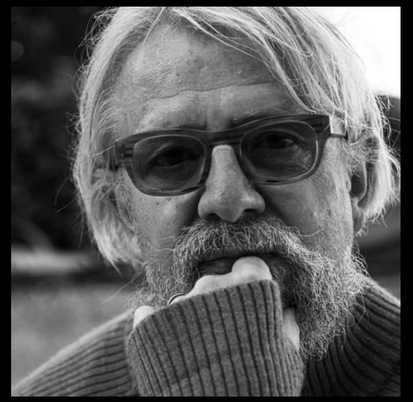
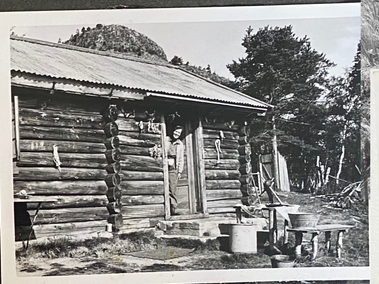


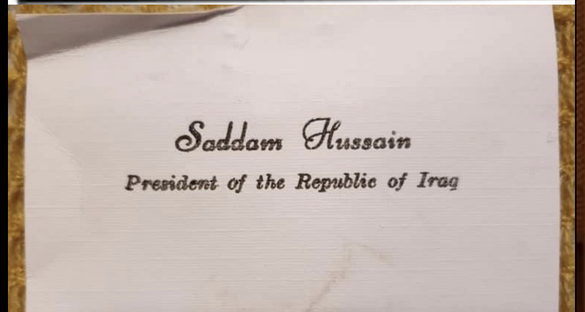
theodor.barth@khio.no

what are the deeper connections between design & freedom?

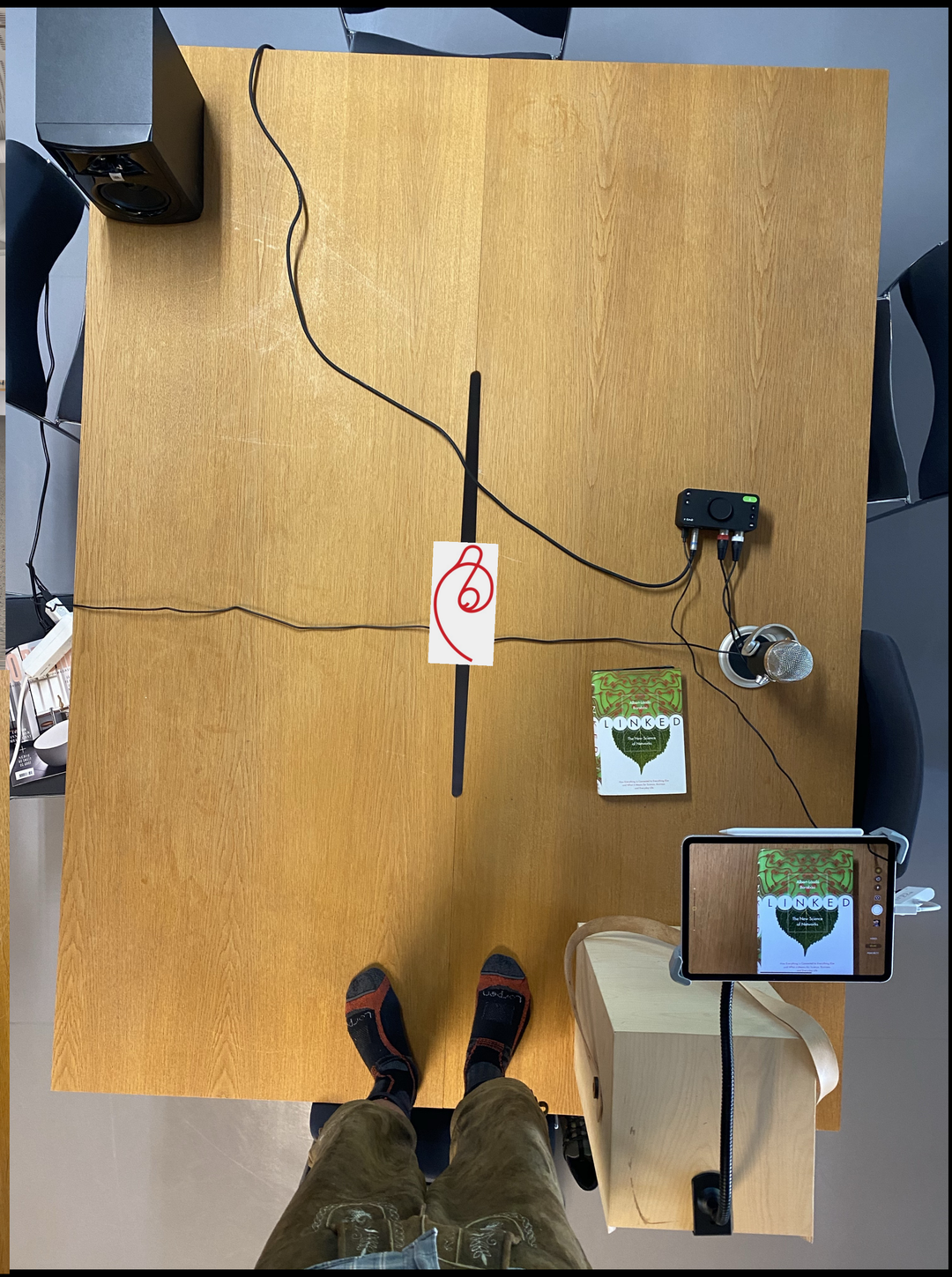
kickoff—MDE 504 | theory 1 — theory in design practice

