

Independent Project – An extended essay on manifestos, concluding in a personal manifesto of my own.

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BA course title: Product and Furniture Design

Word count: 4732

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This extended essay will explore three different aspects of manifestos, political, cultural and artistic, and how they have shaped society, theorists, brands, and designers. Throughout this essay, I will be studying each manifesto and forming my opinion throughout. This will guide me to create my own manifesto that will be a representation of me as a designer.

To start this essay, I think it important to clarify what a manifesto is and the meaning behind it;

“The British and American English word “manifesto” derives from the Latin terms “manifestus” and “manifestum,” both of which mean “obvious.” Over time, the Latin morphed to “manifesto” (“to make public”) before changing again to a new word in Italian with the same meaning: “manifestare.” - (MasterClass, 2022a).

The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes the word manifesto to be “a written statement of the beliefs, aims, and policies of an organisation, especially a political party” (N.D). The manifesto can serve as a political instrument and historical artefact for democracy. A manifesto is not just open to politics but can be used for individual or other group movements. It is a particular form of message that addresses an audience and implores them to join to effect change. Although there is no necessary way of writing a manifesto, in order for all manifestos to function, it must be recognised by the audience it is aimed at. As it is seen as an almost public announcement, the manifesto can often be printed in journals and newspaper articles.

Manifestos in politics

There are many different varieties of manifestos. A personal manifesto could openly proclaim who you are and what you aspire to achieve, but a political manifesto might be used as a public proclamation of intentions. During certain periods in time, manifestos have been regularly written, frequently by small groups of individuals who desire to question the status. Authors have included individuals, political parties, and art movements throughout history. It is a fusion of art and politics, which has led researchers to believe it be a type of modern literature and a genre in its own right. (Cooke, 2019). Either way, these documents operate as useful assessment tool, as they allow people to reflect on how closely their actual efforts to improve things match their original goals and achievements.

A timeless example of a political manifesto is *The US Declaration of Independence*. This is pictured in *figure 1*. Written by Thomas Jefferson and approved by the Second Continental Congress in 1776 (Owuor Otieno, 2017), the declaration announced why the thirteen Northern American colonies believed themselves to be independent sovereign republics, that are free from the rule of the Kingdom of Great Britain. The manifesto

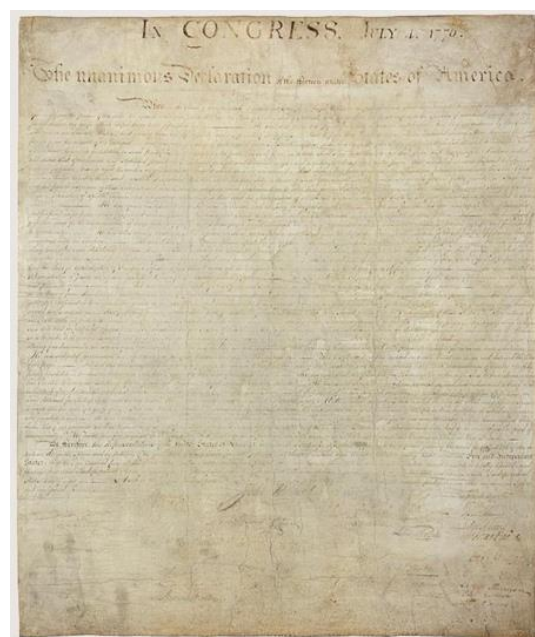


Figure 1

accumulated 12 votes from the different colonies in support of this (www.britannica.com, 2022). This manifesto is so highly renowned that the adoption by the Congress of said document is celebrated annually as a National Holiday by Americans as the 'Fourth of July' or 'Independence Day'.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* reveals that there are three main concepts in *The Declaration of Independence*: God created all people equal and granted them the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Government's primary responsibility is to safeguard these rights. If a government attempts to restrict these rights, the populace is free to rebel and establish a new one (1998). With the many signatures the manifesto accumulated, this document influenced a change that allowed for the justification of the expansion of American political and social democracy.

