

**A v o i d i n g  
the Post-critical**

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Francisco Laranjo

Soon after the financial services firm Lehman Brothers collapsed in 2008, economics occupied a central position in the media. For decades, the financial sector had been driving a process of depoliticisation of society. However, the exposing domino effect caused by the auto-destructive nature of capitalism allowed it to continue suppressing an already fragile public, political discourse. Terminology such as 'subprimes', 'derivatives' and 'collateralised debt obligations' headlined public statements and tv reports, as infographics attempted to explain what had *really* happened.

As European countries started to implement severe policy measures and cuts in all areas of public life, civil unrest was imminent. This took form as an outburst on behalf of the people, in response to the pressure exerted by banks, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission, to which society felt both powerless and not responsible. Government arrangements with the financial sector under neoliberalism became the norm, attempting to establish a consensual, inevitable state of affairs managed by technocrats. To the condition of eliminating the "proper political,"<sup>1</sup> philosophers such as Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek call the 'post-political.' Throughout the media, a shift in the discourse emerged. There was one reality before the global financial crisis started and another one after it began. A 'pre' and a 'post' global financial crisis. These prefixes are recurrently used to mark the before and after of a social, political and cultural event in time.

When the main focus of Western governments is a desperately obsessive yearning for economic growth at any cost, the state of crisis naturally spreads not only to all layers of society, but also to all disciplines. Graphic design is no exception. Trapped between disciplinary discourse and personal, private and public

interest, graphic design has another opportunity to re-examine its complicity with the current state of affairs. In other words, the present economic, political and social crisis highlights the fragilities, limitations, but also the potential of the discipline. Yet, at a time when it is fundamental to be critical, the very term has become ubiquitous, cool and vague. While it is possible to identify overlapping levels of criticality, as suggested by the personal (reflecting on own work), disciplinary (expanding disciplinary issues) and public (addressing societal phenomena), what is meant by *critical* is open for debate.

In a conversation between the designers Zak Kyles and Mark Owens published in *The Reader* (2009), the latter makes an important observation concerning the (mis)use of terminology adapted in graphic design discourse. Owens argues that graphic design tends to be delayed in engaging with terminology that is under discussion in other disciplines, more often than not using terms that are "frequently founded on some unacknowledged misreading or misunderstanding." (Owens, 2009, p. 327) He notes that 'postmodernism' was an exhausted term within fine art and architectural discourse by the time it started to take hold in graphic design in the late 1980s. Adding to the list of examples, he says that the same applied to the discussions of 'graphic authorship' in the 1990s and, more recently, the exploration of the term 'relational design' by retrofitting Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics.'

The term 'post-critical' seems to follow this legacy. As the above examples, compared with other disciplines, it is still a recent term within graphic design discourse. As Owens points out in relation to other terms, its reading and interpretation are likely to generate misunderstandings in disciplinary discourse, but also overlaps with the applications developed in other disciplines. In "Critical of What: Toward a Utopian Realism" (2005), architect

and critic Reinhold Martin provides a succinct account of the manifestations of the post-critical within architecture. Martin constructs his argument by referencing and extending the article “Criticality and Its Discontents” (2004) by the architect George Baird. Martin characterises practices operating under the banner of the post-critical as “sharing a commitment to an affect-driven, non-oppositional, nonresistance, nondissenting, and therefore nonutopian, forms of architectural production.” (Martin, 2005, p. 104) According to Martin, the kind of practice he described citing Baird, failed to deliver “an actual, affirmative project,” hiding instead behind adjectives such as “easy,” “relaxed,” and “cool.”

