

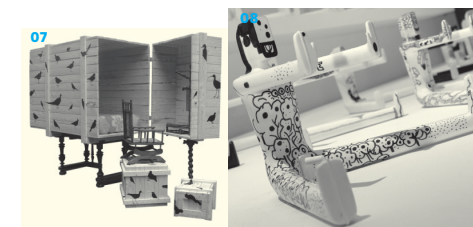
Two RECENT theoretical design movements have roots in design authorship. “Critical design” and “design fiction,” simply by their names, seem to take the idea of authoring in general into the specializations of opinionated critical writing and imaginative fiction writing, as if design authorship is limited to objectivity, fact and reality. Perhaps it is a differentiation, or simply the growth of disciplinary progeny.

Design criticism is generally thought of as critical and editorial writing about design. The critical act is not just commentary on, or criticism about, but the translation of the visual and material into the verbal. The relationship is inherently reactionary — first comes the design, followed by the criticism.



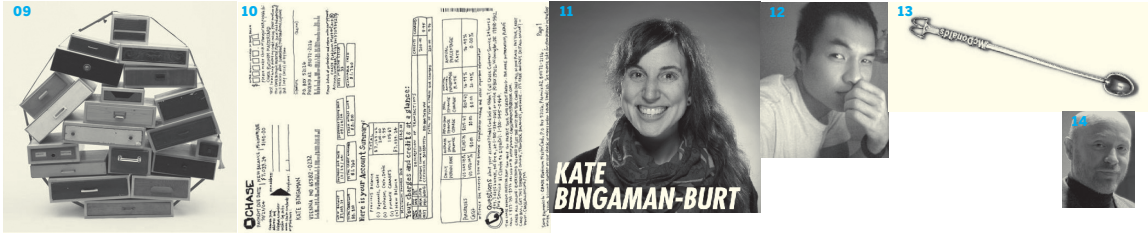
The emergent field of critical design, however, uses the medium of design to make statements about social, political, economic and cultural issues, or about the discipline itself. Primarily associated with contemporary product design (SEE EXPLANATION IN DUNNE AND RABY'S 2001 BOOK *DESIGN NOIR*), critical design's posture bears strong resemblance to graphic design authorship, which often takes a critical stance. The other parallel is in critical design's communicative nature — the objects may function in the traditional sense, but their main goal is to contribute to the field's discourse as polemical actors.

Critical design, according to the gallery Z33 web site referring to the exhibited work of Martí Guixé, Jurgén Bey, Fiona Raby & Anthony Dunne, is a current movement consisting of: "...designers who are ... known for their critical attitude towards mainstream product design. Although they have distanced themselves from today's commercial design world, they sometimes use its mechanisms to pose questions about technological, social and ethical questions. Their ambivalent, critical position towards design and the spirited, playful form language used to express this is a constant theme..."



Diverse themes of consumption, privacy, waste, sexuality, debt, technology, genetics, media and globalism are raised in critical design's broad agenda. Critical design is often manifest in objects: the quirky furniture and domestic products of Dutch firm Droog, Kate Bingaman-Burt's *Obsessive Consumption* project (CREDIT CARD

- 01 /// Fiona Raby and Tony Dunne
- 02 /// Dunn and Raby, *Design Noir*, 2001
- 03 /// Gallery Z33, Hasselt, Belgium
- 04 /// Martí Guixé
- 05 /// Martí Guixé, *Food Bank Bench*, 2001
- 06 /// Jurgén Bey
- 07 /// Jurgén Bey, *Lincoln Closet*, 2002
- 08 /// Fiona Raby & Anthony Dunne, *Evidence Doll*, 2005

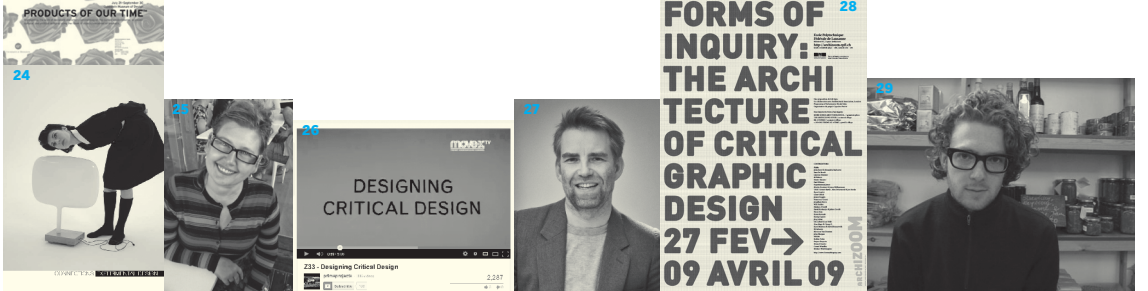


STATEMENT BED SHEETS, DOLLAR SIGN PILLOWS, HAND-DRAWN PURCHASES, AND MORE), Tobias Wong's chrome-plated box cutter and gold-plated McDonald's stirrer spoon, Daniel Jasper's quilts depicting American women soldiers killed in the Iraqi war, self-defined 'ex-designer' Martí Guixé's 'fill in the blank' wall clock, and many more. Graphic designer Tibor Kalman of M&Co may have been the proto-critical designer with his whimsical watches and office products in the 1980s.

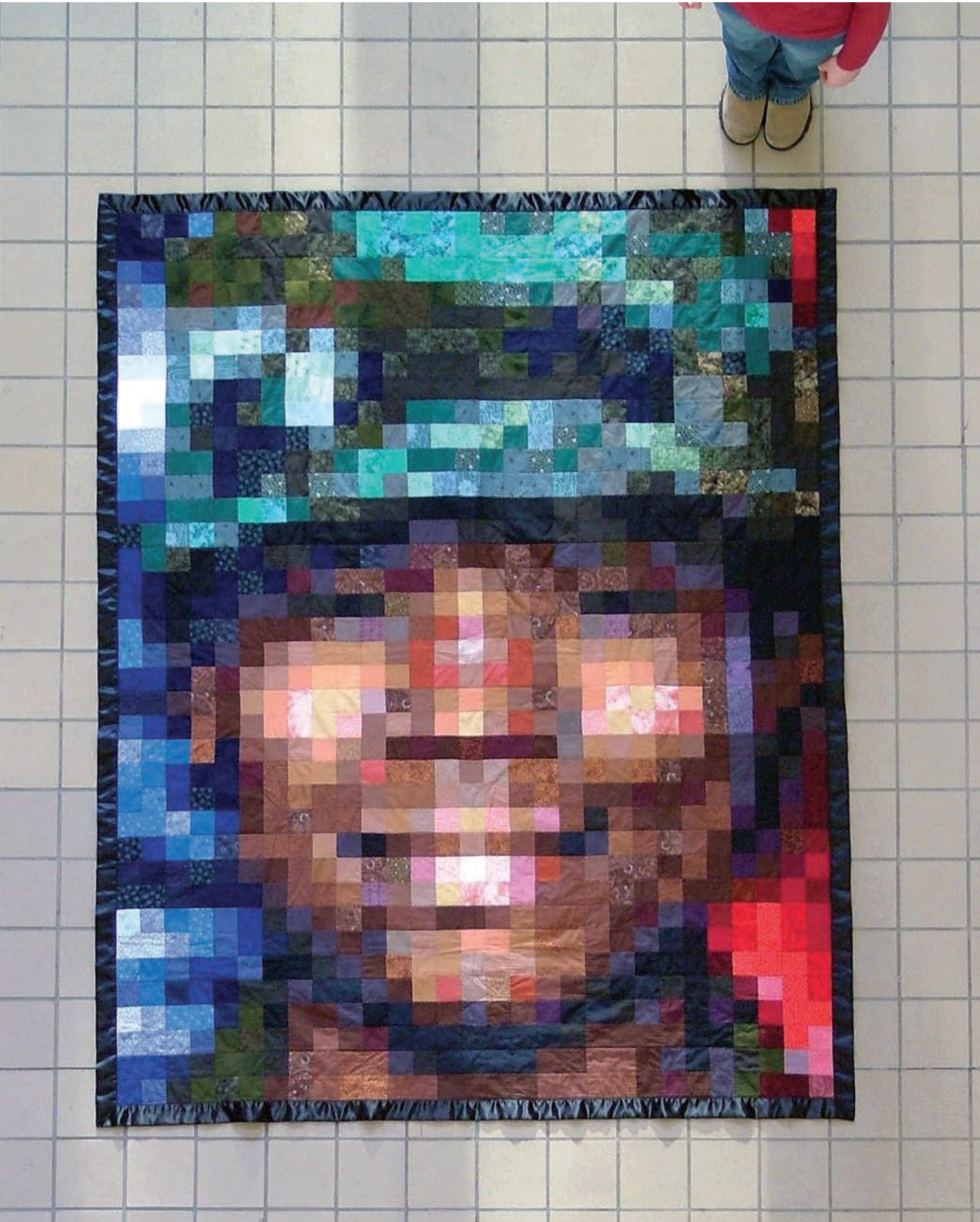
Critically designed artifacts carry meaning beyond the function of the object. Jasper's Casualties of War Series quilts can certainly warm one's bed at night, but they are really about war, feminism, and domesticity. Because the quilt's basic unit, the square of colored cloth, is a single pixel in a low-resolution image spanning a 'queen-size' quilt, the designs also confront the viewer through the use of scale. In close proximity to the quilt, one is simply impressed by color, pattern and texture — but from a distance, a dead woman soldier stares back. Jasper's critical point is that 'things are not what they seem,' or a disconnect between perception and reality, a commentary on the geo-politics of terrorism and the US-Iraq war.



Recent exhibitions of critical design demonstrate worldwide interest: *Don't Panic* (LONDON) curated by Gerrard O'Carroll; *Products of Our Time* (MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL) curated by Daniel Jasper; *Connections: Experimental Design* (SYDNEY) curated by Katherine Moline; *Designing Critical Design* (BELGIUM) curated by Jan Boelen; and *Forms of Inquiry: The Architecture of Critical Graphic Design* (LONDON) curated by Zak Kyes.

