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Assignment Title: Question 6: With an emphasis on Welsh language, Culture or Identity chose a theme or focus on creative practitioners relevant to your field of study and critically analyse your choices.

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Question 6: With an emphasis on Welsh language, Culture or Identity chose a theme or focus on creative practitioners relevant to your field of study and critically analyse your choices.

Being indigenous to the country, epistemologically Wales has a rich heritage of design craft that continues to influence the present and future designers and makers of the Surface Pattern Community. I will introduce two design products that began their roots steeped in historical functionality that have now become designer luxuries and still relevant to today's marketplace. Women's Archive Wales suggests, "we need to know our past to know our present" and to preserve "our past for our future". Appreciating that design and functionality are key and a synthesis when considering the user and to learn from what we know to improve on what we can make better. Wicks (2006, quoted in Design Issues, 2010, p15-28) claims "Design is always about synthesis – synthesis of market needs, technology trends and business needs" to make it relevant for the present demand.

Carthen

Mae'r gwrthrych cyntaf rwyf am drafod yw'r carthen. Both functional and an object of design it is an important piece of history that traditionally is handed down through families as an heirloom. An heirloom is "a valuable object that has belonged to a family for several generations" (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010).



Figure 1. Carthen, made by Lewis D Jones 1926

Blanced sydd wedi'i gwehyddu i'w gilydd gan ddefnyddio lliain fras o liwiau traddodiadol i greu phatrwm arwyneb, cymysgedd o linellau neu phatrwm geometrig ond does neb yn gwybod lle ddaeth y patrymau yn wreiddiol. Yn ol Mark Lucas, Curadur Amgueddfa Wlân Cymru yn Nhre-fach, Felindre, "Mae'r cofnod cynharaf o'r patrymau geometrig ar garthenni Cymru yn dyddio nôl i 1775 ac i'w gael yng nghasgliad Archifau Sir Ddinbych." (Cylchgrawn Cymry Fyw, 10 Awst 2018). Mae hi'n debyg bod y patrymau wedi gael ei ddylanwadu gan patrymau celtaidd hanesyddol.

Mae'r carthen yn Figure 1. yn cael ei arddangos yn Amgueddfa Cymru ac yn dangos y patrwm arwyneb ar y ddwy ochr. Nid dim ond gwrthrych i'w admygu yw hyn ond hefyd i fod i gael ei ddefnyddio yn ymarferol i gadw'n gynnes ym misoedd y gaeaf. Yn fwy bwysig yn ddiweddar, mae'r carthen yn gael ei phasio i lawr trwy'r teulu fel nwydd o werth, efalliai ddim yn ariannol ond yn fwy sentimental. Mae llond o waith llaw wedi mynd i fewn i'r garthen ac yn aml wedi'i greu ar gyfer rhywun o feddwl yn draddodiadol. Ac fel mae'r carthen yn dod i lawr trwy'r cenedlaethau mae'r werth yn cynyddu a'r phatrwm yn cael ei adnabod fel bathodyn y teulu rydym yn gallu perthnasu. Deallwn trwy esboniad Richard Sennet, "Objects do not inevitably decay from within like a human body. The histories of things follow a ... course, in which metamorphosis and adaptation play a stronger role across human generations." It is no longer just a functional blanket to keep warm but an heirloom to snuggle into family history of ancestors who once were.

Weaving has played a significant part in Welsh culture and heritage. Well known for sheep farming, the wool, a bi-product was used to weave colourful blankets and textiles that were exported in particular to North America (Welsh Otter, 2021).

Textile production has been at the heart of Welsh village life for centuries, taking place in cottages, outhouses and sitting rooms. Few communities existed without the rattle of the spinning wheel or the clank of the small home loom, providing a backdrop to Welsh rural life. Wales proved the perfect country for making woollen textiles, due to fast flowing mountain streams providing power, and of course the sheep to provide their cosy fleeces.

(Welsh Otter, 2021, <https://welshotter.co.uk/blogs/news/the-story-of-how-wales-got-its-tapestry>)

Today has seen a decrease in woollen mills, whereas once there were hundreds across the UK, only 12 still stand in Wales currently. This has also seen the decline in weaving as a skill. Llio James, a weaver, introduces

herself on her website about page, following the same path as mentioned above “My interest in textiles began at a very young age having been raised in a small village that had two traditional weaving mills” (Llio James, 2021). She is now a Lecturer in Camarthen and concurrently has her own business. She encapsulates the “hiraeth” behind her involvement in weaving with a small manifesto of aligning her values “The feeling of belonging to country and culture is important to me and one way of expressing this is through my work. I see weaving as a way to bring together industry and culture.” To explain the Welsh word “hiraeth” is a longing for ones country (Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, 2021), culture and heritage almost in one feeling. Llio uses traditional colours and patterns reminiscent of a time and attachment to the memories of a grandparents home.



