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DESIGN
ANTHRO
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ALISON J. CLARKE (ED.)

OBJECT CULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Edition Angewandte
Book Series of the University of Applied Arts Vienna
Edited by Gerald Bast, Rector

edition: **angewandte**

SpringerWienNewYork

From designers we ask for a designed world that has meaning beyond the resolution of purely functional needs, one that also has poetry, communicates subtly something that makes sense, not just by fitting in with the culture and environment in which it lives, but by adding a new dimension to it.

JANE FULTON SURI

Poetic Observation:
What Designers Make of What They See.

design and observation
What does it mean to bring a design sensibility to looking, noticing, and learning about people, places, and things in the world? This essay is about the importance of ensuring that design teams make time and space for designers to explore, to see, and otherwise sense the world *in their own way*, without the limitation of adhering strictly to some formal process or plan of 'research'. It begins to explore answers to the question: What *is* their own way?

Design and innovation are creative endeavors that defy entirely rational and linear processes. Human intelligence, skill, and leaps of imagination are required to grapple with multiple variables and uncertainties to make future sense. And, as designers, we care about this future sense in more than a pragmatic way; we care also about its poetry.

Social science perspective

Twenty years ago, it was rare for designers to even talk with human and social scientists, never mind to employ their theories and methods. These days, it's not unusual to find psychologists and anthropologists among designers, sharing and adapting methods, integrating insights, generating and evolving ideas and implementing them. Many progressive organizations, ranging from Nokia to Nestlé to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have embraced human-centered design research in addressing business and social issues.

As a result, the practice of observing and interviewing people in their natural habitats has become widely established in design. So much so that nowadays it is the social sciences – with their focus on people, context, behavior, and subsequent insight about motivation and meaning – that largely dominate the conversation about how observation informs and inspires design. Known in business circles as 'ethnographic-style research', this practice of observation has become familiar to buyers of design services as a valuable form of 'consumer insight'.

As *Business Week* noted in 'The Science of Desire', 5 June 2006: "Now, as more and more businesses re-orient themselves to serve the consumer, ethnography has entered primetime [...] it provides a richer understanding of consumers than does traditional research [...] closely observing people where they live and work, say executives, allows companies to zero in on their customers' unarticulated desires."

Certainly ethnographic-style observation can provide inspiration and grounding for innovation and design. It increases our confidence that ideas will be culturally relevant, respond to real needs, and hence be more likely to have the desired social or market impact.

But for design and designers there's much more to observation than that.¹ As we shall see, successful designers are keenly sensitive to particular aspects of what's going on around them, and these observations inform and inspire their work, often in subtle ways.

Now feels like a critical moment. As businesses and organizations increasingly embrace design thinking and human-centered approaches, it feels important to understand more about how observation really works in design. Am I arguing that a human/consumer-oriented focus isn't important? Far from it. But there are other equally important, less celebrated, and less-obviously-logical ways that

¹ The mirror image for anthropologists is that there's much more to ethnography than looking at people in context to provide insight about their needs and desires.

observation contributes to design. Being less predictable, less direct, and more subtle, there's a risk that the opportunity for some kinds of observation will be neglected in the planning and conduct of design programs and in our appreciation of designers.

Myriad ways to look and see

At the outset of many projects we don't even know what we need to know or what we're looking for. We know only that we need to fulfill our promise to find or give appropriate shape to opportunities – whether that's for product, service, space, strategy, media, or organization. Even so, design teams often find themselves pressed to create and follow a detailed plan for research and exploration. There's no doubt that design projects benefit from constraints, including constraints on the time to explore, to hone intuitions, to seek inspiration. But following too tight a prescription for exploration can be counterproductive.

One can make good bets about fruitful activities: Let's map the competition, explore metaphors, interview extreme users, consider connotations of the brand, examine cultural context, visit the factory and saleroom, observe production processes. But these activities, often built into 'the design process', are valuable to the extent that they inform and inspire the imagination of designers. Designers need to interpret what they see (and otherwise sense) in ways that will lead to design outcomes. They need to be able to 'make something' of their observations, whether design strategies, principles, or concepts relevant to the project brief.

