Prof. Jurgen Faust
e-mail: jurgen@jfaust.com, 3364 words

Design Discourse and Discourse Design: Reflections on "Conveyence Matter”

Introduction
The traditional distinctions between theory and practice, as well as the differentiations among the applied (angewandte), practical, and theoretical, are questionable and fuzzy when viewed against the backdrop of the evolution of applied arts discourse (design discourse) during the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries. The same can be said of the tradition of science and design, for example, design models for theories could also be framed as discourse design in science. If we compare these models with current design discourse, we can follow design discourse as a science of design, that body of work which attempts to improve our understanding of "scientific" design methods of investigation, or a design science, an explicitly organized, rational and wholly systematic approach to design, or even a science *for* design, that is, a systematic collection of accounts of successful design practices, design methods, and their lessons (Nigel Cross 2001: 51,52). But within the context of a comparative analysis of discourse design and design itself, the distinctions become quite fuzzy.

An example of a theoretical discourse work, which is simultaneously a design work because it also contains theory design, is Helmut Krippendorf's Semantic Turn, which focuses on the trajectory of artificiality, a trajectory that Krippendorf constructs by following the development of design in the 20th century. Krippendorf identifies changes in the development which he relies on for his trajectory: It moves from products to goods and services, then to identities, to interfaces, to multi-user systems and networks, to projects, and finally to the discourses we are currently involved in (Krippendorff 2006: 6).

This proposed development offers us an interesting illustration to work with, especially if we wish to evaluate contemporary assignments in which designers are involved, since designers are not only involved in traditional design discourse, which uses drawings and objects to project solutions, but contemporary designers are also being challenged in purely theoretical language discourses to create meaning from proposed designs. Furthermore, discourses reside in those communities of people who join together to enact that what constitutes their community. They perform it, so to speak, and thereby create everything that matters to the members of the community (Krippendorff 2006: 11).

Design and Discourse
We can therefore also claim, as does Krippendorff, that artifacts become increasingly embedded in language (Krippendorff 2006: 12, 13). And he acknowledged that meaning matters, since it is a move towards human-centeredness. All designs objects need to be communicated and understood—and therefore interpreted.

Within Krippendorff's proposed trajectory of artificiality, the development of design moves toward a culture of discourse in which designers—like philosophers or other professional thinkers— participate in making sense of things. Krippendorff locates the designer and his work within a general

philosophical linguistic turn—a "semantic turn". Thus, this change is linked to many other changes in our societies (Krippendorff 2006: 12). Put another way: Language is a cultural artifact that enables humans to coordinate their conceptions, engage in joint action, and construct and reconstruct the realities they see… humans are beings who "language each other into being" (Krippendorff 2006: 20). Today, designers can therefore be seen as humans who "language us" into aesthetic discourses and aesthetic constructs which surround us. The use of the iPod, for example, is not only accompanied by discourses and interpretations of the meaning of the gadget, but the i-Pod is an expression of the way in which we construct our environment, since we are now confronted with the unlimited possibility of extending our sound-scape into infinite space. It is a merging and transforming of the private and the public, a blended living where virtual, artificial sounds are blended into the "concrete world" of our being. This process certainly started with tape-recorders and portable CD players, but it has been hyped by the i-Pod as the symbol for the newly designed (constructed) and blended environment. This is not an applied art that has not been applied before, but it is a construction of an artificial, and the realization of a blended, world.

The i-Pod (or this blended world) confronts us with a radical position, which involves the questioning of an outside reality, a world that exists without us. We are confronted with a position that includes a "known world", which, as a construct, must be created in order to be observable, talked about with others, and enacted. Words do things, create artifacts, and change worlds (Krippendorff 2006: 21, 22). Because the proposed framing of reality, which we have referred to in this paper as "blended", is a matter of language, it is a construction which "languages" us into being. From this perspective, industrial design, along with its underlying assumptions, is based upon many questionable universal conceptions and many taken-for-granted notions, for example, matter, form, gestalt, color, beauty, and also the idea of function. In most design theories, concepts like form, gestalt, etc., are considered a given, not a constructed result. This happens easily because the use of language can unwittingly draw us into such ontological concepts.

As a result, we have developed an ontology comprising objects and their properties, e.g., color, gestalt, etc. Within our reframing and rethinking, we must reframe design and take the role of language seriously, since it is the use of language that distinguishes forms, materials, functions, and problems, and directs the attention of designers to what they are to do with such things (Krippendorff 2006: 23). The distinctions among these things are not given facts, for objects, the natural and artificial worlds, are always continuous, not discrete. The realities that we construct in design, for example, form, material, functions, and problems, are created within communities. The same is also true of the applied arts (*angewandte Kunst*), which assumes that there is an art that exists prior to, or independently of, its application. A definition of applied arts refers to the application of design and aesthetics to objects of function and everyday usage.

