

2020 will commence the next cycle of "Roaring Twenties". A period in the last century marked by the beginning of modernization as now we know it. With the birth of consumer technology came seismic shifts in culture, and daily life was forever changed. Automobiles, movies, the telephone, radio, electrical appliances and the business of aviation were all introduced to the human experience during this time. As the spirit of innovation invigorated western societies, the possibilities for a new world felt infinite. Traditions were broken and left behind, and those affected by the shift stepped into a curious new way of life.

Artists played a major role in stimulating modernism during this time; why the 1920s were also heralded as the "Jazz Age". In the wake of World War I, an emergent class of creatively gifted people were embodying new forms of expressions to uplift the collective mood. Their actions, inspiring an untold tomorrow, made way for the 20s to be shaped by a converging advancement of art and technology. Modern entertainment took hold with this shift.

In her TED Talk "Your Elusive Creative Genius" author Elizabeth Gilbert describes how ancient societies didn't believe creativity came from human beings¹. They believed instead that it came to humans from a distant and unknowable source in the form of a divine attendant. As time went on, this belief transformed and it was the artist who was seen as unworldly and other. In the 1920s came new technology that could capture this divine magic. Electric sound and image recording mechanisms quickly

lead to radio broadcasts and motion pictures; media that'd define our favorite pastimes for nearly a century to come. Microgroove vinyl and silver screen pictures became in greater demand, allowing audiences to start paying for new ways to experience an artist's wonder. This made for newly lucrative modes of art distribution, and with that an industry was born.

Emerging industries entail gatekeepers. Back then, breaking into the industry was an artist's only chance at making a living through pure use of their creative power. Winning a gatekeeper's support was necessary for an artist to create work and build a narrative. This support was won by birthright, dumb luck or great struggle. Record labels, film studios, publishing houses, art galleries and curators held keys to invaluable resources while also carrying a unique trade at growing an artist's career. The systems for refining talent into star quality adhered to industry standard media types, which formed clear-cut boxes for art to squeeze inside of. Also creating standards for the genres of art artists could embody. All of this would change completely at the dawn of the internet.

Since the first "Roaring Twenties", technology has continued on a path that leaves more creative potential unearthed in its wake. Recent advancements have empowered human expression, as software is

Mission Objective: Art 2020

proliferating new ways to create and communicate. In the course of innovation currently unfolding, that we now understand as the information or digital age, the experience of an artist is normalizing amongst many societies. In 2019, it's hard **not** to meet someone who didn't just recently discover the inherent bit of artistry buried inside them, fighting for space in their life.

New paradigms are causing art to become more fluid. Flowing outside and in between the systems that formerly governed it. New kinds of creators and thinkers exist now, and in this landscape gatekeepers are no longer the ones who build cultural capital. They instead support artists who are capable of making their own waves, after seeing and taking a liking to the self-actualized essence a creative person emits on their own – out in the world or on digital platforms.

Artists are embodying this increased autonomy, producing work that reflects uncommon explorations of self. Void of old limitations and living in a sea of new information, artists can dive deep into their worlds in total search of what makes them tick. Even finding different avenues for doing so. Emerging forms of art are more deeply embedded in information systems that help facilitate an artist's search. As a result, the output is increasingly conceptual, often dealing in audiovisual realms of new media that also reflect newfound tools of a changing reality. In this reality creativity keeps expanding, however some boundaries remain firmly in place.

Technology affordances are yet to influence the professional classifications artists may use to achieve success – beyond a capacity to create or entertain. The standard notion of artists as entertainers and content creators is extremely limiting in a time when art is opening itself up to more interpretations. We're yet to experience a watershed moment in this regard, seemingly stuck in the 1920s anxious for the next real move. Until that time comes, people across

all creative genres are moving through quicksand: the more some move and grow, the quicker the rest fall and sink. The logistics are concerning as more humans become creatively aware. Creativity's floodgates are open and rushing, while spaces for creative output are expanding at snail's pace. These are grave circumstances that signal an imbalance in financially viable ways artists may create and exist. Resulting in a small, stagnant number of people who may do so. There's still a world of untapped potential.

This is a good problem to diagnose. Two main hindrances are the value artists are assigned with delivering, and the platforms through which they can convey that value. The entertainment industry paradigm presents one challenge, wherein art of many kinds is rendered unconsciously as entertainment and nothing further. There are few ways for an artist's knowledge to transcend this realm in application. This constrains how artists are instructed to hone their craft, stay in a vocation and make a living.

