

Design production in creative industries: criticism of the neoliberal capitalist logic

A produção de design nas indústrias criativas: crítica à lógica capitalista neoliberal

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we consider the professional designer's work as project-oriented praxis guided by dialectical logic, that is, one that is shaped and, at the same time, shapes capitalist creative work. Through a critical social analysis, we show the marketing dimension of imperative socio-economic notions in the Field of Design and how they impact it, since the current understanding of the act of creating is technocratic. To develop this investigation, we begin with a presentation of the capitalist mode of production and its determination, and the critical bias that emerges as a challenge to this configuration. Next, we trace the meaning of "creativity" as a historical process and its consequences in Design. Afterwards, we contextualize the current hegemonic nature of late capitalism, the Creative Industries, and how Adobe Inc. influences the digitalization of production. With the results obtained in this critical analysis, we highlight the importance of observing implications of social phenomena in the praxis of designing, and how the creative process is impacted by materiality.

Keywords: Capitalism. Creative industries. Creativity. Criticism. Design theory.

RESUMO

Neste estudo, o trabalho do designer é considerado uma práxis projetual orientada pela lógica dialética, ou seja, é moldada e, ao mesmo tempo, molda o trabalho criativo capitalista. Por meio de uma análise social crítica, é evidenciada a dimensão mercadológica de noções socioeconômicas imperativas no Campo do Design e como estas o impactam, uma vez que o entendimento do ato de criar vigente é tecnocrático. Para desenvolver esta investigação, inicia-se com uma apresentação do pensamento econômico-político do modo de produção capitalista e sua determinação na instância de produção, além do viés crítico que surge como contestação a essa configuração. Em seguida, traça-se o processo histórico do entendimento de "criatividade" e sua influência no Campo do Design. Por último, contextualiza-se a atualidade hegemônica do capitalismo tardio, as Indústrias Criativas, com uma breve análise da Adobe Inc. e sua influência na digitalização do trabalho no Campo do Design. Com os resultados obtidos nessa análise crítica, evidencia-se a importância de observar implicações de fenômenos sociais na práxis do projetar e como o processo criativo é impactado pela materialidade e historicidade das circunstâncias nas quais está inserido.

Palavras-chave: Campo do design. Capitalismo. Criatividade. Crítica. Indústria criativa.

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INTRODUCTION

The reflection of this study is based on the master's research called "Field of Design and Creative Industries: Criticism of the Adobe Inc. Hegemony in Contemporaneity", developed in the Design Graduate Program of EBA-UFRJ. Through the analytical reading of materials presented in the "Visual Design and Culture" (PPGD-EBA-UFRJ) and "Political Economy of Information and Communication" (PPGCI-UFRJ) disciplines, we identified socioeconomic characteristics of the capitalist production system that influence the work in the Field of Design¹, and how the critical approach of Political Economy can help the research and the understanding of its configurations.

Nowadays, as designers, we obtain the status of "creative", members of a supposedly rising working class, embraced by new technologies. Based on this conjuncture, the question is: what do we understand as creativity today? What are the interests that shape and are shaped by this notion? And what are its impacts in the designers' practice as a worker under the capitalist production regime? Besides, in the digitalization era in the Field of Design, a company that manufactures and sells tools for "creative" practice reaches exceptional presence and popularity, which requires further investigation.

In the first section, we will present the field of Critical Political Economy and the key Marxist fundamentals from the production sphere, aiming at understanding the logic that defines the conditions of capitalism. Then, we will present "creativity" as a socially determined and determinant process for the Field of Design, turning to authors that criticize the hegemonic notions that prevail in the Field. After, we will place the state of art of productive hegemony through the Creative Industries phenomenon, and how it impacts the Design work. For that, we will approach the influence of Adobe Inc. in the work and digital reality of the XXI century.

HISTORICAL-ECONOMIC CONTEXT: THE CAPITALIST LOGIC OF PRODUCTION

In this investigation, the epistemological base was the Critical Political Economy concept. As presented by Hardy in "*Critical Political Economy of the Media*" (2014). Hardy explores the relationship between the political-economic approach and media studies.

The author (HARDY, 2014) defines the political economy thought as the study of power social relations that structure the production, distribution and consumption of resources. Hardy criticizes the neoclassic (hegemonic) approach of economy, mainly developed by authors such as Adam Smith (1723-1790) and David Ricardo (1772-1823), defenders of capitalist liberalism, justifying that it is limited by deductive mathematical methods, concerned about the market-oriented performance of the product offer to fulfill wishes, instead of focusing on fulfilling the collective needs of society.

1 In this study, we understand "Field of Design" as the field of professional work, and "design" as the format of a commodity. Throughout the study, the use of the term "design" in uppercase or lowercase letter can change due to the spelling used in the mentioned references.

Then, he contextualizes the field of Political Economy in the studies of Communication, presenting the broad field of Communication Political Economy and delimiting focus to the approach of Critical Political Economy (CPE). In this case, there is a strong contribution through the studies of Karl Marx, to understand matters about power, dominance and inequality, which are still current. Osvaldo Coggiola (2021) comments, for instance, the continuous relevance of the celebrated piece *Capital*², claiming that its brilliance is justified by the broad analyses of the consequences of changes in social life – which persist up to this day – with the appearance of proletariat and the great industry. Therefore, themes analyzed by Marx over a century ago are still relevant and need to be debated.

Grundrisse, by Karl Marx (2011), is a piece that discusses the method developed by the author, because it gathers drafts and initial studies of the political economist and enables the analysis of concepts from the Marxist philosophical thought and the Political Economy method under a critical perspective. Marx (2011, p. 59) highlights the importance of the relationship between subject and social structure in the theoretical method approach, arguing, through the historiography of the onset of bourgeois economy, the rise of the structure based on generation of capital:

Since in general, in every historical and social science, in the course of economic categories, it is necessary to be aware that the subject, here, the modern Bourgeois Society, is given both in reality and in the mind, and, therefore, the categories express ways of being, determinations of existence, only with frequency of singular aspects, of this determined society, this subject and, because of that, society, also from the scientific point of view, somehow only begins where the discourse is about it as such.

One of the concepts initially approached in the piece is that of material production, and how the individual's production is socially determined. A brief historiographic contextualization of the subject as a social element in the capitalist system is developed by Marx (2011). For the author, the bourgeois society appeared in the XVI century and reached its maturity in the XVIII century. In this environment, the subject is separated from his natural bonds. For Marx (2011, p. 39): "in this society of free competition, individuals are detached from natural bonds that, in previous historical times, made them an accessory in a determined, limited human cluster". That is, a product both of the ruin of feudal society models and the new productive strengths that rose from the XVI century. So, considering the individual as a "natural" being is an illusory, naive vision; after all, individuals are not independent, but instead, a member of a much larger whole.

