

Experiencing the Art/Craft/Handmade/Studio Furniture Aesthetics in Postmodernism Theoretically (III)

-Creating a piece of wood furniture by transforming the Postmodern furniture aesthetics through the interpretation of metaphor-

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ABSTRACT

Through this study, I explored a creation of the postmodern furniture aesthetics through the transformation by student's interpretation in experiencing the art/craft/handmade/studio furniture aesthetics in postmodernism theoretically for 'wood culture experience class' or 'wood love experience class' by the Korea Forest Service because the class tends to focus on making simple wood works involved just in the practical part. Qualitative conceptual analysis as the principal methodology was used to achieve the theoretical context in the experience programs. Following the lesson one on defining the postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture as metaphor and the lesson two on interpreting an aesthetics of art and everyday life with the wood furniture which expresses the metaphorical and symbolical aesthetics appeared as New Design furniture in postmodernism in the previous papers, I developed lesson three on creating an object using eco-friendly materials like wood in transforming an aesthetics of postmodern furniture as the final stage of the study. Therefore, the students will be able to create a piece of eco-friendly wood furniture for our environment as metaphor transformed by his/her perspective regarding a piece of selected New Design furniture.

Key words: Creation, eco-friendly wood furniture, recycled materials, ecology, experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creation of a piece of wood furniture transformed from postmodern furniture aesthetics using symbol and metaphor was explored for the theoretical education of 'wood culture experience class' or 'wood love experience class' supported by the Korea Forest Service, which generally intends to inform the benefit of wood to the public, to make people aware of importance of wood, and furthermore to stimulate the industry to use domestic wood more. In the study, the students will create a piece with eco-friendly materials like wood for our environment to maintain welling-being like LOHAS (Lifestyles of health and sustainability). Base on the previous two lessons on the definition of the furniture aesthetics and the interpretation of the postmodern furniture aesthetics, the lesson three, the final lesson, will be developed to help the children attending the wood programs create a piece of symbolical furniture metaphorically by their point of view in learning the

Received for publication: Jan 10, 2009 ; Reviewed: Feb 20, 2009 ; Accepted: May 15, 2009.

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Thereby, from now I will develop the lesson in terms of the subjects such as objective, contextual information creating an art work with eco-friendly and recycled materials like wood, recyclable furniture for our ecology, integration of subject areas, the inquiry strategies, lesson preparation, procedure, question sheet, resources and materials, transition, and follow-up for writing and talking about a piece of solid wood furniture aesthetics to strike a balance between the theory and the practice in the programs.

2. LESSON FOR AESTHETICS OF ART AND EVERYDAY LIFE WITH WOOD FURNITURE

Objective

Everyone creates an object expressive of the postmodern aesthetics of communication in New Design furniture using with recyclable objects or materials. Objects and materials will to be transformed through student's interpretation of metaphor in everyday life, with students by teams of two or three working collaboratively.

Contextual Information:

This lesson will explore the creativity of the students through their expression of the postmodern aesthetics of communication in New Design furniture by creating an artwork with recycled objects such as box, cup, light, shelf, and/or, chair or recycled materials such as cardboard, plywood, fabric, and/or stone. They can adopt or adapt the postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture in relation to beauty, decoration, or craftsmanship into the objects or materials. Thus, I will deal with current issues such as durability, recycling, and frugality by contemporary furniture design for an approach to our ecology at present and in the future. I will lecture and discuss "out of fashion" furniture, durability, and mass production of New Design furniture, and a new design philosophy emerging with a new aesthetics for our environment.

Recyclable furniture for our ecology

Today, furniture designers influenced by the need for conservation of resources try to create furniture by adapting recyclable and nonpolluting materials, using energy saving systems because our energy resources are limited. Out of concern for the ecology of our environment, it is significant for the designers to reuse and recycle materials in creating their furniture in reaction to issues of pollution and destruction of resources. Moreover, the designers must make the consumer base his decision on keeping his/her furniture not on its being out of fashion but on its no longer being able to perform its function. They have responsibility for producing durable and sober furniture for our ecology beyond fashion. Current furniture trends depend on the designers' ideas of theory and practice. Today, it is possible for the mass-produced furniture to approach a broader number of people than one-offs or limited-editions in considering quantity and economy. However, the shoddy furniture mass-produced by manufacturers can cause waste of energy resources and tons of garbage because of the poor quality of the furniture. One-offs or limited-editions also tend to end in a pile of refuse because they soon go out of fashion because of the fast production on small scale. Thus, furniture designers are now attempting to obtain quality, functionality, and beauty in creating their furniture according to the need of environmental sustainability. As the designers consume fewer materials, minimize and simplify pieces, and invent and use alternative materials like recyclable ones, they can make a contribution toward the sustainability of our ecology. Through recycled and reused materials, the designers will lead the society to share their intentions, and people may learn and adopt the designers' ideas about life.

