

# MAKING THINGS MAKES PEOPLE



Barry (Katz) is presenting the first lecture in his Design History class for the mechanical engineers (ME110).

We are having a running conversation (some two years old now) about design – completely agreeing that **things make people** as he puts it here this morning. The more subtle point holds too – that this dissolves the absolute distinction between people and things (Latour is right to prefer to call them non-humans).

Anyway, Barry makes the point, central to his course, that “design” was invented as a field, practice, concept, experience to cover the loss of meaning that comes with industrialization. Well, he *is* talking to a bunch of aspiring industrial designers. He connects his view on design with the emergence of mass production, and the decline of the singular object – aura is invoked here.

I don't see why design has to belong only with modernity. There may be justification for a more restricted definition of design, but the **transactions**, you could even call them existential, between people and non-humans implied by that insight that making things makes people have been going on since before the

emergence of anatomically modern humans.

Could you say that design belongs with the spectre of the double – confrontation with that which has an intimate (even if alienated) relationship with the maker, user, consumer? The uncanny again, very Hegelian this time.



Another take on this – mass production of the multiple thing is clearly coming to an end – we are getting into an era of mass customization.