Thus, when we talk about production, we are considering a production localized in a specific stage of social development resulting from its past. This definition remains relevant nowadays. "No production is possible without past, accumulated work, even if this work is only accumulated skill, concentrated in the hands of the

² "The first book of the piece was published in 1867; the second German edition is from 1873. The second and third books were edited by Friedrich Engels and published in 1885 and 1894, respectively" (GRESPLAN, 2021, p. 10).

savage through repeated exercise” (MARX, 2011, p. 41). Therefore, the accumulation of capital throughout time is configured as an essential instrument of bourgeois modes of production. We can exemplify it with the current production of the merchandise called “digital book reader”, which was made possible thanks to the wage-earning workforce involved in the production, circulation and consumption of digital aids; but also physical books, and even the diffusion of reading by the European press — also carried out based on past work (Figure 1).

With a knowledge base, Marx (2011, p. 44) elaborates about the economic steps — production, distribution, exchange and consumption — and the relations established between them. He exposes that, “in production, the members of society appropriate the products of nature to human needs”. He also defines that



Source: the authors, with images accessed in the links: <https://www.amazon.com.br/kindle-11geracao-preto/dp/B09SWTG9GF>, <https://www.qualitel.com/how-to-reduce-costs-in-electronics-manufacturing/>, <https://ensinarhistoria.com.br/linha-do-tempo/gutenberg-lega-a-imprensa-a-humanidade/> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=171Ftx0oxgg&ab_channel=FactoryMonster. Access on: Feb 2, 2024.

Figure 1. Collage indicating the historical connection between a merchandise and the workforce prior to it.

production is immediately consumption, and consumption is immediately production — through objective and subjective spheres. Only in the stage of consumption can the product receive a final improvement. Thus, consumption reproduces the need for production. Therefore, production creates consumers and the cultural aspects of their experiences. “Therefore, production produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object” (MARX, 2011, p. 47).

Further ahead, Marx (2011) clarifies the relationship between producer, distribution and products, which enables the economic mechanism. Distribution consists of the resources that will be used, such as earth, tools and creativity. As production agents, we can mention: earth, work, capital. And as distribution agents, we can quote: earth income, wage and mode of capital reproduction (interests and profit). Besides, before being product distribution, distribution is the distribution of production instruments and members of society in the different types of production.

Regarding productive force, Marx defines what would become fixed capital as a mean of production: “capital that consumes itself in the very process of production” (MARX, 2011, p. 578). The process of fixed capital production involves: work means, metamorphosis, machines. In this sense, the machine needs to be considered as a (powerful) social organism, and not a detached individual aspect. “The worker’s activity, limited to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated in all aspects by the movement of the machinery, and not the other way around” (MARX, 2011, p. 581).

After understanding the important concepts of the Marxist theory for the work activity as a whole, in which, historically, is inserted the act of projecting in the Field of Design, it is necessary to understand the current consequences of the subject-machinery relation, and to what point what we produce can be influenced by them and by the hegemonic economic context. Based on what was seen in this section, the question is: is it possible to establish semantic relationships between the contemporary digital production of the Field of Design and the Marxist economic-philosophical concepts, elaborated in the XIX century? To answer this question, the choice was to understand the thought considered as “creative” — which permeates the Field of Design — and its industrialization process to, afterwards, observe the digital production of the Field of Design.

ABOUT THE NOTION OF CREATIVITY

In the Field of Design, “creative process” is a methodological concept that defines the mode of production in the project-oriented praxis. To conceive the manifestation of creativity as a fundament of the “making” in the Field of Design, according to the Marxist theory, it is necessary to assess the process of formulation and dissemination of the “create” activity as a social practice through work. According to Janet Wolff (1982), the general concept of “creativity” can be identified in all forms of human activity, not being restricted to artistic performance, or, in our case, to the designer. The base is the assumption that the qualification of a process, product or even a designer as being “creative” is inserted in broader socio-historical structures.

Since “creativity” is a recent word, originated in the XX century (WILLIAMS, 2007, p. 113), we analyze its appearance through the term “creation”. Before being recognized as a human activity, “creation” was understood as divine property, witnessed by mortals until the XVI century. According to Raymond Williams (2007, p. 112):

Create began in English based on the root of the past participle, from the Latin, *creare* (make or produce). This inherent relationship with the sense of something that was made, and, therefore, with a past event, was exact, since the word was mainly used in the precise context of the original divine creation of the world: creation and creature have the same root.

Therefore, we observe that the primary and significant use of the act of creating in the language is originated in a divine, founding action, however, with cloudy and universal causality, which would only be moved by the hidden wills of God. As shown by Nicola Abbagnano (2007): during the medieval period, the notion of “creation” did not represent the concept of reality, once this would be an effect of non-divine authorship. Thus, “creation” would represent a benevolent superpower of the omnipresent, which we would be privileged to witness.

With the Bourgeois rationalism from the XVIII century, the “creative” faculty begins to be considered of human authorship, instead of being restricted to a divine execution causality. Thus, the “creation” phenomenon is configured by a rising economic system, as a private skill of commercial interest in the generation of surplus value and capital accumulation. The consolidation of such a change in paradigm can be mainly detected in the understanding of “artistic work” reproduced by agents and structuring and alienated conditions of that moment, which persists, except for some specificities, until these days (WOLFF, 1982, p. 30). In this moment comes the belief that the art producer is a genius creator, with an interior, individualized ability to relate to unknown superior forces through “inspiration”. As explained by Cipiniuk (2014, p. 67):

After the Renaissance, result of the fundament crisis, the passage from theocentric to anthropocentric cosmology, man was understood as a supreme creator, competing with the religious notion of the *artifex* god. One of the reasons for the modern man to be modern is the fact that he took God’s place in creation.

However, it is important to highlight that the advent of creative capacity as talent, intrinsic geniality, was only made possible due to its assertive representation in terms of profitability for the capitalist economic system. In this sense, the idea of particularity should not be restricted only to the creator, but also to his creation, which is praised as something superhuman – phenomenon that can be observed in Renaissance artists and their pieces, recognized by high ingenuity and excellence by the members of the artistic class. To solidify creation as merchandise, we turn to the technical discourse as a way to justify attributed value through the use of qualitative criteria. It is observed that, up to these days, a product considered as “excellent” according to arbitrary values imposed by the dominant class is priced and announced

in a superior manner in comparison to a product considered as “average”. These concepts of “quality” influence the creation and, consequently, the creature. Such precepts are not fixed, but instead, malleable and adaptable to different specificities of a certain context or field, but maintaining the ideological base. Thus, we are unconsciously guided not only in our consumption habits, but also in our production habits, that is, in the creation of the material world in which we live. To release the productive state from a specific hegemonic domain, the cultural consolidation of actions that promote awareness about what, why and how we express ourselves as social and creative agents is necessary. Until this condition is reached, the capitalist production values continue to be reproduced and normalized.

