

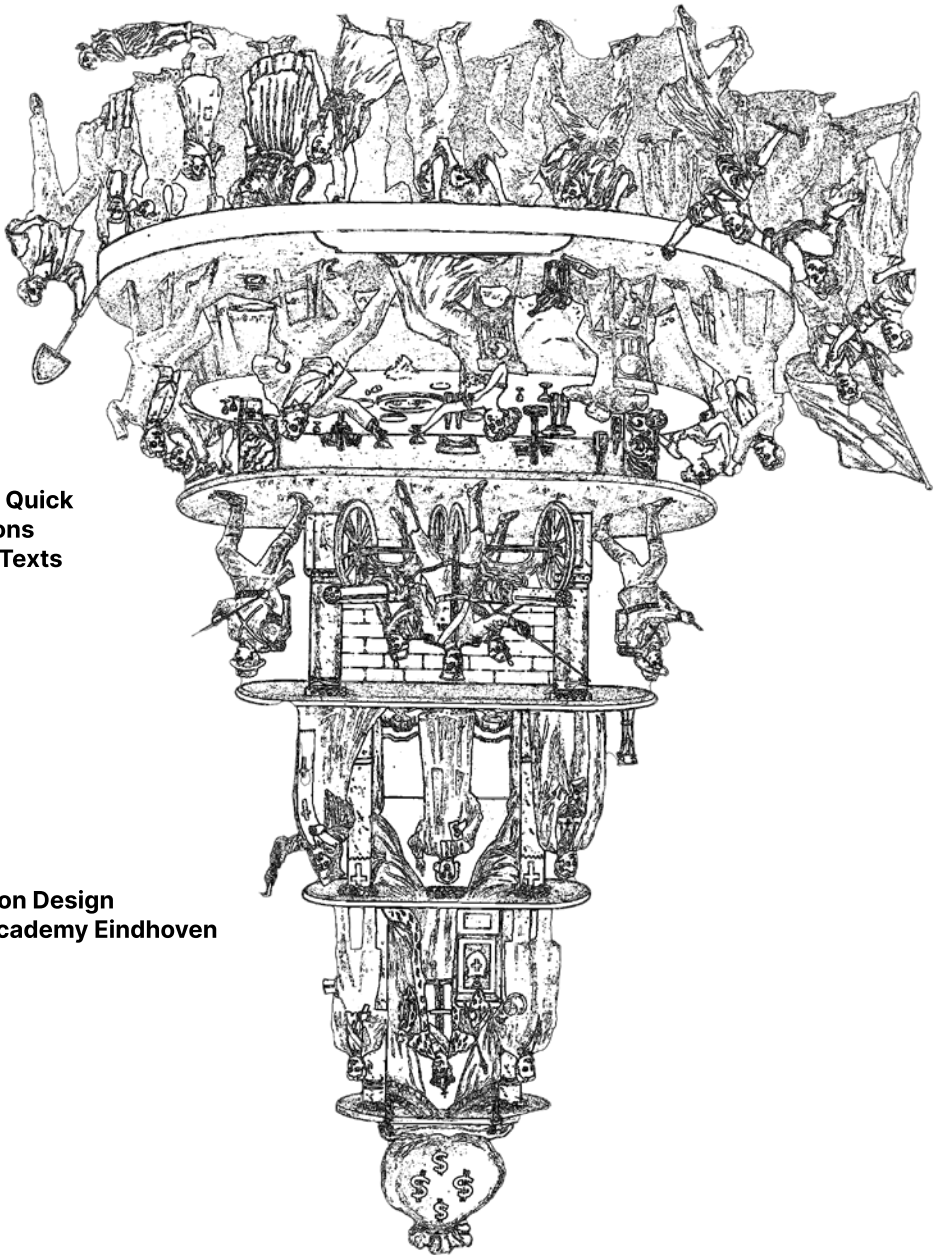
ALL CAPS

(Towards) a Reader on Design and Capitalism

2023

Including Quick
Impressions
on Some Texts

Information Design
Design Academy Eindhoven



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Abstract

Capitalism has emerged as a contentious subject of debate within design circles, igniting discussions that extend beyond this mode of production to encompass potential alternatives. To gain a solid sense of the issue at hand, however, it is essential to explore the relationship between design and capitalism in its specificity. Sure, design and capitalism are inextricably related, but how? Does design play a privileged role in perpetuating the capitalist machine? Can we trace the evolution of ideas about this subject throughout history? Did these ideas change over time? Did new approaches emerge? In this two-day seminar, we have tried to answer these questions and move beyond generalizations. To do so, we immersed ourselves in an array of texts spanning more than a century. The goal of this analytical journey was to build the foundations for a reader on design and capitalism, a reader that would enable students, designers and researchers to act within a capitalist system, both theoretically and practically, with awareness and discernment.

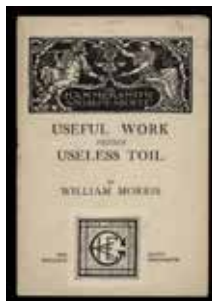
Participants

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USEFUL WORK VERSUS USELESS TOIL

Cover



Date

1885

Author

William Morris

Biography

William Morris (1834–1896) was a British textile designer, poet, artist, fantasy writer, and socialist activist associated with the British Arts and Crafts movement. He was a major contributor to the revival of traditional British textile arts and methods of production. His literary contributions helped to establish the modern fantasy genre, while he helped win acceptance of socialism in fin de siècle Great Britain.

Quick Impression

Abstract

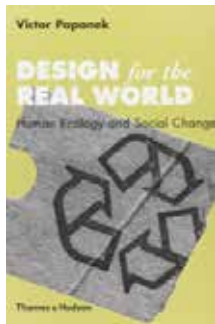
Visionary English Socialist and pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris argued that all work should be a source of pride and satisfaction, and that everyone should be entitled to beautiful surroundings – no matter what their class.

Keywords

DESIGN FOR THE REAL WORLD

Human Ecology and Social Change

Cover



Date

1971

Author

Victor Papanek

Biography

Victor J. Papanek (1923-1998), designer, educator, and author, was born in Vienna, Austria escaping to the United States in 1939 following the Anschluss of Austria to Nazi Germany. Educated at the Cooper Union New York in architectural design, Papanek claimed to have apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright in the late 1940s and worked briefly with fellow Austrian émigré architect Frederick Kiesler.

Abstract

Design for the Real World has, since its first appearance twenty-five years ago, become a classic. Translated into twenty-three languages, it is one of the world's most widely read books on design. In this edition, Victor Papanek examines the attempts by designers to combat the tawdry, the unsafe, the frivolous, the useless product, once again providing a blueprint for sensible, responsible design in this world which is deficient in resources and energy.

