Invention Design and Evasion Design
Superstudio

It would appear that the fact that the world is round and rotates is now beyond discussion.

There is still room for discussion, however, about how we are to live on it. And particularly on whether everything should be invented all over again every day or whether on the other hand it is enough to cling tightly to the appropriate gravity straps against the centrifugal force and keep on breathing.

And this is possible, or obligatory rather, for those who live in the cubic boxes about which so much has already been said. In other words for the lucky inhabitants and owners of block apartments, small villas, and civilized housing in general, and then, by natural kinship, for all the owners and users of refrigerated portions of established truth and the commonplace . . .

If on the contrary we face the problem of making our reckonings with reality at every moment, if we face the problem of living creatively, living truly that is, regular breathing is no longer enough and we must invent on each occasion the utensils for "doing things" and find the answers to new queries.

Only in this way, by taking a creative attitude, can we avoid the prefabricated answers imposed by the big monopolies of truth.

But contestation of the system, rejection of the products imposed by the consumer industry as the only true answer at this particular moment of history, will not be achieved through a total rejection of the products and the activities connected with them. Salvation does not lie in a primitive Arcadia or even in Alice's Wonderland. Arcadia and Wonderland, or the self-sufficient civilization of craftsmanship (or even the nonacquisitive one of the Hippies) and the hyperconsumer society of Supermarkets and Carnaby Street: on one hand a magic world in which the utensil is the object of a rite, on the other a code of liturgical regulations governing nonexistent objects.

But seeing that "you cannot go backward," and that the process is irreversible (and revivals confirm this), and seeing that the system offers us transparent or nonexistent objects (the sales system sells only one product: itself), and seeing also that we need something in order to live (utensils, signs, totems . . .), we put the process of design back into motion. If, then, the problem is one of living creatively and finding the true answers to our problems, of avoiding the prefabricated answers imposed by the great monopolies of truth (the pitfalls of the affluent society), we then come to propose "invention design" as an alternative or variant to "product design" or "industrial design" as currently conceived. But any valid design is always invention design (and in this connection think back to the meaning of the terms "design" and "invention" in Renaissance tracts).

The term to use, then, may well be "evasion design."

Evasion design, punning and easy overtones of political disengagement apart, is the activity of planning and operating in the field of industrial production assuming poetry and the irrational as its method, and trying to institutionalize continuous evasion of everyday dreariness created by the equivocations of rationalism and functionality.

Every object has a practical function and a contemplative one: and it is the latter that evasion design is seeking to potentiate. Thus there is an end to the nineteenth-century myths of reason as the explanation of everything, the thousand variations on

the theme of the four-legged chair, aerodynamic shapes, and the sterilization of dreams.

We need in fact to begin all over again: the data are those of experience and those of myth, those of technology and consumer demand, those of repressed desires.

The important thing is to keep on asserting ourselves, to go on making our mark on things. The important thing is to "be there." Perhaps one of the most disturbing manifestations of our time is the sit-in, the pacific protest meeting at which everyone sits on the ground.

What we want to do is lay the foundations for an existence this is one long protest: a "be-in."

This means involving all the users of our products and creating an operative area.

Such total involvement may be achieved in two ways: by supplying products that are poetically functional or by supplying patterns of behavior.

In the first case you supply multisignificant (ambiguous) products, objects of universal use, and each user puts them to the use he thinks fit.

In the second case you supply the rules of a game to be played with all kinds of objects, or containers that can be filled with all kinds of things.

To switch our attention to interior space, this may become a genuine space of involvement (a stage for a continuous performance or, in other words, a place for happenings, a place for the be-in) by the agency of the design products we place in it.

While on this subject we should clarify the fact that this operation belongs to the first of the modes of operation to which we referred earlier: we thus put on the market poetically functional objects in containers of any kind, even if they are indifferent or degraded like those supplied by the building trade today. It is obvious that we can see this only as a "rescue" operation: it is not the total operation to which we aspire (supplying and shaping the whole human environment).

It is only a way of taking action "here and now" in an existing situation. Evasion design, then, to evade everyday dreariness, or rather evasion design to make it possible to live with everyday dreariness.

All this is because: apart from those fortunate mortals who can afford to build their own "house" (ideally in their own image and likeness), and those lucky enough to find one in which it is possible to live even without putting paintings up on the walls, those who live in "residential blocks" usually live in a room, a cubic box without memories, with vague indications of top and bottom, entrance and exit, a Euclidean parallelepiped painted white or distempered in bright colors, washable or no, but always without surprises and without hope.

We should remember however that "it is poetry that makes you live," and that life is lived not only in hermetically sealed boxes made for small parallel lives, but also in the city and in cars, in the supermarkets, in the cinemas, on the motorways. . . . And an object may be an adventure in space, or an object of worship and veneration, and become a shining intersection point of relationships . . .

Thus evasion design aims at working on the theory of introducing foreign bodies into the system: objects with the greatest possible number of sensory properties (chromatic, tactile, etc.), charged with symbolism, and images with the aim of attracting attention, or arousing interest, of serving as a demonstration and inspiring action and behavior.

Objects in short that succeed in modifying the container-unit and involving it totally

together with its occupier.

We shall build on the ruins of our own wars and those of others, on the smoking ruins of private and public guerilla warfare, on the clouds of numerous mushrooms, atomic ones and those of peyote.

We shall construct huge and indestructible objects thoroughly shockproof because as flexible and manageable as the willow branches in Japanese prints.

We shall have soft pyramids and looking-glass furniture and rooms for the contemplation of everyday poetry.

We shall have microscopes and kaleidoscopes to investigate the mysteries of stupidity and boredom.

We shall make journeys with airline itineraries around the world, tightening only the seat belts of the intelligence, but without fear, and we shall construct with a single everyday purpose: living with poetry.

With no time for analysis or denunciation, with little time for bitter ironies and cruel tricks of the intellect: we wish to rediscover the heart and raise it on high. *Sursum corda.*

We shall no longer do anything except for love and in hope and we shall surely die of ingenuity, happy.

Our problem is to go on producing objects big brightly colored cumbersome useful and full of surprises, to live with them and play with them together and always find ourselves tripping over them till we get to the point of kicking them and throwing them out, or else sitting down on them or putting our coffee cups on them, but it will not in any way be possible to ignore them.

They will exorcise our indifference.

Things that can modify time and space and serve as signposts for a life that is going ahead.