

Title: The loss of the art of crafts and the impact on society

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The loss of the art of crafts and the impact on society

Proposal for my dissertation

Contained in this paper is the loss of art and crafts and the impact that has on society, it will cover the concept of the loss of the art of handcrafts and skills in conjunction with three words I have chosen; time, technology and society; with supporting images. In addition, three artists and designers including Mori Tōgaku and Lake Flato architecture studio will be included to support the text and my area of research. I will be linking together the words time, technology, and purpose to uncover if we have lost the skills of handcraft, artistic abilities and problem solving, and if advancements in technology through time will benefit humans in the future.

Time

Human's most valuable thing in life is time, a concept we created (Barnett, 1998, p.28). It is with us when we are born when we live and when we die. It is an infinite expanding thing that is neither able to be visually observed but felt and understood. The concept of time is simply an illusion made up of human memories and thoughts, without them there is no past, present or future. The theory of time dates to sundials in ancient Egypt, around 1500 BC. A simple idea that used shadows to determine the time of day, without the traditional use of numbers. A few hundred years passed, and the ancient Egyptians create a system of time that relates to our modern-day clock. Their day was split into 10-hour segments, with an hour on each side called twilight, and night-time would be 12 hours, in total being the 24-hour day and night cycle implemented in modern society around the globe (Rossum, 1996, p.2).

The scientific description of time is the progression of events through the past, present and future. And is said that time is timeless and ever-expanding, meaning that there is no beginning or end to time, just a constant. As humans have evolved and gained more capacity to think, resulting in the creation and use of tools, crafts and skills which have been passed on from generation to generation. Some tools and techniques have advanced far beyond their initial process whereby the initial process is lost to time. The modern-day has rendered these skills useless with the invention of machines and electric tools, no longer does society need skilled workers and handcrafts as the world becomes less capable and more automatic (Isaacs, 1989). An example is in engineering, the slide rule tool is now obsolete due to the creation of handheld computers and tablet devices (Blyler, 2021).

One of many problems with machines taking over traditional methods is jobs are usually lost, and many companies put profit over people's need for jobs; so more of their profit goes to shareholders (Semuels, 2020). Our history tells us a lot about advancements in knowledge, skills in crafts, arts, and design, an example being; when humans started to group into tribes, we can see how joined minds and leadership and give many solutions to our problems, tribalism has a very adaptive effect in human evolution. Humans are social animals and ill-equipped to live on their own (Hogenboom, 2015). Tasks and jobs that took 1 person weeks could take 5 workers a couple of hours. as things become easier and faster the quality of our creations is vastly reduced, this ties closely with economics and power, and how skilled workers are paid to complete jobs for the wealthy. A rich man's house will be

covered in stone masonry, built by the poor man, and the poor man's house will be simple and cheap. How fit were cavemen? (SportsShoes, 2017).

The artist I have looked at for the word time is Mori Tōgaku, who uses the traditional Bizen ceramics craft in Japan, the oldest known ceramics technique in Japan (JapanPottery, 2017). As time has passed, the level of skill for work and effort is reduced, hence why; as a species, we are losing our more manual craft skills and relying more and more on automation. Modern solutions now are all about money, and making things as cheap as possible. This could be an answer to why old hand-crafted items and skilled work cost so much now, as it has become a delicacy and people appreciate quality items more. And will be interesting to see how values and skills change in the future to come. Sir Isaac Newton said in his theory of relativity that time is relative, and is experienced individually by all of us, and is also said that time can warp and change in space (DiSalle, 2020). My point relating this to design and art is to do with how each person perceives time, everyone perceives it differently, there is also the famous concept of “time flies when you're having fun”, this further backs up the point that time is experienced individually.



World's oldest known sundial (c. 1500 BC), [photograph]
(Accessed: 3rd May 2022)

Technology

Technology is the application of practical and scientific knowledge in conjunction with engineering to further help and develop society in the industry and the commercial world (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2018). Millions of years ago the human ancestors; Australopithecus, are believed to have created the first tools, being sharp flakes of flint and rock used as knives, spades and a range of other tools. Approximately 1.7 to 2 million years ago, the first humans created fire, a monumental skill that was crucial in humans' evolution into what we are today. Fire, with the ability of great destruction, uses and power (University of Toronto, 2012). Scientists can make a good estimation of when Fire was first discovered by humans from burn marks in caves which have been studied for years in detail to fully understand our past and how technology has changed throughout time, linking back to my first word of time.

As homo sapiens first started using more advanced tools, their brains developed and evolved to problem solve. Therefore, giving us the knowledge passed down from generation to generation, and skills on how to use tools. This is key in human history as one idea, concept and tool were passed down, so did the advances and ideas on how to improve the world and tools, thus creating major societal jumps such as the use of clay and fire to create pots and bricks (Brickarchitecture, 2011).

During the period of time of around 20,000 years ago, humans started to conjoin together in tribes and families. We can see from major technological advancements that our social skills improve and our communication. Examples include projects that require a larger group or tribe to complete, such as houses, boats tools and structures. The further we go into advancements of technology, the easier lives become and the less work we must do, as a result, vocational courses and jobs become obsolete and we lose our creative and inventive minds, letting robots and computers become smarter and more efficient than us (Thompson, 2021).