What originally concerned people, namely, the discourse and negotiations between art and applied art, is now manifest in an observer-independent reality. We have "language(d)" each other into a reality and no longer know anything about our construct. As a result, we operate within a "monument" that is called *Hochschule fuer angewandte Kunst (*Academy for Applied Art*)*. What was originally a dialogue among people, and then later a belief in an observer-independent universe, namely, the applied arts, is now a fact—the *Hochschule fuer angewandte Kunst*. We have denied the process as a part of the

reality, and we therefore accept something that was constructed by human beings as a given. Can we escape such a trap? And, if so, how can we sustain a discourse in order to overcome such a false ontology?

Krippendorff says that discourse analysis contains five elementary aspects (Krippendorff 2006: 23-25):

1.   A discourse surfaces in a body of textual matter, in the artifacts it constructs and then leaves behind
2.   A discourse is kept alive within the community of its practitioners
3.   A discourse institutes its recurrent practices
4.   A discourse draws its own boundary
5.   A discourse justifies its identities to outsiders

Furthermore, these discourse regulations outlined for design discourse are consistent with scientific discourse as described by Foucault in his Archeology of Knowledge. Within design, however, the emphases are different than those within an archeology of knowledge, since we should view discourses not merely as written or spoken. Traditionally, designers have always used texts and media matter that go beyond traditional texts, including texts based on signs and symbols; but textual matter goes far beyond such texts and includes all artifacts generated by a designer or even by humans. The visual is also central to the development of Foucault's thought, and according to Rajchmann (Rajchman, 1988:91), who studied Foucault extensively, the visual is the complementary component to "discourse".

And if we look at Foucault's exploration in Archeology (Foucault, 1972:193), then we can understand Rajchman's view: "In analyzing a painting, one can reconstitute the latent discourse of the painter; one can try to recapture the murmur of his intentions, which are not transcribed into words, but into lines, surfaces, and colors; one can try to uncover the implicit philosophy that is supposed to form his view of the world. It is also possible to question science, or at least the opinions of the period, and to try to recognize to what extent they appear in the painter's work." And Foucault continues: "Archeological analysis would have another aim: it would try to discover whether space, distance, depth, color, light, proportions, volumes, and contours were not, at the period in question, considered, named, enunciated, and conceptualized in a discourse practice; and whether the knowledge that this discourse practice gives rise to was not embodied perhaps in theories and speculations, in forms of teaching and codes of practice, but also in process, techniques, and even in the very gesture of the painter." Both elements—images and texts—can be used in discourse formation; and the painter as well as the historian, the theorist as well as the designer, are using discourse analysis, although they are emphasizing different discourse media.

Design Is Turning Documents into Monuments

What are designers doing besides generating and sustaining discourses within this perspective? In his introduction, Foucault associates his work to archeology, where an attempt would be made to "turn documents into monuments" (Rajchman: 1988: 91). And turning documents into monuments can also be seen as an important aspect of the process of designing, since documents, that is, phases within the process of designing—for instance, sketches, drawings, brainstorming results, charts, descriptions

etc.—will eventually be cast into prototypes and objects, into visible results, which we can therefore call "monuments".

Who would argue that the process in design cannot be seen in this light? Who would argue that design objects, like buildings of famous architects or designers, are not monuments as soon as they have been realized, as soon as they appear as visual facts? In his work on Foucault, Deleuze states that he sees both elements in each layer (*strata*) (Deleuze, 1986 Foucault: 71): There is a way to say it and there is a way to see it, discourse and evidence; each layer is a combination of both and from each layer to the other there is a combination of discourse and evidence. I would argue that the same can be said for design. Each design object combines both elements: the discourse, documented in drawings, sketches, and even texts, and the ever-present evidence, evidence in the monuments that are created and, thereafter, in the discourses about the monuments, which appear in design magazines, articles, and books; and also the understanding and discourse found in design science—the discourse about design, we can say. Thus, in design there is a way to see and a way to speak.

Foucault (Deleuze 1986: 70, 71) has said that history is the determination of what can be said and seen in each epoch, the discourse formation and the non-discourse formation (Deleuze, Foucault: 71). But each layer is a combination of both, a way to say it and a way to see it, discourse and evidence; and from one layer to the next there is a variation of both elements and their connection. Design and the history of design is therefore a matter of what we can see, the monuments we have documented; however, it is also what has been said and the relationship between the visual and the spoken, the evidence and the discourse. Reducing design to a pure statement would create an illusion.

