

Catrin Young

Drawing, Colour, Regeneration

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Surface Pattern Design

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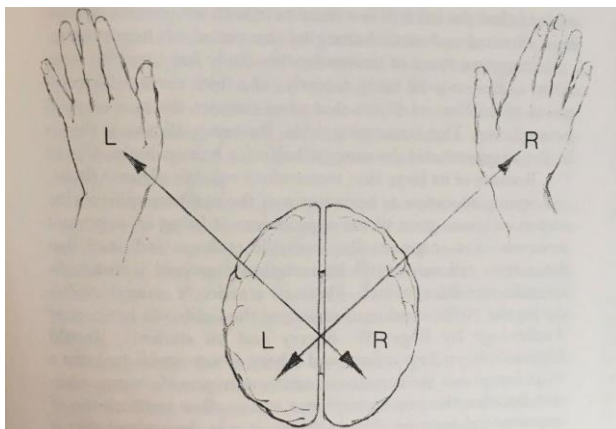
Julia Lockheart

My dissertation proposal will consist of three key words which I will be researching. These three key words reflect areas of my practice which I am both passionate and interested in. I have chosen to research into the words *Drawing*, *Colour* and *Regeneration*. I am particularly interested in why we do these things; therefore, I will be primarily looking into how we use the brain to draw and how our perception of colour has changed over many centuries. I have also chosen to look at regeneration as this is the future of design, focussing on biomaterials and why this process of redesigning the textile industry is so important.

My first chosen keyword is *Drawing*- ‘the art or skill of making pictures, plans, etc. using a pen or pencil’ (Oxford learner’s Dictionary, 2020). Not everyone possesses this ‘skill’ of drawing. Fortunately, I have been able to draw since a young age and this had developed into a real passion throughout my life. My friends however, always used to say they hated drawing, or they wish they could draw. This has led to me questioning why only a minority of people share this skill and passion. Therefore, I have decided to research into how we draw, basing it on the brain.

To understand the connection between the brain and the hand, I researched into ‘*Drawing with the right side of the Brain*’ (1992) by Betty Edwards. She explains that the brain is split into two halves, the right hemisphere and the left. The left-hand is controlled by the right hemisphere and likewise, the right-hand by the left hemisphere. Edwards describes how “split-brain” studies were carried out on neurological patients. She states that “The tests provided surprising new evidence that each hemisphere, in a sense, perceives its own reality” (Edwards, 1992, p.29). It is particularly interesting that although we have one brain, the two halves have a mind of their own. She cites the “left hemisphere is verbal and analytic. While that of the right is nonverbal and global” (Edwards, 1992, p.30) This indicates that the right side of the brain is the creative, imaginative side whereas the left is academic and dominant. This is particularly interesting to me as I could sit and draw aimlessly however writing an essay or even a general knowledge quiz, I am far more uncomfortable with. This indicates that my right hemisphere is dominant over my left.

Below is Betty Edwards (1992, p.27) diagram of the two hemispheres and their cross connections:



Research by Jerre Levy indicated that “the two modes of processing tend to interfere with each other” (Edwards, 1992, p.30) causing conflict between our mind and hands. This is a statement I strongly agree with. I regularly get lost in my work, enjoying the creativity and later find myself

staring at it, analysing and criticising it in my head until I no longer like it. This is a clear demonstration of the confliction between the hemispheres.

This sense of differences is also apparent in our language, Betty Edwards (1992, p.32) explains how we use statements linking to the left hand “For example, if we want to compare *unlike* ideas, we say “on the one hand...on the other hand” “A left-handed compliment”, meaning a sly dig”. We say these comments daily within our conversations without making the connection to the original context. “These terms indicate not just differences in location but differences in fundamental traits or qualities. “(Edwards, 1992, p.32) This is also apparent in everyday life, in a wedding the groom will always stand on the right side and the bride on the left, the right side being the dominant.

