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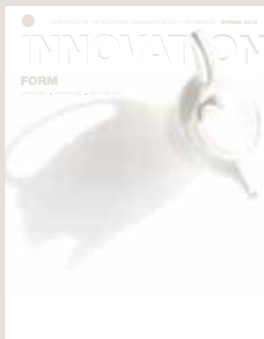
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By Bill Moggridge, FIDSA

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Bill Moggridge is director of the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

DESIGN TO TOUCH, USE & INHABIT

When I graduated from my industrial design program (at the Central School of Design in London) in 1965, I expected that my career would be spent designing mass-produced products, usually manufactured in metals and plastics. How surprising that the context of design has expanded so dramatically in less than half a century that I am now convinced that everything can be (and usually is) designed, from jewels to cities, including digital interactions, services, organizational change, social innovation, and on and on. This led me to leave “industrial” out of the description of my occupation, calling myself only a “designer.”

I like the notion that we make the world better by giving form to ideas; it's just that the form includes more than the physical. The iPhone is now ubiquitous, demonstrating that tangibility is inherent to the value of the device, enjoying the nimble touch of fingers on the surface to tap, stroke, pinch and flick. We can give form to the whole idea, including shape, structure, surface, color, interactive behavior, social consequence and implications for the sustainability of our planet.

What do we mean by design? I like the 1969 definition by Charles Eames, “Design is a method of action” because “method” implies the commonality of process shared across



Branca Chair designed by Industrial Facility for Mattiazzi

design disciplines and because “action” shows that design is about doing as well as thinking, making a difference, creating an outcome. An intriguing book called *Usefulness in Small Things* arrived on my desk recently, created by Kim



Table, Bench, Chair for Established & Sons designed by Industrial Facility

Colin and Sam Hecht of Industrial Facility in London. When you browse through the pages, each item is interesting in itself as an object that has some special form and quality, but you probably haven't seen any of them before. Seen collectively, these objects amount to a philosophy about design values and attributes, enhanced by a playfulness that is so laid back that it feels minimal.

The subtitle of the book is *Items from the Under a Fiver Collection*. Sam Hecht has been collecting inexpensive things (the translation of "Under a Fiver" is less than £5) since 1994, finding inspiration in unexpected functionality, ambiguity, usefulness, quirkiness, local value or some quality that makes you stop and think. In 2008, the London Design Museum mounted an exhibit called "Industrial Facility, Some Recent Projects," featuring product designs for clients, but also including a selection of items from Sam's Under a Fiver collection. Since then the collection has continued to grow, and Kim Colin developed and designed this presentation of the material as a book. You can get a good impression of it from this online video: <http://vimeo.com/31096872>.

Another perplexing question is the relationship between design and art; design is taught in the art departments of universities and a lot of designers would like to be thought of as artists. Hecht addresses this in his essay in the book, saying, "Art is a presentation of thought that makes you think. Design is a communication of thoughts that makes you use. Simply put, art cannot be compromised and design can never *not* be." In the famous interview with Madame Amic for the "What is Design?" exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1969, she asked, "Is design an expression of art (an art form)?" and Charles Eames answered, "The design is an expression of the purpose. It may (if it is good enough) later be judged as art."

You notice that both these ideas about how design compares to art are very broad in their coverage. Whether it's a "communication of thoughts" or an "expression of purpose," the authors claim that design is much more than

creating physical form. The communication or the expression can exist in any context or medium: If it's an object it will include physical form; if it's virtual it will include the interactive behavior; it may also include systemic structures and social implications. As designers we are concerned with the relationship between whatever "it" is and the people we are designing for, so we should consider the complete narrative from start to finish and from birth to death.

The value of this holistic approach is demonstrated by the emergence of Apple as the most valuable technology company in the world. The iPods, iPhones and iPads are dominant because the physical form-giving of Jonathan Ive and his team of designers is closely coupled with the interaction design of the software, the graphic design of the packaging, the communications and Peter Bohlin's delectable architecture for the stores. These elements are not only closely linked but also patiently developed with a consistent strategy year after year. Take the iPod, for example. Apple acquired SoundJam in 2000 and used it to develop iTunes, the program that allows people to manipulate music on their Macs. It was over a year before the first iPod was launched, allowing people to carry their music with them and easily synchronize with iTunes. Two more years went by before the iTunes music store gave people the chance to purchase their music as easily as stealing it, and again a couple of years went by before iTunes for Windows was developed and shipped. The patience to achieve this integrated systemic solution paid dividends for Apple in the marketplace and laid the foundation for the iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad.

We're back to the tangibility of all these touch-screen devices, demonstrating both that the physical form and the interaction design can be completely integrated with the audio design, screen appearance, animation and interactive behavior, engaging us as we tap, stroke, pinch and flick. Let there be many such tangible objects that we can design to touch, use and inhabit. ■



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