THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF DESIGN CULTURE

The article is devoted to introducing new theoretical frameworks and methodological concepts from the field known as science and technology studies (STS) and discussing their potential for design history. The concepts of design and culture are analyzed and compared within the article, providing the possibility of developing the complex concept of “design culture”. The study shows that design can be considered as a social and cultural phenomenon, that design historians may find that the sociology and the history of technology can provide an appropriate theoretical framework and methodological repertoire for studying design, not only as the part of art history. The article introduces main concepts from science and technology studies that might be of particular value to design history and culture, focusing on actor-network theory, script analysis and domestication.

Key words: design, design culture, design history, art history, actor-network theory, script analysis, domestication.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the study is built in a historical paradigm containing multi-conceptual components, addressing its proposes defining new paths not only within the history of art (which recently claimed the definition of design in the narrow frame of applied arts), but through implementation problems of design as substantive field of cultural studies, sociology, history, technology, aesthetics and social philosophy.

Exposition of the main material of the study. Design today is considered not only as the aspect of everyday life, but also as the complex theoretical field of cultural and social studies. It allows researchers to see the most prominent paradoxes of modern society and culture. Nowadays it is the discussion on the level of ideas and the meanings they mediate, which helps constitute a rich conceptual material for cultural history. Coming this way, the first thing we need to do is to provide a comparative analysis of the design and culture terms, as D. Carlson does. "Design and culture have always been closely interrelated, but in many instances design is flunted as the true measure of culture, rather than belonging to part of cultural context of the society. Design has become the embodiment of a larger process of creative ‘culture-mongering’ that has become a means to capture ideation, innovation and enterprise and made to stand for cultural identity” [3].

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Y. O. Bytsykina, PhD, Assistant Professor
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
60, Volodymyrska Street, Kyiv, 01033, Ukraine
gudzenkoh@gmail.com

THE BORDERS OF ART

The paper examines delimitation art and non-art as a crucial issue in contemporary philosophy of art. This thesis is developed with a special reference to Thierry de Duve’s nominalist theory and is argued that this theory traces some opportunity for seeking answer the question indicated in the title. The author agrees with the main idea that name of an art is a performative, which makes changes in our mind and transform a mere phenomenon, that design historians may find that the sociology and the history of technology can provide an appropriate theoretical framework and methodology to overcome the traditional essentialist mode of thinking. However, the author puts in question the ideas, which have implicit essentialist connotations.

Deuve’s theory argues that aesthetic judgement is a main condition for establishing the borders of art. The theory explores a crucial change of judgement about art. The judgement “this is art” is functioning like the judgement “this is beautiful” in the previous time and they two have equivalent attributes in the art and human life. I refute these ideas as not convincing and prove the alternative theses: the name of art performative power is determined primarily with social and cultural factors (not aesthetic judgment). The author offer the TV show episode The National Anthem (Black Mirror) as a model for testing the theory. It is evident that modern notion of art is tied to existence of the autonomous social “artworld” (Arthur Danto), or cultural field (Pierre Bourdieu) or social system (Niclas Luhmann). Any judgment about art cannot escape its destiny to divide people and social opinion. As a result, we have at least two subjects (instead of one) with different statuses and authority to say and to be heard. The author concludes that judgement “this is art” is political as such but judgement “this is beautiful” is not.

Key words: Thierry de Duve, name of art, borders of art, art and non-art, system of art, art and policy, aesthetic judgment.

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There are some conceptual issues within analyzing the both terms together, in connection with each other. That is why the researcher need to make a terminological reduction: "Design has become synonymous with the labelling of culture; ‘design culture’ now represents not only the emblem of cultural prosperity, but is considered as a means to legitimate whole areas of urban regeneration, and for gaining international recognition as well as mediating for social change" [3].

