

“If an ox had hands  
and could paint a picture,  
his god would look  
like an ox.”

*Xenophanes of Colophon*

## **Aesthetics: Not Value Collisions, but an Invigorating Humanistic and Democratic Value Dialogue**

### **Aesthetics: ‘Pure’ and ‘Absolute’ or ‘Obsolete’.**

#### **Aesthetic Value: Creation, Transference and Interpretation**

##### **Definitions and Flow**

##### **The Qualia of Aesthetics**

In the process of analysis of a conscious experience of an object, qualia describe through visual, verbal, aural and kinetic means the subjective qualities of objects (intellectual, physical, emotional and social and cultural) and place them into cultural and social value hierarchies. For analytical dialogue and cultural discourse they provide the bases for inductive and deductive reasoning as well as conclusions. Qualia explicate the factual and illusory sense data of characteristics, relationships and values that provide the metaphoric descriptions of the exemplified ideals embedded in the experience engendered by the object.

##### **The Society**

It is the total aggregate of social relationships, in history and in current conduct, among individuals and groups that shape the quality and character of a community bound together by shared interests, similar customs, traditions and homogeneous institutions, nationality or ethnicity.

##### **The Culture**

It is the sum of sophistication, knowledge, and engrained folk wisdom, accrued through observation, education, exposure, and tradition, over time, that provides the foundation for specific religious beliefs and worldviews, customs, and practices, and is expressed through art, music, literature, and through the research and verification of disciplines.

##### **The Objects**

In this context an object is any conceptual or physical entity, which is subject to critical evaluation (valuation). It relates to the multitude of outcomes of human creative endeavors: concepts, ideas, literature, objects, images, processes, performances, etc.

Objects do not exist by themselves. They are part of, relate to and interact with other objects in various contexts, of which each is different and specific.

Objects cannot be evaluated separated from their total ecological context (function/purpose). Therefore they must be viewed in their totality of social and cultural contexts.

In a symbiotic interaction, both culture and object shape each other: the culture guides the maker in the conception and construction of the object; the object instructs the culture.

*If one were to take Kenneth Clark’s analysis of John Ruskin’s nineteenth century concepts about art and aesthetics and paraphrase them for the pragmatics of the twenty-first century, aesthetics still would not be just a matter of taste and quality, not just lie in the “eyes of the beholder.” Informed judgment still requires, from maker and interpreter alike, knowledge and understanding of the whole human social and cultural history, bringing to bear intuition and feeling, intellect and knowledge, historical fact and memory, and every and all other human capacities, all focused on the task to define epoch-specific and relevant sets of aesthetics. The task still demands openness with and immersing in physical, intellectual and social conditions; otherwise the new aesthetics would emerge just as another of false concepts in a line of predatory, dehumanizing, trendy and short-lived things.*

*Even the most superior mind and the most powerful imagination must be logic-based – to understand the logic of the absurd even – and the narrowness, expanse or limitations must be clearly understood. Especially, since imagination will often recast truths in all kinds of ways that overwhelm banal, commonplace and trite minds in their understanding, but the superior mind and the most powerful imagination must test and ground its principles. The principles cannot just be based on theory, but on observation, experimentation and testing.*

*If the greatest twenty-first century art/design schools still believe in their duty to impart vital truths, not only about facts of visual literacy and technical skills, but about the sociology of concepts and ideas, and the anthropology of philosophies and mythologies as well as the interdependent relationships and conduct between concepts and institutions of life, then great art/design will be the specific expression of a democratic epoch in which cultural groups are united in many beliefs of purpose and human destiny.*

Without doubt, investigating the discourse on aesthetics, past and present, is like opening Pandora’s Box, ideal when linked to a single sharply defined philosophy or worldview, a can of worms when the complexity of the subject matter must be unfolded, because the problematic of aesthetics encompasses the many values that not only surround the conception of two, three-dimensional or time-based-performance objects, but also the conceptual quality of involvement and attitude of maker, selection and application of his skills, the receptivity of audiences, the esoteric or pragmatic purpose (to inform, educate or entertain) of the object, the coarseness or sensitivity to social and cultural contexts, the measures of emotional intensity and challenge, and the growth of the culture which is either hurried on or slowed and impeded.

Rationalists want to capture the notions of intuitive proportions of beauty and contain them in measurable empiricist frameworks. Perspectivists prefer to recognize the fact that all conceptual schemas are directed by particular individual or combinations of many intellectual perspectives to describe or envision the universe. Perspectivists, like Nietzsche and Einstein, would reject any notion that there exists either objective metaphysics or objective space and time. Hedonists, filter the world before them through the notion that humans are motivated only by their self-interest and therefore pleasurable sublimation is the only thing that a person demands from beauty. All represent just a fraction of the exhaustive wealth of philosophical investigations that attempt shedding of light on the human condition. If all criteria for an aesthetic ideal would be joined, it most likely would result in a most amazing cacophony of contradictions. It seems, like all democracies, which by design must be open to all expressions, it is the self-stimulating discourse that makes the subject of aesthetic so interesting and dynamic. Any clear definition would drain its lifeblood. The maker and the object start the dialogue and the interpreter comes to certain conclusions, some to be discarded, others as eye and mind openers which begin to change the culture and society.

There are few limits to the perception of an object, but aesthetic qualities can only come from human experience. They may be perceived to be embedded in the object, but they exist only as intellectual constructs.

### The Makers

#### Concepts:

Thinkers, Philosophers, Writers,  
Intellectuals of all disciplines

#### Objects:

Artists, Designers, Artisans, Craftsmen

#### Performances:

Actors, Dancers, etc.

### The Object in its Culture Contexts

a  
**Physical** (in macro/micro environments, ecology of the relationships between humans and the natural and physical environment)

b  
**Behavioral** (framed by the individual psychology of makers and interpreters and their rational and irrational likes and dislikes)

c  
**Social** (within the hierarchical structure of status and territory, through privilege, tradition, education, ideology, etc.)

d  
**Cultural** (embedded in human institutions of philosophy, law, art and morals, ethics)

e  
**Religious** (the ethical and moral restrictions)

#### f Philosophy/Worldview

- **Aesthetics:** the branch of philosophy deals with the study of values embedded in the beautiful and the sublime, as well as the illusive rules and principles for reading the universe, creating concepts about it, and shaping objects, performances and experience through it.

- **Epistemology,** another branch of philosophy, investigates the nature of knowledge, the validity of its roots and foundations, its encompassing range, defining its boundaries and power, weight and separating integral binding laws from duplicity.

- **Ethics** or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy which addresses concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice, while studying the moral standards and how they affect individual human behavior and the conduct of groups.

- **Logic** deals with deductive and inductive reasoning as part of most intellectual activities and is the most important point of etiquette in any disciplined intellectual discourse. The function of logic is to form the strategies for critical thought on which the discursive argument rests in an attempt to distinguish valid from faulty reasoning relevant to a object. It explores the object's hinterland, namely the relationships between events and situations to foreshadow the inevitable consequences of their interaction.

- **Metaphysics** concerns itself with the study of causality in nature and existence in time and space.

- **Political philosophy** is a study of individual and common rights and freedoms, in relationship

## Few Answers in Complex Times

Let's face it, as hard as this message is, in today's times of fame, notoriety and bottom-line commerce, most professionally educated or vocationally trained artists/designers lack the deep knowledge necessary for sustaining a culture beyond amusement and profit motives. They lack the stamina and interest as well as the commitment to sustain selflessly their own arduous, physically and intellectually complex discipline, which puts their ownership of aesthetics in doubt. The object making process requires the use of not just a convenient partial but a full understanding of principles in visual literacy for methodically and constructively framing a clear and "pure" or "absolute", as well as culture-defining set or sets of relevant aesthetics. Few art/design schools offer deep course programs in the rigor of philosophy and aesthetics or about the psychological, social, and cultural ecology that must be sustained by artists and designers.

This century-old goal of developing sets of aesthetics, like fractured fairytales, derived from early attempts to stem "against the soulless machine production" of objects during the Industrial Revolution, split into various schools. On one side, championed by the Arts and Crafts movement in the UK and the USA, saw mass production as threat to individual creativity and expression. It inspired the Art Nouveau credo and its concept of "Gesamtkunstwerk", namely to merge all facets of human existence into one unified work of art, which was put to practice by the likes of architects Henri Van de Velde and Victor Horta and later by the community of architects, artisans, artists and designers of the Wiener Werkstätte. The other, although coming from the same roots that begat their foundations, the Bauhaus and later of the HfG Ulm, both in Germany, championed mass production, standardization, and affordable objects. Later in the fifties and sixties the styling efforts of the Basel Allgemeine Kunstgewerbeschule, Switzerland joined.

