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APPENDIX GA36b

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:		Student ID number:	
Programme:	Contextual Practices (for SP&T, PFD and DC Programmes)		
Module:	Research in Context		
Module code:	ADAD5003	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	100% 10 Credits
Lecturer:	Julia Lockheart, Gwen Beynon,	Internal Verifier:	Rob Charters
Assignment Title:	Essay	Word count (or equivalent):	2,500 words
Submission deadline:	15.12.22	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	02.02.23
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

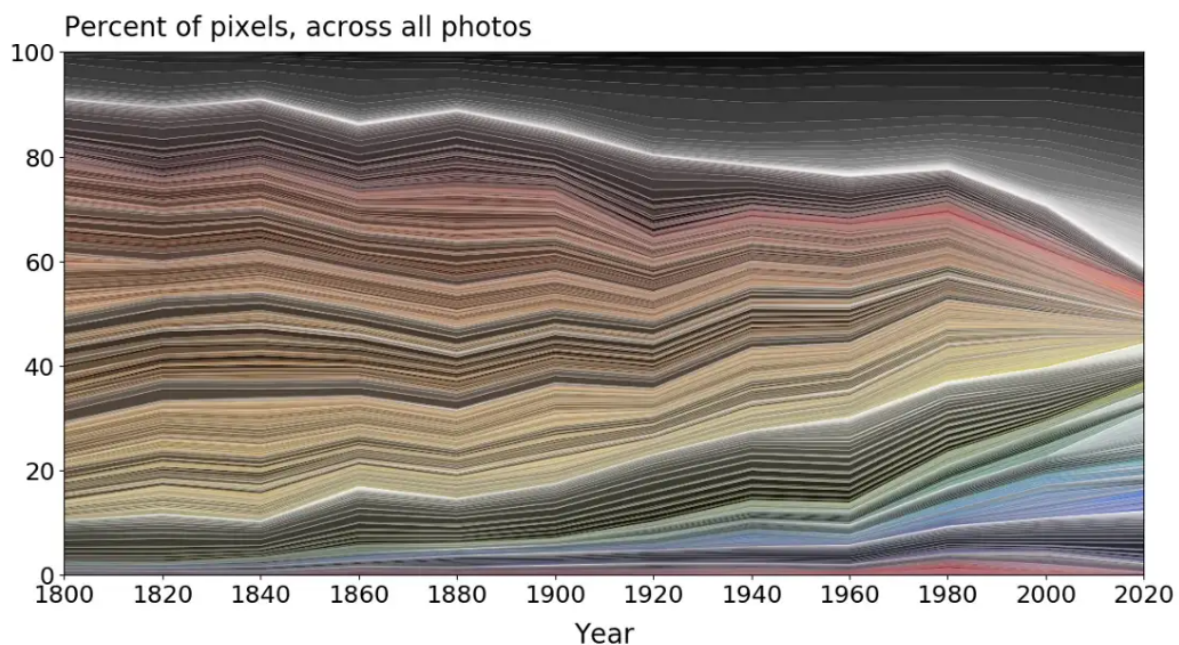
Question 4: Outline a current environmental, political, or social issue that requires redesign. Explain how you will solve this issue over the duration of your future career. Underline the tools and approaches you will use and discuss how and why.

“Our world is dominated (around 60% in total) by objects, items, and materials that are either black, white, or grey” (Hobson 2022)

The disappearance of colour in art and design is an issue affecting society psychologically, culturally and even politically. In this essay, I will explore the root of the problem as well as its impacts, finally outlining my design solution to solve it on a personal scale.

Firstly however, it is crucial to inspect the disappearance of colour and detail itself.

In 2020, the Science Museum Group Digital Lab published an article. After analysing over seven thousand images of objects (placed into 21 categories) created from the year 1800 to the year 2020, their data was compiled into this graph.



Changes in the colour of objects over time.

Figure 1. Changes in the colour of objects over time (Sleeman, 2020).

