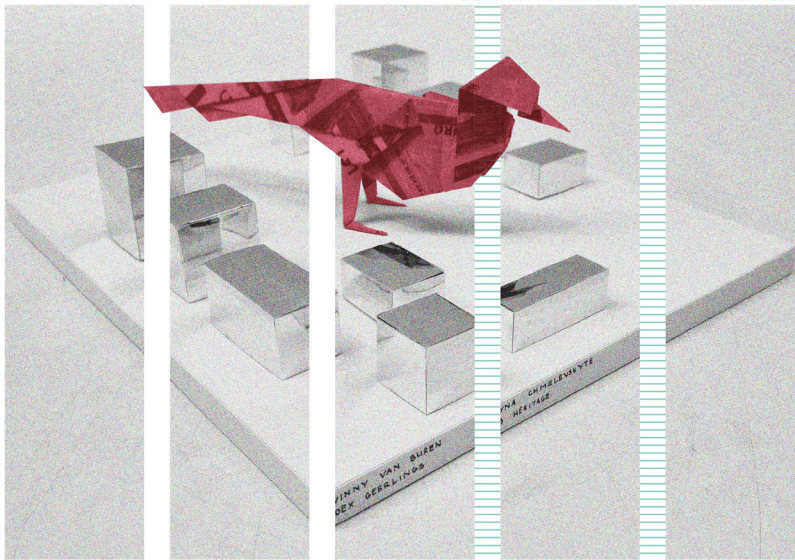


Shopping mall in a post-consumer era

Research Paper

Adapting 20th Century Heritage



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ABSTRACT

With growing rates of over-consumption, leading to a massive amount of waste, the question of how spaces of consumption are created remains still not answered. Consumption space in architecture is defined as space that is designed to encourage consumption. This paper is an attempt to deconstruct consumerist spaces and identify the non-consumerist properties of Dutch post-war shopping malls. Through historical analysis, the interrelation of shopping typology and consumerism using Morris Holbrook's (1999) consumer values framework is researched. The development of shopping typology reveals the dynamic character of consumer values, causing conflict with more stable heritage values. The case study of The Mall of The Netherlands is used to bring the issue to life. The differences between post-war and contemporary aesthetic values inspire a discussion if radical changes in post-war mall aesthetics to satisfy contemporary consumers are necessary and what effects it has on the heritage values of the mall.

MODERN HERITAGE

According to UNESCO's Identification and Documentation of Modern Heritage (2003), Modern Heritage encompasses "architecture, town planning, and landscape design of the 19th and 20th centuries." Although often unloved and undervalued, these buildings are the testimony of the socio-economic development of modern society. Most buildings of modern heritage must still go through the Darwinian natural selection process (Macdonald, 2013, para. 7) to become appreciated as heritage by future generations since most generations struggle to appreciate the architecture of their own period (Bond, Worthing, 2016, p. 80). Over time, appreciation will inevitably grow for places that represent the Modern era's richness and diversity, however without adequate protection many of these places will be lost (Macdonald, 2013).

INTRODUCTION

We are all consumers. From the air we breathe to the food we eat; consumption is vital to us. Space is also consumed by our (non)mobile bodies as we require somewhere to live and make our life (Goodman, Goodman, Redclift, 2010). However, in post-modern society consumption is regarded as a part of the “extended self” (Jackson, 2009, p. 98). People use material artifacts (for example, expensive cars or clothes) to communicate about their social status. Therefore, the issue of consumption arises when people are encouraged to develop false needs through the promotion and reinforcement of identity constructed by material artifacts (Jackson, 2009). This can lead to a range of negative social, environmental, and economic consequences often discussed in the academic field [Seth et al, 2010; Blühdorn, 2017].

