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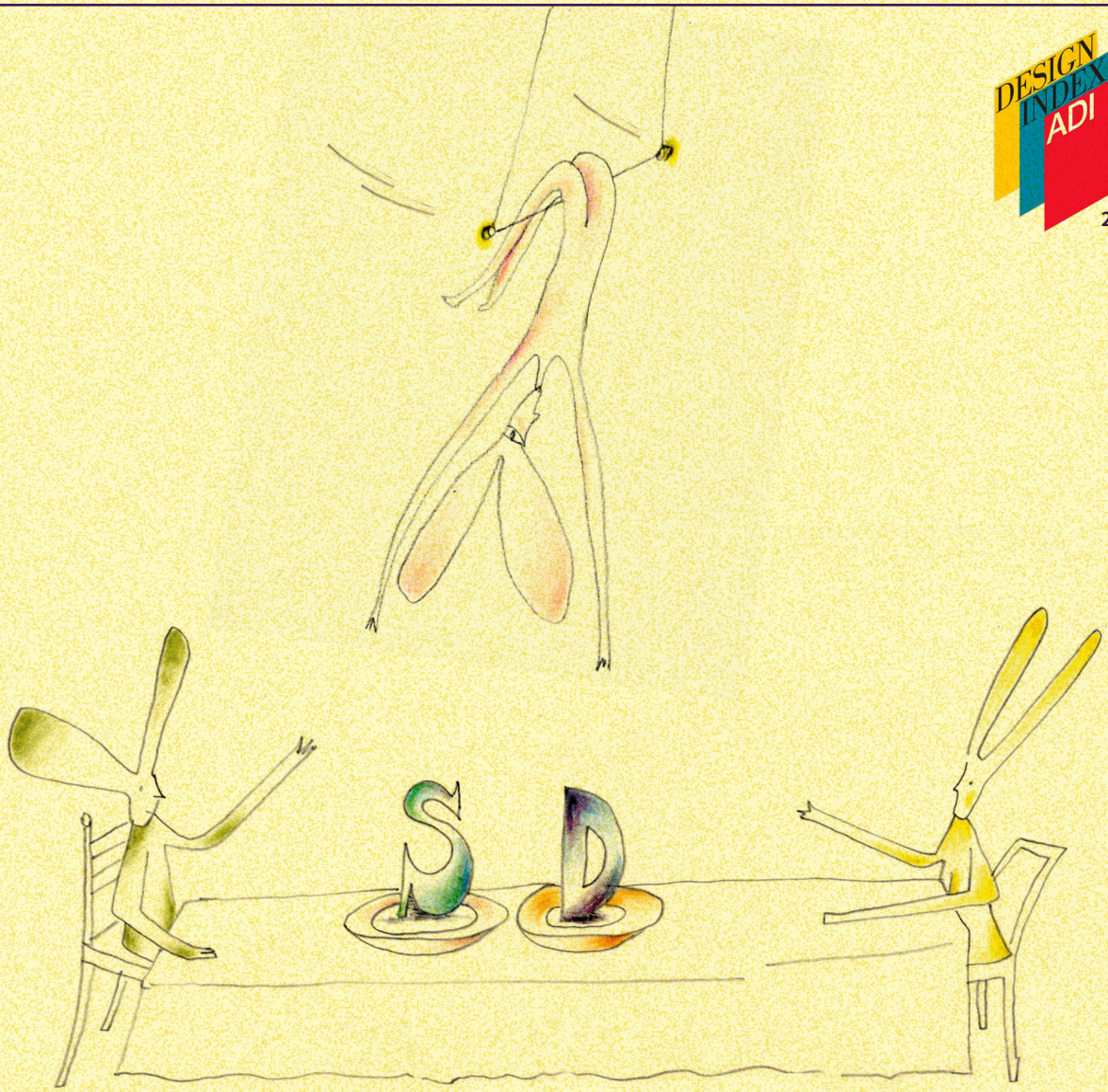

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Massimo Dolcini, *Anziani non autosufficienti*, poster, Comune di Pesaro, 1990 (courtesy of AIAP CDPG).

Saggi

Principles of Good Design and Social Design

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Throughout history designers, historians and critics have made their views known on a range of issues, or rather fundamental points that remain intrinsic to the practice of design, which we consider in this paper to be "criteria for good design", more specifically those which have always aimed to bring about a better world for all, and thus constitute the basis of social design. In order to justify the conclusions of this research, we have drawn upon a series of theoretical contributions and examples of "good design", and have categorised them into three fundamental principles that a design should possess, specifically a design should be: honest, ethical and easy to use and understand. The paper tries to provide various aspects that help designers to reflect upon their practice in order to continue producing "good design" for society.

KEYWORDS
Good Design
Design Fundamental Principles
Social Design
Ethical Design

1. Introduction

Designers, historians and critics have reached an agreement on a range of points, which we shall refer to as *criteria for good design* in this paper. Such criteria have existed since the birth of the profession, since they are inherent to its activity; therefore, rather than a theoretical reflection on the practice of design, what we exhibit in this paper is in fact its fundamental principles.

Since the Enlightenment, there has been an idea associated with the criteria for *good taste* that in principle came into being in order to oppose the excessive ornamentation of the Baroque, which considers that those objects lacking pretensions, also termed *honest*, are *well-designed*. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., both Director of Industrial Design at the MoMA and creator of the *Good Design* exhibitions, provided new impetus to these criteria as a guarantor of the quality of industrial products in the mid-20th century. According to Kaufmann (VGD, 2019, p. 33), *Good* meant:

> Satisfactory for its purpose; ample; full; considerable, not insignificant; possessing attractive qualities; agreeable, pleasant; adapted to a useful end; valid,

> adequate; of comparative excellence in its kind, admirable; commercially sound or reliable. (Kaufmann, 1950)

By virtue of the MoMA's efforts, the modern idea of *Good Design* first came to be considered during the 1930s, and was consolidated after the Second World War. The museum organised exhibitions under the title *Useful Objects* between 1938 and 1948. After the War, they were renamed *Good Design*, and took place between 1950 and 1955. The distinct prevalence of modern style in the post-war years allowed designers and historians to make these principles their own, as well as contribute to their distribution around the world. In 1959, Eliot Noyes claimed that "Good design 1: Fulfils its function, 2: Respects its materials, 3: Is suited to the method of production, 4: Combines these in imaginative expression" (VGD, 2019, p. 29). Dieter Rams' ten principles of *Good Design*, which we will explore further on, are perhaps the most renowned version of the basic principles of well-made design.

