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Carretera San Vicente del Raspeig s/n 03690 San Vicente del Raspeig. Alicante (SPAIN)

eurau@ua.es

The designer, the musician

A similar way to approach creativity, a similar way to live their professions

Mancini, Marco¹

1. University of Florence, DIDA Department of Architecture, DESIGNCAMPUS, Florence, Italy, e-mail: m.mancini@unifi.it

Synopsis

How many times, in their creative moments, architects are inspired by a particular music? How many times, in their creative moments, musicians are inspired by the place or the room where they are playing?

As musician and architect, I wonder if my mindset is different while practicing the one or the other profession. Unexpectedly, I found out many similarities between a musician and a designer, in the importance of personality, technique, listening skill, influences of environment and society, until the verification that both architecture and music are mainly imposed to other people, without choice.

Key words: Design, music, touch, space, similarity.

1. Design. A musical word

Elegant. Short. Insinuating. There is music in the word “Design”. When they pronounce it, they open the mouth as a singer does.

As an architect and musician I always wondered how to facilitate my professional life by practicing both Design and Music; I started to look for the mutual connections between these two disciplines, finally founding something very interesting.

2. Convergent thinking – Divergent thinking

A requested attitude of a Designer is the ability to control both the analytical/convergent (Guilford) and the creative/divergent stage of an innovative process (a new building project, i.e.). If we consider a musician, we can also agree that, while creating music, he/she uses and controls both convergent and divergent thinking, too (Fig.1). Music is art and mathematics. Architecture is art and mathematics, too. We need to analyze a problem if we want to fix it, but in our disciplinary field (design and music) a solution is never the only possible solution, but it depends on the author’s inner culture, experience, knowledge,...



Figure 1. The analytical and the creative mind – Elisa Riva.

3. That touch, that personalit

The touch of a famous designer or of a famous musician can't be taught. Beyond the technical competence, a Designer and a Musician express themselves and their personality with intangible features: this is a form of art. This is the reason why a customer chooses that particular architect. For the same reason a spectator goes to that particular concert. Through his touch, the artist reveals something, he/she is able to change the space or the time perception to his interlocutor, simply by sketching a smoky dark interior of New York or by playing a delicate Eastern Europe ballad (Fig. 2).

The work of the designer and of the musician is carried out through the synthesys, not through the analysis, as other scientists do: culture, attitude, personality, experience are real ingredients of the creative's work (Munari) and they are responsible for the materialization of an architecture or of a song.



Figure 2. Bill Evans, 1969.

4. Beyond creativity, the technique

We could hardly imagine a good result if an architect is not able to correctly draw or if a musician is not able to play the song that he/she composed.

The study of each discipline and the technical skills are fundamental, even in creative disciplines. Creativity is: "the break and passing of a previous situation" (Cerroni) but in order to create, it is necessary to know and to perfectly control that discipline.

5. Social artists

Designers and musicians rarely work in solitude.

Even if the stereotype (Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Van Gogh,...) is the solitary artist, this is more possible for a figurative or narrative art.

On the contrary the architect must work in a social environment: he needs the comparison with customers, industry, municipality,... to carry out his work; the same happens for Euterpe (the muse of Music): to play an instrument means also to modulate the volume and respect the bpm of a song; in general playing and listening to music is a moment of social sharing.

6. We depend on the approval of other people

Without the approval of his/her customer, the architect is not able to carry on the project. The same happens to a musician: without the approval of his/her fans, the musician will not sell that song; if people don't like his music no one will participate to his concerts.

It is strange to consider that many times famous Designers and Musicians are protagonists in social life, parties or public events (Fig. 3), but concretely they depend on the same people who glorifies them.



Figure 3. Cini Boeri and Giò Ponti at a party.

7. Listen to, first of all

Engagement and interaction between people are based on the attitude to listen to our interlocutors (Brownell). This becomes a fundamental attitude in social arts as architecture and music. The success of a designer's work depends mainly on how much and how right he/she has listened to customers, to market, to social scenario, to competitors, to people's needs. The same happens to a musician: it is necessary to listen to the other instruments if he/she

wants to play accordingly to the orchestra. “To listen” happens before “to understand” and before “to create”. Good Designers and good musicians know it very well.

8. The stage is a construction yard

Either in the stage that in the construction yard many similar things happen. They are:

- the place where the work of the architect and the musician is finalized, after many months or years, without possibility to fail;
- the only possible test for the activity of an architect or a musician;
- both itinerant and always different: each stage, each performance is different as each construction yard is different, even if the same concert is played or an identic building is built.

By a semantic point of view, it is interesting that both places speak the language of the metal, with its light reflections, with its sounds: they are made of scaffolding, they need temporary devices (electrical and other machineries); they are also characterized by a rigid pyramidal organization which regulates different access zones (public, private, staff only,...), different authorizations, different materials: in the stage, as in the construction yard, each person (the designer, the musician, the workman, ...) is an actor and he/she has a unique and clear role.



Figure 4. Structural worker - Lewis Hine.

The construction yard (Fig. 4) and the stage (Fig. 5) are also the two main places where the contemporary happens and reveals itself to the world.



Figure 5. "Mario Del Monaco" Theatre, Treviso, Italy – Lights over the scene, Riccardo Messere.

9. Space developers



Figure 6. Triennale Design Museum, Milan, Italy – Pasquale Formisano.

An impressive similitude between the work of an architect and the work of a musician is the construction of a kind of space, either physical or sounding one (Brown, Muhar). The technique used in interior design to give importance to a certain light accenture (Fig. 6) is similar to the technique used by a musician to enforce the presence of an instrument more than an other, in the mix: they are

defining the perception of a specific space (Fig. 7) in which the word “position” expresses also the meaning of “role”.



Figure 7. Concha Acústica, Cabo Rojo - Jerjes Medina Albino.

10. Without choices

We can't avoid seeing the lighthouse (Fig. 8) that regularly lights up our summer nights. We can't avoid hearing the bell (Fig. 9) that sounds over the city downtown. As architects or musicians, we force other people to perceive our work.

Architecture is an imposed art (Piano) because we can't decide if to see the ugly building in front of our home or not; but also Music is an imposed art because we can't decide if to hear that stupid music on the restaurant or not.



Figure 8. Johor Lighthouse, Singapore - Erwin Soo.



Figure 9. Campana dei Caduti, Rovereto, Italy.

Let's think of all the places that we encounter in our life: except from home, all the other places are full of objects that we don't choose to see, to touch, to hear, but we do it; we see and perceive, we hear clearly, loudly or quietly: all this external world is created, modeled and imposed mainly by designer or musician.

The designer, the musician
Mancini, Marco

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Biography

Marco Mancini. Architect, Ph.D. in Architecture - Design. He was born in Italy in 1977. Graduated cum laude, he carries out teaching and academic research since 2005, at DesignCampus (University of Florence, School of Architecture, Degree and Master Degree in Industrial Design) in the topics: innovation theory, technological innovation, industrial design, planning; in 2016 he ran the course "Innovation in design" at the Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (NUAA), Nanking, China. He participates in inter-departmental research projects which involve local and international enterprises; he worked as "Design and innovation expert consultant" for enterprises in regional projects and for industry association. He deals with outfittings and temporary installations for international exhibitions (Pitti Immagine, Florence). He designed integrated systems for the safety of artifacts in emergency conditions: on this matter he owns three patents (with other colleagues).