The notion of a content creator is also tricky, a paradigm that confines artists to platforms for sharing that don't allow them the full expression of their gifts. Creative people fuel social media platforms, but these platforms exploit and indirectly benefit today's creators. While people stay online longer to discover intriguing content generated by all forms of artists and creators, platforms monetize this attention through ad sales to evolve into major corporations. Rather than supporting creative types, the goal of these companies is to acquire more users through the continued acquisition of free content. For them business is good, and now creators are beholden to social media to keep free gates of distribution open. While artists should be at the center of the economic models they sustain, these systems are fundamentally consumer-centric, optimized for success that may only be achieved through a mass audience.

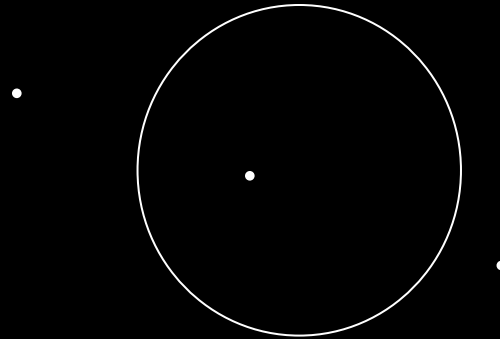
On this course, an obstacle is likely mounting in time and space. Capturing the attention of the masses is expensive, and that attention is often short-lived or fickle. Fame comes at many costs that not every artist in search of success wishes to stomach. Those who make it are those we see can see. They rise to the perceived cream of the crop and from their platform deliver a message to everyone watching. The more often this happens, in general the better. As visionary perspectives continue making their way into the world, human beings have more opportunity to resonate with a greater abundance of information.

Intelligent, sentient beings rely on steady streams of varied information in order to evolve. Human evolution used to primarily rely on physical information – helping us to eat and roam the earth – whereas now it relies on mental processes that help us learn and articulate our thoughts. We've recently been experiencing an evolution of the mind. Popular ideas and ensuing popular culture are cultivated in a main stream of media. Each entry point to the stream reflects an information source, and these are rapidly increasing. But historically a bottleneck existed in the stream as it lacked physical channels for growth. Now each increasing facet allows the stream more space to connect and flow.

Different media we experience in our pastime, that we currently perceive as entertainment, account for some of the stream's most viable entry points. As these channels are created for society to access them en masse, the channels are engrained with a notion that a broad group of people can only relate to a short scope of familiar, equally broad perspectives (something further explained in the next section). As a result, the main stream is constructed from inherently restrained channels that are designed to reflect a breadth of common perspectives that limit our collective ability to evolve.

Now, for the benefit of artists who wish to share knowledge as media and society who seeks more perspectives to learn from, we need to carve fresh channels in the stream. A new generation of entry points that may help us bypass future blockage.

Roberto Vertangi



Modern innovation happens one of two ways: *radical* innovation that's *pushed* by technology or *incremental* innovation that's *pulled* from the market². Technology breakthroughs aren't easy to come by, making the social, cultural and utilitarian drives of consumers the dominant impetus for innovation. This pattern is apparent amidst unicorn startups that recently found success based on ideas about how to afford people greater convenience in their daily lives. User-centric design is the current mode of success in the business community worldwide, especially in the United States³. This results in markets most commonly affected by incremental change.

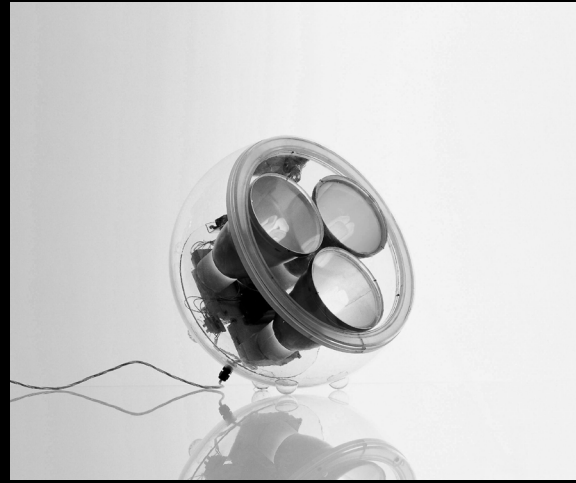
A different mindset is required for breakthrough introductions to the human experience. Yet how does one introduce radical innovations in the absence of groundbreaking technology? Milan-based Professor Roberto Vertangi proposes a third strategy he calls design-driven innovation. Ten years of empirical analyses, discussions, research and assignments on the topic culminate in his 2009 book *Design-Driven Innovation: Changing the Rules of Competition by Radically Innovating what Things Mean*. The design-driven innovation strategy is more about business management than design. However grasping the approach relies on clarity around the function of design, a discipline that has thrived in ambiguity for some time now.

