A Playful Design

Understanding Constructs

perform

                    w
                        a
                            l
                                    k
                                i
                                    n
                                        g

move s-low-ly and (_____)

dwell   dwell   dwell

            Be [   ] elsewhere and | thought-full

                            -ienke Kastelein-

"Bolt up brass commemorative plaques in places
(public or private)
where you have experienced a revelation.

– Hakim Bey –

remove Your choice.
flip a coin.
for everything.
or ask somebody.
trust them.

-John Cage-

Arrange to observe a sign indicating direction of travel.

Travel in the indicated direction.

Travel in another direction.

- George Brecht -

Imagine.
[   ]
create a portrait
                              of the room
                                              the city
                                                      the space
                                                              the time

in which everything   everything   everything you encounter

                                    is magical

or slightly out of place

                                                      altered from Reality.

document in a way you know

                              and a way

                                                      you don't.

                              -Italo Calvino-

Pass by a tree or
a bench or
someone or
let some object pass by,
but each time
differently.

-Mieko Shiomi-

document the last fifty things you did.
write them. draw them. map them.
all of them.

before familiarity can turn into awareness
the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness.

start now
where you are.

-Bertold Brecht-

Designing the Spaces that Design design

Directions:

Each question in this section is based on the reasoning presented in a brief passage. In answering the questions, you should not make assumptions that are by commonsense standards implausible, superfluous, or incompatible with the passage. For some questions, more than one of the choices could conceivably answer the question. However, you are to choose the best answer; that is, choose the response that most accurately and completely answers the question.

Question 1

A Designer who has been trained to Design according to a certain method imbues the values of such a method into the artifacts they Design. This happens consciously and unconsciously. When a way-of-being runs counter to these values, the artifact, by means of the affordances and enforcement mechanisms Designed into it, Designs such ways-of-being to comply.

If Designs and Designing Design

A. Ways-of-being become Designed   B. Such Design outcomes are out of the control of the Designer

C. The method of Designing becomes the central concern   D. All of the above.

Question 2

A Disciplinary Technology is an instrument which permits the control, organization, and amplification of the power of bodies. It trains them to form a productive consensus. According to Michel Foucault, the shift from a mode of punishment, which emphasized physical torture, to one which relies on surveillance, normalization, and examination, i.e., Disciplinary Technologies, reveals a new power to control. And, from its origins, this form of control has manifested through Design.

If Discipline can be Designed, then

A. Design can be Disciplined in such Designing   B. Spaces, in which ways-of-being are highly normalized, are Disciplinary Designed

C. Ways-of-being can be controlled to a point of near-certainty.   D. Disciplined ways-of-being may not be freely chosen ways-of-being

E. All of the above.

Question 3

At the New York City High Line, which is physically Designed by James Corner Field Operations with Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Piet Oudolfson and experientially Designed by Friends of the High Line, "you can walk through [Designed] gardens, view [Designed] art, experience a [Designed] performance, savor [Designed] delicious food, or connect with friends and neighbors [in specific Designed spaces]-all while enjoying a unique [Designed] perspective of New York City." It is an experientially seamless, intuitive, safe, and user friendly engagement with the New York City skyline, separate from the chaotic clatter of life on the streets below.

The New York City High Line is

A. Highly Designed   B. A Disciplinary Technology

C. An opportunity to disengage and relax   D. All of the above.

The Yard is an adventure playground, right?

Yes! The Yard is a 50,000 square-foot adventure playground on Governors Island.

Say more about what that means.

An adventure playground is a specific type of playground for young people. It is typically an area fenced off and set aside for children. Within its boundaries children can play freely, in their own way, in their own time. They are defined by a philosophy of unrestricted play, the presence of playworkers, and an absence of the kind of play structures, found in conventional playgrounds.

And it is Designed to achieve the kind of unrestricted-play you're talking about, correct?

Well, we set up the space. With wood, tires, any kind of large spools, any, you know, theatrical props or mannequin limbs and pile them up. We set the space up with a tool shed and a kind of entry desk, and then areas for secrecy. And we do this in a way that we think children will find engaging, and then we let them create it.

There is intentional to eliminate the hazards so that kids can take risks. And that's, you know, that's the work we do when we risk assess and we site check the playground. And from there, the kids built it all. They design it.

But, at the same time, it's not gonna matter what physical things you're going to do. Like you can't make anything fixed or even moving that's going to answer everything. Human beings are so complicated. The only thing that can, kind of, navigate that is another human being.