Quote

“
The revolutionary meaning of the protest movement can basically only be established by means of planning and designing. A negation of the existing that abandons the hope of planning and designing is nothing other than a more subtle form of affirmation of the existing. Or—to paraphrase it more cautiously—a negation, a projectless no, a no with empty hands, does not pose any particular danger to the ruling powers that embody the status quo.«
[passage translated from the German version]

”

“

Rising up against the established order is, in practice, the same as opposing an apparatus that vouches for (and, according to some, even justifies) the prevailing order. But one thing is certain: one cannot use violence against such an apparatus without in turn having an apparatus that softens the resistance of the opponent or at least provides sufficient protection against the violence that is to be expected—as a counter-reaction—on the part of the opponent.«
[passage translated from the German version]

”

Quick Impression *From the brief reading, Moltonado's essay has the potential to open up the space for reflection on contemporary challenges and the role design can possibly take on in moments of crisis. The idea of design as a field that needs to think beyond the merely formal and reactive nature, that it is often connoted with, especially resonates with me. The constant interaction of human society with their environment and the societal and cultural consequences but also responsibilities that come with this inevitable exchange lie at the core of his writing. Thus, he proposes an expansion of the idea of design to a theory of the human environment that includes not only the design of (physical) objects and structures but also networks of communication and specific methods of inquiry in order to counteract the established order. In other words—resistance to exploitation is hopeless if the counter-movement's methodology is less sophisticated than the methodology of the opponent.*

Keywords

design x crisis, societal change x environmental devastation, interdisciplinarity

ARCHITECTURE AND UTOPIA

Design and Capitalist Development

Cover



Date

1973

Author

Manfredo Tafuri

Biography

Manfredo Tafuri (Rome, 4 November 1935 – Venice, 23 February 1994) was an Italian Marxist architect, historian, theoretician, critic and academic. He was described by one commentator as the world's most important architectural historian of the second half of the 20th century. He is noted for his pointed critiques of the partisan "operative criticism" of previous architectural historians and critics like Bruno Zevi and Siegfried Giedion and for challenging the idea that the Renaissance was a "golden age" as it had been characterised in the work of earlier authorities like Heinrich Wölfflin and Rudolf Wittkower.

Abstract

Architecture and Utopia leads the reader beyond architectural form into a broader understanding of the relation of architecture to society and the architect to the workforce and the marketplace.

Written from a neo-Marxist point of view by a prominent Italian architectural historian, Architecture and Utopia leads the reader beyond architectural form into a broader understanding of the relation of architecture to society and the architect to the workforce and the marketplace. It discusses the Garden Cities movement and the suburban developments it generated, the German-Russian architectural experiments of the 1920s, the place of the avant-garde in the plastic arts, and the uses and pitfalls of seismological approaches to architecture, and assesses the prospects of socialist alternatives.

Quick Impression

Keywords

REMARKS CONCERNING THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITAS PROJECT

Cover



Date

1972

Author

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

Biography

Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1929–2022) was a German author, poet, translator, and editor. He also wrote under the pseudonyms Andreas Thalmayr, Elisabeth Ambras, Linda Quilt, and Giorgio Pellizzi. Enzensberger was regarded as one of the literary founding figures of the Federal Republic of Germany. He was one of the leading authors in Group 47 and influenced the 1968 West German student movement. He was awarded the Georg Püchner Prize and the Pour le Mérite, among many others.

Quick Impression

Abstract

Keywords

DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

Or, The inflationary Curve of Political Economy

Cover



Date

1972

Author

Jean Baudrillard

Biography

Jean Baudrillard is a French philosopher, radical sociologist, and poet with an interest in cultural studies. He is best known for his analyses of media, contemporary culture, and technological communication, as well as his formulation of concepts such as 'hyperreality' or, more widely, the inspiration behind the film of The Matrix films.

Abstract

The essay Design and Environment: Or, the Inflationary Curve of Political Economy by Jean Baudrillard is part of the, The Universitas Project (1972), a two-day conference and book sponsored by the Museum's International Council and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. The distinguished participants, including Jean Baudrillard, Umberto Eco, Gyorgy Kepes, Octavio Paz, and Meyer Schapiro, engaged in a multidisciplinary debate on the future of design and design institutions in the postindustrial era. This important volume publishes in their entirety the various components of the conference, making this chapter in the intellectual history of the Museum available for the first time to scholars, the architecture and design community, and the general public.

Quote

“

Today, although "pure" design condemns the floral motif, it takes the "naturalistic" ideology further still: it is the starlike structures of organisms that will serve as models for an entire city. There is no radical difference between the two. Whether we take nature as decor or as structural model, there still remains, ever since the concept came into existence, its projection as a social model. And, any starlike structure is capitalistic

”

Quick Impression *In this essay Baudrillard develops on the relation between product and object: what is the propose of an object that has been stripped out of its functionality? This never-ending ambiguous friction between denotation and connotation is one I find as exciting as controversial for a design practice. In a time where objectivity is “decaying”, Baudrillard wonders how a design object’s functionality changes when it is defined by its directive or parasitic qualities. He raises the question: what is more fruitful in a time of crisis, a “fact” or an “idea”? Within a system where functionality is inevitable would design be more grounded if it embraced “floral motif” when it adopts “naturalistic” ideology?*

Keywords

Denotation vs. connotation, Funtion vs. sign, Kitsch vs. rigor , Objectivity vs. ideology

Quote

“
[...] design is intrinsic to the production process and as such remains buried in the manufacturing cycle as one part among many others. It is not extrinsic— as a mediation of the production process through the information schemata a design provides, or the way design may ideate or govern what is to be manufactured.
”

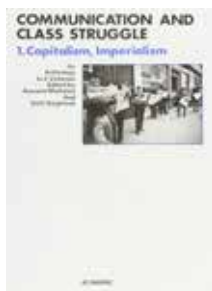
Quick Impression *According to his argument with the word ‘the absence of design,’ design is lost somewhere between production, exchange, and consumption. Where and how could we place the role of design in this industrial economy based on hard manufacture and products, and where the political element of wealth creation and distribution resides on the fault line between labor and the ownership of capital? If design could be said to be the abstract element to any operation of production that ensures material consistency across different situations and conditions, then we could say that an essential aspect of production on the scale on which political economy is concerned is the combined productivity of the nation, thus is neglected with manufacture schematics. It seems to be that we should consider design as that which creates or codifies transmissible information, nor that which governs a process or system, and the notion of ‘communal’ as the clue for the postindustrial society.*

Keywords

Positioning, Objectivity, Design industry

COMMUNICATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE (VOLUME I)

Cover



Date

1979

Author

Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelau

Biography

Armand Mattelart (born January 8, 1936) is a Belgian sociologist, known as a leftist French scholar. His work deals with media, culture and communication, specially in their historical and international dimensions.

