



Translocated making in experimental collaborative design projects

Ashley Hall PhD Thesis 2013

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I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Cover: Nirona stool, research design Ashley Hall, Industrial design Matthew Kavanagh, legs made by Bhavik Bhavchaya, of Nirona and seat by Yunas Bhai of Bhuj, Rann of Katchchh, Gujarat, India, 2012.

For Clarence Hall 1936-2008

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Translocated making in experimental collaborative design projects

Abstract

This thesis examines the activity of designing and making across geographical distances. Through critical reflection on the author's own design practice, and the initiation of new collaborative design projects, the thesis develops and tests the concept of translocated making. Translocated making is explored as a form of production where activity, influence, media and understanding are shared across multiple locations, both physically and virtually.

The author's own design practice is situated and analysed in the context of how the manufacturing possibilities of mature western markets have developed since the 1990s. With the rise of digital technologies, greater degrees of interaction and collaboration between designer and manufacturer have been enabled; however, it is found that the effects of geographical and cultural distance on designing and making have not been systematically researched, nor understood from the perspective of the designer as creative agent.

Drawing on theories of cultural interaction, and in particular Appadurai's theory of suffixscapes, the thesis sets out a framework for experimenting with and analysing the effects of cultural and geographical difference on designing and making. Collaboration across distance is established as a key mode of designing and making, bringing to light the effects of difference in design outcomes. Gujarat in India is the location for a series of design projects in urban and remote locations. These are investigated through designing research and researching through design methods.

New knowledge is articulated through the way in which the design projects allow for the testing and reflection upon theories of cultural interaction. The experimental design methods employed in the projects show how exchanging differences through collaboration in digital and analogue media can create new artefacts with hybrid cultural values.

The value of this research for designers and makers in advanced and developing economies is through helping them to understand the possibilities of collaboration across geographical distance. For academics and researchers the value lies in critiquing and further developing practice-based design research methods, and in exploring the longer-term strategic, creative and cultural changes that globalisation and digital technologies are bringing to all forms of design and manufacture.