

COOP
DESIGN
RESEARCH

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M.S.C.
PROGRAM

ON PERFORMATIVITY AND DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This Master Thesis began to be designed based on my body knowledge, concerns, curiosities, and experiences. I consider it to be an experiential research that entails a dynamic and unfinished process but which reveals what was possible (humanly speaking) during the four-month period of its development.

In line with the above statement, with this thesis I set out to explore how performativity contributes and enhances design research practices. To attain this, and as the context of this research, I outline through a historical overview the transition of design domains from technological to social innovation, emphasizing changes in design ways of doing and knowing. Therefore, the framework of this thesis delves first into a shift of perspective manifested in Western design cultures during the 1960s and 1970s, and follows a dialog between epistemologies of the North and current epistemologies of the South (Colombia) with the purpose of unveiling three major ideas. Initially as a way of reflecting on the socio-environmental consequences revealed from such historical context, then, as the basis for Western design cultures to acknowledge the diversity of contexts in which design practice takes place, and finally to postulate the making of a plural world beyond the dominant modern and capitalist way of life and dualistic way of knowing.

Having explored the above, and as a proposal for non-dualist and non-traditional design practices, which focus on contextual and experiential knowledge, this thesis continues its journey to ground performativity within design practices through a theoretical analysis of performative and design ways-of-doing and knowing. It includes a deep exploration at a social level of the terms 'performance', 'performative', and 'performativity'; which are intrinsically related to the concept of 'tacit knowledge'. Furthermore, I also investigate a case study that has already applied performative strategies within design practices by immersing myself in an embodied experience as a way to collect empirical data (a performative way-of-doing and knowing). With all the previous in mind, at the end of this thesis I provide a discussion and conclusion that seeks to: open up possibilities for designers to delve into social realities [activity] in a non-dualistic way, recognize social concerns at local and global levels, and finally, embody an event, an action, or a behavior through body language and embodied knowledge.

Keywords: Performance, performative, performativity, tacit knowledge, body language, context, Global South, design research, industrial design, social innovation, design