Interpreting what we see is both a personal and a social process. In our own individual ways, all of us pay attention to what's meaningful and interesting to us. While we might guess that certain activities will be fruitful, not everyone sees the same things or finds them equally useful. When working in a team, what is inspiring and relevant to some will be less so, or not at all, to others. This diversity and richness of perspectives is in itself powerful. Exploration in design is not a search for absolute truth, but for insight about the nature of the challenge and for generative ways to frame it. Indeed, one of the benefits of diverse perspectives is that they can help others see situations in a new light, challenge conventional interpretation, and reveal previously unappreciated possibilities.

Many factors play a role in determining what individuals notice in the world. Everyone's outlook is unique, but one factor shaping it is the cultural lens shared by people from the same discipline – each with its own traditions of perspectives and frameworks for looking. George Nelson's primer *How to See* (1977), for example, presents a collection of photographs with the explicit intent of helping us to appreciate visual design qualities of the world around us; *Everyday Engineering* (Burroughs and IDEO 2007) invites us to view our surroundings through a particular kind of engineering lens. Flickr and other Internet photo-sharing services offer representations literally through a variety of individual

FIGURE 1
Billboard without an advertisement. This caught Gen Suzuki's eye as he passed it in a Tokyo subway station. He understood later that what intrigued him was the boundary between the object and its environment.

FIGURE 2
The coffee Gen Suzuki was served on a summit in the Alps; the whipped cream on top was the shape of the mountain he had just climbed.

lenses. Similarly, visual blogs allow individuals to post what's observed and interesting to them in their everyday world. For example, at www.itchyrobot.com/foundtype/ you can see observations through the attentive graphic designer trained eye of my colleague, interaction designer Graham Hicks; Jasper Morrison, celebrated British industrial designer, posts a photo every month accompanied by his personal observations at www.vitra.com/en-gb/collagejaspers-picture-of-the-month-1/.

These examples express particular and personal ways of appreciating and looking at the world. But how do such perceptions influence design output? Here follow four examples in which designers have seen the world *in their own ways* and brought that perspective to their work.

1. Inspiration everywhere

The first illustrates a particular sensibility about objects and their context. My colleague Gen Suzuki is an acutely perceptive industrial designer, internationally recognized in his native Japan as well as in the UK and the USA. For Gen, the relationship of objects to their context is not only a source of fascination, influencing what he notices in the world around him, but also a source of design inspiration, affecting how he approaches the design problem. Gen captures, and is captivated by, instances of interesting or unusual, even humorous, juxtaposition and congruence between things.

These are examples of what Gen notices and observations that he finds personally inspiring. His perceptions are not related to functional attributes; the connections have a whimsical, playful quality. They are not instances that support a preconceived theme [Fig. 1, 2]. Gen said, "I took the photo of the subway wall before knowing what it might mean. I thought it was beautiful, but I didn't know why I thought it was good."





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Gen's pictures are reflections of his outlook, his observations, and thoughts at play independent of specific project work. His appreciation for these moments is instantaneous, and the subtle influence on his approach to design essentially intuitive. But, as he's reflected upon them and why they're personally inspirational, he has come to understand how this lens influences his approach to design execution. What's significant for him in both these images is the awareness of the object (the advertisement, the cup of coffee) in the context of its place and in relationship to other things around it. He's almost unconsciously attracted to what he calls "blurring boundary" in which objects possess a quality (material, visual, or spatial) that connects them in a meaningful way to other objects or the environment around them.

As a designer, he's excited by the opportunity to create new objects that live in more intentional harmony with their surroundings. For example, his pen stand was inspired by a similarly incidental observation of pens on his friend's worktop held in a stack of tape [Fig. 3]. Gen's pen stand is conceived not as a container in isolation, or even just in relation to pens, but in relation to other objects on the desk whose form and negative internal shape stack to create a container of perfect dimensions. Gen refers to his pen stand approach as "overlapping boundaries."

FIGURE 3
Gen Suzuki's design for a pen-stand was inspired by his observation of rolls of tape stacked on a friend's desk.

At a functional level, this is an effective solution but, more than that, it embodies an emotional relevance. It's a design that elicits a smile, a sense of recognition and rightness, from the subtle harmony between the object and its context.

This example illustrates the value of an approach to observation that involves respecting and reflecting upon a personal and intuitive point of view. By noting instances in the world that capture his imagination – valuing and sharing them simply because he finds them beautiful, intriguing, or amusing – Gen enriches his design intuitions. By observing in this way, he learns about how particular qualities evoke a sense of beauty, intrigue, and amusement. He brings this sensitivity to his designs, evoking such experiences for other people.

