Top designer in call for action over bad design

By **System Administrator** on April 24, 2008

Former Pentagram partner Kenneth Grange is calling for British designers to be as willing as their French cousins to make a stand and fight on issues they care about.

Speaking at the Meeting Of Minds event at the British Museum in London last night, Grange said, 'Instead of us seeing the same work regurgitated time and again, designers should be trying to move design on'.

He added, 'If we think something is terrible then we should remember that we have the skills to make changes.'

Grange cited the humble London Underground turnstile, saying he is distraught at the way such an outstanding piece of product design is becoming increasingly 'defaced' by branding.

'I say we rise up en masse, head to the station and get things sorted,' said Grange.

The fourth Meeting of Minds debate asked a panel, comprising Grange, Martin Lambie-Nairn, Michael Wolff and Harry Pearce, 'How can design not only meet a client's commercial objectives, but also enhance our lives and the culture around us?'.

The nature of design was a key element in the discussion. Lambie-Nairn caused controversy by saying, 'Design is a very generic term that covers a very wide mix of crafts. I see design as a job, not a code by which to live my life.'

He said sometimes designers should be brave enough to walk away from clients who are offering them large sums of money if the opportunities might end in the design execution being below par.

However, Michael Peters, interjecting from the audience, said, 'It would be wrong to leave clients who are offering work, not for the money's sake but because that would be a missed opportunity to influence them and show them the benefit to their businesses of making use of good design and creative teams.'

Peters added, 'Designers have a responsibility to their clients to try to help them.'

Wolff argued that designers were more than 'servants of clients', as Lambie-Nairn suggested, and said 'Designers, as well as clients, can be inspirational', citing that one of the most influential examples of design is the Technology Education Design conferences.

The diversity of debate among the speakers proved that there is no easy answer to the question of whether design should have a broader impact on the cultural sphere.