

Design Activities in Turkey: Facts and Figures

By
Gülay Hasdogan

Despite having a rather slow acceleration and occasional interruptions, the development of the industrial design profession in Turkey has a 35-year-old history. The 1960s witnessed the first signs of design awareness in a few big-scale manufacturing firms, due to their growing international relations.

Educational progress. At about the same time, in collaboration with the US Agency for International Development, the government made its first attempt to prepare a program for the development of industrial design in Turkey. This triggered the establishment of an Industrial Design Department at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara. Though these initial attempts did not reap immediate results, they nevertheless formed the basis for further developments.

Industrial Design education began in Turkey in the seventies, initially at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul, and later at METU. A professional society of industrial designers (ETD) was founded in Istanbul at about the same time. However, as all other organizations, its activities were frozen after the military take-over in 1980, with few signs of revival.

Commencing from the late 1980s, an increasing number of industrial design graduates have become socially organized and proved to be the most important promoters of the development of the Turkish design profession. At the moment, there are five educational establishments offering design degrees and the estimated number of industrial design graduates in Turkey is about 900.

The profession. The majority of the practicing industrial designers are located in in-house design groups of manufacturing companies. Consultancy-based design practitioners are generally specialized in furniture, interior design and graphic design.

In the late 1980s, a group of young designers, mainly METU graduates, founded a professional society (ETMK) in Ankara. With an additional branch in Istanbul, ETMK now has 150 members. In 1994, METU organized its first international symposium on product design, entitled "Design, Industry and Turkey". As a joint event in the same

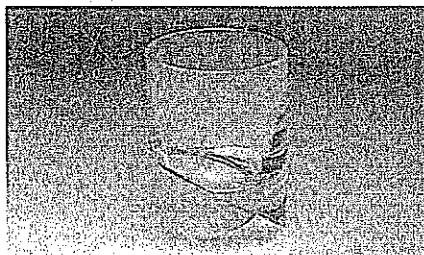
year, ETMK organized the first national design exhibition and granted awards to a selection of designs.

Industrial investment. To turn to industry, the 1980s were rather inactive years for the design profession in Turkey, because design education was not able to receive sufficient support from industry or the state. Furthermore, big-scale manufacturing firms lost their incentives to invest in Turkish Design due to changing government policies towards industrialization.

They were being encouraged to base their production on foreign license agreements. Small and middle-size manufacturing firms generally lacked design awareness and based their production on plagiarism. The factors which could discourage plagiarism in Turkish industry did not exist at that time, since Turkey did not possess a design protection law and lacked competitive vitality in domestic markets.



Shampoo bottles designed by Emre Kahraman



Crystal whiskey glass designed by Oya Senocak

Legal procedures. From the early 1990s, numerous events have had a positive effect on the design profession. One of the major factors indirectly affecting design was the establishment of customs union agreements with the European Union. Such procedures included the revision of the existing patent and copyright law and preparing a design protection law.

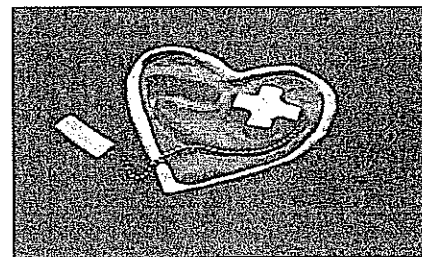
Dr. Gülay
Hasdogan,
Assistant
Professor, Middle
East Technical
University



In June 1995, a Law for the Protection of Industrial Design was approved by the Council of Ministers. Although still incomplete, this law should serve to accelerate the development of Turkish design in the future, since it will consequently discourage industrial plagiarism.

The possibilities of gaining a greater share of internationally-competitive markets has urged big scale manufacturers to reform their infrastructure. The demand to receive the quality standard of ISO 9001, which includes the standardization of a firm's design practice, has been increasing. At the moment there are about 70 firms which have already received TS-ISO 9001.

Information. Design-related periodicals in Turkey are very few in number. There are five popular publications which include interior design, architecture and product design. Despite their limited



Magnetic button designed by Hakan Gencol

target group, there are also two periodicals directly related to product design: the ETMK News Bulletin and the METU Design Department's publication of student progress.

The establishment of a design council has been long sought-after. Though State support has been solicited, no positive signs have yet been forthcoming.

Despite the many obstacles, the design profession in Turkey has demonstrated its first signs of rapid development during the last five years. GH

Contact:
Middle East Technical University
Department of Industrial Design
06531 Ankara, Turkey
TEL +90 312 210 1000
FAX +90 312 210 1251
E-mail: id@vitruvius.arch.metu.edu.tr