

The magazine for form and function, meaning and value:

designreport.



EXHIBITING DESIGN

How a discipline tells its story in three dimensions

Sense and sensibility

The presentation of design in three-dimensional spaces – in museums, at trade fairs, in showrooms – is one of the discipline's key communication tools. As a result, design exhibitions reflect the metier's own self-image as well.



Anybody approaching design via the exhibition format right now can observe our discipline's quest for self-definition. By and large, the days of big monographic shows are over. But how can design define itself when it's not linked to an individual personality? The newly opened Design Museum in London, for instance (see designreport 1/2017, p. 21ff.), examines design icons in the light of the process that leads to their creation and how they are used.

The design process seems to have outstripped the ingenious final product as an exhibition topic – at least for the time being. In September, the new Design Biennale Zurich will be turning its attention to creative processes and experiments (see p. 26). And exhibitions like Design Talks Politics by designxport Hamburg or Design and Democracy at the Autostadt in Wolfsburg are focusing on design's influence on political and social structures. But what's behind the exhibition makers' interest in such topics?

Firstly, (self-) confidence in the value that creative work can add is growing – both in the design sector and beyond. Methods like service design and design thinking are currently viewed as panaceas when it comes to driving innovation. Secondly, the urgency of finding sustainable production methods is directing attention towards the processes used to manufacture consumer goods. And thirdly, sometimes shifting the focus away from the object and towards the processes that go before it quite simply makes for a more intriguing story.

Designers are increasingly seeing themselves as consultants and process designers for political and social structures. In this context, exhibition makers are trying their hand at new, participatory formats: museums are becoming platforms for discourse, with the aim of involving the public and triggering changes in society as a result. The possibilities these discourse formats hold and the question as to how new impetus can be brought to design debates is the subject of Klaus Meyer's interviews with curators and a doyen of the discipline (see p. 32).

What's astonishing is that, in design museums, these very special conceptual approaches rarely coincide with innovative forms of presentation. Yet isn't it precisely the

abstract components of design – processes, usability, technology, functionality, application – that most urgently need new visual communication strategies? Digital technologies like augmented reality provide elegant ways of conveying the invisible elements of design in three-dimensional space. Four agencies that specialise in three-dimensional communication gave us an insight into their latest digital projects – however, they were actually created for product presentations at trade fairs rather than for museums (see p. 40). At this point, museum curators will no doubt be thinking that it all comes down to the budget; but in our view, these digital formats can provide inspiration for any three-dimensional form of imparting knowledge.

The conviction that cultural and commercial exhibitions can cross-pollinate one another was the motivating force behind the development of this issue. Exhibitions make the close proximity between culture and commerce that is unique to the design discipline clearly visible. An example: trade fair and showroom presentations use the iconisation of design objects to increase a product's non-material value (and, by extension, its sales) and strengthen brand loyalty. Conversely, museums are using interactive, emotional scenographies to facilitate more intuitive access to the many and varied facets of design – rather than, as used to be the case, primarily conveying knowledge via the “distance senses” (sight and hearing).

The question as to whether it's possible to classify all the different typologies used in contemporary design presentations within an overarching system led us to a research project at the University of Design Schwäbisch Gmünd by the name of Exhibiting Design – Designing Exhibitions. We're delighted that project assistant Tabea Schmid agreed to share the interim results of the project with us (see p. 54). One interesting insight is that exhibiting design always raises the question as to how much closeness or distance the show should create between the observer and the object. But ultimately, whether a chair belongs on a pedestal, in a doll's house or under your backside is a question that has to be answered on a per-case basis.

Wiebke Lang,
Editor-in-chief

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Everything's so new and shiny

We have to change the world. Everything is in a state of flux. Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. Change we can believe in. We are the change that we seek. Il faut être absolument moderne ... It's always the same old story. But unfortunately, the quest for something new doesn't always produce innovations.

