

1. Your name: Jiri Zdebski
2. Your Student Number: 1802998
3. Your Module course and number: **Research in Context ADAD5003**
4. Your BA course title: Product Design
5. Tutor name: Julia Lockheart
6. The full question you have chosen: Question 3: How useful are Manifestos to designers and/or design groups? Outline your discussion with reference to three key manifestos. Through careful critique, conclude your text by defining your own design values in a 10-point manifesto.
7. Word count: 2338

Content

- 1) introduction
- 2) What is manifest and why use it
- 3) Outline and discuss 3 key manifestos
- 4) 10-point manifesto of personal views
- 5) Bibliography

Introduction

This essay is aiming to discuss the usefulness of manifestoes in specific regards to designers and/or design groups. The plan is to do this through three steps:

1. Looking at the dictionary definition of the word Manifesto and attempt to derive from that its usefulness for designers;
 - a. The usefulness of writing a manifestoes
 - b. The usefulness of reading manifestoes
2. Identify and deconstruct three relevant manifestoes;
3. Conclude by writing a personal ten-point manifestation of my own views in design values.

What is manifesto

The dictionary definition of manifesto is

“a written statement of the beliefs, aims, and policies of an organization, especially a political party”

(Cambridge dictionary, 2019)

the usefulness of writing a manifesto

Deriving through this definition the usefulness of manifesto through writing one is that of setting publicly visible guidelines for the designers work and/or intention for the upcoming future.

Deriving through this definition there are three main reasons why designers might want to write a manifesto.

The first one being to write a career manifesto outlining future career plans. This may especially be useful to fresh and upcoming designers looking for the job placement and/or guidelines to help keep their career goals clear.

“A career manifesto will help remind you of individual career needs and get you unstuck when those opportunities come about,” says Darrisaw. “You don’t want to look back and be clueless as to why you made the decisions you did and why are you here. Move with intention and you won’t be in that position.” (Gross, 2019)

The second reason why a designer might want to write a manifesto is to outline their personal or company’s views and/or values on any given topic. This could be used to publicly address any question the customers might have about the designer’s/company’s views, values. This should make it more like-minded people approach to do business making it easier to stay by and uphold your principles by appealing to those like-minded people.

The third reason why designer might want to write a manifesto is to publicly setup guidelines for his/her project/work. This specific reason is one that holds the largest appeal to me personally. This is because it’s incredibly useful when the customer’s brief is incredibly vague; in these situations, it’s important to set up some boundaries on what to focus yourself. By making it a manifesto it is made public this could prevent wasting time on focusing on things that the customer isn’t interested in especially if you do it on regular basis; this could show customers in advance how you work and there so the customer coming to you will have some idea what to expect.

By far these three reasons are not the only reasons. The reason I have chosen to write about these is because these seemed to be the most useful at the time of researching this topic.

The usefulness of reading a manifesto

This section I will separate in two parts:

1. The usefulness of reading a manifesto for a designer as an individual
2. The usefulness of reading a manifesto for a designer group/company

Designer (as an individual)

Designers might want to look up manifestoes of other designers with the purpose of looking for inspiration during the research process for their projects. Reading other people’s manifestoes can help the designer to understand their views and/or opinions. This is useful for research purposes since as a designer’s it is our job to empathise with the people we are designing for.

On the other hand, a designer might want to look up a manifesto of companies that he/she are considering working for. This is to ensure that you agree with their values (this should be done before applying for the job).

Designer group/company

Whilst on the other hand the designer groups might want to research any manifesto a job applicant might have written to ensure that he/she share their core values and/or views. This is what the individual should be doing before applying for the job any way however it is my opinion that the responsibility falls on both sides. This is because the understanding of the manifestoes might be slightly different because of personal circumstance.

The key manifestoes

Dada Manifesto 1918

Dada manifesto is about creating a change in the world of art. It was written in a neutral zone during World War 1 (WW1) it writes about the not existing future from the view of exiled pranksters.

My favourite quote from the manifesto is "I write a manifesto and I want nothing, yet I say certain things, and in principle I am against manifestoes, as I am also against principles" (TZARA/Dada Manifesto, 1918) reading this manifesto makes me feel as if this manifesto was written out of sarcasm. With the intent to show the declining relevance of the manifesto platform.

Red Alan's Manifesto, Grayson Perry RA, 2014

Red Alan's manifesto is a unique manifesto that was exclusively printed on napkins, "printed on 100% cotton and measuring 60 x 60cm" (Royal academy of art press release, 2014) this manifesto contains ten points of demands of artists from artists.

Most of the point in this manifesto are very agreeable. However in these points are written as demands in the true manifesto fashion which in the 21st century seems out of place. This is especially since it's less acceptable to make demands in the modern culture than it was in the previous centuries.



(Royal academy of art press release, 2014)

The Guerilla Girls, 1985-90 manifesto

The Guerilla Girls, 1985-90 manifesto was written as part of a feminist movement in the art with the goal to change the standing of women in art. Before this movement the standing of women was mostly as a naked model.



