

# Editorial

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In 1986, in the first issue of ELISAVA Temes de Disseny, then called Temes de Disseny, in an article about social criticism of projects, Jordi Berrio proposed that a critical culture in this discipline was a discrediting culture. An attitude that necessarily involved a work of denunciation, due to which design could not be used for more than as a legitimising ideology of the system. Twenty-one years have passed since the author raised such a question in a text both well-argued and paradigmatic at that time, two decades that have been essential to the intellectual development of the design profession. A long period but one that, as always, has passed quickly and one in which the profession has been greatly incorporated into the university world. Through contributions such as the ones made in that magazine - led by people such as Enric Bricall, Jordi Pericot and the aforementioned Berrio - those years have proven that design, a field that has many implications for the economy, culture and technology as well as a great capacity for setting the scene, may be one of the most outstanding platforms for reflection today.

Over these years, we have seen what can be precisely defined as a legitimisation of design, a young discipline that is increasingly carrying more weight in business strategy, it is very important to reflect on the condition itself in order to generate its theoretical content. Design has a relatively new history, a quick trajectory, just leaving adolescence, a period that tends to be characterised by experiencing a certain lack of understanding as well as taking efforts towards self-confirmation. It is only building its own aesthetic, a concept, that of design aesthetics, which includes ethical, economic, techno-scientific and historical aspects, as well as socio-political ones. Referring once again to design schools, they are only just adding sociology, anthropology, economics and political science to their curriculums. The next step would have to be to generate design's own discourse capable of attracting other disciplines. Its own point of view -as defended at times by Josep Maria Pujol- within the cultural studies that permits a position to be taken and to put conscience criticism into practice, thus reducing domination

in a world that is excessively instrumented by capital. In this regard, one of the contributors to this issue of ELISAVA TdD, economist Miren Etxezarreta, summarises with a critical spirit the considerations of those who think that a permanent critical activity of the society we live in can be exercised through design; a perception of the collective life that unveils its limitations, makes its defects clear and mobilises it in order to improve it. However, this will be difficult to obtain, Etxezarreta reminds us, while we live in an economic system whose objective is to obtain profits for private capital. In this same issue and in a type of distance dialogue, the sharp focus of this same author is explicitly contained in the article by design historian Raquel Pelta and implicitly present in the text published jointly by Jaume Badosa and Joan Subirats, the first a designer and political expert and the second a political expert. Both of them are very aware of what Etxezarreta proposes, but their vision is the power of individual or group actions as an engine for larger changes, convinced that there are no obligatory powers, but rather social counter-powers capable of creating obligation. The system has its fractures and contradictions, states Pelta, through which aware citizens can operate productively within it. Badosa and Subirats, in an analysis coming both from politics and from the ideas emanating from the same design protagonists, make clear that from the modern-day perspective in question, it is no longer about propagating universal or redemptive attitudes about the world through design, but is conversely essential to keep asking ourselves questions about what we are producing. We must have a vision, say the authors, of re-socialising the function of designers, avoiding a strictly technical vision, and claiming the complexity and wholeness of the personal dimension that every designer should have. Ruedi Baur, in another article published in this same issue of the magazine, translates these good ideas into the reality of professional practice. And he does it by recalling that the design process implicitly entails the need to question the work that is commissioned. Doing it without creating a split with the client is not only a minimum act of resistance but also undoubtedly improves the end result, making new possibilities emerge that the party commissioning the work had never thought of. Complying without questioning, submitting without more ado goes against the

project itself. The start of all design processes, defends Baur, must rest on this act of questioning and an understanding of the elements that are present.

