

Gustavo Orlando Fudaba  
Curcio  
Maria Cecília Loschiavo  
dos Santos

P

POPULAR FURNITURE:  
DESIGN TO THE NEW  
MIDDLE CLASS

ABSTRACT

It is the focus of this paper the ability of architects and designers to choose, distribute and articulate objects inside Brazilian popular houses. The social group targeted by this research was the so-called New Brazilian Middle Class. Given the impossibility of hiring the services of an architect or interior designer, either for lack of capital, whether for cultural reasons, the New Middle Class, largest consumer group in the country, ultimately choose and buy objects and household furniture without the help of a professional. This empirical selection process results in ineffective arrangements that hinder the movement through the rooms and end up harming the life quality of those families. The present study analyzed the process of designing, editing and broadcasting a pioneer strategy by a popular architecture and design magazine, first published in 2010. Apartments and houses constructed by the federal popular housing program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* were used as templates. The communication, the language editing, the strategy of content production on decoration, renovation and building ideas targeting the New Middle Class, as well as their effects, are presented on the Conclusion chapter of this research.

KEYWORDS

Home furnishings. Design. Middle Class. Manufactured Goods.

DOI: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.11606/ISSN.2317-2762.v23i41p74-87](http://dx.doi.org/10.11606/ISSN.2317-2762.v23i41p74-87)

MÓVEL POPULAR:  
DESIGN PARA A NOVA  
CLASSE MÉDIA

RESUMO

Este trabalho traz uma avaliação da capacidade de atuação de arquitetos e designers na escolha, distribuição e articulação dos objetos no ambiente da habitação popular no Brasil. Tem-se como grupo social alvo da pesquisa a Nova Classe Média Brasileira. Diante da impossibilidade de contratação dos serviços de um arquiteto ou *designer* de interiores, seja por falta de capital, seja por questão cultural, a Nova Classe Média, maior consumidora do país, acaba por escolher e comprar objetos e mobiliário doméstico sem o auxílio de um profissional da área. Esse processo empírico de escolha resulta em arranjos ineficazes que dificultam a circulação no espaço e acabam por prejudicar a qualidade de vida dessas famílias. Neste artigo, apresenta-se uma análise do processo de concepção, edição e estratégia de veiculação de revista popular de arquitetura e *design* pioneira no país, lançada em 2010. Unidades habitacionais do programa federal de produção de moradias Minha Casa, Minha Vida foram usadas como modelos de laboratório no decorrer da investigação. Comunicação, adaptação de linguagem, conceito de produção de conteúdo de arquitetura, design, reforma e construção para a Nova Classe Média e seus efeitos integram os resultados deste trabalho.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Mobiliário doméstico. Design. Classe média. Manufaturados.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The present article presents the results of a Doctoral research which has as its element of analysis the insertion of the popular furniture in the so-called popular house, considered the dwelling of the New Middle Class, which represents the majority of the Brazilian population in the second decade of the XXI. Popular furniture is the denomination of the furniture present in a popular house. Its design (form, function) is specific and defines the quality of use of the house's different environments. This thesis presents the results of an applied academic research on that subject, demonstrating the ability of architects and designers to act together with the New Brazilian Middle Class, using as a media outlet the publication of a magazine specific to the market of popular architecture and design, something new in Brazil. The results of this investigation, which began in 2002 at the University of São Paulo as part of a scientific initiation research supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation, provided material to a Masters degree dissertation, articles published on printed and digital academic journals, the book *Madeira: matéria-prima para o design* (CURCIO; KEPPLER; MUYLEAERT, 2011), and the publication in 2010 of a new magazine on restoration, construction and organization of interior spaces, with a nationwide monthly circulation of 250,000 copies.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

After the redemocratization process occurred in the country during the middle 1980's, the Brazilian social pyramid suffered an important modification. The consolidation of the New Middle Class, formerly known as C-Class, increased the possibilities of the publishing market to invest on new products, following the tendency of creation of specific brands directed to that socioeconomic stratum already adopted by other industries since the beginning of the 1990's. In that sense, the creation of a design manual specific to that public – which in 2009 became the majority of the Brazilian population – served not only as a platform providing information relative to interior and furniture design, but also as a means of communication between the retail market and its consumers. The combination of publishing and advertisement investments yielded the creation of a new niche of publications in the Brazilian market: the popular architecture and design magazine. The present research had as one of its objectives the analysis of the inception of furniture in the context of the popular house, the search for alternatives of furniture placement using pieces available in the market, and the elaboration of an editorial strategy specific to an architecture magazine targeting the New Middle Class.

