

The changing landscape of design

 By [Dave Nemeth](#)

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One big paradigm shift in the design arena over the next few years, will be what I refer to as the 'corporate designer'. This is a designer that has a clear understanding of both business, as well as more than one design principle. I firmly believe that being just a graphic designer, multimedia designer or and interior designer is not going to be sustainable fields. (video)

Technology is moving too fast and aided by great software and items such as 3D printers and other prototyping medium; companies are using internal people within these functions. It is already very difficult for many designers to do what they studied and what they excel at for that matter, what will it be like in five or ten years' time?

I firmly believe the role of the designer must change and more valuable engagement with corporate business is vital, especially at board and executive level. Designers should be part and parcel of the entire decision making process.

Other trends we will see emerging throughout 2014:

1. DIY Design

With a large focus on curbing spending, consumers are looking at avoiding design services such as interior designers and preferring a more 'hands on' approach and doing it themselves through the help of large DIY retailers whom have found a great business model over the years. Clever designers however are designing great products, which allow for customisation and creating an interactive process between consumer and product. A good example is the new curtain system created by the [Bouroullec brother duo for Kvadrat](#).

Other examples could include 'assemble yourself' furniture, which literally clicks together but allows the consumer to paint the finished item in any colour.

2. The rise of the artisan

Just like the role-change of the artisan, so too has the integration of arts, crafts and design where for decades a debate has taken place to where certain pieces or work fit in. The big focus going forward is on customisation and bespoke products. 'Handcrafted' and 'limited edition' will continue being buzzwords even with the large luxury brands.

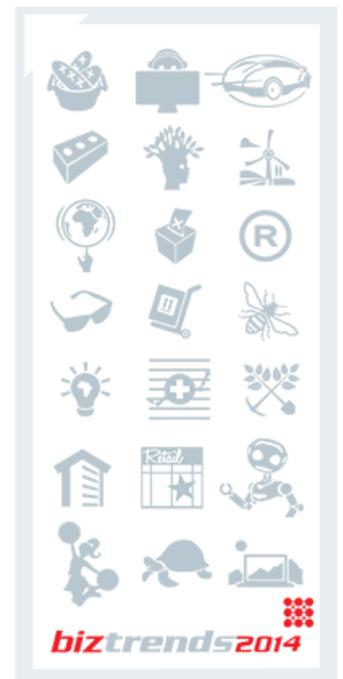
3. Printed... Everything!

Technologies are evolving in all directions - almost anything and everything can be printed, from fabric to huge boards to actual concrete. Enter the printed age, where amongst all the kitsch, great designs will also emerge.

Internationally we are seeing entire kitchens being printed and in the fabric world digital printed fabrics will be as common as an umbrella on a rainy day.

4. Contresign

Design etched with controversy, from nudity, religion, politics and sex, designers are realising the rising 'open



mindedness' of the consumer and playing in a highly competitive arena with anything that will make a statement or at least catch the masses' attention. This is also used for hard hitting advertising messages and even retail. A great example is the battered mannequins used by fashion guru Vivienne Westwood in her women abuse campaign.

Still on mannequins, [America Apparel is creating quite a stir](#) with its female mannequins having pubic hair... Maybe it will just be the year of the unusual mannequin?

5. Design humour

We have all come to realise hard hitting things like recession, climate change, terrorism and crime and decided we cannot change the world, but we can change our outlook and having a bit of fun and a good laugh is the perfect remedy for the blues. In fact, even hipster designers are lightening up and creating up-beat funk products.

2014 will start seeing the emergence of more brightly coloured fun design, from the catwalks to the kitchen and even the bedroom for that matter. Sex toys themselves are evolving at a rate of knots and look more and more like Object d art than their past phallic relatives.

6. Retro... A looking back at the past

With an ever-increasing worldwide revolt against mass production, we are seeing a huge interest in products, materials and design from years gone by.

The overall attitude is that products of the past were better constructed and we see this somewhat clumsy and heavy design coming through in many kitchen appliances, specifically coffee machines and food processors - in fact, fridges and gas stoves have returned to their original styling. Many designers are also looking to past materials such as Bakelite and experimenting with new uses. Copper and brass, which have been devoid from contemporary design for many years, will make a dramatic return. Rockabilly, Punk, Goth and Grunge elements will continue to influence fashion. [Dr Martens](#) are hotter than EVER!

7. 3D printing and scanning

With most patents expiring on these printers, the East will capitalise and make them more and more affordable (certain SA retailers are already selling them). This will allow for quicker prototyping, but also allow for the 'man on the street' to become the next famous industrial designer.

The printing technology has already expanded into the food arena and certain printers can print in chocolate and candy. The University of Southern California is experimenting with a massive 3D printer, which will build a house out of concrete within a day.

Why have a photograph when you can be scanned and have a lifelike model made of yourself or your family? 3D scanners will have a huge impact on traditional image cameras and I believe we will see integration over the next few years.

The biggest paradigm shift is that the average man on the street is becoming far more design savvy; from styling to typography there is an increased awareness and appreciation. There is no longer space or place for bad, or even mediocre design.

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ABOUT DAVE NEMETH

A leading blue chip international company recently identified Dave as one of the top creative influencers in the country. Dave Nemeth is a qualified designer who has held a variety of senior as well as executive positions with some of the countries leading retail groups, spanning a career of twenty years. Email Dave at daven@worldonline.co.za, follow @davenemeth on Twitter and connect on Facebook.

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