Besides the most practical approaches to the positions to take, another methodological aspect appears that is also important. Badosa and Subirats provide a clear example about the symbolic weight of design and the capacity it has to express our identity as a person, a group or a collective. Concretely, they contrast the case of a neighbourhood association with an institution like the European Union. Another possible comparison could have been a small company with a large multinational, where the latter surely has invested enormous amounts of money into perfecting its identity to disseminate it at a world-wide level. And it is during this process where the determining questions and issues arise that designers like Baur have been posing for some time now. The issue is if this formula applied to the large multinationals must be a single model that is also used for small companies, or whether it would always be more relevant to disassociate them from these large structures and work with diversity, evolution or specificity, separating from the typical idea of the logotype to develop more flexible visual elements. That is, as Baur outlines in more general terms in his text, that design cultivates specificity of situations instead of turning to generalist solutions. We must be sensitive to differences, as closed or single solutions that are applicable to any context are a mistake. In this sense, there is a very important topic not approached in this issue of the magazine, but which really should have been: the debate about the new forms of sociability and domestic spaces linked to the topic of social housing. Significantly, after decades of unlearned lessons and generalist solutions like housing blocks, it does not seem to have improved much, simply because from the upper echelons, the topic continues having a generic focus and not one from up close. The complexity of this issue about housing has escaped from the scale and proposals of this publishing house, but undoubtedly points out possible discussions for upcoming issues of ELISAVA TdD. However, it does contribute new proof that Baur incites us from his professional experience exercised in communication design.

The second block of writings that completes issue twenty-four turn to a new formula that has been little practiced by this magazine. This format is that of monographic articles aimed at commenting on an author's work or a concrete project from his production, an event that has entailed the need to add colour images for the very first time in a significant way in order to illustrate the different cases. Faced with themes such as the one outlined here, critical design, the examples that have been chosen are by artists that are not greatly published and works that are not normally seen in conventional dissemination channels. A type of design that can only exist outside of the market, like a type of conceptual design, where the conceptual term does not refer to the conceptual phase of the project, but to a proposal aimed at questioning how design affects our lives. It is about ways of seeing and of making others see. These proposals -each one in its own way- try to dissolve the borders between what is real and what is fictitious, investigating how these methodologies can be integrated into daily life, confronting utopia, fantasy and fiction. So that what is visionary becomes what is real and what can be seen becomes a fiction produced by obliging technologies with the banal trends of consumption products. Designs that go beyond the evidence, that question or unveil, like the Austrian but Sarejevo-born architect and artist Azra Aksamija does through his project The Generic Mosque, the Islamophobic feeling that is currently being breathed in the countries of Western Europe and the United States, as well as the biased and politicised representations coming out of the Islam world. Roger Ibars analyses the case of Dunne & Raby, designers who have been researching the psychological effects of new technologies through their projects since the nineties. A trajectory where the concept of critical design has been used constantly in reference to their works and their respective tools. In this task, as we understand it, they have been able to rise above unfruitful

debates such as wanting to distinguish between art and design, amongst other things because the words themselves indicate that they are not the same. Conversely, they have made use of the significant interaction between these two disciplines in the debate about the growing general dissolution in a visual culture dominated by moving images and interaction. Alessandra Caporale writes about one of the people who through her work have known how to give a more personal vision about the social, cultural and political implications of technology. She is engineer and artist Natalie Jeremijenko, who has put the game and use of collective experimentations on the Web into play with provocative invitations to challenge the myths that surround scientific knowledge, in particular around artificial intelligence and biotechnologies. Finally, Pilar Echavarría leaves traditional formats behind, presenting a glossary sketch that incorporates the idea of daily utopias into its title. In other words, it is a type of rejection of large postulates in favour of a more sensitive relationship of design with people's daily lives, environments and lives, with real life, the here and now.

We do not want to end our editorial without mentioning a very important act in the history of this magazine, with the publication of this issue that inaugurates the new online version of ELISAVA TdD -<http://tdd.elisava.net>- which in turn contains all of the back issues published on paper. With totally free access, this digital version is structured using an information architecture implemented using a relational database. Likewise and as mentioned at the beginning, starting now we are also adding a name, the name of Elisava, which has implicitly also been present. Thus, it is changing to ELISAVA Temes de Disseny, whose shortened form will be ELISAVA TdD. Furthermore, this new title also makes it easier to access the publication on the Web.