Recently, the museum has once again spearheaded this debate, organising the exhibition *The Value of Good Design*, open to the public from 10th February until 15th June 2019. The display focuses on bringing the concept of good design up to date, inquiring as to whether the values of the past mid-century can be translated and redefined for a 21st century audience. Admittedly, these principles have never disappeared: at present, *Good Design* awards are issued across the world, which has served to normalise the idea of a design based upon the modern conception passed down from Enlightenment, one which was centred on man and the honesty of his products, innovation, aesthetic and ethics. In 1951, Betty Pepis wrote that "Good design may mean different things to different people" (VGD, 2019, p. 22), a quote which has resurfaced 68 years after the curators of the aforementioned exhibition, which certainly justifies her point.

In this paper we have categorised the ideas which surround our modern concept of *Good Design* into three fundamental principles. As we elaborate upon them, we aim to contribute to defining and updating the concept of *good design* in order to devise a model that can be applicable to any one of its disciplines. We will demonstrate that such a model has always held societal benefit as its goal, and therefore it constitutes the foundation upon which social design has stood since its conception.

Well-designed objects that serve society and contribute to its development must be:

— Honest
— Ethical
— Easy to use and understand

1. Objects must be honest

According to one idea deeply rooted in the Arts&Crafts Movement, craftsmanship and the respect that craftsmen profess to have for their work, as well as the materials that they employ, indicate the honesty of their objects. According to Richard Sennett, "craftsmanship represents a basic and enduring human impulse, the desire to carry out a task well" (Sennett, 2009, p. 20). The act of making things solely for the sake of making them well already implies a marker of quality. In point of fact, this was the source of the main criticism from the outset concerning objects that emerged from the Industrial Revolution: without the direct intervention of man, "machine-made" objects could not reach such a level of honesty, and therefore, neither quality.

The Universal Exhibition celebrated in London in 1851 brought forth major theoretical issues about the quality of machine-made versus handmade products These questions can be fundamentally described as twofold: the relevance behind the continued existence of the ornament, and the failure of industrial production to ensure the quality of crafts (Virtue, 1851), both inextricably linked in defining objects of good design as *honest*. In bringing quality to the forefront of the debate, the Exhibition showcased to the public the great technological advancements of the time, as well as the new materials and skills which imitated the work of craftsmen in a more industrial, and indeed economical fashion, allowing it to reach the general public.

In this respect, Gui Bonsiepe claims that "advanced technologies produce advanced products that provide relatively advanced financial gains, necessary to acquire said products" (Bonsiepe, 1985, p. 39). This development, which would result in the birth of the middle class, had not yet taken place in Morris' time. In spite of this, the Movement incurred a revival in craftsmanship, which persisted throughout the 20th century; this urged designers to approach their work from the standpoint of the "trustworthiness of the materials", and inspired later trends in design, such as the modern style of the 1920s, which incorporated this principle with the idea of good design. The *well-made* designs of the Arts&Crafts Movement, "produced a renovating effect in applied arts" (Eguizábal, 1998, p. 192).

In *El diseño de la Periferia*, Gui Bonsiepe claims that at the start of the 20th century, *Good Design (Gute Form)* was a movement bolstered by a diverse group of people who raised awareness and educated the population about their aesthetic preferences, preaching that the quality of a properly designed and manufactured product is determined as much by aesthetic factors as by practicality and durability (Bonsiepe, 1985). Once again, this gave *good design* the connotation of being reserved for the élite. However, due to this simple conception of forms, it was possible to perfect a manufacturing system that was cost-effective, both as much for the producer as for the end user, that would be capable of providing all kinds of quality products to a Europe ravished by the War. As Bonsiepe suggests, it is possible that after the post-war years, modern objects, particularly those produced by designers who rose to fame in the 1950s, were starting to be sold at exorbitant prices, though it was their methods of production (such as the use of plywood), as well as their techniques, that incurred the most significant breakthrough in what we call the *democratisation of luxury*.

However, the interest in craftsmanship has never disappeared. In a world that is currently fast-paced, globalised, increasingly technological and indeed plagued by environmental problems, people need to recover their traditions and return to a more natural, simple, and considerate lifestyle.

In conclusion, the sixth principle of design according to Dieter Rams states that "*Good design is honest*: Good design doesn't (must not) seem different (more useful, more innovative, more valuable) than what it really is" (Rams, n.d.) thereby confirming what designers had known for centuries, and giving rise to the appearance of the term *functionalism* which, never shy from controversy, allows us to better understand what honest objects are.

On the other hand, Peter Behrens, heralded as one of the pioneers of modern design, asserts that: "Design is not about decorating functional forms — it is about creating forms that accord with the character of the object and that show new technologies to advantage". Drawing on Louis Sullivan's famous claim that "form follows function", as well as Austrian architect Adolf Loos' denouncement of the ornament as a "crime", the so-called *style of the machine era* reached the height of its development, with particular reference to the products of the German company Braun, as well as their imitators in Great Britain, the US, and Japan.

The creation of such new forms compelled the design of modern objects toward the pursuit of not only *being* honest, but also *appearing* so. In the modern

classical sense, in accordance with Rams' model, as outlined in his tenth principle: "Good design is as little design as possible" (Rams, n.d.), which offers a modern take on Mies van Rohe's famous "less is more". The idea of the Modern Movement dictates that all objects must be functional (i.e. achieve the function for which they have been created), however only *functionalist* objects are *good designs*. In other words, only in its implementation will minimalism produce *gute form*, which ensures that this idea of honesty is conveyed.

