



Design

CONTRIBUTION OF DESIGN PIONEERS (CRAFTSMAN/ARTISANS) IN BUILDING THE VISUAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT Visual art has been an integral part of the human ecosystem even before the existence of graphic design. In our age, where digital design is at its peak. The main role of a graphic designer is to do promotional content. All being the need of the time and a medium of communication. The core is communication. The paper seeks to explore the idea of visual art before the times of graphic design. The paper will emphasize in describing the importance of old designers (artisans) in creating the functional designs, as design was art and the oldest traces of art can only be found at holy places (here temples and monasteries). The study will explore the roots of graphic design in reference to the visual culture carved in wooden gateways of temples in district Kinnaur.

The research was executed in five key areas of the district Kinnaur.

- Reckong Peo
- Kalpa
- Roghi
- Sangla
- Chitkul

As these areas have the temples and monasteries that holds a strong visual culture in terms of wood carving, murals and metal work. The whole paper is a manifestation of a small idea which seeks to connect the dots between the graphic designers and old story tellers who used craft as a medium of communication.

KEYWORDS : Visual Art, Communication, Graphic Design, Culture, Religion, Old Designers

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research is to seek answer for the following questions:

How visual arts has its roots in holy places built in past?

How visual arts gives birth to visual culture we see around us? *What helped art sustain and communicate the same idea even after so long? Why is modern design too quick to come and pass?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

“An artist is a man who digests his own subjective impressions and knows how to find a general objective meaning in them, and how to express them in a convincing form.” Is quoted in *Design as Art* by Bruno Munari.

The book *Art as experience*, by John Dewey also talks about the importance of experience and how the things that surrounds us as an ordinary object are the ripe things of beauty. The book talks about the aesthetics of the objects that creates the environment and how it plays a prominent role in acting as a stimulus in creating how we feel about a space. These two books play an important part in creating the base of our research. Apart from the books, the secondary data from the internet and the documents found in the resource center of National Institute of Fashion Technology played a crucial role in formulating the ground research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research collects the data through a qualitative research method. Data collection was performed through focus group discussions, observational methods and document analysis.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are useful to examine how social knowledge is produced. The researcher stimulates discussion in order to examine how knowledge and ideas develop and operate in a given group. The role of the facilitator is to create an open atmosphere, involve participants in the discussion and manage this discussion.

Observational Methods

Observational methods are used to understand phenomena by studying people's accounts and actions in an everyday context. We used different types of observations, with various degrees of research participation, like non-participating observation (e.g. by using video recordings), and participant observation or ethnography. Ethnography 'usually involves the researcher

participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is based on existing sources, like government reports, personal documents, articles in newspapers, or books.

SELECTED FIELD: KINNAUR

Kinnaur is surrounded by the Tibet to the east, in the northeast corner of Himachal Pradesh, about 235 kms from Shimla is a tremendously beautiful district having the three high mountains ranges i.e. Zaskar, Greater Himalayas and Dhauladhar. It is one of the 12 administrative districts of the state of Himachal Pradesh in northern India. The reason for selecting Kinnaur district as the field of study was its touch with the simpler form of life. We selected 5 places to study in depth the roots of visual culture in these selected areas. Apart from being a perfect example of simpler form of life. Kinnaur is also known for being a hub of Hinduism and Buddhism. Since Himachal Pradesh is known as the land of devi & devtas (goddess & god), there are some prominent temples in Kinnaur where one can find intricate craftsmanship. The holy places in Kinnaur have wood carvings crafted in the most deep and intricate way one can. It shows the depth of creativity and imagination that past generations had even without reference images. What made them think? What lead to creation of a visual culture? we will discuss below.

INTRODUCTION

A human mind has grown in such an enormous manner that when we see a line, we tend to formulate visuals, when we see a sign, we associate them with different meaning. By seeing different arrangement of colours, we perceive them in a certain manner. The world around has grown in such way. When the first man drew humanities first image as a wall painting (reference to the caves of Lascaux). It contained the images of aurochs (giant bull that existed in prehistoric age) sitting, standing, grazing and sleeping. First time a human associated itself to an image, some 20,000 thousand years ago. This magic of association still works.

