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Emotion, Equity and Career

An Independent Research Document Proposal

This Research essay aims to explore the depth and understanding of three chosen key words supported by a minimum of three images. Philosophers/theorists and artists will be used in conjunction for further comprehension. Upon conclusion of this research, I aim to link my three words to an ultimate question which I can take further into my independent research project. The three key words I have chosen to research are Emotional design, Equity and Career happiness. For this research essay I will use the following theorists and Designers to provide a thorough understanding behind my thoughts, Sean Adams (Emotional Design), Don Norman (Emotional Design), Katica Roy (Equity), Kerning the gap (Equity), Seneca (Career Happiness), Eli Rezkallah (Equity). And. Theus Chan (Career Happiness).

Emotional Design

Graphic communications key objective is to retrieve a response from an audience in an aim to meet a purpose. Success in design blossoms when understanding the power of emotion in design and utilising this understanding as a tool. A more thorough understanding of this was brought to light through reading Sean Adams book depicting how design makes us think, feel and do things. (Adams, 2021). In addition to this discovery, Don Norman a legend in UX design (Norman, 2022) famously paved the way, highlighting the weight in which emotion has on a design's victory. A new designer stepping into the design industry must be constantly aware of emotional design when making choices. This new way of design thinking could help create a new and improved future for design. Supporting this notion, Adams says *'Recognizing the designer's power to create an emotional response and arouse desire is critical to modern life.'*

“Everything has a personality: everything sends an emotional signal. Even where this was not the intention of the designer, the people who view the website infer personalities and experience emotions.”

(Norman, 2022)

A designer's duty is to be responsible and meaningful when making design decisions, constantly being conscious of the effect it intends to have on the audience. Design is powerful. Through research it is apparent on the power it can have on its audience.

This initial research has sparked questions such as, why does design create a varied emotional response, depending on its components or context? What are the fundamental factors to consider when designing to meet an emotional outcome? Is this design approach apparent in the 21st century industry?

Designers can control the emotional impact their design has on the chosen audience. Design can stir up emotions ranging from the deepest darkest gut wrenching feeling to nostalgic butterflies, filling an audience with joy or excitement. Sean Adams supports this idea, breaking down the relationship between specific emotional responses and design. (Adams, 2021).

In the world of design, descriptions such as eye catching, and intriguing are seen as the top tier compliments to a prosperous design. These actions are led by an emotional impact which the design has on its audience. It is debatable whether a successful design requires the emotional response to be as planned/expected by the designer, or whether a freedom of emotional feedback is more beneficial. Perhaps, allowing the audience to generate unique thoughts and feelings which could spark conversation and boost advertisement of a design. *‘The fact is that the emotional design of a product or service affects its success—and thus the bottom line.’* (Dix, 2022)

This leads me to question if Graphic design triggers emotions, if so, how and why?

'In our brains, when we see beauty a large portion of the medial Orbitofrontal cortex is activated. This is the same area that is connected to our emotions, decision making, and feelings of pleasure.' (Adams, 2021). It is important for a graphic designer to understand the psychological reasoning behind why design triggers humans to feel different emotions.

Figure 1 What time is kick off in your house? (Bloom, 2014)



When done correctly, Emotional design is impactful, having the potential to be used as a tool to change the world. Fig 1 is a graphic design poster, designed to solve a global issue using emotional design tactics.

Fig 1 displays a poster published by the Northumbria police force in 2014 to help combat domestic abuse, specifically during 'game' days. *"A study showed domestic incidents increase by more than a third when England loses a World Cup match."* Reported the Daily Mail. (Bloom, 2014)

I wonder if the graphic designer behind the poster felt an immense responsibility and pressure during the creative process. When designing for a sensitive problem such as domestic abuse, it is important to pay extra attention to the audience in which the help is directed to.

Analysing fig 1, What time is kick off in your house? (Bloom, 2014), will help provide evidence of the emotional impact design can have on its audience. In first instance of viewing the poster, it is apparent that the bold typography which says, *'What time is kick off in your house?'* immediately jumps out. It can be suggested that the colour choice of red puts emphasis on *'kick off'*, reflecting the idea of an abusive argument within a relationship. This immediate reflection would create anger for an audience who might have experienced this horror within a personal relationship. *"When a person feels anger, brain activity focuses attention."* Says Sean Adams. (Adams, 2021). This is a critical tool for awareness campaigns such as figure 1 because it creates an urgency and fire behind society to make instant change.

