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Design Research and Development

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PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN

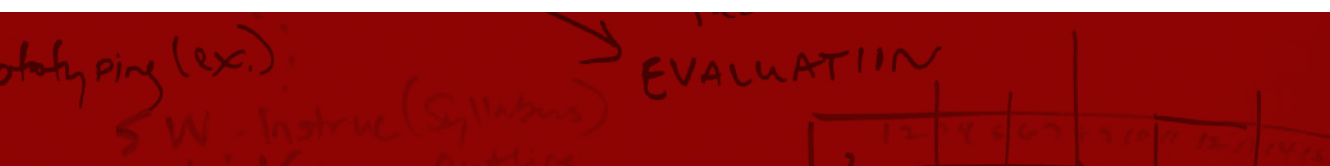


I am delighted to introduce this first issue of *The Journal of Design and Management*, which presents some of the critical work being undertaken by the faculty, students, and distinguished visiting lecturers in the Design and Management program of Parsons The New School for Design.

Like the program itself, this journal represents an essential—and exciting—area of intersection between design and business. It is an area of intersection that is rapidly growing, and we at Parsons are proud to be facilitating its growth. We treasure and celebrate the aesthetics of design, and we believe profoundly in the need for students to develop the difficult skills of making things, whether they are in the realm of objects, images, clothing, buildings, or spaces. But making also needs to be understood within the context of meaning and connected to the world beyond the object.

Our Design and Management program, which offers a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, focuses intensively on understanding how design works—in economy, society, and the marketplace. These remarkable students and faculty and professionals think about the resources, skills, and thought processes that are required to take a design-based idea, identify its potential, and develop it, produce it, market it, extend its reach, and measure its impact. The articles in this journal give you a sampling of this significant thinking in its important and growing field of study, and I am confident that they will extend the reach of Parsons far beyond the school itself.

Paul Goldberger
Dean



Educating Innovators

MEG ARMSTRONG

The Parsons program in Design and Management offers students a unique opportunity to explore design fields in New York City while completing an interdisciplinary program in general business management, design strategy, and innovation.

To manage design well and identify opportunities for meaningful innovation and new business growth, students must understand design's impact on products, services, interactions, environments, and organizations. The program enables students to manage design that is useful, beautiful, and sustainable, by providing both the expertise and experience of its faculty, corporate internship sponsors, and external partners. Coursework stimulates thinking about how design can be a catalyst for positive social and business change. Work in design research and development, design-based entrepreneurship, and new product development provides a clear understanding of the interrelationship between design and business and the ways in which design can become a potent source of value for companies and organizations.

Design and Management, now in its 21st year, enables the collaboration of designers and businesspeople and encourages design entrepreneurship that has a positive social impact. Like the companies that will employ their graduates, many top business programs recognize the need for more creativity in management and are incorporating courses and approaches based in design and design education or teaming up with design schools to provide an integrated approach to business and design strategy. For students of Design and Management, the innovative and strategic potential of design is not only a boon for business but also a tool for progressive, socially responsible management. Our students are entrepreneurs; they look for ways to create new value through design-based interventions that are grounded in sound business decisions. They value smart, sustainable thinking: sustainable business models, sustainable environments, sustainable people practices. Our students benefit from their participation in the wider community provided by Parsons and The New School. These institutions have deep and lasting commitments not only to design and the creative arts, but also to innovation and social responsibility.

The Journal of Design and Management explores and documents collaborative work on the borders of management and design. The journal welcomes contributions that address the importance of design and design-based education to business strategy and planning and that speak to the need for sustainable approaches to new value creation. In each issue, we will highlight people, projects, approaches, and events that together characterize an important aspect of the collaboration between business and design.