Figure 2. Llio James, (2021)



Figure 3. Llio James, (2021)

Llio uses traditional weaving methods and concentrates on a contemporary design for her woven products. She has a shop that contains many products including paper design but it is the modern Carthen I am drawn to having experienced the passing of the heirloom in my own family. Redesigned to modern day living with sharp lines and a contemporary pallet, traditional use of geometric shapes and coarse wool she successfully places timeless upholstery and blankets in a present day home. You will always remember who gave you a Carthen.

Figure 4. Llio James, (2021)



Cafodd yr ystafell gwely yn nhŷ Celebrity Big Brother eu arddurno gyda blancedi a charthennau yn lle ddefnyddio cwiltiau trwchus fel arfer. Ysbrydoliaeth y dyluniad oedd porthdy sgîo Sgandinafia (Westbrook, 2012). Mae'r ailddyluniad wedi digwydd wrth deall sut fyddai'r cystadleuwyr yn ymddwyn yn y ty o ddydd i ddydd. Fel arfer yn eistedd a siarad a ddefnyddio carthen am gysur gan fod teulu a ffrinidau mor bell i ffwrdd.



Figure 5. Big Brother House

The Lovespoon

Yr ail gwrthrych dewisaf trafod yw'r Llwy Bren. Yn enwog dros y byd mae'n dangos y gwaith crefft a chariad sydd mynd i fewn i bob llwy sy'n cael ei greu'n traddodiadol. Rydym ni yn creu perthnasoedd gyda gwrthrychau, yn enwedig anrhegion. Mae'r llwy yn bwrpasol, yn anrheg o ddyn i fenyw (yn hanesyddol) a heddiw yn anrheg Gymraeg mae twristiaid yn hoffi prynnu fel swfenir.

Things, according to Miller, are constitutive of identity. "Material culture matters," he insists, "because objects create subjects more than the other way round". Even more strongly: "the closer our relationships with objects, the closer our relationships with people" (Miller 2009). Culturally the love spoon is an allegoric gift of love from one partner to the another defining the characteristics of the relationship.

It uses a crafted piece of wood to tell a story of meaningful symbols between two people. Sara Beckman and Michael Barry say 'STORYTELLING IN DESIGN Throughout our description of the design process, we've emphasized the role of stories and storytelling" (Beckman, S. and Barry, M. (2009). So here we have to understand the symbols to understand the story.



Figure 6. Selection of lovespoons from the The Love Spoon Gallery

The language of symbols or icons is called Semiotics as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary "the study of symbols and their use or interpretation". Saussure, one of the founders of semiotics introduces us to the idea of the "signifier" and "signified" (A Dictionary of Critical Theory, 2010). Its with the understanding that the symbol is the signifier and the receiver is the signified that has the ability to understand the language of the icon to receive the message conveyed in the piece of work. In this scenario, the maker chooses the symbols based on the relationship with the other party and builds them into the design so that the spoon communicates the love and relationship characteristics for one and other. The object being the bind in the

relationship as understood by the maker. Nigel Cross distinguishes “Design is a language and system of codes formed through designers’ ability to locate the relationships between the artificial environment and human needs.” He continues that “Designerly ways of knowing are embodied in these codes” (Cross, 1982:25). This epistemology is representational of life experiences, inductive design of bells representing wedding, horseshoe for luck, heart meaning to love or feel loved, the harp for appreciation of music and the traditional Welsh icons – the daffodil and dragon to solidify the heritage. The Celtic knots link the symbols together with a nod to Christianity being the national faith once upon a time. Knowledge built through immersing yourself in this culture would teach you these symbols as an epistemological way understanding the messages.

Alexander McQueen’s divergent thinking brought the design of the lovespoon into the fashion collection showcased at the Paris Fashion Week on March 2nd 2020. The Autumn Winter collection according to Adams was ““The resulting collection is both a testimony to the creativity of the McQueen designers and the skills of Welsh makers past” (Rhys, 2020).



Figure 7. Alexander McQueen’s Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020)

Creative Director, Sarah Burton took the design team to the St Ffagan National Museum of History for an inspirational visit to research the archived collection of love spoons and Carthen blankets. According to Post Magazine, Sarah Burton is known for reaching out to historical venues across Britain for divergent opportunities for innovative design showing that looking at our past can inspire the future design.