Seth Siegelau (1941, Bronx, New York – June 15, 2013, Basel, Switzerland) was an American-born art dealer, curator, author, and researcher. He is best known for his innovative promotion of conceptual art in New York in the 1960s and '70s, but has also been a political researcher and publisher, textile history bibliographer and collector, and a researcher working on a project on time and causality in physics.

Abstract

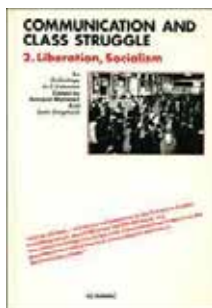
Anthology of Marxist writings on communications, information and culture. This first volume, 1. CAPITALISM, IMPERIALISM, provides the basic Marxist theory essential to an analysis of the communication process and studies the formation of the capitalist communication apparatus, ideology, and 'mass' culture. Volume 1 contains 64 texts. More than one third are published for the first time in English, and some texts appear for the first time in any language. Contents: A. Basic Analytic Concepts; B. Bourgeois Ideology of Communication; C. The Formation of the Capitalist Mode of Communication (Bourgeois Hegemony, Colonialism, Industrialization, Fascism); D. Monopoly Capitalism/Imperialism and Global Ideological Control (Concentration and Standardization, New Technology, Imperialist System, Militarization of Culture).

Quick Impression

Keywords

COMMUNICATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE (VOLUME II)

Cover



Date

1983

Author

Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelau

Biography

Armand Mattelart (born January 8, 1936) is a Belgian sociologist, known as a leftist French scholar. His work deals with media, culture and communication, specially in their historical and international dimensions.

Seth Siegelau (1941, Bronx, New York – June 15, 2013, Basel, Switzerland) was an American-born art dealer, curator, author, and researcher. He is best known for his innovative promotion of conceptual art in New York in the 1960s and '70s, but has also been a political researcher and publisher, textile history bibliographer and collector, and a researcher working on a project on time and causality in physics.

Abstract

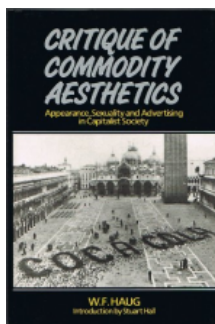
This second volume, 2. LIBERATION, SOCIALISM, provides an analysis of the development of popular and working-class communication and culture, its theory and practice under different political-social and historical conditions, and its contemporary expression. Volume 2 contains 64 texts. 38 are published for the first time in English, and some texts appear for the first time in any language. In addition, it includes a 650-entry bibliography. CONTENTS: E. Popular Culture and Communication: Elements Towards a Definition; F. Popular Communication and Cultural Practices (The Formation of Proletarian Organization and Communication, Clandestine Communication, National Liberation Movements); G. Socialist Communication Processes; H. Towards a Globalization of Struggles (The Interior of the Capitalist Communication Apparatus, Intensification of Struggle, New Struggles - New Communication Practices)." -- publisher's statement.

Quick Impression

Keywords

CRITIQUE OF COMMODITY AESTHETICS

Cover



Date

1971

Author

Wolfgang Fritz Haug

Biography

Wolfgang Fritz Haug (born March 23, 1936, in Esslingen am Neckar, Württemberg) was from 1979 till his retirement in 2001 professor of philosophy at the Free University Berlin, where he had also studied romance languages and religious studies and taken his PhD (in 1966 on the topic of "Jean-Paul Sartre and the construction of absurdity").

Abstract

This book offers an original and highly provocative account of the ways in which consumer goods are packaged, promoted and displayed for purchase in contemporary societies. 'Commodity aesthetics' is the term used to describe these complex processes of artful presentation.

Drawing on Marx's analysis of the basic mechanisms of capitalist production and exchange, Haug demonstrates the economic importance of advertising and explores the ways in which human sensuality is moulded and exploited by the advertising system. Abstract arguments are illustrated with examples that are familiar to us all: the use of brand names to achieve 'aesthetic monopoly,' the cultivation of style to increase turnover, and the many ways in which sexuality is modelled by the promoters of the cosmetic industry.

Quick Impression

Keywords

POSTMODERNISM

or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

Cover



Date

1984

Author

Frederic Jameson

Biography

Fredric Jameson (born April 14, 1934) is an American literary critic, philosopher and Marxist political theorist. He is best known for his analysis of contemporary cultural trends, particularly his analysis of postmodernity and capitalism. Jameson's best-known books include *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and *The Political Unconscious* (1981). Jameson is the Knut Schmidt-Nielsen Professor of Comparative Literature, Professor of Romance Studies (French), and Director of the Institute for Critical Theory at Duke University. In 2012, the Modern Language Association gave Jameson its sixth Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement.

Abstract

Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism is a 1991 book by Fredric Jameson, in which the author offers a critique of modernism and postmodernism from a Marxist perspective. The book began as a 1984 article in the *New Left Review*. It has been presented as his "most wide-ranging and accessible book".

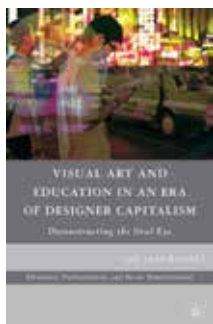
Quick Impression

Keywords

VISUAL ART AND EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF DESIGNER CAPITALISM

Deconstructing the Oral Eye

Cover



Date

2010

Author

Jan Jagodzinski

Biography

Educator and artist Jan Jagodzinski's (born 1948) work strives to re-imagine educational models in the face of ever-proliferating technological interfaces in order to find a new foundation for visual arts education. Investigating Lacanian psychoanalysis, feminism, and linguistics, among other practices, he focuses on the effect of these tools upon aesthetics, gender, and the fantasy life of children as reflected in education pedagogy.

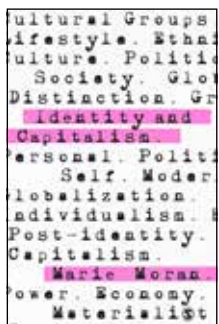
Abstract

The oral eye is a metaphor for the dominance of global designer capitalism. It refers to the consumerism of a designer aesthetic by the 'I' of the neoliberalist subject, as well as the aural soundscapes that accompany the hegemony of the capturing attention through screen cultures. An attempt is made to articulate the historical emergence of such a synoptic machinic regime drawing on Badiou, Bellmer, Deleuze, Guattari, Lacan, Rancière, Virilio, Ziarek, and Žižek to explore contemporary art (post-Situationism) and visual cultural education. Jagodzinski develops the concept of an 'avant-garde without authority,' 'self-reflexion' and 'in(design)' to further the questions surrounding the posthuman as advanced by theorists such as Hansen, Stiegler and Ziarek's 'force' of art.

