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Simple, Sustainable Living: An Illustrated Journal

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SIT Study Abroad

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Simple, Sustainable Living: An Illustrated Journal

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Environmental Action, SIT Study Abroad, Fall 2012

ISP Ethics Review

This ISP paper by _____ Jenn Livermore _____ (student) has
been reviewed by _Peter Brennan _____ (Academic Director)
and does/does not* conform to the ethical standards of the local community and the
ethical and academic standards outlined in the SIT student and AD handbooks.

*This paper does not conform to standards for the following reasons:

Academic Director: Peter Brennan

Signature: _____

Program: Australia: Sustainability and Environmental Action

Date: December 7th 2012

Abstract

As we are faced with the gravity of climate change, fundamental lifestyle changes need to occur in order to achieve a sustainable future. The purpose of my creative project was to create an illustrated journal that promotes simple and sustainable living in Melbourne. This paper describes the process undertaken to complete this project. Initially, I discuss the power of art in transitioning to a post-growth society and the benefits of using an illustrated journal as an artistic medium. I also outline the background of the voluntary simplicity movement. In my Methods section, I discuss why Melbourne was a perfect location to base my journal, and continue with a description of the background research I conducted to include in my journal. Over the course of a three-week period in Melbourne I read many books, carried out directed observation research by visiting farmers markets, parks, gardens, a meditation class and more; and I interviewed four simple living. After completing this research I organized my findings into eight main sections ranging from food to transportation, housing to happiness. Next, I illustrated the text and printed my journal. The journal is also a multipurpose tool that transforms into a bag, demonstrating the kind of creative thinking needed to transition to a sustainable future. Lastly, I left my final product on a park bench for a resident to find and use.

The rest of this paper describes the thought process behind my final piece, and evaluates the effectiveness of my project. It discusses the audience of my work, the influence my work had in terms of promoting sustainability, and what I would change if I were to do it all again. In my conclusion I argue my illustrated journal was successful and effective in communicating the benefits of simple living, but I would have needed to distribute many more copies to create real change.

Keywords: Voluntary Simplicity, Sustainable Living, Illustrated Journal, Melbourne,
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Environmental Art and Sustainable Living

I believe that the new role of the artist is to create an art that is more than decoration, commodity, or political tool – an art that questions the status quo and the direction life has taken, the endless contradictions we accept and approve.
- Agnes Denes (Denes, undated)

Art is a method of communication, a mode of expression, and a tool for creating change. Historically, art has played many different roles, but one constant has held true – good art is immensely powerful. In today's modern world, full of contradictions and rife with problems, Agnes Denes argues the artist must take on a new role as a change agent (Denes undated). While Denes' art encompasses many subjects, a key part of her work is environmental art. By using art to raise questions about our careless and detrimental relationship with our fragile and sick environment, Denes inspires important dialogues about the importance of preserving the health of our earth.

While Denes is originally from Sweden, she works internationally and the messages she conveys are important on a global scale – especially in the face of climate change. As we begin to experience the immense challenges brought on by a warming planet, we must consider our current lifestyles and the “endless contradictions we accept and approve” (Denes undated). In his book *Growth Fetish*, Clive Hamilton describes that our current lifestyles perpetuate economic growth. Unfortunately, climate change and large-scale environmental degradation are a direct result of the predominant worldview that a growing economy is the ultimate goal. Growth is not only seen as the main way to achieve happiness, it is also viewed as the solution to most of our problems (Hamilton 2003). In modern Australia, this way of thinking holds true. In a country known for incredible biodiversity and breathtaking landscapes, a focus on promoting economic growth harms this environmental legacy a little more every day. What's more, this obsession with growth is not only ecologically harmful, it is also failing to make people happy and is creating more problems than it is solving (Hamilton 2003).

Thankfully, there is an alternative to this destructive, consumer-driven way of life. It is called simple living, downshifting, or sustainable living, and it is happening right here in Australia. The Voluntary Simplicity movement, illustrated by Samuel Alexander in his article *Voluntary Simplicity: The Poetic Alternative to Consumer*

Culture is about living more with less. The key idea is that “by *lowering* our ‘standard of living’ (measured by income/consumption) we can actually *increase* our ‘quality of life’ (measured by subjective wellbeing)” (Alexander 2009). If we want to save our precious environment and lead rich lives, living simply and sustainably is a promising option.

