

Management Summary_Bachelor thesis_Ava Toyloy_2022

Title of the Bachelor thesis :

Self-defence: A consumer product or an attitude? Research on the best ways to defend oneself

Question :

How can industrial design support the most effective ways for young women to defend themselves ?

Research method :

- an analysis of self-defence products
- 2 days of self-defence workshop
- 4 interviews with experts: policewoman, trainer in corporate security systems, self-defence instructor and inventor of self-defence necklace

Thesis:

Self-defence objects can be allies during an aggression but they involve risks if misused and can support gender stereotypes

Self-defence sprays :

Self-defence sprays can be seen as allies in self-defence but they involve risks if misused. Indeed, they contain toxic substances and must be handled with care otherwise the use could be counterproductive. Without even needing to be used, pepper spray and like all these self-defence products can bring a feeling of security by their simple presence near the person. However, by their gender appearance, pepper sprays can convey social constructions that perpetuate gender stereotypes.

Self-defence workshop :

During this two-day course, self-defence items were not used or trained. This course advocates the effectiveness of the body's defence tools.

This starts with being aware of your surroundings and knowing how to locate anomalies. Breathing and anchoring are necessary tools to calm the person and prepare them for action. Communication and shouting are also strong tools against conflicts. Shouting alerts the environment and can destabilise or even frighten the aggressor. The purpose of both tools is to break the pressure imposed by the aggressor. If these tools do not work and I cannot run away, I have the right to defend myself physically. I strike several times in order to escape.

Interviews:

Thanks to the interview I was able to confirm most of the tools seen in self-defence class :

- Preparation
- Communication
- Proportional physical defence
- Escape

Conclusion :

This work represents my transformation that I have felt towards this subject but also as an industrial designer. There are limits to what industrial design can and cannot do. In self-defence a lot of these self-defence products monopolise the real image of self-defence. Self-defence, as it says in its name, is a way of protecting yourself with your body. Objects can be allies, but they are not the first tools to reach in a conflict.

In the next section of the practical part of the bachelor thesis, I want to focus on different characteristics of industrial design: How can industrial design be an ally in the context of human violence through its communicative features?