



## New Directions

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## EDITORIAL

# New Directions

**Anne-Marie Willis and Tony Fry**

We end this year with both continuity and change. Below is news of some exciting new directions for 2007. But first an introduction to the papers.

### **Papers in this Issue:**

Two of the papers continue the theme of design/ethics pursued during 2006, while another introduces a new theme to be developed during 2007. Starting with the latter, **Eli Blevis** opens up the question of what needs to happen for Interaction Design to contribute to sustainment rather than being a force for the unsustainable. He focuses here on ‘a rubric of material effects’, developing what is virtually a diagnostic hierarchy for considering the impacts arising from the design of digital artifacts. He exposes a number of telling instances of how “software and hardware are presently intimately connected to a cycle of mutual obsolescence”; he also lays out five principles of Sustainable Interaction Design, to be expanded in further papers.

**Susan Stewart and Jacqueline Lorber-Kasunic** in ‘Akrasia, Ethics & Design Education’ find that an ancient idea, Aristotle’s notion of *akrasia* (failure to do what

one knows to be right) to be a fruitful way of understanding the contradictory character of living within consumer culture: we ‘know’ just about everything we buy, eat, use, discard, and so on, has disproportionate environmental impacts, yet we go on doing these things. They discuss akrasia as it operates in everyday life situations and consider how designers might productively intervene in those fleeting moments when akrasia is foregrounded, so as to turn them into opportunities for change.

**Philippe Gauthier** responds to Wolfgang Jonas’ earlier paper, ‘A Special Moral Code for Design?’, focussing on the perennial and much debated question of whether the ethical resides primarily in the actor or in the action, and the implications of how this question is answered for the education of designers.

### **New Directions:**

In consultation with the Editorial Advisory Board, key contributors and supporters, we have decided on a new direction for *Design Philosophy Papers*.

### **Context for the Change**

Since its establishment nearly four years ago, DPP has worked to advance the understanding of design as a world-shaping force. On the one hand, we have aimed to extend intellectual engagement with the significance of design to disciplines beyond design and, on the other, to turn critical concern of design constituencies outward to engage worldly imperatives rather than inward to academic and professional concerns of ‘the discipline’.

The main reason for this mission is to increase recognition of the relation between design and the continually deepening condition of unsustainability. Following this, is the imperative for design to become a redirective practice that can advance an **epoch of sustainment** – this, well beyond the limits of the contemporary niche of ‘sustainable design’.

The mission has been pursued in diverse ways: we have closely interrogated the nature of design’s agency, asking questions about its relation to social change and ethical action; the ideas of sustainment and of redirective practice have been introduced and partially elaborated; design’s relation to technology, materiality, ethics, users, otherness and to specific social circumstances, like homelessness, have all been explored.

Has this project been successful? In truth, and predictably, it has only been realised to a very small degree.

A diverse global readership has been created, but the dialogue with this readership has been less than was initially hoped for. Certainly, DPP has attracted a core of committed regular contributors mainly within design/design studies and a few from elsewhere. However their number needs to increase if we are to maintain the quality of analysis and writing we believe is necessary

to confront contemporary challenges. What distinguishes those contributors we most value, is their commitment to a politics beyond disciplinary introspection and career pressures to publish. Sad to say, the latter are the two major characteristics of a good deal of the abstracts and papers we receive in response to our calls.

The constituency of readers and writers has to be widened. There are just not sufficient critical thinkers nor proto-redirective practitioners within design/design studies constituencies. We believe that there are people in other sectors who could be attracted to engaging with design. This might be able to be achieved by orienting DPP to 'design and the cultural sector'. The optimal position is to retain strong links to design constituencies while communicating that DPP is not just a discipline specific journal.

### **The Nature of the Change**

The key change we wish to announce is the creation of **an expanded, magazine format website** with briefer, more popular content, which encloses/enframes the current *Design Philosophy Papers*. Having a refereed journal within a more popular, polemical magazine is quite possibly unique, and we think could be made quite exciting.

This reorientation begs a new name to overarch both. We canvassed several options, and the overwhelming vote is for **Design, Philosophy, Politics**. The political has to become overt rather than covert – not in terms of an alignment with a political ideology but rather in relation to the cultural politics of the DPP project and the political ends to which design becomes attached.

This means structural and stylistic changes, but not embedded in a rigid format. The writing has to have wider appeal, and a number of voices: analytic and reflective, polemical and provocative, theoretical, exploratory and imaginative and perhaps fictive. The advocated proximity to the world as it is and might be has to be made more evident.

Rather than having discrete themes for each issue as we currently do, we're conceiving of broad themes that run continuously across both the 'papers' and the 'magazine'. These will be chosen on the basis of what has proved to be of continuing interest in DPP as well as those we believe need addressing. Calls for papers will be accompanied with examples of the kinds of topics the themes can generate. Alongside this, we will frame some specific questions, arising from the themes, to which a range of diverse contributors will be invited to respond.

We're working towards making these changes early in 2007. They will be accompanied by an affiliation and webhosting arrangements with a larger organisation. Among other advantages,

this will deliver much improvement in DPP's website operability.  
The details will be announced soon.

Wishing all our subscribers and readers a sustaining 2007.

*Anne-Marie Willis & Tony Fry*