1.2 The Illustrated Journal as an Artistic Medium

Sustainability can be defined as an individual and systematic approach to preserving and improving the health of the Earth in order to ensure a good quality of life on our one planet. Simple living provides the opportunity to live in a sustainable manner that will benefit both the planet and the individual. But because simple living rejects dominant mainstream culture, adopting this lifestyle can be challenging. In order to thrive as a simple liver, it is necessary to think creatively. As such, art becomes the perfect medium through which to teach about the benefits of simple living. However, some forms of art can be quite ambiguous, and simple living theory is grounded in logic. An illustrated journal then is a perfect synthesis between text-based logic and creative expression because images are able to clarify the text while transforming words into an artistic medium. If, as Agnes Denes suggested, the new role of the artist is to create art that “questions the status quo and the direction life has taken, the endless contradictions we accept and approve,” an illustrated journal about simple living does just that (Denes undated). By using text and image to effectively communicate strategies for simple living, art that questions the direction of dominant culture while providing solutions for an alternative future is created.

The journal itself also contains important connotations. As a book, the information might seem somewhat righteous or even critical. A journal is more approachable because the reader is under the impression it was not written for them. In this way the information is presented free of judgment. An additional aspect of my journal is that the physical journal transforms into a bag [Appendix A]. This transformation is a metaphor for the kind of creative thinking needed in society to transition to a sustainable future. This aspect also further engages the reader and makes reading the journal desirable, while demonstrating how enjoyable and innovative simple living is.

1.3 History of the Voluntary Simplicity Movement

The concept of living simply is not a new phenomenon. For most of human history people have lived without abundance. However, as consumerism began to become more mainstream, authors like Henry David Thoreau wrote about living in an alternative fashion to this way of life. Observing that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” Thoreau decides to reduce his life to the bare minimum (Thoreau 1999, p.9). In *Walden*, his book that documents this quest, Thoreau explains “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived” (Thoreau 1999, p.16). Thoreau’s observations are very relevant to dominant culture today, where populations attempt to create identity through consumerism, and are left with an unsettling emptiness. As Gershwin Penn observed in his ISP about the Voluntary Simplicity movement in Melbourne, Thoreau urges readers to enrich their lives by “break[ing] from the societal chains of conformity and follow[ing] a path of their own choosing” (Penn 2010, p6). While Thoreau’s ideas are centuries old, they make up the foundation for voluntary simplicity today.

Eighty years later, Duane Elgin explores some of the same ideas presented by Thoreau in his book *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*. Elgin’s book acknowledges “In the rush of modern industrial society and in the attempt to maintain our image as successful persons, we feel that we have lost touch with a deeper, more profound part of our being” (Elgin 1993, p.13). In order to live a fulfilling life Elgin claims that we must focus on living intentional and purposeful lives that are free from material want. Interestingly, Elgin was largely inspired by Mohandas Gandhi, who also taught of the importance of living deliberately many years earlier.

Modern Australian writers such as Clive Hamilton and Samuel Alexander also write about the unsustainable and unhealthy environment the dominant consumer culture creates. In *Growth Fetish*, Hamilton describes “a world where waste and over-consumption are rife, where growth and development are out of control, [and] where materialism and consumerism are driving out the values of community” (Hamilton 2003, p.xiii). The solution to our crumbling society is to transition to a post-growth society. Samuel Alexander describes this type of living in his various writings. By “providing for material needs as simply and directly as possible, minimizing

expenditure on consumer goods and services, and directing progressively more time and energy towards pursuing non-materialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning,” Alexander reasons that a sense of purpose and fulfillment will be achieved and the environment will immensely benefit (Alexander undated).

Even psychologists have noted the faults with a consumer society. In *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt explains the concept of the hedonic treadmill. On a regular treadmill you can increase the speed all you want, but you will always remain in the same place. In life, you can earn more, spend more, and accumulate more, but you will still have the same level of life satisfaction (Haidt 2006, p86). This is because the riches you accumulate simply raise your expectation of what an average life is. Yet, we fail to realize this and continue to run endlessly, even when exhaustion sets in (Haidt 2006, p86).