## 3. DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE FOR A NEW AGE

Social-interest dwellings were significantly affected concerning their possibilities of spacial arrangement, having its internal space reduced over the years. Over the last ten years, habitational programs such as *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* developed by the federal government democratized the process of

purchasing low-cost homes produced in partnership with big construction companies and local City Halls. Those programs provided the population an easier access to lines of credit, encouraging the private sector to start building popular homes. That established a strategy of supplying the habitational deficit without the dependence of the public system of house production. However, the furniture present in those dwellings – produced by the public sector as well as by the government – were not adapted enough to the configuration of its internal space.

According to a study conducted by *Fundação Getúlio Vargas* in August of 2008, around 17,4 million people entered the now-called New Brazilian Middle Class between 2002 and 2008. According to the *Salão Imobiliário de São Paulo*, popular homes (houses costing less than R\$ 115,000.00) represented half the total of home sales in 2009. It must be said that the present research had as its object of study families with a total income between R\$ 1,064.00 and R\$ 4,561.00 per month, and that the average area of the researched dwellings stayed around 50 m<sup>2</sup>, varying according to the geographic region studied.

#### 4. SPEAKING TO THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS: MAGAZINES

According to data provided by *Instituto Verificador de Circulação*<sup>1</sup> (IVC) in 2009, six of the ten best-selling weekly magazines in Brazil targeted the C-Class. *Viva Mais!*, *AnaMaria*, *Tititi*, *Contigo*, *Minha Novela* e *Malu* occupied fifth to tenth place, respectively. The other top five places were occupied by news magazines such as *Veja*, *Época*, *Istoé*, and by lifestyle magazine *Caras*, the best-selling magazine title in Brazil. That list showed that there were no titles dedicated to architecture targeting that specific population.

After the implementation of *Plano Real* (a national economic stabilization plan) in 1994, the country saw an explosion of popular magazines. With a stable economy, the population from D and C-Classes experienced a real increase in their income. The growth in sales of superfluous products – yogurts, soft drinks, biscuits – came together with the increase in magazine circulation.

*With low prices and articles mostly related to TV programs and domestic life, those publications reached sales of 1 million copies per week. Popular titles published by Editora Abril alone (AnaMaria, Contigo!, Viva Mais! and Minha Novela) sold around 50 million copies in 2002 (SCALZO, 2011, p. 48).*

Between 1996 and 2002, that segment was one of the responsables for the growth of the magazine business in Brazil, which went from 300 million to 600 million units per year.

In 2010, four new popular titles were released by big publishing companies: *Máxima* (first monthly trend magazine), *Minha Casa, Decorar Mais por Menos* and *Construir Mais por Menos*. The success of those titles — parallel to the strengthening of popular titles already in the market — is due to the fact that they represent a new way of important brands to reach potential consumers.

<sup>1</sup>The *Instituto Verificador de Circulação* (IVC) is a non-profit Brazilian official body responsible for the auditing of the circulation of the main newspapers and magazines in Brazil, and is considered the principle reference in that field. Founded in 1961 as a department of the *Associação Brasileira de Propaganda* (ABP), it became autonomous in 1965, gaining a notable reputation throughout its history. With a tripartite executive board, the Institute is commanded with absolute equity, having nine representatives in each one of its main categories: associates, advertisers, advertisement agencies and editors. IVC has offices in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo, as well as audit teams travelling all over the country. Today, more than 450 publications, between newspapers and magazines, are affiliated to IVC.

Brands directed to a high-power purchasing public launched sub-brands or exclusive lines at affordable prices. Deca, a Duratex S/A division which produces metal products and sanitary ware, released Link, a line of taps and accessories with the promise of lowering the prices while keeping the product's quality. In the same manner, the paint division of BASF (a German chemical industry) responsible for the production of *Tintas Suvnil* in Brazil, released the popular brand Glasurit, which began to offer options like a reduced color palette and small but more affordable ink tubes. The retailers specialized in planned furniture retailers (furniture made to measure) now compete with popular brands as *Italínea Indústria de Móveis Ltda.* and *New*, a division of *Única Indústria de Móveis Ltda.*, owner of lines such as Dellano and Favorita, with products targeting classes A and B. The investment in advertisement made by those companies and other similar ones made possible for the editors to finance new titles as well as to expand those which already existed.

