ENDNOTES

1. For an excellent analysis of the conspicuous absence of the rain from Kant's writings on aesthetic effect and the sublime, see Karen Lang, "The Dialectics of Decay: Rereading the Kantian Subject" (1997, 413–39).

2. The irony of the situation is that Speer's elaborate preparations provided no guarantee, and in reality the majority of his works were destroyed violently by enemy bombs or by demolition after the war, creating an aesthetic effect quite different to that which he planned.

3. See McCle, who writes that the possibility of a normatively transcending the flawed world of experience tends to devalue the experience of its breakdown. Such false aesthetic transcendence was just what Baroque Traumspiel desired. In order to gain access to its allegorical form, therefore, Benjamin would have to demolish the affirmative bias built up around the romantic concept of the aesthetic symbol." (1993, 127)

4. This is Schopenhauer's distinction, which Benjamin employed to illustrate the historical marginalisation of allegory. As McCle relates it, "the cloister in this argument was to equate allegory with sign, for sign was seen as 'a conventional relationship between a signifying image and its meaning ... a mere mode of designation,' or a 'playful illustrative technique at best' [which designated] The ''in the symbol' versus the mere 'technology of the sign.'" (1993, 123)

5. Later re-interpretations of allegory have valued precisely this richness, indeterminacy and ambiguity of meaning, the disengagement of a direct connection between signifier and signified. (McCle 1993, 135)

6. "In the rain history has physically merged into the setting. And in this same history does not assume the form of a person but in the rain is the rain." (Benjamin 1977, 178)

7. "A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the process in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the 'normal' image of past, historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past." (Benjamin 1968, 264)

8. The presentation of the historical object within a charged field of past and present, which produce political electricity in a 'lightning flash' of truth, is the "dialectics as a standard". (Buck-Morss 1999, 219)

9. The celebration of war was not confined to Italian Fascist circles. Germany had its own proponent in Ernst Junger, one of whom Benjamin wrote a scathing critique as early as 1932 (Benjamin 1968, 235). See Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays" (1979, 120–125) which is accompanied by a commentary by Annette Holm, "The Aesthetics of Politics: Walter Benjamin's "Theories of German Fascism." (1979, 99–119).

10. First, he maintained that political spectacles divert critical judgements about the configuration of modern life: they deflect any comprehension of the political as a noninstrumental space in which we may negotiate the cultural idea, institutions, and values that ought to organise political exchange. Second, Benjamin read fascism as an attempt to supersede on political practice romantic notions of genius expressivity, and hence, to ground processes of legitimation in aesthetic myths of self-referential creativity and symbolic totality. Third, Benjamin believed that the aestheticisation of politics results in a degrading regime of visual modes of political representation, one that feminises and sexualises them as uncritical spectators and voiceless tokens in the allegedly aesthetic form of the Volkswagenwerk. (Kempf 1986, 59)

11. The use of the skull and crossbones flag by pirates in the Baroque period evoked a similar configuration—having chosen to live as renegades, pirates were condemned to die if they should ever be captured, and thus lived (literally) under the sign of their renounced mortality. Thanks to John Macarthur for this observation.

12. Criticism itself is thus a 'violent' act: Regardless of medium, [Benjamin] considered criticism an activity of stripping its objects bare, stripping them, dragging the truth content of what is depicted in the image out before it, not as an unveiling that destroys the mystery but a revelation that does not just uncover, but that negativity and destructiveness of criticism opens up a moment of revelation, which in turn opens the future potential of the object." (Morrison 1988, 119)

13. The object of philosophical criticism is to show that the function of artistic form is as follows to make historical content, such as provides the basis of every important work of art, into a philosophical truth. The transformation of material content into truth content makes the decrease in effectiveness, whereby the attraction of earlier charms diminish, diminish by decade, into the basis for a rebirth, in which all ephemeral beauty is stripped off, and the work stands as a rain." (Benjamin 1977, 182)

Negotiating Design: Conversational Strategies Between Clients and Designers

MARK ROXBURGH

INTRODUCTION

Design is typically thought of as an activity that results in the production of artefacts or forms of graphic communication and has often been conceived of in rather simplistic binary terms. Disciplines such as industrial, graphic, interior, and fashion design are seen as being artistic ('subjective') whilst disciplines such as engineering, computer science and systems design are considered more technical or scientific ('objective') (Davies 1987; ix; Dilnot 1989b; 249; Rowe 1987, 1). Occasionally design gets located between these poles, particularly in describing architecture and, more recently, industrial design. Though each of these 'standard' models has a different focus (one placing emphasis on creative intuition, the other on technical rationality) historical anecdotes of design thus practised have been based on the study of the lives of great designers, artefacts, design movements, and the processes of making objects (Dilnot 1989a, 220–1; Forty 1986, 239). Viewed like this design is the activity of gifted individuals. The failure of this view is a lack of recognition of the wide range of material and social situations within which design gets played out which help to shape the design process and outcome.

