

Every generation is tested by danger and disease

ANXIETY is a perfectly normal human emotion, just like happiness and sadness. Scientists believe that moderate stress levels are good because they spur us to take remedial action, but severe depression and panic attacks are debilitating and may be programmed in our genes.

Most of us wrestle with domestic, financial or health concerns, and the media bring new regional and global dangers to our attention every day.

Humans have always felt threatened by unfriendly neighbours and natural disasters. Our Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer ancestors feared attacks by ferocious predators and found it difficult to collect adequate food supplies. They

The way we were



By Jackie Loos

were often on the brink of starvation and few lived past their thirties.

Neolithic people farmed with domesticated livestock and cereal crops and were able to feed non-farming kings, priests and soldiers with their agricultural surpluses. Germs spread more rapidly in static societies and the inhabitants suffered from a range of infectious diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis and typhoid. Their life expectancy was initially lower than that of hunter-gathers.

The domestication of horses in Asia during the Bronze Age and the ability of farmers to produce enough food to support armies and navies led to waves of warfare that continue. Peasants lived in fear of being chased and speared by mounted warriors (Scythians, Huns,

Vandals and Mongols), much as Middle Eastern people dread sudden death by more sophisticated weapons in 2014.

Germs have exterminated millions throughout history, including the "Black Death" (bubonic plague), which is thought to have killed 30 to 60 percent of Europe's total population in 1348-50. European adventurers introduced epidemics that spread rapidly through parts of Asia, Africa and America, decimating indigenous populations.

Colonisation was followed by a great escalation in the number of Africans who were captured, enslaved and exported to foreign countries to endure years of brutal forced labour – a "living death".

Add religion to the mix and you get a new set of dangers. Jews, Christians and

Muslims have been cruelly persecuted at times, and some South American gods required copious sacrifices of innocent blood. It's sad to note how easy it is for fanatical religious groups to become merciless oppressors – the Spanish Inquisition, the religious wars in Ireland and the recent beheadings in Syria come to mind.

The twentieth century was marred by mass killings in two world wars, the Spanish Flu, the Aids pandemic and a 45-year chill while the super powers threatened each other with thermonuclear weapons.

Looking at the local picture, we could say that the Nkandla upgrade is an irritation, the ongoing shortage of energy is a worry, and the unchecked spread of Ebola in South Africa (unlikely as it seems) would pose a dire threat.

DESIGNING A NEW ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

Over the last 19 years, the Design Indaba Festival has grown in stature and prominence. During that time, we have earned a strong local and international reputation for offering a world-class, multitiered platform that champions all creative sectors.

2014 was another case in point: featuring 509 SMME sector exhibitors and once again proving our ethos that through design there really is a better future for all.

Design Indaba Festival's contribution to the South African GDP over the past 6 years

Design Indaba Festival's contribution to the South African GDP in 2014 alone.

The average spend per visitor to the 2014 Design Indaba Festival – double the figure for any other expo.

Total number of jobs created by a single source in the design industry.

Total number of visitors who came to experience the creative work from 26 different countries.

Total income earned by exhibitors from business orders.



Tavern of the Seas



By David Biggs

There's more to life than glitz and celebrities

WHENEVER I pass time in doctors' or dentists' waiting rooms I reach for a magazine and am amazed at the triteness of most of the features that are supposed to entertain or educate me.

It seems the world is besotted with rich people, who they're sharing beds with and what they have bought.

I believe this trend has had a very damaging effect on young people all over the western world.

A survey among school-leaving children in Britain revealed the greatest ambition among most of them was to become a "celebrity".

"What do you plan to be when you leave school?" they were asked, and the answers came loud and clear – "rich and famous, thank you."

They want to be like the people in the magazines, be seen wearing diamond-encrusted watches and designer shoes, arriving at fancy functions in expensive cars and being photographed by paparazzi.

These are selfish, shallow role models and I hope there are teachers and parents out there to point this out to their children. There's more to life than bling and glitz. There are far better role models than the tinsel glitterati in the magazines.

Think of Safia Abdi Haase, the first woman immigrant to receive Norway's prestigious Order of St Olav. She fled Somalia in 1992 and has been the victim of all kinds of violence and abuse. Without any formal education she has become the leader in the fight against female genital mutilation.

By sheer determination she put herself through primary and high school and then obtained a university degree in nursing. She is helping the Norwegian government formulate policy against female genital mutilation, abuse of women, and racism.

And consider Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, at 17 the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

She started campaigning for education for girls when she was only 11 years old (supported by her father, which is an important factor in her story).

In spite of being shot in the head by Islamic extremists she continues to campaign for women's rights, and spent her summer school holidays travelling to Nigeria from her school in England to campaign for the release of the girls kidnapped by Boko Haram.

There are good people quietly making the lives of others better, in our townships and suburbs, bravely working to care for Aids orphans, raising money for the homeless, looking after single mothers, risking their lives to expose corruption and crime.

People like these should be in the magazines, not the empty glitterati who have achieved nothing but fancy watches and shiny tat. As long as the magazines in the waiting rooms of the world display these empty lives as the gold standard of human achievement we will have generations of young people who value a diamond watch more than a saved life.

Last Laugh

A CHILD asked his mother: "Where did people come from?" She set him down and told him the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden.