It is not just what we do, but where we do it. According to Lefebvre (1991), the commodity is in space and occupies a location, thus creating consumerist space. Consumerist spaces are designed to encourage consumption and were continually reinvented and reshaped to keep up with the most subtle changes in society (Chung, Inaba, Koolhaas, 2001). Contemporary shopping malls rarely live longer than ten years without some sort of refurbishment or major renovation, often leading to a change in their image – increasingly attracting potential consumers (Woodward, 1998). This can result in the destruction of historic buildings, and the creation of sterile, homogenized environments that lack diversity and character.

The main concern of this paper is the tension between constantly shifting consumer values and the stability of heritage values. In the field of architecture, the redesign of post-war shopping malls poses a dilemma when the post-war shopping mall requires modernization to suit contemporary consumer needs. Therefore, the research aims at answering how consumer values of Dutch post-war shopping malls can be adapted for the future without losing their values.

Considering the problem of overconsumption, the future of this research is seen as a shift from self-centered materialism to liberation from consumerism. Several authors describe this major shift as inevitable [Soper, 2009; Walker, 2010; Dahl, 2012; Blühdorn, 2017] given the accelerating climate change and the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources. This change in the current socioeconomic order is referred to as post-consumerism [Soper, 2009; Blühdorn, 2017; Walker, 2010].

CONSUMER VALUES



The research is based on consumer values typology. Consumer value is a key concept in marketing that involves a trade-off between benefits and costs (Bourdeau, Yeganeh, Marcotte, 2010). However, traditional models lack multidimensionality to fully understand consumption experiences and their relation to retail typology. Among several multidimensional consumer value models, Holbrook's typology (Holbrook, 1999) is accepted as "the most comprehensive approach to the value construct" (Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2009, p.97).

The typology developed by Holbrook (1999) is based on three dimensions: extrinsic vs intrinsic value, where extrinsic values relate to the functionality of consumption, while intrinsic values occur when the consumption experience is preferred; active vs reactive value, where Active values describe a subject's action towards an object, while reactive values describe their reaction; self-oriented vs other-oriented value.

By combining the above-mentioned dimensions, Holbrook identified eight consumer value types: efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, play, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality. This research, however, is focused only on self-oriented values and their dimensions (extrinsic vs intrinsic; active vs reactive), as shopping is typically characterized as self-oriented activity (Kim, 2002).

Efficiency is an extrinsic value related to convenience, where the key input is personal time.

Excellence is a reactive extrinsic value, where one admires an object's quality and customer service.

Play is an intrinsic value enhanced through sensory experience, entertainment, and social interaction.

Aesthetics is a reactive appreciation of an object's beauty.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research is conducted using a literature review and a case study, to answer how consumer values of Dutch post-war shopping malls can be adapted for the post-consumer era without losing their values. The research consists of two parts.

In the first part, the aim is to understand how the interrelationship between consumer values and retail design influence retail typology development. To answer this question literature is scanned quantitatively to identify how frequently each consumer value was used in the description of a specific shopping typology. All the fundamental quotations were highlighted and inserted into a database developed by the researcher, identified by keywords. Collected data are then translated into the matrix to identify the pattern of each typology and its dominant consumer values. This chapter aims to understand the general outline of consumer values through history and the role of architecture in the enhancement of consumption experience.

The second part attempts to disclose how shifting consumer values influence the change in the spatial characteristics of post-war shopping malls. This part uses a comparative analysis of the mall in the Netherlands before and after its renovation. This chapter aims to understand the differences between post-war and contemporary aesthetics.

CONSUMER TYPES AND SHOPPING TYPOLOGY

Traditional consumer

The basic pattern of shopping and the development of the retail trade was established in the Middle Ages, and it did not change significantly until the middle of the XIX century, as the poorer half of the population created no mass demand that could trigger important developments in the retail (Davis, 1966). The shopkeeper emphasized the instrumentality of the display rather than its decorative potential (Stobart, 2010, p. 343).

Elite consumer

In XVI the introduction of the court in Elizabethan England created the grounds for social competition among noblemen and gave birth to the most important phenomenon in consumption: fashion. This period can arguably be considered the beginning of consumerism (Corrigan, 1997; McCracken, 1988). However, the serious attitude towards shop design only began, as consumption became more accessible to the middle class in the late XVIII century. The elite consumers loved to promenade and keep in fashion, and the commercial possibility of bringing these aspirations together led to the development of shopping arcades.