DRIKK
Sold
A/S TØNSBERG BRYGGERI





Overrekkelse av akkreditiver til
President Saddam Hussein
Bagdad, 21. september 1981


LINKED
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Bill Viola
Tristan’s Ascension

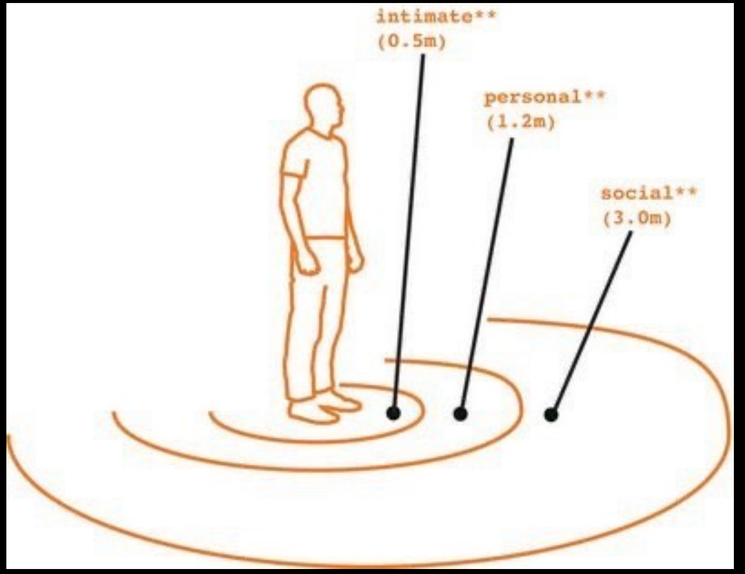
What is immersive—
other than a pair of VR goggles?