Once again, we are presented with a partnership between good design and social wellbeing. "Good design in any period is simply... a thorough merging of form and function, and an awareness of human values expressed in relation to industrial production for a democratic society [...] Good modern design will be quiet, honest and functional". (Kaufmann 1948 in VGD, 2019, pp. 13, 18). Rams adds a further two ideas to this concept of minimalism, in his principles 2 and 5 respectively: "*Good design makes the product useful:* People buy products to use it. There are secondary functions but the primary is the optimization of usage" and "*Good design must not be uncomfortable*: Products satisfying a task fulfil the function of a gadget. These are neither decorative objects nor objects of art. That's why design must be neutral. Items must draw back for human to live" (Rams, n.d.).

According to Couturier, "linked to progress, changing attitudes and emerging needs, design reflects the economic, social, ideological and cultural conditions of a period of time" (Couturier, 2006, p. 15). The present-day version of this relationship between design and wellbeing would come to be founded upon the necessity to change the development model in order to get more from less resources. "Buy, consume, buy again cannot be the pattern to follow, for it proposes a model that enables one to reinterpret and reuse that which already exists" (Dopico, 2009, p. 49).

Indeed, it is precisely the relationship of design with its consumption and the culture of its time that serves to endanger the *honesty* of design, since a simple object that is well-designed in accordance with the criteria of the Modern Movement runs the risk of becoming functionally and formally obsolete. Serge Chermayeff asserts in 1944 that "Good design survives temporary and superficial changes" (VGD, 2019, p. 3).

Rams' seventh principle of good design proposes that "*Good design lives long:* It doesn't have components of fashion for the sake of living long (visually). This is how well designed products differ with a distinct line from trivial

products with short lives. Today there is no profit in these products." (Rams, n.d.) In the context of a global climate crisis for which excessive production can be held largely responsible, preventing built-in obsolescence and designing objects to last longer and to not lose their formal or functional validity must be one of the main objectives of designers. To conclude this section dedicated to honest objects, it is important to note that it is not only ill-intentioned manipulation in the industry that shortens product life. Indeed, many a time it is the designers themselves who become consumed by styles of fashion that limit or predetermine product life.

In conclusion, well-designed objects must be honest, or rather: that the materials and manufacturing processes must not be impetuously pushed forward with a disregard for nature, nor must they claim to impersonate or imitate craftsmanship. The skills used to produce crafts possess a certain kind of honesty, and furthermore they are able to ensure the final quality of their products. In the modern sense of the term, which was coined in the mid-20th century, objects must both *appear* and actually *be* honest, and preferably *have the least design possible.* In addition, they must be durable, that is to say, avoid being rendered functionally and formally obsolete.

This principle of the honesty of design is linked to the social commitment of *beneficial art*, which reveals a social aspect of design that indeed forms part of its very essence. It is committed to the pursuit of a better society and to the control of an environmentally friendly means of production. This brings us to the second fundamental principle of design.

2. Objects must be ethical

Isabel Campi argues that combining ethics with aesthetics has been the greatest ambition of responsible designers (Campi, 2007). This ambition reached its highest point in the late 1960s. Hence, designers were forced to self-regulate their work and keep social consciousness above the individualism that would later become the general norm upon the arrival of Postmodernism. As a measurement of resistance, they reclaimed by force the role of design as an agent of social transformation. Her work is supported by some of the most important works concerning this theme: in Sweden in 1970, Victor Papanek first published his *Design for the Real World*, which has since become a reference for designers committed to the environment, economic equality and democratic access to the environment. Papanek advocates for a culturally globalised world and asserts that a cultural object is simultaneously both a diagnostic tool and a signpost that points towards the future (Papanek, 1984).

His work is one of several key works that allows us to make sense of the transition into Postmodernism, which sews serious doubts on some of the premises of modern design, particularly from an ethical standpoint. Among these works lies Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at any speed* (Nader, 1965), which scathingly criticised the design of the Chevrolet Corvair, a compact car model that was launched in 1960 and inspired by European cars. It became the fashionable sports car, but its rear-wheel drive, together with its high speeds, made it a highly dangerous car. Robert Venturi's classic *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Venturi, 1966) shed light on the contradictions of the Modern Movement as regards its pursuit of *good form*, whilst Jonas Hans and Wolfgang Haug demonstrated how design had been sold out in the interests of capitalism. In 1977, in *The Imperative of Responsibility* (Jonas, 2014), Hans put forward the need for ethics with regards to technological society, challenging the precept that not all innovation is possible. Haug, in *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics. Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society* (Haug, 1986), criticised the role of design concerning its service to advertisement.

Despite the postmodern indifference towards such issues, some of the movements and organisations that emerged in the seventies gained traction in the eighties, such as feminism and environmentalism. Over the course of its historical evolution, the main function of design has been to put technology into use in accessible and comprehensible ways for the greatest number of people. Nevertheless, designers, whose numbers have only increased, have found themselves engulfed in a sea of problems: on the one hand, their efforts are often under constraints from organisations and institutions. In many cases, it is determined and controlled by the political decisions of those who are not always responsible for the consequences in society.

Effectively, circa 1970 the designer found himself at a crossroads: either continue down the path paved by the Enlightenment and fulfil a long-standing desire to transform society, and renounce fame and all its advantages, as proposed by Papanek, or become a tool at the service of industry and the political establishment.

According to Papanek, design differs from architecture and engineering in that whilst these two related disciplines solve real problems, design is aimed more at detecting them (which to a certain extent also seems to create them). He invites us to root out certain myths about the practice of design, with the objective to advocate for a more ethical and honest production. By recovering plans from the *Good Design*, he proposes an elimination of five myths: to

eliminate the elitism of production in order to truly reach the entire population; to design against obsolescence, making products better and durable; to avoid the pressure from opinion groups so that only objective criteria dictate the viability of a product; to guarantee that the designer has absolute control over the final result of his product and to put quality, in the broadest sense possible, above all other concerns (Papanek, 1984). Papanek demonstrates that a good design is possible without needing to get involved with issues relating to elitism or the market.

