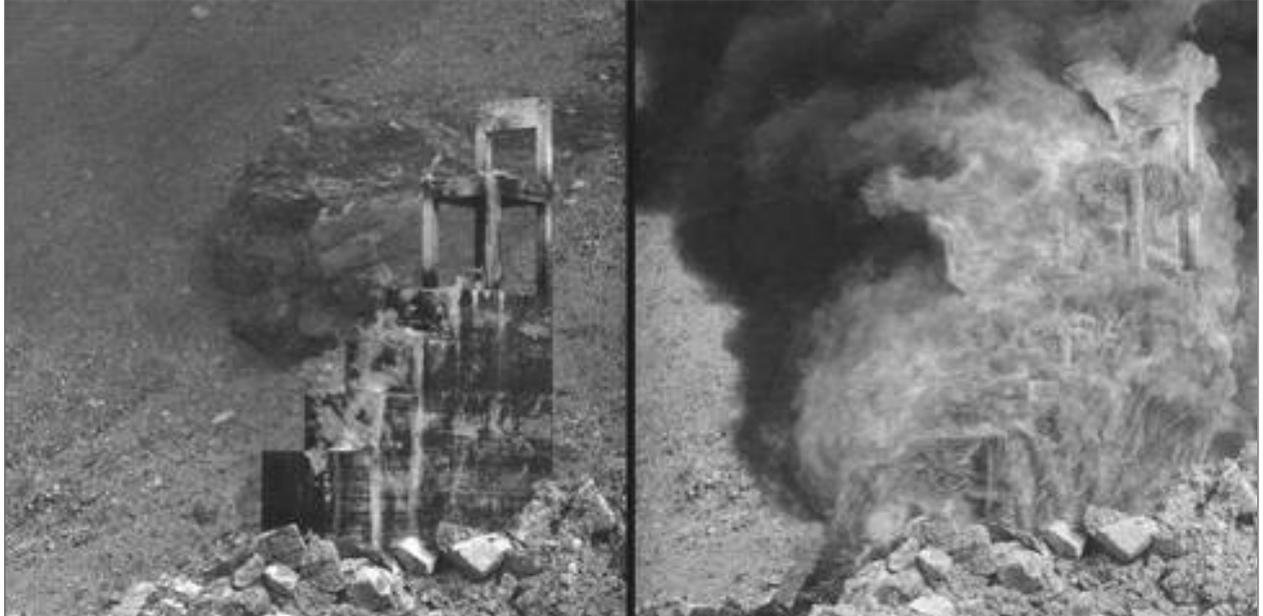


ID707 CRITIQUE OF DESIGN I: *object writing*

2015-16 Fall Semester | Mon 09:30–12:30, R22 | Harun Kaygan : R68, hkaygan@metu.edu.tr



Alessandro Mendini, Lassù, 1975.

Course description

The course offers an extensive vocabulary of theoretical concepts, with which it aims to help you *think about, talk about and write about objects in a creative and critical manner.*

The emphasis is on *critique*. Together, we will be exploring possibilities of developing creative and powerful critiques of design objects and practices. For this purpose, we will study an eclectic selection of readings and engage in a range of writing exercises. These will be complemented by discussions on pieces of literature and works of art and design, on which you can hone your critical skills, and which you can use as jumping boards for future academic and/or creative work.

Requirements of the course

1. Text is our principal medium. Each week is assigned pieces of reading on the week's topic. These include *required* readings and *complementary* readings.

Required readings are around *40 pages per week*, offered as a bound copy at the Library photocopy office. You are expected to read these *in full before* the lectures. This is not only a requirement of the course but also fundamental to the in-class exercises and discussions.

Complementary readings are optional pieces that provide reference to, examples for or further elaboration on the *required* readings. These will be shared with you in digital format.

2. The course outline is organised into four modules: *Representation, Consumption, Body* and *Meshwork*. Each module comprises two weeks of lectures, and a concluding assignment where you are expected to

write a brief paper. The purpose of the four written assignments is to (a) help you consolidate the new knowledge through application, (b) let you experience different modes of writing (critique, observation, and research and analysis), and (c) help you choose a topic for your final paper.

At the end of the course you are expected to submit your *revised* assignments in the form of a portfolio.

3. In addition to the portfolio, the final output of the course will be an essay, minimum 3,500 words. You are strongly encouraged to write the final paper by expanding one of the four assignments in your portfolio, but you are expected to incorporate new literature, acquired through a topical literature review. (As a guideline, the new literature should include one or two books and a few journal/conference papers.) Formal requirements and the deadline for submission will be announced later.
4. Your final grade will be determined by your assignments (15% each) and the final paper (40%). Late submissions are accepted at the following week's class, but graded with a 50% penalty.

Attendance is obligatory. Not attending the course for more than three weeks without any official excuse, or failing to submit two assignments will both result in outright failure with an "N/A" grade.

Note that plagiarism is a disciplinary offence, and will result in outright failure and disciplinary sanctions. (On plagiarism, see <http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism>)

Course Outline

Note that you are *required* to read *all* the *required* readings, *in full* and *before* the lectures. You are advised to read the *required* pieces in the order they are presented here for they follow a certain logic.

Week 1: Introductory meeting (12 Oct)

Introduction and general discussion

Week 2: Representation I: Semiology and Advertising (19 Oct)

Gillian Rose, "Semiology: Laying Bare the Prejudices beneath the Smooth Surface of the Beautiful", in *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, pp. 69–99.

Judith Williamson, "Back to Nature", in *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, pp. 122–131.

Complementary reading on semiology, recommended if you are unfamiliar with the topic: Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation", in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, pp. 15–41.

