

DESIGNING EMOTION

Methods and Strategies
for Designers

Mareike Roth | Oliver Saiz

Preface

Mareike Roth
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Lying before me on the table is a book whose influence on my professional life — and on my private life as well — could hardly be greater: the previous German edition of *Designing Emotion*. I have to confess that, as a rule, it has not had all that much of a presence in my daily life. It sits on the shelf and once in a while, when I cannot seem to recall a specific piece of information, I take it down and browse the pages in search of an answer. But for the past year and a half things have been different. After the second edition was sold out, we — the authors — subjected every passage, every sequence of ideas, and every illustration to careful scrutiny. Was the sequence of chapters genuinely useful? How might the material be presented in a way that is even more comprehensible and pertinent? And which external people might, with their wealth of experience, contribute something valuable to the topic of emotions and design strategy?

Back then, *Designing Emotion* was written in response to a personal impetus. We wanted to understand the emotional spectrum of design, to examine our topic in a deliberate and scientific fashion. This desideratum remains unaltered, and has lost none of its urgency, even after ten years. On the contrary. This field of research has been enriched through so many new facets, and will continue to expand in the future. Not just through the specialist input that has emerged from new studies, but also on social and personal levels: design is networked through the factor of emotion. In recent years in particular, human emotion has shifted increasingly toward the focus of attention — whether on the individual (mindfulness, neurodiversity, depression, and so on) or collective levels (social isolation because of COVID-19, hate in social media, and so on). All the same, human emotion and its influence on our behavior and sense of well-being merit far greater attention.

The emotional factor in design is far more than an attractive product exterior or an automotive interior that offers a thrilling driving experience. If we pose the right questions, this factor may even supply us with vital and helpful answers to the challenges of climate change or gender equity. And while these are only two examples, I am convinced that this profoundly human perspective of the problems of our world can provide indispensable approaches to arriving at solutions. From my perspective as a designer, challenges are always design questions and I hope to see greater empathy and responsibility in the way such tasks are mastered. The knowledge that the ideas, methodology, and examples contained in this book are making real contributions would be a source of joy and pride for me. As these two emotions resonate, I wish the reader an enjoyable immersion in one of the most fascinating aspects of design.

Rough pine bark presses into my sore, chafed shoulder. At a height of 13 meters, in the middle of the forest, I have taped myself to a branchless tree. The strain and the midday heat send sweat pouring down my back. In just two hours, the police will be removing a tripod (a roadblock that is intentionally difficult to remove) during our activist skill-sharing “forest occupation.” That was seven months ago. Today, I’m sharing this memory because I’m convinced of our impact as designers. More than ever, I believe that we have the potential to exert an influence by taking small steps designed to make the world a better place and we don’t have to occupy trees or forests to do so. Right now, reading these lines and practicing your profession, you are already in exactly the right place!

Looking back, there were phases when I doubted the usefulness of our activities as designers, not least of all because, considered from a distance (holistically), our profession is often tainted by adverse secondary ecological and ethical effects. Design, after all, is powerful and that is the crux of the matter. It can be a strategic key, provided we accept the privileged duty of ensuring its positive impact. But if our influence is to be productive, we must fully utilize the interplay of heart and mind: design with empathy and strategy. Here, it is not about us, but almost always about other people. If I sharpen my focus, then in the middle- and long-term it is not only a question of others, but of everyone. Planet-centric design means people, animals, and plants. In short: it’s about life on this planet. Even if this recognition continues to conflict with the aims of many enterprises, I nonetheless conceive of design based on emotion-based strategies as something more profound than a mere tool for the next product or campaign. It’s so much more.

Consumption changes, values change, and new ones are established. Whenever I’m charged with designing something, I have an opportunity to create relevance and to exercise an influence on the fitting emotions, which is exactly why I regard it as essential to understand how people think, feel, and behave, to achieve an understanding with both heart and mind: what motivates and drives them, what they fear, what discourages them. I would like to see us using this empathy as designers in order to exert an influence. We are predestined for the task of calling products, processes, and established ideas into question. We can reveal negative conditioning and even systematically dismantle it. Together with others, we can conceive a better future, nurturing our visions, giving shape to them. The business philosopher Anders Indset hits the target with the remark: “But we must do something, now, each of us must ‘futurize.’” He is right, and I look forward to it. It would be nice if we could tackle this ‘futurization’ together!

The secret code of design is emotion.