Martin suggests that the post-critical may be seen as the shift from ‘political critique’ to ‘aesthetic critique’. He argues that the former can be defined as “Frankfurt School-style negative dialectics” in reference to critical theorist Theodor Adorno, and associated with theorists like Manfredo Tafuri or Michael Hays. In other words, it follows a tradition of what the word critical is traditionally associated with: negation, resistance, emancipation. Hays has notably described critical architecture as “one which is resistant to the self-confirming, conciliatory operations of a dominant culture and yet irreducible to a purely formal structure disengaged from the contingencies of place and time.” (Hays, 1984, p. 14) Martin notes, too, the disbelief and dismissal of architecture’s potential by the post-critical, as it “usually winds up testifying not to the existence of a critical architecture, but to its impossibility, or at most, its irreducible negativity in the face of the insurmountable violence perpetrated by what the economist Ernest Mandel called, some time ago, ‘late capitalism.’” (Martin, 2005, p. 105) This is particularly important, as graphic design has to deal with (proportionally) similar political and economical constraints as architecture in its search for space for critical autonomy. Yet, the architect Peter Eisenman explicitly diverted

his criticality, as Martin argues, towards the questioning of the discipline’s internal assumptions and processes, thus resulting in what he calls aesthetic critique, and architects Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting call projective architecture. By demonstrating both disinterest and resistance towards the political, social and economic struggles architecture has to deal with at professional and academic levels, Martin says that Eisenman semantically changed what was understood as ‘critical.’ Using the rationalist architect Giuseppe Terragni who worked under the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini as example, Martin alerts to Eisenman’s illusion that a “formal syntax could be separated definitely from its political semantics.”

In issue 64 of *Emigre* magazine (2003), a concern with a generalised uncritical state of the graphic design discipline was openly expressed, namely by design curator Andrew Blauvelt. Commenting on a reality observable within graphic design discourse after the vivid contributions generated during the 1980s and 1990s, such as the discussions revolving around ‘design authorship’, Blauvelt presented a dark account of the state of the discipline. In the article “Towards Critical Autonomy or Can Graphic Design Save Itself?”, pluralism seemed to be the word that best described graphic design at the beginning of the 21st century. The discipline’s constituent elements were so “scattered and destabilized”, that for Blauvelt, “any attempt at definitions becomes meaningless.” He goes even further, by introducing the ‘post-critical’ term to graphic design discourse by arguing that “any critical edge to design—either real or imagined—has largely disappeared, dulled by neglect in the go-go nineties or deemed expendable in the subsequent downswing. However, the reason seems not a factor of cyclical economies, but rather the transfiguration of a critical avant-garde into a post-critical *arrière-garde*.” (Blauvelt, 2003, p. 38)

Five years later, Blauvelt reaffirmed this post-critical condition. In the article “The Work of Task” (2008), he reviewed

the birth of the magazine *Task Newsletter*. This magazine, edited by designers Emmet Byrne, Alex DeArmond and Jon Sueda collected a series of conversations with influential design figures and writings on a diverse range of themes. Blauvelt argues that *Task Newsletter* was being symptomatic of an installed, non-confrontational attitude in graphic design practice. He questions: "The presence of *Task* asks, How do you make a magazine for the post-critical, post-movement moment of contemporary graphic design?" After the application of the 'post-critical' term was contested in the blog post's comment section, Blauvelt provides a clearer reasoning for its use, shedding light on its meaning: "In my opinion the critical establishes a position. The post-critical does not. I'm not evoking a specifically architectural reference for the term, only alluding to the idea that there is nothing to define, uphold, be against, or resist, etc. The issuance of an object into the world does not necessarily establish a critical position. It is possible that we can have more objects and fewer critical positions." (Blauvelt, Design Observer, 2008)