2. Crystallizing insight

This second example is about an unplanned observation that helped distill a set of design principles, in this case for a new bank space and service concept. The client company, a global financial institution, wanted to redesign bank branches to support a desirable experience for their customers in Central and Eastern Europe, where many citizens either saw no value in using banks or had a history of unpleasant interactions with them: What would make people walk into a branch, and how could their visit feel like a positive one?

This was a project where it clearly made sense to observe interactions between bank staff and customers. This would help to uncover culturally appropriate ways to encourage the desired relationships and experiences. Indeed, the design team met with customers and staff in ten cities and observed their behavior in twenty-five branches and fifty-plus analogous sites. These observations revealed how staff behaviors and spatial cues had given rise to an unwelcoming feeling for banking customers. Ultimately, learnings led to a radically new concept for the branch layout and service model to better support staff and customer

interactions. All this sounds as if the design emerged by following a predictable and rational plan, but Annette Diefenthaler, insightful and culture-curious design researcher on the Munich-based team, recalled [Fig. 4]:

We were in Nizhny Novgorod and had had a late interview. On the way back, I asked the cab driver to drop me at this low-end shopping center that we had been passing by. I was just curious to see what that'd be like.

FIGURE 4
This image of the shoe store in a Russian mall became a powerful metaphor for the simple and honest 'old world' offering to Eastern European consumers.



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What I saw was a multistory hall with many small stalls. It all looked rather improvised. What amazed me was the way things were sold there: One stall sold only blue jeans. The next one sold only black pants. The next one had light colored skirts; another one had black shoes only. The way the goods were presented was incredibly straightforward: wall, hooks, black shoes. No frills.

Now, we had been looking at many shopping centers that were all full of Western brands, creating all sorts of experiences around products. That was the new world, the new Russia.

And then there was this. And while at first sight you might dismiss that as depressing or boring, I realized that there was something very honest and straightforward in this way of selling goods. Customer experience? Not here. You want black shoes? You get black shoes. No fuzz about it.

There were no additional promises around the product: A pair of shoes is a pair of shoes. A shape, a type of material, a color, a sole. That enabled customers to clearly evaluate and compare the product itself without any distractions. There is an element of empowering the customer to make an informed and focused choice. In contrast, many of the 'new world' shopping centers offered a shopping 'experience' – meaning that goods were not only goods, but were mixed with all kinds of promises around them. So it was not just about buying the shoes but the coolness of the model wearing them on the poster, the glamour of the brand etc.

Telling that story back to the team and relating it to some interviewees' comments led to one of our big learnings about Eastern Europe: In their 'old' world, things were super straightforward. The 'new' world brought about all these experiences. But that's not necessarily what people wanted – they wanted an honest offering.

This insight very much informed our thinking about what trustworthy and honest means in banking and translated into branch design: the layout, the service model, and in making suggestions about the product offer. It was the photo of the black shoes on the wall in our team space that kept reminding us.

Annette's chance observation was powerful. It helped the team make concrete sense of what they were discovering in a more abstract way in their interviews: Since people were already reluctant to even go to the bank, they weren't in for 'an experience'. Like the shoe store, the bank was a means to an end – customers were there either to make a transaction or to ask a question. As Annette put it: "They wanted the TV set, not the loan."

The team understood that the simpler the new branch experience was, the more it would engender a sense of trust. So in designing, their guiding principle was to make things visible, clear, and as tangible as possible. The new space is divided into two distinct parts – one for transactions and one for consultation –

inspired by the idea of the visit as a means to an end. The new design also literally increases transparency, opening up a view of the branch interior from the street, so that passersby can see what is going on inside.

Annette's spontaneous curiosity yielded a dramatic observation that helped clarify an important design theme for the project. This wasn't random inspiration. Given the right catalyst, a designer's mind will process rich observations, stories, and insights from the field and crystallize these into design direction. What's important is to make sure we leave room in project plans, daily schedules, and in designers' heads for this kind of intuitive curiosity to play its magic.

3. Contrasting culture

At times, cultural immersion is the best way of informing design intuition. This example involves designers taking largely unstructured time to soak up an experience directly and multisensorially, using contrast and conversation to make sense of impressions.

Havaianas wanted to design a product extension for the brand. Their iconic flip-flops are enjoyed and revered around the world as a representation of Brazilian culture. They wanted to offer a range of other accessories that shared the same spirit, starting with a series of bags.