Recent theories of design have sought to deconstruct the dominance of this episteme view by exploring the complexities of the relationships between the design process and various aspects of its social and material contingency (Ackrill 1992; Forty 1986; Cockburn 1992; Law 1992; Mackay & Gillespie 1992; McKenzie & Wajcman 1985). This shift has resulted in design being conceived of as a negotiated process rather than simply a process of individual creation or invention. A significant feature of these negotiations is the conversations that designers and clients have during the planning and execution of a design project. Studies in such conversations have generally looked at participants' use of language in constituting the designed outcome as a means of emphasising the negotiated nature of the design process (See Cuff 1991; Fleming & 1996; & 1998; Forester 1989; Schon 1983). Whilst some of these scholars have looked at the codes of language used by participants, none has fully explored the rhetorical implications of the relationship between the use of these codes, the participants' discourses, and the configuration of their identity in
these conversations.

Drawing upon recent theories of the social construction of technology, discourse analysis, cultural studies and design as rhetoric I will argue that, in these case studies, it is through the participants’ subject positioning, enabled by their discourse histories, that they are able to control the conversations and thus the design process and outcome. In doing this I will argue that design in this sense not only produces objects but reproduces ideologies. It must be stressed at this stage that this analysis is indicative and further and more extensive case study analysis is required to develop a more conclusive picture for the broader application of this proposition.

THE STUDY

To examine these issues two separate case studies of design projects were undertaken. Both focused on the production of graphic design material and both were chosen because they involved designers and clients of differing levels of design experience. By contrasting the progress of the two projects I will demonstrate the way in which these differing levels of experience influence the degree of sophistication of the participants’ rhetorical use of subject positioning.

To provide a richer analysis of the material I also undertook semi-structured interviews with each of the participants shortly after the completion of both projects. In these interviews the participants were asked to reflect upon their understanding of the design process in general and their specific experiences within the context of the projects just finished. The contrast between what was said in interview and what was said during the design process highlights the tensions and competing understandings of design that exists between clients and designers, and the different discourses they draw on.

The first case study (CS1) involved the design of a company logo, business card and stationary for a self-employed IT contractor. The female designer, Toni, has been working as a designer for ten years. Prior to this she worked in marketing in the fashion industry for several years. Toni freelances as a designer and also works half-time as a lecturer in design at a Sydney university. She had not previously worked for this client. Toni is in her early forties.

The client in CS1 is a male in his early thirties, named Mike, who had not previously worked with a designer. Mike had been working as a software engineer for six years and had recently set up his own company in order to work as a freelance consultant in the IT industry. Both Mike and Toni knew each other socially for several years prior to working on this project. It was this social contact that led Mike to contract Toni to undertake the work.

The second case study (CS2) involved the design of a recruitment poster and a prospectus for international students for a Sydney university. The designer is a male in his late twenties named Jae. Jae is the senior publication designer at a design and multimedia company set up by the same university. He has three years working design experience and is also a graduate of that university.

The female client, Kath, is in her late twenties and is a marketing officer of the International Student Centre at the same university. She has been working in this capacity for eighteen months. During that period both Jae and Kath have worked on numerous projects together. Prior to working with Jae, Kath had only worked with one other designer for a period of two months.

THE CODES OF DESIGN

Drawing upon the idea that themes or professional codes frame the constitution of ‘texts’ through discourse (Fleming 1996, 136–7; Hall 1990, 129), I identified three key codes that were either explicitly dealt with in the design meetings or were an implicit part of them. In interview, these codes were also identified by the participants in relationship to their views of the design process and their roles in it. These codes are:

THE FORM OF DESIGN

This code relates to the aesthetic and material properties of the proposed design artefact. Discussions about these properties, in the case studies, often involved discussions about and actions of crafting the artefact. In essence this code is about how the work looks.

THE FUNCTION OF DESIGN

This code relates to functional properties of the proposed design artefact. The case study projects involved the graphic design of various visual communication media. The functional aspect of the proposed design artefact is therefore to communicate a message in graphic, image and text form. In essence this code is about what the message is and how designers and clients imagine it is encoded into a form.