By Markus Frenzl

Illustration: Lars Hammer



Any experienced cleaner knows how important it is to make the results of your labour clearly visible by moving furniture around, rearranging the bottles on the bathroom shelf and breaking the occasional vase from time to time. If you don't want to be accused of idleness, it's essential to make sure nothing looks the same as it did before. And it's the same when you're developing a new product generation or redesigning a logo: it's vital to demonstrate your dedication to the task in hand. If you don't want to make a laughing stock of yourself, the courage to transform must be visible, the change not too small. The recent reworking of Bayern Munich's logo, for instance, which only altered details, resulted in an outpouring of scorn for the designer and football club alike: "Somebody actually got money for that???" The pursuit of modernity, the quest for a mode of expression for a new age, the improvement of living conditions, the shaping of a new society, "the new human", the new anything, are what drives our discipline and serve as the starting point for any aesthetic debate. We design people believe in the new, that transformation is something that can be planned and shaped. We are the creators of worlds; we love changes, and change is how we earn our money. We are the influencers, we pounce enthusiastically on the first products equipped with artificial intelligence and buy the new iPhone, even if the only thing that's different about it is a slightly altered corner radius.

Since digitalisation arrived in everyday life, however, our relationship with change seems to have become rather contradictory. Perhaps future generations will look back and classify today's style as "retrodigital", our era as a time that combined rapid technological change with an amazingly nostalgic aesthetic. In which modernism underwent emotionalisation, as if there had never been any such thing as functionalist design approaches. As a time that combined the digital innovations of the 21st century with the retro forms of the 20th – and the objects of modernism with the identifiers of the digital, with displays, camera lenses, touchpads and headsets. Perhaps the reason the white Apple earphones were so successful was that they were emblematic of the tide of newness flowing from a decades-old Braun design. What better way to signal the arrival of the new than to use the same immaculate, innocent and blank white that served Braun as a herald of change when it launched the SK4 record player back in the 1950s?

Envisage the future and shape the change – think different! has been Apple's advertising strategy for decades. Copied hundreds of times over, the original quest to improve people's lives has turned into a quest to improve sales arguments. Transformation has gone from being a highly political attitude to a cliché for minimal innovations. In Germany's cities right now, for instance, there are bill-

boards with "Change" emblazoned on them in huge letters. Under the picture of a white e-cigarette – which could easily be mistaken for a pregnancy test – comes the self-confident claim "This changes everything!" – a far more fitting assertion to make about the aforementioned pregnancy test, supposing it were positive. Because transformation seems to be the hallmark of successful companies, change has been given its own management, which has to evince its presence every much as the vase-destroying cleaner. Change processes have to be implemented in every area of the company, the new has to be conceived ever faster and be launched in product form at ever shorter intervals. A new product generation is even willing to accept changes for the worse, at least at a practical level. The USB-C ports of the new MacBook Pro, for instance, are so innovative that early adopters have to carry a full range of Apple-white adapters around with them. The connecting cable between the computer and the mains adapter can no longer be wound onto fold-out wings – for they, like the sensible MagSafe connector, have had to make way for progress. And the new keyboard probably only clatters so loudly because it will make you attract so much unwanted attention at conferences that you'll soon have to buy the next next-generation MacBook, which will no doubt be equipped with a revolutionary new keyboard. The new generation of high-speed ICE trains demonstrates its progressiveness with a reservation display in the headrests, with the result that you have to keep bending down when you're looking for a seat instead of – as with the previous generation – being able to see where there are unreserved places at a glance, even from the platform. The big information displays in the middle of the carriage make it seem more like a suburban train. And the brightness destroys any hint of the kind of cosiness you appreciate on long-distance journeys. The emblems of change employed by modernism – simplicity, the absence of ornament, brightness, light, transparency – have become a knee-jerk convention that is automatically brought to bear whenever something is supposed to demonstrate modernity.

For a long time, the logic of change was also a logic of growth. But in the light of climate change, globalisation, hyper-economisation and digital progress, our view of change has changed. Amid so much global turmoil, the changes we can expect a different kind of e-cigarette or Apple's HomePod to make to our lives seem almost touching, as does the messianic tone in which their coming is announced. Of course we need to give shape to social, technological and cultural change. And we need to have the courage to make changes. But we'd better be careful that one of our discipline's core themes doesn't degenerate into an advertising cliché. And watch out that we don't knock too many vases over in our eagerness to demonstrate our zeal. ●

Museum tour

A growing number of museums are exploring design as a culturally relevant topic – but what about innovative ways of conveying that? How is it possible to portray those aspects of the design that the object itself does not make tangible – things like contexts, processes and discourses?