Reinhold Martin's analysis points to a de-politicised manifestation of a new uncritical form of criticality. The lack of ideology is the ideology. It is one which, perhaps unwittingly, blurs, confuses and ignores what critical has been known to mean in the past. The 'aesthetic critique' reconfigures what the word 'critical' can mean in relation to graphic design, thereby liberating the word and allowing it to be attached to virtually any kind of practice that deviates from an uncritical approach to design. This opens up two additional possibilities: 1) the critical as critique—visual formulas can be developed in order to rapidly make a project look critical; and 2) the critical as simply a synonym of thinking. As a result, there is no need to bridge—or justify—any gap between theoretically-grounded research/critique, visual output and effect. The post-critical places itself beyond criticism,

delusionally rendering the tradition that preceded its existence neglectable. Martin suggests that the post-critical avoids becoming obsessed with the past, looking instead optimistically to the future. The designer Stuart Bailey seems to partially reinforce this idea in his open letter in *Dot Dot Dot* 20 (2010). Responding to design critic Rick Poynor's criticism of overlooking graphic design history and tradition associated with the term 'critical design', Bailey said that they (referring to a group of participants of the exhibition *Forms of Inquiry: The Architecture of Critical Graphic Design*) have their own tradition, make their own and will continue to do so, sustaining his arguments with a series of eclectic references. For them, *Emigre* is as much as an influence as an independent record label or a band.

The impact the financial crisis had on graphic design, such as precarity, student debt and budget cuts, has been briefly noted by design writer Adrian Shaughnessy in "When Less Really Does Mean Less" (2012). Here, it is possible to see the introduction of another 'post': post-graphic design. This over-dramatic term does not suggest that graphic design will cease to exist. Instead, it points to imminent changes. The fierce competition from businesses of ready-to-use, categorised templates and logos, to crowd-sourced services such as Fiverr or 99 Designs, will drastically reduce the need for typical graphic design work. People producing generic work via these services at reduced prices will, too, be out of work, replaced by automated, data-driven tasks. In this sense, the term also draws attention to the extremely dangerous rise of surveillance, big data and pre-emptive personalisation, which are important to design. It alerts to an increased acceleration of algorithmical automatism, which anticipates personalised graphic design across media based on collected data across devices. This can render the traditional role of the graphic designer redundant and close even more opportunities for criticality.

This 'post' serves to introduce, as all the posts, the "notion of posteriority, the transition from a known classifier to an unknown but suggestive future" as architectural theorist Charles Jencks suggests in *What is Post-Modernism?* (1986).

The post-political and the post-critical have two goals. The first draws attention to the elimination of politics and the bankruptcy of the dominant political systems. At the same time, it opens up new possibilities: direct action, impromptu public forums, new governance models, movements and parties, for example. The second has a similar orientation. On the one hand it alerts to the crisis of the word it is claiming to be moving away from. On the other, it indicates other approaches operating or diverging from its original meaning, suggesting a new definition of what is meant by critical. While these and other 'post' terms surface within graphic design discourse, it is unlikely that designers will want to wear their corresponding badges, avoiding pigeonholing in an increasingly volatile and fast changing discipline. That is also arguably the least relevant contribution of their emergence and existence. They are useful to signal paradigm shifts, to indicate upcoming demises, challenges and especially to open up discussions and platforms, which in turn can foster new approaches to deal with current social, political and cultural conditions—ultimately keeping the discipline under much needed scrutiny. The post-political and the post-critical will keep highlighting shortfalls and promoting possibilities. In this sense, it may well be the political and disciplinary conditions that lead to the emergence of such prefixes—creating a state of indefinite crisis—that will force the 'critical' to really become critical once again. The post-critical is a term that graphic design does not need to borrow or adapt to. It signals, however, a crucial opportunity to clarify, debate and define what the *critical* in graphic design can and should be—to generate a critique of the critical.

