

Outline a current environmental, political or social issue that requires redesign. Explain how you will solve this issue over the duration of your future design career. Underline the tools and approaches you will use and discuss how and why.

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Surface pattern design

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With the current global situation as it stands in regards to COVID-19, it is prevalent that the design and entertainment industry is more important than ever in our daily lives. This is due to our new altered routine and activities being contained mainly within our safe home spaces, so the use of arts such as interior decoration, motion pictures and digital design have been higher than ever. However, it is undeniable that in today's post-modern world, artists and designers are still as underappreciated and belittled as they have been for decades. So what source is the causes of this negative valuing, is there something deeper playing into the public views of the Artistic sector? What impact has this had on Design and Craft practices, and what repercussions does this cause to society and to the people who live within it? These are the issues that I will set out to analyse and try to distinguish within my essay, and to find responses and practical solutions that I could bring into my practice as a future surface pattern designer.



Figure 1

One of the most recent campaigns against the arts produced by the government, was the “Rethink. Reskill. Reboot” advertisement backed by CyberFirst, which proved to be unsuccessful and cause major backlash from the general public. It was a clear example of the undervaluing of the arts, that was justified by the pandemic which means that dancers are unable to perform, so are being encouraged to retrain in other lines of work. *“At the root of the word 'advertisement' is the Latin verb 'advertere', meaning 'to turn towards' or 'to consider'. It is certain that the visual and commercial verbal messages, which are part of the advertising, are intended to attract attention and to produce some responses from the receiver, by making it compelling and practically impossible to escape from,”* (Brame, 2018, 10; Schement, 2002). This is telling us that the basis of any good advertising is to create a message which is so convincing, that we automatically and subconsciously overlook any other possibilities; which in this case is that the Performing arts sector is currently not valuable to the economy and it urges us to neglect the idea of the general public perusing artistic careers. By HM’s Government releasing this advertisement, we can deduce that they are encouraging us to “consider” that the cyber-ware industry is exceedingly beneficial for all, and it is encouraged to change sector to become a useful member of society. The response to the campaign was the vocalisation of the offence that it caused, as it attacked the value of most artistic professions and in turn, the expression that many individuals use which is extremely personal to themselves. It could also be construed as a form of propaganda, as the Oxford definition for it is *“Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.”* (Oxford languages, 2020). Many people would consider that this depreciative attitude from HM’s Government, is a further example of the views of designers which is deeply ingrained within our society. It also links to the hierarchical class systems which is also prevalent in present day, causing an art divide which means that the general

public cannot access recreational arts as conveniently as higher class citizens. This causes an imbalance in the way that Artistic practices are perceived as many people in society will generally form stereotypes upon things which are not attainable, due to a lack of understanding about the matter.

This divide in the arts can be attributed to the highly influential nature of our Government and the monopoly of businesses - creating a society through designers which means that in many cases the highest valued forms of Art and Design, are unobtainable to much of the general public due to the high costs of products and services which ultimately bring a higher social status to the able consumer. *"Whosoever controls the designers – in modern capitalism that role generally falls to business and government – controls to a large degree the expressions and evolution of the design culture."* (Faud-Luke, 2009, 33). This highlights the importance of the progression of practiced design, and how going forward it should be reformed to benefit society, not to be used to create modern capitalism. However, these views upon art-societal divides is not a new topic within today's post-modern design economy and is something that business owners were trying to reduce or eradicate even back in the 19th Century. *"Morris, Marshall & Faulker & Co – intent on promoting a revitalized vernacular simplicity combined with excellent craftsmanship. Morris and his colleagues extolled the virtues of these new ideas of craft as a means to promote social cohesion."* (Faud-Luke, 2006, 37). This was an early investigation into the plausibility of designers of the era, being able to speak directly to the mass consumers and to potentially further the accessibility to their products and services without the disruption of high costs and furthermore, the cultural capital that follows. *"In Reproduction (Bourdieu 1977[1970], p. 46), cultural capital is defined as cultural goods and values that are transmitted through class differentiated families and whose value as cultural capital varies with its cultural distance ... from the dominant culture promoted by dominant agencies of socialization. This suggests that various types of cultural capital could have different values, and that some are even 'illegitimate,' or of low value."* (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, 157). This tells us that the arts could still increasingly become a capital within social status which means that only the rich and wealthy are able to obtain or own. Removing more of the arts for the working class creates a higher divide which expands the gap between the general public, who are the main customers of functioning design and entertainment, and the creators who use arts within their practice. However, the backlash received in regards to the Cyber-ware campaign did create a surge of recognition surrounding the importance of design within our daily lives, as many people's vocalisation on the topic was heard and the advertisement was branded "controversial" and was subsequently removed.

Interior art and curation has always been one of the most important fields of design in our daily lives; this is due to the very personal connection we maintain and the way that it reflects an individual's interests and meets their needs. Therefore this means that the consumer has a very emotional attachment to the design also, making interior products of the highest importance as they are the most used and therefore, of the highest value within our routines. *"The people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment"* (Marcuse, 1964). This is telling us that each individual curates their own space out of specific pieces of design, to express their personality in visceral ways to further confirm their identity throughout their day-to-day and to express themselves visually to potential guests. This both subconscious and conscious process aims to create a utopic space, in which the surroundings are in a permanent state of perfection and projects idealistic views of the curator. *"Our self-image plays a more important role in our lives than we like to admit. Even those who deny any interest in how others view them actually do care, if only by making sure that everyone else understands that they don't. The way we dress and behave, the material objects that we possess, jewellery and watches, cars and homes, are all public expressions of ourselves."* (Norman, 2004). In the current global situation, people are spending more