THE USE OF DESIGN

This code relates to the intended use of the proposed design artefact. In these case studies the artefacts are intended to communicate a message to an ‘audience’ or ‘user’ group; they are configured with that ‘user’ group in mind. In essence this code is about how designers and clients believe their message, in design form, will be decoded by potential users. For the purposes of this article, however, I will limit my analysis to the
use of the code of the form of design. It is through this code that I will explore both the participants’ views of design and the rhetorical use of subject positioning during the design process.

**DISCOURSE AND DESIGN**

Herbert Simon's proposition that design is an intellectual activity that is concerned with devising 'courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones', through the production of artefacts (Simon 1981, 129-33), finds parallels in Mansell's view that design is a process through which social actors, who desire a situation, satisfy that desire by actualising an outcome (Mansell 1996, 23). Though Simon's account of design recognises its contextually contingent nature (Simon 1981, 177) his emphasis on a scientific model for its practice effectively locates social structure as the determinate factor in cultural reproduction. Like Forty (1986), Simon fails to account adequately for the role of human agency in regard to this. Mansell on the other hand, recognises that agents and structures are co-determinate in cultural reproduction (Mansell 1996, 28).

Buchanan and Fleming have both argued that Simon's concept of design implicitly hints at its rhetorical dimensions (Buchanan 1995, 42; Fleming 1996, 136). However, rhetoric is not just a feature of the negotiations that bring the artefact into being, it is also a feature of the artefact itself. Artefacts have rhetorical capacity in that they can persuade, convince, and direct users to courses of action (Buchanan 1995, 24-6; Golby-Smith 1996, 8; Schon 1983, 79). This proposition has direct parallels with the notion of enrolment developed within Actor-Network Theory. In that theory all actors in the network of social relations attempt to persuade or enrol others into a preferred course of action (Mackay & Gillespie 1992, 687). Design considered this way is an active process 'closely associated with individual and collective actions which create differentiation and variety in social systems by marking out signs, symbols, or other boundary indicators' (Mansell 1996, 23). The rhetorical dimensions of the negotiations within the design process (and thus of the artefact itself), and the concomitant ability to enrol others into courses of action, is then both political and ideological.

Pinch and Bijker (1984) argue that to reveal the ideological dimensions of technological development it is necessary to analyse the choices that are made through the social negotiations that constitute the design process. I would also argue that this type of investigation must also be undertaken in order to counter the 'common sense' view of design as being the practice of gifted individuals. Studies of individual designers or the design artefact, without reference to the wider context in which they exist, are circumscribed in their ability to examine the ways in which symbolic and functional meaning circulates through and around cultural artefacts. The practices of encoding meaning into designed artefacts are part of that context and an examination of this phase of an artefact's cultural trajectory will provide valuable insights into how this occurs (Mackay & Gillespie 1992, 690-4).

A key part of the design process, during the encoding phase, is the ongoing series of negotiations, through conversation, between a client and designer. Language is a central medium through which clients and designers communicate and it is used with rhetorical intent in an attempt to enrol each other into a preferred course of action. It is enmeshed within social structures and is not a neutral medium but one through which competing ideologies circulate (Kress 1988, 80). Fleming argues that it is only 'when design artefacts are seen as enmeshed in contexts of production and use, that language takes its place as a constitutive element in the invention of the built world' (Fleming 1998, 42).

Studies in the use of conversation in design generally have as their aim the examination of the role language plays, in client/designer or teacher/designer interactions, in constituting the designed artefact (Cuff 1991; Fleming 1996 & 1998; Forrester 1989; Schon 1983). Cuff sees design as a process of socially constructing the artefact and that the objective of the conversations between designers and clients is to move 'toward a specific scheme that will be mutually agreeable' (Cuff 1991, 194). Fleming argues that the design process, of which these conversations are an integral part, can be seen as a rhetorical action that is 'social, discursive and argumentative' and not just a practical task of creating a designed artefact (Fleming 1996, 136). He describes discourse as 'not merely a tool for depicting reality but rather a means through which individuals try to constitute that reality by influencing the beliefs and actions of themselves and others' (Fleming 1996, 138). Conversational strategies employed during the design process, understood in this way, can be seen as a means of setting and constraining boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Cuff 1991, 181; Fleming 1996, 140; Golby-Smith 1996, 20; Forrester 1989, 120).