While simple living is a fantastic alternative to consumer driven culture, the voluntary simplicity movement is still quite small. Although simple livers are clear in that they do not “recruit” members or preach a simple lifestyle to others, it is important to spread awareness of this graceful alternative lifestyle. One way in which this is happening is through the blogosphere. In Australia, websites and blogs such as *Aussies Living Simply*, *Down to Earth*, *The Simplicity Collective*, and countless others provide useful and inspirational information about simple living. The growing popularity of these blogs illustrates that simple living is a realistic possibility.

Although ideas about simple living have been around for quite some time now, the way in which these ideas are transmitted have changed. Thoreau chose to isolate himself in the woods and then write about his findings, whereas other authors chose to publish books about living simply within society. Today, teaching others about sustainability by becoming a living example of a simple lifestyle is effective. In our modern world, the amazing accessibility of the Internet can make demonstrating a simple lifestyle more public. It is beneficial and influential to engage in behaviors such as shopping at farmers markets, taking part in bike culture, and practicing other sustainable living methods. Through the Internet and especially the blogosphere, promoting sustainable behaviors such as these becomes even more effective. On the other hand, there is something comforting and reliable about the tangibility of printed work. My illustrated journal contains the benefits associated with printed material, while serving the purpose of educating a vast number of people about an individual’s progressive lifestyle – much like a blog. By using mediums like these that

are accessible to a wide audience, the voluntary simplicity movement can continue to grow and flourish.

2.0 Methods

2.1 Choosing a Location

Because simple living involves establishing a connection with one place and living fully within that landscape, it was important to base my journal in a specific environment. Melbourne was a great place to choose as the foundation for my project because it is a vibrant city that is environmentally progressive in many ways. In fact, the 2012 Global Livability Survey voted Melbourne as the world's most livable city (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). Even though this conclusion was reached without taking sustainable livability into account, there are many ways in which making the transition to a simple lifestyle would be easier in Melbourne. For example, Melbourne has fantastic public transportation, great bike paths, and many prominent green spaces. The abundance of farmers markets makes eating locally and seasonally exciting and easy, and community gardens and personal gardens are rapidly growing in popularity.

Melbourne's multicultural population is also an asset to the city. Because of this rich diversity, different lifestyles and beliefs are widely tolerated. Even so, mainstream consumer culture – highly reliant on economic growth – is without question the dominant mindset. Those who live simply are undoubtedly a minority. Living in an urban environment like Melbourne also poses a challenge, as space is limited and housing costs are high. This urban aspect is critical to consider however, as the world's population is rapidly becoming dominantly urban (United Nations, 2007). Because transitioning to a simple lifestyle would be a challenge in any industrialized country, I felt it would be easiest for my project to have an impact in a city where hints of progressive change were already taking place, and Melbourne fit this description perfectly.

2.2 The Illustrated Journal as a Communication Tool

Originally, when I decided to create an artistic piece about sustainable living, I envisioned a guidebook detailing how to be sustainable in different aspects of life. After I arrived in Melbourne however, I found myself struggling with this goal

because I was a foreigner. I felt I was not in a position to tell locals how to live in their own city. Thus, I decided to write a journal from the perspective of a character I invented that was trying to live simply and sustainably. My character, Anya, had recently decided to transform her life and live simply¹. The journal is what she used to record useful information as she explored different aspects of Melbourne on her quest.

This method of transmitting information about the benefits and methods of simple living is effective because the reader is provided with all the same information as would be presented by a guidebook, but it doesn't seem as if it's being forced upon them. This tactic is also perfect for teaching about simple living, because a main aspect of simple is learning through example. People don't like to be lectured, but if they are presented with a working example of alternative living, the concepts are easier to absorb. The illustrations in the journal also aid in the comprehension of the information, because they describe the text further while catching the immediate attention of the viewer. The final creative aspect of the journal is that it transforms into a bag. This transformation demonstrates the gratification and necessity of innovative thinking on a quest to live sustainably. Re-purposing materials and imagining resourceful solutions are pertinent. Upon first look, the journal's ability to transform inspires curiosity in the viewer, which leads them in. On closer inspection however, the viewer recognizes the deeper message: a need for societal transformation and the creative thinking necessary for this transformation to take place.