Quick Impression

Keywords

Cover



Date

2014

Author

Marie Moran

Biography

Marie is assistant professor in Equality Studies at the UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD. She is currently director of the UCD Equality Studies Centre, and head of subject for Equality Studies at UCD. She was director of the M.Sc. programme in Equality Studies from 2013 to 2017, and has taught on the programme since 2007. She is also a core member of the teaching team on the Social Justice degree programmes since 2010. Across the two programmes, she teaches modules on critical social theory, global justice, social movements and egalitarian theory.

Abstract

Identity and Capitalism explores the emergence and evolution of the idea of identity in the cultural, political and social contexts of contemporary capitalist societies. Against the common supposition that identity always mattered, this book shows that what we now think of routinely as ‘personal identity’ actually only emerged with the explosion of consumption in the late-twentieth century. It also makes the case that what we now think of as different social and political ‘identities’ only came to be framed as such with the emergence of identity politics and new social movements in the political landscapes of capitalist societies in the 60s and 70s.

Quick Impression

Keywords

DESIGN FOR THE PLURIVERSE

Radical Independence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds

Cover



Date

2018

Author

Arturo Escobar

Biography

Firstly trained as a natural scientist, Artur Escobar focused on anthropology later in his PhD studies. As a Colombian American anthropologist, he examines social and political structures that intervene in and with design, formulating a politico-ontological perspective. Today, he teaches at the University of North Carolina and is part of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Abstract

In his book, Arturo Escobar bends a bow between the ontological roots of design and its impact on the present and future. He links his arguments with several other actors in this field with a close look at the differences between the Global North and South. Due to their scattered utilisations, definitions, and beliefs on design, he questions a space of pluralism, of coexistence. Through his book, Escobar often comes back to ontologies, questions the differences between patriarchy and matriarchy, and the notion of an autonomous design. Since his book was first published in 2017, he also responded to Dunne's and Raby's established Speculative Design (Speculative Everything, 2013) and defined it as a new design practice.

The book finds itself in a year of political changes all over the world, of developments of Queer Rights and discussions on Climate Justice.

Quote

“

Ontological design stems from a seemingly simple observation: that in designing tools (objects, structures, policies, expert systems, discourses, even narratives) we are creating ways of being.

”

Quick Impression

Talking about today's world and its capitalism-driven economic system implies talking about hierarchies and gaps.

How can a pluriverse exist within this system?

Who is the universe?

Is it the stakeholder and the others? Or is it the horizontally aligned individuals and communities?

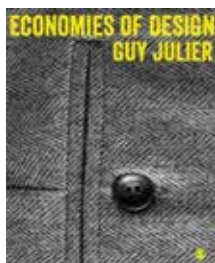
Is this idea of horizontal rather than vertical possible once exiting the theoretical field? As Escobar states, Design creates new ways of being (4). But those new ways of being also imply biases depending on where it origins.

Keywords

Politico-ontological, Pluriverse, Autonomous design

Broadly speaking, design works in two ways in relation to neoliberalism. First, it makes stuff that is used within its systems. Products are fashioned for sale, environments are configured for use, images are formed for viewing, services are designed and rolled out and so on. These form part of the neoliberal pressures of marketisation and differentiation. Second, design also plays a more symbolic role. As a thing that is intended to be at the leading-edge of cultural production, it points towards the possible. It shows what it is in potentia. It materialises the probable. Design plays a semiotic role in making change appear reasonable

Cover



Date

2017

Author

Guy Julier

Biography

Guy Julier is a writer, academic, and practitioner observing and researching global changes in design, economics, and society. He is credited with having established Design Culture as a field of study and research. Julier is a Professor of Design Leadership in the Department of Design at Aalto University, Finland. His other books include *New Spanish Design* (1991), the *Thames & Hudson Dictionary of Design since 1900* (2007), and *Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice* (2009).

Abstract

How is the rise of design and neoliberalism connected? How does design change the way we operate as economic beings? What is the economic significance of design? Historically, design has been promoted for its capacity to add value to products and services. In contemporary capitalism, however, it assumes a more central and more complex role. Design today is both influenced by and actively shapes our economic systems.

Quick Impression

"Economies of design" could appear to a designer as an unappealing, boring book, but that's a pity because, on a closer look, it can provide a very useful toolkit to become more prepared in the extremely contemporary discussion about the role of design inside capitalism. With a very rigorous academic approach, it can be used both as an economy handbook for designers and an overview of the design industry for people outside of the field.

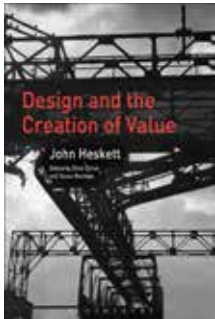
Keywords

Neoliberalism, Design industry, Innovation, Value

DESIGN AND THE CREATION OF VALUE

If human creativity offers a bottomless well of potential new ideas, it must, nevertheless, be emphasized, that an idea is not an innovation, as is frequently assumed. Only when an idea is embodied in a design – encapsulated into forms that are relevant, comprehensible, useful, accessible, affordable or pleasurable in the lives of users – can we truly speak of innovation, of creating new value

Cover



Date

2017

Author

John Heskett

Biography

John Heskett (1937—2014) was a British writer and lecturer on the economic, political, cultural, and human value of industrial design. Heskett was a professor at the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, and the School of Design at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Between the late 1970s and 2010, he published *Industrial Design and Toothpicks* and *Logos: Design in Everyday Life* and several other books. These are considered to be significant contributions to the study of the history of design, to the study of design policy, and latterly, to the theoretical and applied articulation of the economic value created by design, first in the United Kingdom, then in the United States, and, in the last decade of his life, in Hong Kong.

Abstract

Design and the Creation of Value publishes for the first time Heskett's seminar on design and economic value. In remarkably clear and accessible prose, Heskett explores how the key traditions of economic thought conceive of how value is created. Critically teasing out the role of design in this process, Heskett shows how design's role in innovating and creating value for organizations and products can be given a firm grounding in economic theory. Featuring examples of businesses that have successfully responded to the value of design in their practice, as well as others who have failed because of their inability to understand value-creation, Heskett looks in detail at the relationship between producers, markets, products, and consumers, using these instances to offer both a strong critique of the limitations of conventional economic thought and a new model of the economic importance of design thinking in value creation.

Quick Impression

Design and the Creation of Value offers actually quite a great overview of the entanglement between »the economy/market« and design. Under the assumption that our economical system works with the relationship between supply and demand, Heskett results that designers are creating value by constantly creating new, different supplies to create new demands by either copying, modification or innovation of old products.

Even if Heskett's concept of design in the book seems to be quite narrow and only focuses on product design. However, the theory is actually quite great as it can be easily translated to other design practices that work outside the traditional commercial fields. While »the market« is different it is still a constant creation of a new (critical) standpoint that have not been here yet, the product is something more intangible, an idea, a research question or outcome, but still a kind of innovation.