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# Derivative Ideals: Our Speculative Anachronistic Design

NOTE: This article is an expanded and revised version of "Questioning the 'critical' in speculative and critical design" and "Cheat-sheet for a non- (or less-) colonialist speculative design", published online in 2014. These are available at [www.a-pare.de](http://www.a-pare.de)

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Speculative design is going through a troubled adolescence. Roughly fifteen years after interaction design duo Dunne and Raby first started talking about “critical design,” the field seems to have grown up a bit too spoiled and self-centered. Being a fairly young approach to product and interaction design, it seems to have reached a tipping point of confusion, rebellion, contrasting opinions and confrontations. Presently, from practitioners to theorists there seems to be little consensus about what the field is able to offer—and whether it is of any use at all. In this article we hope to pinpoint some reasons why this is so, while at the same time offering not possible, plausible or probable but *preferable* developments for the field.<sup>1</sup>

Before introducing what we consider to be *truly* critical about speculative and critical design (from here on referred to as simply *scd*), context is paramount. *scd* made its first appearance as “critical design” in the late 1990s in the corridors and studios of the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London. It envisioned design as a tool for critique, and aimed to explore the metaphysical possibilities of the designed object in order to “provide new experiences of everyday life, new poetic dimensions” (Dunne 2005, p. 20). Even though the idea in itself was not new—with other practitioners already undertaking similar endeavours without necessarily defining them as “critical design”—this was perhaps the first time that criticality was proposed as a deliberate attitude to product and interaction design, “a position more than a method” (Dunne and Raby 2008, p. 265; 2013, p. 34). In the following years speculative proposals became a strong driving force and a trademark of the Design Interactions programme at the RCA—under the direction of Dunne—and a few other schools in northern Europe. Across

<sup>1</sup> We are referencing physicist Joseph Voros’ *Futures Cone* (2003), recurrently employed by speculative and critical designers to position their projects (as seen in Dunne and Raby’s *Speculative Everything* (2013, p. 5), for example).

the Atlantic, practitioners and authors such as Julian Bleecker and Bruce Sterling, as well as curators such as MOMA’s Paola Antonelli, began taking interest in these new perspectives on design; in the us the discipline was rebranded as “design fiction”<sup>2</sup>—though it maintained most of critical design’s core goals.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the growing number of practitioners and the interest that this approach has garnered in the design community since its inception, the discourse in the field has remained suspiciously static. In *Hertzian Tales* (2005), Dunne passionately argued for an exploration of the metaphysical possibilities of the designed object, focusing on its potential as embodied critique, political statement or activist provocation. His proposal rejected design as a discipline exclusively focused on servicing the industry, though it was equally careful not to align itself with Marxist ideals (*ibid.*, p. 83). Distancing its speculative proposals from “market-led agendas” (Auger 2013, p. 32) emerged as the motto of Design Interactions’ output, with a good number of the programme’s alumni becoming mainstream references for what speculative design is able to achieve. Their projects follow a clear path of dreaming about the uncanny implications of tricky subjects such as birth,<sup>3</sup> death and social anxieties,<sup>4</sup> only to name a few. Yet, they are predominantly expressed through aesthetics of consumerism, still contained within a clear neoliberal framework. Fifteen years on, the field seems to have taken this fear of left-wing ideals at heart.

<sup>2</sup> It is unclear who coined “design fiction”—although science fiction author Bruce Sterling is commonly credited. Dunne and Raby (2013, p. 100) remark that even though similar in nature, design fictions are “rarely critical of technological progress and border on celebration rather than questioning.” For a comprehensive account of design fiction, refer to Bleecker (2009) and Sterling (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Ai Hasegawa’s project *Wanna Deliver a Dolphin* explores the possibility of humans birthing other animals: <http://aihasegawa.info/?works=i-wanna-deliver-a-dolphin> (Accessed October 14, 2014)

4 Auger Loizeau explore “the harnessing of our chemical potential after biological death through the application of a microbial fuel cell, harvesting its electrical potential in a dry cell battery” in their “Afterlife” project: <http://www.auger-loizeau.com/index.php?id=9> (Accessed October 14, 2014).  
Sputniko’s project *Crowbot* Jenny dreams of trans-species communication as a solitary girl’s way of connecting with other living things: <http://sputniko.com/2011/08/crowbot-jenny-2011/> (Accessed October 14, 2014).