Keeping in mind the concepts of the recycled and reused materials stated previously, the students will explore creation reflecting the postmodern aesthetics shown as metaphor, narrative, symbol, humor, animation, mysticism, and fluidity in New Design furniture or interiors. For the postmodern aesthetics of communication in everyday life, not only through animation, fluidity, humor, imagination, symbol, metaphor, narrative, mysticism, etc., designers of New Design furniture express their ideas in their furniture but also by using fashion, media, and design, along with color, light, and pattern, the designers complement the images of their furniture in interiors.

Integration of Subject Areas

Readings: The books *Neo-furniture* by Claire Downey (1992) and *Art Synectics* by Nicholas Roukes (1982), and the articles “Minimal lamps” by Silvia Suardi (1997), “Design and ecology” by Vittorio Mangnago Lampugnani (1995), “Parsimony and luxury by Vittorio Mangnago Lampugnani (1996), and “Designing sustainability” by Francois Burkardt (1997)

The reading materials of the books show sources for transformation of diverse postmodern aesthetics of New Design furniture in beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship. The articles will encourage the students to use nonpolluting, natural, durable, recycled materials and objects to protect our environment through the understanding, interpretation, and transformation of postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture. Through these reading materials, the students will become aware of one way of using parsimony in relation to our ecology and environment at present and in the future.

Thus, the students can define, interpret, and transform their own metaphor through their own objects in terms of the questions What is symbol? What is narrative? What is humor? What is animation? and What is fluidity?

Inquiry Strategies (objectives)

The students will:

1. become familiar with the aesthetic characteristics of the postmodern aesthetics of New Design furniture such as metaphor, narrative, symbol, humor, or wit through the description of beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship;

Evaluation: Were the students able to figure out the metaphor from beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship? They will discuss their opinions in teams of four or five. They will take a note on their discussion and turn them in.

2. appreciate slides of the New Design furniture aesthetics to get and adapt ideas for transformation of a recycled and functional object through selected New Design furniture such as Pecora’s *Chamaleon* table and stool (see Figure 1), 18 Aout’s Navaronne vase (see Figure 2), Blue’s *Zita* table (see Figure 3), Moon’s flower-shaped table and chair (see Figure 4), Moon’s decoration chest (see Figure 5), Wood’s Moody chair (see Figure 6), and Dalmon’s Sarah chair (see Figure 7);



Fig.1. Chamaleon table and stool.

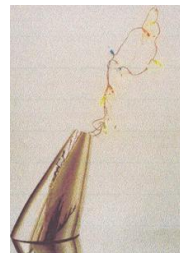


Fig.2. Navaronne vase, Downey, 2001



Fig.3. Flower-shaped table & chair, Moon, 2001. Fig.4. Decoration chest, Moon, 2001.

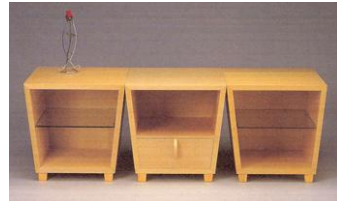


Fig.5. Zita table, Downey, 1992. Fig.6. Moody chair, Downey, 1992. Fig.7. Sarah Chair, Downey, 1992.

Evaluation: Were the students able to get some ideas for creating an object through the slides? They will talk about their ideas, develop, and describe them in teams of two or three. The teachers will collect the description of the object being created by the teams and give the students comments.

- bring to the class functional and recycled objects such as box, cup, light, shelf, chair, etc, to be transformed for everyday life in our environment.
- create a studio project with postmodern aesthetics such as metaphor, symbol, narrative, and humor using nonpolluting, natural, and recycled materials and objects through their interpretation and transformation.

Evaluation: Were the students able to develop and present their ideas in relation to metaphoric decoration such as metaphor, narrative, symbol, or humor in connection with natural, cultural, personal, group, and familial contexts?. The teacher will observe and make a note the process of the work being created by each team. The teacher will give the teams comments.

