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‘Proposed question for Independent Project (Part One in Independent Project in Year Three)’ - How important is it for interior designers to understand the psychological impacts that their designs have on infants in comparison to adults, in what way can this affect them?’.

This essay explores the connection between three keywords: colour, environment and futuring. In relation to designers of our present and future and how they impact our lives. With a focus on the psychological effects that surroundings have on us especially in the sense of colour. By the means of key thinkers Tim Armstrong, Richard Gregory, Dana Thomas and Tony Fry. I will discuss the environment and how colour can be used to associate brands with sustainability. My last area of research will explore the connection between sustainability, technology, and the future of our planet if we do not change our ways. There is no instant connection that occurs from my chosen keywords, however extensive researching will show how each intertwine with one another.

Colour is defined as “the property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eye as a result of the way it reflects or emits light” (Oxford Language Dictionary, 2022). From reading this you understand the complexity of colour and how we can see it. I found this short insight into how we can see colour fascinating so delved deeper and came across a book called colour perception by Tim Armstrong, in his book he goes into much more depth and states that

“At both ends of the visible band of wavelengths large energies of light are required to stimulate vision... These wavelengths are normally seen as green and yellowish green (lime). When a beam of white light is shone through a glass prism the various wavelengths are bent (refracted) by differing amounts. They spread out and form a multicoloured spectrum which can be seen if a screen is placed in their path. The order of the colours is always the same: violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red. No doubt you have noticed this order occurring naturally every time you have seen a rainbow” (Armstrong, 1991, p.4).

So now that we understand colour and how we can see it, let us look at the importance of colour and the effects it has on us. In Gregory Richard's book called *Eye and Brain* he talks about the importance of optimal environments for babies. Richard mentions that “neural mechanisms degenerate with lack of stimulation. Early visual environment of babies is highly important for adult vision so nursery wallpaper should be considered!” (Gregory, 1997, p.5). Trends these days are very minimalist see fig.1 below especially in interiors, this concerns me because you can see Gregory's passion in his book about pattern and colour being so important for babies' development.



Fig 1: Baby, We're Loving these Nursery Interior Trends for 2022, 2022.



Fig 2: Digs Digs, 25 Fun and Colourful Nursery Décor Ideas, 2019.

Fig.2 is far more exciting and engaging to look at than fig.1. In a world with no colour or pattern how will this affect the futures of our babies? As designers we must not completely disregard pattern and colour within our designs so that they fit into a certain trend. The development of babies is far more important than whether the nursery fits the theme of your modern monochromatic house.

In university I am currently doing a project based on the coast. My colour palette consists of neutrals, greys and soft blushes of pinks and blues see (Fig.3) below



Fig 3: Zoe White, My Desk, 2022.

My fellow peers and technicians at university have commented on how calming and relaxing my colour palette is, they also mentioned that it is refreshing to see such a subtle colour palette. This makes it clear that although babies need bright colours and loud patterns, as we get older we prefer to look at more subtle and calming designs as a form of escapism and tranquillity. I wanted to understand the physiological effects behind the colours I used, so I went on to research each individual colour. The colour beige is “neutral, calm, and relaxing” (Zahra, 2021). The colour grey creates “a sense of calm and composure, relief from a chaotic world” (Kemmis, 2009). The colour pink “calms and reassures our emotional energies” (Kemmis, 2009). Finally, the colour blue “promotes peace and tranquillity” (Braam, 2021). From researching these four colours, I now understand why my work has the effect it does on people.

To help me construct this essay I decided to use three different colours to differentiate each research area for my key words. Purple was used for colour; green was used for environment and blue was used for futuring. This shows how helpful colour can be and how you can use it in so many ways. It is also interesting to see the way in which we associate colours with different words.

Environment can be described as “the natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity” (Oxford Language Dictionary, 2022). I am interested to see the connection between colour and environment and how the two affect one another. The colour green has connotations of sustainability, Laura Perryman states in her book *The Colour Bible*,

“in the latter half of the 20th century, the colour gained popularity alongside the rise of the global environmental movement...today it has been adopted into the branding of any organisation wishing to associate itself with environmentally sustainable practices” (Perryman, 2021, p.135).

This shows that people use colour to represent what they stand for and to show that they are environmentally friendly. I wanted to understand why the colour green has been chosen to represent sustainability and found that,

“Green is a color that can evoke powerful emotions. It is a dominant color in nature that makes you think of growth. Think of nature and see the incredible variety of shades of green expressing renewal and life” (Wharton, 2022).

For a sustainable brand who wants to be or are already environmentally friendly, you can see why green would be used to either represent themselves or used in their branding. As a brand you would want people to know that the way you chose to make your clothing etc will allow our environments to grow and not decay. In the book *Fashionopolis* by Dana Thomas she talks about a jacket Princess Diana was wearing and she says that “It was dyed and lettered with coloring agents that while decomposing in landfill, would poison the earth and ground water” (Thomas, 2019, p.2). This shows how colour can have negative effects on our environment, it can also affect our emotions and the way we view our environment. An example of this is the mountains surrounding my house were purposely set on fire and the once green mountains are now black and unpleasant see fig. 4 below. They were calming to look at due to the various shades of green but now when I look at them, I feel a sense of sadness. That dramatic change of colour has completely changed my environment. In the little book of colour by Karen Haller she mentions that emotional experiences can be delivered through colour, and I could not agree more.



