

Introduction to an unfinished thought :

What I am here calling Formed-ness (for-MED-ness) refers to the historically specific conditions and common formal qualities of human-made objects – the persistent design features of manipulated matter at any given moment in time.

- To think of “Formed-ness” is to think through a fundamentally archeological – or at very least, socio-historically diagnostic frame of mind.
- Eg. Hellenistic Formed-ness is different from Victorian Formed-ness, which is different from Soviet Formed-ness, etc.
- Admittedly, the analytic valuation of Formed-ness might be somewhat naive, because it implicitly believes that something of a historical world-view, a given ethos, can be retained in and signified by the objects produced by humans. In following this trail, one should remain skeptical and avoid reductive essentialisms.

Today’s Formed-ness appears most often on the surface of consumer products - particularly appliances, gadgets, and the various novel accessories that interface with lived experience. Think of almost any piece of merchandise in any isle in any big-box store. Never mind their particular functions (for now) –think only of their form - all those injection-molded plastics, those extruded acrylics with heat formed contours and perfectly fitting parts. Ridged, pleated, ribbed and studded, these molded shapes, pressed with texture or the pristine lack thereof make up the “minor” yet ever-present architecture of our time. When these many banal forms, made from plastic, Styrofoam, or something yet unknown, are considered as a whole, they concatenate a massive vocabulary of contemporary design, of contemporary thing-ness, which is simultaneously both the cause and symptom of our visual everyday, our aesthetic episteme.

The prevalence of particular shapes or patterns, for example, the radial “rounded” corner, is not simply the product of consumer demand or utilitarian necessity, but is of course inter-linked with the capacity of available production technologies: the body of knowledge, if you will, which precedes any executable design or manifestation of Formed-ness. For example: the smooth, mathematically complex shapes, seemingly inherent in vector-based design constitute a central pillar of contemporary Formed-ness.

However, Formed-ness does not simply distil or depict the productive or technological status quo - Formed-ness also appears to have the nearly magical ability to both embody and delimit the many facets of socio-psychological conditions. That is, taken to its logical limit, Formed-ness constitutes the horizon of knowledge made manifest, a concretized field of what is knowable - as this field shifts through time.

- If moral restraint and delicate grandeur are attendant upon - or dissolved within the stitching of a Victorian gown, what pulses beneath the computational lines of a Tesla Model X?

And more so: What might such Formed-ness of the current represent “accurately” or not - to a future mind, after catastrophe - to a future pair of eyes that reads our forms as relics, as ruin, as evidence?

How might the fragments of our Formed-ness be interpreted, archived, or worshiped?

