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Designers are a part of a silent revolution, and we have a responsibility to actively and quietly produce art and designs that speak volumes about present issues. My intention is to show what is important to me and how I believe that I may be able to create change through my field of work.

What is culture? There are a couple of definitions in the Cambridge dictionary. The first description of the word culture that I want to add in is 'the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time'(Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, 2020) and the definitions that relates to the art culture is 'the arts of describing, showing, or performing that represent the traditions or the way of life of a particular people or group; literature, art, music, dance, theatre, etc.'(Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, 2020) What if within art and design we see these descriptions not as different but rather as harmonious? Within the arts, there are many different cultures and sub-cultures, even though the lines within the art departments are blurred. However, for the purpose of this paper I will be focusing my interests on the craft culture and design culture, (both of which I believe have more in common than one might think and can very much be a part of the same culture). As Edward Said explains 'culture is not monolithic either and is not the exclusive property of the East or west nor of the small groups of men and women' (Said, 1993). I believe that the word 'culture' is steeped in a heavy history, and it had been embedded into the modern-day vocabulary to make it easier to differentiate between the different groups, whether it be social, racial, economical and in the context of this paper, groups within the art world, which separates us (the individual) from 'the other'. In 'Orientalism' Edward Said explains that "The other' is a person that is visually not from the west and they are defined through their difference.' (Said, 2014) Even though Said uses the description of 'the other' in a racial context as the book refers to colonialism, I believe that the general idea of someone thinking, acting or being different from another, makes it much easier from us to create an invisible line that separates them from us. This sort of 'tribalism' has always been fundamental to the way that humans work. Within the art world, artists and makers from different areas of expertise rarely mix. However, 'just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities' (Said, 1993) and the differences that we have should not change the way we view others or the work they create.

I will be looking at the different relationships that first and second world cultures have with crafts, design and makers. The focus will predominately be on the West and African cultures as thoughts, as this is something that I am passionate about. In the western world, crafts are seen as superior and are sold at a much higher market value as they are considered as luxury, whereas in poorer countries they are not seen in the same light. As a matter of fact, their value decreases, as they are usually seen in a prejudice context. 'Crafts tends to be part of the luxury and gift markets. First and third worlds come together in the craft products made by the poor for the affluent foreign tourists that are the so called 'ethnic',

‘tourist’ and ‘airport arts.’ (Walker, 1989) I believe that this is because those people who can afford to travel already have what they need, whereas in poorer areas, some people struggle for the necessities in life and the arts are not a priority for people who are living day by day.

Both these images A and B (Appendix) that are shown are made from recycled and reclaimed materials to create 3D sculptures. The first image is from US based artist Sayaka Ganz’s exhibition titled ‘Reclaimed Creations’, the second was made by the Ilboubo brothers who is based in Burkina Faso. Both works needed great skill, time and creativity to make, however the difference is that Ganz’s work is appreciated as works of art, whereas the Ilboubo brother’s work is not. The Ilboubo brothers sell their work to tourist in order to make a living. The lack of appreciation for one person’s work and the appreciation for the other is clearly visible. If the Ilboubo brothers has the same time and resources and perhaps even opportunities as other designer/makers, then perhaps their work could be seen to the same standard. ‘Design must become an innovation highly creative, cross-disciplinary tool responsive to the true needs of men’ (Papanek, 2019) and the Ilboubo brothers design what they need to economically support themselves and sell what they think the tourist would want, which are the ‘tacky, touristy and airport arts’ (Walker, 1989). But why do we praise one culture for their design and craft skills and not the other? And how can we change it?

Design has always been subjective, and one is likely to get a different answer depending on who is asked. The official Cambridge dictionary describes design as ‘to make or draw plans for something, for example clothes or buildings’(Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus, 2020). The idea of design is essentially to imagine and make something that has not been done before. Regardless of who is asked, most often people will agree that the job of the designer is to change the environment around them. And for this new generation of designers ‘in an age of mass production when everything must be planned and designed, design has become the most powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments (by extension, society and himself)’(Papanek, 2019). Designers are responsible for what is known as ‘a silent revolution’ where the changes, though they may be small, create a significant change in the way that people live their lives. This is seen when the iPhone was released in the summer of 2007. To many, this may have seemed as an inevitable technological change that was going to happen at some point or another, but what was not anticipated was the social change. People seemed to be unaware of the deep impact that a design such as the iPhone made. Every small detail was thought about during the designing process of the phone, from the technological and functional aspect, to (what I believe to be the most impactful) the interaction that the buyer would have with the phone. The social change is visible from the way we hold the device, how often we use it, the actual use of the device as well as how one would interact with it. This design changed the way we interacted not only with technology but with each other in a more permanent way. But perhaps this great innovation which allows us to stay connected, has in fact made us a lot more disconnect with the world outside our doorstep.

With the internet the world is our oyster, and everything is at our fingertips; the world has become more connected in both time and space. I believe that this disconnect is visible within our personal lives, with factors such as online shopping and selling, (which the need for has vastly increased recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic) war and work, growing more demanding of less interpersonal relationships. While the demand for quicker access has increased, the human need for social interaction and the natural world has become more interesting on screen than in person.