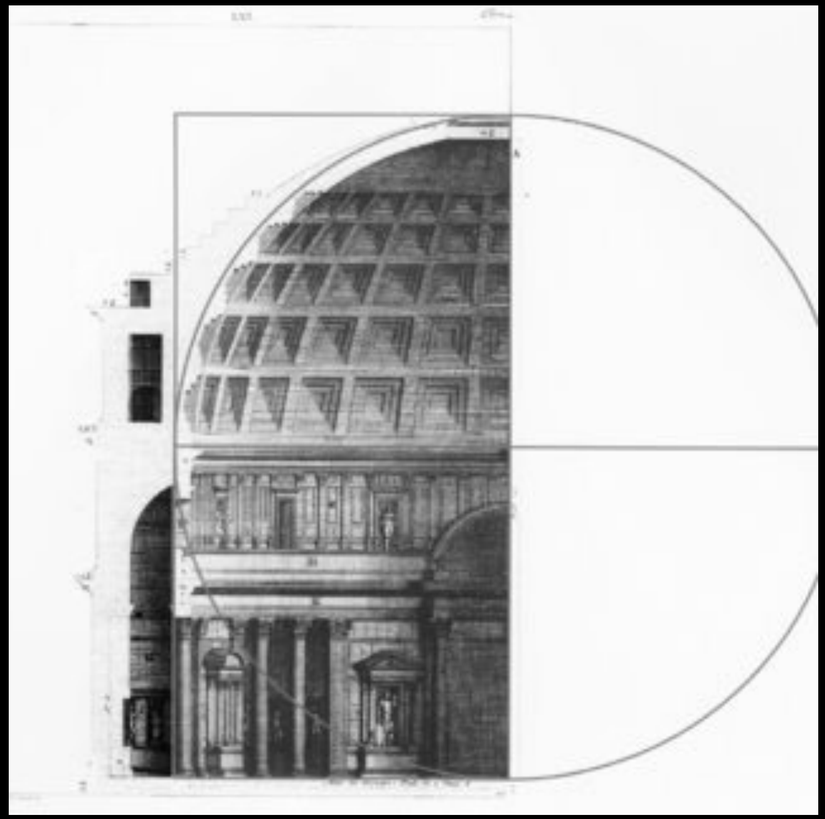
The Hidden Dimension

Edward T. Hall

Author of *THE SILENT LANGUAGE*

An anthropologist examines man's use of space in public and in private





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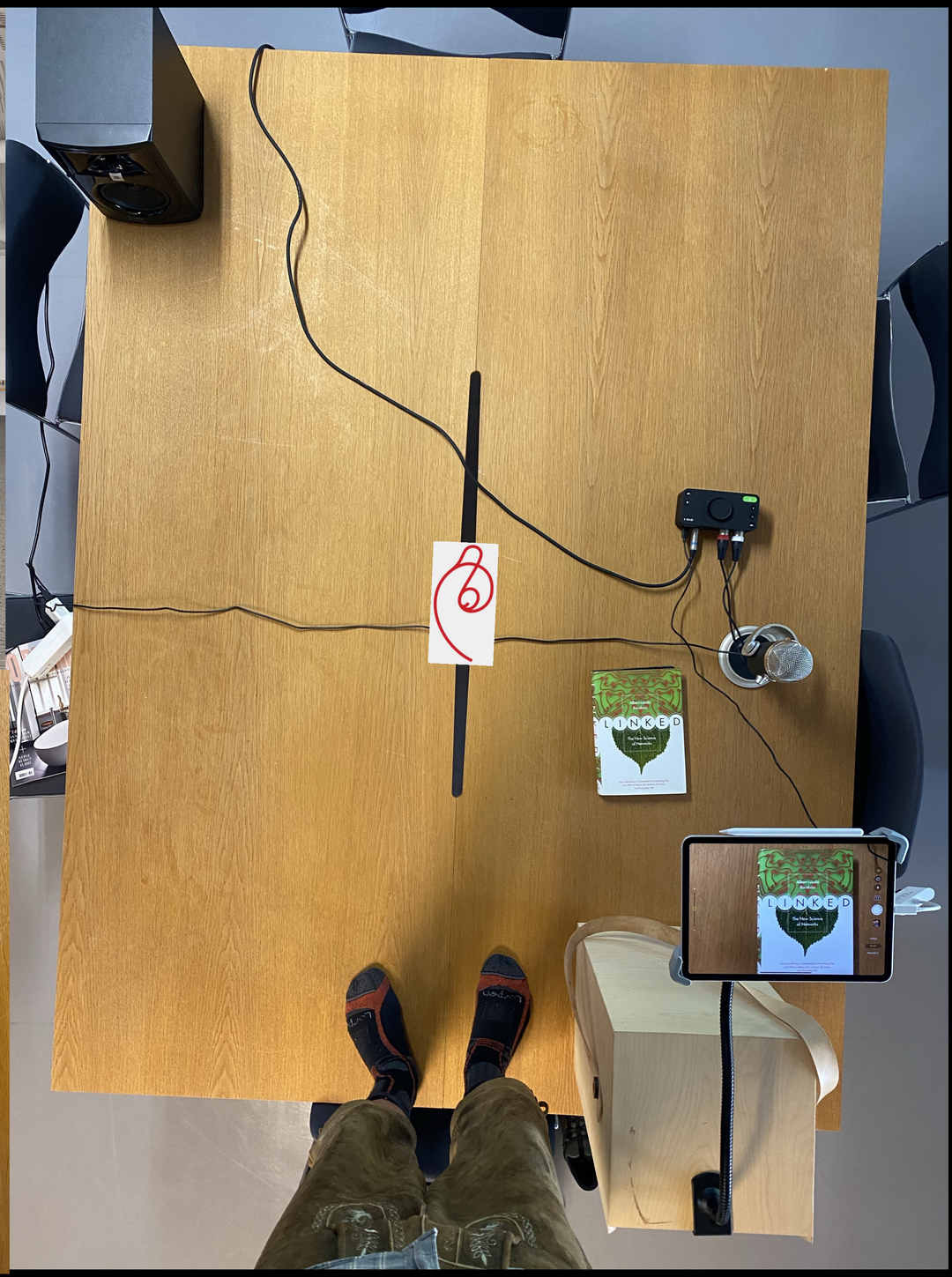
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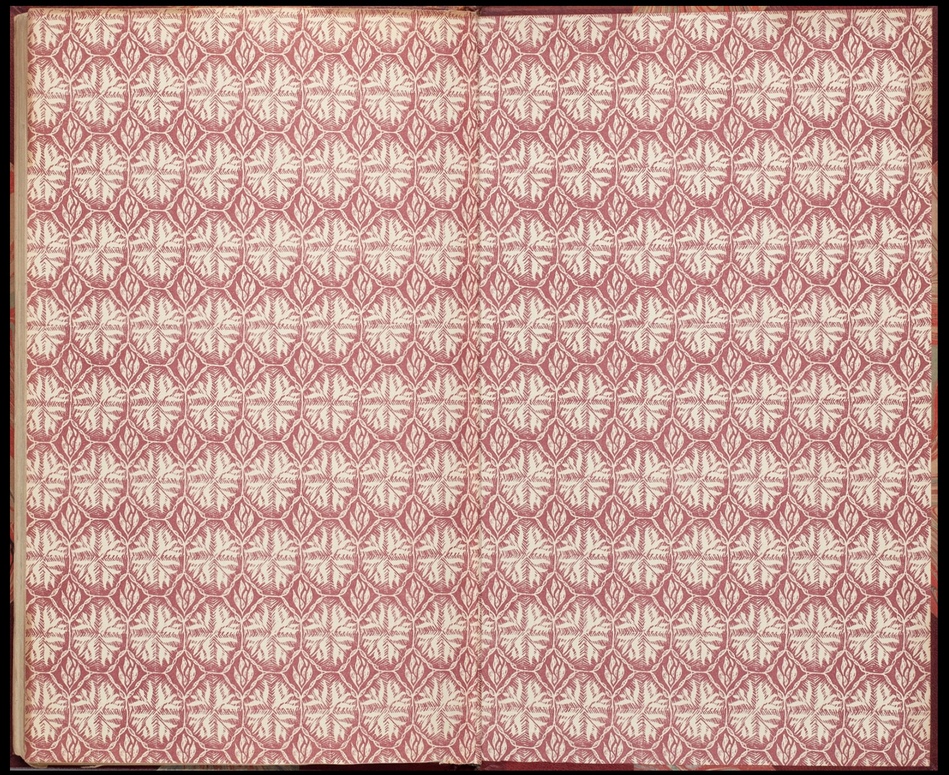
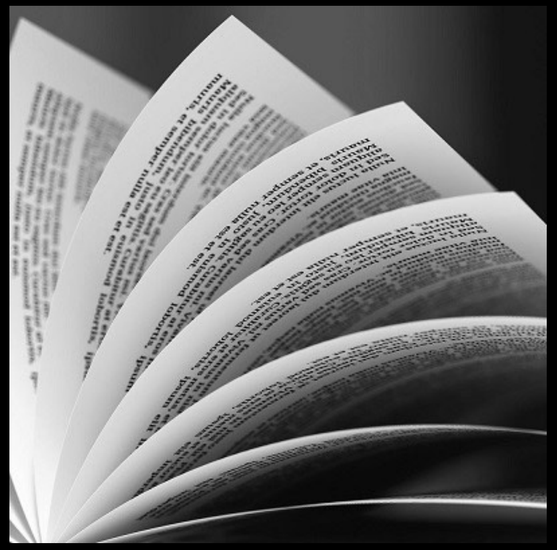
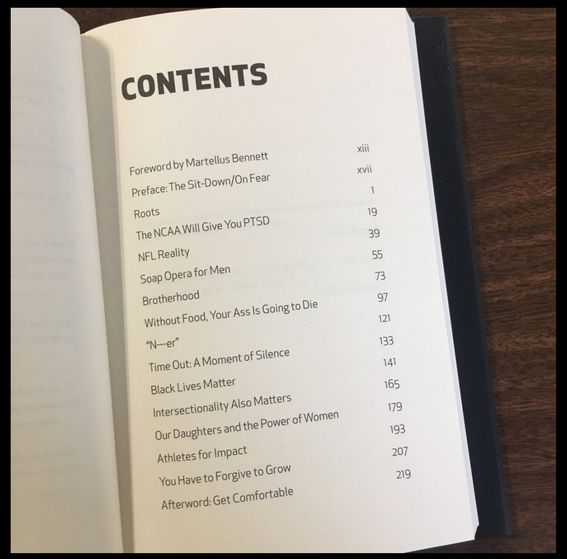
DELIVERY 1:
Black Book
(BB)