time within their homes which then in turn requires the consistent confirmation from their immediate surroundings about their identity. As a surface pattern designer, this affirms the importance of my practice, and highlights the significance that my design will have on an individual, even more so under the current bearings. *“When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude towards them, his competence, his trust-worthiness etc.”* (Goffman, 1959, 13). This suggests that taking away recreational arts and design from working-class citizens, would mean that the views upon an individual would be drastically altered. This is because as said earlier, people present themselves in a visual way to express their identity, which is then perceived by others and a first impression is made about various attributes within the individuals’ personality. This also creates a strong and continuous dedication by the individual to maintain the perception of themselves which they are projecting onto others, or the ones which are recognised subconsciously in the choices made by the person. *“The individuals’ initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretences of being other things.”* (Goffman, 1959, 22). This suggests that there is a consistent effort from the individual to uphold their own beliefs and identity within their curated surroundings and to be as infrequently hypocritical against this as possible, so that they secure the views of themselves within society which means they are never judged poorly. This ongoing control over the expression of ones’ personality, can potentially create a relaxing environment as said before, it creates a familiar and utopic space upon which the individual is at their most comfortable. Therefore, creating a divide between the classes by using expressive interior design as one of the artistic cultural capitals; would heavily disrupt an individuals’ visceral way of conveying themselves, potentially depressing the emotional way in which they are interpreted and ultimately, the way they feel on a daily basis.



Figure 2

Researching into potential solutions to that can be incorporated into my role as a practicing surface pattern designer, requires first going back to the 19th century to analyse the work of William Morris. He was one of the first businessmen to approach, and attempt to resolve the gap between the societal class systems, which meant that his products were only obtainable by the wealthy. *“Morris and his followers encouraged artists to get out of their academies and immerse themselves in more prosaic production activities. He also galvanized the Arts and Crafts Guilds to organize themselves, and set standards of quality for both design and production. However, the outputs of their efforts could only be afforded by the bourgeois.”* (Faud-Luke, 2006, 37). This approach encouraged people to

participate in design, who perhaps worked in contrasting fields in the economy, to assist in improving the quality of the products and services that he had on the market. The objective was also to produce textiles, artefacts and wallpapers which were accessible and affordable for the working class citizens however, due to high costs this was not the outcome. Although it was an unfortunate conclusion for the time, the movement did inspire an era of design which is of the highest influential presence in today's modern interior design. *"This early design movement is credited with stimulating and provoking thoughts among artists and designers throughout Europe, laying the foundations for various expressions of Art Nouveau," (Faud-Luke, 2006, 37-38).* This is a good example of a specific area in design evolution which was an important milestone in revolutionising the way that Designers are scrutinised, as Art Nouveau was created with the objective of changing these perceptions of the general public about decorative arts. Although the outcome was not entirely as intended, the demonstration of passion within the artistic field created something that sent ripples throughout the world, even to present day.

A modern approach to this issue may come from Scandinavian culture, which is known for its inclusive society and furthermore, its design. *"The processes used, the working and operating hours, employee titles, corporate hierarchy, and compensation structure—these have all been designed, often "top down," mandated from a central source of power. But there are circumstances where these design decisions are made "bottom up," involving or sometimes driven by the people who will encounter these rules and policies in their day-to-day work. Researcher Pelle Ehn describes this bottom-up approach as a democratic process where the gap between designers and users is closed." (Kohlko, pg.39, 2018).* This strategy involves taking an existing design process, and includes people not necessarily design trained; not focusing directly on its capital in society, but to strengthen the bond between the designer and the consumer to create more emotionally valuable products and services. The difference between the objectives of William Morris and that of Scandinavian designers, is that one was pursuing increased access and availability of their products, and the other is creating consumer goods which have a longer lifespan due to a higher consumer connection to the items. *"Building engaging, rewarding, active partnerships between people and products by ensuring participation through creative activities. This allows users to become producers, not observers of their interaction, which can also be achieved by letting the user reconfigure the product or learn a new skill or acquire knowledge through using it." (Haines-Gadd, Chapman, Lloyd, Mason, Aliakseyeu, 2018).* This was a physical study into the personal connections that the public have with sentimental items, and how that can be incorporated into design to create profound emotionally durable products which align far better with the circular economy objectives. Using this method will have three outcomes; better consumer connection to products and objects of design, increased mood and wellbeing due to the personal attachment expressed through the immediate surroundings and ultimately less waste as there will be reduced desire for mass consumerism. This covers many of the current issues in today's mass production of products, which creates a 'throw-away' culture that is creating increasing amounts of waste and ultimately – pollution. This study can be effectively utilised within my Surface Pattern Design degree, as I will aim to gather first hand research from potential consumers, to assist my products design process at every stage. It will mean that my practice becomes more sustainable, increases the life-span of my finished designs and creates an increased connection with the general public and my future brand. This inclusion of the general public in the design process, would be a good way of improving the overall views on Artists and creators who use design in their practice.

To conclude, although increasing cultural capital within the arts creates a predominantly negative outcome, studies in the 19th century have shown that it can forge movements which encourage inspirational elements of design with a wider legacy that follows. In present day this process is also

being demonstrated in the development of modern design, combining it with decreased costs and better knowledge and understanding to create increasingly positive outcomes which can benefit everyone. This has been shown in studies which aim to create emotionally durable products, that will obtain an expanded life cycle and therefore will result in the reduced production of waste. This connection to consumer products, has proven to create a more emotionally comfortable environment for an individual, which is crucial in today's current global situation. It could also reduce the use of arts as a cultural capital, as the use of design becomes a freedom of expression and not a luxury only obtainable by the wealthy. This would mean better integration of design in modern society, and increasingly positive views from the general public, businesses and HM's Government on practicing Artists.

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