This idea was already present in the founding principles of *Good Design*. Kaufmann, in 1946 (VGD, 2019, p. 12), comments that "A frequent misconception is that the principal purpose of good modern design is to facilitate trade, and that big sales are a proof of excellence in design. Not so. Sales are episodes in the careers of designed objects. Use is the first consideration".

Following in Haug's footsteps, the criticism in graphic design was its dependence on the markets, which was based in advertising. In particular, British designer Ken Garland, together with another twenty-one other professionals, in 1964 published the *First Thing First Manifesto* in the *The Guardian* newspaper, speaking out against how important advertising was becoming, and furthermore, against the leading role that designers were playing in the unbridled increase in consumption. Toward the end of 1998, the magazine *Adbusters* [adbusters.org] re-edited the original manifesto. Upon seeing this republication, designers like Tibor Kalman put forward a new manifesto, which would be republished in 1999 with the title *First Things First Manifesto 2000*, in an attempt to establish the responsibilities of graphic designers, based on the issues and needs of the 21st century. According to Pelta, this was a true declaration of principles, which "appeared to put an end to a decade of discussion on the technological and formal aspects in the field of graphic design, meanwhile a phase of reflection opened up concerning the role of designers in an increasingly globalised world" (Pelta, 2010, p. 13). If the original manifesto criticised designers' service to the advertisement industry, the *Manifesto 2000* emphasised a focus on their problem-solving abilities to resolve new problems in society, such as environmental, social and cultural crises, putting forward a change of focus in favour of more useful, lasting and democratic means of communication.

Again we observe how the perspectives that emerged around the 1970s in favour of a more ethical design still remain valid today. Between February and March 2001, a group of students in their first year studying design at

Central St. Martins College of Arts and Design in London presented a manifesto in which they outlined their criticism of the "vow of chastity" taken by British youth. In that same year, Italian designer Fabrizio Gilardino founded Socialist Designers, a collective of graphic designers who drew up a manifesto similar to that of St. Martins. *The Socialist Designers Manifesto* "demanded a greater naturalness of design [...] seemingly absurd and ordinary, the writer is, a critic of the homogenisation that has ensued since the appearance of the computer" (Pelta, 2010, p. 77-78). In 2004, Milton Glaser delivered a speech of a similar vein before the American Institute of Graphic Design (AIGA) in the conference *Ambiguity and Truth*; therein, he explained a study that he conducted on his students entitled *The Road to Hell* (Glaser, 2014), which consisted of a series of progressively ethical questions, regarding how far they would be willing to go in their daily practice as designers and publicists.

With this resurgence of criticism from designers against such excessively market-centric positions, warning bells were already being rung regarding the risk of abandoning the fundamental principles of the profession, which left the notion of *Good Design* at the sidelines, since design "does not live apart from a world in which the economic factor has become a form of almost exclusive assessment criteria" (Pelta, 2010, p. 15).

In order to approach any work of design, it is of vital importance that the designer be aware of the great influence that his work has on society, as well as the responsibility that he has as a professional, since his acts and decisions can directly, or indirectly affect a large number of people. Consequently, the designer must always act in a responsible manner, and consider the repercussions that his work may have on his professional colleagues, clients or users, on society at large and on the environment; one must not forget, as Michael Worthington said (in Pelta, 2010, p. 193), that "they can form the lenses through which we see culture, and predict the future by inventing it".

If we apply the concept of *beneficial art* to design, as we have observed in architecture, then the method of design for effective prevention of the negative repercussions of design, is to create useful objects for society. Sir Terence Conran defends the idea that "good design can be accessible to all" (Conran & Fraser, 2008, p. 8). Ken Cato maintains that "good design is good business, in addition to being good for society" (Diseñadores de la AGI, 2001, p. 136), to which Pierre Bernard adds that "the social responsibility of the graphic designer is based upon the desire to take part in the creation of a better world" (Diseñadores de la AGI, 2001, p. 110).

In the mid-eighties, Gui Bonsiepe argued that design was not sought-after in periphery countries because they had "more important [things] to worry about instead" (Bonsiepe, 1985, p. 33), such as the material, social and economic reality in which they found themselves at that time. Economic and cultural globalisation has called this core-periphery dualism into question, though it has been substituted by the updated notion of placing a value on the local. Nowadays, appropriate design can constitute that which has been created locally, preferably by local means, in order to meet local needs and with local teams; this is precisely the idea of "thinking locally, acting globally" (Gallo, 2002, p. 335).

In essence, a *Good Design* ruled by ethical principles has the responsibility to improve society, and as a mediator between the latter and industry, it must ensure that objects that can improve people's lives truly reach them. Again, this means working towards making them low-priced and cost-effective. Effectively, it is about democratising luxury. As an embodiment of the pursuit for honesty, industrial objects must, in contrary to those produced by craftsmen, seek to reach the greatest possible number of people, and be appropriately and affordably cost-effective. In this respect, both industry and technology would be a much-needed path towards a better future that drives modern utopias.

Designers like Henry Dreyfuss, author of *Designing for people* in 1955, felt it necessary to recount his experiences, and to use them to predict the future. Norman Bel Geddes in *Horizons*, published in 1932 proposed an entire series of futuristic objects, which were promised to reach the entire public in a maximum of three decades. These homes, airplanes, trains, cars and liners "of the future" were characterised by delivering first class luxury to all of their users.

In line with this social commitment, designers cannot be excluded from the solutions of the current major challenges. In line with this social commitment, designers cannot be excluded from the solutions of the current major challenges. In 2018 El Museu del Disseny in Barcelona held an exhibit entitled *Design does. Lo que el diseño hace*, which demonstrated how design is shaping the global challenges of our society by exploring the responsibility of design as regards its impact on industry, mankind, social systems and cultural values. This project raised the question of what role the designer has and will have: was it to be problem-solving, humanist, strategist and/or an agent of change? (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2018).