So, there's the understanding that things are always different. You can't have formulas for what's going to work and doesn't work. You have to always think afresh of what's going on. And that's why reflections is so crucial in practice. It takes just time and practice.

in the absense of Design

an abstinence from Design decisions on absentee properties and spaces that were in disrepair

in the midst of a system responding to and evolving from redlining and other forms of systemic racism and classism

a period in New York City informed by racialized neighborhood disinvestment and deteriorating and abandoned properties

when the City of New York decided to neglect the needs of certain neighborhoods

the 1970s

we took these spaces for us

to be and be freely

we seed bombed into fenced-off lots

planted flowers on the edges of lots

cleared and transforming vacant and abandoned lots into communal green space

and tree pits

for recreation, gardening, and even small-scale farming

In 1979, when the 9th Street Community Garden Park was founded, it was a safe space and a gathering space for local, engaged residents.

Built on philosophies of anarcho-communism, the 9th St Garden, in its origin, fostered freedom to design one's way-of-being.

But since 1978, the City, through Operation Green Thumb, has stepped in; Designing unifying mechanisms for all community gardens and mandating adherence to certain Design standards to maintain neighborhood rights of operation.

Designed to Dwell

What do you know
about the effects
of your Design
practice?

Designed to Dwell

What do you know about the effects of your Design practice?

What do you know about the effects of Design?

Designed to Dwell

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Designed to Dwell

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What can you know?

Browser tab: **playful design** — playfuldesign.com/Designed-to-Dwell

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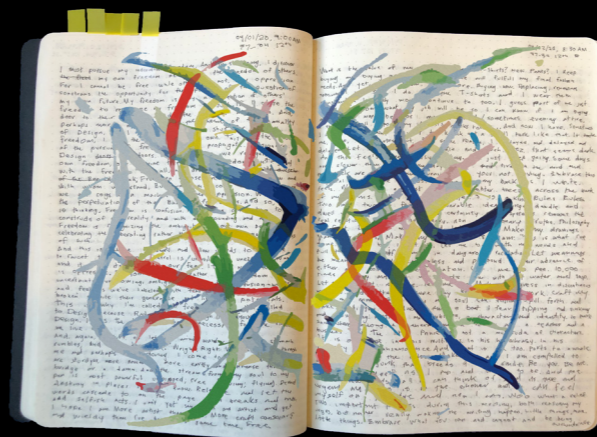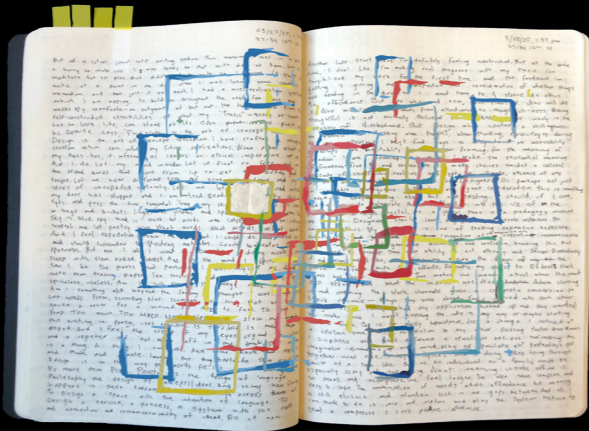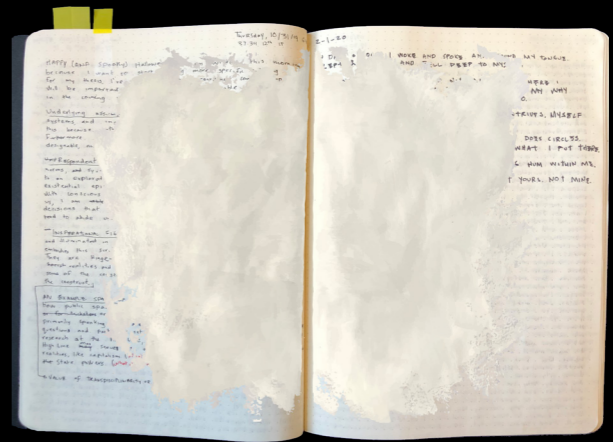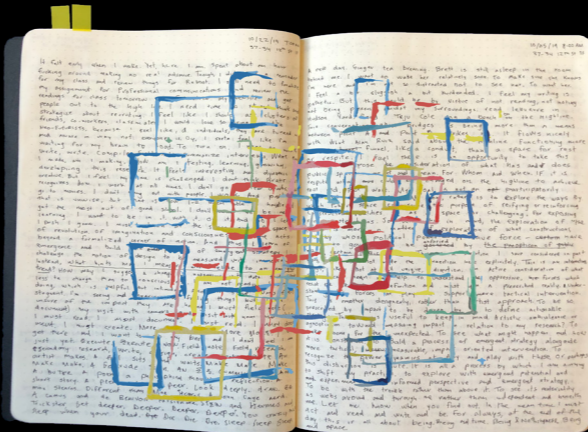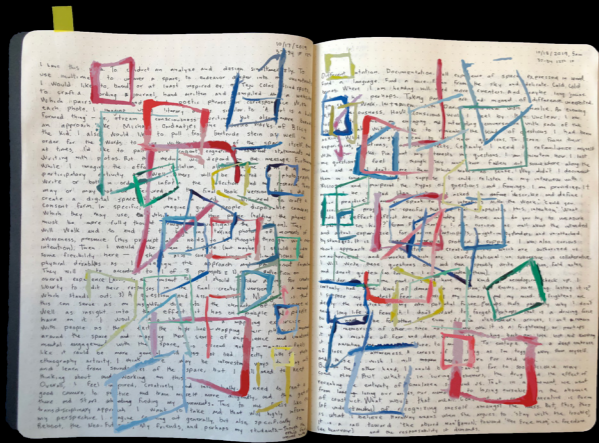
A Playful Design

