

Agency, Context and Meaning: The Humanities and Design

Mads Nygaard Folkmann, University of Southern Denmark

Abstract

The paper is a meta-discursive contribution to the discussion of how design can be understood as a medium of meaning formation and the questioning of meaning. Further, the paper makes a plea for the role of the humanities in formulating relevant questions in design through a conceptualization of the nature and scope of design. Three fundamental approaches to understanding design from the perspective of the humanities will be proposed: 1) The question of *agency* in design, i.e. what the role and agency of design can be conceived as in human life, which can be addressed in the historical perspective of *design history*, 2) the question of *context* in and of design, i.e. which contexts give meaning to design, a question that calls for interpretive models of *cultural analysis* of the circuit of design that acknowledge the phases and aspects of production, mediation and consumption, and 3) the question of *meaning constituents* in design, where the paper points to *design philosophy* as a framework for interests in aesthetic, ontological and phenomenological concerns in design. In the methodology of the paper, approaches from the humanities offer frameworks for understanding the role and nature of design in terms of meaning formulation and cultural contexts and, thus, for contesting the what, how and why of design.

Keywords

The humanities, cultural context, design history, design philosophy, meaning constituents

Introduction

Approaches to design from the humanities and from design practice often operate in different theoretical and institutional settings. Design historians in university contexts may claim design history as a discipline in its own right, a “de-tooled” instrumental use in a practice-oriented educational setting (Fallan 2013). From the practice perspective, the humanist concerns in questions of history, culture and meaning may seem abstract and detached from the immediate matters of design practice and practice-based design education, as the humanities often operate with a hermeneutical model of interpretation where the topic of investigation is formulated and created as an analytical object, detached from immediate concerns or questions of actuality.

In this paper I will make a plea for the role of humanities in relation to understanding design as a medium of meaning formation and thus as a medium that questions meaning and proposes models for engaging with the world. Some 20 years ago, Richard Buchanan made an important statement about design in a humanist perspective as a “liberal art of technological culture”, where design should point “forward to a new attitude about the appearance of products [...] and carry a deeper, integrative argument about the nature of the artificial in human experience” (Buchanan, 1992, p. 20). Buchanan’s aim was to claim design as a field in its own right and not as an appendix to art or technology. Buchanan spoke of design as a specific and contemporary human enterprise. Here, my approach is

to ask what we can learn from a humanist approach in relation to design. Thus, in an overview, I will lay out different tracks along which questions in relation to design are raised by the humanist investigation within design. My claim is not that knowledge from the humanities will deliver or promote a comprehensive theory of contemporary design or provide direct answers to urgent or emergent questions in design (e.g. how to create better design in terms of ethics or sustainability or, even better, both in combination), although that may happen, but rather that a humanist approach allows us to propose relevant and appropriate frameworks for questioning and debating design.

The humanities as a framework for understanding design

The humanities cover a variety of different foci and interests and may be difficult to circumscribe as a homogeneous entity. Below, I will point to different fields of investigation but also attempt to establish a comprehensible framework.

In my view, the humanities can be seen as defined by (i) institutional settings (e.g. university faculties), (ii) various kinds of general scientific approaches, and (iii) specific disciplines and subject matters, e.g. disciplines in language, rhetoric, philosophy, culture and history. I will not go into the question of the institutional setting, besides pointing to my own affiliation with a humanities department that is focused on research and education aimed at analyzing and understanding design as a phenomenon of modern culture. Regarding the general scientific approaches, as prime foundations of the humanities I will point to *hermeneutics* (focusing on understanding and/or non-understanding in pluralities of meaning, cf. Gadamer, 1960; Ricoeur, 1975; Hörisch, 1998; 2009), *phenomenology* (investigating the structure of experience and dealing with the intricate constituents of human experience in the balance of subject and object, e.g. Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and *semiotics* (looking at the overall question of what meaning is and how it can be described). Further, *rhetoric* has proved relevant in analyzing the design process and the strategies of persuasion of design objects (see Buchanan, 1995; Joost & Scheuermann, 2008).