For example, in the phase of industrial capitalism (after the second half of the XVIII century), production through the act of designing goods became stronger. In “Objects of desire – design and society since 1750” (2007), Forty discussed the importance of variety for the manufacturing of products. According to the logic of capital, a single design of a product is limited to matching us, whereas multiple designs, or a more particular visual configuration, transmit a (illusory) feeling of choice. As an example of this time, Forty (2007, p. 89) mentions the wide set of pocketknives produced by Montgomery Ward & Co.

In its 1895 catalogue, the North American sales company, through postal reimbursement, offered 131 types of pocketknives, grouped in four categories: “for ladies”, “for men”, “for boys” and “for men, heavy and for hunting”. Even though there were differences between categories, the variations were relatively small. The catalogues of other postal reimbursement companies, department stores and manufacturers from the XIX century show that this amazing variety of choice was normal for everything, from pens to sewing machines or chairs for the dining room.

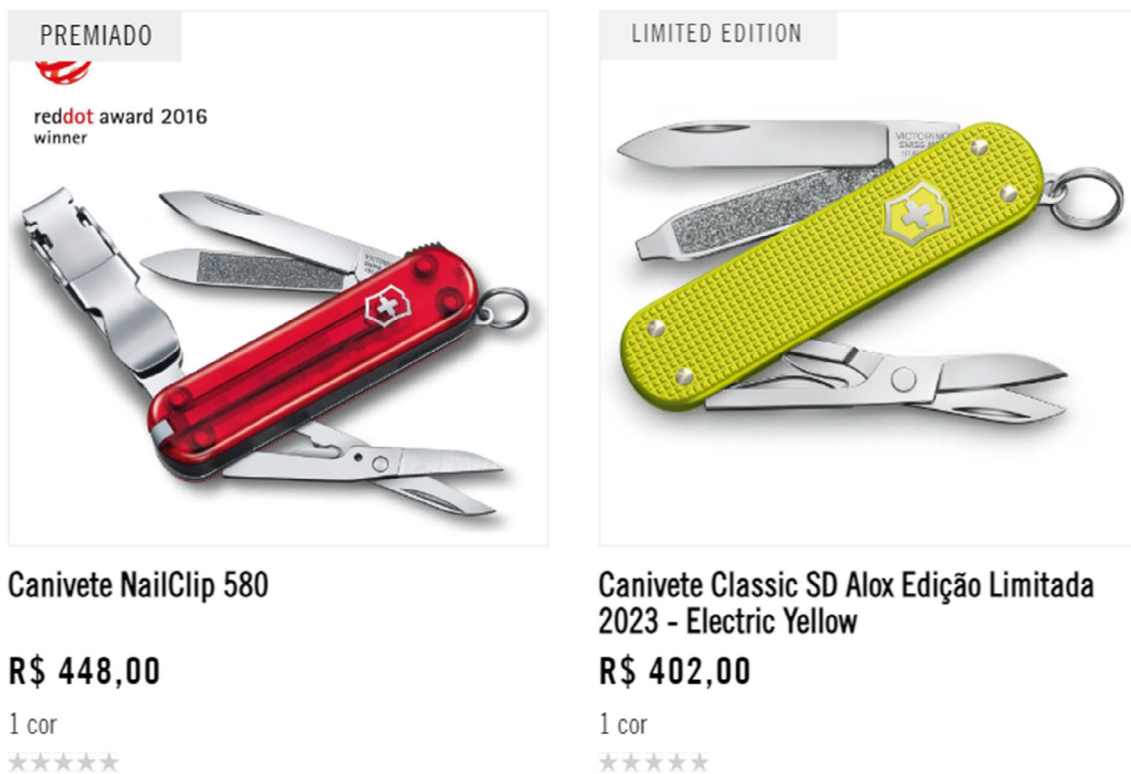
It is observed that originality through individualization was developed to trigger consumption and, consequently, participated in the bourgeois advance and its consolidation as a hegemonic ideology. According to Forty (2007, p. 124), encodings both visual or ergonomic, of these “varied” goods, are designed from commercial projections based on assumptions about gender, age and social class. As the author puts it: “profit was determined by the volume of sales, and once the existence of more types of design stimulated fashion, they promised more sales and performed an important role in the accumulation of capital” (FORTY, 2007, p. 126). Therefore, the creation process of a designer³ is influenced by market expectations of consumption and economic surplus.

Currently, it is observed that the differentiation of products as a market argument of production is maintained as part of the structure, a factor of the capitalist regime that is reinforced by the neoliberal model. Analyzing the digital catalogue of the Swiss pocketknife brand Victorinox, there are five categories of products: pocketknives, cutlery, travel items, watches, and personalization. Regarding the

³ Like Forty (2007) and Cipiniuk (2014), the authors of this text consider that the practice of Design appeared with the advent of the industrial bourgeois mode of production, First Industrial Revolution.

first mentioned category, seventy-nine products are offered in three subcategories: small pocketknives (fifteen models), medium-sized pocketknives (thirty models) and large pocketknives (thirty-four models).

Of the fifteen small pocketknives, we found a total of 40 variations of colors or patterns to be chosen. And, at the same time, pocketknives with special seals, such as “limited” or “award-winning”, are offered in a single version to symbolize rarity or scarcity as a distinction to trigger more sales (Figure 2). Therefore, the differentiation of the form is used as a profitable strategy for the market, but it becomes obscured or hidden behind a speech considered as “creative”, in which differentiation is manifested as sacred, innocent and individualized, only accessible to those who “have talent” or “were born with a gift”. It is possible to notice this lack of socioeconomic context in alienating shows, such as documentary *Abstract: The Art of Design* (2017), from Netflix, which only shows great names of the contemporary Field of Design, like Paula Scher, and not the system of conditions and privilege that involves the production, circulation and consumption of her products.



Fonte: <https://www.victorinoxstore.com.br/>. Access on: Sep. 15, 2023.

Figure 2. Screenshot of the page “small pocketknives”, with examples of special sealed products from *Victorinox*.