i woke and
was (the habit of
before being)

conscious [mindfull] (barely certain and
(un)clear) and

weary. weary was the
beginning. this is important

to believe(in action)in priorities(felt
and more) necessarily

for everything begins
here and nothing is
worth anything
except (through) it.

A Playful Design
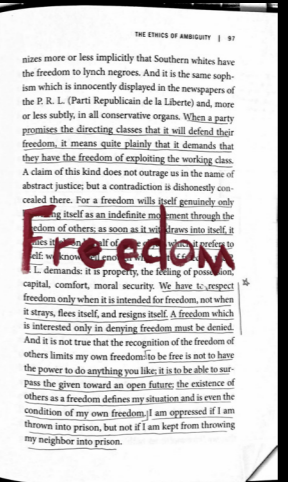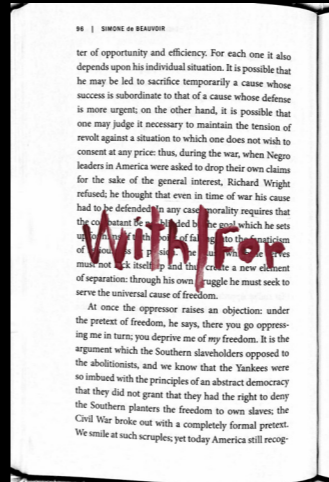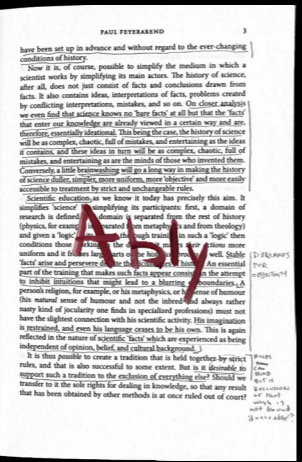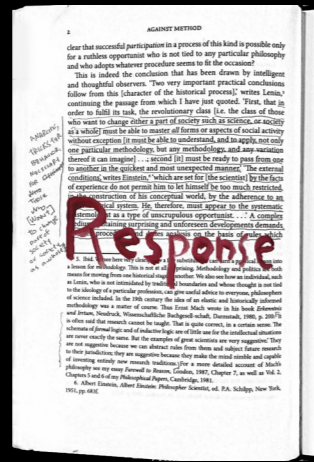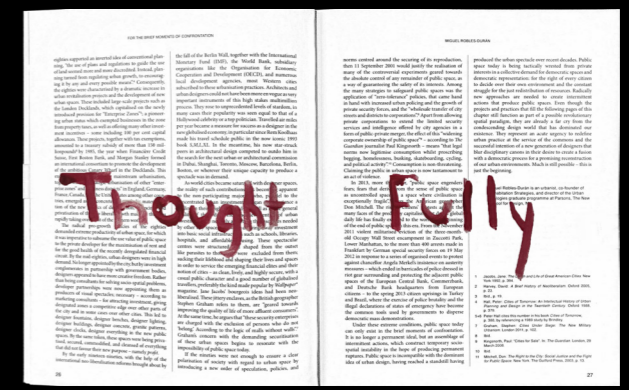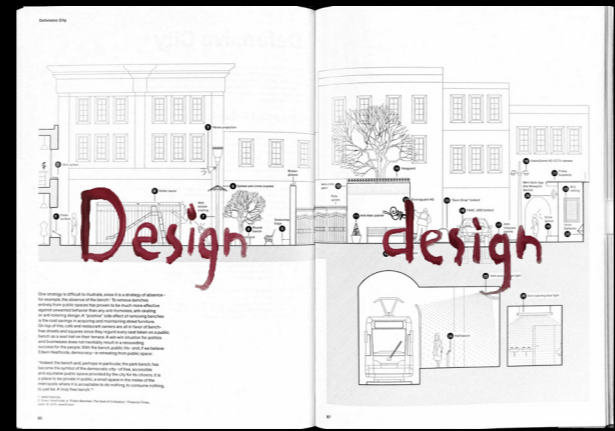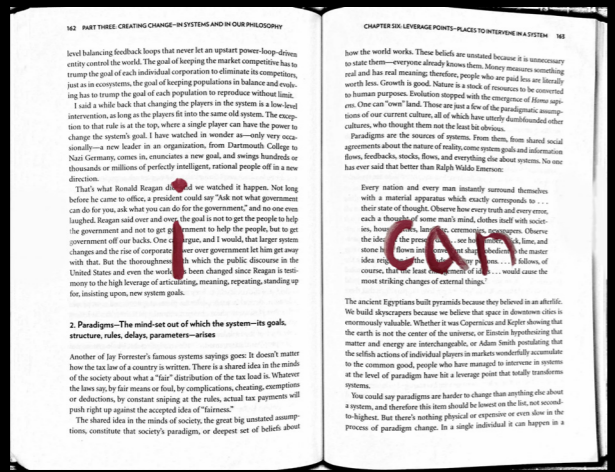
A Playful Design