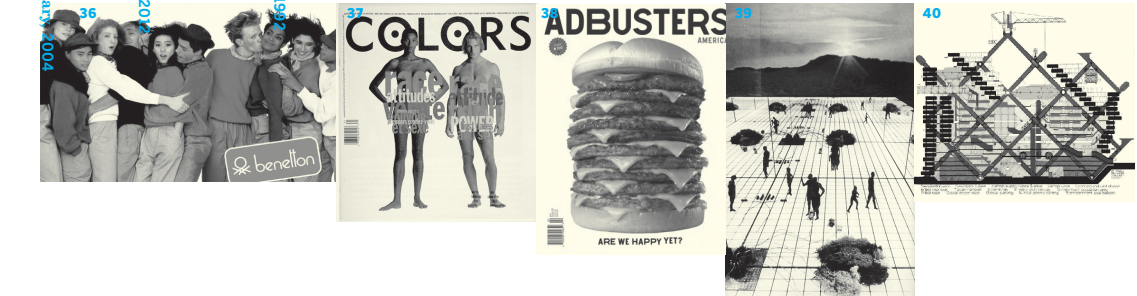


CASUALTIES OF WAR SERIES: TYANNA AVERY-FELDER (QUEEN-SIZE QUILT) /// Daniel Jasper /// 2005



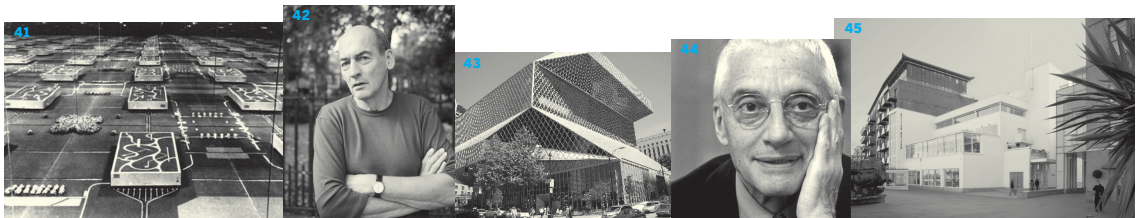


30 Critical design deserves to be cast into the wider context of design authorship. By considering historical precedents and examining similarities, the activism and entrepreneurialism of critical design will be shown to have their roots in theories of graphic design authorship. Specific examples that are more strongly associated with graphic design include: Jonathan Barnbrook's rhetorically charged typeface designs and naming provocations, Gran Fury's confrontational posters for gender and sexual awareness issues, Shepard Fairey's globally viral *Obey Giant* campaign, Benetton's *Colors* — a "magazine about the rest of the world" — that covers global social issues, and Adbusters magazine as a forum for anti-consumerist designs.



There are two primary parallels between critical design and design authorship. The first is the act of self-initiation — acting without client commissions — whereby designers frame the topic, aesthetics, process, medium, materials, and users of their designs. The second is the politicized viewpoints of the designers; their designs stake out intentional positions that range from social, cultural, economic and geo-political to personal concerns. Both design authorship and critical design, whether self-referential, 'art'-like, populist or idealistic, pose questions as readily as they offer alternative solutions.

Architecture's influence on concepts of critical design should be acknowledged — experimental firms Superstudio, Archigram and Archizoom from the 1960s and '70s are appropriate models, as are the works of contemporary architect Rem Koolhaas and designer-architect Alessandro Mendini. Referring to Superstudio, the Design Museum stated, "Rather than blithely regarding architecture as a benevolent force, the members of Superstudio blamed it for having aggravated the world's social and environmental problems. Equally pessimistic about politics, the group developed visionary scenarios in the form of photo-montages, sketches, collages and storyboards of a new 'Anti-Design' culture in which everyone is given a sparse, but functional space to live in free from superfluous objects."



TRANSPARENCY SUIT (GARMENT) /// Studio Smack /// 2010



Many of critical design's objects might be considered superfluous in the conventional functional sense, but as carriers of meaning they assert their presence. Mendini's Designer's Suit (CO-CREATED WITH KEAN ETRO) is a classically cut men's business suit covered with corporate logos, not unlike the uniforms of many race car drivers. It identifies the companies' brands while commenting on the wearer's identity as beholden to corporate interests.

The theoretical projects, exhibits and publications about graphic design authorship since the 1990s have also had a direct bearing on the discourse surrounding critical design. The field of product design does not own the concepts behind critical design any more than design authorship is the exclusive intellectual domain of graphic design. Both terms overlap and converge. Both enlarge the activist presence of the discipline of design in general, and both require society to engage in design meaning-making beyond the passive role of consumer.

The term design fiction is largely associated with the confluence of science fact and science fiction — the latter primarily through sci-fi novels and films — as advocated by the writings of futurists Bruce Sterling and Julian Bleecker. Design fiction posits that the future can be imagined through narrative devices, and that indeed, this is already related to the way designers work: brainstorming, speculating, creating and prototyping. While its disciplinary roots seem most firmly established in computer science, engineering and by experimental product designers like Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, its theoretical underpinnings are linked to the wider design world.

Theories of design authorship suggest that design fiction has been around for longer than some realize, and that design fiction reaches well beyond science





DESIRE MANAGEMENT (FILM STILL, FILM SHOT ON 16MM AND HD) /// Noam Toran /// 2005



to employ the arts and humanities. This section will demonstrate, through three case studies, that the definitions of design authorship have included design fiction — in practice and theory — for many years.

The goal here is not to pit the arts and humanities against science, in philosophy or method, but to expand the definition and range of design fiction so that more design disciplines can benefit from its intellectual reach. This notion of using non-scientific methods is broached in the description of *Made Up*, a 2011 exhibit and symposium about design fiction at the Art Center College of Design. Organizer Tim Durfee states: “Worthwhile [design fiction] work requires occasional liberation from the strictly rational. Many of the most valued contributions to both high and popular culture originated from fevered, non-rational processes.”

In her essay “Discourse This! Designers and Alternative Critical Writing”, scholar Denise Gonzales Crisp has coined the term ‘designwrights’ to mean “writers [who] use the rhetorical position of fiction to capture facets of the design world not readily expressed in expository prose.” That she uses as one example William Morris’ 1892 book *News From Nowhere*, about a utopian socialist society in the twenty-first century, which he wrote, illustrated, designed and printed, establishes one genesis to design fiction’s trajectory.

57 /// Noam Toran
58 /// Mad Men
59 /// Design Within Reach
60 /// Amy Franceschini
61 /// Twitter
62 /// Trojan horse

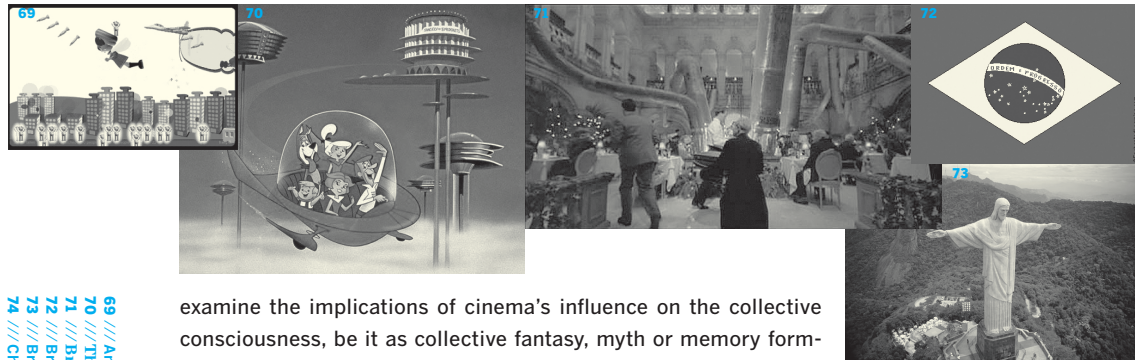
THE MACGUFFIN LIBRARY (OBJECT SERIES) /// Noam Toran, Onkar Kular, Keith R. Jones (CO-AUTHORS OF THE WORK) /// 2008



© NOAM TORAN, PHOTOS: SYLVAIN DELEU



THIS IS NOT A TROJAN HORSE (PROJECT) /// Amy Franceschini (FUTUREFARMERS) /// 2010



69 /// Amy Franceschini, Kosovo Elf, 1999
70 /// The Jetsons
71 /// Brazil, 1985
72 /// Brazil
73 /// Brazil
74 /// Chuck Palahniuk

examine the implications of cinema's influence on the collective consciousness, be it as collective fantasy, myth or memory forming." Toran's design fiction future is shiny and orderly, but oddly awry.

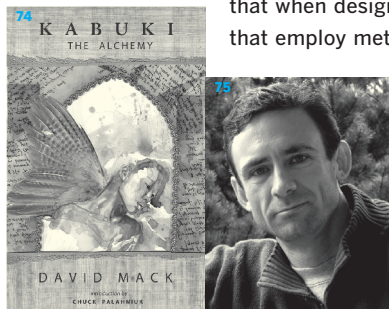
Franceschini's early screen-based work was cutesy-cartoony, even as her interactive computer games like Kosovo Elf opposed the war-time atrocities by the Serbians and subsequent NATO bombing. Her large-headed characters frequently float through the screen-space to chirpy music, often in Jetson-like vehicles. Franceschini's recent work more closely resembles the machines and architecture in the science-fiction film *Brazil* — not expressly dystopian, but rather 'steampunk' — but whose function is benign social interactions through design. In the spirit of relational aesthetics, Franceschini's users collaborate earnestly and endeavor to create meaning with the environment and their place in it. Reality is built upon actual, and virtual, social networks and interactions. Ideally, the future is ethically constructed through people-design-people relationships.

Mack's *Kabuki* is illustrated with a style that blends the representational with the expressive. The integration of image and text (COMPUTER SET, FOUND AND HAND-WRITTEN), and ink and paint rendering with collage, creates a communicative flow — not unlike film — akin to thoughts, memories and dreams. Even depictions of violence are less disturbing for their reality than for their psychological impact.

In the introduction to Mack's *Kabuki: The Alchemy* graphic novel, novelist Chuck Palahniuk wrote, "Art is the lie that tells the truth better than the truth. And in *Kabuki*, David Mack ...[uses] his past instead of being used by it." If 'art is the lie that tells the truth,' then Mack's design fiction vision of the future is extruded through *Kabuki*'s imagined past. Perhaps that's why *The Alchemy* book ends with this line: "It begins like this... Once upon a time..."

Besides the expanded cognitive, expressive and experiential toolkit that the arts and humanities provide design fiction, considerations of authorship — whether employed for fiction, fact or something in between — alter perceptions of the future by engaging the present and past. Across design disciplines and in different media, the design fiction works of Toran, Franceschini and Mack show that when designers author their own — and their users' — narratives, objects or systems that employ methods beyond science, a fuller future can be imagined.