At present there are multiple documents at our disposal — professional codes that change depending on the country in question, such as AIGA's *Code of Ethics*, which addresses the good praxis of design, or indeed the ethical decalogues for the practice of design offered by READ (*Red Española de Asociaciones de Diseño*) in 2017. Similarly, there are other such resources on the politics of design, such as guides for organising design competitions, contracting a designer, and facilitating the practices of accessible design etc.; such is the case of Ico-D[1] (International Council of Design), which provides a series of criteria that should be understood and respected, as well increasingly integrated in the creation processes of initiatives, as much by professionals in design themselves as by the general public.

In the words of Thackara (in Pelta, 2010, p. 108), "You must not design for the people but rather with the people". As its very name indicates, participative design actively intends to get people involved by inviting them to participate in the process. To this end, the University of La Laguna already has its project named *Amoratitas* under way, which endeavours to restore the image and memory of a district named *Las Moraditas* in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. In a process that combines both design and community work, professor Carlos Jiménez and researcher Alicia Morales are successfully encouraging its residents, led by its local elderly, to improve the design of their environment as well as the visibility of the city through the methodologies of participative design.[2]

In order to enhance social innovation and guide it towards more sustainable means, designers must consider becoming part "of a complex mesh of new designing communities: the emerging, interwoven networks of individual people, enterprises, non-profit organizations, local and global institutions that are using their creativity and entrepreneurship to take some concrete steps towards sustainability" (Manzini, 2006, p. 6) and work together hand-in-hand with them. This could be a very favourable option thanks to collaborative platforms, open-source software and other increasingly popular co-designing methods.

Today they are committed to the environment, engage in the process of digital transformation, drive industrial competitiveness, and design objects aimed at social wellbeing (Heras Caballero, 2019). Contrary to what transpires in other industrial sectors, design deals with non-technological innovation, which is fundamental to overcoming these challenges in a way that is both cost-effective and environmentally-friendly.

The environmental concern is not, however, something new for designers. George Nelson in 1948 claimed that, "what we call good design is one which achieves integrity that is, unity or wholeness in balanced relation to its environment". Today, eco-design is a necessity, and indeed an obligation for designers. Evidently, design plays an important role in the carbon footprint of industrial objects throughout the entire production cycle, since we know that all of its stages have an impact on the environment, such as the depletion of natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable), the emission of greenhouse gases, waste production etc. For this reason, particularly now, it "presses for the creation of a committed, ethical, and conscious designer, who can integrate multi-disciplinary teams in order to address, from a broader perspective, the needs of human beings, by taking sustainable approaches and reflecting on the impact of their solutions" (Ávalos, 2018, p. 20). Designers must ensure a circular economy: that the materials, products and their components be processed by means that allow for their reintegration into the value chain once their service life is over (Marcet et al., 2018, p. 11).

Good Design implies that the content must be *good*, in essence legal, ensuring that what is promoted does not violate any laws, that it is ethical and does not run any health risk, and that it must minimise its impact on the environment to the utmost degree. In 1994, Saul Bass said in an interview: "long ago I took the decision not to consciously use my talent for the benefit of products that are harmful to living creatures" (Bass, 1994, p. 19).

We need products that use the fewest materials and least energy possible, that are less heavy and bulky to ensure less use of transport, that are more easily recyclable in order to have less waste and residues, and that cause the least environmental impact throughout their life. Much is being said of the need to change the model to a circular economy, in which objects are designed "cradle to cradle" (Braungart & McDonough, 2005).

The role of postmodern design has been criticised in the search for *Good Design*, alleging it to be frivolous, banal and individualistic. From the 1980s onwards, critics and designers were somewhat unanimous in rejecting ideas of socially-oriented design, such as those of Víctor Papanek. However, we must emphasise that this broad criticism of the Modern Movement has also contributed to the debate on *Good Design*. Albeit less conventionally, the postmodern designers increased awareness by creating objects that were both socially and culturally critical, metalinguistic, able to take an ironic look at

our surroundings, and emotionally engaged with people, all of which served to enhance the ethical role of design.

If, as art historian Pierre Francastel asserts, "Every object is a historical and social expression determined by a culture" (Peltier, 2003), then it is worth learning everything that design is able to teach us about ourselves at any given time. The Postmodern Movement taught us that the validation of everything we do can also be achieved through objects.

Postmodern criticism focused on the excessively formalist and homogenising drift of the Modern Movement. For Leonor Arfuch, modern design contrasted attitudes that were both ethical and socially responsible with issues focused excessively on technology, that were capable of reducing technology to a mere set of skills, to "the use of certain codes and technology, [...] a customer service and the product, a correct response, to the demands of the market" (Arfuch et al., 1977). Faced with such perspectives that would always result in the reduction of design to a series of stylistic and methodological formulas, it would be the postmodern claim that architecture (also applicable to design) was "complex and contradictory" (Venturi, 1978) that would reclaim the value of the artistic, of the individual seal, and later reinforce the object as a notion of authorship.

As Óscar Mariné affirms in an interview for *Gràffica* magazine (Gràffica, 2019), "the ingredients for creating a good design are: Intelligence, Culture, Humanity"; he goes on to say that now, "the work we carry out and deliver, for consumption, communication, etc. are of great social responsibility, they have to implicitly carry a great load of knowledge and experience." This incorporation of knowledge, experience, and individuality into design is precisely the significant contribution that Postmodernism makes to the debate on *Good Design*.

We have observed how, with ethical imperatives, a second basic notion of *Good Design* is achieved. Design should be "beneficial", it must bring about a society in which there is a high quality of life for everyone, by democratising access to industrial objects and technology for all. As an integral part of how the search for honesty and a better future is truly embodied, designed objects seek to reach the greatest possible number of people through an adequate and affordable effective low cost. We have also emphasised the responsibility of resolving current challenges: today, designers are committed to the environment, engage in the process of digital transformation, drive industrial

competitiveness, and design objects aimed at social wellbeing. Non-technological innovation, inherent to the process of design, is fundamental to overcoming these challenges.

