THE FLOW OF KOREAN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

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Abstract: Korean visual communication design has developed through constant interaction with the outside world. There were largely two major things to exercise an influence on the early history of Korean visual communication design. One was realism-based abstraction that stemmed from early Japanese visual communication design, and the other was a pursuit of simpler and more concise abstract formality, which followed American practices in and after the late 1950s. Since the mid-1970s, there have been continuous efforts to build an identity of Korean design, and Korean visual communication design has consequently developed. In addition, active international exchange and the emergence of the Information Age have facilitated its growth and enabled it to compete with foreign ones in the world. Korean design is expected to take the lead in international design world. To make it happen, it's required to put ceaseless efforts into creating unique design of Korean style, which represents Korean history and spirits.

Key Word: Identity, Korean visual communication, Influence, Korean style

1. Introduction
Despite short history, Korean visual communication design has developed drastically. Now it can compete with that of any other nations in the world, and it's very important to take a careful look at how it has grown to have a better understanding of it and determine some of the right directions for it in the future.

It's not easy to define design of Korean style, but works of Korean visual communication design are definitely unique enough to be different from others, and it's attempted in this study to delve into how such a unique quality had been created.

2. Introduction of Modern Design
Modern design, which appeared since the Industrial Revolution in the West, was introduced into Korea generally in the 1880s when the nation began to become enlightened. But Japanese occupation started in 1910 when well-grounded independent Korean design wasn't yet established. Japan's attempt to root out Korean culture made it declined, and few craftsmen who were able to transmit cultural heritage were left consequently.

Today's Korean visual communication design was basically launched by Koreans who studied in Japan in the 1930s. Lee Suk-jae, the first Korean who graduated from Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1928, made a contribution to teaching design and industrial arts at Ewha Womans University after the independence of the nation. Lee Sun-seok who graduated from Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1931 served as the first head design professor at Seoul National University established immediately after the independence of the nation. Lee Byeong-hyeon who graduated from Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1934 taught a method of abstract art called freeform, which featured geometric abstract patterns of Mondrian style for decoration. Condensed abstract Korean practices to convey a concise and clear message can be said to stem from them. Also Han Hong-taek's method to produce images, which was under the influence of new Japanese wood-block print popularized by Japanese painters such as Hashiguchi Koyo and Ito Shinsui, features a mix-up of Korean and Western style, and this kind of image-making method which originated in him is still used.

3. The Appearance of the First-Generation Designers
After the independence of the nation, regular college design education started in 1946 when Seoul National University offered design courses. Ewha Womans University set up art department at Yerimwon in order to start art education in October 1945 as the first art institution, but full-scale design courses weren't offered until living art department was established in 1960. Hongik University set up division of arts and craft in art college in 1958, and design department was installed in division of arts and craft only in 1964. As a matter of fact, there was no design department in universities until the 1960s except for Seoul National University, and it could be said that Seoul National University laid the foundation for modern Korean design education. Immediately after the Korean War, there was a new change in Seoul National University design curricula, as John L. Frank, an American lecturer who worked at the information and culture center of the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea introduced some of basic American design education. He taught a method of abstract art called freeform, which featured...
free composition. That was often used in basic design education in America in the 1950s, which was also called doodling and characterized by liberal plane division and subjective eclectic application of colors and texture. Although it was taught just for a very short period of time immediately after the Korean War, that exerted a huge influence on modern Korean graphics in that it introduced evoking sense of dialectical abstraction into Korean design education for the first time. At the same time, a lot of information about the trend in Western art were supplied to students from America.

In March 1958, Korea Handicraft Demonstration Center was founded as the first design promotion institute under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. That was also funded by United Nations Special Commission (USOM), the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea and International Cooperation Administration. Its foundation was very significant in Korean design history in that American-style design education and practices started to be fully applied to Korean ones. This center provided an opportunity to be directly exposed to American-style design that was called international style, and designers who studied in the United States returned home as part of its training programs, which brought a series of big changes to Korean design sector in the 1960s.

4. The Appearance of the Second-Generation Designers
In the mid-1960s when professional designers were starting to be educated, the government was aware of the importance of design. The first economy-development plan facilitated the growth of manufacturing industry, and demand for design was on the increase consequently. As consumer goods began to be mass-produced as the major target of industry, the necessity of design was accentuated. As a consequence, Korean Commerce & Art Fair was held in 1965 by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, which took Korean design to another level. This fair served as an opportunity to specialize each of design sectors separately and produced lots of new competent designers.

5. The Independent Growth of Design
Since the mid-1970s, there have been sustained efforts to build an identity of Korean design, and it has developed independently by mixing up unique Korean aesthetic consciousness and the influence of Japan and the United States in the beginning. Specifically, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games brought a huge change to design, and informed the world of the excellency of Korean visual communication design. Afterwards, diverse cultures have been grafted on it, thanks to active international exchanges, the Internet, state-of-the-art multimedia technology, and return of many Koreans who studied abroad. Korean visual communication design has kept growing under a mutual influence of different cultures. Now, Korean visual communication design successfully competes on the global stage as one of the best designs.

6. Conclusion
The beginning of Korean visual communication design was affected largely by two things. One was realism-based abstraction that originated in early Japanese one, and the other was pursuing more condensed and concise abstract formality that was introduced after the late 1950s. Owing to tremendous efforts by early designers, Korean visual communication design has grown independently, building its own identity. That is expected to take the lead in global design market, and in order to do so, there should be ceaseless efforts to create unique design of Korean overture that describes Korean history and spirits.

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