The term of design culture cannot be studied without the framework of design history – the concept which also need explication. Design history was traditionally considered as the history of designed objects of high (aesthetic) quality and the designers, ideas, movements and institutions that conceived those objects. But today we associate this term with practices and phenomena, as it becomes more and more difficult to maintain or establish neat definitions and categorizations of what makes up the subject matter for design history. As V. Margolin explains, “Design history as an academic subject received its first major impetus in the early 1970s in Great Britain. When design history first began to emerge in Great Britain, those involved felt it important to mark the subject “design” with boundaries that would shape the development of its historical accounts” [7, p.34-35]. Modern researcher find two main locations for design history – one in relation to the “discourse and particular concerns of its own practitioners” and the other in “relation to the wider field of design discourse”, where it can contribute to the ongoing research about design and its future.

John Walker describes the term ‘design’ as one with complex meaning and structure, with changing attributes and connotations. Today we know this word having several key meanings: “…like most other words, ‘design’ causes ambiguities because it has more than one common meaning: it can refer to a process (the act or practice of designing); or to the result of that process (a design, sketch, plan or model); or to the products manufactured with the aid of a design (designed goods); or to the look of overall pattern of a product (“I like the design of that dress”)” [8, p.42].

That is why, there is a need to provide a wide study of these concepts within three aspect of disciplinary reflexivity – historiography, theory and methodology, and epistemology. In this article historiography, theory and methodology are being analyzed, concerning the interdisciplinarity of the subject.

Historiographical survey presents a brief outline of the development of the design field, theoretical and methodological survey discusses a selection of recent perspectives and concepts appropriated from other fields of study and how it may enrich design history research. Talking about the general field of design history, K. Fallan says that it is “…naturally thought to encompass a far wider subject matter, including pre-industrial and non-industrial manufacture, and spanning graphic design, fashion, textiles, interior design and craft” [4, p.4]. It is important to remember the sources that played their big role in design history conceptual formation. For example, it was the journal Block, which was established in 1979 (and discontinued in 1989). Inspired in particular by French social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault, this new journal provided the articles where art history, cultural studies and design history were exposed. Also, the authors of this journal did not agree with rejection of academic approaches of art history influencing the subject. They explained design history as ‘the undergrowth of visual culture’ [4, p.7].

Another important journal was the Journal of Design History. It showed design history in variety of its representations, including articles about history of creative ideas and matching them with studies of economic and political history and post-colonial, feminist/social and cultural context, combining with history of technology and business history. Other sciences presented in the journal were ethnology and psychoanalysis. The Journal of Design History enlightened such crucial subjects as "legal matters of designs (intellectual property problems), consumption, propaganda films and television, design journalism, aviation design, participative design processes, economic policies, period furniture, trading, bicycles, packaging, product photography, computers, artificial limbs and do-it-yourself boat building have been probed" [4, p.7]. The great number of topics and methods represented in that journal makes it ever more complicated to find the exact meaning of design, design history and design culture. But with the help of such diversity there is a big chance to discuss and understand as much aspects of this theoretical field as we can.

Talking about the meaning of design history within the theoretical discourse, Judy Attfield, a prominent design historian, has taken a particular interest in material culture studies and considered one of the prime virtues of material culture studies approach to design history to be ‘that it does not exclude any artefact or part of the mundane everyday object-word and meant venturing into territories that were once considered beyond the pale’ [1, p.373].

The historiographical survey shows the importance of exploring how design history has developed over the XXth and XXIst centuries and has included some of the influential debates and concerns that have shaped the field.

The theoretical and methodological concepts should be explored more thoroughly in design history. They can transform the reception and vision of design history beyond than just the discipline of art history or technology history. The narrative of design history usually stuck to formal and aesthetic aspects, although it needs the contextualization that can be different and more interesting one.

One of the most popular method of design history research is actor-network theory: the networks is a large and intricate field of connections and communication between actors (actants), and the roles of the various actors highly dissimilar. K. Fallan explains the principle of the theory in details: “But who are these actors? Imagining the analysis of the design process, a general, tentative, and far from exhaustive list could look something like this; company management and board, product planners, product management, in-house designers, consultant designers, engineers, technicians, production workers, sales department, marketing department, advertising agency, trade unions, interest groups, media, distribution systems, sales channels and a multitude of user groups. The list can no doubt be expanded and modified, depending on the character of the case study, but it can at least indicate the contours of a network’s complexity” [4, p.69].