## 5. NEW MIDDLE CLASS, NEW DWELLINGS

The population's access to credit and the consolidation of the New Middle Class in Brazil were presented as elements responsible for the economic growth experienced by the country during the first decade and half of the second decade of the XXI century, especially between 2000 and 2012. "*Although in a very irregular way, the growth of the GDP was enough to leverage consumption, protected by the inflation control and by the inflation target system regime adopted by the federal government since 1999*" (PASSOS, 2013, p.18). It is known that the inflation target regime — which uses the interest rate to control price increase — can both stimulate or not consumption by means of credit manipulation, which implies both the acceleration or deceleration of financing offers. That process can directly influence the consumer's purchase intention and, consequently, contributes to the freezing of prices.

Federal government politics aiming the increase of income distribution, the consolidation of formal jobs among the poor, the currency stability and the increase of industrial production and consumption promoted a better social inclusion of the masses, reducing poverty and bringing social improvements to the population. This consumer's profile has been the object of study of private industry and service sector managers. An evidence of that is Instituto Data Popular, an institute created in 2001 to develop researches on the C, D and E classes. "*To understand low-income consumers, companies have to understand their reality and their needs, and to develop specific strategies*" (BARKI, 2006, p.37).

According to Rocha and Silva (2008), in order to gain access to that market, it is necessary to create products and processes which can meet the needs of that group of consumers through innovative and creative solutions at affordable prices and using new channels. It is exactly about that that specialized magazines — which began to be consumed after the stabilization of the currency, having its explosion in sales in the 2000's — aroused the interest of industry and retailers brands to invest in advertisement specific to that consumer. Therefore, editorial projects viewing the New Middle Class, such as *Máxima* (trend) and

*Minha Casa* (architecture) were able to gather the needed financing for their releases.

According to the information provided by *Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos*, a federal institution linked to *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (Ipea), the New Middle Class's income in 2012 stayed between R\$ 1,064.00 and R\$ 4,561.00. In 2015, IBGE informed that it oscillated between R\$ 3,152.01 and R\$ 7,880.00. Between 2004 and 2010, around 32 million people ascended to the category of Middle Class, and 19,3 million left the poverty line. It was in 2009 that the New Middle Class began to represent more than 50% of the Brazilian population. In comparison, in 1992 the same social group corresponded to 34,96% of the population. In 2009, the 94,9 million Brazilians who constituted the New Middle Class corresponded to 50,5% of the total population – they were dominant by electoral and economic viewpoints. Holding a buying power of 46,24%, they surpassed classes A and B (44,12%) and D and E (9,65%).

### 5.1 The home of the New Middle Class

Contrary to the habitational model practiced during the 1990's, devised from orthogonal plans and the corbusian model – which did not stop being used in Brazil –, the new configuration of the middle class family home had an impact on the typology and internal space of the dwellings, following patterns dictated by the market, with cut plans and balconies incorporated to the apartment after the *Habite-se*<sup>2</sup> had been issued, and not registered as part of the apartment's net usable area. As an example of the new configuration of that type of inclusive home, the present research selected at the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program's showroom the equipped home's aspirational models projected by architects and designers. The analysis of the selection verified a small offer of appliances and furniture adequate to the space itself as well as to low-budget buyers.

In the decorated apartments, there was an abuse of high-end home appliances, cabinets made to measure and luxury furniture found in shops which normally target the A/B-Class market. Regardless of the wrong pattern of the internal arrangements, the apartments' plans were coherent with the needs of the average family belonging to the middle class. The two and three-bedroom apartments, averaging between 40 m<sup>2</sup> and 80 m<sup>2</sup>, are equipped with a master bedroom, a children's bedroom and, for the most part, a third bedroom which can be reverted to become part of the living room, adding spaciousness to the social area of the apartment (an effective strategy to generate sales).

If the building materials industry adapted itself to a new demand offering budget product lines – as already mentioned on a previous chapter –, the construction companies did not fall behind. For example, Cyrela Brazil Realty, a construction company and real state developer headquartered in São Paulo ranking between the 25 most valuable Brazilian brands in 2010, created in 2006 the Living Construtora, responsible for affordable units most of them targeting the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program. In 2009, Living Construtora began to operate as an independent arm within the group. The same strategy was used by the construction company Gafisa S/A, also specialized in high standard consumers, which acquired the brand Tenda in 2008, a company focused in economic

<sup>2</sup> *Habite-se* is the name of a document issued by the local City Hall which authorizes the actual use of buildings or buildings for housing. It proves that a project or building was built following the requirements established by the City Hall for the approval of projects. Originally, the term referred only to residential buildings.

