

Once More, with Feeling: Design Thinking and Embodied Cognition

Abstract While leaders in business and industry maintain their interest in design thinking, academic discussions of the concept have become less common. This article examines design thinking in relation to developments in cognitive science and embodied cognition. We examine an influential theory of metaphor as central to cognition, along with theoretical nuances of the body, perception, and feeling. We argue that some material design practices may augment the creative process. We propose a broad interdisciplinary account for the role that feeling plays in design and cognition both.

Keywords

Design thinking
Embodied cognition
Metaphor
Visual thinking
Felt sense

Received March 24, 2017

Accepted May 1, 2017

Emails

Karin Lindgaard
(corresponding author)
karin.lindgaard@gmail.com

Heico Wesselius
hwesselius@swin.edu.au

Copyright © 2017, Tongji University and Tongji University Press.

Publishing services by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

The peer review process is the responsibility of Tongji University and Tongji University Press.

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/she-ji-the-journal-of-design-economics-and-innovation>
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2017.05.004>



1 Bruce Nussbaum, "Design Thinking Is a Failed Experiment. So What's Next?" *Fast Company*, May 4, 2011, <https://www.fastcodesign.com/1663558/design-thinking-is-a-failed-experiment-so-whats-next>.

2 Jon Kolko, "Design Thinking Comes of Age," *Harvard Business Review* 93, no. 9 (2015): 66.

3 Tim Brown and Roger Martin, "Design for Action," *Harvard Business Review* 93, no. 9 (2015): 57–64.

4 Ulla Johansson-Sköldberg, Jill Woodilla, and Mehves Çetinkaya, "Design Thinking: Past, Present and Possible Futures," *Creativity and Innovation Management* 22, no. 2 (2013): 121–46, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12023>.

5 Donald A. Norman and Roberto Verganti, "Incremental and Radical Innovation: Design Research vs. Technology and Meaning Change," *Design Issues* 30, no. 1 (2014): 78–96, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00250.

6 Lucy Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I," *Design and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2011): 288, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175470811X13071166525216>.

7 Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya, "Design Thinking," 121.

8 Ulla Johansson and Jill Woodilla, "How to Avoid Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water: An Ironic Perspective on Design Thinking," paper presented at the European Group for Organization Studies Colloquium, Lisbon, June 30–July 3, 2010.

9 Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I," 285–306.

10 Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya, "Design Thinking," 124.

11 Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I," 290.

12 *Ibid.*, 300.

13 Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya, "Design Thinking," 131.

14 Kimbell, "Rethinking Design Thinking: Part I," 301.

The fate of design thinking is unclear, and its present status uncertain. Some advocates for design thinking have distanced themselves from the concept.¹ Others continue to celebrate its achievements and possibilities. In a 2015 cover feature article for the *Harvard Business Review*, Jon Kolko maintains that design thinking has "come of age."² In that issue, Tim Brown, Roger Martin, and Kolko – all well-known proponents of design thinking – trace the expansion of the concept from the realm of product design to broader spheres and more complex problems.³ By contrast, there are fewer academic discussions of design thinking. Some researchers argue against the notion of design thinking as a "panacea for the economy"⁴ and some discussions of innovation now avoid the term. Moreover, certain methods of design thinking used in business and management – engaging with users and iterative prototyping, for example – appear to support incremental innovation rather than radical product innovation.⁵

Many argue that the concept of design thinking is "not well understood, either by the public or those who claim to practice it"⁶ and it lacks "sustained development"⁷ in the academic literature. These authors describe differences between academic definitions and those used in industry. They schematize these differences, suggesting ways to better develop the concept.

Some definitions of design thinking in academia and industry are related. Johansson and Woodilla find a substantial parallel increase in academic and industry publications during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Both peak in 2009.⁸ Nonetheless, work on design thinking in industry pays little attention to the academic history of design thinking. Its development began during the Conference on Design Methods in 1962, and it includes an extensive trajectory of research since the still-current Design Thinking Research Symposium began in 1991.⁹

However, academic work with the concept is not unified. Ulla Johansson-Sköldberg, Jill Woodilla, and Mehves Çetinkaya identify five sub-discourses, each with "clear roots and a substantial academic following"¹⁰ within academic discourse. They use the umbrella term *designerly thinking* for these. They reserve the term *design thinking* for the three identifiable management discourses. Lucy Kimbell, who maintains that "design remains a fragmented discipline,"¹¹ schematizes three ways of describing design thinking: as a cognitive style, as a general theory of design, and as an organizational resource. Business and managerial discourse includes the last of these. According to all these authors, the notions of design thinking prevalent in business and management are based on anecdotal evidence rather than on robust theory.

Despite the convoluted design thinking discourse, these authors suggest further research into the concept of design thinking, along with a search for clarity. Kimbell recommends a shift in focus toward "situated, embodied material practices"¹² within a broader interdisciplinary context. She acknowledges the cultural and social position of designers – and recognizes their limits. As one of three suggestions for future research, Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya propose linking popular design thinking discourses from the innovation domain with the designerly view of meaning creation. They warn that "the design thinking discourse will most probably die if it does not acquire a scholarly base that relates more to designerly thinking."¹³

This article is a contribution to the "critical rethinking"¹⁴ of design thinking. While we do not pursue the research directions that these authors propose, our direction aligns with their approach. We explore how material design practices may contribute to the innovation process by relating these competencies to a theory of meaning making that we adapt from cognitive science. We attempt to link design practices from the popular design thinking discourse – sketching and prototyping, for example – with a theory that explains how understanding emerges and relates

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7431119>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7431119>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)