

A DISREGARD

- IS CONSUMER CULTURE CONSIGNING

London Design Week is a six-day event, which truly reflects the creativity of the capital, providing the chance to explore influential interior design first hand. One of the many topics up for discussion at this year's event - 'The Effect of Colour Forecasting on Product



ANDREW TUCKER

"The fast rate of design consumerism is due to people always wanting the best and most exclusive items in their homes. Due to a greater sense of entitlement, the end consumer feels they are entitled to a better quality. Customers need to feel privileged, and they do with curated detail, very much like the fashion industry. People want a sort of 'cabinet of curiosity' to display a wealth of cultural wealth and understanding.

Andrew is a talent scout for London Fashion Week, Consultant to the British Fashion Council, an established journalist and author, and Course Director of the Masters in Fashion Journalism at London College of Fashion.

"Let's use the Primark to Prada analogy. Primark creates basic throwaway products fuelled by the media and these are incredibly low cost. Prada, on the other hand, creates high-cost, sought after investment pieces for the trend-educated individual. There is a need for both.

"That said, I find the fact that people view design as disposable very concerning and it's undeniably creating a problem with waste. Customers need to be encouraged to think of the life cycle of their product, just as they do when recycling plastic bottles.

"Trends need to be limited and forecasters and designers should have courage in conviction. I believe 'Trash' should be the new trend. Reinvention hopefully will sway customers. People need to look into archives and rejuvenate trends with new colours. Freshness is needed and new designs with a certain element of heritage or else design will stagnate.

"But it must be understood that trends shown in interior magazines are, just like the models in fashion and beauty magazines, set-ups. Like photo-shopped images, these rooms are not real and they are not there to imitate. They are there to look up to as inspiration, not to create a mirror reflection. Some consumers understand this, most don't. When consumers learn this, I believe the rate of consumerism will slow to a controlled pace and design will truly start to be appreciated again."



ANDREA MAFLIN

"Two years ago I was working with department store giant John Lewis, and one of the first questions I asked them was how long do they want a scheme to last? They said ten to 25 years, sporting ideas of classic appeal and longevity. More recently five years is far more realistic as the life expectancy of interiors has dramatically reduced.

For the last 14 years Andrea has been running her own interior design business in corporate and domestic interiors. She has worked throughout Europe for designers such as Richmond International and Hirsh Bedner Associate. She has also had a number of television appearances including the BBC's Home Front and Real Rooms, Renovation Street for Carlton and regular design slots on Sky interactive and This Morning. Andrea also currently has a regular, weekly slot in The Sunday Times, answering readers' design queries.

"These days a lot of interiors don't consider comfort and are based around spontaneous 'lust purchases'. I believe personality needs to be represented in interiors, whether this includes sentimental pieces or bold, personal colours. Some of the most interesting clients I have seen are those with sentimental clutter - people who show their personality. And this is where bespoke items come into play. These items create a reaction to availability, meaning people will pay more for a piece of furniture that is exclusive to them. Bespoke items make it personal, adding sentimental value and most importantly reducing the amount of waste caused by fad or lust purchases that go out of fashion as quickly as it took to buy them.

"Going against consumerism is not a scheme; it's a number of influences, and in this case it is the environment and the need to appreciate good and in many cases older designs. I believe the education of customers is key; they should want to know how and where their pieces were made."

FOR DESIGN

By Chloë Hukin

GOOD DESIGN TO THE SCRAPHEAP?

and Consumerism' – raised questions about the extent that trends fuel fast-moving consumerism and in turn create a disregard for good design. Here we bring you a selection of the key views expressed by leading industry figures.



LORI PINKERTON-ROLET

"Rampant consumerism is the very problem which has led to the recent downturn in the financial markets and which is beginning to impact the property market. And I believe it is the credit card companies who are responsible for this speed - when money is 'cheap' things tend to be purchased even when they are not needed or fully appreciated.

Lori is the Chairman of British Interior Design Association (BIDA) and has been on the BIDA board for several years. She has also been the Director of Park Grove Design since 1993 working on residential, contract and health sectors. Lori is a member of the IIDA (International Interior Design Association), the Inchbald Association, and is an Affiliate of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects).

"And with low to mid-market furniture and interior design stores offering cheaper, trend influenced pieces, they have themselves created a brainwashed consumer with a disregard for great design. All too often we are seeing people consuming goods and soon after throwing them out – there's no market for interior designer there.

"Good design is not necessarily related to speed in either a good or bad way. It can, however lead us to slow down and appreciate individual items of beauty or functionality, or spaces which give us a sense of well-being.

"It is the designer's job to find ways of using the often 'ugly' older pieces - antiques represent the most cost and energy efficient form of recycling. Prices are very competitive at the moment, and I find e-Bay an excellent way to keep usable items in circulation and out of landfill. At a recent BIDA Regional event at Tomlinson's in Yorkshire we were shown examples of furniture 'marriages', the practice of putting together different pieces to make something new, or otherwise enhanced.

"I think in order to slow the fast-pace of consumerism the industry needs to continue to underline the enhancement made to our home and work environments through good and thoughtful design."



DAVID OLIVER

"Interior design is now less aspirational and yet still highly desirable. As we move house more, we redecorate more, and to make our-selves more comfortable is good, not bad. It opens a gateway for interior designers to introduce incredible key pieces. However, it is the consumer that has taken advantage of a surge in mass produced design due to its cheap and cheerful quality.

David Oliver established Paint & Paper Library in 1996, specialising in the design and supply of inspirational paints and wallpapers and opened his first London show room in May 1997. Trained at the National Art School in Sydney he developed an authority for twentieth century art and visual cultures. His eclectic style is pure without being uncomfortable and he combines a unique sense of colour with ability and innovation: qualities that have become the trademark of his collections.

"The problem lies with oversupply and repackaging and low to mid market stores lead me to raise the question: is it really any different to what was offered last season? We need to act consciously about product recycling and think about how we use products? This is where recycling bespoke items comes into play. People will always want traditional, hand made, and one off pieces, a great deal of these people are just swayed by the price of lower market and lower quality design. But people need to start caring.

"Static adherence to a trend book will not produce the best results in design. After all, the saying is 'each to their own'. It's all about freedom of interpretation. There is no soul or personality in a trend book and so it should never be cloned in a room. A trend book is business to business tool and should be used to inspire and consumers should be encouraged to mix bespoke, sentimental and trendy pieces.

"The best interiors are like comfy clothes. They have to be your preferred colours and styles and perhaps don't always follow trends. At the moment the market is price driven, which in the end results in short-life furniture. In the future, consumers need to be encouraged to invest, save waste, look for longevity and better products with aesthetic value."