

## Failed Design: What were they thinking?

**Date** : February 16, 2009

Graduate Student Symposium, Friday, April 24, 2009

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, New York, NY  
Design is a process, yet in our success-driven world, we tend to focus on the end result.

The goal of this symposium is to think about this distinction—process versus end result—by considering the significance of failed design and the insight it offers into societies and individuals. Pruitt Igo, Zeppelins, Ford Edsel, and Crystal Pepsi: Why do some designs succeed and others fail, and who decides? What is the distinction between bad and failed design? Does studying failure offer the prospect of a unique historical insight?

Our aim is to gather speakers who will explore these issues, from all disciplines and time periods.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- scale of failure—humiliation, disaster, catastrophe
- commercial versus functional failure
- reformist and utopian visions
- conceptual design
- emotional investment in design
- the function of taste: Why do some bad designs become popular?
- changing criteria of success over time
- being “ahead of your time”
- ergonomics
- the role of obsolescence
- intellectual property

Please send a one- to two-page abstract for a twenty-minute presentation, together with a CV, to [GradSymp@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:GradSymp@bgc.bard.edu) by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 27, 2009. Selected participants will be notified by Friday, March 6, 2009.