Figure 8 - Alexander McQueen's Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020)



Conclusion

Welsh heritage has so much to offer the design world and it needn't only be confined to Wales. As an ever growing society, the development of emerging technologies and travel being so accessible, we have more opportunity now than before to stretch the history of our land to suit the purpose of our future. Combining functionality with design, understanding the use of the object, how it will be stored, when it will be showcased, the emotional attachments it might make, its lifespan will help us reach into the archives of cultural influence as a starting point to bring it to its contemporary redesign.

Steve Jobs at Apple, when going through a period of change realised he had to start with the end customer in mind and the work backwards (Jobs, 1997). As Designers, we live in a constant environment of change. Design just doesn't happen, we have so much history to research draw from that we simply take the baton and take it forward.



Figure 9 - Alexander McQueen's Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020)

With the two examples I have chosen to discuss and the makers involved showcase the historical making process that hasn't moved that forward in the technological sense. Its still crafted work by hand that creates items made to last multiple lifetimes. We easily forget out of "hiraeth" that actually both of these products can easily be mass produced by laser cutters and fast fashion. But they don't have the same integrity,

longevity, purpose or emotion. Which Designer do I want to be? The challenges facing designers today is the consumerism, constant want for a shiny new thing but is then discarded once a shinier thing comes along. Historical times forced us to appreciate the things we had because that is all we had, to make do and mend. A big problem for us in Wales is the creeping poverty line and the waste generated by single use products. Jonathan Chapman suggests we “reduce the consumption and waste of resources by increasing the resilience of relationships between consumer and product, presenting a more expansive, holistic approach to design for durability, and more broadly, the lived-experience of sustainability”.

Not only did my Grandmother pass down her Carthen but also the mindset to make things properly. As a seamstress, she taught me to look at materials and fabrics and to question how they were made by the shops that sold them. Were they worth the cost of the price and what was the value of the item. I learned to turn it around and rhetorically question the Designer of the added value, what will this product mean to me. Creating meaningful designs using resources that would normally be wasted is a big interest to me. Taking into consideration the story behind the lovespoon and the will to pass down through generations I captured the young love of two local child sweethearts in a light bottle I made. The flowers were a Valentines gift from the boy to the girl and now she has the longevity souvenired in a bottle of love.



Figure 10 - Authors Own



Figure 11 - Authors Own

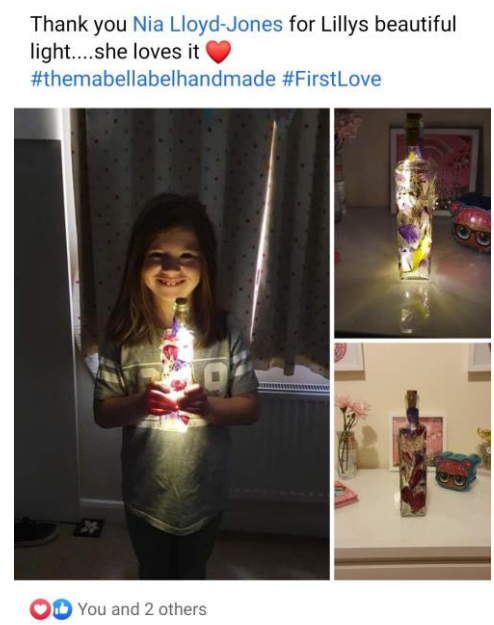


Figure 12 – Social media screenshot

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Figures

Figure 1 Carthen by Jones, Lewis D (1926) Lampeter Available at:

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Figure 2 – James, Llio (2021) *Fireside Stool*. [upholstery] Cardiff. Available at:

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Figure 3 – James, Llio (2021) *Canol*. [Blanket] Cardiff. Available at: <https://www.lliojames.com/siop/canol> Accessed at: 09 December 2021

Figure 4 – James, Llio (2021) [Blanket] Cardiff. Available at: <https://www.lliojames.com/siop/> Accessed at: 09 December 2021

Figure 5 – Celebrity Big Brother House (2012) [photo of bedroom] Channel 5. Available at: Metro

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Figure 6 - Selection of lovespoons from the The Love Spoon Gallery (2021) Mumbles. Available at:

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Figure 7 - Alexander McQueen's Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020). Available at:

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Figure 8 - Alexander McQueen's Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020). Available at:

<https://sites.courtauld.ac.uk/documentingfashion/2020/05/01/alexander-mcqueen-and-the-welsh-dress/> Accessed at 09 December 2021

Figure 9 - Alexander McQueen's Autumn Winter Collection at Paris Fashion Week (2020). Available at:

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Figure 10 & 11 – Authors Own (2021) [Bottle light] Bridgend.

Figure 12 – Authors own screenshot of social media post.