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Research in context ADAD5003

BA Design crafts

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**How useful are manifestos to design groups
/designers?**

**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.**

Word count:2259

Alexandra Franzen aptly describes a manifesto as, “A written statement where you publicly declare your intentions, opinions and vision.” (Choi design, 2018).

As Walker states,

The history story of design is problematic it has not always been a single discipline and “There are always multiple histories, various histories of design. These histories are the output, the product of the discipline design history. They are physically embodied in various languages, media and forms of presentation, (Walker, 1989)

The same can be said of manifestos, as society has changed so have, they, leading to differences in design and meaning. Whereas they may have once been a platform or blueprint of an individual designer's ideology, a format to follow or a set of ideas. Recent postmodern manifestos reflect the absurdity or irony of this type of document. Possibly they have lost their usefulness or perhaps people no longer want to be stifled and held to account by other's ethics. Artistic manifestos surely are no longer needed as art should be able to speak for itself. Besides in the current day with our plethora of modern technology there are a variety of platforms on which intention can be voiced (Twitter face book etc.) Have manifestos now become an aggressive imposition and an outdated concept? (Walker, 1989)

Design manifestos have been around as early as The Ideal Book by William Morris in 1883. They are still relevant today, currently The Extinction Rebellion has used the manifesto format, pushed through its bills.

“The way you express yourself with words is a crucial extension of your creative identity” (Reading, 2010)

Manifestos can be influential and give designers guidelines, they can be thought provoking, visionary and therefore lead to ground-breaking changes, and innovating designs. Providing similar minded people, a framework where their shared values can thrive and flourish. Such as Dieter Rams, Ten Principles of Good Design. Dieter Rams, a functionalist who solves problems, has a clear set of ideas and incorporates the three corners of the design pyramid, which are structure, function, and aesthetics.

He gives designers a structure to work from with key words like, innovative, aesthetic, simplicity, and long lasting. Being helpful for designers, looking at unobtrusive and functional designs. Whilst working for Braun, his ideas were “remarkable for their clarity of layout, aesthetic elegance and practical functionality.” (Fiell, 2016) In fact the manifesto by Dieter Rams was fundamental due to its simplicity and informative guidelines of shaping the iconic brand Braun, known and celebrated for similar ideology.

Designers are the key, to producing physical goods, that do not inhibit everyday living, that either maintain convenience or improve it without the consumer becoming frustrated or disappointed. “design is also a continuous interpretation of what function is about, of setting new functional demands.” (Bernsen, 1989)

All designers have their own ideas and outlook, each one wanting to produce an object or project an idea and invent or create an innovative design in the hope of making a unique product or spark a thought that possibly changes things for the better.

Technical advancement has created a platform where designers can communicate and collaborate from all corners of the globe, merging many artistic and imaginative ideas, to improve and make positive changes in the way we think, act, and consume. Lunar Design states “Our goal is to solve business problems by connecting brand, technology and people in innovative and compelling ways.” (Fiell, 2016)

Human nature usually takes the easy option. Even though we know this will be the cause of our own demise and ultimate destruction of the planet as we know it. Yet we continue, through greed, laziness and restricted choices. As designers we need to change now, inevitably changing the future, before it's too late. As quoted by Kazuo Kawasaki “design must balance ethics and aesthetics for good of society.” (Fiell, 2016).

From ornament and crime by Adolf Loos “the effort wasted in designing and creating superfluous ornament is nothing short of a crime.” (Forester, 2016).

Adolf Loos wanted to take design ideas and concepts forward even if the technology needed was not available. He was forward thinking, influencing the paradigms of future practice, for example apple products. (Forester, 2016)

My first manifesto, William Morris, the creator of the Arts and Crafts movement, who was a design visionary in the nineteenth century and the founder of the modern movement. Morris was a revolutionary thinker, who believed in looking at the past to make sense of the future. Morris stated, “hatred of modern civilisation.” (Fiell 2016 p 238) Whereby the industrialization of Victorian society had reduced men to, as he put it, “wage slaves.” (Fiell, 2016 p. 238) He wanted to produce handmade, good quality goods that were affordable to the less affluent, this proved difficult to achieve because of the time they took to make. He resisted embracing machinery to

assist in the process, which could have possibly enabled lower costs equalling lower prices.