Our author Markus Zehentbauer took an up-close look at three different answers.

1. Design Labor, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna

The workshop



It's a long way down to the vaulted cellar of the MAK in Vienna, a 153-year-old institution with 600,000 objects in its collection where you wouldn't necessarily expect to find such an ambitious approach to exhibiting design. This permanent exhibition in the basement goes by the name of Design Labor and has little in common with the Study Collection that used to be housed there and was arranged according to materials and typologies. It also sets itself apart from the principle of displaying classics on white pedestals, a practice still often seen in design museums today. No fewer than nine custodians worked on the development of a multiperspective itinerary, basing it on the idea of avoiding presentations that are overly fixated on the actual objects and shining a spotlight on design practice instead. Take 3D printing: rather than merely showing the printed products, the exhibition also presents the printer, the source material and a video about the production process. And next to the mobile Vietnamese street kitchen with its woven baskets on a bamboo pole, a film shows how it's used. Visitors can actually step inside the replica Frankfurt Kitchen to explore its practicalities and get a sense of the space. And anybody who feels like it can bash out a letter on Sottsass's Valentine typewriter – paper is provided. While none of that may sound very spectacular in itself, even the sign saying "Touching allowed!" is an indication that visitors are anything but used to taking an active role when they visit a museum.



The goal was to bring the MAK's collection, which was originally dedicated more to arts and crafts than to design, closer to contemporary everyday life and present-day issues. Themed spaces dedicated to topics like Cooking, Eating and Drinking, Communicating or Transporting and supplemented with table-height wooden pedestals aim to make the exhibition more accessible. Again and again, different areas of the collection – sometimes poles apart – or historical and modern-day exhibits are combined into a single topic area. It's an approach that can be thoroughly inspiring – such as when, in the Ornament section, the spines of worthy classics and Donald Duck books, veining patterns in stone, grain patterns in wood and patterned haori jackets follow on from one another in close proximity. In the next room, some of the historical fabric patterns on show can even be taken home (after being selected on an iPad) and used under a Creative Commons licence. The one thing the Design Labor doesn't yet offer is a real laboratory where visitors can actually conceive and build something, perhaps under the guidance of a designer. That would be the next step.

Conclusion: the exhibition makers show the diversity of design in everyday life. Involving the user creates familiarity – and demystifies the design discipline.

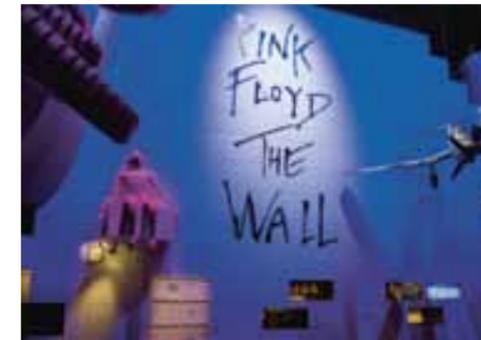
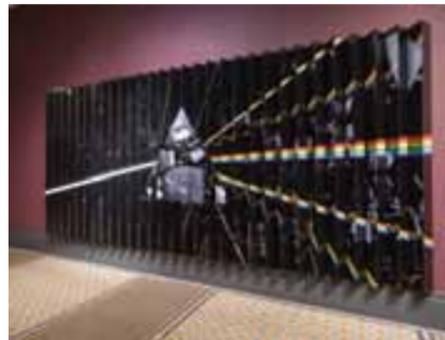


Ⓞ The rooms of the Design Labor created by EOOS explore themes like Communicating (opposite page), Ornament or Cooking. The exhibits include a mobile plywood kitchen by Breaded Escalope (top left), patterns from all sorts of different areas of the collection (top right) or Sottsass's Valentine typewriter, which visitors can actually use. Bottom: the remnants of an event by Jerzy Seymour.

2.