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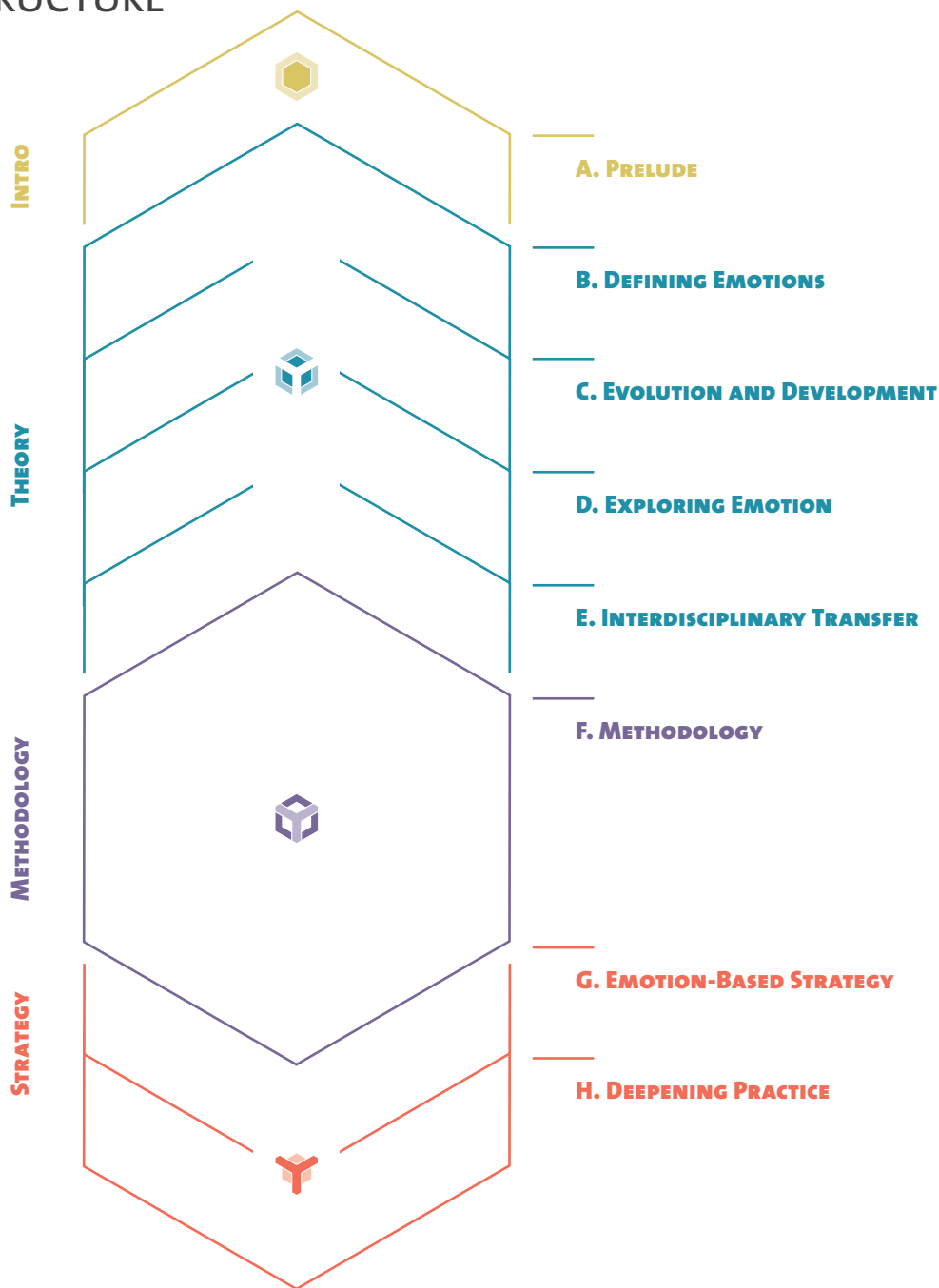


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STRUCTURE





PRELUDE



Function is obligatory,
emotion the masterstroke!

An intimate relationship between user
and product is a further step toward
a green future.

The emotional darkroom: Can someone
turn on the f***** lights?!

A.