The shopping arcade was an industrial luxury with a glass-roofed corridor extending through the whole block of buildings. It was constituted of rows of elegant display windows, generating new practices of making an attractive display of products (Bader, Lepik, 2016; MacKeith, 1986). The display and advertising often had to make up for what the architecture lacked in terms of distinction. According to Benjamin (2002), for the first time in the history of architecture, iron as an artificial building material was used in the arcades, as well as artificial lighting provided by gas lamps.

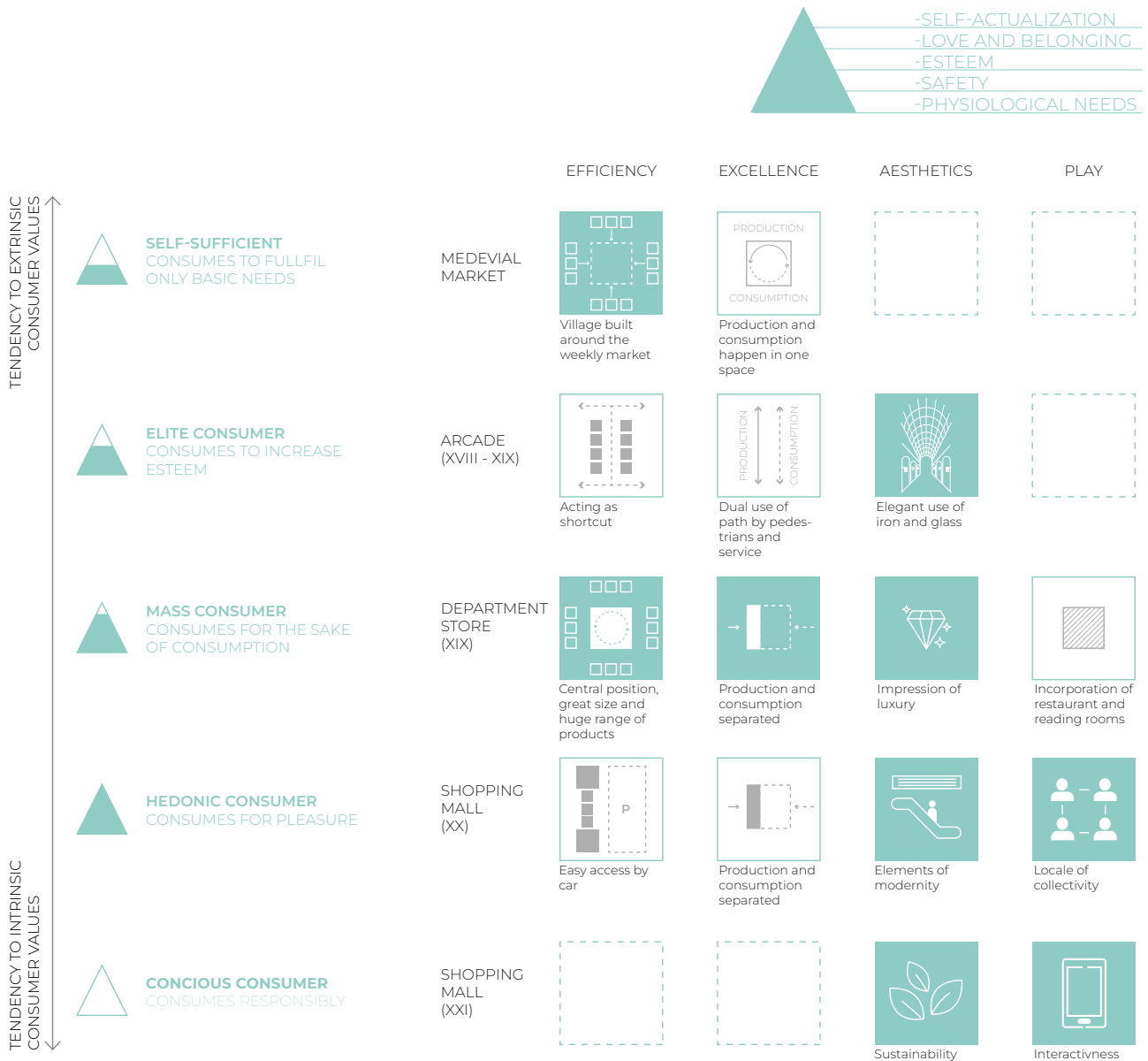
Mass consumer

The industrial revolution and the beginning of mass production marked the shift from "elite consumption" to "mass consumption". As a great proportion of the shopping public was low-paid working class, they wanted cheap, mass-produced goods and the small select shops of the arcades were entirely unsuited to that form of retailing (MacKeith, 1986). Shopkeepers saw the potential of mixing various trades under one roof and thus the department store typology was created.

The architecture of the department store was not primarily aimed at the wealthy customer, but at a type of customer who was seeking the sense of wealthy life without having the means to have one. The early department stores created an aristocratic ambiance, and the possibility for all the classes to enter palace-like department stores was often described as the "democratization of luxury" (Corrigan, 1997, p. 50). The department stores helped to create fashion conscious society with their ever-changing displays, emphasizing novelty and up-to-dateness. They were partly responsible for the creation of the new concept of obsolescence where goods had to be replaced when they were outdated rather than outworn (Davis, 1966, p. 293).

Hedonic consumer