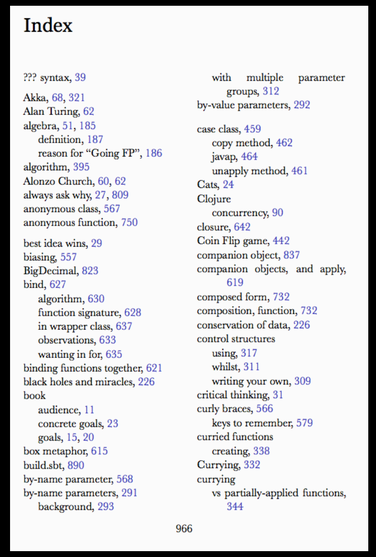
I would like you to share the story of how you got to the book you pick for you presentation: what drew you to it? Did you find it, or did it find you? At the library at KHiO or somewhere else? What does it feel like having in you hands, as a physical object? What is the cover like? Hard cover? End-paper? Glued/stitched?

BOOK presentation








Index

??? syntax, 39

Akka, 68, 321
Alan Turing, 62
algebra, 51, 185
  definition, 187
  reason for "Going FP", 186
algorithm, 393
Alonzo Church, 60, 62
always ask why, 27, 809
anonymous class, 567
anonymous function, 750

best idea wins, 29
biasing, 557
BigDecimal, 823
bind, 627
  algorithm, 630
  function signature, 628
  in wrapper class, 637
  observations, 633
  wanting in for, 635
binding functions together, 621
black holes and miracles, 226
book
  audience, 11
  concrete goals, 23
  goals, 15, 20
box metaphor, 615
build.sbt, 890
by-name parameter, 568
by-name parameters, 291
  background, 293
  with multiple parameter groups, 312
by-value parameters, 292