There is a challenging problem within this theory, concerning the issues of interactions between human and non-human actants inside the common network. Though it can develop into promising perspective of analyzing design processes, products and their meanings in the writing of a cultural history of design. Another problem is that researcher can be seduced by the agency of the co-called “great human actors”, losing sight of the other inhabitants – humans as well as non-human – of the actor network, as K. Fallan also admits. “Designers thus refine actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, political prejudices, and the rest, and they assume that morality, technology, science and economy will evolve in particular ways. A large part of the work of innovations is that of ‘inscribing’ that vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object. I will call the end product of this work a ‘script’ or ‘scenario’” [4, p.79].
This methodological possibility while analyzing the cultural history of design is called “script analysis”. This theory can be a very convenient tool if researcher wants to get how a user of a product functions, aesthetic expressions, social meanings and cultural identities are constructed. Therefore, the script analysis verifies the highest possibilities that design sphere in its historical perspective.

Both actor-network theory and script analysis aim at moving back and forth between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption/use in order to understand the co-production of meaning. Consumers/users play active roles in forming their lives through creative manipulation of objects, meaning and social systems according to their needs, desires and abilities. As K. Fallan says, “In their daily lives people use products by integrating and consuming them. At the same time, people are consumed by the products as they respond to them and engage with their properties, functions and forms” [4, p.90-91]. This specific relationship between human and non-human actors (people and products) is what the British sociologists (e.g. R. Silverstone) name as the final stage of a “process of domestication”, which is another methodology used within design cultural history research.

The process of domestication means that consumers transform the things they use so they suit their needs and desires in the best possible way (utilitarian, emotional, both symbolic). And this is a reciprocal process: consumers behavior, feelings, and attitudes are transformed by the artifacts they own. When the products’ meaning has been negotiated, constructed and stabilized, it can function as a personal expression for the user. K. Fallan provides a definition of domestication concept: “Domestication is a multidimensional process of negotiation that involves human and non-human actants and is characterized by conflict collaboration. … Domestication is thus neither a harmonious nor a linear process – it is normally conflict-ridden and dynamic. … Needs and desires might change, external symbolic codes might be internalized or new users might be enrolled. Such situations can lead to redomestication of the artifacts. … Using the concept of domestication as a prism can provide new insight into what the consumption and use mean” [4, p.92].

This methodological theory in some cases can be the best way for the researcher: some kind of intermediate position arise, where parts of the script is subscribed to and other parts rejected or misunderstood (de-inscribed), and a process of negotiation commences when consumer and product and user are adapted and transformed until a satisfactory degree of domestication is achieved.

There is an interesting example about old American automobiles are not only changed and adapted by their owners in Cuba, but also, though they are everywhere on the Cuban streets and in whole Cuban culture and everyday life, the cars also change and adapt their users. This process is what domestication is all about.

The concept of domestication is a methodological tool used to analyze how consumers turn things in their artificial environment into useful things, memorable objects and valuable symbols. “One of its most attractive qualities is that it follows the artifacts way past the purchase phase and thus facilitates studies not only of consumption but also of use” [4, p.97]. Agreeing with K. Fallan, we can say that the feature of domestication can reveal its deep meaning in design cultural history.

More interesting is the concept of “domestication of ideology” created by Anna Calvera. Her idea is that contents, forms and meanings of ideas, theories and knowledge are transformed by their consumers – just as with the domestication of artefacts [2]. But researchers find some problems in this theory: “What is lacking in Calvera’s description to make it domestication proper, however, is that such a process entails not only the adaptation of the ideas/aesthetics/technologies but also the adaptation to the ideas/aesthetics/technologies. Domestication is relational, dialectic, reciprocal – it is co-production” [4, p.100].