The post-war era was a period of prolific economic growth and rapid urban change in Western Europe, including the Netherlands (Verlaan, 2017). The accumulated wealth increased the buying power of working-class people, and advanced marketing techniques created the demand for certain social statuses and identities expressed via consumption patterns (Lebow, 1955). The department store concept, promoting a very wide but not very varied assortment of goods, did not live up to the expectations of contemporary consumers, who also wanted to use shopping as means of social distinction (Karrholm, 2012). Therefore, the shopping mall concentrating the necessary range of goods and services within delimited space was created (Bader, Lepik, 2016). Attention to details such as lighting, materials, landscape, and entertainment of the potential shopper was seriously considered (MacKeith, 1986).



MATRIX OF CONSUMER VALUES AND SHOPPING TYPOLOGY (OWN WORK, 2023)

The matrix above summarizes the relationship between consumer types, values, and retail development. It indicates that there was a parallel between consumers becoming more prone to intrinsic values and retailers' increasing focus on the materialization of those values. The figure also shows that aesthetic value was a key element in attempting to increase consumption experience. Considering the dynamic character of consumer values and their effect on the changing design of consumerist spaces, the following chapter analyzes how the aesthetic values of retail typology changed in a relatively short time of 50 years. The chapter analyzes the differences between contemporary and post-war aesthetics by using the case study of the recently renewed Leidsenhage shopping center.

POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS OF CONSUMERIST SPACE

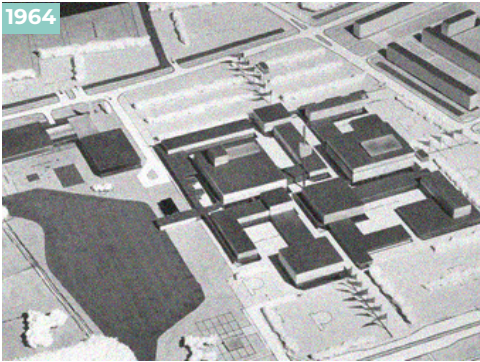
The Leidsenhage shopping center was an initiative of large retail chains V&D, C&A, and de Bijenkorf to establish themselves in Leidschendam. Well-known post-war architect E.F. Grossman was commissioned to create a regional “shopping paradise” with a strong clustering of shops and excellent accessibility by car (Gemeente Leidschendam-Voorburg, 2015). Grossman created an open shopping center organized around the central square, following the principle of linear routes, which were characteristic of the Dutch post-war shopping centers.

