

Creativity and industry: a difficult integration. The role of design as a bond between emotional genius and organised rules in the innovative development of products and services

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Abstract

This contribution focuses on a central theme for the innovation of products and processes in contemporary industrial organisations: the integration between the creative contribution of the single genius and the organised characteristics typical of mature industrial processes. We aren't dealing with a recent problem. The first part of this research crosses the history of the international industrial evolution in a sort of problematic crescendo which follows the maturation and crisis of the "classic production system". The second part identifies several contemporary case studies in which this integration seems to have been successfully achieved. The third part looks at certain design driven tools and processes which can prove to be instrumental in the accomplishment of this difficult integration. Our aim is to prove that an enterprise capable of absorbing a design driven culture is a better environment for the contribution that the genius of external creative subjects can individually or collectively make.

Keywords: Creativity. Industry. Design. Innovation. Processes.

1 Rule and emotion

The "enterprise" is an ancient form of organisation. Its basic configuration, made up of one or more associated businessmen, of a process for the development of a product or a service, of a series of instrumental tools, of a sum of money held in the form of capital

¹ Flaviano Celaschi is responsible for paragraphs 1, 4, 5; Elena Formia is responsible for paragraph 2; Laura Mata Garcia is responsible for paragraph 3.

available for investment, of people employed to carry out specific tasks, dates back to the Italian Renaissance and is named after the graphic seal used to identify a noble family in the so-called society of the “communes”. But it was modernity and development of systems useful to the production of energy (hydraulics, steam, electricity etc., and no longer just animal or human energy) that made increasingly complex and conspicuous fixed investments (factories and plants) necessary, along with specially trained manpower, work sharing systems, procedures and know-how useful to the organisation of production into a form described as “industrial”.

The increase in the complexity of production processes, together with the progressive saturation of the markets and the birth of competition, generated the need to convey a particular shape to products. This led to the birth of the process that takes the goods made to the market on which they are released for sale. This process triggered the need to design the product in order to convey a form of aesthetic recognisability, as well as improving performance, while continuing production on an industrial scale and using machinery. For a long time it was known as “artistic design for industry” and then “industrial design”. Today this culture that is so essential to the development of industry and the satisfaction of the markets is known simply as “design”.

The original term of “artistic design for industry”, which is based on the experimental and less systematically determined foundations of English arts & crafts, already encompassed the dualism we intend to observe in this work: the joint presence of two worlds, the “industrial” world on one hand and the “artistic” world” on the other.

The debate that has rung through the history of design for about 150 years could be clearly summed up in the contrasted relationship between these two systems of thought and action; often divergent, occasionally interacting, sometimes, possibly accidentally, integrated in an idyllic form (at least in the most frequent cases of international success of design).

Design is the culture through which this relationship between art and industry progressively, and not unitarily, takes shape. Our intention in this research is to highlight the difficult relationship between the creative genius of the single author (artist, designer, inventor) and the static and conservative, necessarily regulated and organised nature of the “industrial enterprise”. The relationship between the genius, that conveys personal creativity and subjectivity, and the collective organisation focused on making a profit, with needs in terms of standardisation, use of procedures and intensive exploitation of the idea and the form. A relationship which entered an irreversible crisis when the classic industrial system started to decline, and was reborn, in the post-industrial system, in the articulated forms that characterise industrial enterprise within a society of knowledge.

What any attentive observer would define as a natural, necessary and indispensable cooperation has, in actual fact, always been a difficult integration which, in the history of design, is celebrated in just a few (hundreds) of positive cases when compared with the thousands of cases of failure, litigation, lack of success and crisis generated by the entry

into proximity of these two antithetic worlds.

In the pursuit of success by contemporary enterprise and the foolish ambitions of dissemination of the name and the stylistic language (not to mention the need for economic survival) of the industrial designer, lies a difficult integration between needs and objectives. A divergence of interests, languages, objectives and working processes which we will try to decipher by attempting to introduce a third subject, without which the tension generated is incomprehensible: the market.

