



The Spirit of Design: Objects, Environment and Meaning

By Stuart Walker

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Imaginative design will be a crucial factor in enacting sustainability in people's daily lives. Yet current design practice is trapped in consumerist cycles of innovation and production, making it difficult to imagine how we might develop a more meaningful and sustainable rendition of material culture.

Through fundamental design research, *The Spirit of Design* challenges a host of common assumptions about sustainability, progress, growth and globalization. Walker's practice-based explorations of localisation, human meaning and functional objects demonstrate the imaginative potential of research-through-design and yield a compelling, constructive and essentially hopeful direction for the future - one that radically re-imagines our material culture by meshing mass-production with individuality, products with place, and utilitarian benefit with environmental responsibility. In so doing, the author explores:

- how understandings of human meaning affect design and how design can better incorporate issues of personal meaning
- how mass production needs to become integrated with localised production and service provision
- how short-lived electronic goods can be brought into a more sustainable design paradigm
- the changing role of the designer in a post-consumerist world taking a design-centred approach
- a combination of creative, propositional design practice, reasoned argument and theoretical discussion
- the book will impel readers to investigate the nature of contemporary material culture and its relationship to both the natural environment and to deeper notions of human meaning.

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Editorial Review

Review

These days design is a glamorous covering draped over machines whose final purpose is the satisfaction of desire. Stuart Walker is reopening the issue of design with provocative experiments and thoughtful reminders of what design should be?the moral excellence of the material culture.

Albert Borgmann

Regents Professor of Philosophy, University of Montana, author of *Real American Ethics* (2006)

Stuart Walker has provided a valuable reflection on the nature of design in our time, as we seek to move beyond the consumption model that has driven design thinking for decades. I am glad to recommend it as an important addition to the growing literature on sustainability and the moral responsibility of design.

Richard Buchanan

Professor of Design, Management, & Information Systems, Co-Editor, *Design Issues* Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, USA

In the age of networks and sustainability, material products will still have to be designed, produced and used. But they will have also to be deeply re-thought. The same is true for product design: for its practice but also, and most of all, for its cultural meaning. Stuart Walker's *The Spirit of design. Objects, Environment and Meaning* indicates a challenging way of dealing with these topics. A very original one.

Ezio Manzini

Professor of Design, Politecnico di Milano

The Spirit of Design is a series of narrative compositions challenging the practical, ethical and spiritual functionalism of our contemporary design and material cultures. Just like the example of the Japanese shakuhachi flute invoked in the text, this book is immediately accessible but will deeply reward anyone who invests time.

Alastair Fuad-Luke

Professor of Practice, School of Art and Design, Aalto University, Finland, author of *Design Activism* (2009)

About the Author

Professor Stuart Walker is Head of Design and Co-Director of the Imagination Lancaster creative research lab at Lancaster University, UK and Visiting Professor of Sustainable Design at Kingston University, UK. Formerly, he was Associate Dean at the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Canada where he retains his affiliation. His research papers have been published and presented internationally and his conceptual designs have been exhibited at the Design Museum, London, across Canada and in Italy. He

also serves on the editorial boards of several international journals. His book, *Sustainable by Design: Explorations in Theory and Practice* is also published by Earthscan.

Users Review

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