(Hanson, 2013)

My thoughts and feelings on the manifestos before writing my own manifesto

The more I look into this the less fond of manifestos I become. The more manifestoes I read the more it makes me feel that they are an out dated way of making demands and or sharing opinions. This might have been the ideal way in the past however in the day and age where internet is a thing it feels out of place to write a manifesto. Honestly, it's difficult now for me to be writing on the usefulness of manifestoes when the more I look into it the less use I see in them. However, I've already chosen this task out of the available options so I will drag it to the end.

My manifesto on design

- 1) The opposite of a good idea isn't always a bad ide
- 2) Don't design for averages
- 3) The nature of our attention affects the nature of our experience
- 4) Dare to be trivial
- 5) Don't design for the sake of it alone
- 6) Belief in what you design
- 7) Understand the customer
- 8) Research the user
- 9) Design with the environment in mind
- 10) Good design should be simple not simpler

"the opposite of a good idea can also be a good idea" (Sutherland, 2019, vi) lot of people might not agree with this statement as the most common logic is that if it's not good than it's bad. However, it is my opinion that if something is bad for a specific task it might be good for some other task for example knife and fork are very good for eating steak. On the other hand, they are very bad for eating a soup.

Most humans are not average; there so it makes no sense to be designing for the average. By this statement large amount if not most designs aimed for human interaction could be considered flawed. At a quick glance that is ludicrous and that is why most designers still design for the average human even though almost no humans are of those proportions.

“The nature of our attention affects the nature of our experience” (Sutherland, 2019, vi) through this statement it could be understood that every experience is different depending on the personal circumstance of the individual experiencing it. This is one thing that I believe that every designer should consider when working on their designs. This view is often ignored and/or underrated by the younger generation of designers. It is my opinion that this should be put more into the consideration and practise by the new and upcoming designers.

“Dare to be trivial” (Sutherland, 2019, vi) to discover something new it is important to look in all places not just the exciting but the trivial too. If we all look only through the exciting, we’ll never find all the solutions. The other reason is that what one might consider trivial the second might find incredible. The point I’m trying to make is that we all have different taste and opinions.

Don’t design for the sake of it alone. It is important to know why you’re designing what you’re designing. This is my opinion because if you’re designing without a reason why you lack the passion needed to fuel the research and the design process to the fullest capabilities. If the design lacks passion behind it most of the time it will suffer. I have noticed this in my own work that if I don’t believe in my own design the results are not the most satisfactory.

Understand the customer. It is important for a designer to understand their customer even when the customer doesn’t understand them self. This could be achieved by at least basic knowledge of psychology. It is my opinion that every designer should have some interest in psychology as it helps in understanding what the customer really wants even if the customer doesn’t know what he/she really want. This is very crucial for a designer because if customer isn’t happy then you won’t get paid which sadly in this day and age is be all and end all. This fact might be upsetting for some people but to be honest it doesn’t actually bother me.

Research the user. Even though the customer has the final word in what gets out there or not. In the end it is the end user who is going to end up using the product. That is why my main focus during the research process for any of my products is the end user’s needs and wants. This could be easily overlooked since it’s easy to merge the customer and the user together however the customer and the end user are two separate groups of people. It’s possible that the customer might become the end user however that is not always so. There so it’s important to understand both.

For you the reader it might be around the time you might question what about the ecological values, does he not care about being eco-friendly. To be honest in this day and age it is almost impossible to not to consider the ecological values. Now a days I think it’s almost impossible to ignore the eco demands that are out there. As a designer I always consider the eco value of the product I’m working on. When it comes to the overall notion of eco friendly everyone seems to be looking towards electrical energy especially in the motor industry. It is my opinion that this is not the best solution since most of that electricity still comes from fossil fuels however it is important to drive this progress forward no matter what

Good design should be simple not simpler. I know that this point didn’t originate from my head however I can’t seem to find where I’ve read or heard it from. Even so I fully agree with this statement. It is important to fully understand the meaning behind this statement, as to some people it may sound like as if the statement is contradicting itself. It might make it easier to understand if

you replace the word simpler with dumber. I know I'm not the only designer who believes that a good design should be simple. I know this because almost every designer I have had the chance to talk to or have read their work they all either outright say it or at least hint towards it.

The need for manifestos in design is shrinking and so is their usefulness. There is no need to declare our self's in the way of manifestos. Most manifestos in the art world lately have been written in a sort of sarcastic way almost mocking the idea. I'm writing this only out of necessity to do so due to my status as a student Not because I consider them useful. In fact, I struggle to find any relevance to my profession and manifestos. The need for manifestos from the artist's position is gradually reducing inversely proportionally to the human equality. The fact is that manifestos are falling into obsolescence thanks to the rise of internet.

Conclusion

The relevance of manifestoes is in my opinion at it's all time lowest. I believe this because all the manifestoes that had an impact were written around a revolution or an uprising of sorts. There so at time of peace the need for this kind of tool is almost non-existent.

If I'm going to be honest, I'm struggling to see the full usefulness of manifestos at this point in time. I have chosen this task of writing this essay/manifesto with the hopes of finding the usefulness of manifestoes however the more I look into this topic the more confused I am. The act of writing this pretend manifesto doesn't seem to be helping to release the confusion either as I'm struggling to think of what to write especially since it has to be ten points long which is too much for my comfort as I believe that five pints would have been enough to express my views and opinions and probably would have ended up being more thought trough.

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