Of course, these central paradigms have been criticized and challenged by developments in cultural theory and philosophy, but despite trends such as post-structuralism, anti-hermeneutics and deconstruction, the questions of *interpretation*, *experience*, and *meaning* remain constituent and central, also for contemporary investigations into human culture. The framework of the humanities, however, needs, to be met and modified to match the relevant field of inquiry. In the context of design, I will point to three general questions that may be raised in relation to the framework of the humanities. My proposal – and thus the thesis of this paper – is that the humanist approach in relation to design can be distributed along three questions:

1. The question of *agency* in design, or rather what the role and agency of design can be conceived as in human life. This question, which allows for different models of conceiving human experience, can be addressed in the interpretive perspective of *design history*.
2. The question of *context* in and of design, that is, which contexts give meaning to design, and how design is experienced by people. This calls for interpretive models of *cultural analysis* of the circuit of design in phases and aspects of production, mediation and consumption.
3. The question of *meaning constituents* in design, where I will point to the recent discipline of *design philosophy* as a way of engaging in a matter that was formerly an exercise in semiotics.

In the following, I discuss these three entries to design which I consider central for a humanist investigation of design; design history, cultural analysis of the circuit of design, and the question of meaning. They all, in different ways, convey and employ methods of interpretation, framing of experience and investigation of meaning. Further, in combining these, we may raise a number of questions regarding the formative powers of design as illustrated in a model that frames the big questions of the *what*, *how* and *why* of design (figure 1). This model may be seen as the interpretive output of the article.

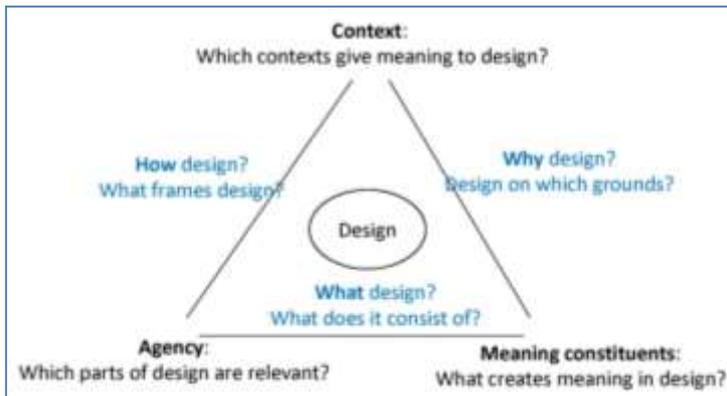


Figure 1: Model of formative factors of and questions in design.

Design history: asking for agency in design

As a discipline, design history has come a long way from beginnings in affiliation with art history to recent interests in context and culture influenced by e.g. Actor-Network Theory, Science and Technology Studies and Cultural Theory (see e.g. Fallan 2010). In its ever new variations, the implicit question of design history is to ask which formative factors of design can be regarded as important to emphasize in design.

Looking at the development of design history in broad terms, it is possible to discern three different positions. (i) First, design history has been dominated by an interest in “masters” and their masterpieces; Pevsner’s 1936 celebration of *Pioneers of Modern Invention* (Pevsner, 1991) is a paradigmatic example of this in its use of devices from classic art and literary history in claiming superior authorship for singular persons. In this kind of conception, the design derives its importance from its origin in the mind of a singular individual. In opposition to this metaphysics of the creative origin, (ii) later approaches have attempted to valorize realism and ‘truth’ in analyzing and acknowledging the operations of design practice as complex activity taking place in a specific context with the contribution of many actors (see e.g. Dilnot, 1984; Fry, 1988; Margolin, 1995). Here, design objects are seen in relation to and as an outcome of a dynamic practice of designers and designing. Thus, the origin of meaning is de-centered; it cannot be located in one specific point but has a variety of contributors. (iii) Finally, there is a position in design history where design history is embedded in the context of cultural analysis, and there is less emphasis on the origin of the design and more interest in its effects in relation to use and consumption and its role in culture, even if the interest in the acts of production remains present within the overall framework. This position, which has been dominant since John A. Walker’s *Design History and the History of Design* (1989), is characterized by an interest in the cultural circuit that circumscribes the process of attributing meaning and value to design objects in all phases, from the conditions of production to the possibilities of consumption, e.g. in the so-called PCM paradigm, Production-Consumption-Mediation (cf. Lees-Maffei, 2009), which examines how design develops not

