

3 REASONS TO BELIEVE THAT THOMAS THWAITES IS A LEGEND

The reinterpretation of an extra-ordinary author's work.

1. It is written in the title: 'heroic attempt'

We all know that heroic gesture are the origin of myth and legend, what we may disagree on, is to think that someone is a hero only because of an attempt.

This oxymora, heroic versus attempt, contained in the title of Thomas Thwaites first book, was one of the biggest challenge in the replica of his toaster project. This dualism identify the author in the role of an extra-ordinary designer, not goal oriented but certainly explorer. His original spirit brought him to create an unconventional object extremely rich of content but less curated in the formal aspects.

How to replicate such a deep conceptual object? How to copy an attempt? And, more in general, how to reinterpret his work?

The answers came buy making.

Within the cardboard copy assignment I mostly focused on the material which was the only restriction given for this replica.

Consequently, in order to be coherent with Thomas Thwaites material research I decided to create my handmade cardboard by a long process of blending newspaper and water, pressure and drying. At the end the result was surprisingly interesting because the copying of the toaster was much easier because the texture of the handmade cardboard immediately refers to T.T. toaster. This make me think about the beauty, satisfaction and pleasure of the auto production witch for me represent Thomas attempt.

2. His concept is so strong that he fail without defeat

Considering that the toaster worked for a few minutes only, Is the toaster project a failed attempt?

In case of a affermative answer Thomas would be no longer our legend but the victim of a industrialisation, consumerism and capitalism crime.

On the other hand, I am happy to believe in a negative answer that sees Thomas one of the few who survive from this lack of knowledge that industrialisation brought. With these project he proved to the entire world how complex objects are and how advanced human knowledge is, compared to the capacity of a single person.

The level of technologies contained in a daily object like the toaster is certainly the proof of this.

The numbers of components and the variety of the materials used are enormous, almost impossible to reproduce by our self.

For this reason, In his attempt, Thomas, had to scale his project by giving himself constrain, such as selection of materials to reproduce or the choice to use existing tools.

Because Thomas was able to express all of this with a non functional toaster, while I was copying the toaster, many times I asked my self if the outcome needs necessary to be actually functional or not.

By producing the piece in clay I faced this problem in two different aspects:

The first one is because my copy was much more precise than his copy in terms of aesthetic, that I was forced to create imperfections, more than beauty. I started integrating the clean surface of the toaster with impurities like sand and little stones and buy covering them again in order to have it more raw.

The second challenge was to create a copy not only focusing the attention on the shape but also the actual function that a toaster has, so I decided to bake the clay piece and use the property of the material of being heat absorbing. The clay toaster works pretty well !

3. Before becoming a celebrity the toaster's coast was already £1187,54

Thomas Thwaites is certainly a celebrity now, his Ted conference has more than minion of views, his book has been translated in many languages but the really hight price of the toaster is not depending from his fame, but rather is the addition of the expenses and effort that he put in the realisation of the project. This price is the representation of the knowledge lost compared to the 3,50 euro unknown toaster. I believe that Thomas is a pioneer and not a conservator in

a fight against knowledge obsolescence.

Website like instructables, wikyhow and the minions of tutorials on how to build objects on youtube are the proof that we are in a moment of reappropriation of the values promulgated by Thomas. In the design practice it is frequent to being inspired by referring to other designer's work by reinterpret them. I did so In my final replica. I created a solar toaster, here the function of the toaster has been maintained the same but the technology is much more simple and intuitive to understand. The price? Because it's made only with aluminium foil and cardboard it can be really cheap.