

Design Studies and Design Culture

Design Studies Forum Special Session

College Art Association Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts

5:30–7:00 PM, Thursday, February 23, 2006

Hynes Convention Center, third level, room 306

Session chair:

Miodrag Mitrasinovic, University of Texas at Austin

Speakers:

Guy Julier, Glasgow School of Art

“From Singularization to Complexity”

Jacques R. Giard, Arizona State University

“Design Studies at Arizona State University ”

Nick Laird, University of Otago

“Developing Design Culture within the University“

Gwynne Keathley, Parsons School of Design

“The Laboratory and Design Culture at Parsons”

Discussant:

Clive Dilnot, Parsons School of Design

The Design Forum special session 'Design Studies in the Academy: Designing Our Future' that took place at the CAA's annual meeting in New York on February 20, 2002 explored conceptual frameworks under which Design Studies would operate within existing academic structures. One could argue that, in the academic setting, Design Studies should have the capacity to bring 'designing' and 'design' closer to the focus of all contemporary academic discourses.

The working assumption of this session is that one of the key tasks of Design Studies in the academic setting could be to enable incoming students in all academic and professional fields to acquire skills that would render them capable of reasoning about-and-within the contemporary, manmade world and acting upon it accordingly. This kind of initiative would introduce what one could call Design Culture programs into the freshman year: by Design Culture one could assume modes of reasoning, belief systems, values,

customs, processes and methods of the production of artifacts, and an entire universe of human practices that bring the designed world of today into being. A number of universities world-wide have in place simplistic forms of design education at the freshman level commonly listed under either 'visual literacy' or 'art foundations' course offerings, but contemporary academic programs are urgently needed in order to create Design Culture curricula that will introduce subject matters, principles, theories and methods that are interwoven in the conception, production and consumption of the artificial.

In that respect, a meta-disciplinary conception of the artificial is essential in explaining the centrality of design[ing] to contemporary life because we increasingly live in a world whose holistic logic, conception, and production escape the domain of expertise of any given professional and academic discipline alone. Such a meta-disciplinary curricular environment could be designed as a synthesis of the bodies of knowledge situated in existing disciplinary territories, but also on highly mobile and transparent networks configured by other knowledges pertinent to the creation of a socially critical agenda for all professional practices of the 21st Century.

The hypothesis of this panel is that the curriculum of such a Design Culture program would build on issues of sustainability, ecology, social awareness, cultural management, civic leadership, knowledge innovation, and other frameworks that put forth socially and ecologically defined goals, while simultaneously imply both a common social accountability as well as a socially responsive framework for individual action. Design Studies, with its cross-disciplinary appeal, has an important role to play in preparing new generations of reflective practitioners to face complex challenges of the 21st Century.

This session invites design educators, theorists, historians, designers, graduate students, and others with interest in introducing Design Culture programs into academic curricula to send in papers that may speculate on: ways in which Design Culture programs or design-awareness programs have been created, applied, and tested; ways in which Design Studies can bring together wide academic communities to carry on the above described scenario; ways in which design-minor programs have been introduced at universities and results of such implementations; theories (of education, but not only) that can provide a base for Design Culture programs; and so on.