

The aesthetic character of industrial design furniture in the eclectism period

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Abstract: *The aesthetic character of industrial design furniture in the eclectism period.* Contemporarily, industrial design obviously and fundamentally determines both the aesthetic and the utilitarian nature of industrial production. It also determines the aesthetic aspects of the material reality co-created by the technique and art according to the "beauty rights." The 21st century is increasingly adopting the character of the new nature for the modern man. This new reality is primarily composed of material objects, architecture and industrial design, in order to not only satisfy the needs of the consumer but also the aesthetic needs of the man. In the 19th century the sharp opposition of "beauty" and "utility", applied to the art and the technical civilization, has lost its relevance, as a result of the activities of people such as William Morris, who opened a new era in bilateral relations between these two areas. Impressive achievements of industrial design, including furniture design, has contributed to strengthening the role of art in the production of industrial and urbanized world. Furniture, as an utility object, with time has began to play an important role as a field where the creativity and the artistic imagination can be expressed. It thus serves to expose the beauty of the material world. The decorative properties of furniture were influenced by: the artistic taste of both their makers and their clients, and specifics of a given period. The 19th century is a time of industrial revolution, in which the craft was arguably forgotten and neglected. The first response of the industrial revolution to the transformation has become a new trend called eclecticism, which is quite different from the earlier furniture styles. Mechanized production, growing at a rapid pace, contributed to the separation of craft from art and thus reduced the individual craftsman's thought. On the other hand, industrial development brought new materials and techniques. This era is proved to be quite unable to create new art forms, but deriving from the past it has led to the development of various hybrids, such as a gothic column made of cast iron. Curiously, a theme of a "curved line" appeared in almost every type of furniture from this period, often causing lack of harmony.

Keywords: Eclectism period, aesthetic, industrial design furniture

INTRODUCTION

Contemporarily, industrial design obviously and fundamentally determines both the aesthetic and the utilitarian nature of industrial production. It determines the aesthetic aspects of the material reality co-created by the technique and art accordingly to "beauty rights". The XXI-th century increasingly adopts for the modern man the character of the new nature. This new reality is primarily composed of material objects, architecture and industrial design, to satisfy the needs of the consumer but also the aesthetic needs of man. In the XIX-th century the sharp opposition of "beauty" and "utility", applied to the art and the technical civilization, has lost its relevance, as a result of the activities of people such as William Morris, who opened a new era in bilateral relations between these two areas. The impressive achievements of industrial design, including furniture design, have contributed to strengthening the role of art in the production of industrial and urbanized world.

Furniture, as an utility object, began with time to play an important role as a field where the creativity and the artistic imagination can be expressed. It thus serves to expose the beauty of the material world. The decorative properties of furniture were influenced by: the artistic taste of both their makers and their clients and the specifics of a given period. The XIX-th century is a time of the industrial revolution, in which the craft was arguably forgotten and neglected. In the furniture, the first response of the industrial revolution to the transformation has become a new trend called eclecticism, which is quite different from the earlier styles.

Mechanized production, growing at a rapid pace, contributed to the separation of craft from art and thus reduced the individual craftsman's thought. On the other hand, industrial development brought new materials and techniques. This era proved to be quite unable to create new art forms, but deriving from the past it has led to the development of various hybrids, such as a gothic column made of cast iron. Curiously, the theme of a "curved line" appeared in almost every type of furniture from this period, often causing a lack of harmony.

In Poland, as in other countries, the design of furniture has evolved in two directions. The first was the Renaissance Movement of Arts and Crafts. The Movement was established at the turn of the XIX-th and the XX-th centuries and it still developing. The second trend was established during The Interwar Period. It was a time when the first ideas of the industrial design appeared in the area of the artistic avant-garde. The practical side of the industrial design was realized after The Second World War. The political and industrial situation in Poland and in the world had a large and extended influence on its shape. Both of these directions competed, but also draw inspiration from each other. At the end of the XIX-th century the interest in the arts performance has started to grow up all over the world. One hundred years after the industrial revolution, the admiration for the achievements of engineering was common. On the other hand, the educated people didn't accept it, and expressed a dissatisfaction with the aesthetics of the mass-produced products.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF PHENOMENON

In order to fully appreciate and understand the value of modern applied art, we have to go back to the beginning, to the first art, projects and visualizations which the human imagination created at the time. The cultural traditions, styles and standards that allow to identify the history of producing furniture date back to prehistoric times and are closely linked with the process of emancipation of man from its natural environment [Krawczyk 2006].

