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Graphic design studies: what can it be? Following in Victor Margolin's footsteps for possible answers

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Abstract: Graphic design studies is proposed as a new way to differentiate practice in graphic design from reflection on that practice. Previous attempts to link design studies and graphic design have fallen short of arguing for graphic design studies, and consequently has not been explicit about how graphic design studies may contribute to better understanding the nature of graphic design practice. This has not been helped by the abstruse nomenclature that confuses graphic design's relationship to and distinction from other visual practices. Victor Margolin called this 'narrative problems.' This paper explores the potential to differentiate graphic design practice from graphic design studies. Building on Margolin's longstanding work and dissatisfaction with perpetuating the term 'design research' in favour of adopting 'design' and 'design studies,' the potential for recognising a new field of graphic design studies is introduced and explored for the benefit of emerging interdisciplinary design research agendas.

Keywords: graphic design; narrative problems; interdisciplinarity; process

1. Introduction

What can graphic design studies be? This paper follows Victor Margolin's interest in developing design studies as a useful way to differentiate design practice from reflection on design practice and attempts to adopt this approach for the benefit of graphic design research, past, present and future. The aim is to present the idea of graphic design studies as a possible remedy to the perceived lack of credible research in graphic design. The paper speculates on a future for graphic design studies and the aspiration for more coherence, consensus, stability, and standards in graphic design research. First, it will consider Margolin's argument for design studies before exploring this for the benefit of graphic design scholarship. Through further focusing on portrayals of graphic design practice, the objective is to make a comprehensible case for graphic design studies. The credence in Margolin's argument will serve to hypothesise what graphic design studies already is and what it can be.



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2. The argument for design studies

At the Design Research Society's 50th anniversary conference in Brighton in 2016, Dennis Doordan presented a paper on behalf of Victor Margolin, who had been unable to attend. Entitled 'Design Research: What is it? What is it for?', the paper questioned the use of the term 'design research' in preference for adopting *design* and *design studies* 'to delineate more precisely the nature of the knowledge or capabilities they signify' (Margolin 2016: 5). In essence, Margolin argued that when scholars call what they do 'design research', this suggests a secure and clear domain, but his belief was that this is not the case. In his view, so-called 'design research' does not have a distinctive character, is somewhat illusory, and 'does not designate a specific body of knowledge or a particular methodology' (2016: 9). Hence, and in its place, design should denote 'producing design' whilst design studies should concentrate on 'reflecting on design as it has been practiced, is currently practiced, and how it might be practiced' (2016: 8). Margolin is unsure about what design research is and what it is for.

This clearly questions the nature of design research since it has evolved from the 1960s onwards, when there were no design research journals, conferences, societies, PhD programmes, or disciplinary concepts of design (Cross 2018: 706). During this time, design research is said to have transformed through a series of waves that, in brief: (1) explored its methods and theories whilst becoming a credible discipline at degree level; (2) attracted funding and grew internationally through conferences, journals and interdisciplinarity; (3) impacted on industry and the economy through innovation; and, (4) became more people orientated, absorbing theories from other disciplines, impacted on competitiveness and influenced other non-design disciplines (Cooper 2019). This fourth and most recent wave resembles design research as a transdisciplinary field.

Throughout this same period, established design practices are typically identified as 'product design, graphic design, fashion design, transportation design, interior design, design management, and the related activities of engineering and architecture (Margolin 2013: 403). To these Margolin adds an abundance of new design activities such as 'service design, interaction design, human-computer interface design, universal design, participatory design, ecological design, social design, feminist design, medical design, organization design and numerous others'. However, this latter group is said to have been established in a 'haphazard fashion with no attention given to the theories, principles or arguments that should identify any shared assumptions, purposes or methods among these diverse activities' (2013: 403). If Margolin is right, these newer conceptions of design do not appear to have advanced design research and reinforce his view that design research has evolved without a precise identity as an intellectual field (2016). Hence, Margolin calls for the adoption of design studies as 'a framework that can most effectively integrate the multiple voices, theories, arguments and claims that have design as their subject into a course of action that can make the most productive use of them' (2013: 405). In this pursuit, Margolin's ideas align design studies with the fourth wave of design research noted earlier.

