



Good evening. I am very pleased to be speaking here today at such a prestigious design conference.

22nd March 1754

Design has always been at the heart of the RSA's mission. We were founded in 1754 by a drawing master, William Shipley, who was also a social activist. This year we are therefore celebrating our 250th Anniversary. In those days London, like New York, was prosperous and had expanded rapidly but it had a huge proportion of poor people. They suffered from crowded living conditions and no fresh water, sanitation or access to medical care. Shipley and ten like-minded people therefore met in Rawthmell's Coffee House in Covent Garden, London on the 22nd March that year with the objective of making the world a better place.

Shipley was a designer and his endowment has resonated down the years because he decided to use his own experience as the basis of a great social movement. My challenge to you all here today is to ask you also to lift your sights so you may be remembered not only for the material wealth you may achieve but also for the way you have used your design skills for society.

Benjamin Franklin

The RSA has always had strong US connections. One of our first Fellows was Benjamin Franklin who joined in 1756 as he moved to London where he stayed for 18 years. He served on our Agricultural Committee and became Chairman of our Colonies Committee. He left London for America in 1775 just before the War of Independence.

However to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his joining the RSA, and by coincidence the 250th Anniversary of his birth, in 1956 we established our Benjamin Franklin Medal. This commemorates people who have made an exceptional contribution to the special relationship between the UK and the US. It has in the past been won by many eminent people such as Senator Mitchell and Colin Powell.

Medal Winner

It gives me great pleasure to be able to announce tonight that the 2004 Benjamin Franklin Medal is to be awarded to a designer, Jonathan Ive of Apple. Jonathan is a Brit who has now settled successfully in the US but he first came to prominence when he won the RSA's student design award. I very much look forward to welcoming Jonathan to Buckingham Palace on October 27th when his Medal will be presented to him by HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Hammond

Our two countries had the inconvenience of the War of Independence but following this then our relationship gradually got back to normal. Britain's first ambassador to the US was a man called Hammond who was appointed by Prime Minister William Pitt in 1791. He took up his residence in this great city which was of course then the official capital of the United States. His role does however show that life used to go rather more slowly then than it does

now. The government archives in London contain a letter written two years later in 1793 from William Pitt to his Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville. It states; “We appointed Hammond in 1791, but we did not hear from him last year. If we do not hear from him again next year then we should send him a note.”

RSA

I am proud to be Chairman of this unique organization, the RSA. It is for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. In the 1750’s, Arts had the meaning of skills and represented all those man-made things, making up the vast majority of consumer goods, that were crafted by hand. It therefore covered the fine arts such as painting or sculpture, which were then known as the Polite Arts. However many more people were involved as artisans with designing and making clothes, carriages, furniture, utensils, and household decorations. The novel idea was Manufactures which were things made by machine and in the 1750’s these included relatively few items such as pins and textiles. The third element of Commerce was the exchange of goods in the market system so that they could reach where they were required.

RSA (2)

Shipley wanted to use all of the expertise of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce to improve the state of the world. He had a five strand manifesto: to embolden enterprise, to enlarge science, to refine art, to encourage manufactures and to extend our commerce”.

Shipley’s Scheme

He saw his mission as “For improvements in the present plans of education, in naval affairs, in husbandry, and particularly for the introduction of such Manufactures as may employ great numbers of the poor, which seems the only way of lessening the swarms of thieves and beggars throughout the kingdom”

Early Prizes

The sense of using design expertise and enterprise for the good of society runs right through the Society’s history. We offered prizes for modeling, carving, chasing, enamel painting, medals, glass-blowing, book-binding, leather-work and generally ‘useful objects calculated to improve the general taste’

Leonardo

For many people, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) ranks as the “first designer”. His Study for a Flying Machine is illustrated here. In the work of this universal genius, art and technical design are united.

Etymologically, the word “design” comes from the Italian disegno, which since the Renaissance has meant the drafting or drawing of a work. The verb to design originally meant to plan, to intend, to map out a project. Only in the early twentieth century with the rise of the professional designer did we start to get the meaning that we have today.

Since Leonardo, design and designers have always had a hand in shaping each wave of industrial, economic and social change. Design was part of the first stirrings of the Industrial Revolution which began in Britain in the 18th century.