Taking the expansive view, design criticism and design fiction are part of the design authorship family. They expand the discipline into what might appear to be foreign territory, but really tread on familiar and accessible grounds once the roots are exposed. Because of this, these new directions offer strong potential for enriching the design discipline while being inherently interdisciplinary.



KABUKI: THE ALCHEMY (BOOK) /// David Mack (MARVEL COMICS) /// 2009





INTOLERABLE BEAUTY: PORTRAITS OF AMERICAN MASS CONSUMPTION (PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES) /// Chris Jordan
above /// CRUSHED CARS #2, TACOMA /// 2004 below /// CIRCUIT BOARDS #2, NEW ORLEANS /// 2005



Copyright © Chris Jordan

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“All art is quite useless.”

OSCAR WILDE, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, 1890

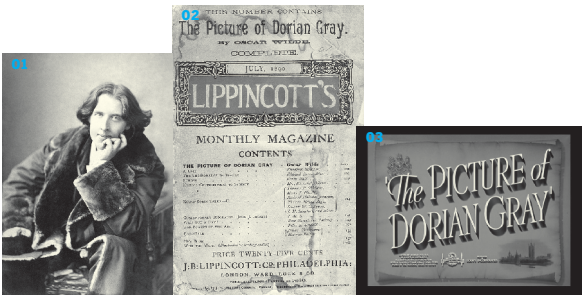
On THE SURFACE, this quote suggests two primary things. One, that art has no function; it cannot house people, provide transportation, inform patients, direct citizens to vote, sell widgets, extend human capabilities or any number of practical things. Two, that if art has value in the face of not being useful might mean that it is superfluous — a luxury, a trifle enjoyed by a leisure class or a cultural elite. The paradox lies in the tension between these ideas.

On the other hand, it is accepted that design is useful. It functions, and through that function it gives value to the user. When designs work well, when there is a perfect symbiosis between form and function, the value increases as the user’s needs go beyond satisfaction to having emotionally rewarding experiences with the design. However, in the hyper-consumerism of the global economy, the notion of ‘needs’ that are met through designed artifacts, environments and services has become consumer desires that are anticipated, manipulated, cultivated and consummated.

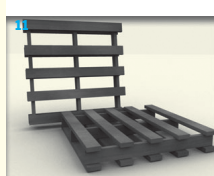
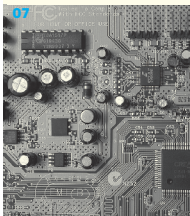
Design then, seems to address fewer needs but more wants and more desires, at least in the developed world — often with accompanying consumer debt. The function of much design now is to lubricate the exchange of currency, not to provide affordable housing, healthy foods, efficient transportation, accessible information, a cultured citizenry and more. The success of much design is cemented the moment it leaves the store, not over the lifespan of its use, or its reuse, or in its discarded state.

Photographic artist Chris Jordan has addressed this in his series *Intolerable Beauty: Portraits of American Mass Consumption*. Seen from a distance, Jordan’s photographs have a slightly undulating surface and an even, largely monochromatic color palette — perhaps at an aesthetic level, they are beautiful.

Closer inspection reveals thousands of discarded products, grouped by type and often bleeding off all sides of the image: cell phones, chargers, circuit boards, cars, cigarette butts, glass bottles, wooden pallets, oil drums and more. The photos appear visually seductive while



- 01 /// Oscar Wilde
- 02 /// Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, 1890
- 03 /// The Picture of Dorian Gray, 1945
- 04 /// Chris Jordan
- 05 /// Cell phone
- 06 /// Charger
- 07 /// Circuit board
- 08 /// Car
- 09 /// Cigarette butt
- 10 /// Glass bottles
- 11 /// Wooden pallets
- 12 /// Oil drum





shocking the viewer with a disturbing portrait of consumption and waste. Through personal expression the images are art; through communication of environmental issues the images are designed to create awareness and inspire change.

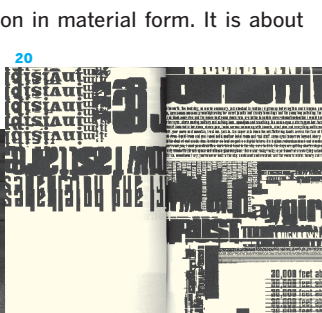
Does this emphasis on desire over need, and consumption over function mean that design is less useful than it should be? If so, does this creeping quality of 'uselessness' mean that design is becoming unmoored from its original mission, that of improving the human condition? Does this mean that design is becoming more like art?

Design for the Other 90%, an exhibition about designs created for populations that do not enjoy the standard of living taken for granted in the Western World, is a welcome exception to the notion of 'uselessness.' "Designers, engineers, students and professors, architects, and social entrepreneurs from all over the globe are devising cost-effective ways to increase access to food and water, energy, education, healthcare, revenue-generating activities, and affordable transportation for those who most need them," according to cooperhewitt.org. "These designers' voices are passionate..." as they endeavor to create functional things of value. The Worldbike, with its 'long-tail' design for hauling people and cargo, and the LifeStraw, a drinking tube that filters water-borne bacteria, are two notable examples.

As some forms of design authorship straddle both art and design, through its emphasis on expression, initiation and speculation, a comparison is required. With any two ideas being compared, a 'black and white' polarization often results — here, a sliding scale is preferred, as context determines varying shades of gray.

Artists' books, or 'book arts,' an art genre that uses the book form, is an obvious point of comparison. Varying between one-of-a-kind sculptural books to large editions using commercial production techniques, artists' books employ the tools of graphic design (TYPE, IMAGES, SYMBOLS, COMPOSITION, PAPER, INK, BINDING STRUCTURES) and writing (POETRY, WORD PLAY, METAPHOR, NARRATIVE, SEQUENCE) with art's emphasis on expression, aesthetics and 'uselessness.' Artists' books are emblematic of this gray zone: some works are quite functional, with an emphasis on communication and readability; others might be impractical for the mass market but inspire designers with novel ideas, use of materials and innovative forms.

Art is concerned with personal expression in material form. It is about the creative use of wood, paint, metal, plastic, cloth, software, ink, stone, clay,



light, space, sound and so on. Experimentation is core to art-making; it shares this with science, engineering and the design disciplines — they address the timeless question: what if...? Art and design also share a language of form. The vocabularies of elements (LIKE LINE, SHAPE, COLOR AND SPACE) and principles (SUCH AS UNITY, HIERARCHY, BALANCE AND RHYTHM) provide a common discourse, even as they lead to different outcomes.

British design firm Tomato's print work of the 1990s, in particular, bears strong resemblance to the painted black on white Abstract Expressionist canvases of Franz Kline that were created in the 1950s. Abstract, aggressive, energetic and complex, Tomato's work uses a fine art vocabulary to communicate for its clients in the music and culture fields. Even their current work, the animated identity for Tokyo Rocks for example, draws upon Kline's painterly influence.

Art is conceptual. Ideas about seeing, feeling, observing, documenting, communicating, parodying and satirizing give art its social and psychological impact. Art gives voice to fundamental human emotions. Concepts of visual and spatial syntax, semantics and semiotics relate art to design. Even the notion of art being therapeutic for its creators is valid to designers as they are called upon to empathize with their users.

The hyper-realist sculptures of Ron Mueck are an example of contemporary conceptual art that is also representational. He creates startlingly real depictions of faces and bodies, often nude, with actual hair, glistening mucus membranes, textural skin, and other realistic cues. By changing one single relationship — human scale — Mueck succeeds in recasting our humanity. When staring at *Dead Dad*, a two-thirds reduction of the artist's own father, viewers are awkwardly over-sized voyeurs. Next to *Mask II*, a decapitated head nearly 4 feet (120 cm) from chin to top of head, viewers shrink in comparison, and perhaps from complicity.

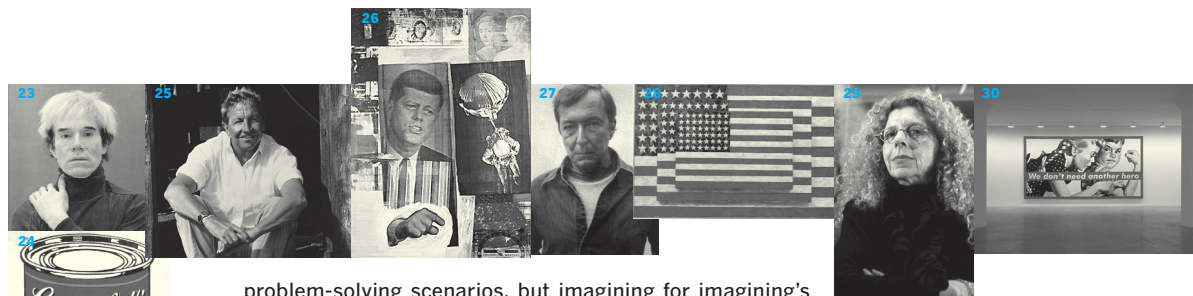
Art has social, cultural and political influence. Art's roles include both reflecting back at society and speculating as to society's future. Like design, art imagines scenarios — not just applied,





ROCKS TOKYO (VIDEO STILL) /// Simon Taylor (TYPOGRAPHY AND ART DIRECTION), Jan Urbanoski (CGI)(TOMATO) /// 2010





problem-solving scenarios, but imagining for imagining's sake, an act of pure speculation. Art also serves as critical commentary — it gives voice to the marginalized, the outsiders, it speaks truth to power.

Do these criteria — personal expression, emotional concepts, and cultural influence — also apply, to some degree, to design? Returning to the idea of usefulness versus uselessness, it seems that context and intention matter. Is art mysterious and ambiguous while only design is clear and explicit? When zooming one's car down the highway on a rainy night while searching for a specific exit, which solution is preferred: a highly legible and readable sign on reflective material resulting from user testing, or a typographically expressive and experimental message with vague, yet poetic inferences about the destination? Now apply these vocabularies to a counter-cultural magazine on one's lap — which is desirable in which situation?

Ryan McGinness has taken the imagery of graphic design — symbols, letters, pictograms, graphic illustrations — and uses it to build an expressive fine art vocabulary. Like Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Barbara Kruger and others, McGinness appropriates the material of commercial graphics, street signage and symbolic communication to make art. (MGINNESS ALSO SERVED AS A CURATORIAL ASSISTANT AT THE WARHOL MUSEUM – POSSIBLY AN EARLY INFLUENCE.) He layers brightly colored vector-based shapes into dense compositions. The effect seems primarily visual and aesthetic, although some meaning is connoted by viewers' associations with the images from other contexts.