only in phases of production but also in the mediation in user manuals, magazines and advertising.

The design historian Kjetil Fallan has asked design historians, “To What Purpose and for Whom Do We Write?” (Fallan, 2013) as part of a discussion where he claims that design history is often regarded as a secondary tool in the education of practitioners. Instead, so the argument of Fallan, the discipline of design history should be “de-tooled”, abandoning its “Stockholm syndrome” tendency to identify with the “hostage takers”. Fallan initiates a central discussion about the purpose of writing design history, and part of his answer derives from his habitus as a professional historian: A central element in writing design history is the methodological reflection of the aims, means, and models of design history, and this dimension may be lost if the discipline is not allowed to develop on its own terms but is instead a servant to another purpose.

I wish to point the discussion of design history in another direction. Whether design history is tooled or de-tooled, its perspective enables a deeper understanding of both design and the wider contexts of design, as seen in a variety of historical settings. First of all, the historical perspective allows for the basic understanding that *design has changed* in scope, materials and shape; design has come a long way, from the early designs of the industrial revolution to contemporary design developments in relation to digital technology, branding and conceptual-immaterial solutions. Further, to be aware of design history is also to acknowledge that we cannot simply project the present into the future (Rooden et al., 2011) but instead rely on a much longer tradition.

Next, reflecting design history in terms of historiography, that is, in terms of different models for conceiving and writing design history, may inform the *emphasis of agency in design*, both in the context of design history and in the context of design itself. Design history is itself a product of ways of looking at design, as stated so precisely by Richard Buchanan: “The history of design is not merely a history of objects. It is a history of the changing views of subject matter [...]. One could go further and say that the history of design history is a record of the design historians’ views regarding what they conceive to be the subject matter of design” (Buchanan, 1992, p. 19). Thus, design history has changed from an emphasis on creative geniuses, as in the Pevserian conception, to a focus on objects and their contexts (e.g. as “objects of desire” as proposed by Forty, 2005) and on design as an agent in the social construction of meaning. Increasingly, the complex context of design has come into view, and the debates have revolved around questions of production, mediation, and consumption, as stated above.

In this way, much recent design history looks at the agency of design in terms of a dialectics of design objects and their context; exemplary in this context is Gert Selle’s brief design history *Design im Alltag. Vom Thonetstuhl zum Mikrochip* (2007), where Selle, based on a selection of concrete design objects (highly profiled as well as more anonymous examples), looks at design as a phenomenon of both visible and invisible properties of agency and cultural meaning which must be comprehended:

“Out of objects long only debated within the perspective of art history, comes a problem of perception, research and interpretation in cultural studies. The gaze that is originally focused on the visible will today have to comprehend the complex structure of the invisible conditions, ends and effects of a form” (Selle, 2007, p. 11).

For example, Selle demonstrates how an anonymous design, a white sheet of paper, is material but also contains invisible, immaterial design aspects, ranging from its conception to its ways of structuring its own use and of introducing and educating a culture of literacy. The agency of design no longer hinges only on the object but also on its evocation of meaning and effect.