Later he asked his father: "Where did people come from?" and his dad told him about evolution and how people descended from monkeys, via cavemen.

The lad rushed to his mother and shouted: "You lied to me! Daddy told me about how we came from monkeys and you said we came from Adam and Eve."

"Yes, dear," said his mother, "But he was talking about his side of the family."

The Wanderer

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Reaping the benefits of Design Indaba initiatives

Entrepreneurial expo exhibitors create direct and indirect jobs and income from business orders and sales to the public adds to GDP

TWO-THIRDS of all revenue earned by Cape Town accessories designer Katherine-Mary Pichulik is from exports. That's some statistic when one considers Pichulik only started her business in May 2012.

When she applied to be an "Emerging Creative" in last year's Design Indaba Expo, her wares were stocked in just two Cape Town boutiques. The exclusive Emerging Creatives programme – made possible by the Department of Arts and Culture – provides free floor space at the expo and mentoring to qualifying applicants.

"To have a weekend with R65 000 worth of accessories sold really allowed me to expand. Afterwards I could up my production, buy more materials in bulk and I hired another person," she said.

Last year Pichulik rented a trestle table in a shared studio space with six other designers. This year she moved her team of 10 into a 106m² space that's all their own.

Pichulik was one of 486 exhibitors at the expo last year, of which 116 other designers were also new. For the expo in February next year, a quarter of all confirmed exhibitors so far are first timers. For newbie businesses that don't have financial backing, and manufacture on demand, it's a springboard into commerce writ large.

Accessories designer Friedel Harmsen studied jewellery design and describes herself as a self-taught graphic designer. She is exhibiting at the expo for the first time next year with a wearable art label she set up earlier this year called Love, Africa Studio.

"Design Indaba for me is about that magical space between art and design. I like that it's curated so strongly, and the local and international market that it draws is very intermingled in the art world."

Another first-time exhibitor, Rollin Vintage, is a four-person team that upcycles antique cutlery into jewellery. Since the products are only available in Durban – where the company is based – and elsewhere up north, the expo is an invaluable way to connect with Cape Town stockists and get the products known there, said Ryan Rollin.

"We started as a sideline so we didn't really have the capacity to exhibit before. Now we're full-time and it's full steam ahead."

In the US, the government recognises that entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of the economy. In that

Dominique Herman

country, small firms create more jobs than big ones do. In South Africa, the Department of Small Business Development was established in May. Minister Lindiwe Zulu said that the key in assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) was to create a support structure for connections to be made among them.

In the Financial Mail, shadow minister of small business development, DA MP Toby Chance, writes that 90 percent of the 11 million new jobs in the National Development Plan are expected to come from SMEs.

"The idea people are talking about in small business development circles is the 'entrepreneurial ecosystem'. By this is meant the activities, enablers, conditions, stakeholders and incentives that make up the environment in which entrepreneurialism can exist and thrive," Chance writes.

Design Indaba recognises this "entrepreneurial ecosystem" well. It provides a prolifically marketed networking platform with the expo and conference. Its contribution to this economic stimulus is evident in the number of other design-oriented conferences and shows that have emerged locally over the years.

At the first expo in 2004, there were 40 exhibitors and two buyers. At the most recent one in February, there were 509 exhibitors and 806 buyers, 211 of whom were international.

The conference that happens simultaneously, and attracts global leaders in various design fields,

provides the inspiration to the expo's perspiration.

According to a report compiled by Barry Standish in association with UCT's Graduate School of Business, exhibitors at the most recent expo in February earned R201.9 million in total income from business orders from buyers and sales to the public. Design Indaba created 575 direct jobs and 571 indirect jobs this year. In the past six years, Design Indaba has generated R1.7 billion to South Africa's GDP.

These figures are not anecdotal. There are surveys filled in by exhibitors post-expo and sales figures and business orders collated.

Standish does all the analysis for conferences held at the CTICC so the statistic that the average visitor to the expo spent double that of any other expo held there is testament to its impact. The increasing number of jobs created year on year, as well as visitors – from 8 000 in 2004 to 40 967 in this year – is testament, too.

Photographer and product designer Ed Suter has exhibited at the expo six times. Prior to his first expo, he had never done a show before. "At some point I couldn't believe it. The interest was enormous. I was really basking in confidence. To hear all that praise was the biggest motivator to continue," he said.

From three in year one, Suter now has more than 40 different products in his range. From the first expo came orders to supply a range of shops countrywide. From subsequent expos he's had orders from Paris, Milan, Berlin, Lagos, San Diego and Namibia. He also met representatives from Mr Price at the expo for whom he has designed a "huge variety of products".

"Design Indaba is where people get to see the products, feel them and talk to me, and that's when they place orders. I think for anyone whose business is the same size as mine, it's vital to be there. I just don't know if my business would have continued without it. And being seen amongst other designers has been very important," he said.

Pichulik's sentiments are similar. "It's great if you don't have a flagship store: to connect with your market and understand your market. But for me what becomes more valuable than the sales is being part of that dialogue. It's important to put oneself on the platforms where the African aesthetic is under discussion."

● Dominique Herman is a writer and editor and works for Design Indaba on a freelance basis.

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