

Ideological Design

Spring 2002

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Office Hours: I'm available on Tuesdays from 2-3, Wednesdays from 2-3, and Thursdays from 1-2—but because I have no office space to call my own, I'm not localized in any one place. Therefore, I ask that you please inform me in advance—either by email (24 hours in advance) or before or after class—if you'd like to set a time and place to meet.

The designed environment is a social text. Encoded or written—or built, wired, or woven—into our buildings and furniture and appliances and clothing are the ideas and values of the culture that created them. Contemporary American architects, landscapers, and industrial designers are in the process of creating *our* material history—a history to be read decades, even centuries, from now and taken as an indication of what we, in early 21st-century America, did and thought about and valued. In this course we will examine our material landscape and the physical objects within that landscape as *texts*, as objects imbued with ideology. We will begin by looking at various theories of *ideology* and considering how designs might carry particular ideologies. Then, for the remainder of the course, we will examine various classes of environments and objects in order to read, or decode, their built-in ideologies. This course will provide you with the tools you need to critically analyze the values and ideas embodied in your material environment. Ideally, you will also come to appreciate, and learn how to talk about, the ideological—and perhaps even ethical and moral—dimensions of your own design practice.

Required Texts: A course reader will be available at **East Side Copy**, 15 East 13th St. If you prefer, you may ask to have the readings bound into two booklets.

Course Schedule:

Readings listed are those that will be discussed in class on that day.

1/28 **Introductions** **Foundations**

What is ideology?

What is design?

Design as Rhetoric

Reading (in class): Bierut, Michael, "Why Graphic Designers Can't Think" In Bierut, et. al., *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design*, 1994. (3 pp.)

What is material culture?

What is cultural geography?

2/04 Class begins at **1:00** today.
Before class, you should have visited the new **Prada** store at 575 Broadway.

Marx and Ideology **Commodity Fetishism** **Designing the Consumer Experience**

Muschamp, Herbert, "Forget the Shoes, Prada's New Store Stocks Ideas," *New York Times*, December 16, 2001.

Sorkin, Michael, "Riff on Rem," *Architectural Record*, January 2001. (2 pp.)

Brown, Janelle, "High-concept Haute Couture," *Salon.com*, June 25, 2001.

Moyer, Michael, "Tech Style," *Popular Science*, October 30, 2001.

Sullivan, Jenny, "Boosting Business," *I.D.*, February 2002. (1 pg.)

"The Art of Shopping," *Harper's Bazaar*, December 2000.

Marx, Karl, "The Two Factors of a Commodity: Use-Value and Value" and "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" In *Capital, Vol. 1*. (18 pp.)**

Strinati, Dominic, "The Theory of Commodity Fetishism" In *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. (3 pp.)

Kurson, Ken, "The Power of Plastic," *I.D.*, November 1999. (1 pg.)

- *What ideologies are inherent in the concept of "credit" and its embodiment in the credit card?*

**Challenging—May need to read twice!

2/11 **Conspicuous Consumption & Collection**

Veblen, Thorstein, "Conspicuous Consumption" In *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899. (25 pp.)**

Ewen, Stuart, "Form Follows Waste" In *All-Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*, 1988. (13 pp.)

Barber, Bernard & Lyle S. Lobel, "'Fashion' in Women's Clothes and the American Social System," *Social Forces* 31:2, December 1952. (8 pp.)

Spindler, Amy M., "Amy M. Spindler on Style," *New York Times*, November 11, 2001.

Barcott, Bruce, "Rising Incomes, Rising Tastes: Why the Silicon Gold Rush Has Forever Altered What We Buy and Why," *Seattle Weekly*, July 29-August 4, 1999.

Casey, Susan, "The \$70 Million Toothbrush," *Business 2.0*, June 2000. (3 pp.)

Vanderbilt, Tom, "Brush With Greatness" (toothbrushes), *I.D.*, May 1999. (3 pp.)

Milgrom, Melissa, "Disposability" (the diaper), *I.D.*, November 1999. (1 pg.)

