DGB01: Design for Debate

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Design has evolved as a broader practice than making artefacts with the intention to create societal change.

Broadening the scope and focus of designers toward advancing the practice of design with the goal of reflecting, critiquing, provoking and ultimately improving society at large.
Different approaches:

Critical Design
Italian Radical design - Anti design
Radical Game Design
Critical making
Speculative design
Reflective design
Value-sensitive design
....
Design as critique is not a new idea.


Highly critical movement of prevailing social values and design ideologies.

Reaction against the perfectionist aesthetics of Modernism. Modernist designers placed emphasis on the style and the aesthetics of good form by many leading manufacturers and celebrated designers.
Characteristics of Radical Design:
- Striking and bold colours
- Scale distortion
- Irony and humor
- Kitsh
- The designed function of the object used to subvert the way people think about the object.
- Playful shapes
- Surprising proportions
- Variety of materials

Demonstrated through:
- photomontages
- video projections
- sketches
- mock buildings
1970 ‘book chair’ from Gianni Pareschi and Umberto Orsoni
Indulgence
Exhilarating dreams
Ironic nightmares
Seductive, captivating and utterly surreal
Playfully ironic, vulgar and sharply witty

Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari’s ‘Toilet Paper’ book
Postcards by Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari: greetings/saluti da/from Rimini
Objective:
to harness power of design to create objects and living quarters that were unique rather than embracing style, mass production, consumerism, sales and greed.

Anti-Designers wanted people to think about the objects they were buying, even if they ultimately threw those objects away.

Design should mesh with humanity's uniqueness, not the other way round.

Modernists: design used to reform lifestyles in order to make people healthier, more productive and so on. They wanted to make objects that would fit in with modern lifestyles and be useful, but unobtrusive.

Anti-Design: modest, self-effacing conception of the role design.
To create objects which were both useful but stood out for their bizarrity.
Boalum flexible lamp

Long plastic tube with light bulbs wired up inside, so to form a luminous tube.

The form is indeterminate – it can be manipulated by the owner. This allows the user to determine the form, at least to some extent.

Manufactured by Artemide.
Reversible Vase

The vase can be displayed upside down, which makes the form adaptable.

The perfect design solution is impossible to achieve.

Manoeuvrability and flexibility

Manufactured by Domese.
Critical design

to push design research beyond an agenda of simply reinforcing values of consumer culture and to instead embody cultural critique in designed artefacts. to critique social, cultural, technical and economic controversies through designing critical artefacts.

A critical designer designs objects not to do what users want and value, but to introduce both designers and users to new ways of looking at the world around them and the role that designed objects can play for them in it.

Dawn Chorus
an artificially intelligent bird feeder that trains local birds one’s favourite songs. The system uses operant conditioning principles to teach local birds new songs. This design raises issues about the ecological effects of interfering with birds’ natural behaviour.

FABRICA

FABRICA, a communication research center, owned by Benetton Group.

Visual Communication Department directed by Omar Vulpinari has been active in producing global awareness campaigns critiquing social, political and environmental issues through provocative imagery and critical design.
Design for Change/Lille

Fabrica si aggiudica il 1° Premio con Water Culture.

http://www.fabrica.it/projects/design-for-changelille/
Lille Métropole: 177 days of rain per year
lunedì 23 novembre 15
Responsive architecture to the climate. Hydro-chromic ink material with a special binder detector. Printed images appear with the water and disappear when the fabric is dry.
Design inspired by the textile tradition and richness of natural resources of Lille. Turnips, onions and sugar beets could be used to dye fabrics.
**Radical Game Design** by Lindsay Grace (2009),

Critical Gameplay project: A collection of video games that apply Critical Design. The games provoke questions about the way games are designed and played.

**Wait**: a game designed to critique the hurried pace of existing games by forcing the player to balance waiting and moving. As the player moves the world disappears, but when the player waits, the world becomes more rich.

http://www.criticalgameplay.com/thegames.html

**Big Huggin’**: the game requires players to hug a 30 inch stuffed animal in order to support it through its adversities. The hugs are registered by an analog sensor that allows the on-screen player character’s bear to register the scale of each hug. Big hugs help the player character jump higher. The game is designed as critique of the history of physical interfaces available in video game arcades.

http://www.criticalgameplay.com/hugme/

**Match**: a game about procedural racism through procedural rhetoric. Matching task. Each time a player fails to match, the item is stacked. If the player stacks too many items, the game ends. Some characters have no match, because they have no pre-established stereotypes and contain a mix of characteristics from each of the other 4 races. You can choose to push them to the side and allow them to stack, or you can put them in the middle and hope they don't cause your game too much trouble.

http://www.criticalgameplay.com/match/index.html
Critical making
Matt Ratto, Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto.