Wedgwood

The Wedgwood pottery factory, for example, was founded in 1769 by Josiah Wedgwood in the northern city of Stoke on Trent. The distinction of Wedgwood's factory was that it was no longer intended to serve only the demand of the aristocracy, but sought a wider market among the middle class with more everyday pottery. Wedgwood was, in essence, a pioneer of the mass market, seeing a need and filling it, with "a kind of earthenware table service with a completely new appearance which can take sudden changes in temperature, is easy and quick to produce, and is therefore inexpensive."

In the process of transition from handwork to industrial production, conceptual work – the planning of an object – began to separate itself from production work by either hand or machine.

With the increased division of labor in the course of industrialisation, the first draft of a project and its actual production no longer lay in the hands of the same person. Thus industrialization created the basic requirement for the profession of the designer.

Chippendale

Portfolios and pattern books were already being printed and widely distributed in order to solicit and to secure orders. The products themselves had formerly been ordered and finished individually according to customer specification but now began to be standardized.

The pattern books of the early industrial era in Britain come from people such as Thomas Chippendale, 1718-79. He had a great influence throughout Europe and was one of the first real industrial designers. His skill was not in building furniture himself but in designing and marketing. He was so successful that he created the first designer label and even had a furniture period named after him.

Industrialization

In 1783 Scotsman James Watt invented the rotary steam engine, and with it began the industrial revolution. This radically altered the life first of the people of England, and a few decades later of the rest of the world.

Expensive and time-consuming handwork could now be replaced by machine work, and the supply of goods for broad social classes required the inexpensive production of all sorts of consumer goods. A new range of design work also came into existence with commissions for railroads and factories. Design was instrumental in uniting art and industry in Victorian Britain in the 19th century.

Great Exhibition

In the 19th century the Society initiated the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, London which showcased invention and innovation from around the world. The Crystal Palace designed by Joseph Paxton (1801-65) made a clear break with traditional architecture. The use of glass and iron eliminated the traditional separation of interior and exterior.

The technical advances of the later 19th century resulted in new methods of production, new commodities, and new equipment with new functions. But a new aesthetic of industrial products was not initially part of the picture. For many of the new mechanical objects there was no tradition of either form or usage, leaving questions of design shrouded in uncertainty, with no historical precedence to build upon.

Model T

Products like the Model T Ford were conceived for broad mass usage and often faced no real market competition. Their aesthetic appearance was therefore of little consequence, and was accorded little consideration, at least in the beginning.

Competition of Industrial Designs

In order to encourage better design of the new mass produced goods, in 1924 the RSA created the Competition of Industrial Designs. We can see here some of the early winners.

We continue to run this Competition, now called Design Directions, and this has become the UK's most influential scheme to encourage good design with most design colleges including the projects in their curricula.

Royal Designers for Industry

Following on from the design competition, The Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry was established 70 years ago by the RSA. This was in response to: 'a crying need for some form of public recognition for those designers who, through their great work for industry, are deserving of a wide public recognition of their valuable services to their country'.

Over the years, the one-line ordinance which defines an RDI has evolved and it now reads:

"An RDI is someone who has achieved sustained excellence in aesthetic and efficient design for industry"

RDI's

This shows you the current list of RDI's, who are all UK nationals. They are an eminent group but young designers are now entering a very different world from the one which existed in the 1930's. Then it seemed possible for an eccentric to stumble into design whereas now there is almost mandatory training and education.

Design has always mattered but now it is everywhere. Design is a cultural event, and great design exhibitions, like great art exhibitions, draw streams of visitors.

Hon RDI's

It is an international business, as shown by this list of our current Honorary RDI's who are those people reaching the high RDI standard who are not in the UK. The pervading presence of design has however also led to an inflation of the term. Like a seal of approval, it is applied indiscriminately to all sorts of things to increase their marketability. Suddenly, there are designer jeans, designer glasses, designer furniture, and, to top it all, designer drugs, none of which has anything to do with the original meaning of the word.

RSA Manifesto

When I took over the Chairmanship of the RSA last Fall I led the introduction of a new Manifesto to unify our activities and give a clear focus for our 22,000 Fellows around the world.

We created five Manifesto Challenges, which now underpin the whole of our work at the RSA:

- Encouraging Enterprise
- Moving towards a Zero-waste Society
- Developing a Capable Population
- Fostering Resilient Communities
- Advancing Global Citizenship

Design at the RSA has a rich tradition of creative achievement and social engagement. It has always been central to the work of the RSA and this Manifesto provides a fresh opportunity to reinforce the message that design can be a genuine vehicle for change.

