

Research Request: Philosophy of Design

Ken Friedman

Dear Colleagues,

This is a research request for articles and books on philosophy of design.

I seek citations, references, and descriptions of articles and books in which philosophers discuss issues that can be applied to design process as well as articles and books in which designers and design researchers discuss or develop a philosophy of design.

In this sense, I do not restrict the call to full-formed or comprehensive philosophies, but invite also propositions and heuristic probes. If you have written articles or papers you are willing to share, I will welcome them and I will include them in the compilation.

Please send suggestions and comments both to the list
<h-arthist@h-net.msu.edu>
and off-list to me at
<ken.friedman@bi.no>

This call has gone to several lists. I will compile all responses and post them to each list. I will also prepare the compilation in the form of a small anthology that will be made available in .PDF format. The anthology will include full-text articles.

The authors of each contribution will retain the copyright to his or her contribution.

Thank you.

Ken Friedman
Professor of Leadership and Strategic Design
Institute for Communication, Culture, and Language
Norwegian School of Management

Design Research CenterDenmark's Design School

Applicable definitions of the term, "philosophy" in "philosophy of design":

Merriam-Webster's (1990: 883) defines philosophy as:

"2 a : pursuit of wisdom b : a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means c : an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs 3 a : a system of philosophical concepts <Kantian philosophy> b : a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought <the philosophy of cooking> <philosophy of science> 4 a :
the most general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group <the hippie philosophy>."

The Oxford English Dictionary (2002: Unpaged) defines the relevant aspects of the word philosophy the same way:

"1. a. (In the original and widest sense.) The love, study, or pursuit of wisdom, or of knowledge of things and their causes, whether theoretical or practical." To speak of a "philosophy of" is to discuss "The study of the general principles of some particular branch of knowledge, experience, or activity." OED cites this usage example, "Expressions like 'philosophy of science', 'philosophy of history', 'philosophy of government', 'philosophy of law', 'philosophy of religion', and so forth creep into the language, indicating that after scientists, historians, statesmen, jurists, priests, and the rest have said all they have to say, there is still need of a special kind of knowledge to inform us what it is all about."

Webster's International Dictionary (1913: 1077) defines philosophy as "1. Literally, the love of, including the search after, wisdom; in actual usage, the knowledge of phenomena as explained by, and resolved into, causes and reasons, powers and laws. When applied to any particular department of knowledge, philosophy denotes the general laws or principles under which all the subordinate phenomena or facts relating to that subject are comprehended."

References:

Merriam-Webster, Inc. 1990. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, Massachusetts.

OED. 2002. OED Online. Oxford English Dictionary. Ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. Second edition, 1989. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Oxford University Press. URL: <http://dictionary.oed.com/> Date accessed: 2002 January 18, verified 2005 November 27.

Webster's. 1913. Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (G & C. Merriam Co., 1913, edited by Noah Porter). ARTFL (Project for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language).

ArtHist.net

Chicago: Divisions of the Humanities, University of Chicago. URL:
http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms_unrest/webster.form.html
Date accessed: 2002 January 18, verified 2005 November 27.

Reference:

Q: Research Request: Philosophy of Design. In: ArtHist.net, Dec 1, 2005 (accessed Mar 27, 2026),
<<https://arthist.net/archive/27811>>.