In connection to this, looking at language around the world, “The Latin word for left is *sinister*, meaning ‘bad’, ‘omnious’. The Latin word for right is *dexter*, from which comes our word ‘dexterity’, meaning ‘skill’ or adroitness’. (Edwards, 1992, p.33). I also looked at the Italian word for left which is ‘*sinistra*’ (Collins Dictionary, 2020). It’s clear that around the world, the left hand was the inferior side, the word sinister is also used to describe evil. This suggests that creativity was not seen as a gift and drawing was not seen as a skill but maybe a sin.

In contrast, Ian McGilchrist argues that “the two hemispheres are essential and work together”. In his video ‘The Divided Brain’ (RSA Animate, 2011) he gives an example of a bird trying to feed on a seed against a background of pebbles, he explains how it must focus narrowly and clearly on that little seed to pick it out against the background. However, if it wants to stay alive it’s also got to look out for predators. He states:

It seems that birds and animals quite reliably use their left hemisphere for this narrow-focussed attention on something it already knows is of importance to it and keep their right hemisphere broadly vigilant for whatever might be. (RSA Animate, 2011)

I agree with this statement because if you use both sides of the brain working together you will not only have a creative and imaginative outlook on life, you would be sensible and practical which will enable you to make the best decisions.

McGilchrist (RSA Animate, 2011) argues that we now live in a left hemisphere world, in the 6th Century BC and the 15/16th Century in Europe he believes the two hemispheres were balanced. However, he claims we now live in a paradoxical world where we prioritise the virtual over the real. Bureaucracy has flourished and our need for control has led to paranoia in society. This statement is very accurate in relation to our society today, we are being forced to think and worry more about practical things such as money, deadlines, jobs and having a place within society. The world has lost its imagination, creativity and art is often described as ‘not a proper job’.

In relation to drawing, Edwards explains how having the ability to draw really depends on your brains ability to disconnect from the dominant left-hemisphere. She states;

The ability to draw may depend on whether you have access to the capabilities of the ‘minor’, or subdominant, right hemisphere – whether you are able to “turn off” the dominant verbal left brain and ‘turn on’ the right (Edwards, 1992, p.32).

Therefore, our capability to draw is based on our ability to ignore the left hemisphere. I often get worried and stressed about living up to society’s standards as I mentioned in the last paragraph. However, when I draw, I can completely switch off and get lost in creativity, this would be due to my ability of turning the left hemisphere ‘off’.

This leads to my second key word, Colour- “the appearance that things have that results from the way in which they reflect light. Red, orange and green are colours.” (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). As a

textile designer, colour is extremely important within my practice. I also find colour very interesting, having investigated colour psychology in the way it can make us feel I understand the importance of it within everyday life also. But how do we see colour? ...” The human eye and brain together translate light into colour. Light receptors within the eye transmit messages to the brain, which produces the familiar sensations of colour.” (Pantone, 2020). Seeing colour is due to biological science, however, research shows we may not have always seen colour as we do now. I’m particularly interested in seeing how our perception of seeing colour has changed over time, starting with the Ancient Greek’s.

Within Guy Deutscher’s book ‘Through the language glass’ he looks at Gladstone’s analysis of the Homeric period through poetry. He compares how we see colour now compared to the Dark Greek ages by Looking at Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey. He believed by studying this literature that they did not see colour as we do today. Deutscher (2011, p.61) proposed that there was “universal colour blindness among the ancient Greeks” and that “The sensitivity to differences in colour, is an ability that evolved fully only in more recent history”. This suggests that our ability to see all these colours we experience today is due to the evolution within our human biology and sight. I found this fascinating and although it wasn’t scientific proof, Gladstone believed that Homer’s poems reflected the true reality of the ages.