We have used the Manifesto to redefine our design focus from just concentrating on commercial competitiveness to a broader concern for societal and global issues.

These new areas in design not only have the means to open up new market opportunities but also to improve the quality of life for everyone.

The Design Process

Designers are adept at "seeing" patterns and design is a process that can create connections and develop insights. They then give life to radical ideas, visualize solutions and develop prototypes. They hope to inspire others, change attitudes and effect change.

Behind every design is a process - a thought process. And that process transcends design itself. Design, like business, is all about solving problems. A designer's true power comes through working with many partners. Design skills and business skills are converging. You all need to spend some time asking yourselves how you can use your expensively obtained skills not only to produce a better widget but also to advance awareness within

wider communities. Designing as a way of thinking can add extraordinary value to the most intractable issues we all face in this uncertain world

A famous seminar about design was held at No 10 Downing Street in 1984 and called 'design for profit'. Now we might talk about 'design for people' or 'design to improve the quality of life' — neither of which means that profit is not involved but we have finally put the user at the heart of the design process

I would like to challenge you today to think how you could use your design skills to make the world a better place and I would like to give you some examples from the RSA's work to encourage you in this direction.

One of our design competition winners Tirza Abb, memorably said: "The RSA Awards provided me with a starting point from which to realize that there IS a world out there for designers who want to do more with their skills than advertise consumption."

Enterprise

Our first Manifesto challenge of encouraging enterprise is at the centre of traditional industrial design. Developing bright ideas for business has always been central to the RSA's mission and is a key aspect of its new Design Directions programme with student designers.

Design is playing a critical role for corporations as they turn away from cost-cutting survival tactics to return to strategies of growth. Designing is a strategic process that adds substantial value to business.

Design Winners

This slide shows some of the winning designs in our recent student competition to encourage enterprise.

Moving towards a zero waste society

Our second challenge relates to the environment and there is an ever increasing demand for raw materials, resulting in devastating effects on the world's natural resources and its supplies of non-renewable energy.

This summer the design industry passes a milestone it would prefer to forget. It is exactly 50 years since the term 'planned obsolescence' was coined by the American designer Brook Stevens.

The design profession from Augustus Pugin to the Bauhaus had prided itself on a moral and ethical stance but was now tainted with the charge of consumer exploitation and environmental waste.

The author Vance Packard condemned Stevens in his books *The Hidden Persuaders* and *The Waste Makers* for promoting two different types of planned obsolescence — 'functional

obsolescence', in which objects were intentionally designed to wear out, and 'psychological obsolescence', in which last year's model was deliberately made to look outdated in the manipulated mind of the consumer.

But 50 years on, there are signs that designers are carving out a new reputation for sustainability. From the smallest medical device to the largest town plan, sustainable solutions are high on the design agenda.

Many laws encouraging sustainability have been proposed or passed. In Europe, the Waste Electronics and Electrical Equipment, W-E-E-E, directive, will require manufacturers to take responsibility for recycling and reusing the products they introduce to the market when the consumer life of those products comes to an end. This will have major implications.

WEEE Man

This is a model of the 25 foot high structure weighing 3 tonnes that we propose to erect on the South Bank of the Thames near Tower Bridge. It is made up of the electrical waste consumed by one person in their lifetime. It should provide a graphic reminder of the resources we all use.

Developing a Capable Population

Our objective with this third challenge is to increase world class educational opportunities that cater for individual aptitudes and aspirations; that realise everyone's lifelong learning potentials and that produce a skilled and capable nation

This means equipping people with the skills and knowledge they will need to enable them to thrive and prosper in our dynamic but complex twenty-first century economy.

Design for Education

This slide shows a range of projects where design has played a key role in improving educational opportunities. All of you live in communities with schools or colleges and this is a great opportunity for you to use your design skills for the greater good.

Fostering Resilient Communities

Communities need to help all of their members. In particular, our work in the area of inclusive design (or as it is called in the US, universal design) promotes the need for designers to take into consideration the needs of all of the population, whether aging, young or disabled.

