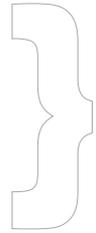


A publishing project by the Aalto University Digital Design Laboratory, ADDLAB



ADD METAPHYSICS



SEMESTER I

The instrumentalization of design has changed throughout the industrial and digital revolutions, both conceptually and formally. An amorphous apparatus defined by its creator, its user, and its context, the field—and its variegated dispositions—has been influenced by environmental, techno-scientific, economic, as well as cultural factors. At a time when persistent dichotomies of nature and culture, information and material, and concrete and abstract are constantly reconfigured, design, like so many other disciplines, must, again, be reevaluated and reinvented. In fact, and as this project proposes, when few presumed best practices or metaphors apply, practitioners must distinguish themselves through conjectural yet specialized modes of inquiry. They must distinguish themselves through practices that occupy shared territories of both theory and praxis, and those that move beyond the servicing of consumption and production rates to other areas of contemporary life, such as work, education, participation, communication, material engagement.

In order for new design knowledge to be produced, spaces facilitating open critique and expanded thinking are required. ADD METAPHYSICS is a publishing project that has been established in order to create such a space in the context of Aalto University Digital Design Laboratory (ADDLAB) at the School of Engineering and the School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Espoo, Finland. In the lab, designers and artists work with mechanical engineers and material scientists, together constructing a platform for experimental, inquisitive design practice that converges around not only the material and the digital but also the metaphysical: molding the perception of the material world as much as materials themselves. The forthcoming publications include contributions by select practitioners and academics, who probe into the interrelations between information and material from their idiosyncratic perspectives and share their ideas and questions in the form of radical assignments, stretching out to utopian or even enigmatic domains. The assignments function as boundary objects* between disciplines, encouraging activity and debate both within and outside of ADDLAB.

ADD METAPHYSICS takes note from philosopher Manuel De Landa, who, in a 2011 lecture at the University of Southern California, suggested that while computers are valuable in exploring different spaces of possibility, designers must create the spaces worthy of exploration. Along these lines, our series of publications looks to prepare designers for their role as scriptwriters in the unfolding electro-material-cultural moment; so complex by nature that the ability to ask always overrides the capacity to answer. Furthermore, in order to come up with the most revealing queries—those that seek to identify significant and insightful parameters—no less than a new vocabulary is requisite: new

*

Boundary object, a concept originally introduced by Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer refers to objects that serve as an interface, or have a translationary function between different communities of practice. Serving as a point of mediation and negotiation around intent, boundary objects may be physical artifacts, such as a map, but they can also consist of a set of information or conversations.

terms and analogies for productive encounters between disciplines, or words to shift the focus of digital design beyond technology and form, towards original sensibilities.

ADD METAPHYSICS consists of a web journal as well as a series of printed publications. Published per semester, and borrowing from a schoolbook format, they present an experimental foundation course on digital design in the midst of a changing electro-cultural logic of material. Consider its assignments as open-ended curricula taking place in the open site of the publication—interfaces facilitating a passage between disciplinary worlds. Let the material not confine.

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