Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming (MIT Press)

By Anthony Dunne, Fiona Raby

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Today designers often focus on making technology easy to use, sexy, and consumable. In *Speculative Everything*, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby propose a kind of design that is used as a tool to create not only things but ideas. For them, design is a means of speculating about how things could be -- to imagine possible futures. This is not the usual sort of predicting or forecasting, spotting trends and extrapolating; these kinds of predictions have been proven wrong, again and again. Instead, Dunne and Raby pose "what if" questions that are intended to open debate and discussion about the kind of future people want (and do not want).

Speculative Everything offers a tour through an emerging cultural landscape of design ideas, ideals, and approaches. Dunne and Raby cite examples from their own design and teaching and from other projects from fine art, design, architecture, cinema, and photography. They also draw on futurology, political theory, the philosophy of technology, and literary fiction. They show us, for example, ideas for a solar kitchen restaurant; a flypaper robotic clock; a menstruation machine; a cloud-seeding truck; a phantom-limb sensation recorder; and devices for food foraging that use the tools of synthetic biology. Dunne and Raby contend that if we speculate more -- about everything -- reality will become more malleable. The ideas freed by speculative design increase the odds of achieving desirable futures.

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Editorial Review

Review

In *Speculative Everything* Dunne and Raby continue to inspire and challenge us to consider design as a unique mode of sociocultural inquiry. Rather than resigning design to either problem solving or styling, what Dunne and Raby offer is a vibrant practice of using design to materialize and experiment with alternate worldviews and futures. *Speculative Everything* is an important contribution to the field of design and should be read widely.

(Carl DiSalvo, author of *Adversarial Design*)

In a period where existing systems are reaching their effective limits, *Speculative Everything* describes an expanded and refreshing role for design. Dunne and Raby show how speculative design can stimulate debate and reveal choices that exist beyond the constraints of existing business, social, and technological approaches.

(Tim Brown, CEO, IDEO)

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby have set out to change the landscape of contemporary design. They remind us that design is about asking questions, as well as answering them. *Speculative Everything*, their provocative manifesto, is an intriguing contribution to the search for a new direction for design.

(Deyan Sudjic, Director, Design Museum, London)

Designers are usually seen as problem solvers. Their function is to make a product better or more beautiful, or to make a process more efficient. But what if, instead of solving problems, they posed them? That is the premise behind *Speculative Everything*, the first book to look in detail at the kinds of results such an approach might throw up.... Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, professors at London's Royal College of Art, have been the most articulate proponents of the idea of "critical design". Their concern is not to design products to be sent out into a slightly uncertain future but rather to imagine how that future might be entirely different. The result is a series of scenarios that help to illuminate moral, ethical, political and aesthetic problems.

(*Financial Times*)

Speculative Everything neatly and quietly dispels the myths, misunderstandings and simplifications surrounding speculative design. Of course, there will always be people who dismiss Dunne and Raby's work for being too arty, and, well, too speculative to be strictly design but if some of them ever read the book, i'm quite convinced that they will at least agree on the fact that its authors ask some valid questions and more importantly perhaps articulate them in an intelligent, compelling way.

(*We Make Money Not Art*)

In conclusion, something should be said about how refined and handsome this book is, as a designed artifact. Though it's a work for the academy and not for the coffee-table, it deliberately upholds a high standard. All the illustrations, and there are many, are in crisp resolution, while starkly obvious pains have been taken to see that due credit was given to every creative person involved in every image. It's the polar opposite of the carefree, slobbering virality of Youtube, Tumblr, and this weblog, and there's something heart-lifting in its living demonstration of what can be achieved today. Not tomorrow, and not in the imagination -- but really, right here and now.

(Bruce Sterling *Beyond the Beyond*)

About the Author

Anthony Dunne is Professor and Head of the Design Interactions Programme at the Royal College of Art. He is the author of *Hertzian Tales: Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience, and Critical Design* (MIT Press).

Fiona Raby is Professor of Industrial Design at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, and Reader in Design Interactions at the Royal College of Art.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alberto Holbrook:

The knowledge that you get from Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming (MIT Press) may be the more deep you digging the information that hide into the words the more you get considering reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to recognise but Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming (MIT Press) giving you thrill feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by anyone who read it because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. That book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this kind of Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming (MIT Press) instantly.

Roger Everman:

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Ronald Searle:

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Tim Vazquez:

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