



## 5. High Design

Read chapter 5 of *The Culture of Design* 'High Design'

High design often involves a number of strategies to place itself in this category: the emphasis on 'named' designers; the way it is presented in magazines, the web or in retail outlets; the way it takes quite 'ordinary' functional objects or environments and adds a particular designerly patina to it. This chapter also shows how, even, items might be deliberately made non-utilitarian in order to make them 'high design'.

### 1. Re-launching a product

Here's a bit of fun you can have. Take an ordinary household object. Devise a strategy for it to be re-launched as a high design product but with a minimal amount of adjustment to the thing itself (e.g. you might just change a colour, or a material, or make a small change to its form). Look at how you might promote it in order get 'high design' status.

### 2. Meta-object

Toward the end of the chapter (*revised 3rd edition only*), we see how 'critical design' makes commentary on design itself. Often this is concerned with imagining fictional futures. But we can use this idea of a design making commentary on design in terms of contemporary material culture as well.

Design and make a meta-object. This should be an object that makes commentary on an object, image or space or an identified typology of one of these.

We understand 'typology' to mean a studied or systematically classified set of things that have traits or characteristics in common. Here are some typologies to give you some other examples:

- modern university buildings;
- high-end outdoor café seating;
- hatchback car adverts for print;
- luxury tableware;
- tentage for festival-goers;
- sports themed bar interiors.

Your meta-object could be, for example a:

- small-scale individual sculpture;
- set of multiples (eg. small-scale objects that are identical, or almost identical);
- photomontage;
- collage (eg. mixing cut-outs, text, drawing, painting – but making it artful); or,
- beautifully produced 'object book'; or,
- a combination of these.

The maximum dimensions of your meta-object should be 600mm x 600mm x 600mm.

The commentary you make through your meta-object should tell us something about the relationship of design features (the 'look', colour, texture, weight, smell, articulation, sequencing of encounter, luminosity etc.) to its cultural significance.

What do we mean by 'cultural significance'?

We don't mean mean whether or not something is 'good'. And it certainly isn't about whether you like it or not. It is about asking 'in what way is this interesting'? What does this tell us about society? What values does it represent and support? What *meanings* does it convey?

Try and communicate all or some of these questions through your meta-object.

©Guy Julier, 2017