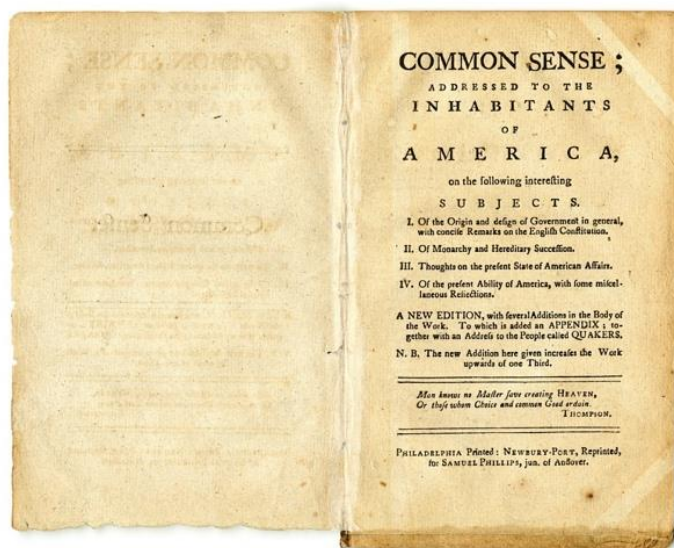


Figure 2

In support of *The Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Paine released the pamphlet '*Common Sense*'. This is pictured in figure 2. The leaflet was distributed across all thirteen colonies due to its enormous popularity due to Paine writing in plain, straightforward sense, which was intended for the whole population. This document encouraged many people to choose independence and a republican government. Which is a huge change from the ruling by the monarchy and the British Empire. Therefore, you could argue that this was a stepping stones for *The Declaration of Independence*.

Unlike *The Declaration of Independence*, this piece of literature did not entice nor receive signatures. With this being said, both documents gained the support of the people and side by side, helped change the course of America and the separation from British reign. This shows that receiving help from others can be beneficial.

I feel that both pieces worked cohesively together to make the change needed for America. They both succeeded in putting the leaders under pressure to ignite the revolution. Although *The Declaration of Independence* is a major mark in history that is celebrated widely in the United States of America, the *Common Sense* pamphlet was mutually influential and does not receive the same recognition. I believe that this could be due to the author or that *The Declaration of Independence* received signatures as support, whereas *Common Sense* did not. *Common sense* sold an estimated of 500,000 copies. This is impressive considering this was centuries before the internet existed. By the end of the Revolutionary War, half a million copies were projected to be in circulation across the societies (Kiger, 2021). This proves that a manifesto does not need signatures to make an impact and to encourage change.

This manifesto speaks to me because it succeeded in securing independence for America from England, which as a proud Welsh person, gives me hope that we could possibly have

the same for our future. It helped me see how passionate I am about my heritage and that it is something I should promote and fight for.

Another distinguished manifesto in the political sector is the *Communist Manifesto*. Pictured in figure 3, the Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and published in 1848 as a result of correspondence with a network of Communist Correspondence Committees that had been established by the League of the Just, a London organisation. Marx and Engels were persuaded to join the League of the Just Central Committee in a new, more inclusive Communist League (Dean, 2017). With unrest in the political status in Europe, along with a surge in demand encouraged by the revolution in Paris, the document was reissued three times within a month of the first production. This prompted a second edition to be published.

The *Communist Manifesto* starts with: “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism.” (Marx, 2019) This indicates how most of Europe united in opposition to communism and regularly rejected its ideologies. This evoked the communist community to gather in London to write the *Communist Manifesto*. This was a point of gaining the power that communism already possessed and to publish their views and squash the misconceptions around them. As a whole, the Communist Manifesto was an attempt to change history by spreading information about the communist movement.



Figure 3

The Communist Manifesto's central thesis is that the politics and ideologies that define a given period are based on economic production, circulation, and the social organisation that results from these (Dean, 2017). This implies that individuals who are engaged in revolutionary change must start by learning about the economics.

