

When History Meets Design

Re-examining the Debate over "Design History or Design Studies?" and Their Underling Historical Thoughts.

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Abstract

Although design history has been an established academic discipline since the 1970s, its subject matter? 'following design practices' is always fluctuating. This paper reviews the arguments between Victor Margolin and Adrian Forty (amongst other scholars) regarding design history in the early 1990s, exploring the disputes of their historical thoughts. Margolin retraced the primary writing, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, commenting that the modernist moralistic narration leashed the expanding of the area of design history. He purported that design studies should substitute for design history in order to gather a variety of issues and approaches, and therefore direct new developments. Whereas Forty, on the other hand, considered that judgements were still necessary in order to improve the quality of design; and that after cross-fertilization with other disciplines, many new visions in design history would be produced, deeming it needless to bother with the boundary of design history.

Besides the inconsistencies of the epistemology and the category of design history, there are further positive aspects. In Margolin's critique of Pevsner's historical idea, he clarified the ambiguous relationship between design and art; and when Forty refuted Margolin, he articulated design and social contexts. They were both anxious and contradictory about how properly history influenced design. Therefore it is possible to pinpoint the debate of history research and design practice. By reflecting on design history's past trajectory, we can interface with the present and future challenges in design's technological transformation.

Keywords

historical thought, design history, design studies, Margolin, Forty, Pevsner.

User Centered Value Structures.

Bridging the Gap from Ethnographic Research to Design. A design-driven Research Strategy for Analyzing Qualitative Data

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Abstract

There has been a shift from a producer-Centered Design to a User Centered development process. Design has turned to the social sciences and to ethnography in particular, to look for methods that help understand people in the context of their lives. However using ethnographic methods in Design is problematic; the goals and the intentions of ethnography and Design are quite different. While ethnography (and the social sciences in general) seek to create or add to existing theory, the goal in Design is to introduce change to the very same context that is being used for research.

The goal of this research is to develop a design driven research strategy that assists in the development of high level frameworks and methods that help reduce the gap between research and early prototype development. We advocate ethnographic methods as an invaluable source for understanding people.

We propose a form of analyzing qualitative data. What we call value frameworks is a unique process to structure, link and understand ethnographic research in order to better understand what values are at play in a given context.

Keywords

Ethnography, User Centered Methods, Qualitative Data Analysis, Design Research