

Question 1:

What is the role of the designer/maker in the 21st Century and how might this role change in the next 10 years?

Discuss your ideas with reference to two of the practitioners or thinkers discussed in your lecture strand.

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Designers or makers begin their careers in a conventional setting such as an art school where they are instructed in the craft of making and discovery, whether it be of an object or a being. Placed within subcategories, designers are distinguished based on potential and ability level in terms of drawing and knowledge ability. Despite knowledge being crucial to what we perceive as design, the desire to discuss and apply complex global challenges within our work is often declined due to feelings of misinterpretation or communication. Designers who choose to address and almost behave in an act of influence, possess qualities of a design thinker "design thinking might add value when used as an approach in academic interdisciplinary research", (Brown T, 2008, p.19). Interdisciplinary research and approaches are allowing of students to express and establish a lasting connection between their peers and lecturers, it is almost an area of shared values and immediate action.

In this essay I will be discussing the methodologies of current designers as ultimately "design (has) become a tool of consumerism", (Brown, T, 2009, *Talks at Google*) a significant issue due to wastage and refusal of use as trendy objects and clothing are becoming quickly obsolete. Despite this, buyers appear far more interested in brands with sustainable ethics, an interesting factor as often those individuals are astounded by the price of a sustainably made item, this is due to the nature of the fabrics. Fast-fashion brands typically use synthetic fabrics, Shivangini Padhiyar (*co-founder of sustainable brand The Summer House*) states the morbid realities of these fabrics "Synthetic fabrics made from carbon-based materials and toxic dyes pollute the air, underground water and rivers. The unchecked use of pesticides and rampant deforestation to keep up with demand further compounds the problem" (Khatib, H, 2021). A report conducted by *The Changing Markets Foundation* in 2021 (*Fossil Fashion: the hidden reliance of fast fashion on fossil fuels*), discovered that much of the fashion industry are dependent on synthetic fibres such as nylon and polyester two with the highest environmental repercussion. They discovered that fast-fashion brands such as *Boohoo* and *ASOS* discard the traditional scheme of creating wearable garments for 4 seasons a year as they launch "500-100 'micro-seasons' annually" (Foundation, C.M, 2021) an unthinkable act as we question the civility of labour in production. Prices of garments in these companies are ordinarily low priced, however, the above report identified that *Pretty Little Thing* (UK fast-fashion company) could lower their prices even more on occasions such as "*Pink Friday*" *Pretty Little Thing's* own Black Friday, which saw items being sold under £1 even turning to social-media offering buyers a chance to win items for free on their site; a controversial action as items were often "non-trendy" or made for a previous season.

The Summer House, Bengaluru's luxury sustainable brand co-founded by Shivangini Padhiyar, adheres to always creating garments in the most responsible way from sourcing or recognising the production and housing of the raw materials and manufacture of the garment, transcending to the postal stage care. Their thought process even recognises the act of an increased carbon footprint, parallel to many interior designers that are incorporating local manufacturers to cut down on transport costs and emissions. Continually discovering and uncovering the expansion of the subject, when questioned "is it challenging to carry a brand that relies on sustainability and traditional processes?" (Gupta, G, n.d) Padhiyar responded that in fact the greater she discovered, the further she became intrigued, interestingly the brand wasn't familiar with the practices of a sustainable brand. Experiencing challenges, they uncovered that black dye despite being one of the most used

dyes, is in fact “the most damaging to the earth” (2021) quoting that the brand only buys “deadstock of black when needed”. Findings of this nature is difficult as many fashion trends saw rises in the colour and its sophistication and favourable nature. AW20 saw British Vogue absorbing a “Black is Back” perspective (Quick, H, 2020) stating that the colour “(had) gained a poignant new edge” meaning at that time an increase of consumption of clothing in black. *The Summer House* creates clothing from dresses to swim wear, the fabric econyl “created by Italian aquafil, uses synthetic waste such as industrial plastic recycling and regenerating them into a new nylon yarn” (Carruthers, D, 2015) almost a form of re-purposing as fibres of this fabric are shovelled from the oceans to originate new textiles.

In the 21st century, designers and businesses are now more than ever selecting a new method of production towards becoming sustainable, trying to create multi purpose garments to encourage consumers to truly wear pieces more than once as unfortunately, the fear of wearing something more than once especially if you’ve been previously photographed in the garment remains. This era has also seen an expansion across sizing as brands are finally becoming inclusive in their garments, conclusively paying attention to the consumer.