Designing fully aware of the
Designs reDesigned and Designed
again and Designed onto
and from and through.

For Design Designs design. And
Design Designs the conditions
of designing. And Design and
design. But unless Design Designs

Thoughtful | Thought-Full
Thought-Full-er

than. Then. Design Designs
to design. Designs Designing Designed
from and with
a need to design

Freely. Radically Free.
Genuinely Free.

A Playful Design

I. Designers ought to acknowledge
their Radical Freedom
to engage social constructs.

II. Designers ought to acknowledge
the ways Design, Designs, and Designing
contribute to social constructs and
Design design, i.e. ways-of being.

III. Designers ought to be prepared
for the thinking necessary
to discern justifiable and unjustifiable
social constructs.

IV. Designers ought to acknowledge
their Radical Freedom to challenge
unjustifiable social constructs.

V. Designers ought to respond to
such acknowledgements and preparation
with a pursuit of Genuine Freedom:

An Ethics of Playful Design

Hinge Mind

Thought-Full

Shape-Shifter

Response-Able

Genuinely Free

The Playful Designer

162 PART THREE: CREATING CHANGE—IN SYSTEMS AND IN OUR PHILOSOPHY

level balancing feedback loops that never let an upstart power-loop-driven entity control the world. The goal of keeping the market competitive has to trump the goal of each individual corporation to eliminate its competitors, just as in ecosystems, the goal of keeping populations in balance and evolving has to trump the goal of each population to reproduce without limit.

I said a while back that changing the players in the system is a low-level intervention, as long as the players fit into the same old system. The exception to that rule is at the top, where a single player can have the power to change the system's goal. I have watched in wonder as—only very occasionally—a new leader in an organization, from Dartmouth College to Nazi Germany, comes in, enunciates a new goal, and swings hundreds or thousands or millions of perfectly intelligent, rational people off in a new direction.

That's what Ronald Reagan did—and we watched it happen. Not long before he came to office, a president could say "Ask not what government can do for you, ask what you can do for the government," and no one even laughed. Reagan said over and over, the goal is not to get the people to help the government and not to get government to help the people, but to get government off our backs. One can argue, and I would, that larger system changes and the rise of corporate power over government let him get away with that. But the thoroughness with which the public discourse in the United States and even the world has been changed since Reagan is testimony to the high leverage of articulating, meaning, repeating, standing up for, insisting upon, new system goals.

