



The Animal Within

Erez Nevi Pana

Humanity has succeeded to accomplish a great deal. Our evolution exhibits immense power and accomplishments. Among the wide spectrum of human achievements are symbols, paintings, language, writing, printing, Internet, architecture and design. All function as life-changing manifestations of human intellectual achievement, amplified by multiple communication tools which have unified individuals under the tag of shared culture. The Cambridge Dictionary defines culture as “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”, but does today’s culture really reflect my deepest values and beliefs?

KEYWORDS

Veganism, Design, Morals, Culture, Evolution

PALABRAS CLAVE

Veganismo, diseño, moral, cultura, evolución

Design, having a massive cultural impact, began to develop 3.3 million years ago when toolmakers started shaping stones to cut and break. The first designers displayed compelling imagination and technical skill. Within a timeframe of two million years, the stones altered in shape to attain different functions. Design started to grow and develop as a language in an evolutionary dimension, one that undergoes change according to the needs of mankind. Painting, followed by writing, functioned as a means of preserving information (Avital 2010), like an extended unit for data-storage, and played a significant role in human evolution with a broad continuity and a gradual development towards today’s Artificial Intelligence.

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An explorer who uses design as a significant tool to investigate phenomena through material experimentation. Nevi Pana earned his BA in design from the Holon Institute of Technology and a MA from the Design Academy Eindhoven where his thesis focused on the recrystallization of salt. In 2015, Nevi Pana formed La Terrasse in Eindhoven as a platform for designers, artists, writers and thinkers to work closely together, share their thoughts on a central theme and realize their visions. The Design Museum Holon recently acquired two of Nevi Pana’s works developed from an organic material mixture of soil and fungi for their permanent collection, in addition to three salt pieces from his solo exhibition at the museum. Nevi Pana practice research and design around the world as a doctoral student investigating the topic of vegan design. E-Mail: ereznevipana@gmail.com

Fig. 01
 Roeë Shpernik.

The first tool makers displayed a compelling imagination and technical skill as can be seen in the findings from Lomekwi 3, a site on the western side of Lake Turkana, Kenya, which display the record of tool making over the extent of some 700,000 years (Hovers, 2015). The evolution of tool making has led to the evolution of visual thinking. Man has come to manifest great achievements in technology and functionality, but also in the aesthetics of designed objects. Characterized by ornaments or minimalism, exquisite craftsmanship or mechanized mass production, desirable sleek or dull and rough looks, objects were often changing and the concept of beauty kept shifting. The desire for change was driven by an artistic hunger to fabricate and achieve what is beyond our reach. This curiosity and need for the new is part of human intelligence. Just like in other realms, designers remained in a constant search to form alternatives to any given reality, utilizing technologies and developing material culture to fulfil functional features, and beauty that feeds the taste of the viewer.

The assumption that humans were the only species that made extensive use of stone-based technology has long been refuted, as crude stone tools made by chimpanzees have been unearthed in the rain-forests of Ivory Coast, proving that chimpanzees have been using stone tools for at least 4300 years, concluding that primates entered the Stone Age. The use of tools doesn't make primates unique among other animals; Crows improvise and teach their young techniques to manufacture tools to catch their food. We know of elephants, insects, dolphins, octopuses and other animals that declutter their life using objects as tools to make their lives easier. Animals have brains and they use them as we do - to experience the world, to think and feel, to solve problems and ensure their survival (Morell, 2013). Their emotional range is also larger than first thought. Like us, animals have a mental life, a personality, moods; they laugh and play, experience simple emotions such as sadness and happiness to more complex ones like jealousy, grief and empathy; they are self-conscious and are aware of their actions and intentions.

The existence of consciousness in animal species has been examined by ethologists, humanities researchers and comparative psychologists. Different species have differing levels of consciousness and intelligence, a state of being aware of one's surroundings. They exhibit distress and sensitivity, awareness and self-esteem; Cows have accents and regional dialects, fish use tools, sheep don't forget a face and they can recognize each other and humans by their faces (Kendrick, et al., 2001). Pigs can recognize themselves in a mirror, and they interpret the image reflected using it to find hidden food (Broom, et al., 2009). They play video games better than chimpanzees and are playful, social and emotional beings. In addition to chickens, goats, water buffalos, ducks, calves, deer, horses, dogs, cats, rabbits, and turkeys, *inter alia*, all are conscious animals that we kill for food.

The addition of meat to the human diet has had the most powerful impact on human-animal relations. Bones that were found in Ethiopia showed evidence that the first humans who used tools and ate meat were *australopithecus afarensis* and evidence for stone-tool-assisted consumption of animal tissues 3.39 million years ago at Dikika, Ethiopia, was found in 2010 (Hovers, 2015). The progress of humanity is liable to the presence of wild life, and meat consumption resulted in the reduction of foraging time, which was essential to manage and maintain

energy levels. As a consequence, time was available for social engagement and gathering information, as well as to reason and understand. The killing of animals and the consumption of meat became a part of human existence and different traditions and practices were developed in relation to this – animals worked for people, were worn, and their blood, bones and skin were used for designed objects.