Keywords

Economy, demand, Supply, Invisible hand

CROWD DESIGN

From Tools for Empowerment to Platform Capitalism



2017

Florian A. Schmidt

Florian Alexander Schmidt is a media scholar and design educator with a background in communication design. He is a professor at Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden and currently researching image ecologies of machine learning image synthesizers. Previous research on digital labor, crowdsourcing of design, and the platform economy.

The author analyses the workings and the rhetoric of crowdsourced work platforms by comparing the way they address the masses today with historical notions of the crowd. The study is focused on the crowdsourcing of design tasks, but these specific applications are used to examine the design of the more general mechanisms employed by the platform providers to motivate and control the crowds.

Cover



Date

2017

Author

Nick Srnicek

Biography

Nick Srnicek is a Canadian academic, writer, and public speaker. He is known for his work on political economy, technology, and post-capitalist theory. He has gained significant influence for his writings on platform capitalism and the challenges posed by the digital economy. Srnicek is often associated with the political theory of accelerationism, which suggests that the processes of capitalism should be accelerated rather than restrained to bring its eventual collapse. He is also connected with discussions of post-scarcity economies and the challenges and potentials they might bring.

Abstract

In this book, Srnicek delves into the rise of big tech platforms. He provides an in-depth analysis of their economic models, typologies, and the wider implications these have on the global economy. Central to the discussion is the nature of capitalism in the digital age and the roles of various stakeholders within this framework. A key aspect of the book is its exploration of how the 'digital economy' signifies a transformation in the relationship between labor and capital. Srnicek offers a sharp critique of the societal and economic impacts of platform capitalism. He sheds light on issues such as precarious labor, data privacy concerns, and the growing centralized concentration of economic power. The book also covers topics like automation's role, avenues for resistance, and the consequences of platform dominance on both workers and consumers.

“

Understanding our position in a broader context is the first step to creating strategies for transforming it.

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“

Big tech companies are notoriously small. Google has around 60,000 direct employees, Facebook has 12,000, while WhatsApp had 55 employees when it was sold to Facebook for \$19 billion and Instagram had 13 when it was purchased for 1 billion. By comparison, in 1962 the most significant companies employed far larger numbers of workers: AT&T had \$64,000 employees, Exxon had 150,000 workers, and GM had 605,000

”

Quick Impression *I commend this book for its rational and accessible presentation. It provides precise examples and effectively charts the evolution of platform capitalism, as well as its key players. The book excels in pinpointing the problems and challenges of platform capitalism by offers a comprehensive overview of various perspectives and even ventures a forecast about the future of platform capitalism, aligning with acceleration theory.*

However, my reservation regarding this book stems from its limited historical context. Its focus is narrow, addressing only a brief period and predominantly concentrating on Western-centric platforms and concerns. A broader, more globally diverse perspective on the digital economy would have enhanced its depth and relevance.

Keywords

Big tech, Platform, Digital economy, Data extraction, Digital labor, Precarious labor

Cover



Date

2018

Author

Oli Mould

Biography

Oli Mould is Lecturer in Human Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. His work focuses on issues of urban activism, social theory and creative resistance. He is the author of *Urban Subversion and the Creative City* (Routledge, 2015) and blogs at taCity.co.uk.

Abstract

From line managers, corporate CEOs, urban designers, teachers, politicians, mayors, advertisers and even our friends and family, the message is ‘be creative’. Creativity is heralded as the driving force of our contemporary society; celebrated as agile, progressive and liberating. It is the spring of the knowledge economy and shapes the cities we inhabit. It even defines our politics. What could possibly be wrong with this?

In this brilliant, counter intuitive blast Oli Mould demands that we rethink the story we are being sold. Behind the novelty, he shows that creativity is a barely hidden form of neoliberal appropriation. It is a regime that prioritizes individual success over collective flourishing. It refuses to recognise anything - job, place, person - that is not profitable. And it impacts on everything around us: the places where we work, the way we are managed, how we spend our leisure time.

Quick Impression

Keywords

DESIGN AND CULTURE #3

Special Issue: Design and Neoliberalism

Cover



Date

2019

Author

Arden Stern and Sami Siegelbaum

Biography

Arden Stern is a design historian whose scholarship focuses on graphic design, printing, and visual culture in the United States. She teaches in the Department of Humanities & Sciences as well as the graduate program in Media Design Practices at Art Center College of Design.

Sami Siegelbaum is a Los Angeles-based art historian whose work focuses on the intersections of aesthetics and labor in Modern and Contemporary visual culture. He has written extensively about the political engagement of artists and designers in France in the 1960s and 1970s for numerous publications.

Abstract

This special issue of Design and Culture examines the ways in which neoliberalism has both expanded and constricted the purview of design across multiple disciplines, including (but not limited to) product design, interaction design, graphic design, advertising, branding, fashion, digital media, experience design, web design, architecture, furniture, and other adjacent areas of inquiry and practice.

This call for papers seeks submissions that engage global perspectives on the intersections between design and neoliberalism across this wide variety of design and design-related fields. Of particular interest are submissions engaging historical perspectives, the context of the Global South, and questions of labor.

Quick Impression

Keywords

DESIGN STRUGGLES

Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives

Cover



Date

2021

Editors

Claudia Mareis, Nina Paim

Biography

Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis focuses on design, cultural science and design research. Mareis is a professor of Design and History of Knowledge at the Department of Cultural History and Theory at the Humboldt University of Berlin since 2021.

Nina Paim is a Brazilian designer based in Switzerland. In her work she focuses on curation, research and education. She has conducted teaching and lectures on a global scale, and she played a significant role in initiating the Futuress platform.

Abstract

Design as we know it today is deeply influenced by ideals and norms created by a very small and exclusive circle. By projecting their mostly homogenous white male assumptions onto others, design became reductive and superficial. Rethinking design for today also means coming to terms with its problematic history in order to avoid the kind of universalism we have experienced in the past. The book collects contributions by authors from diverse practices aiming to question and break the dominant narratives and frameworks: Danah Abdulla, Tanveer Ahmed, Zoy Anastassakis, Ahmed Ansari, Brave New Alps, Johannes Bruder, Cheryl Buckley, Sria Chatterjee, Alison J. Clarke, Sasha Costanza-Chock, Paola De Martin, Decolonising Design, depatriarchise design, Bianca Elzenbaumer, Arturo Escobar, Kjetil Fallan, Griselda Flesler, Corin Gisel, Matthew Kiem, Claudia Mareis, Ramia Mazé, Tania Messell, Anja Neidhardt, Nan O'Sullivan, Maya Ober, Nina Paim, Luiza Prado de O. Martins, Mia Charlene White

Quote

“

We believe that design, in its historical discourses, its pedagogies, and its practices, must come to terms with its troubling past and reimagine itself for the twenty-first century. Our Volume foregrounds design's problematic and violent legacies and makes palpable current struggles to rework its material and conceptual logics.