During the time of this manifesto, there were split into two separate classes, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariats. Both of these classes had different functioning roles in society. The proletariat is a class of workers who do not own means of production and must sell their labour to subsist, as opposed to the bourgeoisie, which refers to the capitalists who control the means of production and the majority of the wealth in society (Hasa, 2020). This supports the manifestos claim that capitalism is based on the corruption of proletariats by the bourgeoisie. It also explained how the exploitive class structure resulted from the rise of capitalism as an economic system due to the number of injustices. Additionally, the political and social order had been questioned. People were motivated to view life more broadly as a result of the introduction of the communist revolution, which helped the working class movement grow and the functioning of the society at the time. This was a movement that had the political potential to become revolutionary, changing the economic system and power structure within European countries (UKEssays.com, 2018).

I believe that the *Communist Manifesto* was revolutionary because it evoked equality between people and united the working forces and evidentially improved the general functioning of

the working class environment. I think that without this movement, society in this day and age would be completely opposite, without people enjoying their freedom of speech, equal rights.

Manifestos in culture

Throughout history, many minority groups have been oppressed by supremist through physical and psychological attacks in many different aspects of social interactions. We live in a society now that accepts the oppressed groups on a wider scale but how did this acceptance come about? We have seen many movements that have shaped the society we live in today and this is has come from taking action.

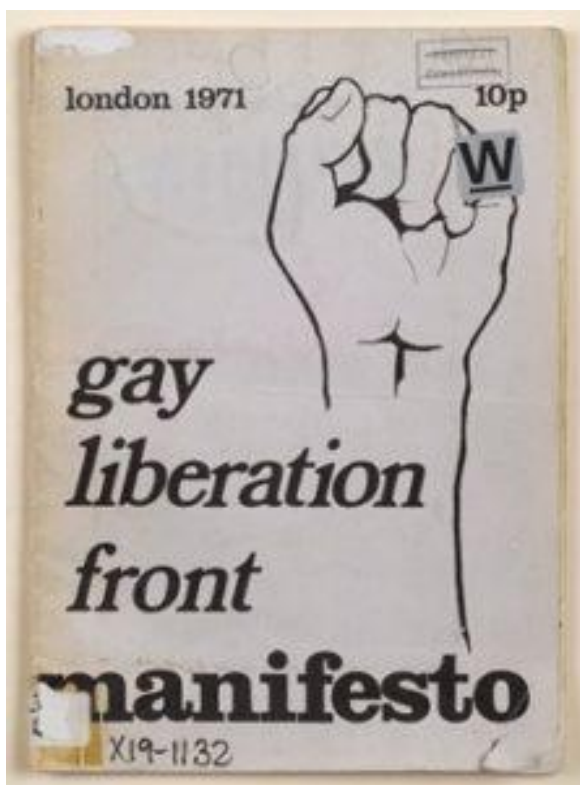


Figure 4

A routine police raid on a homosexual club in Greenwich Village on June 27, 1969, sparked unheard-of riots among its customers. Gay and lesbian people gathered at the Stonewall Inn all weekend to protest the police and their brutal methods. Although there had been organising for homosexual rights for two decades, the Stonewall riots marked the beginning of a new gay militancy that was later known as gay liberation (Bateman, 2004). In *figure 4* we can see the *Gay Liberation Front* manifesto which was created soon after this. They set out to create a change in society and transform the way minorities were treated.

According to the manifesto, the *Gay Liberation Front* wanted to “*use our righteous anger to uproot the present oppressive system*’, which comprised mainly of the family, education, the Church, the media, and the law, and ‘*form a new order, and a liberated lifestyle*’ (ROBINSON RHODES, 2020)”. The word family was used in the manifesto to represent heterosexuality and a conservative social way. The manifesto suggests that gay people reject the social normality of

heterosexual marriage and are trying to rid the gender role society that we live in that makes the gay community oppressed. “We are already outside the family, and we have already, in part at least, rejected the “masculine” or “feminine” roles” (Gay Liberation Manifesto, 1971).

What I appreciate about this manifesto is its ability to challenge gay people to be perceptible and visible. They explored all the means that they were oppressed by the “normal” or “straight” society. It seems that they were not meaning to change the law, but to change how they were perceived and looked upon in society as a whole. There were no signatures made but a whole group formed to back the manifesto and to protest the liberation of homosexuality. However, because of the different political views of those who joined the Gay Liberation Front, it was frequently difficult to reach agreement on a single issue. The *Gay Liberation Front* had collapsed by the end of 1973, yet the group and its manifesto left a lasting impression (The British Library, 2019). It allowed young gay and lesbian people to live out of the shadows and to take pride in themselves. The *Gay Liberation Front*’s legacy

was so influential that we saw a rise in organisations in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This included organisations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation, that are determined to fight AIDS and homophobia. Many of the leaders of these two organisations had either participated in GLF's original concepts or had been significantly affected by them (Bateman, 2004). This proves the influence and effect a manifesto can have on other parties, with the long lasting effect on society to this day.