Looking at all the possibilities of research, design history has a vast tradition in appropriating theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches from other conceptual fields, from the material of art history, or cooperating with material culture studies today. The methodological theories provided here are aimed to support the theoretical possibilities of design history, to make it better analyzed to meet the challenges of present and future.

Design in all its controversy, from conceptual contents to historical paradigms, from production, through mediation and to final use. Its subject matter has expanded far beyond the narrow attention to “good design” and “great designers” that once were the most significant within the discipline that it might perhaps be beneficial to use term “design culture”. G. Julier defines “Design Culture enquiry traces a cartography that exposes and analyses the linkages of artifacts that constitute information flows and the spaces between them. Second, while one might dwell on individual artifacts, this process requires these to be seen relationally to other artifacts, processes, and systems. Third, it may be mobilized not merely as analysis, but as a generative mode that produces new sensibilities, attitudes, approaches, and intellectual processes in design practice. In this way, it promises a critical and knowing pathway toward the amelioration of this runaway world” [5, p.76].

Conclusion. Today the most prominent researchers admit that design history does not have a very well-defined theoretical framework and methodological apparatus, nor has this seemed to be a particularly prioritized area of inquiry. But critical discussion of the discipline’s own history is therefore essential to its present and future practice. First of all, it lies out of the critique of the heritage from art history. But now we know that the theoretical field of design history is better suited to deal with a subject matter far beyond the applied arts. And then it develops into the broader academic domain of cultural studies and the humanities, still remaining in various relations to design practice and design research.

In such way, the aspect of design history got from material culture studies before ending up arguing for a cultural history of design with design culture as an object of study. As Fallan states, “…that includes both the material and the immaterial aspects of everyday life. On one level it is articulated through images, words, forms and spaces. But at another it engages discourses, actions, beliefs, structures and relationships. This shift in the focus and practice of design history is grounded and reflected in changes in the theoretical and methodological aspects of the discipline” [6, p.16].

We can’t expect that all humanities and social sciences will be charged within design culture as their point of empirical convergence. But if design history is thought of as “the history of design culture” or as “the cultural history of design”, then it will be relevant to the humanities and social sciences more and more and appropriately, and it will also help integrate the field design history with cultural and social disciplines and integrate their research of new problematic and methodological instruments.

D. Carlson says that “There is an opportunity … to employ an approach to combine the knowledge of indigenous people’s and ethical ecological design, to permit an exemplary form of sustainable ‘cultural permaculture’ to be evolved. Central to this new concept would be to develop an approach to Culture that maintains an au-
Теоретичне та методологічне обґрунтування культури дизайну

Ключові слова: дизайн, культура дизайнів, історія дизайну, історія мистецтва, акторно-мережева теорія, сценарний аналіз, теорія одомашнення.

ТЕОРЕТИЧНЕ І МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНЕ ОБОСНОВАННЯ КУЛЬТУРИ ДИЗАЙНУ

Стаття присвячена введенню нових теоретичних основ і методологічних концепцій з галузі, відомої як науково-технічні дослідження, та обговоренню їх потенціалу для розробки історії дизайну. У статті здійснюється порівняльний аналіз поняття дизайнів та культури, що забезпечує можливість розробки комплексної концепції "культури дизайну". Дослідження показує, що дизайни може розглядатися як соціальне і культурне явище, історія дизайнів вважає, що соціологія та історія технології можуть забезпечити відповідну тематичну основу до методологічні інструментарій для її вивчення дизайнів без підходу до антропологічних аспектів історії мистецтва. У статті представлені основні поняття з галузі науково-технічних досліджень, які мають важливе значення для розробки історії та культури дизайнів, уважається також на акторно-мережевій теорії, сценарному аналізі та теорії одомашнення.

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М. М. Бровко, д-р філос. наук, проф.
Національна музична академія України ім. П. І. Чайковського
ул. Городецького,1/3, м. Київ, 01001, Україна
e-mail: brovko-mm@ukr.net

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