



Lolita Dutta

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Lolita Dutta is an alumnus from the National Institute of Design, with over four decades of experience as a design practitioner and as a design educator. Her area of expertise lies in the domain of communication design, with a specialisation in exhibition spatial design.

She has worked extensively for the Government of India, the private and public sector, NGOs, and diplomatic missions. In her role as an educator she has held several leadership positions with premier design institutions. Her profile includes curriculum building, mentoring, and advocacy and policy. She has been active as a panellist, moderator, and speaker on various platforms. Other than being a designer and educator, Lolita enjoys writing, painting, reading , photography and cooking!

THE ATTITUDE OF DESIGN

Lolita Dutta

Abstract

In a world largely influenced by changing technology, AI and other such interventions, the humanisation of personal connections is at a minimum. Where as design requires an attitude. An attitude in demeanour, work ethics, and most of all an attitude in the way you are and how you see the world around you.

Keywords: *Attitude, Design, Adaptability, Learning, Change, self-reflective*

I was all of five when I realised I have an attitude. Left to my own devices on a hot summer afternoon in Delhi, I saw the pristine white wall of our balcony as an appropriate canvas. Armed with a new box of crayons, I unleashed all my creative energies onto the wall. Pink, and blue juxtaposed with purple and green, yellow mingled with orange and red. My parents were visibly distressed as we lived in a rented apartment. Two days down the line, the landlord happened to pay us a visit; aghast at first, he peered at the wall once again and then declared he did not mind the artwork! Emboldened by this, I went to the wall again, and that is when I realised I had an attitude. Towards my work , and towards being confident about using colour. Years later, while doing a colour exercise in design school, I was told I had an unusual approach towards how I saw, mixed and used colour. It's an attitude I thought, and this I imbibed into my practice.

Attitude is also about acceptance, I embraced the changes from analogues to digital, from how design perceptions became understood in different ways. As an exhibition/visual designer, my approach to work imbibed another kind of attitude, it made sure I aligned with the new age technology.

It has been well over four decades since I graduated from the National institute of Design, Ahmedabad India. In these intervening years, I also became a design educator. Almost 35 years into education has made me aware that attitudes have drastically changed. Not merely in terms of learning, but in terms of how students perceive design and all that goes with it. It is disconcerting, to say the least, how the learner of today does not have the attitude to either explore, be curious, or have a streak of madness. They are almost robotic in their approach to the classroom, bored; they do not stare out of the window, but into their phones. AI speaks to them, answers their questions, writes their papers, and decodes their assignments. Only a handful of learners are still enthusiastic, and proclaim an attitude.

Design to me, is an intrinsic part of our daily existence, a human centric problem solving tool. In recent times, we have given it new nomenclatures, but at the core of which still lies a process, driven by research and a deep understanding of the psyche. To embrace this we need the attitude towards evolving theories, ideologies, but most of all a self-reflective personality that speaks of individuality, embodies the spirit of the self, anticipate user interaction, all leading to cohesive design solutions.

To be able to do this effectively, the truly creative mind must not stop dreaming; there is the artist in all. Of course the right brain often overlaps with the left. A juxtaposition of logic and art. However, it is all about one's attitude regarding social relations; this has to be centre stage, but today one seldom sees that spark, rarely senses the attitude which can change the way we think.

The young learner of today is in search of instant gratification. Seldom stopping to pay attention to empathy or even delving into the soul of what lies beneath. My role as an educator often feels redundant in the classroom, where the only deliverable is either marks-driven, or what gives remuneration. However, I still try my best to motivate the student by narrating my experiences, escapades, and sharing that attitude I long proclaimed, of the times when I was five. I never stopped drawing, dabbling with colour and writing poetry. To me this is my personal style, an attitude which I feel connects me to the reality of the world around us. It is in the way I dress, think radically, and speak. Utopian in some ways, I imagine, but utopia can be inspirational and can change the way people, or the design student thinks.

I recently conducted some ideation exercises which were out of the box. At the end of the day (having taken away the phones and laptops of the students), I asked them what they thought? I was pleasantly surprised. "Liberating" they echoed with sentiment! A total change in attitude!

My own trajectory through these years of being a close observer in design methods, policies, critical analytics, and mainly education, is this: we may embrace all the AI we want, but with reasonable usage. I am not averse to it as long as the willingness and the attitude to learn through some lecture based or human-centric intervention still prevails.

Today we are on the threshold of opposing schools of thought. I am not one for any conflict. My indicator of learning is the welfare of the student; their attitude towards information has to be defined between the parameters of their own understanding. It can most certainly be achieved.

