

# Design: “Yes” in “No”-Discussion on Enlightenment and Application of Ecological Design Concept to Artistic Design Practice

Shuyun Rong

Arts Institute, Shandong Yingcai University, Ji'nan, 250104, China

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**Abstract.** At present, the human beings face various crises in the survival environment, and they have to pay attention to the harmony of ecological system, to this end, the concept of “ecology” has been gradually penetrated to various levels of the social life and is highly concerned. The evolution from the concept of design for life to the value orientation of design for ecology has been accepted by the whole world. From the aspect of artistic design and in combination with the ecology, the traditional Chinese ecological morality concept and the modern ecological design concept, the author strives to make clear the internal relation between the ecological culture and the artistic design, and proposes the concept of “design respecting ecology” and “ecology compensating for design”. “No” in this paper refers to the theoretical basis for artistic design refined from the traditional Chinese ecological moral and ethnical concept, and “yes” is the artistic fruit with life impression on the design nature of “no”.

## Introduction

At present, the human beings face various crises in the survival environment, and they have to pay attention to the harmony of ecological system, to this end, the concept of “ecology” has been gradually penetrated to various levels of the social life and is highly concerned. Because of this, the ecological issues closely related with people’s life will inevitably concerned by the designers. Further, the concept of ecological design is gradually penetrated to various levels of the artistic design fields. Ecological design concept is not a design subject purely, but a design process, a life attitude and a design value concept.

The ecological design concept emphasizes that the biggest role of artistic design is neither to create the maximum commercial value nor the competition in the style of design products, but to guide people to build the correct value concept, life concept, consumption concept, ecological concept through the design works and envisage the people's life value, continuously improve people's living standard and realize the sustainable development of society by virtue of the infection of artistic design.

The discussion in this paper will be carried out centered on the “yes” or “no” of art design, in which it is explained that “no” is the theoretical basis for artistic design refined from the traditional Chinese ecological moral and ethnical concept, and “yes” is the artistic fruit with life impression on the design nature of “no”.

## “No”, exploration on nature of artistic design

The mission of artistic design is not only to create a beautiful appearance, but to continuously explore the relation that are invisible to naked eye hidden between the things and human beings, making people realize many natural problems behind the daily life and formed in the hidden natural ecological environment.

### “No”, internal nature of artistic design

In the ancient Chinese art, the natural and simple beauty of the Chuang Tse had always been regarded as the model of ideal beauty and it was thought that “nothing in the world can be compete with simplicity”, and it was advocated to conform to the nature and develop and represent completely

according to the nature, without exerting any human power to change the original nature, so as to maintain the “real beauty” and advocate the beauty of simple without decoration.

Based on the current ecological design concept, the concept of “no” in the artistic design has something in common with the “simple and natural beauty” in the design art of ancient China, i.e. to require the designer to start from “ecological nature”, pursue acting according to the actual circumstance, making best use of the things, going with the flow and eradicating the artistic effect of adopting of a sentimental pose or boasting and being false and cheating. For example, in the “One With Nothing” Hotel designed by Japanese architect Kiyoshi Sey Takeyama, the design concept is to inject the design connotation of “no” to the building structure. In the center of the hotel there is a courtyard full of shaw, unlike the Kyoto temples in Japan which consider the modeling, in the courtyard, the maples, pine trees and hawthorn trees grow freely and openly, which blend with the natural like nature itself. When the spring comes and the trees sprout, the light yellow and green making people impressive overflow from the courtyard like flood. In all guest rooms of the hotel, there is a window directly facing the courtyard. Therefore, the green of these new leaves become lights crossing the space and times, pouring to the room. At this time, all guests living in the guest room will feel the time of “no” and the texture of “empty”. The design concept of “One With Nothing” Hotel reflects the thought of “no” under the ecological design concept, the “no” here is not “empty space” but “reality”, being the principle of going with the flow.

