates in video animation had a solid background in either ceramics or photography.

And most important, you cannot predict who is coming out how with which technology at a certain time – the only quality that can be taught is the clearness of conception and the crafts of handling one, two, three or more media. In this way, arts, crafts, and design will be stay invariably linked to each other, especially on the ground of a responsible education promised by state institutes.

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Conclusion: Art, craft, and design cannot exist without communication about it. There are media both to produce art and design as well as to guarantee the successes of any communication about this work. All of this is not related to the work of an artist or a designer in itself; it is just a part of its public appearance. Our age is named post-industrial in the sense that communication has taken over large parts of everyday life that had to be granted by heavy industry before. And all of these areas are influential to the economics

of a state, of a city, of a school, of a family, of an individual like you.

In times of global information exchange nobody can exist just for himself while producing aesthetic objects of one or the other kind. The craftsmen dying silk or fabrics in Uzbekistan, e.g., will have to decide either to stay with their old fabrication methods and become extremely expensive and exclusive in their production, or they would have to choose cheaper materials and machine aided working methods which will reduce the quality of their results.

If there are good designers at hand, the latter alternative would not even come to the craftsmen's minds – if an exclusive product fits into schemes of life-style and fashion it will be sold worldwide. I will talk about these relations in one of my later lectures here. But examples like these are surely to be found in dozens when looking around in your wonderful country. Here begins the moral competence of designers: They find concepts of productions equally ecologic and economic, they create marketable objects, and they find ways of informing the world about it. Some theories on the relation of design and economy count up to 80% of any given national production to be qualified and improved by design.

Design has a firm ground in both arts and crafts which can be well trained in schools and workshops. The importance of design today lies in its conceptual quality of combining information, aesthetics, and beauty to a whole which is as undivisible as important to society.

Within the next days Ros and I want to present you some forms of art and design in history, in education, and in the presence of electronic imagery. It would be a great pleasure for us if you join us, and thank you for your patience so far!

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