With the passage of time, the notion of materiality has been advanced from pure function to include beauty and tactility in physical matter. An inconceivable variety of materials is available today and technology plays a vital role in the abundance of materials and products flooding the market: plywood, paint brush, sandpaper, safety gloves, cork, brass, plaster, paper, wood glue, glaze, MDF, black pigment, aluminum mold, photographic film, inkjet paper, cellular concrete, cardboard, wallpaper, paint rollers, glossy paint, crayons, chalk, wood wax, canvas, rubber, certain plastics, silk, asphalt, bookbinding, and so on. All of these are products and common materials that can be used in the design process to materialize the finalized product. Each and every product may contain animal ingredients or may be manufactured with the support of wildlife components. Today, the range of materials which contain animal ingredients extend far beyond the commonly known animal products, like leather, suede or wool. Animal ingredients such as gelatin binder, bone glue, collagen, stearic acid, among others, are blended into materials and products that we fail to recognize and relate to the standard industry practices where animals are turned into meat and leather. Diverse industries work in harmony such that two dissimilar manufacturers coexist in a mutually beneficial manner to maximize profits from one cow, pig or chicken and their like. The main parts are used for food, and the remaining - blood, bones, fat, skin and hair - are gathered and traded with various industries.

The book PIG 05049 exposes one animal, integrated into 185 diverse products, pieces of pig number 05049 (Meindertma, 2008) “find themselves in the most wide-ranging places” as a part of products that we meet on a daily basis. Maximizing profits has a definitive impact on the life and death cycle of the animal, where profitability and the reinforcement of the economy is set in motion by the exploitation of a pig – every single part of the animal is utilized. The feasibility of the products exhibited in the book is based on numeral logic whereby all the mentioned products are manufactured in much greater numbers. As Verweij described, “The scale of one pig, ... has long been forgotten as the scale at which we trade. This is because, on the scale of one pig, it makes no sense to separate out a few milligrams of black pigment, gelatin or collagen. It only makes sense if you are dealing with tens or hundreds of pigs every day”.

The domesticated animals that are raised, bred, then slaughtered for meat in this multibillion-dollar industry, also comprises countless smaller industries that are inter-linked. Once you support one of these industries, you are backing up the others as well.

Most of us do not believe that cruelty towards animals is right, so why do we keep purchasing animal products and support these industries? We have established a set of social and psychological justification mechanisms that allow caring, humane people to contribute and take part in inhumane practices without understanding and recognizing what we are doing. In her book “Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear

Cows: An Introduction to Carnism” (2011) The American social psychologist, Melanie Joy coined the term carnism and described it:

“the belief system and psychology of meat eating... carnism is one of the many atrocities, one of the many violent ideologies that are an unfortunate part of the human legacy (...) although the experience of each set of victims will always be somewhat unique, the ideologies themselves are similar. The mentality that enables such violence is the same. It is the mentality of domination and subjection, of privilege and oppression, turn someone into something, to reduce life to a unit of production”.

Joy argues that the primary defense of carnism is denial, which is expressed by the quality of being impossible to see - the invisibility factor. According to Carol J. Adams, American writer, feminist, and animal rights advocate, “If the problem is invisible, then there will be ethical invisibility”. One of the ways to keep something unseen is by remaining unnamed “if we don’t name it we can’t think about it. We can’t talk about it, or challenge it, or question it”. Another aspect of the invisibility of carnism is keeping the victims hidden, out of view, out of the public consciousness. The first step to change as Joy notes, is being aware of the existence of the system and jumping out of it, because without awareness there will never be a real free choice.

To increase awareness, designers should be scanning reality beyond the one that is seen –with her beauty and ugliness, with our triumphs and failures. Hundreds of millions of farm animals are slaughtered every day around the world, and the numbers keep rising. The expression of an ethical position towards these animals started to stretch and to be linked to products beyond one’s diet. An ethical lifestyle that corresponds to consumption as a whole emerged and developed into a basic and logic understanding –if it’s unethical to eat an animal, it’s unethical to wear it, or to sit on it. Still, we need to achieve more and propel the discussion towards new ideals that correspond with a real civilized and humane society, one that rejects ‘moral sleeping pills’, in order to embrace clean design. We should willingly wake ourselves up and move forward towards an ethical future in which our culture is conscious and the industries supporting it are tied with our deepest values. As a designer and as a human being, I want to work and live within a genuine civilised society, one that is liberated from ignorance, and speciesism –it is a great challenge to restrain the animal within us, but a noble one. Staying focused, we must remember, our reality is aligned with our choices –the morals of contemporary designers are crucial, but they are yours to establish and to express in effect.

In the present ‘climate’, the designer’s role cannot be limited and cannot adhere only to the stage of problem solving. We should be in sync with nature and predict future challenges, to be a few steps ahead of them; We must work within a critical, visionary and holistic approach. We have the ability to navigate humanity to an aura of greatness and a progressive consciousness. For this, we must acknowledge that everything and everyone is interconnected, we need to think with a unifying mentality that embraces all animate and inanimate forms. Thinking holistically, designers should add to their book of principles material reuse, consumption reduction, fair trade, organic growing, and waste policies that will heal the land, ocean, air, and the social system upon which our world is based. Just as our medical ethics were established after World

War II, there is a need for philosophical construction related to moral principles in the field of design. Our concepts should dive into greater depths and aspire to rephrase the mind of the next generations, reshape the material world, and reveal the harmony in which design should exist. Design should struggle against ignorance and brutality and desire higher consciousness and harmony. It's not a matter of evolution anymore, but rather of survival. RA

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