Auger Loizeau also explore social anxieties in their project *Social Telepresence*: <http://www.auger-loizeau.com/index.php?id=11> (Accessed October 14, 2014).

product (or a prototype thereof as “critical design”) comes into being (2013, p. 161). Yet contrary to what they affirm, we argue that designers are as politically responsible and accountable for their practice as for their actions as citizens; there is no separation between one role and the other. When this simple assumption is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the art gallery is not the most appropriate space for these “provocations” and discussions to take place—it needs to penetrate public discourse beyond the “art and design exhibition” setting in order to become an instrument of the political (Fry 2011; DiSalvo 2012; Keshavarz and Mazé 2013).

It is precisely because sCD’s productions—and the debates they aim to incite—rarely leave these specific environments that they stall. The field’s preoccupations are directed towards little more than an alleged “lack of poetic dimensions” in our

relationship with designed objects (Dunne 2005, p. 20). sCD is made *by, for and through* the eyes of the Western—and typically northern-European and/or us-American—intellectual middle classes; the vast majority of work currently available in the field has concentrated its efforts on envisioning near futures that deal with issues that seem much more tangible to their own privileged audience. Projects that clearly reflect the fear of losing first-world privileges in a bleak dystopian future abound, while practitioners seem to be blissfully unaware (or perhaps unwilling to acknowledge) the existence of different realities.<sup>5</sup> This myopic vision of the world has led the field to limit itself to superficial concerns, and stunted the development of its once-ambitious political aspirations.

Clear examples of these problems can be found in the visual discourse of sCD: the near-futures envisioned by the great majority of projects seem devoid of people of colour, who rarely (if ever) make an appearance in clean, perfectly squared, aseptic worlds. Couples depicted in these scenarios seem to be consistently heterosexual and bound by traditional notions of marriage and monogamy. There are no power structures made visible that divide the wealthy and the poor, or the colonialist and the colonised. Poverty still happens *somewhere else*, while the bourgeois sCD subject copes with catastrophe through consuming sleek, elegant, futuristic, white-cubed and white-boxed gizmos.<sup>6</sup> Gender seems to be an immutable, black-and-white truth, clearly defined between men and women, with virtually no space for trans\* and queer

<sup>5</sup> Michael Burton and Michiko Nitta’s *Republic of Salivation* suggests a dystopian future in which citizens are fed rationed meals by the government. The designers seem to be unaware that this is already a reality for many countries in the developing world. Its inclusion in MOMA’s *Design and Violence* online curating platform ignited a long debate on the validity of sCD and served as the starting point for this and other essays. The thread is available at <http://designandviolence.moma.org/republic-of-salivation-michael-burton-and-michiko-nitta/> (accessed October 10, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> As Tony Fry remarks, “[f]or the privileged, defuturing often happens under an aura of elegance.” (2011, p. 27)



7 Whereas Sputnikiko's *Menstruation Machine* attempts to tackle the subject of transsexuality and queerness, it still employs questionable terminology and representation of queer identities (cf. Prado de o. Martins 2014).

identities (let alone queer and trans\* voices speaking for themselves).<sup>7</sup> Between these narrow depictions of reality and whitewashed formulations of near-future scenarios, scd seems to be curiously apathetic and apolitical for a field that strives to be a critical response to mainstream perceptions of what design is, and what it should and could do. In truth, the only message that this apathy can convey is that society is fine as it is.

The question is then whether it is possible to expand from these superficial concerns and provide more thoughtful perceptions and analyses of the world. While the majority of criticism towards the field remains highly sceptical (and perhaps rightfully so), we still believe scd can be transformed into a strong political agent. For this to happen, however, it needs to be tested, spread out, modified, re-appropriated, bastardized. scd's hesitation in acknowledging its problematic stances on issues such as sexism, classism or colonialism, to name a few, need to be called out. Projects promoting and perpetuating oppression should not be tolerated, and those not willing to second-guess their own decisions need to be held accountable for their political decisions. Assuming that the (white, cisgendered, male, European, etc.) gaze is 'neutral' or 'universal' is not only narrow-minded, but also profoundly reactionary.

