

Capitalist monopoly criticized at design conference

Ankur Tewari, TNN | Nov 9, 2014, 08.48PM IST

AHMEDABAD: Day two of "Design for a Billion" international conference at IIT-Gandhinagar received thought insightful opinions from some of the leading designers and thinkers.

Mass production is endangering cultural diversity, University of Pennsylvania professor Klaus Krippendorff cautioned young designers.

Jean-Joseph Boillot, an advisor to the CEPII Business Club on large emerging economies like India and China, said, "At the moment, mass production or capitalist economy is controlling the market. We need to adopt a model of design by the billion for the billion. We need social innovation to control the system."

Prof Krippendorff proposed expanding design possibilities to the people; "Designers must lead the billion not by imposing ideas upon them but by proposing ideas to them. Most of the greatest inventions come through conversation."

The panelists debated challenges to sustainability in the market and capitalist driven economies. Boillot said, "Environmental and social sustainability is the challenge in front of you. If you don't work on this you will face a terrible future."

The conference also featured Satish Gokhale, founder of Design Directions, who discussed challenges of bringing mass impact products to the market, such as the Tata Swach. Gokhale has also designed plastic gates for dams as an alternative to the conventional iron gates. Apart from being lighter in weight than the conventional gates, Gokhale's plastic gates are comparatively much stronger and more durable as they do not corrode. However Gokhale faces resistance to bringing the product to market and has had difficulty getting the required clearances from the government. Gokhale said, "Hopefully I would be able to get the approvals with the new government."

AUT University Prof Gjoko Muratovski discussed the possible parallels between luxury goods and sustainable products and suggested that the latter adopt the practices of aspirational and emotional marketing tapped by luxury brands instead of tapping into negative associations with guilt and conscience, around which they are presently marketed.