Prelude

Design, “to make, shape,” ultimately from Latin *designare* [...] from French *dessigner*, *desseiner* “purpose, project, design,” ...
[Online Etymological Dictionary]

Congratulations on your decision to purchase this highly emotional packet of methods, which contains 450,000 characters and weighs ca. 650 grams. As the authors, we hope to support you in unpacking this opus. To help you avoid the feeling of having purchased a ‘cat in a box,’ we take this opportunity to remind you of its main topics. Emotions, design, methods, and strategies. Four keywords that accurately circumscribe the contents of this book. In the first third of this volume, we guide you step by step into the topic and our methods. In the central section, following the tools, are the corresponding derivations and an interdisciplinary discussion. If you find yourself still wanting more, or have questions or suggestions, please get in touch!

For years now, we have been working very deliberately along the interface between emotion and design. It all began when we asked ourselves: Why do certain things speak to us (while others don’t)? Why do we feel compelled to pull a certain product off the shelf? We were not concerned with marketing tricks, but instead of the question: would it be possible to navigate the emotional impact of design in a targeted way? Our research into the design literature revealed that when it came to the investigation of systematic instruments and methodological solutions, we encountered a proverbial black hole. To explore it leads toward precise brand communication and target group appeal, as well as to an improved acceptance of design.

In 2010, our vision thrust out its first shoots with an essay on the topic of the “Impact of Early Childhood Conditioning on Product Design.” It received continuing nurturance from various expert interviews, and blossomed forth into a 304-page research project, finally attaining maturity as the strategic design office hoch⁵. Now, with this publication, a number of facets are revealed. Our research bug also impelled us to convey our practical experience and theoretical and methodological expertise to others as lecturers, as supervisors of degree theses, and as consultants at numerous seminars and workshops.

More than 7000 hours of analysis and research have culminated now in a set of scientifically grounded methods, and in unerring design. Through the specialized research foci of our agency, we are in a position to translate corporate values into comprehensible design alphabets, transforming them into a powerful competitive advantage. Psychology, neuromarketing, and design offer tangible discoveries that flow directly into our design work.

All of that and so much more provides the tailwind for our continuing preoccupation with the interface between emotion and design.

"If only it were possible, finally, to introduce a word into our language that did not segregate thought from emotion. I am truly fed up with always having to choose in favor of one and hence against the other. And how much unhappiness has arisen because people have also acted accordingly."

— Hanna Johansen, Meier-Seethaler, 5

Do you still remember the feeling of love at first sight? The unforgettable flirting? The fluttering sensation in your stomach? An awareness of simply wanting more? A relationship is born. With pet names, and a private history, a past and a future. Here, it's not a question of the sparks that pass back and forth between lovers, but instead of those that are exchanged between an individual and a designed object. Exactly what happens here, and why? Every design has primary — and in many cases secondary — messages, which are conveyed to begin with through form, color, and materiality. With virtually all products, consumers expect its perceptual appearance to correspond to their personal expectations and desires. As a rule, beholders/consumers engage in minimal reflection concerning the impact of individual components and their causes — nor, for that matter, do most designers. To some extent, the design process proceeds intuitively, in reliance upon gut feelings. This can work, but may in fact not. If on the other hand, clarity is achieved about why certain forms have specific psychological effects, concerning the origins of such perceptions, and how these can be aroused subliminally, the result is a powerful design tool.

The secret code here is emotion. For the most part, emotional phenomena occur without conscious awareness. Our conscious emotions are only the tip of the iceberg. More than 80 percent of our daily decisions are guided by the subconscious.

By no means is it our intention to create an all-encompassing panacea — which would be impossible anyway, fortunately. The focus of this book is on the disaggregation of the emotional core of design. And in this spirit, we are opening the airlock of our laboratory to offer you exclusive inside views into a few of our test tubes.

What questions does this book pose?

- Which emotions are relevant to design?
- Can emotions and values of a brand be identified and designed in a focused way?
- Why are certain products perceived, for example, as intelligent, enduring, silly, or brilliant?

What does this book offer?

- It provides an understanding of what the emotions actually are.
- It provides insights into how design is networked with other disciplines.
- It contains the Emotion Grid® (basic version).
- It contains the Design Elements (basic version).

What does this book not offer?

- A rigid set of rules, to say nothing of a magic formula.
This is neither possible nor desirable.

A.1 Reform is Long Overdue!

All too often, they have often been irresponsibly misused in recent decades. Watered down and trivialized by the media, neglected by the judicial system, deemed incompetent, simplified and debased in advertisements via their reduction to just a few facets. We are talking about the emotions.

