

UT DESIGN DIVISION  
DESIGN VALUES\*

**SUBVERSIVE VS. OBEDIENT** Subversive = the attempt to overthrow an existing power system by those working (secretly) from within. In this case, designers questioning problematic design paradigms, re-framing them, and developing tactics to "right the wrong" or "game the system". Designers often find themselves in a field of competing arguments which they must assess in order to assume a position; but the designer should also ask meta-questions: "Am I dealing with the appropriate problem or is this problem only a symptom of some other, higher level problem which I should attack instead?" (HORST RITTEL, 1988)

UNLEARN  
ASSUMPTIONS

Designers should question all preconceptions, including their own.

KNOW YOUR  
SUBJECT

Designers should consider the context of a design and understand the implications of a design act.

**STAKEHOLDER INCLUSIVE VS. CLIENT EXCLUSIVE**  
Stakeholder = all the individuals, groups and things affected by a design act.  
Client = one who compensates the designer and usually frames the design task.  
How can the designer bring the interests of overlooked stakeholders to the table?

**LONG VIEW VS. FASHIONABLE** Strive for solutions and ideas that are valid today as well as in the future.

**INTANGIBLE VS. TANGIBLE** Tangible = the object. Intangible = all the effects (economic, environmental, cultural, emotional, intended and unintended) of the tangible object.

**CONTEXT-SPECIFIC VS. UNIVERSAL** Universal = a preestablished method or visual form that is applied to a problem with little consideration of the subject or issues at hand. Context-specific = design developed in response to stakeholders' requests and conditions observed "on the ground".

EMBRACE  
PROCESS

Work must evolve out of the idea/subject and the process of pursuing it, not from predetermined design ideas.

**PROCESS VS. RESULT** An emergent design method evolves out of the investigation process. A predetermined or result-oriented solution is one applied regardless of discoveries.

**RISKY VS. SAFE** Taking chances will better serve the designer's education and the subject being investigated. Honest errors are more informative than icy perfection.

**ITERATIVE VS. GRASS HOPPER** Iterative development = work developed and refined in an evolving and growing process that responds to the strengths of previous iterations (not randomly jumping from idea to idea).

RESOLVE  
YOUR WORK

The intention of the work should be clear. The designer must be honest about their design decisions. Design decisions should reflect the intention.

**PARAMETERS VS. LIMITATIONS** Parameters define a field in which to explore. Definitions encourage a focused and rigorous investigation of possibilities. Working within parameters builds design muscles. Ignoring parameters encourages design flab. Viewing parameters as stifling is unproductive.

**INHERENT LOGIC VS. ARBITRARY DECISIONS** The work should be true to its logic and arbitrary decisions should be eliminated whenever possible.

**TECHNIQUE VS. TECHNOLOGY** In all fields of human activity, from athletics to photography, techniques emerge and develop for using technology. However, the technology should not drive or replace technique.

**RIGOR VS. SLOP** Rigor = fully investigating an idea and being true to what it tells you. Slop = arbitrary and ill-considered elements in a design.

**CRAFT & SCOPE** The work should always be well crafted, all aspects considered and resolved. Refining a project invariably yields new insights. The scope of the work should be factored into the process and never used as an excuse for bad craft. Better to scale the project down than be ineffective.

\* This list is a heavily edited summary of a conversation by the Design Faculty in the Spring of 2009. These values are not fixed, but instead an evolving list of descriptors intended to share the current collective viewpoint of the Design Faculty.

(P. Hall & D. Olsen)