Victoria and Albert Museum,
London

The theatre



For some time now, design museums have been displaying a tendency to show less and less product and furniture design and shift towards other, more popular disciplines instead. The MAK Frankfurt, the city's applied arts museum, is planning a major Jil Sander retrospective for the autumn, and the V&A in London regularly holds spectacularly staged music and fashion exhibitions – currently on Pink Floyd and Balenciaga. And every time, the scenographic ambitions of the V&A curators' seem to grow.

As a result, a visit to the Pink Floyd show is first and foremost a synaesthetic experience: equipped with headphones, you pass through an outsized replica of a tour bus before being immersed in the darkness of the black box and a different world, with a different song playing in your ears depending on your location. Hallucinative black-and-white patterns, lava lamp animations and the reflections of a disco ball star suffuse the condensed itinerary, where the individual exhibits – posters, LP covers, instruments, photographs – are difficult to tell apart. The cover visuals in particular are very much present, not just in the form of originals but – greatly enlarged – in animations and as huge backdrops: the prism from *Dark Side of the Moon*, the Battersea Power Station from *Animals* and of course *The Wall*. At the end, after so many theatrical,

overpowering effects, you step out of the darkness and straight into the dazzling light of the museum shop. The question is whether this isn't actually more a case of wallowing in nostalgia rather than communicating insights – even though a great deal of material from the period is displayed in red telephone boxes dotted along the way, not to mention Johnny Rotten's T-shirt emblazoned with "I hate Pink Floyd".

The Balenciaga exhibition, while just as opulent and condensed, is a great deal quieter. Virtually every garment on show is presented together with context materials like fabric sample books, design sketches, photos of the respective wearers or dressmaking tools, interspersed with films of the aged Balenciaga during fittings, historic fashion shows and draping techniques. And there's no shortage of participatory elements either: in one corner, two replicas of a turquoise-coloured dress with deep pleats stand waiting to be tried on. Elsewhere, you can try to fold a sheet of paper into a coat. The life-size x-rays of several dresses are particularly informative: the black-and-white images reveal the structures and seams that ensure the garment's perfect fit. In this case, the exhibition has come up with a very literal solution to the often-heard lament that many aspects of design cannot be shown via the end product because they are invisible.



⊙ X-ray of a Balenciaga dress, projection with morphing effect.



⊙ ⊖ From top left to bottom right: outsized cover visuals from Pink Floyd albums form the backdrop to the exhibition. Seen here: the prism, the metal heads, *The Wall*, the light bulb figures and Battersea Power Station.

Conclusion: curatorial concepts that link design with pop culture and fashion enable exhibitions to draw large numbers of visitors. Scenographies that hinge on surprise and effect, as well as participatory elements, are entertaining ways to make the function and impact of design in a broader sense accessible.



3. Schaudepots, Museum für Gestaltung Zurich and Vitra, Weil am Rhein

Visible storage

Since more and more museums have started digitalising their holdings and putting them online, thereby making them publicly visible, these collections – which actually represent the origins and identity of a museum – are gaining more significance again. Not least of all, that is apparent from the fact that, in these digitally dominated times, design museums have started presenting more of their collections in analogue form again – often based on the same classification principles and groupings as their storage facilities. In German-speaking countries, this format is known as a *Schaudepot* and is rapidly gaining popularity. A connecting corridor at Hamburg’s Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe has housed a theme-based visible storage display for the last five years, Vitra opened a *Schaudepot* on its campus in Weil am Rhein in 2016, and Munich’s Die Neue Sammlung museum will be following suit in 2018.

Besides being a good way to shed light on the history of the institutions and the work of their curators, visible storage displays create transparency and it’s probably fair to say they represent the greatest possible contrast to big scenographic shows. In the case of Vitra, for instance, it certainly makes a refreshing change, as a visitor, to be left entirely on your own – with no legends to read, no storytelling, no references to the development and production processes, the usage, historical context or social implications of



⊖ Although the chairs in Vitra Design Museum’s *Schaudepot* (opposite page) are placed on industrial racks, they stand on glass shelves and at a greater distance to one another than in the actual storage facility. The drawers in the Vitra Lab (left and below) contain information on individual materials, such as the difference between glulam and plywood. The *Schaudepot* of the Museum für Gestaltung Zurich is only accessible as part of a guided tour. One of the attractions: a metres-high stack of posters consisting of discarded duplicates (bottom).

the design. You get to concentrate completely on the individual object, make your own discoveries and establish links with the neighbouring exhibits that aren’t part of a line of argumentation or proof of a theory. On the other hand, if you use the online guide, it is of course possible to link the physical objects with the digital ones, thus enabling you to find out about every single item in depth. In Vitra’s case, 430 pieces of seating furniture are arranged chronologically on the three levels of tall shelving units, which are positioned one behind the other. The key difference to the “real” storage area in the basement, which can only be glimpsed through windows, is the generous amount of space allocated to each individual design – an approach that is actually more typical of a classic permanent exhibition.

