



“Now that you can make anything, what is it that you want to make?”

Bruce Mau

I have this quote on my wall from Bruce Mau.

It gets me thinking about the importance of design. And at the same, the finite resources we have left to us in this world.

Put those two thoughts together and you can understand why the role of the designer in the near future will have to take on a new set of responsibilities.

A designer will have to make something desirable, that remains a given. But they will also have to make something that will become as useful for its next life as it was for its first life. A designer will have to learn to close the loop. To do that we have to remake the way we make things.

A leading example of this design mantra is this chair. It's made by Orangebox right here in Wales. It's the first chair developed and manufactured in Europe to achieve Cradle to Cradle accreditation.

The process all started from a desire within the company to go and find a better way to do things. The next step was to go and talk with Michael Braungart and EPEA – his groundbreaking organization based in Hamburg.

Then came the difficult part. Looking at each chemical ingredient of each material. This determined their safety to people and to the environment. Then to determine which materials could be successful in technical cycles of reuse.

What this means in simple recycling terms is a high quality material can go into high quality material. What most recycling currently means is a high quality material goes into a lower quality material.

'This isn't really recycling, but 'down-cycling'.

Less bad is not the answer.

Next in the making of a chair is to design it so it can be taken apart. For example, the frame and the back are not glued together and no fasteners are used.

Instead a piece of innovative design means they simply click together. Then the arms were made so they could be separated easily. Even the base was made from just one material and not two like the rest of the industry.

The result of all this was a chair that is 98% recyclable. There is even a take back service to customers when the end of life of the chair has been reached.

The chair has already won awards, international recognition, and some nice big orders in a very competitive market.

So maybe the competition aren't sitting as comfortably as they once were.

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