

Visual Hygiene on the Internet

Semiotic and Psychological Aspects

Abstract

An individual of the Network Society has to live simultaneously in two worlds: the real and the virtual. At first glance, each of them develops according to its own laws. But if we take a closer look, we will see that they have similar problems. As people are increasingly becoming victims of air and water pollution, so in the virtual world of visual ›dirt‹, their virtual environment becomes ›unnatural‹.

Certainly, the problem of the visual ecology is related not only to the Internet space. However, in the real world nature itself takes care of a person and lets him take a break from visual objects that cause him irritation or depression. A person can focus on contemplation of the beautiful scenery and landscapes, when it is necessary. On the Internet, the possibility of such ›switch‹ may not occur, for example, if a person is required to work with the same electronic resource as a ›visual allergen‹ for a long time.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the theories and concepts of Russian and international scientists, that, according to the author, are useful in solving the problems of visual ecology in the Internet space. The methodological resources of these theories and concepts will be considered using the examples of ›virtual‹ design and architecture.

Up until certain time in history, humans lived in harmony with nature, a perfect space from the viewpoint of visual comfort, regardless of the season and time. However, urbanization processes, technologisation and computerization have led to the situation where the natural environment has been turned into an almost artificial one: a person within the society-network is not surrounded by animate nature, but instead by spaces of megacities, agglomerations, e-cottages and mobile e-offices. Yet all these spaces are far from visual perfection. Eye-comforting color combinations and ›divine

proportions« [Luka Paccioli] have given way to speed, pragmatism and functionality. Nevertheless, the pursuit of beauty and visual perfection is inherent in human nature itself – both on the physiological level and on the level of archetypes and stereotypes. Otherwise people without appropriate education in art would just not feel any *visual and environmental problems* since the problem occurs only when one thing conflicts with another. In this case, a visual environment is in conflict with the concepts of human beauty, its *feelings* and the *subconscious pursuit* of beauty. Hence, just as in the real world, people increasingly suffer from air and water pollution, in the virtual world they become victims of the »unnatural« visual environment. This »unnaturality« can be expressed in discrepancy with its visual cultural codes, with its preference for a particular color combinations, etc. The problem of visual ecology on the Internet becomes serious in cases where, without the ability to »switch«, an individual is forced to work with the same electronic source as a »visual allergen«. In this regard, the purpose of this essay is to analyze theories and concepts by Russian and international scientists that, in the author's opinion, are applicable to solving the problem of visual ecology on the Internet.