

Introduction

In our contemporary developed societies, creativity has become a central concept. This is a fact which is symptomatic of the cultural environment in which our lives develop.

The 20th century has meant a generalisation of the application of the concept of 'creativity'. During the Middle Ages, creativity was reserved for the Divinity. It was a matter of *ex nihilo* creation corresponding only to God. In the 19th century, the transfer of creativity to the artistic sphere was consolidated, and this transfer had begun a few centuries before. Thus, the artist was confirmed as the paradigm of the creator, implying the crowning idea of the artist as the subject who creates personal worlds by means of his works. However, individual and exceptional artistic creation has given way in the 20th century to a generalisation of the application of the concept 'creativity' to different fields of human activity. During the 20th century, creativity has come to be considered a specific quality which can arise in any field: art, of course, but also sciences, techniques, design, politics, cuisine, leisure, etc. In fact, anyone can be creative in any aspect of existence.

The 20th century has produced a 'democratisation' of the concept of creativity, but there has also been a culmination of the process of privatisation of the concept. We are now far from the cultural models which reduce all human undertaking to canons to be aspired to or imitated, be they divine rules or classical canons defined by academe or tradition. At the heart of these cultural models, creativity would be considered simply deviation or excentricity. In the 20th century, creativity is an established, solid value, and an aim to be attained. In fact, educational philosophies have been developed to stress the need for educating in creativity. The idea is increasingly that for people to develop fully, contributing positively to social progress, it is not only necessary that they be intelligent and accumulate knowledge and skills, but also that they be creative.

It is basic to consider this historical situation so as to evaluate the perspectives we face at the beginning of the 21st century. We are at a historical moment in which creativity has become a central element in culture and life, perhaps more than ever before in any time in human development. By this, we do not mean the fact that this may be the moment when more creativity is produced "objectively", but rather that this is probably the historical period when creativity is a more widespread, consolidated value, and that the general consensus on its positive consideration is higher.

On the other hand, there is a new and relevant displacement in the historical definition of the concept of 'creativity'. Creativity has gone from a definition related to the production of worlds to another, in which the basic value is originality. Thus, in our culture, creating is no longer producing a world, like gods, but rather simply generating something different from what existed previously. In this way, creating is generation of novelties. Originality has become the central and defining element in creativity. Originality has also been linked to difference. What is different is creative. Therefore, a creative achievement is whatever is original and different. But both originality and difference are related values. In fact, originality defi-

ness a relation of difference between the element created and other elements existing within a specific reference framework. Originality always presupposes a comparison and implies difference or even opposition.

Creativity, by means of originality, deploys its effects onto two bases, basic to our cultural environment: identity and innovation.

Difference brings about identity. Identity is a relation concept: a subject is recognised by means of the difference as to other subjects. The identity of a subject is especially constructed by means of qualities which distinguish him from the rest. In a wider sense, a subject (individual or collective, concrete or abstract) with no originality, is a subject without identity who disappears anonymously. In a market-defined field, there are a succession of subjects for whom it is necessary to construct their own identity: companies and corporations, brands and products. The market is a universe peopled by specific characters whose identities are to be constructed, and these identities can only be set up if they are based on difference, originality and, thus, presuppose a certain degree of originality.

The degree of a company's, brand's, or product's notoriety or exceptionality largely depends on its capacity for differentiation and assumption of original and specific values.

In this market scenario, both real and imaginary, economic and symbolic, the capacity of assuming a high-identity and far-from-anonymous profile depends on the creative capacity given to serving the identity construction. In the market field, the absence of identity represents something more than anonymity; it represents non-existence because, in a market scenario, there is no difference between real and symbolic as far as consumers are concerned.

If identity is an essential condition for existence, innovation is a condition for leadership. We have said that originality is defined by difference and that difference creates identity, but innovation is placed on a different plane, and requires something more. Innovation introduces a component of narrative because, to use a space metaphor, innovation implies generation of an originality ahead of what had been produced until then.

Innovation is inscribed in a concept framework which defines the idea of progress, an idea which is characteristic of Modernity since the Illustration. In the ultimate analysis, innovating supposes marking a diegetic axis according to which History is structured like a narrative which develops and advances.

Innovating means placing oneself in the avant-garde, while being innovative is, in a way, becoming a pioneer.