Today, that goal is even further away from coming to fruition. Art/design education has become much more narrow and specialized and is unfortunately culturally vacuous. In today's education, budgeted time is weighed against investments in cultural perception, aesthetics, and conceptual skills and craft, hand dexterity weighed against machine expedience, in a struggle against bottom-line financing. It is no longer about cultural musing. Axioms of "it is better to work ten days on one product than to manufacture ten products in one day" have been exchanged for "time is money", "fifteen minutes of fame", glitz and notoriety. In addition, design education lies still predominantly in the domain of physical crafts and continues to be about an efficient, but marginally creative investment of intelligence in following and copying the most leading and successful styles promoted by the professional media. The same maybe said about art.

The fact is, the task of defining true cultural aesthetics is a philosophical matter, requiring serious time commitment, investment in critical thinking, accumulation of empirical knowledge and understanding of the construction, transfer, and interpretation of human values and that knowledge depends on all participants – maker and interpreter, critic and audience.

## The Widening Schism Between Aesthetics, Society and Culture

Nowadays, design plays by the rules of market capitalism, which are a value-charade between popular and culture-building aesthetic values. When institutes predict the annual or even faster turnover of color schemes for all goods-producing industries and when marketers invent and then begin to define sets of aesthetics artificially and outside of any historical or cultural framework like, for example, inventing an artificial frameworks for "Generation X or Y or Z", and waiting for the public to find and adopt these as new identities, then the question of design-aesthetics as culture-supporting has most likely become mute. Fashion and color forecasting is about standardization of materials and stabilization of an otherwise very dynamic and competitive market system, focusing on the production of a single item in much greater and extreme quantities rather than on many items of various volumes and aggregates. It is the collapse of democratic choice through a near corporate dictatorship. Marketing takes full advantage of a very beleaguered user/audience with very limited time and survival information, providing artificial sets of identities, requiring the public to adopt and not to organically grow their own.

Aesthetics have always been part of a complex social game of status, hierarchical positioning and ranking, as well as identification – keeping some in and others out, some welcomed and others being ostracized – for privileged tribal chiefs, shamans and medicine men in original cultures, and

to all human institutions that are guided by laws, policies and procedures to organize a social and cultural system to assure a certain quality of life for citizens.

- **Social philosophy** studies the social behavior between individual and groups, the variety of life styles and taboos emanating from different ethnic groups and speech communities.

#### **The Interpreters**

are critics, audiences, users, participants of all walks of life (educated, experts, novices, and learners, the devout and the banal). They and the objects are intimately engaged in a negotiation process, searching for the best fit between stable cultural and social perception and valuation, and looking for symbolic meaning or functional significance and more.

#### **Perceptual Filters:**

a

#### **Physiological Filters**

are activated by the senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch).

b

#### **Psychological Filters**

funnel the stimuli through personal and individual intuitive or cognitive processes that affect the experience.

c

#### **Social Filters**

Channel the stimuli through the value depository of acceptable criteria for appropriate behavior and interaction to determine the worth of the experience by ranking it.

d

#### **Cultural Filters**

screen the stimuli in relationship to beliefs, customs, and practices

#### **Evolutionary Stages in the Formation of Culture**

a

**Homeostatic Cultures** (lowest emancipation): encompass a variety from orthodox, self-restricting dogma to oppressive and repressive dictatorships: What must/ought be done; what must and ought not be done! The common characteristics are that once the initial creative act is completed, orthodoxy, autocracy or dictatorship takes over. Even though the world is made up of diverse viewpoints, one dogma or one concept is chosen to control everything. All values, embedded in language, traditions, customs, and law are completely programmed either by orthodox and self-restricting dogmas or oppressive and repressive world-views or ideologies in service of autocracy. The individual is required to live in complete synchrony with the collective and is usually in a state of unawareness of other possibilities, leaving the exterior world and ideas unchallenged. There is some energy in the creative act of refinement and reiteration but serious metamorphosis cannot be expected. The energies are conservative and very close to a standstill (i.e., anthropologists claim that Australian Bushmen, over centuries, coined very few words, and that all of the rather small vocabulary is totally functional today.)

b

#### **Adaptive Cultures** (medium emancipation):

In relationship to homeostatic cultures, adaptive cultures are predatory and opportunistic. The only creativity exists in the observation of convenient, profitable or advantageous behaviors in a competing culture, which takes it and adapts it. They behave as timid or passive democracies.

aristocratic and religious leaders in traditional cultures, later aided by scholars, military, and industrial gatekeepers. In contemporary times, marketers have taken up the role to define the aesthetics for society but as tools for corporate captains and political opportunists. They take advantage of short-shrift trends and lifecycles. In a consumer-oriented world, in which each year more products must be marketed than in years before, long-lasting aesthetic requirements are considered unnecessary hurdles and barriers to corporate success. Long gone are the times during which people took part in a slow and methodical evolution of shared aesthetic values.

The obstacles for truly understanding aesthetics are great. Most cultures are thoroughly handicapped in the topic. They have delegated aesthetics to the domain of the holy, like truth and mysticism, while gravitating to anything profane that seems to assure worldly survival. There is no comparison between the disparate investments in the literary-culture and visual-culture. The literary arts, at least in the western world, depend on formal education sustained over many years, starting in kindergarten and progressing through the next levels all the way through the university, where the discourse continues to be primarily verbal, depending on dialogue, the explication of written text for the bulk of argumentation and disciplinary discourse, with some visual material in form of charts, graphs, maps and diagrams to support it. Visual literacy is not taught in same depth to the same constituency or when it is, it is supporting the existing dogmas of art or design. The psychological and sociological issues about visual communication as well as aesthetics are rarely, or when, just cursorily addressed. Most likely, there are philosophers who are better educated in aesthetics at the university than artists and designers are at art schools. This leaves the public in darkness about the dynamic discourse that is raging between the different schools of thought, believing that artists/designers are experts in the field that claims aesthetics as its focus. Meanwhile sociologists have discovered that the greater portion of visual communication occurs outside awareness and in relationship to flight or fight, an animalistic behavior that is heightened especially through ambiguity, which requires alertness and vigilance from the observer towards the malignant and the beguine.

## **The Utopian Myth of True Democratic Aesthetics**

The concept of freedom is a truly utopian dream. Ornithologists and sociologists alike have long debunked the exuberant human notion of "Man as free as a bird", because humans and birds are bound to species-related life cycles and rhythms, social behaviors, and physical and ideological territories. If biological nature, environment and ecology do not curtail as much any longer as in former times, society, no matter how open and liberal, still imposes restrictions and impediments to any concept of freedom that is unfamiliar. In modern times, aboriginal taboos have morphed into social codes and etiquettes, which are enforced by the same religious, philosophical and ideological constituencies and their institutions. Only few citizens self-determine their goals of life with certain specificity and choose to restrict their conduct to characteristically defined behaviors that suit their values and preferences. Others, who also earnestly believe in living full lives, wait passively for society to guide them through the complexities of existence by duplicating the life styles of those they admire or envy.

In the convolutions of an overpopulated world with diminishing resources and finite measures of time and space, little has changed. To be able to facilitate a cross-cultural discourse, conventions may not be just extremely necessary but the only way to provide ease to overwhelming complexity. That is why ancient prohibitions, enforcing the sacred and the mundane, continue to be placed on behaviors, ideas and expressions, objects and images. They help in safeguarding the underprivileged against the overanxious power and influence of more highly placed individuals. They provide means for communication that although confined to ancient traditions are garnered into social reservoirs of values and laws.

In a comparison between lives in the 19th and today, it becomes evident, that the required conceptual breathing space around a person was controlled by the values injected by religion, education, social standing and the direct relationship with the community. Very few citizens dared to think independently or creatively beyond conventions. There was not enough affluence of time to step out and think differently from others. Few would allow themselves to impose on another's life space. Interpretations of right or wrong were accorded by religious dogma and local conventions. Today, citizens are exploring the edges of the space around them, thereby trespassing very frequently and bumping into the life space of others. Now lawyers stand in for the integrity of citizens and their institutions. Life has changed from the idealistic to the pragmatic. The discussions have changed from the assessment of what

Although individuals are culturally empowered to act, create and invent, they are reluctant to make decisions on their own. There is a limited sense of individualism and greater reliance on guidance from experts and institutions. Individuals are able to deal with tensions of change if they perceive the new to be in complete synchronisms with the collective and that it will not change their individual status in the social and cultural hierarchy. Their own value systems are semi-stable. Change is introduced only through the adaptation of values conceived by other competitive cultures (i.e., the guilds during the Renaissance). The traditional uniform and homogenous values must meld with the new in a process that is not always productive and sometimes warps both the new and the tradition. The process may also be gradual, often unconscious, absorbing knowledge and ideas through continual exposure rather than deliberate learning.

