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Earth has a waste plastic crisis. '40% (161 million tonnes) of plastic is packaging. Most are just used and then thrown away. Less than a fifth of all plastic is recycled globally.' (Parker,2018)

I am going to explore activism, re-use, and cradle to cradle, to include Chris Jordan, Steelcase, and Orangebox, and the making of the Homicide Quilt.

"Microplastic particles have been revealed in the placentas of unborn babies for the first time... which are likely to have been breathed in by the mothers" (Carrington, 2020), and "several microplastic fragments were detected by Raman micro spectroscopy in human placenta samples collected from six consenting patients with uneventful pregnancies" (Jenner, L. C., Rotchell, J. M., Bennett, R. T., Cowen, M., Tentzeris, V., & Sadofsky, 2022).

This is echoed in Chris Jordan's photographic art, "Midway: A Message from the Gyre" (2009). The mother albatrosses are feeding their young plastic, thinking it is food, and killing them.

This proves to me how our culture believes that they are not accountable; as Wood states, "Rights without responsibilities... 'In 1927, Coca-Cola designed the first non-returnable bottles for disposal at sea. By 1948, we had normalised the use of non-returnable bottles in the USA and beyond'. Today, plastics are raining down from the sky and choking the life out of creatures around and within us." This has no doubt started to contribute to the ongoing crisis.

Can designers and artists make consumers aware and educated about their choices and highlight the massive issues of consumerism and ecological waste when purchasing products in our linear economy of take-make-and-waste? 'Consumerism, as a process, caught roots within a modern ideology that daily brings us pollution, the irrational exploitation of resources, the corruption of governments, manipulation of minds and behaviours through advertising, the enslavement of technology and fashion, the "disease of shopping" (Tasnadi).' (Parker,2018)

Chris Jordan, photographer, artist, and activist, quotes Jim Soren's first lesson of life, "Embrace reality," in which he states his work is about "embracing transformation personally and culturally" (Jordan, 2012). "You see through his lens; no words" (Berger, 1972).

According to Alastair Fuad-Luke (2009, p. 6), "Activism is about... taking actions that catalyse, encourage, or bring about change in order to elicit social, cultural, and political

transformations, activating and transforming people." Chris highlights the issues of plastic pollution and mass consumerism.

Figure 1 Midway: Message from the Gyre



Chris talks about "the power of witnessing and facing the true horrors of the world" while documenting the Midway Crisis. This can also make you feel an 'abject,' uncanny feeling of disgust, fear, loathing, or repulsion. The paradox of the abject is that it is beyond the subject and a product of the subject" (Buchanan, 2018). The poor bird seems to be our subject or product of consumerism, as Metropolitan Emmanuel of France stated: "Ridiculed, beaten, and left dying of hunger, nature looks like the man whom the merciful Samaritan found and helped. Because behind the wounds hides the mysterious power of regeneration in the light of resurrection" (Adamakis, 2010). 'It seems that still there is hope, the question being, for how long will it still be?' (Tasnadi, 2018)

This then made me question, why are people not looking? There are numerous scenarios. As Fuad tells us (2009, p. 123), "significant numbers of people go hungry every day and do not have access to portable water and live in temporary shelters; these people are focused on survival," so would be on the bottom of Maslow's pyramid. Is it social, cultural, economic, or a refusal?

This is interesting, as I am curious to understand, so I actively look. "To look is an act of choice; as a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach" (Berger, J. 1972). Our culture can also have a mentality of "out of sight, out of mind." This cannot carry on, as time is of the essence and we are a "ruling class in decline" (Berger, J 1972). As Julia Kristeva (1982, p. 1) reveals in her essay on abjection, "the twisted braids of affects and thoughts I call by such a name do not have, properly speaking, a definable object. This would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous."

Therefore, the idea of innocence faces two challenges. "By refusing to enter a conspiracy, one remains innocent of that conspiracy, but to remain innocent may also

be to remain ignorant." (Berger, J. 1972). Echoing this is the albatross, a white bird (white) being considered a symbol of purity and innocence, signifying the bird of good omen. "At length did cross an Albatross; through the fog it came; as if it had been a Christian soul, we hailed it in God's name (Coleridge).