Through making you get a better understanding of how various technologies function.
Reflections on technology and society.

“...to use material forms of engagement with technologies to supplement and extend critical reflection and, in doing so, to reconnect our lived experiences with technologies to social and conceptual critique.”

"Critical making is an elision of two typically disconnected modes of engagement in the world — "critical thinking," often considered as abstract, explicit, linguistically based, internal and cognitively individualistic; and "making," typically understood as tacit, embodied, external, and community-oriented."


Projects
https://www.hackster.io/team-skrt/skrt-e58330
Feminists argue that this physical sign of dominance forces the woman into a smaller space, tinier than what she is accustomed to. Other people argue that the personal bubble is decreasing outwardly but increasing inwardly. The bubble does not exist beyond the body anymore but exists internally because of the cell phone, prominently the smartphone. These devices force users to not be aware of their context and only focus on matters occurring privately within the palm of their hands.
Personal bubble
https://www.hackster.io/team-skrt/skrt-e58330
Speculative design

Future-oriented.
“What if” questions that are intended to open debate and discussion about the kind of future people want.

Lampshade robot:
Flies and moths are naturally attracted to light. This lamp shade has holes based on the form of the pitcher plant enabling access for the insects but no escape. Eventually they expire and fall into the microbial fuel cell underneath. This generates the electricity to power a series of LEDs located at the bottom of the shade. These are activated when the house lights are turned off.
Light through Culture

2011 - Santa Maria della Scala Museum: The Pilgrimage
https://vimeo.com/23830663

2012 - Santa Maria della Scala Museum: Experiencing Human Rights
https://vimeo.com/50476772

2013 - Fondazione Monte dei Paschi: Women’s Rights - Emancipation, self-determination and violence
https://vimeo.com/71131822
Ballade of women

An interactive installation explores perspectives on women’s rights, eliciting individual reflection, triggered by an immersive experience.

VIOLENCE
Lucia da Siracusa, Maestro dell’Osservanza, XV century

SELF-DETERMINATION
Maria Magdalena, Rutilio Manetti XVII century

EMANCIPATION
Cleopatra, Marco Pino XVI century
Digital acquisitions of the paintings were fragmented and floated in the space, being projected on moving panels.

The panels were suspended from motors that, when controlled by an Arduino processor, could turn them to deny or reward the viewer with a view of the full painting when projected.

Ballade of Women
Projections had graphic overlays, which contained directly streamed information from the Internet and social media, together with facts, figures and graphs relating to the issues highlighted.

This information flow was enabled by the software crawler which performed a continuous monitoring of news regarding the topics of self-determination, emancipation and violence. The number of discussions generated on Internet was an input to the structure, which determined both its movement and visual contents.

Ballade of Women

lunedì 23 novembre 15
The movement of the panels was sensitive to online discussions which were continuously overlaid onto the projected paintings. Tweets and other posts related to the subject were used to move the motors handling the panels and therefore to modify the contents projected on them. The theme that gathered the biggest number of new posts, determined a slight movement on the servos. In principle, the visitors could send a tweet and experience the impact of their opinion on the structure in real time.
Reflective practice
News and posts concerning episodes of violence against women were displayed every day at a faster rate. This was clearly reflected in the behaviour of the panels connected to Santa Lucia that moved more quickly than the others, displaying many news about violence against women.
A similar phenomenon occurred for the theme of emancipation, since the crawler found a lot of images and posts related to the use of the woman’s body as a tool of power and seduction.
Deliverables

1. **Group assignment:**
   - one page illustration/multimedia: your “galaxy” of Critical Design approaches. Explain features, commonalities and differences by selecting examples (designed artefacts or projects).
   - design guidelines derived from your framework of Critical design approaches.

2. **Group assignment: Design concepts**
   Select an issue of contemporary society and develop a conceptual design idea to stimulate reflection and provoke critical thinking.
   
   Develop sketches and scenarios of use applying the design guidelines

   Describe your concept in a video prototype

   Collect feedback from people

3. **Group assignment:** Presentation on Framework + Guidelines + Design concepts

3. **Individual assignment:**
   Report your own reflections on Critical Design, the derived guidelines, your design process.
Meetings/Activities

23 November:
Kick-off (introduction lecture)
Groups
Review of your framework on Critical Design
Review of your design guidelines derived from the framework
Selection of the topic/issue to address in your concept

30 November:
Review/discussions
Presentation