

# Adaptation as a basis of triggering long-term design and fashion trends

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In everyday life we experience a lot of objects, products and pieces of art which we can explicitly qualify as being liked or disliked. Although we are obviously very fast and unambiguous in processing the aesthetic value of most items we are familiar with and we are often very clear in preferring specific colors, shapes or form languages ("Formensprache") (Carbon, 2010), such preferences do not seem to be very static. When we look for preferences in a historic context (historic from a personal as well as a cultural perspective), we find clear signs of dynamics of preferences. For instance, the common cut of jeans in the 1970s was flared (bell bottom jeans), in the 1980s it was the drainpipe cut, in the 1990s many consumers took Baggy Jeans, whereas the early 21<sup>st</sup> century was dominated by hipsters. A clear cycle of preference for the Formensprache of cars was recently documented (Carbon, 2010) from being very round in the 1950s to ultra-sharp in the 1980s, back to round forms in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, such trends are not only followed by single, very expressive individuals, who want to strive against the main stream, but are followed, after a while, by a mass of people. By analyzing such phenomena of synchronization, psychology can get deeper insights into the development and establishment of so-called personal taste.

Personal taste is by definition one's own specific taste or, defined as contrast to shared taste as "subsuming all attractiveness standards of a single judge that give rise to replicable disagreement with shared taste" (Honekopp, 2006). In the domain of facial attractiveness Honekopp (2006) calculated that personal taste explains about as the same portion of variance as shared taste. Still, this means that our taste is also very much influenced or generated by commonsense. In the domain of consumer products, this shared part is obviously documented by strong preferences for design-oriented products such as the common admiration of red Ferraris or the attraction generated by computer, audio or other technical devices from Apple Inc. One explanation for this shared taste is a kind of synchronization of taste (German: "Geschmack") by the mere presence of stylistic forms on the market. Based on the ideas of "diffusion of innovations" (Rogers, 2003), innovations are communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. First, so-called "innovators" adopt the innovation, for instance a new fancy cut for Jeans—let's hypothetically think of some brand-new Jeans with distinctive white-blue rhombs always accompanied by two depictions with yellow lions placed on the backward trouser pockets. As innovators are mostly opinion leaders and are, thus, multipliers for presenting and disseminating new ideas of this specific fashion line, they will, for instance, wear these jeans on several public platforms. Other consumers called "early adopters" will follow this model strengthening the presence of the new models. After a while, many communication channels show instances of the new fashion line. Although common consumers are known to reject too innovative products at first sight (Hekkert, Snelders, & van Wieringen, 2003; Leder & Carbon, 2005) due to their inherent conservatism (Moulson & Sproles, 2000), they will integrate them after a while and by elaborating them into their visual habits (Carbon & Leder, 2005). In the end, a new trend is set (Carbon, Ditye, & Leder, 2006).

One major basis of the integration of new stimuli into the existing visual habits is the cognitive phenomenon of adaptation. When we visually inspect extreme exemplars of one specific kind, our visual system automatically adapts towards these exemplars. We cannot do anything against it, but the mere processing of visual information changes our visual habits. Although most people in the Western hemisphere know the general facial configuration of Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" very accurately, mere exposition to a distorted version of the original changes the internal representation of this masterpiece (Carbon & Leder, 2006)—people identify versions which are slightly changed towards the distorted version as more veridical than the original version itself. Such adaptation effects are not only demonstrated in the domain of perception (Webster & MacLin, 1999), but seem to affect the memory traces as well; at least for hours (Carbon et al., 2007) or even days (Carbon & Ditye, in press). It was additionally shown that adaptation effects do not only change the internal representation in terms of memorizing the configuration of specific objects but also the preferences for such objects (e.g., Rhodes, Jeffery, Watson, Clifford, & Nakayama, 2003).

## Further reading

Carbon, C. C. (2010). The cycle of preference: Long-term dynamics of aesthetic appreciation *Acta Psychologica*, 134(2), 233-244. (Link »)

Carbon, C. C., & Leder, H. (2005). The Repeated Evaluation Technique (RET). A method to capture dynamic effects of innovativeness and attractiveness. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 19(5), 587-601. (Link »)

Carbon, C. C., & Leder, H. (2006). The Mona Lisa effect: is 'our' Lisa fame or fake? *Perception*, 35(3), 411-414. (Link »)

Carbon, C. C., Strobach, T., Langton, S., Harsanyi, G., Leder, H., & Kovacs, G. (2007). Adaptation

effects of highly familiar faces: fast and long lasting. *Memory and Cognition*, 35(8), 1966-1976. (Link »)

Leder, H., & Carbon, C. C. (2005). Dimensions in appreciation of car interior design. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 19(5), 603-618. (Link »)

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### 1. Aesthetic properties of everyday objects

(2007) Stich, C. | Knäuper, B. | Eisermann, J. | Leder, H.  
*Perceptual and Motor Skills* pp.1139-1168 Cited 0 times.

### 2. Dimensions in appreciation of car interior design

(2005) Leder, H. | Carbon, C.-C.  
*Applied Cognitive Psychology* pp.603-618 **Cited 6 times.**

### 3. Dimensions in the appreciation of car interior design

(2004) Leder, H. | Carbon, C.C.  
*Applied Cognitive Psychology* pp. **Cited 1 times.**

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[<http://www.ihdp.uni-bonn.de/html/publications/proc...>]

### 2. A model of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic judgments Helmut...

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[<http://www.moz.ac.at/user/billm/seminare/2007/Lede...>]

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[<http://epubl.luth.se/1402-1617/2007/034/LTU-EX-070...>]

### 4. Journal of Interior Design Volume 31 Number 3 2006 Theory Research...

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Journal of Interior Design Volume 31 Number 3 2006 Theory Research Education Practice perspectives  
6 special issue: Design methods and process Inside Out: Reconstructing Interior Lives in New Orleans  
Alex Bitterman and Daniel Baldwin Hess, Ph.D.  
[[http://www.hcs.ohiou.edu:16080/jid%20\(%201%20\)/31....](http://www.hcs.ohiou.edu:16080/jid%20(%201%20)/31....)]

#### 5. Microsoft Word - 07\_Carbon.doc

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When design innovation is realized in an overly advanced way, the resulting designs tend to be rejected by perceivers at first glance, but seem to be favored when perceivers become more familiar with them (Carbon & Leder, 2005b).

[<http://www.uni-salzburg.at/pls/portal/docs/1/55997...>]

#### 6. URBAN DESIGN: GREEN DIMENSIONS This page intentionally left blank...

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[<http://www.uop.edu.jo/e-courses/architectural%20de...>]

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Ensuring Tank Car Safety A Government and Industry Partnership Proceedings from a Public Information Meeting Federal Railroad Administration Washington, D.C. December 18, 1996 1 Ensuring Railroad Tank Car Safety, National Research Council, Transportation ...

[<http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/safety/program.pdf>]

#### 8. Comfort studies on aircraft interior sound and vibration

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