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What is the role of the designer/maker in the 21st century and how might this role change in the next 10 years? Discuss your ideas with reference to two of the practitioners or thinkers discussed in your lecture strand.

This essay looks at combining two approaches that provide a road map for how design might change in the next ten years. The first is a modern approach that understands the relationship between aesthetics and their emotional impact on usability, which while looking back to the ideas of William Morris, reminds us that objects also need to be well made. It is a combination of attractiveness and durability that is likely to be effective in the future as people move away from throwaway culture.

There is a general reaction against throwaway culture, causing people to look for designs that are durable, especially with the environmental concerns the world is now facing. In today's consumer market there is this constant desire for something new, but consumers have economic constraints. This leads to companies and brands producing products of different qualities. So that they can reach those price points, a lot of these products are produced in an inexpensive way. This means that the products produced do not have much longevity. There was a study done that showed that people's expectations were dropping in terms of how long their products would last. There is also a high amount of waste produced through throwaway culture. People buy something use it for a while, the quality decreases, they throw it away to then buy something new or a replacement (Whiteley, 1987, p. 138). "We need to move beyond a philosophy of single use. All products, and especially plastics, metals and textiles, should be designed with the intention that their raw materials will be recovered and recycled" (Macarthur, 2018). Ellen Macarthur suggests the idea of a circular economy. A circular economy tackles getting rid of waste, continuing to use different products and materials and finding a way to keep circulating them. There is an emphasis on not only preventing nature from getting harmed even more but helping it flourish again (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2022). There is an initiative being taken on by large companies to reduce single use packaging and make it fully recyclable. National Geographic are an example of a company who are advocating for this movement to sustainable products by thinking about the issues and beginning to figure out solutions. They are encouraging people to open their eyes to

the problem and advocate for everyone, consumers, brands and companies to look towards a future of sustainability (Macarthur, 2018).

“Attractive things should be preferred over ugly ones” (Norman, 2005, p. 17). This statement refers to the idea that aesthetic looking things have a higher usability compared to something that is ‘ugly’. In fact these two Japanese researchers Masaaki Kurosu and Kaori Kashimura wanted to prove that theory. They did an experiment with ATMs and looked at different ways of formatting them. They created a few different versions of these ATMs that all worked exactly the same. Some of them were designed in a more attractive aesthetic way and some were less so. They did this experiment in Japan and found that people found the aesthetic ones easier to use. (Norman, 2005, p. 17). This shows that if something is more attractive and aesthetically pleasing to the eye it makes it easier to use. These results seem to be consistent across different cultures. For example in Israel a scientist called Noam Tractinsky did the same experiment and found that the results were even higher than in Japan, where he stated “Japanese culture is known for its aesthetic tradition”. It seemed that even more people in Israel found the attractive ones far easier to use (Norman, 2005, p. 18). Norman claims that emotion actually impacts the way the human mind solves problems, as cognition and emotions are connected. (2005, p. 18). When something is aesthetically pleasing to the eye it makes one more inclined to use it, it makes one happy and sparks feeling of joy, whereas when something is less attractive in comparison it creates unease. Psychologist Alice Isen and co workers found that when someone is happy they are able to open up their minds and think more positively (Norman, 2005, p. 19). On the other hand Something that is difficult to use and not aesthetically pleasing creates an anxious response. When that response is triggered one becomes stuck in a narrow mindset only being able to think negatively and therefore are not able to find creative solutions (Norman, 2005, p. 19). Therefore when someone is happy they are able to think more creatively and use their imaginations (Norman, 2005, p. 19).

These studies demonstrate how important the idea of ‘aesthetics’ is when it comes to designing products. Items that are alluring evoke a feeling of happiness opening up the creative minds of those who perceive them. This makes things easier to use as it helps people find ways to fix problems they come across (Norman, 2005, p. 19). This is a philosophy companies, designers

and brands keep in mind when it comes to creating and advertising a product. "Products can have personality. So, too can companies and Brands" (Norman, 2005, p. 56). A products personality refers to how it looks, how it acts and how its placed in advertising and marketing. "Personality must be matched to market segment. And it must be consistent" (Norman, 2005, p. 57). Depending on the target audience for the product companies and brands have to think about how the product interacts in different settings and how advertising is worded and set out. For example when advertising a video game, slang and informal language might be used, whereas for kitchens, presentations are likely to be more formal. Once the personality is established the design must support all aspects of that personality (Norman, 2005, p. 56). Colours also play a big part in designing and advertising in order to evoke certain reactions out of customers. For example different hot pinks represent different things, they can bring out feelings of melancholy but can also represent feelings of joy and lust. Whereas deeper richer purples surface a feelings of decadence (Chapman, 2005, p. 97).

The way things are advertised to consumers is very much considered, and it uses the emotions of its target audience to make them want to buy what they are selling. They really think about their target audience and what that person would envision in their lives. They sell an ideal life to the consumer, by staging the product in a certain setting, thinking about font and thinking about who is holding or wearing the product. All of this forms the personality of the product. Designing when it comes to fashion can be difficult. There is a clear difference between big more established brands and smaller ones. As the market is constantly changing, companies have to keep up with the changing trends. Smaller less known brands have more of an opportunity to think outside of the box and think about alternative ideas, whereas bigger more well known brands come up with quicker designs with quirky names that look like they could exist independently. All of these companies are constantly competing in the consumer market, "where fashion can be as important as substance." (Norman, 2005, p. 59). Fry reminds us how important design is in our lives and how it impacts every aspect of it (2009, p. 29). Suggesting that design is integrated in every aspect of our lives, in everything we do, everywhere we go, yet it is not always recognised and can be taken for granted. Douglas and Isherwood have argued that human social interactions can not be properly understood without a consideration of the social function of goods and the design of goods, a further reason why the emotional impact of design is important (1996, p. 39).

