

Original scientific paper
UDC: 684.4(48)(091)

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF TRADITION AND TRADITIONAL SKILLS OF PRODUCTION ON THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

Boris Iliev, Vladimir Karanakov, Elena Nikoljski Panevski

*Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia,
Faculty of Design and Technologies of Furniture and Interior - Skopje,
e-mail: karanakov@fdtme.ukim.edu.mk; nikoljski@fdtme.ukim.edu.mk*

ABSTRACT

The specific socio-historical, cultural-anthropological and economic conditions in Scandinavia have determined the appearance and development of a unique, functional-aesthetic concept of expression through design, which has established itself, in the overall European hierarchy of design, as a prestigious emanator of many styles that appeared later on.

In the second half of the 20th century, the intensive development of technology and industry have given rise to design and visual communication as forms of non-verbal, visual conveyance of attitudes and visions. Such conjunctural rise of technology and industry, as well as visual communication as a social practice, have naturally imposed her standards and parameters as a necessary criterion in the evaluation of all forms of artistic expression that is of visual character, including interior and furniture design. The context of treating a certain design concept from the aspect of a wider social function must take into account the interactive relationship between the design and the ambient of its appearance.

Key words: Scandinavian design, tradition

1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries the Scandinavian countries have held their regional relationship, based on cooperation, while retaining its distinctive history, political aspirations and social interests. For example, the Danish design reflects its venerable tradition – sailing, while Swedish design is developed under the strong influence of social policy. Despite these regional emphasis on design, the five Scandinavian countries have a common aesthetic culture, which is a result of their tendency towards social unity. Besides sharing common historical, cultural and religious roots, the influence of nature and affinity for it is the dominant feature of Scandinavian design.

Harsh climate, long dark winters and very light summers have had big influence in the interior design and furniture. Throughout history, this remote and sparsely populated countries have acquired external cultural influences, their skills being in reinterpretation to adaptation of a specific original things, which created authentic products. As a result of their craft skills and design sensibility, the Scandinavian countries became dominant international force in the development of modern design.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Main Targets of the Research

Through theoretical analysis, this paper attempts to expose a vivid and clear display of Scandinavian design and strong influence on its creation that has been made by the tradition, culture and overall way of life of the people of this region. Scandinavian design largely relies on Nordic material and spiritual heritage.

2.2 Object of the Research

The analytic - synthetic approach of this paper is to analyze how the influence of national tradition and traditional skills has affected the production and development of modern Scandinavian furniture design. Besides, the paper follows the historical development, performs analysis of industrialization that, unlike in other Western countries, developed much later in these countries. It did not degrade the process of furniture design, but rather, with its ongoing development has perfected the production of furniture.

3. SOCIAL - ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Scandinavia comprises the North - European countries of Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland, which are regionally and culturally separated from the rest of Europe. Sharing a common, cultural and economic history, and linguistic roots, the Scandinavian countries have a unique character that reflects their geographic and social conditions. More than anywhere in the world, designers in Scandinavia have reached a democratic approach to design, which explores the social ideals and quality of life through appropriate technology and products available. Since its creation in the 1920s, modern Scandinavian design was supported by moral humanists, initiated by lutheranizm - " state religion " in Scandinavia, upholding truth and reason and not teach that salvation can be obtained through honest work. This moral belief in the social sense formed the philosophical grounds on which this design developed and succeeded.

Each Scandinavian country has strongly expressed its own specific national history and identity. They have historical and mythical forms from which their nation draws its inspiration. Although in the distant past there had been conflicts, people of Scandinavia have achieved permanent peace for more than two hundred years. The population of the five countries is noticeably homogeneous in ethnic and religious terms . The legal system has a common origin and a similar philosophy - very modern social laws are formulated together. While having many similarities and connections between them , in these countries there are strong stylistic differences in the approach to design. Scandinavian countries are exposed to a variety of industrial, political and social conditions and influences. Particularly interesting is their fundamentally different temperament. The emotional level: "Danes are Southerners, Finns are Easterners, Norwegians are Northerners and Swedes hold the lucky center. Icelanders are a story in itself ". These differences in national character are the result of different approaches of applied art and design flourishing at different times throughout their history.

