

Working In Harmony With Nature

Annotated Bibliography Reflecting On The Importance of Working With The Natural Environment

Berleant, A. (1992) 'Environment as a Challenge to Aesthetics' *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. p2-13

The chapter's argument is for a redesign of the way we view aesthetics and our natural environment. Intertwining the two disciplines engages our understanding of the natural world in a way that improves our relationship to the natural environment in a more holistic manor.

The author examines the connections between aesthetics and the environment thoroughly, providing a strong argument for interconnecting the two fields, whilst also challenging anthropocentric views that we as humans are separate from nature. This defines the importance of our role as designers not to exclude ourselves from nature and the environment but to include it throughout the design process.

Aesthetics are philosophically viewed as something beautiful, something we have designed to look good. By designing purely to be aesthetically pleasing we are often disassociating ourselves from the natural environment. Combining our thinking of the two fields enables designers to create an aesthetic concept that enriches our understanding of the environment.

Orr, DW. (2004) 'The Problem of Ecological Design' *The Nature*

***of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated. p1-32**

The chapter discusses the need for urgent change in the design process that integrates human activity and ecological systems. Enabling a shift from negative impacts, to designs that reinforce both human and ecological welfare that builds a sustainable future.

The author highlights the need for change through a historical and cultural reflection of humanity's impact on the planet. Using examples of Amish and Balinese cultures to exemplify successful sustainable living. Designers have a responsibility to combat the ecological degradation of our environment through sustainable practices.

Shifting the design process away from technical solutions towards a holistic understanding of our role within the ecological system allows us to change our presence on Earth. Designers have a moral responsibility to build environments that live in harmony with nature, this is vital in tackling climate change and developing a sustainable future for the planet.

Pannels, I. (2019) 'Glass-A Material Practice in the Anthropocene' *Arts*. Vol 8:1, DOI:10.3390/arts8010007

The article is about the "Material Journey" of an art project, looking specifically at the carbon footprint and environmental impacts of making art with glass. The author uses this project as an example to highlight the urgent need for us to shift towards a circular economy that understands the effects of material processes in the Anthropocene.

The article gives a clear understanding of "Material Journey" and its impacts on the environment. This highlights the importance of material choice within the Interior Design field. Understanding the entire lifecycle of materials creates an awareness around material selection making it possible for

designers to make environmentally responsible decisions.

Understanding the carbon footprint of material production, will enable us a designer to shift towards a circular economy that engages with sustainable practices. We can make informed choices that promotes ecological responsible and sustains our natural environment.