#### **Democratic Cultures:**

Independent individuals pursue their vision of "happiness" as long as they do not impinge on others. The drive for ultimate democracy is pressing all individuals to make use of their freedoms and potentials. Values are in continuous flux and subject to unforeseen challenges, modification and change. They create great opportunities for metamorphoses and revolution. Their dynamic characteristics stand against homeostasis, especially against singular control by institutions, church and state, and invite continuous and conscious intellectual challenge. In the stage of sophistication, objects shift from specific cultural meaning to dynamic possible interpretations from "practical/pragmatic" to "symbolic/semantic" to "syntactic/unstructured", in all combinations and configurations, that may or may not relate to existing hierarchies and may even cross territorial boundaries of other disciplines. Individuals are forced to deal with the results of change. They are no longer passive bystanders. As values may traverse all traditions, may stay separate or aggressively mingle, may have little relationship to the past, critics and audiences will be left behind. The newly formed values require creative responses from all, to be resilient in dealing with a flood of incongruent concepts and ideological collisions, in direct experience for the development of knowledge, in trial and error mode, for the sake of understanding the emotional, intellectual, social, and physical experience

#### **Personal Interpretation (worldview)**

The construction of a set of value filters to interpret the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social worlds (based on family and ethnic traditions, religion, political view, education, sense of social justice, individualism, interdependence, independence, and responsibility)

#### **Change in Perception and Related Valuation:**

Perceptual Feedback > Acceptance/Rejection, Clarity/Distortion, Creative Expansion of Phenomenon > Valuation

• There is no proportional correspondence between what exists out there in the universe and what is perceived by the interpreter. The worldview provides the scope of accepted perceptions (fact + fiction = values) accumulated in an individual's life experience.

is ethically and morally right to what is legal. This is also true of aesthetics. It is what it is. It is less about social and cultural value. It is about investment and financial value. The artist as shaman and seer, who instructs society, has stepped aside for the artist as commercial opportunist and entertainer, the pied piper of aesthetics making sometimes-shallow promises.

In addition, over the years the process of critical thinking in relationship to works of art or design has been neglected. Most scientists give art a very broad berth, because nothing in the arts, not even the principles, when properly applied, may result in valuable aesthetic experiences. Artists and designers are taught as makers, not as intellectuals, and this shows in contemporary times when all rules are relaxed and all traditional borders and confinements are eliminated. Visual aesthetics, over the years, have slipped into the entertainment category. Museums are social entertainment centers, where persons, belonging usually to privileged classes, educated or affluent, come to meet each other, not necessarily for deep discussions on aesthetics, but to be seen at event and show openings, clinking glasses with the prominent, sometimes artists and sometimes others. Art critics do not encourage critical thinking. They are headline hounds in their own journalistic competition as kingmakers. Most critics function as agents for museum visitors as interpretation guides leading them safely through the ideological forest. They determine for many the work's value. Visitors function as passive participants, usually adopting the critic's viewpoint, but not necessarily understanding it. This way is easier.

## **Territoriality and Identity**

As much as Man wants to escape his biological roots and his slow behavioral, social and cultural evolution, the world has not yet seen an overwhelming change from his expression of animalistic territoriality to something more gentle and accommodating like adjusting to the many needs and values of others. He aggressively applies his territoriality to all of life's situations, while responding intuitively to ancient competitive survival traits and instincts. Humanity is still waiting for Man to attempt to emerge as a utopian benign creature of benevolence. There is nothing in human life that doesn't thrive for a competitive edge or advantage from which to benefit, may it be religion, philosophy, sport, business or art. While "survival of the fittest" seems like a nasty evolutionary slogan, without competitive refinement in all aspects of human endeavor the world can only revert back to homeostatic entropy and just a few evolutionary steps away from stagnation and elimination.

As in sports or chess, in all play, it is nearly impossible to carry on a game without the challenging and distinctly curtailing rules for establishing a by-the-breadth-of-hair winner or a by-a-nose loser. Rules make the game interesting. Tougher rules make the game better. They not only foster the development of strategies, physical and mental skills, but because they can never completely address all game-related possibilities, there are always hidden loopholes, areas for the deviant mind to explore. If that were not true, in interdisciplinary communication all discourse would become stale – uneventful, without energy and cognitive stimulation, without potentials of dangerous and mind-altering metamorphoses. Even though every debate, in reality, is about refining, changing or nullifying opposing concepts and part of a civilized rhetorical process, which evolved over centuries in clans and tribes and refined by institutions, language and law, most debates are about territorial integrity in which logical but also overpowering rationales are presented to quiet the opposition.

All rules represent values. Values divide, separate, but also unite and provide space for identity and belonging. Trappist monks would have to close their monasteries if they would remove their rules of silence. In the evolution from hunter-gatherer to modern member of society, Man has moved from physical to intellectual, emotional and ideological territoriality. Owning a house, a car or belonging to specific civic, cultural, religious or political groups signal outlines of specific identities and privileges. A very good example is the Carthusian Order, devoted to study and meditation since its founding by Saint Bruno of Cologne in 1084, which expanded the already very restrictive but simple rules of "pray" and "work", established by St. Benedict, including the definitely challenging eremitical rules of "silence". One would think that adding new and difficult rules would have stifled the growth of the order, but in retrospect it has over time grown into three-hundred monastic foundations, of which twenty-five are charterhouses for monks and nuns.

Other living examples are the thriving Amish Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania, in which members in order not to be ostracized or shunned submit to very strict rules that limit behaviors and daily conduct, restrict the use of any contemporary technology (cars, tractors, electricity,

- Acceptance or rejection of environmental stimuli is filtering information through the mindmap of a worldview is out-of-awareness.
- Only in retrospect and during a cognitive analysis will the contour of the worldview or scope emerge.
- The constant dynamic process of perceiving and evaluating phenomena results in change of values as well as perception.

**Values:**

**Abundance and Rarity:**

Scarcity increases value. When there is more demand than availability value rises, when abundant it decreases.

**Undetermined Values**

are ambiguous, flexible and their value has still to be determined.

**Conceived Values**

form and develop the configuration of the individual's value scope. Even though these values may be intuitively apprehended and function out of consciousness, they construct the belief system in which critical opinions reside.

a

**Independently conceived values**

are the result of revelation, epiphanies or discovery during the value discourse between interpreter and object, image, idea, performance. Independently conceived values are idiosyncratic. They are the orderly or chaotic response that relate to the behavioral characteristics and quality and sophistication of the skills of observation, induction, and deduction, peculiar to individual and independent interpreters, based on education, knowledge, ability to speculate, adumbrate and explicate.

b

**Adopted values** (generated by authority: experts, disciplines, institutions)

are framed outside of the interpreter. The lack of personal freedom in accepting the packaged criteria for the evaluation of the object prevents the interpreter from full involvement and an unbiased experience. Value rationales, based on expertise and credibility of specialists, provide very efficient, but passive ways in the socialization of ideas. In the process of adaptation, culturally sanctioned value-rationales from expert sources are used in comparison to the new. However, if the new is of such an extreme that the expert value vocabulary is incapable to grasp the underlying rationales, the chance is that the new will be put aside as nonsense (i.e., Marcel Duchamp's introduction of the 1917 "Fountain"; the difference between Determinism and Relativity. Values supplied by external sources short-circuit the value transaction. Values adopted from external sources are often contradictory to related values which are independently conceived.

•

**Actively Functioning Value**

are those that are in force and in effect are guiding decisions and actions.

•

**Objective Value**

are actual and real (not influenced by emotion or personal bias or prejudice). They are based on observable phenomena, presented factually and can be tested by others.

telecommunication, etc.) that has potentials to disrupt family relationships and the community. Prohibitions regulate clothing, restrict music and allow no dance. The Amish do not sanction insurance or acceptance of public assistance. They practice nonresistance and resist military service. Despite the lifestyle that outsiders consider very confining, to their surprise, the communities continue to steadily grow.

## Aesthetics in Homeostatic Cultures

(from the beginning of human history to the early Middle Ages)

Homeostasis imposes a quality of constancy, consistency and dependability on traditional social/cultural systems, which to a certain extent tend to thrive not on principles of invention or drives for discovery but on self-preservation by attempts to repeat past successes, making only adjustments to maintain the safe equilibrium between inside and exterior through regulations, conventions or directives and dogma. Homeostatic cultures seem satisfied when the milieu de l'intérieur, the environment within, maintains stable and constant conditions without being greatly influenced by ideologies stemming from the exterior. Only when conditions in the external environment cannot be instantaneously compensated and equilibrated by self-similar adjustments of the interior or the influences from the exterior are perceived as seriously threatening will there be an attempt to adapt to the overwhelming conditions.

The systems of aesthetics in homeostatic cultures, which seem to be mostly either ancient (original cultures) and antique (small, isolated cultures deliberately shielded by dogma, taboo and specific social rules like the Australian Bushmen or Amish societies), show only very slow and nearly imperceptible change over long periods of time. There are few or no generational gaps and the perceptions and anticipations of futures are in exact synchronization with replications of the past. They display tendencies of maintaining internal as well as external stability and there seem to be coordinated response capabilities of its members to any stimulus tending to disturb the normal condition, as described by anthropologist Margaret Mead about grandparents, holding newborn grandchildren in their arms, who cannot conceive of any other future for them than the mirror of their own past lives. The past of the adult is the future of each new generation – son like father, daughter like mother.