If we can trust the prognosis offered by Axel Venn in *Das Farbwörterbuch* (The Color Dictionary), then the word “emotion” — which is more relevant to design than ever before — will be decisive for the occupation in the coming decades. No other term is more controversial. And perhaps even more importantly: no other term is so difficult to grasp or to define. And to begin with, of course, the complexity of this endeavor is something we had to experience for ourselves. Back then, we plunged eagerly head-first into the nebulous waters of emotion. Filled with blind zeal, we gave no thought to swimming technique, equipped with little more than the creative water wings of curiosity for security. Hoping to learn the ‘crawl’ from top athletes, we turned toward the most experienced and best-known design offices in Germany.

A booklet containing five questions was designed to serve as a starting point for gauging the relevance and tangibility of emotions in daily design activity. Sounds simple enough! But of course it wasn’t.

To be sure, the relevance of emotion for design practice was consistently deemed to be ‘hot,’ to be incredibly important, but attempts at definition remained murky, and the targeted application of emotions in product, packaging, trade fair, and graphic design remained opaque.

And what would you do if you had plunged — overeager, overambitious — into unknown waters for the first time? That’s right! You paddle. Lacking in coordination, looking around in all directions, grabbing at anything within reach.

In our case, we found ourselves reaching, among other things, for biology, psychology, and behavioral research. But even there, definitions turned out to be problematical. In contradistinction to the design field, we did indeed find definitions of ‘emotion’ — and how! In psychology, there are more than 100. Unfortunately, this complex research object could not be formulated in a way that was readily comprehensible for designers, to say nothing of being user-friendly.

The problem lies deeper: as soon as the word was spoken aloud, images of red plush hearts and Lätta ads hovered involuntarily before the inner eye. For many designers, it is often still difficult to comprehend that emotion can also take the form of phobias, hate, or self-interest, and that such attributes can be implemented accurately as design statements (and going beyond sun-drenched imagery, accentuated by

*“The guiding principle of functionalism, ‘form follows function,’ is no longer viable.
Who really understands the function performed by a microchip?”*

— Heufler, 44

soothing music). In everyday and unreflective usage, unfortunately, emotion-based design and kitsch are still often closely associated. But what exactly is kitsch anyway? Regarded as kitschy are attempts to present feelings or memories in a clichéd way. The word ‘kitsch’ triggers associations with sentimentality, artificiality, and tastelessness. Familiar examples include holiday souvenirs, stuffed toys, garden dwarfs, and porcelain figures. Typical characteristics include the exaggerated use of colors, forms, or materials, or the indiscriminate mixture of stylistic elements.

But a reflective confrontation with emotion enables the designer to transcend such banalities in order to create richly-faceted products that are characterized by fields of tension. It is not, however, a question of prettifying products emotionally with the help of decorations or embellishments and it is still at this point that mental drawers are pulled open. Fumbling about nervously, trying to conceal a cold sweat, there are still many today who hope to see the topic of emotion and design quickly vanish there.

The roots of the problem are much older: we need to make a leap backward 50 years in time. In design, the Bauhaus and the motto ‘form follows function’ were enjoying a heyday. But what does this phrase actually mean? What exactly do we understand by ‘function’? This can be best exemplified with reference to industrial design. During the postwar era, new materials such as plastics, along with revolutionary technologies, led to innovation in nearly all fields. The desire for enhanced quality of life and everyday convenience ensured brisk sales of products. In design, clear outlines, with their putatively ‘rational’ appearance, were emblematic of the era and its demands. Meanwhile, this guiding principle, much vaunted even today, was consistently misunderstood.

A reading of Louis Sullivan’s article “The Tall Office Building Considered Artistically” already makes it clear that the emphasis is not on ‘pure functionality.’ It is too little mentioned — and often overlooked entirely — that both aesthetics and a wealth of psychological factors must be subsumed under the concept of ‘function.’ For Sullivan, a focus on the human individual was bound up inseparably with his vocation as an architect. The misinterpreted concept functioned. But only until its very one-sidedness caused it to capsize.

And today? How does ‘function’ appear currently?

In many cases, people still cling to the old formula ‘form follows function’ with a certain desperation. The field of industrial design in particular has remained in a state of suspended animation, with only a few to date venturing into the ‘emotional darkroom’.