Leaders in design strategy and new product development understand the advantages of observing people as they encounter and reflect upon the products, services, environments, and interactions that make up their everyday experiences. In this inaugural issue, our faculty and students explore the importance of a wide range of design research and development methods and practices to the creation of new value in both for-profit and nonprofit arenas. As elaborated in the articles on design research and design development by Timothy deWaal Malefyt, Raoul Rickenberg, and Michael D. Rabin, we teach our students how to

critically observe people and organizations, strategize new design-based interventions that will provide greater value to them, and develop concepts and prototypes that will bring this value to life in the real world. Speakers in our 2005–06 Stephan Weiss Visiting Lectureship, highlighted in this issue, address the importance of ethnographic and design-based research in the development of innovative approaches to product development, store design, advertising, and business strategy. Jay Dehejia uses his entrepreneurial expertise to explore the potential for design-based businesses in the global marketplace in his class, “New Ventures in Emerging Markets,” while students such as Dan Otero plan and launch their own design-based businesses here in New York City.

The editors and I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Design and Management faculty, students, and staff who have worked so hard to build an innovative and thoughtful approach to teaching and learning about the business of design.



Design Research

RAOUL RICKENBERG

It is difficult to imagine how one could teach design without asking students to articulate how they expect whatever they are developing to be used. Conceptualized in terms of functionality, the importance of addressing artifacts from the perspective of use has grounded the practice as well as the pedagogy of design since the early years of the industrial revolution (Beninger, 1989; Nobel, 1984). Until relatively recently, however, the human dimension of usability—the fact that it is people who contextualize and use artifacts—was largely ignored. The term “human factors” did not enter the discursive formation of design until the early years of last century, when Frederick Taylor and his colleagues drew attention to the relationship between efficiency and the differing levels of knowledge and ability that people bring to their interactions with artifacts (Taylor, 1947; Rabinback, 1990). And even with this insight into efficiency, designers rarely addressed usability in a manner that accounted for the ways in which people actually perceive their interactions with artifacts until the final 20 years of the century (Chapanis, 1996; Norman, 1988). It was only with the widespread adoption of a conceptual framework generally known as user-centered design that designers expanded their focus to explicitly address how people’s interactions with artifacts are informed by needs and desires as well as by knowledge and abilities (Alexander, 1977; Winograd, 1996; Laurel, 1999). Many factors motivated the adoption of this framework, but the social sciences clearly played a formative role in the process—it was only by appropriating the methodologies of psychology, anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences that designers gained insight into the motivations of those who use their designs. Today, it is not unusual for clients to expect the designers they hire to be conversant, if not fluent, in social science methodologies.

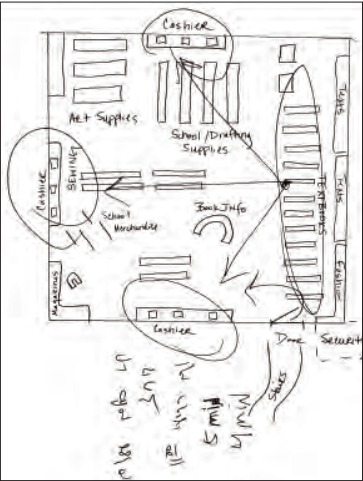
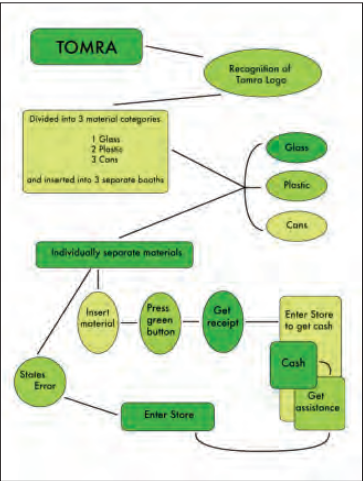
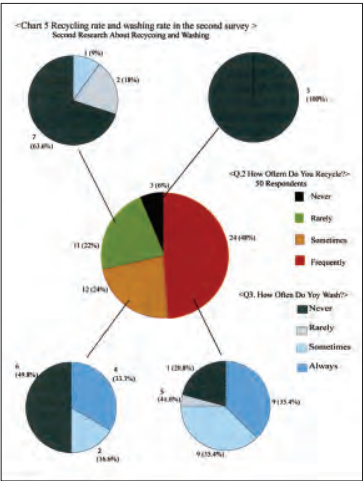
Given the fundamental role social science now plays in design, it is seen as a core component of the curriculum taught in the Department of Design and Management. Recognizing the importance of teaching a competency—or, in this case, an array of methodologies that are grounded in several discrete disciplines—is far simpler, however, than actually incorporating it into a demanding, highly interdisciplinary curriculum. There are conceptual as well as logistical hurdles that must be addressed. Social science is fundamentally different from design in that it is premised on the goal of discovery rather than that of creation. The sciences, to paraphrase Richard Buchanan, concern ways of revealing existing structure, while design concerns the construction of that which does not yet exist (Buchanan, 1996). In order to integrate courses on research with those on design, students (and faculty) must bridge two wholly different conceptual frameworks—and in our case, they must do this within the institutional constraints of a design school (Jepperson, 1991).