## Aesthetics of Adaptation and Assimilation

(from the Middle Ages to the times of Enlightenment and the Modern)

In cultures, which are able to sanction the relaxation of borders, yielding to formerly unknown influences coming from the outside, both old and young generations begin to assume that it is quite natural for the behavior of each new generation to differ from that of the preceding one. Even though directives and dogmas still persist and elders are still dominant in setting and defining the social and cultural rules and limits, there is a new open space for intellectual discourse, which allows new ideas to mingle with traditional concepts. While adaptation and assimilation are considered slow and limited in their creativity and individuals and their social activities are usually unconsciously modified by out-of-awareness adjustments of traditions to new cultural surroundings, formerly unknown environmental conditions, and to a level of intensity of stimulation and quality that cannot be measured in its initial stages. Margaret Mead claims that the main causes for substantial change in adaptive cultures are due to unforeseen events, namely wars, ideological changes due to new insight, technological inventions and discoveries, causing the experiences of the young to be very different from those of the old. Unlike homeostatic cultures, adaptive cultures are better equipped for survival. Even if there are no drives for invention or discovery, adaptation becomes better fitted for survival in a changed environment. An adaptive culture is no longer trying to duplicate the achievements of the ancestors. Adaptive cultures present a prevailing model for members to follow that looks at the behavior of contemporaries and presents a willingness to accept concepts from other cultures into their reservoirs of language, customs, and lore.

## Aesthetics of Continuous Metamorphosis

(contemporary and near-future times)

In contemporary cultures all information and values are in flux, under construction or in the process of refinement and revision is nearly incomprehensible. Margaret Mead predicted forty years earlier, that in contemporary times, nowhere in the world are there elders who know what their children

- **Subjective Value**  
override objective values to express and bring to bear the individual's worldview.

**The Interpreter and Valuation Strategies**  
must be active involved in the valuation process, responsible for or abdicating the responsibility for valuation

**Valuation Strategies:**  
All valuation criteria is related to human proxemic needs: prestige, status, rank, hierarchy, entitlements perceived through education, privilege, pedigree, etc. Individual idiosyncratic criteria or peculiarity or expert opinion reflect collective human needs.

- **Cognitive Valuation**  
Is based on the limits or expanse of personal knowledge. The interpreter has the option of just using the knowledge presently held or by appropriating all necessary resources. Because of unpredictable dynamics of the new, constant vigilance and re-valuation is required.

- **Cognitive Valuation Process:**  
Individual priorities > Perceivable properties > Foreshadowing the status of the object and the contexts in which it will be able to perform without detriment to the present worldview and the new one that emerges from the knowledge.

- **Gut-emotional Valuation**  
This process can only rely on the accumulated knowledge ("Beauty in the eyes of the beholder") of the interpreter. It is an uninformed, spontaneous liking or disliking of an object. Without criteria gleaned from an expanded knowledge base it most likely will not be able to respond favorably to the new or anything rooted in the unknown. That is the reason why new concepts and ideas are often characterized by common shortshrift as crazy and their inventors as crackpots.

**Transference**  
A perceived social contract evolves in the dynamic value transferal process between object and interpreter. It brings into alignment the interpreters' values (position and standing in social space, self-image) with the values that the object exudes. The object's author significantly reassures the interpreters in the value discussion in terms of meaningfulness, usefulness, and aesthetics. The interpreters through their criteria try to bring into harmony the highest cultural values they know and the ideal characteristics that the object seems to represent. In a democratic world, many interpretations of highest cultural value or ideal characteristics may exist.

- **The Interpreters' Cultural Orientation**  
is the attitude toward social approval, self-gratification, power, control, change, ownership, ecology, market, meaning, and quality.

- **Experiential Worldview (fact/fiction):**  
**Style:**

• Italian Design	High Style/Flare/Comfort/ Sensuousness
• Japanese Design	Affordability/Quality/ Dependability
• German Design	Precision/Pragmatism/ Clarity

know, no matter how remote and simple the societies are, in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any of their children, in terms of their experience of having grown up within a stable cultural system. Today there are none. The culture will depend on the existence of a continuing dialogue, in which the young, free to act on their own initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown. Then the older generation will have access to new experiential knowledge, without which no meaningful plans for futures can be made.

## The Hermeneutic Circle of Language

In the early sixties, György Kepes, one of Moholy Nagy's protégées, working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, USA, suggested in one of his lectures that in contemporary times the artistic image/icon would displace the word in efficiency, which has turned out to be just partially true. It may be true that here and there, an image is able to stand in for thousands of words but when it is uniquely unprecedented, then, to describe it, the whole sophistication of a language vocabulary will have to be pressed into service. Nothing exists outside of communication, and anything that wants to enter social and cultural communication must enter a discourse, which can only be facilitated through the metaphor-wealth of a language to construct the conceptual outline, framing the Gestalt of the new.

Like in the construction of language components to define and describe any discovery or conceptual innovation, the hermeneutic circle in the construction of meaningful visual objects starts with the choice of words and metaphors in recognition that there is something out there in the universe that behaves differently from any formerly known phenomenon. The process begins with thorough contemplation, investigation and questioning of every aspect that surrounds the perception, usually in solitude and in a conversation with oneself and in comparison with what one knows. In the next phase the phenomenon is tentatively named and metaphorically described. Framed by single or by as many descriptive metaphors as is needed, it is now able to enter the discourse with the professional world – a cauldron of queries, proofs and counterarguments – until it emerges strong enough to withstand all major criticism. Only then is it able to be picked up by the concept-socializing media, culture feuitons, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and distributed on the various levels of complexity and sophistication to the public, from ridicule and trivialization to insightful and constructive explications, until it becomes a household concept or word and is entered into the encyclopedic knowledge of an epoch. With that it is becoming part of the socializing process of knowledge through which all value systems are being challenged, altered or further refined.

## Coping with a Biased Universe

None of the perceptions of the ideal universe come without bias, generated by class, race, gender, abilities to think, translate, and explore. There are always insiders and outsiders, some who stay close to the intended interpretation and those who see opportunities in expanding the concepts way beyond the intentions of the originator. All meaning-systems are independent and open-ended, able to adjust to the philosophical constraints of the interpreter. This gets further complicated by the fact that the aesthetics of an object cannot be fully understood without cognition of the maker's intentions, the framework and context in which it is used or presented and the level of intellectual vigor, knowledge and scope of social and cultural experience that the viewer/interpreter brings or should bring to the event. The interpreter's ability to critically think is democracy's requirement for probing the relevance of the object's aesthetics against the collective knowledge evolved in a culture that shaped ideology, values, and social goals.

The pressure on the contemporary interpreter is to abandon self-reference situated in personal, cultural and social and frozen prejudices, and to enter a discourse which allows the widest variety of specific knowledge domains to begin linguistically mediate, coming to a consensus in which the agreement is no longer frozen but able to admit new interpretations and revelations. This may differ from the task of the maker, who as an author of an ideologically framed narrative and context, must present the aesthetic argument so clearly and succinctly, that it is not a trivial repeat of what is known but a platform leading to greater cultural growth and understanding. It is rare to find a strong concept/image/object to be open to all kinds of interpretations.

<b>Cuisine:</b>	Fact/Fiction
•	
Italian Cuisine	Healthy/natural/homey
•	heavy
French Cuisine	Ellegant/aristocratic/
•	light
English Cuisine	Limited/limited
	imagination

## Meaning

Meaning is a relationship between a message embedded in an object and the recipient. It is context dependent, which influences the interpreter's behavior. Evolves in the transaction between interpreter and object, in which the interpreter assigns significance to the communication conveyed by the object and the cultural and social baggage he brings to the task. The high, medium, low quality (structure, organizational clarity) of information in relationship to contents/context and his wishes to be informed, educated, entertained or cultured and the major disciplinary domains of the humanities and sciences is scanned to engender meaning according to the interpreter's worldview. The interpreter, not the maker, creates meaning. The object maker may be aware of the many communication obstacles and able to facilitate understanding. However, he cannot guarantee meaning or even meaningfulness.

Meaning is relative to the interpreter's worldview, religious belief, expanse or limits of personal vision and scope or ability to perceive or change perceptions, to anticipate, and let go of old and outdated constructs, etc.

## Criteria

### Pragmatic criteria

assess the quality, precision and appropriateness of skills, craft, materials, methods of fabrication, time, and space in the making process of the object.

### Syntactic criteria

construct logical rules that follow those of the maker or emerge independently in the interpretation of the object's contents in relationship to the context and circumstances.