This manifesto is inspiring because it promotes that everyone should be equal. It shows that it is not about the sexual orientation of the person, it is the heart and mind that is important. We should be building relationships based of these morals. It promotes the need for healthy relationships. Relationships are important through every aspect of life.

Manifestos in design

If we look at the history of design and art, there are many notable movements that have formed the workings of now. Between 1914 and 1918, there was an urgency to rebuild a 'new world' after the 'old world' was dying from the Great War. This was a calling for groups who were desperate to see change in the world. De Stijl, or "The Style," was created in Holland during this time, and the artists in this group's yearning for harmony and balance reflected their abhorrence of the chaos and conflict erupting around them (Willette, 2011a). Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg were the two pioneering Dutch abstract artists that created De Stijl in 1917. In the past, De Stijl was a journal where artists published their theories on abstraction and art.

De Stijl, along with Dada and the Russian Avant-Garde, saw the urgency of a rebuilding movement at that moment in time. It was utopian in the sense that the members of De Stijl believed in the transformational potential of art. Art, for them, was a way of social and spiritual regeneration (Wolfe, 2019). Due to the knowledge that a new sort of civilization was emerging from this disaster and that this contemporary culture needed to be portrayed through an altogether new art form. We see this portrayed in *figure 5*, which is Theo van Doesburg's manifesto. The manifesto was signed by artists Vilmos Huszar, Piet Mondrian, G. Vantongerloo, poet Antony Kok, and architects Robert van't Hoff and Jan Wils.

We can see how they wanted to adopt a fresh perspective and differentiate themselves from conventional types of art through the manifesto's first statement; "There is an old and new consciousness of the age. The old one is directed towards the individual. The new one is directed towards the universal. The struggle of the individual against the universal is revealing itself in the world-war as well as in the art of the present day". This point expresses their goal to create something entirely original in art as opposed to what the world had before the war. It also suggests a balance between the individual and the universe, thus a new

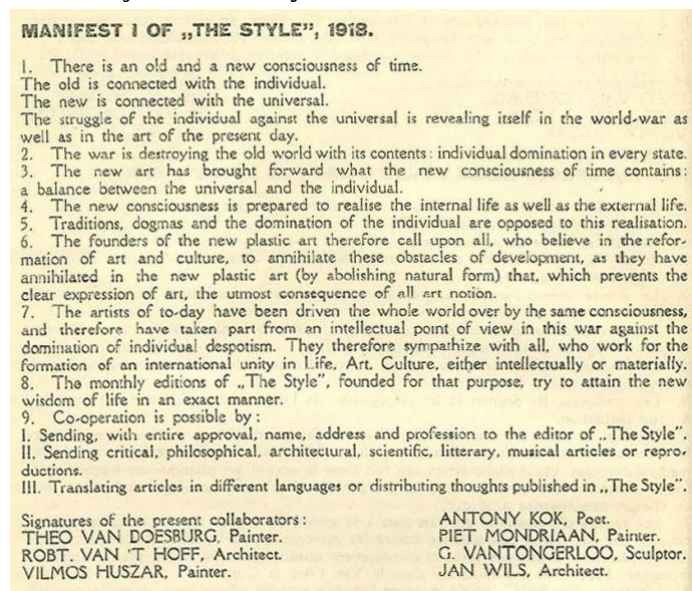


Figure 5

consciousness of time. Despite his belief that a new universe was being formed, Theo van Doesburg's ambitions were political and absolutely restricted to art itself. For the head of De Stijl, artists needed to abandon nationality and individualism in order to pursue the "universal," which he defined as a common awareness that might extend beyond art to society itself (Willette, 2019b).