Benjamin, Walter, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting" In *Illuminations*. (9 pp.)

Melchionne, Kevin, "Collecting as an Art," *Philosophy and Literature* 23:1, 1999. (5 pp.)

**Challenging

STUDENT PRESENTERS:

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2/18 **No Class—President's Day**

2/25 Privacy and Publicity

The Project on Disney, "Public Use/Private State" In *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World*, 1995. (18 pp.)

Davis, Mike, "Fortress L. A." In *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles*, 1990. (30 pp.)

- *What values of privacy and publicity are "built into" the following places and things?*

The Museum of Modern Art, *The Un-Private House*, 1999: Michael Bos' Glass House @ 2°, Shigeru Ban's Curtain Wall House, Koolhaas/OMA's Maison à Bordeaux, and Joel Sanders' House for a Bachelor.

Arieff, Allison, "Well, Not Quite," *Dwell*, October 2000. (1 pg.)

Albrecht, et. al., *Design Culture Now: National Design Triennial*, 2000: Palo Alto Products' Palms and Motorola's Talkabout and Wireless Digital Communicator

Hall, Peter, "Palmistry," *I.D.*, May 1999. (2 pp.)

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3/4 Class Begins at **1:00** Today
By today, you should have visited the Russel Wright exhibit at the **Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum**. Please bring to class your signed & dated ticket as proof of your attendance.

Russel Wright: Domestic Ideologies

Excerpts from Wright, Mary & Russel Wright, "Home, Sweet Home," "Room to Relax," and "The Vanishing Dining Room" In *Guide to Easier Living*, 1950. (51 pp.)

Viladas, Pilar, "Set for Life," *The New York Times Magazine, Style & Entertaining*, Part 2, Fall 2001. (1 pg.)

Makovsky, Paul, "The Wright Idea," *Metropolis*, December 2001. (2 pp.)

Glueck, Grace, "The Man Who Was Martha Stewart Back Before She Was," *Salon.com*, December 7, 2001. (3 pp.)

3/11 **Clay to Plastic, Earthenware to Tupperware, and a Shift in Values**

Deetz, James, "All the Earthenware Plain and Flowered" In *In Small Things Forgotten*, 1977. (22 pp.)

Barthes, Roland, "Ornamental Cookery" In *Mythologies*, 1957. (3 pp.)

Blaszczyk, Regina Lee, "From Invention to Metaphor: Plastics and American Culture" [Book Review], *American Quarterly* 49:3, 1997. (6 pp.)

Barthes, Roland, "Plastic" In *Mythologies*, 1957. (3 pp.)

Clark, Allison J., "A Wealth of Wishes and a Galaxy of Gifts" and "Conclusion" In *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America*, 1999. (34 pp.)

Vanderbilt, Tom, "It's a Wrap" (plastic wrap), *I.D.*, November 1999. (1 pg.)

Food Design & Ideologies of Consumption

Pearlman, Chee, "Editor's Note: Food for Thought," *I.D.*, September-October 1998. (1 pg.)

Hall, Peter, "Eat Me" ("snackitecture"), *I.D.*, September-October 1998. (1 pg.)

Kabat, Jennifer, "High Flying Food" (airplane food), *I.D.*, September-October 1998. (1 pg.)

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3/18 Better Living: The Mechanics and Values of Domestic Productivity; Housewife Politics

Excerpts from Lupton, Ellen, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office*, 1993. (47 pp. [mostly pictures!])

Hall, Peter, "The Kitchen Think" (smart appliances), *I.D.*, May 2000. (3 pp.)

Busch, Akiko, "Infopliance Nightmare" (smart appliances), *Metropolis*, July 2000. (2 pp.)

Excerpts from Lupton, Ellen & J. Abbott Miller, *The Bathroom, The Kitchen and the Aesthetics of Waste: A Process of Elimination*, 1992. (31 pp. [again, mostly pictures])

Barthes, Roland, "Soap-powders and Detergents" In *Mythologies*, 1957. (3 pp.)

