

EP

Prof Alex Coles

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Project Description

The book *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* is the second in a critically underpinned three-book series of publications that fluidly move between art, design and architecture. The series creates a discursive platform between popular magazines ('single play') and academic journals ('long play') by introducing the notion of the 'extended play' into publishing with thematically edited pocket books as median. Professor Alex Coles was the sole editor of *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* with sole responsibility for selecting the submissions for inclusion and for the underpinning process of investigation.

Key Outcomes:

EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction (Coles ed.)

Project Duration:

EP Vol. 2, 2016

Funder:

EP Vol. 2 £10k Creative Industries Fund, Rotterdam.

Research Partners, consultants, collaborators:

EP Vol. 2 Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht.

Research Aims & Objectives

Research Aims:

Through a series of books to:

- Create a transdisciplinary publication series.
- Develop a unique form of editing that balances text and image.

Research Objectives:

- To identify key moments where art, design and architecture trigger a previously overlooked creative dialogue.
- To collaborate on the art directing of the series with an innovative graphic design team.

Design Fiction	EP
<p>Umberto Eco (1902–2016) was a semiotician and novelist. Alex Coles is an art and design critic and editor.</p>	<p>Bruce Sterling is an American science-fiction author. Verina Gfader is a Research Fellow at the School of Art, Design and Architecture of the University of Huddersfield.</p>
<p>Lucas Maassen is a Dutch designer. Huib Hays van der Werf is a Dutch curator. Paola Antonelli is Senior Curator in the Department of Architecture & Design at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.</p>	<p>The Atlas Group (1989–2004) was a project undertaken by the artist Vladimir Roudnitskiy to research and document the recent history of Lebanon, with particular emphasis on the wars of 1975 to 1990.</p>
<p>Will Holder is a writer, editor, performer, and book designer exploring the transformative processes at play in the act of publishing.</p>	<p>Hiroko Shiratori is a Tokyo-based designer specialising in furniture, product, space, and installation design. Sophie Krier is a designer and researcher.</p>
<p>Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby established their design studio in 1984. Rick Poynor is a writer and curator specialising in photography, design, and visual culture.</p>	<p>James Dyer is a researcher in the School of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Huddersfield. Wim Flusser (1920–1991) was a Czech-born philosopher, writer, and journalist.</p>
<p>Carnie Lambert-Beatty is an art historian and Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University.</p>	<p>Philippe Morel is an architect and theorist. He co-founded E2CT Architecture & Design Research in 2000. Benjamin Reynolds and Valle Medina are co-founders of PALIAC.E.</p>
<p>7–16 Here I Am – Not a Fiction Umberto Eco and Alex Coles discuss the multiple points of contact between Eco's fiction and theory.</p>	<p>91–102 Most Design Fiction Will Of Course Be Pretty Bad Bruce Sterling is interviewed by Verina Gfader on his coining of the term "design fiction."</p>
<p>17–40 Carl the Chair Paola Antonelli and Huib Hays van der Werf discuss Lucas Maassen's project about Carl, a chair with its own sitcom.</p>	<p>103–116 The Loudest Muttering Is Over Images and citations from the archive of The Atlas Group (1989–2004) are juxtaposed to underline the multiple roles fiction plays within it.</p>
<p>41–50 The Middle of Nowhere Will Holder presents a graphic think piece triggered by a conversation with design researcher Paul Bailey.</p>	<p>117–132 Fiction as Function: Unusual Objects from Japan, 1888–1945 The narrative-based designs of Hiroko Shiratori's ongoing project provide a point of departure for an exchange between the designer and Sophie Krier.</p>
<p>51–72 Critical World Building Rick Poynor draws Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby out on their development of the role fiction plays in their designs.</p>	<p>133–142 On Fiction A previously overlooked 1966 article by Wim Flusser views design problems through the lens of fiction. James Dyer introduces the new translation.</p>
<p>73–90 Believing in Parafiction Carnie Lambert-Beatty examines the political potential of fiction in recent interventionist art practice.</p>	<p>143–162 On Computationalism Philippe Morel is interviewed by Benjamin Reynolds and Valle Medina on the recent computational turn in architecture.</p>
	<p>163 Forthcoming Issues 171 Acknowledgments 172 Colophon</p>
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Research Context

Leading publications in the arts tend to focus exclusively on a particular discipline: *Afterall* - art; *The Grey Room* - architecture; *Icon* - design. With the EP edited-book series, the intention was to change that by working across all three disciplines. In this sense EP is the latest part of Coles' ongoing research into the relationships between creative disciplines which began in 2005 with a focus on the interdisciplinary dialogue between art and design (explored in the books *'DesignArt'*, Tate Publishing, 2005, and *'Design and Art'*, MIT Press, 2007) and in 2012 developed into an analysis of the transdisciplinary dialogue between art, design and architecture with the book *'The Transdisciplinary Studio'* (Sternberg Press, 2012). The research process of *'The Transdisciplinary Studio'* was characterised by dialogue with creative practitioners by conducting embedded research, which led to the finding that transdisciplinary approaches are only possible through close collaboration. From this came EP, underpinned by a number of further articles and papers on the significance of the transdisciplinary as a method for engaging the disciplines of art, design and architecture simultaneously.

