Chapters 4 and 5 provide an insight into general processes of design, and interior design in particular. Despite confirming that design processes vary, there does seem to be some blurring between design as abstraction and process and design as material practice. This in itself is not a problem if the ‘critical’ approach examines these relative to various theoretical formulations. For example the problem of linear design processes is dealt with by outlining a general model and noting the limitations of such abstract models in reality. However the detailed examination of a design process (Chapter 5) immediately reverts to a linear model that mirrors traditional practice. What it does not do is examine ‘critical practice’ or ‘research-led practice’ that might adopt new techniques and technologies to advance design outcomes. Further the premise for design is based upon slightly dated ‘principles’ such as proportion, balance, symmetry and axis – that underscore ‘classical’ readings of architecture. While I am not against the historical significance of such ideas, and their impact on the built environment, we also have to look at the effects of new mathematics informed by non-Euclidean geometry, and rapid prototyping. What design currently has is the ability to compute complex mathematical forms very quickly, and thereby offer an alternative framework around parametric design, and file to file manufacturing. Having said that, the case studies in this chapter leave a lot to be desired, they are certainly not exemplary projects, and should have illustrated a more critical approach to either the traditions espoused, or offered new formulations.

As the book shifts into the more ‘elemental’ sections on Space, Colour and Light, the historical tone that introduces each chapter gives way to the didactical. When describing the contributions of philosophers and psychologists to the understanding of space the author’s position is not clear on how such ideas inform thoughts on spatial organisation and wayfinding. That is, the examples lack discussion about how theories might inform design practice, even the broader aspects of interior design practice (urban interiors, performance, narrative, installation and art practice). In a similar manner the chapter on Colour provides a short introduction to colour history/theory and psychology before reverting to an empirically driven statement about colour planning.

To some extent these later chapters exemplify a problematic raised by the challenge of the book: how do you present a critical introduction to a discipline that is only just beginning to articulate its activities? To some extent a good concluding chapter would have been more effective than leaving the reader adrift after the final chapter on ‘The business of interior design’. It might have been worth examining current design teaching and research emanating from tertiary institutions.

Despite these questions I have raised, Interior Design: a critical introduction deserves a readership. While I have no doubt it will assist first year students orientate themselves to the expectations of traditional practice, interior design clearly needs a second, more inspirational volume that unpacks a more critical academic and research oriented approach to the discipline.

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**Publication Review**

**Inventario: Tutto è progetto ⁄ Everything is a project**

Creator: Beppe Finessi Editor: Corraini

http://www.inventario-bookazine.com

Reviewed by Eleonora Lupo, Polytechnico di Milano, Italy

The list as ‘representation’ system is an expedient presentation alternative to the showing of a finished form, which is referential and closed in on itself. In literature, Umberto Eco’s reading of Homer’s Iliad, among a number of citations related to biblical scriptures, illustrates the contrast between the description of the shield of Achilles and the power of the Greek army. The first description is shaped by enumeration of the shield world [even if the incredible number of represented scenes makes it difficult to reproduce it visually]. The second is a list or a catalogue ‘made of countable items that we can not enumerate’ specifically the ships of the Greek army, and suggests the physically infinite perceived through the indefinite.

The need to postulate an ‘aesthetic infinite’ of an objective kind is related to the shortcomings of the inventory and not to a subjective feeling about the sublime to which the representative modality of the list responds.

The recent Italian publishing project, Inventario, situated between book and magazine is curated by Beppe Finessi and published by Corraini with the support of Foscarini. Drawing reference from the example sourced from Eco’s writing translated to the physical and material field, the subtitle Tutto è progetto ⁄ Everything is a project, expands upon the infinite list when it...
satisfies what is defined as design. In fact, the rhetoric of representation through visual lists that permeates the history of the entire production and experience of the arts and human creativity, from the painting collections of Giovanni Pannini, to the lists of wonders, to the Bibliotheca Memorabilis by Abü Warbug, returns in the name and on the cover of issue No. 1, a visual inventory, a ‘collection’ of flower pots, adopting and interpreting in such a way a modality, now back in vogue, to tell the stories of artefacts in the name and on the cover of Issue No. 1, is a visual inventory, ‘Judicious pairing’, on the relationships between art and design works, ‘One thing leads to another’ about forgotten objects, collections of everyday objects, ‘bagatelles’ collections around a motif that traces interdisciplinary paths between design, art, architecture and photography. Stories of designers, exemplifying forms of organisation in which many different properties align without establishing any hierarchical relationship among them (in a similar logic to the set theory), the inventoried collection corresponds with an ‘order’ of sensory experience that has a very specific function. The value derived from collecting in relation to the category of completeness as opposed to utility is flanked by the value of classification ordered by type, category and exemplar, according to disciplinary rules.

If the scientific classification of things is structured on the basis of formal, structural or functional configuration, Inventario these ‘rules’ are the result of an innovative and sophisticated approach to interpret and narrate the world of design, an original leitmotiv that traces interdisciplinary paths between design, art, architecture and photography. Stories of designers, exemplary works, analysis of recent projects at the different scales from architecture and photography. As Franco Clivio, Hans Hansen and Pierre Mendell, Hidden Forms: Seeing and Understanding Things (Writings on Design), (Basel: Birkhäuser 2009).

Inventario, moves beyond concern with reflecting upon the status of contemporary forms of art, to adopt a museological practice through the gaze of the scholar and the ethnographer and field researcher of design who can go in depth ‘Technical Matters’ shows the construction aspects of a project and identify design behaviours beyond the specific discipline ‘Life as a project’, in which passions, struggles and dreams become projects. From the techniques of display the visual and narrative tricks needed to build around each repository a specific story is borrowed, almost like a temporary exhibition, capable of both cross-fertilization and completeness, and able to explore language coherent to content, to set up a catchy yet sophisticated and expressive poetic.

In this sense the Inventario project is an ‘interior’, a series of rooms functionally characterized in which contemporary interdisciplinary research finds the space and visibility to debate the ethics of the aesthetics of the project.

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