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Quick Impression

By taking on a curatorial role and allowing various other voices from different disciplines to speak, the format of the book is already a realisation of their main messages. In its entirety, the book is a counter narrative to existing prejudices. Rethinking the Eurocentric view of design that still prevails in our environment is crucial for a paradigm shift that is so urgently needed. The authors do not limit themselves to history and theoretical analysis, but also show practical ways to break norms.

Keywords

Design intersections, Pluralism, Post-capitalism, Queer, Feminism

Book Title	TYPOGRAPHY, AUTOMATION, AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR: A Brief History			Quote
Cover				
Date	2019			
Author	J. Dakota Brown			
Biography	J. Dakota Brown is a book designer and teaches and writes on design, labor, and the history of capitalism.			Quick Impression
Abstract	<p>Typography was born in the mass-production mechanism of the printing press. It has thus always been implicated in automation—and, thereby, in the distinctly modern dynamics of overwork, underemployment, and runaway production. Transformations of labor and technology, however, have received scant attention in graphic design historiography.</p>			
				Keywords

DESIGN THINKING AND THE NEW SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

Sociological Reflections on Innovation Culture

Cover



Date

2019

Author

Tim Seitz

Biography

Tim Seitz is a lecturer in sociology at Goethe University Frankfurt. His research interests lie in science and technology studies, ethnography, and praxeology. He is fascinated by the possibilities and irritations that ethnographic approaches offer for sociology, the study of the contemporary, and the question of critique.

Abstract

An ethnographic study on Design Thinking, this book offers profound insights into the popular innovation method, centrally exploring how design thinking's practice relates to the vast promises surrounding it. Through a close study of a Berlin-based innovation agency, Tim Seitz finds both mundane knowledge practices and promises of transformation. He unpacks the relationships between these discourses and practices and undertakes an exploratory movement that leads him from practice theory to pragmatism. In the course of this movement, Seitz makes design thinking understandable as a phenomenon of what Boltanski and Chiapello described as the “new spirit of capitalism”—that is, an ideological structure that incorporates criticism and therefore strengthens capitalism.

Quote

Quick Impression

Keywords

GOING REAL

The Value of Design in the Era of PostCapitalism

Cover



Date

2019

Author

Giovanni Innella and Marco Petroni

Biography

Giovanni Innella is a designer, researcher, and curator currently based in Doha. He graduated from Politecnico di Torino and Design Academy Eindhoven. His work is part of the permanent collection of the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in Paris, as well as the Design Museum Den Bosch in the Netherlands.

Marco Petroni is a design theorist and critic. He works as Adjunct Professor at Politecnico, Milan, and at the Università della Campania, Naples. Having studied contemporary art and architecture, Petroni develops innovative curatorial projects and events related to design with a transdisciplinary approach.

Abstract

In the age of post-capitalism, what is the value of design? Is value defined by economic potential? Or is it something far less tangible? Now more than ever design has the ability to engage us in economic, political and cultural debate, to actively resist the monotony of daily life, and to counteract the precarious situation on which modern society seems to rest. Positioning itself as a lens through which to view the world, design allows us, and in some cases, even forces us to reflect on the many aspects of the societies in which we live. The book draws on the works of selected designers and artists to reflect on the economic, political and cultural aspects of our post-capitalist societies.

Quick Impression

Keywords

ENGINEERED TO SELL

European Émigrés and the Making of Consumer Capitalism

Cover



Date

2019

Author

Jan L. Logemann

Biography

Jan L. Logemann is an assistant professor at the Institute for Economic and Social History at the University of Göttingen.

Abstract

The mid-twentieth-century marketing world influenced nearly every aspect of American culture—music, literature, politics, economics, consumerism, race relations, gender, and more. In *Engineered to Sell*, Jan L. Logemann traces the transnational careers of consumer engineers in advertising, market research, and commercial design who transformed capitalism from the 1930s through the 1960s. He argues that the history of marketing consumer goods is not a story of American exceptionalism. Instead, the careers of immigrants point to the limits of the “Americanization” paradigm. Logemann explains the rise of a dynamic world of goods and examines how and why consumer engineering was shaped by transatlantic exchanges.

Quote

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By the 1950s, enclosed shopping centers symbolized an affluent postwar society in which suburban homeownership went hand in hand with access to a dynamically expanding world of consumer goods. One of the premier architects behind these midcentury temples of consumption was Victor Gruen, whose design of several early centers such as Detroit’s Northland Center and the Southdale Center earned him the nickname “Father of the Mall” among historians of retail architecture.

[...]

Victor Gruen, however, was an unlikely engineer of American consumer capitalism. He was not a native to the American cities he helped transform, nor had he been socialized in the country’s consumer culture. Gruen was an immigrant from Austria, a Jewish refugee from the rise of National Socialism in Central Europe.

”

Quick Impression

Logemann builds an enticing counter-narrative to the Americanization of postwar Europe. By focusing on selected protagonists in fields around marketing, design, branding, and social sciences, the transatlantic influence from East to West is rapidly put forward and then extensively proved. The character-based approach brings the author’s point closer to the reader by mixing well-known examples like Victor Gruen or the Bauhaus with other niche characters. The structure makes the book easily approachable, flowing smoothly between the different sub-stories. The book moves us to always go a step further when looking for the origins of ideas, styles, and methodologies since influences are most often entangled both trans-disciplinarily and trans-nationally.

Keywords

Expats/Émigrés, Design influence, Design history, Americanization

PLASTIC CAPITALISM

Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste

Cover



Date

2019

Author

Amanda Boetzkes

Biography

Amanda Boetzkes specializes in contemporary art history, theory and criticism, with an emphasis on the intersection of artistic practices with the life sciences and global systems of energy use. Other areas of research and publication include: currency, economic exchange and the concept of value; theories of consciousness and perception, specifically ecological perception and neuroplasticity; art and visual culture that problematizes the ontological and political status of animal species; phenomenology and art historiography; art of the American counterculture; landscape art and aesthetics from the 18th century to the present.

Abstract

Ecological crisis has driven contemporary artists to engage with waste in its most non-biodegradable forms: plastics, e-waste, toxic waste, garbage hermetically sealed in landfills. In this provocative and original book, Amanda Boetzkes links the increasing visualization of waste in contemporary art to the rise of the global oil economy and the emergence of ecological thinking. Often, when art is analyzed in relation to the political, scientific, or ecological climate, it is considered merely illustrative. Boetzkes argues that art is constitutive of an ecological consciousness, not simply an extension of it. The visual culture of waste is central to the study of the ecological condition.