Finally, we have observed that this responsibility is perfectly complemented by the critical consciousness which emerged from Postmodernism. Since the late 20th century, designers have created objects based on social and cultural criticism, that are able to take an ironic look at our surroundings, that are also metalinguistic and emotionally engaged with people.
There is a third principle upon which *Good Design* is based, which encompasses the skills and methodologies most deeply rooted in the correct implementation of well-designed objects; it includes notions of implementation, universality of use, innovation, and beauty.

3. Objects must be easy to use and comprehend
For the "modern classical" conception of design, which was taught in the Ulm School of Design in the 1950s and interacted with Swiss graphic design, as well as the early years of Dieter Rams who headed Braun, designs must not only be simple (minimal), but must also convey their message with the greatest clarity possible. Thus, in graphic design the use of reticles and sans-serif fonts such as Univers and Helvetica was enforced, whilst product design advocated for the homogenisation of colour and a kind of "quietism", which defended correct construction to ensure the most functional location of control devices. A formally well-constructed design was one in which the user could identify the brand by its outward appearance (white in Braun, or beige in IBM, for example), or by the correct layout of information. The posters of Max Bill or Anton Sankowski would become the paradigm of this design, based on the order and clarity of the information.

For Rams, this principle features in the fourth item on the list: "Good design makes the product understandable. Design emphasizes the structure of the product. It may even make the product speak out. Ideally the product defines itself and this solves the problem of reading a usage prospectus" (Rams, n.d.).

According to Bonsiepe, at the beginning of the 20th century, the search for *Good Design* endeavored to remedy the deformations and aberrations of the production system. The first current obtained the primary results thanks to the Werkbund, founded in Germany in 1907. The movement was upheld by three pillars: the claim that the quality of objects was independent of the materials used, the creation of standardisation, which gave rise to the DIN

standards, as well as the need to create an educational programme specific to design. This gave rise to the need for standardisation, which resulted in an increase in productivity and consolidated the notion of honesty as regards the use of materials. The second current, which appealed to subjectivity, sought to remedy what for Bonsiepe constituted the "aberrations resulting from the cultural blindness of industrialism". Both currents concern themselves with the quality of the verifiable product according to three indicators: "quality of use, or functional quality, aesthetic-formal quality, and performance quality" (Bonsiepe, 1985, p. 20).

Another criterion of quality closely linked to the functional and communicative aspects of objects is innovation. Design was born in response to a need of the industry, but it has been proven sound by use of non-technological innovation, which begins at the point where technology ends: learning from its use and improving products to optimise their functionality.

Throughout the 20th century we have learnt that the economic success of a product does not necessarily require a high degree of technological sophistication, and therefore, non-technological innovation can be highly profitable. It is proven by the fact that some of the most groundbreaking products have emerged from ideas proposed by design.

Consequently, the adaptation of the criteria for good design regarding contemporary society, universal design, and design for all, has become a necessity that spans across all areas of design. In a society which favors universality, "design for all people is the method of designing whilst bearing in mind that the consumer is diverse. Jesús Hernández Galán (2018, p. 13), as Director of *Accesibilidad Universal Fundación Once*, asserts that "Good design enables and poor design disables". In light of this,

> graphic design is highly efficient as a means of communication, being that it allows information to be managed, organised, and presented in an intelligible manner, so that it is accessible and understandable for the greatest number of people. Graphic design enables the breaking down of language barriers and even illiteracy. (Arfuch et al., 1997, p. 39)

In recent years, the attitude of designers towards design for all people has been supported by a series of public policies and mandatory regulations in the majority of developed countries across different fields of action, which make reference to the so-called DALCO requirements on accessibility (Deam-

bulation, Awareness, Location and Communication). The fulfilment of these requirements guarantees the global accessibility of an environment, service or product, including those of graphic design, since the advances in this field applied to signage and poster design have been remarkable. The regulations indicate that in situations in which it is not possible to guarantee any one of them, technical assistance or adaptations will be used, and only in the latter will an alternative element be used.

Isabel Campí notes the difficulty with which young designers today face "the challenge of finding ethically acceptable concepts of beauty that generate new attitudes in the consumer and that respond to the challenges of globalisation and the energy crisis" (Campi, 2007). If we assume, as Anna Calvera proposes, that the need for design in terms of aesthetics was raised during the mid-19th century in England, then this would be the starting point of another obligation that has weighed heavily on design ever since.

To elaborate further on the aforementioned needs: the ethical need bestows upon designers the imperative to improve the world and ensure social well-being, whereas the functional need demands that the work of the designers comply with concepts such as order, standardisation or universality of use, which serves to further endorse the aesthetic need. For Calvera, the work of design professionals "came loaded with many important moral obligations, among which, one of the most important was specifically to ensure a better aesthetic of industrially-manufactured everyday things, as well as to care for the beauty of the landscape" (Calvera, 2007, p. 16). We shall not engage in the debate concerning the relationship between art and design, on which much has been written, but we will say, at least, that both have the function of detecting problems in society, among their undertakings. It is difficult to define exactly what making good use of beauty involves, since this idea often changes with the times, but it seems undeniable that *Good Design* must also provide for a proper use of the key aesthetics of its time.

If indeed design goes beyond form, then functionalism becomes a style just like the many others that designers have operated over time. For Norberto Chaves, "The evolution of the discipline has dissolved the false association of rational character with rationalist aesthetic" (Arfuch et al., 1997, p. 113). For Chaves, this would signify that style does not respond to questions of choice, nor is it solely the result of subjectivity, "whereby, design appears as the first historic manifestation of conscious planning of the symbolic" (Arfuch et al., 1997, p. 113).