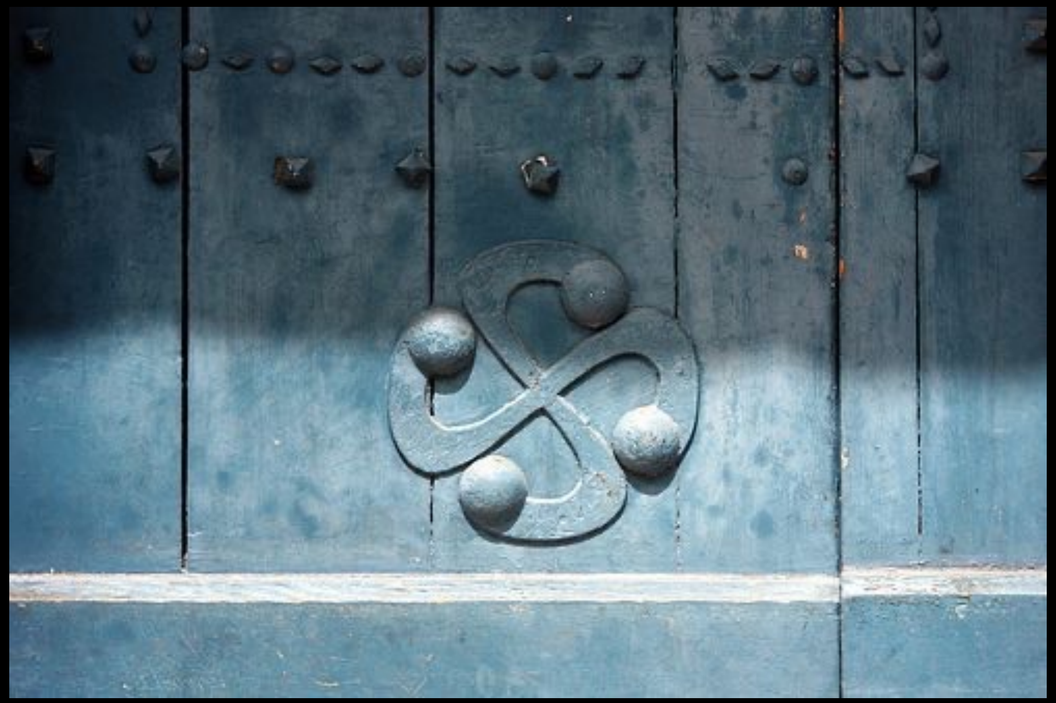
case class, 459
  copy method, 462
  javap, 464
  unapply method, 461
Cats, 24
Clojure
  concurrency, 90
closure, 642
Coin Flip game, 442
companion object, 837
companion objects, and apply, 619
composed form, 732
composition, function, 732
conservation of data, 226
control structures
  using, 317
  whilst, 311
  writing your own, 309
critical thinking, 31
curly braces, 566
  keys to remember, 579
curried functions
  creating, 338
Currying, 332
currying
  vs partially-applied functions, 344

966

Design is a field of concern, response, and enquiry as often as decision and consequence... it is convenient to group design into three simple categories, though the distinctions are in no way absolute, nor are they always so described: product design (things), environment design (places) and communication design (messages).

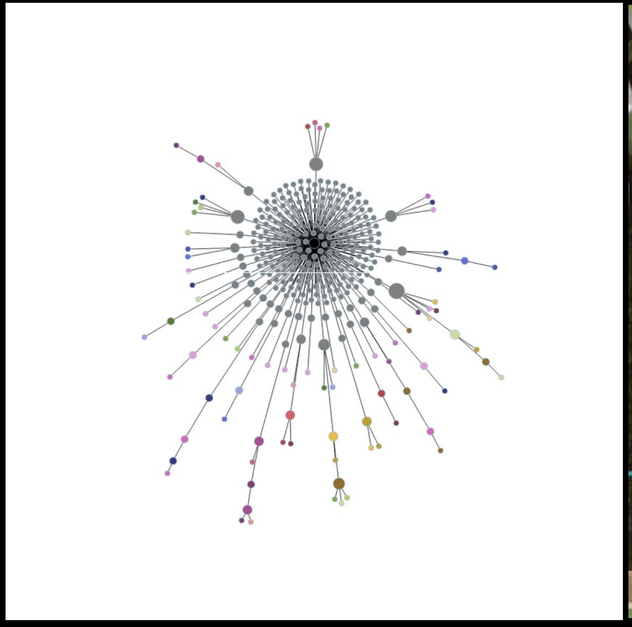
This is important, because I want you to sample that passage. Read it out loud. Taste it for yourself, then in class. What does it do? How does it work for you at this moment, in this place? In this way you are present to the text but on *your own* terms. Then, close the book and put it back. What do you take on?

BOOK presentation
—close the door!!