“While it was still necessary to complain more than 20 years ago [around 1980] about the neglect of emotions in psychology, an ‘emotional revolution’ in the cognitive fields was initiated [at the turn of the millennium].” [Friedlmeier/Holodynski 1999, Vorwort VII]

During a lecture entitled “Erfolgsfaktor Marke” (The Brand as a Success factor), held on 20 May 2010 at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Schwäbisch Gmünd, Uli Mayer-Johannsen, the proprietor of MetaDesign, went so far as to advocate the thesis that “understanding is delayed emotion.” We often believe that we are carefully weighing pros and cons before making a decision. In reality, the opposite is actually the case. Decisions are arrived at on the basis of an emotional preselection. This allows us to respond spontaneously and flexibly, to avoid spending hours delaying a decision concerning which radio station to tune into. Often, however, we attempt to justify our decision with ostensibly rational criteria.

The example seems absurd, but exactly this was experienced by a patient of the Portuguese neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. Following the removal of a brain tumor located directly behind his forehead, the man found himself incapable of making decisions. Worse yet, he had also become emotionally cold. No joy, no frustration, no anger. This case demonstrates that decisions are closely bound up with the emotions. But what does all of that have to do with design?

Antonio Damasio’s case study is only one of many relevant examples drawn from the neurosciences, as well as from psychology and the behavioral sciences. Thanks to modern imaging techniques, much has occurred in these disciplines in recent decades, and science now provides us with an increasingly precise picture of the processes that occur in the brain. When it comes to the emotions, however, the state of our knowledge remains rudimentary, and it is questionable whether such a complex phenomenon could ever be investigated satisfactorily.

During our research, nevertheless, we were able to arrive at interesting conclusions concerning design. Psychology can explain to us in detail what emotions are, but we are interested in the question: Are there fundamental design tendencies regarding form, color, and materials that can be associated, more or less, with certain emotions? We were skeptical at first, but soon realized that practical correlations were indeed susceptible to development. For a number of years now, we have been structuring this transferred knowledge into a multidimensional system — and rendering it appropriate for the design process through the “Design Elements.”

In the so-called Emotion Grid®, fields of values and emotions can be defined in relation to brands, products, or services. In a subsequent step, reference to these emotion spaces facilitates a specific design orientation. This proceeds by means of the form, color, and materials cards (Design Elements).

Consumption is moving more strongly in the direction of 'must have and match.' The more accurately individual emotional and value expectations are targeted, the more successful a product, brand, or design will be. But this has absolutely nothing to do with styling or a society of blind consumption. The door to the human heart opens only when we address the emotions. There are many examples of successful brands that have succeeded in developing a connection to their target group, in achieving uniqueness, in remaining in the memory. We will discuss some of these later on.

Emotions have always been a primary medium of expression, and remain so today! In communication processes, facial expressions, gestures, and speech melody provide us with clues concerning the speaker's 'real' intentions. Our brain is configured in such a way that it can recognize emotions even in the most minimal linguistic nuances. These are seldom perceived consciously, and hence all the more influential. Genuinely fascinating is our capacity to recognize emotions even in lifeless objects or forms. And our capacity to accurately recognize faces, to find familiar people, even in a large crowd.

The ability to find, identify, and interpret such codes in our environment was programmed by evolution — and it cannot be switched off, even in the most modern high culture. Once it becomes evident which signals are transmitted by certain forms, colors, and materials in specific contexts, and how these can be emotionally classified, we will have taken an important step toward the future of design and toward the accurate planning of brands and products.

The automobile industry is extremely well-versed in this area. There is nothing new about the designs of most vehicles being oriented toward human facial expressions. Increasingly, since the turn of the millennium, cars have been imitating angry expressions and playing with elements that express aggression and dominance. Today, the design-DNA of all of the auto manufacturers relies on skillfully shaped signals of dominance. BMW's head designer Adrian von Hooydonk comments: "A BMW should always look as though it wants to devour the road in front of it." [Sorge, 2022]

“As the capacity for judgment schooled by the emotions, reason weighs potential objectives according to their worthiness and dictates them to the will.”

— Hans Jonas, from Meier-Seethaler's *Gefühl und Urteilskraft*, 150

But what are the consequences of automobiles that seem to want to engulf the street, along with the people traveling on it? Such perceived and aggressively displayed dominance is not without consequences for the coexistence of co-actors in road traffic. In the end, economic interests and commercial objectives have given shape to a street scene that also conditions collective behavior. A look at current traffic statistics brings this point home: documented changes in behavior involve increased aggressivity and reduced mutual consideration between travelers.