In other words, functionalist formalism is no longer the only valid aesthetic marker of quality. The rise in the necessity for ethics emerged after Post-modernism had opened up in an almost infinite way the range of styles that we consider aesthetically valid. These styles form a kind of catalogue that designers are required to master in order to create *Good Design*. According to Anna Calvera, "the parameters of quality become more relative and refer more to user preferences and the current markets" (Calvera & Monguet, 2007, p. 71). What has actually changed are the reasons why users or clients feel satisfied. For example, the aesthetic of craftsmanship has gained value after having been ignored by the Modern Movement. This has been achieved thanks to society's interest in the environment, which has led to the recovery of rural life. Due to these new attitudes, design has opened up to new aesthetics, which also include the revival of those past, giving them new life.

Further to those aspects that define the usability and understanding of objects, Dieter Rams again indicates in the eight point of his principles on design, that it is essential to pay maximum attention to details. We can leave nothing to chance, "Good design is thorough down to the last detail. Nothing must be arbitrary or left to chance. Care and accuracy in the design process show respect towards the user." (Rams, n.d.) "The necessity for validation and reasoning is more important than ever" (Ambrose & Aono-Billson, 2011, p. 15).

Therefore, in order to talk about a good design from this third principle which links it to usability and clarity of the message, it is vital to bear in mind that well-designed objects must also be formally constructed and ordered well, in addition to being able to adequately communicate their use and significance. They must be innovative and universal, that is to say adapted, or adaptable to the greatest number of people, capable of encouraging the visualisation of ideas in line with the canons of universal beauty or the times, as well as pay maximum attention to details. We might add to this that industrial objects must reflect the brand and be clearly directed at the target audience.

We have observed that the principles of *Good Design* affect all areas of design equally. Designers, whatever their field of expertise may be, must face the same problems with the same tools, which can be summarised in three basic principles: the fruit of their labour must serve to create objects that are honest, ethical, and easy to use and understand. These principles are subject to gradual and continual change, for which reason their definition may vary from what is presented in this paper. According to Bürdek, "Industrial products originate from a midpoint between technological progress, social trans-

formation, economic circumstances and the evolution of art, architecture and design" (Bürdek, 1994, p. 55).

However, whatever the future development of the concept of good design may be, *good designs* will have to answer the three aforementioned needs: the ethical and the aesthetic, which impose an obligation to design for a better world, and the functional, which stipulates that in order to achieve the first two, the work of the designers must be useful and understandable.

In recent decades, interest in so-called *social design* has grown. In this respect, it is understood as referring to all design that is not exclusively geared towards commercial gains. Normally, it is produced by multi-disciplinary teams who focus their efforts on finding solutions in small or large communities, attempting to involve them in the design process itself. As with sustainability-oriented design, it is a discipline that is yet to be defined, one which is probably destined to become a fundamental and intrinsic part of the design process itself. Grounded in innovative methodologies, the interests of social design are focused on achieving the same objective as we have previously commented, that which has existed since the time of the Enlightenment: to bring about a better world for all.

4. Conclusion

In summary, many of the defining aspects of the criteria for *Good Design* that we have defined throughout this paper uphold the social vocation of design. We emphasise the social when we create objects that do not misrepresent the materials and manufacturing processes in a manner that is contrary to the nature of craftsmanship, that is to say: when we employ methods of traditional craftsmanship, when we design durable objects that are useful to society, when we broaden the number of users of any kind of technology and democratise its use, when we engage in resolving current major challenges, when we use our critical awareness to communicate ideas to society, when we make social design, co-designing with the people to empower them and of course, when we do what we do *well*, placing non-technological innovation at the service of society, creating objects for all and conveying the notion of beauty clearly and intelligibly in every moment. To create a good design is to create a social design.