Among the methodologies that designers have appropriated from the social sciences, ethnography stands out as the most widely used and—superficially—the simplest to master (variables that are not unrelated). In essence, ethnography is premised upon an assumption that the construction of meaning and assignment of value are closely coupled with behavior and that one can derive insight into ways that people conceive of the world by observing their actions and interactions with others over extended periods of time (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). We have found that ethnographic methodology provides an excellent vehicle with which to introduce students to social science, because they are rarely intimidated by the prospect of observation, they are readily engaged by the tangible aspects of what they observe, and they are regularly surprised by the level of insight that emerges over

time. Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that students quickly come to understand that the ways in which their observations are discussed or critiqued in the classroom are integrally related to ways in which they have chosen to present their data to classmates. By exposing our students to ethnography, we are teaching them how to conceive of design as a process of mapping—we are calling their attention to the ways in which current perspectives inform future possibilities (Corner, 1999).

Because ethnography is inherently an exploratory rather than an explanatory form of research—meaning that it is better suited to uncovering new relationships than to explaining those of which one is already aware—it forms an ideal foundation with which to train students in other social science methodologies. Once students have uncovered relationships that are of interest and after they become familiar with the contexts in which such relationships are grounded, they are generally well equipped to choose from the broad array of qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies that can be used to answer more specific questions. Moreover, given that students will already be familiar with the ethnographic data that their cohort has collected as a result of ongoing classroom discussion and critique, they need not participate in the primary research of their classmates in order to gain insight into the methodologies that are used. With this structure, it is possible to strike a balance between our desire to familiarize students with the power of social science and constraints posed by other demands of our curriculum.

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Students who enroll in our courses on design research already possess well-honed observational skills. Most are far more adept at spotting the latest trends in fashion or entertainment, for example, than are their instructors. Rarely, however, are our students versed in the frameworks required to analyze and communicate their observations in a rigorous manner. To address this deficit, we begin the semester by reviewing different dimensions and levels of analysis used in the social sciences. This enables students to reconsider the formation of familiar artifacts—an engaging activity that inevitably increases students’ awareness of the degree to which their immediate environments are informed by deliberative design processes—as well as the ways in which these artifacts “afford” ongoing social interaction. By asking students to find and document such socio-technical interaction in the course of their own day-to-day experiences, we highlight the strengths and weaknesses of various analytical frameworks while simultaneously introducing the students to a broad array of methods for collecting and representing data.