Does this mean that the bird in Chris' journey shows a bad omen for our future? With companies today such as Steelcase Orangebox that "implement impactful, reuse, recycling, and re-manufacturing strategies across their entire range and delivery process," there is hope for the future. Steelcase and Orangebox (2023)

Steelcase and Orangebox (from Hengoed Wales!) make sustainable furniture and spaces work. I believe they are forward-thinking and work for the environment, making designs for circularity. They also implement impactful design, re-use, recycle, and remanufacturing strategies across their entire product design and delivery process. "Their products" are designed for disassembly time and time again, and the materials are chosen for their nearly infinite capacity to be reused" (Braungart and McDonough, 2009, p. 6).

They create a sense of belonging by "collaborating with employees, dealers, and customers, building their team to reflect our communities." Steelcase and Orangebox (2023)

I really like that they have a mission-based attitude and approach; similarly, in the policy and strategy document Innovate Wales, they say that if we don't have all the actors in this space that we'd want, the ones we do have can act with collaboration and discipline towards shared priorities," which creates a culture of inclusion and encourages participation," Steelcase and Orangebox (2023). Fuad (2009, p. 147) suggests that "there is an upsurge of interest in participatory design approaches, perhaps in part due to the increasing complexity of problems that all organisations face." In their Steelcase and Orangebox (2023) Impact Report, Sarah Armbruster, President and CEIO of the company, states, "Our goal is to help people do their best work by creating places that work better. But making products in the 21st century compels us to ask, how can we design better futures for the wellbeing of people and the planet?"

They offer "learning experiences for employees and leaders that provide inclusive behaviour, social learning, and accountability." Steelcase and Orangebox (2023). Fry (2009, p.195) wrote that we need to sustain the self, which is not an act of physical wellbeing, for it is equally an issue of mind. We are always present, implicated, and responsible for what we bring into being. We literally need to put ourselves before what we envision and bring ourselves to account." I agree that we should personally be accountable, not, as said earlier, brush this out of our minds and ignore what we are doing to the environment.

Fig 1: Steelcase & Orangebox office spaces

Pods
design

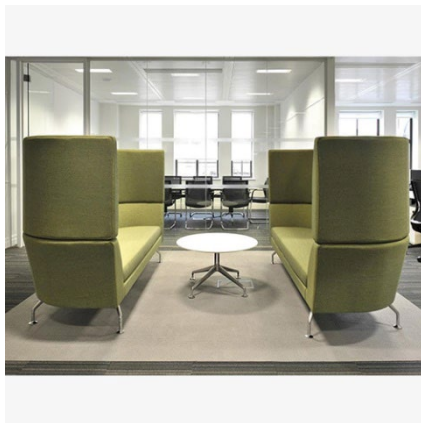


Fig 2: Dieter Ram's 10-point manifesto on good design



They “design products for the long term by using less.” Steelcase and Orangebox (2023) Theirs is not a throw-away product. But as Jonathan Chapman (2005, p.121) suggests, “people still throw away products that still work.” By allowing the customers to be part of the decision in customising the product, choosing the paint, sealing products, stains, and textiles, and also requesting new ones that will be tested in line with policies, it connects them with it more emotionally and personally. “People like the idea of buying something that makes them feel smart, and they recoil from products that make them feel crass and unintelligent.” Braungart and McDonough, (2009, p.173) I believe this company mirrors Dieter Ram's 10-point manifesto on good design and will be a company that is at the top of its game.

“In a time of seemingly endless political and social unrest across the globe, many are reacting strongly to injustices through protest and other forms of activism, as expressed through craftivism, or the merging of art and crafts. (Bustle,2022)

Craftivism emerged in the late nineties as part of anti-globalization and anti-war activism and gained recognition as a political movement through the early twenty-first century. (Black, A. and Burisch, N, 2021, p.6)

“This was the case with Untitled (Homicide Quilt), a 2014 project created by artist Rachel Wallis and Thelma Uranga, the founder of the Chicago stitching collective El Stitch y Bitch. Using information from reporters, the quilt names 500 individuals killed by gun violence in Chicago in 2013. (Greer, 2015)

Figure1: The Homicide Quilt

Figure 2: The Homicide Quilt



How something so ugly as the people that were killed can be transformed into something so beautiful: "It has been said that wabi sabi is the coaxing of beauty out of ugliness" (Juniper, 2003, p.13) and by "stitching this beautiful item, it has turned into a quilt made with love and care, with every stitch a remembrance of a loved one" (Greer, 2015) Seeing this quilt made me think of the individuals and parents, being a parent myself and how terrible it must be to lose someone especially a child or family member that you love, it was thought provoking and poignant.

