KORE: NATURAL PIGMENT PAINT

By

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Thesis Proposal

With the company I am creating I intend to help artists recognize that sustainable options are available without giving up on quality in regards to paint products. Named Kore, my company focuses on creating reusable, environmentally friendly pigment based paints exclusively for artists. Earth Pigments is a company that makes non-toxic pigments from the earth, but unfortunately has poor product design, which reflects lesser quality paints. I will use Earth Pigments and create a design that reveals the high quality of the paints, and I will use pamphlets to show what these paints produce. The branding process will include designing labels, business cards, a pamphlet, advertisements, and tote bags. The paper is made of 100% industrial waste, glass bottles with cork lids will be used for the packaging, and the shipping container will be made of recyclable or reusable materials to encourage the user to return the bottles for refills. My intention for Kore is to provide the highest quality paints while at the same time leave minimal environmental footprint and even improve the environment when possible.
Artist Statement

Environmental graphic design is becoming a staple to many designers in today’s world. Designers and artists consume vast amounts of packaging materials and supplies, as well as print materials. Throughout my time as an art student, I have begun to realize the amount of waste that we produce as artists, so I want to provide a smarter option to my fellow students and artists. I am creating a company that goes back to natural sources. My company, Kore, supplies natural paints and shows artists and designers how to become sustainable creators and consumers.

Kore is a sustainable company through its use of recyclable and reusable packaging and products that are less harmful for the environment than other popular materials such as plastic. I designed a brand that includes packaging design for natural paints and advertisements such as posters, pamphlets, and a promotional item. The glass containers and the paper used in the packaging are eco-friendly, reusable, and recyclable. I also designed an informative how-to pamphlet for the paint, which is fittingly printed on environmentally friendly paper. My promotional item will be a tote bag, which will further encourage the consumers to promote a sustainable lifestyle.
Even though I am a designer, fine art is a significant part of who I am as an artist. Therefore, I wanted to incorporate these two aspects not just in my thesis but also in my future plans. Through Kore I could experiment with new materials while learning more about the popular and growing field of environmental design.
Sustainable Design: The Process of Designing Backwards

Sustainability is a new standard that is defining our era even in such areas as architectural, technological, and graphic design. The literature review in this thesis will focus on green graphic design. As a designer, I discovered that I have the opportunity to design backwards, by which I simply mean reversing the process. According to Brian Doughtery, before graphic designers begin to design a product, they need to think about packing, warehouse distribution, and the total waste and energy to make the item, or, in other words, the materials come first and the designs come second.

As the creator behind new product packaging and print materials, I can take a leadership position and provide companies with sustainable options. Two things specifically stuck out to me in my research: first, the harmful effects of plastic, and second, the viable options that can be used in production to reduce waste. Plastic can affect the body as well as the environment in many negative ways. Michael SanClements explains that many items in everyday life contain plastic such as to-go coffee cups, iPhones, and most food containers. While sustainable design originally was met with opposition from clients and consumers mostly centered on cost effectiveness and availability, new research and affordable materials have begun to break down those barricades.
SanClements writes: “I recognized a shift had occurred somewhere in the past moving us from a period of traditional materials like glass, metal, ceramic to one in which plastic dominated.” Plastic has its uses, but why are there not extra steps being taken to avoid this toxic material? Designers enjoy immersing themselves in their products and their creative visions. My question when designing products is how can designers see the entire vision if they are not looking past the mere creation of the product? Designers, if they are truly dedicated to their field of work, want to see the full process of their products and not just the visual aspect. How does graphic art play a role in an eco-friendly lifestyle? In this paper, I am going to explore the reasons behind green graphic design and examine the ways to incorporate environmentally friendly design through practical modifications, leadership roles, and innovative theories.

Literature Review

Practical modifications are the steps available to lead a more sustainable lifestyle, Changes in lifestyle and thought-processing are the first moves needed for an eco-friendly future. The adjustments to graphic design are important and necessary for restoring the environment and creating less waste. Practical modifications can range from using less toxic adhesives and inks to choosing the paper that is used in the printing process. Using sustainable paper and ink are obvious yet effective solutions for green design. In order to see more progress towards this sustainable type of design, creators must put forth the time and energy. Graphic artists need to put
this energy into “designing backwards” whereby they research, understand, and are able to communicate this eco-friendly lifestyle at the beginning of the design process rather than the end. Doughtery goes straight to the point: “Where do I want this product to end up?” Creators have to start at the end of the product’s lifestyle.

Designer’s have to consider packing and transportation in addition to how much energy and waste are being created. After they have figured out the transportation, packing, and supplies that are necessary, then the design process starts. The practical modifications require creative thinkers to be “active upstream in crafting strategies and messages,” according to Doughtery. Yes, there are going to be some aspects that a designer cannot control, such as whether or not the consumer takes the time to recycle the product. However, it is a designer’s job to consider the containment, storage, display, shelf-appeal, end-use and disposal.