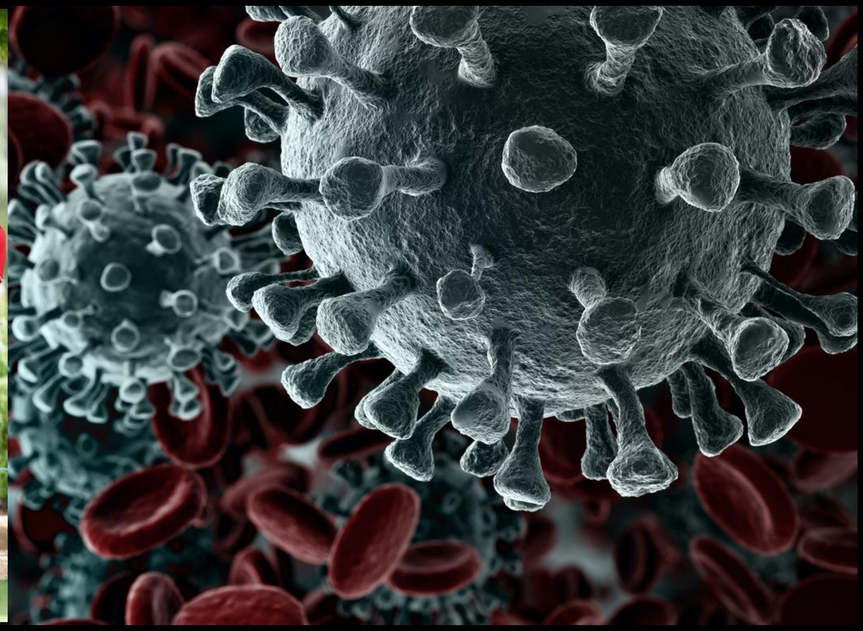
DISCUSSIONS

discussions in the edgeland



digital connect

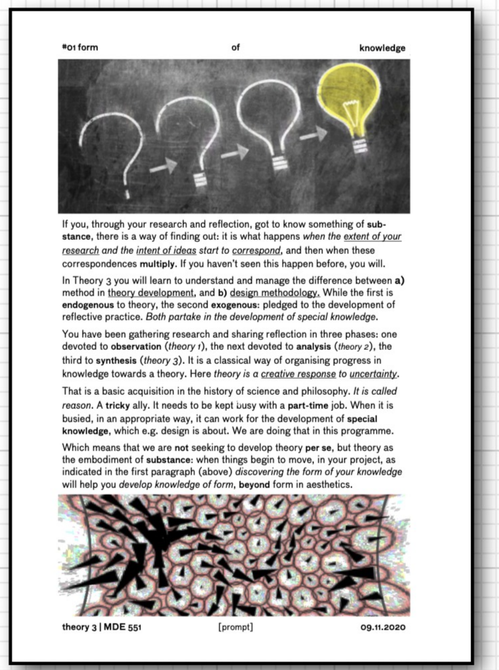
contact zone



viral contamination

CLASS-log:
flyers (thematic & synoptic)

If you make a map one would expect you to know the territory. On the other hand, you don't make a map in one day. The steps that I use in situations like these are: first I make an attempt, after that I try again, then I do something else, because when I return I learned something, then I *unlearn*…



#01 form of knowledge

If you, through your research and reflection, got to know something of **substance**, there is a way of finding out: it is what happens *when the extent of your research and the intent of ideas start to correspond*, and then when these correspondences **multiply.** If you haven't seen this happen before, you will.

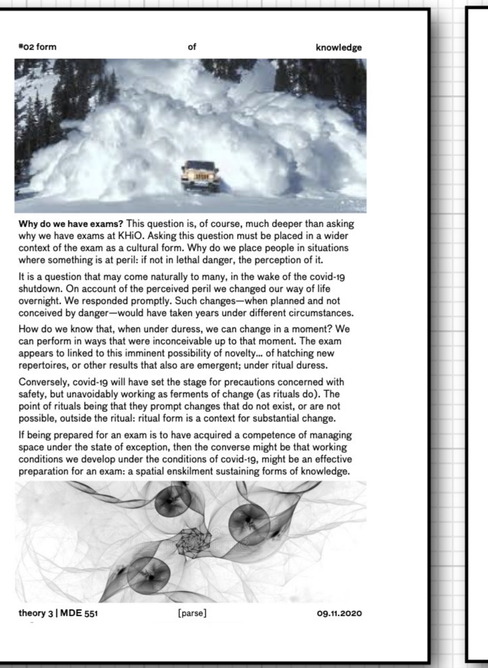
In Theory 3 you will learn to understand and manage the difference between **a)** method in theory development, and **b)** design methodology. While the first is **endogenous** to theory, the second **exogenous**: pledged to the development of reflective practice. *Both partake in the development of special knowledge.*

You have been gathering research and sharing reflection in three phases: one devoted to **observation** (*theory 1*), the next devoted to **analysis** (*theory 2*), the third to **synthesis** (*theory 3*). It is a classical way of organising progress in knowledge towards a theory. Here *theory is a creative response to uncertainty*.

That is a basic acquisition in the history of science and philosophy. *It is called reason.* A **tricky** ally. It needs to be kept busy with a **part-time** job. When it is busied, in an appropriate way, it can work for the development of **special knowledge**, which e.g. design is about. We are doing that in this programme.

Which means that we are **not** seeking to develop theory **per se**, but theory as the embodiment of **substance**: when things begin to move, in your project, as indicated in the first paragraph (above) *discovering the form of your knowledge* will help you *develop knowledge of form*, **beyond** form in aesthetics.

theory 3 | MDE 551 [prompt] **09.11.2020**



#02 form of knowledge

Why do we have exams? This question is, of course, much deeper than asking why we have exams at KHiO. Asking this question must be placed in a wider context of the exam as a cultural form. Why do we place people in situations where something is at peril: if not in lethal danger, the perception of it.

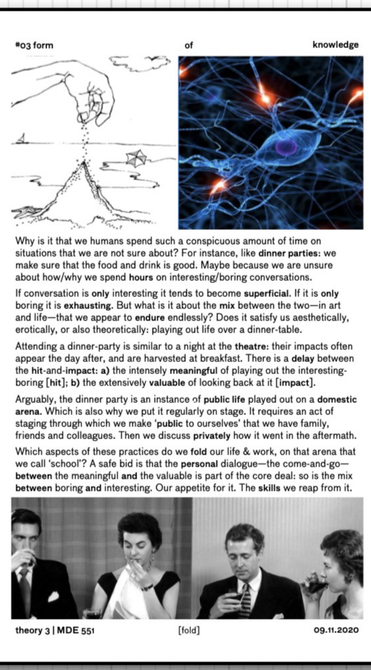
It is a question that may come naturally to many, in the wake of the covid-19 shutdown. On account of the perceived peril we changed our way of life overnight. We responded promptly. Such changes—when planned and not conceived by danger—would have taken years under different circumstances.

