Design for Later Life
A people-centred approach

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Based in London, the Royal College of Art is the world’s only entirely postgraduate community of innovators in art and design
The Centre has a number of programmes, working with academics, students and professional designers, but today I will talk about our work with business, an important part of Universal Design.
THREE RESEARCH LABS

- AGE & ABILITY
- HEALTH & PATIENT SAFETY
- WORK & CITY
Design goes way beyond aesthetics...

… it can change business culture and all of our civil society as well.

Bruce Nussbaum, BusinessWeek
RCA Innovation Night, June 2007
IMPROVING LIFE
So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
We look to put people at the centre of design, not just as passive recipients, but as active contributors to the process. We call this people-centred design … and this can be really smart business practice.
INCLUSIVE DESIGN
Including people of all ages and abilities age-inclusive rather than age-exclusive

Well, most design is done for people, aimed at people, or affects people. Everything in this room has been designed—it is ever-present in our daily lives.
A young man will not buy an old man’s car … and neither will an old man buy an old man’s car
Designing for … and designing with
Evolving role of the designer

Maker
Creator
Evolving role of the designer

Maker
Creator
Thinker
Facilitator
Listener
Ethnographer
Business leader
Evolving role of the designer

Professional dreamer:
Head in the clouds
Feet on the ground
This is design for older people ...
And this ... and they should be grateful if design pays them attention at all.
Older people only like beige, white or grey.
Older people only like beige, white or gray.
All older people are the same
Technology is not relevant to older people

PDA/Tablet Concept Babysits Old People

Hey, old people have technological needs too. Or so this concept would have us believe. The idea behind this tablet/pad-like device is that it uses RFID tracking technology to remind the elderly when to take their meds, when food in the refrigerator goes bad, and what to get at the store to meet nutritional requirements. But if my grandparents' trust into technology in any indication, this device would do nothing but muddle the elderly mind. [Further Design]
Only teenagers go through transitions
Old age means that you are on the edge of financial ruin.
£250 billion
Spent by over 50’s in UK annually

Spending power

£250 billion
Spent by over 50’s in UK annually

Only £62 billion by under 30’s

Managing wealth ...

Financial services that support longevity
Support longer retirement
Support inheritance
Give personal choice
Reassurance and trust
Managing health…

Health means different things
Move from a medical model to a social one
Move from reactive care to preventative
Impact of technology
Who ‘owns’ my health data
Remaining independent for longer
Managing work ...
Remaining mobile…
The high street of 2030?
More will be single … and dating
More will be active
The ageing action hero
Design for multiple minor impairments
But do not forget aspiration (and desire)
Technology
Only 13% of the American public believes that technology products are easy to use.

Existing solutions, or Silver Phones as they are often called, are stigmatizing and unrespectful.

They focus on disabilities and are not inspired by abilities.

Older people can benefit from picture messages and the features of modern phones – they shouldn’t just be given simplified options.

These phones don’t even have enough digits to dial a number.
Access and learning

The second book is the main manual – the phone actually slots into this and becomes the center of attention.

Arrows point to the exact locations the user should press, avoiding confusion and eliminating the feeling of being lost in a menu.
It is not just about technology. It is about enabling social connection and creating personal independence.
The rise of the virtual community

. . . . many of these now exist virtually.

For example, an online group such as Mumsnet, a forum for parents by parents, twitter . . . .
‘It feels like a video game’

skype.
‘It feels like a video game’

skype.
Older people are not looking to accumulate more relationships.

Digital services need to help them maintain their existing relationships.
A new 'Digital Etiquette' has to be learnt.

Who Even Are You? Facebook Friend Request Etiquette

June 10th, 2006

Who are you people?

Examples of appropriate messages:

• Hi Amanda, I follow you on Twitter and wanted to connect on Facebook, too.
• Hey Amanda, we met at a Tweetup in Boston. It was great meeting you in person—Facebook friendship is the next logical step, right?
• Hi, I'm Friendz bomber. Small world—I work with Friendz and she told me you've been buds since you were kids. She said you're a good person to know.
• Hi Amanda, I subscribe to Social Honeycomb and think your blog is rad. Wanna be friends?

Examples of inappropriate messages:

• Hi your hot LOL
• I tried poking you but you didn't poke me back. Can we be friends now??????!
• I'm visiting Boston next month and you looked like someone who knows how to have fun, if you know what I mean...
• Hi, you said on your blog I had to do this or you wouldn't accept my friend request. So, yeah.

skype.
A new ‘Digital Language’ has evolved

MMS
GPS
GPRS
SMS
WiFi

skype.
A new ‘Digital Language’ has evolved

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skype.
A new ‘Digital Language’ has evolved

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EDGES OF AGEING
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Andy Chen, Helen Hamlyn
Centre for Design
Image and Portrayal

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
The Big Question
How much would you be willing to pay for good quality care?

representing the rights of older people with sensory impairment and dementia.
Positive representation

Photo: Katrin Trautner
Elder-preneur: people in their 50s and 60s are much more likely to succeed in a new business venture than those under 30.
Volunteerism

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
Collaborators and authors ... not just ‘test subjects’ or recipients

Technology, as used here refers to digital technology that provide communications, information and entertainment.
Meet some helpers

Meet some of our Helpers and see what they have to say about Southwark Circle. Scroll down to watch a video to learn more about becoming a Helper of Southwark Circle.

Meet Mike

“Being a Neighbourhood Helper fits in with the rest of my life as it is very flexible. I help members with all kinds of things from some light gardening, to tidying, clearing and sorting. Although these are only everyday household tasks, I get a real feeling of satisfaction from helping other people do them and from seeing that I can make a concrete difference. Whatever job I am doing, I love meeting all the interesting people that are part of Southwark Circle.”

Meet Eric

“Fixing leaky taps, putting up shelves and curtain rails, computer lessons, fixing door handles…the list goes on! With every task comes a different member, it’s great meeting all these people.”
So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
Whipcar: allows you to share your neighbour’s car
Where are the older people?

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
Sustainability

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
In the context of ageing
WE NEED TO RADICALLY RETHINK
Family structure
(learn from other cultures)

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
Relationships

So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
..in couples..
So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
We spoke to people who battled with technology alone,
Years of Life Expectancy After Retirement in Ten Countries: 2004 Versus 1970

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Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006b.
So why is more design processes and activities not centred around people, the consumers, the users who we are designing for.
..and in groups..
Need to start now
THE CREATIVE ARGUMENT
DESIRE DOES NOT FADE AWAY WITH AGE
Why have one perspective …
… when you can have many
OUR APPROACH

SECRETS!
1) Aim for the edges

Average customer is a myth
2) Statistics are just the start

Technology, as used here refers to digital technology that provide communications, information and entertainment.
3) See the ‘person’ … not the ‘user’

Technology, as used here refers to digital technology that provide communications, information and entertainment.

Photos: Aaron Fotheringham
4) The rule of one

If one designer sees one interesting thing from one person…

… that can be enough to get started.

Technology, as used here refers to digital technology that provide communications, information and entertainment.
130 PROJECTS FROM THE CENTRE
Technology, as used here refers to digital technology that provide communications, information and entertainment.
With thanks to Onny Eikhaug from the Norwegian Design Council and Sean Donahue from Art Center College of Design (USA) for the use of selected images and input.