The emotions of the client are constantly thought about in the designing process. “They carry with them an emotional response that guides us towards a product or away from it” (Norman, 2005, p. 60). Sergio Zyman the former the chief marketing officer of Coca Cola argues that, a trust is established with a consumer and this is achieved through emotional branding. The branding then resonates with deeper desires such as pride and joy (Norman, 2005, p. 60). Brands and companies can enforce an emotional reaction to a product, however they can not guarantee that this is how the consumer will respond. Each customer will naturally have their own emotional response beyond the one that the brand incites. This is because each person has different experiences and memories which they then project onto the object (Chapman, 2005, p. 100). “The more an individual consciously or unconsciously relates to the sensory/aesthetic, cognitive/behavioural and personal/symbolic qualities of an object, the more profound will be the object” (Chapman, 2005, p. 101). The notion of ones personal experiences mixed with the product itself is an important component when it comes to “designing emotionally meaningful products” (Chapman, 2005, p. 100).

William Morris believed that it was important for design to be durable and well made. He wanted people to feel joy and see beauty when they were at home (V&A, 2022). That sense of beauty was very important to him. He was one of the most influential designers in the Arts and Crafts movement. He was completely against the values of capitalism as he believed that these ideals ruined the quality of peoples lives (McDermott, 1994, p. 49). A writer from the 1830's named Augustus Welby Pugin believed that people during the gothic period of art were a lot more aware of the importance of beauty and design than anything that had been created in the 19th century. According to him these gothic ideas outline a philosophy which designers should follow (McDermott, 1994, p. 49). Designers thought of this message as a way of accomplishing social reform using design and creating objects which were both beautiful and had a purpose. Morris stated that design should be ‘A thing of beauty and a joy forever’ (McDermott, 1994, p. 49). Designers and thinkers involved in the Arts and Crafts movement believed that there should be more emphasis on the process rather than the profit. They wanted there to be more of a relationship between the designer/architect, and the craftsmanship of the product, as well as to

bring back more hand crafted artisanal goods, creating well designed products for everyday use (Cumming and Kaplan, 1991, p. 6).

Morris initially thought of himself as a painter but then realised he was more of a designer. He began his design journey by getting furniture and architecture designs commissioned for his house before starting his own company called Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co in 1861 (McDermott, 1994, p. 50). There were three very important principles when it came to this movement, the first being the importance of the material. Materiality was very important to Morris. He believed it was important to consider the material, thinking about what would work and what would not if they were to make designs of any value (Naylor, 1980, p. 104). He thought that it was important to value the natural qualities of the material in the design process, for example the natural colour of wood (McDermott, 1994, p. 50). To him it was important that the designer experiment and figure out for themselves the functionality of the materials. He did not think it was something that could be taught but to be learned through ones own experimentation (Naylor, 1980, p. 104). He was set on the idea that beautiful designs enhance the quality of ones life. It was very important to him that the people working for him at Merton Abbey were paid fairly and worked in a good environment. Morris held the view that designers have a moral responsibility in their work to the greater good (McDermott, 1994, p. 50).

Morris valued the importance in using older techniques to produce his designs. He did not like that these means of production had been suppressed by the introduction of industrial processes. For example he did not like the synthetic dyes that had been introduced in 1830 through the chemical industry (McDermott, 1994, p. 50). Morris tried experimenting with dyeing cloths using natural plant and animal dyes, as well as block printing and hand weaving, all techniques which he had recognised from objects he loved (Perry, 2020, p. 2). He was also very explorative when it came to thinking about different ways in which to make pattern repeats and figured out which ways worked best for his designs (Perry, 2020, p. 3). He even came up with his own methods of printing, one being the discharge printing process (McDermott, 1994, p. 50).

Nowadays design and craft have two separate meanings. Design refers to the manufacturing industry and craft to objects made separately (McDermott, 1994, p. 51). In the 21st century the

arts and crafts movement and the ideals of William Morris have had an impact in mainstream design. "With the increased pressure of life in the industrial world people are looking again at the ideas of William Morris, for so long considered a hopeless idealist and dreamer. His ideas are once again seen as relevant to the way we live and the way we plan the future." (McDermott, 1994, p. 52). Consumers are interested in a mix of different products with different aesthetics.

It is my belief that designers in ten years should look back to the values of William Morris and should produce well made beautiful designs that evoke a good emotional response from the consumer. In the domestic space, there is likely to be a move away from throwaway things to things that people cherish and have an emotional connection to and are aesthetically pleasing. Morris was very considerate when it came to every part of the design, wanting to create something beautiful with time, precision and attention to detail. He was very innovative in honing his craft coming up with new print processes and creating colour, but also getting in touch with past processes and bringing them back to life. It would be good for the designer of the future to continue to explore different forms of printing and colour exploration. This is an ideal that I think all designers should share when thinking about their target consumer. I think it is important for the consumer to feel a sense of joy and happiness when they see the design displayed in their home. It is important that they do not end up regretting the purchase but instead cherishing it for the rest of their lives.

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