### Semantic criteria

measure the quality and appropriateness of metaphors and symbolic representation.

## Context + Contents + Metaphor = Interpretation

Context + realistic content =  
Realistic metaphor

Context + non-realistic content =  
Realistic metaphor

Context + realistic content =  
Non-realistic metaphor

Context + non-realistic content =  
Non-realistic metaphor

## Dynamic Filters (some samples)

The list of possible metaphoric filters is unlimited. However, in modern times the ways that make the stone stonier are prevailing.

## Language: The Social and Cultural Depository of Value

Language plays the most important role. It incorporates everything. In its holdings and constantly refurbishing reservoir are the fundamental ingredients that shape a culture's perception and metaphorical descriptions of the universe, the environment, the human condition, and the abstract philosophical and religious values, which instruct all human institutions for social relations, interdependency as well as independence. It would be very hard to interpret any symbol, any image, signal, without a process in which critical thinking turns thoughts into a vigorous dialogue. The tools for the critic are equal to those of the maker as well as the interpreter. Only in an agreement between terms and definitions will yield a specific understanding. All must use the rhetorical conventions with which to explore the challenges that anything new brings to the table. If visual diagrams would be better tools than verbal language, society would have long ago invested significantly in the evolution of a critical system of diagrams. The personal perceptions of a complex universe can only be described to some one else through either the commonly used metaphorical mind images turned into maps, diagrams, and images or through coining new metaphor or creating amalgams to provide the conceptual clarity to describe the phenomena.

A critic is never independent from a chosen set of principles that ground their evaluations. The principles position and differentiate, but do not limit any interpreter from adding or expanding the knowledge. No concept can therefore have an ultimate meaning disallowing doubts or misinterpretation. In fact, misinterpretation is a right and a creative gift, which only the interpreter possesses, as all systems of meaning making are open-ended systems of signs in which concepts of aesthetics are as varied as the myriad of perceptions, ideologies allow,

Words define certain worlds, an efficient conveyance of mostly shared experience among humans. Some generic descriptions may join others in a universal language, the roundness of the wheel or the fact that water is a symbol standing in for concepts of transition, energy, power, continuity, and cyclical metrological metamorphosis, adjusting to all forms, adapting to all vessels and basins. It is always moving, in trickles, in torrents, from plateaus to the sea, it knows no obstacles. It will find its way, around, through, and over. It has the ability to part and to reunite.

## Metaphor: The Bridge between Language and Visual Aesthetics

A visual work of art/design cannot function without reference to a metaphor. Even if the content is about "nothingness," it is about something that can be described verbally and pictorially through instructive and guiding metaphors. The ancients looked to nature, to the mythologies and parables transmitted over epochs, to frame the metaphors that described their world, emotions and values. Miyamoto Musashi, a 17th century samurai, master swordsman, hermit and poet described his successful battle strategies, using very simple and easily understood metaphors, like void, ground, water, wind and fire.

## The Void

The spirit of the void, a spiritual space of nothingness exists where there is literally an undefined emptiness of obligations, of purpose or reasons for existence. It is an undefined imaginary expanse, without borders. Its boundaries are lacking definite form, without markers signaling beginnings or ends. There is no permanent topology unless it is imagined or imposed. There is no content, no purpose, no specific goals or function. It exists. It is. It is without limitations and therefore difficult for Man to include in his reservoir of provable knowledge. Musashi instructed that by acknowledging things that exist, one could imagine that which does not exist or might exist in the future. The void is Man's most creative space, open to all ideas, inventions, and discoveries.

## The Ground

By knowing the smallest as well as the biggest, the shallowest and the deepest of physical configurations, one can establish the outline of Place – a map that affords one to take a distinct position, a stance toward a specific goal. Without the map it would be difficult to find identity and belonging or the concepts of a better place.

## The Water

Water is always in transition. It has its own timing and flow. It is influenced by its

- **Excessive Familiarity**  
can be perceived as intrusive, invasive, improper and presumptuous, but also as common, vulgar, domesticated, tame, safe, secure.

- **Defacilitation**  
removes the metaphor far from any known reality. It couches the contents in a metaphor that defies any ordinary or logical sense.

- **Defamiliarization** (making-it-strange)  
Familiar elements have been omitted and distorted to heighten the sense of ambiguity and the range of interpretive possibilities of the relationships between object and context to increase the interpreter's choices of what the object "may be" or "is".

- **Substitutions**  
The object or experience is hostile, unsympathetic or indifferent with the purpose of alienating and removing the interpreter from accustomed interpretations. It is used to place new associations by challenging the interpreter by estranging, disaffecting, disrupting and replacing the bonds of trust and safety in traditional beliefs and loyalties.

- **Disaffectation**  
Ambiguous, puzzling, or inexplicable usually implies discontent, ill will, and disloyalty within the membership of a group.

- **Devices**
  - The use of unnecessarily detailed and involved metaphors to create cognitive chaos, confusion
  - Evasive metaphors to present the contents in roundabout expressions
  - Inverting or reversing normally rational organization, order, structure
  - Introducing abrupt changes in composition by insertion of one or more inconsistent and structural irritants (styles, colors, materials, etc.)

- **Style**  
communicates meaning relative to a culture's value orientation (mostly hierarchy, privilege, affluence):
  - In Ghana, Africa, the ornament actively transfers meaningful symbolic messages, totally apprehensible by members of the culture.

- In the Netherlands, Europe, ornamentation is without specific message other than formal decoration and style (Art Nouveau, Art Deco, De Stijl, etc.)

- **Value Strategies**

- **Semiotic Strategies**  
The object's existence is reviewed within the orderly semiotic framework (pragmatic, symbolic, syntactic) to address all perceivable physical and conceptual properties to locate the object in a value hierarchy.

- **Deconstructive Strategies**  
reveal particularly noticeable characteristics and relevant features by dividing the critical tasks into pragmatic, symbolic and syntactic categories, from several points of worldview and through several senses, in addition to semiotic strategies.

surroundings. It can be calm or full of energy. It is powerful, full of continuity and cyclical meteorological metamorphosis. Water adapts to all landscapes, vessels and basins. It is always moving, from a melting trickle in the mountains to the rush to the sea. Water has no obstacles. It will find its way, either around or through or over. It has the ability to part and to reunite.

## The Wind

Embedded in its concepts are flexibility, constant shifts, being never at rest, constantly dispersing and reassembling from smallest breath to most stormy gust, balmy breeze to sea churning typhoons and tornados. Wind comes from and goes into all directions, touching and having touched past history, present day and allowing visions of future.

## The Fire

Its concepts engender drastic change abilities, from small nearly coy beginnings – a spark, a glint – to the nearly uncontrollable spirit of a single flame – a flare, a blaze. Small flames burn with the same intensity, as does a firestorm. Its unpredictable agility, and ability to jump across spaces make it dangerous and capricious under some conditions, warming and nourishing under others.

## Aesthetic Value: A System of Integrity

Integrity is a proper term with which to describe the search for high value or wholeness of relationships and interactions between philosophies and worldviews, artistic/design schemes and concepts within the other human machinations of the social and cultural universe. Integrity is implemented through processes of melding craft, tool and materials into presentations of concept, image, object or performance, while the experience is eliciting memorable reactions of extraordinary, special or ideal qualities in the viewer/user/audience. It will attach itself to any frameworks of high or low value and quality like harmony or chaos, logic or confusion. However, as soon as the maker defines requirements, goals and directives for the object, the outline of a framework to reach a very specific level of integrity will be revealing the necessity for specific ingredients for the concept's implementation. In this way, a disharmonious composition or a cacophonous color palette, required by the conceptual framework, contributes to the aesthetic integrity of the work.

But integrity is not democratic. Democracy assures access but not quality. It either exists or it does not. Doing one's best according to one's aptitude, capabilities and stamina make aesthetics just quantifiable. Quantity of time spent, number of projects completed, miles of canvas produced, maybe commendable but are not culture-constructive. In the long run, aesthetics refer to the revelations of ideals of a culture to itself.

For instance, although typographers talk about aesthetic rules, which on the surface sound like principles taken from the visual arts, in truth there is only one applicable rule, namely contrast. When applied to spatial arrangements and clustering of lines of type, paragraphs and columns, readability is about the discernable contrast between fonts, sizes, line spacing, line lengths and difference between the programmed templates of each typeface (italic, light, regular, medium, bold, extra-bold, extended, condensed). The rest relies on adhesion to or breaking traditional editorial hierarchies and rules. Because of centuries of guidance by rhetorical theory, most documents in Law, Medicine and Science follow the efficient traditional editorial hierarchies. When type is to be read then the designer must deal with the Ergonomics of seeing and reading. When it comes to typographic self-expression or typographic styling all rules are off. The conceptual framework declares the extent of integral rules. Although designers and art directors use and direct typography, it is clear that they deal mostly with the most obvious form, rarely with the explication of contents. They do headlines well but ignore the rest.