A few decades after the construction of Leidsenhage, a discussion about the major renovation of this shopping mall started. It was noticeable that Leidsenhage could no longer meet shifted consumer needs causing its vacancy rates to grow (BRO, 2013). Therefore, an independent consultancy and design agency was asked to carry out the study of the feasibility of the plan to make Leidsenhage a top regional shopping paradise again. It was concluded that even if the shopping center was functioning at a reasonable level at that moment, it required a renewal to make it future-proof (BRO, 2013). Following the study, in 2014 Leidschendam-Voorburg municipality and retail giant Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield signed an agreement on the future of the Leidsenhage shopping center.

In 2021, a completely renewed Leidsenhage shopping center, renamed “The Mall of the Netherlands”, was opened to the public. The shopping center was remodeled by MVSA architects and was expanded from 70 000m² to 200 000m² (MVSA, n.d.).

The new development completely changed the image of the post-war shopping mall. According to MVSA architects, the “run-of-the-mill” shopping center was given a strong and spectacular design identity (MVSA, n.d., para. 1). This case reveals that there was indeed a shift in aesthetic consumer values from post-war to contemporary times. The main differences between contemporary and post-war aesthetics are described in the following pages.

I. SPATIAL FORM



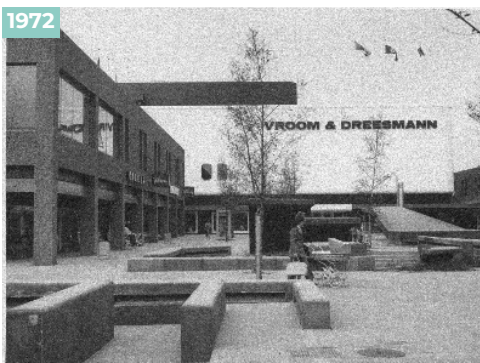
THE OPEN-AIR LINEAR CHARACTER OF LEIDSENHAGE (TOP) WAS TURNED INTO A CLOSED AND INTROVERTED BUILDING (BOTTOM). INSTEAD OF RIGID LINES WESTFIELD (BOTTOM) USES CURVES IN THE LAYOUT.

Dutch post-war shopping malls were often more modest in scale and massing, with a human-centered design approach that emphasized pedestrian circulation. Dutch post-war shopping malls were often open and integrated into the urban fabric of their surroundings. These general elements of modern malls can be also seen in the original design of the Leidsenhage shopping center with its perpendicular streets pattern (Gemeente Leidschen-dam-Voorburg, 2015).

However, the renovation converted the Leidsenhage shopping center into a closed mall, as contemporary shopping malls are often characterized by large, monolithic, and introverted structures. Paterson (2006) notices that the fact that contemporary malls are mostly closed spaces creates a possibility to create a world of themes and fantasies separated from ordinary spatial contexts and their usual meanings.

Another aspect that was largely altered after the renovation is the layout. Dutch post-war shopping malls have a significant linear character, whereas contemporary shopping malls often use curves. According to Woodward (2009), the curves sustain shoppers' visual interest and invite them to discover what lies beyond the ever-changing horizon.

II. EXTERIOR

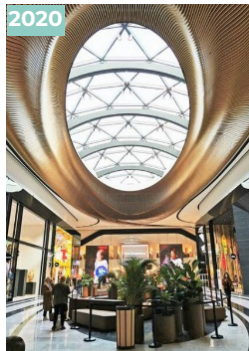
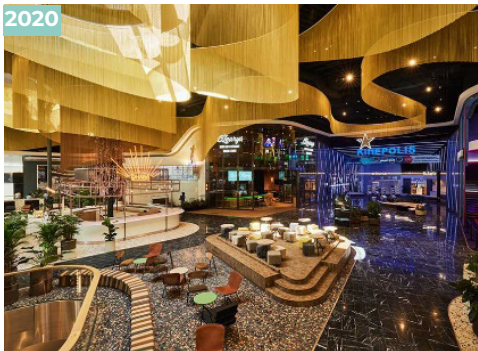