Efforts to achieve individuality and higher social consciousness were crucial for Scandinavian design in the last period of five hundred years. In the long historical period, a common basic idea turns into practice through various stages of development of socialism in each of the five countries. The main feature that is inherited is the Scandinavian practicality and nowhere else in the world had no such effect as in the development of their modern designs. For decades the home was the center of existence and not only offered shelter and vitality of climatic conditions, but also the feeling of warm family life. Through the long history of applied and decorative arts, the designers intended to concentrate on the production of functional and attractive items in the home, which reflect in the wooden industry and modern principles. In Scandinavian countries well designed products are common, because the meaning and understanding of "good design" is infiltrated in their culture. Scandinavian designers, in their search for beautiful and useful household objects, adopted an approach to design where the product is developed through the humanistic interpretation of formal aesthetics and technical principles, accompanied by modernism.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SCANDINAVIANS

4.1. Importance of Scandinavia in the Development of Modern Design in the World

The Scandinavian design is an active part of social changes in the world. Historical tendency of Scandinavian designers was to find a balance between natural and artificial. Scandinavians traditionally relied on the design of their past, using limited sources of materials, using them as rationally as possible. This approach to design has led to considering it as an important element of

their cultural, social and economic life. Despite a long history of excellent design, until 1950, the concept of their design was not popularized. It was exposed for the first time outside their region at the annual exhibition of Scandinavian design in the U.S. and Canada from 1954 to 1957.

Key feature of Scandinavian craft and design was the need for quality. It is widely known that the furniture and other items produced in this region, no matter whether they are made by hand or machine, whether expensive or inexpensive, need to provide emotional comfort. The main reason is that in Scandinavia well designed and manufactured products are seen as vital to the enrichment of their everyday lives, rather than as a status symbol. "Scandinavian designers essentially are aware that through a harmonious blend of form and practical function, it is possible to create a truly useful and relevant facilities or Brukskunst (useful art)". Scandinavian designers are guided by the main tenet of modernism, to achieve an optimal balance between form, function, material, color, texture, durability and cost, in order to achieve free designer solution. They realized that the open industrial aesthetics can be strange, so they developed products that are fundamentally humanistic, products that places humans in the first place rather than the machines. Therefore a number of designers have tried to implement free design solutions. "Whether realized in mass manufacturing factory or a craft workshop, they express the Scandinavian concept of Hugge".

Designers in Scandinavia believed in the concept of "Brukskunst" movement in which there are many examples of "art off art sake" items that can be used not only for functional purposes, but also to enhance their beauty. Designers worked for the needs of industrial production, they designed artifacts, that are facilitated by the use of traditional crafts and skills. Crafts roots in Scandinavian design continued to exist thanks to manufacturers and are used up to date.

Scandinavian products are primarily initiated by the idea of satisfying the daily needs, and so is the furniture that is affordable, practical and beautiful for anyone who does not care much about the status and exclusiveness. Because of this, the typical Scandinavian interior is more home eclecticism rather than mix of the old with the new. The essence of Scandinavian design is domination of simplicity, which helps to feel a sense of warmth and light, an important element when living in the dark and cold northern regions.

Humanism and essentialism in Scandinavian design embodied Nordic fundamentalism, belief in social democratic liberalism, which is based on the principle that good design is something that is gained from citizens, regardless of wealth, gender, age. The idea that "prettier everyday objects" can beautify life, perpetuates the international phenomenon of Scandinavian design. With the growing complexity and dynamism of modern life Scandinavian design continues to offer timeless simplicity, providing psychological comfort and emotional tranquility, at the same time offering an ethical approach to design, which will become more and more flexible, when we face the rise of environmental concern and social challenge for the future. Scandinavian design consistently provides satisfactory design solutions that are filled with practicality and aesthetic research.

The interiors are characterized by accuracy, diligence, rigor and cruelty. Less furniture creates more space to balance the lack of light in winter. However, this is far from the common opinion of the cold, northern and interior minimalist Scandinavian design and actually combines functionality with warm and natural materials. In terms of color, their usage is constant. They use primary the following colors: yellow gray, beige, whitish edge, and natural tones of the wood. Exception of neutral colors is the frequent use of the red color, which is sometimes used to break the monotony of bright tones, if it appears.

4.2 The Organic Concept with Scandinavian Design

The question is, why the need arose from organic concept for the design of furniture precisely in these countries at this time. However, it seems that the issue is very complex, but the answer, put in a nutshell, would be that it was conditioned by the obvious geographical conditions, especially modest and almost limited range of materials, production and furniture design. Therefore, Scandinavian designers in their furniture creations used goods that are available, and that is wood. Wood, because they are abundant in forests in Sweden, Norway and Finland, as Eileene Harrison Beer will notice: "the spectacular landscape around, strongly contributes to abstract design motifs in education, and so skillfully realized by nature. These landscapes are a constant source of lasting beauty as by its shape and its color". Models inspired by natural flora and fauna decorated objects of everyday life. That's

why throughout the 20th century most of the Scandinavian designers such as Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen and Tapio Wirkkala, set up forms that have been inspired by the natural world, and the "help" of the machines for their production plays only a technical role. That makes it pioneer of the organic modernism.