## Emancipative Values Create Unforeseen Aesthetics

It is clear, determining an over-arching meaning and function of "aesthetics" is like herding chickens, not just a few but several hundred flocks of them, without achieving any ultimate or clear certainty. The ancient search for social and cultural equality will continue. Individuals within cultural groups and peoples between states and countries will want to escape any dogmatic political or religious control in which obedience to singular ruling ideologies is strongly enforced by censorship and punishment or shunning – although, most likely, never coming to conclusion – the slow transition from

- **Critical Strategies**  
are attempts to explore the object beneath its surface and establish its position in a value hierarchy (as cliché, reiteration or refinement of convention, invention or enigma).

- **Comparative Strategies**  
compare the new object to others of the culture or the customary way in which objects were made (pragmatic, symbolic, syntactic) and evaluated.

#### Value Match/Mismatch

##### Fit/Misfit

In the comparison of critical components in the valuation gauge of the total context of an object (including the maker's and interpreter's worldviews, cultural orientation, specific ideological configuration, and value source, application of positive/negative value strategy, the finalized object will either fit the interpreter's worldview or not.

Valuation is specific and relative only within the contexts in which it occurs. By design, all critiques come from biased viewpoints. Therefore, any critique is able to yield a true valuation only in respect to its authority, because it cannot include all possible viewpoints

Value results from the correspondence/disparity between the interpreter's expectations concerning the match and the perceived characteristics of the object. The match can be straight-forward or warped.

Most often the acceptance/rejection response to environmental stimuli or filtering information through the specific mindmap of a worldview is out-of-awareness. Only in retrospect and during a cognitive analysis will the contour of the worldview emerge.

The constant dynamic process of perceiving/evaluating results in change of values as well as Perception.

authoritarian societies, controlled by restrictive dogmatic regimes and religions to true emancipation and independence is taking place. It is energized by principles of humanism, which encourage all peoples in modern times, especially since World War II, to actively participate in the spurred exponential development and momentum of democratization. In the world's democratization, the emerging result from this positive but very sluggish humanistic emancipation process, many of citizens have been inspired and most, if not all, have become interested in determining their own life-paths. They either have taken or have received access or possession to the intellectual and social resources, even if begrudgingly granted, to be able now or in the foreseeable future to participate in the range of ultimate opportunities for further refining the values of freedoms of expression, movement and equality. Emancipative values empower and entitle citizens to practice their freedoms and to engage in collective actions that challenge any elite, may they see themselves as gatekeepers to institutions like education, health, science or art. The sources for emancipation are unpredictable.

One of the best examples of emancipation has been the Internet – form, text, image and performance – which most traditional and powerful institutions see as anarchistic and only reluctantly give dues. With the gatekeepers removed, the surfers and browsers are never sure and have to determine themselves the value of the messages, its source, its quality and correctness. As one dog whispered to the other, sitting in front of an electronic word-processor: “On the Net, nobody knows that we are dogs.” This gives all minority viewpoints access to communicate about worlds unimagined. The process has thrown the traditional controllers, universities and their writing and authoring programs and publishers and their traditional standards, into serious turmoil. But then in art/design as in all human endeavors the charlatan always stands next to the scholar, taking advantage of the novice. The democratization of knowledge is the spread of knowledge among common people, in contrast to knowledge being controlled by elite groups. Democracy is supposed to empower citizens to think critically.

As the universe has been perceived as simultaneously shrinking and expanding by millions of lightyears, which boggles anybody's mind, the ingenuity of Man will constantly discover and invent conceptual things for which artists and designers will have to find the proper metaphors to inform the culture and bring society along. There will always be full engagement for those that are open-minded.

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## Exhibit 1

# Aesthetics in Relationship to Cultural and Social Emancipation

Extreme, Ultimate and Utopian Freedom provides the widest range for aesthetic expression

### Ultimate Utopian Democracy

Acutely dynamic, this constant, uninterrupted intellectual metamorphosis is the ultimate but utopian goal of all individual freedoms, which empower millions of world citizens to shape millions of independent worldviews in pursuit of fulfillment of happiness without fear of intellectual reprisals, social anarchy or cultural chaos. It is the utopian promise of extreme freedom of thought, expression, and movement in science, religion and art.

### Utopian Aesthetics

This is the most demanding and for most people the most exhausting phase of aesthetics, which are determined by the new values emerging from the context and contents (author of the work, use of metaphor(s), conceptual social and cultural frameworks, readiness and preparedness of institutions and audiences to deal with the new, and which like weather or stock market reports must be updated on a moment to moment notice. Citizens will have to devote considerable energy and time to learning and understanding the historical hinterland that surrounds the new as well as the future implications it presents.

On the basis of its humanistic and democratic ideals, Ultimate Democracy invites all world citizens to contribute metamorphosing innovation and construct independent worldviews and insights for all to marvel and from which to learn and expand horizons.

It is the territory of the most tolerant, open-minded, independent and constructive activists and geniuses from all disciplines and walks of life.

Active and Dynamic Democracy allows citizens all choices, to either do or refrain from doing and participation. Even in this ideal environment for creativity, invention and discovery, only few citizens utilize fractions of their freedoms

### Active and Dynamic Democracy

It is the today's goal in the emancipation process of the complete intellectual environment which fosters invention and discovery. It provides access to a knowledge exchange, thereby fulfilling the expectations of the social contract of members in a free society. It allows for the expression of independent and revolutionary ideas as long as these do not impede the freedoms of others. Dynamic Democracy requires active participation in the intense process of shaping of human institutions and social and cultural values.

### Democratic Aesthetics

At this particular stage, all concepts of aesthetics are invited, but only few citizens enter the arena of a social, cultural and institutional discourse. The stress is on active participation, not on blind acceptance. It requires from maker, audience and critic the learned intellectual deconstruction of concepts and independent reconstruction of values through critical thinking. It is clear that the public is asked as participants in responsibly framing the cultural and social values and the appropriate aesthetics.

Invention/Discovery:

Even though self-responsibility of contributors is required to monitor revolutionary concepts, few citizens or, in fact, their institutions, step up to the task.

The freedom stays utilized by many individuals and institutions.

More creative than Homeostasis, Timid Democracy encourages the adaptation of values from others. Creativity is curtailed.

### Timid or Passive Democracy

It is vacillating between autocratic or self-imposed ideological controls of individual freedoms. In this kind of passive democracy, gatekeepers and mind controllers are empowered to set agendas and values with recourse through constitutional court challenges, only. There is an illusion of an open discourse but it is controlled by experts with the public as bystanders and onlookers, as passive participants, not active contributors. The public is eager to rely on conservative traditions and interests to fend off any challenges to traditional expression, resources and ideas by claiming rights of traditional ideological or religious choice. Only when extremely endangered will adaptation of concepts from the exterior allowed in to create the next level of change.

### Adaptation of Aesthetics

In this passive approach to democracy, individuals and their institutions lie back, waiting like cultural predators for concepts and expressions by other individuals and institutions. The only freedoms exist in accepting and rejecting, but the major creative tasks of invention and discovery are left to others.

Into this category fall most professionals and their institutions. Artists, designers and their schools eagerly follow fads and trends. Instead of inventing and constructing individual ideologies and visual expressions, they adapt successful curricula practiced at other schools. Museum programs, collections and acquisitions follow national and international trends, and so do galleries. Designers frequently are programmed by the narrow professional leadership and the exhibition and award circuit.

Homeostasis is the apathetic and lethargic and non-creative answer to resolving inertia. It is incapable of participation in an open and unprejudiced discourse. It limits aesthetic expression.

### The Self-restricting Democracy of Homeostasis

Homeostasis stands in for the intolerant refusal to consider change for reasons of vested interests, rigid traditions, not negotiable value conflicts, resistance to anything new, which is perceived as dangerous. There is fear of diverse viewpoints or challenges from exterior critics. Homeostasis is about the preservation of very selective perception, conformity, insecurity, dependence on power to solve problems. It restricts expression by even its own responsible contributors and substitutes propaganda of conservative and traditional ideas.

In today's dynamic times, one would think that the aesthetics, arising from homeostasis, would be few. But in the struggle for fiscal survival and attention, nearly all art and design movements, at some point in time, have used restricting or negatively critical language about competing ideologies. Design and art history texts are full of dogmatic examples about individuals and institutions.

Stagnation  
Absolutism, Orthodoxy;  
Aesthetics are imposed.