As demonstrated, the understanding of the act of creating is ruled by political interests of a dominant ideology, which dictates the guidelines of any field, or occupation, including the design project. To understand how this exploratory aspect of creativity is veiled, we turn again to Forty’s work (2007), which demonstrates how the formation of a Design theory is connected to individual reports, instead

of determinant factors to produce a product. According to the author, the way manufactured goods are exposed in museums contributes with the focus on the agent as a designer, hiding him or her as accumulated workforce. To illustrate this point, Forty mentions the exhibit “Thirties”, carried out by the Arts Council of Great Britain in Hayward Gallery, in London. There, British Art, Architecture and Design pieces from the 1930s were exposed. Defining such objects were “the names of the designer, the manufacturer, the date of the design and the name of the current owner” (FORTY, 2007, p. 322). Besides these materials, a brief biography about each of the present designers could be found in the exhibit’s catalogue. The lack of social determinants, such as:

(...) original price of the exhibited products or the market to which they were destined, or how they were advertised, or some facts about the manufacturer, made it difficult for the audience to see that the design was not only an expression of the designer’s creativity, but also incarnated ideas and material restrictions about which designers had no control over. (FORTY, 2007, p. 322)

Thus, Forty (2007) explains that creativity cannot be an intrinsic, individualized process. Despite being shaped by subjectivities that look individual, these are influenced by sociocultural contexts. The economic system that rules these contexts and specificities of reality that we know of is capitalism, which might even change its forms of production in operating and technological terms, but whose logic of generating surplus value for the profit of the bourgeoisie remains the same (MATIAS, 2014). According to Matias (2014), there was a process known as productive restructuring, with which the Toyota production system rose as a new way of generating and accumulating capital.

Matias (2014), throughout his work, shows how liberal capitalism had to adjust to the needs of the organizational model, production and work, called Taylorism-Fordism, and then, Toyotism – model of production in current industries. He also dissertates about the hegemonic importance of concepts of innovation and entrepreneurship coming from the field of business management in the theoretical field of contemporary Design, indicating that changes in the shape of neoliberal economic model are the explanatory basis for transformations that happen inside the Field.

With Fordism, general production was focused on manufactured goods, whereas the Toyota way, based on technological “advances”, turns to the emotional and the subjective; turning them into material for new forms of merchandise in favor of consumption. Therefore, market agents and managers expect the designer to develop new ways of awakening desires and cause enchantment.

As we can observe, in capitalism, market factors determine what can in fact be created. In this system, we are led to a version of “strange creativity, once the conceptual power that designed the object materialized by the work process is also exterior and hostile to the worker” (MATIAS, 2014, p. 55). Creativity under capitalism is, therefore, an action addressed to commercialization, marginalizing ideas that are not seen as a source that generates capital – that is, those that cannot be sold.

Even with a change from this industrial model to another one, the logic of accumulating richness and power among a few still dominates our reality. However, it is essential to delimit the new means and apparatuses that materialize these mechanisms, as well as the influence and hegemonic relevance they exercise. Therefore, next, we will observe the impacts of the industrial phenomenon in the Field of Design, and how it is strongly influenced by a North American digital tool company.

HEGEMONIC PRESENT: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, THE FIELD OF DESIGN AND ADOBE INC.

According to Bell (1973), we live in a “post-industrial society”, in which information is the base for all development. Production is focused on the generation of services, instead of manufactures, and the bourgeois elite is replaced by new technical elites, with forms of social organization that are still unknown. However, Contino (2019) disagrees with that notion. For the author, the social transformations that occurred after the 2000s, date foreseen by Bell for such changes, did not represent a wearing down of the bourgeois power structures, but instead, a distinguished manifestation of the already structured logic of monopolist capital. Cray (2014, p. 37) reinforces that vision: “as many have noticed, the way innovation takes on in capitalism is the continuous simulation of the new, whereas the existing power and control relations remain, in practice, the same”.

In the 1970s, while Bell developed his futurological essays, a variation of the capitalist economic doctrine began to rise as a promise of “innovation” in the market practice: neoliberalism. According to Julier (2017), such a movement occurred based on changes in global measures of economic control, guided especially by the United States. Due to the Second World War and the influential North American power during the conflict, the USA dollar was designed as a reserve currency in the global commerce, that is, currencies from other countries were, since 1944, fixated in relation to the North American currency – event known as the “Bretton Woods Agreement”. However, with Nixon’s government (1969-1974), this formulation was concluded, promoting that monetary negotiations would be carried out and determined by financial market agents instead of being subjected to government treaties between countries. In the long term, according to Julier (2017, p. 7, our version), “this launched a new era in which the liberalized market, in terms of trade in goods, services and finances, would dominate the increasing capitalist world”.

Thus, based on this moment, characteristics of neoliberalism began to interfere in our experience through production and consumption. Julier (2017) defines these specificities as: deregulation of markets and freedom in relation to state intervention; privatization of state companies (and services); intense favoritism of financial interests and focus on competitiveness and business and individual practices. These new measures were put in practice, especially by English governments under Thatcher (1979–1990), and in the United States, under Reagan (1981–1989).

These characteristics are sustained by several techniques, developed to facilitate the circulation of goods and the generation of surplus value to penetrate and

become part of reality in different sociocultural contexts. The work of the neoliberal program is diverse, flexible, represented by the production of processes, media and artifacts (tangible and intangible), manufactured by industries.

In 1998, Blair's administration in the United Kingdom created the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The objective was to promote the so-called "intellectual work" through a speech focused on creativity as an economic resource to be explored. The department then developed the concept of "creative industries", delimiting the sectors that would belong to this group, plans and actions of encouragement for those who aimed at promoting the objectives of the mean. The initiative was considered an economic success, employing millions of people and generating attractive income.

Using forged models in the Silicon Valley and in Hollywood, where the profitability of intellectual property had been perfected (especially by an army of legal services' professionals and a flexible and autonomous business), this new government in the United Kingdom began to adopt a cultural production policy that defended its competitiveness, global reach and viability. (MOULD, 2018, p. 12, our translation)

As Mould (2018) indicates it, intellectual property is the base for the so-called "creative economy". According to John Howkins (2013), there are many variations of intellectual property defined by governments and courts. However, the most common ones are: copyrights, patents, brands and industrial design. A high flow of financial transactions coming from these four sectors of "intellectual" production is what makes the success of the creative economic model. For example, in 1999, the number of American patents, made by the US Patent and Trademark Office, reached 169,000 with a new peculiarity:

Besides patenting the current inventions and devices, he patented methods of "making business" (fact that amazed many people). This body granted a patent to Dell Computers not for the computers it sold, but for the way it sold them. (HOWKINS, 2013, p. 11)

Regarding the fields that include this type of production, according to Howkins (2013), fifteen of them are defined: advertising; architecture; arts; handicraft; design; fashion; cinema; music; performing arts; publishing sector; research and development; software, toys and games; TV and radio; videogames.

Thus, by the influence of this context in the Field of Design, creativity, through "creative processes" with an automated application of the design methodology, is used as an appropriation of work by the capital — whatever the shape of the desired merchandise is. Therefore, as professionals, we are guided, consciously or unconsciously, to producing "innovative" projects and studies, but they are actually uncritical products that do not represent change, only conformity. Creativity, under the ideological domain of capital, does not create in a freely manner; it appropriates itself through rhetoric (MOULD, 2016). As designers in a context of creative industries, we participate in the construction, and, therefore, in the reproduction of this rhetoric.