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3/25 No Class—Spring Break

4/01 Gendered Designs & Ideologies

Final Design Project Proposals Due
Discuss Proposals In Class

Betsky, Aaron, "Introduction: The Man-made World" In *Building Sex: Men, Women, Architecture, and the Construction of Sexuality*, 1995. (9 pp.)

Walker, Lynn, "Women and Architecture" In Rendell, et. al., Eds., *Gender Space Architecture*, 2000. (15 pp.)

Franck, Karen A., "A Feminist Approach to Architecture: Acknowledging Women's Ways of Knowing" In Rendell, et. al., Eds., *Gender Space Architecture*, 2000. (10 pp.)

Zimmerman, Jan, "Technology and the Future of Women: Haven't We Met Somewhere Before?" In Joan Rothschild, Ed., *Women, Technology and Innovation*, 1982. (11 pp.)

Dillon, David, "Women's Museum, Fair Park, Dallas, Texas," *Architectural Record*, November 2001. (2 pp.)

- *What feminine values are built into this structure?*

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4/08 **Office Politics: The Ideologies of Labor Inherent in Workplace Design**
Field Trip to Workspace2000, 122 East 38th St. (Date is still tentative)

Excerpts from Zuboff, Shoshanna, "Office Technology as Exile and Integration" In *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power*, 1984. (39 pp.)

Herman Miller, Inc., "Collaborative Settings" and "Office Environments" [White Papers], 2001.

- *What "ideologies of labor" are built into the following designs?*

Albrecht, et. al., *Design Culture Now: National Design Triennial*, 2000: Haworth's Office Explorations and Ayse Birsel's Resolve office system.

Barreneche, Raul, "Work is Where You Are," *Interiors*, April 2001. (3 pp.)

Vienne, Véronique, "Sugar and Noise" (the "loud" office aesthetic), *Metropolis*, July 2000. (6 pp.)

Hall, Peter, "Pushing It" (the pushbutton), *I.D.*, November 1999. (3 pp.)

4/15 **Empire**
Cultural Imperialism
The International Style

Excerpts from Tomlinson, John, "The Discourse of Cultural Imperialism" In *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*, 1991. (19 pp.)

Excerpts from Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, 1995 (originally published 1932). (78 pp. [large print])

Excerpt from Blake, Peter, *No Place Like Utopia: Modern Architecture and the Company We Keep*, 1993. (5 pp.)

STUDENT PRESENTERS:

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4/22 Globalized Design as an Ideological Project

Sassen, Saskia, "The Global City: Introducing a Concept and its History" In Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter, Eds., *Mutations*, 2001. (10 pp.)

Harvey, David, "Time-Space Compression and the Postmodern Condition" In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990. (24 pp.)**

Glancey, Jonathan, "Hilton Saw His Hotels as Envoys of Capitalism," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 6, 2001. (3 pp.)

Ward, Jacob, "Global Arches," *Architecture*, December 2000. (3 pp.)

**Challenging

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4/29 **NO CLASS:** Instead—**Individual Meetings** to Discuss Final Projects

5/06 **Playthings and the Ideals of Childhood**

Cross, Gary, "Their Toys and Ours" and "Modern Childhood, Modern Toys" in *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*, 1997. (42 pp.)

Owen, David. "Where Toys Come From," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1986. (17 pp.)

"What's It All About, Barbie?" *Salon.com*, November 26, 1997. (3 pp.)

Barthes, Roland, "Toys" In *Mythologies*, 1957. (3 pp.)

Taute, Michelle, "Toy Story" (brief history of toys), *I.D.*, April 2001. (10 pp. [mostly pictures!])

Caniglia, Julie, "Material World" (the Sims), *I.D.*, October 2000. (3 pp.)

Shreve, Jenn, "Listen Reader," *I.D.*, June 2001. (1 pg.)
Playthings Constructing Adulthood

Shulman, Ken, "Not Your Grandmother's Old Age," *Metropolis*, December 2001. (6 pp.)

