

Being a 'Creative' is a business. How do you sell yourself to the modern world? Present your findings, plans and discuss. Use the lecture series to support your views as appropriate.

Alexander McQueen said “a collection is two-thirds artistic, one-third business. But I always remember that it is the fantasy, the artistic side, that makes the customers want to buy the straight-forward black pants that put the money in the bank”. (McQueen, in Jenkyn Jones, 2005, p.88) Creativity is arguably something we are born with, an inner talent or ability; it is defined as relating to or involving the imagination or original idea, especially in the production of an artistic work. According to Steve Jobs “when you ask a creative person how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something” (Steve Jobs on Product Design, www.impactinterview.com) but in order to market this creativity, to make money from it, business is required. At what point does creativity stop becoming an instinct and start becoming a business; and how do we reach this point?

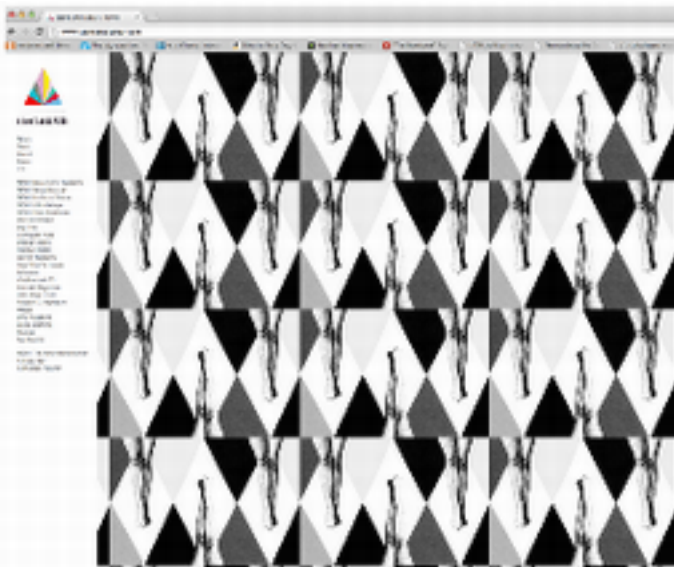


Figure 1, Stone and Spear Website Homepage, www.stoneandspear.com

A key aspect in creating a business from creativity is being able to market yourself, your products, in order to get yourself known, to generate interest and eventually revenue. From the offset of leaving education and entering industry it is crucial to be on top of marketing yourself to appeal to others. Simon Cook, a designer who graduated in Graphic design from Nottingham University spoke in his lecture of the importance of 'branding yourself as something different, as an alter-ego' in order to get noticed. (Cook, 2012, Lecture) He chose to re-brand himself as Stone and spear, “the pseudonym from his middle names,

Peter and Frank. Searching to escape the monotonous routine of day to day life, Simon propels us into another dimension where the world of Stone and Spear collides with our own”. (About, www.stoneandspear.com) By creating an alter-ego brand image Simon was able to market his creativity as a business and quickly made a name for himself in the industry receiving lots of press after his graduation and creating a website for his work (figure 1).

In the modern age, with the internet allowing us to connect to people all over the world, creating a unique brand or image is essential to success. Creativity allows us to develop unique, interesting ways to market ourselves in order to better ourselves as a business. As much as being a creative is a business, it can be argued that without this initial creativity success of the business would be much weaker; the two things go hand in hand.



Figure 2, Digital Screen in Burberry store, Regent Street, streaming a live catwalk show, www.sparklestyle.co.uk

With over 82.5% of us having access to the internet in the UK (Digital Life, www.tnsdigitallife.com/), and spending over four times the global average on digital technology (Western Europe, www.emarketer.com) marketability in business is arguably reliant on digital connection and on keeping at the forefront of this new digital age. A brand at the helm of this revolution is Burberry, a company who holds technology and digital

connection at the integral core of their business. Christopher Bailey says “It’s about an experience as well as buying a product. And I think what we’ve found is the more we entertain, the more we allow people into our brand. Then maybe one day they’ll buy”, (Christopher Bailey: Tech Mate, www.vogue.com) showing how through marketing their creativity and making this widely accessible they are encouraging business and increasing revenue. They are able to stream their catwalk shows into their stores via large screens (figure 2) keeping customers involved in the brand and allowing them to feel a part of high fashion.

The digital world has increased the speed of which things are shared, of discovering new things, and it is important to keep up in order to sell yourself as business. “Time is the currency of all experiences,” wrote business guru Joseph Pine on the Harvard Business Review website. “And a very simple rule applies: the more time your customers spend with you, the more money they will spend now and in the future.” (Retail Recon | Burberry’s Bet on Retail Entertainment, www.businessoffashion.com) The same is said for any work as a creative, the more people know about you, the more time they spend looking at your work, the greater the investment in you and your business will be.

For Christmas this year I was given my full name as a web domain, meaning I now own, www.georgiadoe.com (figure 3), for the next 10 years. This is definitely one of the more original presents I have been given, but studying within the creative field and wanting to work within the fashion industry in the future it is actually extremely useful. On a much smaller scale to Burberry it allows me to put my work out there in the digital world allowing people to see it, and allowing me to begin to gain recognition. By owning the domain for my name I can create an individual brand that is uniquely mine and is not able to be taken by anybody else. By searching the words “Georgia Doe Fashion” into Google, the top three hits are my LinkedIn profile, my website and my online portfolio. I think for a creative who is only just starting out in business and in marketing herself this is a good place to begin.