<sup>3</sup> IPI (*Imposto sobre Produtos Industrializados*) is a federal tax on industrialized products.

<sup>4</sup> White line is the general designation given to larger household appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, microwaves and freezers, which historically have as their main purpose to meet a common home's basic needs.

<sup>5</sup> A 60 years old company, Casas Bahia is today a network of stores which commercializes home appliances, furniture and home utility products. The brand is managed by Via Varejo, a company which operates in the BMF Bovespa (VVAR11) stock exchange market and is regarded as one of the biggest retailers in the world. Casas Bahia headquarters are located in the city of São Caetano do Sul, part of the greater São Paulo. Today, the company has 55 thousand employees working in 650 stores distributed over eighteen States as well as in the Federal District. The Casas Bahia brand is currently evaluated at R\$ 1,2 billion and is recognized by Interbrand's Most valuable Brazilian brands ranking as the most valuable retailer in the country. That evaluation represents an increase of 20% over 2013. Casas Bahia also received the Top of Mind DataFolha prize for eight consecutive years in the category "Furniture and Appliances stores".

enterprises. In that same year, Gafisa owned seventeen stores and was present in 100 cities distributed among twelve States in Brazil. In 2016, the brand had already built 75,000 homes and owned thirty stores.

Aware of the movement created by the new apartments' demands, furniture stores, helped by the reduction of IPI<sup>3</sup> on furniture and white line products<sup>4</sup>, tried to reach all those new emerging consumers. Smaller modular furniture lines (for example, kitchen cabinets' depth of 45 cm being reduced to 35 cm) began to appear as alternatives in popular retail stores. In the same manner, digital sales brought new possibilities to the consumer more and more connected to the internet. It is no accident that an adapted version of the classic *Swan* chair, designed by Arne Jacobsen in the mid-1950's, has been present on Casas Bahia's<sup>5</sup> catalog for the last eight years. Accessible through installment payment plans, its price can be divided up to ten payments.

The speed of information and the media explosion during the last decades are two factors responsible for bringing the aesthetic standards of the A/B-Classes to the New Middle Class. In practice, in the same way that department stores bring prestigious designers like Alexandre Herculano to sign collections targeting A/B-Class consumers, popular furniture stores have appropriated the minimalist aesthetics and models of modernist tradition — which are often repaginated and adapted mainly to the quality of the raw material — in their portfolios. One example is the popular wallpaper line sold in *home-centers* and signed by Marcelo Rosebaum — a famous interior designer who had a "before-after" segment on *Caldeirão do Huck*, a popular Rede Globo TV program aired on Saturdays.

## 6. THE LABORATORY: CONTENT CREATION METHOD

The possession of house objects, with an emphasis on furniture, constitutes an element of social positioning (even though subliminal) to an individual belonging to the New Middle Class. The social areas of the house, specially the living room and kitchen, get more attention from popular furniture users because of the roll they play as a showcase of the house to society. The reason for that is that those are the rooms used to receive friends and relatives as well as the main stage of family reunions.

*Most of the time, such increased mobility, commutability, and convenience are only the results of a forced adaptation to the lack of space. It is the poverty that invents. And if the old dining room has been overburdened by heavy moral convention, the 'modern' interiors, in their ingenuity, produce the effect of functional expedients. The 'absence of style' is first the absence of space, and the maximal functionality is a solution to adversity where the home, without losing its confinement, loses its internal organization (BAUDRILLARD, 2004, p.23).*

The main focus of the present work is not to investigate alternatives to acquiring objects, but how to choose them correctly and, mainly, how to adapt them to the small size housing of the metropolis, optimizing the use of space.



This is the main justification for the feasibility of designing a publication for that purpose. But its success lies in its effectiveness as a design manual, not as a source of merely aesthetic and aspirational ideas.

To support this choice, three basic language principles of popular trend titles applicable to architectural and design magazines are suggested:

a) **To spread numerous titles per page:** The heritage of digital media, apart from the immediacy generated by the constant updating of information, is the reader's lack of patience to devote himself to long texts. Faced with this, it becomes necessary that attractive photographs, together with the so-called "reading entries", be present on the page. If an economy or trend magazine frequently use columns filled with plain text, the same can not be done in popular titles. The "reading entries" are secondary titles which cut out the main text by drawing the reader's attention to each fragment. The reader can opt to read or not each small part of the text.