### Ultimate Stagnation:

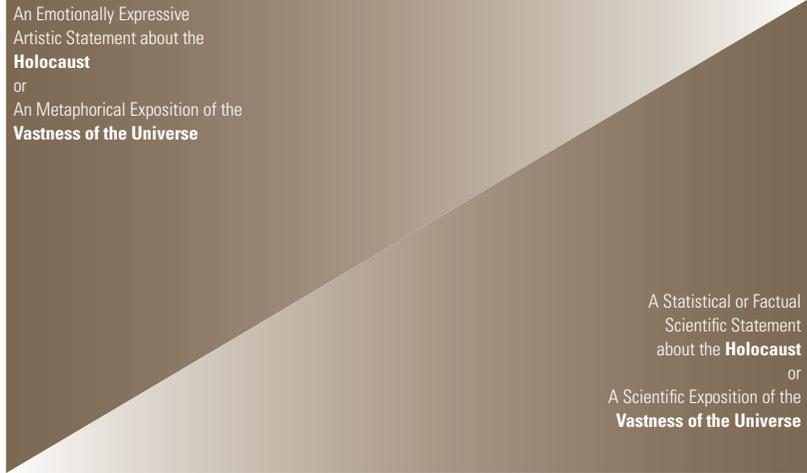
One ideological autocratic dogma controls everything

**Two Kinds of Aesthetic Experiences: Intuitive/Cognitive**

**100% Art**

The non-scientific, contemplative, and intuitive creation of thought-provoking metaphors applied to concepts about the universe or devastating events to shape aesthetic statements in form of images, objects, music, literature and performances

**0% Science**



**0% Art**

The systematic observation of and experimentation with manifestations and machinations of the physical universe.

**100% Science**

**Fact:**

A light-year is a measure of the distance that light travels, without hurdles and interferences in a vacuum, in a solar year. It is not an intangible but pragmatic measure, in which the unit of length per solar year equals about 5,878,630,000,000 miles, just under 10 trillion kilometers.

**Aesthetic Metaphor:**

In 1977 Charles and Ray Eames adapted Kees Boeke's book *The Cosmic View* to their film *The Powers of Ten*, which was lauded by critics as "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

**Fact:**

Between 1933–1945, in the World War II Holocaust, the Nazis systematically murdered between 11 and 17 million people, including ethnic Jews, Poles, Romanians, Russians, and people with disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other political and religious opponents. The numbers are so overwhelming that statistics stay out reach of any true comprehension.

**Aesthetic Metaphor 1**

Theodor Adorno, German philosopher, thought that writing about the Holocaust in a disciplined language of philosophy is a futile and further dehumanizing attempt to express the inexpressible. Romanian poet Paul Celan, a friend of Adorno, believed that the fascists had corrupted the whole German language and that it was unfit for any discussion of human concerns. Below is a synopsis of Paul Celan's poem: *Fugue of Death*.

**Aesthetic Metaphor 2**

Celan presents his metaphors in an uninterrupted, repeating rondo, in which at each day break, concentration camp inmates are given black milk to quench, at dawn, at noon, at nightfall, while they are digging imaginary graves in the sky, amply large in size. When night falls in Germany, there is a blue-eyed man who writes lyrics to his girl friend while playing with serpents. Every day he keeps on writing and writing about his maiden's golden hair, and when he stops, he walks out and whistles for his dogs, then commands his Jews out with orders to dig a grave not into the sky but into the earth, and others to strike up the music for the dance, commanding sweeter death's music, this master from Germany, with those blue eyes. Each day repeats.

**Aesthetic Metaphor 3**

Another poignant metaphoric translation of overwhelming statistics was made by an American Midwestern high school class after collecting throw away tab rings of soft drink cans in the same quantity of the statistics, which by the time of the presentation filled a sports auditorium to such an extent, that visitors were brought to tears. The students' metaphor had explicated the information in the most simple and touching aesthetic.

1  
Interpreting Aesthetic Objects

**Syntactic Dimensions**  
are the ways and specific arrangements in which thoughts, words, objects, images, emotions, dance movements and memories are put together to form an aesthetic experience.

**Semantic Dimensions**  
pertain to meaning, which is either directed by dogma, education, ideological positioning or independent deduction or logical induction.

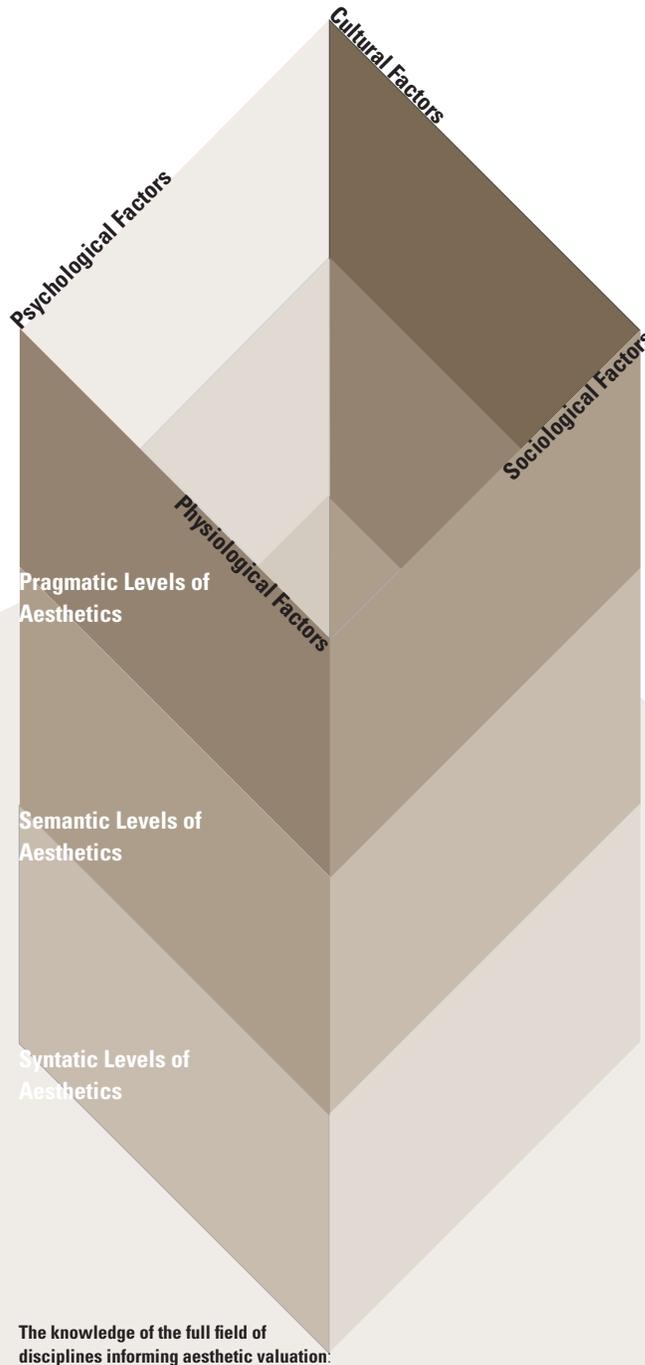
**Pragmatic Dimensions**  
are concerned with causes, effects, relationships, needs and results (order, structure, construction, composition, etc.). They are concerned with basic and practical aspects.

2  
The Interdisciplinary Aesthetic Dialogue

**Philosophy/Logic**  
the sciences comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology, provide the methodologies for inquiry into the nature of things based on logical reasoning. (There are hundreds and hundreds of philosophies, ideologies, and religions listed, each recognized by a group as singular, very unique and important.)

a  
**Deductive argumentation:**  
It is an argument in which premises provide some sort of a guarantee of truth emerging with the conclusion. In a deductive argument, the premises are intended to provide support for the conclusion that is so strong, that, if the premises are true, it would be impossible for the conclusion to be false.

b  
**Inductive argumentation:**  
It is an argument in which the premises provide reasons supporting the probable truth of the conclusion. In an inductive argument, the premises are intended only to be so strong that, if they are true, then it is unlikely that the conclusion is false.



**The knowledge of the full field of disciplines informing aesthetic valuation:**

All subdisciplines of the Humanities, Arts, Social, Natural and Physical Sciences are contributing specific perspectives and logic for the search for context-specific sets of aesthetics. That is why one can speak of the aesthetics of engineering, sports, chess playing or political argumentation.

Most aesthetics prevail only for short time periods, captivating the attention of culture and society. However, each invention and discovery begins to change perceptions, language and behavior and with that the social and cultural values of aesthetics.