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5/13 **Informal Presentations & Wrap-Up**

Lupton, Ellen & Abbott Miller, "Low and High: Design in Everyday Life" and "Graphic Design in America" In *Design Writing Research: Writing on Graphic Design*, 1996. (10 pp.)

Course Requirements:

- 20% **Attendance and Participation:** Because this course is designed as a seminar, your attendance and thoughtful participation are integral to its success. You will be permitted two excused absences. Each additional absence will impact your attendance score. Students with more than five absences will not pass the course. Please be aware that if you should miss class on the day of your scheduled presentation, you will not be permitted to reschedule—unless you have made prior arrangements with another student to swap presentation dates. Note also that every two late entrances count as an absence. Finally, please make sure to turn off cell phones and all other potentially disruptive electronic devices before entering the classroom.
- 20% **Prompted Writings:** Throughout the semester you will complete a total of ten prompted writing exercises at the beginning of class. These exercises are designed, first, to allow *you* to begin thinking about and synthesizing the readings before we engage in discussion and, second, to allow *me* to make certain that you have completed the readings. These prompted writings will not be graded; you will receive full credit if you complete all ten, and if all ten demonstrate a critical engagement (or at least an *attempt* at critical engagement) of the assigned readings. If you consistently arrive late, you will not be able to satisfactorily complete the exercises. You will be permitted to substitute for each of your two lowest scores a one-page synopsis of the assigned readings (the same readings addressed in the prompted writing you wish to replace).
- 30% **Presentation and Short Paper:** Each of you will be asked to serve as a representative of your chosen design specialization by delivering one five-minute in-class presentation. In that presentation, you will share with the class an *ideological analysis* of a particular design project or designer, a body of work, etc., within *your* design field that is relevant to the readings and discussion topics for that particular day. You must clear your proposed topic with me at least *one week* before you are scheduled to present. On the day of your presentation, you will also submit a three-page paper on the topic you've chosen to discuss. This project will require that you consult and cite at least two credible sources (not personal websites!) aside from those that we're reading for the class. Make sure to properly cite sources and edit and proofread your paper before submitting it. The presentation will constitute 10% of your score, and the paper, 20%. Grammar and spelling *do* count!
- 30% **Final Design Analysis Project:** You will choose from your existing design portfolio a project that exhibits or illustrates the themes, ideas, concepts, etc., we have addressed throughout the course. In an eight- to ten-page paper, you will address how your project incorporates or engages these ideologies and values. If, however, your portfolio does not include an ideologically-driven design, you may discuss why a particular design does *not* engage any ideology or set of values, and propose how that design might be revised so that it *can* be made "ideological." Outside research is encouraged. You must properly cite all texts referenced—including those that we have read in the course. Again, grammar and spelling will impact your final score.

This project will provide you with invaluable practice in articulating your design philosophies and concepts—both, communication skills that are greatly important, yet regrettably lacking, in professional practice. You will be required to present an outline and at least *five* pages of a rough draft of your final paper in an individual conference during the week of April 29.

Grades:

- A Work of exceptional quality that often goes beyond the stated goals of the course.
- A- Work of very high quality.
- B+ Work of high quality that indicates substantially higher than average abilities.
- B Very good work that satisfies the goals of the course.
- B- Good work.
- C+ Average work that indicates an understanding of the course material.
- C Adequate work; passable.

- C- Passing work but below good academic standing.
- D Below average work that indicates that the student does not fully understand the assignment; probation level; passing for credit.
- F Failure; no credit

Plagiarism—presenting someone else’s work as your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally—is academically dishonest and unacceptable. Plagiarism and cheating of any form are grounds for failing the course and/or immediate dismissal from Parsons. All ideas, images, clips, etc., “borrowed”; all passages paraphrased and all text copied verbatim from another’s work must be cited properly. If you have questions about what to cite or how to properly cite sources, please refer to an appropriate style guide—e.g., MLA or APA—or ask me. There is also a tip sheet available through the Office of Academic Advising.