What would these bags have to look and feel like to be consistent with the Havaianas brand? The design team wanted first to understand the brand's tight connection to Brazil. Obviously, a good way to explore this was to go and spend time in Brazil. Less obvious was what Miguel Cabra, the exuberant and reflective Barcelona-educated design leader on the project, told me about the team's process: "We had to go to India to understand Brazil", and "We really didn't talk to anyone about bags!" He explains:

Europe and Brazil are different in so many ways, from culture to social structure to weather; so much so that it was hard to learn deeply about Brazil because we didn't have anything to compare it to, and that's how the idea of India came. We thought it might be useful to visit another (but different) third world country just so we could figure out what really belonged to the identity of Brazil. We went to Bangalore because it's a rapidly emergent city. There are a lot of big companies, and they co-exist alongside a traditional and poor environment, and that reminded us of the contrasts of Brazil, where you can have the most amazing mansions next to a favela [Slum].

To be honest, we had no idea how useful the trip to India would be; we went because we had an intuition. We did no formal observations whatsoever, but we did talk with a lot of people and observed with a very curious eye. It was after that trip to Bangalore that we could really begin to understand the essence of the Brazilian way of life. On the plane trip back we talked about



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the differences and similarities in what we'd seen in India and in Brazil. To our developed European eyes some things had seemed to be essentially 'of Brazil' before we'd been to Bangalore, but were common to both cultures. A relevant example: One of the things that we saw a lot in Brazil was the 'simple bag', a cloth closed by knotting the corners diagonally, two and two. But it turned out that this is just a general poverty-solution for carrying things – you can see the exact same bag in Bangalore and São Paulo.

But there were differences; one was about color. Everybody knows that Brazil is a colorful country. Warm countries tend to have less fear of colors than cool ones, and going to Bangalore helped us be much more concrete on how Brazil understands color differently. Color for Brazilians is not only decoration; it's a way for them to make a statement of their hope, their optimism, and their rebellion against their poverty. It's the cheapest way of showing their attitude and enhancing the places where they live and work.

FIGURE 5
Images documenting observed uses and meaning of color in Brazil.

FIGURE 6
The overloaded dolly; a typical sight in Brazil that inspired the idea of a bag that is not only a container but can also carry things bigger than itself.

The team's observations of color in Brazil were captured in photographs that directly influenced the color palette they curated in designing the bags [Fig. 5]. And their observations of 'the Brazilian way' influenced not only elements of the design, but also the way the team worked [Fig. 6, 7]:

After we finished our research process we started as we normally do: ideating, brainstorming, and sketching – but it didn't work, the results felt fake to us. We realized that in Brazil we had seen that Brazilians don't 'design' if we understand design as the planning process before the execution; they are



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FIGURE 7
The Havaianas Zip Bag embodying how expressions of color, gestures, and versatility play out in Brazilian culture.



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much more intuitive about creating things, they don't sketch out a solution and then build it, they look first to what they have and build something out of it, and that is what prototyping is about. So we started to shift our strategy to a more 'hands on' approach, which made a MAJOR difference. One of our design principles was $1 + 1 = 3$, which is about taking two things that don't belong together, de-contextualizing them, and building something completely new. This is how the 'Zip Bag' was created, two 'pockets' stitched together that create a third open compartment for your towel or yoga mat. A bag that can carry bigger things than the bag itself, which is also something we observed in Brazil – see my picture of an overloaded dolly.

Ultimately, for our things to feel real we had to adopt the way Brazilians approach creativity; we became non-designers, we became makers, and we substituted 'brain-storm' for 'hand-storms'. It was like being an actor in a way, like being Brazilian for a while.

What the team learned about the Havaianas brand came about through a deep connection that the designers made with relevant aspects of Brazilian life. As Miguel says:

When a brand blends so much with the culture of a country you can't just research around the people and the product, you need to really immerse yourself. You have to be there because, before you go, you don't know what you need to know or even what you can know.

In this kind of immersion there is process, though it's not strict:

[...] it's 'look and think aloud about what you saw'. So we notice the prevalence of color, materials, forms, and we ask ourselves: Is there a discernible pattern here? What are the similarities? If so, what are the formal rules behind it? Are there in fact patterns that you might call cultural design principles?

The process, the talking about it, proposing and testing the patterns you see, thinking about what that would mean for how we design, is probably more important than the input actually.