Further the women's gaze stares directly into the viewers soul, in a desperate pleading look. This technique draws the viewers' attention to the severity of the issue, in hope to spark motivation to help the victims and make change. In addition, the battered football split halfway on the poster might reflect the damage inflicted on women that occurs after a football game within these abusive relationships. All the design decisions have been made in attempt to create an anger within the audience, to encourage action to be made. Adams believes that *'The viewer is now prepared to hear a command, take action, or find information.'* (Adams, 2021).

After completing research into Emotional design, it is apparent that it is important for me as a designer to take the concept forward into my own designs. Emotional design can help me create meaningful impactful design in a fight to change the future. When deciding on a question to take forward for my individual project, many ideas have been sparked. I am interested in applying this concept of emotional design into a practiced based project and testing the success rate of it compared to a more detached design. I wonder whether emotional design could help fight for current issues such as equality amongst genders.

Equity

The fight for equity is not yet won. All industries continue to witness an unfair treatment to both women and men. In my opinion, Gender equity needs to be at the

forefront of conversation in board meetings, interviews and news presence to keep the fight moving forward. *'Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs.'* (Roy, 2017) Different to the meaning of equality, equity upon genders, fights for the idea of there being strength in unity, helping the opposite gender where they lack genetically can help bridge the gap, bringing successes to all. Forbes author Katica Roy put it simply stating, *'If gender equality is the end, gender equity is the means.'* (Roy, 2017)

Focusing on what the feminist act has achieved today, Society has come leaps and bounds in the fight for equality between genders. To imagine a world where women were seen as if only house cleaners and carers for children is outrageous. The reality of equality in the graphic design industry is eye opening to say the least. Research suggests *'70% of graphic design students are women, yet only 11% of creative directors are women.'* Kerning the gap reports. ' (Dawood, 2018)

This shows the shocking truth of how sexist the industry is, stunting women's career growth. So why, in the 21st century after all the hard work our ancestors put in are we still suffering with sexism and inequality among genders?

Figure 2 (Coronavirus: Government withdraws 'sexist' Stay Home advert, 2021)



I believe it is important to reflect on the presence of this issue in the 21st century because it is often overlooked . If the current feminist push for equality was effective,

then advertisements as seen in figure 2 would not have been carelessly and nonchalantly released into the public. An article from the BBC questions the stupidity and inattentiveness the designers behind this 'social media advert urging people to "Stay Home. Save Lives"' had. (Candy, 2021) This poster showed 3 scenes of women cleaning, ironing and teaching children, while the only representation of a man was relaxing on the sofa, perhaps after a 'hard day at work'. As a social media post, there was opportunities for society to bite back at the disgrace of this advert. Society was in disbelief that the sexist history of our government was yet to be put behind us. Lorraine Candy, former editor of Sunday Times Style Magazine shows her dismay commenting *"Are there no intelligent, smart women advising the government about this? I am perplexed by the lack of awareness."* (Candy, 2021) A feeling and judgement many women of these times might relate to. It is a graphic designer's duty to be knowledgeable and aware of the designs they are putting into society and the impact they could cause to naive easily encouraged children as they are the future we hope to change.

Figure 3 Parallel Universe (Brand, 2018)



It can be suggested that the idea of equality is outdated.

Gender equality *"does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female."* (Roy, 2017)

One viewpoint of equality, when dissected, could be the idea that women and men should be treated as equal. This could perhaps stunt our mental and physical opportunities for growth, where both genders aren't given the required extra help where needed due to genetic setbacks. For example, in a 'perfect' reality of strict gender equality rules, men and women would compete in athletic competitions together, where proven by scientific research, men are naturally more capable limiting a woman's chance to compete. According to Nuwer, *"...men remain, on average, larger and stronger than women, possessing 26lbs (10kg) of skeletal muscle, 40% more upper-body strength and 33% more lower body strength."* Reports the BBC. (Nuwer, 2017)

Figure 3 shows artwork produced by Eli Rezkallah, a photographer and concept artist who created posters reimaging what life would be like in a *'parallel universe'*. (Brand, 2018) The clever idea of flipping the gender roles sparks conversation, acting as a strong form of advertisement to boost awareness. This idea can be interpreted as the artist showing men the obscenity of how women have been treated through history by putting them in woman's shoes. Although a powerful delivery to promote awareness of the issue at hand, this 'us vs you' idea can cause separation between the genders. Equity requires the synchronism of genders to become one and fight the problem together. Research says, *'the World Economic Forum projects it will take 170 years to reach gender equality globally, and 158 years in North America.'* (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016)

In conclusion of my research into equity, it is clear a redirection in approach is needed, a fight for equity opposed to equality being that tool for change. For my individual project I am intrigued to question whether my research thus far reflecting the benefits of an equity approach for change, will transfer well into reality. I could perhaps look into different design strategies that would truly benefit our societies

current issues with sexism, ensuring they are inclusive of both genders to fight the issue together.