Interestingly, it often seems difficult for the *discipline* of design history to go beyond the concrete objects, that is, to incorporate newer design types such as interaction design, corporate design, branding, service design, and conceptual design. It may seem that some of the art history heritage, reflected in the drive to detect some kind of (stylistic) development in the objects, continues to affect design history: If one has to go beyond the object, the stricter discipline of design history must be left behind and perhaps reframed and renamed, e.g. as Design Culture (cf. Julier 2008). Nevertheless, what remains as an important heritage of design history is its ability to reflect design: to look not only at changing agencies but also at the different conceptions of agency in design.

Cultural analysis: asking about relevant contexts

As complexity (or, rather, the *perceived* complexity) in design has increased, a series of attempts have been made to describe design analytically in its relation to and dialogue with its surroundings. In a tentative, non-unifying way, I propose *cultural analysis* as a label for this interest in the context of design; however, it should be noted that this entry to investigating and understanding design has many origins and methodological approaches. First, much cultural analysis does not have design as its prime subject but is instead interested in broad cultural phenomena such as subculture, mass-consumption and cultural representation (cf. Hall, 1997; Hebdige, 1979). Much cultural analysis speaks primarily about products and objects, while the topic of 'design' as a specific mode of objects is addressed as a secondary topic of interest.

Further, much cultural analysis derives from various sociologically informed traditions such as the British discipline of Cultural Studies (Hall and Hebdige) or studies in Material Culture as ways of looking at how social meaning evolves, not only in discourse but also through objects and people's engagement with them (cf. Attfield, 2000; Dant, 1999; Miller, 1987). Regardless of origin and scope, these cultural approaches are relevant for a humanist, interpretive engagement with design. They either are – or may, in a further reflection, be made – reflective of design, what design is, and the contexts of design.

Examples are legion; I will point to three different but overlapping approaches: Dick Hebdige's investigation of parameters of production, mediation, and consumption in relation to the Italian motor scooter, Paul du Gay et al.'s analysis of the Sony Walkman, and Guy Julier's concept of design culture. They can all be related to a tradition of social sciences (which they also see themselves in relation to), as they investigate elements of the social world. However, I will also embed them in the context of the humanities due to their central element of *interpretation* in an attempt to grasp the various contexts of design.

1) The cornerstone in Dick Hebdige's investigation of the Italian motor scooter is the ambition to create a comprehensive cultural analysis of specific objects (which, in addition, have a relation to subculture). His question is how we can "hope to provide a comprehensive and unified account of all the multiple values and meanings which accumulate around a single object over time, the different symbolic and instrumental functions it can serve for different groups of users separated by geographical, temporal and cultural location" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 80). His answer is that it can be done by separating out different moment of the analysis in production, mediation, and consumption. In Hebdige's view, these three moments have "cultural significance" (p. 81) in relation to use, meaning, and valuation of the objects in focus. In this analysis, Hebdige is not interested in design as such, but he continuously reflects on the role that the actual design of the objects play in the various contexts of production, mediation, and consumption that affect the object.

2) While Hebdige proposes a framework for understanding a concrete phenomenon in Western societies (specifically why the sub-cultural group the Mods used Italian scooters in their sub-cultural positioning – what was the meaning potential in the objects that the Mods were able to relate to?), the methodological case study *Doing Cultural Studies. The Story of the Sony Walkman* (du Gay et al., 1997), takes the ambition of cultural analysis further. It introduces the notion of a whole “circuit of culture” of production, consumption, representation, identity, and regulation, each affecting the other, and all of them contributing to the overall production of cultural meaning. A basic assumption is that products in themselves do not contain a meaning, but that meaning is being created through the interaction and intersection of the different elements of the cultural circuit and thus, in this process, attributed to the product. By being inserted into the circuit of culture – and investigated through its elements – the product becomes a “medium of modern culture” and a “cultural artefact” (p. 2) with symbolic meaning. Thus, in the scope of this analysis, which deals mainly with cultural meaning and addresses design as a secondary topic, to design is to inscribe products with cultural meaning:

“So, in addition to creating artefacts with a specific function, designers are also in the game of making those artefacts meaningful. In other words, design produces meaning through encoding artefacts with symbolic significance; it gives functional artefacts a symbolic form” (p. 62).