Margolin has explored the possibility for adopting ‘design studies’ since the mid-1990s. In 2013, he argued that the tasks and challenges associated with the idea of design studies should emphasise, above all, a need to ‘find its own subject matter, topics of investigation and methods’ as well as convincing established researchers to contribute to and clarify a chaotic domain, and lead the shaping of design’s future (Margolin 2013: 400–401). Accordingly, the broad domain of design should encompass practice, research, discourse and education, with design studies providing the place for transformation in these sub-domains at the interface between design and non-design domains, these being those disciplines outside of design that can and do provide useful insights on design. Going back further still, he posited design studies as an alternative to design history because advances made in that field had made it difficult to pin down a fixed identity due to the fact that design as an activity constantly changed (Margolin 1995: 10). Recognising the breadth of subject matter that the study of design had evolved into, Margolin then proposed a definition of design studies as ‘the field of inquiry which addresses questions of how we make and use products in our daily lives and how we have done so in the past’ (1995: 14). This affirmed the idea of design studies as an inclusive, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary field of inquiry. Margolin concluded his argument by proposing a central focus for design studies as the social, technological, cultural, transformative, exploratory and educational potential of design, with a particular emphasis on improving and transforming practice in a global context.

At a time when there is considerable interest in how design research can facilitate collaboration and co-creation, celebrate the uniqueness of disciplinary knowledge as well as interdisciplinary ways of working, meet the challenges in design education, understand roles, experience and expertise, as well as include multiple voices, amongst other concerns, this paper explores the potential for graphic design’s contribution to these debates by exploring its possible contribution to design studies in readiness for the next wave of design research and its ‘potential to change the world at all levels’ (Cooper 2019: 10). In essence, it explores the usefulness of design studies as an approach to establish what can be learned for the benefit of graphic design research.

3. The argument for graphic design studies

The need for research in graphic design is not new. Research has been recognised as an important addition to the education of graphic designers, and in 2006 was considered ‘the next big academic challenge’ (Heller 2006: 13). This came after concerns about graphic design research at the end of the last century when it had been argued that the research culture in graphic design was beset by ‘narrative problems’ in the form of abstruse nomenclature that confuses graphic design’s relationship to and distinction from other visual practices (Margolin 1994). Twenty years on this had not changed. For example, in the United Kingdom, the most recent national review of research suggested research in ‘graphic and communication design’ is weak intellectually and theoretically (Anon 2014). That said, in the United Kingdom a modest graphic design research culture is said to be emerging, and ‘thriving, if you know where to look’ (Walker 2017). This view emerges from on a broad

definition of the field, a random set of sub-disciplines, and alternative name suggestions that extend the narrative problems, either by narrowing or broadening its scope from information design, graphic communication, to communication design. In the same vein, there are said to be a few 'graphic design academic journals' such as *Communication Design*, *Journal of Design History*, *Information Design*, and *Visible Language*. However, none of these are known by name as graphic design research (a minor concession being the short-lived *Communication Design*, which carried the sub-heading *Interdisciplinary and Graphic Design Research*).

Conversely, there is clear evidence of scholarship that diminishes the potential for confusing narrative and directly aligns with the term graphic design. Numerous publications are available that account for the depth of practice and how it continues to:

- evolve as a practice (Dziobczenski and Person 2017; Roberts, Wright, and Price 2015; van der Waarde 2009);
- build on a significant documented histories that are both short- and farsighted (Müller and Wiedermann 2019a; 2019b; Drucker and McVarish 2013; Eskilson 2012; Cramsie 2010; Jubert 2006; Hollis 2001; Heller and Balance 2001; Meggs 1983);
- examine theory (Hongmin Kim 2018; Bestley and Noble 2018; Davis 2012; Armstrong 2009; Bennett 2006);
- explore critical perspectives (Triggs and Atzmon 2019; Lees-Maffei and Maffei 2019; Drucker 2014; Blauvelt and Lupton 2011; Bierut, Drentell, and Heller 2006; Barnard 2005).

This sample of references access the knowledge of other disciplines to help structure thinking about graphic design, leading to an understanding that it is fundamentally interdisciplinary (Davis 2012: 234). Margolin's definition of design studies as a field of inquiry that 'addresses questions of how we make and use products in our daily lives and how we have done so in the past' is useful here for what can be referred to as graphic design studies, as distinct from graphic design practice. If research in graphic design needs to discover its own subject matter, topics of investigation, and methods, by reflecting on graphic design practice, past, present and future, what could its focus be?