At this point, it should be mentioned that we simply cannot escape the impact of emotions, either concerning interpretation (external) or our own reactions (internal). It is difficult — and often simply impossible — to grasp these processes rationally, to say nothing of reversing them. Our emotions influence all areas of life — and this extends from cognitive to social functions, and all the way to motivational or demotivational ones. Greater knowledge of their impact must be accompanied by an increasing focus on design ethics.

We designers have a mission. Our creative output is oriented not toward technology, nor toward machines, nor toward the multimedia industry. We design for people. For us, the human individual stands at the center. At the same time, this means an enormous responsibility. We must be ethical, sustainable, economic, and much more besides. Since we don't want to place banal symbols in the world which others are then compelled to notice, we must design communication in such a way that it is maximally clear and emphatic. It is not a question of becoming 'everybody's darling,' but instead of producing accurate design for clients and the target public. Of sensitizing ourselves to the most rudimentary language of our species, of interpreting and transforming codes, of going beyond an understanding of design creativity based on subjective, gut feelings. We need to work across interfaces. Scientific insights, outside-the-box networked design research, discussions with researchers and experts from the fields of biology, psychology, and behavioral research, as well as field testing and measurements are only the first steps. Design no longer needs to hide behind the smokescreen of engineering, or behind outdated propositions.

In the long term, this has consequences for ecology and sustainability as well. The design product can generate emotional connections, either through its serviceability and 'pure' functionality, or instead by making a visual statement. This points toward products that tell stories — but not merely via marketing tools! They convey messages which, ideally, penetrate the target group, connecting them emotionally to the product. High time to turn on the damned light and explore the emotional darkroom!

A. 2 Sustainability

Whether it's a question of organic food, corporate strategies, renewable energy, or social values, eco-awareness has become established in all areas of collective life. This ubiquitous presence is an indicator of the weighty challenges that lie ahead. Politics, the business world, and consumers are called upon to assume responsibility. Increasingly, corporate entities find themselves under pressure to reconceive the scope of their responsibilities toward society.

More than ever before, designers enjoy the privilege of exerting influence, of helping to shape the ecological turning point, which means taking ecological responsibility seriously in order to reform existing systems. The impact of our creative activities must be examined and appraised. A broad field extends from the need for incentive systems for environmentally conscious behavior, to materials conservation, to cycle chains.

If we are to propel the ecological transformation forward, a consciousness of the emotional impact of design represents (at least at times) an elementary basis. Ideally, such knowledge can be deployed to generate an emotion-oriented relationship between product and user. Precisely with regard to their longevity, it seems vital that we design products that — alongside their technical functions — give rise to emotional connections. Careful handling, care, and a preparedness to undertake repairs are only some of the positive results. The greater our success, the less likely it becomes that a product will simply be replaced or discarded. “When a person feels attached to a product, he/she is more likely to handle the product with care, to repair it when it breaks down, and to postpone its replacement.” [Mugge/Schoormans/Schifferstein, 427]

When an emotional orientation is adopted, we also attribute an emotional value to a product. The extent to which we do so is dependent upon our requirements, but also on the context. Oftentimes, designers have no control over either. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile pursuing the question of how we might identify decisive needs, gain an understanding of the context, and shape the relationship accordingly. Indispensable here is the broadest possible evidentiary basis, with a corresponding focus on details. Necessary before designers can initiate emotion-oriented relationships is a grounded knowledge of emotions and their impact, as well as of the corresponding expressive possibilities that are available to design. Hartmut Esslinger, the founder of frog design, says, “If you build in emotional value, people will keep the product longer, and take care of it.” [Sweet, 9]

Products that give rise to strong emotional connections are not seen as disposable; ideally, they are treasured for a lifetime. Over time, cherished objects become invested

Nudging. “A nudge, as we will use the term, is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid.”

[Nudge – Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness, Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, 6]

— alongside with the design message — with memories, nostalgia. A good example of this is heirlooms, which are passed down from one generation to the next.

The perceptible design of a product has an enormous subliminal impact, in particular with regard to handling. Alongside the task of generating an emotion-oriented product-consumer relationship is that of giving shape to change that leads toward positive action, which is why the authenticity, philosophy, factual basis, and story found behind a product are at least as relevant. In the end, the total package must be right. For designers, it begins with tapping into specific values and emotions and leads in many cases to a long-term shift of philosophy within an enterprise.

Nearly everyone focuses on the virtuous values that serve as lodestars for action. If these are addressed via design in an appropriate way, then an intellectual confrontation with ecological themes will be accompanied by (long-term) behavioral changes. Particularly important in this context is direct emotional involvement and a clarification of one’s own contribution.