Many of the problems we have highlighted within scd stem from the tenuous grasp that the field seems to have of the humanities and social sciences. In its ambition for envisioning how technology reflects social change, it assumes a very shallow perspective towards what these social shifts mean; it avoids going deeper into how even our core moral, cultural, even religious values might—or should—change. While scd seems to spare no effort to investigate and fathom scientific research and

futuristic technologies, only a small fraction of that effort seems to be directed towards questioning culture and society beyond well-established power structures and normativities. This is, perhaps, the most defining trait of a teenaged field: the ironically anachronistic nature of a practice that creates futuristic gizmos for profoundly conservative moral values. In order to overcome this, we believe designers have to look beyond given socio-economical and political structures and inquire *how* and *why* our societies got there in the first place. One way to do so is to get closer to research in the critique of science, feminist and queer theories, sound studies and other scholarship that dare to question the hierarchies of privilege that constitute the world as we know it today. More than that, scd should offer a helping hand towards making these tricky questions visible and tangible to public discourse, well beyond exclusionary spaces such as academia, museums and art galleries. This needs to be done without fearing a dialogue with the so-called "mass culture" or "mainstream" so often neglected and avoided through the use of purposefully cryptic language.

While the issues highlighted in this article are not the only ones worthy of the field's attention, demanding meaningful engagement and thorough research from a community largely stemming from—or with connections to—academia is hardly asking too much. Such an attitude will not only prevent projects from incurring in the same basic mistakes pinpointed here and henceforth failing to address their aspirations, but will also offer some diversity beyond self-indulgent, narrow-minded perspectives. From the moment scd researchers and practitioners start keeping these issues in mind and holding themselves accountable for their political decisions, the field might finally start fulfilling its promises of critique. Until then, it will remain confined to a vicious circle of navel-gazing and self-appraisal.

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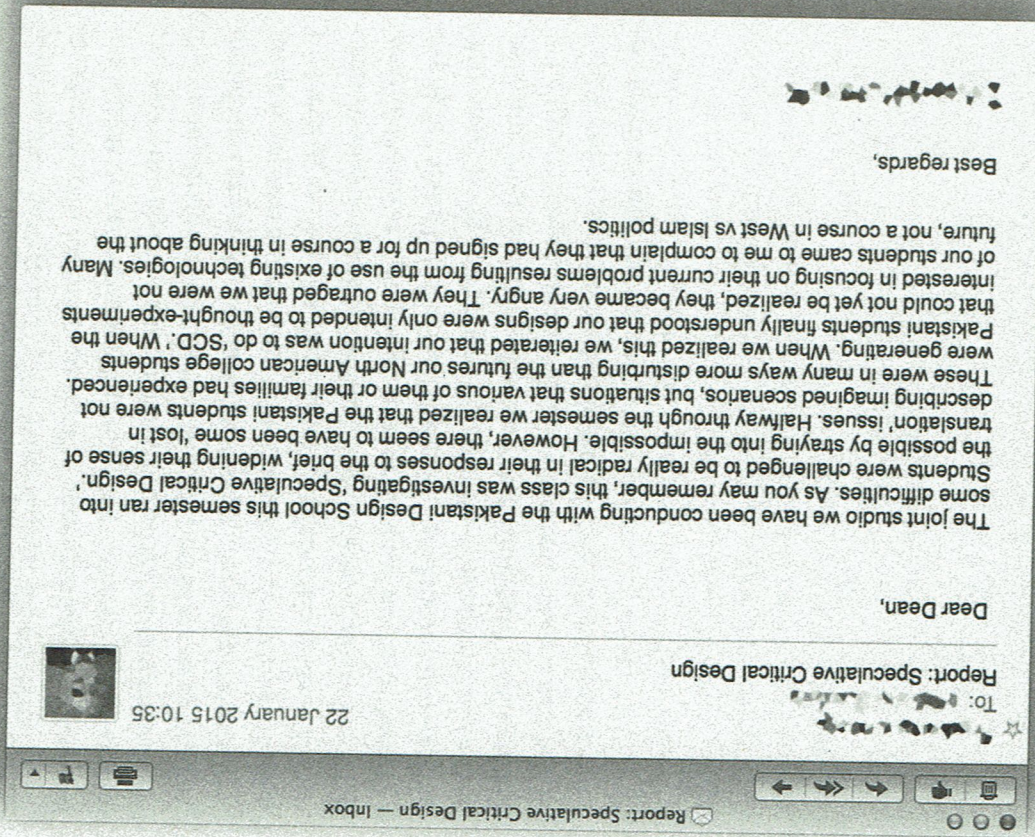
# DESIGN FICTIONS