The concept of “no” based on the ecological design concept sounds a little “virtue”, actually, the design concept of “no” is to require the designers to break through the inherent design thought and place the design in the close relation between man and nature, focus on the observation and consideration to the life details, continuously discover the design works improving people's lifestyle and life attitude, i.e. “design should respect ecology”.

#### **“Empty”, unlimited potential in artistic design**

“Empty” does not “nothing” or “zero energy”. Actually, in many circumstances, it refers to a state, which will be filled in the future. According to the hypothesis on this basis, “empty” can form an effective energy of communication.

For example, the Japanese famous plane designer Kenya Hara designs a brand advertisement for No Stamp, with the design concept of “Emptiness”. The advertisement itself does not contain clear commodity information, but presents a container which seems to be empty but can contains everything. Kenya Hara believed that “the co-called conveying is not to send information in one direction. First it is required to make clear which concept will the advertisement convey to the mass, and then use a clear and understandable way to convey it to the mass. However, not all information conveying must comply with this principle. Sometimes, it is possible to use a container full of nothing to replace the information itself, so as to leave an imagination space for the audiences, and the meaningful filling they give and the container joint complete the information conveying (Design in Design, by Kenya Hara, P117).

If we observe those successful brand advertisements, we can see that they apply the same principle for operation, that is to say, with the centripetal force of diversified interpretation as the core, they make people place on their various expectations. The advertisement concept “Emptiness” of Empty Stamp is to realize the consciousness of this principle. Some people feel it suits for the ecology, some love its simple design and some like the internal sophistication..., perhaps is the unlimited potential of “emptiness”.

“No” in artistic design is an attitude of the survival of human beings, while “emptiness” is a space for the human communication, the nature of “no”, just like the “emptiness” of container, means nothing originally, but here it contains a very important value concept. In addition, it also means that a thing seeming to be useless has a very rich connotation, and the possibility generated by such design concept will bring an extraordinarily rich design achievement.

## **“Yes” in artistic design-rethinking of design practice**

“Yes” in artistic design reflects the material concept of the design works, being a design result, reflecting the contents and forms, technique, skill, spirit, sensing and other specific medium forms of the design medium. The “yes” in artistic design requires the designers to face the design subject, review the survival environment and humanistic feelings surrounding us, and explore the design source and purpose with the simplest way of appealing.

### **Gentleness, relation between content and form in the artistic design.**

“Gentleness” means that if the simplicity is more than the literacy grace, it will seem to be vulgar”, and if the literacy grace is more than the simplicity, it will seem to be impractical. Only when matching the two properly can a man be called gentleman. The requirements of “gentles” are not out of date in the artistic design of modern society, whether brand operation or artistic creation, “gentleness” is required, both contents and forms, and the internal quality and external packing are both inseparable, only in this way can a success be made. For example, in the modern packing design, if gentleness surpasses simplicity, the products cannot make people pleased, so it is difficult to open the market; if the gentleness surpasses the simplicity, although the products can be well sold at one time, there is a lack of delayed effect, and the sales cannot last for a long time. That is to say, if the packing is too luxurious to exceed its use scope, it is a waste and should be eradicated; if the packing is simple without any beauty, it cannot reflect the internal value of the products themselves. Therefore, the form in artistic design is important indeed and needs continuous innovation, but it must be complementary with the contents. Once the artistic design becomes the competing for wonder and color, unconventional thing and pleasing the public with claptrap in form, it will be superficial, fickle and empty.

### **Natural wisdom, combination of environmental protection technology with design in artistic design**

Design is a behavior of discovering new problems from life. Our environment consists of the people living in it, so its prospect is the future of technology and design. As a specific design, ecological design cannot be realized by completely separating the materials and technology. Therefore, we need to select new technologies, materials and processes reasonably in design to realize the modern technology-oriented ecological design. Actually, technology is longer the means and approach simply, but reflects a sensible, scientific and healthy life attitude of people, and can express the demand of ecological life really.

