

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Yana Dvoretzka, PhD

New Bulgarian University, Department of Fine Arts

for the candidature for the scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts,
professional field 8.2. Fine Art - for the needs of the Design Department, NBU

of Maria Nikolaeva Milichin and the documents submitted for the award of the scientific degree

"Doctor", as well as a scientific thesis on:

DESIGN METHODS IN WEB SPACES CONSTRUCTION

Scientific supervisor: prof. Elena Todorova, PhD

I. General presentation of the applicant

The candidate Maria Nikolaeva Milichin is a well-known person to the members of the jury from New Bulgarian University - a graduate of NBU, with a previous Bachelor's degree in Social Activities and a Master's degree in European Studies and Social Sciences from Sofia University "Saint Kliment Ohridski". She graduated from NBU's BA Fashion in 2011 and MA Fashion, Styling and Business Strategy in 2016 in one of the strongest classes led by designers Vesselin Yordanov and Sandra Klincheva. Maria Milichin's graduation project is the basis of the M2V label, created and developed together with her colleagues from the Master's program. Over the years of its existence M2V has emerged as one of the strong young brands on the Bulgarian fashion scene with an aesthetic signature and recognizable presence.

I have known Maria since her years as a student in our BA program and as her teacher I can say that besides perseverance, dedication and responsibility, she was distinguished by her intellectual approach, critical thinking and creative flare - qualities that she demonstrates today as our colleague. Maria Milichin's two educational backgrounds resonate in her research interests and teaching expertise: Design psychology, Design history and theory, Forecasting and trends, Digital fashion product.

II. Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms.

The significance of the research "DESIGN METHODS IN WEB SPACES CONSTRUCTION" lies in its impact on both scientific and applied aspects of web development.

The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of how to create effective and user-friendly web spaces. It extends knowledge of the principles, processes and methodologies involved in web interface design and suggests innovative ways of conceptualising and structuring web spaces. The results of such research can lead to the development of new design theories and frameworks.

Understanding user behaviour and preferences in designing web spaces can serve to create more engaging and effective interfaces.

Practical implications of the research include improving web design practices by applying evidence-based design strategies, leading to more effective and user-centered outcomes.

Understanding design methods helps to create web spaces that facilitate positive interaction with users, and improved design contributes to increased user satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

III. Aims and objectives of the dissertation.

The main goal of this dissertation is to develop a system of design methods that serve as tools for building an accessible, aesthetically pleasing, and effective web space. The following tasks are set which take the research to the achievement of the set goal:

- Review, study and analysis the existing literature on the topic;
- Investigate previous attempts to create and apply various design techniques in visual and digital design;
- Analysis of existing design methods for web space construction;
- Examination of the rationale for creating and refining design techniques as a necessary act of updating, repositioning and enriching the digital environment;
- Introducing a multidisciplinary approach to designing up-to-date design;
- Presenting the effectiveness of combining different art disciplines and fields of science;
- Formulating universal approaches and tools for designing and implementing digital and web design.

IV. Relevance and state of knowledge.

It is pointless to discuss the relevance of the problem at hand - 65% (5.35 billion) of the world's population has access to the Internet, and worldwide Internet users spend an average of 6.6 hours per day on the Web, using it for information, social networking, entertainment, shopping, and other activities. This makes the construction of web spaces one of the most vibrant, relevant and

competitive areas of design, which clearly needs both an analytical framework and constant updating of construction methods.

The thesis is divided into three parts: I. Scientific design methods in web space construction, II. Effective design methods in web space construction and III. Contemporary design methods in web space construction. These are in fact three perspectives on the research problem, but they intersect and justify each other through different sciences (psychology, neuroscience, physics, mathematics, marketing, etc.) and their fields. In her attempt to construct a system of methods for building web spaces, the PhD student carries out a precise analysis of the state of the problem - not only through the usual historical and chronological overview, but also through the crossing of the topic with all the fields of scientific knowledge that are relevant. Not only the main paradigms of design are examined, but also their concrete interaction with the user, which brings us back to the practical relevance of the research. At the same time, in the ocean of available information, the PhD student has been able to synthesise the resources that will most adequately support her research thesis.

V. Accuracy in citing a representative number of authors.

The bibliography of the dissertation contains a total of 152 titles. Cited are similar research works on design, classifications of design research, articles written on research on the topic. The selected sources show thoroughness of the research and ability to build a sound research framework.

VI. Correspondence of the chosen methodology and research methodology with the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation.