*In order to divide a text of 2,500 characters into three parts and to add flashy titles (reading entries), you need to reduce it to 2,000 characters, but believe me: cutting is a blessing! You end up throwing away what was perfectly disposable. And, with three new reading entries, your article will get double attention (PAPAROUNIS, 2014).*

b) **To write as you speak:** In the context of a newspaper office, it's common to hear a perfectly clear account from a reporter who has just arrived from an investigation which, after being put on paper, becomes incomprehensible. Usually, it happens because one has the tendency to unnecessarily rummage the trivial, making the message prolix. In the case of an assembly scheme of an object, mobile or electronic device, this is even more evident. Most users have difficulties interpreting product manuals. Thus, any title targeting consumers of popular housing and related equipment should use the most appropriate language to that group. Popular magazine readers seek to reproduce the look of the environment in question based just on the images displayed on the article. Just a few of them read the text.

*Efficient communication depends on the use of resources which necessarily contain an aesthetic component. The information design's goal resembles the traditional rhetoric comprehension as follows: its contribution consists in to reduce cognitive complexity, to produce clarity, and thereby to contribute to a better understanding (BONSIEPE, 2011, p.88).*

c) **Not to underestimate the consumer's intelligence:** Even when made with the best of intentions, a publisher's exaggerated care in simplifying the magazine's speech may indicate an underestimation of the reader's intelligence. "One can not confuse reading difficulty with intellectual limitation" (PAPAROUNIS, 2014). In the case of an architecture magazine, apart from the readers' knowledge, one must take into account personal taste acquired through culture and incited by the media itself. If the publisher comes from a background different from that of his readers, he or she should necessarily strip itself of aesthetic biases to compose environments, texts and articles which meet the technical criteria of functionality without producing confusion, otherwise there



will be no identification of the reader with the model proposed and the publication will not be commercially viable. This segment requires even more rigorous organization of both its verbal and visual languages, so that the message is correctly sent by the editor and received correctly by the reader. Fashion magazines focused on a more popular market are one example of that. They frequently create articles and templates to help its readers how to better match pieces of clothing. The images on the article present possible results of combinations with the same skirt or pair of pants, always dressed in a model or mannequin. Pages rarely display spare decontextualized clothes. In the same way, it is indispensable for the architecture magazine to display furniture arrangements in a context that makes sense for the reader and generate identification with the house in which he or she lives.

## 7. DISCOVERY: THE MAGAZINE COVER FORMULA

At the outset of President Lula's government (2003-2010) its economic policy incentivated the purchase of white line appliances. After 2011, during President Dilma Rousseff's administration, that movement happened towards the field of furniture. A line of credit linked to the program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* was released aiming to aid the New Middle Class to equip their homes. Called *Minha Casa Melhor*, it offered financing at low interest rates to furniture and appliances purchases. Under the call "*Have you conquered your own home with Minha Casa, Minha Vida? Are the installment payments up to date? Is your property ready to be delivered? Then you can have the Minha Casa Melhor card!*". The federal bank Caixa Econômica Federal made available a credit R\$ 5,000 per home for the purchase of furniture and appliances. According to a note published on August 29, 2013 on the federal government website, the credit line that is part of the second *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* (PAC 2) channeled a total R\$ 1 billion for that purpose.

In a report published at that time (DESIGN ATRAI MAIS QUE QUALIDADE NA COMPRA DE MÓVEIS, *Folha de S. Paulo*, 20<sup>th</sup>, march, 2013), the popular furniture market was heated after the explosion of sales of white line goods: "[...] after the purchase of white line products and automobiles during last year (2012), consumers directed their savings to the furniture market, with an average expenditure of R\$ 1,170.00". Still according to the same report, aesthetics and design were more important than functionality as determinant elements to the consumer's choice.

*Even if the purchase is motivated by functionality, according to 41% of the total consumers, aesthetics is the most important item when choosing a furniture piece (research conducted by IEMI Market Intelligence in 2013). Durability and resistance are observed by only 18.6% of the population (DESIGN [...], 2013).*

The purchase based on aesthetics and not on usability characterizes one of the factors – added to the low quality of the raw material used in the manufacturing and the inadequacy of the object to its context – responsible for the rapid disposal of furniture by the New Middle Class. "*When an object no longer exercises the function and its purpose is solely aesthetic, it becomes a parasite and is put aside*" (LE CORBUSIER, 1930, p.115).