THE MODEST DESIGN OF LEIDSENHAGE (TOP) IS TURNED INTO EYE-CATCHING EXTERIOR (BOTTOM)

Leidsenhage was designed in a modernist style, which emphasizes clean horizontal lines, simplicity, and functionalism. In contrast, Westfield features a spectacular exterior with more elaborate architectural features. It uses an attention-grabbing entrance to create a sense of excitement and anticipation. Since the goal of designers was to create an , "iconic identity" (MVSA, n.d., para. 7) to attract potential consumers, the modest post-war shopping mall's exterior was unsatisfactory. Therefore, it was replaced by an expressive and sculptural facade design.

III. LIGHT

Leidsenhage was designed as an open-air pedestrian street, with covered walkways. This reflected a desire to create a bright and open atmosphere with a lot of natural light. In contemporary shopping malls, the use of natural light has become more varied. In The Mall of The Netherlands, a mix of natural and artificial light is used. Different types of lighting are used to create different moods and to highlight specific areas within the mall. For example, the dining plaza upstairs is lit by warm and dim light, to create a cozy and intimate atmosphere, whereas the cinema area behind features a more dramatic lighting scheme. According to MVSA, the color of the lighting scheme can be changed, creating a range of possible atmospheres.



IN THE ORIGINAL DESIGN OF LEIDSENHAGE (TOP), NATURAL DAY-LIGHT WAS USED AS A MAIN SOURCE OF LIGHT. CONTRARY, WEST-FIELD (BOTTOM) MAINLY EMPLOYS ARTIFICIAL LIGHTS AS THEY HELP TO CONTROL THE MOOD OF CONSUMERS.

IV. SHOP WINDOW

1981



In Leidsenhage storefronts were made of a single material and had a uniform design to create a cohesive look. The shop windows then were mostly used to display commodities for purchase acting as a background. In contrast, storefronts in Westfield tend to have more diversity in their design, with a mix of materials, shapes, and colors to create a visually interesting and varied shopping experience. The goal of the shop front in the contemporary mall is to present the identity of the shop rather than the products for sale.

1998



2020



THE SHOP WINDOW OF LEIDSENHAGE (TOP) MAINLY DISPLAYS COMMODITIES FOR SALE, WHEREAS IN WESTFIELD (BOTTOM) THE SHOPFRONT MAINLY DISPLAYS THE BRAND AND ITS IDENTITY.

V. MATERIALS

In the design of post-war shopping malls, materials such as concrete, steel, and glass were commonly used to create a modern aesthetic (Gemeente Leidschendam-Voorburg, 2015). In the design of the Leidsenhage shopping center architect E. Grossman made extensive use of materials such as gravel, concrete, glass, natural stone, steel, and prefabricated elements. However, after the renovation the original design of Groosman was wrapped in post-modern skin. Although about two-thirds of the original building structure was kept (Raij, n.d.), it is hardly possible to recognize fragments of the old shopping center.

In contemporary shopping mall design, there has been a shift towards using more natural and sustainable materials in response to the growing concern for environmental sustainability. Additionally, contemporary mall designs often incorporate wood and green walls (as can be seen in the interior and exterior design of The Mall of the Netherlands) which further promote a connection to nature and sustainability, and sometimes might lead to greenwashing*. Shopping malls may use greenwashing in their design to appeal to consumers who are increasingly concerned about the environment.

*Excessive use of sustainable design elements for marketing reasons rather than the actual act against climate change

The interior of the contemporary shopping mall might also incorporate luxurious materials (for example marble in The Mall of the Netherlands), which adds more value to the commodities on sale. As Paterson (2006) notices, something purchased in a particular mall or store, just like a souvenir bought on holiday, becomes associated with the place, and can absorb a certain glow and exclusivity of the place.