The phenomenon becomes this: an industrial organisation tries to satisfy, with profit, the needs of a market by exploiting the sensitivity, the art, the intellect and the good taste of a particularly creative subject. These are characteristics that must allow the subject to act as “mediator or interpreter” of the needs of the contemporary consumer (mediator with respect to the market). Alternatively, an ingenious creator succeeds in inventing something original and new (mediator in relation to the processes and places of basic knowledge). Alternatively again, a subject proves an ability to take on a productive technical problem and think up or invent a way of producing things that is convenient or which allows original solutions (mediator with respect to the production system).

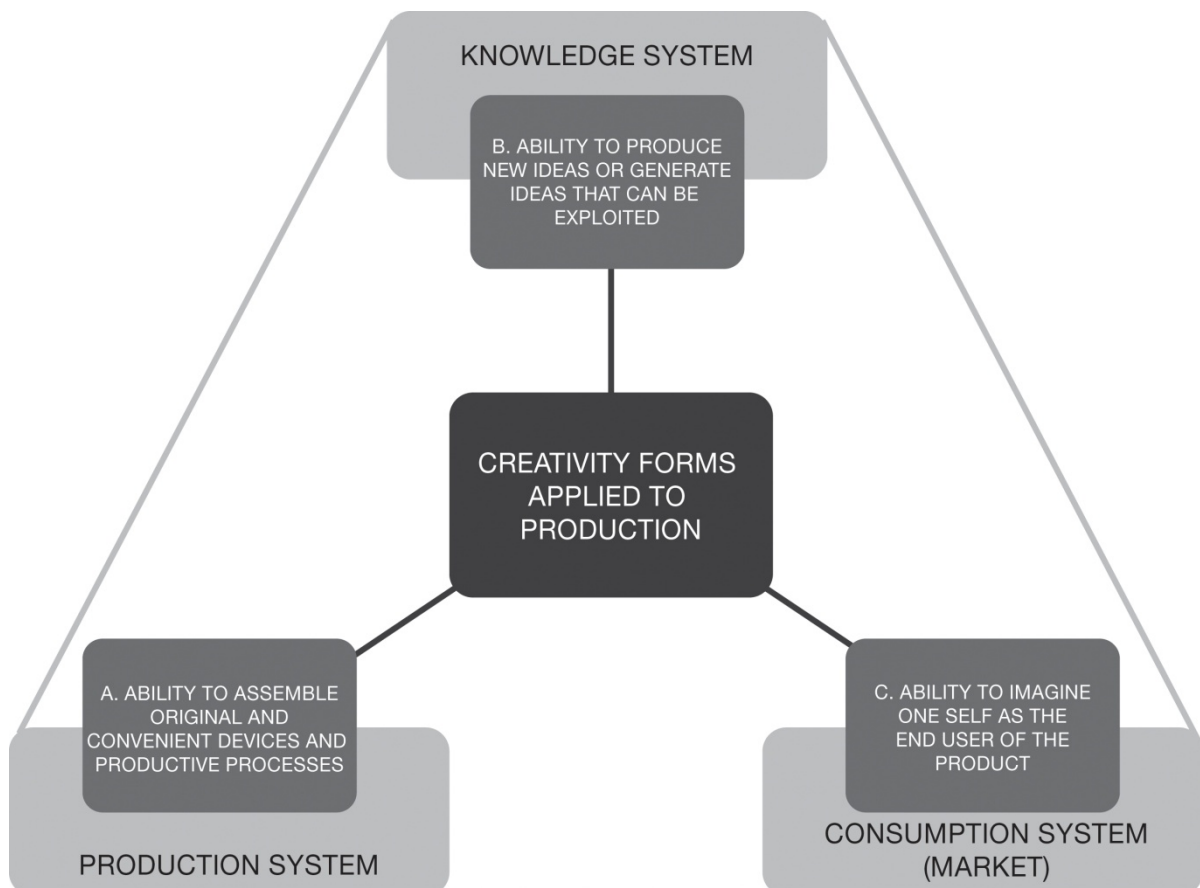


Figure 1 – Represents the problematic area in which a contemporary enterprise operates. It has to be constantly capable of carrying out its productive role within a system made up three interacting subsystems. The model studied summarises the question: the productive organisation tries to play an active role, identifying “creative” subjects that are capable of playing one of the three roles (A, B, C) indicated, better than the enterprise itself.