Figure 1: *Minha Casa* magazine cover showing a two-children's bedroom with dimensions similar to those offered by *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (left) and its floor plan (right). Source: *Minha Casa*, São Paulo, Editora Abril, ano 1, n. 6, set. 2010.



Figure 2: *Minha Casa* magazine cover showing a decorated two-environments living room (left) and a study reproduction of a terrace house's typical floor plan constructed on a 5 meters front lot (right). Source: *Minha Casa*, São Paulo, Editora Abril, ano 1, n. 4, ago. 2010.

Unlike the traditional architecture magazines – which seek among renowned professionals new submitted projects to be reproduced on their pages –, its popular counterparts do not find environments that meet the aspirations of its future reader, since architects and designers are not part of the reality of the New Middle Class. Thus, publishers of those publications had to rely on the strategy of creating in the studio environments with plans based on the housing units delivered by *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program – construction of walls, installation of windows etc. – and equipped with pieces of furniture exclusively available in popular stores. In that manner, a series of environments were created for all the rooms of those homes.

From the development of the model to the production of the cover photo, with emphasis on the arrangement of furniture and the choice of pieces of the project – always based on a fictitious needs program, according to a predetermined profile (example: a couple with two children) –, a formula which justifies the success of the publication was obtained: a headline on the cover that appropriates the commercial language of popular furniture retail stores. “To attract them (readers of the New Middle Class), service publications need short, powerful cover calls to make them irresistible” (PAPAROUNIS, 2014).

Being the flagship of the publication, the cover story is defined by a single environment, accompanied by the information that the total cost of the furniture displayed in it can be divided in installment payments. That corresponds to the formula of the cover (Figures 1 and 2), along with the lines “Have this room paying only ten installments of R\$ 299.00.”

## 8. INTERPRETATION OF CONCEPTS BY READERS

Having established the magazine's editorial strategy and distribution plan, it is necessary to develop a process to evaluate the reader's satisfaction on the magazine's content. After discussions with Editora Abril's customer service, it was decided the application of a two-step evaluation on the magazine's effectiveness as an instrument for improving the use of the popular housing space.

a) **Analysis of sales and increase in the number of subscribers:** The success of the magazine was evident. The first edition quickly went out of print – having to be reprinted – and with the rapid growth of its circulation, surpassing the market leader *Casa Claudia*, the magazine consolidated itself as a business case while also gaining international repercussion. In April 2012, it was featured in the *Fédération Internationale de la Presse Périodique* (FIPP) yearbook. After two years of existence and an average circulation of 195,000 copies, the magazine received the following citation:

*Minha Casa, the first architecture magazine planned with the New Middle Class in mind, completed this month two years of success celebrating another great achievement: to be featured in the Yearbook of Innovations in Magazines 2012, published by FIPP, the International Association of Magazine Publishers. The yearbook, which searches every year for stories about magazines with innovative ideas around the planet highlighted Minha Casa as a publication that detected a strong tendency – the emergence of the new Brazilian Middle Class –, immersed in it and surpassed all expectations. Three days after its launch in 2010, all 240,000 copies were sold. Faced with success, Editora Abril decided to print an additional 50,000 copies. In eight months of circulation, the subscriber base of the magazine grew 450%, jumping from 7,290 to 39,911 subscribers. Today, with an average circulation of 195 thousand copies and 340 thousand readers, Minha Casa is the leader in single sales in the architecture and construction segment (BLOG ATITUDE, 2012).*

b) **Customer service:** Editora Abril has an organized customer service system, which analyzes data and publishes periodic reports of consumer satisfaction ratings of its publications. Experience with the popular magazine market shows that this group of readers has more sensitivity and willingness to contact customer services when compared to readers of the A-Class magazines. If they are not satisfied with the content, they show it by demanding for changes. After the emergence and popularization of social networks, *Minha Casa's* community on Facebook experienced an exponential increase in the number of its followers, reaching nearly five million likes in 2016.

Although positive, a publication's evaluation alone is not enough to measure the effectiveness of the editorial content on its readers lives, whether in terms of didactics – adapted language and relevant content consistent with the readers' needs – or in terms of applicability in their homes. Faced with the need to evaluate these aspects, a strategy was adopted on the occasion of the first anniversary of the publication to know the actions conducted by them at home based on content published on the magazine. A channel called "*How I did in my house*" became available on the reader's virtual community. The channel's main goal was to open space to readers to publish photographs of their houses' environments inspired by tips presented on the magazine. Along with this, a competition was created to select and award the 22 best adaptations of spaces inspired by the magazine. Thus, a database was created with hundreds of photos showing reforms or modifications made according to the content of the magazine.

