

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN IN MOLDOVA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF SCANDINAVIAN EXCELLENCES

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Abstract. *With a recent increasing interest in a harmonic and mindful lifestyle from the youth of Moldova, it has become obvious that our local design industry lacks balance regarding originality, authenticity, quality, and color. This article aims to pinpoint mostly on the faults of the living space design that are met in a standard house/apartment in Chișinău, due to an extremely limited range of choices, in furniture and ornamental objects. For the space that reflects directly on people, is the one they spend most time in, catering to an either stimulating and flourishing lifestyle or not. In light of this matter, the local industrial design potential will be addressed in analogy, with one of the most successful furniture retailers in Europe, IKEA. It is imperative to acknowledge the well-crafted input that this company has made worldwide by adapting the traditional Scandinavian culture in an innovative approach to design, making it accessible to everyone's preferences. Overall, this comparison is supposed to grant new perspectives into the Moldovan design practices, plus to highlight the subjectively favorable elements, that are worth developing and preserving.*

Keywords: *art, folk, furniture, housekeeping, lifestyle, materials*

Introduction

Everyone desires to have a fulfilling life, where their job offers financial stability, where they are surrounded by a nice family with healthy, long-lasting friendships and perhaps where they have a vacation every other season; however, this solely does not dictate the feeling of having a “good” life.

To aspire for a harmonious lifestyle, attention must be brought not only to these substantial parts of an ordinary life but also to details, because akin influence to a relaxing holiday or a loving pet, holds the surroundings we find ourselves in every day; from the way the bus station looks like or how the school corridor is illuminate, down to the colors of the flower arrangement across the street. Considering this as a prominent attribute to one's quality of life, attention must be brought to the most inhibited space in a person's life: the house. All forms found inside a house: the shoe shelf; the vase near the family photo; one of the bed frames; the kettle; the working space chair; establishes, one by one, daily effect on a person's fulfillment.

That is why this article will approach the matter of Industrial design in Moldova: problems and solutions through the lens of Scandinavian excellences.

Definition

Firstly, there should be defined what exactly covers the term industrial design: this is an industry that is characterized by the professional practice of designing products, devices, objects, and services used by people every day. This includes a broad number of categories f.e.: transportation, electronics, furniture, housewares, medical & healthcare, toys & accessories, etc.

An objectively good design typically focusses on the physical appearance, functionality, and manufacturability of a product, that promises the overall lasting value and experience of the mentioned product from an objective point of view; subjectively speaking, it is understandable

that the personal likes and dislikes have a huge impact on what “good” represents. However, untrained eyes can misguide the preferences, thus people unknowingly acquire objects or services that bring a bad name to industrial design.

In correlation to the previous paragraph the title begs the question: what is exactly “the” Scandinavian excellency and what does it have to do with the industrial design in Moldova?

Scandinavian design

In substance the aesthetic and overall concept of the Scandinavian design is based on a movement that succeeded in merging new styles and functions, with their specific folk traditions and values. They value simplicity, also known as minimalism, however, not deprived of colors Fig 1. It emerged in the early 20th century in these 5 countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland. Scandinavian designers are known particularly for household products: furniture, textiles, ceramics, lamps, and glass, and this will be the pinpoint aspect of industrial design, that will serve as the main comparison for the upcoming ideas [1].



Figure 1. Minimalist Living Room

Primary example of excellency

Since the last century, there have been created, up until the present, many iconic furniture pieces by the Scandinavian market, with independent designers representing their personal approach to the industry. Although many of them are worthy of high recognition and deep analysis of their work, no other name represents the status of design excellency as good as IKEA, a Swedish multinational conglomerate that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture. Their design philosophy emphasizes cost-effective manufacturing processes, efficient use of materials, and flat-pack packaging, allowing them to keep prices low without compromising quality.

There are a lot of fascinating aspects that can be analyzed in relation to the company's furniture design, from materials, colors and sleek lines, to the assembly methods, nevertheless, there should be highlighted, again, one specific thing that wraps everything up and concludes the overall success of this brand and that is the original folk authenticity, that is kept throughout the specifics of the designs.

More precisely, the way that they reflected their traditional heritage in their designs, making them first and foremost suited to their native's needs and their way of living. For example, the warm tones used for all the lamps present in a house are essential and that is because the northern weather is gloomy and cloudy for almost 9 months. To combat this downside of their circumstances, they put a detrimental importance on all artificial sources of light.

In less complicated terms the furniture has character, and they are not afraid to rebrand what is old and adapt it to modern life [2]. But this does not refer to everything IKEA produces,

mostly to one of their consistent style and approach. For example, this year's catalogue paid especially attention to traditional textures of Scandinavian folklore, in woven and embroidered patterns and textiles Fig. 2.