How do we know that, when under duress, we can change in a moment? We can perform in ways that were inconceivable up to that moment. The exam appears to linked to this imminent possibility of novelty… of hatching new repertoires, or other results that also are emergent; under ritual duress.

Conversely, covid-19 will have set the stage for precautions concerned with safety, but unavoidably working as ferments of change (as rituals do). The point of rituals being that they prompt changes that do not exist, or are not possible, outside the ritual: ritual form is a context for substantial change.

If being prepared for an exam is to have acquired a competence of managing space under the state of exception, then the converse might be that working conditions we develop under the conditions of covid-19, might be an effective preparation for an exam: a spatial enskilment sustaining forms of knowledge.

theory 3 | MDE 551 [parse] **09.11.2020**



#03 form of knowledge

Why is it that we humans spend such a conspicuous amount of time on situations that we are not sure about? For instance, like **dinner parties**: we make sure that the food and drink is good. Maybe because we are unsure about how/why we spend **hours** on interesting/boring conversations.

If conversation is **only** interesting it tends to become **superficial.** If it is **only** boring it is **exhausting**. But what is it about the **mix** between the two—in art and life—that we appear to **endure** endlessly? Does it satisfy us aesthetically, erotically, or also theoretically: playing out life over a dinner-table.

Attending a dinner-party is similar to a night at the **theatre**: their impacts often appear the day after, and are harvested at breakfast. There is a **delay** between the **hit-and-impact: a)** the intensely **meaningful** of playing out the interesting-boring **[hit]; b)** the extensively **valuable** of looking back at it **[impact]**.

Arguably, the dinner party is an instance of **public life** played out on a **domestic arena.** Which is also why we put it regularly on stage. It requires an act of staging through which we make '**public** to ourselves' that we have family, friends and colleagues. Then we discuss **privately** how it went in the aftermath.

Which aspects of these practices do we **fold** our life & work, on that arena that we call 'school'? A safe bid is that the **personal** dialogue—the come-and-go—**between** the meaningful **and** the valuable is part of the core deal: so is the mix **between** boring **and** interesting. Our appetite for it. The **skills** we reap from it.

theory 3 | MDE 551 [fold] **09.11.2020**

#04 form of knowledge

As digital **citizens,** many of us live under the spell that we extend **endlessly** in all directions, and with a global **connectivity** that transforms **planet** earth into a **village.** This is our **extensive** mode: we extend **ourselves** and **shrink** the world. In our **intensive** mode we develop **paths** between **limited** Internet resources.

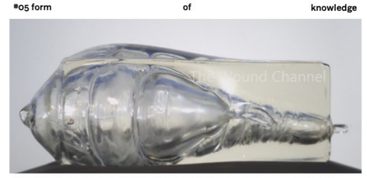
When we work **intensively**, many of us develop "ant-roads" between relatively **few** Internet-portals, that reflect our **needs** and/or our **way** of working. These ant-roads—digital working-**habits**—could be mapped as we do when drawing **activity**-diagrams in space: how people **move** and **operate** during a day.

If we define the **contours** of a **professional** person by what **returns** to her—like an 'echo-chamber' allow to gauge the **range** of how **far** s/he extends—we are **no longer** talking about an endless extension: and are thereby into **profiling** the professional person. People with **special** knowledge **do not** extend endlessly.

This is **why** we, for instance, would bring them in as **experts.** We can think of this professional **contour** of a **person** as a **space;** and that, doing so, we will develop a kind of spatial **competence.** If we succeed, we will have something similar to a **portfolio** but made available for **real-time** staging of knowledge.

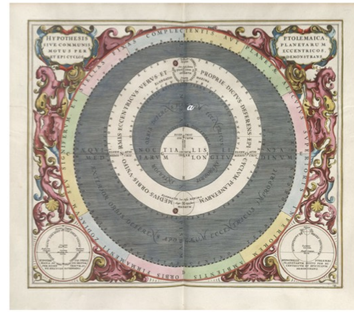
That is, a **support structure** that is portfolio-like in concept, but made **available** as an **active** spatial repertoire (with a potential to integrate digital culture into that repertoire); featuring the 'learning theatre' as a broader concept, while the 'spatial workstation' could be linked to this **criticality** in the **digital sphere.**

theory 3 | MDE 551 [traverse] **09.11.2020**



#05 form of knowledge

Hypothesis means: **under** (hypo-) the thesis. The **thesis** is **argued**, what is under the thesis must be demonstrated/**shown**—either by experiment, or by another sort of **test.** The function of the **test** is double: **a)** to discover; **b)** to dismiss/reject. By testing a hypothesis, you will either: **c)** refine it; **d)** change it. Hypothesis-testing is a method of making **choices** in research: its function is **directive.** Its form is determined by the the logic of **hit-and-impact** [next page].



theory 3 | MDE 551 [transpose] **09.11.2020**

#06 form of knowledge

Embodiment is an **often** misused concept: it is often used to determine how we take knowledge into our bodies. Whereas in the philosophical tradition, more precisely, in **phenomenology**, it means almost the opposite. It indicates the transition from a world made up of **things**, to one made up of **bodies.**

Here, a body is **not** a biological body but **any** thing taken into **consideration** and **care:** when we speak of objects, it is about bodies in this sense. In a physical experiment—in the history of science—one will speak of objects involved in experiments as bodies. Celestial bodies, spherical bodies, bodies of knowledge.