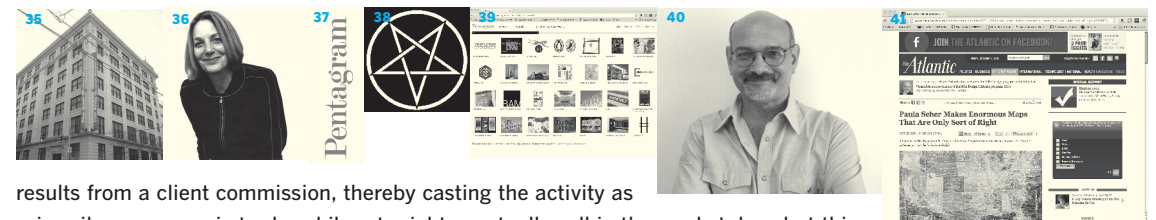
Context itself became the emphasis of one exhibit, according to colab-projects.com: "In 2003, Ryan McGinness produced an exhibition at BLK/MRKT Gallery in Los Angeles that consisted of nothing more than corporate sponsors' logos sized on the gallery walls according to their level of sponsorship for the exhibition. McGinness explains, 'My hope was that a content-deprived exhibition comprised of only sponsorship logos would create enough pause for us to consider both the fine art of corporate sponsorship and the corporate sponsorship of fine art.'" This is an unquestionable embracing of socio-cultural-economic content that communicates his position, as McGinness continues to mine the vernacular of commercial design for his inspiration.

One long-held assumption is that art comes about from an internal, personal motivation while design requires an external, public impetus. Another is that design

- 23 /// Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup Can, 1964
- 24 /// Robert Rauschenberg, Retroactive II, 1963
- 25 /// Jasper Johns, Three Flags, 1958
- 26 /// Jasper Johns, Three Flags, 1958
- 27 /// Barbara Kruger, Untitled (We Don't Need Another Hero), 1987
- 28 /// Ryan McGinness, Sponsorship Redux, private reception invitation, 2011
- 29 /// Sponsorship Redux, poster, 2011



33 WOMEN (PAINTED MURAL) /// Ryan McGinness /// 2010



results from a client commission, thereby casting the activity as primarily an economic trade, while art might eventually sell in the marketplace but this should not taint its creative production. Both assumptions carry truths as well as myths, and polarize creative activities that design authorship strives to bridge.

Paula Scher is best known as a partner in the New York office of Pentagram. Her maps, however, are self-initiated illustrations that depict continents, countries, cities and oceans with dense, hand-lettered words. Painted on large canvasses, Scher's maps are not merely geographic information designs — they are geo-political, with commentary about global climate change, trade relationships and the history of colonialism. "Obsessive, opinionated and more than a little personal, the maps provide an exuberant portrait of contemporary information in all its complexity and subjectivity," says pentagram.com.

Although sold in commercial galleries, Scher also creates her maps for client commissions, to serve as commercial and editorial illustrations in a mass communication context. In an interview with Steven Heller on theatlantic.com web site, she concludes, "Design has a purpose. Art has no purpose. I can't imagine one without the other."

This reinforces the idea of usefulness as the sole measurement distinguishing art from design. But because 'usefulness' itself is open to interpretation, it does not seem to fit an either/or model. A more appropriate definition might be that art and design have an ever-shifting and contextual relationship. Lacking a firm border, they share a gray zone of indeterminate boundaries, awaiting creative exploration.

CHINA (MAP)(DETAIL) /// Paula Scher /// 2008



- 35 /// Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh PA
- 36 /// Paula Scher
- 37 /// Pentagram
- 38 /// Pentagram
- 39 /// Pentagram.com
- 40 /// Steven Heller
- 41 /// Atlantic.com

delicious and refreshing.
But there wasn't any.

Renie PRICE had already been over, blabbing about seeing the tall girl in the red coat again, but by then, her gossipy tell-tales were old news to Mary. Luckily, Mrs. P had only seen me going out, not coming back.

Roy stepped up with an explanation, telling her that his 'cousin' had gone to live in Dundee. Permanently. "She's going to join a convent, as a matter of fact," he said. It was all he could think of on the spur of the moment. Mary shot him a glance to let him know he had gone too far. "Yes," she said, with a light dusting of icing sugar, "so we won't be seeing her again."

"A convent?" said Renie. "Fancy that. She didn't look the convent type."

Mary smiled awkwardly. Roy looked at the wall. "She's a big girl, isn't she, Mary?" said Renie, seeking confirmation.

Roy stepped in. "She's not that big."

Renie wasn't having it. "Ooh, she is. She's taller than you, Roy."

"That's just high heels," he said.

"And she likes her bright colours, doesn't she?" The tone was mocking.

Mrs. PRICE was beginning to get on Roy's nerves. He said: "Not always. She wears subtler hues as well. Anyway, there's no low against bright colours, is there?"

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This was not strictly true.

IN 1960, AMENDMENTS TO THE 1938 FOOD, DRUG AND COSMETIC ACT outlawed THE USE OF THE STRAWBERRY-TONED RED NO.3A COLOUR ADDITIVE USED IN MARASCHINO CHERRIES, BUBBLE GUM AND CERTAIN LIPSTICKS BECAUSE TESTS SHOWED THAT LARGE AMOUNTS CAUSED THYROID TUMOURS IN MALE RATS.

They finally got rid of her, and Mary went out to the garden. When she came back in, Roy was adjusting his tie in the hall mirror.

"Where do you think you're going?" she demanded.

"Out. I've arranged to meet EVE."

"You can't. We've got to get a bonfire going and get rid of all those clothes. Or have you forgotten?"

"No need. I went out last night."

"Last night?"

"Yes, I couldn't sleep for worrying, so I drove out to the country and buried them in a field."

"I didn't hear you get up. What time was that?"

"AROUND TWO."

Mary shook her head.

"You should have told me what you were doing."

I thought we were going to BURN them down the garden."

She sounded almost disappointed, as if she'd been looking forward to it.

"I know, but it's done now."

"Did anybody see you?"



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WOMAN'S WORLD (BOOK) /// Graham Rawle (ATLANTIC BOOKS) /// 2005

than a short skirt, you know. They're not bothered who's wearing it. They're animals, most of them, and their morals are disgusting. It's not even safe for decent girls to go out alone after dark, never mind you."

"It was awful."

"What did he do?"

"I can't say."

"Where was this, ON THE STREET?"

"No." Roy's hands were still covering his face, unable to bear the shame.

"Where then?" she demanded, impatiently.

Slowly, he answered. "At his flat."

Mary WAS INCENSED. "You went to a man's flat? Dressed as NORMA? ROY,

what the devil were you thinking? That's just asking for trouble."

"I know."

"Did he think you were a WOMAN?"

ROY squirmed. "Yes... I think so... I don't know. He might have known."

THESE ARE THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, delicate as daffodils in the snow.

"And he soon found out for sure, I suppose."

Roy didn't want to think about what she might be imagining.

"THERE WAS A FIGHT," said ROY, unsteadily.

"Then she hit him."

"Who did?"

"NORMA. She hit him really hard."

"Well, it's what he deserved, I expect, but it's your own stupid fault for going there in the first place."

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"No, it's worse than that. He's dead."

"What the devil are you on about?"

TALK PROPERLY. **Dead?** He can't be." She stared at him, astonished and perturbed. Roy said nothing. There in the silence, Roy heard Mary's heart plummet to THE BATHROOM FLOOR like a weight on a cut rope.

Mary perched on the edge of the bath next to Roy. She was hunched over, resting her elbows on her knees with her palms pressed to her eyes as the terrible truth sank in. "I knew something like this would happen. What have I done to make you do these terrible things?"

LOVED you too much, I expect. I should have been firmer with you when you were young."

There was nothing to say.

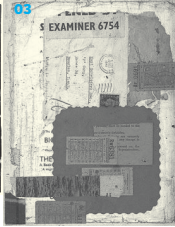
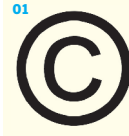
IT was a long time before she spoke again, but when she did she wanted to know all the ins and outs. After the obvious WHO WAS HE? HOW DID IT HAPPEN? her questions became more practical. Who had seen me? Who knew I was there? Was any evidence left at the scene of the crime? Fingerprints?

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Authorship

IN GRAPHIC DESIGN is typically thought of as the designer-author's original voice, of one's authentic creative production. But what about authorship through sampling, appropriating, parodying, copying — is this a legitimate method of designing?

Perhaps scale, scope and context can be used to determine this. If one copies a paragraph or more of text without permission, compensation or attribution, this is considered plagiarism. One could even apply this to sentences, but what about phrases? Is taking a phrase plagiarism, or acceptable — could it even be a coincidence? Words and letters are recognized as being in the public domain, the building blocks of all writing, so it is not plagiarism to use specific words (IF THE WORD IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK, THEN IT IS A DIFFERENT ISSUE DEPENDING ON CONTEXT). Clearly, the order that the words are in and the number of words that are borrowed help to determine if plagiarism occurs.

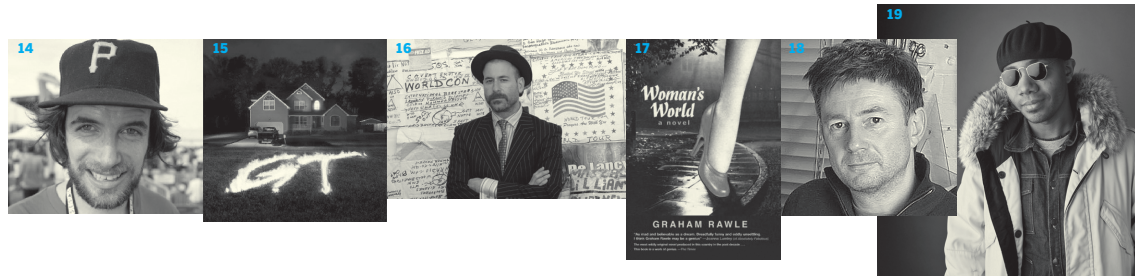


Beyond the ethical issues of copying someone else's work, there are legal considerations. Copyright law protects against unauthorized copying, but in the United States, the Fair Use clause of the Copyright Act allows for exceptions. Using four criteria, Fair Use considers if the work in question is for commercial or nonprofit purposes, including education; the nature of the work (materials and medium); the relationship of the portion used to the whole work; and the potential effect of the copy on the marketability of the original. Fair Use is meant to protect works of commentary, criticism and parody as 'free speech.'