The enterprise, especially in the classic (Taylorist) version, initially tries to equip itself with every kind of skill necessary to guarantee survival. In keeping with this tendency, the enterprise centres its activities in the factory and calls the result product. This isn't something to be taken for granted, but it clarifies certain basic issues:

- role A finds its ideal laboratory of expression in the factory and a clear hierarchy in the "product" logic: It's called product because, first and foremost, it has to be suitable for production (CELASCHI, 2000);
- roles B and C are relegated to the factory and treated like role A, or they are hierarchically subjected to the conditions and "techno-productive" interests (the primary problem of the enterprise);
- the intellect expressed in situations B and C has to be located outside the factory. Its productive and analysis times and places do not coincide with those of production, being often discontinuous or too continuous. They have to relate with their reference system (whether this is a system of knowledge or market).

With the first market recession and the progressive saturation of the offer of goods came the impossibility to have creators based inside the factory and to operate with them in compliance with times, methods, contracts and processes that were reasonable for production only.

The problem began to take on a more intangible configuration. The attempt to have creators based permanently within the enterprise and work in the same way as production officials or administrative staff was a dismal failure. The awareness of a fracture became apparent and in some lucky cases this led the way to the first fruitful and reciprocal relationships.

2 Episodes of the difficult path of art for industry

In 1977, the designer and artist Bruno Munari in his famous book entitled *Fantasia* wrote: "Creativity: everything that wasn't there before but that can be made in an essential and global way" (MUNARI, 1977, p. 13). Almost twenty years on, in an interview for "Wired" magazine, the CEO of Apple and Pixar Animation Steve Jobs declared:

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask a creative person how they did something, they may feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experience they've had and synthesize new things" (WOLF, 1996)

Two statements that share the same tendency towards innovation; two definitions that stigmatise a combination, that between creative genius and capital, which characterise the not linear trajectory of 20th century industrial design. It was during this historical period that, albeit with different approaches, the relationship between productivity and artistic activity became progressively central. Together with the affirmation of the logic of

big numbers, 20th century industry witnessed the on-going intervention and gradual recognition of the role of the creator, seen as a fundamental link in the value production chain.

It was 1907 when the German artist, painter and graphic designer Peter Behrens was appointed artistic director of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (the general electricity company known by the acronym of AEG), established in 1883 by the industrialist Emil Rathenau under the name of Deutsche Edison Gesellschaft (DEG). Behrens' time spent at AEG produced excellent results: lights, clocks, kettles, advertising posters, typographic characters, industrial buildings which standardise the company's overall image, sanctioning the birth of the profitable relationship between industrial designer and enterprise².



Figure 2 – Peter Behrens, advertising poster for AEG, 1907

Source: HISTORIARTE

Continuing on - and not just symbolically - from the work of Behrens, there is another successful example. Just after the end of the Second World War, the dissemination of household electrical appliances and new electronic technologies marked a radical about-turn in the production of consumer goods. The very young Dieter Rams was invited by Hans Gugelot, teacher at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, to work in the Braun design department, becoming the sole manager of the company's study centre at the beginning of the 1960s. More than a successful partnership between school and industry, this was a happy marriage between creator and industry, which lasted over forty years. Rams' work for Braun was exemplary in terms of duration, consistency and professional constancy, and produced a series of everyday items that became veritable symbols of what is generally known as "German functionalist design" (KLEMP; UEKI-POLET, 2010). This way of reasoning can be crowned by citing the relationship which has linked Steve

² The literature on Behrens and his commitment as an industrial designer numbers an extensive series of publications released from the 1970s onwards. Here the intention is to mention, as reference, the initiative dated Spring-Autumn 2010 between Turin Polytechnic, Milan Polytechnic and Venice IUAV, entitled *Peter Behrens. Maestro dei maestri*, an international convention which featured intervention by experts including Stanford Anderson, Jean-Louis Cohen, Hartmut Frank and Carlo Olmo.

Jobs to Jonathan Ive and the apparently endless wave of successes of Apple since the end of the 1980s.