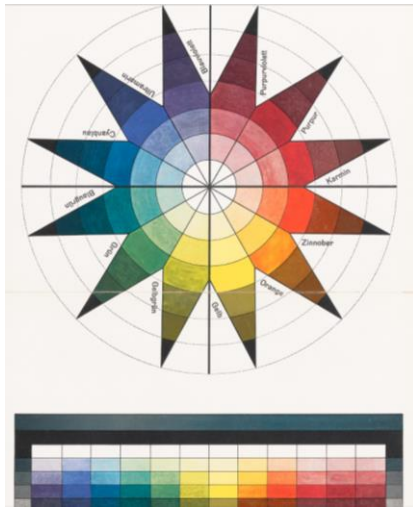
Gladstone’s analysis suggests that the Ancient Greeks “perceived the world in something closer to black and white than to full Technicolour”. (Deutscher, 2011, p.53) One famous example of this was Homer’s description of the sea, he used the word “*oinpos*, which literally means ‘wine-looking’ (*oinos* is wine and *op-* is the root ‘see’ leading to the epithet of the colour, “the wine-dark sea”(Deutscher, 2011, p.54). This is strange to us as we regularly refer to the ‘deep blue sea’, whereas wine would indicate purple or deep red. He then moves on to look at what else Homer describes as ‘wine-looking’. Deutscher (2011, p.54) finds that “except for the sea, the only other thing that Homer calls ‘wine-looking’ is...oxen”. This really does raise the question of whether we have changed the way we see colour through hundreds of years. Why would Homer use the same word to describe our blue sea as the colour of oxen which are black or brown.

I believe this almost black and white vision was prior to the evolution of the eye and eyesight. According to zoologist Dan-Erik Nilsson, scientists believe that the human eye evolved from a light sensitive spot.

Random changes then created a depression in the light-sensitive patch, a deepening pit that made ‘vision’ a little sharper. At the same time, the pit’s opening gradually narrowed, so light entered through a small aperture, like a pinhole camera. And then eventually the spot evolved into a retina, the layer of cells and pigment at the back of the human eye. Over time a lens formed at the front of the eye. It could have arisen as a double-layered transparent tissue containing increasing amounts of liquid that gave it the convex curvature of the human eye. (WGBH Educational Foundation, 2001)

This research into evolution could really explain this lack of colour vision the Ancient Greeks experienced. Although they had fully formed eyes, the capability of seeing in colour may have only started to develop hundreds of years later.

Following this idea of evolution of the eye, we now have the revolution of Bauhaus. Possibly the most famous movement in connection to colour. By the 20th Century, “Itten identified seven fundamental categories of contrast: hue, light-dark, cold-warm, complementary, analogous, saturation, and extension.”(Getty Research Institute, N.D) Not only do we now have a full colour wheel but he also identified shades and hues of colours, as shown below:



Itten, 1921 (Color Sphere in 7 Light Values and 12 Tones)

Itten's colour star demonstrates an advanced understanding of colour compared to Homer. Itten quotes "The kingdom of colours has within it multidimensional possibilities only partly to be reduced to simple order. Each individual colour is a universe in itself." (Getty Research Institute, N.D) This illustrates the spectrum of colours we can experience today. Thanks to our advanced eyesight, we not only have one shade of blue for example. We have shades of light blue, duck egg blue, deep blue, navy, cobalt blue etc. Our understanding of colour through experimentation is continuously advancing and as a textile designer I must understand this advancing in order to stay on top of the trends. Mixing colours and shades comes with the job and understanding how it has developed over time is extremely interesting.

Finally, in connection to this advancing of our colour vision, it's time our design strategies advance in a sustainable and Ecological way. We have reached a time where we cannot keep designing and producing the way that we are. This leads to my final keyword; *Regeneration* "the process of making an area, institution, etc. develop and grow strong again" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2020) Sustainability and re-design is the only forward solution within the design industry.

