

DESIGN FUTURES: NEW YORK CITY

Instructor: Frederick Tang ftang@barnard.edu
Hours: Fridays, 1:10 pm – 4:25 pm (some classes end at 5:25 pm)
Location: 504 Diana Center
Office Hours: Fridays by appointment
TA: TBD



Pierre Cardin, Vinyl Eyewear 1970



Black Lives Matter street mural in Harlem
Photo by Alon Sicherman for New Kingston Media

“Design has become so ubiquitous as to have almost become invisible, subsumed into everyday life to the point we forget it is also inevitably a political activity with far-reaching social implications.”

- Joseph Grima, *Adhocracy*

In an era when everything appears to be designed, how do we determine the definition and confines of design? Who is a designer? How is design different from art? And how is design different from invention? “Design Futures” provides a broad introduction to design culture with the argument that contemporary innovations have made the traditional boundaries of disciplines less relevant and that interaction and overlap between modes of practice constitute the new model for design processes. We will focus on events of the last year including the COVID-19 crisis, the Movement for Black Lives, and climate change. We will consider at these topics through the lens of design.

Design is a process as well as the result of processes -- open-ended and changing. Design is a tool for social and political action. Design is an exploration, formal and conceptual, where different types of practices share similar preoccupations. Design is a network that encourages interaction between many systems including technology, ecology, economics, commerce, fiction, politics, technology, science, activism, time, and beauty. The course is meant to foster an understanding and appreciation for various design disciplines. It will be organized by scale, moving from the hand to the body, from the room to the building and then from communities and cities to the world. The format of the course will rely heavily on guest lecturers with an emphasis on utilizing the resources of New York City.