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**LEONARDO ABSTRACT SERVICES (LABS) 2008-2009**

**ARTIFACTS, TECHNICITY AND HUMANIZATION:  
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN AND THE PROBLEM OF ANOETIC  
TECHNOLOGIES**

**By Stephen James Thompson**

This thesis concerns the intellectual heritage and autonomy of West European and American industrial design as a discourse community at a moment when biotechnological developments are challenging the certainty of what it means to be human. Proceeding from the assumption that industrial design is an autonomous intellectual engagement played out through the interpretation of technology as an artifact, the thesis identifies how this is a critical moment for industrial designers, who appear to be unable to respond to a problem of the apparent disconnection and the progressive displacement of the human in reference to technology. The thesis identifies the cause of this as the understanding of the artifact, which has conventionally been placed at the centre of its analysis. The way that this has been constructed has not only impacted on design solutions but has led to a particular understanding of technology. It is this understanding of the artifact that has ceased to be sustainable and has precipitated the crisis. The thesis argues that, by revisiting the artifact as a mutable consequence of culture, it is possible to relieve the problem by opening up the scope for finding new methodological approaches. These can be used to develop design strategies that are sufficiently subtle and coherent in their terms to engage with the open complexity of future discussions of the distributed and enacted human.

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