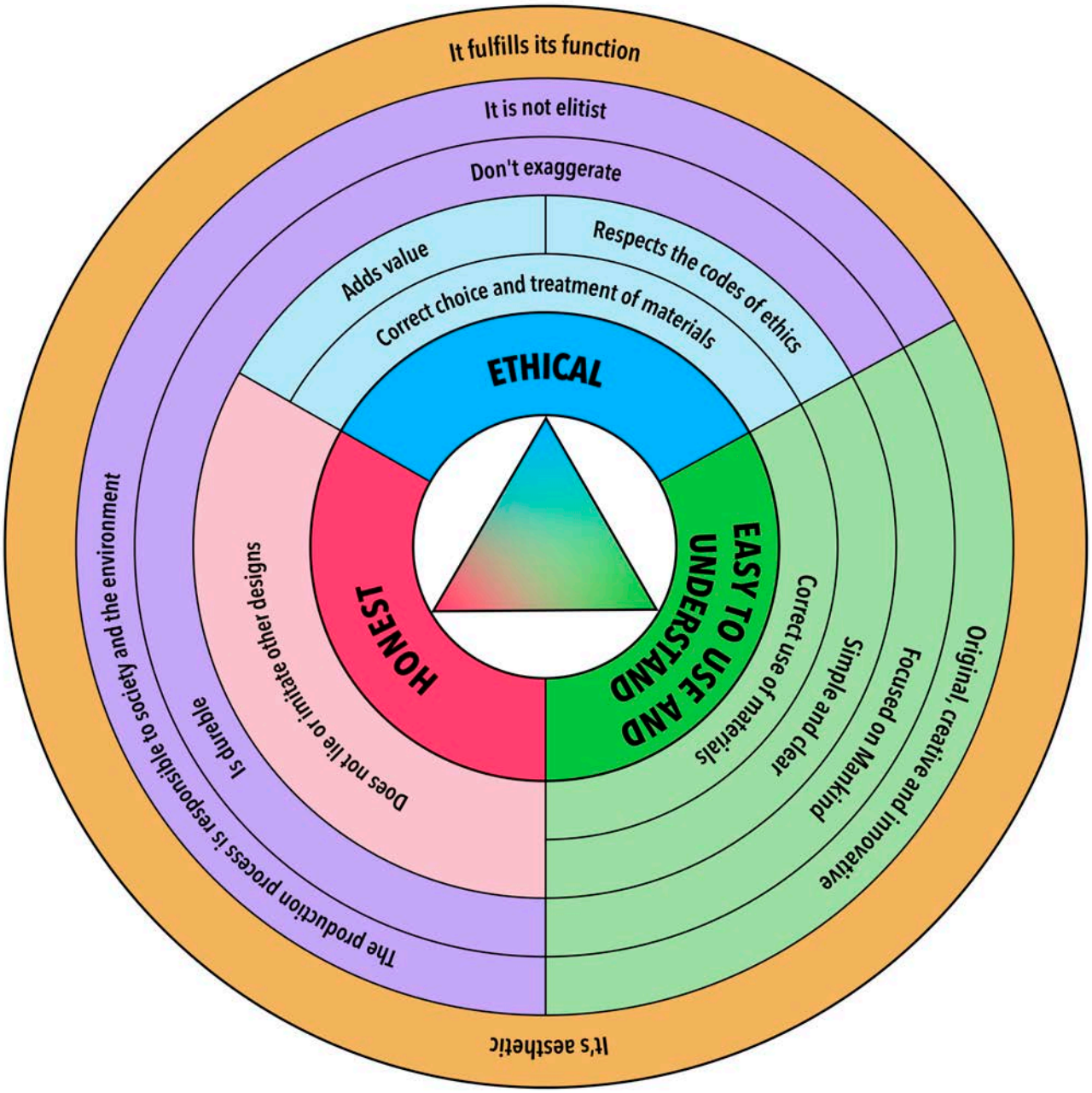

Fig. 1 — Principles of Good Design.

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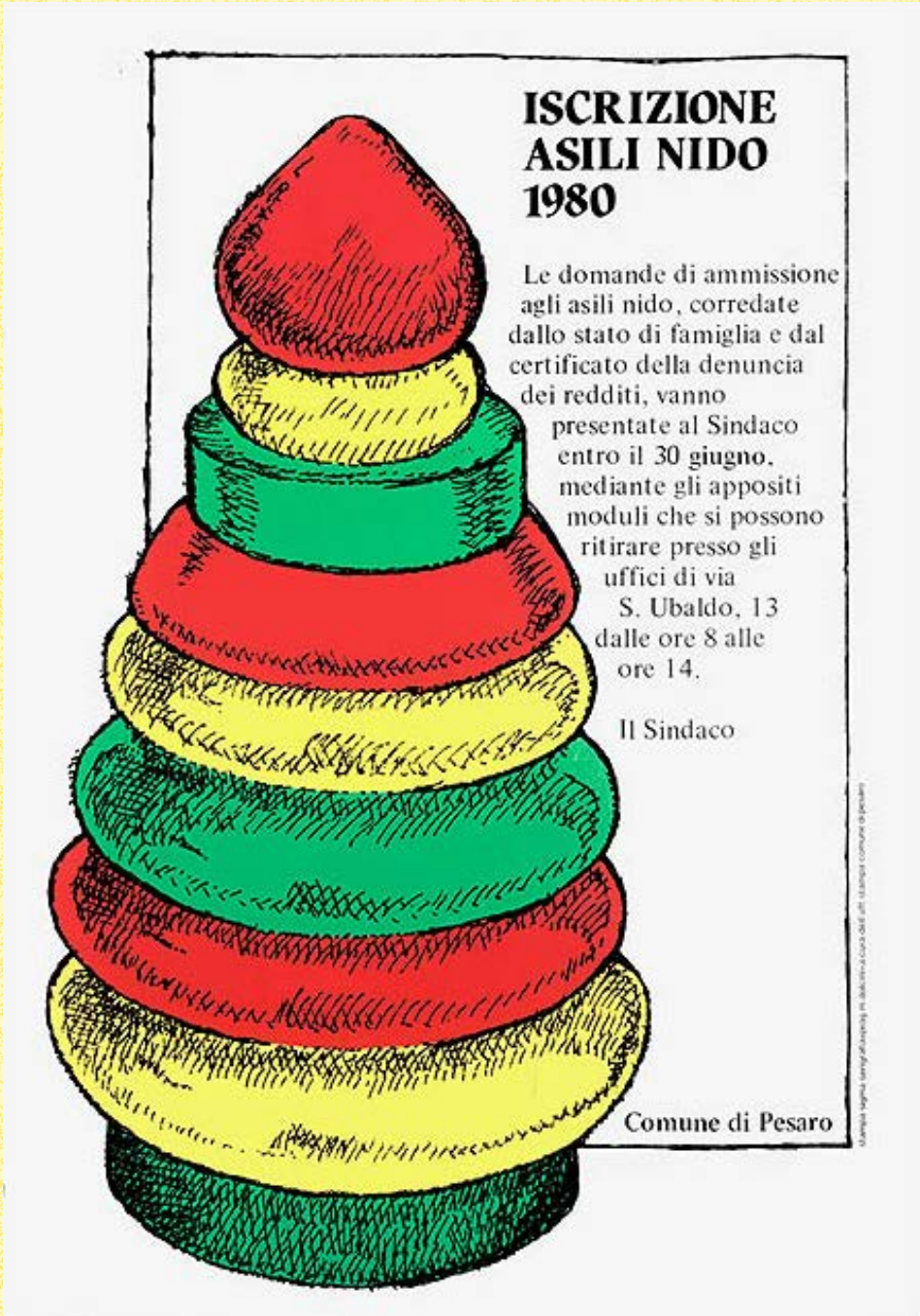
NOTES

[1] The documents cited herein can be accessed on the Websites of the various institutions: www.aiga.org; www.designread.es; www.ico-d.org

[2] A project summary delivered in a presentation at the Iberoamerican Design Biennial of 2019 can be accessed via https://cutt.ly/zyfdt44.



Massimo Dolcini, *Iscrizione Asili Nido*, poster, Comune di Pesaro, 1980 (courtesy of AIAP CDPG).

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