Fig 4: Zoe White, Burnt Mountain, 2022.

If we continue to abuse our planet this could potentially become a worldwide problem where there are no more beautiful colours within nature it will become a dark and depressing world to live in.

To help decrease the impact that my clothing has on the environment, I have decided to sell and buy unwanted clothes on vinted. This is a simple step everyone could take to better our environment. Colour links to this as some people are not satisfied with the colour of the items when they receive them, so they end up sending them back to the seller which increases the carbon footprint of the item. This shows the power of colour and how it can potentially have negative effects on our environment as well as positive.

Futuring means a “field of using a systematic process for thinking about, picturing possible outcomes, and planning for the future.” (Encyclopaedia, 2019). I came across an article by Alice Payne who is an associate professor in fashion in the school of design, a program leader in centre for a waste-free world, and co-leader of the research group TextileR: Future Textile Industries. Within her article Payne says, “In a Malthusian narrative, humanity faces an era of collapse and scarcity, brought about by the monstrous, unstoppable nature of technologies set loose on the natural world” (Payne, 2017, p.7). This is a powerful statement made by Payne. She is suggesting that technologies are what caused the destruction to our planet this could be described as the Anthropocene era which means “the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment” (Oxford Language Dictionary, 2022). Technology does not have to be this destructive tool; we can use it to reverse the damage and better our planet.

Technology is and will remain a very big part of the fashion industry and using the technology to save the future of our environment is vital. However, after understanding the importance of colour in our everyday lives I cannot help but wonder whether the impact that the colours have on people when seen in real life will be lessened through viewing it via a screen. As we all know all screens portray colour in different ways, the reason behind this is because

“The pixels are in some pattern of red, blue, or green depending on the bit depth, a.k.a. how many can fit on the screen. If one monitor has a higher bit

depth than the other, it will affect the resolution, which in turn, affects how visual content, namely color, shows up on the screen” (Mertes, 2021).

I have seen this many times when I have created a pattern and viewed it on a different device. The colours are completely different depending on what screen you use, then designs do not have the same impact as you intended them to have due to the difference in colour.

“Sustainable design, with its preoccupation with ‘green products’ and ‘green buildings’, is no exception to this productivist disposition. Actually, asking whether the thing to be designed is really needed, is just not a question in the forefront of most designers’ minds (be they ‘green’ or not)” (Fry, 2009, p.72).

Planning and thinking about how your design will affect the future is crucial for the growth of our environment. Fry is saying that just because you have put the word green in front of a product does not mean that it is good or even necessary for our environment. Designers should not fall into the trap of relying on this colour to make themselves seem like sustainable designers. If the product or design is not needed, then it is not environmentally friendly. Green is the colour of balance and harmony and that is exactly what we need for our planet in the Quaternary (Present Day). We must look past the Anthropocene and not let that era stop us from changing our ways as designers to have less of an impact on our climate and environment. In this section of my research there has been much discussion regarding the environment. This is because the more I continue my research, the more I realise how much each

area needs one another. We need futuring to avoid more disruption to our environment and we need a sustainable environment to avoid destroying the future of our planet. See fig.5 below of the beautiful and exuberant world we live in, now look at fig.6 below of what our environment could potentially look like without the use of futuring.



Fig 5: Peakpx, pretty, grass, Lavender, clouds...HD Wallpaper.



Fig 6: Matt McGarth, Climate Change: 12 years to save the planet? Make that 18 months, 2019.

The difference in emotions you feel when you look at the images above is incredible, colour has a big part in this. The importance of looking after our environment to better our future in the Quaternary out ways the desire to see the true colour of clothing and other things. Designers will have to understand this and see the benefits and the positive impact they can have on our planet if they go digital in some areas during their design careers. Without environmental change there will be no colour nor future, all three are vital for the sanity of us humans and our existence.

To conclude, it is clear that the key words I have chosen to take forward and research have substantial differences. There is no obvious link from just seeing each word next to one another. Colour is something we see; environment is something we live in and futuring is a possible outcome. Although there are differentiations, after

conducting thorough research into each key word it became obvious to me that there are in fact relationships between them. One of the relationships I discovered are that we need futuring to allow us to plan and design in ways that do not harm our environment in the future, if we chose not to do this it could then impact on how colourful the surroundings are which can then have negative psychological effects on humans. With the knowledge I have from all the research I have undertaken; I would like to look further into the importance of colour and pattern for the development of babies. Another possible area of study would be researching the effects that fashion has on the environment and how futuring and technology could tackle this issue. From everything I have learnt, my research has led me to one final question. How important is it for interior designers to understand the psychological impacts that their designs have on infants in comparison to adults, in what way can this affect them?'

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