

Adversarial Design

In Adversarial Design, Carl DiSalvo examines the ways that technology design can provoke and engage the political. He describes a practice, which he terms "adversarial design," that uses the means and forms of design to challenge beliefs, values, and what is taken to be fact. It is not simply applying design to politics -- attempting to improve governance for example, by redesigning ballots and polling places; it is implicitly contestational and strives to question conventional approaches to political issues. DiSalvo explores the political qualities and potentials of design by examining a series of projects that span design and art, engineering and computer science, agitprop and consumer products. He views these projects -- which include computational visualizations of networks of power and influence, therapy robots that shape sociability, and everyday objects embedded with microchips that enable users to circumvent surveillance -- through the lens of agonism, a political theory that emphasizes contention as foundational to democracy. DiSalvo's illuminating analysis aims to provide design criticism with a new approach for thinking about the relationship between forms of political expression, computation as a medium, and the processes and products of design.

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