From a high level, design practices are those that determine the formal qualities of an object, also associated with the manifestation of style and beauty. As design is widely applicable, it's carried out by a range of industries for varying goals and purposes. New disciplines eventually coalesce around shared principles that Thomas Kuhn first regarded as "paradigms" in his groundbreaking study of the sociology of science⁴. *Design-Driven Innovation* points out design as in limbo, remaining in a pre-paradigmatic state.

In this condition design is slippery, constantly conforming. It's a device whose intended use is at the fluctuating whims of economics. Business managers currently decide how design practices are implemented, not designers, and Prof. Vertangi was lead to counter this tradition after studying breakthrough innovation success at Harvard Business School during the internet boom. He proposes that design should instead lead business management procedures in order to manifest impactful innovations. His research culminates with an unbiased view on design, contrary to its user-centric utilization.

As a native of Italy, Prof. Vertangi develops his insight from a business community known for a strong history of design excellence. Italian firms are worldwide leaders in culture-forward industries such as food, furniture and fashion, and this context permits him an uncommon perspective. In Italy, primary and secondary education is sharply focused on humanities while management sciences, in contrast, have developed more slowly⁵. This makes the Italian design system a unique empirical setting for management studies, particularly for investigating the management of design-driven innovation. Many of the executives illustrated in the professor's examples are alike in how they leverage their own cultural assets against an unawareness of established management theories. One of the quintessential quotes shared is from Ernesto Gismondi, founder of the prominent lighting manufacturer Artemide saying,

"Market? What market! We do not look at market needs. We make proposals to people."



The Metamorfoosi project introduced new lighting collections in 1995 that gave birth to the use of coloured light and new relationships with light management, offering the opportunity to select scenarios that underline our life and emotions.⁶

The Artemide *Metamorfoosi* lighting system is an anchoring product case study of design-driven innovation. The founder's response is to a business professor who had just asked what kinds of market tests the company did to develop the lamp.

Gismondi understands that people use things for profound emotional, psychological reasons, as well as utilitarian ones. Design methodology pioneer and researcher Donald Norman describes how a product's real value can be in fulfilling an emotional need, since humans are predisposed to projecting their beliefs and emotions onto anything they encounter.⁷ With *Metamorfoosi*, the Artemide group proposed a new reason for people to buy, not another beautiful lamp, but **a light that makes you feel better**⁸. Similarly, when Nintendo introduced the Wii system in 2006, or when Konami first released *Dance Dance Revolution* in 1998, they overturned greater conceptual awareness of videogame consoles to bring forth something new: a virtual gaming environment for stimulating physical activity in the real world⁹.

The innovations of Artemide, Nintendo and Konami allude to a few things. First that people don't simply buy or use things for what they are, but for what they mean and the feelings they give. Second, that the feelings and meanings things are programmed with can change, even radically so. And third that new meaning doesn't come from consumers – it's the maker that pushes them with intention. When companies encroach on people to better understand

their desires, they stray further from meaningful innovation, and this is a latent problem in the ongoing HCI (human-computer interaction) design system. On the contrary, successful design-driven innovators push their vision to build scenarios that would perhaps never occur without an unsolicited proposal.

Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon famously said that to design is to devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones.¹⁰ His interpretation doesn't specify what design is, but shows what design isn't. It deals in the realm of hypothetical, not actual. Grounded in the future, not the present. Design doesn't provide people with what they think they need, but looks out beyond their allegedly permanent situation to find something thought impossible to be fulfilled by. A designer is then any person who works to modify their environment: engineers, doctors, researchers, entrepreneurs, architects, painters and musicians concerned not with the certain, but with the contingent.¹¹

In the current model, contemporary designers negate the forward-looking research that design truly requires. Designers are asked only to ideate, unchecked by more intense groundwork, to scale ideas quickly. Meanwhile, more thorough experimentations rarely materialize as practical solutions, and designers on both ends of the spectrum are left confined to half a total aptitude. Slowly though there've been shifts in favor of convergence.