As stated previously, the manifesto was strongly influenced by Cubism and its abstract simple shapes, which supports the movements disownment of the Dutch Baroque and Art Nouveau styles, that the artists found to be far too ornamental, which they wished to simplify and abstract, also influenced the movement (History of Art, 2016). In order to produce something that reflected modern life, they eschewed the flowing curves in favour of straighter lines and geometric shapes.

This manifesto had a huge influence on the design and art community as it promoted De Stijl as a new, modernist art movement. You can see a lot of influence from this movement in many modern designs. It is easy to say that De Stijl is one of the most recognisable and easy to decipher styles in modern art. Straight lines and neutral colours were hallmarks of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's architecture and the Bauhaus movement, both of which were influenced by De Stijl (MasterClass, 2021b). There were many influences made through this movement, such as furniture design. A successful manifesto, in my opinion, requires a great deal of research and reflection, as well as the focus on what you want rather than what the world is handing you, and this manifesto displays that.

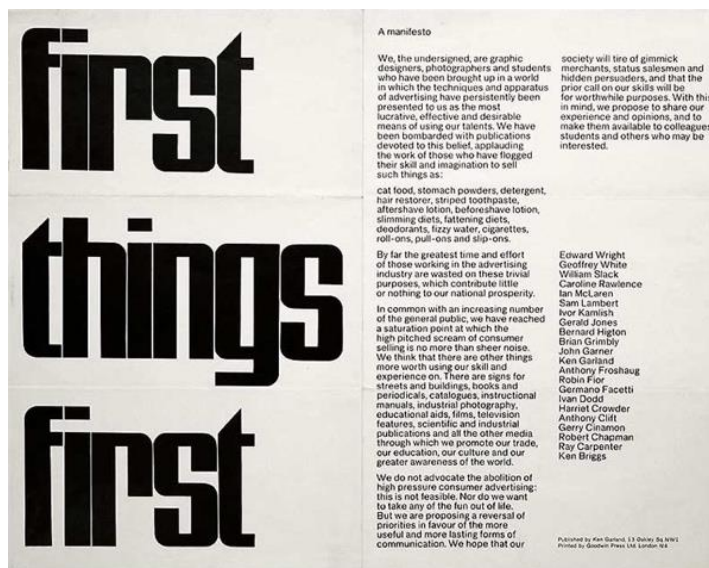


Figure 6

productions, seeing them as time-consuming. We see this through him saying that using designers' talents to sell things like cat food, slimming diets, and striped toothpaste was a waste of time. They "contribute little or nothing to our national prosperity". The manifestos aim was to better civilisation and to show that designers had something to give and contribute to society.

Another noted manifesto in the design community is the *First things first* manifesto, written by Ken Garland in 1963.

Ken Garland initially created First Things First after delivering an impromptu lecture at a gathering of the Society of Industrial Artists. In agreement with 22 other designers, photographers and students, the manifesto demanded a return to a humanist perspective on design as a response to the rigid culture of 1960s Britain (Flask, 2019). It took a stand against this consumerist culture and slammed its conventional advertisements fast paced and frequently simple

First Things First was eventually published in its full in The Guardian newspaper, which led to the designer appearing on a BBC news show and the manifesto being reprinted in several journals, magazines, and newspapers (Edgington, 2021). This proves that the manifesto had a big influence on society and had support behind it. In an interview with Anne Odling-Smee, Ken Garland addressed his influence by expressing: “Something explosive did happen in the 1960s, and my generation happened to be around just at the time when certain people



Figure 7

felt the need for us. I guess it looks significant because there were so few of us – there were a dozen at the most who had their fingers on the certain pulse” (2007). The manifesto inspired many designers to flee the limitation they felt had been put on them in modern life. The manifesto had such an impact on the design community that a second version, First Things First 2000, was created in 1999. This is seen in figure 7. Though the new manifesto was an updated version by *Adbusters*, Ken Garland still signed and approved it. The structure of the manifesto was very similar, aiming at advertising, but also broadening its horizon towards brand development (Poynor, 2021). They felt that “consumerism is running uncontested” and designers should challenge this from other perspectives and resources.