Head of Strategy at MetaDesign Berlin Daniel Rosentreter (2020) wrote "Either businesses continue as before and we lose the battle for our future, or businesses become drivers of the changes needed for a more sustainable future." As a designer of the future this is very important within my practice, big brands such as Nike and H&M are beginning to design and use sustainable fabrics. Liz Gyekye (2020) explains how H&M have recently made an alternative to leather using wine, she states "discarded grape skins, stalks and seeds" are used to produce this Bio fabric. Liz Gyekye (2020) also states "The collection will also include a new dye made from the coffee grounds in H&M's offices in China, as well as recycled polyester." There are many other biodegradable aspects within this collection. This is revolutionary within the fashion world and other brands will soon follow, making this the new normal. I will be entering the textile design world at the perfect time and through regeneration we would not only change design but also change the world. Below is an image of H&M's new leather:



H&M Vegan Leather, (ND)

It's not only fashion companies that are transforming, Daniel Rosentreter (2020) states "Microsoft's recently announced to be carbon negative by 2030 – introducing amongst other things an internal carbon tax and new procurement processes to enable and incentivize suppliers to reduce emissions." Daniel Rosentreter (2020) also claims that by putting sustainability in the core of their company "these organization will become the leaders for a new world with more equality, less poverty, improved health, cleaner water, sustainable energy and responsible consumption.". It's this "new world" that I will be a part of and just like these world leading organisations, I must think out of the box and completely redesign the way we see and work.

As designers, we are always looking to advance and be 'ahead of the game', always designing for the future. However, we have ended up in a 'fast fashion' world where the cheaper the clothes the better. We have done this through creating plastic fibres which are cheaper to produce and they're durable, making them very attractive to consumers. But, as we know, plastic is causing devastation to our planet. The only way to be 'fashion forward' now is to be sustainable.

During an interview with Daniel C Wahl (2017), Prof Davis W Orr describes 'Ecological design' as a;

Healing process. It is how we understand patient Earth, and about how we understand ourselves, and our own health, to be dependent on the larger body of Earth — Gaia. The idea that as species can be healthy and prosperous on a planet run to wreck and ruin isn't just wrong. It is a form of mental derangement for which I don't have any words.

His outlook on Eco-design is very spiritual, but it makes you question our true purpose of being on Earth. We weren't created to ruin the Earth, he believes, if we find our true purpose and then we will be able to survive and naturally we would become sustainable by caring for the Earth who we solely live off.

Authors of Cradle to cradle are also key thinkers within the Eco design world, Braungart and McDonough (2009, p.53) believe that;

Once you understand the deconstruction taking place, unless you do something to change it, even if you never intended to cause such destruction, you become involved in a strategy of tragedy, you can continue to be engaged in that strategy of tragedy, or you can design and implement a strategy of change.

We are currently engaging in the 'strategy of tragedy' within fashion, by continuing to use the same fabrics and designing using the same processes. This supports my argument that we need to rethink

our design strategies and address these issues using sustainable eco-friendly methods. This is my idea of re-generation.

Having researched my three keywords, I am interested in focussing my research into sustainability within the fashion world whilst using human psychology to understand what we are naturally attracted to visually. Now that I understand how we have evolved to see different hues and colours, I'd like to focus more on the psychology of how those colours and certain shades make us feel, using this science to enhance my sustainable fashion designs in the future.

How can designers address sustainability using creativity and human psychology to make designs both sustainable and naturally draw our attention?

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Images

Figure 1

Edwards, B. (1992) *Drawing on the right side of the Brain*. London: Souvenir Press, p.27, illus.

Figure 2

Itten, J. (1921) *Color Sphere in 7 Light Values and 12 Tones* [Lithograph] Artists Rights Society, New York. (Viewed 10th May 2020).

Figure 3

H&M Vegan Leather, N.D. [Photograph] Available at:
<https://www.veganfoodandliving.com/news/hm-debuts-vegan-leather-made-from-wine-waste-in-new-eco-friendly-collection/> (Viewed 11th May 2020).