Another way to consider sampling is through the lenses of music, literature or art. Collage, montage and assemblage have been recognized art methods for the past century. Remixing, layering, juxtaposing, mash-ups and referencing are seen historically in the works of many artists: Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, Richard Hamilton, Richard Prince, Negativland and



- 01 /// Copyright
- 02 /// Kurt Schwitters
- 03 /// Kurt Schwitters, A Rannat, 1942
- 04 /// Hannah Höch
- 05 /// Hannah Höch, The Art Critic, 1919-20
- 06 /// John Heartfield
- 07 /// John Heartfield, Der Sinn Des Hitlergrusses (The Meaning of the Hitler Salute), 1932
- 08 /// Richard Hamilton
- 09 /// Richard Hamilton, Just what is it that makes today's homes so appealing, so attractive? 1956
- 10 /// Richard Prince
- 11 /// Don Joyce and Mark Hosler, Untitled (Cowboy), 1993
- 12 /// Don Joyce and Mark Hosler or Negativland
- 13 /// Negativland, U2, 1991



14 /// Girl Talk (Greg Gills)
15 /// Girl Talk, Feed the Animals, 2008
16 /// Kenneth Goldsmith
17 /// Graham Rawle, Woman's World, 2008
18 /// Graham Rawle
19 /// DJ Spooky (Paul D. Miller)

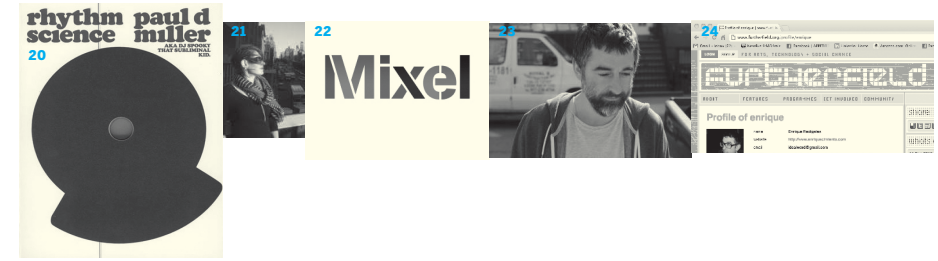
Girl Talk among others. The 'commonplace books' dating to the Middle Ages were essentially hand-written compilations of text passages, quotes, recipes, poems, prayers and more from other sources — they can be considered the proto-mix tape! For today's writers engaged in digital copy and paste 'patchwriting,' Kenneth Goldsmith says that "the act of writing is literally moving language from one place to another, proclaiming that context is the new content."

Patchwriting has long been possible in the analog world. *Women's World*, a novel entirely cobbled together from collaged words found in 1960s British women's magazines, was written and designed by Graham Rawle. Availability of certain words and phrases determine the story's syntax, characters and plot. Graphically and literally, *Women's World* has a bumpy, humorous flow from its 40,000 snippets of text and image, which is its charm. Although the book's text is graphically active with varying fonts, sizes and formats — all in the half-toned grayscale of photographic scanning — the story is equally propelled by coherent patchwriting.

Paul D. Miller, also known as DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, is renowned for innovative musical mixing and sound sampling. Even his original styles of 'illbient' and 'trip hop' can be considered portmanteau word collages, as word meaning is transported into new contexts and alternative meanings. In his book *Rhythm Science*, Miller said: "The DJ 'mix' is another form of text and its involutions, [as] elliptical recursive qualities and repetitions are helping transform an 'analog' literature into one that is increasingly digitized. Dj-ing let's you take the best of what's out there and give your own take on it." The rhythms, patterns and vectors of music have direct parallels in both writing and design, making the DJ an author who mixes existing work into new work. Or as Luna van Loon put it in the Dutch design journal *Morf* 6, "Copying and cutting-and-pasting are well-considered strategies instead of arbitrary ones."

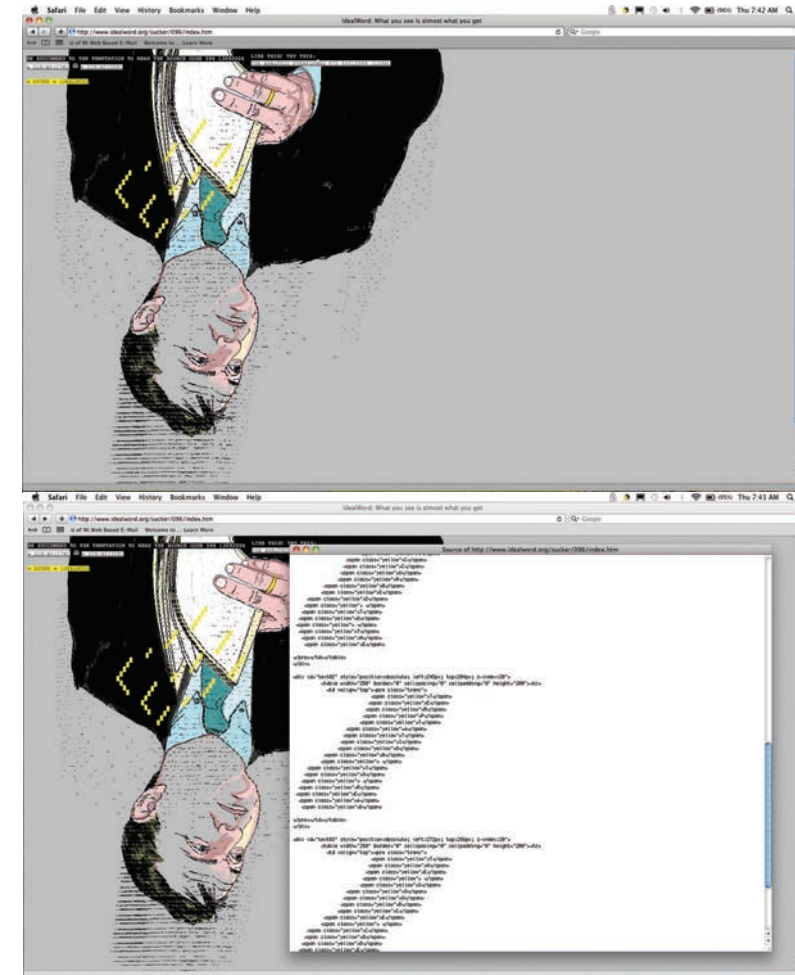
Today's technology-savvy users create original content (DIGITAL ART, MUSIC AND VIDEO) and mix it with mass media works in new, ever-evolving forms of interactive authorship. Artists and designers, actors, musicians and authors' individual roles have permanently shifted as curators, directors, producers and editors have blurred traditional boundaries, and vice versa. For example, the Apple iPhone application Mixel enables users to create and share collages of digital images from on- or offline sources. Using one's fingers on a touch-screen instead of scissors and paper, images can be combined, sent to others and then remixed in infinite ways.

Enrique Radigales' idealword.org site is a virtual gallery of HTML-based illustrations that uses collage images, pixelated drawings, text and software code. By manipulating image file types and layers, Radigales' screens appear in successive scans, creating a crude animation. As the images are bit-mapped GIF files, they can be scaled up and down, another innovative form of animation. Many images also have screen-grabbed photographic content pasted into pixelated contour shapes, thereby mixing media. An interview with Radigales on furtherfield.org discloses that: "... IdealWord's beauty is not merely surface deep. Each drawing contains texts that have been visually camouflaged within the image. These hidden texts — in a variety of styles, and from often surprising sources — are visible by selecting and copy-pasting the piece into a blank text document, or by



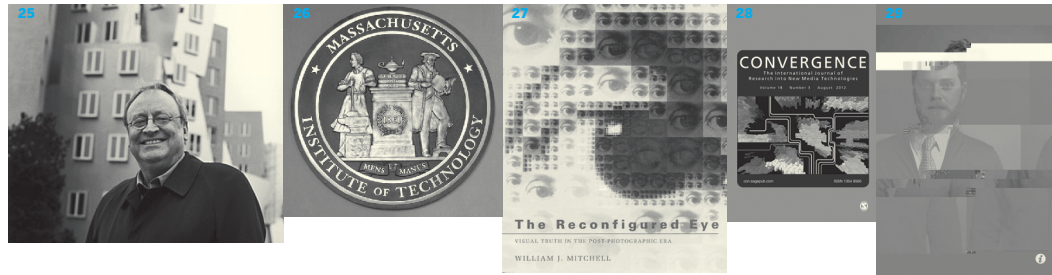
viewing the HTML source code." By engaging the viewer in the deconstruction of the image and word collages, Radigales extends the notion of sampling into performance.

Digital media have erased the distinctions between original and copy. In analog technologies, like film, mimeography, photocopying, and tape recording, each successive copy loses quality. With the binary code of computer software, each copy is an exact duplicate of the original, assuming consistent file types and lack of compression. Whether with a JPG image or an MP3 music file, distribution and sharing in the digital environment has become fast, cheap and wide-reaching. This has caused both content creators and consumers to reconsider issues of ownership, access and originality. New categories of attribution and distribution have emerged, such as 'Copyleft' and 'Creative Commons' licenses.



IDEALWORD.ORG (WEBSITE) /// Enrique Radigales /// 2003-10

20 /// Paul D. Miller, Rhythm Science, 2004
21 /// Luna van Loon
22 /// Mixel
23 /// Enrique Radigales
24 /// Furtherfield.org



25 /// William Mitchell
26 /// Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge MA
27 /// William Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye*, 1992
28 /// *Convergence*
29 /// Satromizer effect (portrait of Jon Satrom, creator)

William Mitchell, former dean of the school of architecture at MIT, uses the terms 'allographic' and 'autographic' in his book *The Reconfigured Eye*. The terms are also explained in the article The Art Portrait, the Pixel and the Gene in the journal *Convergence*: "Autographic refers to artforms that are unique, created in a single instance, and difficult to reproduce without degradation, like a painting. Allographic refers to artforms that are notational and performative, like sheet music or a theatrical script, original both in their conception and in their subsequent performance. Digital images, by Mitchell's definition, fit the allographic description. For example, an artist might create an image which could then be performed by other artists through manipulation of color, contrast, composition, cropping, applying special effect filters, adding collage elements, etc."

