

Dear Jaleen,

This is pretty interesting stuff, actually, and while I don't take exception to your characterization of *Sights of Resistance* as missing the boat on commercial and illustration art, I do think that you imply a misunderstanding of my position such as it is outside of that book. That is, I see no defensible phenomenological, cognitive or creative distinction between "fine" and "applied art" at all -- none, zip -- that are not the result of contexts of distribution and consumption (not to mention arrogance and pretentiousness) rather than the intrinsic characteristics of the works. You might be amused to know that I am the chair of a provincial body that gives awards for excellence in applied art and design (see <http://www.bcachievement.com/board.php>.) I wouldn't do that if I didn't really believe what I just said. So the answer to your title question is -- for me -- Yes.

There are more differences between individual works of so-called "high art" than there are between the categories "high art" and "applied art." That said, much of the stuff I had wanted to put in the book simply never made it into the finished product. My original "long shortlist" was around 1,000 items, but that was clearly impractical. Many of those things were from the so-called applied arts, and you are right on the money in stating that pieces were missing, at least in part, due to the absence of of an established history of Canadian commercial art. Once upon a time I thought I might correct that historical accident with a completely different second edition of *Sights*, but I have recently come to realize that I don't have enough energy for that.

By the way, I have no prejudice against computers at all. Quite the contrary: At my insistence, our old BFA program made computers a required part the program for all visual arts students, eliminating the fine/applied distinction. Unfortunately, as far as I was concerned, many of the students themselves hated the requirement, so we finally made it optional. (Now we are UBC Okanagan, and much has changed again.) I don't have what I wrote in *Sights* in front of me, but what I think is not that computers make designers less creative, it's that computers have a tendency to make the works of very different designers look more alike than needs to be the case. It's kind of an analogy with handwriting vs word processing. The handwriting of two different writers will exhibit idiosyncratic formal features, but the actual appearance of the word processing of two different writers does not (assuming they're using the same font, etc.). Software offers the lamentable possibility that some fairly untalented folks will think they're wonderful designers. But this

is no less true of photography or certain printmaking techniques. The problem is that certain technologies can overshadow the minds that are at work.

Anyway, this is not why I wrote today. I actually wrote to ask you how serious you are about pursuing the PhD and in what area would you pursue it. Now that we are UBC Okanagan, we are beginning our PhD program in interdisciplinary studies, and you might be interested to know more. We are definitely beginning to do things differently.

Cheers,

Sincerely,

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