Hence the relation between **phenomenological** bodies—that appear as such on an horizon (i.e., an environment)—and **carnal** bodies (biological bodies) is complicated one. A biological **organism** is defined by a **surrounding** (Umgebung), and the bodies that **make up** its world, is somehow **part** of the **life-form.**

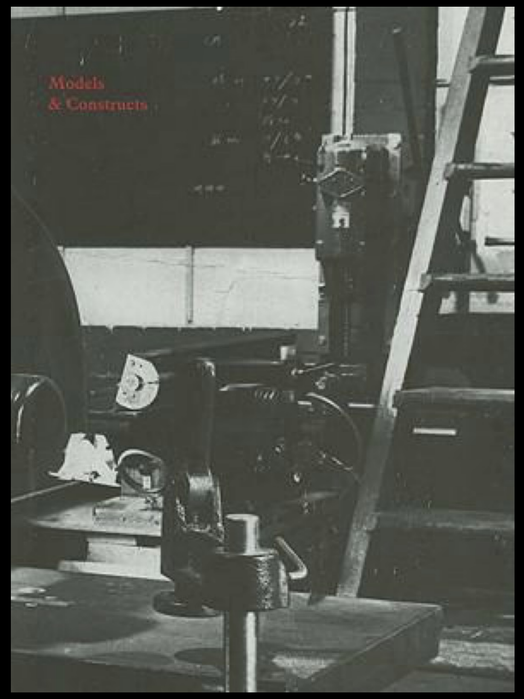
However, (phenomenological) bodies can also be **learned** and **shared.** When Ane Thon Knutsen (PhD) worked with a Caslon type-face to set books by Virginia Woolf—who set her own books in that font—she repeated the embodiment developed by Virginia Woolf before her. She **shared into** it.

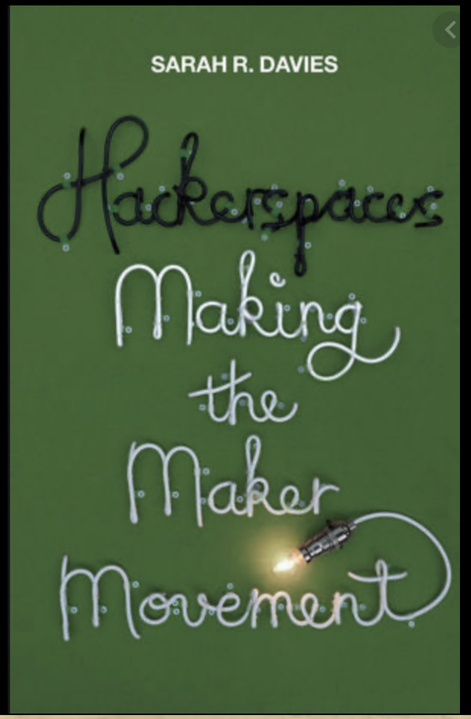
Everything we produce at the design dpt. are **embodiments:** whether in the authoring mode or the research mode—in graphic design & illustration (GI), clothing & costume (KK), interior architecture & furniture design (IM)—it is where the **personal** meets the **precise;** as clarified on the next page (verso).

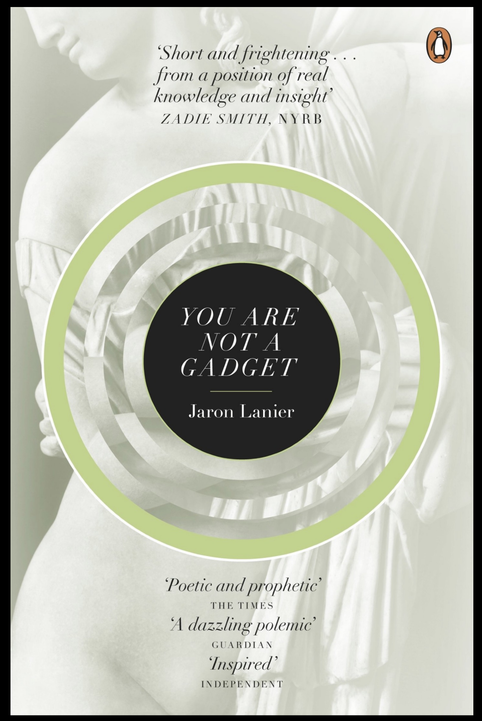
theory 3 | MDE 551 [embody] **09.11.2020**

That is, you make a comment of the interview—what you learned from it and your impressions of the interviewee as a colleague and a professional—and you make a comment of it in a media of your own choice. A comment picks up on what has been shared and said, but with a *twist*, which is your own.

BOOKS







LISTS from last term

AUTUMN!

by
Øystein Hvamen
delivered to
my kitchen

FIN