

How Design Has Shaped My Life

Richard Brownlie-Marshall, Designer and Creative

Richard shares his journey from a childhood fascination with textures and form to leading creative strategy for some of the UK’s most recognisable brands including Mindful Chef. From interiors and packaging to campaigns and concept stores, this story highlights how curiosity, versatility and a passion for design can open unexpected doors and why nurturing that mindset in young people today is more important than ever.



I think design is in my DNA. Some of my earliest memories are shaped by it, whether it was the rich wallpapers in National Trust properties I visited as a child, or passing by an Eames chair in The Conran Shop and being captivated.

I didn’t just look at objects – I wondered how they were made, why they looked the way they did, and what I might do differently if I were the designer. That curiosity never really left.

To me, design is about creating something people love, something that improves their day or brings a sense of joy. I knew early on that I wanted to be part of that world.

Starting Out and Switching Lanes

After studying Industrial Design at Northumbria University, I wasn’t sure exactly which direction to take. Like many graduates, the transition into industry felt daunting, so I began with an internship at an online interiors company. After working hard and absorbing everything I could, I was offered a full-time role as Design Coordinator.

I thought my career path was set and could see a clear future in interiors until a meeting with the founder of healthy eating brand Tossed changed everything. I joined as Head of Creative, leading on campaigns, packaging and shop interiors. It was a steep learning curve, but one that sparked my love for fast-paced, multi-disciplinary design.

Designing for Impact at Pret A Manger

From there, I moved to Pret A Manger and suddenly found myself working on global projects across Europe, America and Asia. One of my proudest achievements during that time was helping bring Veggie Pret to life – a project that truly felt like we were doing something pioneering. It was one of the first major steps towards mainstream vegetarianism on the high street and it showed me the power of design to lead change.

Embracing a Non-Linear Path

Looking back, my career path has been far from linear but that’s what I’ve grown to love. What started as a structured plan has evolved into something much more fluid, with my curiosity leading the way. I’ve designed restaurant dinnerware for Zizzi, apparel for Candy Kittens and helped launch new brands from scratch. Every project has brought different challenges, but at the heart of each one is the same creative thinking – asking the right questions, exploring ideas, and finding the best way to solve them.

Unexpected Opportunities, Unforgettable Moments

Some of the most surprising turns in my career have ended up being the most rewarding. One of those moments was appearing as a Design Expert on Gordon Ramsay’s Food Stars in the US. I got to evaluate and advise on product ideas pitched by entrepreneurs and it was a brilliant way to combine



my design knowledge with my love of storytelling and reality television. Another standout experience was becoming the Go To Guide for Disneyland Paris in a Disney travel series. As a Disney fan, it was a dream project and an incredible opportunity to collaborate with one of the world’s most iconic brands.

Disney is a juggernaut in brand design, with every detail, from storytelling to set dressing, considered and executed flawlessly. To witness that up close was nothing short of magical.

Leading Creative at Mindful Chef

Now, in my role as Head of Creative at recipe box brand Mindful Chef, I get to bring together all the strands of my experience. I lead a team of talented designers, photographers and videographers, and together we create everything from packaging and recipe magazines to digital campaigns and website design.

The pace is fast, we often turn around high-quality creative in days, but it’s incredibly rewarding to see how our work drives the business forward. It’s a place where the creative team is genuinely seen as a driving force, not just a supporting act.

What I Wish I’d Known as a Student

What I wish I’d known as a student is just how versatile design skills can be. Creativity isn’t just about sketching or making – it’s a way of thinking. It’s about being curious, asking “*what if?*”, and then turning

those ideas into something real. That mindset can be applied to almost any problem and in any industry.

Whether it’s crafting a viral campaign to launch a new product or how an athlete trains for peak performance, creative thinking is the constant.

Inspiring the Next Generation

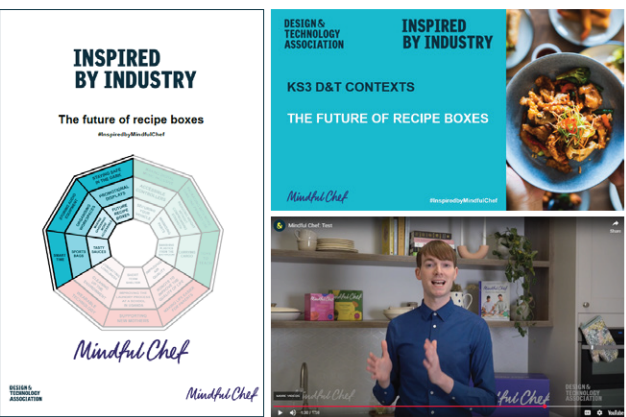
That’s why I was especially excited to get involved with the Design & Technology Association on the KS3 ‘Inspired by Industry’ contexts exploring the future of recipe boxes. Having students investigate, reimagine and redesign an everyday product feels incredibly timely and exactly the kind of challenge that can help spark the next generation of creative thinkers.

Design isn’t just about making things look good but it’s about changing how we experience the world. And when I finish a project, look back, and think, “*I’d never have guessed this would be the outcome*” – that’s when I know we’ve done something special.

So stay curious, take risks and remember that design can take you anywhere. From the tread of a running trainer to the interior of an airplane, the ergonomics of a game controller to the way a cereal box makes you smile – design shapes how we live, move, work and play.

Whether you’re creating something that makes a daily task easier or reimagining how people cook at home, you have the power to shape the world around you. Use it.

Download Free KS3 Context in Collaboration with Mindful Chef



Age Range: KS3–KS4
Duration: 6–8 lessons (flexible)
Subject Links: D&T, Food Technology, Science

Project Goal: Design a modern recipe box – includes meal planning, nutrition, packaging, and instructions.

Key Tips: Encourage creativity (dual-use packaging, themes, etc.) and explore cultural food practices and sustainability. Use CAD, vacuum forming, or handmade prototypes and link learning to real-world careers and teamwork.

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