Besides, John Hartley *et al.*, in “Key Concepts in Creative Industries” (2013), define relevant terms to understand creative industries. One of these terms is the work called “creative”, in which authors highlight the importance of the theme for the incentive to the production of richness. Professionals are characterized as “creative” when they possess the “creative human capital”, able to relieve the negative consequences coming from technology, and still helping economic growth through the development of potential techniques.

Unlike tasks performed under a Fordist logic, according to the authors, creative processes would be more related to principles such as freedom, inconformity and flexibilization. However, because we continue to be in an industrial model, it is necessary to think of ways to align “creative talent” with the purposes of the market and the owners of the business. Therefore, the investment is in mitigated, mild control practices, instead of more totalitarian management operations.

Such a behavior is criticized by some work relations’ scholars for being exploratory manners of manipulating the workforce in creative sectors, places that can bring about insecurity due to its high volatility (HARTLEY *et al.*, 2013). To compensate this scenario, monetary and symbolic rewards are conceived, which would maintain the attractiveness for a “creative” career. Therefore, the propagation of values such as autonomy and self-fulfillment in creative work are considered, by critical approaches, as another way of precarization in work conditions. Hartley *et al.* (2013) problematize this vision:

The criticism of precarious work can become so general and comprehensive that it might lose the analytical understanding of changes in the work conditions it seeks to understand. To generalize precarious conditions and the experience of marginalized workers, such as janitors and domestic workers, for the status of a common cause with creative cultural workers and professionals, is deeply problematic. (...) Instead of making an effort to understand labor trends, the objective of criticism seems to preventively judge how the capital is, once again, exploring the work’s surplus value. This analysis does not produce any new information. (HARTLEY *et al.*, 2013, p. 64, our translation)

For the authors, it is necessary to obtain more information about the work conditions in creative industries before assessing the deficiencies resulting from these conditions, once it is a recent contemporary phenomenon. They complement it by stating that critical research about creative “workforce” should not be limited to a simple opposition to the political economy of capitalism, but instead, to making efforts to understand the categories, strategies and risks of creative work. The questionable and condemnable position of neutrality of the authors concerning the investigation becomes clearer in the part: “we need to overcome this *pro versus* anti standoff, rethink work categories in a more fundamental manner, paying close attention to the real changes that occur in economy as a whole “ (HARTLEY *et al.*, 2013, p. 65, our translation). The logic of the capitalist mode of production operates from the exploration of the workforce, and this exploration is reproduced in different forms of work, both for janitors and domestic workers and for workers from

the creative industry. Therefore, it is a theoretical mistake to let go of this common point of origin and to be dedicated only to “labor trends”, as the authors mention, and that should be avoided.

About “creative industries” (HARTLEY *et al.*, 2013, p. 58-62), the authors argue that one of the reasons for the wide use of this expression is its connection with the current political tendencies of consumption and production. However, since the concept of creative industries is in constant debate, the authors also mention five variations of interpretation models. Then, they elaborate how economic growth can be triggered by this type of industry.

At first sight, from a mainstream business perspective, it may look like creative industries are not progenitors of the standard causes of economic growth in the development of new technologies, in the further exploration of capital, in operating efficiency, in the innovation of the business model or institutional evolution. However, many of the people and companies of this sector are actually closely related in all of these things. Creative industries are deeply engaged in the experimental use of new technologies, in the development of new contents and applications, and in the creation of new business models. (HARTLEY *et al.*, p. 61, our translation)

From this part, one can observe the importance of using “new” technologies in the production process of creative sectors. Harvey (2010) elaborates, with a materialist base, the historical context of technological developments based on the space-time compression phenomenon, and how it is shaped by the reorganization of the capitalist system in the late XX century. To understand the significant changes in the use of space and time, the key-event approached by the author is the transition from the Fordist mode of production to the so-called “flexible accumulation” — characteristic of the Toyota way, mentioned in the previous section. In 1973, Fordism-Keynesianism was in crisis. And to solve the problems caused by the rigidity of such a model, new forms of organization and production were implemented — one of them was the acceleration of turnover, with reduced inventory through electronic systems in several productive sectors (HARVEY, 2010).

With the acceleration of production turnover, time of circulation and consumption were also accelerated, in a dialectic relation. Communication systems then became adapted to enable the circulation of goods in a shorter interval of time. As an example of projects considered as innovative for accelerated distribution, the author mentions the rise of electronic banks and plastic money — initiatives that have been improved until these days. In relation to consumption, two new organizational projects were emphasized: the development of fashion in mass markets and the transition from the consumption of goods to the consumption of services (HARVEY, 2010), with the commercialization of “experiences⁴” (HEINRICH, 2018, p. 51). Therefore, the act of consuming presents an expansion of its limits, then restricted to the physical environment.

4 In her dissertation, Fabiana Heinrich (2018) shows the uncritical notion of “production of experiences”, perpetuated by the designer. According to the author, the experience is impossible to be designed.

Nowadays, volatility is significantly represented by the digitalization of spaces of production, circulation and consumption of goods and information. The current configuration of production in the Field of Design faces strong digitalization of space through electronic software from the North American company Adobe Inc., founded in 1982 by Charles Geschke and John Warnock in the state of California, United States of America (WARNOCK; GESCHKE, 2019).

As Oli Mould (2018, p. 12) explained when defining the main influences for the development of creative industries that, in this period, rose the “Silicon Valley”, “technological innovation” region of late capitalism, which accommodated the birth of this and so many other companies that work with the development of mechanisms and software for computers. A sort of collaborative competitiveness connected companies established there, in which there was much more of a managerial concern of sharing development techniques (functionalism) for different applications of coding than with the development of more human work interactions, sustainable in the medium and long term (MOULD, 2018).

Before founding Adobe Systems, Geschke and Warnock worked together at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), the research sector of Xerox Corporation, which produced machines and systems of photocopies and printing material⁵. However, they were unhappy with some internal decisions regarding what they considered to be a long period for the development of mechanisms in which the execution of their computer system would be carried out. They wanted the project, that took about 4 years to be developed, to be used fast (WARNOCK; GESCHKE, 2019).

So, the two scientists decided to found their own company with an initial bank investment of 2.5 million dollars for the two first years. Forty years went by, and the renamed Adobe Inc. currently has an annual income of 17.61 billion dollars (ADOBE United States, 2023b), 12% higher than the taxable income of the previous year⁶, with the work of more than 29,000 employees (ADOBE United States, 2023a)⁷.