Figure 3 – Diter Rams and Dietrich Lubs, calculating machine “ET 66 control” designed for Braun, 1987

Source: TEORIADODESIGN

However, the opportunities supplied to industry by technological progress represent the first and possible the simplest key: there are other forms and way in which virtuous spheres of encounter between creativity and capital have occurred. One example is industrial patronage: in 1929 Adriano Olivetti took on a role of responsibility in the enterprise established in Ivrea (Italy) in 1908 by his father Camillo and radically changed its layout, acting as spokesman for a plan for industrial and, above all, cultural renewal. The rationalisation of production was accompanied by the progressive habit of calling artists, graphic designers and architects to work with the company technicians on product development (VINTI, 2007). Then at the beginning of the 1930s, the cooperation with Marcello Nizzoli (creator of the first Olivetti calculator, the “MC 4S Summa”) began, opening up the way to a series of successful professional partnerships that led to the creation, for example, of the “Valentine” typewriter by Ettore Sottsass with Perry King (1969) or the first electric calculator designed by Mario Bellini (1980s). The same happened for the development of new products, with the involvement of numerous Italian and foreign architects in the design of the company’s factories, service areas and showrooms; graphic designers and publicists worked on the coordinated image; poets and writers moved in the rooms of the publishers called Edizioni di Comunità established by Olivetti in Milan.



Figure 4 – Adriano Olivetti outside the Olivetti factory based in Ivrea (Italy)

Source: CINEFESTIVAL



Figure 5 – “Valentine”, typewriter by Ettore Sottsass with Perry King, Olivetti, 1969

Source: S.PINGS

The international furniture industry also experienced a similar period: it was 1977 when Rolf Fehlbaum inherited the management of Vitra, established in 1957 and active between Switzerland and Germany, from his parents. Once again, it was the ability to create a system of relationships with international creative experts that transformed this company into such a huge success. Starting with furniture designed by Charles and Ray Eames and George Nelson, for which Vitra purchased the licence for Europe from the American Herman Miller, a series of fortunate co-operations ensued: in the 1960s, Verner Panton, in the 1970s Mario Bellini, in the 1980s Antonio Citterio, in the 1990s Alberto Meda, up to the more recent works by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Jasper Morrison and Hella Jongerius. As in the case of Olivetti, patronage crossed simple industrial production: in the 1980s Vitra opened up a new campus which became synonymous with media architecture and, at the same time, established the Design Museum, the research themes of which often investigate the confines between art and design (WINDLIN; FEHLBAUM, 2008).

A third possible key regards those moments in which the industry rode a cultural, artistic and ideological wave, economically exploiting the creative potentials. This was in Italy, at the beginning of the 20th century, and Futurism was occupying the cultural debate: following the publication of the Manifesto by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909, a fortunate artistic season opened, witnessing certain exponents of the Avant-Garde movement at work on the themes of the design of home furnishings, advertising and industrial objects. The most famous case regards the eccentric Fortunato Depero, who flanked an exquisitely artistic activity with a long-lasting cooperation with the company from Milan, Campari, for which he created an authentic international advertising campaign, as well as bottles, trays and other promotional elements (SCUDIERO, 1989). It was this world, submerged in futuristic accelerations, that generated the design of the Campari Soda bottle (1922): the cone shape, the opaque glass and the absence of labels highlight the red colour of the drink, which is still the company's emblem.

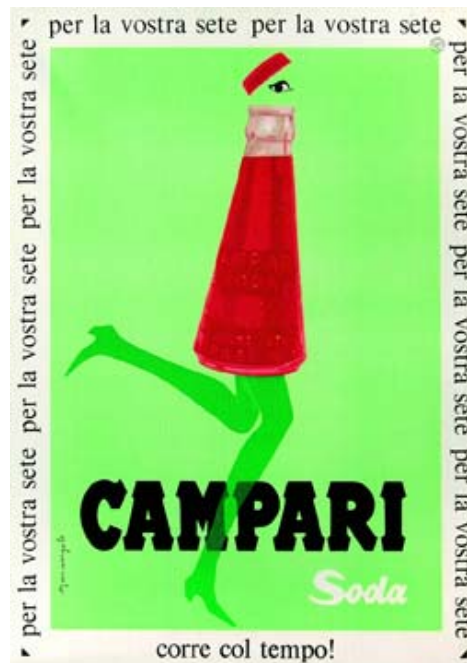


Figure 6 – The bottle of “Campari Soda” by Fortunato Depero in an advertising poster of 1950s