With this overview behind them, students are ready to delve into the research projects on which they will work for the bulk of the semester. While we encourage students to work in teams and to employ ethnographic methodologies in their research, we place few restrictions on the domains they may choose to investigate; interesting findings soon emerge regardless of what is studied. Students have developed valuable insight in domains that range from recycling practices to behavior in bookstores to the logistics of ordering desk-chairs. What unites these investigations is the common focus on people’s interactions with their environments and the fact that, by appropriating a social-scientific lens, the students have learned how to see such interactions as opportunities for innovation. Unlike approaches to research that privilege discovery as an end in and of itself, our courses address research from the perspective of mapping—we use research to articulate the contours of possibility.

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Labyrinth, a research project on recycling in New York, created by Adeline Chew, Mackenzie Crone, Linn Beate Loemo, and Masae Yokoyama.



University Bookstore, a research project on bookstore conditions, created by Kate Coley, Erinn Leahey, John Targon, Darinia Wang, and Rahav Zuta.

By exposing students to ethnography, we are teaching them how to conceive of design as a process of mapping—we are calling their attention to the ways in which current perspectives inform future possibilities.

JAY DEHEJIA ON New Ventures

“Everything I do is a matter of heart, body, and soul,” says Donna Karan; it is this totality that students at Parsons strive for in class and as they plan future ventures. Our student culture is fortified each time an alumnus like Donna Karan, Narciso Rodriguez, or Michael Eisenberg becomes an established name in the industry. It is strengthened too by the high standards the alumni set in their entrepreneurial ventures. Our students now, as previously, dream of developing their innovative ideas and transforming them into profitable success stories. Parsons harnesses the creativity of students through interactive class discussions, while guiding them through the fundamentals of conducting business in today’s world. In the 21st century, our businesses are interconnected, and thoughts and ideas mingle and transfer across the globe at the speed of light. To paraphrase Thomas Friedman, globalization is a reality, and the world is indeed “flat.”

The Parsons of today also has an eye on the future. When Donna Karan was at Parsons, the school did not have a Department of Design and Management. Students who wished to understand the workings of business learned the techniques as trainees in work-shops and improved their business acumen on the job. Parsons, in cooperation with alumni and businesses, anticipates students’ needs and develops new core and elective courses to help meet the challenges of the future. Today, as our young men and women go through four years of classes, they have the opportunity to learn basic business theory and practices from academics as well as practitioners from a variety of industry sectors. In addition to learning the

concepts of design, they begin to understand elements of venture management, including strategic planning, venture finance, negotiations, operations, marketing, and sales. The diverse members of the design and management faculty bring their own experiences to class for the benefit of the student body at large. In turn, the students bring to class their individual identities, their cultures, and their different backgrounds to create an exciting “melting pot” of ideas. Together they learn how to transform innovative concepts into successful ventures.

Parsons’ student population today is drawn from around the world, from China to Chile, from South Africa to Sweden. The make-up is varied: Some students have come back to school after a few years in business; others have transferred from universities around the world. They come to hone their creative skills, as previous generations of students have done, and also to learn, and understand, the many aspects of managing a business on their own or as members of a team within small or large organizations. These students, while having fun in class, have set high standards for themselves and are challenged by both the faculty and their colleagues to bring out the best in themselves. With its location in New York City, Parsons provides students with the added exposure they need, and the opportunity to intern at a variety of companies. In class, they are encouraged to discuss what is done in practice and bounce ideas around to see if alternative solutions can work as well.

Establishing and managing a successful venture requires a range of skills. It is a combination of creativity and good business sense; it requires understanding other cultures and behavioral patterns; it needs a probing mind; and most important, it requires behavior in a socially conscious manner combined with ethical integrity. During my fall 2005 class, while several students were preparing strategic plans to start their own businesses, some were already setting up their own ventures, both in this country, and in the Czech Republic, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and India. Energized by the immense opportunities available to them globally, these students used the classroom as an arena in which to think through critically

the many issues that needed resolution. Such well-rounded business learning in class begins to give students a feel for the implications of global trade and business. They will graduate with a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship and venture management.