The organic design was based on the spirit of nature and was founded by Alvar Aalto. Crucial to this organic approach was thinking, how to connect single elements, objects and furniture, visually and functionally in the context of the interior. Equally decisive was how to connect interior appearance and function with the environment that surrounds it, through the harmony of its proportions, and the need of materials and colors. Aalto's designs were understandable, but its crucial importance wasn't associated with the spiritual supremacy, but with functional. The success of Aalto's furniture was widespread and his view toward design was widely accepted in the U.S., where he changed the course of designing the expense of organic modernism (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Alvar Aalto's chairs

Another Scandinavian designer who is considered one of the leaders of the organic design is Eero Saarinen. He took part in the exhibition for organic design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where he received first prize in the category "elements for sitting in the living room." The armchair, which was exhibited, was a revolutionary piece of furniture, not only because of the developed technology, but the simple shape and great ergonomics that gives the saddle shape of the shell, being processed organic form. All this influence encouraged the attempt to achieve the ideal structure, organic materials and functional units in the design. Although organic design is often in association with natural materials, however, it is not. Plastics, top synthetic materials, are the best solution that can capture natural forms and shapes.

Scandinavia is a promoter of organic design and has a major impact on modern movement in the last fifty years. As a result of the preoccupation with the mechanical revolution, modern movement could not reach the real and important place in Scandinavia. However, despite the technological revolution, they have achieved fundamental goals, including the creation of well-designed "democratic" items every day. Pure functionalism of the Bauhaus designs and humanism are the main

feature of Scandinavian design. Therefore it is clear that Scandinavian designers are the first ones that offered the world more acceptable and less doctrinal form of modernism, with softer forms and natural materials (Figure 2 and 3).



Figure 2. Arne Jacobsen design



Figure 3. Eero Saarinen and Vernon Panton chairs, and contemporary designed chair

Balancing the need of machines, Scandinavians did not reject the past, but learned from it. In search for beautiful forms and practical simplicity, they installed a modern design that is an expression of the soul.

4.3 Design with Respect for Tradition and Traditional Values

Compared to Western Europe and the United States, industrialization in Scandinavia came relatively late, so wood furniture traditions of each of these countries has evolved to the point of perfection. By linking these old skills with modern practice, Scandinavian designers were able to produce high quality items that could be produced industrially. Essential approach to design – putting in a logical order only those items that are absolutely necessary to achieve a particular goal - is being practiced by Scandinavian designers. For decades they have developed this principle, and as a result, the materials became an important principle of Scandinavian design, which in modern times corresponds to the best approach to industrial production. During the 20th century, Scandinavian wooden industry skills and design sensibility had a dominant influence on the development of modern design and the epitome of good design in general.

With the entry of massive production, these traditional values, due to the feeling of respect for them, were not abandoned. Respect for the tradition of art and craftsmanship, combined with technologies, made Scandinavian design one of the most recognized and prestigious ones.

Scandinavian designers were inspired from traditional Scandinavian sensibility for aesthetically clean furniture, based on mastery of materials and constructive solutions. Subtlety and modern fundamental approach to problem solving is based on a refinement of ideal forms, which is the main characteristic of Scandinavian design.

4.4 Design with Respect and Use of Natural Materials and Characteristic Structural Links

Geographic location and harsh climate is not only seeking a deeper view of domestic comfort and environment, but at the same time and respect for nature. Scandinavians mainly possessed a deep understanding of nature and therefore particularly appreciated raw materials (especially local). Long and rich tradition of wood processing industry and folk art that existed in all five countries not only demonstrated their empathy for materials, but also their desire to bring everyday objects with invaluable natural beauty.

Since some parts of Scandinavia were geographically distant from civilization, they were directed to nature as a condition for their survival. The main influence was carried by the harsh climate. For these reasons, Scandinavians valued natural materials. Wood as a natural material is used because it gives heat and also it is the material that dominates in their surroundings. The use of wood and its processing has excelled to the point of perfection. Thus developed crafts.

During the 1930s, many designers experimented in the creation of new forms and technology. So furniture, especially chairs, are true masterpieces, not only technically, but also as a design, and they create the impression of an elegant line that emphasizes its structural essentiality. The skill of understanding the structural elements allows balancing between function and aesthetics, setting the optimal solution for industrial production. They used natural materials with strong proportions and superlative woodworks, which is reflected in the skills of Scandinavian craftsmen who were using simple constructive joints and functional immediacy. In particular, special attention was put on curved fine forms, and the use of hidden constructive joints, so today without their use we could not imagine the design of exclusive furniture.