4. The focus of graphic design studies

If the main objective of design studies is to reflect on design as it has been practiced, is currently practiced, and how it might be practiced, and the same applies to the aim of graphic design studies, it is essential to understand the nature of graphic design practice. It has been suggested that specialist graphic design sub-disciplines now include, but are not limited to, typography, typeface design, wayfinding, book and periodical design, interaction design, illustration, exhibition design, branding and corporate identity (Walker 2017). Whereas, in his historical account of design, Margolin (2015) implies graphic design emerged as a profession at the end of the nineteenth century from the work of commercial artists in five kinds of business: printing and engraving houses; book, periodical and newspaper

publishing; lithography and poster houses; advertising agencies; and commercial art studios (2015: 387). This involved a range of activities, or sub-disciplines, including lettering, type design and typography, layout, poster art, illustration, the design of books and periodicals, even writing.

In discussion about the formation of graphic design as a profession, Margolin (Margolin 2015: 387) does not say much about the adoption of the term graphic design by those working at the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century (leaving this to a later discussion about the Dwiggin), even though graphic design has been identified in use as early as 1908 related to the design of charts and graphs (Shaw 2014). However, there is a clue about the origin of the practice as a design activity when Margolin refers to the activity of Chicago based freelance independent 'designers' such as Fred Goudy and Will Bradley who in the 1890s 'managed to establish patterns of practice that enabled them to move between various activities such as typography, layout, poster art, and the design of books and periodicals', both being 'part of an active design scene in Chicago' (Margolin 2015: 387).

The scope and scale of activities listed in portrayals of the discipline since suggest this pattern has continued. During the second half of the twentieth century the unification of a disparate but clearly related set of practices as graphic design eventually crystallised in a definition in the first *Dictionary of Graphic Design and Designers* (Livingston and Livingston 1992) as 'Generic term for the activity of combining typography, illustration, photography and printing for purposes of persuasion, information or instruction'. This short description did not reflect the full extent of practice in the early 1990s, when computers had already integrated with graphic design process and its practitioners had made significant impact in non-print applications such as broadcast media and environmental signage. However, it did capture the integrative nature of the practice.

Graphic design in the early twentieth century, considering the various trades, techniques, and technologies, clearly crossed and integrated many sub-disciplines, and the situation is similar a century later, with some notable similarities and differences forged by an understanding of the basics (for example, type design, illustration, printing) as well as some newer areas of practice (branding, information design, digital design).

In design scholarship, graphic design has recently been described as a 'broad and multidisciplinary' profession for print, screen and environmental (physical rather than ecological) applications that include various modes of representation such as photography, illustration, typography, diagrams, and animation (Ramirez 2016: 107–109). It is still acknowledged as often being combined with other disciplines and its 'specialities' are said to include: editorial design; visual identity design; packaging design; web design; alphabet design or typography (adapted from Ramirez 2016: 108–109).

However, this partial indication of graphic design as a practice in the early twenty-first century is insufficient. It excludes a number of specialist interests such as illustration or photography, advertising, or writing, and preoccupations already known from accounts of graphic design by its practitioners and critics. See Table 1.

Table 1 *What is graphic design and what it is for?*

What is graphic design? (Newark 2002)	What is graphic design for? (Twemlow 2006)
Alphabets	Experimental typography
Modules	Movie titles
Typefaces	Visualising music
Digital typefaces	Broadcast design
Full character set	Sound design
Languages	Games design
Typography	Signage
The grid	Editorial design
Hierarchy	Book design
Rules and other devices	Information design
Images	Interactive design
Illustration	Identity design
Photography	Advertising
Using photography	Type design
Word and image	Writing
Tools	Software design
Pencil	Mise-en-scène
Materials	
Paper	
Computer	
Disciplines	
Logos	
Identity	
Print –publicity	
Print – information	
Packaging	
Books	
Magazines	
Exhibitions	
Signs	
Web and film	

Building on this early twenty-first century indication of graphic design practice, investigating graphic design from a research perspective is further revealing new insights into the practice. Through an extensive research programme of interviews with graphic design practices in the city of Breda in The Netherlands, the full extent of what graphic designers actually do (see van der Waarde 2009) provides a much more nuanced indication beyond the various attempts at definition and the many books that show the products of the practice. Organised into three basic components of visual elements, visual goals and effects, there is clear evidence that links recent practice to how it was a century ago. See Table 2. For example, typography, illustration, font design, publishing, graphic art, and advertising clearly provide a constant thread back to then. Activities such as photography and animation have since been added as they became established in the twentieth century. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, programming, website design, spatial design, end user research and communication strategy, to name a few, provide a more contemporary indicator of what practitioners do, providing a picture of a sophisticated practice capable of supporting other disciplinary perspectives beyond those who have had training and education in art and design.