2. Paradigms—The mind-set out of which the system—its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters—arises

Another of Jay Forrester's famous systems sayings goes: It doesn't matter how the tax law of a country is written. There is a shared idea in the minds of the society about what a "fair" distribution o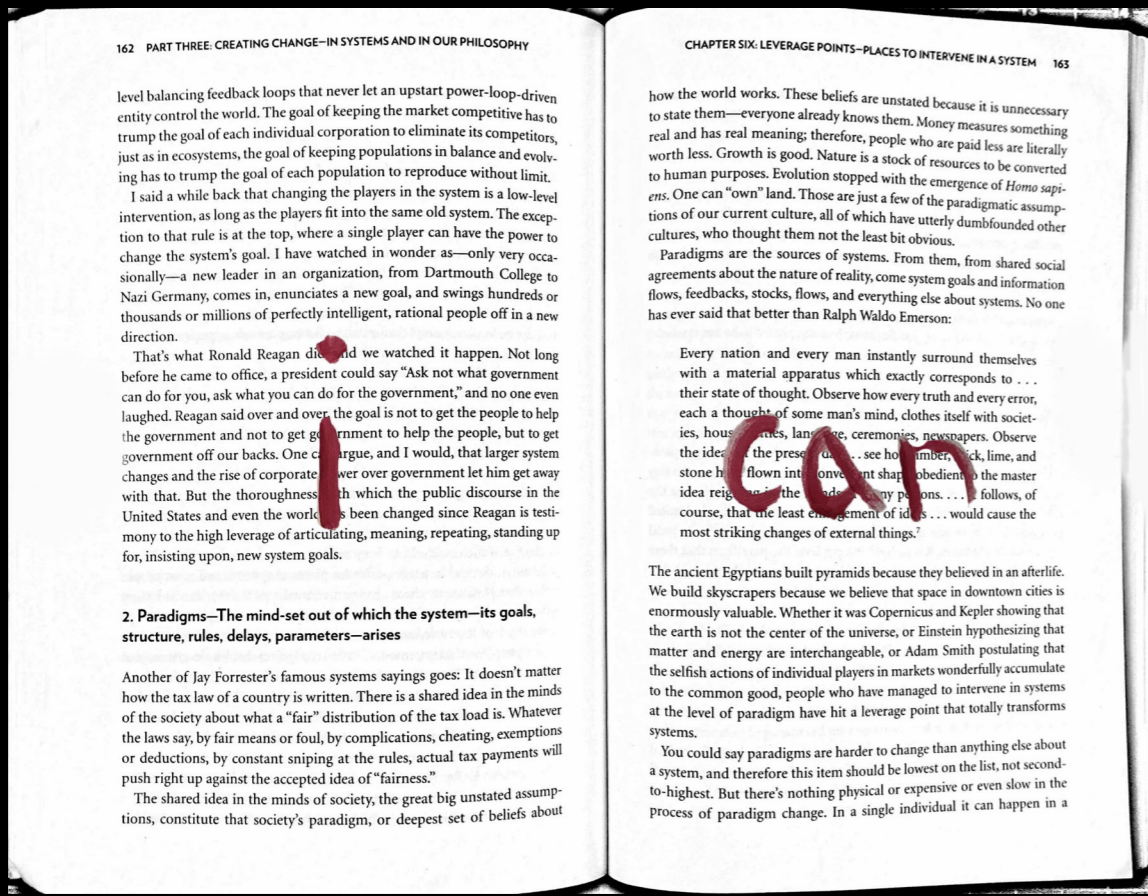f the tax load is. Whatever the laws say, by fair means or foul, by complications, cheating, exemptions or deductions, by constant sniping at the rules, actual tax payments will push right up against the accepted idea of "fairness."

The shared idea in the minds of society, the great big unstated assumptions, constitute that society's paradigm, or deepest set of beliefs about

CHAPTER SIX: LEVERAGE POINTS—PLACES TO INTERVENE IN A SYSTEM 163

how the world works. These beliefs are unstated because it is unnecessary to state them—everyone already knows them. Money measures something real and has real meaning; therefore, people who are paid less are literally worth less. Growth is good. Nature is a stock of resources to be converted to human purposes. Evolution stopped with the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. One can "own" land. Those are just a few of the paradigmatic assumptions of our current culture, all of which have utterly dumbfounded other cultures, who thought them not the least bit obvious.

Paradigms are the sources of systems. From them, from shared social agreements about the nature of reality, come system goals and information flows, feedbacks, stocks, flows, and everything else about systems. No one has ever said that better than Ralph Waldo Emerson:

Every nation and every man instantly surround themselves with a material apparatus which exactly corresponds to . . . their state of thought. Observe how every truth and every error, each a thought of some man's mind, clothes itself with societies, houses, cities, language, ceremonies, newspapers. Observe the ideas of the present . . . see how timber, brick, lime, and stone have flown into convenient shape, obedient to the master idea reigning in the minds of many persons. . . . It follows, of course, that the least enlargement of ideas . . . would cause the most striking changes of external things.[7]

The ancient Egyptians built pyramids because they believed in an afterlife. We build skyscrapers because we believe that space in downtown cities is enormously valuable. Whether it was Copernicus and Kepler showing that the earth is not the center of the universe, or Einstein hypothesizing that matter and energy are interchangeable, or Adam Smith postulating that the selfish actions of individual players in markets wonderfully accumulate to the common good, people who have managed to intervene in systems at the level of paradigm have hit a leverage point that totally transforms systems.