- prepare and present their artwork by groups in the context of metaphor, symbol, narrative, humor, animation, and fluidity.

Evaluation: Were the students able to convey the metaphor of their teams in class? Each student will write about his/her response to the other teams' work. The teacher will collect their responses and give the teams comments such as excellent, good, or so with reasons.

- write a reflective paper about his/her feelings about the groups' use of postmodern aesthetics in their work.

Evaluation: Were the students able to expand their idea in relation to appreciation and transformation in writing reflectively about the use of postmodern aesthetics? They will write about extending their ideas for other crafts such as jewelry, metal work, or textiles in everyday life. The teacher will collect their writing and give the students comments.

Lesson Preparation

1. Research and provide references about how to use and decorate recycled objects and materials like New Design furniture. If real examples of New Design furniture are not available, the teacher should create an object and show the process by him/herself based on the book *Art Synectics* by Roukes (1982).
2. Research and review of transformed New Design furniture selected or referred to as examples for students from references such as books and articles.
3. Prepare a poster with examples of transformed New Design furniture with descriptions.
4. Prepare an artwork with a useful function and a piece of New Design furniture as examples using nonpolluting, natural, and recycled materials. (see resources)
5. Prepare question sheets for students to use in writing about how postmodern aesthetics transformed various materials in a recycled object (see procedure).

Procedure

1. Briefly review New Design furniture as metaphor in transformation by interpretation based on lesson two.
2. Show slides of New Design furniture transformed from posters and books.
3. Describe the pictures of New Design furniture in relation to metaphoric characteristics such as narrative, symbol, humor, animation, mysticism, and fluidity in beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship.
4. Introduce articles and books related to adaptation and transformation of artworks and furniture in order to come up with creative ideas for objects.
5. Introduce the operational techniques of adaptation and transformation through such questions as: How do New Design furniture designers do this? What are some of the underlying methods, techniques, and pictorial devices used to adapt and transform ordinary subjects and visual perceptions into the uncommon, the extraordinary, and the fantastic? Study the works of modern and traditional furniture designers for this purpose.
6. Discuss the concepts of the aesthetics of New Design furniture and develop ideas by using the examples. When students (by teams) decide on an idea for a studio project, each student will explain his/her concepts from the slides. From among the students' ideas, the group will select the best idea for a functional project, and then the recycled object and materials to be used, and they will separately find materials appropriate for the project, create parts, and put the parts together.
7. Explore creative thinking about adaptation and transformation by introducing the book *Art Synectics* by Nicholas Roukes (1982).
8. Ask the students to form teams of two or three and discuss with each team their ideas for creating a functional piece of furniture, using recycled materials and reused objects for protection of our environment.
9. Ask the teams to discuss their concepts with the teacher and create an object.
10. Ask students to prepare and give a presentation.
11. Have students discuss and consider the concepts of function, beauty, decoration, and craftsmanship in their works based on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 in response to the following specific questions in teams of two or three.

Question sheet: (to be used as a handout)

- 1) What is the metaphoric meaning of the work in your team?
- 2) How did your team convey the meaning literally and nonliterally?
- 3) What do you think about using recycled materials and reused objects in recreating a

functional and beautiful art work for your life?

4) What do you do for the sake of our ecology in your own life?

Resources and Materials

1. Slides of selected New Design furniture: Pecora's *Chamaleon* table and stool (see Figure 1), Aout's Navaronne vase (see Figure 2), Blue's *Zita* table (see Figure 3), Moon's flower-shaped table and chair (see Figure 4), Moon's decoration chest (see Figure 5), Wood's Moody chair (see Figure 6), and Dalmon's Sarah chair (see Figure 7)

Books and articles: *Art Synectics* written by Roukes (1982) and *Neo-furniture* written by Downey (1992), "Minimal lamps" written by Suardi (1997), "Design and ecology" written by Lampugnani (1995), and "Parsimony and luxury" written by Lampugnani (1996)
Objects made from recycled materials and reused objects: cup, light, and shelf

Transition

The Students will communicate with their work through the metaphor, and explore art appreciation through their work. They will be able to explore art and everyday life through furniture, ceramics, or metal work transformed by their concepts about the postmodern aesthetics in daily life

Follow-up

Have each student write a reflective paper as to their feelings about their metaphoric and literal work. Have each student create his/her own work, relating it to an idea or concept that he/she feels strongly about in the postmodern aesthetics of communication.