UI (user interface) and UX (user experience) designers are rising archetypes for today's professionally creative people. Where startups emerge, these designers roam, often taking over the cultural spaces they occupy. With an influx of data science, their work involves analyzing user data and feedback through empirical research processes.

Focused on how to get users to embrace new technology through established paradigms, UX/UI designers miss the opportunity to explore less evident lifestyle problems around which they could propose new experiences. It's uncommon for them to

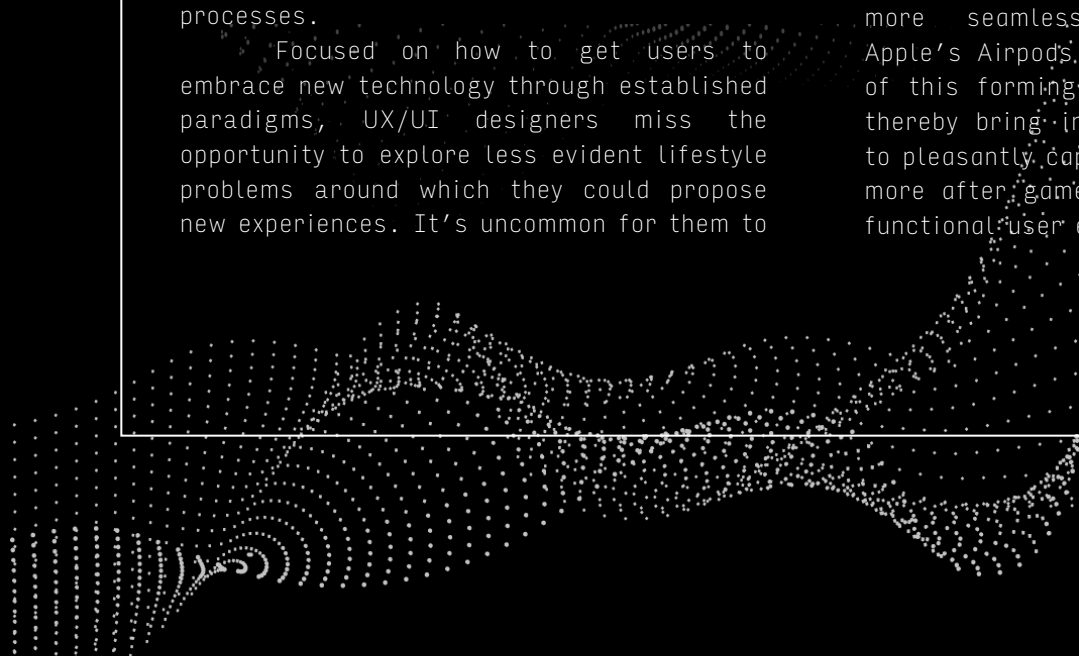
study or address the usability scenarios we partake in. Which leaves users in the dark about the potential ramifications of any software they adopt.

To offset the modernist business mindset, "interpreters" not designers are the core of the design-driven innovation strategy; a divergent classification used to suggest a new professional context. Interpreters are experts who critically explore how the circumstances in which people live are evolving, both in sociocultural and technical terms, before envisioning how a situation could change for the better¹². Interpreters chase an understanding designers can omit. Embracing a process that employs the balanced synergy of creativity and research.

From the perspective of *Design-Driven Innovation*, painters, writers, filmmakers, musicians, and choreographers are some of the most powerful symbol creators in society. Prof. Vertangi equates design with "making sense of things" and artists undoubtedly help us make sense of our place in the world. Although we seldom acknowledge it, artists conduct research and have a great impact on everyday life. Furthermore their individual creative practices are free from many of the user-centric paradigms that restrict other creative professionals. It may be that artists' practices provide insight into productive paths forward for research and design.

Twenty/Twenty

In a short post made to an open source blog in 2017, scientist and CTO Jordan Harper shares his thoughts on a looming future; what he predicts as the necessary rise of emotional design. The oracle is that soon we'll experience a shift away from screen-based interfaces toward more seamless integrated technology. Apple's AirPods are cited as a visible sign of this forming precedent. This shift will thereby bring interfaces that are designed to pleasantly capture our attention, modeled more after games or art installations than functional user experiences.¹³



“As conversational interfaces, increasing automation and artificial intelligence combine to help perform our functional needs more seamlessly and efficiently than ever before, designing for humans will become more and more like art.”¹³

The position the article presents on art is most interesting. An interview with Brian Eno is referenced where the musician defines art as “anything you don’t have to do”. This, Harper says, depicts art as any “non-functional” activity meant to stimulate or satisfy the human brain. From childhood through adult life, it’s the various forms of play that are most impactful to our learned experience. When we can marvel at big things and small is when our mind is happy and highly stimulated. The state of being that comes from “non-functional” life experiences is what Jordan Harper believes will be necessary for constructing future conversational interfaces, interfaces like Alexa that mimic real human interactions. To-date, these systems have relied purely on functional designs. Such predictions lead one to wonder:

if designing for humans is going look more like art, what will art grow to become?