You could say paradigms are harder to change than anything else about a system, and therefore this item should be lowest on the list, not second-to-highest. But there's nothing physical or expensive or even slow in the process of paradigm change. In a single individual it can happen in a

There is an art
that begins with
finding the hinges
    discovering
        the loopholes
  refusing
      to guard
      the secrets
that uncovers
an abundance of
materials hidden from
Conventional eyes
and that points toward
a kind of mind
able to work with
that revealed
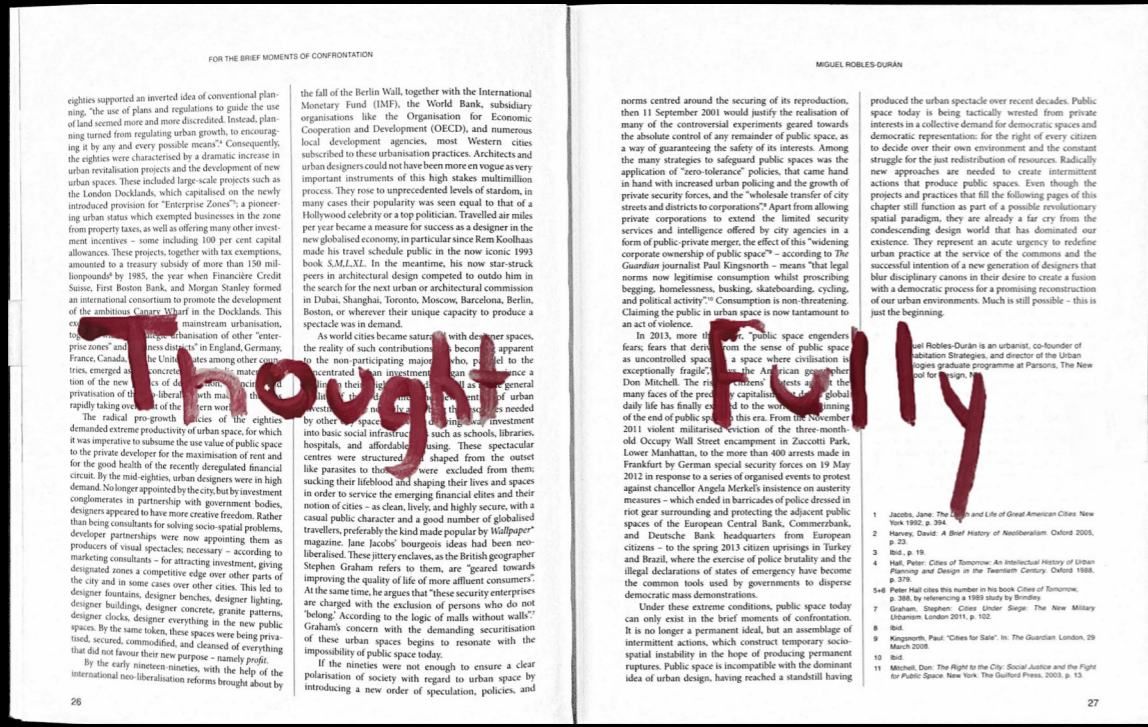complexity