Today, a broader perspective is imperative for emerging designers. Don Norman (director of the Design lab at the University of California and principal of emeritus of Nielsen Norman Group) discusses the ideation of design and how essentially great design rarely considers the aesthetic nature of a “taught” notion at an Art university. He categorises stages of design thinking into 3 sectors “Service Design”, “Journey Map” and “Service Blueprint” all of which generate an emotional presence in time. The needs of others are to be highlighted in the 21st century with continued area of improvement, Norman exclaims the development of service design a discipline “that takes account of all the needs of the people” (Norman, D, 2020 *Interaction Design Foundation*). To provide a service an individual must be directive and considerate of the journey they must take to arrive at the desired location, Norman (2020) discloses this as the “Journey Map” which involves an interaction of all persons as they integrate in terms of work and customer. Intrigued by some of the greatest designers of all time, Norman demonstrates that although they have created an artistic structure, interestingly, none were trained in the arts and had degrees in other subjects such as Physics which ultimately has “given them a wider understanding of the world” (Norman, 2020). Creation and ability are contrasts, as young designers we are continually reminded of our ability and how this ultimately determines our line of succession later in life. However, creation on no occasion is interrogated, our mind sources our proceedings and ideology forms when execution such as the sustaining of the material or if the object will be tactile or an installation where the public can interact with. Advocating for a more contemporary education in design, Norman doesn’t want to eliminate the tactility of traditional design such as the nature of craftsmanship, but to depart out and experience global issues such as impure water. He quotes “instruction must be demonstrated for individuals to be capable of improving in such extreme circumstances” (Norman, D, 2020). In completely differently circumstances, it is also feasible to be informed of many that aren’t digitally inclined, in “*Emotional Design*” (Norman, D, 2004, p.17) Norman implies that it is normal to slightly be “behind” on technical platforms, “consider the rage and frustration many people feel when they use computers”, a slightly worrying factor as many use social media for not only work but everyday pleasures.

Managing complexities is difficult in design, often our ideas are peculiar, and execution of these ideas isn't what we expected. Design has limits, we are often ceased by reality such as cost or time, "most of the problems come from a complete lack of understanding of the design principles necessary for effective human-machine interaction" as quoted by Norman, D (2013, *The Design of Everyday Things*, p.19). A lack of understanding is difficult as often due to experience and as discussed, designers come from diverse backgrounds in many instances such as a physiology background designing a building made for a similar institution, in comparison to a designer who was derived from an art institution creating an infrastructure in a rival sector. In *The Design of Everyday Things*, Norman divisions design into 3 major areas- "Industrial design", "interaction design" and "experience design", I particularly am interested in interaction design as it is an integration of technology and understanding of the viewer. Norman states "the goal is to enhance people's understanding" (2013, p.19) a notion that is highly emotive and creation of a satisfaction today. Designing objects for the public is often confusing and highly strung, "people are frustrated with everyday things" (Norman, D, 2013, p.20) such as household configurations like the internet or a technological mean like a robot Hoover. A clever solution as mentioned in the book is the act of "human-centered design" almost a system for consumers to feel connected to their deviser. "Good design requires good communication, especially from machine to person" (Norman, D, 2013, p.20) communication is particularly important in the process of making as something may go wrong as if began correctly, interaction with the client would be positive as the conceptual model would have been discovered and sourced. The main principle of "human-centered design" systematically is the focus on the people/person not merely the ones who will be retrieving the outcome but also the ones who have placed it out in the store or have simply provided an input all together. A problem occurred as mentioned by Don is that it is "fundamentally important to solve the root" however, simply solving a system that equivalent to a tiny section of the larger problem when optimised will maximise the final.

Design and marketing, design is questioning what the fundamental prompts are, taking a considerable likeability to the company whereas, marketing collects data in order to observe what the buyers buy and why they buy, is it for pleasure or possibly for research? it comes back to an idea of need, what we buy sometimes isn't always what we need. Signs are important in a marketing instance when understanding the areas for insertion almost the blanks as they invite for investigation and experimentation.

To conclude, the role of the designer in the 21st century is to educate and to be bold in their approach to construct work. The designer must be enabling for any queries risen from the consumer and if this applies, address these factors closely to resolve. Although sustainability and highlighting of global issues is evident currently, numerous brands refrain from these issues due to minor delays in production. In 10 years, I envisage that changes in focus will become the accepted methods, wastage will no longer be an active problem in landfill and in production levels as materials will be accurately recycled. This year, designers have been generating sustainable means at Christmas such as changing Christmas wrapping paper to be produced without plastic and glitter so that it can be recycled, this mechanism in 10 years will be of standard procedure.

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