

## acar2

### basis for designing a neoanalog world

We need locations at which to conceive prototypical strategies and structures for afterwards, concepts for a time that will come after the Industrial Age in Europe. Since so much nowadays comes across as just as unfamiliar as it is open to different outcomes, comprehensive design work is called for in order to come up with models, structures, experimental arrays, processes and products that can take advantage of the opportunities afforded by a surprising circumstance: awakening, amidst globalization, in a post-industrial society. At this point, we have to ask ourselves: What is it, actually, that remains the outstanding quality of the geographical setting of our culture at a time when everything is mobile and subject to global competition? How can we assure ourselves sensory experience and the act of partaking of beautiful tangibility in a digitized world?

The way we see it, the blinkered and short-sighted perspectives that are prevalent among MBAs, economists, high-tech engineers and classical product designers can't provide much help here. A thoroughly interdisciplinary approach to a solution is what it takes to come up with the strategies and products of design work that satisfy the criteria of sustainability. Our *acar2* project is based on long-term thinking; with it, we aim to conceive, implement and utilize suitable structures.

#### neoanalog

We've coined the term "neoanalog" to subsume the related content elements that have emerged from our research. These include a renaissance of tangibility as a relief from the sensory impoverishment of digital technology. Through research into an expanded concept of handicrafts, we want to open up more intuitive ways of dealing with high tech to users of the complex functions of leading-edge products. Neoanalog refers to the design of this digital tangibility.

#### Striking Leg

With *acar2*, we are attempting to orchestrate joint undertakings with many of the established and experienced associates we work with in the design field, and to enable these ventures to then serve as the launching pad for an experimental leap to another basis. Putting this in terms of a soccer metaphor: *acar2* functions as a striking leg in reconnoitering this new world, but we certainly appreciate the role of the pivot leg being played by our established partner institutions, which is precisely what makes this experiment possible.

#### The New Market

*acar2* has a stimulating and enriching effect at participating universities; nevertheless, the targeted consequences are on a much grander scale. Particularly in times of global competition, it would be helpful to enjoy the benefits of a crafts culture—which, after all, will always remain attached to a regional setting—that is vitally active and not simply arrested in tradition in order to assure that even products of the high-tech sector are endowed with a recognizable profile. The more de-materialized the goods and services of our still-to-be-discovered Information Society become, the more decisive it becomes to make a statement on their interfaces, the final remnants of the vanishing world of tangible things.

#### Open Search

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, director of Berlin's Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, wrote the following in an extensive essay on the art of researching the unknown (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, May 5, 2007, B3): "The fundamental problem is that one does not know precise-

ly what one doesn't know. This is a short but quite succinct articulation of the essence of research. Ultimately, the point is to gain new insights; and what is truly new cannot, by definition, be foreseen. Thus, it can be brought about only to a limited extent. That which is really new must come to pass, and one must establish the preconditions for it to be able to do so."

How these conditions stack up with respect to *acar2*'s agenda, which experiments we'll be conducting, which issues will be discussed right now and which can be expected to come up in the future—these are what we'll be attempting to bring out in our public presentations in conjunction with the "neoanalog" theme of Campus 2.0. We're in this for the long term; thus, what we do at Campus 2.0 during Ars Electronica represents just one step among many. We want the current generation at leading design universities to be confronted with issues having to do with neanalog design in order for us to thereby make an impact on the design of the near future on a meta-level. Our long-term hope is to be able to exert some slight influence on the complex course of events in the world, and thereby never losing sight of the fact that we constitute an integral part of this world.

### From Product to Process

Our slogan "From artefact to actefact" unmistakably indicates where we want to take *acar2* and how we envision the path that will get us there. We wish to make it clear to the many members of the design scene who are still wrapped up in three-dimensional products that today's products are processes. And we also want to expand the role as well as the competence of the designer, and to enable the design field to go through a process of emancipation and development from a relatively limited consciousness of configuring the external form of useful objects to the long-overdue encounter with social models.

Design can provide sustainable solutions by conceiving of the entire chain of processes from design to production, sale, use and recycling as designable. Only by designing processes in this way can we overcome the longstanding constraints of mass production, which, at least in Europe, is the unavoidable conclusion if only for economic reasons alone. What this calls for are innovative services that are capable of taking advantage of the qualities of individual, made-to-order production without having to accept its disadvantages into the bargain. Thanks to more flexible means of production and marketing channels as well as to the growing need for customizability, craft-related offerings are emerging for a post-industrial reality. These will be made available by the next generation of craftsmen who can successfully combine learning a craft and getting higher education too. Such curious, open-minded practitioners will absorb and expand the holistic approaches and expressive techniques of the ideal handicrafts. *acar2* seeks to further the prototypical, encouraging development and implementation of such offerings. In the coming years, it would certainly be desirable for research to be conducted on all levels and at many universities, and for the results to be made public and applied in the marketplace.

### On the Attempt to Gain the Upper Hand

The plan is to refine and establish the orientation of the content and the structure of the decentrally networked craft academy *acar2* in a five-year pilot project. Experience gained during the Ars Electronica Festival will be a key contribution to this. It has already become clear that it's desirable to expand the supporting network consisting of educational institutions, government agencies, businesses enterprises and research facilities in order to ensure a framework for what remains to be done. The way to communicate this is via the socially relevant positioning of *acar2* as a symbolic connecting bridge over the raging digital waters. Those who learn how to combine handicraft and high tech in an innovative way have a chance of getting the upper hand.