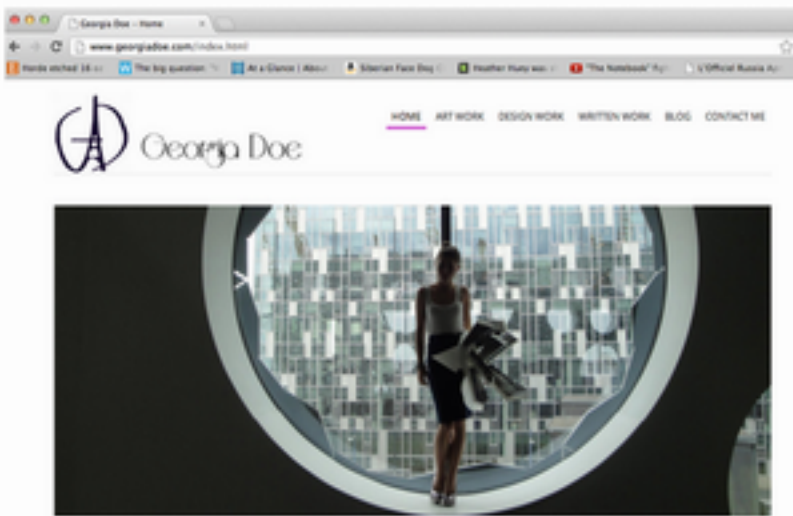


Figure 3, My website homepage, www.georgiadoe.com

It is of the utmost importance that people are able to see my work, are able to contact me and stay up to date with what I am doing. In choosing to market ourselves we choose to share a certain portion of our lives, to open ourselves up to critique and opinions. It creates a vulnerability which I feel strengthens you as a creative and pushes you forward as a business. The pursuit of creativity as a career becomes all consuming and is fed through collaboration with

other creatives, collaborations which only become possible if people are able to connect with you.

As I am yet to make any money from my creativity, it could be argued that it is not really a business, and that the more important aspects of a creative being a business come in production and retail of ones work. It's clear that a sound business knowledge is essential to commercial success within creative industries, particularly fashion. Kate Mulleavey, of design duo Rodarte, said in an interview that "you have to live and breathe both the creative and the business parts... you can be experimental, but it still has to be popular" (Mulleavey, 2009, p.7), addressing the importance of understanding the commercial aspect of your brand as well as the intuitive creativity. Website, *The Business of Fashion*, was set up with the sole intention of filling the void for an informed, analytical and opinionated view on the fashion business, (About, www.businessoffashion.com) whilst offering an education in starting up and running your own business; an idea and blog which has grown into an invaluable tool for young creatives and start-ups like myself.

When looking at different degree courses for fashion design I found it interesting that Ravensbourne, with an impressive 94% graduate employment rate, (Careers, Employability and Industry Links, www.rave.ac.uk) include business modules within their fashion course so that you enter industry with a sound understanding of creating a commercially viable and creatively interesting brand or label. This highlights how important a business knowledge is in securing employment within the fashion industry after education. I was asked in my pre-UCAS interview for the degree course why I should be chosen for the course and what makes me unique. Coming from a very academic background at school my answer was that I am not only creative but I have a bright mind enabling me to think sensibly and to understand business in order to create marketable products which will ultimately make money in the future. I have subsequently been offered a place on the degree course at Ravensbourne, a course which would allow me to grow both creatively and commercially.

Although business is primarily a positive augmentation of ourselves as creatives it is important to be aware that it can, in reverse, stifle and restrict creativity. David Throssel, from Fluid Pictures Ltd., spoke in a lecture of how he is not always designing to a creative brief, but rather to a financial one, causing limits of what can be achieved under a certain budget. (Throssel, 2012, Lecture) This does not allow him full creative reign or freedom over his own work and puts boundaries on the fantasy that he can make. From fashion students like myself, to international brands, designs will always be limited by their retail potential and ultimately finances. Alexander Wang spoke of his brand “in the beginning we didn’t know anything about line sheets or market dates... I could just do what I wanted, and I was free to think a little more openly”. (Wang, 2009, p.27) Before business is introduced creativity has full control, but without the introduction of business creativity is unable to thrive financially. Whilst business is integral to being a creative in the modern age it can create boundaries and causes us to question where the line is drawn between something being entirely creative or entirely business.

It is difficult to determine the point at which creativity becomes a business. Being a creative is a natural talent, something that cannot be forced. It is the marketing of this, the selling of oneself as a brand as well as ones artwork, that transforms the simple adjective of being creative into a noun and a career. It is this transformation, done through personal development, digital connection, education, sharing, that being a creative becomes a business. Without creativity there would be nothing to sell and therefore no business, but without business there would be products and no income; neither of which is sustainable. The two go hand in hand; and in today’s society if you want to make a living from being a creative, then it will inevitably, become a business.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Stone and Spear Website Homepage. www.stoneandspear.com (Accessed date 03/01/13).

Figure 2. Digital Screen in Burberry Store, Regent Street, streaming a live catwalk show. <http://www.sparklestyle.co.uk/2012/09/burberry-regent-street-store-xx.html> (Accessed date 03/01/13)

Figure 3. My website homepage, <http://www.georgiadoe.com/index.html> (Accessed date 03/01/13)

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