You get much closer to the everyday working life of a museum in the *Schaudepot* of the Museum für Gestaltung Zurich, which is only accessible as part of a guided tour. Six such tours are offered every week, allowing visitors to experience what the three different climate zones in the halls feel like, open the drawers of certain drawing storage cabinets, wander through two levels of the high-bay storage facility and encounter the metres-high stack of posters where every poster duplicate has been deposited for years. Die Neue Sammlung in Munich, which aims to accommodate 1,000 objects on 530 sq m of space starting



from next year, is based on a different concept again. Director Angelika Nollert doesn’t want to give any details away yet, but one thing is certain: the room will not be called a *Schaudepot*. The term, she says, is becoming “a little overused”.

Conclusion: the visible storage format tempts visitors with the promise of an authentic behind-the-scenes view of a design collection. In times of spectacular installations and scenographies, its focus on the pure object can be liberating. ●

Choice selection

Virtually no other market experiences as many short-lived trends as the furnishing, cooking and leisure segment. One fad chases the next. In this case, only those bold enough to try out new things will make a mark. So visitors to Tendence at the end of June were well advised not to miss the Talents section. Annie Kuschel took a look at the Frankfurt show's newcomers' platform.

Age-old tradition

Japanese designer Kuniko Maeda doesn't think much of recycling paper. She prefers to extend the material's life instead. "Too much paper is used, so it diminishes in value. I like to extend the product cycle through upcycling and create added value as a result," she comments. For her The Landscape of Paper project, the London-based fabric designer uses simple disposable paper bags to which she applies kakishibu, a dye made from the juice of persimmons, used in Japan and China for centuries. Kakishibu lends the paper a smooth surface, strengthens it and even makes it water-resistant. Maeda applies a laser cutter to create complex, geometrical patterns in the material, resulting in delicate items such as lampshades, fabrics or simple objects.

kuniko-maeda.com



Left to chance

After graduating in design in Braunschweig and Eindhoven in the Netherlands, Anna Badur founded her own design studio in Berlin in 2013. Two years later, china manufacturer Kahla from Thuringia in Germany invited the designer to take part in one of its Kahla-kreativ workshops. Applying paint to the china after bisque firing (the first firing process) was one of the things Badur experimented with during the workshop. In this condition the china is still able to absorb the paint. Very delicate, water-colour-like patterns are the result. The designer lets thinned paints – such as cobalt blue – run or drop onto plates and even dips whole objects into the water-paint mix. "I want to capture the movement of water on china like snapshots," explains Badur, who has her creations produced at the Kahla factory. As the artistic director of her project, she drops by regularly. "Although each object is left to chance to a certain extent, some manual skills still need to be learnt to achieve the right result." Anna Badur has, to date, been selling her Blue Sunday, Green Edition and Aqua collections herself. She used the Talents platform to establish contacts with buyers and dealers.

annabadur.de



Through thick and thin

Lenka Záhorková, a master's student at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, was inspired by a special technique developed by the Swiss ceramics artist Arnold Annen. Annen heats his vessels with a blowtorch so that bits of the china are chipped off the surface. The upshot is an irregular structure of different thicknesses; the thicker sections are impermeable to light, the thinner ones like gossamer and virtually transparent. The Czech student uses this effect for her Light series of lamps, which she presented in Frankfurt. As soon as she has completed her master's in Pilsen, Záhorková wants to start her own brand. Her participation in the Talents programme was the first step towards working for herself.

zahorkovalenka.com



Spinning yarns

Two industrial design students called Robin Kuhnle and June-Noa Fàbregas were keen to get to grips with the assignment set for their course term project at the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design. It involved developing and creating three fashion items. Kuhnle and Fàbregas embarked on a quest for manufacturing processes that were as unusual as possible. So they came up with tools made of steel pipes, around which they wound cords that they bonded with adhesive. They removed the moulds once the adhesive had cured. Their Spinning Jenny collection, consisting of a skirt with top, shoes and glasses, was the outcome.

junenoafabregas.com



How can exhibitions do justice to do design?