**DESIGN AND IDENTITY**

Forrester develops this argument further by contending that design conversations are not just about creating the object but also about the reproduction of the participants' identities and social relations (Forrester 1989, 129–30). In doing this, though, he outlines a fairly generalised account of the relationship between the participants, their social histories and context, and their identities (Forrester 1989, 70–2 & 78–9). It is an account that looks at the structural (macro) conditions in which this occurs and the issue of the relationship of human agency to these structures is not adequately accounted for. Similarly Golby-Smith argues that design conversations include a search for identity but again this is explained only in general terms (Golby-Smith 1996, 20).

In exploring the ways in which clients and designers use their insider/outsider knowledge during negotiations, Fleming (1996) comes closest to articulating how
identity is configured in relationship to conversational codes. However, he is more concerned with how the gap between designer and client cultures is constituted, by examining the accounts of clients and designers of their shared experience of the design process, as opposed to explicitly examining the way subjectivity is configured through discourse in the design conversations (Fleming 1996, 157). Others too have observed that design conversations are conducted through the discussion of a range of themes or codes that emerge, disappear and re-emerge during the course of one or more interactions (Cuff 1991, 185–91; Forester 1989, 121–3; Golshy-Smith 1996, 19–21). Like Fleming, none of these accounts analyse the specific mechanisms that conversational participants use to configure their identities during the design process.

In her analysis of the construction of subjectivity Holloway (1984) explores the nexus between discourse and subject positions. She argues that discourses make available positions for subjects to take up but that the histories of social practices and meanings developed through peoples’ lives shape what discourses they have access to (Holloway 1984, 236–7). It is through discourse that we categorise, make sense of and describe the material and social world (Davies & Harre 1990, 45–6). Thus, the contingent nature of our access to discourses is ideological and has implications for notions of the self, as the self is produced through discourse (Thompson 1990, 90–1). This means that identity is never finally fixed; there is always a degree of ambiguity in the way in which subject positions are articulated (Mouffe 1989, 35). This concept of the changeable and contingent nature of identity supplants then the idea of a unified self with the notion of multiple selves (Lupton 1998, 26).

In relation to conversation, discourse encompasses both the structure of language and the way sense is made of social meanings and practices through it, as I will demonstrate. In the design conversations observed each participant takes up a variety of subject positions in relation to the circulation of the code of form through discourse. As discourse is the means through which ideology circulates and subjectivity is constituted, it can be seen as a mechanism through which individuals and social groups can strategically negotiate to achieve desired ends (Lupton 1994, 18). Though the application of these issues is commonplace in critical social theory and analysis they have not been systematically explored in relation to design theory and practice. These concepts have much to offer in developing an understanding of the social and negotiated nature of the design process and could provide designers with new models of design practice that move beyond the dominant model of intuitive creativity or technical rationality. In this light, rhetoric can be seen as an enrolment device through which participants, in design negotiations, access codes through discourse and subject positions to legitimate their authority. This is fundamentally an ideological practice and it is this aspect of design conversations I wish to analyse.

PARTICIPANTS’ VIEWS OF DESIGN

In examining the discursive dimensions of the code of ‘the form of design’ I will analyse empirical material that deals with both the look of the proposed design and its crafting. Though it might seem that I am conflating what appear to be two categories, the discussion of how the artefact would look was generally accompanied by discussions about, or actions of, crafting it in prototype or sketch form. The conception and discussion of the aesthetics of the designed artefact, therefore, does not occur independent of this prototype crafting and they are, in fact, parallel ways of designing (Henderson 1995, 197; Schon 1983, 80). The code of ‘the form of design’ relates, then, to the aesthetic and material nature of the intended designed artefact and the processes associated with bringing it into being.

The preconception of design and the role of the designer as being artistically creative was a view that both designers held when first attracted to design as an occupation. Toni saw design as a ‘way of being creative with my hands. A way to do artwork that would also supply me with a bit of an income’. Jae pursued design as a career because she ‘wanted to do something creative’. Mike, not having previously worked with a designer, similarly assumed that what designers did was ‘artistic’ and that the negotiations with Toni would be focused on ‘what it’s [the outcome] going to look like, what colours and that sort of stuff’.

As a client Kath had had significantly more experience in working with designers than Mike, but in spite of this she also characterises the designer’s role as being concerned with aesthetic issues. In describing Jae’s qualities as a designer she stated that ‘she has a good eye and she does make it [the outcome] balance, makes it look presentable’.