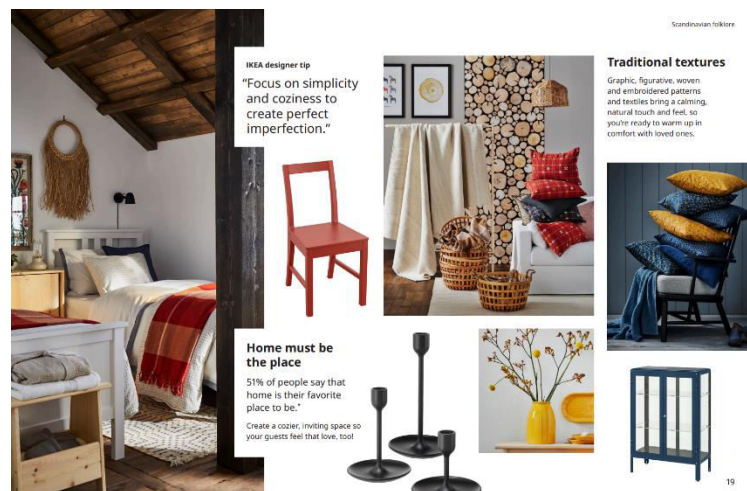


Figure 2. IKEA Style Guide 2024

Main problem in Moldova

Finally, considering all the points highlighted previously, the core of this presentation can be dismantled and that is the problem that lies in Moldova's interior furniture style - which is, more or less, non-existent Fig. 3.



Figure 3. Typical kitchen area in Moldovan house

The local industry has nothing authentic available on the market comparing to the worldwide progress and results seen in the majority of the countries, this regresses to the sad reality, where a stereotypical Moldovan house looks like a washed-out byproduct of the dark wooden soviet cabinets that are infused with tasteless “misunderstood” minimalism; usually represented by gray, custom made, furniture. And referring to what was emphasised initially, about what a good design is, none of this can be detected in the generic local furniture.

Sadly, this disbalance of shapes, colors and functions does not just look bad but harmfully affects our mental health and overall quality of life. Research has proven that well-designed spaces can lead to increased cognitive function and productivity. There are many examples that serve as proof, such as amplified natural light and air quality in a child's bedroom could ease the anxiety accumulated during the day in the cramped school classes [3].

This is exactly why the Scandinavian design serves as a parallel. They are known to have a high life quality, meaning that for Moldova to reach a more harmonious widespread lifestyle and industrial design standard, they must subtract the Scandinavian way of approaching design to in their own circumstances and their own traditions, instead of just plagiarizing it in a cheap misinterpretation of minimalism.

The main reason for this drastic difference is none other than the historical background and overall evolution of the arts in the last century in Moldova. Because of the constant economic regression and stagnation since the 2nd World War, they have distanced themselves from originality and the beauty of natural elements in design. This being a traumatic response to the forced collective lifestyle, implemented during communism. Later as a result of the liberation from such oppression, people started chasing an unattainable lifestyle concept of quantity and a glorification of foreign wellness, that was automatically mirrored onto industrial design; making it hard at the present moment to detach all these twisted values from the local preferences in furniture design.

Solutions

According to these ideas, the local designers should be inspired by the local culture and traditions when coming up with new orders, as they have the power to actively change the trajectory of the current lack of style. New visions must be brought from the old elements found in the historical accurate house designs, from materials to patterns and unique functions strongly interlaced with agriculture. One good example is the iconic handwoven Moldovan carpet found in every village house Fig.4. The colors and symbols can be adapted to current design preferences and made into a new iconic version of this carpet.



Figure 4. The traditional flower print Moldovan carpet

Although this situation has a lot more layers that need to be inspected, there can still be provided some sensible solutions to a slight improvement for the Moldovan furniture industry that can be implemented by people who have the personal interest of changing things without waiting for the industry to take a new step in furniture production:

1. promoting small artisans - instantly promises an original artistic object;
2. DIY of the available furniture - repainting; changing handles; disassembling old cabinets and using the pieces in new ways;
3. Custom furniture - gives the freedom of having an individual input on the space you want to create, making it possible to put into practice the principles accentuated beforehand.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, it has been explained the relevance of design on a person's quality of life and how complex the correlation is.

To improve the Moldovan furniture design, the local market should take inspiration from their own traditions and heritage, to manage a positive impact on the general public without any use of plagiarism. Inspiration, however, can be always taken from the successful results of Scandinavian design.

By engaging in these ideas and accepting the shortages of this industry, progress can be promising, even if this is a hard and long path that must be taken, it will prove to be fruitful. This shift can lead to an enhanced quality of life and a modern chapter for the Moldovan culture.

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