By comparing images C and D (Appendix), there is a clear example of why the works of designers and makers are more expensive, but the images also demonstrate how crafts can change the world. Image C (Appendix) is from a pottery from KJ pottery and this set retails for about £81,51. That is for one dinner plate, one side plate and one bowl. Image D (Appendix) is from Sainsbury's, a recognised English supermarket. Their dinner set are priced at £44, that is for four of each individual item. KJ pottery sell their work at an obviously higher rate but for good reason. Their plates and bowls are designed and made by hand, naturally making them more expensive due to the time and skill required to create the products. Furthermore, when people buy these plates, they are more likely to keep them for a much longer time period, as they will then also have sentimental value. When people hold something that a craftsman has made, there is this an unspoken joy and connection created with the material object, and the craftsman's ability to manipulate the raw material. 'Industrial manufacture; mass production methods; a capitalist, free market economy and a reasonably affluent population' (Walker, 1989). The throw away consumerist society makes it easy for large companies to manufacture cheap, and most of the time, plastic objects which are more desirable for people who come from a lower income society, But the people who ow these companies can afford the more expensive and desired 'crafted' work. In almost every industry from the food to the fashion industry, the larger companies can afford to sell their goods at a fraction of the price due to their mass production process, with little regard for the negative environmental impact. But I believe that this is all about to change. There has been both negative and positive outcome from this, but as designers we must start thinking about how we can change the foundations of our society today. 'Our society makes it crucial for designers to understand clearly the social, economic and political background of what they do' (Papanek, 2019) and everything is constantly changing and developing, and therefore so must the designs of the designer. During the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, I am sure that there are many designers who are struggling to think of innovative ways to contribute to the situation. It is my belief that we can find ways to make the lockdown bearable but also to change our consumer habits as well as the way we teach, learn, and just live our everyday lives. The world that we have known before is gone, and we designers need to find ways to make the changes as smooth and as easy as possible.

Future of design and crafts is very uncertain. 'Technology as we know it is rooted in craft but it different from craft' (Dormer, 1997). As designer/makers it is essential to be able to adapt

to what the future may hold and as previously stated, we have the power to change the way our society works. To do this, we have to understand the environmental, ecological and social influences both bad and good that have happened in the past in order to make sure that we do not make those same mistakes. It is a common saying, the more things change, the more they stay the same. We designers must strive to not repeat past mistakes and forge a more sustainable future; either through the materials used for our art, or the message created through our craft. 'Past and present inform each other, each implies the other and in the totally ideal sense intended by Eliot, each co-exists with each other' (Said, 1993) and one of the biggest changes that will happen in design will be the attention that the designer will have, in both their design and in the making of their design. By making sure that what they produce will not harm the environment and will be sustainable, whether it is functional or simply just art. We will look to the past and the way that the materials were successfully used, as well as by looking to technology to see where we could push the materials even further, getting the most out of something.

Artist and designers such as Oliver van Herpt are the perfect example of the future of design. He has a high level of understanding with the material he works with and has used this knowledge to create ceramic pieces from a 3D printer (Image E, Appendix)). If we compare this to the work of Sayaka Ganz and the Ilboudo brothers (as previously mentioned) who use their making/craft skills to the highest level by making pieces from related objects and materials, they make the well-known proverb 'one man's trash is another man's treasure' come to life.

With the current social climate being that of unknown and fear, and most countries in lockdown, there had been an obvious change in the environment, a change that some people did not know could happen, and that some may have even thought impossible. These changes, such as animals thought extinct come into abandoned cities, water pollution going down to allow visibility as well as cleaner air due to the lack of air pollution, have made people see what changes can be made. This has inspired some to more locally sourced foods and shopping locally, either by choice or by necessity; 'Architects, engineers, and designers are creating a new generation of prototypes that challenge the way we think about materials in a built environment' (Veivich and Adams, 2014). Designers and craftsmen create products people want, with the power to change society indirectly. And with the help of modern technology it would be possible to reduce the amount of material waste that it would take to build prototypes and testing the products, and it would also allow designers to make realize that their designs with as minimal waste as possible. We use a variety of materials to create art to inspire and create thought - but what is our responsibility?

Proposed question for independent inquiry: What is our responsibility? And how can designers, makers and craftsmen address the world and our future through their works? Changing the way we view ourselves, each other and the world that we live in.

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Appendix

Image A



Sayaka Ganz; Reclaimed Creations - Vibrant sculptures of the natural world and animals made from discarded materials. (2020). Retrieved 13 May 2020, from <https://sayakaganz.com/>

Image B



Modern, S. (2020). Handmade Fair Trade African Baskets & Collections - Swahili Modern. Retrieved 13 May 2020, from <https://www.swahilimodern.com/collections/recycled-sculptures/products/recycled-spark-plug-lovers>

Image C



Tremper, C. and Zakharenko, V., 2020. *Dinner Plate - Salad Plate - Bowl - KJ Pottery*. [online] KJPottery. Available at: <<https://www.kjpottery.com/listing/603948455/dinner-plate-salad-plate-bowl-kj-pottery>>

Image D



Sainsburys.co.uk. 2020. *Sainsbury's Online Grocery Shopping And Fresh Food Delivery*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.sainsburys.co.uk/gol-ui/product/sainsburys-home-coastline-dinner-boxset-12pc-134517259-p>> [Accessed 13 May 2020].

Image E



Herpt, O., 2020. *Functional 3D Printed Ceramics - Olivier Van Herpt*. [online] [Oliviervanherpt.com](http://oliviervanherpt.com). Available at: <http://oliviervanherpt.com/functional-3d-printed-ceramics/> [Accessed 13 May 2020].

Intended reading list

The politics of Everyday- Enzo Manzini

Design in Dark Times

Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism- Betsy Greer

Africa: A Modern History- Guy Arnold