Despite these preconceptions the clients recognised—ironically—that they too played an important role in shaping the object’s aesthetic dimensions. Mike felt that he ‘definitely had input into the creative side of things’, a point Toni acknowledged for she felt Mike was ‘not really interested that much in concept’ but ‘more how it looked’. What Toni and Mike both articulate here is a notion that creativity is concerned largely with issues of aesthetics, once again conforming to the common notion of graphic design as an aestheticised activity. Kath similarly conflates aesthetics with creativity for she pushed her ‘preference for the full colour [poster]’ despite Jae having ‘had all these artistic considerations’ in proposing a black and white poster. This points to Kath’s awareness that she played a role in the look of the poster through her negotiations with Jae.

Like Toni, Jae also acknowledged the client’s role in shaping the aesthetic parameters of the design outcome. Despite having a strong view of how the outcome should look she recognised that Kath did too. Her response to this type of potential conflict with clients is to ‘try and mix those two ideas and give them what they want’. This indicates an awareness that the aesthetic aspects of the proposed design are subject to
negotiation. It is recognition that the social and material parameters of design are constituted by both participants (Reling 1996, 139). Each participant clearly and consciouslyconfigures themselves, and the other party they are working with, as being involved in aesthetic decisions. This contradicts their preconceptions of the role of the designer which conforms to the common view of the designer as artist.

REGULATING THE FORM OF DESIGN

A feature of first time client/designer negotiations is the courtship stage in which the participants attempt to establish an understanding of each other and the parameters of their working relationship (Cuff 1991, 178-9). In CSZ the client and designer have worked on numerous projects over eighteen months and the meetings observed did not involve this courtship. Their working relationship was characterised by a degree of informality and an implied shared understanding of the design process; so much so that Kath readily positioned herself as a designer in the initial meeting by accessing the codes related to the form of the artefact:

Kath I'm going to work off the ad that you've done. I'm thinking in terms of size around the planner size. Around that size. [points to a poster on the wall]

In doing this Kath's view of the form of the object is dominant and Jae is in effect relegated to the status of a paste-up artist. By positioning herself as a designer ahead of Jae, Kath is staking a claim to a comparable, if not dominant, role in the design process, thereby limiting Jae's ability to claim this position as a source of her own authority. This is typical of their first meeting. Jae is less concerned with the aesthetics of the object and seems more intent on understanding what Kath wants. Jae rarely accesses the codes of form; rather it is Kath who more actively positions Jae as a designer in relation to those codes.

Kath So where this is put [Kath points to a section of copy we could have the city image and then 'turn your diploma into a degree' and then the student image ... perhaps ... and then all of this at the bottom, wherever you want to put it.

The use of terms like 'we could' positions Kath and Jae as aesthetic collaborators, and is a rhetorical strategy to make Jae feel as if she is part of the decision-making process. By monopolising the use of this code Kath limits the extent to which Jae is positioned as a participant in the considerations of the form of the poster. By rhetorically constituting other ideas as the property of both parties it also becomes easy for Kath to drop them at a later time, should they be challenged, without feeling as if her judgement is in question.

Conversely Jae rarely accesses the codes of form at this early stage; access to the position of designer is regulated by Kath; Jae has little aesthetic investment in the object, as they are not her ideas being put forth and discussed. When she does position herself as such it is usually in relation to the forming of the artefact that will occur in the future—I'll have to have a look—and is done in a non-committal manner—maybe along the same line. This strategy allows her to postpone decisions about how things will look until she actually makes the object, which she can then defend or modify in a subsequent meeting.

As in CSZ there was no apparent courtship phase of Mike and Toni's working relationship, which can be attributed to their longstanding social relationship. In the first meeting of three, most of the discussion centred around the nature of Mike's work and the image he wanted to communicate through the designed material. This reflected Toni's approach to the design process in that she 'was trying to incorporate what he [Mike] did in his own work in the logo'. Where aesthetic issues were touched upon it was in response to Mike's desire to have the initials of his company used as the basis of the logo. To which Toni responded:

Toni It's better that I don't work on it just looking at the T's and the S's and the C's and stuff because that just tends to be too descriptive. So I try and think about what it is you are doing and how you work. You communicate that first and then try and use the letters. If I can't use the letters I won't. If they don't appear ...