I think that both of these manifestos simultaneously state quite an outdated stance. It might be interpreted as prejudice against many talented designers who work tirelessly under challenging and demanding commercial constraints. This coincides with perhaps these designers feel that they are above others and do not want to lower themselves to “commercial” levels, yet a lot do buy commercially promoted items such as Apple products



Figure 8

and designer branded clothing. I do not think I quite grasp the concept of them not wanting to better consumer experience with what is presented to them. I think that they are trying to create morally good designs, but there are good design opportunities in advertising. The quote “we are not supposed to fritter our time away on trivial work” from the manifesto, does not sit well in this modern time as many people do not have to option to choose and pick what they work on and is it expected for graphic designers to refuse work from supermarkets because they should not “waste time” on this commerce. Is there such a difference in designing a poster for a supermarket or designing an art portrait?

Again, this manifesto gained much success that a third, in 2014, and a fourth, in 2020, version was made.

Although the 2020 version, pictured in *figure 8*, follows the previous versions with its anti-social and disparaging of the consumer culture, it does focus primarily on the contribution of graphic design to global warming and the unethical capitalist society. Also, this time, in addition to registering your support, you may contribute to edit the manifesto by sharing your thoughts. There are also links to the manifesto's prior versions in 1964, 2000, and 2014, as well as tools to aid the conscious designer (Ball, 2020b).

If we compare this manifesto to the previous First Things First manifestos, it is clear to me that this one is very valid for the world we live in now. It has been updated to reflect the ever-changing world we live in now. Climate change is a massive issue for us right now and a lot of people are unwilling to admit it. This manifesto is urging designers to understand how their designs could be improved for a more ecological society. The manifesto influences designers to push past the efforts already being made, and to look at designing new ways of designing; “we can no longer push merely for sustainability but must create new systems that undo and heal what’s been done” (First Things First 2020, 2020). With this updated version, I feel that this manifesto is very effective for us as designers. Although the conversation of climate change is a subject that is already talked about in the world, this manifesto sparks the conversation among the design community and how the designers and their designs play a role in the climate crisis. The manifesto answers with a checklist of pressing design aims, including design histories and ethics, community-based efforts, social-environmental relations, and reconnecting design and manufacturing to the planet. As I feel that this manifesto raises current and urgent points, I decided to sign my name to it on the website, in agreement with the statement made.

I take inspiration from this manifesto as sustainability is something that I take seriously, so it is an aspect that I follow in my personal life, as well as my design life.

I know manifesto by Hannah Evans

As stated at the start of this extended essay, after exploring all the different types of manifestos, I will create my own. My manifesto will be a reflection of myself and the values I possess as a designer, and as a person. Exploring other manifestos has given me an insight into how they can be portrayed by either being a public announcement or a personal document. The manifesto was vital in some of the most major art movements of the preceding century, including Cubism, Dada and Surrealism. However, most of us are unlikely to start a fully fledged movement, but this kind of writing may motivate you to examine the literary substance of your creative work.

As a designer, it may feel that the focus is purely on visual crafts and not written words. I think that both coincide, especially when building a brand. You need words to convey promotional pieces, like “about me” pages on your website. I think it is important for clients to see a collide of visual and written design to view you as a professional business.

I KNOW manifesto by Hannah Evans

- I know who I am
- I know what I am passionate about
- I know to be honest
- I know that relationships are important
- I know to make time for myself

I know who I am

I know I pride myself as being a Welsh Woman. My heritage makes me a proud, passionate, family-orientated person. I have a constant feeling of hiraeth when I am away from home. Being Welsh pulls on my heart strings.

I know that I will never be someone else. I know I must be confident in myself and be proud of who I am and what I achieve. I know I am smart; I know I am creative; I know I have the freedom to be me.

I know that I must remind myself that I am lush.

I know what I am passionate about

I know that I am passionate about design. I know that I have the ability to show my full potential. I must push my ideas; the possibilities are endless. I know that passion drives my creativity. I know that my passion will help clarify the uncertain and unfamiliar in my designs. I must believe in myself to make miracles happen.

I know I should work on my passion to build and manage it over time. I know that I am capable of adding my own unique stamp to my work so that it is both relevant and acceptable to others. I know that my passion fuels my fire for action.

I know that being confident works for me. I know that I should radiate my passion. I must inspire others with this. I know that I must follow my passion.