Table 2 What graphic designers say they do (adapted from van der Waarde, 2009).

Visual Elements	Visual Goals	Effects
Illustration	Film production	Marketing
Photography	Website design	Communication strategy
Typography	Graphic Art	Usability
Copywriting	Spatial design	End user research
Image processing	Advertising	Visual research
Animation	House style design	Visual strategy
Audio-video		Concept development
Programming		House style management
Author		Project organisation
Infographics		
Font design		
Desktop publishing		

In a similar vein, Dziobczenski & Person (2017) have identified what employers look for when appointing graphic designers, implying a similar alignment to the core capabilities of practitioners working across the various graphic disciplines a century ago. Essentially, the core competence areas cover the spectrum of activity that the contemporary graphic design professional must demonstrate, as well as personal characteristics of acumen, aesthetic and creative sensitivity, self-motivation and a passion for design. See Table 3.

Table 3 *Graphic Design Competencies, Knowledge, Skills and Personal Characteristics, listed in order of importance (Dziobczenski and Person 2017)*

What competence areas UK [graphic design] industry says it needs	
Competence areas	
Print and Advertising	
Digital Design	
Packaging and Point of Sale	
Brand Visual Identity	
Retail and Environmental Design	
Film and Animation	
What knowledge and skills UK [graphic design] industry says it needs	
Process management skills	Conceptual design skills
Interpersonal (teamwork)	Idea generation and concept development
Project planning and administration	Business orientation
Presentation and communication	Design research
Team management	Process understanding
Client relationship	Briefing
	Problem solving
Technical design skills	
Detailing and production	Software skills
Coding and platform management	2D software
Visual coordination	Office software
Layout and composition	Web development software
Typography	Animation/video software
Photography	3D software
Digital photo manipulation	
Illustration	
Motion design	
3D modelling	
Personal characteristics	
Acumen	
Aesthetic and creative sensitivity	
Self-driven	
Design passion	

These portrayals of graphic design as a professional practice indicate the range of different activities undertaken in the name of graphic design. Although still overlooking some aspects

of practice that one might expect to see, such as 'App' design, they considerably extend the way graphic design practitioners and critics have previously portrayed the practice in terms of what it is and what it is for. However, it remains the case that many of these sub-disciplines are activities in their own right, with independent associations, exhibitions and publications, as was the case in the twentieth century (Margolin 1994: 239).

What is clear from this is that graphic design has stood as a unifying term, first to integrate a disparate set of practices, then throughout the twentieth century serving a more descriptive purpose. Clearly, what graphic designers say they do and what employers require from graphic designers is not represented by the way the practice was defined in the early 1990s. It has evolved in the same way that many fields and academic disciplines do (e.g. Geography). Now, based on recent research into the field, any attempt to describe the field of graphic design would conform with the need to recognise the complexity of practice, but still recognise its synthesising capability.

As implied earlier, if graphic design studies should reflect on the practice of graphic design, it must stay abreast of the field of activity. As shown in Table 1 and 2, this benefits from empirical research into what graphic designers and graphic design employers say they do and should not be reliant on single disciplinary perspectives. For example, it should be clear from the examples cited above that graphic design is more than editorial design, visual identity design, web design, alphabet design or typography. Research into graphic design, rather than self-declaring statements about graphic design, reveals the nuanced dimensions associated with the visual elements, visual goals and effects, or the competencies, knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that are necessary to practice. Such approaches, as Margolin suggests, will provide distinction between graphic design and other practices that produce 'visual communication' and enable deeper analysis of 'the distinctive discourses within each practice such as advertising, illustration and typography and understand better how they are contextualized and recontextualized into new narratives' (Margolin 1994: 237).

