The Munich Design Charter

The Munich Design Charter aims to bring new movement into discussions on the fundamental role to be played by design in the future Europe. The Charter should therefore be understood as a platform which offers new arguments, categories, and intellectual dimensions—rather than dogmatic beliefs or ideologies. It thus spotlights a possible and complex way of both comprehending European modernity and creating perspectives for a new Europe. For the coordination of Europe is above all a question of form and must thus draw on the professional creativity of design.

In addition to this overarching aim, the Munich Design Charter puts forward a detailed, complex model of cultural, social, and economic life in Europe, namely the veracity of the artificially-generated environment—a model that is feasible precisely by virtue of its complexity. Given that the Munich Design Charter merely wants to set the ball rolling, to prompt further discussions and to trigger off a real debate on European design, other equally plausible ideas and models can and must also be added to it. As a consequence, signing the Charter does not automatically constitute acceptance of all its details or of the approach it takes—but it does mean that one supports and stresses the overall need to promote an informed public discussion on design and the future of Europe.

PREAMBLE

Experts and designers from different European countries met recently in Munich and have come to some conclusions on design intended to promote the development of more wide-scale cultural and civic cooperation.

These conclusions aim to confirm the historical role played by design in the major choices open to society and in the elaboration of the developmental models of modern societies.

I. DESIGN

European design is a balance between technological and humanistic aspects of culture. It has always aimed to make the industrialized world both human and habitable, as well as to generate a better quality of life within artificial environments.

Design is, therefore, one of the most extensive ethical theorems of European thought, as well as one of the higher and more problem-conscious points of reflection on the project of modernity in Europe. In terms of its genesis, design has always been deeply concerned with all parts of contemporary life: with economy as well as ecology, with traffic and communication, with products and services, with technology and innovation, with culture and civilization, with sociological, psychological, medical, physical, environmental, and political issues, and with all forms of social organization. Given its complexity, design has thus meant working on history, on the present, and on the future.

II. THE CHALLENGE AND THE LIMITS

In the face of the great political and cultural changes that we are witnesses of today, those of us involved in design must adopt a new mode of thinking and designing, and we must adopt a new ethical basis for planning a united and broader Europe.

What we must also understand is that the search for a balanced and ecological model of development for our industrial and social system coincides dramatically with the awareness that the system we live in has both physical limits, beyond which lie only environmental disaster, and political limits, beyond which lie dysfunctional forms of social coexistence and dictatorship. If we do not take this into consideration then we run the danger of turning design into a discipline dedicated to producing strategies of social legitimation.

The role of design is exposed to new social and industrial problems, is faced with the challenge of putting forward new, profound qualities, of creating a more advanced ecological balance between human beings and the artificial environment which they inhabit.

III. NEW SCENARIOS AND NEW HORIZONS

Progressive research into an ecology of the artificial world must be situated within this debate. What is called for is an ecology able to tap the major cultural problems of the future, an ecology neither reactionary nor punitive, but rather problem-conscious and dynamic, founded on three humanistic theorems.

1. Let us call the first theorem *"ecology of complexity."* It proceeds from the assertion that, *as is the case in nature*, the artificial environment surrounding us follows a polycentric and extremely differentiated logic. In the metropolitan environment of our postindustrial society productive and technological logics coexist and balance, although apparently mutually exclusive: serial products exist alongside unique items; standard languages alongside anarchic ones; high technology alongside archetypal technologies; codified behaviors alongside non-conformity; definitive alongside seasonal products; hand-made alongside

industrially-produced goods; historical objects alongside built-in obsolescence. Through these contradictions we have to reconsider a new dimension of design.

This difference has a positive value: such complexity is an anthropological condition to be managed, not to be annulled.

We therefore have to work to find the right temporary and experimental balance of our environment between these different logics of technology and production, a balance that accords with a rich and emotionally-chargeable view of the artificial environment.

2.The second theorem is called *"ecology of the project."* It proceeds from the assertion that, *as is the case in nature*, man enters a highly complex relationship in his use of artificial objects. This relationship can never be reduced to the object's technical and ergonomic functions, but is richly infused with fundamental symbolic, literary, affective, and psychological elements.

This complex relationship has a positive value, it is a benefit to be developed, and not to be fought.

Society has today to face the challenge of making a rich interface between man and the artificial world a reality.

To achieve this result, design must renew its sensitivity, its modes of planning, its languages. It is neither important to achieve results of some kind or other, nor important how the methodologies are worked out. Design will have to develop new professional skills and educational concepts.

3.The third theorem is the *"ecology of relations."* It proceeds from the assertion that, *as is the case in nature*, people today must rebuild a well balanced relationship with the human environment. The processes of industrial automation are causing a great migration of the manufacturing population away from big and small factories toward the service companies, to commerce, to the heart of the post-industrial metropolis.

This historical human migration, which has yet to be analyzed, produces the effect of an environment laden with human interfaces.

Robotization, therefore, is engendering a great increase in interpersonal relations.

IV. SUMMARY

The ecology of human relationships and the potential for producing new codes of behavior, will become one of the great themes for the culture of project and imagination.

The old form of ergonomy, so engaged in solving dimensional problems, and proxemics, so involved in describing the proper spaces of and for man, must both evolve into a new area of research, in order to define the way to be taken by and forms of a new culture of behavior, that will enable us to afford the metropolitan future, without the risk of collapse owing to an uncontrollable excess of interhuman contact.

We want, by means of the "Carta di Monaco," to confirm design's role as a culture that accompanies the relationship between man and the artificial world: a discipline set at the very heart of the great problems of this century, a cross-roads for the role of Europe in the world.

In our society the development of this new dimension of design will become the yard stick for assessing the quality of life.

Signers of the "Munich Design-Charter" as of October 15, 1990: Dieter Rams, Ettore Sottsass, Jr., Javier Mariscal, Andrea Branzi, David Chipperfield, J. Saenz de Oiza, Daniel Weil, Michael Erlhoff, Gillo Dorfles, Ann Marie Boutin, Mai Felip, Alexander Neumeister, Gudrun Neumeister, Marco Piva, Mike Jones, Giuliano Molineri, Cristina Morozzi, François Burkhardt, Edouard Bannward, Ezio Manzini, W. Poelman, Alberto Meda, Ruud Nordt, Isao Hosoe, Herbert H. Schultes, Clino Tini Castelli, Anna Maria Beesch, Remo Buti, Klaus Schmidt, Lapo Binazzi, R. Kemna, Antonio Citterio, Philipp Thonet, Alessandro Mendini, Evelin Möller, Pierluigi Molinari, Uta Brandes, Mario Bellini, Marc Bertheir, Antonio Petrillo, E. van Hinte, Francesco Morace, Winfried Scheuer, Anna Castelli Ferrieri, Ingrid Scheurmann, Denis Santachiara, M. Brandes, Massimo Iosa Ghini, Augustin N. Calabro, Maria Grazia Mazzocchi, Hans J. Neyer, Rodolfo Bonetto, Egon Chemaitis, Stefan Marzano, Siglinde Spanihel, Brigitte Wolf, Peter Zec, Marco Zanini, Günter Zamp-Kelp, Niko Fritz, Michele De Lucchi, Michael Klar, Paolo Deganello, Jo Eisele, Rolf Fehlbaum, Stephan Ott, Holger Fritzlar, Klaus Achim Heine, Christof Langhof, Richard Linxweiler, Günter Horntrich, Volker Albus, Andreas Brandolini, Wolfgang Laubersheimer.