

Introduction

The practices and products of design are constantly shifting, and so—appropriately enough—this issue begins with an examination of the discipline of design. Craig Bremner and Paul Rodgers locate design in a state of crisis—a state in which design often finds itself. The current situation for Bremner and Rodgers is one of disciplinary dissolve, in which the former familiar distinctions between modes of design practices and products are shifting. In their essay, they trace various forms of disciplinarity as it is encountered in design and reflect on the broader transformations of disciplines. They conclude with the insight that given contemporary society “it is possible that design might need to be ‘undisciplined’ in its nature.”

Jonathan Luken’s essay on infrastructure continues this theme of the expanding boundaries of design. Lukens identifies *DIY infrastructure* as a particular design practice concerned with the self and small-scale making of socio-technical support systems. Through his investigation of this emerging practice, he calls attention to how this practice, at one and the same time, expands the scope of design activities and “challenges the radical monopoly” of infrastructure. Drawing from the work of sustainability and innovation of scholar Frank Geels, Lukens then examines how DIY infrastructure projects might contribute to niche design innovations and even possible transformations within larger technical regimes.

Miguel Sicart’s essay shifts our focus towards a more common cultural form, but from an uncommon perspective. Sicart investigates gameplay in which the design of a game invokes the player as an ethical agent, producing a pause in the game “that forces players to evaluate their behaviors in light of ethical thinking.” According to Sicart, game designers too often create tame problems, when what is needed to support more substantive gameplay are wicked problems—ill-defined ethical dilemmas. Sicart concludes with a series of issues for future work in ethical gameplay, including questions of how ethical gameplay might connect to practices of critical design and also to ethical theory.

The essay by Tsun-Hsiung Yao, Chu-Yu Sun, Pin-Chang Lin is a shift again, this time to the field of design history. Their essay explores the integration of Taiwanese design culture with Western styles during the Japanese colonial period. The authors trace changes in both education and commerce which were brought

about and influenced by the presence of the Japanese, who—in turn—were influenced by Western trends, and they show how these changes influenced the graphic arts of that time in Taiwan. This influx of Western aesthetics by way of Japanese colonialism has had, according to the authors, a transformative effect on Taiwanese design culture.

Damon Taylor reflects on the issues of the constitution of the contemporary product and the constitution's relation to ethics and agency. Taylor's discussion explores the character of product-service systems. For Taylor, the design of these systems is an issue of ethics. He points out that, in the design of such systems, the user or consumer often "authorizes the system to act on its behalf," and in doing so, changes the structure of agency within the context/experience of use. Moreover, as use becomes extended through a service, the "actual experience of consumption becomes fragmented," which further alters the experience of agency, or choice, in the process of consumption.

Eduardo Romeiro Filho explores the relationship between design and craft in Brazil. Product systems are again a concern here; but as craft, the products are of a distinctive kind. Drawing from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, Filho proposes that the designer might be understood as a kind of "organic intellectual" who serves to develop product systems and production structures for craft. In this process, the designer applies methods for formal knowledge exchanges to contexts of tacit knowledge development, bringing resilience to craft. This is not a colonial endeavor, but rather, following in the tradition of Paulo Freire, becomes a pedagogical endeavor—one of teaching design.

Anthony Crabbe turns our attention to the design issues of e-voting. For Crabbe, e-voting is a continuation of the historical tradition of developing products and systems to support democratic participation through voting. He presents a compelling case study of the design of a telephone system for e-voting, detailing the security challenges and technical design of the system. Due to a shift in policy, the system described by Crabbe was not deployed. Crabbe uses the occasion of this shift to question the commitment of the government to e-voting as a form of contemporary democracy. As Crabbe states in his conclusion, "the more simple, immediate and effective is the design of any e-voting system, the greater is the threat it poses of transferring decision-making powers from politicians to the public."

Closing the issue, Stuart Walker explores the relationship between spirituality, sustainability, and design. Walker traces spirituality through the perspectives of worldviews, human needs, meaning making, and in the process, makes connections with the creative impulse of design. For Walker, this leads to courses of right action, and ultimately towards a shift to what he terms as “the wisdom economy”—an economy that fosters inner development and values—“*being* rather than *having*.” This shift to a wisdom economy could, according to Walker, result in a lasting change and a more sustainable society.

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