Imagery became the tactile form showing the evidence of visual culture, a stimuli that made people feel they belonged to a tribe, a culture or a country. These visual aids were in the form of cave paintings, sculptures, wood carvings and murals. In this paper we are going to understand, moreover manifest how the craft we find around us is the key element in making us who we are. As discussed, our subject field is Kinnaur and the holistic places around.

This paper will talk about the scattered dots between the current graphic designers and the ancient craftsman. For understanding the core that binds the past and present occupation we would like to cover the following steps of analysis and data collection.

WHAT IS GRAPHIC DESIGN?

The term "graphic design" first appeared in print in the 1922 essay "New Kind of Printing Calls for New Design" by William Addison Dwiggins, an American book designer in the early 20th century. Raffle's Graphic Design, published in 1927, was the first book to use "Graphic Design" in its title. The field is considered a subset of visual communication and communication design, but sometimes the term "graphic design" is used synonymously. Graphic designers create and combine symbols, images and text to form visual representations of ideas and messages.

Speaking about current situation Common uses of graphic design include corporate design (logos and branding), editorial design (magazines, newspapers and books), wayfinding or environmental design, advertising, web design, communication design, product packaging, and signage.

Although the digital age entails designing with interactive software, graphic design still revolves around age-old principles. With user psychology in mind some especially weighty graphic design considerations are:

- Symmetry and Balance (including symmetry types)
- Flow
- Repetition
- Pattern
- The Golden Ratio (i.e., proportions of 1:1.618)
- The Rule of Thirds (i.e., how users' eyes recognize good layout)
- Typography (encompassing everything from font choice to heading weight)
- Audience Culture (re Colour Use and Reading Pattern)

Visual communication is about as old as our opposable thumbs, though it's been a long journey from stone tools to digital tablets. In short, the graphic design's story spans the entirety of human existence and it has the power to inspire and inform modern graphic designers.

WHAT IT USED TO BE?

Earlier design had a purpose to communicate and promote cultures apart from promotion and communication of business that it has today. Previously, design as a term was non-existent, but it existed in the name of Art.

Today, art is more independent and individual than it used to be. Artist were human being skilled with a form of aesthetic beauty that could adorn the world. People from Michelangelo to Raja Ravi Verma had a job to paint the painting they were commissioned for. Those painting were not supposed to be abstract or subjective. The paint on the wall had a purpose. It meant something to the commissioner. It was encrypted with a message or represented a real-life scenario. The idea was very similar to that of design i.e., to communicate, which is the reason why we have so much intricate work all around the holy places. The district Kinnaur had temples like Kothi temple, Chandika temple and monasteries where one find detailed wood carvings. These wood

carvings told the story of Ramayana, Mahabharata.

The iconography induced on the wood took forms of different Hindu and Buddhist deities. One can easily see lord Shiva (a Hindu god) next to the Palden Lhamo (a Buddhist goddess) in the temples of Kinnaur. Two different deities from two different culture found in one place. This is not random; the craftsmanship was not random or just aesthetic. It had a purpose, here two different types of iconography at one place meant amalgamation. It meant unity; this woodcarving was imposed of the temples found in district Kinnaur.

What could be the plot behind the build that stands even after 50 -60 years of establishment? The simplest reason of putting two cultures at one place was to produce an after effect. Cultural diversity makes living uneasy on micro level, which gives birth to the problems in macro level.

And our ancestors or the designer behind the monuments didn't want that, humanity do not dwell on conflict. It dwells on unity and cohesiveness. The easiest way to bring different cultures together (in reference to Kinnaur, Hindus and Buddhists) was to create a place that nurtured both the culture, serving different people and norms. It is a great idea for introducing long term peace and harmony amongst different tribes. Can you see how the visual art leads itself in yielding a visual culture of a place? Where the native people accept and embrace the cultural differences.

This is how the craft (here wood carving, murals in temples) communicated harmony. The efforts of the craftsmen and the leaders of a place played an important role in creating a place how it looks today. Specially the world created by the artisans. The unknown artists who created the environment and added meaning to the daily objects.

Art is a skill as mentioned before and its function was to communicate, propagate divine tales or teach ethics to humanity. The holy places were the areas that had maximum footfall as they were created for the purpose of mass gatherings whereas now, we have malls or shopping complexes where we can find modern graphic design serving as a communication tool. And as we understand from the studies that mankind can always prudent enough to know how it wanted the history to look like.

