

***Indu Varanasi*****Design Director, IRD Design**

Indu Varanasi is the Founder, Design Director, and Architect (interior design and architecture) of IRD Design in Dubai. An award-winning architect and designer with over 30 years of experience, Indu has been based in Dubai and is renowned for her philosophy of 'Design Consciousness'. She holds a degree in Architecture from JNTU in Hyderabad and a Master's Degree in Design and Architecture from the School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi. Starting her career in architectural practices in India and in Dubai, she established her own design practice, IRD Design in 2004 and has since been considered among the Middle East's top 20 designers.

DESIGN DEFINITIONS

Indu Varanasi

Abstract

Design, often represents luxury, exclusivity, and perhaps has an aura around it. This is the misnomer which feeds into the narrative where as design should provide solutions, the ability to marry the tangible and intangible is the key strength of design. Design has the ability to solve problems, anticipate them and create solutions. The value of design should be respected to create a thought processes and different narratives. Design needs to be respected and be responsible to create a better tomorrow. The article reflects on the evolution and perception of the word "design" over 30 years. It explores how "design" has become commonplace yet often misunderstood. The author discusses the relationship between people and design, emphasising, the importance of balancing tangible and intangible factors. Good design is seen as an amalgamation of conditions to create solutions. The article also highlights the continuous change and learning in design, the impact on individuals and society, and the need for integrated solutions. Designers are encouraged to understand their responsibility and value in creating solutions that have longevity and adaptability. (AI supported)

Keywords: *Design perception, Design responsibility, Longevity in design, Emotional design*

The topic is a reflection of how the word 'design' is perceived during this long journey of 30 years in the design industry. The summary of this article will be exploratory in nature with some introspection, which will include:

1. Articulating what 'design' is? The word has become commonplace without the underlying understanding.
2. Arranging the pieces of the puzzles together to create a design
3. Continuity of change and learning
4. Relationship between people and design
5. Understanding the philosophy and application
6. Shaping the design industry today – attempting to do so.

The word 'design' is common place now from the mason to a tailor, from the gardener to the street food vendor, everyone recognises the word and uses it to define himself/herself, the product or the service. Big companies leverage the work differently to smaller entities, but everyone uses this word time and time again. So, it might be a good idea to dissect the word 'design' from the idea of someone who earns their living by using this word. Design can mean many things, exclusive, customised, expensive, individualist, personalised which somehow pander on our ego of say this is 'special' and it is made only for me, perhaps I am the few chosen ones who can afford it.

The word has been very well used by the marketing agencies to drive across the point that with this 'designed' product all the problems will be solved. It is the panacea of all problems. But what does the word actually mean, entomologically, de-sign, is something which is not constant, a sign is constant, symbolic and has a fixed connotation whereas something which is 'designed' is different, non-confirmative and breaking a few defined laws.

Why has this word become so common place? In a world of machine-made goods, factory made products, we suddenly crave for things which are special, something that is specially made to solve 'your' problem, be it food, clothing, living or anything. The simple understanding that design is something which looks at a problem, or anticipates a potential problem, considers the various tangible and non-tangible parameters. Tangible parameters are measurable, size, shape, location, target usage. Intangible parameters are hard to define, they have no metrics, sometimes they are subjective, sometimes they are driven by societal narrative and most times emotional. Good design is a product of the obvious and not so obvious amalgamation of conditions to create solutions.

How does one learn design? They don't because design is ubiquitous, everyone creates, designs their lives. We, as human beings aspire to create circumstances which are best suited for our well-being (or we think are best-suited). The so-called designers among us are the people who have some more technical knowledge than others to articulate the problems and thereby find solutions. The balancing act of not forgetting and integrating the intangible factors into our solutions makes good design.

Change is constant and also cyclic. What was a good solution to a particular problem may cause another problem, are we able to change constantly to provide solutions? Are we able to anticipate the implications of 'today's' solution? For example, the motor car was designed to create mobility, now the same mobility is the cause of traffic jams, air pollution, noise pollution and even oil-wars. Was this anticipated? I am sure not, was this the vision? Digital gadgets were meant to free us of time, give us leisure, perhaps our addiction was not anticipated.

Each design, big or small has an impact both on individuals and society at large. Every product we buy and every space we live in, work and play has a far reaching impact which is why design has to be critical in its thinking and approach. Design is being conscious of our surroundings, the impact which it has on ourselves, the impact it has on our immediate surroundings and the world around us. Products are manufactured all over the world, shipped from one part of the world to another, the standardisation of the products is as bad as it is good. Application of rules from one part of the world to another causes incompatibility leading to societal changes which are aspirational but yet conducive to our well-being.

The flattening of the design solutions leads problems, which seem insurmountable in the wake of fragmented knowledge base. Solutions provided by large organisations, without the actual localised societal norms of a cultural integration, respecting the flora and fauna, intersecting bounds of the existing building fabric are leading to alienated solution. Ours is a collective world, we need design as an integrated solution provider, designers are the only profession in the entire gamut of professionals who are able to sew different narratives both tangible and intangible into a tapestry.

Our design philosophy has to evolve from just producing beautiful, good looking products, places in renders but understanding longevity of both product and place. So, what does this look like? It is about how do we use resources (both natural and man-made) to create solutions which have longevity, which can survive for long periods of time and be passed on from generation to generation. Places which can survive changing narratives with their adaptability. Understanding that labels do not matter, labels should not be the cause of exploitation of people but that labels should represent a quality which serves the purpose and lasts, it is not

about the every year 'new' product launch. It also matters that society understands that our needs have to be limited, every new product, every cup of coffee, all the food waste is a product of our creation of a 'good life'.

Human tenacity is to constantly re-invent themselves, it is not about a slogan, it not about a narrative, it is not about religion, it is not about the economic barriers, it is for each of us to believe that we are able to better our 'living' in our world through the thorough process of design integration.

The world has to change, it will change only when we value the artisan, create the pride of the artisan. The designer has to be valued in society to bring solutions. Solutions should be a process of thinking, iteration and integration and not creating beautiful pictures as renders which are then interpreted by some others who have no understanding of the parts which made the whole solution.

Always keep the amalgamator, the designer in a discussion, value the thinking behind the process, it is only then that we will get solutions which can be either resolve or anticipate problems which plague. Finally, to my fellow designers, understanding the responsibility which you hold and the value you provide in making the better place to live, it takes courage to create solutions that will change the course of history and our lives on this earth.