

DESMA 104: DESIGN FUTURES

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

The take-home final has two parts, a prototype and an essay. The essay is a 10-12 page (1500-2000 word) curatorial statement for a speculative exhibition, *Design Futures*. The essay should be accompanied by captioned descriptions of 25-50 images that make the case for your argument about the future of design, via their juxtaposition, inter-relationships, and even the wit with which you choose and arrange them. A maximum of 10 images may be drawn from the examples covered in the lectures and readings. The final is due at Friday June 8, 12:00 PM Noa Kaplan's mailbox in the Broad Art Center Office and via email to the teaching assistant.

The prototype is a 1-2 minute video proposal for your exhibition; it can be a motion graphic, an elevator pitch, an interview, testimonial, a slide show with voice over, any genre you choose. Note that regardless of method, the theme and argument behind your show must be clearly presented in the prototype. A link to your prototype video is due on Thursday, June 7, 9:00 AM via email. We will view the prototypes on the last day of class.

The author Mindy McAdams identifies five steps to curation; I'll summarize them here:

1. Selection of the best representatives
2. Culling
3. Provide context
4. Arrangement of individual objects
5. Organization of the whole

One of the main points of this course is that the world of contemporary design is just too big and evolving too fast to "master" it. The question for all of us is how to negotiate our way to a productive relationship with this field, and how to relate our interests in design to broader issues in society. To help us do this, I'm proposing a transformation from "students" trying to "learn" the material, to "curators" proposing a show. The point is to demonstrate a sensibility that appeals to us or that causes us concern.

In Susan Sontag's essay on camp, she writes: "A sensibility is almost, but not quite, ineffable. Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mold of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea... To snare a sensibility in words, especially one that is alive and powerful, one must be tentative and nimble." This assignment is about yoking images to words, creating "powerful" yet nimble associations. In other words, it is a certain kind of "design brief."

What I'd like you to do is think about the work we've been looking at, the texts we've been reading, the discussions we've had in class, our visiting speakers and your visits to other shows and talks as the starting point to develop your own analysis of and contribution to the world of contemporary design and media art. Start to identify, pull out and organize a set of images, objects, and experiences that build an argument, make a point, and/or express a sensibility about the present moment in design.

Illuminate a potential future through curation. What future do you envision?