As for me, the white walls of my childhood still linger in my mind, echoes of the splashes of colour often assail my thoughts, the journey from the untrained artist to designer has been joyous, has made me who I am. A woman designer with a positive attitude.



Dr. Yuliia Korneiko

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Yuliia Korneiko is the Assistant to the Rector for International Educational Projects at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts and an Associate Professor in the Department of Cross-cultural Communication in Creative Industries. She holds a PhD in Pedagogy and a Master's degree in Design with a focus on art-based therapeutic practices. Since joining KSADA in 2018, she has worked in international cooperation, design education, and art-recovery initiatives. Her research interests include cross-cultural communication, art therapy, healing environments, and trauma-informed design for vulnerable communities.

WOMEN DESIGNERS SHAPING HEALING ENVIRONMENTS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION FROM UKRAINE

YULIYA KORNEIKO

Abstract

This essay reflects on my professional journey as a Ukrainian educator working during a time of war, displacement, and transformation. As women designers become increasingly influential in the global discourse on inclusive and healing environments, the Ukrainian context adds a profound dimension to this work. Teaching at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (KSADA) under daily air-raid alarms has reshaped my understanding of design as a tool of emotional resilience, care, and recovery. Through the development of the Master's program "Universal Design and Art Recovery Practices," I have worked with women students who create therapeutic books, sensory tools, and art-based interventions for displaced children and vulnerable communities. Their diploma projects—ranging from multisensory room design and innovative therapeutic toys to meme-based communication and art-therapeutic games—demonstrate how design becomes a form of healing. This essay shares my experiences, challenges, and the role of women designers in shaping restorative environments in Ukraine today.

Keywords: Art-Recovery Design, Multisensory, Healing design, Art-therapeutic games, Ukraine

My essay

I often think about how radically my understanding of design has changed over the past years. Before the war, design for me was a space of creativity, communication, and cultural dialogue. Today, living and teaching in Kharkiv, a city that experiences daily air-raid alarms, explosions, and displacement, design has become something much deeper: a tool of care, emotional grounding, and human resilience.

As a woman designer, educator, and coordinator of international educational projects, I have learned that design in crisis is no longer about aesthetics or trends. It becomes a form of protection, self-expression, and healing—especially for children and young people who carry invisible emotional wounds.

My Path Into Art-Recovery Design

Women's Projects That Heal: A New Wave of Ukrainian Design

Over the past years, I have supervised diploma projects that respond directly to the emotional and social needs of displaced children and teenagers. All of them were created by women designers, each demonstrating empathy, care, and a deep understanding of healing design.

1. Designing a Sensory Room through Multisensory Approaches

This project developed a multisensory room based on Snoezelen principles adapted to the realities of wartime Ukraine. The student designed lighting scenarios, tactile zones, sound textures, and flexible calming modules for shelters, IDP centres, and schools. It

showed how sensory environments support emotional regulation and reduce anxiety among children experiencing trauma.

2. Developing an Innovative Toy as a Tool for Children's Emotional Support

This work centred on creating a therapeutic toy providing grounding, comfort, and emotional security for children under stress. Soft textures, weighted elements, and symbolic features help children cope with fear and instability. Such toys are now widely used in temporary educational spaces.

3. Meme Design as a Tool for Teenagers' Visual Communication

This project investigated how visual humour, digital identity, and memes serve as tools for emotional expression and peer communication. During displacement, memes became a lightweight but powerful medium for sharing difficult emotions, offering support, and building community. The work revealed how visual communication strengthens psychological resilience.

4. Designing an Art-Therapeutic Ice-Breaker Game for Communicative Interaction

This diploma explored an art-therapeutic game aimed at helping children and teenagers rebuild trust and communication after relocation. Through drawing prompts, symbolic tasks, and playful interaction, the game encourages emotional sharing and strengthens social bonds.

Healing Environments as a Collective Practice

Through my work, I have come to understand that healing environments are not created by one person—they emerge from collective resilience.

As women educators, we create emotional safety through communication.

As women designers, we build tools, spaces, and symbols that support emotional survival.

As women students, our learners transform their pain into creative support for others.

This collective female perspective aligns with global theories of therapeutic design, which emphasise the role of comfort, sensory balance, and emotional clarity in recovery (Ulrich, 1991).

My Design Philosophy Today

After teaching through crisis, my design philosophy rests on three principles:

1. Design must care.

It should reduce harm, calm the nervous system, and offer emotional stability.

2. Design must listen.

Healing environments begin with empathy—listening to trauma, displacement, and lived experience.

3. Design must restore.

Through colour, texture, narrative, interaction, and communication, design can rebuild a sense of safety and belonging.

Nowadays in Ukraine, design is more than a creative practice—it is a lifeline for emotional survival.

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