The
Hinge
Mind

Hinge Mind
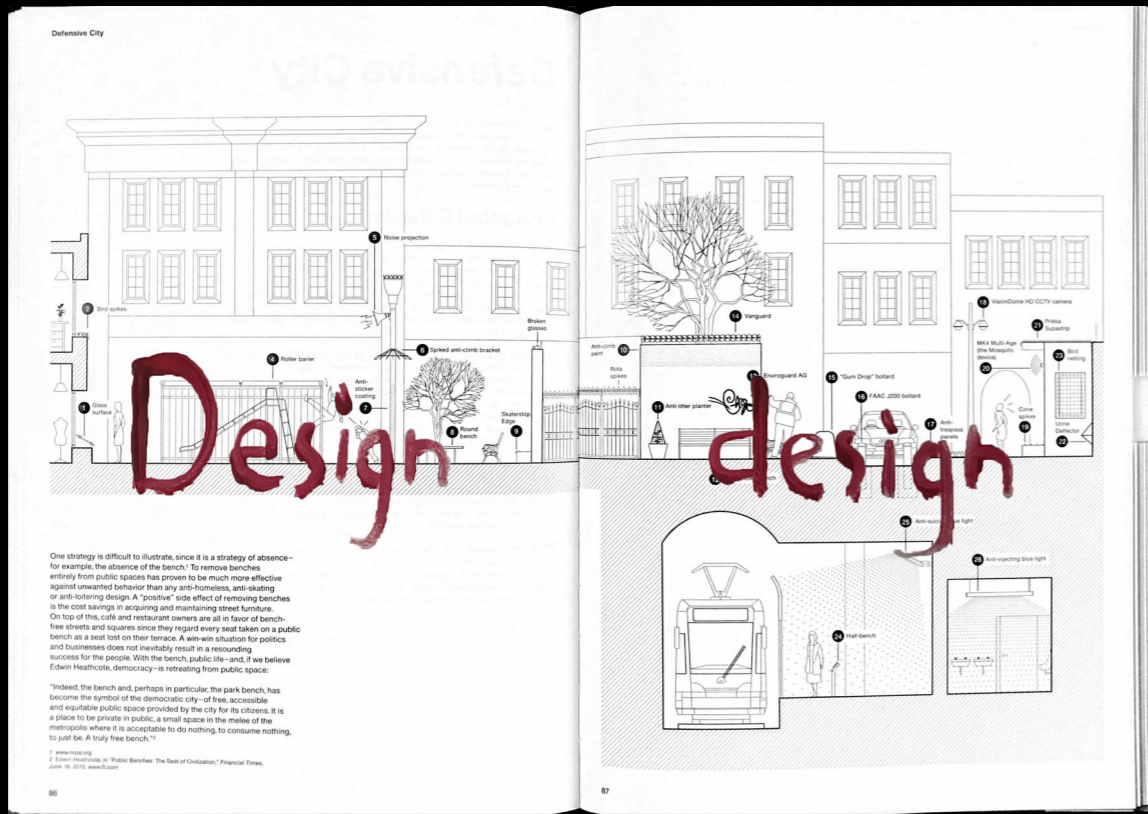
The playful designer
is a great shape-shifter.

it isn't so much that they shift the shape
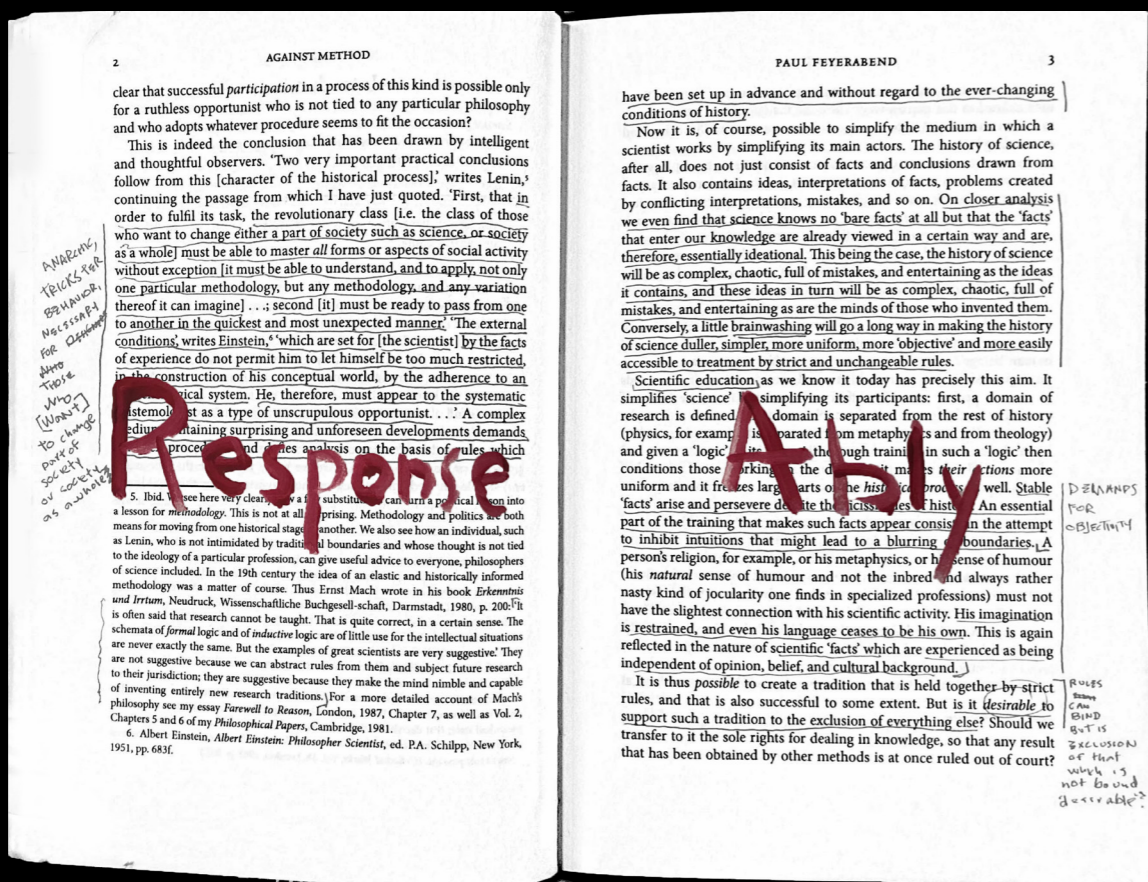of their own bodies.

