

Question 3: *How useful are Manifestos to designers and/or design groups? Outline your discussion with reference to three key manifestos. Through careful critique, conclude your text by defining your own design values in a 10-point manifesto.*

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Three manifestos:

Dieter Rams

Oslo Manifesto

Conditional Design

Origin: Probably partly a borrowing from French. Probably partly a borrowing from Italian. Probably partly a borrowing from Latin. **Etymons:** French *manifeste*; Italian *manifesto*; Latin *manifestum*.

Etymology: Probably partly (i) < Middle French, French *manifeste*,

Manifestos are important for both designers and design groups as they provide a form of guideline for a specific approach to the design process. For companies, manifestos can be a unique selling point, representing their company or personal ethos this can attract certain consumer who may have greater spending power, and are ready pay for company's goods or services because of what they represent about themselves. Within writing about art and design, "the manifesto has played a pivotal role in some of the most important creative movements of the previous century" (Redding, 2010). Manifestos in general have been successful, because it supposed to being representing working class. Basic principle was to make everyone to get the equal sharing, to have encourage equality in society. Perhaps one of the influential manifestos is written by Karl Marx and his assistance Fredrich Engels on February 21, 1848. This manifesto was described by History (2010):

The political pamphlet—arguably the most influential in history—proclaimed that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" and that the inevitable victory of the proletariat, or working class, would put an end to class society forever.

This manifesto has impacted history for many societies throughout world. The principle of communist manifesto can still be seen in some countries, these ideas did change the structure of some societies. As this suggests, manifestos can influence

people and the way societies are led, likewise the existing design manifestos can be influential. To answer the question above, I will look at three manifestos, which are Dieter Rams, The Oslo Manifesto and The Conditional Design and consider their points of similarity and contrast. By looking at each manifesto, I will outline their beneficial points in the three main topic areas and conclude with my own 10-point manifesto.

The definition of a Manifesto from a design point of view

The definition of manifesto is stated by Oxford Learner's dictionary (2020) that it is a "written statement in which a group of people explain aims, especially one published by a political party to say what they will do if they win an election". Manifesto within arts and design is defined by Redding (2010) that:

The artists' manifesto is a "document of an ideology, crafted to convince and convert" (Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: a Century of isms*). The word 'manifesto' contains elements of the Latin terms 'manus' (hand) and 'festus,' which may be derived from the root 'fendere,' as in 'offendere.' In other words, the manifesto is a personal or even handwritten statement intending to shock, inspire, or offend.

From a design point of view, manifestos are a philosophical viewpoint for an individual based on their experience within design. For example, Dieter Rams asked

himself a question “is my design good design?” and he then presented his answers in his ‘*Ten Principles of Good Design*’. Manifestos can also set questions regarding the design itself, again demonstrated by Dieter Rams, when he modelled ‘*Fifteen questions*’ which he asked himself when designing new products. Additionally, manifestos provide a set of standards that designers/design groups must achieve, as set out in The Oslo Manifestos, which include 17 questions that the designers and architects must consider when they launch new projects with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, groups such as The Conditional Design (2008) have manifestos which are based on their work that “focuses on processes rather than products”. Within their manifestos, they described three areas of their beliefs: “Process is the product”, “Logic is our tool”, “The input is our material”. These are simple but directed values. Within the practical side, this manifesto shows that it does not have to be complicated. The choice of words and the way it has been written are important factors that will make the manifesto stand out. This relates to the other two manifestos, which are both simple as well. For example, The Oslo Manifesto is a 17 point question e.g. “How can this design contribute to the goal of ending poverty in all its forms, everywhere?” (The Oslo Manifesto, 2015). A good choice of words are used, only one or two line sentences of questions which are not complicated, and are simple to understand. For designers, manifestos enable them

to visualise their work through words. According to Sudjic (2014, p.290) manifestos are also signs which some architects and designers need to express through words:

It is a form which shows signs of flickering back into life. Some architects, and a few designers, are once again feeling the need to express themselves through words as well as objects and buildings. They feel the need to underpin their work with the intellectual ballast that serves to dignify what otherwise might be regarded as their frivolous indulgence of shape-making with their rigour of theory.