Doughtery suggests that when making large print projects one should consider using everything except vinyl and plastic. Other options are printing on canvas, or cutting out aluminum or wood. When thinking about paper options, consider using alternative printing fibers such as bamboo, hemp, or agricultural residue. Tress take a longer time to grow and replenish than the other available options, and they reduce topsoil loss. SanClements reminds us that there is also concern about how toxic plastic is for individuals and the environment. SanClements points out the scale of plastic waste that is currently happening when he writes, “today we are producing nearly three hundred million metric
tons of plastic globally each year, which about 10 percent is recycled!” For those who cannot seem to escape plastic, though, using post-consumer recycled plastic, also known as PCR, is a good option. Doughtery reports that companies such as Aveda have been using PCR, and reports that it has not affected the company’s costs or quality.¹⁰

Packaging design is impressive nowadays, and though companies have created cheap, efficient, eye-catching, and theft-proof packaging, the designer’s job does not seem to have been quite right. Scott Boylston reports that as a result of this efficiency-based design process, the world has suffered through natural resource depletion, inefficient energy consumption, and toxic by-products.¹¹ It does not seem to add up that if people are doing their jobs so well, there would be this much harm done environmentally as a by-product.

Designers are experiencing resistance to green design because of a lack of knowledge, funds, and drive, but designers are the cause of this resistance that is greatly affecting the earth. Whether a junior designer, the creative director, or a freelance designer, creative thinkers need to expand their field of expertise and accept the responsibility of what their designs create and how they affect the world. An easy method designers could adopt is simply to increase the dialogue between themselves and the client. While discussing design, move beyond just the visual aspects and into the opportunities that future designs can have on the ecological and human systems. Employers might think that this blurs profession lines between designers and developers, but designers are only broadening their education and making themselves a more positive attribute.¹²
A leader in the field needs to make information about sustainability available to the rest of the designers. Incorporating knowledge of sustainable options into each and every project will make coworkers and clients more aware of the available options and possibly help them to make changes to their lifestyles.

Boylston writes, “the present era of disposable convenience, which has lasted less than half a century, is quickly approaching its end by necessity.” Innovative theories and practices are changing the graphic design field. These theories and practices have the potential to forever influence the packaging industry. Designing sustainable packaging introduces the idea of a company considering the “triple bottom line,” accounting for “the social, the environmental, and the economic considerations of operating a business.” Ann Thorpe discusses the field of sustainable design and writes, “it has moved from largely technical concerns about efficient resource consumption and minimizing waste in our existing industrial systems to a more recent focus on the very social issue of lifestyle change.” As such creative people, this challenge should be invigorating. After all, designers are well known for being the best problem solvers.

A good place to start is to consider whether the product even needs a package. A new idea that is radically changing the process of design is considering a second life for the packaging. One way to create this second life is by teaming up with another company that can use waste in a productive way. For example, a company that cannot get around the use of plastics can then give
their recycled plastics to a company that can use the PCR’s to create new
products. The act of taking the extra step to understand where your waste goes
is an essential part of designing backwards.¹⁷

Sustainability will define the next shift in the graphic design field. The
next generation of designers is concerned with the future and the potential
environmental issues because they are going to be a part of that occasion.¹⁸
Therefore, they are called to make themselves knowledgeable about sustainable
change. Individuals cannot keep living in this sustainable society.

SanClements, 15.
³ Scott Boylston, *Designing Sustainable Packaging* (London: Laurence King
⁵ Doughtery, *Green Graphic Design*, 175.
¹⁰ Doughtery, *Green Graphic Design*, 152.
¹¹ Boylston, *Designing Sustainable Packaging*, 10.
¹² Raymond J. Cole, Peter Busby, Robin Guenter, Aiste Blaviesciunaite, and
Tatiana Alencar, “A regenerative design framework: setting new aspirations and
¹³ Phil Hamlett, *Everything You Know is Wrong*, American Institute of Graphic
Arts, n.d., http://www.livingprinciples.org/everything-you-know-is-wrong/, 28
October 2014.
¹⁴ Boylston, *Designing Sustainable Packaging*, 12.
¹⁵ Boylston, *Designing Sustainable Packaging*, 10.
¹⁶ Ann Thorpe, "Design’s Role in Sustainable Consumption,” *Design Issues* 26,
no.2 (2010): 3-16.
¹⁷ Doughtery, *Green Graphic Design*, 150.
¹⁸ Phil Hamlett, *Everything You Know is Wrong*, American Institute of Graphic
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