5. Discussion

Prominent design researchers, cited earlier in this paper, argue that design research today has evolved over the past 50 years into an established academic subject. It has also been suggested that this has been through a series of 'waves', the most recent confirming how design not only benefits from but adds to non-design disciplines. What has been called the fourth wave in design research resembles design as a transdisciplinary field and aligns with Margolin's argument for design studies as 'a framework that can most effectively integrate the multiple voices, theories, arguments and claims that have design as their subject into a course of action that can make the most productive use of them' (2013: 405). This has been part of a longer trajectory that sees design as having evolved from 'craft, to sophisticated professional practice and academic discipline,' along the way finding 'novel ways of dealing with the ever-increasing complexity of the problems it needed to address' (Dorst 2019: 118). Conversely, Victor Margolin has argued that design research has not yet developed a

distinctive body of knowledge. Both established and newer design practices are implicated in Margolin's suggestion that design is yet to establish clear theories, principles, arguments and methodologies.

To some extent, this resembles the objectives of the already established notion of design studies as outlined in the relatively long-established research journal of the same name. *Design Studies*, established in 1979, has as its stated focus design processes and the study of design activity – a shorthand version of what Margolin argues as reflection on design as it has been practiced, is currently practiced, and how it might be practiced. Design Studies' website home page states:

Design Studies is a leading international academic journal focused on developing understanding of **design processes**. It studies design activity across all domains of application, including engineering and product design, architectural and urban design, computer artefacts and systems design. It therefore provides an interdisciplinary forum for the analysis, development and discussion of fundamental aspects of **design** activity, from cognition and methodology to values and philosophy. (<https://www.journals.elsevier.com/design-studies>)

As the journal representative of the Design Research Society (a learned society committed to promoting and developing design research, founded in 1966), Margolin believed that those who contribute to Design Studies as so-called 'design researchers' did not constitute an established discipline or field in the same way historians, philosophers, anthropologists or sociologists may contribute to journals in their disciplines. There is an obvious contention in this delineation between design, design studies and design research. However, Margolin's differentiation between design and design studies offers a useful approach for established design practices that have struggled to establish a widespread research culture that is clearly defined. Graphic design is such a case.

Since the 1970s, graphic design has been singled out for its limited grasp of theory, even though there is a considerable amount of scholarship in the field and glimpses of research capability have recently come to the fore. Margolin's call for his interpretation of design studies – to provide the space for reflection on design (note that this is different to the kind of reflection-in-action associated Donald Schön) – may also be adopted for graphic design. From an historical perspective, there is an abundance of sources about graphic design that continue to emerge since the 1980s. Theoretical perspectives are more recent and tend to draw more from other disciplines such as art, design, communication, language studies, to name a few. Meredith Davis' book *Graphic Design Theory* cited earlier, is a good example of this in that it draws from not only design theorists such as Christopher Alexander, or J. Christopher Jones, but also from humanities and social science through often cited models of communication, for example, Shannon and Weaver, gestalt psychology, and semiotics, to mention a few. To some extent, this satisfies Margolin's early argument for a broad domain of design, or 'design world', based on observations made about the 'art world' (Margolin 2013: 402) where 'different disciplines come together to teach, do research and disseminate it.' Graphic design theory, in the way it is characterised by Davis, does exactly this and may be usefully deemed *graphic design studies* within a larger design studies framework.

Furthermore, the examples given above of research into what graphic designers actually do, compared to what graphic design practitioners and critics say it is and who it is for, necessarily provides a more detailed portrayal of the evolving nature of practice in the field. It is clearly much more than the integration of typography, illustration, photography and printing, and a closer reading of scholarship in the field reveals its functions, for example, as information, persuasion, decoration, magic, metalinguistic and phatic (Barnard 2005: 13–18).

Although some argue that there are graphic design academic journals, there are none that claim graphic design as their core concern. For example, *Visible Language* started in 1967 as *The Journal of Typographic Research*, but now speaks to the research and practice of visual communication, and the development of communication design. There is no mention of graphic design in its stated ‘publication history’ (<http://visiblelanguagejournal.com/>). The more recent *Dialectic* follows a similar path in its alignment with visual communication design (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/dialectic/past-issues>). There has been occasional reference to graphic design in the aims of research journals. For example, Information Design Journal was founded in 1979 with several clearly stated aims published in its second issue. These initially made no mention of graphic design, but emphasised information, communication and information design. In response to one correspondent, who suggested the basic aim of the journal was to establish a connection ‘between graphic design practice and information design theory and technique’ the editor Bryan Smith agreed an additional aim as ‘to establish a link between graphic design theory and practice’ (Smith 1979). This link with information design has been reinforced on several occasions since. For example, based on the suggestion that graphic design had strong ties to printing and visualisation, Gui Bonsiepe (1994) sought to reinvent graphic design to include the special activity of the of ‘information designer,’ or ‘info-designer’ to reflect less concern for ‘communication’ but ‘effective action’. Per Mollerup (2015: 148) also reinforces this with the suggestion that ‘information graphics’ as a sub-category of information design’, is a ‘special type of graphic design that deals with visual explanation’. In all, these links reflect the same narrative problems noted earlier.