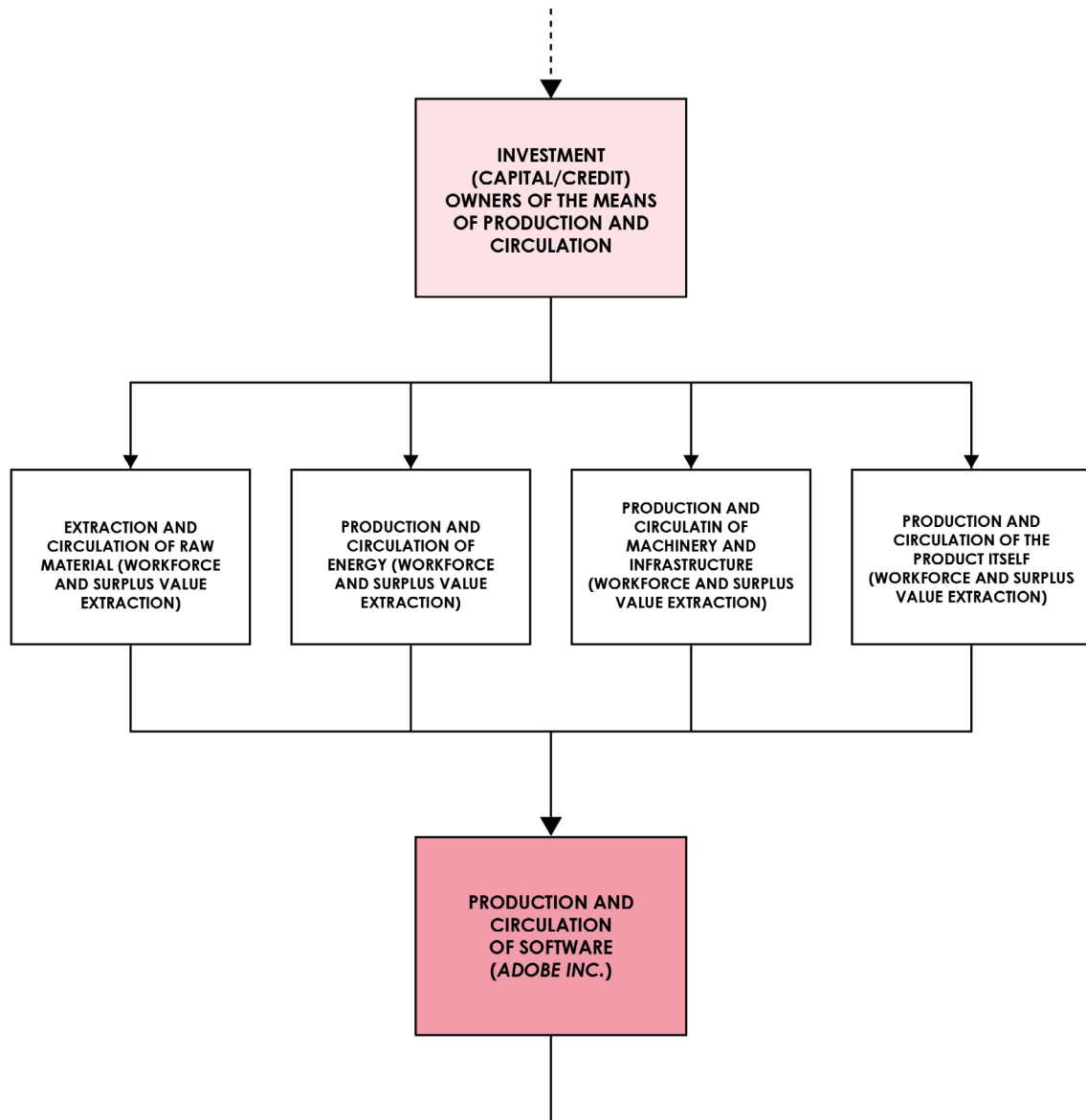
To understand the relationship Adobe Inc. has developed with work in the Field of Design in the past decades, a scheme (Figures 3 and 4), based on the study “The Financial Logic of Internet Platforms: The Turnover Time of Money at the Limit of Zero” by Marcos Dantas (2019), was elaborated, contextualizing the company’s participation in total production.

For production to happen, an investment is necessary from the holders of the means of production and circulation, divided in four categories (Figure 3): extraction and circulation of raw material; production and circulation of energy; production and circulation of machinery and infrastructure; production and circulation of the

5 Xerox Corporation was so popular for its prices and photocopy products that, in Portuguese, the expression “fazer uma xerox” and “xerocar” began to be used. Source: <https://canaltech.com.br/empresa/xerox/>. Access: Sep. 26, 2023.

6 Data regarding 2022. Available at the company’s official platform: <https://www.adobe.com/pdf-page.html?pdfTarget=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYWVY29tL2Nvb3RlbnQvZGFtL2NjL2VuL2ludmVzLWdG9yLXJlbGF0aW9ucy9wZGZzL0FEQkUtUHJveHktMjAyMy5wZGY=>. Access: Sept. 26, 2023.

7 Data regarding 2022, considering employees that are not Only in the USA. Available at the company’s official platform: <https://www.adobe.com/about-adobe/fast-facts.html>. Access: Sept. 26, 2023.