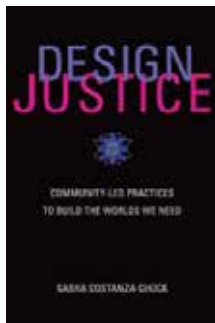
Quick Impression

Keywords

DESIGN JUSTICE

Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need

Cover



Date

2020

Author

Sasha Costanza-Chock

Biography

Sasha Costanza-Chock (she/they/ella/elle) is a researcher and designer who works to support community-led processes that build shared power, dismantle the matrix of domination, and advance ecological survival. They are a nonbinary trans* femme. Sasha is known for their work on networked social movements, transformative media organizing, and design justice.

Abstract

What is the relationship between design, power, and social justice? “Design justice” is an approach to design that is led by marginalized communities and that aims explicitly to challenge, rather than reproduce, structural inequalities. It has emerged from a growing community of designers in various fields who work closely with social movements and community-based organizations around the world. This book explores the theory and practice of design justice and demonstrates how universalist design principles and practices erase certain groups of people—specifically, those who are intersectionally disadvantaged or multiply burdened under the matrix of domination (white supremacist heteropatriarchy, ableism, capitalism, and settler colonialism)—and invites readers to “build a better world, a world where many worlds fit; linked worlds of collective liberation and ecological sustainability.”

Quote

“

Despite a growing body of studies that demonstrate at least correlation (if not causation) between employee diversity and capitalist profitability, as well as shifting mainstream cultural norms that favor increased gender and racial/ethnic diversity, corporate leadership remains dominated by white cis men across all sectors of the economy. Women make up just 16 percent of executive teams in US companies, 12 percent in the United Kingdom, and 6 percent in Brazil. In terms of race, 97 percent of US companies have senior leadership teams composed primarily of white people.

In other words, under the informational stage of racial capitalism, employee diversity is seen by most of the managerial class as an input to increased efficiency, innovation, market domination, and capital accumulation. However, despite steadily increasing interest in establishing a diverse pool of designers, developers, product managers, and other tech workers, the industry persistently fails to meaningfully diversify.

”

Quick Impression

The author explains contemporary problems in the design and technology realm from an empirical and practical point of view. Giant topics like sexism, racism, and assumed systems are being tackled on a smaller scale, which makes stories more relatable while maintaining effortless readability. Criticism of current customs that technological corporations are creating is also confronted with data and results of multiple studies to highlight a paradoxical correlation between the oppression of marginalized groups and annual revenue statistics.

Keywords

Technology, Social design, Diversification, Inequality

Cover



Date

2022

Author

Ben Burbridge

Biography

Ben Burbridge is a writer, curator, and academic. A former Editor of Photoworks magazine, he has edited two books about photography. He is a Senior Lecturer in Art History and Codirector of the Centre for Photography and Visual Culture at the University of Sussex.

Abstract

In turning to photography as work, Burbridge explores both the limits of the present capitalist organization of photography, as well as the utopian and democratic elements of photographic culture that might remodel current social relations.

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The photographs we make, look at and share, along with the act of making, looking at and sharing, often have close affinities with the individualistic logic nurtured by the current system. Yet the bond is not unbreakable or guaranteed. Those activities may, in fact, produce the unintended forms of collective subjectivity required to loosen the hold of the market on our imaginations. The infrastructure on which interactions with images occurs is entwined with the political and economic interests of multi-national corporations. But other systems are already under construction, on a variety of scales.

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Quick Impression

In today's digitally interconnected society, photography saturates our surroundings, from its prevalence on social media platforms to its omnipresence on Google Street View. However, despite our constant exposure to photography, the labor that brings these images to life remains concealed.

We create photos, we gaze upon them, and in this exchange, we shape our identities. Inevitably, as we assimilate into the structures and constraints of society, we are compelled to become commodities. Presently, individuals are submerged in the spectacle fashioned from our own bodies, and to some extent, everyone exhibits narcissistic tendencies.

However, the tool—the camera and photography—exists as a means to comprehend the mechanisms and workings of capitalism, offering an alternative avenue for resistance against oppressive ideologies.

Keywords

Photography, Digital labour, Community economies, Post-capitalism

Cover



Date

2020

Author

Peggy Deamer

Biography

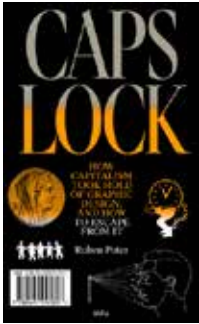
Peggy Deamer is an architect, architectural educator, and Emeritus Professor of Architecture at Yale University. Her research explores the nature of creative work, stretching from a psychoanalytic interpretation of art production and reception – initiated in the dissertation on Adrian Stokes, who was analyzed by Melanie Klein – to neo-Marxist examinations of creative labor. She is the founding member of the international advocacy group, The Architecture Lobby.

Abstract

What forces prevent architects from empowering ourselves to be more relevant and better rewarded? How can these forces be set aside by new narratives, new organizations and new methods of production? How can we sit at the decision-making table to combat short-term real estate interests for longer-term social and ethical value? How can we pull architecture—its conceptualization, its pedagogy, and its enactment—into the 21st century without succumbing to its neoliberal paradigm? In addressing these controversial questions, *Architecture and Labor* brings contemporary discourses on creative labor to architecture, a discipline devoid of labor consciousness.

Quick Impression

Keywords

Book Title	CAPS LOCK How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It	Quote
Cover		
Date	2021	
Author	Ruben Pater	
Biography	Ruben Pater (born 1977) is a designer and researcher from Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He finished the master's program at the Sandberg Institute in 2012, and as 'Untold Stories,' he works on self-initiated and collaborative projects between journalism and graphic design. Past projects are Double Standards (2012), the Drone Survival Guide (2013), and Behind the Blue Screen (2014). His work has received several international awards and is featured in exhibitions around the world.	
Abstract	Our current economic system could not exist without the number systems, coins, banknotes, documents, advertisements, interfaces, typefaces, and information graphics that graphic designers have helped to create. Even speculative design and social design play their part in fueling the economic system. Capitalism has brought tremendous wealth, but it has not done so evenly. Extreme income inequality and environmental destruction are the price future generations have to pay for unbridled economic growth. The question is whether ethical graphic design is even possible under such conditions. CAPS LOCK uses clear language and visual examples to show how graphic design and capitalism are inextricably linked. By sharing examples of radical design practices that challenge the supremacy of the market, it hopes to inspire a different kind of graphic design.	

