

PLOT(S)

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Editor's Letter

Claudia Marina

Design, especially when we write about it in the public realm, claims to be in the details so that it may be recognized for its official qualities rather than its banalities. This is one narrative of tension I frequently encounter in the field of design studies, and it seems central to why this journal exists. Now in its fourth volume, *Plot(s) Journal of Design Studies* is at a critical point of defining the tensions of what we, as a collective of thinkers on design from multifarious backgrounds, contribute to the expansive field. In writing out the word design, I feel compelled to keep it lowercase. So much of the term is loaded when the formal element of capitalization is introduced, turning away everyday interventions and focusing on a producer/consumer dynamic that fails to engage with nuance in adequate ways.

The essays in this volume come from nuanced questions of engagement such as how a contest that asks citizens to vote on their country's ugliest buildings provides a platform for public discourse on aesthetics or how one exhibition addresses a national place-branding narrative pre-Brexit. More intimately, the effects of

memory and design are considered through an object exploration of the *Balígrafo*, or bulletpen, which developed as a promise of peace and collective healing in Colombia, and one essay considers the significance of an heirloom long rendered useless to a family simultaneously mourning and moving on with life. In light of the growth of digital technologies and its design opportunities, one contributor writes about the popularization of telehealth technologies, while another looks at how calligraphy and modern mobile fonts and interfaces shape communication.

Plot(s) is published by Parsons School of Design, The New School, in New York City. We are a student-run academic publication peer-reviewed by alumni from the MA Design Studies program, part of the School of Art and Design History and Theory (ADHT), and edited by graduate students. With this special double issue, we hope to further extend the reach of design studies by providing a collection of essays from within Parsons as well as international academic design circles to engage readers in the multiple narratives and tensions of contemporary design issues emerging from theory and practice. ■