## 9. CONCLUSION

According to Mike Featherstone (1995), the desire for certain products is driven, among other factors, by “consumer fetishism”. The direct preoccupation with superficial appearances does not clearly show underlying meanings that serve to deliberately conceal, thanks to the domains of culture and taste, the real basis of economic distinctions. Furniture, like any element of consumption, works as a parameter to people’s evaluation of their own social positions. The furniture is nothing more than “[...] the means by which we make known our social position” (LE CORBUSIER, 1930, p.113).

The analysis of the environments created by readers – inspired by ideas published on the magazine – was an essential subsidy for the redefinition of concepts that assure the user’s persuasion and the effectiveness of the publication. The preponderance of the aesthetic factor on the functionality translates readers’ need to relate to the ideal or the model proposed. At first, this relation happens through the appearance of the furniture – as much of the environment –, and not by a “standard” arrangement or design.

*Based on the visual arrangement on the page and the main title of the article, readers have only two seconds to opt almost unconsciously to stand in front of the open magazine page or to abandon it in favor of the next. Thus, the photographic equation added to the title of the article must be thought in order to attract the reader and guarantee his or her permanence in front of the presented content.* (Interview with the architect, art director and editor Jan White on January 2011 in New York).

The editorial strategy of having a publication with environments produced in the studio (in which the design factor is highly relevant in relation to aesthetics) along side real ones (in which the aesthetic factor overlaps with the design) constitutes a double way of diffusion of the concepts, reaching almost the totality of the readers’ wishes. As a result of the consultation on the “How I did in my house”, it was found that four of the six of the most inspiring reports had a content that was almost 100% aesthetic, not functional. Thus, the theory that the adapted language of popular vehicles (magazines) dedicated to the world of fashion is effective once applied with themes of architecture and design is reinforced once again. It is thanks to the appearance of the object or the environment presented that the reader is captured, thus taking up again the concept of the necessary superfluity presented by Le Corbusier (1923):

*Decoration is the superfluous necessary, the peasant’s quantum, and the proportion is the superfluous necessity, quantum of the learned man. In architecture, the quantum of interest is reached by grouping the proportion of pieces and furniture; Architect’s job. The beauty? It is the imponderable acting only by the formal presence of the primordial bases* (LE CORBUSIER, 1923, p.99).

If “for many the design is restricted to the aesthetic aspect of the product, and almost all the furniture industries do not incorporate this factor in their industrial production” (FOLZ, 2002, p.104), the Brazilian e-commerce market has already aroused interest in devising new diffusion strategy of products, valuing the design of the pieces and also exposing the profile of the designer who conceived the project (virtual stores like *Meu Móvel de Madeira – Comércio de Móveis e Decoração Ltda.*,

opened in 2006, sells online exclusively, and Oppa Design Ltda., launched in 2011, which received investments from US investment funds), it is the responsibility of the magazine to value this new sales channel, placing it at a different level from other items sold by large retail networks. If, as Folz assets (2002, p.107), economic stability has brought to the furniture market a new group of consumers linked to the New Middle Class – which has mainly increased the production of popular furniture on an industrial scale by medium and large companies (since the production based on demand increases the cost of the product) –, it is up to the editor to seek (with the help of an architect or designer) means to guide the reader to use serialized objects to better adapt them to the environment of the popular housing.

If until the 1990s “[...] *internal space planning aimed to reduce the disproportion between the number of members of a family and the space available to live*” (FOLZ, 2002, p.121), any initiative developed from 2000 on should consider the new model of the Brazilian family, with a reduced number of people specially in large metropolises.

*[...] following a worldwide trend, Brazilian population growth has been declining in recent years. The population will continue to rise, but growth rates are plummeting. Urbanization, the decline of women’s fertility, family planning, the use of methods to prevent pregnancy, and the ideological change of the population are all factors that contribute to the reduction of population growth* (CERQUEIRA, 2010).

Any design manual for the New Middle Class, be it printed, filmed or virtual, must adapt the objects already produced by the industry to the space in which they will be arranged, as well as appropriated and used by the population.

