DESIGNERS – THE ARCHETYPE – ODYSSEUS



This post is in a series of commentaries on a class running at Stanford, Winter Quarter 2010 – "Transformative Design" ENGR 231 – [Link]

Today I got to thinking about the character type of the “designer”. Not so much a craftsperson or artisan, nor an inventor, nor a fine artist. Someone attuned to particular circumstances, to problem solving, pragmatic and opportunistic.



Apollo

The designer is not associated with Apollo, *Mousagetes*, leader of the Muses,

offering poetic and artistic inspiration, creative insight. This is too removed.



Hephaistos in his forge



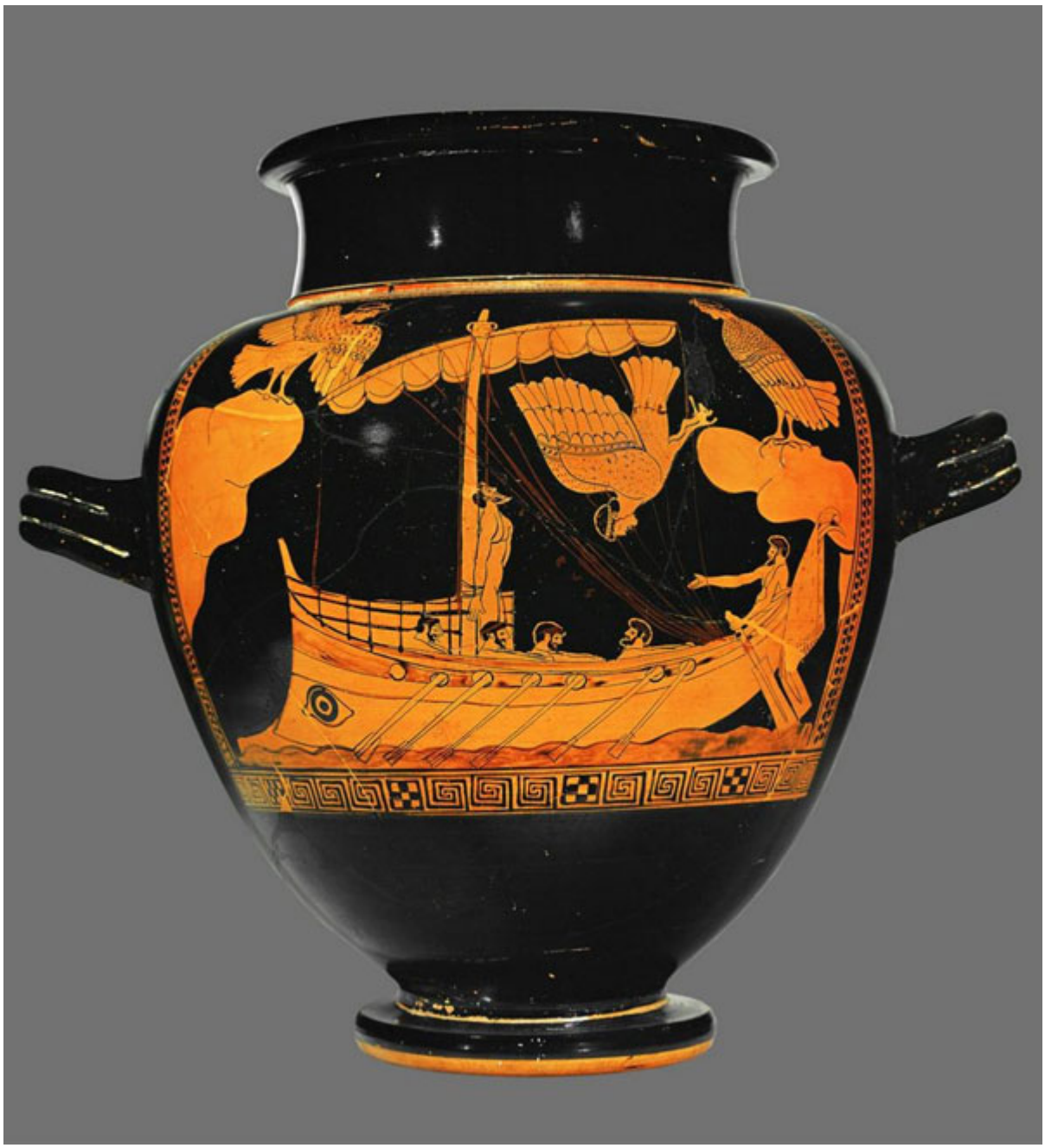
Daidalos and Pasiphaia

The designer is neither a divine engineer, Hephaistos, nor a smart inventor, like Daedalus, who made human flight possible, who created the first automaton.

Smart and resourceful, listening and watching carefully, the designer is *polytropos*, turning to this and that, cunning, potentially deceitful, selling you something you don’t want, possessed of *metis*, a pointed cleverness for solving specific problems.

This is Odysseus.

(And Hermes – the translator, mediator, trickster.)



Odysseus, polytropic man of *metis*, outwits the Sirens