

The role of the designer in the 21st century

Student name: Carwyn Llewellyn

St number: 1902052

BA course: Design Crafts

Word count: 2306

Name of tutor: Julia Lockheart

In this essay I am going to address the role of the designer within the 21st century and where I personally believe this role is headed in the next ten years. I will do this through the use of credible research into current practitioners and gain their perspective on the issue, as well as implement my own beliefs on the matter. As a designer maker myself I am able to personally relate with this statement and will be able to implement my own experiences and furthermore integrate accurate making knowledge that will solidify the overall role of the designer. I will also be discussing the vast number of areas that the practitioner covers within the modern-day occupation and how this will change.

Within simplistic terms I believe that the key role of the designer within the modern era is to think both innovatively and creatively to design and produce man-made products and or structures that demonstrate both functionality and artistic flare. Such an important and influential role as this demands an individual who emits mass amounts of creative energy and is able to thrive in both success and failure. This individual must also look both into the past and future of design and gather both the influence and the knowledge required to move forward. In relation to this, the designer is able to gather influence from numerous artistic and real-world themes such as nature and or within the work of others. It is also possible for the designer to gain influence from numerous societal and trending behaviours that can evoke emotion within oneself at the time. This is what I believe drives the ideas of the designer and helps with the evolution and progress of their work ethic. As a designer myself I have discovered the beneficial factors of having a good work ethic, and how it can affect the outcome of your overall working process. Sourced from an online article describing successful work ethics they believe that "A work ethic may include being reliable, having initiative, or pursuing new skills" Purushothaman (2020) was a useful source of information. Therefore, influence and a good work ethic is a key factor within the role of the designer and can provide assistance with both the design and production of their work. As previously stated, a good understanding of design and making knowledge is also required in order to progress within the making world. Through gaining this knowledge the designer is able to

fully grasp the limitations of numerous tools, materials and making techniques that will benefit their overall work process and provide clarity within their style of work. It is also possible for the designer to fully grasp the limitations and capabilities within themselves through working within design. Therefore, the role of the designer heavily influences the functionality and future of today's society.

As previously stated, societal design has a grasp over both the functionality and future of our species, thus providing change and evolution within ourselves and our surroundings. This change will inevitably drive the human race forward into a far more sustainable and prosperous future and provide assistance within our daily lives. Currently design within society can fall under a multitude of categories such as architecture, textile, and brand design. These categories require a multitude of individuals who specialize in their fields and are able to produce and achieve success in both the creation and development of their work. Such practitioners as these are what makers such as myself strive to become and what I use as a source of influence for my own work. Influence within design is an important step within the development of numerous products and or structures and can be grasped from such areas as cultural design. Demonstrated within an online article Vivek Gautam describes that "Culture has also been addressed as an influencing factor in literature on distributed product development and collaborative product" Vivek Gautam (2007) was a useful source of information. Following on from this, I believe societal design has the potential to affect both the emotional and behavioural state of the population through the use of subliminal design. An example of this was through the subliminal marketing campaign between the two globalizing companies of Pepsi and Coke. Within this marketing ploy Pepsi's initial advertisement of their product was made to challenge their competitors and fully integrate their brand design within society. Coke responded to this through the use of designing and editing to re-purpose its competitors' advertisements and turn it against them in a form of capitalization to promote their own product. Although both companies demonstrated competitiveness between one another, both brands were able to successfully present their

product to the nation in a memorable and co-operative fashion. Therefore, both the concept and design of the product remain relevant within society, thus presenting subliminal design within the subcontis of all that recognize the brand. Design and marketing are everywhere as written by Phil T. Kotler, Gary Armstrong, Lloyd C. Harris, and Hongwei He "Today's marketers want to become a part of your life and enrich your experiences with their brands" (Kotler ga la he.2019, p. 6).

Leading on from a previous statement, design within the modern era is spread into a multitude of areas that demonstrate their own beneficial aspects and contribute towards society. Contrasting against one another are the two forms of design categorised into both artistic and industrial product and or structural design. These two forms of design, although different in some areas and similar in others, present the world with both the cultural significance and functional means to move forward as a species. Primarily focused on the experimentation and creation of their work, artistic designers are able to demonstrate both powerful and meaningful statements that demand questioning and intellectual thought throughout. Demonstrating its emotional value in comparison to its counterpart artistic design is a way to evoke and present emotion through the use of visual means. As stated by Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby "One of critical Design's roles is to question the limited range of emotional and psychological experiences offered through designed products" Dunne, Raby (2017) was a useful source of information. This can be done through a multitude of material and or practical work skills that will manifest emotion within both the physical and or digital work pieces. Unlike the artistic designer the purpose of the industrial designer is to imagine and manufacture products and or structures that demonstrate purpose and functionality within our world. Such examples as this are seen within the architectural and product design backgrounds to which manufacturers are able to visualize the gap in the market and or see a need for a certain product. Designers such as these can fall under the category of entrepreneurship, to which they are able to develop their own company and produce a signature product unique to themselves. Entrepreneurial design is a form of independent

manufacturing and is a key element within the functionality and existence of today's products. Furthermore, entrepreneurial design is a key element in providing both value and economical purpose to a product. Once described by Famous critical thinker and designer Tom Fisher "The Design Council frames design's contribution both in terms of making a world that performs better, helping people by providing goods and services that work well, and in terms of adding value that benefits economic performance and makes profit" (Fisher and Gamman, 2018, p. 25). Moving into the future of manufacturing I believe that Entrepreneurship will remain a key focus of an industrial designer, as there is constant need for new products within the modern world.

