HOME-GROWN DESIGN
and the impact it has on the graphic design industry?

DISCOURSE & REFLECTION by Mia Moore
MA Graphic Design Hertfordshire University

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The economic requirements to enter an industry have an enormous influence on the degree and nature of competition within that industry.

In the graphic design industry, **it is incredibly cheap to set up a design "firm" and enter the industry**. All you need is a Mac (rented will do), some pirated software and enough money to get a cheap print shop print you some stationery. **You don't** even **need** to have invested in **a degree** or have independently verifiable proof of expertise.

The implications of such low "entry barriers" is that the graphic design industry will be made up of millions of small practices, many run by people without an education in the field - the home-grown designers.

Will this have an impact on the overall quality of the industry? What are the benifits and threats of this ever increasing phenomen? Has Social Media encourage this even futher?

In such a highly fragmented industry, clients will have to learn, from experience, how to tell a good, responsible designer from a bad one.

For designers, educated clients will be few and far between - clumsy, ignorant clients will predominate. **It will become even more important for the good designers to educate every new client about the fundamental value of design**, because the odds are against you finding individuals within your clients who have finally learnt the value of design.

"knowing how to use Photoshop doesn't make you a designer any more than knowing how to paint a house makes you an artist"
— Unknown author

"In an economy where technology price reductions are guaranteed, where hardware prices will continue to fall, where automated softwares will continue to gain market share and the demand for cheaper design solutions are on an increase - the market for home-grown designers will continue to flourish."

WHAT I WILL BE LOOKING AT

The industry has no government-imposed regulations, which makes wild variations in quality abound. There are no legal terms of reference with which a client can compare practitioners. This makes it easy for a home-grown designer to enter the industry.

So **why haven't governments regulated the design profession?** An answer to this could perhaps be that the low enty barriers into the design industry guarantees competition will be fierce, and surely the government loves that, because it delivers greater designer productivity and lower prices which will make a difference to the national economy.

Software companies target many traditional 'craft' skills for automation, eg. type-setting and typography, thus driving the entry of amateurs and the popular **client misconception that owning Photoshop, Indesign and Illustrator makes them a designer too.**

Regulation that protects and supports designers is not likely until graphic designers become much more visible as significant generators of intellectual property, and therefore as significant contributors to the national economy. This is most likely going to take some time to happen and only the survivors have an influence on the future.

Perhaps the future forces and trends don't paint a pretty picture, but surely in an industry undergoing such stresses and changes, it can't only be threats! There must be a great load of opportunities out there too!

With my research I am hoping to identify these opportunities and to take a closer look at what these home-grown designers are actually doing to the design industry. What is happening to the design world? What are they bringing in terms of innovation? What are the damages done? Is there a place for them too?

industry related regulations

intellectual property influence

strategic sourcing

fee hammering

technology price reduction

software automation

designer ethics

"best practise rule"

company ethics

design education value

new media impact

market forces

design value misconception

quality design