The black box and all its undulating interfaces reflect the motions of an ever-expanding void, one that we fill through an equal rate of creation. In *Design-Driven Innovation* there’s a quote from the late Nicolas G. Hayek, former chairman and CEO of The Swatch Group that reads, “If you combine powerful technology with fantasy, you create something very distinct.” Evidently, as humankind endeavors to take technology further, art should be in greater demand to envisage where to go. Fiction writer Charles Bukowski once said that art is to do a dangerous thing with style¹⁴, and this notion is similar to those discussed about innovation and design. These practices are meant to defy existing norms in search of alternative futures, and to do so with form and style.

Art, design and innovation are somehow inseparable. One realm doesn’t change without inevitably influencing another. And these disciplines are tied together in such a way where technology also responds to their subtle actions.

While this relationship grows more connective, harnessing it may hold the future of high art expressions.

Jordan Harper speaks of an imminent emotional design movement, but the truth is there's not enough practical emotive information to safely enact this radical methodology. **There's still so much we don't know about human minds and our resulting emotional experience.** Forthcoming art and design frameworks must pave the way for new types of knowledge bases, with the help of interpreters or other subversive designers.

Artists are powerful students and teachers of emotion, drawing from their experience to help us learn about our own. In a parallel universe, maybe they were called emotional designers. Art work emits from an empathic place that remains of reach from purely conscious realms of understanding. There's a reason why sculptors, writers, filmmakers and musicians have the eloquent ability to posit what they see; their creative output is physical and sensory, affecting us in the mind but even more so in the body. It's something that we feel.

Of the myriad forms it takes, live experiences are supreme examples of high art. There is catharsis in hearing a singer's cry or becoming entranced by any kind of stage performer. It's an effect that epitomizes artistry for those who truly experience it: a revelation. When it happens, we feel released. And these are the same experiences that help us to evolve. Birthing new perspectives that motivate the mind to form new connections and let ideas take shape.

If artists had more space to reach their highest potential, society would likely benefit in reciprocal fashion. For that to happen, the existing creative climate needs fresh air to be relieved from stifling surroundings. It'd be impossible for the ways of the last century to provide the results we need now.

Pioneers that wish to carve new paths for streams of media must start by renegotiating what it means to host art and media platforms. Emergent services must find ways to cater to niche insights, embody transcendent forms of expression, while prioritizing artists and their content over audience demands. Patreon, Bandcamp, Medium, and Adobe's Creative Cloud are artist-centric platforms already in motion. They provide digital spaces to help creators connect directly with an attentive audience that may provide them with monetary support. Allowing artists to establish market value around the insights they share, while also ensuring the human collective has increased means for seeing with more in-depth perspective.

On the present course of innovation, directed by business practices and user-centric success, new media can come with frightening implications. Technology like virtual reality environments, smart hardware assistants and conversational interfaces are at present kind of creepy, and could lead to devastating behaviors if we're not careful. However tools are indispensable; the only way to offset potentially ugly outcomes is by creating with the intent of doing so. To build better technology we will need creative approaches. But first we must take better care of our emerging creative class. It might be more important than ever to make concerted efforts around investing in artists and showing their work.

In the new Earth yet to come, the value of post-market high art can hopefully be based on the ability to positively impact society. While it's still unclear where these new seeds may take hold, perhaps we start by building spaces for people to collaborate and convene in new ways. Where cross-pollination can energetically occur through human interactions. Bringing to light a new collection of wonderfilled, thought-provoking experiences.

Manifest

is an initiative to merge STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) + the arts by forming a Framework that mediates art, design and research practices.

Our mission is to expand the contexts in which audiovisual artists work by demonstrating their potential contributions to education and information archival, health and wellness, innovation and design.

Phase one of this mission is underlined by constructing physical art & science exposition events.

Works Cited

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