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The Machinery of Design: Playing with Brecht, the Surrealists, and Provocative Images

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Through narrative, interruption, and collage, this paper proposes a way of understanding design using Brecht's style of epic theater and the Surrealists' affection for paradox and irrationality. I analyze how we can interpret existing design in terms of Brecht's belief that the nature of reality is economic, and how designers can adapt his techniques, along with those of the Surrealists, to create - or re-create - works that generate a unique response. Brecht used techniques to remind theater audiences that they were watching a play rather than observing a representation of reality. He found that the machinery of theater, opera, and the press is no longer "a means of furthering output but has become an obstacle to output, and specifically to [intellectuals'] own output as soon as it follows a new and original course which the apparatus finds awkward or opposed to its new aims." I apply this theory to design and discuss how the "machinery" that generates design affects its output and how unveiling that machinery for the reader/audience creates new meaning.

Using the Surrealists' irreverent methods of production simultaneously with Brecht's techniques provides a unique way of seeing design.

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