2.3 Background Research

2.3.1 Books

In order to first get a grasp on the voluntary simplicity movement, I visited the State Library of Victoria (an example of sustainability in itself as it provides free knowledge and many shared resources). There is much to be learned about voluntary simplicity from published works. On one end of the spectrum, there are books that talk about what is wrong with modern consumer culture. These are works like *Growth Fetish* by Clive Hamilton, and *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben. By providing grave facts and figures about the state of society and earth, these authors call for a

¹ An Aboriginal elder gave me the totem Kuranya, which means rainbow in the local Bundjalung language. I used the end of Kur(anya) to name my character.

fundamental lifestyle change that resembles simple living. These works were important to consider in my journal because providing facts strengthens an argument.

Another type of literature I studied were works that focused on solutions such as writings by Samuel Alexander, *The Transition Handbook* by Rob Hopkins and *Rethink: the way you live* by Amanda Talbot. These writings subtly call for action by illustrating a brighter future. Samuel Alexander effectively describes the immense benefits that come with simple living, providing the reader with hope and inspiration. Using an upbeat tone and conveying hopeful messages was very important for me to include in my journal because it is pertinent to remain positive when making large-scale lifestyle changes. *The Transition Handbook* was also a key work to reference because it is similar to my journal in that it provides concrete examples for living in a post-carbon world. Amanda Talbot's *Rethink: the way you live*, was also an inspiration when creating my journal because the entire book was graphically compelling, which made the text more accessible and desirable to read. Talbot intermixed the body of her text with images, quotes, lists, and graphics. All of these different aspects were linked by consistent design themes, which made the book well organized, while still stimulating to read. This layout was a huge inspiration for my own work.

Another important perspective on dominant culture is from a psychological perspective. While many people believe protecting the environment is important, this is generally more of an abstract feeling that is not often acted upon. In this way, it was important for me to focus on the psychological benefits of simple living. Authors such as Barry Schwartz (*The Paradox of Choice*) and Jonathan Haidt (*The Happiness Hypothesis*) look at modern society through the lens of happiness. Even though wealth is increasing rapidly, people are not becoming any happier. Everyone wants to be happy, so highlighting that the way we live today does not result in happiness is important when trying to illustrate the benefits of simple living.

Books focused on highlighting what Melbourne had to offer in terms of sustainability were also key in my research. *The Foodies Dairy* written by Allan Champion and Michele Curtis is an annually published diary that is full of luscious images and seasonal eating tips. This information, placed side-by-side next to a personal calendar assumes that the reader will incorporate fresh local produce into everyday life. This diary was key for me to consider when laying out my journal, in

that I made sure useful information was next to stimulating graphics to captivate the reader. It was through this kind of extensive book research that I was able to make my journal a rich source of information.

2.3.2 Direct Observation

Another important aspect of the background research I conducted was direct observation. Melbourne is a rich city; in terms of culture, history, wealth, and diversity, and it was pertinent for me to explore in order to grasp how sustainable living could take place in this urban setting. To conduct this research, I made a list of all the places I wanted to visit, and whenever I needed a break from library research I would visit a new place. After observing each space, I made sure to record observations about the people I saw, the accessibility and popularity of the space, and how the space promoted sustainability. I then analyzed this data to determine how I could include it in my journal.

In order to experience food in Melbourne I visited farmers markets such as Queen Victoria Markets, the Preston Markets, and the market at Collingwood Children's Farm. These spaces were not only packed with people, they displayed the kind of rich community that local food fosters. I also visited Rushall Community Gardens and CERES Environmental Park to observe "green" communities in Melbourne. Rushall Community Gardens is a perfect illustration of the benefits of local food, while CERES demonstrates a wide range of feasible sustainable living practices. Another space that fosters community is the Abbotsford Convent. Lentil As Anything, a pay-by-donation restaurant is located here – a great example of an alternative economic system. There were also many marvelous green spaces to visit, such as Yarra Bend Park, The Royal Botanical Gardens, and Carlton Gardens to name a few. These numerous oases of calm provide a much-needed breath of fresh air in the bustling city.