Unit Evaluation

This unit of instruction can be evaluated according to the criteria established. Those criteria of evaluation are designed for each unit from its objectives. The evaluation of the achievement and performance of the students will have to be made by the design and objective of the teacher according to the maturity of the student.

The value of this unit as an alternative approach to teaching postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture arises from these phenomena: 1) the unit of instruction clarifies the students' learning and understanding of the postmodern aesthetics function as metaphor in New Design furniture, 2) the three lessons differ in the student's degree of mastery when defining, writing, and creating, throughout the unit of activities; 3) the unit constitutes critical activities which, when carefully structured, addresses the students' learning and understanding; 4) it also contains activities to encourage the students involvement. It can now be stated, on logical grounds, that this approach to the postmodern aesthetics of communication in New Design furniture can be made to function as curricular content in a unit of instruction directed toward the art teacher's use in an aesthetics class.

3. CONCLUSION

The unit of instruction has been developed for an alternative approach to teaching a furniture aesthetic of art and everyday life theoretically for the programs like 'wood culture experience class' or 'wood love experience class' supported by the Korea Forest Service. Based on a content analysis of the postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture, each lesson explores discourse, activity, writing about metaphor, and creating a wood piece according to the teacher's objectives. The students experience the postmodern aesthetics of communication such as symbol, narrative,

imagination, or humor as metaphor. Thus, the teacher designs three lessons in definition, interpretation, and transformation of the aesthetics in terms of the maturity of the students.

Lesson one is planned to let the postmodern aesthetics be defined in the context of nature, culture, group, person, and family according to the teacher's description and interpretation through New Design furniture. The students are involved in exploring "What is New Design furniture for?" derived from the inquiry 'What Is Art For?' by Ellen Dissanayake. The discussion of what New Design furniture is for explores diverse social-cultural contexts through anthropological approaches. The objective is to lead the students to know how New Design furniture functions as metaphor in the social-cultural contexts between the teacher, the students, and the students and the students in personal and group contexts. The students appreciate and define the diverse postmodern aesthetics in natural, cultural, personal, group, and familial contexts. When they write about and discuss the definition of metaphor in New Design furniture, they can understand and interpret the postmodern aesthetics of communication.

Lesson two is designed to interpret a selected piece of New Design furniture by writing about the postmodern aesthetics according to each student's perspective through natural, cultural, group, personal, and familiar contexts. For the interpretation, the students, who are familiar with linguistic metaphors, explore visual metaphors in New Design furniture transformed by their perception. In writing about the visual metaphor linguistically, the students are inspired by the reading *Meaning and Visual metaphor* by Feinstein and *Metaphors We Live by* by Lakeoff and Johnson. The objective of this lesson is to make the students understand the differences in linguistic and visual metaphors and guide them to develop their own ideas of the postmodern aesthetics as metaphor. In identifying each student's metaphor through presentation and discussion of his/her writing about the interpretation of the postmodern aesthetics, the students are able to develop ideas for creating an object adapting the postmodern aesthetics of communication in New Design furniture.

Lesson three is scheduled to use the postmodern aesthetics of communication through creation of an object in transforming teams' perception of metaphor. The object is created with recycled materials and reused objects in teams of two or three students. An important current issue in furniture design in the postmodern era is defending the ecology of our environment. The designers have considered use of recyclable materials, new system, and less waste of materials in creating their furniture. They attempt to use natural and artificial materials in their pieces appropriate to their concern for the reduced use of raw materials like wood which the designers have often used in their furniture in the postmodern era. Thus, currently designers tend to create durable, sober, minimal, and simple furniture. In this way, the designers have created a new aesthetics with a new design philosophy in their furniture. The students learn and come to understand parsimony in contemporary furniture through the reading of "Design ecology" and "Parsimony and Luxury" by Lampugnani, and "Designing sustainability" by Burkardt. The objective of this lesson is to have the students create a metaphoric studio project with the postmodern aesthetics of communication, using such elements as metaphor, symbol, narrative, or humor and using nonpolluting, natural, and recycled materials and objects according to their interpretation. The students are aware of the need for protection of the ecology about LOHAS through the process of the activities in their everyday lives.

Therefore, through these three lessons designed according to the intention of the teacher in an aesthetics class, students come to understand and appreciate postmodern aesthetics in New Design furniture through definition, interpretation, and transformation; they explore art visually and linguistically and everyday life in their life spaces, especially in wood objects created by themselves.

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