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David Colangelo

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<u>Jony Ive – A Modern Designer</u>

Jonathan Ive is a legendary designer who is responsible for the look of some of the most iconic products such as the *iPod, iPhone, iPad and iMac*. Although most people are very familiar with the products that he has designed, most people are not too familiar with the man himself. In this paper, I will cover a look at *Ive's* career as a designer, as well as the modernist approach that he takes to his design culture.

Ive was born and raised in the town of Chingford, England. His father *Michael John Ive* was a silver smith, and his mother *Pamela Mary Ive* was a psycho therapist. *Ive* attended Chingford Foundation School. While in school, *Ive* was diagnosed with dyslexia. This however never seriously affected his education. *Ive* was curious about the inner workings of things throughout his childhood and was fascinated with how objects were put together. He would carefully dismantle radios and cassette recorders exploring how they were assembled and how the pieces fit. *"I remember always being interested in made objects. As a kid, I remember taking apart whatever I could get my hands on. Later, this developed into more of an interest in how they were made, how they worked, there form and material",* (Ive, 2003 Interview). Although he recognized his passion early on in life, it took him some time to figure out exactly what he wanted to design. His interest ranged from furniture and jewelry, to cars and boats. His father took him on tours around London design studios and design schools. Young Jonathan Ive took a

special interest in a car design studio. He later looked into attending *Central Saint Martin's College of Arts and Design* in London (famous for their automotive design program). However, Ive found the school to be a bad fit. Due to other students being *too weird*. They were making *vroom vroom* noises as they did their drawings. He looked elsewhere for a higher education, and eventually turned to *Newcastle Polytechnic* in the north of England. Ive decided product design would become his specialty.

It was during his college years when Ive first developed his signature Modernism Design Style based on German Bauhaus tradition. This design philosophy embraced a minimalist approach, where designers should only design what is needed. These were the same principles followed by former Braun designer *Dieter Rams*. You can clearly see similarities in the products that each of them has created.

After graduating, Ive took to Silicon Valley to explore up and coming design studios in the Bay Area. He immediately fell in love with San Francisco and hoped that he would return there in the future. Ive returned to London, to work for the *Robert Weaver Group*, one of the top design firms in Britain at the time. After a fall out with RWG, Ive left the firm and joined a new design consultancy called *Tangerine Design*. While Ive had much more freedom, his designs were often rejected by clients due to expense or deviation from the company's existing product line. Another problem was clients accepting Ive's designs but reengineering them only to look half as good as it should have been.

In fall of 1991, *Bob Brunner* began scouting Europe for outside design firms to work with *Apple* on a secret project called *Juggernaut*. Brunner was determined to get Jonathan Ive on board at Apple. At the time, Apple was expanding its product lines, and Chief Executive Officer *John Scully*, was investing heavily in R&D to speed up development of new products. Ive accepted a contract to consult on the Juggernaut project but was still working under Tangerine Design. Apple wanted him to focus on developing mobile devices like tablets and laptop hybrids. Ive produced the *Folio Keyboard* that featured its own CPU, network jacks and a trackpad. Ive was later offered a full-time job working at Apple in Cupertino. Ive appreciated the supportive work environment where he could focus less on day to day business operations and more on design as a craft. He had also become frustrated with consultancy since working outside a company made it difficult to have a serious impact on product plans with true innovation. In September 1992, Ive accepted a full-time position at Apple.

His first assignment was to redesign the *Newton Message Pad*. The first version was a failure, and Apple was hoping to change that with its second iteration. Although the Newton as a whole was a complete failure, Ive's Newton was a design success. It earned him four of the top awards in the industry, and the honor of being featured in the permeant collection of the *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art*.

Since Ive was young and inexperienced as a manager, he was not exercising much discipline or leadership. His design group was creative chaos, with each designer working on their own projects with virtually no coordination. Then, new Chief Executive Officer *Steve Jobs* refocused the design team and got them working together on a new project the *Macintosh NC*

which would later become the *iMac*. In order to meet the deadline, Ive implemented the *Radical Integrated Design Process* which transformed the way Apple developed its products. The iMac was released nine months later and ended up becoming the best-selling Mac in Apple's history up to that point.

Ive takes a very modern approach to all products that he designs. When looking at modernism, some key principles that can be seen are clean geometric forms, a restricted use of colour, and the idea that *'form follows function'*. This is an excellent description of Jonathan Ive as a product designer. Ive and his design team at Apple, approach the design of a product with not just how it looks and feels, but also how it works. Since the design is what the user is going to be presented, and what the user is going to interact with, Ive feels it is important to work on every aspect of the process and experience of using the device. *"Designers bow before Apple's thoughtful, minimalist aesthetic: "Every aspect is considered--the ergonomics, the feel, the touch," says Toronto industrial designer David Didur,"* (Kingston, 46). A key example of this was the first-generation *iPod* designed by Ive in 2001. While it was not the first MP3 player of its kind, it was the most successful and beloved in history to that point. MP3 players prior to the iPod were incredibly complicated to use, and the process of getting music onto the device was a nightmare. It also did not help that they were not the best-looking devices to be released. With the iPod, Apple fixed these concerns with an incredibly simple and easy design both in hardware and in software. Additionally, Apple introduced *iTunes* which at the time made purchasing music as well as importing current music libraries incredibly simple. This was due to Ive's simple and elegant design. Not only was it incredibly user friendly, but the design was also an incredibly appealing device to own and display. *"When Steve Jobs introduced the iPod in 2001, he did*

something that would have been counterintuitive for any other consumer-product company CEO:

he showed the back of it first. "I'm in love with it," he said of the elegant, shiny surface reflecting

the Apple logo in matte relief. It's stainless steel; it's really, really durable. It's beautiful,"

(Kingston 46).

One of Ive's biggest design inspirations was Braun designer *Dieter Rams*. *"the*

company's aesthetic under Jonathan Ive, head of Apple's design group since 1986, owes a huge

debt to Dieter Rams's design in the 1960s for Braun electronics and appliances," (Kingston 46)

Ive loved the simplistic yet functional design. When looking at Ive's design for Apple's *iPhone*

and *iPad* software called *iOS*, the similarities to Rams are quite present with its skeuomorphic

design of their applications. In fact, Ive's calculator app was a remake of the *Braun ET 66*

Calculator designed by Rams in 1981. This was done to reduce the time and effort of the

learning process users would have to adopt in order to optimize their new device and its software

to follow.

This concludes a brief history and analysis of Jonathan Ive as a product designer for

Apple. It is quite clear that he had a major impact on the look and feel of not only Apple, but for

consumer electronics as a whole. While he currently working as the Chief Design Officer at

Apple, the question must be asked of what the company will do when Ive retires. How will the

company function and what it will represent? While the future is unclear, a similar question was

asked about the departure of *Steve Jobs*, when he tragically passed away in 2011, and while the

company was not the same afterwards, Apple still continued to thrive and dominate the market

under the leader of new CEO *Tim Cook.*

Work Cited

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