



Design in the expanded field to include Aristotles' the whole foursquare definition of causes: efficient, material, final and formal. As a condition to define design environmentally.

If we define the shift between the modes of causes as metaphysics, we have also defined a realm in which the application of what might have been achieved in metaphysics to physics—or, nature—a more direct and practical relation. Which means that what has been hyped as the end of philosophy needs not be so dramatic. Modes of causes readily transpose to ways of being, while at the same time relating to cause by symptom: that is, semiotics. Not a semiotics merely linked to *meaning*, but also to *agency*: efficiency, materiality, form and end. In other words, *design*.

In the expanded field of design—as outlined in the above diagram—the metaphysical definition of design is what makes it tangential to physics: which might bring some structure to the question of why new materialism has caught on in the last two decades, in the artistic end of the “pool”. This tangential relation is what makes the theory of *shifters* the core of semiotics (rather than a marginal and difficult category of sign). The shifters here are conceived as categories of contingency: events that engage the alongside, rub and touch within and beyond the two (meta/physics).



In *étant donné*s (1969) worked on two layers of the given: the lantern (*le gaz d'éclairage*) and—behind it—the water-fall (*la chute d'eau*): two events brought together in this dual work/installation. The one as the study (the lantern: *studium*) the other as an after-image (the water-fall: *punctum*). Two boxed-in *shifters*.

Here *events* are significant: whether it is in the mode of dynamic field-properties (wave), or in the mode of decision (particle)—complexity vs. agency happening. These are connected through saddle points: the dynamics of which may be engineered to “flip-switch” between different modes of cause. According to the left square in the diagram above: material, formal, efficient and final. According to the right diagram: efficient, final, material and formal. The first sequence has a physical bias (*production*) and the second has a metaphysical bias (*reception*).

Let us call the one (production) *sequence*, and the second (reception) *consequence*: it is in the relationship between sequence and consequence that we can define shifters as [aesthetico-epistemic operators](#) (operators in *semi*-automated usership, or as *tools*). NB! If no shifters are mapped and defined, the saddle-point will work in a *passive* mode determined by simulation, substitution and erasure. In the active mode, as shifters are defined and monitored, it will operate in an *active* mode, determined by screening, interception and framing. Which is how design, in the expanded field,

becomes a difference that makes a difference. In sum: instead of adopting a theory of shifters that is marginally semiotic, it is possible to screen, intercept and frame meta/physical contingencies to which ontology and epistemology are marginal. That is, real and operative, but at the rim of an aesthetico-causal domain.

This move is a result of the “tie-break” between Deleuze and Badiou outlined in [OPPORTUNITIES](#). And venturing to explore the outcomes of the possible conclusion that ontological and epistemic investigations—as concerns at the theoretic core—has come to a dead end. And what can be achieved by relocating/refocusing our attention on a meta/physical shifter-semiotics in active models: that is, monitoring/steering within and beyond the saddle-point (wind-rose). In essence, the shifter-semiotics amounts to equipping the meta/physical contingency with a *mousetrap*.

That is, a dual *boxing*—or, *screening*-device—whereby the causal sequences (physics) turn up as guests hosted by causal consequences (metaphysics), according to Marcel Duchamp’s quip: “**a GUEST + a HOST = a GHOST.**” In Marcel Duchamp’s own work: **a)** his art-practice [*same*]; **b)** his lecture at the New School for Social Research in 1957 [*similar*]; **c)** his official abandonment of art in favour of chess [*different*]; **d)** while secretly working on developing the double-boxed installation *étant donnés*, which was shown in 1969 in Philadelphia Museum of Art, after his death [*other*].

Here, the retinal and gestural functions of human neurophysiology are visitors in a study hosted by Duchamp in the ploy of perspective-machines unto the intrigues of painting. As in Hamlet, the mousetrap is there to testify of the truth of events that has come before it (Badiou). Though it involves human neurophysiology the truth it unravels belongs to the scene of artistic choices (and their history). However, the reflective mint-wrappers—on which was written **a GUEST + a HOST = a GHOST**—is an artistic intervention into the perambulation of people at an opening.

Here, the mousetrap features an artistic into the realm of reflective media, mobility & shmoozing. The host-visitor relation between the causal and the occasional is here reversed. Under the analytic loop of shifters there are two main possibilities: **1)** the *coding* element of the shifter is the *meaning* supplied by the reading of the reflective wrapper on site; **2)** the coding element of the shifter is the *agency* provided by the audience visiting the installation. In both cases, an artefact is involved. The difference lies between which is activated: **1)** the *contraption* or **2)** the *entrapment*.

These are the two possibilities of the *mousetrap*, or two main directions of the shifter: one fed by *meaning*, the second by *agency*. The point being that these are vectors: directional entities rather than fixed objects (Deleuze). Which is a vantage point with a potential in setting where *programming from data* is a relevant angle. If we take an image-database as the vehicle of a mental experiment, **1)** the mint-wrapper and **2)** vision-trapper *modes* activate, as the image prompts **1)** a *meaning-event* when hosted by an investigation, **2)** an *agency-event* when hosting the investigation.



Shifters are signs that become defined as they mark fictional vehicles—such as meaning and agency—which in turn code the event. Thus, the reader (who has just had her mint) who sees her own reflection in the wrapper.

That is, in an investigative relation text and image will alternate between being the guest and the host of a mousetrap: a play within the play, or a game within the game, a situation within a situation. In both cases—**1)** when the text hosts and the image is a guest; **2)** when the image hosts and the text is a guest—the shifter is involved in its two basic modes: **1)** one which is coded by *meaning*, **2)** the second which is coded by *agency*. The first mode operates according to **1)** the hermeneutics of *execution*, the second according to **2)** the *proliferation* of an actor-network.

The permutable joinery between the entangled non-same elements of a mousetrap, is a conceptual-practical framework for a saddle-point. It is reversible, but never to the same position. In one aspect it is irreversibly non-repetitive. It therefore can be compared to a wind-rose integrated into a vessel—as a gyroscope—and the sense of orientation comes with steering and the territory is transformed into a landscape: as a 1-to-1 scaled map. The postmodern car has been instrumental in developing this sort of cartography.