THE ORIGINAL MATERIALITY OF LEIDSENHAGE (TOP) IS CHANGED INTO GREEN WALLS (BOTTOM) REPRESENTING THE ECO-FRIENDLINESS OF THE WESTFIELD

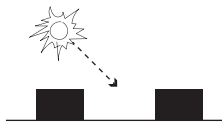


INSTEAD OF THE MODEST DESIGN OF LEIDSENHAGE (LEFT) FOR THE INTERIOR OF WESTFIELD (RIGHT) SHINY MATERIALS ARE USED TO CREATE A LUXURIOUS ATMOSPHERE

CONCLUSION

Consumption actively constructs and changes spaces which in turn induces consumption practices. Consumption spaces like shopping malls are imposed on us and both intentionally and unintentionally alter consumer behavior. Through their seductive appearance malls absorb us and haunt us with their commodities. The historical analysis of shopping typology showed an emphasis on an attempt to create a closed-off space separated from the exterior world creating a consumer paradise. Starting with the development of arcades, retailers understood the potential of space aesthetics in attracting potential consumers. The department store aesthetics revealed the power of creating a spectacle and a false sense of wealthy life, which as a result creates a surplus value for products on sale. The controlled environment of shopping malls in general helps to disconnect consumers from time and space and put a consumer in a theme world where his needs and desires can be manipulated. Even if it is not possible for a designer to make people stop consuming, it is possible to create more honest places to reconnect people to time and space.

The Dutch post-war mall already shows its potential in reconnecting people to time and space through its open character. Firstly, the Dutch post-war malls are usually integrated into the urban fabric, usually acting as a shortcut, like Arcades typology. This means that consumers are often attracted by chance and are not trapped inside a box, keeping the connection to space outside the mall. Furthermore, the use of natural light in Dutch post-war mall design not only creates a certain atmosphere but also reconnects people to time, making consumers conscious about their time spent inside the mall. Also, the simplicity of the modern design of the malls does not create false luxury, so the consumer does not lose his true identity. The space stays true to its intentions of selling goods without adding surplus value.



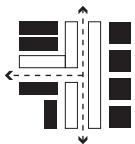
OPEN AIR
NATURAL LIGHT



SIMPLE AND
MODEST DESIGN



DISPLAY OF
CRAFTSMANSHIP



EMBEDDED IN
URBAN FABRIC

NON-CONSUMERIST PRINCIPLES (OWN WORK, 2023)

However, there is still a disconnection from the consequences of our consumption choices as we are often unable to see the processes of production and post-consumption. The display of craftsmanship and production was an aspect of medieval shops, which with the introduction of mass production and growing emphasis on space aesthetics, slowly lost its importance. With the growing interest in support of local economies nowadays, the display of these processes could become an important lesson and element of the medieval ages that could be brought back and implemented in the malls.

DISCUSSION

This paper was an attempt to analyze the interrelation of shopping typology and consumerism using Holbrook's (1999) consumer values framework. Drawing on the hypothesis that consumer values are not fixed and are constantly changing, the research showed the possible effects of consumerism on post-war aesthetics in the redesign of post-war shopping malls. The case study of The Mall of The Netherlands revealed that consumerism as a global phenomenon causes architecture to become spectacular and seductive, but homogenous and disconnected from the local culture and history. To satisfy the contemporary consumer and create a successful shopping mall, the designers of The Mall of The Netherlands decided to wrap it in post-modern skin completely changing its post-war character. The moral question, in this case, is if the radical adaption of a post-war shopping mall to contemporary consumerist aesthetics can be considered a durable and future-proof design choice, as the analysis of shopping typology development revealed the tendency of consumer values to constantly change.

It must be emphasized that a singular case study of post-war mall redesign should not be seen as an attempt to generalize all consequences of interventions in post-war shopping malls. Further research on this topic could focus on successfully functioning original post-war shopping malls, distinguishing the main consumer values determining their success in the contemporary context. This research could help to understand if and how post-war aesthetics can be valued by the contemporary consumer.

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