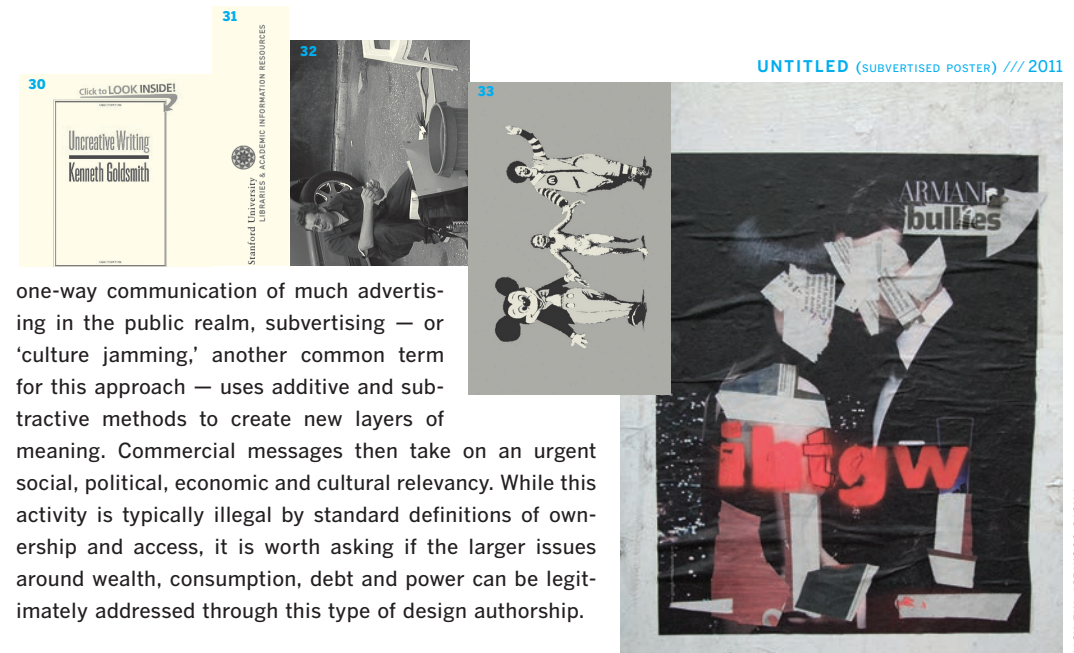
'Glitching,' the corruption (OR ENHANCEMENT) of digital files through code manipulation, is one method of creating mashed-up content. By intentionally introducing one file's binary or ASCII code into another, unexpected results are possible. Although 'breaking' a file might be undesirable in most contexts, some glitch artists enjoy the aesthetic of random results. Even crossing media is possible: using text to alter a JPG image, image data to alter an Mp3 sound file, or sound data to alter text — digitization is the common ingredient, and distortion the common outcome.

Responding to the glitch trend is Satromizer, "the world's first multi-touch glitch tool," a new app for the Apple iPhone and iPad devices. Because it allows the user to glitch images directly on the screen by touching, it lacks the creative input that directly manipulating digital file codes provides. Although inverting an image's 'signal to noise' ratio, Satromizer masks glitching's penchant for randomness and happy accidents.

Sampling and remixing strategies like collage and montage are often additive, but subtractive methods can be equally compelling. Taking parts away through editing, deleting, covering and revising can be an effective way to mash-up the original. Instead of literally, or figuratively, cutting and pasting, some designers, artists, writers and musicians create derivative works by simply cutting. Goldsmith, author of the book *Uncreative Writing*, elaborates, "Success lies in knowing what to include and — more important — what to leave out. If all language can be transformed into poetry by merely reframing — an exciting possibility — then she who reframes words in the most charged and convincing way will be judged the best."

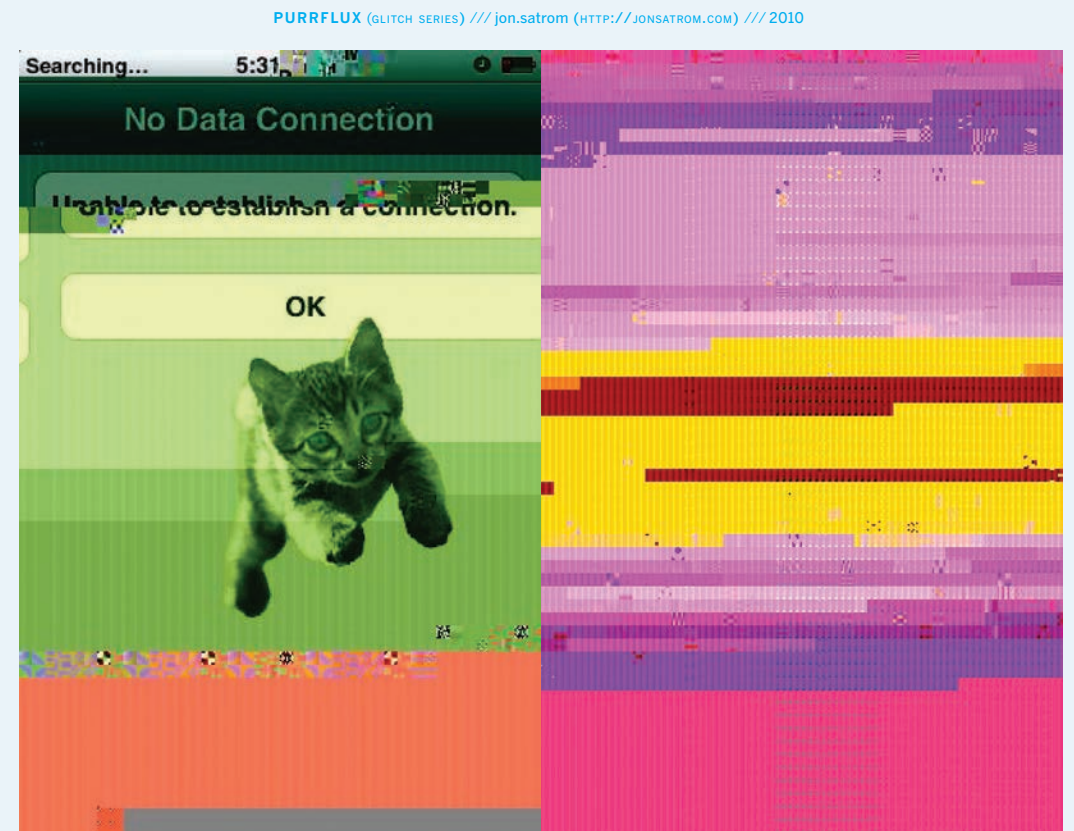
The appropriate way to look at sampling in design authorship is as a matter of degree, not easily polarized into right and wrong. The Stanford University Libraries' Copyright and Fair Use web site offers a fifth factor to Fair Use: "Are You Good or Bad?" This considers ethical and moral issues along with legal ones — in cases of borrowing or altering copyrighted works, context and intention seem to matter.

'Subvertising,' a neologism formed from the words subvert and advertising, involves the altering of billboards, corporate identities, branding and other forms of advertising as graphic activism. Some types of graffiti are considered subvertising; the stencil art of Banksy is an example. To contest the



one-way communication of much advertising in the public realm, subvertising — or 'culture jamming,' another common term for this approach — uses additive and subtractive methods to create new layers of meaning. Commercial messages then take on an urgent social, political, economic and cultural relevancy. While this activity is typically illegal by standard definitions of ownership and access, it is worth asking if the larger issues around wealth, consumption, debt and power can be legitimately addressed through this type of design authorship.

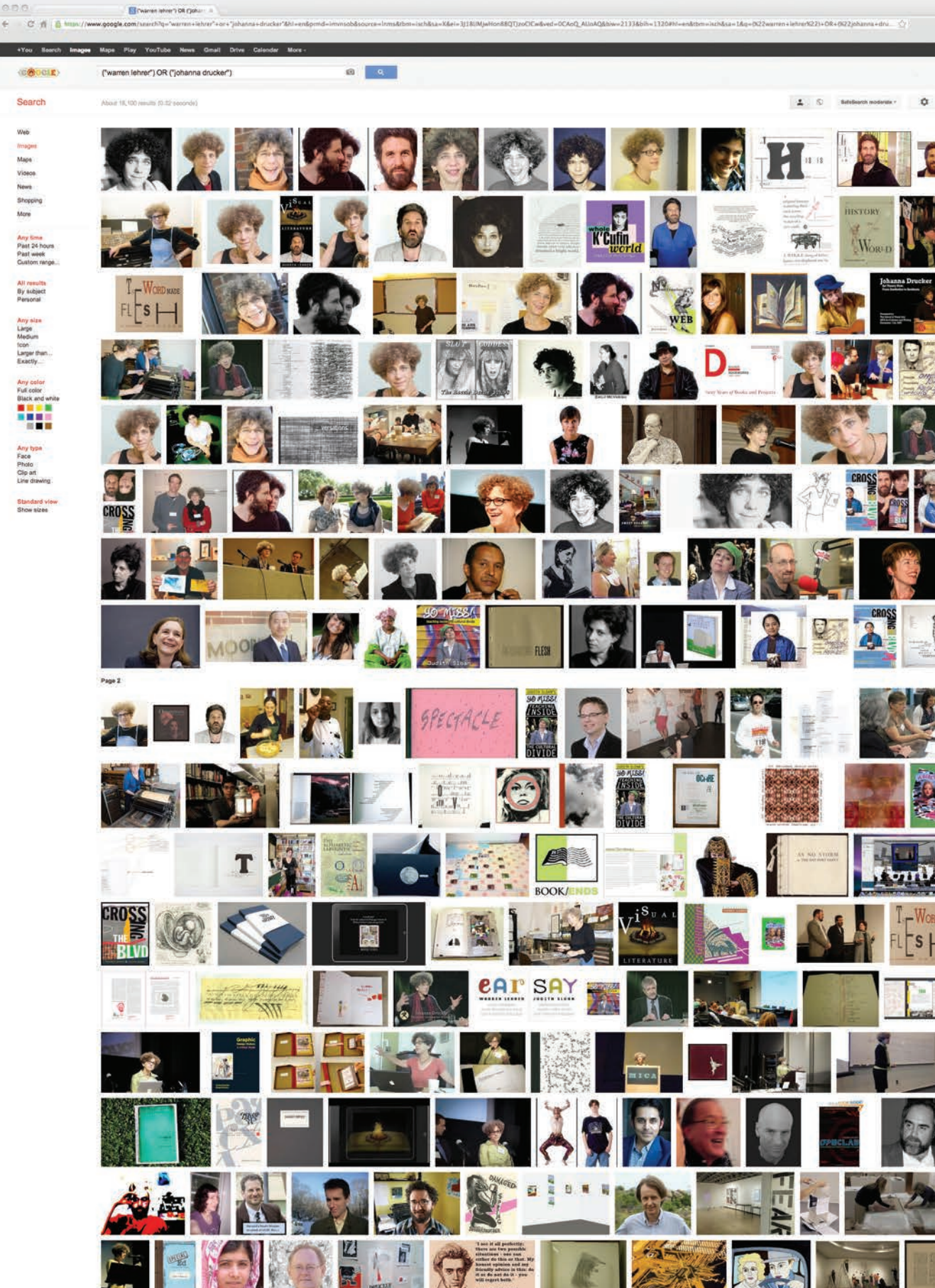
Sampling and remixing can be performed in various media, with various techniques, with a variety of outcomes. Some collages are laden with social or political meaning, and are meant to serve as commentary. Others are purely aesthetic, or contain images and words juxtaposed for humor. Regardless, the designer channels the authorship of others into new creative works.