But, that   given the materials of the world
they demonstrate the degree
to which the way we have shaped them
may be altered|Designed|[re]Designed.

Shape Shifter

A designer ought to be ready.
Ready to be betwixt-and-between

And   all the same   attempt

to discern
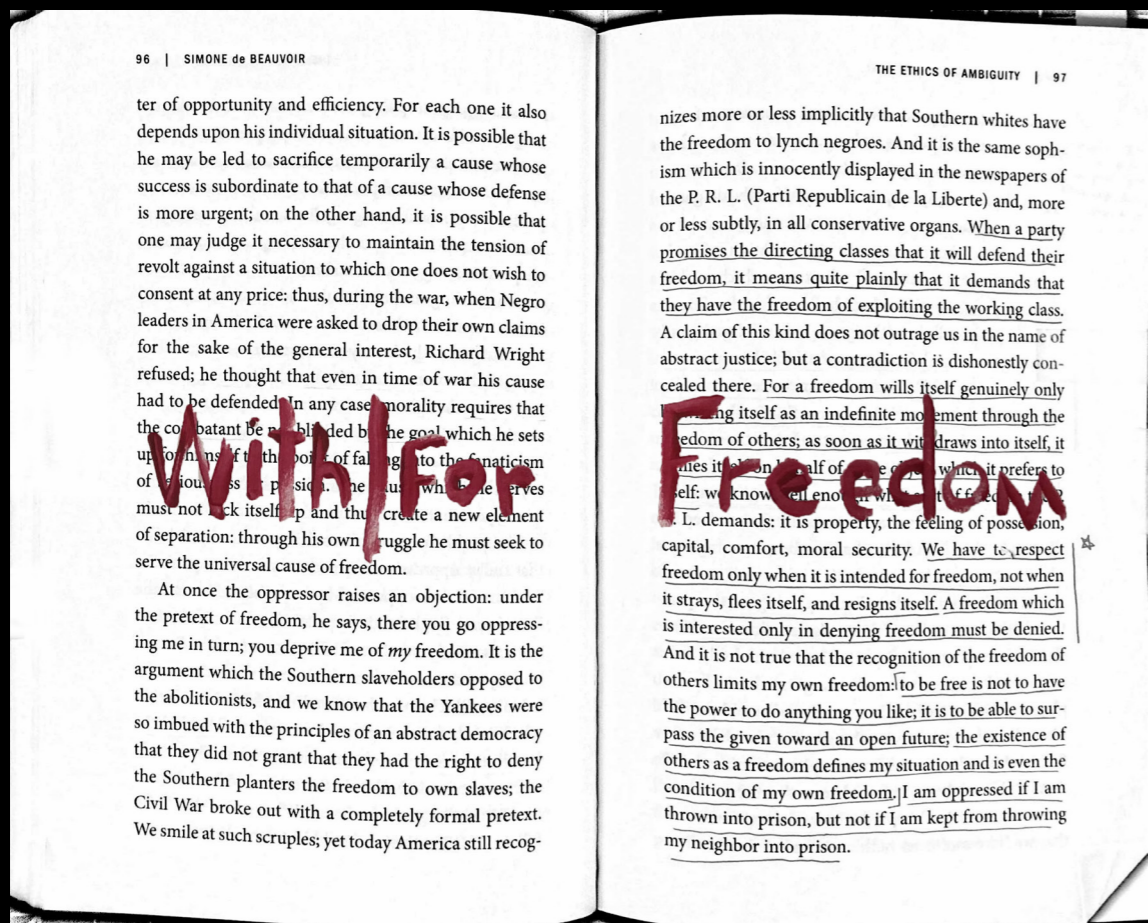the just and unjust
of our most ready made
constructs.

Thought-Full

i can
find
the ability to respond

to disturb the established categories
of truth and property and,
by so doing
open the road to
[the possibility of]
possible new worlds

Response-Able

my freedom is but a reflection of other's freedom to recognize my freedom as such. if i leave the door shut for the freedom of others, i do the same to my own. this is the crux of the pursuit of genuine freedom. once we recognize our own freedom, our genuine freedom, our freedom entangled with the freedom of all, we are free to play and play-with and be playful.

and the relevance of Design?
well, Designers Design doors.

Genuinely Free