

POSTED ON  
1/11/2016  
BY ALYS  
BRYAN

## FUTURE

POST TAGS:

Brexit

Design

CATEGORY:

EXPERTS &  
TRENDS,  
UNCATEGORIZED

## THE FUTURE OF UK DESIGN

Coinciding with the London Design Festival in September 2016 Dezeen launched their [Brexit Design Manifesto](#). A message to the UK government about the importance of the sector following the UK's recent vote to leave the EU.

Dezeen introduce their manifesto by explaining the position of the design sector in the UK, a sector which generates over £71.7 billion in goods and services a year and employs more than 1.5 million people:

*'The UK's architects and designers are among the most creative and dynamic in the world. They generate billions for the economy and act as global ambassadors for our nation. Design is one of our nation's greatest strengths and plays a key role in the "soft power" we project overseas. Our architects and designers are recognised for their creativity and expertise, creating world-class buildings, infrastructure, products, services, clothing and software.'*

Along with many of the UK's high profile designers such as Thomas Heatherwick, Terence Conran, Richard Rogers and Jasper Morrison, GA Design International support the Brexit Design Manifesto:

*'Diversity and integration is critically important so we fully endorse the Brexit Design Mandate to keep open the two way sharing of education, expertise and manufacturing which enriches the lives of our team whereby world class designers are nurtured and created. Reduced access to any of these elements would be detrimental to our business and hospitality design in general.'*

*'G.A Design International prides itself on its commitment to delivering consistency, quality, and excellence in design. We draw upon the experience and knowledge of our international team of designers, who work on projects across the globe, to create high end interiors. Travel to trade shows and exhibitions is key to keeping abreast of latest technology, without this our designer's skills would lack richness and depth.'*

Martin Howitt, UK Brand & Marketing Manager at Nowy Styl Group, shares concerns that benefits the UK reaps from international relationships may be lost:

*'Opinions in Europe and the rest of the world on our industry will change over the coming years as we close ourselves off from friends and partners. Year on year we rely on foreign students*

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*and designers from both inside and outside of EU to work with us in all areas of design from product and furniture through to graphics and digital, I fail to see how leaving the EU will encourage designers to study or work here in Britain. This can only have a negative effect.'*

Similarly, Alistair Gough CEO at Ocee International, sees that despite his overall feelings that leaving the EU will bring many benefits there my by potential for difficulties in recruitment, not only the recruitment of designers but also the skilled craftsmen he requires:

*'My feeling is that the UK will become a more export focussed country and we will have greater flexibility to develop a wider and more diverse range of trade agreements across the world, without the same level of bureaucracy that exists within the EU. I believe Britain has a very strong reputation and both EU and other countries will want a mutually beneficial trading relationship.*

*My main concern is the negative impact on migration and any difficulties we find attracting the required talent. Controlled immigration is undoubtedly necessary but we need to ensure, as part of our Brexit negotiations, that the UK can still easily attract the required people and talent it needs to enable our economy to grow and prosper.*

*As a manufacturer of commercial furniture our biggest challenge is finding skilled labour for our upholstery department. There are limited UK-based training courses or apprenticeships for such a skilled trade. We have therefore recruited a number of highly skilled and excellent workers from Eastern Europe. We do bring in young staff and train them ourselves in house but this obviously takes a considerable amount of time and it is therefore necessary as well, to recruit experienced skilled workers that can support the significant levels of growth we have enjoyed in recent years.'*

Ocee have also addressed the future of their supply chain, as Gough continues, *'despite this outlook, the opportunities for us to grow and develop our business are still very significant, both within the UK and in the rest of the world. We have just acquired a business in Denmark that operates in Scandinavia, Europe, USA, China and Australia. This acquisition will allow Ocee to grow in existing and new global markets. The acquisition gives us a base and manufacturing facilities in the UK as well as in the EU; this should help us to minimise the impact of Brexit as we can choose our manufacturing site depending upon the political and economic circumstances that develop over the coming years.'*

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Theo Nicolaou, Head of Design at leading interior design and procurement group, Areen Design, considers the impact of Brexit on supply chains a main concern; *'As in any business, supplier relationships are critical to success. Strict time, cost and quality criteria agreed with clients often rely on the close relationship and trust we have with our suppliers.'*

Nicolaou's comments already ring true with HF Contracts, *'since the confirmation that we are activating article 50, there has been a definite slow-down in customer orders from our high street retail clients'* says Sam starting to feel the pressure of cost increases on products and materials we need to purchase from overseas. *To help combat some of the cost increases we have strengthened our in house manufacturing and have looked to source and subcontract more products locally.'*

Dezeen has highlighted five areas where the government needs to help the UK design sector, these are recognition, education, recruitment, manufacturing and Intellectual property. The importance of intellectual property post-Brexit is already a high priority for Dids Macdonald, CEO at Anti Copying in Design (ACID), who explained why ACID has spearheaded a campaign to ensure that UK designers are not disadvantaged by any erosion or loss of access to EU design rights (registered and unregistered) post-Brexit:

*'Brexit provides a unique opportunity not only to ensure the best possible IP design rights' negotiations but also to create strengthened protection enabling UK designers to be on a par with their EU counterparts who can rely on unfair competition if UK IP law fails them, as demonstrated by the high profile Trunki case.'*

*ACID is already in discussions with policy makers to create a new UK unregistered design law which mirrors EU unregistered rights and lasts for 10/15 years. Why? because the majority of the UK's 350,000 designers rely on unregistered EU and UK design rights and not having access to EU unregistered design rights post Brexit would seriously affect them.'*

*Currently, both EU registered (with one application) and unregistered rights (which arise automatically) offer UK designers design protection in 28 member states for 25 and 3 years respectively. EU unregistered design is a much stronger design right because it includes surface decoration and loss of access, potentially, could influence UK designers to launch new designs in alternative European locations to secure stronger design protection.'*