Source: GOASKTOALICE

Not dissimilar, and remaining within Italy, is the experience that brought the radical group Memphis, founded in 1979, to the Abet Laminati company. Ettore Sottsass's contributed was based upon the idea of conveying an original expressive capacity to plastic laminate using modern moulding and silk-screening techniques. The product was the birth of a family of irreverent pop furniture items, of which the “Carlton” bookcase is definitely the most acclaimed result (CARBONI, 2005).



Figure 7 – “Carlton” bookcase by Ettore Sottsass, Abet Laminati

Source: KOLLER

These are just some of the possible trajectories chosen to document the role of design in the success of the industrial product and the brilliant combination of creativity and industry. Trajectories that try to interpret the phenomenon, tracing it back to complex factors that have nothing to do with simple stylistic and aesthetic research applied to the product, despite not neglecting its importance. Trajectories that witness the involvement, by choice of the authors of the text, creative experts consecrated by the history of design and companies that are undergoing, even today, a period of economic growth. Another story could be read in a negative sense, bringing the difficulties and problems and even the failures in the combination between artistic genius and industrial capacity to the fore. To make an example: the famous design “made in Italy” of the 1950s and 60s in full of projects that only gained recognition later, often linked more to the positive opinion of the critics and professional success of their creator than to the actual dissemination of the product. In 1985 Achille Castiglioni defined the lamp “Bulbo”, conceived for the XI Triennial in 1957, as “A misguided, irrational lamp, not meant to be mass-produced, designed for fun”. Similar fortunes were had by the indirect light floor lamp Luminator (1955) and the agile vacuum cleaner Spalter (1956) (POLANO, 2001, p. 13). But then that’s another story altogether. Little, if anything at all, is known of the creators of the products and technologies that turned out to be complete flops on the market.

3 Successful cases of design driven creativity integration

Organizations in this last century have achieved great efficiency that has enabled them to produce high-quality mass products at reasonable costs by coding and standardizing their processes.

Martin (2009) points out that until now, all companies based on the 20th century industrial Taylorist approach have done so by turning a mystery into a heuristic (a rule-of-thumb) and codifying the heuristic into a repeatable formula or algorithm. The process of converting a heuristic into algorithm raises efficiency, lowers the price for the consumer and thus, creates an enhanced value proposition. The focus of the company then, becomes to be able to systematically produce reliable outcomes time and again.

Creativity, on the contrary as noted by Leavy (2010), cannot flourish in an environment characterized by repetitiveness. It is widely acknowledged that no new ideas can be generated using past data. Generally, new ideas arose “when a thinker observed data that did not fit with the existing models”. The role of the designer in this new century has shifted from embellishing the outer shell of black boxes to imagining new products and scenarios of consumption.

However in the XXI century according to Martin (2009, p. 56):

“in order to prosper in the long run a company needs to succeed at both (exploring new ways to create value and fueling growth from bulletproof reproducible systems). It must mesh the classical workings of a traditional organization with the prototypical features of a design shop”.

This task is particularly daunting for large corporations that have based their competitive advantages on refining and executing their assembly lines and aiming at achieving flawless reliable operational activities.

A famous case of a big corporation that has turned successfully into a “design thinking” organization is Procter & Gamble. P&G was very famous for its rigor and strong process discipline. However, in the late 1990s, the company was facing the biggest crisis of its history. Profits were declining, revenue growth was slowing down and seven of its top ten brands were losing market share. When A.G. Lafley took over as CEO in 2000 the situation looked grim. However, he decided to commit his efforts into turning P&G into a “design organization”. The first step was to appoint Claudia Kotchka vice-president for design strategy and innovation. The role of this key position would be to create an internal design division, inexistent before in the organization, and mediate between the internal design division, the rest of the organization, the CEO (to whom she would report directly), external design agencies and an external design advisory board.