The question of cultural meaning in products is not just relevant in relation to consumption (where people can inscribe new meanings in things and relate them to their various social contexts), but even more in relation to production, where the big question is how to design products with a high or specific degree of encoded, cultural meaning based on the constituents of the cultural processes that surround and attribute meaning to design.

3) Design and the culture in and of design constitute the prime focus of Guy Julier’s approach in *The Culture of Design* (Julier, 2008). Here, he introduces the concept of design culture, both as an object for study and as a discipline (written with capitals, Design Culture). In a recent formulation, “Design Culture” is seen as “the study of how design functions in all its manifestations economically, politically, socially and culturally” (Julier, 2013). In the cultural formulation of design, Julier looks, on the one hand, at the actual design and its ‘objects’, ‘spaces,’ and ‘images,’ while considering, on the other hand, contextual factors such as ‘production’, ‘designer,’ and ‘consumption.’ Thus, he states that it “is the interaction and intersection of these domains and their interactions with designed artefacts that is of prime interest to the study of design culture” (Julier, 2008, p. 13). Interestingly, Julier sees the designer as a contextual factor of design; this is not because the designer is not inherent to design, but because there is a series of ideologies and value systems surrounding designers and design.

With his notion of design culture, Julier creates a dual framework of examining design and its determining contexts and discourses. In sum, as an “object of study,” design culture “includes both the material and immaterial aspects of everyday life. On one level it is articulated through images, words, forms and spaces. But at another it engages discourses, actions, beliefs, structures and relationships” (Julier, 2008, p. 7). In this dual perspective lies a central interpretive task of defining meaningful contexts for design while also relating these contexts to actual objects of design.

So, the question that these approaches raise is, What are the relevant contexts for design, how are they formulated and stated, and how do they affect the understanding and investigation of actual design objects and design solutions? How is design created as cultural objects or entities of meaning – and how are they received and appropriated as such? What role do production and designers play for consumption, and, vice versa, how do processes of consumption affect production? A brief example may serve as illustration.



Figure 2: fritz-kola ad, 2013.

The German, Hamburg-based soft drink company fritz-kola may illustrate how cultural meaning enters concerns of design, and how what is conceived as design is subject to change (figure 2). On a fast-moving consumer good market with a high degree of differentiation, the company aims at offering a product that defines itself through strong values due to its high content of caffeine: “for long nights” (*für lange Nächte*) in relation to sexual situations, and stating that “doing coke is so 80s” (*koxsen ist achtziger*). Further, fritz-kola has aimed at a subversive branding strategy to become a counter-brand in relation to the market-leading brands. In its market relations, fritz-kola aims not to reflect an existing cultural practice but to create a new practice of being simultaneously cool and subversive. Thus, the company seeks to define the cultural contexts that should accompany its products (see Folkmann & Lorentzen 2014). Thus, a dual strategy evolves in relation to the cultural contexts of the products: On the one hand, the company targets existing groups on the market, and on the other hand, it seeks to create a new perception of the market in a strategy of “refining and controlling the flows and patterns of meaning which pass from production to consumption” (Julier, 2008, p. 73).

Ultimately, the frame of the cultural context is not given but constructed, and as such it must be investigated through interpretive analysis.

Design philosophy: asking for meaning constituents

Design philosophy is a fairly new branch of design theory, even if philosophical approaches to design have been a part of the field for some 20 years; here, the texts by Richard Buchanan mark an important starting point. In my conception, design philosophy deals with fundamental questions of what design is, what its constituents are, and what it is for. Since the beginning of the 2000s, a variety of approaches have contributed to the discussion about design; it has been raised through perspectives of analytical philosophy (Galle, 2008, 2011), the philosophy of technology (Verbeek, 2005; Vermaas et al., 2009), through a philosophical investigation of use and action in relation to design and material culture (Dorschel, 2003; Preston, 2012), and through the theory of phenomenology addressing questions of experience, where design is seen a vehicle for enabling, creating, and mediating conditions of experience (Folkmann, 2013; Vial, 2010). Further, the publication of the journal *Design Philosophy Papers* (2003-) may be seen in this context.

