

## Summary in English

### *Shaping memory – Theoretical and practical perspectives on memory in Italian and Danish jewellery design*

There is a lack of research in the use of the theme of memory as an important aspect of the meaning of design, particularly jewellery design. The present and more in-depth literature about jewellery design and the meaning of jewellery is rather limited. It is primarily within the architectural, historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological, archaeological, anthropological, and literary research disciplines that the dimension of memory has become an essential theme. Contrary to this, memory has only been touched upon within design research as an extra aspect of the identity-forming element of a design product, for example in theories by design researchers such as Tim Dant and Donald A. Norman. Indeed, when it comes to jewellery design, the use of the theme of memory is practically virgin territory.

Memory both requires a cognitive process and a sense of intuition. It can be found on both the large and the small scale: Architecture, product design, jewellery and drawings. Some forms appeal more to the user than other forms, which can be socially and culturally determined. Memory in design concerns the creation of connections across distances in time and space, across different cultures and traditions. With the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, memory thus concerns the merging of different horizons. As early as in the 1600s/1700s, the philosopher Giambattista Vico saw that memory represents a way to create a connection between the present and the past, because it makes it possible to fixate certain points in history, around which earlier cultures may be understood. However, memory will always represent a reconstruction of the past, not as it really was, but as a mediator of meaning to the particular present with which the past is in constellation.

The main purpose of the project is to investigate the dimension of memory in Italian and Danish jewellery design after 1945, a matter that has become more complex today compared to the past. The main emphasis is on the Italian design tradition where a culture of working with the theme of memory in the design process is present. It may be because there is a long tradition of teaching philosophy, art history, cultural history and architectural history at the Italian design schools where the students learn how to unite theory and practice and where the learning process is anchored in an interdisciplinary forum. Memory also plays a role within the Danish design tradition, although it seems to do so in a less conscious way. This is why the project includes fewer interviews with Danish designers.

Some of the central research questions in the project are

- if the memory dimension plays a role within Italian and Danish jewellery design
- which kinds of memory that are significant to the design process
- how memory can be categorized in a design context
- how memory and forgetting are connected in a design context
- how poetry and fantasy can be connected to memory in a design context

The methodological core of the interviews and the analyses of the selected works is constituted by a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. This is the reason that the theorists who form part of the thesis are positioned to "talk with each other" rather than to "talk against each other". However, it has also been important to point out the differences. Without that dimension, the analyses of the selected works would lack sharpness and a quality judgment. Memory is interdisciplinary by na-

ture, which is why elements from architectural theory, philosophy and other product design are included in the project with memory-related theories by architect and designer Aldo Rossi playing a pivotal role. The above-mentioned lack of research within jewellery is a main reason for placing the interviews with a number of relevant and prominent Italian and Danish jewellery designers and theorists at the very core of the project. Their design practices have been very important to the project because of that.

One of the characteristics of memory in jewellery design and product design is slowness. A piece of jewellery can express slowness if it has taken a long time to create it and if stories are hidden, waiting to be discovered. Slowness thus characterizes the process of creating design for the future and, with the words of designer Paolo Portoghesi, even for eternity. The designer in this way expresses an ecologic sensibility so that the jewellery becomes precious and difficult to dispose of or discard.

The idea of 'happy memory', which was introduced by Paul Ricoeur as a leitmotif in his phenomenology of memory, is tied to an ambition of being faithful to the past for good and for worse. The idea of 'dirty memory' (or *memoria sporca* as Italians may call it) is therefore introduced in the thesis. This kind of memory possesses a critical function and lets us reflect with an existential wholeness in mind, which we cannot approach if we dualistically separate good and evil and are content with the light side without the dark side. It can be seen as a cultural memory of for example tragic events related to Fascism. The term was used in some of the interviews in connection with exemplifications of how memories can be complex and how this complexity can be expressed within design. The designer Alessandro Mendini extends the concept by expressing that there is something dirty (*sporco*) in all people, which concerns the mistakes we as human beings make in our lives. This more complex kind of memory can create a connection between the tragic and the comical, like when Mendini's corkscrew Anna Etoile shows how dancing can make us forget a tough reality. In a design process, it is about filtering memory so as to make it possible to decide what to remember and what to forget. A delicately tuned balance between memory and forgetting provides a breeding ground for the creation of poetic design.

In the thesis, one of the articles raises the question whether there is a cultural difference between Danish and Italian design. The article concludes that there indeed is a cultural difference due to the immediate observation that Italian designers take inspiration from cultural forms and work consciously with the theme of memory, whereas Danish designers focus more on nature as a source of inspiration and work with memory in a more indirect, intuitive way.

The question of which categories of memory that are important in the design process is also a central subject in the thesis. The categories that are brought into play are mainly personal, cultural and collective memory. Based on both articles and interviews it can be concluded that both personal memory and cultural memory are important in a design process. Both kinds of memory are connected with future thinking.

The thesis also addresses the idea that memory is connected to storytelling. It can be the stories that the designers imbed in their design and explain in the interviews. Memory design also concerns the meanings that users read in design over time. The thesis investigates to what extent it is possible for a designer to tell stories today and subsequently, to what extent it is possible to communicate this insight as a source of inspiration for design students.

Another matter, which the thesis touches is that memory, poetry and fantasy are notions that can be linked in a design process. Memory and fantasy play an essential role in any work, whether contemporary or historical. Vico is involved because he can contribute with something new to design research with his stressing of the significant role of fantasy in forming our understanding of the past. If such a historical consciousness is to be kept, it requires a merging of a deeper understanding of past events with an identity-forming and imaginative recreation of these events so that

we can recognize ourselves in them. Fantasy forms the basis of a self-understanding where fragments of memory are assembled into a whole picture. The conclusion is that fantasy plays a central role when personal and cultural memory meet in the creation of memory design.

The main perspective of the project is that an insight into the dimension of memory can make designers more conscious about how to create design for the future. In an educational context, the project can stimulate a sense of the aspects and potentials of memory in design and contribute to concrete analyses of selected design objects. The research field of memory design can contribute to the development of a design research that combines theory and practice so that design students through theoretical classes may gain insights, which they subsequently may deploy in practice. The dimension of memory can contribute significantly to a greater theoretical and humane insight into the meaning of jewellery design in this context.

The interviews with designers have made it possible for the silent knowledge that generally characterizes jewellery design to be articulated and made accessible. Through conversations and reflections, jewellery designers get easier access to the heritage they stand on and consequently, they also get the opportunity to take a few steps away from it. It contains perspectives for designers, but certainly also for design students and the coming generations of designers.

The conversation with tradition is important, not only with the surviving works, but also with contemporary things. To create conversations is to create common experiences. On a general level, it concerns the importance of listening to each other and sensing the world and learning from the valuable experiences that designers possess. This thesis thus points out that it is possible to tell stories through design today. In a cultural and educational context, it concerns the idea that a piece of jewellery first acquires a meaning when connected to a story. We have to know something about it before it can remind us of something.

The thesis is article-based and consists of three published, peer-reviewed journal articles and a published, peer-reviewed paper for an international design conference. Furthermore, one article manuscript is now completed and ready for submission. The articles are placed in the thesis in a "frame" that consists of an introductory part and a concluding part.