Regardless of this, the motto must be: “Enough with the stale ‘green’ image of jute bags and hippie communes.” Today already, with the emergence of the LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability), consumption must be consciously underlain by the ideology of sustainability, well-founded knowledge, and an emphasis on aesthetics. To enhance preparedness for a change of behavior in the broad mass of the population, sustainability must also and in particular be a lifestyle choice. This definitely needs to integrate factors such as status and progress.

If success is to be achieved in switching from complacent autopilot to a new and more demanding way of life, the desired behavior must be interesting, ingenious, and simple. Ideally, it should also be fun. The crucial question for green behavior is, “What psychological trigger is capable of disrupting the user’s autopilot system and impelling him or her toward an examination of alternative modes of behavior?”

The tools of choice are design signals (indicating function, symbol function, emotional message, and so on) and the corresponding information processing. Playful pokes — so-called ‘nudges’ — may also impel people to ‘strip a yogurt cup’ or ‘feed a trashcan.’

This combination of nudges, authentic corporate ideology, and relatedness-promoting design constitutes an emotion strategy in its full breadth. Conceived in a sophisticated way, it has enormous potential, and may even represent a key to coping with some of the challenges we will encounter on our path toward a livable future.

A.3 An Emotional Turn

While the design philosophy “form follows function” was long regarded as possessing universal authority, a different component has acquired greater importance in the age of the dematerialization of entire product lines: the emotions.

During the 1920s, the heyday of functionalism, “form follows function” was an irrefutable maxim. It became familiar through the American architect Louis Sullivan. Unlike Sullivan, however, the functionalists interpreted the term “function” in purely technical terms. Symbolic and aesthetic aspects were utterly devalued. During the 1950s and 1960s, this brand of functionalism, with its emotional inhibitions and monotonous objectivity, encountered criticism and counter-reactions, as discussed by the designer Gerhard Heufler in his celebrated book *Design Basics*. [cf. Heufler, 53]

“In line with a holistic approach, it would be better to use the expanded concept of functionalism formulated by Jochen Gros in the 1970s. Then, the principal ‘form follows function’ would actually mean: ‘the form follows the functions,’ which is to say not simply technical, practical function, but also the symbolic function and the indicating function!” [Heufler, 53]

According to Klaus Scherer, a psychologist of emotion at the University of Geneva, we are definitely living in an age of emotions. [cf. Kast 2010] This is why it is more crucial than ever to grasp the importance of emotions for design and vice versa. Not least of all, this aim is being advanced by a marketing trend: knowledge from the realms of neuroscience and psychology have been increasingly deployed for years. And this has raised the long-overdue question of potential applications in design as well.

In the field of industrial design in particular, the ostensible contradiction between emotion and rationality acts as an obstacle. An examination of the curricula for twenty-three German educational establishments, along with interviews with well-known industrial designers, shows that the emotional component carries virtually no weight at all, to say nothing of methodological applications. In product development, psychological insights and human needs yield for the most part to pragmatic considerations.

In this context, our motto is “Function is the task, emotion is the icing on the cake!” But to avoid a diet of bread and water, emotion builds directly on function, and the two condition and interpenetrate one another. Only then does design become desirable, and only then does the distinction between the designer and other occupational groups – engineering, for example – become tenable. Strictly speaking, there can be no design without emotional impact.

Lena Jüngst of AIR UP

HOW CAN DESIGN AFFECT PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR AND SENSE OF TASTE?

Lena, would you like to begin by delineating the scope of your activities at air up?

The sphere of my activities was always in the creative sector, which means that at the start I was responsible for product design, graphics, and similar things. Ever since we stopped being active only operationally and started to work strategically, I've been responsible for product vision. I combine our brand strategy with our corporate strategy, and work up a kind of framework within which our R&D department, which is to say our product department, can develop their products. The two other areas I cover are brand strategy and corporate communication.

Is there a philosophy behind the design language of air up? And if so, how would you characterize it?

We've adapted our brand positioning so that we are effective for our target group, but also communicate the core concept of our enterprise in our product. We position ourselves between the rebel and the innovator, which is meanwhile how our branding appears. We selected highly contrasting colors, and our logo is no longer subtle or well-behaved. It has become broader and has more dynamism.

Are there other examples of how you are translating this positioning into design?

We've given a lot of thought to how to approach the use of photography and video clips. If you view our ads, for example, you see these short video clips. Early on, we used a lot of stock material, so we were really authentic on the platforms.