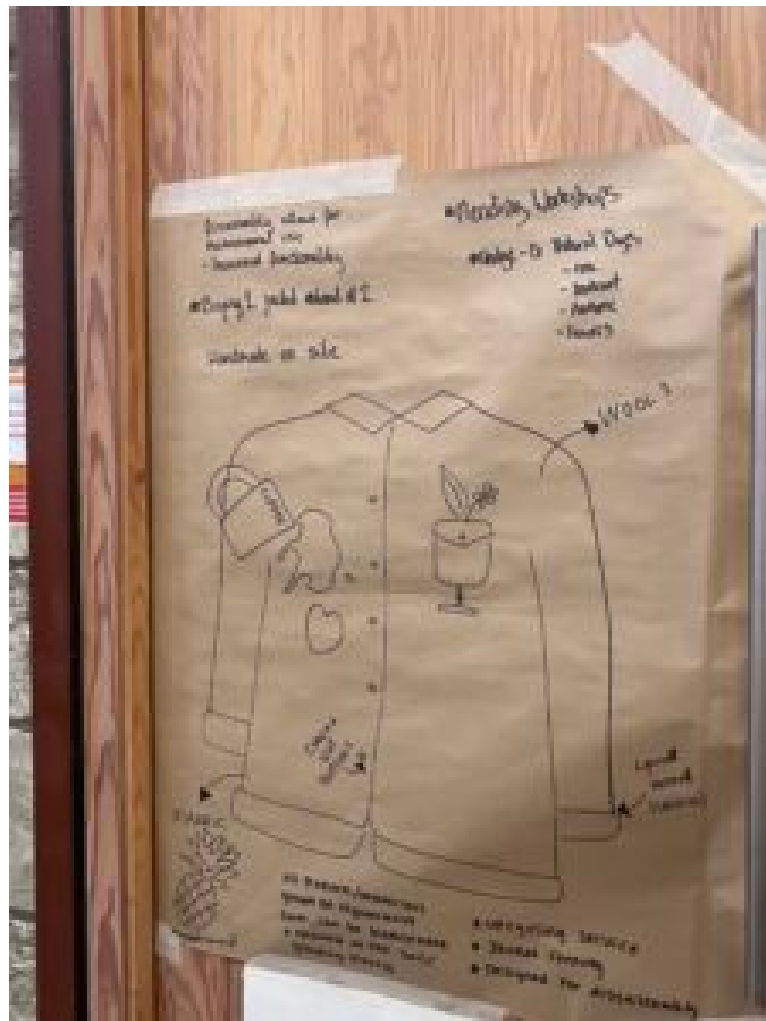
The Stories Of Our Things

The “stories of stuff” has been an interesting topic, I am not sure the stories of stuff are told enough, we have all these “things” or “objects” in our lives and how many of us truly understand or know their story. Where did they come from? how were they made? who made them? Again, it all relates back to our lack of understanding as humans of the life cycle of products and things that we consume, surely learning the “stories of stuff” can enable us to design “stories” that have a full life cycle that benefits humans and nature.



(Understanding the full story/journey of a product)

To follow this, theme our workshop task was to create a product with a full life cycle. We were given “clothing” and decided to design a jacket that was made of natural fibres all grown on a single farm. The fibres and materials were to be responsibly treated with natural dyes etc. The farm would then also manufacture the jackets, deliver, recycle and reuse creating a full life cycle for the product. Our vision was that if everything is produced on one site it makes it possible to ensure every element is sustainable and that we are creating a product that has a cradle-to-cradle life cycle.



(Process of designing a jacket with a full life cycle)

We delved deeper into all the factors that would be required to produce such a product and realised that there was such a large variety of skill sets needed to tend to every aspect of the production such as farming knowledge for the materials, manufacturing, design and tailoring to name a few. How could it be possible to achieve all this responsibly from one place?

Creating a product that had a complete life cycle that was sold on its story and journey was not something that was going to be easily achieved.

Don't Rock The Cradle

“Cradle-to-Cradle” was a term I personally had not heard of before, but a concept that I found extremely interesting upon reading. The amount of toxins coming out of our mass-produced items was shocking, and the negative impact that this is creating on our biological environment is devastating. There is so many products that are designed without the environment in mind creating a “cradle-to-grave” life cycle. It became clear that it is possible to create production systems that are designed with a “cradle-to-cradle” approach producing items that have a full life cycle and a positive impact on the natural biology of the environment.

One of the examples I thought was key in explaining why this concept is so important was the story about the sewage pipes. Originally designed so that sewage sludge could be reused as fertilizer, which was seen to be an intuitive way of using waste for good to create a complete life cycle “waste is food”. But in fact, because the pipes had not been designed with our biological environment in mind the whole concept became a dead end, a solution that is now polluting the natural biological environment instead of aiding it.

(McDonough, W. 2009)



Sewage Pipe Pollution (Hawkes, D. 2023)

A product that has successfully been cradle-to-cradle certified is “Ice-Stone”, made from recycled glass and cement. The product is used for countertops within the design field and is created with a non-toxic pigment, 75% recycled materials and 0% petrochemicals or resins. This product highlights that it is possible to design responsibly using materials that are non-toxic creating a positive impact rather than a negative. (Icestone 2024)



Ice-Stone Countertops (Icestone 2024)

I believe that concepts like “Cradle-to-Cradle” are the future of the design industry and can only be achieved with further education and connections between environmental studies and

design history. We need to fully understand the processes in which the materials and products we choose have been treated and manufactured so we as designers can become part of the “cradle-to-cradle” life cycle and make positive design choices.

Having this kind of knowledge as a designer will allow us to make informed decisions on the built environments we are creating. By using this knowledge, we could design built environments that have a 100% biologically safe impact on nature. This is surely our responsibility as designers if we are going to create a positive impact on the climate crisis.

Bibliography:

Hawkes, D. 2023. How to fix the UK's sewage overflow problem. <https://www.ice.org.uk/news-insight/news-and-blogs/ice-blogs/the-infrastructure-blog/how-to-fix-uk-sewage-overflow-problem> Accessed on 07/10/2024

Icestone USA, 2024. Get to Know Icestone. <https://icestoneusa.com/get-to-know-icestone/> Accessed on 08/10/2024

McDonough, W. (2009) Cradle to cradle : remaking the way we make things /. London :, Vintage

Our Entanglement Between Nature and Culture

As a society our relationship between nature and culture is deeply entangled. The many types of interactions between humans and the environment shape our perceptions and alter our

outlook towards nature. Culture, language and symbols are all constructs that influence our perception of what we perceive as “natural”. These constructs are shaped by our cultural practices and mediate the way we perceive nature. This is easily highlighted through a few interesting examples from this week’s workshop.