As well as systematically exploring these locations, I also made sure to record unplanned experiences, interactions, observations and thoughts about sustainability in Melbourne. Some of these instances included pondering the brightly lit billboard outside my bedroom window, thinking about how I could live more sustainably in my house, experiencing the joy of riding a bike again, and receiving free food from the CERES café. By embracing every experience as inspiration for my journal, I was

able to better understanding what sustainability really means to Melbourne and how sustainable living can be achieved in this environment.

2.3.1 Interviews

Yet another part of my research involved conducting a few interviews to supplement the other data I had gathered. I was able to speak with Samuel Alexander – creator of the Voluntary Simplicity Institute, Richard Keech – a sustainable energy consultant, Katerina Gaita – the Co Project Manager for Environment Victoria’s Home Planet Program, and Brett Hedger – the Green House Programs Officer for the City of Port Phillip. I was also able to attend a meditation class taught by Gen Kelsang Dornyin about pure and simple living. Talking and listening to simple livers was key in rounding out my research. As my journal illustrates the journey of a character fully exploring Melbourne, it should only make sense that wise people I interacted with would also provided insights into simple living. These examples added an accessible nature to the journal as they truly epitomized learning through example.

2.4 The Process of Creation

Before I started conducting any research, I first made a storyboard of everything I wanted to include in my journal. This helped me focus on what research I needed to gather. The chapter headings I envisioned were: General Sustainability in Melbourne, Buying Stuff, Food, Home, Transport, and Happiness. After I had collected all of my research, the next step was to create a layout for the journal that was well organized and had flow to captivate the reader. In order to do this I separated my research into 8 sections: 1) The World as We Know It 2) The Solution 3) Purchases 4) Food 5) Home 6) Transportation 7) Happiness and 8) Interviews. Interspersed in between these sections I included observations about some of the places I visited and experiences I had (all written through Anya’s perspective). These experiences served to break up the text and make the journal seem more personal and thus accessible. Woven into the body of the text I also included simple line drawings illustrating the writing. These images served to resemble doodles that someone would draw in their journal. At the same time, these illustrations also make the text visually appealing and add a layer of visual communication to the journal.

Through using simple illustration, the text becomes art, and thus is aesthetically appealing to the viewer.

The last part of the creation of this journal is its ability to transform into a bag. To achieve this transformation the layout of my book was dictated by a pattern I had created earlier. Each piece forms a different part of the bag, which it is all held together by organic cotton string. By piecing together the different pages of the book, I assembled it into a bag and completed my work. The last step was to leave a finalized copy of my book on a park bench in Melbourne, just as if Anya had forgotten it there. Hopefully, it will inspire someone to make a change towards a simpler life.

3.0 Description and Explanation of Creative Work

3.1 Purpose and Meaning of Work

The purpose of creating this work was to use my art and design skills to promote sustainable lifestyles. The simple illustrations I have included in my text explain the information visually, and thus add a deeper message to the piece. The fact that the book is black and white also reinforces the simplicity and accessibility of the work. Art is powerful in that it can be an extremely effective method of communication. I wanted to use this power to promote simple and sustainable living in an unobtrusive way. Through the use of descriptive illustrations, aesthetic text, and important information, I was able to create a toolkit for change. This journal is not just a documentation of one persons quest to live simply and sustainably in Melbourne, but an environmental education tool as well.

The transformation of the object is also a key part of the core message. In order to live sustainably on this planet we are going to have to embrace large lifestyle transformations. After reading this journal, the transformation of the physical object is the last step. This is symbolic on a larger scale, for once you are exposed to the information, the next step is to transform your life. The transformation of the book also associates this transformation with a pleasurable experience. It is exciting to turn a book into a bag, and thus a lifestyle transformation is viewed in a positive light. The transformation also perpetuates sustainability, as it is repurposing material to serve a new purpose.

The transformation of the book into a bag is also significant. A bag is somewhat associated with consumer culture, for a shopping bag is a recognizable

icon of consumerism. Yet, my bag questions this consumerism. When the bag you are carrying around is covered in information about living simply, the individual will have to think twice about placing unnecessary material objects in the bag. The user of the bag will have to pause and consider purchases before placing them in the bag and question whether they are really necessary. What's more, the bag may inspire the individual to make ethical purchases. This bag will fit in much better at a farmers market than inside a Woolworths, and in an op shop instead of a mall.