During the rebranding, we did two big photo shoots, an extremely small number. But with this style, we come close to a certain aesthetic, one that is very familiar to our target group because everything seems improvised and also moves very quickly. Our viewers have a shorter attention span. The way we narrate stories, which is to say the tonality of the video, the way the text is composed and recited, all of this is geared to the perspective of the target group. And on the topic of rebelliousness: we use it to really stand out.

In the meantime, we've noticed that many others have adopted this kind of video editing and advertising. But when we first came out with it, it was very unfamiliar; not many other brands dared to work that way. Given the style we use in our advertising, we can't think in extended storylines. This means that the story needs to be narrated in images, ideally with a single image or short video clip. The main thing is to be different, among other ways through unconventional scenes that convey the archetype of the rebel or the innovator.

What are the core values that underpin your design philosophy and your brand?

We divide this into internal and external brand values. Externally, there are the values creativity, truthfulness, and innovation. Falling under these three pillars, in turn, are various values. The pillar innovation, for example, is very broad; found here, among other things, is life-centered design. That's the core philosophy we always try to integrate. Ultimately, it's a question of creating a product that is attractive for the individual

**WE POSITION OURSELVES BETWEEN
THE REBEL AND THE INNOVATOR,
WHICH IS MEANWHILE HOW OUR
BRANDING APPEARS.**



Lena Jüngst is the creative director and founder of air up. She studied product design at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Schwäbisch Gmünd. In 2016, together with Tim Jäger, she laid the foundation for the startup with a BA thesis on the topic of “Neuroscience Meets Design.”

(classical consumer-centered thinking), and at the same time being attentive in our product development to the consequences for the environment and for society. A two-pronged approach: from human-centered design to life-centered design. Truthfulness, of course, builds on the product. Here, it's a question of transparency in the food sector. We are able to guarantee a taste experience that is free of additives. At the same time, we see incredible potential in communicating transparently as an enterprise and as a brand, through the way our product is manufactured, for example. Here, we haven't become as good today as we would like to be. We have come to realize that our customers are increasingly interested in what they're consuming and want to know more about it. For us, that's an added value.

With creativity it's about the world of taste as a whole, which is highly creative and individual with regard to our target group as well. As digital natives or content creators, they are extremely imaginative in their dealings with brands and products that really stand out in the world and are more interesting than the others. Hence the triad: creativity, truthfulness, and innovation. Important to us internally are the topics of entrepreneurship and collaboration, which is to say, working together in a team. The third pillar is innovation. Innovation is our central pillar, and it needs to be visible in our external communication, but has great significance as well in our internal working approach.

As a startup, we need to be innovative, since we don't have the same resources as the big firms, and at the same time we need to move incredibly quickly due to our growth, and, of course, we want to stay relevant.



Alongside the philosophy, we are particularly interested in the process behind your design. When you are launching a new project, how do you proceed?

We have a corporate strategy that specifies the numbers up until 2024, and is based on our existing business model. We have to reach these numbers, and we will. That model, plus the basic direction we're striving toward as a brand, is combined with customer insights, and we're working together with our head of brand to develop a brand strategy and a product vision, the two conditioning one another reciprocally. This product vision is then broken down into a product road map.

As the leadership team, we only strive to provide a framework, but in the end, we expect the team to develop its own solutions, since we believe that they can be successful, not only due to our corporate culture, but also because they are to some extent closer to our clientele than we are.

How do you see the significance of emotion for designers today, but also for the future?

I'm convinced that behavioral psychology will play a greater role because solutions can no longer be found on a purely technological basis. The climate is changing and we will have to change certain things in society very quickly. We can't just continue producing more and more, and not every problem can be solved through a new physical or digital product.

Given all of this, the theme of emotion is becoming more relevant. But it's going to take a long time before people can really get their heads around it. Richard H. Thaler, the author of the book *Nudge*, which deals with behavioral design, won a Nobel Prize in 2017, and was an advisor to

Barack Obama. The topic is gradually gaining in importance, but at the moment it only has an impact in the highly elite scene where it's circulating. It might take a while before the corporations become aware of it and then hire the right agencies. That's a problem. I'm convinced that agencies and designers recognize its potential much more quickly.

Especially since design is one of the greatest levers that make it possible to transform behavior, design is always manipulative, and I mean that in a value-free way because it can induce people to break with patterns of behavior or to establish new modes of action. Your product is a good example of this.