Trade: Gravel

Gravel comes from a natural resource and is manmade in quarries by crushing the stones into gravel. This production of gravel is then distributed into our society. Nature provides us with the “natural” resource while our culture dictates how the raw material will be utilized due to our cultural specifications. The movement or “trade” of these goods alters our natural landscapes, impacting our natural environment, this illustrates how “trade” as a cultural activity is entangled and shaped by nature.



Pile of Gravel (Lancaster, J. 2024)

Home: Security

Home is a place that allows us to feel safe and secure. A home is a physical space and a cultural construct. A home in the physical sense is built in conjunction with natural landscapes and climates, constructed with raw materials provided by “nature”. While “culture” educates us on how the home is designed and the traditions in which a home is shaped. Culture educates us on what makes a home feel “secure”. Nature and culture intersect to create a home that joins us to the environment and society.



Keyholes/Security/Home (Lancaster, J. 2024)

Water: Growth

Water unites all living creatures, the world is made up of water, we as humans are mostly made of water. Nature cannot grow without water, nature feeds us, water is vital for our survival and growth as humans. In this sense we are not separate from nature, but the way we interact with water is shaped by culture. Many rituals such as baptisms involve water, symbolic of life, growth and renewal. This is our cultural way of connecting to the natural world. Water flows through both nature and culture to create growth.



Living Things (Lancaster, J. 2024)

Our cultural practices shape the way we design, they determine the way in which we consume raw materials. Our perceptions of these raw materials are mediated through our culture. For example, we often associate natural materials as being sustainable because they come from nature. But is this just our cultural perception of nature being a renewable source? By educating ourselves as designers we will be able to make informed decisions on ways in which design culture can benefit nature. I believe this is the way forward for designers wanting to create a sustainable approach to their practice.

Bibliography:

Fallen, K & Jørgensen, F.A. Histories of Design: Towards a New research Agenda. doi:10.1093/jdh/epx017. Journal of Design History. Vol. 30 No. 2
Accessed on 11/09/2018

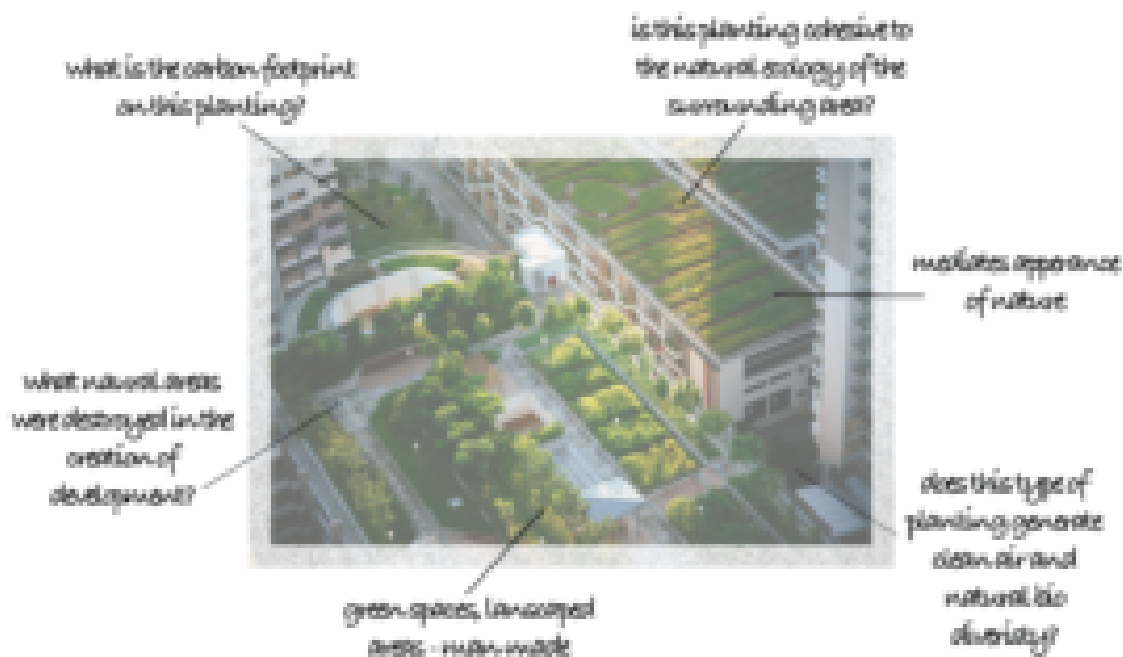
Images:

Our Experience of the Environment

This week was focused on the reading by Fallen and Jørgensen, the article explores the need to interconnect the concerns about the environment with designers. Environmental history often doesn't reflect the impact from human-made design, connecting the two fields could create a beneficial understanding of the problems within our natural environment that are fuelled from design choices. What ways does design connect us to nature, are these connections transparent? How is it even possible to define the true starting point of the Anthropocene when the effects on the environment span over a geological epoch.