This should not yield surprise, as many influential designers over the past century have been pushing for minimalism in design. Notably, Dieter Rams’ “10 principles of good design” was an influential body of work on the staples which should come with well designed items. The 10th principle reads “Good design is as little design as possible”(Rams, 2021), and it is further explained in the phrase “Less, but better - because it concentrates on the essential aspects, and the products are not burdened with non-essentials. Back to purity, back to simplicity.”(Rams, 2021). This principle refers to form as well as colour of everyday objects, deterring designers to opt for colourful products. With this statement, Rams could be understood to render colour as obsolete, and a distracting feature to everyday use products.

While we cannot accredit modern design's drift from the inclusion of colour to Rams himself, it is important to explore the style and movement with which he was heavily involved in, minimalism. Emerging from New York in the 1960s, minimalism has become an iconic, widely recognized and implemented style of art and design. Celebrating the previously mentioned diversion from detail as well as colour, minimalism and its rise in popularity during a century in which items have become increasingly mass-scale manufactured may be one reason for the loss of colour and detail in today's design.

On the other hand however, it could be argued that minimalism did not contribute to the loss of colour. "...only a shallow transfer from typography would yield that minimalism is simply a reduction of colour and form." (Obendorf, 2011). Many minimalist designers and artists did not shy from either. Ellsworth Kelly, an American artist notably known for his "hard edge" style of painting, pursued the style of minimalism while exploring a wide colour palette, often contrasting multiple colours in a single piece.



Figure 2. *Colour Panels for a Large Wall*, (Kelly 2020).

Perhaps then it is the combination of two factors; the rise of minimalism and in manufacturing. Monochromatic or single colour products are easier, cheaper and faster to produce than highly detailed, adorned with colour and perhaps even intricate patterned products, and in a world deeply trapped in the paradigm of purchasing an excessive amount of products with a short lifetime, rather than investing in, truthfully more expensive upon purchase, longer lasting products. Matthew Wizinski, a designer and author researching the effects of capitalism on design, states that under late stage of capitalism, standardisation of design (standard referring to the previously mentioned greyness) in terms of colour is inevitable as design under capitalism serves "larger social systems of contemporary design- not individuals' intentions or values" (Wizinsky, 2022). Wizinsky mentions values in conjunction with aesthetic preferences, but more importantly he is suggesting that the minimalist design of everyday items does not

necessarily reflect the owner's desired style, but that the owner has to conform and accept it due to its mass availability.

The disappearance of colour has psychological roots, but also impacts. The grey-washing of surroundings such as workplaces has been done with consideration of colour theory, however the colour grey wasn't used to promote positive feelings as other colours often are. A commercial & house painting business Ecopainting listed an article on their office painting services and suggestions, stating that "Greys and beiges have this exact calming (numbing) effect, shielding us from visual and emotional stimuli" (Ecopainting,2022). Clearly, grey is assumed to boost productivity, which is a positive outcome for the companies and economy, but is neglecting the human response to loss of colour. The human response isn't positive, as emotional and visual stimuli are crucial to the development of the brain and beyond that, cognitive functions. This is better described in "The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory", a Frontiers article stating that "emotion modulates virtually every aspect of cognition...including perception, attention, learning, memory, reasoning, and problem solving." (Tyng et al., 2017). This can of course be interpreted both ways, while positive emotion can boost productivity, negative emotion can decrease it.

The "(numbing) effect" (Ecopainting,2022) however could be avoided by choosing colours which both promote motivation and don't under-stimulate workers. Having reviewed the reason behind the loss of colour in work settings in conjunction with colour theory, I believe there is a way to utilise colour more successfully, aiming to boost productivity without compromising the morale of the workers. In fact, I believe that invoking positive emotional stimuli through colour can lead to higher amounts of productivity. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association states that while experiencing positive emotions "creative problem solving is improved...because increased dopamine release...improves cognitive flexibility" (Ashby et al.,1999).

