

Why I [Design]

As a kid it's very easy to express yourself.

You dress up every day like it's Halloween: princess dresses, glitter, light up shoes. If a kid has messy hair, and a little dirt on their clothes, nobody bats an eye. You dress in your favorite color, put stickers on your notebook and draw on your walls. You can fill up an entire page with scribbles and writing and it's considered "artwork" and self expression. In fact, not only is it widely accepted for any kids to express themselves any way they want, it's also largely encouraged. At that age, there's no need to justify any actions or methods of taste, it's just because you like it. As I got older I watched this societal attitude to self expression slowly morph and change. I watched kids around me wear all their favorite colors and princess dresses. When we were 14 they got some nasty stares. I can't say I wasn't included. In middle school, it starts to become harder to identify each person individually and instead everyone dresses and does what's in style. In 2022 half of the people in my class wore white Nike socks, over black leggings. In 2023, everyone wore uggs and had stanleys, and in 2024 everyone started wearing Birkenstocks and walked around carrying Owalas. And although, if you didn't it wasn't frowned upon, if you did something else instead it might have been. Like drinking from a hydroflask, because that was popular 6 years ago, by then it was out of date and cringy.

As an adolescent I conformed to these norms, you had to fit in. That pressure is what is extremely interesting to me.

What changed? Why did people stop expressing themselves in unique ways and begin to do, say, look like, and act like everyone else? Driven by a desire to continue expressing myself despite growing up, everything I design or create now, serves to assist this desire of self expression.

My questioning of this began at a very young age. Why do all adults look the same, act the same, do the same things. When 30 years ago they were all unique? Why are social norms for dressing and acting so ingrained into society, and why does this not apply to children? These questions are overall what led me down the pathway to design and architecture.

Why does everyone slowly morph into one reflection of society and expectations? I began to develop a question: How do I avoid this pipeline, and how do I express myself freely as an adult?

I began observing with the people around me, I began to realise that my friends were very unique in their own way, that's what made them fun to be around. I want to be able to talk or look at a person and know that even if me and them might never click, at least they're unique and I respect them for that. And that people that didn't have unique interests, style, overall vibes to them, were boring to me and underwhelming.

A majority of people my age wanted to go into engineering, doctor, or business. There's good and bad doctors, but the definition of that is their individual knowledge of communal thinking. These are careers and hobbies that's definition of success is the amount of money generated.

Design to me is a perfect gateway from creativity and self expression to helpfulness and a career. Whether to hate it or love it is needed to survive as an adult. Design to me is a big umbrella; it can be anything from styling an outfit for the day, designing everyday furniture , or

designing a house. Design is a way to see someone without actually seeing them, and understanding somebody on a level others who look past design might not.

Architecture especially interests me because it takes self expression and makes it physical. The spaces we live in have the ability to say something about who we are. Two houses can serve the exact same purpose but still feel different. One can be colorful, strange, open, crowded, minimal, uncomfortable, playful, or calm. The person designing it makes lots of choices and those contribute to how others experience the space. I find it interesting that a building can carry so much personality.

This is also why I don't want to design things just because they are considered in style at the moment. I want to question why things are designed that way in the first place. Why does a classroom have to look like a classroom? Why are some materials, colors, and shapes considered appropriate and others aren't?

At the same time, I've realized that self expression in design can only be about me. Architecture is something other people have to actually live in, move through, and interact with. That creates a challenge I really enjoy, figuring out how to maintain individuality while designing something that works for somebody else.

Design in general is a way to show the world who I am and how I can improve others lives. Design to me is a way to not lose that creative spark. As I grow older, I don't want self expression to be something I leave behind. I want to keep questioning what's considered normal, experimenting with things because I find them interesting, and creating without worrying about if something fits in. I may not wear a princess dress and light up shoes anymore, but I don't want to lose the part of myself that once did without thinking twice. Design gives me a way

to carry that part of myself into adulthood, and hopefully create spaces that allow other people to do the same.