Take the work of world famous architect Ieoh Ming Pei, Japanese MIHO Gallery for example, this work expresses a main concept, i.e. the blending of nature and buildings. The bright spot of “blending” makes us appreciate the future trend of new technology and design, first, a curve steel member crossing the tunnels and suspension bridge between two mountain ridges independently researched and made for the gallery, and second, at the main entrance of the front façade, the steel structure of the entrance hall is the concentrated reflection of the whole architecture structure technology with “9-girder node” specially aimed at this project. From this point, we can also see that this is a high-tech building. Therefore, technology does not conflict with nature, but coexists with nature, which also reflects the design of Japanese designer Kenya Hara that “the more progressive the technology is, the closer we are to the nature”.

### **“Morality comparison” thought, relation between ecology and design in artistic design**

“Morality comparison among gentlemen” and “unity of man and nature” are the important thoughts of the Confucius, highlighting the natural aesthetic concept, the natural concept of “morality comparison” reflects the moral inspiration of the Confucianism, which is actually to guide people really experience the mountains and rivers and compare mountains and rivers as a spirit to reflect the connotation of social character such as “benevolence” and “morality”. Such social characters are especially highlighted in the design of public welfare advertisements. For example, since its establishment in 1961, the World Wide Fund for Nature has always been devoted to the environmental cause, and reminds people to concern the natural ecology most closely related with the human beings through the public welfare environmental protection design works. At present, the

World Wide Fund for Nature has nearly 5.2 million supporters and public welfare advertisement websites active in more than 100 countries. Another example is the public welfare advertisement reflecting “social health”, “social focus”, “hope project” and “environmental protection”, it is the reflection of such characters of “benevolence” and “morality” that opens up the beauty of simplicity that the artistic design advocates the caring of nature and life. The “morality comparison” thought pursues that the relation between man and nature is to “wait”, wait, wait..., unconsciously, we will feel the richness of nature, and we can also understand the “ecological compensation design”.

### **How to realize “Yes” in “No” in artistic design**

To realize the “yes” in “no” in artistic design, the designers are required to not only have the occupational feelings of “no”, but also the occupational skill of “yes”.

#### **Ecological concept, human quality of art designer**

The ecologic design and human humanistic concern are a design concept, the formation of concept relies on the quality of designer, while such quality will be directly reflected in the design works. At present, there is no lack of learning and training of technology in the professional education received by the designer, but there is a lack of recognition to the human knowledge and relevant disciplines. In the process of growth, the designers should experience and learn the correct ecological design concept and ecological moral design concept consciously, build the faith that “design makes life better”, become a responsible designer, absorb the design wisdom in the profound traditional culture of China and reach the acme of perfection in practice.

#### **Ecological technology, scientific practice of art designer**

Ecological technology is a scientific practice in the process when the designer completes the works, which requires the designers to have a deep understanding to the nature, science & technology and the relation between the two, science & technology are no longer in the opposite side of the nature. The mission of designers is no longer to concern the rules and mining of beauty, but to fully develop and use all possibilities provided by all technologies, arts and spiritual cultures mastered by the human beings, and push the limit of nature and life to the future, only in this way can we extend the natural existence. To master the ecological technology, the designers must have a high perceptibility and sensitivity to transform the high technology into “ecological products” through creativity.

### **Conclusion**

Ecological design is not luxurious but necessary. Ecological design emphasizes that everyone is a designer and participates in the design. The ecological design is unlike the traditional design which emphasizes the individual creation of designers, and takes the design as a simple and elegant artistic process. Ecological design is contained in all daily activities of each person. In modern times, ecology is not only a fashionable slogan, but a feasible thing that concerns our vital interests. We should be devoted to creating a healthy, beautiful and harmonious natural environment, use the new concept of ecological design to guide us march toward the green and realize “design respecting ecology” and “ecology compensating for design”.

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