Mike I'm glad you warned me. [laughs]

Toni is not committing herself to Mike's suggestion and positions herself as the dominant party by accessing the code of form and talking about what she will and won't do. This positioning can be seen as an attempt, by Toni, to clearly mark out the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to the aesthetic territory. However, to exclude Mike totally would be counterproductive to Toni's agenda as it would undermine the rapport that is necessary to negotiate towards a satisfactory design outcome (Cuff 1991, 237). In light of this Toni does, from time to time, position Mike as a collaborator in aesthetic discussions:

Toni What we'd do is finalise the logo first and then apply it to business cards, once you've narrowed down to 2 or 3, and then I'll do a range of applications to business cards and letterheads.

Here decision and action are not only potentially collaborative, as the use of 'what we'd do' demonstrates, but Toni allows Mike a degree of creative autonomy, for her work is dependent on him narrowing the logos down to 2 or 3. It is, though, only a semblance of autonomy for his choice is contingent upon what she presents to him. What is significant about this passage though is that Toni, like Kath, uses the device of rhetorical substitution—'I'd' for 'we'd'. The effect of this in design conversations is to enable the other participant to feel that they have an important role to play in the
design process even if that role is highly regulated (see Fleming 1998, 30–1). As in
Kath and Jae's first meeting, this encounter is characterised by the degree to which
access to the codes of the form of the proposed design is regulated.

NEGOTIATING THE FORM OF DESIGN

In subsequent meetings, once the design proposal had material form, the regulation
of access to the codes of form, which dominated both initial meetings, gave way to a
greater degree of negotiation. Instances of rhetorical substitution increased, as did the
positioning of each party as a designer. At the second meeting of CS2, Jae presents a
design prototype and more actively configures herself as a designer by arguing and
defending her work with recourse to the codes of form. The rhetorical use of her posi-
tioning as a designer was particularly evident when she was explaining to Kath why
she omitted a photo she was asked to include:

Jae  Yeah, I tried but the thing is you see there's so much information that
you're either distracted by photos ... otherwise ... because you've got so
much text ... I've tried this way and I've tried that way so you read the
... but you really need some empty space to balance it all out otherwise it
doesn't work.

In arguing that she's 'tried this way' and 'tried that way' Jae demonstrates to Kath
that she has taken the request seriously and not dismissed it out of hand but that on
the basis of her aesthetic expertise she has concluded it doesn't work visually. She is,
in short, trying to enrol Kath into this point of view through positioning herself as a
designer by accessing the codes of form. This is a clearly an ideological strategy.

Kath insists on seeing what the poster looks like with the photo included and actu-
ally instructs Jae to make changes to the poster on the computer screen.

Kath  I'd still actually, if it's not a pain for you, like to see what it looks like
with a photo of Sydney.

Jae  ... of Sydney.

Kath  Yeah.

Jae  See the only other place is to put it here. [Jae draws box where the
photo might go on the poster on screen]

Kath  Well we could move the text. [points to where she wants the text
moved to] study at the largest ... like ... Do you know what I mean?

Jae is resistant to the inclusion of the image and rather than demanding its inclu-
sion outright, Kath tries to negotiate a satisfactory compromise. This is a common way
of handling disputes in interactions between clients and designers and it is done to
avoid a deterioration in their relationship and/or prevent inappropriate decisions
being made (Cuff 1991, 183). Kath does this by positioning herself and Jae as collab-
orative participants in resolving this aesthetic impasse through the use of rhetorical
substitution—'we could move the text'. This strategy is a further example of the
rhetorical use of subject positioning.

Jae however, seems unconvinced the proposal will work and does not take up the
offer of the collaborative positioning. Instead she responds that 'even if I put a picture
on top it wouldn't work. Furthermore, she distances herself from the problem of the
image's inclusion through the rhetorical substitution of 'you' for 'I' when she states
that 'once you start putting a picture in the focus gets lost'. Though 'you' does not
explicitly relate to Kath—it is a general term which can encompass anyone—Jae's
reference to 'I' in relation to trying to solve this particular problem implies it is Kath's
understanding of the codes of form that are at fault. Jae's line of argument is based then
upon her rhetorical use of the codes of form and the associated configuration of herself
as a superior designer. This has the effect of positioning Kath as a less competent
designer than herself. The issue of the inclusion of the image was not resolved to the
mutual satisfaction of both parties at this point, though it cropped up again later in
the meeting. The deferral of problem resolution is also a common feature of the design
process (Cuff 1991, 184).

In the second meeting of CS1, Toni presents the roughs to Mike for comment and
feedback. In this meeting Mike begins to position himself as a designer by discussing
the aesthetic aspects of the logo. However, this only occurs after Toni has stated
emphatically that the objects are her work:

Toni  This is purely just the logo and it's based on what you told me and it's
based on also how I see your industry; how I see your place in it and
what you do rather than it being specific this or that or whatever. I've
tried to integrate those three elements as well as making it clean and
simple and still look aesthetically attractive.