“	What we have learned about capitalism and graphic design, is that this relationship doesn't limit itself to a critique of consumerism or advertising. All aspects of life—including the role of design education, competition and overwork, unpaid domestic work, and caring for children—support capitalism in its current structures.
	[...] Capitalism's logic has been, and still is, to find the last remaining spaces of equal exchange and open access, and privatise those spaces for profit.
”	

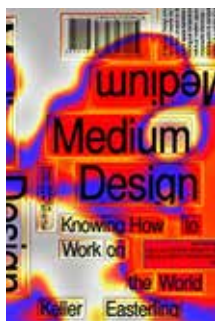
Quick Impression	<i>Ruben addressed the paradoxical situation contemporary graphic designers are facing in the chapter titled "THE DESIGNER AS ACTIVIST." He discussed how designers can uphold anti-capitalist design practices and maintain their independence to avoid being appropriated by capitalism, as seen in many other cases. Ruben grounded the invasion of capitalism in the realm of creative activist participation in design. He empathized with how the emergence and development of open access and Copyleft within the existing design industry have paved the way out of the capitalized business model and influenced the roles of design activists. To escape capitalism as a design activist, Ruben suggested a few possible approaches to putting ideology into practice by interviewing five different design collectives from across the continents.</i>
	<i>Openness and generosity are admirable values, but graphic designers can do more than just make gestures to alter the status quo; they can actively reshape the underlying power structure.</i>

Keywords	Graphic design practice, Activist, Positioning, Interviews
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MEDIUM DESIGN

Knowing How to Work on the World

Cover



Date

2021

Author

Keller Easterling

Biography

Keller Easterling is an American architect, urbanist, writer, and professor. She is known for her research on urbanism and globalization which highlights the role of architecture in shaping societal and political dynamics. Easterling's interdisciplinary approach merges design, politics, and spatial methodologies.

Abstract

In "Medium Design," Easterling delves into the idea of intervening at the level of medium—namely, the interrelationships and conditions that underpin our world. This book can be considered as a manual on how to work with the world and its dilemmas in a manner that is interlinked and decentralized. She argues that, rather than solving problems, we should be 'unsolve' to achieve the change. Easterling also argues against binary thinking, namely, two ideas or solutions against each other. She warns that there is no one-size-fits-all solution or tech-driven solution to complex problems. Instead, she calls for more nuanced, context-aware interventions.

Quote

“

Rather than prescribing solutions, like buildings, master plans, or algorithms, medium design works with protocols of interplay—not things, but parameters for how things interact with each other.”

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Quick Impression

I recommend "Medium Design" for those who are interested in interdisciplinary approaches that fuse design, politics, and spatial strategies. The book offers some easy-to-grasp metaphors that illustrate the author's methodology.

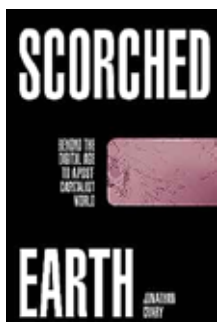
However, my reservation would be its abstract nature, which might be a challenge for those expecting straightforward design guidelines. Easterling's writing style, while rich and unique, can be dense and times difficult to absorb.

Keywords

Spatial activism, Infrastructural matrix, Design philosophy, Urban systems, Medium intervention

SCORCHED EARTH

Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World



2022

Jonathan Crary

Jonathan Crary is an art critic and essayist, and is Meyer Schapiro Professor of Modern Art and Theory at Columbia University. His first notable works were *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century* (1990), and *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (2000). He has published critical essays for over 30 Exhibition catalogues, mostly on contemporary art. His style is often classified as observational mixed with scientific, and a dominant theme in his work is the role of the human eye.

In this uncompromising essay, Jonathan Crary presents the obvious but unsayable reality: our “digital age” is synonymous with the disastrous terminal stage of global capitalism and its financialisation of social existence, mass impoverishment, ecocide, and military terror. *Scorched Earth* surveys the wrecking of a living world by the internet complex and its devastation of communities and their capacities for mutual support. This polemic by the author of *24/7* dismantles the presumption that social media could be an instrument of radical change and contends that the networks and platforms of transnational corporations are intrinsically incompatible with a habitable earth or with the human interdependence needed to build egalitarian post-capitalist forms of life.

IMMUTABLE

Designing History

Cover



Date

2023

Author

Chris Lee

Biography

Chris Lee is a graphic designer and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. He is a graduate of OCADU and the Sandberg Instituut. His research/studio practice explores graphic design's entanglement with capitalism and colonialism/ity through the banal genre of the document. He is also currently developing a typographical project that narrates the oscillating status of Asians between the "model minority" and "yellow peril" as a function of the consolidation of Euro-American settler identity. Chris is an Assistant Professor in the Undergraduate Communications Design Department at the Pratt Institute.

Quick Impression

Abstract

Immutable: Designing History explores the banal genre of the document and its entanglement with statecraft and colonialism. This is framed as a roughly 5,000 year chronology, imbricating the developments of money and writing from Mesopotamian clay tablets to distributed digital ledgers like the blockchain. Immutability figures as a design imperative and hermeneutic for considering a variety of techniques (material, technological, and administrative) of securitization against the entropy of a document's movement through space and time, and the political contingencies of its era.

Keywords

DESIGN AFTER CAPITALISM

Transforming Design Today for an Equitable Tomorrow

Cover



Date

2023

Author

Matthew Wizinsky

Biography

Matthew Wizinsky is a designer, educator, researcher, and author on contemporary interaction and communication design. He is Graduate Program Director (Master of Design) & Associate Professor in the Ullman School of Design, University of Cincinnati; Associate Editor for the design journal Visible Language; Principal Designer at the consultancy studio junglecat; PhD researcher in Transition Design at Carnegie Mellon University; and author of the book *Design After Capitalism* (MIT Press, 2022).

Quick Impression

Abstract

The designed things, experiences, and symbols that we use to perceive, understand, and perform our everyday lives are much more than just props. They directly shape how we live. In *Design after Capitalism*, Matthew Wizinsky argues that the world of industrial capitalism that gave birth to modern design has been dramatically transformed. Design today needs to reorient itself toward deliberate transitions of everyday politics, social relations, and economies. Looking at design through the lens of political economy, Wizinsky calls for the field to transcend the logics, structures, and subjectivities of capitalism—to combine design entrepreneurship with social empowerment in order to facilitate new ways of producing those things, symbols, and experiences that make up everyday life.

Keywords

RADICAL INTIMACIES

Designing Non-Extractive Relationalities



2023

Oliver Vodeb

Dr Oliver Vodeb is senior lecturer in the School of Design at RMIT, Melbourne. He is founder and principal curator of Memefest and Lipstick+Bread. His latest book Food Democracy: Critical Lessons in Food, Communication, Design and Art has been published by Intellect Books, UK.

Radical Intimacies is an investigation of the key aspects of capitalist domination and resistance to it through design; its five sections explore dialogue, power, land, interventions, and radical praxis. Vodeb's curated chapters engage radical intimacies with design and connects it with media, communication, and art. Radical intimacies imply a closeness to the world created through our relations, which work towards the decolonization of knowledge and the public sphere. The closeness is political as it involves qualities that constitute and enable an alternative and opposition to extractive relationalities imposed by capitalism.

PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM