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Word count: 2598
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Question 4: Outline a current environmental, political, or social issue that requires redesign. Explain how you will solve this issue over the duration of your future design career. Underline the tools and approaches will you use and discuss how and why.

Technological advancements that have introduced cheaper and more cost-effective clothes production within fast fashion have benefitted certain parts of society; however, it has also had a negative environmental impact on the planet. The fast fashion industry is renowned for creating problems with an environmental and social impact. The fast fashion industry has made its self-renowned for having an increasingly negative impact on the environment with the production and transportation of garments contributing for up to 10% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. Socially the fast fashion has affected countries economically which then causes political and social tensions, as the state often values money over the safety and health of their workers.

Fast fashion is defined as ‘inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-marketing retailers in response to the latest trends.’ (Oxford dictionary, 2024 [online]) As fast fashion is in expensive and realistically more affordable this creates the allure around it as it is essentially excisable to everyone. This can cause environmental and social impact as it impacts all classes all over the world and effects the planet negatively as a whole.

“Consciousness of the world as an object, which is to be regarded, cherished and looked after, is one example of positive thinking, and a rebirth to the modish pessimism and latest ironic posing developed ... It is unlikely (And undesirable) that people's need for variety, for distraction and, of course, for employment will diminish. But it is possible, perhaps probable, that the fashion in design will be for things that are longer lasting and better quality.”(Dormer,1991,p171) There is always going to be a desire for change and trends however if the fashion industry took a step back to consider and slow down it would not only have a positive effect on the environment but also of the quality of clothing as a whole, as there would be less need for quick turnovers therefore allowing more time to create better quality clothing with a reduced environmental impact. However, this may seem unrealistic as this economically would have a huge impact on the fashion industry, as they would lose revenue. This loss of revenue in the short term cannot be seen to outweigh the long-term environmental impact.

“Machines presented an infinite range of possibilities which combined greater productivity with greater leisure for working people” (Lambert, 1993, p.19). With machinery development it skyrocketed the fashion industry into the ability for quicker production; meaning even though moving the production overseas would take the companies longer to ship, it saved time as it became completely reliant on machinery; this meant the garments were cheaper to manufacture overseas. This demonstrates how the fast fashion industry does not directly cut corners but takes the easier way round, which only solves the direct problem in front of them and does not always look at the long-term impact or solution.

“Money is to be made-and virtue gained-from environmental issues. Politicians are appearing greener, and the manufacturing, from the raw materials to the depositing of the object” (Dormer, 1991, p.170). This highlights how often politicians and integral people in the fashion industry often use green a language to indicate slight changes they have made towards a more environmental issue, even though many of these changes are not significant enough to make a huge, long lasting or impactful difference.

“It is important to acknowledge the potential absurdity of the approach and the less visible problems it may conceal....Bear in mind that positively selecting the ingredients of which the product is made, and how they are combined is the goal” (Braungart, M. and McDonough (2002,p59), To be able to effectively make a change through your practice you need to know every step of the existing material use and process before you make a change. For example, changing the digital print inks to make them solvent free and replacing them with new inks leads to a new a set of questions. Are the new inks better for the other parts of the environment or are they also depositing equal amounts of waste into the ecosystem such as toxic metals.

“Unwanted textiles are exported to low-income nations, disrupting their local economies and polluting their environments.” (Payne, 2021, p87) This statement from Payne further shows how fashion does not only affect the wearer and is also bigger as an industry than people initially realize. With this statement Payne proves that most fashion comes with consequences that people are often too scared to think of, as they refuse to be part of the problem with the underlying thought that if it is not directly affecting you then there is no issue.

“Global production has primarily moved overseas due to lower labour costs. This has given rise to brands ordering larger quantities, resulting in longer lead times. Having to commit to larger orders created large amounts of unsold inventory.” (Kennedy, Reyes, and Venezia ,2020, p55) Fast fashion is so unpredictable as the trends move so quickly. The big fast fashion companies often become irresponsible when ordering large quantities from abroad; this is leading to higher wastage and lower quality as they are sourcing it from factories that creates with a quick turnover that quality control is not

their main concern. Sourcing materials and production from overseas not only creates bad environmental issues from the fabrics and often social problems such as poor pay and bad working conditions for workers, is also creates heavy carbon footprint as the product is then having to be flown back to the main company and then distributed to the point of sale.

The problem with these companies is that many are Transnational Corporations (TNC's) that are owned by many other companies. An example is H & M who own brands like Monki and Weekday. The TNC's have a huge amount of power in the decision making as they are influential politically, economically and socially. Having such a complex system of branding can also trick the buyer as many companies use the tactic of greenwashing to make the consumer feel that they are purchasing something that is better for the environment than it is. Brands often put heavy marketing on words such as green, sustainable and bio to help emphasize the fact that they have changed a very small percentage of their production line creating a full sense of security towards the consumer buying the item.

"It is usual to discard than repair" (Fletcher, 2014, p140) In this statement Fletcher shows that it has become a societal norm to embrace consumerism rather than it be frowned upon. Consumerism focuses on always having a material goal in mind with the undesirable always being what everyone else has. In the modern world there has become less connection to people with their clothing, many people seeing a garment as ruined once it has either gone out of fashion or is broken. The phrase "Make do and mend" that came about in World War II even when clothing was being rationed has all but become non-existent with the rise in fast fashion and consumerism culture. There will continue to be a devastating environmental impact unless people repair their clothes and opt not to throw them once they are broken if they continue with a more modern lazy way of thinking; where people are opting for the quick option with less effort involved not thinking about the repercussions towards the environment. This throw away society ultimately results in more landfill and less storytelling within a garment as there is less personal connection to the clothing.

