



Editorial

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Editorial

First, to the papers in this issue:

Tony Fry, in 'Design after Design', argues that design as most designers conceive of it should be abandoned, and advocates a new kind of design education that recognizes design as political.

Dermott McMeel, in 'Material CTRL: Reflections on the social and material practices of digital fabrication', discusses the impact of digital fabrication on knowledge practices, showing this to be about not just the erasure of manual skills but also the emergence of new hybridized forms of knowhow that blend the material and the immaterial.

Cigdem Kaya Pazarbasi, in 'Contemporary Art and Critical Perspectives in Industrial Design Education', presents a case for, and case study of, the value of exposing industrial design students to selected critical art practices as a way of shifting their focus from *how* to design to *what* to design.

Mads Nygard Folkmann and Hans-Christian Jensen, in 'Design and the Question of Contemporary Aesthetic Experiences', consider philosophical categories of aesthetic judgment and whether they have any meaning in the design-driven era of 'aesthetic capitalism'.

Clive Dilnot, in an extensive paper 'Design, Knowledge and Human Interest', reworks a well-known essay by Jurgen Habermas to put a case for design as a form of *theoretical* and not only practical reflection necessary for comprehending the world we have made and thereby '*how to act in the world ...*'

This is the final issue of *Design Philosophy Papers (DPP)*. The journal was established in 2003 by Tony Fry, Clive Dilnot and myself, at a time when the idea of an online academic journal was a novelty, and for most of its life *DPP* was designed and distributed as an independent Web-based journal, with a style of its own that didn't mimic print journals.¹ In recent years *DPP* joined the journal publishing stable of Bloomsbury, which was then sold to Routledge/Taylor and Francis. With that move into the corporatized system for the production of validated scientific knowledge have come costs that can no longer be accommodated, as explained in what follows.

DPP started out with the aim of developing, deepening and extending critical voices engaging with design. The ambition was to take design beyond design, by which we meant beyond the circumscribed world of professional design, as practice and as the study of practice. To prompt designers and design scholars to look beyond the designed object and glimpse the sociocultural environmental complexity of which every designed object is just a tiny node, while also glimpsing how much of that complexity is designed as material and immaterial structure and system.

From the other side, we hoped that critical thinkers from the humanities and social sciences would begin to realize that it is not sufficient to address questions of power, inequality, justice, ethics, the political and the like only at the level of institutional structures or of values, beliefs, attitudes, opinions and behavior as if such things were self-evident; that a wider range and greater number of critical thinkers would be able to recognize that the socio-political-cultural is never separate from prefigured and configured material and immaterial forms that have become

increasingly directive of the possibilities of human existence – and here we are not talking just of professional design but of all forms of prefiguration across times and cultures that result in new or modified material or immaterial forms that endure in themselves and/or in their effects. So put, such a theory of design is inseparable from theories of civilization or theories of knowledge – the latter of which is explored at length in Clive Dilnot's paper in this issue.

To some extent, design, and the ways in which designed things design us, is now more widely recognized within and beyond design studies (examples include the take-up of Bruno Latour's and Actor Network Theorists' observations of the socially inscriptive power of designed artifacts, or sociologist Elizabeth Shove's studies of the shaping of everyday practices by domestic technologies). Far fewer critical thinkers are recognizing the designed as both fundamental and over-arching, as normality, and thereby attempting to name it and engage it; one such attempt is that of Benjamin H. Bratton, who defines the condition of now as The Stack 'an accidental megastructure ... that is both a computational apparatus and a new governing architecture,' and describes his book of the same name as 'a book of design theory.'²

Returning to the engagement of design from within design that goes under labels such as design research, design studies and design history, this activity has expanded over the last decade with the proliferation of postgraduate study programs, this linked also to an imperative to publish imposed by the neo-liberal, managerialist mindset that dominates universities, which goes in the direction of breaking down intellectual work into measurable units amenable to monitoring and evaluating 'performance,' the quantifiable level of which has a huge effect on the funding of universities and the expansion or contraction of departments within them. All of this creates huge pressures to conform. It drives and normalizes algorithmic thinking – take a list of criteria, assign an easily identifiable characteristic (preferably measurable) to each criterion, set this up as a template for the writing of research papers, and then another template for reviewing them – and there you go: a designed, automated system for producing research outputs. Perhaps this is an exaggeration, though certainly over the last 15 years as an editor I have noticed increasing standardization in the content, style and voice of papers submitted, this coupled with decreasingly important topics of investigation. Papers following the rules of scientific paper-writing while engaging nothing of substance equals the worst of both worlds: the performing of research according to a choreographed score. Such simulated research, written mostly by those in pursuit of a higher degree in order to gain or retain employment, usually focuses myopically on a defined 'field' of design research, taking up terms and categories as if the meanings and status of contingent, unexamined concepts were self-evident and able to be applied to design in general or, worse, to the world at large.

I could go on, and give examples, but to cut to the chase, the key point is that this system for the production of knowledge, in which academic journals such as *DPP* play a significant role, is obstructing critical thinking and normalizing the absence of a politics of intellectual work. This is why design philosophy needs to be decoupled from this system. The termination of the journal is not the termination of the project. Learning from the experience, we are returning to the original concept of independent design writing and publishing to be developed in new ways, one of which will be in the context of The Studio at the Edge of the World. Those who wish to continue to in the spirit of what's said above, we'd very much like to hear from you.

I would like to thank all those who contributed papers, refereed papers, edited special issues, and served on the editorial board over the last 14 years, with special thanks to Cameron Tonkinwise, Tony Fry, Clive Dilnot, Erik Stolterman, Eli Blevis, Arturo Escobar, Ezio Manzini, Albert Borgmann, Karsten Harries, Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos, Wolfgang Jonas, Terry Irwin, Gideon Kossoff, Tiiu Poldma, William McNeill, Shana Agid, Mahmoud Keshavarz, Aysar Ghassan, Daniel Lopera, Matt Kiem, Sean Donahue, Rama Gheerawo, Samer Akkach, Abby Lopes, Glen Hill, Aidan Davison and Carleton B. Christensen.

Notes

1. We did however produce six printed 'Collections' of selected papers.
2. Benjamin H. Bratton. 2016. *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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