*Only by investigating this process and shifting focus away from the designer’s figure (conception of the object itself) can we properly understand what design is and appreciate how important it has been to represent ideas and beliefs by which we assimilate the material facts of daily life and adjust to them* (FORTY, 2007, p.330).

Whether it was by social inclusion policies through consumption promoted after the country’s economic stabilization brought by Plano Real, or through access to credit or low-interest financing from the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program, it can be inferred that the democratization of design, or the socialization of design, has never been so advanced in Brazil before.

## REFERENCES

- BAUDRILLARD, J. *O sistema dos objetos*. Editora Perspectiva: São Paulo, 2004.
- BARKI, E. E. R. *Estratégias de empresas varejistas direcionadas para a baixa renda: um estudo exploratório*. São Paulo, 2006. Master degree dissertation (MBA) – Fundação Getúlio Vargas, São Paulo, 2006.
- BLOG ATITUDE. *Reconhecimento internacional: Minha Casa é destaque em anuário da FIPP*. May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. Disponível em: <<http://atitude-news.blogspot.com.br/2012/05/reconhecimento-internacional-minha-casa.html>>. Accessed on: ago. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- BONSIEPE, G. *Design, cultura e sociedade*. São Paulo: Edgar Blucher, 2011.
- CERQUEIRA, W. F. Crescimento da população brasileira. *Brasil Escola*, 2010. Available at: <<http://brasilecola.uol.com.br/brasil/o-crescimento-da-populacao-brasileira.htm>>. Accessed on: jul. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

- CURCIO, G. O. F.; KEPPLER, P.; MUYLEAERT, R. *História revista*. São Paulo: ANER, 2011.
- DESIGN ATRAI MAIS QUE QUALIDADE NA COMPRA DE MÓVEIS, Folha de S. Paulo, 20 de março de 2013. Available at: <<http://classificados.folha.uol.com.br/imoveis/1249095-design-atrai-mais-que-qualidade-na-compra-de-moveis.shtml>>. Accessed on: feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.
- FEATHERSTONE, M. *Desmanche da cultura: globalização, pós-modernismo e identidade*. Studio Nobel: São Paulo, 1995.
- FOLZ, R. R. *Mobiliário na habitação Popular*. São Carlos, 2002. Master degree dissertation (Masters program in Constructed Environment Technology) – Escola de Engenharia de São Carlos, Universidade de São Paulo, São Carlos, 2002.
- FORTY, A. *Objetos de desejo — design e sociedade*. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2007.
- LE CORBUSIER, C.-E. J. *Précisions*. Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1930.
- LE CORBUSIER, C.-E. J. *Vers une architecture*. Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1923.
- PASSOS, C. A. *A eficiência e a estratégia das empresas que atuam no mercado de bens populares no Brasil: um estudo sobre o setor de móveis*. São Paulo, 2013. Master degree dissertation (Masters program in Economics, Administration and Accounting) – Faculdade de Economia e Administração da Universidade de São Paulo, FEA-USP, São Paulo, 2013.
- PAPAROUNIS, D. *Como escrever para a classe C*. Meio & Mensagem, São Paulo, 2014. Available at: <[http://www.meioemensagem.com.br/home/marketing/ponto\\_de\\_vista/2014/02/13/como-escrever-para-a-classe-c.html](http://www.meioemensagem.com.br/home/marketing/ponto_de_vista/2014/02/13/como-escrever-para-a-classe-c.html)>. Accessed on: feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.
- ROCHA, A.; SILVA, J. F. Inclusão social e marketing na base da pirâmide: uma agenda de pesquisa. *RAE electron*, São Paulo, v. 7, n. 2, dez. 2008. Available at: <[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1676-56482008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1676-56482008000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso)>. Accessed on: ago. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.
- SCALZO, M. *Jornalismo de revista*. Contexto: São Paulo, 2011.

### Editor's note

Date of submission: 07/29/2016

Acceptance: 02/18/2017

English revision: Marcelo Carpinetti

---

### Gustavo Orlando Fudaba Curcio

Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo (FAU). Universidade de São Paulo (USP). São Paulo, SP.

CV: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8260782804656763>

[gustavo.curcio@gmail.com](mailto:gustavo.curcio@gmail.com)

### Maria Cecília Loschiavo dos Santos

Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo (FAU). Universidade de São Paulo (USP). São Paulo, SP.

CV: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9875100117374731>

[closchia@usp.br](mailto:closchia@usp.br)