

History of Design

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- 1 Given the purview of past design movements which flowed with changing contexts, what could be a potential emergent design manifesto, ethos, movements, styles, trends or directions, which you could creatively adopt for your Final Year Project?

With ubiquitous access to the Internet and social media, there is no shortage of issues that people can weigh in on today. Hiding behind their glowing screens, people are quick to pass judgement on the latest news. Take for instance, the recent "Brownface" advertisement controversy in Singapore where an ethnic Chinese actor was darkened to portray characters of different races. What had been intended as comical portrayal of our multi-racial society become a heated, and at times, vulgar and crude, dispute of ethnicity appropriation, with many expressing their opinions on the issue. (Stambaugh) This was but one of the many recent social issues that have stirred judgement and enraged the public. It is incidents such as these that led me to realise how "hypersensitive" the society we live in today is.

This younger generations has, rightfully or wrongly, the reputation of being overly sensitive, heavily opinionated, living in a self-righteous bubble, and often causing an unnecessary fuss over trivial matters. However, this reputation is not necessarily bad. We adopted such a mindset from the culture we were brought up in. As we become more educated and given the ease of access to information through the internet, we start to be able to recognise somethings are wrong with the world and give our input in an attempt to correct them. From our perspective, we see ourselves as moving to make a positive difference, to make a more acceptable and inclusive world, rather than shying away from its flaws and shortcomings. In my humble opinion, design will be inevitable sway with the tide to accommodate such a belief.

I believe that this mindset will create a design ethos that places the message above both form and function. In terms of the design direction, it would most probably continue in what the postmodernism design movement has led, advocating individual experiences and interpretation of

these experience in design. I would see the design styling to be bold and direct yet conscious and inclusive.

For my final year project, I would like to work on creating a physical manifestation for this design ethos I have imagined. Something that I have always felt Singapore lacked was a place where like-minded individuals could freely and openly speak out about matters that they are passionate about.

In other countries like the United States and Australia, citizens can express their sentiment on a given subject, e.g. through pride parades and sustainable marches that are open to the public. In Singapore, even public events that have been approved by the authorities, such as Pink Dot which champions LGBT rights, are still cordoned off with barricades with strict identity checks to ensure that only Singaporeans and permanent residents are able to participate.

I wish to propose designating an area or a street in Singapore that would allow controversial events or even peaceful demonstrations to take place.

And this is where my skills and expertise as a designer will come in. Being a visual communication student, I would like to create a place branding for the designated area. Place branding uses a network of associations in the place consumer's mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place and its stakeholders. This being said, it will be crucial to create a brand styling and strategy that soaks in not only the essence of the designated place but also the people, thus being bold and direct yet conscious and inclusive as mentioned earlier.

I hope our "hypersensitive" society continues to live by what they believe in and maybe my prediction of this design ethos might come to life. I am anticipating the time to come where I can start developing this idea for my final year project in year four.

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