

École Supérieure d'Art et Design, www.esad-gv.fr

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O^{bj.} Intervention de Nina Paim et Corinne Gisel auprès des étudiants en 4^e année design graphique

R^{éf.} Objects of Interest

Sur une invitation de Gilles Rouffineau, enseignant en photographie à l'ÉSAD •Valence.

The goal of this class is two-fold. First of all, it aims to instigate a critical reflection on the social, political and environmental impact of design: instead of looking at design as the solution to problems, we will expose design's culpability in creating, perpetuating, or intensifying problems. On a second level, the class wants to foster skills crucial to the profession of the graphic designer, that of how complex networks of information can be mediated in a clear and enticing way. In the first part, students will act like detectives. In the second part, they will become prosecutors presenting their case to a public.

In all this we will embrace a wider definition of design. We won't only consider objects made by those who call themselves designers, but rather any human-made artefact, process, system or structure, that was constructed to do something in the world, often with a certain intent in mind. Bottom-line: design not as something only done by designers, but something that we all do.

Students will be asked to choose one "object of interest", that is, one design artefact which they suspect has committed "a crime." We will think of crime not primarily in a strictly legal terms, but in a wider sense of anything that has or has had a negative impact in the world: creating new problems, being negligent, being deceitful. Our task is that of "forensics":

"Forensis is Latin for 'pertaining to the forum' and is the root of the term forensics. The roman forum was a multi-dimensional space of negotiation and truth-finding in which humans and objects participated together in politics, law, and the economy. With the advent of modernity, the meaning of forensics shifted

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to refer increasingly to the domain of law, and particularly to the use of medicine—and later science more generally—in the courts. Today, forensics is central to the ways by which states police and govern their subjects, and, through its popular representations, has become a defining feature of contemporary culture.”

Forensic Architecture, *Forensis*, HKW Berlin, 2014, curated by Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizman

Much like detectives, students will conduct an investigation. Following the object's clues and trails, they will go “out into the field” to sniff up information, gathering insights and mapping the network of relations around it, to finally establish the evidence to prove their case. Having the object of interest at the center of their investigation, students will ask: What is the crime? Who is the victim? What's the object's *alibi*? What other actors are involved? Was there so-called “*mens rea*”, i.e. criminal intent, involved? Or did it occur by accident? Did it happen in the past, is it still ongoing, or likely to occur in the future?

The goal of this investigation is to start untangling the knotty networks that objects are enmeshed in, and develop a way to make these relations visible, to mediate them. In the end, students will present their findings to the world and prove their case, using the format of short videos.

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