

DD3016

History of Design

Reflective Essay

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Question IV. What ideals, principles, motto and design qualities might you use to describe and define the next emergent design trend valid over the next 5 years, current to your practices? What name would you give to the design movement?

Design has always been about expression, and with the advent of cyberspace, telecommunication and instantaneous availability of information, we are exposed to the worldwide violence, crisis and dysfunction. I believe that the next emergent design trend would be Dysfunction, as a juxtaposition of design ideologies and a concoction of past design movements. Design is beginning to take a form of neo-aestheticism, shying away from art-for-art-sake and taking influence from our socio-political landscapes. We see design becoming digitalised and readily accessible, with the enormous amount of data that circulates our cyberspace, it is easy to glance over art or dismiss them without having a deep connection to its agenda or message it tries to convey. Thus, we break the norm, having cross disciplinary collaborations that 'spice up' and provoke our audience' thinking of what can constitute as art in our contemporary era.

Dysfunction is a rendition of our evolving socio-political happenings; it breaks our structured understanding of art and challenges past principles and notions of what defines. The presence of abstract, unconventionally aesthetic art forms invites fresh perspectives on the reinterpretation of classics. The idea of dysfunction is adjacent to reflection and commentary on our contemporary issues that has arose in the 21st century. These includes the Hong Kong protests, Brexit and the disarray in our world powers. World-wide concerns such as sustainability has brought forth artists from all around to jointly collaborate in the Dysfunctional Exhibition that is currently held in

Venice, a response to our irreversible negative impacts on the environment that requires a call to action. "Today, there is monumental movement in regards to social consciousness affecting all spheres: [sustainability](#)."(Dysfunctional). The artists go on to explain that "the sustainability message goes further as many of the artists seek to provoke us into thinking about our own existence." (Dysfunctional). Art then becomes a way to communicate and bring across social, political messages to seek solutions. In an article, Holland Cotter explains that "political thinking of an earlier time, you were either part of the problem or part of the solution, the inference being that there was a solution. The art of the present is not so sure."(Why we do what we do). The purpose of art in our contemporary context transcends to become multi-functional in nature, and we seek to not just entertainment, but communicate through our mediums. Art becomes a channel for dialogue and interaction, between audiences to create impressions and expressions alike.

Design does not fear irrelevance in our future and present world. In fact, it is becoming indispensable in our rapidly changing world. The definition of being an artist, a designer is constantly revamped as we develop into multi-faceted learners, problem solvers and members of society. One could almost be unironically termed as a Renaissance man. Given our context of a digital age, we exist in a time of endless possibilities, an encouragement for us to pursue alternate ideologies and concepts; to make sense of what used to not. This points us towards idiosyncratic design, where we further ourselves by pushing against the boundaries. It was no coincidence that Virgil Abloh was one of the participating artists in the Dysfunctional Exhibition in Venice. He is the artistic director for LV and the founder of Off White, who was an architect by practice. It was at the exhibition where he designed chairs

that were slanted on one side to signify the rising water that could claim Venice. Apart from him, there were also others like Irene Posch who designed the Knitted Radio, a sweater that also functions as a FM radio transmitter, inspired by the protests that had taken place in Taksim Square, Istanbul (The Knitted Radio). Their purpose to communicate and delivering messages in search for solutions are quintessential in the Dysfunction art movement.

Design in the Dysfunction movement would become denotation for our geopolitical landscape. It could pack meaning into miniatures, where we no longer require gigantic exhibitions to convince and convey. An example would be the Transparency Grenade by Julian Oliver, a device that could mine data at the pull of a pin. His work was a socio-political commentary on the lack of Corporate and Governmental transparency (Transparencygrenade). As if on cue, we see data privacy issues over the Facebook scandal four years later, where Cambridge Analytica had improperly obtained the data of millions of Facebook users (Cambridge Analytica Scandal). Going forward, we would see more works with a similar design quality. Additionally, Dysfunction tears down the conventional idea of 'aesthetic' or 'beautiful' and attempts to rethink its definitions.

Art that is multi-functional and in sync with current affairs would bring about its purposefulness the world. The beauty of being able to speak without a voice, and to 'write with our non-master hand', to portray our advancement of art alongside technology. Dysfunction seeks to implicate, and not complicate. Traditional ideas of having art works 'completed' are exchanged for that of 'deconstruction', where we

see our made materials and products reverse-engineered as an alternative strategy to convey. Ground-breaking and state-of-the-art compositions that takes the form of neo-aestheticism would allow for a reconstruction on our socio-political structures. Its commentary on current affairs would not only be passive, but active in nature.

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