An Integrated Design Discourse Concept
Within the discourse presented above, we have seen that objects and images, as well as texts, are essential matter of designer discourse. All aspects must therefore be understood. Objects, both virtual and physical, have meaning, both images and texts. The meaning of textual matter is an understanding of the first order. A designer must also consider the second order of understanding, which means that someone else's understanding of something is qualitatively different from one's own understanding of that same thing (Krippendorf 2006:67). We are immediately referred to hermeneutics and its circle; and as Perez-Gomez (1999: 79) pointed out, in hermeneutics truth lies in interpretation, always revealing-concealing, never posited absolutely and objectively. Yet hermeneutics is able to account for change, growth, and perhaps even evolution. Designers must therefore comprehend the discourse, since a stakeholder's understanding of an object can be different and even contradictory to one's own understanding, or that of another stakeholder.

Ricoeur puts it this way: "If there is somewhere a project and a projection, it is the reference of the work which is the project of a world; the reader is consequently enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself " (Paul Ricoeur 1974: 108). In light of the various theories underlying symbolic interactions (Kuhn 1964: 71), designers must therefore comprehend several layers of discourse and meaning and their complex theoretical strata.

Viewpoints are vital for designers. They help designers gain an understanding of users when constructing products. If products are based not only on one (biased) viewpoint, but rather on

multiple, or even conflicting, viewpoints, then they are more likely to succeed. Yet multiple viewpoints become visible only when they are interpreted and constructed. Moreover, this interpretation and construction process itself becomes comprehensible only when embedded in an underlying social context. Design is discourse. This implies a need for conceiving interaction as the object of attention and for contextualizing this interaction within an underlying organization. Representations can be examined both as classifiers bracketed from interaction and as instruments of change during the interaction (Sarkinnen 2006: 1).

In current discussions of design discourse, we actually find some interesting examples of how designers and design scientists handle or cope with discourse in design. Design discourse must be dealt with in different stages of the design process, as well as after the design objects have been published— from objects to signs and symbols and even interactions, from services to classical design objects, such as, a pen, a chair, a car or even a building. The actors within design discourse need to be conscious of the various arenas in which the discourse takes place, as well as how it takes place.

Sarkinnen (2006: 5) explains that the type of interaction between the constituents is important, and he also extends the discourse matter of visual representations and representational practices into verbal discourse practices. Such a practice is naturally found in nearly all design studios, where a design team studies a design proposal together, discussing the advantages and disadvantages, the user-friendliness, the adequateness, etc., of the proposed solution. It is therefore important to extend our concept of textual matter not only into the realm of images and objects, but also into that of verbal matter.

"The 'representational practice' dimension supplements this view. It presents the production of user viewpoints with respect to a set of different conceptual-interpretive and constructive-productive uses of both verbal and visual representations. Verbal representation here refers to the description produced in speech. Thus, both types of representation are examined as part of action, not as bracketed out of it. Both types can be interpreted and constructed. Hence, four types of uses of representations can be recognized, namely, the construction and interpretation of verbal representations, and the construction and interpretation of visual representations" (Sarkinnen 2006: 6).

The Design Discourse Strata
We are now able to summarize the various discourse strata in design, which are conveyed by media matter and which I define here as the "discourse matter", expanding the traditional idea of text and textual matter into that media which designers use during the process of researching, conceptualizing, and designing, as well as evaluating or theorizing about design and its philosophical and historical framework:

1. Visual Discourse in drawings, symbols, and signs, provided by designers when generating visual matter and documents
2. Verbal/aural discourse among designers within the process of designing
3. Visual Discourse generated by objects in the design market and what we construct as a history of design
4. The discourse relationship between above-mentioned discourses one and three, the discursive relationship between the documents generated during the designing phase and the prototypes and
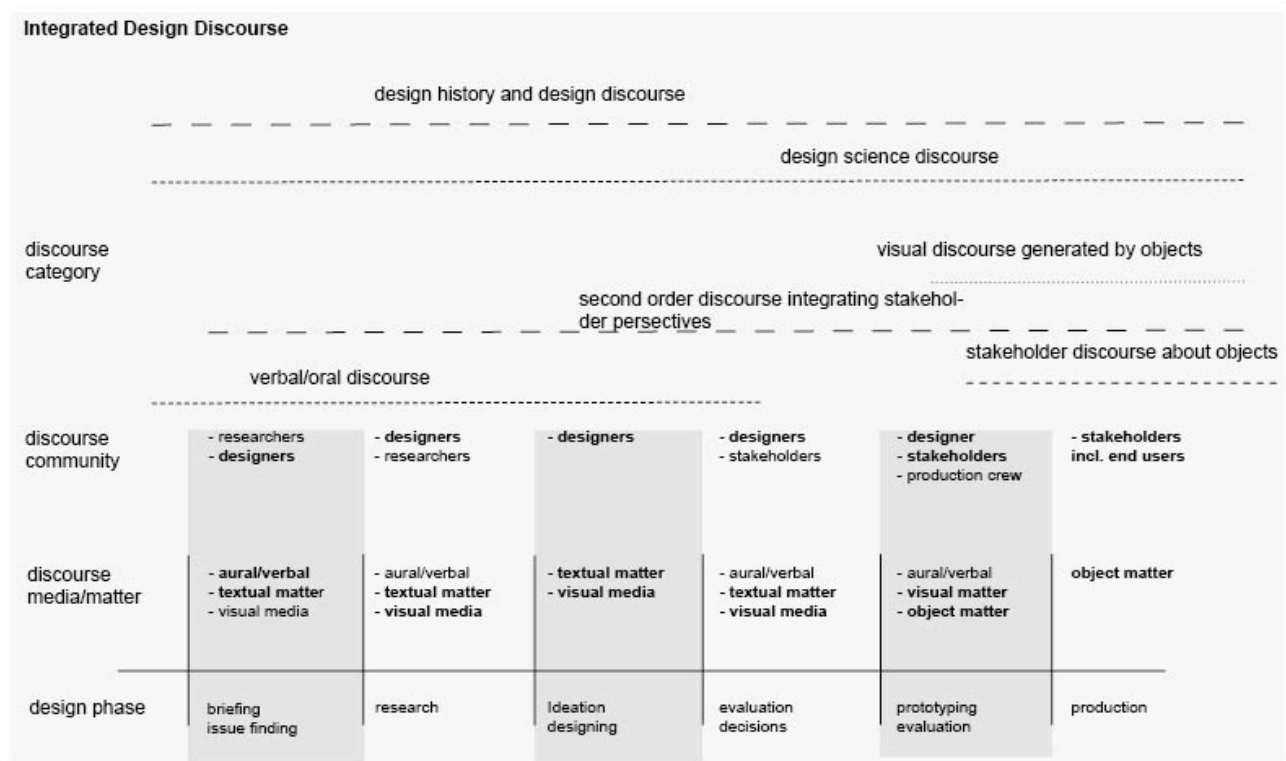
objects that are generated

5. Discourse based on statements within the archeology of design history, the design discourse

6. Discourse based on textual dialogues in design science, that is, the discourse that illuminates design methods, design theories, etc.

7. The discourse relationship between the design discourse and the discourse generated by stakeholders and their respective understandings

8. Discourse generated by the meanings of objects, which is indicated by stakeholders and their respective understandings

Integrated Design Discourse

design history and design discourse

design science discourse

| discourse category | | | | | visual discourse generated by objects | |

second order discourse integrating stakehol-der persectives

stakeholder discourse about objects

verbal/oral discourse

discourse community	- researchers - designers	- designers - researchers	- designers	- designers - stakeholders	- designer - stakeholders - production crew	- stakeholders incl. end users
discourse media/matter	- aural/verbal - textual matter - visual media	- aural/verbal - textual matter - visual media	- textual matter - visual media	- aural/verbal - textual matter - visual media	- aural/verbal - visual matter - object matter	object matter
design phase	briefing issue finding	research	Ideation designing	evaluation decisions	prototyping evaluation	production

When one looks at the above chart, one probably realizes how difficult it is to make clear distinctions among the various design phases, as well as within the discourse media, the community, and the discourse category, since the design process is a continuous process, which makes it difficult to put such a continuum into a discrete framework. Such an undertaken always provokes contradictions. It is necessary, however, to show the emphasis, as well as the domains of the various phases, so that one will understand the various discourse activities within the design process and what can be called "the design world".

Based upon the discourse shown here, however, it should be clear that, along the proposed trajectory of artificiality, we can also see that the distinction between art and applied art is questionable, and that the differences between the textual matter and the media matter used by designers are merging into one discourse field (integrated design discourse), since designers are being consciously forced into discourses and interpretations of designs at all levels and within diverse media and diverse communities. At this point, theory is practice. Designers generate models and "language" us into aesthetic discourses,

philosophical discourses, and constructs called the "world".

According to the development of our argument, we can summarize by saying that design is discourse and science is design if the design is consciously realized. But the "conveyence matter" in design goes beyond text. In design we need to understand the textual matter conveying discourse in a broader manner, since it should include the verbal, the visual and even objects and texts. We must understand the discourse in design as an integrated discourse, and each phase within the process shows a different discourse community and a changing discourse matter or media.
 "There is a way to say something and a way to see something, discourse and evidence; each layer is a combination of both and from each layer to the next there is a combination of discourse and evidence. Expanding on this we can say that, apart from the way we say something and see something, there is a way to code something into texts and plans. Furthermore, there is a way to materialize something into objects. This is what designing does: It transforms documents into monuments.

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