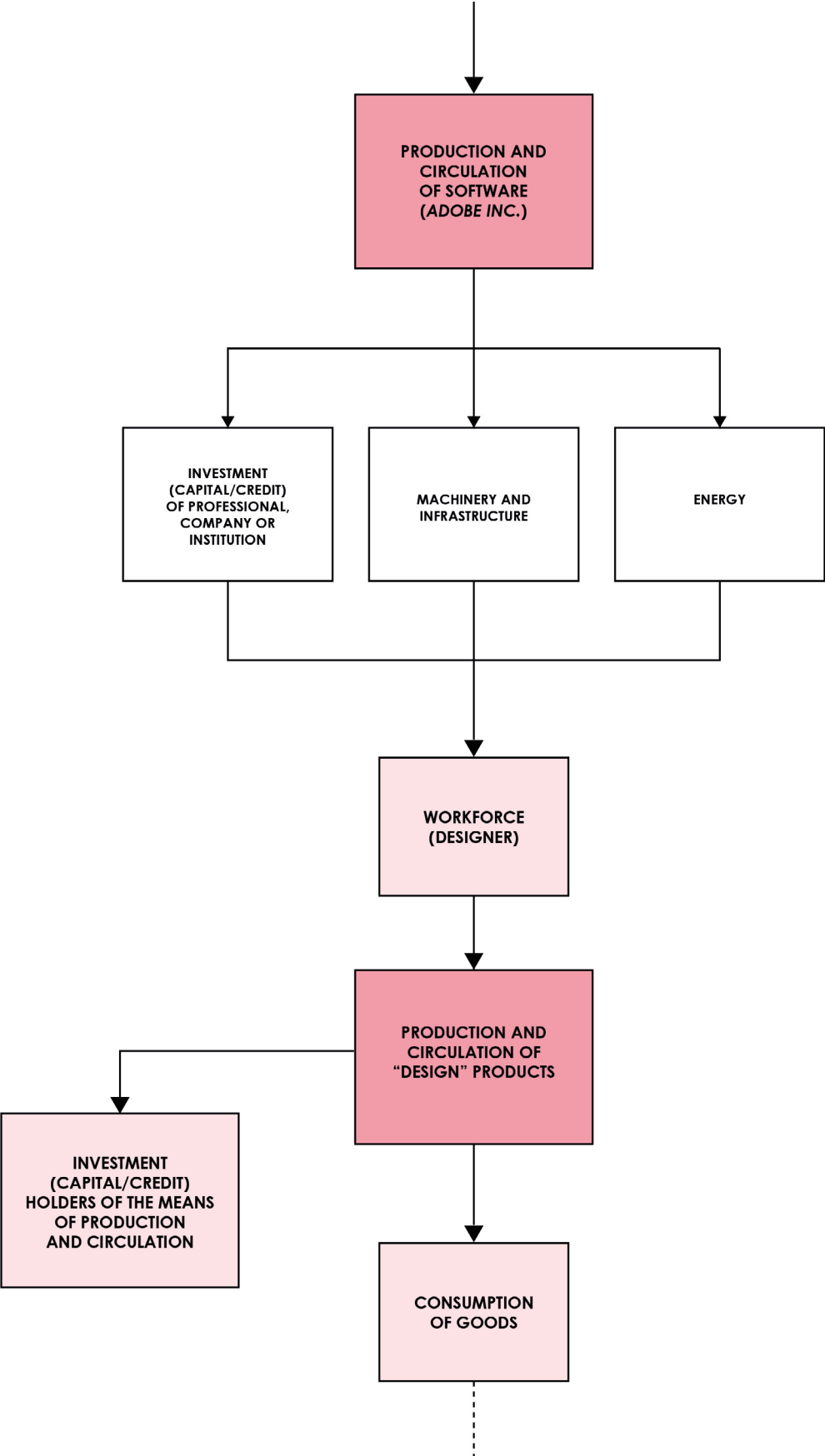


Source: the authors.

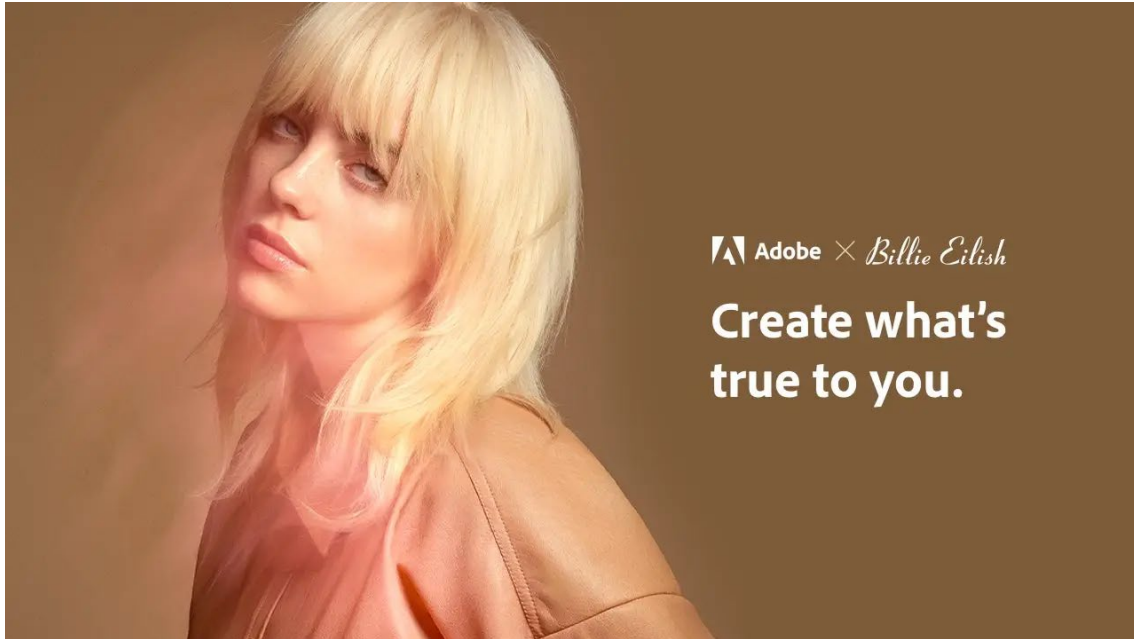
Figure 3. Scheme of the productive (“creative”) process of Digital Design under Adobe Inc. Part 01.

merchandise itself (workforce and extraction of surplus-value). All these categories are work that began to be consumed by Adobe Inc. itself in the fabrication of its own products. Only with capital investment in all of these conditions is it possible for products, such as digital software, to be produced, distributed and consumed by a specific audience.

The investment in the stage of distribution is essential for the success of the production-consumption relation. Adobe Inc.’s strategy in that stage involves the production of static and audiovisual digital advertising pieces of its products and services, which are publicized both in the company’s social media accounts and in accounts of other companies through advertising funding; hiring of influencers in the “creative” field, with different levels of popularity (an example of a very popular influencer was the North American singer, Billie Eilish, as illustrated in Figure 5);



Source: the authors.
Figure 4. Scheme of the productive ("creative") process of Digital Design under Adobe Inc. Part 02.



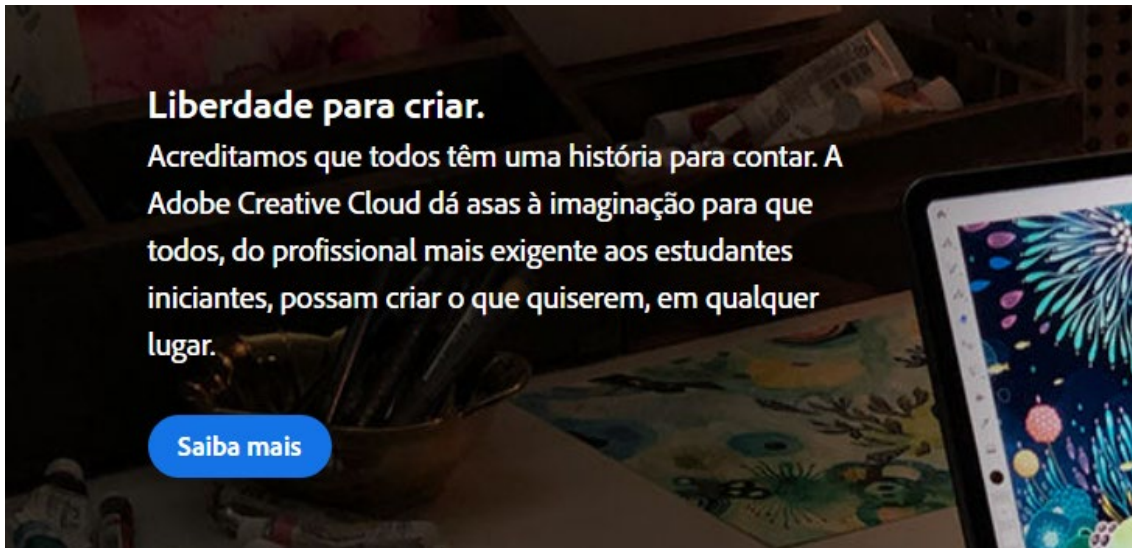
Source: <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2021/08/02/be-inspired-by-billie-eilish-create-what-is-true-to-you>. Access on: Feb. 05, 2024.