The reason for making those artworks is considered that those pioneers wanted to make mankind go in a certain direction of living by idealising those characters from those masterpieces and inculcate values of life in their own.

What helped art (visual art in holy place being reference) sustain?

One of the strongest reasons for the sustenance of art found in holy places is the fact that they never try to outgrow. Each and every place comes with its own folklore. Every place has its roots. And when things are rooted you keep blooming the same flower (metaphorically).

Why the Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha) might sustain for longer than a poster has many reasons. One can start from evaluating the purpose behind a statue of Maitreya in comparison with the ideas we communicate now via posters and brochures:

The statue connects to the people of the place on the core level. The design of a statue/ the imagery has been feed to the human living in a particular region for centuries. There are tales that spread across the generation. Therefore, it stays longer.

1. When a tribe owns a form of art (what we call craft) there is always lack of innovation since the outcome has strong mythological traces from past. Due to this culture of using template design as an identity for a tribe, it tends to stay longer.
2. There is a pattern to the designs crafted by our pioneer designers (artisans) at the holy places. The consistency becomes the USP and the USP become reason for having a long- sustained life for an artwork created some 200 years ago.
3. Whereas if seen the current culture of design, the designers have plethora. There is excess of facts, myths, fantasy, ideology due to internet.
4. Internet made the information 0.65789 sec (hypothetical statistic) away from the designers working today in any part of the globe. If an idea or a fact reaches one human in just 0.65789 seconds, the odds of the formed foundation of the fact is also 0.65789 seconds.
5. Also, the designs used today not belong to a tribe or a group of

- people. There is not much sense of belongingness that we as designers try to seek out of the desired design.
6. The purpose of modern design plays an important role in providing it a short life span. Since the beginning of industrial revolution and consumerism the ideology of design (graphic) evolved as the products became desire not needs. The production increased with the increased desire of consuming in the world that is/ was out growing its pace beyond time and technology.
 7. Also, the nature of cut copy paste and meandering that a mind does while designing these days, like referring to the images found in the internet. The authenticity and individuality of the *generic graphic design* gets lost in between the fast pace production of poster (just an example).
 8. Least importance is given to its individuality and the short commercial life span kills the value of aesthetics that a designer uses in the modern design. Therefore, fast pace mass production of commercial design is one of the reasons of a short life span of a poster.
 9. Also, the reason is lack of roots within the global designers Individuality and lack of group formation. The designer's purpose is to communicate in the most efficient way and today's need is a *fast-moving design* which is trendy today and outdated tomorrow. Since what gets famous gets famous global and every blessed designer can use it, make it better and move forward. It shows lack of roots.

That is the reason that graphic design, despite of having the same idea of communicating information, has a shorter lifespan if compared to art, even after advance communication techniques and media creation tools being utilised. Moreover, the visual we inherited from the pioneer designers are still handy to us. It has induced itself into the current world via books, documentation, scriptures, and internet. And even today the imagination power with which the pioneers created imagery around us without any reference makes them the greatest designers of the world.

Even when it wasn't coined as design it served the purpose that graphic design fulfils today. It catered to the psychological needs and also stimulated strong aesthetic notion within the people of their time and our time.

Indeed, it would not be wrong to state that the artisans who created the world's initial imagery in the name of murals, woodcarvings, sculptures are the ones who super imposed the visual culture into the being living today.

CONCLUSION

Graphic design plays an influential role in communicating and serving a particular purpose. The whole paper talks about how it has been there in our lives from a very long time in name of art. Also, it tries to understand the difference between work of old designers or craftsman and graphic designers.

In the paper the research is conducted in field study Kinnaur. There the sample study has been conducted by visiting the temples and monasteries because it's there where one can find oldest traces of art. And it tries to understand why the work of those design pioneers has sustained throughout so many years and is still serving its purpose and being perceived the way it was intended whereas the work of modern designers does not sustain for long. Hence after doing this research, one can conclude, that graphic design can find its traces back in the art, one witnesses in holy places. The process of designing has existed even before the commercialisation of design. The process of creating and dwelling on to something to communicate, to speak better has been ever since the man gain consciousness. The purpose has changed with the change of time and that is *survival instincts*.

REFERENCES

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