Another key aspect of my book is that it was not written with the intent of being published. Because I would not want this book about simple living to be a product of our current economic system, all copies of my journal would be free. In order to distribute the journal I would leave copies resting on a park benches, tucked into a library shelves, or sitting at a coffee shops.² This act is symbolic in itself, as the solution to our current flawed system is right before our eyes, we just have to be open minded. In essence, these dispersed journals symbolize how accessible the solution is, it just takes some individual action to reach a sustainable conclusion.

In order to add credibility to the journal, the final touch was a hand written letter from Anya to the finder of the book. This letter states that what the reader has found is Anya's journal, which is a compilation of the information she gathered on her quest to live simply and sustainably in Melbourne. This letter is attached to the outside of the book by wrapping up the book as if it were a gift. Because a gift demonstrates care and respect, the finder of the book will first approach the information with an open mind. What's more, the use of a journal instead of a guidebook puts the reader at ease. They have been given the privilege of reading someone else's thoughts, instead of feeling targeted by the information presented.

3.2 Audience

Because my work will be left on park benches and tucked into nooks in the city, anyone could potentially find my work making my audience very broad. This being said, the reader will choose whether or not to read the journal, and thus I did focus on appealing to a particular audience. This audience is basically the types of people with which I envision Anya would be interacting. These types of people would

² Due to my limited resources I was unable to distribute numerous copies of my journal around the city, but on my last night in Melbourne I did place one copy of my completed journal on a park bench.

be people who cared about the environment or felt some sort of discontent with their current life, but were unsure how to create positive change in their own lives. They would be inhabitants of Melbourne, who have either just moved to Melbourne and are looking for guidance on how to live sustainably, or they have lived in Melbourne for some time but have only experienced the dominant culture apparent in Melbourne. This journal will illustrate that there are counter-culture movements happening in Melbourne, and they are easy to join. Thus, the audience of the book would be people who are open minded and aware that change needs to take place, but they haven't taken much initiative to create change yet. This book will hopefully provide inspiration and a set of tools for the reader to try simple living.

4.0 Analysis and Evaluation of Work

4.1 Educational Value and Aesthetics

Overall, I am proud of how my journal turned out. In general, I believe using an illustrated journal to spread awareness of simple, sustainable living is an innovative concept. The combination of images and text I used made the journal more accessible and readable, and thus effectively engages and educates the viewer quickly and thoroughly. The neutrality of a journal, written through the lens of a local, also captivates the reader more fully than a guide. Even though I covered a wide range of subjects, I also made sure to keep the journal a reasonable length so as not to overwhelm the reader. The simplicity of the black and white palette also makes the immensity of information in the book less overwhelming. For these reasons, I believe my journal to be a success.

Even so, there are definitely aspects of the final product I would change. The biggest struggle I had with the journal was materials. Ideally, I would have printed the journal on fabric so that the bag would be more durable. However, given my limited budget and timeframe, I was unable to find a place that could print on ecologically friendly fabric they had in house. As a compromise, I found some 100% recycled cotton rag paper I thought would be perfect. Unfortunately, I was also unable to find any printing house willing to print on this paper. In the end, I had to settle with simply printing on thick, semi-recycled paper. Aesthetically, this was not the look I wanted, but I was left with no other choice. Another huge drawback with having to print with this company is that I was unable to print a proof before printing

my final version. While I prided myself on how succinct the text was, when the final version came out of the printer I realized the text was quite small. This automatically narrows down my audience because people who might struggle with reading such small text probably will not bother reading the journal. There are also a few lines and marks that did not translate in the printing process. When the journal is read closely, these small marks make the work seem less professional. It would have been easy to make these small corrections if I had been able to print a proof, but I was unable to do so.