Students in the Department of Design and Management certainly bring their “heart, body, and soul” to their work. They also know that, as Meredith Waga Perez once said, “Good design must fulfill all the senses,” and they have begun to realize the implications of Michael Eisenberg’s remark, “Parsons teaches you to get things done yourself.” As these motivated students leave Parsons, they may become role models for others who will follow.



Student Start-Ups ...

HEATHERLYNN CHRISTOPHER ON HEATHERLYNN

As the founder and designer of heatherlynn, I strive to encompass a total lifestyle brand that is centered on merging health, beauty, and fashion to create a holistic experience for the wearer. heatherlynn is a brand that is representative of the future of textiles: where fashion is not just an outward expression of one's lifestyle, but also actively contributes to the health and beauty of the wearer.

Over the past year and a half I have been working closely with my partners and investors to seek out the cutting edge in smart textiles from around the world with health-focused attributes. Our search came to fruition when we discovered a historic mill in Asia that produces a textile infused with a pro-vitamin formula that delivers Vitamin C to the wearer. I was immediately lured by the idea of creating clothing that made a difference in people's lives. Our company was able to import the product and follow up with a comprehensive domestic production team, making this technology accessible to the U.S. market. The line will be available for purchase this spring at the luxury retailer Takashimaya.

The heatherlynn collection is the latest project of several entrepreneurial pursuits: After establishing a career as a physical therapist in Aspen, Colorado, I launched a spa that provided holistic health care for injured athletes. I moved to New York City to work in the fashion industry and came to the Design and Management program at Parsons, where my interest in smart textiles was piqued. As a non-traditional student, I found at Parsons an ideal setting to explore new ideas and question standards within the design industry. When I was starting the heatherlynn company, all of my professors in Design and Management were extremely supportive in assisting me in everything from getting my imported fabrics through U.S. customs to figure out where to get my woven labels. They allowed me to tailor certain classes to make my research relevant to my work. However, the best gift that Parsons gave to me was providing an environment where I was allowed to explore ideas and knowledge without the fear of failure ... or bankruptcy! Parsons has been a unique incubator where I am constantly learning from my fellow students and teachers and am encouraged and inspired by the risks and ideas that are generated within my program every day.



NICHOLAS MESTAS ON AKNIVON CESKA REPUBLIKA

I began what started as an independent research project on global pricing after realizing the significant price differences between common, everyday items in the Czech Republic and their counterparts in the United States. It bothered me that the average Czech consumer had to work two to four times more than the average U.S. consumer to pay for these goods. I suspected that the price differences were unnecessary and began visiting merchandise trade shows and showrooms in order to get a firsthand look inside the industry. This took me to wholesale showrooms in Paris, conventions and manufacturing facilities in New York, and trade shows in Las Vegas. After spending several weeks projecting the true, in-store costs of the products in my experiment, I drew up my business plan.

Aknivon Ceska Republika's documents were planned in Paris during the fall of 2004 and in New York during the summer of 2005, leading to its incorporation in Prague in August 2005. While we are a Czech Republic-based firm, our logistical operations stretch to the United States, Austria, and Slovakia. We operate on closeout and wholesale strategies, working almost exclusively with name-brand imports from around the world: health and beauty products, designer perfumes, high-quality jewelry, general household merchandise, and light office stationery and supplies.

With an initial self-investment of 250.000 Kc, I later gained advice and support from CzechInvest, the European Union Commission, Czech Consulates in New York and Paris, the Austrian Consulate in New York and the Spanish Embassy in Paris. Through this international network, I was able to finalize my business plan and strategic mission. Our official headquarters were set up in the beautiful spa resort city of Luhacovice, Czech Republic (the location of our flagship outlet), in September 2005. Prior to this date, with the assistance of my Czech business partners David Sojak and Jitka Sojakova, I conducted a massive national and local market research campaign to determine the actual costs of goods and competition. From the data, I was able to see the relationship between the costs of goods and the average income for Czech consumers. I was also able to identify holes in the market and was thus able to predict the demand of products not yet offered. The results shaped our merchandise selection process and strengthened our knowledge of supply-and-demand dynamics in the Czech Republic.

