

The Role of Fiction in Experiments within Design, Art & Architecture

EVA KNUTZ,
KOLDING SCHOOL OF DESIGN
EK@DSKD.DK

THOMAS MARKUSSEN
KOLDING SCHOOL OF DESIGN
TM@DSKD.DK

POUL RIND CHRISTENSEN
KOLDING SCHOOL OF DESIGN
RIND@DSKD.DK

This article has been selected for a special issue of the online journal *Artifact*.

manifestation of critique; (3) design aims; (4) materializations and forms; and (5) the aesthetic of design fictions. The typology is premised on the idea that fiction may integrate with reality in many different ways in design experiments. The explanatory power of the typology is exemplified through the analyses of 6 case projects.

INTRODUCTION

Within the last couple of years there has been an increased interest in Design Fiction as a new practice or approach within design research (Bleecker, 2009; DiSalvo, 2012; Grand and Wiedmer, 2010). Ever since the advent of modern design, designers have used fiction as a technique for experimenting with alternative models for society or for criticising existing ones. The imaginary urban projects of the Futurists proposed a city where machines enabled radically new forms of architecture and infrastructure, and in the 1920s Norman Bel Geddes envisioned what at that time must have looked like an utopian idea: gargantuan airliners transporting people across the Atlantic. The ability to use design fictions for speculating about alternative presences or possible futures is at the core of design practice. What is new is that it is now claimed also to be a viable road for producing valid

While DiSalvo makes a valuable contribution, his treatment is too limited for understanding other forms of design fiction. Grand & Wiedmer (2010) propose a method toolbox for practicing design fiction in design research, but in fact they say very little about the particularities of this approach. Only that it may take the form of ‘criticising existing technologies’ as in critical design, ‘asking unanswerable questions’ or ‘reinterpreting the past’ by transforming what is into what could be.

We offer a typology, which allows us to explain design fictions according to 5 criteria. The typology is premised on the idea that fiction may integrate with reality in many different ways in design experiments. Since design fictions can take many forms and variations, it is simply impossible to cover them all in the stroke of one paper. Our typology is built up from 6 case projects, all of which use fiction in design experiments offering alternative models for designing the urban environment. This typology should be thought of as an initial first step towards building a more exhaustive framework.

We start out by defining design fiction and discussing the role of fiction in relation to experiments in design research. Next, we account for how design fiction is manifested in the 6 case projects. On the basis of our case analyses we present a table offering an overview. Finally, we critically discuss our typology in relation to related work.