However, he also mentioned that a manifesto is not the essential prop that it used to be. Nevertheless, manifestos are a form of method which still allow designers to express their beliefs and values in both the written word and visually and are therefore still important to designers.

Importance of beliefs and values

It has already been highlighted that manifestos are a type of beliefs in each individual, and I think that the values and beliefs are what makes a manifesto significant. In accordance with definition that having faith in something, beliefs are an important factor within the manifestos. Personal beliefs are the one of the aspects of the beliefs. Personal beliefs are stated by Immigration Authority Advisors:

Values are stable long-lasting beliefs about what is important to a person. They become standards by which people order their lives and make their choices.

A person must be able to articulate their values in order to make clear, rational, responsible and consistent decisions.

For example, Dieter Rams' manifestos are personal beliefs about his idea of 'Good Design'. Personal beliefs come from their own experience. Whereas the Conditional Design, their manifesto is about their beliefs on design process rather than product itself. Again, by Immigration Authority Advisers (2020) when the person the person's commitment to a belief grows and they see it as being important, it will develop into a value. This evidences that values are originated from person's beliefs. This suggests that both beliefs and values have relationship to each other. In the Cambridge dictionary (2020), there are several meanings of the word 'values' however, the most relevant definition is principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong, and how to act in various situations. In line with these definitions, the three manifestos that I am discussing show their values and their beliefs. Core values are a good example of the manifestos. These have been defined by Lexico Dictionary (2020) as "A principle or belief that a person or organization views as being of central importance." This means that core values are essential part of manifestos when they are used as guiding principles to designers for their practice. Core values provide a

unique selling point for the company, this is why they are important as they state “how the corporation should behave in business and perhaps beyond, if they have an additional mission to serve the community. Core values are usually expressed in the corporation's mission statement.” (Your dictionary, 2020). The values of the Oslo Manifesto (2015) are based on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which involve both social and environmental awareness, Thus, the questions within their manifesto concern these considerations. This is where values are vital part of the manifesto, when the designers are repeatedly asking themselves “How can this design....” at the start of each question. This is essential for representing their values, because it will allow the designers “to continuously review and evaluate the impact of their designs” (The Oslo Manifesto, 2015) by referring to these key questions for sustainable development. These beliefs and values correlate to the underlying design principles of the company and as such design principles are similar to the manifestos. Ramirez (2019) states the definition of the design principles:

Design principles are a set of time-proven guidelines that humans have put together through trial and error for understanding how to represent the world.

They serve as a map to arrange visual materials (shapes, colors, lines, etc.) in the best way possible, according to a specific intention, strategy, or objective.

These three ideas are generally identified in the company's manifestos. The three manifestos have their own design principles in their manifestos. Design principles are another method for the designers or design groups to present their values, as they are a set of guidelines like the manifestos but with more practical views.

Pros and cons of Manifestos

There are benefits and drawbacks within the manifestos. Firstly, manifestos give the designers clarity on their vision. When their visions are clear, it gives direction to their practice. This applies to all three of the manifestos. Dieter Rams' manifestos are simple and direct. We can understand this in an example from his *'Ten Principles of Good Design'*:

1. Good design is innovative

The possibilities for innovation are not, by any means, exhausted. Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology and can never be an end in itself.