I know to be honest

I know to be honest with myself. I know I am not going to please everyone. I know that freedom and restrictions coincide in design. I know that things will take problem solving. I know I can get flustered when I am frustrated. I know that I should not let anything knock me down. I know that mistakes are part of the process. I know that I should treat design like everything is an experiment. I know I may never break barriers, but I know I will always try my best and follow my heart.

I know to be honest with my designs. I know that I must design by embracing the environment. I know that sustainability is a key factor for modern design. I know that lifecycle is important. I know that my designs should be sensible. I know that I should encourage the urge for change in consumer waste.

I know to be honest with my work, designs, words, and thoughts.

I know that relationships are important

I know that design is interactive. I know that a brand is a relationship; there is a relationship between brand and consumer. I know that my designs should evoke an emotional response. I know that designers engage to society, and customers responds back. I know to trust the unexpected and assume the best, but low expectations are a good tactic. I must appreciate feedback and accept support. I know I should let others help me. I know I must not allow myself to get too comfortable with help; I am capable of anything I set my mind to.

I know that I should build trust and dialogue with other designers. I know sometimes it is better to work together than alone. I know that a community can build a village. I know that other people's opinions could help add depth to my designs. I know that other people's experiences are significant. I know I have the ability to help others.

I know that my family and friends are always there to support me.

I know to make time for myself

I know that setting time aside for myself is important for me. I know that this means doing what I want to do. I know that this is a form of productivity.

I know I should process my thoughts and feelings; recharging my batteries. I know I should be self-aware and understand myself. I know that my mental health comes before anything else. I know that saying no is okay. I know I must not waste my energy on things that do not matter to me.

I know that I need to stop worrying; worrying solves nothing. I know I am my own worst enemy. I know that living a less stressful life will improve my function and my designs.

I know I should enjoy my hobbies. I know that crocheting makes me happy. I know that it gives me a sense of achievement, outside of work. I know that I should travel the world; love everyone and everything I encounter; dance and laugh at every chance I get; eat as much chocolate as I want; drink my favourite cocktails and wine when I need it.

I know that I am grateful for everything I have been given in life and I count my blessings daily. I know that I should take any opportunity in life that will make me happy.

My manifesto is named "I know manifesto by Hannah Evans". It is called this because I feel I must remind myself of what I do and should know. My manifesto can be used in my personal

life as well as my design life. I have taken inspiration from the manifestos I have analysed; to know who I am – Declaration of Independence and The Gay Liberation Front; what I am passionate about – Communist manifesto and De Stijl; To be honest – First things first 1963; relationships are important – The Gay Liberation Front and Common sense.

Figure list

Figure 1: National Archives. (1776). *Declaration of Independence: A Transcription*. [online] Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

Figure 2: National Museum of American History. (n.d.). *Pamphlet, 'Common Sense', 1776*. [online] Available at: https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_530071.

Figure 3: Wikipedia Contributors (2019). *The Communist Manifesto*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Communist_Manifesto.

Figure 4: Hudson, A. (2021). *LGBTQIA+ History Month – 'Innovate, don't assimilate': The Gay Liberation Front Manifesto, 50 years on – History @ Bham*. [online] *blog.bham.ac.uk*. Available at: <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/historybham/lgbtqia-history-month-innovate-dont-assimilate-the-gay-liberation-front-manifesto-50-years-on/> [Accessed 7 Nov. 2022].

Figure 5: Theo van Doesburg: Manifest I of The Style, 1918. a.k.a. De Stijl Manifesto. (n.d.). *DesignManifestos.org*. Available at: <https://designmanifestos.org/theo-van-doesburg-manifest-i-of-the-style-1918-a-k-a-de-stijl-manifesto/> [Accessed 14 Nov. 2022].

Figure 6: Ken Garland: First Things First. (1964). Available at: <https://designmanifestos.org/ken-garland-first-things-first/> [Accessed 14 Nov. 2022].

Figure 7: Adbusters (1999). *First Things First 2000: A Design Manifesto*. *designmanifestos.org*. Available at: <https://designmanifestos.org/first-things-first-2000-a-design-manifesto/> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2022].

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