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Design Museum Futures: Catalysts for Education

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Abstract

Taking the ambitious educational programmes and global collecting practices of 19th century industrial arts museums as case studies this article analyses the role of design in shaping the future. The article examines the historical dynamics behind the construction of futures knowledge and futures expertise on the one hand, and current futures construction within design museum collections on the other. It tests strategic drivers and trends for the imagination and design of futures in the museum within the context of wider debates about the value of museums as sites of transdisciplinary practical learning. In this way the article also considers how cultural value is articulated through changing concepts of time and temporality embodied in material form. The final section examines the potential for social agency and activism within the design museum to foster critical reflection on the methods by which social institutions signal and shape directions of change. The article finds that in providing tools for the sharing as well as shaping of visions of the future, wider debates about the designed object in the museum have much to contribute to futures agency and literacy across disciplinary and professional boundaries.

Keywords

Museum
Design
Futures
Temporality
Transdisciplinary
History

Abstract

Taking the ambitious educational programmes and global collecting practices of 19th century industrial arts and design museums as case studies this article analyses the role of design in shaping the future. The article examines the historical dynamics behind the construction of futures knowledge and futures expertise on the one hand, and current futures construction within design museum collections on the other. It tests strategic drivers and trends for the imagination and design of futures in the museum within the context of wider debates about the value of museums as sites of transdisciplinary practical learning. In this way the article also considers how cultural value is articulated through changing concepts of time and temporality embodied in material form. The final section examines the potential for social agency and activism within the design museum to foster critical reflection on the methods by which social institutions signal and shape directions of change. The article finds that in providing tools for the sharing as well as shaping of visions of the future, wider debates about the

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