Figure 5. Digital banner of the partnership between Adobe Inc. and the singer Billie Eilish in 2021.

events for the discussion of techniques and practices connected with the company's products; among others.

With Adobe Inc.'s tools, designers depend on three material conditions to acquire and use these goods (Figure 4): capital (be it from the company or from workers, in case of freelancers, to pay for the costs of the other conditions); machinery and infrastructure (such as workspace, computer, internet etc.); energy (for the machinery and infrastructure to function). All these conditions are necessary so that digital production takes place in the Field of Design with any digital tool, including those sold by Adobe Inc. However, it is worth to mention that this software would be useless without the designer's workforce and, for that to occur, a current investment between R\$ 43 and R\$ 215 a month is necessary for the self-employed professional (ADOBE Brazil, 2023), which, according to the neoliberal point of view, is considered as his own company. Despite the economic cost to access these tools, the company defends creativity as being "free" (Figure 6), hiding socioeconomic aspects and its participation in the propagation of production and consumption capitalist ideals.

Therefore, Adobe Inc. participates in the productive system of the Field of Design and communicates itself as being a symbol of "creative" distinction, which some profiles of professionals or aspiring to be professionals can acquire, and some cannot. The minimum monthly subscription fee of one of the packages offered by the company, mentioned before, already constitutes the exclusion of students, self-employed professionals and institutions with low purchasing power. These small producers are then led to the margin of one of the conditions that are essential to their work: the use of tools. Marginalization also leads to the difficulty for them to be hired in private, and even public, positions (Figures 7 and 8).



Source: <https://www.adobe.com/br/about-adobe.html>. Acesso: 04 mar. 2023.
Figure 6. Publicity of Adobe values.

Sobre a vaga

Somos um escritório de Consultoria de Marca que busca impulsionar empresas, gerando soluções inovadoras e atemporais. Acreditamos na conexão verdadeira entre clientes e marcas, propiciadas através do design e da arquitetura.

Vaga presencial em Laguna - Santa Catarina.

Responsabilidades:

- Colaborar com a equipe nos projetos de branding, garantindo a consistência do design em vários meios de comunicação.
- Criar logotipos, designs, mídia impressa e digitais.

Qualificações

- Cursos ou graduação em Design Gráfico;
- 3-5 anos de experiência com design gráfico;
- Proficiência no pacote Adobe;
- Comunicação forte, pensamento conceitual, habilidades de tipografia e habilidades de design.

Source: Duma Consultoria de Marca. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3t9z4yzj>. Access on: Feb. 07, 2024.
Figure 7. Job description at a private company for the position of Graphic Design.

As observed throughout this section, the creativity that is imposed to us, and reproduced by the practice and thought of peers, is a version that is limited to financial profitability; something that is only referred to as creative when stimulating, or reformulating, ways to generate surplus value. In the industrial conjuncture, also in the digital context we are inserted in, creativity is dictated as a cognitive resource that works through production techniques, be them methodological or representative. In this context, Adobe Inc. plays an important role in the Society of the Spectacle, defined by Débord (2013, p. 22). According to the author, "all life in societies in which modern conditions of production reign announce itself as a huge accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly experienced drifted away



SERVIÇO DE COMUNICAÇÃO SOCIAL/ GABINETE
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8. Requisitos

8.1. Dos Requisitos Eliminatórios:

1 – Formação nível superior em Design Gráfico ou Desenho Industrial com habilitação em Comunicação Visual ou Comunicação Social com habilitação em Produção Editorial ou Publicidade e Propaganda. **2** – diploma expedido por instituição de ensino superior reconhecida pelo Ministério da Educação; **3** – experiências prévias e comprovadas superiores há 7 anos na elaboração/produção de materiais gráficos e digitais; **4** - vivência em diagramação e design editorial, com experiência prévia no desenvolvimento de projetos gráficos de peças editoriais; **5** - experiência no desenvolvimento de layouts, criação e padronização de projeto gráfico e identidade visual para materiais gráficos de grande porte (publicações, padronização tipográfica e de elementos gráficos), criação de elementos gráficos visuais e de tratamento de imagens e elaboração de ícones vetorizados; **6** - conhecimento em edição áudio e vídeo; **7** - conhecimento dos principais programas de editoração da Adobe (Photoshop, Illustrator e Indesign), pacote Office e Corel Draw.

Source: INCA (2023). Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3t9z4yzj>. Access on: Feb. 7, 2024.

Figure 8. Job description at a public institution for the position of Graphic Design.

in a representation". The image of creativity publicized by Adobe Inc. is a simulation of creativity without market purposes. That is, an inexistent creativity, disconnected from a labor practice that is mostly guided by capitalist market, as is the professional practice in the Field of Design.

CONCLUSION

For now, we mainly present some critical preliminary considerations about the current production hegemony in the Field of Design. The objective of this work was to present a projective field under a critical approach, also related to the field of Political Economy. In the first section of this study, we analyzed the field of Criticism to Political Economy, and relevant concepts for the ideal of Marxist production. Then, we argued about the historiography of the concept of "creativity", and how this process impacts the Field of Design. Finally, we briefly analyzed the context of Creative Industries in the XXI century, and how Adobe Inc. is influent in the digital field nowadays. Thus, we conclude that, in this socioeconomic context, creativity has become a resource, a capital, instead of a human skill. Through techniques, "creativity" today enables the production of goods, both digital or not, reproducing dominant social values and conventions. However, it is necessary to analyze, in detail and critically, the status of the tools and their influence, which products represent the

productive techniques in the Field of Design, how they can be classified and located in the process we call “creative”. As stated by Iraldo Matias (2014, p. 371), “there are many aspects of the exploration of the cognitive component of work by capital in its manifestations in design, which require further critical research”. In this moment, it is essential to understand the Field of Design under the socially determined instances, and how these guide even what is considered as subjective in a dialectic relation.

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