And there is design discipline about what to look out for:

Yes, curiosity about stuff like color, materials, marks that people make, and the behaviors that these encourage and oblige [...] but not to describe, rather to respond to with something new. To reinterpret. For instance, I'm interested in how particular objects oblige you to behave in certain ways

that then characterize a whole body language and choreography for events or activities, and how these too have cultural meaning. So when we thought about bags, we could imagine a Scandinavian precision and economy of motion, postures, and gestures for putting things in a bag, snapping it closed, picking it up, positioning it on your body. This would affect the way you engage with it, wear it, carry it, take it off, put it down, that would be influenced by the materials of the body and strap, the enclosures, fittings, very differently from a Brazilian way. For Havaianas we created a rubbery strap making a bouncy bag that walks with you, with your stride.

4. Intriguing essence

This example illustrates the power of a designer's eye for visual metaphor, and respecting such intuition despite the lack of an immediate rationale for its significance.

The resourceful and imaginative visual thinker and storyteller, Jason Robinson, was the lead industrial designer who developed a suite of advanced instruments for spinal surgery. Looking back on the project, he recalls two significant visual experiences that he had during the course of the project. Sharing his thought process, and wary of overrationalizing, Jason begins by describing the second event:

In considering what materials and finishes to use, I was drawn to the look of surgical tools that were hand-machined from stainless steel and anodized to withstand autoclaving. The clean precision of the matt silver metal was inspiring to me, and I wanted explore how that would work with some of the forms I'd developed. At the same time, I was intrigued by the look of these tools in black – sophisticated and serious. Martin and I were at my computer reviewing the CAD [computer-aided design] models on the screen, looking at them first in silver. We wanted to see the same tool in black, and to avoid running a whole new rendering cycle – that would've taken too long – I selected a rectangular area and re-rendered only that part of the image. What we were looking at then was a matt silver tool with a black central section, where the rectangular area was projected onto the tool. Martin said, 'That's cool!' It was.

It was an accidental result, and his reaction to it purely intuitive. Nevertheless, he felt it was something to explore further. As he developed the design, Jason remained intrigued by the tension between the contrast of that black element projected onto the silver semi-organic form: "But, why is that cool?" he kept asking himself.

I remember thinking, 'It doesn't fit; it doesn't reference any other line in the form, like a part line or something. There's a conflict between this shape, the square, and all the other aspects of the form. All the other aspects and elements of the form were driven by logical and practical reasons, either ergonomic or to encase functional elements. The square exists on another plane. It's defiant!'

My mind went back to our first visit to the O.R. [operating room], the impressive scene of these dramatic operations, where surgeons were doing incredible things with absolutely no room for error. This was when I saw the connection. My mind made a link between the square and this epic thing that the surgeons were doing. It was the same link that I'd made between a pair of X-rays I'd noticed lying side by side in the O.R., and that had a very powerful effect on me.

The X-rays were of a spine, one before and one after surgery. The 'before' image was annotated boldly with the surgeon's notes and decisive pen marks in red lines indicating that the spine should be set to this or that angle and where various bits of hardware should be placed. The 'after' image showed the spine with all the hardware in place. It had a very strong graphic quality – anything metal really pops on an X-ray, so you see this burned-out white of the surgeon's work wrestling with the X-ray soft grey and black of the organic form of the spine. Here was the soft curvature of this living, growing spine, with a will to grow in its own uncorrected way, and the surgeon's mark-ups that expressed the will and determination of science and technology to correct it. That's what these tools are all about: going in and doing something that the body really doesn't want to do; and the surgeon is creating order and structure, straightness and rigidity. It was like the struggling of two wills. Defiant. So there it was: the moral of the story. It was there visually in that square element superimposed on the tool. It had that same sense of uncompromising dominance as the graphical characteristics of the X-rays.

What was striking for me was that there were lots of fascinating things all over that (operating) room, but it was those X-rays, that dramatic diptych, which had caught my attention. I understood that they were important, I'd photographed and remembered them, but their significance really only emerged over time. Linking it to the black square projected on the rendering was not really a conscious process for me.

But then, after making that connection, and having it validated by other designers and the client, I felt confident that I finally had the components of the story that would explain why this apparently random black area was important to me and how it spoke of what was special about these tools. The design intent was to make these tools unique and stand out as

world-class. We wanted to make them recognizable as high-end and communicate that they are 'special tools, for special things, done by special people'. It is a simple detail but one that pops out and says 'something important and different is going on here'.