The creation of the internal design division required the first change in the organizational culture, since Kotchka recruited mid-career experienced designers, as opposed to P&G’s tradition of getting its new talent from newly minted college graduates. She also placed the designers with the business teams for the first time in the history of P&G and built up relations with external designers and design agencies.

As for the design advisory board, P&G is a pioneer in this practice. The design advisory board, made of world-class designers, meets 3 times a year for a full day and the internal teams present them specific problems and ideas; the board in turn gives the teams ideas that address such areas as product design, strategy, markets, and execution. The idea is also to get a broader picture of trends and weak signals in order to imagine “what could be”.

In order to create a design sensibility, a 1.5 day full immersion in design thinking for the top leadership team was arranged at IDEO headquarters in California as well as a long term program aimed at tens of thousands regular P&G employees with the help of external experts.

By 2003, the results were overwhelmingly positive. Revenues grew 15% annually, thirteen of the fifteen top brands increased their market share and a strong basis for sustainable growth was re-established.

Overall, P&G's key for success was the creation of a design-friendly organization that was open to ideas coming from outside and embedded a design sensibility throughout the entire organization.

A poster child for design today, the Korean giant Samsung was also trapped in a downward spiral in the early 1990s. The change began when chairman Lee Kun Hee was visiting retailers in Los Angeles and noticed that Samsung products were lost in the crowd while products from other brands such as Sony stood out. So he began leading the design revolution, asking his managers to focus less on saving costs and more on creating new unique products.

The first move was to move the in-house design center from small and sleepy Suwon to Seoul, in order to benefit from city's talent pool. By 1994, the first collaborations with external design agencies began. In 1995, the company set up the Innovative Design Lab of Samsung (IDS), an in-house design school where promising young designers could study under experts from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, one of the top U.S. design schools. Samsung designers were also sent across the globe to places ranging from Egypt and India to New York and London in an effort to open the designer's minds to global art, architecture and culture. A major challenge in changing the company's culture began by trying to shift the Confucian mindset that essentially prevented subordinate staff from questioning their superiors. Design centers were opened in San Francisco, London, Tokyo, Shanghai, Los Angeles and Milan. Each unit is encouraged to compete with the others. Another major contribution comes from designers that are sent for short periods (between 6 months and 2 years) to work in external design agencies, fashion houses, art galleries, cosmetic producers and furniture shops with the aim to bring back to Samsung the latest trends and spread them around the company. Overall new product development has shifted the focus to design as a starting point rather than an end-of-the-pipe approach where designers only adorn and wrap technology and products conceived by engineers.

Another virtuous example is the Spanish sanitary ware manufacturer Roca. Roca developed its own internal design center back in 1968, thus becoming a pioneer in acknowledging the importance of design and the shift in the consumer's perception of tiles and bathroom ware. By the 1990s it was evident that bathroom and tiles were not merely functional and technical products but rather sophisticated furniture aimed at creating pleasant spaces. In response to this perception of consumer trends, the Roca design center was completely redefined in 2005, also in response to the international presence of the brand. The Roca design center began collaborating with world class external designers and architectural studios back in the 1970s but now such collaboration is strengthened and aimed at creating multidisciplinary teams and multicultural approaches to the design process. Since such restructuration back in 2005, Roca has won

numerous design awards including design management awards. Finally, in 2007 Roca created the Roca Innovation Lab as an independent cell of the in-house design center. The objective is to concentrate the activities of research and innovation free from the hectic everyday chores of the Roca design center. The lab is thought of as “a nursery of ideas and analysis of the materials and technology to be applied and a promotion hub of a global international vision of the product, recognizing people’s changing requirements, behaviors and tastes.”

The three cases share several common traits: large multinational corporations that have enabled a design culture within the entire organization and have recognized that ideas cannot and may not come only from inside the company. In any case, C-suite and top management are actively involved in the “conversion” of the company into a design company and the revenues as well as market share and other indicators demonstrate the overwhelming success of such approaches.