I will point out three parts of design philosophy that all raise important questions about meaning constituents in design: *aesthetics* (as a question of sensual-conceptual meaning components in design), *ontology* (what design is – and what it is as agency), and *phenomenology* (the question of design creates the constituents of human experience).

1) Aesthetics is an aspect of design that has long been claimed to constitute a central part of design but which has not been fully theorized. Only recently have we seen the “first full treatment of design in the field of philosophical aesthetics” with the release of the book *The Aesthetics of Design* (Forsey, 2013). Roughly put, the question of aesthetics can be addressed from two points of view: philosophy and design. Forsey’s book is an example of the first approach; philosophers have made the move from a general concept of philosophical aesthetics towards the field of design, which has been seen as a quasi-artistic medium employing artistic means but also as a medium different from art, e.g. in its basic element of functionality (see Steinbrenner & Nida-Rümelin, 2010). The second approach has been more tentative, perhaps due to the differences in discourse between the field of design (and design practice) and philosophical aesthetics. But with a glance to newer aesthetic theory (Böhme, 2001 & 2013; Shusterman, 2000; Seel, 2000 & 2007), I will point to the aspect of sensual and conceptual meaning components in design as central for a ‘design aesthetics’ that may illuminate the sensually effective elements of design (the Greek *aisthetá* meaning “that which can be sensed”), how design objects relate to their idea or meaning content (which is a theme in art-oriented aesthetic theory, e.g. Adorno, 1970), and, ultimately, how sensual and conceptual meaning content relate to one another (cf. Folkmann, 2010).

2) Next, in relation to the question of the ontology of design, I will point primarily to the wide scope of the question, which goes to the core of what design is. The question may address the role of design (as method, objects, and phenomenon) in the modern world. On this point, the role of the *artificial* has played a prominent role in the debate, from Herbert Simon’s statements about design as the science of the artificial (Simon, 1996) to Buchanan’s labeling of design as a “liberal art of technological culture” that creates new modes of the artificial in human experience (see above) or Bruno Latour’s claim that “being is design”. In Latour’s argument, design is “nothing foundational,” and in fact, it is quite the opposite: Design changes and remediates what exists, which also enables it to enter the “inner definitions of things” and make them open to improvement and change (Latour, 2008). To follow Latour, design gives shape to human existence through environments and artificiality in “everything from chairs to climates”; thus his Heideggerian phrase in German, *Dasein ist design*, being is design. At the same time, to him, design is less a “matter of fact” than a “matter of concern,” where the objects of design are open to interpretation and open in meaning and, hence, open to new potential directions of meaning. With this, Latour points to an apparent paradox: Design is a medium for an immanent transcendence in the sense that it can be a medium of and a search for change and the transcending element of the possible without leaving the immanent sphere of reality.

Hence, a reflection of design ontology does not just address question of objects or things or the fundamental question of what design is; it also examines how design constitutes a mode of reality that is capable of affecting reality and changing our perception of it.

3) Finally, design phenomenology may designate an approach to design with the focus on how design, in its many types appearance and its creation of the tactile and visual surfaces of the modern world, affects and structures experience. In relation to this, a versatile interest in the role of objects has emerged in the recent years; Actor-Network Theory has claimed objects to possess active agency in networks with humans, e.g. in guiding behavior (cf. Latour, 2005), and Material Culture Studies have pointed to the steering role of the “material environment” with regard to the “development of social forms”

(Dant 1999, p. 12). These positions see themselves as part of the social sciences; in my view, the question of the nature of experience plays a pivotal role for the humanities, regardless which scientific traditions is providing the answers. Further, in a reversal of the interest in the human subject in classic phenomenology, the philosopher Peter-Paul Verbeek speaks of *post-phenomenology* as a way of pointing to and acknowledging the role of the object in shaping the conditions of experience: “Things – and in our current culture especially technological artifacts – mediate how human beings are present in their world and how the world is present to them [...]” (Verbeek, 2005, p. 235).