4  
**Culture**  
is the sum of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought, characteristic of a social system. Culture reflects the prevailing social, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic refinement, and style of social and artistic expression peculiar to a society.

a  
**Language**  
Even though language is usually considered the specific speech of an ethnic people, it encompasses much more, beyond spoken and written words. Because language must be used to sharply define the differences and sameness of perceptions, concepts, experiences and objects, it is the holding tank of all previous cultural and social experiences. Most importantly, each language holds the structures for specific human conduct which is manifested by a culture's etiquette, morals, ethics and sense of aesthetics. Language forms the descriptions of customs and traditions. Individual, social and cultural behaviors form the values with which the culture self-identifies, and which are expressed in its laws and lore. In addition to natural languages there exist a great number of artificial languages developed in special domains with sets of own conventions and vocabularies, which add to language reservoirs. They may be developed in specific fields like music, medicine or art, but sooner or later they spill into general language use. (Linguists agree, when a language, the most important individual element identifying a culture and its people, dies, the unique and special knowledge of the culture, which is embedded in its linguistic representation of customs, ceremonies, myth and lore, is lost. Of 7,202 languages spoken worldwide today, 440 will be extinct within two decades, while the total aggregate will be cut in half within this century.)

b  
**Anthropology**  
is the study of all aspects of human culture or human development, its origins, its cultural development, its languages, values, social customs and beliefs.

c  
**Sociology**  
studies human social behavior, especially the study of the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society. It provides analyses of social institutions or societal segments as self-contained entities or in relation to society as a whole.

d  
**Psychology**  
is the science that studies the mental processes and behavior of persons and the emotional and behavioral characteristics of groups, or their activities.

e  
**Proxemics**  
The sociology and psychology of how perceptions of physical and ideological space (ownership, access, restraint, and status, hierarchy and position) effect human behavior, communication, and social interaction.

<p><b>The Netherlands,</b> Western Europe:</p>	<p><b>Ghana,</b> West Africa</p>	<p>An encyclopedic comparison between Ghana and the Netherlands would not be at all insightful, especially when it comes to aesthetics.</p>	<p>for intellectual convenience, neither for understanding of inter-cultural physiological fact nor accuracy.</p>
<p><b>Exports:</b> The Dutch agricultural product exports rank third worldwide, contributing two-thirds to the world's total in commerce of flower bulbs and plants, and fresh-cut plants. In addition to dairy products, food-processing, petroleum refining, chemical, and electrical machinery production, it exports gas. It has one of the largest natural gas fields in the world.</p>	<p><b>Exports:</b> Bauxite, cocoa, diamonds, electricity, gold, timber, and manganese</p>	<p>An enormously large reservoir of factual details about the two different societies would be necessary. The outer Gestalt of an object/concept is only an abbreviated reference to the total context in which its conception was constructed. One would miss the evolutionary and rhetorical details filtered through the indigenous languages with which all social and cultural narratives have been transmitted orally or in written or pictorial form. No matter what its size, any culture and society, ancient or contemporary, is complete in itself at a specific point in time, unique, as well as complex, but always ready to continue its evolution, slow when traditional and orthodox, fast when trying to reach higher levels in humanism and democracy. Cultures are not part of international competitions for better, best or for greater sophistication. They are what they are and their language represents their treasure of values. Rhetoricians have studied the discourse of many disciplinary domains, from the natural, physical and social sciences to the literate, fine and applied arts along with the other humanities. Only in reflecting on the summation of all aspects will a definition of a shared cultural aesthetic emerge.</p>	<p>However, Franz Boas, anthropological pioneer, believed, that in evaluating cultural values and understanding expression, any generalization stands in the way of recognizing the true reality and differences. He would have agreed with psychologist Abraham Maslow's list that at the most basic level stand the human survival needs: food, shelter, clothing, procreation, personal safety, belonging to family and clan, respect and self-esteem, and creative self-actualization, which do not differ much from culture to culture. But for an evaluative comparison Franz Boas seemed to question any innate universality in the evolution of cultures, claiming that it is impossible to account for similarities, even though they derive from human intellect, tradition and experience. Each social system will bring about social and cultural hierarchies, which become the filters through which value declarations on all subjects, including aesthetics, are espoused.</p>
<p><b>GDP per capita:</b> \$30,500 (+/-)</p>	<p><b>GDP per capita:</b> \$2,643 (+/-)</p>	<p>For example, in Ghana, in addition to the symbols introduced over the past centuries by global commerce (i.e., corporate, traffic symbols) and Christian mission work (i.e., the lion and the lamb as symbol for peace and civility or the serpent as symbol for deceit), there is Adinkra, a very unique visual symbol language in everyday life, originally created by the Akan people, that represent concepts or aphorisms and is used in the design of fabrics, wall decorations, pottery, and woodcarvings (i.e., the "crocodile" as a metaphor for adaptability. It lives in water, yet breathes air, demonstrating an ability to adapt to circumstances; or the metaphor of the "chain link" as symbol of unity and human relations, a reminder to contribute to the community, and that in unity lies strength). There is nothing as integrated in the Dutch culture, which during its De Stijl period rejected any ornamentation as meaningless. In comparison, the Dutch culture is surrounded by the art and architecture of the western world with deep links to Greece, Rome, Spain, the Vatican and Protestantism, to which it also greatly contributed.</p>	<p>Similar traits may have different roots and may have been prompted by differing contexts. Boas would quickly point to the distinct differences in cultural perception and behavior. He believed that the simple fact of tribal and social groups not inhabiting the same physical environments, but areas with diverse features, qualities, and surfaces, would shape different priorities in their perceptions of the universe. Anthropologists point to the affect on language and lore by climatic zones and topographies like polar-regions, tundra, rainforests, grasslands and deserts. In so far that humans do not share the same language metaphors, they do not have the same building blocks for describing social and cultural perceptions, emotions, behaviors and relationships as other cultures do, i.e., ethnic Germans in the Diaspora of the Ukraine share few values with contemporary citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany and Catholics in Italy express their faith quite differently than do Catholics in Ireland or the USA.</p>
<p><b>Population:</b> 16,336,346 citizens (+/-) living in an area of 16,033 square miles</p>	<p><b>Population:</b> 22,113,000 citizens (+/-) living in an area of 92,098 square miles</p>	<p>Mythologist Joseph Campbell preferred to believe that all of humanity is patterned according to an archetypal model of the ideal Man, envisioned already by ancient philosopher Plato and described later by psychiatrist Carl Jung, and therefore that all cultures share many common traits. Yet, all human ideals are artificial and man-made. In some cultures tokens made of stone are symbols to express value, while in others they are formed from mother of pearl, metal or animal-bone or any rare and difficult to shape material. As history has shown there are no absolute gauges, not even for time and space. Le Corbusier based the golden ratio of his modular system on an arbitrary human figure, a 20th century northern European male, perhaps</p>	<p>All cultures are unique and complex. Their mythologies and religious traditions either describe the specific paths for soul-transmigration to eternity as straight, meandering, ascending toward boundless spiritual places or bar any of these descriptions through taboos, barriers erected by religions and sects, matriarchies, patriarchies or other social systems. Tribes in close vicinity to other groups are not oblivious to opportunities for adaptation as are those groups that live in greater isolation. The values expressed by gatherers and hunters, when guided by shamans and through animal and plant totems are distinctly different from agrarians, who show greater beliefs in spirits of fertility, while members of complex city-states revere their deities as gods of pantheons. For contemporary times, spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti saw science removing many mysteries about the universe and the human condition. He sensed that when sorrow, fear and pain are removed, so are one's deities and in the same vein, so will be aesthetics.</p>
<p><b>Ethnic Identity:</b> 80.9% Ethnic Dutch share a common culture 19.1% Various other ethnic groups</p>	<p><b>Ethnic Identity:</b> 45.3% Akan 15.2% Mole-Dagbon 11.7% Ewe 7.3% Ga-Dangme 4.0% Guan 3.6% Gurma 2.6% Grusi 1.0% Mande-Busanga 1.4% Other tribes 7.8% Other (2000 census).</p>		
<p><b>Language Identity:</b> Dutch language</p>	<p><b>Language Identity:</b> English is the official, but about 250 languages and dialects are spoken. Nine are government sponsored:</p>		
<p><b>Religious Identity:</b> 31.0% Roman Catholic, 13.0% Dutch Reformed, 7.0% Calvinist, 5.5% Muslim 2.5% Buddhists, Jews, Sikhs and Suriname Hindus of which 34.0% believe there is a god 37.0% believe there is some sort of spirit or life force 27.0% do not believe in any sort of spirit, god, or life force 41.0% confess no affiliation with any denomination. Fewer than 20% visit church, temple, synagogue regularly:</p>	<p>14.8% Akan (Anyi, Baule, Nzema, Twi (Akuapem and Asante/Ashanti dialects) 12.7% Ewe 9.9% Fante (Fanti, Mfantse) 4.6% Boron (Brong) 4.3% Dagomba 4.3% Dangme 3.7% Dagarte (Dagaba) 3.4% Akyem 3.4% Ga 2.9% Akuapem Though not an official language, <i>Hausa</i> is the lingua-franca spoken among Ghana's Muslims.</p>		
<p><b>Education:</b> 99.0% Literacy rate</p>	<p><b>Religious Identity</b> (2000 census): 68.8% Christianity Pentecostal/Charismatic 24.1% Protestant 18.6% Catholic 15.1% Other 11.0% 15.9% Islam 8.5% Indigenous beliefs 0.7% Other 6.1% None <b>Education:</b> 57.9% Literacy rate (2000 census)</p>		