Week 3: Representation II: Semiological Analysis of Objects (26 Oct)

Roland Barthes, "The New Citroen", "Toys", "Ornamental Cookery", "Plastic", "Soap", in *Mythologies*, 10 pp.

Jean Baudrillard, "Structures of Atmosphere", in *The System of Objects*, pp. 30–62; esp. "Atmospheric Values: Colour", pp. 30–7; "Atmospheric Values: Materials", pp. 37–43; "Stylization, Manipulability, Envelopment", pp. 52–4; "Functional Form: The Lighter", pp. 58–9; "Formal Connotation: Tail Fins", pp. 59–60.

Complementary reading for a review of Baudrillard's book: Mark Gottdiener, "The System of Objects and the Commodification of Everyday Life: The Early Baudrillard", in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, pp. 25–40.

Complementary reading for a literary example: Georges Perec, *Things* [Novella] (You may read this in Turkish: *Şeyler*, Metis, 2012).

Week 4: Representation: Module Assignment (2 Nov)

Find a print or video advertisement of a designed product. Analyse the product (and not only the advertisement) explicitly referring to the semiological terms and concepts we have discussed. In your analysis, try to include not only style, but also issues of functionality and use. Submit your findings in a report 750–1250 words long.

Week 5: Consumption I: Exchange and Commoditization (9 Nov)

Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process”, in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, pp. 64–91, esp. 64–77.

Nicholas Thomas, “Indigenous Appropriation of European Things”, in *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*, pp. 83–103.

Complementary reading for an overview of key literature on commoditization: Nicholas Thomas, “Objects, Exchange, Anthropology”, in *Entangled Objects*, pp. 7–34.

Week 6: Consumption II: Cultures of Consumption (16 Nov)

John Clarke et al., “G. Sources of Style”, in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, pp. 40–45.

Dick Hebdige, “The Meaning of Mod”, in *Resistance Through Rituals*, pp. 71–78.

Graham St John, “Post-Rave Technotribalism and the Carnival of Protest”, in *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, pp. 65–78.

Complementary reading for a review of the literature on subcultures: Rupert Weinzierl and David Muggleton, “What is ‘Post-subcultural Studies’ Anyway?”, in *The Post Subcultures Reader*, pp. 3–23, esp. 3–9.

Week 7: Consumption: Module Assignment (23 Nov)

Find a case in which a group of people consumes a product (a mass-produced object, a space, a cultural product, etc.) or a set of products in a peculiar way. Research the case (in the library, on the Internet, talking to people, or by reflecting on your own experience), and describe in detail the instances of use and exchange, as well as the properties of the product itself. Conclude with a brief assessment of the politics of consumption as regards the product (including issues of style and identity, ritual use, commoditization and singularization, etc.). Submit a report 750–1250 words long.

Week 8: Body I: Discipline (30 Nov)

Michel Foucault, “The Eye of Power”, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972–1977*, pp. 146–165.

Michel Foucault, “Docile Bodies”, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, pp. 135–169; esp. “The Control of Activity”, pp. 149–156; and the excerpt on rifle, pp. 162–3.

Complementary reading on applying Foucault’s approach to visual culture: Gillian Rose, “Discourse Analysis II: Institutions and Ways of Seeing”, in *Visual Methodologies*, pp. 164–186.

Week 9: Body II: Scripts (7 Dec)

Madeleine Akrich, “The De-description of Technical Objects”, in *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, pp. 205–224.

Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant, “Paris: Invisible City”, plans 32–4 (pp. 64–69).

Daniel Miller, "The Sari", in *Stuff*, pp. 23–31.

Complementary reading for an easy-to-read review of ANT for designers: Albena Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold: Toward an Actor-Network Theory of Design", *Design and Culture* 1 (3), pp. 273–288.

Complementary reading for a more theoretically minded review of ANT: Harun Kaygan, "Material-Semiotic Analysis of Design for a Politics of the Material Object", working paper, 15 pp.

Week 10: Body: Module Assignment (14 Dec)

Choose a designed product the use context of which you can observe. Go to the use context in person and conduct non-participant observation, all the while taking notes. Compile your notes in a short paper, 750–1250 words long, providing a detailed description of use and describing how the product shapes (conditions, directs, allows, inhibits, etc.) its user(s).

Week 11: Meshwork I: Ecology (21 Dec)

Tim Ingold, "Of String Bags and Birds' Nests: Skill and Construction of Artefacts", in *Perception of Environment*, pp. 352–361.

Tim Ingold, "Up, Across and Along", in *Lines: A Brief History*, pp. 72–103, esp. 72–84, 96–103.

Tim Ingold, "When ANT meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Arthropods", in *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach*, pp. 209–215.

Week 12: Meshwork II: Materials (28 Dec)

Tim Ingold, "Materials against Materiality", in *Archaeological Dialogues* 14(1), pp. 1–16.

Ezio Manzini, "Paths of Experience", in *The Material of Invention*, pp. 23–34.

Complementary reading for a case study: Jacqueline Field, "Silk Production: Moths, Mulberry and Metamorphosis" in *Making and Growing*, pp. 25–44.

Complementary reading for a case study: Lorraine Daston, "The Glass Flowers", in *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, pp. 223–256.

Complementary reading for a case study: David M. Guss, "All Things Made", in *In The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, pp. 374–386.

Week 13: Meshwork: Module Assignment (4 Jan)

Choose a material. It can be a general type (plastics, or wood) or very specific (wicker, or extruded polypropylene) or anything in between. Write a brief discussion, 750–1250 words long, analysing the material as a "meshwork" of human and non-human bodies, cultural and skilled practices, social and technical discourses, etc.