



Slow Design

Slow design is a new concept within sustainable design which promotes slowing the metabolism of people and resources while also creating positive behaviour change. Creating products that are made from sustainable materials or processes is not enough and designers now realise that a truly sustainable society, will require positive behavioural change as well.

The concept originates from the Slow Food movement in Italy. Slow Food promotes a return to cooking and eating well. It celebrates regional, local cuisine which is made from well-sourced, quality ingredients and is a reaction against mass produced, tasteless food. Slow Food has come at a time when many modern cultures are questioning the values of the fast-paced, globalised world we live in. However, the Slow principles do not shun everything fast, but allow for a 'healthy' speed, eg. if fast broadband allows you to work more efficiently then that is a 'good' speed. It advocates doing less while doing it well.

Slow design has emerged out of this cultural shift and like the Slow Food movement, it encourages designers to make a conscientious choice of materials and processes, to consider which design strategies may encourage a long-life relationship between the object and its owner and even to consider the future (post-consumer) life of the object or material it is made from.

In regards to creating a long life for a textile product, people have many complex motivations for why they consume and discard material goods, and it is often more than just about buying something you need. It can be seen as an endless personal journey toward the ideal or desired self. *Emotionally Durable Design* is a term coined by product designer and researcher Jonathan Chapman which refers to the strategy for increasing the 'empathy' and durability of the relationship between a product and its owner/user.

Considering the rise in 'fast fashion' and the huge amounts of clothing and textiles that go into landfill in the UK, designer's can employ several strategies to encourage people to cherish and care for their garments or interior products more, including designing textiles which adapt and change with age or allowing for customisation by the owner.

Facts

- Over 90% of the resources taken out of the ground today become waste within only three months (Chapman, J. 2006)
- The amount of clothing being purchased in the UK has increased by 30% in four years (K.Fletcher, 'Can Fashion be Slow?', FEI Conference, April 2007)
- Each piece of clothing stays in a Dutch wardrobe for an average of 3 years 5 months, is on the body for 44 days during this time and is worn for between 2.4 and 3.1 days between washings (Uitdenbogerd, D. E., Brouwer, N. M. and Groot-Marcus, J. P. (1998), Domestic energy saving potentials for food and textiles: an empirical study.)

Key Organizations

Slow Food - <http://www.slowfood.com/>
The original Slow Food movement which originated in Italy.

Slowlab - www.slowlab.net
A organisation which promotes slowness in design and organises exhibitions, public lectures and projects.

Slow Design - <http://www.slowdesign.org/>
Website founded by eco-designer and writer Alistair Fuad-Luke.

Carl Honore – <http://www.carlhonore.com/>
A journalist and author of *In Praise of Slow*.

Reading Materials

Chapman, J. (2005) *Emotionally Durable Design: Objects, Experiences and Empathy*, Earthscan: UK

Fuad-Luke, A. and Strauss, C. (2008) *Slow Design Principles: a new interrogative and reflexive tool for design research and practice* http://www.slowlab.org/slow_design.html

Honoré, C (2005) *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed*, London: Orion

Van Hinte, E (2004), *Eternally Yours: Time in Design*, Rotterdam 010 Publishers

Projects of Interest

Top 100 (1999 – 2009) – <http://www.upcyclingtextiles.net>
A ten-year 'slow fashion' research project by Becky Earley who has created a series of ten shirts every few years, using a heat transfer printing technique on second hand polyester blouses.

Local Wisdom (2009)- <http://localwisdom.info/>
A research project by Dr. Kate Fletcher which explores sustainable actions initiated by the owners of garments.

Lifetimes (2004) – <http://www.lifetimes.info>
A research project by Dr. Kate Fletcher and Matilda Tham which explores the slow and fast rhythms of clothing use in our wardrobes.

Companies and Designers

Alabama Chanin - <http://alabamachanin.com>
Based in Alabama in the US, this fashion collection is hand-made using recycled cotton jersey sewn by local artisans.

Hello Fashion - <http://www.moniquevanheist.com>
A Dutch designer who creates classic garment shapes which stay the same for every season, and only slowly adds new styles.

Howies - <http://hmd.howies.co.uk/>
Hand me Downs is a fashion range of classic, well-made pieces which are designed to be passed on from generation to generation.

Keep & Share – <http://www.keepandshare.co.uk>
Keep & Share are a luxury knitwear label who offer customers the chance to 'borrow' a

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garment before they buy, and also offer a laundry service to customers, ensuring the garments are properly cared for.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race - <http://www.slowandsteadywinstherace.com/>
A US clothing collection which creates classic garments and accessories made using simple, durable materials.

Slow Textiles group - <http://slowtextiles.org/>
Emma Neuberg, a textile designer and theorist, presents extended-life textiles workshops where participants learn a traditional textile technique while also being introduced to theories in sustainable design.

Audio Visual Resources

Carolyn Strauss of Slowlab, 'Slow design, Slow fashion'
Beyond Green student conference, Amsterdam 2009
<http://webcolleges.hva.nl/webcollege/Viewer/?peid=10566ee6b31e4a2ea0c85261c469ee8c>

Interview with Monique van Heist from Hello Fashion, a Slow fashion label from Holland.
<http://www.vimeo.com/5522006>

Discussion on Slow, Southbank Centre (2009) Chaired by Helen Carnac
<http://makingaslowrevolution.wordpress.com/analogue/out-in-the-open/out-in-the-open-event-2/>

Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution exhibition podcasts Curator Helen Carnac and writer Carl Honore
<http://takingtime.org/2009/11/17/watch-our-exhibition-podcasts/>