

Summaries

Artefacts: The Artificial as Cultural Mediator

Javier Gimeno-Martínez

This article examines the influence of material culture studies on design history. Material culture studies look at the interaction between individuals and artefacts whilst design history started studying the work of professional designers and their creations. Consequently, one of the main contributions made by material culture studies was to open design history towards the post-consumption phase of artefacts, i.e. the drift of artefacts after their conception and production phases. This has had two major effects on the discipline. Firstly, the scope of products understood under the term 'design' has been broadened to include the ordinary and the everyday and secondly, artefacts have regained centrality as triggers of cultural practices. This article argues that whilst the former has been a confirmation and fostering of a previously existing trend within the discipline, the latter still needs development. We can easily accept that artefacts are products of a given society and therefore reflect their values and beliefs, but how exactly do they achieve this? What is the intimate relation between artefacts and culture and can this be deciphered from the artefacts themselves? What is the benefit for design history in particular and design studies in general? Gimeno-Martínez will argue that these questions can only be answered by looking at specific cases. This article therefore serves as the introduction to the object-centred analyses in this issue.

The Many Lives of Art Things

Roel Griffioen

Artworks are not the static and neatly delineated entities we once took them for. They have 'lives', i.e. specific trajectories through time and space. Following these trajectories can make us aware of the economic and ontological instability of the object, the shifting contexts through which the artwork moves, and our own perception and reception of the object, to discover the 'tangled mass of aesthetic, historical, and even political judgments, and of convictions and values that shape our attitudes to objects' (Kopytoff). Griffioen proposes to follow these

trajectories, even beyond death, when artworks incarnate into other things. Especially in an age in which objects are intertwined or overgrown with images, an age in which the thing as such (if there is such a thing) is veiled by its innumerable mediations, it should be the Latourian hybrids, the image-objects and object-images that we should keep an eye on. They, too, have lives.

Detection, Deterrence, Docility: Techniques of Control by Surveillance Cameras

Selcuk Balamir

In spite of the growing omnipresence of surveillance cameras, not much is known by the general public about their background. While many disciplines have scrutinised the techniques and effects of surveillance, the object itself remains somewhat of a mystery. A design typology of surveillance cameras will be proposed: firstly, real, functional, visible cameras, secondly, the non-functional, 'dummy', simulated cameras, and thirdly, hidden but functioning, covert cameras. In a brief overview of their uses, several techniques of control are distinguished.

Molding the Design Canon at 220°C

Jetske de Groot

The meaning that design historians persistently ascribe to authorship when discussing design becomes clear in this analysis of a ubiquitous plastic chair, the Monobloc. Constructing a 'cultural biography' (a term coined by Igor Kopytoff) of this object shows how different meanings are embedded in the object, which gives reason to question the author-centred approach in design history.

Objects Have a Nightlife Too: Considering a Chair's Agency

Marlies Noijens

The case of the .03 chair, designed by Maarten van Severen, reveals how objects — in particular contexts and as a result of a network of mediators — can inflict agency on the way they are perceived. In this article, Marlies Noijens discusses the tenuous position of the .03 chair as an object of both functional and aesthetic value, showing how a presumably lifeless object acts and behaves differently in diverse contexts. From the libraries of museums to the

dining room of McDonald's, the .03 chair is widespread, both geographically and in popularity. Aside from being an object of utility, the .03 chair is at once a chair and an image of a chair. Linked to the aura of authorship by Maarten van Severen, yet made famous through mass distribution both in physical form and via its image on the internet, the .03 chair is an object with a complex and layered network of associations.

The AK-47: Twenty-first Century Pitchfork

Robbert van Strien

Well-known in the hands of guerrillas, freedom fighters, religious or political extremists and the like, the AK-47 assault rifle designed in the Soviet Union in the 1940's has undeniably grown out to become 'the people's gun'. This is due to a number of practical reasons: its ease of use, its robustness, its abundance; but we may argue that its distinct shape, history of use, and deliberately utilitarian aesthetics have helped the AK-47 to become the symbol of the insurgent.

Ultima Thule: Beyond Known Borders: Exploring the Relationship between Design and Finnish National Identity

Rosa te Velde

This paper aims to reveal how the complex relationship between design and national identities has been established in Finland, in particular in the case of the Ultima Thule glasses. Finnish national identity in the second half of the 19th century was actively constructed through various cultural expressions. Despite a heterogeneous culture, strong stereotypes of Finnishness were spread around, and cultural heritage from specific regions was selectively adapted and actively instrumentalized as 'Finnish'. During the 1950s some of these stereotypes and imagery of Finnish nature were employed in order to promote Finnish design abroad. The Ultima Thule glassware has become an immensely successful product from the time of its launch in 1969 and can be found in many Finnish households. Interestingly, the design can be considered a visual exception to many of the other well-known Finnish design classics. This confirms the idea that there is no fixed national identity, but rather a continuous rhetoric of Finnishness

which is malleable to different cultural expressions throughout history.

The Invention of a Legendary Notebook, Producing Authenticity through Storytelling

Souwie de Wijn

Using Moleskine's black notebook as a starting point, this essay explores storytelling as an instrument to render the differentiating quality of authenticity to mass-produced consumer products. Nowadays, many brands respond to what has been defined by researchers as a contemporary search for authenticity. The exploration of Moleskine's storytelling strategies, which find expression in texts, product design and online interactions, reveals that the search for authenticity by consumers does not exclusively mean finding forms of authenticity that represent 'genuineness' as opposed to a copy or imitation. The presence of fantastical elements does not necessarily hinder the perception of 'realness', but on the contrary, may give room to the imagination of the consumer. Consumers involve themselves in co-producing authenticity by blending 'true' and fantastical story elements with life experiences and personal aspirations. Moleskine introduces story elements, such as creative distinctiveness, that are familiar and meet the aspirations of many consumers, thus evoking the co-production of authenticity.