In a workplace setting of which I had control of, I would design the space in colours with positive psychological association. The book "Theory of Colours" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe offers a detailed insight on how we perceive colour, both physically and psychologically. "If two elementary colours are mixed in perfect equality so that neither predominates... The beholder has neither the wish or power to imagine a state beyond it" (Goethe, 2021) suggests to me that the use of secondary colours offers little mental distraction but does offer satisfaction, I would use this knowledge while designing the work space. A study conducted in 2020 on the emotional associations people have with colours surveyed over 4500 participants, of which "35% linked blue to feelings of relief and 39% linked green to contentment" (Jonauskaite et al.,2020). Not only would I aim to include those colours in the workspace, I will also aim to invoke positive emotions in my own design through the use of colour.

Another speculation for the disappearance of colour is related to patriarchy. A study examining the difference in perception of colour appearance of monochromatic lights between males and females. The study recorded that males had required a longer wavelength to perceive hues in

the same way that females did, using hues from the spectral locus (the hues marked by points on the outer curve of the chromaticity graph).

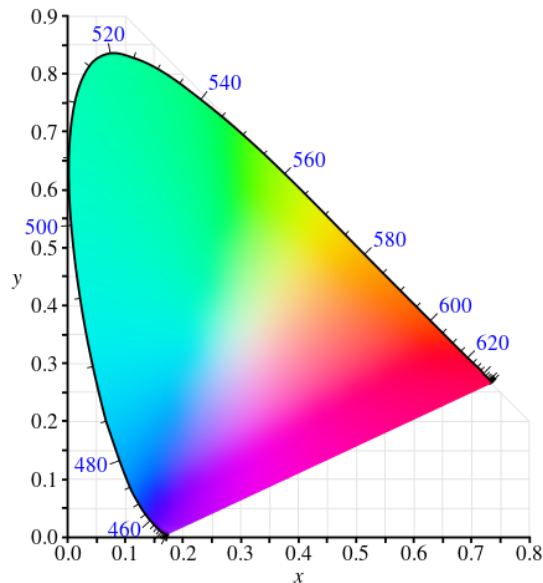


Figure 3. *Chromaticity Graph.*

Longer wavelengths mean the frequency and energy is lower, essentially equating to lower brain activities, which means that while looking at hues the male brain will be less active and therefore perceive less difference and depth in hues than that of a female. This difference is evident in the graph below, where the study examined the difference in perception between the two sexes of the hue “Unique Green”.

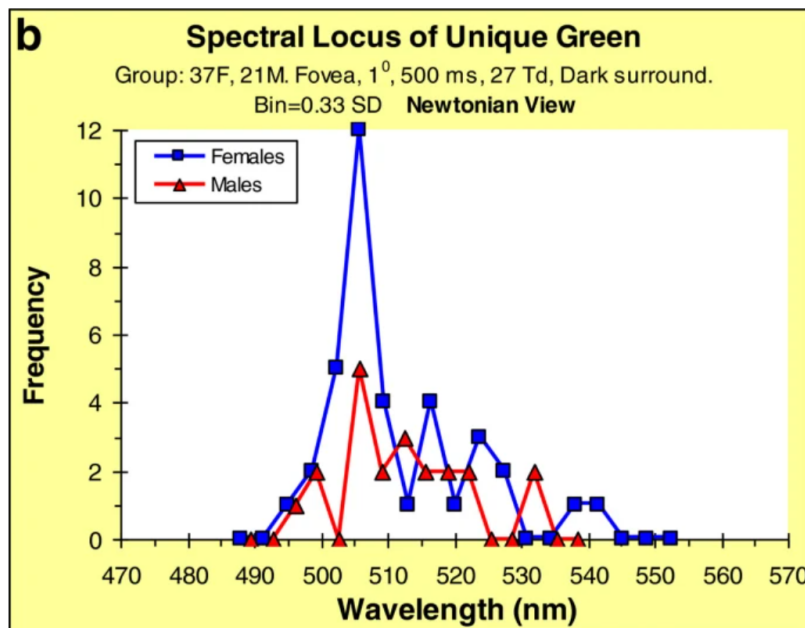


Figure 4. *Spectral Locus of Unique Green* (Abramov, I. et al. 2009).

While this evidence in itself may not justify the patriarchal roots of the disappearance of colour from everyday life, it is important to explore who dominates the design space, which accounts for colours that surround us, from the design of everyday objects to fashion design. The history of design tends to celebrate and favour male designers, and even to this day the majority of design fields are male dominated, with the exceptions of fashion and graphic design. In the 2018 article released by Design Wanted, a digital media company which “aims to empower Product and Industrial Designers”(Abbattista, 2022) titled “Meet the 10 most influential Product Designers of all time (so far)”, 10 designers picked were male. There is one female designer on the list at number 3, Ray Eames, however her name follows her husband’s as they are coupled together in the entry. This article portrays an issue deeply rooted in patriarchy. The fact is, there’s not necessarily more aspiring designers that are male rather than female, it is that there are more established male designers, and clearly their work is more recognized and celebrated than that of their female counterparts. The article spoke specifically of product design, but this is an issue across all fields of design.

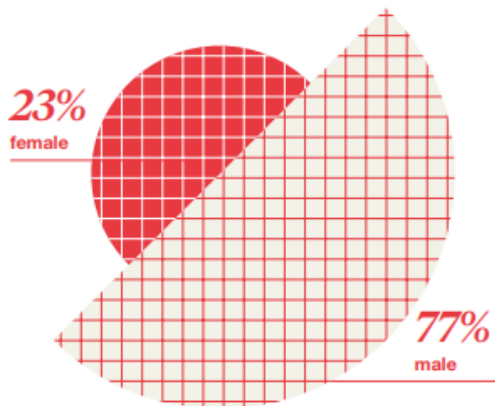


Figure 5. *Employment of male and female-identifying designers by sector* (Design Council, 2020)

It could then be argued that the male, limited perception of colour combined with the fact most influential designers and artists are indeed male; has a part to play in the disappearance of colour. The world is after all tailored to the male experience and interaction with it, a view strongly illustrated by Caroline Criado Perez in “Invisible Women Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men”. Perez not only explores the seemingly unending list of ways in which everyday objects and design is catered to the male metrics, she also articulates the implications and effects of this. Exploring male and female interaction with instruments for example, she states that “78% of women compared to 47% of men had developed RSI”(Perez,2020) due to this design issue.

While I cannot change the statistics, or even alter the system of oppression from which they stem, I can aim to take personal measures within my own future career. These measures include networking with women in design to uplift and support them. Many companies have increased their amount of female hires to reach a diversity and equality quota, however if I am in a position to hire or selectively work with other designers, I would ensure that the majority of

them were female. This way I could contribute to the recognition of women in design. However while researching, writing and reflecting on this body of work, I have realised I only referenced the work of male designers, Dieter Rams and Ellsworth Kelly. Having evidently fallen into the biased overrepresentation of men in the fields of art and design, I will approach my lack of knowledge on female designers, as I do not want to contribute to their underrepresentation, even on a personal scale. I can do so through research, utilising the university's library, as well as the vast articles, books and even articles celebrating women in design.

The final possible reason why the disappearance of colour exists and requires redesign to be outlined in this essay is its contribution to cultural erasure. "In ancient cultures, colors were often used to treat different conditions and influence emotions. They also played a role in different spiritual practices." (Cherry, 2022). In this sense, it can be stated that our society's departure from colour is also its departure from tradition and historical culture. In a geographical sense however, the disappearance of colour dismisses non-Western cultures. David Batchelor explored the whiteness and removal of colour done by the dominating Western culture, believing it to be "Chromophobic", a term he defined as manifesting "itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. Colour is made out to be the property of some 'foreign' body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the vulgar, the queer..." (Batchelor, 2013). If then, the Western culture eroded away the use of colour in cultural settings in fear of the fact that non Western cultures are complex and highly significant, why haven't those cultures fought back and put as much importance on colour as the West did on its lack?

This is simply because non Western cultures haven't been given the agency. Even after the period of colonialism, where the British colonised countries, continents even, and the native cultures were stripped, ridiculed, even labelled "primitive" and "vulgar", the attacked cultures remained suppressed.