It can be argued that Morris's greatest influence was as a designer the contribution which he made to the Arts and Crafts movement, a term which, embracing an enormous variety and disparity of style and technique, refers essentially to a spirit and an ethos. Morris insisted that work which is produced by hand, allowing the craftsman or woman his or her other creative contribution, is morally and aesthetically superior to the machine made, it was this philosophy that lay at the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement (Poulsen ,1989 p. 122)

Nevertheless, he was a thinker and designer who wanted to better the working environment and provide the less fortunate with a better quality of life. Morris's manifesto SPAB, (The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) which was written by himself and Phillip Webb and other founder members in 1877, they wanted to promote the conservation of our ancient buildings, preserving the history, and individual craftsmanship, rather than covering or destroying. Passing on our history to future generations, the skills and the knowledge built over time. Giving future designers a clear frame to work from highlighting the importance of conservation.

My second manifesto ,Bauhaus school was set up in 1919 in Germany, originating from the concept of merging together different ways of thinking, and bringing together both Expressionist and Rationalist ideas, the expressionist believing in the individual creative and the rationalist looking in a more ordered way, such as production. This collaboration of the school of applied arts and the school of fine arts amalgamated. The goal of the new Bauhaus (building house) school being to transform teaching and the practice of design. As envisioned by architect Walter Gropius in 1916. The name

reflected Gropius's belief that "constructing was an important social, symbolic and intellectual endeavour." (Fiell, 2016 p.30) The school relocated several times due to the political climate and, eventually closing, but its principles live on through its unique ideas and ultimately, it's designs.

The integration of bringing two different fields of school together, bringing fresh new inspiration to the forefront of design. Propelling it to the cutting edge of design during this period, it being one of the major players of the time.



Fig. 1: Red Alans Manifesto.

My Finan manifesto, Red Alans by Grayson Perry is thoughtful and witty approach and makes the point that manifestos may now have become ironic and absurd. Which leads to the question of their relevance in today's society. Currently many artists feel that manifestos are not necessary with the change in communication now being much more accessible due to the digital age we now live in. Artists and designers can constantly be communicating with their audiences, updating regularly their work, how it is developing and their story, their ideas and thought, processing their images and words, basically allowing the individual to feel personally involved and even participate in its development. This is expressed in radio fours I player sounds, (BBC sounds, 2019)

Since the Situationists (1957-72.) there has been a new outlook on manifestos, this new post-modernist approach is evident in the work of;

Gilbert and George's manifesto is a way of expressing their ideas of a manifesto in an ironic, periodic manner. It is cleverly entwining the old with the new by enriching it with religious melody and period connotation, in an almost mocking fashion.

"Originality is for people with short memories." (BBC sounds, 2019)

As Grayson Perry's thinking would donate, artists are not philosophers and they should be judged on their art, indeed they do not want to be dictated to.

“Aggressive, imposition, don’t tell others what to do, though shall fight conformism.” (BBC sounds, 2019)

Grayson Perry’s Manifesto is his way of interpreting and communicating his way of thinking that manifestos are not necessarily needed at this current time. He challenges everything that the traditional manifesto represents, as shown in figure 1. Simply displayed in a doodle like, carefree manner, disorganized and chaotic, with random sized letters and words, wobbly lines and wiggly curly perimeter and little childlike sketches. The message this portrays defies convention and challenges the usual rules. To enable the imagination to dare to wonder into unknown territory, which can be a frightening and threatening unknown quantity if there are no restrictions, depending on your point of view. Maybe seen as rebellious and nonconformist act.