Innovation, therefore, not only presupposes construction of a differentiated identity, but also implies that this identity is charged with specific values linked to progress, the avant-garde and, quite definitely, a historical mission. The innovating subject contributes to the advance of the field he operates in. Innovation not only implies difference or opposition, but also implies improvement or overcoming. It is not only a question of differentiating from another but also of overtaking the other, of beating them.

Companies, brands, and products gifted with the value of innovation thus appear as market subjects capable of placing themselves in a leadership position. Innovation allows placement in the lead, being the first in the race, any race, and acquiring a leadership position.

Thus, creativity produces difference and, while doing so, generates meaning. Non-differentiation erases all meaning, all significance. The market reconstructs itself in

consumers' minds as an imagined scenario gifted with sense by means of difference constructs, by means of originality, and, in the end, of creativity. And, thus, creativity is basic for the constitution of characters moving on this stage –companies, brands, products– moving on this scenario, to make them identifiable and give them meaning. But creativity is also necessary to give these characters life and to place them on the plane of the story, a story they themselves are constructing and making go forward. Market dynamics need to keep up the illusion of the historical diegesis and, therefore, need to place creativity foremost in culture, society, and life.

A new displacement of creativity, from expressivity to strategy, also takes place. If an artist's prototypic originality is based, in the romantic myth, on the creative subject's personality, and is oriented towards the manifestation of this genius personality; the aim of creativity developed behind the market show window has, on the contrary, the aim of conquering market shares and positioning brands and products in consumers' minds. We are therefore faced with a strategically oriented creativity which is defined not only by originality but also by adequacy. The designer or adman has to create ideas which will efficiently serve aims set out in marketing plans. It is therefore not a question of a creativity of aims, but rather one of means. But the field of existence for companies and corporations, brands and products, is increasingly demanding. Globalisation means constructing reference frameworks in which strategies for constituting original identities and for innovation development progressively imply an increasingly higher level of difficulty. This increase in the degree of difficulty is derived from the level of competition among subjects –companies, brands, products– which inhabit the new market scenarios. Due to all this, creativity is an increasingly necessary requirement and an increasingly solid value.

Creativity is now a central concept, the need for which is derived from the system of competition within the market. Creativity in this framework and in its double aspect of identity creation and innovation development, appears as a basic component in activities such as design, marketing, and advertising. For this reason, the present issue of *Temas de Disseny* dedicates a treatment and a reflection on the concept of 'creativity'.

Surrounding creativity, there is a succession of basic points for reflection and investigation: the creative subject, the creative process, the creative result, the concept of development of creativity, and creative methods.

As to creative subjects, we can reflect on what their characteristics are, what intellectual, emotional, motivational, etc. qualities they have. But we must also consider that creative subjects may be individual or collective. A corporation, a company, a company department, etc. can be considered as collective creative subjects, and we would then have to reflect on what organisational characteristics can benefit or trip up the development of creativity within it.

In reference to the creative process, we can set up questions about through what phases does this process develop, what factors converge in the process, or how creative people experience idea-generating.

As to creative products, the basic question to ask is what characteristics an idea or object must have in order to be considered creative. This question is linked to the next point: the social context in which creativity is developed. The cultural and historical context, on the one hand, defines certain conditions favoring or hindering creativity but, at the same time, it is the social context, by means of legitimate and institutional group evaluation or by means of mass public response, which eventually selects the products finally recognised as creative.

Finally, we find the issue of creation methods and techniques directly linked to the creative process. In this case, the issue exposed is the definition of efficient processes for the generation of creative ideas. Creative methods tend to solve the problem of the contradiction between the need for certainty in market strategy and the unpredictability of creativity. Creativity methods tend to introduce a control factor in processes and creative results.

In the different articles appearing in this issue of *Temes de Disseny*, we look at the issues set out here. However, we have established two basic sections to group the different works together.

The first section is 'Creativity and creative processes in individuals and organisations'. In this section, we include the articles on the characteristics of the different kinds of subjects, both individual and collective. There are also articles which explore creative processes and their relation to the social and cultural context in which they take place.

The second section is 'Methodological proposals for creativity'. The articles appearing in this section have an operational intention. In them, we present systematised models for the generation of creative ideas. These models are based on different theoretic trends and intend to take a position on a level of methodological innovation.