PURRFLUX (GLITCH SERIES) /// jon.satrom (<http://jonsatrom.com>) /// 2010

30 /// Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 2011
31 /// Stanford University Libraries & Academic Information Resources
32 /// Banksy (unmasked)
33 /// Banksy, *Napalm*, 2004

PHOTO COURTESY THE AUTHOR



INTERVIEW: WARREN LEHRER

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Warren Lehrer is a multi-media artist, writer, educator and designer. He is a partner in the studio EarSay, a “nonprofit arts organization dedicated to uncovering and portraying stories of the uncelebrated.” Lehrer’s artist’s books and media projects are in numerous collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Getty Center, the Georges Pompidou Centre and the Tate Gallery. He is a professor at Purchase College of the State University of New York.

MCCARTHY I’ve been a fan of yours since picking up a copy of your artist’s book *GRRRRHHH: a Study of Social Patterns* at the Stanford University Library in the late ’80s (LET IT BE SAID THAT AT 464 PAGES, IT SET THE BAR FOR BRUCE MAU’S AND IRMA BOOM’S SUBSEQUENT TOMES!). Your practice includes books, performances, digital films, sound works and mixed media — where are you on the art-design continuum?

LEHRER Doing my wobbly-dance on the edges between the two, I guess; generally ignoring the distinctions while embracing the continuum. My undergraduate training was in painting and printmaking, though I was always writing on the side. While still in college, the

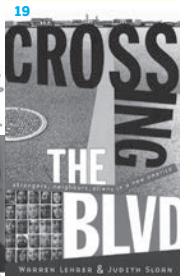
writing and the image making started oozing into each other, much to the dismay of one of my painting professors who warned me that words and images exist in completely different realms and should always remain separate. Inspired by his admonition (AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF ANOTHER PROFESSOR), I went to graduate school for graphic design so I could learn the tools and methodologies needed to produce my own books and multi-media projects. And that’s pretty much how I function to this day — as a writer/designer working on self-authored and collaborative projects that somehow combine writing and image making, and sometimes music and theater.

Though most of your works seem self-authored or collaborative with other artists, the works are not without content or a message. How do you conceive of the best forms or media for these stories?

I’ll give you a few examples. From early on, I’ve been interested in blurring the line between life and art, and somehow translating/creating experience through my work — particularly

- 01 /// Warren Lehrer
- 02 /// EarSay, Inc.
- 03 /// Museum of Modern Art, New York NY
- 04 /// The Getty Center, Los Angeles CA
- 05 /// The Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris
- 06 /// The Tate Modern, London
- 07 /// State University of New York, Purchase College Panthers
- 08 /// Warren Lehrer, *Grrrrhhh: A Study of Social Patterns*, 1988
- 09 /// Stanford University, Palo Alto CA
- 10 /// Bruce Mau
- 11 /// Ren Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL*, 1996 (1376 pages)
- 12 /// Irma Boom
- 13 /// Irma Boom, *SHV Thinkbook*, 1996 (2136 pages)





14 /// Roller Boogie, 1979 (Venice Beach)
15 /// Warren Lehrer, Versions, 1980
16 /// AIGA
17 /// Judith Sloan
18 /// Queens NY
19 /// Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, Crossing the BLVD, 2003

the experience of character, relationships, and place. My graduate thesis was a performance score/book inspired by people I had met on Venice Beach in the summer of 1979. Versions was a setting of eight conversations, arranged and scored for the page and the stage as a kind of structuralist, music/spoken word composition. Each character was cast in their own typeface and typographic configuration. Instead of using punctuation or set column widths, line breaks were determined by breath or thought pauses. Silences equaled space on the page; ink equaled sound; typographic notation tracked the rhythm and emphasis of speech, the shape of thought, the nature and densities of interactions. Printed on all rag, translucent paper, readers could see echoes of voices coming and going. At my graduate thesis presentation, I leafed through the pages of the oversized playbook as actors and musicians performed excerpts. The faculty and visiting critics were divided as to whether what I had done was graphic design, genius or garbage. One of them recommended I submit the book for an AIGA award. It was selected as one of the 50 books of the year in 1981. At the opening of the exhibit in New York, one of the other awardees asked me how I got away with designing the book the way I did. I thought it was funny question, and though I wasn't working in the traditional sense as a graphic designer, it made me think that the field was an open one.

after I met, married, and partnered with actor, oral historian, and audio artist, Judith Sloan. We formed EarSay, a non-profit arts organization, and after writing two documentary plays together, we took on a large project documenting the migration stories of our neighbors in polyglot Queens — the most ethnically diverse locality in the United States. *Crossing the BLVD: Strangers, Neighbors, Aliens in a New America* ended up being a book (W.W. NORTON), a series of public radio documentaries, a performance, animations, a website and traveling exhibition which includes a mobile photo-story booth. In each branch of the project, our goal was to transport the reader/listener/viewer to the streets of Queens, and have them feel as if they're sitting in front of each person, looking into their eyes, listening to their stories, their humor, their living history.

My most recent book project, which I've just finished writing and designing, is an illuminated novel containing 101 books within it, all written by my protagonist, a controversial, bestselling author who finds himself in prison looking back on his life and career. *A Life In Books: the Rise and Fall of Bleu Mobley* is my first novel, and part of what it portrays is the creative process you asked about. How does an artist find the right form for particular stories? ... My own process writing and designing this book was kind of peculiar and mysterious. First I designed the covers of all 101 Bleu Mobley's books. Then I wrote excerpts that read like short stories.

left /// CROSSING THE BLVD (BOOK PAGE SPREAD) /// Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan (AUTHORS), Warren Lehrer (DESIGNER AND PHOTOGRAPHER) /// 2003
right /// FRENCH FRIES (BOOK PAGE SPREAD) /// Warren Lehrer and Dennis Bernstein (AUTHORS), Warren Lehrer (DESIGNER) /// 1984



Fleshing out Mobley's creations enabled me to chart out events in his life, and write his (faux) memoir — the primary narrative in *A Life In Books*. Paired together, the confessional autobiography and the retrospective monograph paint a portrait of a complex, well meaning, if flawed artist. Like my protagonist, who grapples with the decline of the physical book as a primary vehicle for storytelling and the changing nature of how people read, I am currently working on an iPad edition of the novel that will include animations, video performances of Mobley book excerpts, breakout galleries, annotations, and other interactive components.

As an educator with an innovative research agenda, how do you teach the typical graphic design student who might spend his/her career in the more quotidian aspects of the profession?

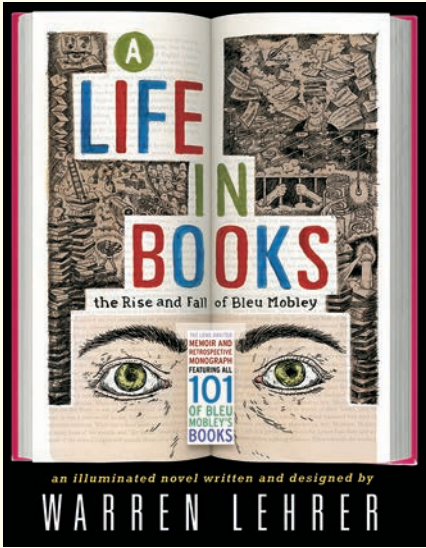
I don't see much of a dichotomy there. When students come to me with quotidian aspirations — to get a good job, to make hip-looking design, and live nice comfortable lives — that's perfectly fine. It's my job, not only to prepare them to be professionals in the field, but to help them discover a path to a life's work filled with meaning, exploration, even purpose. I don't flaunt authorship or my way of working onto students. But I do want them to see the awesome power graphic design has shaping culture, and the responsibility, the opportunity, and the gift that can be.

The traditional model for design education evolves from the notion of the artisan/crafts-

man who serves the needs of the client, generally assumed to be a corporation. It's a disservice to teach design with that singular assumption today. Design educators tend to function as stand-ins for clients, supplying the project/problem to the student throughout their entire undergraduate and graduate careers. Credits and grades stand-in for salaries and awards. When it comes to senior or graduate thesis projects, design educators (ESPECIALLY IN THE UNITED STATES) often find themselves frustrated by the design student's inability to define their own project. It's no wonder! Design students have, in the main, not been encouraged to develop their own ideas and vision. Thankfully, this is starting to change.

... ..

In today's globalized, digitalized, post-post modern, information age — design is everywhere, images and icons are currency, text is oral again, music is bound to images, people are watching more than reading, and everything from politics to personal identity is branded. For better and for worse, graphic designers deliver much of this cultural landscape. They need to be informed, conscious mediators, able to listen, research, write, communicate, manage, orchestrate, understand the historical and cultural significance of the shapes, colors, even typefaces they're putting out there. Most importantly, they need to be able to think for themselves, to redefine the problem if necessary, especially today when entrepreneurship, collaboration, even self-authorship is a very real part of the design



20 /// Thank you

field. Even if a majority of design students don't grow up to be authors or producers of their own projects — what they design and who they design for is ultimately an expression of their values, their approach to working, and the kind of education they received.

Any final thoughts on the notion that design authorship has transformed graphic design?

'Graphic Design' began in the early part of the twentieth century out of revolutionary art, literary, cultural, scientific, and political movements. It developed as a professional art practice imbued with the ideals of making a better world. While proudly proclaiming the heady pioneering days of graphic design (PRACTICED BY POET/PAINTERS, RADICAL LANGUAGE ARTISTS, UTOPIANS AND REVOLUTIONARIES) as its history — its contemporary practitioners, awarders, curators, and educators increasingly defined contemporary graphic design as a servant of industry, the state, and large cultural institutions. That didn't stop artists and writers and other creative people on the fringes from using the means of design to do their thing, be they Fluxus artists, Book Artists, Concrete Poets, Letterists, Situationists, Guerrilla Activists, or any number of iconoclasts who don't fit neatly into any ist, ism or guild. What has changed, it seems to me, is the discourse within the mainstream of the field.