Resilient communities also depend at their core on the healthy functioning of local and national democracy. This is why the RSA had a project this year in collaboration with the Electoral Commission to encourage multi-disciplinary design solutions to improve voter access, participation and engagement in the democratic process.

A further key area is community facilities so that people feel that their community is successful and has a real future.

Inclusive Design Resource

We have produced a web based resource for all those interested in inclusive design to give them examples of best practice. This has the objective of encouraging all designers to think about the inclusiveness of their products.

Design Winners

Community facilities, bus shelters, easy to use appliances, special type faces for those with sight difficulties.

Advancing Global Citizenship

Our fifth challenge is to advance global citizenship.

You might wonder why we feel this is so important. After all so much design thinking is focused on the developed world which has the money to buy the products you all design. Perhaps it is however worth remembering every day that the US makes up less than 5% of the world's population. I hope that there is nobody here who feels that the design profession should ignore the other 95%.

The Modern Developed World

In the West we have become used to an unprecedented standard of living. Educated people can move between countries and are well dressed in clothes with famous trademarks although in fact those clothes are probably imported from around the world. They can enjoy worldwide music and movies and eat a wide range of cuisines. They can phone internationally, they can take holidays abroad and they encourage their children to travel. If they are unemployed or sick they expect the Government to look after them. Indeed they are usually paid more not to work than most people around the globe are paid for working.

World Population

However, according to the World Bank these developed high income countries have only 0.95 billion people (950 million people) in them who represent therefore 16% of the world's population. The low income countries have the other 5.1 billion people representing 84% of the globe's population.

GNP Per Capita

The billion people in high income countries have nearly \$27,000 each every year whereas the majority 5 billion in low income countries have only \$3,700. These people live at about the same standard of living as did the mass of people around Shipley in the 1750's when he formed the RSA.

Health Expenditure

This income differential has the same effect as it had 250 years ago in London or New York. In the West we endlessly debate our health plans, but we spend \$2,700 each year on healthcare. In contrast the people in the low and medium income have to make do on just \$71.

Infant Mortality

This obviously has a huge impact. I am sure all the parents here can visualize the fact that infant mortality at 8.9% in low and medium income countries is more than 12 times greater than the 0.7% in high income ones.

Contrast Pictures

The developing world has to cope in particular with precarious farming economics and a huge movement to the cities. Half of the world's population will be living in urban areas where there is usually inadequate sanitation and poor medical care. The governments are often corrupt and there are harsh laws to maintain the status quo. How can you help to improve this situation?

Design plays a huge role in product development. How can it also lead the way in advancing global citizenship and ensuring that both consumers and producers get a fair deal?

Design Solutions

This slide shows the wind-up radio and wind-up torch that were developed so people could use electrical goods where there is no electricity supply and batteries are too expensive. It also shows the Cellpore water purification system which provides pure water in emergencies.. In South Africa we have one of our Fellows who is a designer who is using his skills to help the local craftsmen to make their goods more marketable by showing them examples of what is available and giving them feedback from the market.

Water and Sanitation

There are still over 2 billion people in the world who do not have accessible clean water and proper sanitation. This leads to unpredictable disease and the decimation of any planned progress. At the RSA we have therefore embarked on a project to bring water and sanitation to a village in India, combining our own resources with those from corporations and from government. It costs about \$200 per household to change lives radically and we shall be using all of our resources, including volunteer designers, to make sure that this project becomes a showpiece of how a little money can make a huge difference.

The Future Challenge

I would therefore conclude by saying that over the many years of its history, design has expanded in its definition and range of responsibilities. There is far more to design today than deciding what something will look like.

Consumers, like manufacturers and designers, are changing. Many buyers have become more sophisticated. As well as a product's practical value they look for its individuality, authenticity, and meaning for their lives.

The importance of design will continue to grow as its field of responsibilities increases. The field of design is being stretched as its methodology is applied to more areas.

The world is becoming more interdependent. We cannot just live our lives in a personalized shell. We must be aware of people in our own communities, in each country and around the world as we are all being drawn closer together.

You are all very important people in the design profession. I would ask each of you to consider how you can follow William Shipley in his mission to make the world a better place.

As you sit here over the next couple of days and listen to all of the following speakers, I hope that you will still remember this presentation and look deeply into yourselves. Make a decision as to how you can use your tremendous skills not only to make life better for yourself but also for the others on this planet. What new design challenge will you decide to take up?

Thank you.