The creation of furniture was probably a results of an evolutionary adaptation to life on Earth. The upright position caused man to seek for more comfortable solutions allowing to change position [Grzeluk 2000]. Therefore, it can be said that the history of the furniture developed with the process of human evolution. The oldest known natural furniture can be observed among the relics of Paleolithic Age, i.e., the polished surfaces of wooden branches, rocks, etc. With the development of the technological advances, the man better and better defeated obstacles for the creation of furniture. The art accompanied to the man since the ancient times. The oldest discovered wall paintings are probably about 25,000 years old and originate from the Chauvet Cave [Sadier i inni 2001]. The ceramic manufacturing and another utility objects found during the archaeological excavations [Sulgostowska i Polak 1984], testify, how important place had decoration in everyday life. The furniture as an utility object with time began to play an important role as a field of the artistic expression and place for the display of beauty. The capabilities and skills of the creators of furniture and the cultural factors, including tastes and fashion prevailing at a given period, had an impact for the shape of decorative forms [Chiarelli 1984].

In the ancient Egypt, the furniture had not only utilitarian function, but also determined the social status [Graham 1994]. The first Egyptian seats were simple and heavy, made of boards with deep and wide seat. With time rich decoration and gilding began to be added to the designs. A simple legs have evolved into the paws of the animals such as lion, a crocodile or a gazelle legs, and were set straight. A one characteristic specifics of the Egyptian furniture was the use of decoration with motifs of animals related to religion. The Egyptians used as a decorative motif heads of cows, lions or hippos, but also the floral motifs. Among these, popular was the lotus flower, symbolizing the purity and a new life, that occurs in several forms: bud, open flower, and leaves [Beer 1999]. It is believed that the ancient Greeks have been influenced by the Egyptian artistic style. However, it should be noted that their designs exhibit a different

perception of reality by giving subjects a more rounded shapes. Here it is worth to recall that the most famous ancient Greek furniture was the Klismos chair that had twisted back and legs, and was for women only. This chair was the inspiration for making furniture in classicism, and, as noticed by Siegfried Giedion, none of manufactured types of chair could match its comfort and convenience for several centuries [Krawczyk 2006]. Another item of furniture was Chromos - a massive high chair with richly carved legs and a footrest. It symbolized the power and and was for men only [Chatnowicz 2007].

With the development of the civilization, one can observe more and more attention to the detail. The appearance of new tools such as water saws in the XIV-th century allowed for cutting thin boards, which could alter the forms of furniture from heavy to more delicate. The change of the perception of the world in the XV-th century (Renaissance) also left its mark on furniture. Urban development, a growing middle class position, and above all the rediscovery of the ancient era, lead to a renewed admiration for the ideas, literature and ancient art. Increasingly started to pay attention to the surrounding harmony, which is also reflected in the application of the principle of the golden ratio (the golden ratio - the division of a segment into such two parts that the ratio of the larger part to the whole segment is the same as the lesser part to the larger) [Baraniewski 2002].