Still, we can look at the impact of design on the conditions of experience: We can look at how we design things, and how we are designed by the things we design. This dual perspective is suggested by Prasad Boradkar when he states that the title of his book *Designing Things* “refers to a reciprocity of agency and an ambiguity of design’s locus of action. People and things configure each other” (Boradkar, 2010, p. 4). Further, the philosopher Stéphane Vial has proposed that we examine the effects of design in the context of experience and thus look at design as more of an *event* than a being, more of an *impact* than a thing, and more of an *incidence* than a property (Vial, 2010, p. 55-56). The effects of design contribute to the creation of the space of experience, which is mediated and structured by the actual objects of design. In his recent book *L’être et l’écran*, ‘being and the screen’, Vial looks at the changes in our structures of perception due to new digital media that, e.g., offer spaces of virtual perception (Vial, 2013).

To apply a phenomenological approach to design is to focus at the dual question of how design, as a medium of meaning formation, both relates to and possibly changes the constituents of experience.

Conclusion

To be informed about the questions in design and the debates that may arise from these questions also implies knowing how these questions can be framed. In this paper, the proposal has been that we can benefit from the framework of the humanities as we formulate questions regarding agency, contexts, and meaning constituents and thus ask questions about the what, how, and why of design.

In addition, an interpretive framework such as this one may be employed in design criticism with the ambition of looking at the aims and scope of design. Often, design is regarded optimistically as a device of progression for the common good; on this point, Herbert Simon lurks in the background with his notion of design as a means of devising “courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (Simon 1996, 111). This view of design is, however, not non-biased but ultimately reflects a Modernist ideology of progression. On this point, approaches from the humanities offer tools for casting a critical perspective on design, also on the Modernist ideology of progression.

Thus, our focus should not be only to ask *what* the questions of design might be; instead we should also critically *reflect the foundational ground of the questions* that it seems urgent to search for formulations for in our present time and, ultimately, to find possible answers for.

References

Adorno, T. W. (1970). *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Atfield, J. (2000). *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg.

- Böhme, G. (2001). *Asthetik. Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- Böhme, G. (2013). *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Boradkar, P. (2010). *Designing Things: A Critical Introduction to the Culture of Objects*. Oxford: Berg.
- Buchanan, R. (1992). Wicked Problems in Design Thinking. *Design Issues* 8(2), 5-21.
- Buchanan, R. (1995). Rhetoric, Humanism, and Design. In Buchanan, R. & V. Margolin, *Discovering Design: Explorations in Design Studies* (pp. 23-68). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dant, T. (1999). *Material Culture in the Social World*. Birmingham: OUP.
- Dorschel, A. (2003). *Gestaltung—Zur Ästhetik des Brauchbaren*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- du Gay, Paul et al. (1997). *Doing Cultural Studies. The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage.
- Fallan, K. (2010). *Design History. Understanding Theory and Method*. Oxford: Berg.
- Fallan, K. (2013). De-tooling Design History: To What Purpose and for Whom Do We Write? *Design and Culture* 5(1), 13-19.
- Folkmann, M.N. (2010). Evaluating Aesthetics in Design. A Phenomenological Approach. *Design Issues* 26(1), 40–53.
- Folkmann, M.N. (2013). *The Aesthetics of Imagination in Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Folkmann, M.N. & Lorentzen, C.R. (2014). *Schwarz ist cool. Rapport om det hamborgske colamærke fritz-kola i designkulturel belysning*. http://www.sdu.dk/~media/Files/Om_SDU/Institutter/ldk/Forskningsprogram/fritzkolarapport.pdf (accessed 2014-03-17).
- Forsey, J. (2013). *The Aesthetics of Design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Forty, A. (2005). *Objects of Desire. Design and Society since 1750*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Fry, T. (1988). *Design History Australia*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- Gadamer, H-G. (1960). *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Galle, P. (2008). Candidate Worldviews for Design Theory. *Design Studies* 29(3), 267-303.
- Galle, P. (2011). Foundational and Instrumental Design Theory. *Design Issues* 27(4), 81-94.