There are occasional special editions of existing design research journals about graphic design (for example, see Design Issues Volume XXVII Issue 1, 2011), but conferences are few and far between, there are no societies of graphic design research, nor are there PhD programmes of research, even though there is an increasing pool of PhD qualified academics. If compared to the waves of design research noted earlier, although graphic design has been a credible degree programme since the 1960s, first at undergraduate and then postgraduate level, it is not a field of funded research. International networks of scholars have formed, but their singular commitment to advancing scholarship in the field of graphic design can be undermined by similar problems of nomenclature and an uncertainty about where to place their research.

Yet, in the context of various international mapping and measuring exercises of the so-called creative industries, graphic design is said to be the majority design practice since the mid-1980s (Julier 2014: 25). This substantiates graphic design as a significant part of the global

design network, not least because it is a subject taught in schools and universities, but also because it has been the foremost creative industries design practice for the past three decades at least. It is clearly a sophisticated professional practice, but it is clearly under-researched.

Finally, at a time when graphic design scholarship ponders its future and acknowledges that graphic design is 'co-produced with other disciplines, such as geography, biology or physics' (Triggs and Atzmon 2019: 776), the argument for graphic design studies as a domain where interdisciplinary knowledge and expertise about the conceiving, planning and making of graphic form can co-exist seems timely. However, this relationship between design studies and graphic design is not new. In 2006, a range of interdisciplinary perspectives on graphic design were assembled in the reader *Design studies: theory and research in graphic design* (Bennett 2006). This considered visionary perspectives, design inquiry, designing culture, and human-centred design, importing and exporting a range of design perspectives for graphic design scholars. The book could have been more appropriately called 'Graphic Design Studies' in that it achieves much of what is argued in this paper, but with more emphasis on design studies and mostly from a North American perspective.

6. Conclusion

This paper has speculated on what graphic design studies can be. In doing so it has further exposed what some interpret contentiously that over five decades design research has not yet established a clear identity in terms of its knowledge base and methodologies. During this time graphic design practice has been shown to have grown significantly through periods of significant change, aligning with design's longer-term trajectory from craft to professional practice and academic discipline. But its research credentials come under constant scrutiny, not helped by the narrative problems it has faced and must be overcome.

Suggestions that graphic design is bereft of research have been highlighted, but it has also been shown that it is not devoid altogether if considered from a design studies perspective. In fact, in the United Kingdom, history and complementary studies are part of the foundation of approximately a third of curriculum since degree level study was introduced in the late 1960s. For most of that time this has generally been taught by non-design educated academics, meaning graphic design graduates are aware of the interdisciplinary nature of design. There is not enough room here to debate the various domains where graphic design studies might be relevant, such as design history, but it is hope that this is implicit in the fact that Victor Margolin was, primarily, a design historian who argued for design studies as a more suitable way to frame design research .

To further enhance the idea that design studies as a field of inquiry should address questions of how we make and use every day products in our daily lives past and present, the nature of graphic design practice has been explored to substantiate the kind of graphic products that facilitate the relationship between people and the world. In particular, it has been shown how research into graphic design compares with approaches from graphic design

practitioners and critics. The former paints a more nuanced picture and provides some indication into how the graphic designers engage with some of the challenges said to be facing design research in the future.

Within graphic design practice, notions of co-creation are implicit, as are the interdisciplinary ways the practice has evolved in close collaboration with a professional client base. It would not have prospered otherwise. Margolin's arguments for design studies provides a useful framework for graphic design educators, researchers and practitioners to coalesce and contribute more to the future of design research and the complexity of problems in need of address in a changing world, or so-called fifth wave of design research.

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