This is not dissimilar to the way in which Jae was more active in positioning herself
as a designer in the second meeting of CS2 by drawing more heavily on the codes of
form. The aesthetic dimensions of the design have been manifest in material form and
Toni, like Jae, now has something tangible to address and argue for. However, it
becomes apparent that Toni controls Mike's access to the codes of form more rigor-
ously than Jae controlled Kath's. In CS2, Kath positioned herself as a designer by
accessing the codes of form almost from the outset. In CS1, Mike is not positioned as
a designer until a third of the way into the second meeting when Toni states that
'there's no point developing an idea if we absolutely hate them [the logos]'.

Mike's positioning, though, is only as a collaborator and is contingent upon Toni
making it available to him. By excluding him from this position for so long it has
allowed Toni to comprehensively state her intentions for each logo, argue them
through and defend them. Only after this has been done is Mike’s positioning in relation to the codes of form negotiated rather than regulated. It is then that Mike takes up the opportunity to engage in discussions about the form of the design:

Mike: So in terms of even space on the page I mean something like this which takes up a lot of vertical space might not be as appropriate as this. [Mike points to two logos]

and a bit later:

Mike: Hmm. I’d be happy to work on some sort of variation of that. [Mike points to the 1st logo presented]

Toni: I can do some more on Thursday.

Mike: Have you got any other stuff to give me ideas … of … work you’ve done?

It is noticeable here that though Mike has now positioned himself as a designer—‘I’d be happy to work on’—Toni has not entirely vacated her position as such—‘I can do some more’. Though Toni is still more or less controlling the negotiations she has opened them up by positioning Mike as a designer by asking him if he wants to take them away and work on them. It is evident then, that access to the codes of form has shifted from regulation to negotiation but it is a negotiation that is carefully controlled by Toni.

**VIEWS OF NEGOTIATION**

The analysis of the meetings I have undertaken is indicative of the social and negotiated nature of the conversations that frame the design process. Though the negotiation of design was not a code that was explicitly articulated in the meetings it was a means through which agreement was reached in relation to the code of the form of design. In interview all participants acknowledged the negotiated nature of the process.

Toni and Jae’s preconceptions of what design was altered subsequent to their employment as designers. Toni saw the designer more as a ‘director’ and the basis of design as ‘understanding people’ and ‘directing the process’. Jae, on the other hand, saw design in terms of ‘counselling’ which requires you to ‘nurture your relationship’ with clients. This demonstrates that both have an understanding of the contingent and social nature of design practice which contrasts with the view they had prior to working professionally. However, Toni’s view implies a sense of wanting to control the process whilst Jae’s view suggests she is happy for it to be a more equitable process of negotiation. These understandings of the design process framed the encoding of the design artefact in both case studies. The degree to which Toni controlled the convers-
sations fits in with her concept of the role of the designer as being a director, whilst Jae’s more negotiated approach reflects her view of the importance of nurturing relationships.

The clients were also conscious of the role of negotiation in the design process. Mike described his relationship with Toni as a ‘relationship where I’m giving her ideas, ideas are bounced back, ideas go to and fro’. However, he did see it as a relationship in which he was dominant in negotiations for he felt that he ‘formed it [the brief] entirely’. Not surprisingly this contrasts with Toni’s view for she felt ‘he followed my lead’ in the negotiations. Kath reflected that ‘the relationship building process is probably one of the most important things about working with a designer and that the design process is ‘collaborative’. Because of this, Kath felt that Jae ‘knows what we want’. Both Kath and Jae’s views of their relationship and the design process are fairly closely aligned.

The significance of the differing views of who controls the conversation in the design process relates to the understanding that the design artefact is configured through conversation. By controlling the conversation the client, or the designer, gains a degree of authority in shaping the design outcome (Cuff 1991, 191). The differing views of these relations of power, in the negotiations, can also be accounted for, in part, by the length of time that the relevant parties have known and worked with each other. Kath and Jae have worked together on a variety of projects for about eighteen months and it is clear that over time they have established a good working relationship, having long established its parameters.