4.2 Communication of Sustainability Message

In terms of conveying my sustainability message adequately, I think my journal does an excellent job. My goal was to spread awareness about simple living, because it is a lifestyle that protects and improves the health of the Earth in order to ensure a good quality of life. By consulting many different sources and combining illustrations with text, I was able to use different forms of communication to get my message across. My use of research from books, direct observation, and interview research helped me pull from a wide range of perspectives and combine a patchwork of knowledge to add depth to my journal. Even though the book is targeted at a specific audience, the nature of the journal is to be applicable to any resident of Melbourne. Because of the clarity and simplicity of the text and illustrations, the information is easily accessible and comprehensible, and thus it can be used by a wide range of people. The length of the journal also allows the finder of the journal to read it in one sitting, enabling them to absorb all of the information without growing bored. One way in which my journal might limit its potential range of the audience however is in its aesthetics. Because I am a woman, I have a more feminine aesthetic and I believe this is apparent in my journal. As such, this journal might not be as visually appealing to a male viewer, especially one who identifies strongly with his masculine identity. Nevertheless, the design is powerful and clear and it is written from the perspective of a female character, so I don't believe this aspect detracts from the journal's message.

4.3 Realistic Effect of Work

While I do believe I did my best to convey important information in an engaging way, realistically a 24-page journal will probably not transform anyone's

life. This being said, my hope was that this bank of information will lodge itself in the viewer's subconscious, and inspire them to begin to question dominant culture. The journal is meant to be a living example of how sustainable living could work, not a bible that changes lives. Thus, by merely existing it can create small-scale change, and any change is better than no change!

Another huge barrier in my journals ability to create change was that given my limited resources, I was only able to distribute one copy out into the city. If I were able to distribute 100 or 200 copies, I believe this would have been enough to reach a sufficient number of open-minded readers, as well start a dialogue between the finders of these books. Realistically, my one copy is probably not enough to create large-scale change. However, I also sent digital copies of my product to everyone who helped me with my research. Because digital copies can be multiplied endlessly, these copies may have more of an effect in Melbourne's community. In essence, I feel that my journal has the potential to have a positive and real effect in Melbourne, but the timeframe and resources available to me limited the journals ability to reach its full potential.

4.4 What I Would Have Done Differently

If I could have done this project again, there are several things I would have done differently. Primarily, I would have started working on creating the physical journal earlier so I would have had enough time to find a printer that could have both printed on fabric and printed a proof of the piece. Because the artistic process took longer than I expected and I switched directions a few times, I ended up doing a lot of research I didn't end up using. I wish I had spent less time researching and more time creating my work since in the end I had too much data and not as much time as I wanted to complete my journal.

Another change I might have considered was staying around the Byron area instead of traveling to Melbourne. I do believe I gained a lot by living in Melbourne and overall it was a fantastic experience, but I wish I could have spent more of my budget on printing copies of my journal to distribute instead of on plane flights. This is debatable, however, because Melbourne was a great location to conduct research, and the population of Melbourne was a good demographic for which to model an environmental education project.

5.0 Conclusion

Overall, I discovered that using art, specifically a combination of writing and visual art, to convey messages of sustainability is a gratifying and effective means of communicating sustainability messages. In the new role of the artist that Agnes Denes describes, using art as a tool to create change is key. By synthesizing text and visuals together, powerful art is created. The type of creative thinking that my illustrated, transformable journal inspires is the same kind of thinking needed to achieve a sustainable future.

While my journal has the potential to stimulate questions about our current system, many more copies of this journal would need to be distributed in order to create real change. To make this process more sustainable I would focus on materials, and making the transformation of the bag more durable. Regardless, I have discovered that using an illustrated journal distributed to the masses is a feasible option for promoting sustainable change. This method of dispersing information would also work in countless other cities and towns, and it would be easy to adopt the framework of my journal to another location in the future.

Another project I could undertake would be to distribute copies of a journal similar to this, but with blank pages intended for the finder's artwork or written work. In this way the finder of the journal would be able to play a role in its creation. When finished, the finder could then leave it for the next person. If the production of these journals were implemented on a large scale, it would also be interesting to create an online community, where the finders of the journals could come together to start a dialogue about sustainable living in their community.

Conveying simple living messages can be challenging given that this lifestyle directly questions the foundation of modern society. Rejecting dominant culture is frightening and challenging, and thus asking others to reject dominant culture is nearly impossible. Using text and illustration as an artistic medium to inspire change makes this task less daunting. Written through the lens of another character, the information truly educates through living example. As examples of creative lifestyles become visible, lifestyle transformation seems less radical. Through art, we can communicate the pleasures of living simply, and take the first steps toward a brighter future.

6.0 References

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7.0 Appendix

Appendix A: The Transformation of the Illustrated Journal (see separate document for physical journal)