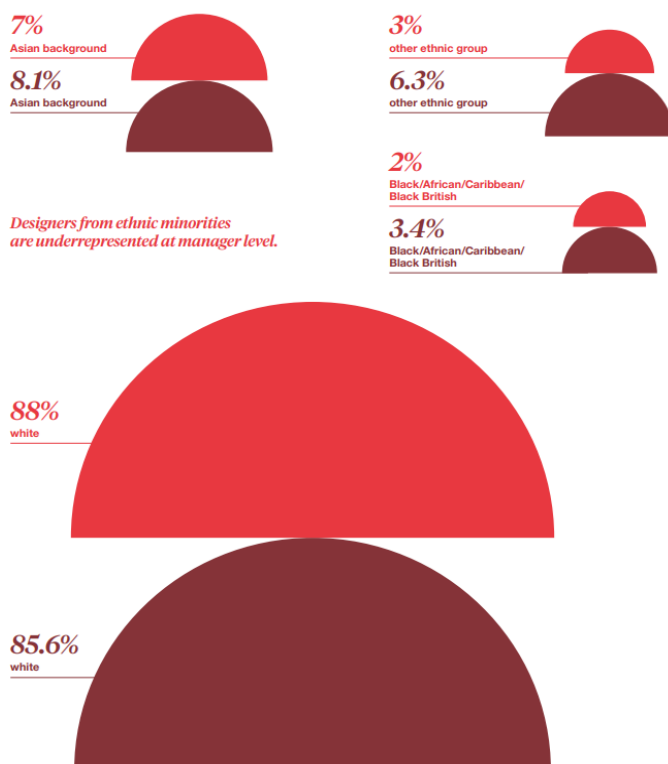


Figure 6. *Managers in the design economy by ethnicity compared to the UK working-age population, (Design Council, 2020).*

The impacts and violence committed by colonisation remains however (postcolonialism), as made evident statistics of the design industry. Racial injustice and systemic racism is still prevalent, and as non-Western cultures have no agency of power to express and celebrate their traditions and in turn use of colour, they have

no platform to display it in the field of design.

My own culture and tradition is dissolving. Due to centuries of occupation and the growing Polish diaspora (people migrating from their homeland), Polish culture is becoming less and less celebrated. I will aim to solve this issue on a personal scale by incorporating the opulent colours and intricate patterns which my culture once would pride itself on. I will also deepen my understanding of it through research, as it is important for me to take part in the preservation and showcasing of traditional Polish culture. Living in the UK, where the population of my fellow compatriots is high, I also plan to collaborate with Polish artists from different regions of Poland to deepen our understanding of regional cultural and therefore artistic differences, and uplift one another while paying our respects to tradition.

To conclude, colour is disappearing from the world. Whether it is due to the rise in minimalism, productivity and efficiency centred colour psychology, its disregard due to the patriarchal system or even erasure due to postcolonialism, it's a simply irrefutable statement. Researching this social and even political issue I am now able to see how crucial colour is, and it is now within my personal manifesto and values to honour and celebrate it. The deep roots of the issue are now apparent to me, and if I can utilise colour to positively affect people's emotions while interacting with my art, whilst paying homage to my own culture, then I believe I am fighting to combat the disappearance of colour from the world and its effects.

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Sleeman, C. (2020) *Colour & shape: Using computer vision to explore the Science Museum Group Collection*, Medium. Science Museum Group Digital Lab, viewed 1 December 2022, <<https://lab.sciencemuseum.org.uk/colour-shape-using-computer-vision-to-explore-the-science-museum-c4b4f1cbd72c>>

Figure 2: Kelly, E. (1978) *Color Panels for a Large Wall*, National Gallery of Art, viewed 1 December 2022, <[Color Panels for a Large Wall, 1978, Ellsworth Kelly at NGA 2022 - Ellsworth Kelly - Wikipedia](#)>

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Figure 5: Design Council, (2020) *Employment of male and female-identifying designers by sector*, viewed 4 December 2022 <<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/championing-the-value-of-design/design-economy/>>

Figure 6: Design Council, (2020) *Managers in the design economy by ethnicity compared to the UK working-age population*, viewed 4 December 2022 <<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/championing-the-value-of-design/design-economy/>>

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