A consequence of this is we will stop problem-solving and thinking of better and new ways of doing things because they will start to impact us in fewer and fewer ways. An example of this is the automobile industry, starting with the invention of the wheel, advancing to hand-crafted horse-drawn carriages, and implementing better tools, such as the jump from ordinary tools to electric ones, this makes assembly and manufacturing easier and safer. Crafting wooden and metal carriages takes skills not only from the creator but the designer and the ideas behind them. Through the use of computers and computer-aided design we can design faster and easier, but also create using automatic machines, this removes the human part of creating these things, as a result losing those skills and society becomes more reliant on technology rather than our abilities.

Similar advancements have changed other industries such as farming with automatic tractors, logging trucks and building with giant 3D printers capable of building a house (Dreith, 2022). Soon we will have computers with the ability to create new computers, making humans almost entirely useless for our advancements. We may be losing our skills to technology, but it also opens up the opportunity for more people to learn skills as they are simpler and safer to accomplish, and also gives lots of job opportunities and allows society to evolve, a use full tool for learning new skills would be YouTube and Google, most of the world's knowledge and skills contained right at your finger tips.



ICON and Lake Flato build 3D-printed House Zero in Austin (2022), [photograph] (Accessed: 9th May 2022)

Society

Society is defined as a group of people living together in an ordered community. People are the main reason why societies are created. Through joint decision-making, societies can evolve their thinking and develop ideas to bring them into reality. Many factors influence societies thinking and outlook, an example of this is the effects of art on culture and society. Research shows that art influences a person's sense of self (Dos Santos Soares, 2015). Art has always influenced society, it does this by changing the opinions of people and instilling different values for many different people.

The industrial revolution and the significant advancements in technology it has changed the production of arts and crafts. It has allowed people to travel more, with the advancements of technology and trading, as it brings people together around the world. This allows people to travel and allows to expand on their work as there are new opportunities. Because of evolution, many art practices around the world have started to die, an example of this is the art of Rogan Painting (Pandey, 2015). This was mainly done in the Gujarat region of India. This art is one of the most exquisite types of painting which has been practised for over 300 years, it is done by a person hand painting designs on fabric using natural dyes that come from vegetables. The dye is distributed on the fabric using a stylus or metal block. In the whole world, there are only about six living families that know how to do this style of art. Because of societal changes and the evolution of technology many styles of art such as Rogan painting has been replaced by simpler and modern arts many of these arts are on the verge of extinction.

Another example of how evolution has changed how society does things would be the use of how they use tools and how they have changed over time. From the beginning of time, the use of tools has been an important part of creating anything in this world. Many people in this generation would reach for an electric tool over using a handheld one. Many industries have changed their man-powered tools and replaced them with a tool or machine that does the job easier and safer. For example, in the stone age they would use something called a stone axe, its purpose was to help cut down trees to clear forests. As it has advanced through the industrial era, we now have stronger and more durable axes, it has also evolved to have its electrical version in a chainsaw. Both the axe and chainsaws are still used to cut down trees. However, harvesters are now mainly used to cut and process trees, which makes the job quicker and safer for the people using it. Society evolves together some quicker than others, but many groups in society still follow an old-school mindset of using tools that are handheld over machinery. As well as still using techniques when it comes to art.

Even though over the past century many art forms have died out or evolved into something different, art will always have the same core effect on society, art is an important part of many people in society's lives. If there were a massive loss to certain art styles, the impact on the people would be massive. Through time, technology and society it is clear that we have lost skill in our crafts, as shown that as life becomes easier and cheaper, we start to lose what we value as good work, as well as our change in how much work is worth and the value we put on quality items and products, this leads to the question of what happens in the future of skilled labour and work, and if our value of work increases.

Conclusion

Other questions that could be asked are what other people think will happen to the future of skilled work, what I think will happen, what we know will happen and what don't we know, and how this affects me and society. I believe we as a society must maintain skills that we have developed over countless centuries of history, if we lose a skill, there is no easy way to learn it again, we would have to re-learn and re-educate, even if it comes from funding from the government, history and knowledge should always be preserved, hence why there are grants by the government for museums and other places dedicated to preserving history. It would also mean that anything built or made would then have to use this new style and no alternatives could be used as they wouldn't have been taught to the current generation.

To conclude my paper, the main question I ponder a lot about my work ethic is, do I feel like I am working – if I am just using a computer and watching a machine doing my work, do I feel like I have made something. Like making a baby but then having a machine take over at the start, you barely get to do anything to bring it to life, wishing you could have done more to make it yours; a staple of yourself. This is why throughout my course, I have been consistently choosing to use the workshop over computer-aided design, it's even in the name: "aided", implying that a computer is aiding you with your design.



Unless new artists are trained in rogan painting, this art will vanish forever (2002),
[photograph]
(Accessed: 17th May 2022)

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