Career happiness

General happiness is a goal many hope to achieve in life. Maybe easier said than done, people find themselves in a constant battle to balance their work with other valuable life aspects. The mystery of this unknown venture into finding happiness in my career generated a few questions I intend to research. Including the following, Today, how is work being made less of a chore and more fun or enjoyable? How can new designers navigate the design industry in ease? What is the reality of the graphic design industry?

An obvious answer to finding career happiness is by picking a job which you enjoy every aspect of. Even though this idea sounds straight forward, this is not the case. Financial responsibilities can often shadow over the importance of true happiness. “*When shall we live, if not now?*” said Roman philosopher, Seneca. (Seneca and Seneca, 2015) A humorous question that encourages reflection on a person’s life stressors and perhaps grounds them to weigh up the importance of these issues. Work life balance is another common suggestion promoted by society. (Bird, 2019) It reflects the idea that a person cannot be satisfied without an equal balance of both. Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric believes ‘*There is no such thing as work-life balance. There are work-life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences.*’ (Bird, 2019) This idea of ‘*work life choices*’ could help give control back to a person, certifying that there is no one way to live, taking the pressure off the idea of work. Bringing freedom to the decision-making process surrounding work could help encourage a sense of fun and therefore boosting one’s happiness. In summary, it is important to not neglect the importance of enjoyment in life because that is the most important factor when creating a work life balance. Jim Bird redefines work life balance when describing it as finding ‘*Meaningful, daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four life quadrants: work, family, friends and self.*’ (Bird, 2019) A definition to live by when in search for career happiness.

Figure 4

(Google, Dublin - Office Inspiration, 2022)



Figure 5

(Google Office Campus Dublin / Evolution Design / Archello, 2022)



‘You are a reflection of your environment’ is a common saying that promotes healthy decision making when choosing your surroundings. such as the people in your life, the space you live or in this case the workplace. Being in a clean spacious well-lit workspace can be seen to promote motivation, creativity, innovation or perhaps a general enthusiastic relationship with work. Figures 4 and 5 show Googles approach to creating *‘the happiest, most productive workplace in the world.’* (Stewart, 2013) reports Jordan Newman, the spokesman for google. Figure 4 shows a futuristic, funky, modern approach to office design, which might encourage designers to brainstorm new innovative ideas. Whereas the nature inside approach seen in figure 5 might encourage a form of free relaxed thinking, helping workers problem solving and innovation skills. All of which a graphic designer would find beneficial. A positive productively run working environment might encourage happiness for an employee, bringing them that much wished for career happiness.

Finding a career which brings a person new fresh excitement every day is key to enjoyment of said career. Specific to graphic design, Designers can often be lost in the rules and regulations, falling into a trap of repetitive. Boring design. So, how can new designers joining the industry avoid this robotic like system of uninteresting design? An intriguing fresh idea introduced by Singapore designer Theseus Chan (2022), suggests the best way to design is to ‘unlearn’. (Cited in Wright, 2022) In an

article by d and d Chan (2022) goes on to say, *“I am seeking the process of finding a new way that leads to a reservoir of ideas and unadulterated purity in expression”*. (Cited in Wright, 2022) Completing a degree in graphic design allows a designer to learn all the necessary skills, practice and knowledge needed in preparation for the giant competitive industry. For Theseus to suggest unlearning such information can at first sound ludicrous. But it's not the skills or knowledge he suggests discarding, it's the box in which rules can imprison a designer in, stunting maximum creativity and innovation. This wild approach to design gives new life and excitement to the career, opposite to the daunting idea of producing repetitive brain numbing design. In my subjective experience I believe that creativity links to contentment and happiness.

This research into career happiness has shifted my mindset for my future industry and relit my excitement. As a young designer I feel the unknown can be daunting. Chan (2022) has lifted this dread and created an excitement within me for a fresh design way of thinking. An idea for my individual project raised by this research is to find out the different possibilities in the modern design industry, what job roles are out there? What schemes are in place to support designers? Etc. Although important, I believe that this might be a personal at home research project rather than for my dissertation.

In completion of researching the three key words equity, emotional design and career happiness I have curated a final question I hope to take forward into my dissertation. My question is as follows –

Using the technique and understanding of emotional design, how can a new wave of feminism be realised, in the fight for equity? I plan to focus on sexism in the graphic design industry, readying myself for my future career. This question could link into a practice-based project by creating these design solutions for the current modern equality crisis. I could use emotional design to create a powerful campaign that would perhaps create a new wave of thinking.

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