

SECONDSIGHT^{Ⓢ②}

OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE FUTURE

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FROM THE HEART



TOWARDS
9 BILLION



AIRBNB



LIVE A RICHER
LIFE



BREWING WITH A MISSION



SLOW
MONEY



DESIGN SYMPHONY



NOT
VOGUE



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ABOUT INTERDEPENDENCY



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'THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT NATURE PLAYS'



'DESIGN BECOMES METADESIGN, A SHARING
AND DIALOGICAL MODE, WHICH MAY
GENERATE TRANSFORMATIONS AND
RECONFIGURATIONS OF CONTEXTS'

IMAGE BY: FLAVIA AMADEU



DESIGN

SYMPHONY

INTERVIEW BY ANDREIA ROCHA, AMSTERDAM 2013



Interdependence, in *ter de pend ence* [in-ter-di-pen-duhns]: noun, the quality or condition of being interdependent or mutually reliant on each other. Interdependence is about social living, to be in symphony with one another, to share common principles, to be mutual responsible. It is a major future trend in a myriad of areas and above all in design. Social Design illustrates design practices that aim to improve human well-being and create positive change.

Flavia Amadeu is a Brazilian social designer and researcher with the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, at the London College of Fashion. Her research runs in collaboration with the TECBOR Project developed by the chemistry laboratory LATEQ from the University of Brasília in Brazil. She also works as a design consultant for craft based communities, and develops authorial design work, mostly in jewellery and fashion. Her work and research is a precise example of interdependence in the design landscape.

Flavia researches the interaction between designers and artisans, design and crafts, focusing on how design activities have enduring positive results for craft based communities. She is also working together with Sky Rainforest Rescue, WWF UK and WWF Brazil in a beautiful project which involves the Amazon rainforest and its communities to save 1 billion trees until 2016.

'What I intend with my work as a designer and as a designer consultant with artisans and communities is to catalyze positive change. Whereas as a researcher I aim at bringing more awareness to the complexity of working within the growing field of social innovation, in which designers have been increasingly

involved.' In 2004 she joined Lateq laboratory to work with ready-to-use colored rubber sheets, the SAS (Semi Artifact Sheet) rubber. This material was developed by the laboratory to provide rubber tappers in the Amazonian rainforest a method to create valuable products using simple and costless technique and resources resulting in the settlement of local communities and in environmental protection. At that time, the innovative material was only being applied in mouse pads, Flavia learnt the process of transforming the latex into vulcanize rubber, she explored and tested its characteristics - resistance, elasticity, softness and 'tactile feeling'. The Organic Jewellery is her authorial work outcoming from this research, it is a playful collection of rubber jewellery designed ensuring a minimum material waste and emphasizing the rubber by avoiding the integration of other materials. Flavia's Organic Jewellery project is showcased in Phaidon's sustainable design book Vitamin Green.

SOCIAL DESIGN

In Flavia's opinion, the role of a social designer 'becomes diluted in numerous other roles'. It makes you think where is the design? Design becomes metadesign, a sharing and dialogical mode, which

'A 'MORE COMPLETE ACTIVITY' IN WHICH
INTERDEPENDENCE IS PART OF THE THINKING
AND DOING'

may generate transformations and reconfigurations of contexts. Thereby, for a social designer you can consider at least some of these roles: a catalyst, a facilitator; an adviser; a creative collaborator; a communicator; a manager; a peer; and even a friend.' Flavia believes social design is much more about the focused communities than about the designer: 'The product or artifact is not the end result, but what goes beyond the material is what matters, what provokes debates in the social and political arena, what transforms lives and grows into emotional wellbeing.' As a social designer, Flavia is interested in 'what's beyond the artifact, while artifact is the meeting point for dialog, collaboration and transformation'. By working as a design consultant in craft based communities, designers can encounter issues in the interaction between design and crafts. Flavia's concern rests in the interaction between designer and the artisans. She believes that 'mutual respect is fundamental and comprises a flat hierarchy, from which it is possible to build a relationship of collaboration'.

AUTONOMY AND RESILIENCE

Besides that for Flavia the work with artisans and communities implies 2 important concepts, 'Autonomy' and 'Resilience'. 'I want them to transform their life for better; by improving their

work respecting their way of living, I want them to grow with a sustainable and meaningful activity and become able to manage their own production.' By 'Resilience', which is also one of the rubber characteristics, Flavia wants to 'perceive how the participatory activities, which are driven by a design and crafts interaction, have resonance along the time, how people community members absorb information and experiences, adapt them and transform them along the time, thereby transforming themselves.'

DOUTOR DA BORRACHA

'The case of Doutor da Borracha is an amazing example of resilience and autonomy' Flavia says. 'Originally a rubber tapper; he became a recognized artisan in his community, state and in Brazil.' Doutor da Borracha is a brilliant artisan that lives and works in the Amazonian rainforest, he created beautiful rubber shoes with the innovative SAS rubber. His work has been developing along the years as well as his technique, his shoes and his life. 'Today he lives of the rubber shoes' and teaches other community members to make the shoes he invented. 'He also reforested part of the rainforest where he lives which was 'cleared' for other economic activities.' Last year he was awarded with the first prize in a Brazilian competition. Flavia adds that



IMAGE BY: FLAVIA AMADEU

the case of Doutor Da Borracha is 'an incredible case of interdependence and love for his context, a meaningful life that he is proud to say it was transformed; and the generosity to teach others and to allow his knowledge and technique to grow in a resilient way'.

BIG SYMPHONY

In the Amazon Rainforest individuals interdepend on themselves and on nature, for Flavia, this is where the beauty lies. The spontaneity and survival force makes interdependence a primordial state.

'For example, in the case of the wild rubber from the Amazon, the natural environment, the social, the economic, the politic, the tradition, the technological innovation, the individual and the collective well being are all a big symphony, in which all the elements are connected. Once the forest is destroyed, the whole symphony stops working; when the rubber cannot be a profitable activity for the rubber tappers, they change their activity perhaps for cattle ranch, or they move to cities, probably where they will have a poorer quality of life. You see, it is all a big symphony as you suggested.'

These extractivist communities take their basic needs and economic subsistence within the rainforest. 'Historically, these populations are politically active and have been fighting for the rainforest preservation since the 70s, having as result the

creation of the protected areas of production, from which they explore resources in a sustainable way. It is important to support these communities, as inhabiting the rainforest also means to preserve it. Moreover; they have extended knowledge about the local flora and fauna.'

FUTURE

Flavia sees the future of design as a 'more complete activity' in which interdependence is part of the thinking and doing. 'Crafting for me is a complete activity already integrated to the local, the collective and the individual. I see crafting as a synthesis of tradition and innovation, the material and the spiritual. It is indeed a meaningful work and it is transformative at the same time that extends the life of generations through continuation.' 'I think today, as designers, we cannot think just in a final target or product, anymore. We must be aware about the interdependence of the whole productive process and the implications of our works. We must think from cradle to cradle; we must work with ethically sourced materials; we must be aware about the people involved and the environmental impact. With understanding the interconnectedness, maybe we can work for a more sustainable world. Design cannot be detached from this concept.' ●

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