4 The dimensions of the productive integration of creativity

The research into case studies that we have isolated in this contribution, together with the on-site experience deriving from the university consulting carried out for numerous Italian and international enterprises, has enabled us to isolate four factors that have a considerable influence on the productive relationship between creative genius and productive capital organised into enterprise:

- space, considered as a search for the form of the place in which the relationship materialises and for the environmental conditions and qualities it is felt positively influence the “cohabitation” of the parties concerned;
- time, considered as rhythm and the chronological dimension in which the parties relate to one another in a productive manner;
- the language that is used to make the parties communicate with one another;
- the roles played by the parties to develop the relationship.

For each of these four factors, we have isolated a “banality” which it is usually felt can determine a positive condition to the growth of the relationship between the parties. The aim of this way of reasoning is to demonstrate their inadequacy.

As regards space, we have found that, very often, an enterprise tries to create a clearly delimited area within the production setting, in which to “install” its creative staff. It is usually thought that this portion of space should contain things, objects, equipment, furnishings, inadequate for an enterprise (we’ve all seen basketball hoops in offices, mini golf courses for the creative director, but also home furnishings, pets, tropical “gardens” and greenhouses, table football, ping pong tables that have nothing whatsoever to do with a factory). According to this “banality”, the ownership of the enterprise or the top management should grin and bear the fact that the creative staff have their own “enclosure”, where the logistic and interior design rules applied to other employees are

banished. This “banality” works on the transgressive identity according to which a certain type of trashy literature portrays creative people as overgrown teenagers, “non-productive fun lovers” who, at the right time, will provide the right thought, but only if they are left to “freely relax” in an unusual dimension.

In our experience, the best place for creative staff is off the company premises. In this sense, we feel that one of the greatest limitations preventing enterprise from breaking away from its tendency towards conservation lies in its natural dimension of modern “heterotopia”. The studies by Michael Foucault (apud CELASCHI, 1992) on the dimension he calls “imprisonment” prove that the factory (or the premises of an enterprise organised around a productive machine as a model) is the form through which the typical archetype of the places of detention and governance of bodies and minds is reproduced in the productive function³.

Creative experts often use productive spaces without worrying about having their own fixed position, often temporarily using “other” environments and then abandoning them once the purpose has been served. They are “go-betweens” subjects whose job is to constantly have “one foot in and one foot out” of the productive situation. The design of a specific, characterised, evident and goliardic space offers a literary “parody” of the creativity of the enterprise that is almost never effective, often leading the genius to feel like an exotic animal in a gilded cage. The productive space that best represents this condition is frequently offered by the work spaces of contemporary advertising enterprises or strategic design and web communication consulting companies.

The second “banality” is linked to the idea that the creative product is discontinuous, occasional, not predictable in its manifestation, preferably nocturnal and syncopated with respect to the fixed and modular times of the classic working week. This idea often leads people to think that creative staff don’t have standard working hours, that their neurones work much faster than those of other employees and that, if they are put under enough pressure, they are capable of connecting their cognitive synapses in a proportion that is just as urgent as the problem to be solved. Creativity is an activity that, more often than not, is manifest as being anchored to systematic processes that are continue in time. The processes of observation of reality and periodical, synthetic and detailed modelling of the observations made often need to use a considerable amount of information and products in progress that have to be prepared and gathered in time, filed carefully and documented. Creativity often starts from the way in which stimulating information is archived. The working hours of the creative expert are often much more monotonous and continuous, routine and precise than those of many other workers. Only in this way is it possible to manifest a quick and plausible response to the occasional and often urgent demand by production to offer an important innovation, at the right time and in the right way. The moment of synthesis must not be confused with the long time required by preparation. We prefer to compare the creative act to the performance in competition of

³ For example, among the first forms of modern heterotopia for the control of bodies in society, there are the lazar houses active in the 14th century and then again in the 17th century all over Europe. These are followed by the typical forms of bodies’ control: prisons, madhouses, barracks, schools, hospitals, etc., up to modern factories (Degani, 1982).

a great athlete. Audiences perceive only the apparently magical event of the record and are unlikely to understand just how much long, hard work goes into the preparation that characterises his everyday life (what he eats, how long he spends training, autogenous training, etc.).