Cameron Tonkinwise

# ABOUT CRITICAL DESIGN

At the beginning of 2015, some researchers took the physical components of the design duo Dunne and Raby *Foragers* exhibition to Liberia. The imagery and texts that accompanied the original exhibition of the 'fictional' artefacts were not included because their art direction contained too many unquestioned class and ethnic assumptions. At the time, Liberia was recovering from being in a state of emergency as a result of Ebola. Food production was limited and the imaginary of Liberians was filled with the 'space age' suits and equipment of wealthy white people trying to contain viruses. As a result, the *Foragers* designs were an immediate scandal. Riots ensued. The Liberian government, believing it had evidence of an anti-African plot by Europeans and Americans, expelled all foreign companies and committed to becoming self-sufficient in organic produce and local economies.

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Investigators have found that a spate of tragic drone-related accidents had a common source. The operators had been inspired to DIY their devices after seeing what they believed were real examples in a shopping catalogue. Instead the catalogue was the 'design fiction' project of the Near Future Laboratory. A court found the Laboratory culpable for the accidents. The presiding judge expressed disbelief that the Laboratory could have imagined such evil devices. The Laboratory argued the 'it was just art' defense but the judge refused to accept this because the ideas had been rendered at such a high level of fidelity. "It was criminally negligent of the Laboratory to have designed these provocations without making any preparations for the consequences of releasing these ideas into the world," the judge said in a statement. "The Laboratory could not explain to the court even their best case scenario for how productive reception of this 'artwork' was expected to take place."

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"Yes, Hello, thanks for taking my call. My design magazine is very interested in publishing stories about your Speculative Critical Design. To be frank, I was told about your work by some of our most dedicated and well-paying advertisers. I wasn't familiar with your projects, but our clients—from some of the most expensive furniture companies to some of the most exclusive fashion houses—knew all about it. They were saying that your work is radical and critical—really disruptive—but that it is still really great design, very clearly demonstrating the power and sophistication of Design. They love how it makes design look so cutting edge. One of my magazine's most prolific advertisers was saying that he has been waiting so long for this. For decades now leftist cultural critiques have been vilifying design as the source of all consumerism. But now you are using design to critique everything else. At last design looks like the savior rather than the villain. It reaffirms the world's faith in the value of design. All our advertisers want to position their products alongside articles about your work. Design schools too. They love that you are driving student interest in forms of designing that they are already teaching—no need to retool. So tell me—what have you been 'critically designing' recently?"

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A new leak from Edward Snowden points to a complicated conspiracy. For some time, design research laboratories at universities, such as the one associated with the design researcher Bill Gaver at Goldsmiths University, have used funding from tech companies to produce what appeared to be provocative propositional products about the social implications of future technologies. Investigative journalism revealed 18 months ago that these projects were not the cultural critiques they claimed. They were instead versions of an old design strategy that the industrial designer, Raymond Loewy, once called *MAYA* – *Most Advanced Yet Acceptable*, in 1951. In this approach, designers produce extremist speculative designs on their own time in order to move the ones that more conservative designs clients might choose further along the innovation spectrum. *Vice News* showed that what appeared to be arm's-length funding for 'ambiguous' explorations of design possibilities, such as Gaver's, were in fact deliberate attempts by tech companies to work with design researchers to 'soften up' the public for new technologies or new uses of technologies. Snowden's leak reveals a further twist. The NSA in the USA channeled money to Speculative Design researchers through tech companies to generate projects that would make the public think that radically life-changing new technologies were just around the corner. The intention appears to have been to make the public believe that increased technological reach was an inevitability.