In the dissertation work of the doctoral candidate Maria Milichin a variety of methodological techniques have been used in order to solve the set tasks. Among them are the method of conducting a snapshot study of the examples, the method of documentary analysis, comparison, synthesis and systematisation of the collected data. Without any claim to comprehensiveness and chronology, the study appears as substantiating evidence from various sources that prove the main research thesis. The dissertation compares technological techniques and presents numerous examples that are used in modern principles of web development. The findings lead to basic and constructive conclusions that subsequently prove the overall thesis, which states that web development involves a series of processes, a combination of techniques and methods, and a combination of visually appealing and interactive elements - a process based on interdisciplinary research theses, encompassing with equal emphasis aesthetic, structural, content and functional components in different visual-digital formats.

VII. Summary of contributions

As already mentioned, web design has become an integral part of our daily lives. To a large extent, it is a connecting element between the user and all other areas of design - fashion, interior, graphic, product, etc. The supply of information, product, service, social connectivity, forms of entertainment, etc. in today's society is moving at avalanche speed into the digital space at the expense of traditional sources. In this context, Maria Millichin's dissertation emerges as an absolutely necessary step in understanding the processes involved in creating a web environment. Until now, the Bulgarian scientific literature lacks such a thorough study and detailed classification of design algorithms and combining methodologies as a function of creating innovative strategies and concepts in the construction of web spaces. Among the specific contributions of the research are:

- Proving the need for a system of different design techniques when building web spaces.
- In-depth review and analysis of different design approaches, classification of methodologies and systematisation of their features and characteristics.
- Exploration of the functioning of design tools and approaches in the process of building visual and digital design through their impact on the user.

In addition, this research establishes a solid foundation for future work related to the design of digital spaces, the interdisciplinary interaction between scientific fields, and the skillful creation of visual aesthetics and functionality required in contemporary web design. Undoubtedly, the theoretical framework is capable of producing practical results - namely designing and refining design products that meet the specific requirements of the respective target audiences.

VIII. Presence of personal input in the gathering and analysis of empirical data.

This dissertation is among the first researches conducted in Bulgarian in the field of the origin and logic of design, the study of the structure and arrangement of the final product. It is likely to prove indispensable theoretical teaching material (which is currently lacking) for students and lecturers involved in web design and graphic advertising, as well as for a wider audience interested in this field.

The topic of using design methods in designing web spaces is not new, but presenting it through the interrelationship of web product creation with scientific fields such as psychology, medicine, and the social sciences is not only an original perspective, but a real contribution to a field as practical as web design.

Understanding user behaviour, preferences, and motivations are the foundation of creating web products that meet expectations. Psychology has a huge impact on the visual design of user interfaces. Elements such as colour, layout, typography and imagery are chosen based on psychological principles to evoke certain emotions, convey information effectively and guide user behaviour. In addition, the dissertation draws attention to the enormous impact that the digital environment has on modern society, or as the PhD student herself notes:

"With its positives and negatives, the internet and its content have become part of mental health - an intrinsic element of the human ability to seek, interpret and understand information."

The study demonstrates the benefits and importance of interdisciplinary features, components and tools in web design. It also highlights the essential interrelationship between different scientific fields to achieve contemporary, professional, effective and aesthetic design.

IX. Evaluation of the compliance of the abstract with the main points and contributions of the thesis.

The abstract is logically structured and reflects clearly and accurately the content of the dissertation. The aims and objectives of the research as well as the theoretical and practical contributions of the dissertation are well formulated.

X. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation.

Two articles have been published on the dissertation topic in refereed scientific journals:

Milichin, M. (2021). Types of webpages and their main roles in the digital space, Collection of scientific publications of the Design Department 7/2021 - 2022, 141-153. New Bulgarian University. Sofia.

Milichin, M. (2023). Design thinking - creative creative process and rationality, Collection of scientific publications of the Department of Design 8/2022 - 2023, 201-213. New Bulgarian University. Sofia.

XI. Conclusion

Maria Millicin's PhD thesis explores the complex and ever-evolving digital landscape of web design, shedding light on new conceptions and contributing significantly to the existing body of knowledge in this field. The comprehensive analysis and innovative methodology of this study not only answer critical questions, but also open perspectives for further research. The findings presented here outline significant potential for practical applications in the field of web construction

and will serve as a valuable foundation for future research endeavours and scholarly discussions.

With conviction, I propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Maria Nikolaeva Milichin at the level 8.2 Fine Arts (Fashion) - Department of Design, Doctoral Program in Design, New Bulgarian University.

Date

15.02.2024

Signature: