

Buddhist philosophy, nature and harmony:
implications for product design

by

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to dad, for the support you gave for 32 years...

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the Thesis, and to the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the Thesis.



Jirawat Vongphantuset

28 June 1999

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Vongphantuset'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jirawat Vongphantuset
28 June 1999

Abstract

This study examines the idea of Buddhist philosophy in its understanding of nature, both outside (surroundings) and inside (self), and seeks to find ways of assimilating these understandings in the design of utilitarian objects. These could then exist in harmony with nature in both physical and philosophical terms.

As a designer who grew up in an Eastern culture, I am interested in Buddhist philosophy which teaches me to understand the nature of self, and of living in harmony with the surrounding nature. Also, the opportunity to live and to visit many places in Tasmania, has provided the luxury of experiencing different aspects of nature first hand.

I have brought these two personal experiences together in the design of utilitarian interior objects. The objects and the exhibition are inspired by the Buddhist concepts of: Enlightenment, *Samsara*, Mind, *Samadhi* and *Puccha - Vissajjana*.

The study is informed by the works of designers and sculptors such as: Shiro Kuramata, Masatoshi Sakaegi, Bruno Munari, Anthony Caro and Andy Goldsworthy whose works are inspired by nature and which have, also, intrinsic beauty through their simplicity. It also looks into Shaker Design, Thai Craft, and, briefly into Modern and Post Modern movements for possible connections or contradictions.

I feel that as I practice designing these objects, I am in a way making a journey into myself and learning more about my own identity than I understood before.

The outcome of this personal approach to design, informed and extended by my reading and experiment research activity, is a group of unique design works which embody an Eastern perspective towards natural harmony, synthesised with Western functional utility. I believe this makes an original and significant contribution to the field of design.

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