

The Future of Visual and Aesthetic Trends: The Urgent Need For a New Enlightenment

We urgently need a new age of enlightenment to ensure that knowledge and experience come back to hold a crucial role in our daily experience and to protect ourselves from the risk posed by obscurantism and ignorance. In this, the work by Edgar Morin will serve us well. He advocated a distinction between rationality, or reason through being open to experimentation and rationalization which is often reduced to a little less than a paranoid system in which we are expected to answer all questions. This view implies a completely inward looking approach to our daily life experience.

Socrates was the first to take philosophy out of the sky and out of the realm of gods, bringing it to the city and into private homes, forcing it to become relevant to our lives. This founding father of Western philosophy created a morality, which is based not on wishes and desires, but on our conscience reached by a process of rational thought. Our ability to think, and therefore to plan, means that we can take responsibility. Being responsible requires us to take informed decisions, and taking responsibility for the choices that we make simply means being free. And our humanity lies there, in this freedom. We become enlightened managers and planners of our own lives enlightened by our reason. Rather than taking nourishment from the logic of advertising images, the New Enlightenment is nourished by those things, which we have already experimented in full. This is embodied by a constant need to experiment, to broaden the nature of human enquiry. It is an awareness of the need to restore a proper value to experience and has, in itself, a hint of experimental experience and tangible innovation. It requires a radical reform in the way we sell our experiences and re-evaluation of insight.

While for many years producers had great difficulty reconciling beauty and functionality, for example, New Illuminism demands that we define and audit not only tangible production process, but also those which affect our senses. If we are to reinvigorate our lives, we will need to first understand and then define new functions. In this way we will arrive to a new way to illuminate our reality through a clear responsibility for planning. The merging of the more radical languages of the 60s and the 70s with modern holistic values, has allowed the current horizon of Experimental Illuminism to define our future ever more clearly, and in doing so, it has transformed the happy musing of some 18th aristocratic intellectuals into a shared collective vision that is capable of routing Obscurantism and ignorance from this millennium.

By overcoming innocent faith modernists and illuminists' innocent faith in progress, we can be the author of our destiny, of our real aims. By overcoming the idea that history is a record of human improvement, we can start a proper value to the concept that men and women have an innate dignity, which has nothing to do with race or religion, but comes instead from their individual uniqueness.

The world of art, design and fashion is showing great attention to these phenomena. The most advanced creative minds and artists are already working on this direction, defining the aesthetic trends of the next years as follows.

Hyper Memorable

In the last few years the worlds of fashion and aesthetics have gone through a wide range of historical revivals. Now that the infatuation with postmodernism is rapidly fading away, we are heading towards a phase of revival of the most consolidated processes, and not just of the icons of the past. The fruitful encounter between personal history, one's own culture of origin and the emerging needs of modernity, stimulate the creation and the reassessment of traditional products that are capable of supporting the new dynamics of people's everyday life.

Wonder Simplification

The emerging aesthetic trends propose some interesting reflections upon the concept of simplification. From the point of view of the consumer, the most appreciated experiences correspond to the most distinctive and intense. This advanced form of essentiality has nothing to do with minimalism. It is instead a way in which to deepen the «purity» of the project, giving value to a form of aesthetic that is functional and that represent modernity. One of the most complex and challenging goals of today's world is that of making life simpler without losing complexity.



Milan

Extra Rules

This sensitivity emerges from the increasing need to rescue some aesthetic rules that have been neglected for a long time and to play with them creatively. From the point of view of project creation this trend is expressed through the search for new shapes, colors and experiences that highlight the great richness offered by regularity. After the randomness and the spontaneous surrealism triggered by the world of the web and the clickstream, there is an emergent desire for an orchestrated form of rigor and carefully planned contrasts. New rules and processes practices are now at the centre of the attention in the work of creative people, from graphic design to the world of the arts and fashion in general.



New York



London

Ultra Graphic

The immediate communication provided by bi-dimensional graphics gives a fresh touch to the most classic aesthetics. This phenomenon well combines with the natural expressiveness of the T-shirts and of the SMS, as well as with the very direct message typical of affective (as we call them «transitive») products. In this trend, far-Eastern aesthetic tradition merges with the classic design of Northern Europe, with Pop Art and with the graphic design techniques consolidated during the rise of digital technology. Within this very «graphic» context, the relationship between light and dark becomes crucial. In many advanced projects, for example, the source of light is visible but it does not illuminate the space, it is present but it does not form any shadow or contrast, which normally creates an ambience.



Stockholm



Milan

Massive Details

Extreme femininity has been one of the most important drivers in the world of fashion in recent years. In the accessory sector, for example, we have witnessed the return of high heels, with tapered pointed shoes and tiny bags. Cosmetics and interior decor have also been influenced by the return of this «feminine sensitivity», in which the great relevance that small details makes is the basis of a daily aesthetic practice. The attraction towards icons, ancient or contemporary symbols is a must for the young generations, who remove the ideological or religious aspects. The attraction towards a surprising and moving aesthetic is a consolidated phenomenon that continues to grow. The role of new femininity has at this point been metabolized and accepted that from post-feminist claim becomes a daily pleasure, freed from specific moments (the evening, celebrations, festivities) to become a true and proper fun and carefree rite.

Micromega Luxury

The world of luxury in recent years has lived various aesthetic cycles: from the formal to the eccentric, from affectation to personal pleasure. Today all these elements are free to exchange roles and to assume different values, cohabiting in a mix, occasionally personal, occasionally ironic, but always charged with innovation. The etymology of the term «luxury» contains the idea of exclusivity, excess, exhibition: not only in having the best, but to show the wealth. Luxury in its «macro» dimension is therefore the infraction of the limits set up by society and rationality. In this sense the forms of luxury, involve a multitude of senses, and are frequently used as inspiration for new forms of product.

Huge Interlace

In the last decade, the dynamics of «cultural pollination» have permeated the world of project and the overall approach to the use and circulation of products which present a very sophisticated aesthetic. The ability to construct an original vision of the design projects merges with the act of reviewing it on the basis of people's daily needs for having products highly personalized. «Cultural pollination» has become a natural phenomenon in people's life, crucial to the realization of one's own style and identity. In this context, it is important to preserve the «whole picture» of a project/product usage in order to easily merge very different elements that consumers have yet to assimilate.

Super Material

The research carried out in the area of materials in recent years has revolutionized the aesthetic fruition of objects. Today's challenge is that of applying innovative materials to new projects and manufacturing processes. Considered as the decade that focused exclusively on «image», the 80's have given a boost to a series of researches in the world of aesthetics that is now proven to be very strategic and crucial to all sectors. From the point of view of material experimentation, our inheritance of the patrimony of the 80's is still actively contributing to the creation of new stimuli.

Francesco Morace
Future Concept Lab

Francesco Morace, President of Future Concept Lab, is a sociologist, writer and journalist. He has been working for more than 20 years in the sociological and market research field. As strategic consultant for various companies, he has held courses in France, Spain, Germany, Holland, USA, Japan, Hong Kong and Colombia. He teaches at Domus Academy and SDA Bocconi Business School in Milan.

Future Concept Lab is a research and strategic consulting institute that stands out on the international landscape as one of the most advanced research laboratories specialized in marketing issues and trends in consumption. With extensive research activities in Europe, North America, South America and Asia, it is headquartered in Milan and has correspondents in 40 countries. The institute implements integrated research projects based on original methodologies that lead to the definition of sector-related scenarios, offers consultancy and training services, publishes works that represent the institute's main activities.

www.futureconceptlab.com