My near-future plans for Aknivon include expansion throughout the Czech Republic, and later throughout the European Union. I am in the process of securing additional properties in Brno and Uherske Hradiste. Our business plan includes opening six additional stores by July 2007. I am continuing my research with the cooperation of the European Union Commission in Washington, DC, and several European commercial agencies. At times, this process has been tiring and frustrating, but mostly it has been exciting and motivating. I've come to appreciate the tremendous work, sacrifice, and determination required to initiate ventures; the delicate process of managing them from beginning to end; and the maintenance demanded once they are started.

AKNIVON	
Oteviraci doba	
Ponděli	9:00 - 18:00
Úterý	9:00 - 18:00
Středa	9:00 - 18:00
Čtvrtek	9:00 - 18:00
Pátek	9:00 - 18:00





DAN OTERO ON MIGUEL PEÑA

In the summer of 2004, two friends and I founded a designer fashion label by the name of MIGUEL PEÑA. Having met at Parsons during a summer intensive program in 2001, the three of us settled into our positions with high hopes. I functioned as CEO, specifically heading up the marketing and sales of the corporation. In this venture I acted as a start-up consultant launching the business into a position where it could become self-sufficient.

Located in Brooklyn, New York the brand is based on the philosophy of creating classic garments with a modern twist. All production and development is done within New York City in order to ensure quality, a core value of the brand.

MIGUEL PEÑA was introduced to the New York fashion world through the creation of a teaser collection, which was not intended for sale, consisting of 12 looks. With this introductory collection, we generated interest from such retailers and publications as Bergdorf Goodman, *Vogue*, Saks Fifth Avenue, *Elle*, Neiman Marcus and *WWD*.

The launch of our first full collection was in the fall of 2005, and the season was received well. The late Kal Ruttenstein of Bloomingdale's took a specific interest in the collection and in our organization. We reached an exclusive agreement with Bloomingdale's wherein they would purchase the collection for their flagship Lexington Avenue store. Included in this agreement was a very special and historic moment for all those involved. It was reported that for the first time in the history of the Bloomingdale's department store, a new designer label showcasing its debut collection was awarded the Lexington Avenue window displays.

With MIGUEL PEÑA established and recognized by December of 2005, it was the appropriate time in the development and growth of this venture for me to move forward with other projects. Currently I am involved in other endeavors that span a variety of industries acting as an independent start-up consultant. Parsons has allowed me to take risks and involve myself in new ventures by providing a flexible, safe, and engaging educational environment. The drive and inspiration for me lies in bringing to life the ideas and dreams of others. MIGUEL PEÑA will be the first of many.



Parsons The New School for Design focuses on creating engaged citizens and outstanding artists, designers, scholars, and business leaders through a design-based professional and liberal education.

Parsons students learn to rise to the challenges of living, working, and creative decision making in a world where human experience is increasingly designed.

The school embraces curricular innovation, pioneering uses of technology, collaborative methods and global perspectives on the future of design.

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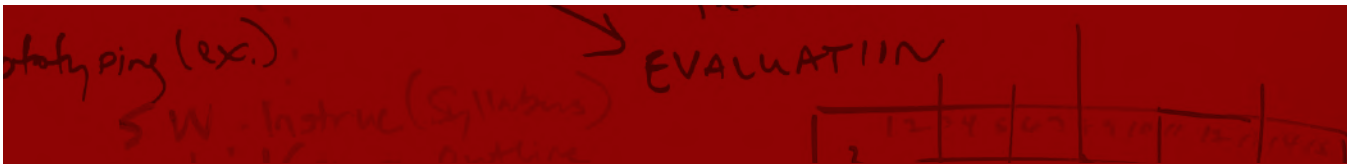
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