“Postmodernism can be anything you want it to be.” (Ward, 2003.p.5)

In Grayson Perry’s book “Portrait of the Artist as a young girl” which addresses his experiences as a child and wearing women’s clothing, again an action which could be interpreted as sub normal.

“Would you like to put on some dresses? It’s really good fun, we can dress up as ladies.” When he scoffed, ‘No!’ I realised it wasn’t something that everybody did.” (Jones, 2007 p. 53)

Pushing boundaries and daring to be different, at the same time considering others and how they might feel is not necessarily a bad or negative thing, but in fact can create good and positive outcomes in many ways, including how our

designs and art affect how people interact and think. Artists and designers could be the catalyst to saving the world and living in harmony perhaps?

The three above Manifestos, William Morris's, Bauhaus, and Grayson Perry's were produced over a vast period in very different political environments. All have a goal and message. A manifesto can be both a useful guide and a hindrance depending on the objective desired. They provide a guideline, can help to personalise your practice, can either sell or make a product or idea, either keeping your values, or not, they set boundaries to consider and adhere to, and provide an adjective. They can be particularly useful when working in a group or collaboration, as they are a way of communicating and helping individuals 'read from the same page' so to speak.

Ken Garland suggested that designers think about the idea of design, not only as a way to promote a product, but also to send a message, to educate, to become more informative, for a better society. He encouraged his fellow designers to move away from the mass consumerism, which design was fuelling and return to a humanist aspect of design.

With the current climate crisis in the world, especially addressing the environment, the disturbing effects of mass consumerism, can be seen globally. Our present throw away society's mentality needs to change today, or products need to be designed with sustainability at the forefront. Manifestos could be a very useful tool to promote a different outlook. Extinction Rebellion recently using the manifesto format to do just this. Has a manifesto the power to start a revolution? Are they a starting point in, a means to inform and educate the public that could evolve and force governments to respond?

In John Ruskin's book 'The seven lamps of architecture', which was written in Victorian times he lists seven moral attributes/design principles which he

believed to be crucial elements of design, consisting of, background, beauty, truth, sacrifice, power, life and obedience.

My manifesto

Respect, open mindedness, compassion is the cornerstone of how I want to be treated and how I treat others.

Humane treatment of animals needs to be in the forefront of current thinking.

Mediocracy has no place in my way of thinking.

To address globally the environmental impact, we are having on the Earth.

To educate in order to preserve the balance of nature.

The digital world can be a blessing-we have to make sure we work with it, not for it.

Personal wellbeing, for people to have a better quality of life, practiced daily.

Art is a form of expression, a language which everyone can interpret.

(Contextual Practices, 2018)

The essence and ideals of my manifesto inspired me to create a visual manifesto of my own; from the horse's mouth. It is a collection of resin moulds from a variety of horses teeth, presented as a gift.(With the intention of making you smile).

My current Manifesto.

FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

1. X2 MY ARSE = The rails- Measurement, Practical design, background, history.
2. THE GRIND = Pleasure, taste, worn down, survival, repetitive, lines.
3. HORSES FOR COURSES = Choices, Imagination.
4. LONG IN THE TOOTH = Wisdom, age, respect, roots, phenology.
5. ON THE BIT = Impulsion, compliance, mutual agreement, training.
6. HARNESS/BRIDLE = Control, element, guide, acceptance.

7. WHIPPED = Power, submission, superior, underdog.
8. SPURRED ON = Encouragement, evasion, pain.
9. FREE SPIRIT = Empathy, love, free spirit, wellbeing, Instinct, primal.
10. STABLE DOOR = Sustainability, timing, hindsight, change.
11. SMILE, hope, dream, da da da.
- 12.A NEIGH A FESTO.



Fig.2: From the horse's mouth.

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1.

Perry, G (2014) *Red Alans manifesto*. Available at: Royalacademy.org.uk. (Accessed :23rd October2019).

Figure 2.

Bowles, G (2019) *From the horse's mouth*.

My Manifesto.

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