Surprises:

So, yes! The world of so–called 'all–encompassing design' is nothing new! It was conceived during the Art Nouveau period, recreated by the Bauhaus, and spread through various institutional clones and commercial imitations – but it seems that only in our age of all–encompassing capitalism has it really come true. The reason for this is not hard to find. In the age of mass production, the commodity itself is an ideology, and the Ford Model T is its own advert, appealing in its kind of extreme homogeneity. However, that's not enough anymore! Consumers had to be pulled in, and feedback mechanisms had to be built into production (one of the origins of modern design). As competition intensified and new 'seduction' techniques were introduced, packaging became almost as important as the product! (The subjectivisation of the commodity, already evident in streamlined design, then became increasingly surreal; in fact, surrealism was soon used in advertising). In our time, this historical process has taken a qualitative leap: the 'flexible specialisation' of post–Fordist production has allowed commodities to be constantly adapted and markets to be infinitely segmented, so that a product can be mass–produced, yet still look trendy, personalised and precisely targeted to each individual. Nowadays, desires are not only recorded in commodities, but also materialised: in catalogs and online, consumers are greeted with 'Hey, that's me!' This timeless portrayal of the 'miniature self' is one of the factors driving the expansion of design. But what happens when this commodity machine – now conveniently hidden from public view – collapses? What happens when the environment collapses, the market crashes, or sweatshop workers across the globe suddenly refuse to continue working?

Can you believe it? Design has become so inflated that packaging is now replacing the product almost entirely! Whether it's so–called 'contemporary British art' or a presidential candidate, so–called 'brand equity' – the ability to embed a product name into the minds of an attention–starved public – has become a fundamental requirement in many areas of society! ––has become a fundamental need in many areas of society! That's why design must be so important! Even more ironically, when the product itself is no longer even a physical object, it becomes even more important to capture the consumer's attention and keep the image memorable! This was evident in the mega–corporate mergers of the Reagan–Thatcher era! At the time, the upstart megacorporations promoted almost nothing, except their newly coined acronyms and logos! Especially when the economy was in the doldrums under George I, this 'branding' became a way of propping up the value of shares, with no regard for the realities of productivity and profitability! Even more outrageously, the Internet has recently given new value to 'company name recognition', as if chasing a shell of glory! For '.com' companies, this 'brand equity' has become a necessity for survival! The recent cleansing of these virtual companies is like a Darwinian evolution of online names, with the unqualified being eliminated!

Referencing
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