Mike and Toni, on the other hand, had never worked together and the decision to employ Toni was made by Mike because ‘we played in the same volley ball team so we had a friendship already established’. Though they had negotiated their relationship in social terms at no point prior to this had they negotiated their professional relationship. The shift in the nature of their relationship was effectively acknowledged by Mike who, when reflecting upon the initial meeting with Toni, said that he ‘felt like he needed a stiff drink’ afterwards because of its intensity. This was a comment he also expressed at the conclusion of that first meeting and reflects his unpreparedness for the rigorous and professional nature of their exchanges.

**CONCLUSION**

Neither case study involved the courtship phase of first-time client/designer negotiations. In CS2, though the parameters of the relationship did not need to be worked out, the parameters of the job did and this knowledge resided with Kath. This, coupled with the apparent ease with which she worked with Jae, enabled Kath to regulate the boundaries of inclusion to the code of form in their first meeting. This also reflected the relative inexperience of Jae compared to Toni in CS1. The role of regulating the boundaries in CS1 was, in contrast, reversed. It was the designer and not the client
controlling access to the code of form. That Mike didn't access this code in the first meeting with Toni reflects his inexperience in dealing with design, the immaturity of their working relationship, and Toni's rhetorical sophistication, developed through years of experience. This indicates that regulation at this stage of design negotiations reflects the privileged position that one party has regarding knowledge pertinent to the specific job or process being discussed.

This regulation gives way to a more negotiated access to the code of form in the second meetings, reflecting the fact that the design proposal has material form and both parties have a specific object through which they can articulate their concerns (Fleming 1998, 45-6). However, the degree of negotiation differed between both case studies. In CS9 Toni continued to regulate Mike's access to the code of form until well into the meeting. This enabled her to articulate thoroughly her rationale for the aesthetic dimensions of the logos presented. Only when this had been done did the negotiation of access to this code really begin to take place. CS2, in contrast, was characterised by a greater degree of negotiation earlier on, reflecting the extent to which Jae, as the person who gave the object form, began to access this code and the extent to which Kath also continued to do so.

Fleming (1996, 139-40) argues that the regulation of the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in design conversations is contingent upon the discourse histories of the participants. In analysing these conversations I would suggest that these boundaries are established, in part, through the regulation and negotiation of access to the code of form, by the conversational participants, through the rhetorical use of subject positioning. However, these boundaries are not fixed but shift through the ebb and flow of the conversation. By regulating one participant's access to this code, the other party is able to take the initiative in relation to the aesthetic parameters of the job and this provides them with greater authority in the ensuing negotiations.

That all participants accessed the code of form demonstrates that, in these studies, the design outcome is not simply the work of a gifted individual. Cuff (1991, 179) has noted that preconceptions of client and designer roles play an important part in shaping the design process by framing the participant's behaviour. As assumptions about the nature of production form part of the professional ideology of any media production field (Hall 1990, 129) we can see that the preconceptions these participants had of design and its impact upon their negotiations reveals the design process is an ideological and social process.

The degree of involvement by the clients in aesthetic considerations and negotiations contradicts then the preconceptions that all parties had of design. Furthermore, the views of who actually controlled the formal aspects of the projects, particularly in CS9, again point to contradictory views of the nature of the design process. Such contradiction is not unusual, for the struggles for meaning and the position taking that occur in relation to social systems or practices engenders it (Bourdieu 1993, 34). Thus the contradictions evident in these case studies can be seen as a consequence of the struggle for authority in the negotiations.

The negotiations that characterised the design process in these case studies occurred through conversation. These conversations involved the articulation of a code of form by all participants. Wolff (1981, 64-5) and Hall (1990, 129) have both argued that in cultural production, codes operate as mediating influences between ideology and the material outcome by interfacing themselves as sets of rules or conventions. In accessing this code during the design process these participants configured a material outcome and their social relations and identities. The implication of this is that the rhetorical use of subject positioning in relation to this code is discursive and ideological.

This is of critical significance since, when viewed like this, we can see that the formal choices negotiated during these design conversations are not the natural consequence of a particular set of circumstances but one possibility among many. Further case study analysis is required to determine the broader applicability of this proposition. Furthermore, knowledge of how this process operates might lead designers to develop greater rhetorical expertise in order to have their views dominate in such negotiations. Such an application of this knowledge, however, would be an impoverished view of its real potential which is an increased capacity to be sensitive to the aspirations of other participants in design negotiations. This is the task of design in the contemporary world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


ENDNOTES

1 Whilst this simplifies the complexity of how design has been thought of historically this generalisation gives us a sense of the two key paradigms that it has often been premised on.  

2 The names of all participants have been changed to preserve their anonymity.