

Editor's Letter

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In echoing the words of former editors of *Plot(s)*, it seems incumbent of me to reiterate the relative youth of design studies as a field. As such, for any scholar, it is and always will be an exciting time to negotiate the meanings of this interdisciplinary world. I encourage design studies scholars not only to continue to question *what* design is but also *where* design is being spoken of and experienced by people who have never called “it” design.

While I originally intended this editor's letter to proclaim the joys of design studies as a field because “design is everywhere,” I can't deny that there now exists a certain banality in my interactions with the same objects every day under COVID-19 lockdowns and new social distancing measures we are experiencing collectively at a global scale. This feeling may not be shaken off for months, so it feels almost condescending to proclaim it. But design is everywhere, indeed. It's in developing new practices for public health, in filtering communication between dueling infospheres, in making face masks out of a very worn T-shirt, and in the way some of us have had to quickly determine what home can become—if such a thing had ever existed in a traditional sense.

This volume of *Plot(s)* is particularly resonant to a world now in a state of flux as a result of a pandemic. As if they were oracles, the authors and creators within this issue have covered themes we may have grown nostalgic for. One essay tackles the importance of the front desk as a critical point of engagement at the Brooklyn Public Library while another author explores what it's like to have Rio de Janeiro “thrown at them,” in a work that engages cultural identity, social media, and the

simple and controversial act of walking. Inversely, authors have also brought to the forefront the reality of inequality, with one author questioning the nature of rescue beacons at the US Border as they create new challenges for immigrants to navigate, while another looks at their own role as a museum attendee and the injustice embedded in its practice. One author traces thematic concerns of the minimal in design over centuries, harkening back to the practices of seclusion and order in monasteries, where the private room was a place of seclusion and restraint. Finally, in a multimedia piece, one author positions doors as a catalyst for exclusion and obstacle for marginalized groups. Even as we slowly move toward a world of relative “normalcy” with the re-opening of businesses and institutions, from home, design studies is helping to locate problems that were always inexcusable, but now take on a tone of urgency. What normal will we return to? And what can design do to change that?

To produce this publication under a time of crisis is a testament to the team I was privileged to work with as well as the many talented authors who worked on their pieces as they navigated their own lives under these extraordinary times.

Plot(s) and *Plot(s)* Multimedia (<http://adht.parsons.edu/designstudies/plots-media/>) is a publication produced in Parsons School of Design, The New School, in New York City. We are a student-run academic publication peer-reviewed by a network of alumni and current PhD candidates at The New School. *Plot(s)* is a publication of the School of Art and Design History and Theory (ADHT) and is edited by graduate students across multiple disciplines. ■