Another important point in time is the reign of Louis XIII. In this time the furniture manufactured from ebony wood appear. However, due to a high price of ebony wood, it has been used mainly as a veneer. Also, one can risk a statement that the use of this type of wood marked the beginning of the transition from the heavy Renaissance furniture from wood carvings to an excess of delicate and artistic later epochs. The discovery of the Pompeii in 1748 was crucial, as it led to the re-discovery of ancient art forms, that initiated the classical era. But perhaps it is apt to cite the Edward Lucie - Smith, who said that the furniture from Tutankhamen's tomb was more sophisticated than anything that has been produced in the Europe between the beginning of the Middle Ages and the half of the XVIII-th century [Lucie-Smith, 1990]. The industrial revolution took place in the XIX-th century and the crafts have been moved a little bit to the side. The first response to the transformation of the industrial revolution became Eclecticism, which is quite different from the earlier known styles in furniture. There are many differing opinions about Eclecticism. Most criticize it for overloading ornaments, matching to the petty bourgeois tastes. Loosely speaking, one can say that Eclecticism forms are simultaneously borrowing from different styles. But already historizing style names such as Neo-Baroque (neo - from the Latin new), [Doroszewski 2000], or just Neo-Renaissance, suggest drawing on a specific era: Baroque, Renaissance. Eclecticism on the one hand alluded to the old forms, on the other hand it was looking for a new, own expression. Eclecticism benefited from the art of ancient Greeks, Egyptians and Romans, but also from ornamentation of medieval, Baroque or Renaissance era [Swaczyna 1995]. However, as notes J. Krawczyk, eclectic furniture designers showed more than just a superficial historical erudition. Many tried to understand the formative process of artistic forms throughout the history as exemplified by Gotfried Semper in his treatise devoted to style [Krawczyk 2006]. Not many art connoisseurs see the beauty in objects produced in the eclectic style. The recurrence to an earlier art like Renaissance (Neo-Renaissance), had its positive side, allowing to rediscover the beauty and harmony contained in the art and paying attention to the individualism and the role of the artist in the creation of their masterpiece. Reading the various studies, one can get an impression that eclecticism is a style equally appreciated and hated in the same time. For example, in the "Dictionary of fine arts terminology" the term "Neo-Renaissance" is interpreted as: „(...) One of the most important directions of historical architecture in XIX century. It developed strongly, from one side as the serious research into the art of the Renaissance, and in the other as a continuation.”[Baraniewski 2002] On the other

hand, in the book "About the Art", E.H. Gombrich, one can read about the lack of sense of beauty, build-frills with a simultaneous lack of any style [Gombrich 1997]. Although Neo-Renaissance design and ornamentation was based upon Renaissance, it did attempt to create its own style. The earlier concepts were not copied directly. It should also be noted that the wood used in the furniture of the era was different than in the eras from which the borrowings were taken. The Neo-Renaissance coincided with Romanticism in the art and literature, and one can risk the hypothesis that it was created by longing for the past. In the decoration, it opposed to the cool and simple Classicism. This ambition could be a cause of the creation of excess buildings and furniture ornamentation. On the practical side: large piece of furniture ostensibly reduced its tectonics, when eyes stopped on decoration [Haaff 2005]. In France, the beginning of Eclecticism can be dated to the July Revolution (1830) and was it called the epoch of Louis Philippe. In Germany, it was called Kaiser era, while in England the era of Queen Victoria. This is the time of production on the machine, thereby the performed products became cheaper and more accessible for the middle class. As a result, the interiors were overloaded with detail and decoration but looked more cozy. The propagation of these art directions was mostly a result of the art and industrial exhibitions [Haaff 2005] in London (1851) and Paris (1867). Among the artists of the period it is worth to recall the company C. Leistler and the Son, who in Vienna arranged interior of the palace Liechtenstein. In Germany, the era of Romanticism in art led to the return to national art inspirations, sought in the chivalry of the Renaissance. The mechanized production developed rapidly in this period. This contributed to the separation of craft from art and thus favored the reduction of individual thought and high quality artisan crafts. On the other hand, industrial development brought new materials and techniques. This era has proved to be quite unable to create new art forms, but deriving from the past has led to the development of various hybrids, such as a gothic column made of iron cast. The railway connections helped to increase the possibility of the spread of new ideas but also the finished products. A noticeable loss of artistry in the arts, crafts and architecture has led to the formation of the museums combined with art schools (eg. South Kensington Museum and a school in London). It was then that the term "arts and crafts", used to this day, was coined. The curved line appears in the almost every type of furniture from this period, often causing disharmony. Most of the furniture textiles contained rocaille (rocaille - characteristic rococo ornament (..) imitating the stylized shapes of ear shells [Doroszewski 2000] floral patterns. For the customer who preferred plain textiles, the velvets were used, usually in a deep red or brown color. The bombastic form and exaggerated decorations were new and common. The excess of decoration was sometimes a cause of a lack of harmony, e.g., as in the case of the thin stem added to the heavy Corinthian Capital (Capital- top, crowning the part of the column, pillar, pilaster [Doroszewski i Ibid 2000]).