Betsy Greer started a knitting club with a mission to "create an environment where any and all acts of making have value and make. Their meetings, which soon sprung up all over the world, allowed for true celebration of creativity. But the two positive words she noticed were defined as negatives. She used the word "craftivism, which she says was born from discussion, which is part of its strength" (Black, A. and Burisch, p.

Greer, who first popularised the term craftivism with her website of the same name, writes that craftivism was, "for me, a way to actively... take steps towards being an agent of change. Small change? Of course. But when done continually and repetitively, small changes aggregate and spread... I talked to people about ways they can use their individual interests to help facilitate change... to express your feelings outward in a visual manner without yelling or placard waving... Craftivism needs your unique voice, via stitches, paintings, puppets, or other crafty endeavours, to further spread the idea that creativity can be a catalyst for change" (Black, A. and Burisch, 2021, p.15).

The quilt is a relational object, "relational aesthetic," a concept Bourriaud tells us he proposed for art based more on actions than objects" (Frazier, 2014, p.89,) which lots of people have come together to sew and is not just an object but personal to them, unlike the consumerist economy we now have of lots of the same object, which to me holds nothing of significance, easy come, easy go, which should not be the case. As Nicolas Bourriaud states, "To recapture social significance for art, artists in the 1990s began inventing new forms of art." These include "meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality." He wrote, "These were intangible acts that rejected the idea of art as an object and also proposed new ways of creating social relationships." (Frazier, 2014, p.90)

"Anthropocentrism, in its original connotation in environmental ethics, is the belief that value is human-centred and that all other beings are means to human ends. Environmentally concerned authors have argued that anthropocentrism is ethically wrong and at the root of ecological crises." (Kopina, 2018, p.109)

“Non-anthropocentrism has been expressed by a movement called ‘posthumanism’ (Wolfe, 2010,p.2), “wherein many researchers have asserted that all species and phenomena are entangled, and therefore one whole, rather than separate entities and phenomena.” (Hopkes, 2018, p.112) I would suggest that 'species' could be the ones we have not encountered yet or be it undiscovered species from other planets or even ourselves and the parts of our minds we have yet to unlock. I believe this can also be classified as speculative design practices. We need to work as a whole.

This may be the case for the future of art and design to collaborate with each other, but not only that, but to take into account who we share the world with and the world. We will all have common ground.

Now Bourriaud tells us in the article ‘Beyond Relational’ that this was fine in the 90s, but things have changed, and now we have to change with the times that have more technology than then" (Frazier,2014, p.92). Which seems to be more relevant now.

“We cannot imagine human interrelations without including new partners, which are machines, animal life, and the atmosphere—all forms of life that surround us” (Frazier, 2014, p.93)

“The purpose of co-design is the creation of new societal values to balance human happiness with ecological truths. In doing so, design contests the notion of material and economic progress and its inherent ecological truths.” (Fuad, 2009. P.228) I think it is so relevant to try and do both: work with technology and the internet to find answers that enhance our work and to find an even balance that allows us to see into the future. To change the way, we see and think.

Taken from The book “ Today it is no longer nature but the artificial, which constitutes the horizon, medium, and prime condition of our existence—and given that we can no longer address or relate to nature except through the artificial, our existence now entirely depends on the character of the artificial worlds that we create’ (Clive Dilnot, 2021)

Fuad suggests that paradigms are shifting and “the role of the internet is opening up new opportunities for design/designing.... Now that the participatory genie is out of the bottle, designers need to get a firm grip on what it means for the design profession and how it can and how it can be engaged effectively for design activism.” (Fuad,2009, p.143)

As an artist or designer, I would like to disrupt people's waste habits and make curious, speculative, and creative designs that contribute to a hopefully forward, imaginative, and open to change culture, as Chris Jordan has done in his filming, testimonies, and photos of the Midway Crisis and Steelcase Orangebox in their designs and crafts everywhere.

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