... ..



GRRRRHHH: A STUDY OF SOCIAL PATTERNS (book) /// Warren Lehrer /// 1988

There is no question that the model of the designer as functionary of a client is waning. Design authorship exists today as an alternative, potentially viable (IF NOT LUCRATIVE) path for designers to pursue, even in its less purist manifestations (DESIGNER AS COLLABORATOR, AS PARTNER, AS A PERSON INVOLVED IN THE FORMATION OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT). It's not only design that has changed — so has technology, the speed of change, global economics, and the nature of the workplace. We're currently in an extended recession, and the days of strong unions, and companies having fidelity to their employees seem to be a thing of the past. If I were a young designer today with a proclivity toward design as innovation, I'd say what the heck! Why not take a crack at pursuing my own dreams, become a citizen designer, entrepreneur, author, — (FILL IN THE BLANK).

Thank you!

INTERVIEW: JOHANNA DRUCKER



Johanna Drucker is a writer, critic, artist and visual theorist. She is a professor in the Department of Information Studies at the University of California–Los Angeles. Her artist's books have been widely exhibited and are numerous collections nation-wide. Scholarly works have included the books *The Visible Word*, *The Alphabetic Labyrinth*, *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide* (with Emily McVarish), and many journal articles.

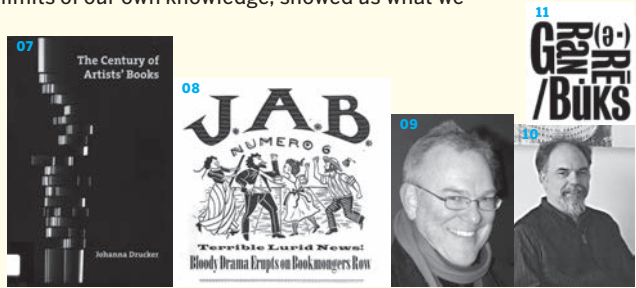
MCCARTHY Your life's work has been at the confluence of three systems for making ideas manifest: writing, designing and art-making. How do you move so fluidly within a personal practice that combines historical research, analysis, criticism, scholarship, communication, expression, creativity, craft and self-publishing?

DRUCKER I think of myself as an artist and a writer who makes books. I think in format. I'm not sure why, but graphical forms of expression have always informed my writing — in the literal sense of making and giving form to its expression. I find the mining of the archive and the experience of daily exposure to graphical forms are both ways of enriching the ways I think about what I do. The study of materials produced before the age of mass media is particularly rewarding because people had to figure out innovative solutions without the templates and conventions that circulate so broadly in our culture. Scholarly work stimulates my imagination, provides inspiration and provocation.

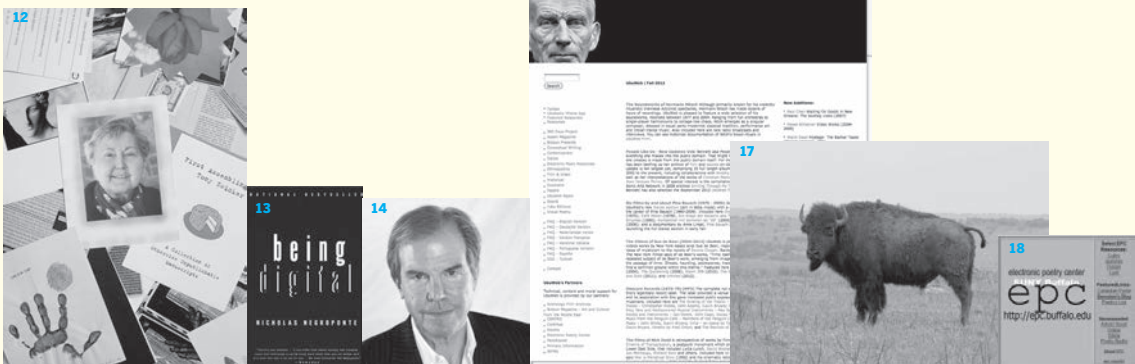
Making is thinking, and critical analysis is part of the cycle of elaborating tools for thought. All seems to fit together, except for the time pressures, of course, and that is a matter of sequencing one's tasks.

Not only are you a prolific maker of artist's books, you've written the scholarly book *The Century of Artists' Books*, and for years were involved with publishing JAB (JOURNAL OF ARTISTS' BOOKS). Why are certain forms, and media, more appropriate than others for your thoughts, and actions, as a maker and thinker?

Oh, I can't take any credit for JAB, that is all Brad Freeman's doing. He initiated that project, did all the work, layout, publishing, printing, shipping, editing, everything. All I did was fill up empty space in the columns! Whenever he needed something to complete an issue he would just ask me to scribble a bit. He's done an enormous service to the artists' books community. Brad [book artist] and Steve Clay [publisher of Granary Books] were both major influences in writing *The Century of Artists' Books*, as was Tony Zwicker [artists' book dealer], now long gone. She taught us about the limits of our own knowledge, showed us what we



- 01 /// Johanna Drucker
- 02 /// UCLA, Los Angeles, CA
- 03 /// Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 2003
- 04 /// Johanna Drucker, *The Alphabetic Labyrinth*, 1999
- 05 /// Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish, *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide*, 2008
- 06 /// Emily McVarish
- 07 /// Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, 2004
- 08 /// Journal of Artists' Books
- 09 /// Brad Freeman
- 10 /// Steve Clay
- 11 /// Granary Books



12 /// First Assembling for Tony Zwicker
13 /// Nicholas Negroponte, 'Being Digital', 1996
14 /// Nicholas Negroponte
15 /// Ubuweb
16 /// PennSound
17 /// Buffalo
18 /// Electronic Poetry Center

didn't know. She was wonderful in her combination of enthusiasm, endorsement, and direct confrontation with us as artists. Any medium has aesthetic qualities and characteristics. But I want to write in a multi-dimensional way. I think we all do. We write, we have thoughts, we have thoughts about where those thoughts might go, and then we have to edit to make the printed page or digital display conform to very limited conventions. Possibilities for thinking differently about writing can be recovered from the study of older forms of inscription and also projected forward to newer possibilities of digital writing spaces. Right now, for instance, I'm doing a little bit of analysis on the ways graphical features of the digital conventions in blogs, tweets, wikis, and so on structure the shape of argument online.

Concrete poetry is something you've written about and practiced through the experimental text in your book-works. Is this the essential 'touch point' between words and pictures (INCLUSIVE OF LETTER-FORMS, TYPOGRAPHY AND PAGE COMPOSITIONS AS IMAGES) — the poet as designer?

Except for sound and performance work, all poetry is visual. The graphical features of writing and text are part of the semantic field. Paying attention to that fact has been at the center of my work as an artist, critic, and scholar. I'm working right now on a small book on visual epistemology, graphesis, in the context of digital humanities. So I think my emphasis is more on graphical organization — the schematic disposition of elements — than on strictly iconographic

characters or qualities. So, yes, that is the touch point. Pictorial organization and its conventions are of course of interest, as are the wonders of the visual world, but format features are essentially diagrammatic rather than iconic.

Your most recent research is concerned with digitization and visual culture. How has 'being digital' (TO BORROW NICHOLAS NEGRAPONTE'S BOOK TITLE) impacted the concept of the designer as author?

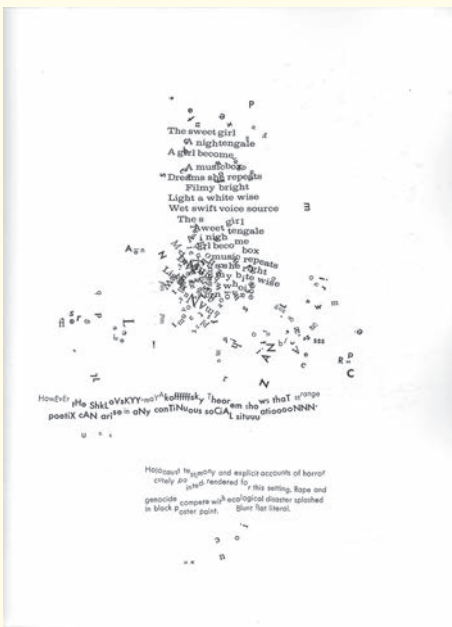
More people know how to think more innovatively with fonts, color, animation, and hybrid forms than ever before. When I began to make printed work, forty years ago (SHOCKING, BUT TRUE), the task of learning basic production skills was the price of entry to graphic design. We made lines with ruling pens (PARALLEL BLADES THAT HELD A WELL OF INK AND DELIVERED IT FOR DRAFTING PURPOSES AS MECHANICALLY PERFECT LINES), and had to know how to 'spec' type to get proofs from a service bureau that produced proofs of hot type or of phototype, and it was all very expensive. If you got your specifications wrong, you paid to have the type reset. The magic of being able to transform a text from one font to another blew our minds when the first desk top computers appeared. Now everyone knows what a font is and what point sizes mean. This is a great time for the long 'hidden' tradition to become visible and for the creative energies of poets who made use of graphical forms to become better known. The online resources that have been put together by ubuweb, PennSound, Buffalo's epc [Electronic Poetry Center], Rui Torres' PO.EX



[Digital Archive of Portuguese Experimental Literature], Scott Rettberg's ELMCIP [Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice] and the ELO's online archive (ELECTRONIC LITERATURE ORGANIZATION), are all great resources for this kind of study. The accessibility of all this cultural material, poetic imagination, is fantastic. But we should remember that it all takes enormous amounts of work and effort, much of it a labor of love and dedication, as, indeed, were the original projects... We still need even more flexible tools for writing diagrammatically, taking full advantage of the computational environment,

its analytic and synthetic properties, as well as its graphical platforms. We will read differently ahead, and across distributed fields of discourse that organize themselves in constellatory configurations according to the rhetoric and poetics of flexible, mutable, mobile forms. And that will seem as natural as the writing and reading we have been schooled in the past, that regulated our thoughts to a careful march across the page.

Thank you!



STOCHASTIC POETICS (LETTERPRESS PRINTS) /// Johanna Drucker /// 2010-12

19 /// Rui Torres
20 /// Poesia Experimental
21 /// Scott Rettberg
22 /// ELMCIP (Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice)
23 /// ELO (Electronic Literature Organization)
24 /// ELO (Electronic Literature Organization)
25 /// ELO (Electronic Literature Organization)
26 /// Thank you