SUMMARY

Many artists in the period of eclecticism often acted against ugliness emerging around them. It is worth to recall the figure of William Morris, who (1834- 1896) together with a group of friends founded shop "Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals" (1861). There were offered complete interior design: furniture, wallpapers, textiles, embroideries, carpets, etc. The motto was "beauty and comfort." The mistake in the Morris assumptions Morris was a total rejection of the machines in favor of manual processing, hence the movement initiated by him had no chance for a long existence as not going with the spirit of progress [Kaes 1990].

Thus, can say that eclecticism is not a uniform style, so very hard to define it clearly. Can't say that everything in it was not esthetic, unsightly overloaded. The contemporary audience somehow appreciate part of the eclectic furnitures, even if the ornamentation disturbs a harmony. Also from a technical point of view, it represents a good quality.

Furniture design it is a whole activity leading to the determination of the characteristics of industrial products, which correspond to the cultural society development. This should be taken into account in their economic and technical progress. The applied art has got visual and aesthetic values, but also today it is very important in creation of society material culture. Each item of daily use, ranging from chairs, can be considered a "small piece of art". So this Applied Art is one of the most popular, most accessible and most democratic areas of creativity. It not only shapes the tastes of conscious consumers, but also often shapes the solution of social and individual problems. The modern image of art is a reflection of the history, traditions and experiences of past generations, which became the foundation and force shaping the modern face of the global furniture industry.

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Streszczenie: *Estetyka mebli eklektycznych w czasie rewolucji przemysłowej.* Wzornictwo przemysłowe jest współcześnie zjawiskiem oczywistym i w zasadniczy sposób decyduje o estetyczno-użytkowym charakterze produkcji, wyznacza estetyczne aspekty rzeczywistości materialno-przedmiotowej, współtworzonej przez technikę i sztukę według „praw piękna”. Wiek XXI coraz bardziej nabiera dla współczesnego człowieka charakteru nowej natury, ta nowa rzeczywistość to przede wszystkim przedmioty materialne, wytwory architektury i wzornictwa przemysłowego służące zaspokojeniu nie tylko potrzeb konsumpcyjnych ale również estetycznych człowieka. Zatem ostre w wieku XIX przeciwstawianie „piękna” i „użyteczności, sztuki i cywilizacji technicznej straciło swoją aktualność w wyniku działalności takich ludzi jak William Morris, którzy otwierali nową erę we wzajemnych stosunkach między tymi dziedzinami. Imponujące osiągnięcia w wzornictwa przemysłowego w tym również meblarskiego przyczynił się do utrwalenia roli sztuki w produkcji przemysłowej i zurbanizowanym świecie. Również meble jako przedmiot użytkowy, z czasem zaczęły odgrywać ważną rolę jako miejsce do wyrażenia twórczości, ekspresji i wyobraźni artystycznej twórców oraz ekspozycji piękna świata materialnego. Na dekoracyjność wytwarzanych obiektów meblarskich wpływały zarówno upodobania twórców jak i osób zamawiających oraz wydarzenia zaistniałe w danej epoce.

Wiek XIX to czas rewolucji przemysłowej w której rękodzielo zostało jakby zapomniane i pominięte. Pierwszą odpowiedzią na przemianę rewolucji przemysłowej stał się nowy kierunek zwany eklektyzmem, znacznie różniący się stylem w meblarstwie od stylów wcześniejszych. Rozwijająca się w szybkim tempie produkcja zmechanizowana, przyczyniła się do rozdzielenia rzemiosła od sztuki, a tym samym ograniczyła indywidualną myśl rzemieślnika. Z drugiej strony rozwój przemysłu przyniósł nowe materiały i techniki. Epoka ta okazała się raczej niezdolna do wytworzenia nowych form artystycznych, jednak czerpanie z przeszłości doprowadziło do powstania różnych hybryd, jak np. gotycka kolumna wykonana z żeliwa, z kolei „linia krzywa” pojawiała się w prawie każdym typie mebla z tego okresu, powodując często brak harmonii.

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