After the first EP volume on the activities of the early Italian avant-garde, the second volume in the series *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* identifies the current fascination with fiction across art, design, and architecture. Practitioners and theorists explore this strategy by pushing the debate into both speculative and real-fictitious terrains. Newly commissioned interviews, artist projects, and essays shed light on topics such as parafiction and algorithmic ambiguity. Included in the volume is one of the final interviews to be published with novelist and semiotician Umberto Eco; a conversation with Bruce Sterling, in which the science-fiction author responds to designers who reference his writings; and design theorist Vilém Flusser's 1966 essay 'On Fiction,' in its first English translation. The full contents list of *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* appears on page 5 of this document.

The third book in the series *EP. Vol 3 Post Craft* co-edited by Alex Coles and Catharine Rossi will be published by Sternberg Press in 2021.



Research Methods & Process

To offer a new approach to publishing and a platform for creative practices that fall between traditional understandings of art, design and architecture, each volume of EP identifies a key moment or thematic in which there is a creative dialogue between the three disciplines. By placing both leading and emerging practitioners, curators, and theorists from across art, design and architecture alongside each other, EP brings diverse agents within the creative economy into contact for the first time.

In order to achieve its aims, the editorial process begins with identifying a suitable partner. For *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* this was the Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht. To arrive at the volume's theme of design fiction, first a non-public seminar was held with researchers and staff from the Jan Van Eyck Academy. Once key individuals within the cohort had been identified, two public seminars followed that further developed the theme. A joint successful £10k funding bid to the Creative Industries Fund (Netherlands) was made with the Jan Van Eyck Academy to support the travel costs associated with both our ongoing editorial meetings and then the commissioning of each chapter. At this point, EP's editorial advisory board – including the designers Konstantin Grcic, the artist Ryan Gander and the academic and critic Rick Poynor – provided feedback on the editorial framework. The commissioned chapters were then laid out with EP's Amsterdam based graphic design team, Experimental Jet Set.



Research Outcomes & Dissemination

Editor of book, *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction*, Sternberg Press, 2016
(<https://www.sternberg-press.com/product/ep-vol-2-design-fiction/>)

Co-author of book chapter, 'Here I Am – Not a Fiction: Interview with Umberto Eco'.
(<https://www.sternberg-press.com/product/ep-vol-2-design-fiction/>)

Keynote conference paper, 'Transdisciplinary Platforms and the Styling of Knowledge', University of the Arts, London, 2018
(<https://teachingexchange.arts.ac.uk/latc/2018/keynotes/coles/>)

Keynote conference paper, 'Post-Craft', at 'Design and Crafts in Dialogue', Belgrade, Serbia, October 2018
(<https://www.europanostra.org/events/international-conference-design-crafts-in-dialogue/>)

Seminar leader, EP, Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht, Netherlands, May 21, 2013 (<https://www.janvaneyck.nl/nieuws/alex-coles-ep/>)

Conference co-organiser and chair, 'Post-Craft', ICA, London, May 6, 2015 (<https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/post-craft-towards-new-economies-making>)

Public debate speaker with Lucas Maasen, Design Academy Eindhoven, October 28, 2016 (<https://www.designacademy.nl/news/articletype/articleview/articleid/2567/alex-coles-on-why-editorial-design>)

Public seminar, 'Styling Knowledge', Design Academy Eindhoven, February 22, 2017 (<https://www.designacademy.nl/news/articletype/articleview/articleid/2621/styling-knowledge>)

Co-organiser and speaker at colloquium 'Design Fiction: The Linguistic Turn', April 26, 2017, Vilem Flusser Archive, Berlin University of the Arts (https://www.facebook.com/events/vilém_flusser_archive/design-fiction-the-linguistic-turn/227538004380336/)

Conclusion

By providing a robust challenge to existing limitations that maintained strict disciplinary boundaries, and a fertile space for new collaborations, the EP book series including *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* led to influential Berlin-based publisher Sternberg Press extending their scope to embrace design, embedding this within their editorial policy considerably from 2014 onwards. Over 10,000 copies of the first two books in the *EP* series have been sold across Europe, the Americas and Asia by Sternberg Press' distributor MIT Press.

Reviews of each volume of EP have further spotlighted its aims. The series has been reviewed by the world-leading New York Times design critic Alice Rawsthorn, the Times Literary Supplement, The Journal of Design History and the Designabilities blog. In Anja Neidhardt's review of *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* for Designabilities she writes, "It becomes clear that design fiction is a wide field and that there is still a lot to discuss. But this publication certainly offers a profound research and broad basis to open up a diverse discourse" (2017).

References

Review of *EP Vol. 2 Design Fiction* in the 'Designabilities' blog by Anja Neidhardt, June, 2017
(<https://designabilities.wordpress.com/2017/06/04/design-fiction-ep-vol-2-bookreview/>)

