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Why did you go into design? When did you start, was it when you were a kid or was it something that came later in life?

Well, I think my career hasn't started yet so it is very difficult for me to say where I am. When I was a kid my grandfather had a shop for electronic appliances and he used to repair everything in the back. So I used to play a lot with these things and I liked to demount everything, at home as well. Even things that worked, it was kind of a perversion. Design chose me. It's a way of life, an uncontrolled muscle and not something I decide to do or not. It's happening constantly and because of it I don't sleep. My brain is in control, so maybe you ought to ask it instead of me.

So the brain is taking over, which is a good expression, on what journeys does it take you?

It needs a lot of definitions but I don't think I let or don't let the brain take over. If I'm honest with myself the physical appearance of the person likes to think he's in control of his brain but that's not the case. If I'm able to get out of my head my brain takes me into multiple levels at the same time, I sometimes feel like a big mountain where you can see the different layers of years and thoughts, of feelings, impressions, impacts or sadness that influence my everyday, I see something – a t-shirt and it makes me think of the black t-shirt I wore a couple of days ago when I was talking to somebody about something else. My world is a complex architecture of metaphors and feelings.

The design process, where does it start – in materials or stories or in forms?

The design process is individual, we can't really apply the same process twice. Of course we may have a brief, a discussion with a client and then have ideas and chose between them. So it is a very complex process but it also has very simple and intuitive sides to it. I often have a gut feeling about the projects, of what is wrong or what is right, what works and what doesn't, what will be attractive and what will not. Unfortunately I'm not always right.

Besides from getting assignments from clients, do you also give yourself assignments?

We often work in a state where we are not in control. So I am constantly creating, constantly putting myself in situations where we pretend there is a client for this or that. What helps a lot in a psychological way is that artwork is an arena where I can express myself and take different kinds of liberties where I set the rules and say this is what I'm going to do, such as painting or sculpture or non-functional objects.

Do you find that your role as designer has changed and what do you think it will be like in the future?

It is a very good question, I don't actually think my roles has changed, I think the audience is listening more carefully.

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personally have practiced these parameters intensively for many years and I just don't think that the audience, or the client or the partner always have the tools or the ability or notion to be able to listen to this sort of discussion. Some of them do but most of them can't. But I think this is the beauty of the era we live in, because we are living in a phase of transition where the object is important but the environment, the feeling and being able to listen to silence, or what we feel, to our bodies is something which is extremely important. Then communicating it and translating it into a tool, whether it's a product, a film, a colour, a texture or whatnot is part of our practical job, to give this idea life.

Is design always emotional?

I definitely think design has great emotional value, on a daily basis. I think beauty is a function, that love is a function. Just think about the very regular scenario, someone walking into a shop, seeing a chair and saying – "I love this chair". Can you say that design doesn't involve emotion? No. Not only does this person love this chair, he puts his hand in his pocket at takes out his wallet, which is probably the result of him waking up for any number of months at six in the morning, taking the public transport, going to work and putting away a little bit of money each month to be able to give his mind and feelings the possibility to invest and spend on what he loves. What is stronger than that?

You get emotional with things and buy them. But what makes you keep things?

Me personally I have a very particular relationship with objects. I speak to them, they speak to me, it's a relationship and I remember so much about these objects, much more than I would with many other things. The notion of memories is so strongly engraved in our brain, in our active mind – whether personal or collective, that it's part of our daily being. Me personally I can not separate myself from it.

It is possible to describe what it is that triggers you to keep certain things?

I call it genetic intimacy. I don't know what you would call it. It's a moment where the rational and the irrational and the rational and emotional connect with strings that we don't control and one thing has more gravity than the other. It's like three people holding hands and spinning in circles, there's a moment when one person becomes the circle and the other ones are just spinning around him. That's how I personally feel, like I'm being taken over by other parameters of who I am and which forces me into different directions. This is total emotional satisfaction, or gratitude. To me it's like a first kiss, that powerful, but I am extremely tactile.

DESIGN IS A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

How has the role of the designer changed over the last couple of years?

I believe the roles has not changed much....finally the industry and the public realise that design is beyond a "Red Stool".... we have definitely discovered new facets to what design can do or should I say where design (creative) thinking and process can be of great interest. It is a great time for design...a phase of transition.

Our world is multifaceted and problems are getting more and more complex - how can hybrid thinking and an open-minded holistic mindset take design into a new dimension?

I think what it does is give design more credibility and that evidently helps to develop new ways in which to create, develop and innovate.

How can we better use storytelling as tool when changing the predominated notion of 'objects' into more memorable and sensuous experiences?

Stories when told well can connect to experiences....design for me should be felt and is something you do hands on...not through internet and catalogues.

How can we design with a more humanistic perspective and thus contribute to cultural and social changes?

Design is a cultural and social change...and I believe one should not confuse trends with design....as the trends are created upon what we design...we are doing it 2-5 years in advance...the time it takes to an idea to arrive on the market.

How can you be part of shaping the future?

We are the future! Honest, responsible and responsive design is part of it.

Arik Levy, born in 1963 in Israel is a designer, technician, artist, photographer, filmmaker, his skills multi-disciplinary and his work available in prestigious galleries and museums worldwide. He is best known for his furniture designs for global companies, his installations and limited editions. Nevertheless Levy is determined that "The world is about people, not table and chairs". Levy and his 20 man strong team forms Paris based L design which also produces brand identities, signage, exhibitions and interior designs.

ARIK LEVY