The concept of design and the designer has been around for countless generations and will remain as a key element in the building blocks of society for the foreseeable future. Taking this factor into consideration there have been countless famous designers throughout history who sauté to make a change in the world through the use of design. Examples of this are seen in the work of such practitioners and changemakers as the Wright brothers and Leonardo da Vinci, who without their contribution to aviation design we would not have the modernised airplane often seen today. In contrast to these practitioners are the individuals who were able to revolutionise the artistic design world through the introduction of new thinking and making methods that are still in circulation today. Such practitioners include the work of Pablo Picasso and George Braque who revolutionized the 20th century with the creation of the cubism movement. Cubism as described by Julian Bell in his novel What is art mention that "For other painters, such as Piet Mondrian, the promise of this line of investigation- Cubism, as it soon became known- Was that it showed how complex of non-natural marks could stand free on the canvas, superseding any obvious reference to the visible world" (Bell, 2017, p. 73). Practitioners such as these are the main source of influence for the current era of artistic designers, who will inevitably provide their own influence on others within a constant cycle of imaginative and creative thought. A primary example of this is seen within the work of Marcel Duchamp who was a pioneer of the Dada movement and

someone who influenced many to question what art. This is inevitably revolutionised the art world and provided freedom without specifications of what art should and could be. Due to the efforts of Marcel Duchamp, today's interpretation of design within art is a free-flowing process where designers are able to produce and develop work based around their own core beliefs as well as numerous subject areas. Although Design within this era has no limitations there is one subject area that is inevitable, and that is the sustainability of both design and the designer.

Sustainability within design is a factor that is constantly growing and is becoming more relevant within the industrial and artistic making worlds. Simply put as species we are slowly running out of material resources required for the production of the products that we are accustomed to. If nothing is done within the coming years the need for design as an occupation will slowly decrease overtime, thus presenting the world with no form of functionality within technology and art. Studies also show the overall effect that design has upon the ecosystem and how it is drastically changing the planet for the worse. This is primarily seen within such advertisements and eco protests, demonstrating the decrease in such areas as forests and or oceans. Combating these issues within design should be the main focus of all designers, as without the required resources for the production of their work there will be no demand for design within both the current and upcoming eras. One famous practitioner of design who stood up for the future of our environment was critical thinker and tech genius Bill gates. Gates described that "To stop the planet from getting substantially warmer, we need breakthroughs in how we make things, grow food, and move people and goods — not just how we power our homes and cars," Mc Carthy (2018) was a useful source of information. Agreeing with the economic factors brought up by Bill Gates as species of creative individuals, we must find an alternative way of creating our own resources and aid within the material shortage plaguing our design world. One environmental strategy to combat the material shortage is the

development and creation of Biomaterials. These materials will be constructed from repurposed and or organic material that is nontoxic and is fully biodegradable, thus providing no long-lasting damage to the overall ecosystem. Moving into the future of design I honestly believe that we as makers can strive towards both an economical and sustainable future.

The future of designs not yet set-in stone, thus there are countless possibilities of how design will manifest and remain relevant within the foreseeable future. Taking this into consideration I personally believe that the role of the designer within the future will relatively have the same purpose as it currently has today. My reasoning for this belief is due to the current functionality of the designer and how influential and important of a role they play within the modernised world. Therefore, rather than adopting a new purpose within society, designers will simply adapt with the current times and produce work according to the trends and or demands requested of them. Trend setting within the future of design will also relatively remain the same, using the method of future forecasting to visualize the gap in the product market. As written by Alex Milton and Paul Rogers "Future forecasting and trend spotting enables designers to predict and interpret the vital implications of user behaviour and develop future scenarios informed by the hard data and expert observation to give their clients the confidence that they are making the right decisions" (Milton and Rogers, 2013, p. 32). As previously stated, I truly believe that the way forward for the sustainability of design is through the use of bio material, for the creation of countless products and or artistic work pieces that will evoke emotion and joy throughout. Within the future I believe that this will become a possibility and will be a prominent aspect of design as we draw ever closer to use of biodegradable material within our work. The use of this material will drastically improve the design world and

bring forward countless new aspects and material qualities within the products we currently love.

In conclusion I believe that the future of design is safely secured within the influences and practical workings of today's designers and will eventually adapt and evolve thus providing new forms of making and material practices within design. I would also like to note the overall importance of the designer in the 21st century and how without their contribution the world would cease to be.

Purushothaman, D. (2020) Living in well benign. Available at: <https://www.livinginwellbeing.org/know-us/> (Accessed: 9 December 2020).

Gautam, V. (2007) Cultural influences on the design process. Available at: <https://www.designsociety.org/download-publication/25586/Cultural+Influences+on+the+Design+Process> (Accessed: 9 December 2020).

Dunne, A. Raby, F. (2005) Dunne and Raby. Available at: Dunne & Raby (dunneandraby.co.uk) (Accessed: 8 December 2020).

Mc Carthy, J. Maes, S. (2018) 9 Powerful People Who Stood Up for The Environment In 2018. Available at: 9 Powerful People Who Stood Up for The Environment In 2018 (globalcitizen.org) (Accessed: 8 December 2020).

Milton, A. and Rodgers, P. (2013) Research methods for product design. Reading: ebook pub date.

Jullien, B. (2017) What is painting. 2nd edn. Thames & Hudson: Limited print pub date.

Fisher, T. and Gamman, L. (2018) Tricky Design: The Ethics of Things. Reading: ebook pub date.

Kotler, P G.a. Ih he. (2019) Principles of marketing. Pearson Education Limited: ebook pub date.