- Hall, S. (ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge.
- Hebdige, D. (1994). Object as Image: the Italian Scooter Cycle. In *Hiding in the Light* (pp. 44-115). London: Routledge.
- Hörisch, J. (1998). *Die Wut des Verstehens*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Hörisch, J. (2009). *Bedeutsamkeit*. Munich: Hanser.
- Joost, G. & Scheuermann, A. (eds.) (2008). *Design als Rhetorik: Grundlagen, Positionen, Fallstudien*. Basel: Birkhäuser.
- Julier, G. (2008). *The Culture of Design*. London: Sage.
- Julier, G. (2013). <http://designculturekolding.org/2013/10/01/design-culture-and-discourse/> (accessed 2013-01-22)
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (2008). A Cautious Promethea? A Few Steps towards a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk). Keynote lecture for the Networks of Design meeting of the Design History Society, Falmouth, Cornwall, September 3. <http://urbanstudiesprogram.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/latour-20081.pdf>.
- Lees-Maffei, G. (2009). The Production-Consumption-Mediation Paradigm. *Journal of Design History* 22(4), 351-376.
- Margolin, V. (1995). Design History or Design Studies: Subject Matter and Methods. *Design Issues* 11(1), 4-15.
- Mattozzi, A. (2010). A Model for the Semiotic Analysis of Objects. In Vihma, S (ed.), *Design Semiotics in Use* (pp. 40-68). Helsinki: Aalto University.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pevsner, N. (1991). *Pioneers of modern design*. Harmondsworth.
- Ricoeur, P. (1975). La fonction herméneutique de la distanciation. In Bovon, F. & Rouiller, G., *Exegesis* (pp. 201-215). Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé.
- Preston, B. (2012). *A Philosophy of Material Culture: Action, Function, and Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Rooden, T. et al. (2011). Time Travel: A Method for Playful Futureoriented User Research. In *Proceedings of Nordes '11: Fourth Nordic Design Research Conference*, May 29–31, School of Art and Design, Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland (pp. 288-292).
- Seel, M. (2000). *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*. Munich: Hanser.
- Seel, M. (2007). *Die Macht der Erscheinung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Selle, G. (2007). *Design im Alltag. Vom Thonetstuhl zum Mikrochip*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Shusterman, R. (2000). *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Simon, H. (1996). *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Steinbrenner, J. (2010). Wann ist Design? Design zwischen Funktion und Kunst. In Steinbrenner, J. & Nida-Rümelin, J. (eds.), *Ästhetische Werte und Design* (pp. 11-29). Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.

Steinbrenner, J. & Nida-Rümelin, J. (eds.) (2010). *Ästhetische Werte und Design*. Hatje Cantz.

Verbeek, P.-P. (2005). *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Vermaas, P. E., et al. (eds.) (2009). *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*. London: Springer.

Vial, S. (2010). *Court traité du design*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Vial, S. (2013). *L'être et l'écran*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Walker, J. A. (1989). *Design History and the History of Design*. London: Pluto Press.

Mads Nygaard Folkmann

Associate Professor in Design Culture, Design Theory and Design History at the Department of Design and Communication, The University of Southern Denmark in Kolding, Denmark. His main field of research is aesthetics, design theory, cultural analysis of design, and the role of imagination and the imaginary in design. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and has published on topics in design, culture and literature.