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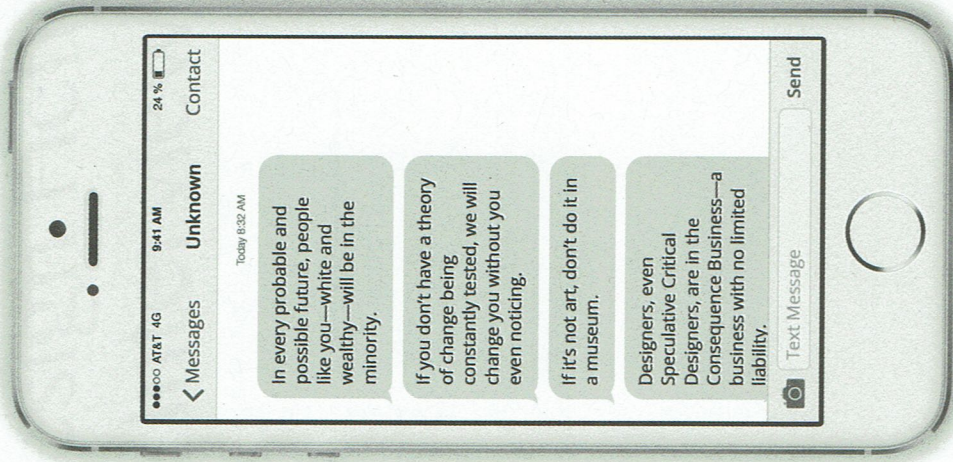
The product designer James Auger is facing disciplinary action by his university for his role in 'industrial sabotage' of genomics research. Auger began working with genomics scientists as part of an 'Art-Science' initiative at his university. The original aim was to explore how designers could help scientists better communicate the implications of their work. Initial collaborations involved Auger using what is known as a 'Speculative Design' to imagine ways in which the scientists' research might be commercially deployed. Scientists were apparently appalled by the resulting designs, discerning for the first time the great dangers of their work. Shocked by the realism of Auger's exploitative propositions, the scientists committed to ending their work. It is alleged that it was Auger, drawing on what he had discovered from his design research about the media ecology sustaining the credibility of this science, who proposed how the scientists could effectively 'suicide-bomb' this field of research. We now know that the experiments that the scientists claimed to be doing, which led to widespread public outcry and consequent outlawing of such work, were never in fact conducted—they were merely stories that the scientists put about to provoke the very reaction that ensued. Auger's defense invokes 'the precautionary principle.' On his way into the disciplinary meeting at his university, he refused to comment to reporters apart from saying repeatedly: "Google 'Post-normal Science!'"

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The New School in New York City, which includes the Design School, Parsons, announced a new degree program that combines Design and Journalism. Part of this unique, innovative and urgently needed degree program is the possibility of majoring in Discursive Design. The Director of the Discursive Design major spoke at a MOMA *Design and Violence* forum saying, "Speculative Design is pointless unless it is active in giving form to the speculations it stirs up. You can't just make provocative products and then throw them over the wall into the existing media landscape. For instance, tech journalism at the moment is an embarrassment. If you really believe in the importance of design as a shaper of the future, you must also construct the media that can be the forum for that shaping. We will teach Discursive Designers how to build up the audiences they need."

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Design researchers at a number of Art and Design Schools are concerned about possible terrorist threats against them. Many have received versions of messages saying things like:



Some of these Design Researchers suspect that the messages have in fact been written by their colleagues more committed to Social Design and Participatory Design.