Alvar Aalto as one of the greatest representatives of Scandinavian design contributed to the production of furniture, especially in the process of bending wood. He and the company for furniture production "Frits Hansen" opened a new chapter in the design of furniture using curved forms. The crucial problem that has always existed, connecting the horizontal and vertical elements, Aalto would solve in a subtle and skillful way, especially in his chairs.

The use of natural materials and new technologies will not only develop the Scandinavian furniture and elevate the Scandinavian design, but its authenticity will have a big impact on the rest of the world.

4.5 Scandinavian Design within Contemporary Standards in Design

Scandinavian design, believing in social democratic liberalism, is based on the principle that good design is something that is contributing to the citizen, regardless his wealth, social class, gender ... All this leads to one goal, according to which a well designed item of furniture should not be available only to a certain, limited class of people, but accessible to all. Scandinavian design does not teach that beauty does not always have to be expensive, but can be well packed, likeable and accessible to all.

Practically, when we first come into contact with elements of furniture, turning is a cute look. Aesthetic assessments of furniture mainly depend on factors of taste and fashion, it is a variable component and differs in certain historical periods. Although art does not recognize boundaries and good design can be as well a work of art that exhibits no other function, it basically applies the motto "beauty without function does not make sense." Aesthetic requirements to meet the furniture must be in unity with functional features. Moreover, it reflects the main feature of Scandinavian design logic, aesthetics - function, a third component exists in explicit factors relating to safe use, it is the strength and hardness of materials and structures and the reflection of time on the effective use that these

products possess. From above, we can draw a conclusion that Scandinavian design has the three most important components of a well-functioning furniture .

Many Scandinavian designers have made pioneering researches in anthropometrics, relation systems of the human body, in an attempt to achieve generalization, which will facilitate the development of furniture which fits better in the physical characteristics of the furniture user. This is particularly evident in the elements for seating where human line is followed and gets a big comfort.

Scandinavian designers had "democratic" attitude with their products. They created products free from the imposition of a particular theme, or were not victims of "democratic design", but they were faced with the personal responsibility of the individual design problem . Style was not affected by the chaos, despite the designers' freedom of action.

The ratio of the designer with his product is balance between form , function , material and color . The design that has been created was simple and functional above all. There are "hostages" of machinery and therefore achieved a number of free solutions. Created products were used in everyday life, and provided emotional comfort . The products are not a symbol of prestige but items that will be used to facilitate the needs of the people.

Utmost simplicity and clean lines, as well as unified form and function, they are combined with natural forms . At the same time the design should be used as a tool for democratic social - responsible approach, in order to create a better product for everyone. Despite this long tradition, Scandinavian designers reached international fame in the 1950s when the exhibition entitled "Design in Scandinavia", toured the USA and Canada. The show lasted from 1954-1957. Bauhaus movement had great influence on Scandinavian architecture in the 1930s. Its stylistic elements were not just accepted, but were expanded to include human and social components . The buildings were adapted to their environment in order to achieve unity with nature.

Although common characteristics of Scandinavian designs include affinity towards nature and functionality, the design and the architecture were still strongly influenced by national characteristics. These differences are due to geographic, economic, social and political factors, but also because of the specific temperament of each of these nationalities separately.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper is an attempt to analyze the high degree of harmonization between aesthetical superiority and technological benefits of Scandinavian design, where the tradition of its production played a major role.

Scandinavian design, as the very expression says, comes from the northern Nordic countries consisting of Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and the isolated island nation of Iceland. Together they share the same historical, cultural, economic and even linguistic roots . Nevertheless, each country has developed its own design and it brings its own stamp. In the 20th century modern Scandinavian design experienced the greatest expansion. It was supported by the morale, and humanists were guided by the principle that only honest work can bring salvation. Due to geographical location and harsh climate, or nine months of hard winter and three months of light fly, this region creates authentic design itself.

Great democracy which is owned repaid in their way of life through the humanistic interpretation of formal aesthetic and technical principles supported by modernism .

The rich tradition of the use of natural materials, which is determined by specific natural geographical factors, gives us the right to declare Scandinavian designers the forerunners of today already dominant awareness of multiple expediency of this type of resource . We are witnessing nowadays the trend of using natural materials in the manufacture of furniture which is much more popular and is becoming standard . Just as an example, the particular institutionalization of such awareness is to mention that the Council of Europe has adopted a resolution on the use of natural materials and their processing. In this context, one of the most important references to Scandinavian design is the fact that in times of absolute supremacy of artificial materials they remained loyal to their tradition of using natural materials .