This principle describes clearly how 'good design' should be. Manifestos like this are simplistic as I have mentioned, therefore this creates a directed guideline which is influential to some designers for their practices. Secondly, manifestos set out ethical values. This enables companies to present their values as a unique selling point. For

example, The Conditional Design (2008), describes one of their values as “we want to introduce Conditional Design as a term that refers to our approach rather than our chosen media.” This suggests that they are focusing upon the process of their practice rather than production of the product. By having a manifesto, it enables them to be recognisable. So as to give unique selling points, which will make the company more marketable. This benefits the company for more business opportunities. As part of marketing, with referring back to the core values of the company, they represent the company’s commitments to standards that are ethical and sustainable. This draws an ethical consumer to the company and their products. An example of this is a social enterprise called The Little Sun, whose values include helping and connecting people with the ‘power of the sun’. Having a sustainable and ethical ethos can present a clean image which is created from their values, and this attracts consumer’s interest. Their interests are driven by the values that developed from the company ethos, people tend to get attracted to the clean image created by positive company values, especially if they are aware of social and environmental issues. In design principles, this is called an attractiveness bias, which can be defined as “a tendency to see attractive people as more intelligent, competent, moral, and sociable than unattractive people” (Lidwell, Butler and Holden, 2003). Although, this is referring to people however, it can be relatable to a company’s

values. This is because by showing their commitments, it can attract people to see them as more appealing. Whilst there are benefits, there are also drawbacks on the other hand. Firstly, manifestos can be a one-sided belief, as we consider the three manifestos, there are biased aspects to their beliefs. Contour bias is the example of the one-sided beliefs. This is because it is “a tendency to favor objects with contours over objects with sharp angles or points” (Lidwell, Butler and Holden, 2003). By having a leaning towards certain objects, the ideas and beliefs of the designers could have an effect on this type of bias. Secondly, because manifestos can represent a one-sided belief, this limits the diversity of the values. Limiting the range within manifestos can be restrictive. For example, within Dieter Rams’ manifestos, his ideas focus on the functional, minimal aesthetic as well as sustainability and do not mention affordability. Thus, this gives a negative effect on the marketing strategy, limiting the company to identifying the target market. This limitation on diversity also applies to both the Conditional Design and the Oslo Manifesto. The Conditional Design manifesto only describes process and does not include aesthetic or functionality of the design, whereas the Oslo Manifesto covers just an ethical and social awareness. Therefore, these manifestos only cover certain points, which is a drawback to them.

I have shown that the meaning of manifestos varies in different ways, especially when it comes to art and design. This can include the core values, which are an essential factor for the development of a manifesto. Design principles, which are similar to the manifestos and used as a guideline or a map, can also be recognized in a company's manifesto. I have also shown that there are benefits and drawbacks within the manifestos themselves. They can clarify and direct a designer's visions, provide a unique selling point, and make them more marketable. However, manifestos can be a one-sided belief and therefore, make designers limit their diversity. Through my research, I have learned that manifestos are for designers to communicate their values in words rather than visually. Their beliefs correlate to their values, which thus develop into the manifesto. The design principles relate to the manifestos within which there are always benefits and drawbacks. Most importantly, I have learned that the three manifestos: Dieter Rams, the Conditional Design, and the Oslo Manifesto have similar but different viewpoints and structures within their statements. For example, the similarities that they have a simple but directed structure, the choice of words that are used and the manner in which they have been written. Secondly, how important beliefs and values are as part of manifestos. The dissimilarities include that each of manifestos has its own beliefs and values in their statements. I understand that these manifestos have several ideas in common to my

own beliefs. This research might lead me into a greater understanding of the manifestos and how they are essential to designers and design groups, and in the future, I will develop my own design philosophy. Having gained an understanding of the importance of manifestos, I can now establish my own statement, with which I will conclude this essay. The following statements are developed from my own values.

1. You will always have failure in every step of your life, it is a learning process.
2. Always be ready to challenge yourself or nothing will progress without change.
3. Drawing is the first step of all of the creative process.
4. Ecological feature should be part of the design.
5. Ecologically friendly features of design include simplicity to minimise resources.
6. Design needs to be understandable and well-functioning.
7. Memorable designs and objects demand accuracy, aesthetic, and application of resources.
8. The consumer desires a clean image or ethical and environmental background to the design.
9. Functionality and simplicity are a key to decent design.
10. There should be a wide range of affordability in the design.

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