This “banality” tends to generate the thought that an enterprise can produce innovation by buying the creative act of final synthesis only, without having to shoulder all the investments required to cultivate the preparatory conditions on which the action of synthesis is based. In actual fact, the enterprise doesn’t realise that this time and these resources are, in actual fact, already activated inside the workplace of the creative expert. We can assume that the time dedicated to creative innovation is continuous, organised, systematic, long, orderly and prompt.

The third factor we intend to highlight regards the language used by the productive organisation and the creative genius to communicate. Following a production driven, short-sighted and old-fashioned logic, the enterprise, often feels that the terrain for common confrontation is the product, seen as the result, which will be subjected to the engineering process and consequent transmission to the market. Consequently, it feels that every contact between creativity, innovation and change must regard the product. And that every innovative boost must be strictly focused on it.

In reality, the analysis of cases of excellent innovation prove that the territory of exchange, dialogue and integration between the logics of innovative creativity and production is much more effective when it isn’t confined to the product only. In these virtuous cases of success, the product is often the initial occasion of contact through which the doors of change begin to open. Just as frequently, the product is a secondary result of the dialogue that is structured continuously and systematically between enterprise and creative genius. Obviously the centre of the sensitivity of both parties lies in focusing attention on the construction of shared language that can allow creative staff to approach the needs usually determined by the productive sector or by the market already served by the enterprise, and allow the enterprise to absorb the value of innovative creativity in the processes and ways of doing things.

Creative innovation is, first and foremost, linked with a specific attitude of the enterprise: it has to observe different situations from those observed so far and then imagine unprecedented scenarios instead of emulating other successful producers.

This result requires that the enterprise change and take possession of several expressive languages. The delicate nature of this theme becomes very clear when we talk about enterprises in which, at the end of the relationship with the creative genius (which can happen for many reasons, including a disagreement or death), replacement becomes almost impossible. In these cases, the enterprise has taken on a comfortable, passive stance: having the design created outside the internal languages.

The final factor regards the role that the players in the value chain can or must play in order to favour the integration of energies. The “banality” likens the creative process in

enterprise to a process of animal generation: the creative genius would be the male, fertilising subject and the enterprise the female, fertilised and gestating subject (which then becomes the “main affective subject” of reference for the whole development of the project).

In alternative to this “banality”, there is another one which sees the inversion of the sexual roles. The creative expert (female) brings her genius to the enterprise (pater familias) as a dowry to be managed with respect for and to the benefit of the union as a whole.

If we want to remain within the field of organic metaphors, it seems obvious that the best combinations between creative genius and enterprise are those born and developed within a symmetrical symbiotic logic. Each of the two parties has to perceive that the integration will produce a short-term and a long-term outcome, an immediate advantage and a future investment. The integration of the two subjects must contain the exchange of reproductive knowledge; each of the two subjects must break free from the integration enriched and bound to the other by convenience which has to be administered, together, in the long term.

The management of these four factors requires the enterprise and the creative expert to develop the ability to operate within a shared culture. This culture has to share methods and sensitivities of strategic design or design seen as a process. This is why we sustain that, in the cases of success, what is interesting to see is the birth of a platform of cultural sharing (frequently intangible), which is studied and regulated by design driven logics.

5 The design as mediator: conclusion

There is a way of intending design that has to do with the ability of an organisation to make physical and intangible forms tangible. Here creativity and enterprise share the challenge of continuous innovation. Design can be the culture inside which these two structurally antithetic polarities can understand one another and operate in synergy.

In this contribution we have considered design as a subject shared by several parties, through which the very shape of the value production process is studied, planned and embodied.

The aim of this process is no longer the “product”, considered as an element which satisfies the producer, but the “ability to create value capable of satisfying the consumer, the producer and every mediator”. The design we’re talking about is the ability to embody the place of interaction, by designing space, time, languages and roles. In order to favour continuous innovation as a lever for the production of value.

The case studies mentioned and those listed in our professional experience don’t hide these problems. On the contrary, they make them a matter for proud and on-going maturation. The most important reference point is, in our opinion, the opening of a debate on design as a process.

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