At 10, the iPhone is finally ripe for the museum

We've been living with the iPhone for 10 years now. No product has made such a lasting impact on our day-to-day lives as the mobile control centre from Cupertino. It has become the virtual melting pot of work and leisure, the blessing and curse of total reachability, the omnipresent ordering tool and lifestyle whisperer, the enemy in our bed and our global matchmaker. While the printing press may have led the world out of the darkness of the Middle Ages and into the modern era – which took it around 200 years – the iPhone has revolutionised the way we communicate in a fraction of the time and developed a microeconomy so big that macro would seem the more fitting prefix.

And apropos of nothing, the iPhone is also proof that, when form follows function, it can produce magnificent, world-changing design. There's no doubt about it: the iPhone deserves a place in the design museum. But how exactly should it be exhibited? Isn't the Genius Bar at the Apple store the best-possible, more or less museum-like form of presentation? Or does it lack the meta level? Years ago the New York MoMA – which is seriously overrated as far as its design exhibitions are concerned – merely put the physical object in a glass display case. Surely there's got to be more to it than that?

Murray Moss's gallery in New York's SoHo district, which has meanwhile closed, went further. Its exhibitions showcased cutting-edge European objects by a young generation of designers somewhere between art and design. It was the way Murray Moss presented the things that was special, the way he knew how to establish a thematic link between these up-to-the-minute designs and the modernist icons likewise on show in the gallery – an approach you couldn't experience at any design museum in the world at the time.

Of course it would be presumptuous to compare the gallery on Greene Street with a museum – it was, after all, a commercial place. But it was unparalleled in terms of the naturalness and authority with which it created narratives in the store's long rows of horizontal display cases – like the history of European porcelain, for instance. The story progressed seamlessly from its beginnings in Meissen to the classicism of the KPM in Berlin before moving on to manifestations of industrial modernism like Hermann Gretsch's 1382 service or Bjørn Wiinblad's Magic Flute and winding

up with postmodernist designs like those by Hella Jongerius for Nymphenburg. All this demonstrated Murray Moss's remarkable curatorial talent for reflecting on a theme and using the nature of the presentation to bring out new aspects of a familiar topic, to establish connections that had perhaps only been lying dormant, waiting to be discovered. And so, by adopting the attitude of an adventurer, he succeeded in giving exhibition visitors new insights.

The 2004 exhibition *Where There's Smoke* featuring young Dutch designer Maarten Baas is likewise unforgettable. Moss encouraged the Eindhoven graduate to take a Bunsen burner to 25 design icons – including Mackintosh chairs and Ettore Sottsass's Carlton shelving unit – and then immerse the charred silhouettes in epoxy resin. The resulting transformation has come to symbolise just how blurred the distinction between industrial design and art has become. With exhibitions like these, Moss managed to turn his gallery into a place for contemplating the design discipline and establish new museological approaches for its benefit.

There may be various reasons why the gallery no longer exists. Perhaps the financial and economic crisis was also the end of the decade of "Iconic Design", when designers like Marc Newson or Ron Arad increasingly adopted the mechanisms of the art market, fetched record prices at auctions and paid homage to the one-off, the very antithesis of industrial design.

On the other hand, Moss demonstrated that the world's design museums have to create new access to design – cultural access to the here and now. Unlike arts and crafts, which undeniably experienced their heyday in the 19th century, design is a present-day phenomenon. It doesn't make sense to present industrial design in the same way as arts and crafts, to put it on pedestals without any reference to the context of its making, the materials, the machinery, the ideologies or the prevailing fashion. Which is why we should try all the harder to find an appropriate form of presentation for the iPhone in a museum context. Only then would there be anything that deserves to call itself a design museum of the 21st century.

Andrej Kupetz,
General Manager German Design Council

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