EPISODE NOTES – Material Narratives with Dean Brown

These episode notes are designed to develop teaching and learning activities for a range of levels and courses. These are just suggestions; please do adapt for your own purposes.

Podcast information:
An international centre of design, V&A Dundee presents the brilliance of Scottish creativity and the best of design from around the world.

Our podcast shares highlights from our public programme, along with stories from our collections and insights from creative practitioners – join us to explore design from unexpected perspectives.

Episode Information:
This episode is a live event recording of Material Narratives with Dean Brown - a talk which took place at V&A Dundee in January 2020.

Designer Dean Brown discusses his studio practice spanning objects, installations and interiors. He introduces his recent projects including an AI Drawing Easel for Google, a furniture collection for the fashion retail app Depop, a transformable kitchen for an Austrian castle and Sunglasses for Puffins created with the Interaction Research Studio.

Content Warning: Animal specimen (a Puffin, which died of natural causes) used as part of a research project is discussed in the audio. Images of this are shown within the presentation slides.

Speaker Biography:
Dean Brown studied Product Design at DJCAD, University of Dundee and is now based in London. He designs and makes objects, installations and interiors for a range of clients including Google, Uniqlo, Nike, Sèvres, Depop and Schloss Hollenegg for Design. His work has been exhibited internationally at Milan Design Week, London Design Festival, the Aram Gallery and the V&A. His research and communication driven approach to design is informed by his residency period at Fabrica (2010-2014) and currently as Research Fellow within the Interaction Research Studio, Goldsmiths University of London (2017-present).

Questions to Guide Listening:
- What helped Dean Brown build on his own language of design and help establish his practice?
- What is a designer in residence?
- What are some central priorities in Dean Brown’s practice?
How do technology and design interact in Dean Brown’s work?
Dean talks about responding to briefs and working with clients. How is the design process effected by constraints: in brief, budget, time etc?
What is the ‘mobile museum’? How far did it travel and how is it connected to Dundee?
What did Dean’s project with Google Creative Lab involve?
What biodegradable material was used as camera housing in the Nature Scene’s project for Brompton Design District?

Learning Outcomes:
- To deepen understanding of design practice in our everyday lives.
- To consider how design thinking can be used to problem solve.
- To understand how designers can respond and work to briefs and with clients.
- To explore and understand ways of working and designing collaboratively.

Connections to Curriculum:
Dean Brown’s talk would be particularly useful for pupils studying Art & Design, and Craft, Design and Technology (National/Higher/Advanced Higher) as an example of approaches to designing. Dean’s talk clearly demonstrates that a range of strategies and phases can help arrive at a potential proposal that meets specific criteria.

- I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others’ work. **EXA 3-07a**
- Through creating a range of reference material, I can demonstrate my skills of observing and recording and apply them to work in other areas of the curriculum. **EXA 4-04a**
- I can apply design thinking skills when designing and manufacturing models/products which satisfy the user or client. **TCH 4-09a**

Resources, Reading and Links:
- [Brown Office](#) is a London-based studio founded by Dean Brown. They design and make objects, installations and interiors with a dedication to materiality and narrative.
- Explore Dean’s [Instagram](#) – projects, process and Inspirations
- Watch Dean Brown’s [PechaKucha talk](#) from Dundee Design Festival 2017.
- Listen to Dean Brown and Riya Patel, Curator at the Aram Gallery, discuss ‘In praise of the prototype’ on [Episode 56 of THOUGHT STARTERS](#).
- As a team member of the Interaction Research Studio read more about Dean’s [Puffin ‘sunglasses’ aid in bill ‘glow’ discovery](#). Further reading [here](#).
Explore the Interaction Research Studio’s *My Nature Watch* Nature Scenes project which took place at London Design Festival in 2019. More about it [here](#) and [here](#). Follow the instructions to build your own My Naturewatch Camera [here](#).