What was initially a fleeting but conscious recognition of an interesting visual metaphor that he observed in the O.R. ended up driving the signature look for the final design [Fig. 8]. This kind of intuitive process is undoubtedly encouraged by the opportunity to observe but not guaranteed by any particular structured plan. "What was important," Jason said, "was to have the physical and mental space for all these things to be seen, and explored, and welded together over a period of time."



FIGURE 8
The final rendering for the surgical tool: it embodies the signature contrast of rigid and organic visual elements.

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In conclusion

What is common among these stories? Each in their own way, the four designers were inspired by their personal observation of the world and saw beauty, poetry, or meaning in something that others hadn't seen. At times, the inspiration was deliberately sought – by taking a trip to Brazil, to India, or to an O.R. – while other times it came as the result of chance curiosity in a Russian shopping mall or while vacationing in the Alps.

In each case their insights emerged from activity and thinking that was not part of a highly formalized research plan. But their approach was certainly

not without discipline or rigor. Each case involved a similar pattern: a focused curiosity coupled with exposure to relevant contexts; attention to elements that invited intrigue; visual documentation and revisiting these records later; percolation and talking about what was significant with team members and clients; storytelling and exploration of design choices and details.

Whether creating products, apparel, services, or spaces, these designers display a particular sensitivity to the physical, metaphorical, and cultural values inherent in context, forms, and materials and how these are experienced. Perhaps, as makers themselves, they have a heightened appreciation for the kind of elements in the environment that they can manipulate and control: formal relationships between sensory qualities such as color, mass, layout, and texture, and dynamic qualities of feedback, rhythm, sequence, layering, and logic. This reflects awareness of both *that* things are made and of *how* things are made, and of the choices and artistry that has gone into that making.

Firsthand exposure to people, places, and things seems to be key, but there is no formulaic method for observation of this very personal kind. Designers are enthralled by the world and the search for patterns and hidden rules that apply. But rather than observing it to describe what they see (which would involve seeing literally and objectively), their purpose is a generative and strategic one. Generative in the sense of a future orientation on what is observed – highly dependent on imagination and interpretation. And by strategic, I mean that their observations help in making deliberate judgments about the relevance and meaning of specific design choices.

Teams of designers, rather than individuals, allow more eyes to see more, and one would hope, differently. But in teams it is important to preserve the tension between multiple viewpoints and singular visions to allow the most powerful new perspectives to develop. Indeed, one of the most valuable contributions that designers make is to help others see situations in a new light, to see as yet unappreciated possibilities for how something (product, service, space, etc.) might look and feel as a future experience.

In attempts to make design and design thinking more widely accessible, there's increasing emphasis on teaching and learning about design process. This inevitably leads to attempts to formalize design activities and approach. As interdisciplinary teams are encouraged to employ their collective observational abilities to uncover problems, it is important to preserve flexibility, allowing for intuition and unstructured time to look and explore through a personal lens.

On any given project the pivotal inspirations and insights often come in unpredictable ways. What seems important is the effort, focus, time, and judicious exposure to relevant (or even seemingly irrelevant) influences. Such is the ability of the human/designer mind to make connections and recognize

(or create) patterns where – with a project brief as simultaneously filter and engine – inspiration and insight seem to pop out of the most random experiences.

It's important to understand this, to allow time and space for it to happen. This isn't an argument for abandoning plans for structured research, just a warning to not be seduced into thinking that a predefined research plan is the sole basis by which individuals on a design team will absorb and articulate their understanding of the context for their work. Reflecting back on the examples, we might follow these principles to ensure that a design sensibility can prevail:

- x Allow for chance and spontaneous exploration in design research plans*
- x Remember to make time and space to satisfy personal curiosity and honor the intuitions that arise*
- x Ensure time for immersion, documentation, and percolation to soak up what's relevant and inspiring*
- x Encourage awareness and discussion about what's beautiful, engaging, and poetic as well as what's appropriate and functional*
- x Recognize that quirky and personal perspectives enrich and catalyze group understanding*

Observation of the world is natural and essential to design. But ultimately, it's less what you look at that matters, it's what you see and what you and the project make of it. From designers we ask for a designed world that has meaning beyond the resolution of purely functional needs, one that also has poetry, communicates subtly something that makes sense, not just by fitting in with the culture and environment in which it lives, but by adding a new dimension to it.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to these featured designers for their inspiring stories, clients of the projects, design team members, and other colleagues who reviewed and helped to refine the essay.

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