Rollin's reflection on the SUV makes an interesting point about the paradox between the SUV having a negative impact on the environment but being "marketed with nature imagery". (Fallan.K & Jørgenson, F.A 2018) This imagery and marketing constructs a false cultural message for the consumer mediating the perception of the SUV's effects on our natural environment. An example of this which relates to the field of Design is the large-scale residential development's popping up around the world with imagery of plants and nature. These developments promote an ideology that connects the consumer with nature but often these developments destroy many acres of forestation and natural ecosystems during the construction

process. In our more modern society this form of marketing/architecture is a form of “greenwashing” selling a false ideology. Having more knowledge on environmental histories would arm the design and architecture field with better solutions and a more transparent approach that doesn’t create a false dichotomy. (Ghisleni.C, 2022)



Residential Development Promoting Nature (Ghisleni, C 2022)

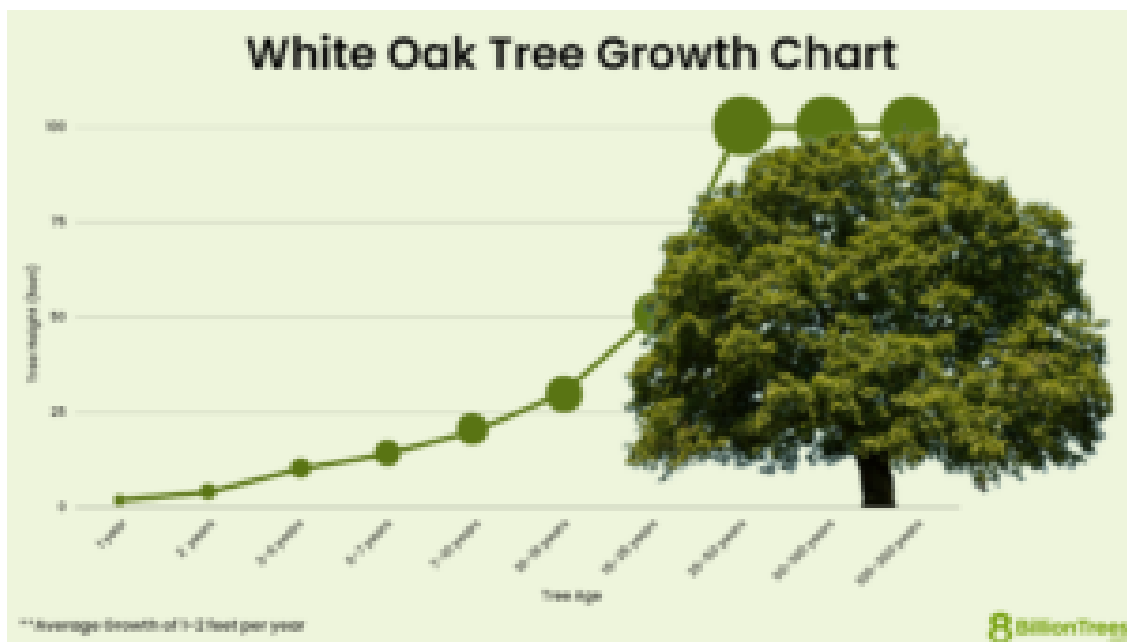
Annotation of Image (Lancaster, J 2024)

Having a proper understanding of how design can impact the environment is an extremely useful tool for future designers.

More education about the effects of design history on the environment enables us as designers to think and act with a transparent, well-educated approach that leaves minimal impact on the natural world. Historically design as a discipline has negatively influenced the environment. Material choices that

follow “trends/fashions” often do not account for the use of natural resources and the pollution caused by manufacturing processes creating an unsustainable approach to design.

This can be exemplified through the material of Oak-Wood which is seen to be natural. Although the rate in which we use this material means that the natural product (oak tree) does not have time to regenerate at the rate it is being consumed making certain types of the material unsustainable to the natural environment. (Hoskins, R 2019)



Lifecycle of an Oak Tree to Fully Mature (Kilgore, G. 2024)

By educating ourselves on material choices and construction methods used in historic designs we as designers would have better perspective on how these choices and approaches to design impact the environment. Understanding the sustainable/unsustainable impact of historic design choices provides us as designers with the valuable knowledge needed to design responsibly in the future. I believe this knowledge allows us to be totally transparent about the environmental implications of our decisions. It gives us the knowledge to educate clients on sustainable practices that prevents

greenwashing, creates transparent ideologies and allows us to participate in a positive impact on the man-made world.

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