Textile designers nowadays are taking initiatives to restore the fixing culture by setting up services that help teach and show people that just because there is a hole in a garment does not mean it is unwearable. With designers such as Celia Pym demonstrating the fixing culture through their designs "Now I darn and am looking for holes in people's clothes and the stories that accompany them; repairing these holes and returning the mended garments. It is a way to briefly make contact with strangers. I am interested in the spaces the body occupies, the tenderness of touch and the ways in which we go about day to day life"(Celia Pym) The Japanese art of Kintsugi which is a form of mending pottery, using gold, shows how just because an item is broken does not mean it can't be fixed and made more beautiful as it represents resilience by picking

itself back up and putting itself back together. This is a strong metaphor which could be used towards the fashion industry as well as it is almost fallen apart in recent decades and needs strong links to pick itself up and become more resilient towards pressures from society that cause strain on the environment which also then trickle down into other aspects of life creating social and economic problems within.

“In this imagery, emotional and physical world almost everything is possible-fashion is - light and free-there are a few limits. Yet plainly as it exists today, fashion production and consumption does have physical limits. Planetary boundaries restrict and democrat all human activity, including the production of fibre, fabric and garment.”(Fletcher, 2014, p141) Fashion is so directly associated with freedom and self-expressions almost ironic as the strong ties and directly binding links it has towards the effect of climate change is shocking, as clothing is a necessity as humans we almost overlook the direct effects we are having on the planet. We're having an ignorant approach towards fashion with a naïve mindset that the one purchase won't have create that much damage. With garments like denim using up to 5678 litres of water to create one pair of jeans and once this water is washed out being placed back into rivers and streams to then be consumed by people who do not have access to clean running water who then directly end up drinking toxic dyes and fibres. This again can highlight the greed of the politicians as they place the financial benefits over the basic human rights of all their citizens.

Although there might not be clear political links between the exploitation of the fashion industry and world politics there are definite major factors that contribute towards political and ethical strain in the industry. The textiles industry has huge economic value in countries like India, China, Italy, UK, Bangladesh and many more. Fast fashion has led to the migration of the fashion industry through the centuries; where Europe was once the heart of the industry now more south Asian countries have taken over, as they are cheaper to produce in so the large fast fashion businesses are able to create cheap and quick supply and demand at the expense of the environment. Taking the textiles industry out of places like England or Italy has had economic effects on the countries. “Wool and cotton have been very important in England, the silk industry in Italy...These trades offered a major source of employment and potential for profit” (Conway, 2006, p32)

Although fast fashion seems like a modern problem there were beginnings of it around the 18th century when the industrial revolution started. This brought new machines that could produce clothing three times quicker, whilst using less human interaction, meaning factories could cut down on workers resulting in cheaper clothing but at the same time meaning workers would lose jobs. This also brought change to the West and fast fashion began to grow when the clothes became cheaper the lower classes were

able to afford products that the rich owned, as they could be more “mass” produced in the factories. “In the West ,until influence brought by the industrialization and the consequent [sic] proliferation of the consuming middle classes, the leaders of fashion were ruling families of Europe” (Conway, 2006, p18) When the clothing became more accessible to the lower classes this took the power away from the upper class as they didn't want to be associated with lower classes. This meant the fashion world was constantly trying to keep up with the changing demands as when everyone has something it becomes much less desirable. The rich wanted to show their wealth by the clothes they wore, and this symbolism of financial power was diminished if the clothes were easily accessible to everyone.

The Fashion industry is renowned for making garments that follow micro trends and are produced extremely quickly, therefore affecting their quality with their aim being to be worn several times then thrown away as they are not made for longevity and have little regard to the effect it has on the environment. As the fast fashion industry is so broad and complex it creates difficulty when trying to find ways to solve the issues it creates. The fast fashion industry is also a huge source of income for certain countries like China, Bangladesh and India, so politically these countries want to continue to be the manufacturers of the garments as economically it brings in huge revenue, however on the other hand it also plays a massive part in exploitation of workers and their human rights.

“Today these tactics are by and large those of the dominant mode of production-Capitalism. Fashion is implicated in the wider system of control and power in the modern era.” (Fletcher, 2014, p142) When buying new fashion items, it is hard to do so with a clean conscience as the industry is so deep rooted and has so many complex layers making it hard to avoid aspects that would directly affect our planet. The fashion industry is estimated to be making around \$1.7 trillion each year. There is no surprise that power played such a large role in its running. Unfortunately, fast fashion has become socially acceptable with big companies such as Shein not being held responsible for the effects they're having, not only the environment but their poor treatment of the staff; with many issues about human rights coming into play. This can be a conflict between political and economic issues, as if the welfare and human rights of the workers are protected this often means production costs increase. This can mean that politicians are more reluctant to step in as they fear the financial impact as the countries can reap huge economic benefits from these multinational companies.

Within the textile industry there are ways that there could be advancements in the next 10 years to reduce the social and economic negative effect it will have on the planet. Within the textiles practice focusing on aspects such as reducing the use of techniques

like devore - as once the fibres are burnt, they have to be washed away down the sink therefore releasing small fibres into water systems and back into our seas. As technology develops there will also be better ways to create more hand-rendered looks on digital machinery; now this is very limited, and the inks are not good for the environment. Overall, the textile industry needs to focus on fixing the current problems within the industry and changing the consumers overall mindset as this will be the most 'powerful' way to make a change. Reduction in fast fashion rather and less focus on creating new items. Although supply and demand will always be a huge thing in the industry as it keeps it running, controlling that supply would be easier if the industry was less competitive and came together to solve the problem and slowed down on the output being created. By prioritising circular design, ethical labour practices, and consumer education, we can collectively work toward a future where fashion is not just an expression of personal style but a force for positive change.

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