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History of Design

Reflection Essay

Question 1

Given the purview of past design movements which flowed with changing contexts (social, political, economic, scientific, technological, philosophical, environmental, etc), what could be a potential emergent design manifesto, ethos, movements, styles, trends or directions, which you could creatively adopt for your FYP/Graduation Project?

There are typically two main reasons for the birth of new art movements. The first is a tangible shift that directly affects the market, like technological advancement or an economic recession. The second is a reaction to the intangible shift in societal or philosophical views. Movements from the former include American Industrial Design and Streamlining, while the latter consists of Dada movement and Postmodernism. By studying the trends of design movements throughout history, the potential emergent design would be movement spurred as a reaction.

This is where studying movements that arose as a rebuttal comes in. The Arts and Crafts movement came about as a rebellion to the overuse of machines for mass production of products during the First Industrial Revolution. Its leaders wanted to bring back the lost practice of artists honing their skills and creativity through craftsmanship. William Morris, a prominent leader of this movement said, "We do not reject the machine, we welcome it. But we would desire to see it mastered." ("The")

Based on the current advancement of technology, there is an ongoing and rising new movement that people are generalising as 'Artificial Intelligence Art'. This is defined by the emerging trend of using AI to create artworks that imitate artists' style through an algorithm trained by studying artworks. Another method of AI art is having the artist/audience input something in the machine, and having the AI produce a response. The artist/audience then adds another input based on that response, which creates a human-machine feedback loop. (McFadden) Judging the current design trend of AI-created art and its possible downsides, including the artist's loss of control over self-expression and the over-reliance of technology to create art, the next emergent trend to follow would be a rejection of this movement.

The emergent trend too would encompass some of the political and social ethos behind the Dada movement, a movement that came about to highlight the horrors and unnecessary evil of the Great War. (Acacia) "The beginnings of Dada," poet Tristan Tzara recalled, "were not the beginnings of art, but of disgust." ("Dada") The new trend would not only convey the ideals of the political left, but also the frustrations of those who have been fighting for the greater good and getting nowhere because of the right-wings or conservatives in the political landscape. The trend would be highly politically inclined given the nature of our current relationship with our ruling parties across several countries, in the case of the Hong Kong Riots and Greta Thunberg's speech. The artworks of the trend should encompass the idea behind Dada's readymades, where the clear function of an item is becomes blurred and vague, and is replaced instead with a sense of absurdity.

It would be a movement I think would be interesting to incorporate in my Graduation Project for it would make a strong statement. This trend would not shun the use of new technology completely, it would be foolish to do so, but rather views AI as a medium of art rather than a collaborative partner. However, it would also instead exaggerate the parts of basic human needs that AI would not be able to fulfill whilst using AI's technology as a form of irony. For example, the essence of human connection over our current socio-political situation or the evolving nature of our thoughts based on personal experiences is something AI Art will never be able to encapsulate. The content will be politically inspired, to make a mockery of the government whose role is to govern us, but whom instead oppress people that place their own interests in danger.

As an Interactive Media student, exploring the world of AR and AI is something fascinating to me in terms of the experiences it could create for others. I am exploring the possibilities of playing with AR through Unity and expanding my views on what it means to bring experiences beyond just the screen. My study in Visual Communications allows me to creatively express my ideals with visuals in the form of typography or imagery. Alike Dada's typography and art, I could create something that defies the rules that were taught to us for legibility and focus on expressing the absurdity and idea of defiance this movement would encapsulate.

Combining what I have learnt from both pathways, I could use AI and redesign it in a way that renders it not only useless but portrays a level of nonsense. It would be a readymade, with a modern, technological twist on it.

(746 words)

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