Consistency of Scandinavian designers to their traditional methods of processing wood even in the intensive industrialization and unified globalism is impressive. In this sense, the comparative

analysis between the Scandinavian example and our relationship to the craft tradition and other forms of artistic wood is always worth noting over and over again, both scientifically and practically.

The enormous respect for tradition did not allow uptake of industrialization to lead to loss of the traditional sense, but it is used through the interviewing of tradition with new mechanical revolution, and thus a unique design was created that later had a great impact on the general Scandinavian culture.

In order to better understand the complex relationship that Scandinavian designers have, the paper comprises data on the major Scandinavian designers. One of the greatest designers and pioneer of the organic design, Alvar Aalto, made a large impact on other designers with his innovative solutions in terms of design as well as structural solutions.

Analysis of their work in the field of design is interesting as well as their education and permanent training. Specific treatment of craft skills and analytical approach to design, points on highly educated and talented individuals with extensive aesthetic and professional culture .

Another famous designer who worked in the early 20th century is Arne Jacobsen, the most famous Danish designer.

His guiding idea is that the balance between function and aesthetics must go together .

Designers who acted in the 1960s and significantly changed the way in designing, Verner Panton and Eero Saarinen, were creating “cosmic” furniture using PVC resin .

One of the main characteristics of Scandinavian design is creating approaches to designing furniture available for everybody and containing the functional and aesthetic preferences . Furniture should not be present status but should satisfy the basic functions of everyday people and way of life style .

Technologies and technological benefits of industrial design that are characteristic for Scandinavian countries are a reflection of a continual, traditionally orientated, through centuries purifying simplicity supported by highly sophisticated technologies .

The possibility of implementation of experiences, skills and achievements of Scandinavian design in the Republic of Macedonia are huge, and it can be achieved through education of scientific staff that can apply these experiences, and it is the responsibility of state institutions and their policies especially when it comes to scientific research activity. This positive experience of creating a unique and original style in furniture design is a great challenge for every furniture designer, and the implementation should start from the basics. Introduction with traditional natural and new materials and their characteristics, getting acquainted with traditional architecture and furniture design, making specific methodology, this is the right way not to get stuck in the trap of wrong implementation or interpretation of traditional design. The new design should be modern and should contain all of the elements that are essential: function, construction, aesthetics, comfort, cost.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bolander's, Lars. Scandinavian design. New York: 2010, Heather Smith MacISAAC
- [2] Вујаклија, Милан. Лексикон страних речи и израза, Просвета, Београд, 1980
- [3] Gura, Judith. Scandinavian furniture: A Sourcebook of Classic Designs for the 21st Century. London: 2005, Thames & Hudson
- [4] Fiel, Charlotte & Petre. 1000 Chairs. Los Angeles: 2005, Taschen.
- [5] Fiel, Charlotte & Petre. Decorative art 60's. Los Angeles: 2002, Taschen.
- [6] Fiel, Charlotte & Petre. Design os the 20th century. Los Angeles: 1999, Taschen.
- [7] Fiel, Charlotte & Petre. Scandinavian Design. Los Angeles, CA: Taschen, 2002.
- [8] Schmidt, Chrystina & Magnus, Englund. Scandinavian modern. New York: 2007
- [9] Sembach Klaus-Jurgen, Gabriele Leuthauser and Peter Gossel. Twenty centery furniture design. Los Angeles: Taschen. 2002.
- [10] Токарев, Михаил. 100 години модерна архитектура, книга прва: големите движења и мајсторите на Модерната, Скопје, 2004
- [11] Мала енциклопедија, Просвета, књ, 2, 3. Београд, 1978

http://www.scandinaviandesign.com/arne_jacobsen/
<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/house-and-home/interiors/the-secret-history-of-alvar-aalto-savoy-flower-vase-1978811.html>
http://www.scandinaviandesign.com/Verner_panton/index2.htm
[http://www.art-iques.com/SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN FROM 1900 TO 1960.htm](http://www.art-iques.com/SCANDINAVIAN_DESIGN_FROM_1900_TO_1960.htm)
<http://www.ikea.com/au/en/->
<http://www.garsnas.se/sv-SE/Designers/Ralf-Lindberg>
http://www.designdictionary.co.uk/en/scandinavian_design.htm
<http://www.woodi.dk/Default.aspx?ID=127>
teNeues publishing group. Alvar Aalto. Barcelona: 2002, teNeues.
teNeues publishing group. New Scandinavian Design. Barcelona: 2005, teNeues.