



What things know: exhibiting animism as artefact-based design research

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This paper develops a way of evaluating designed artifacts as research. It focuses deliberately on design, on the generation of new knowledge that can happen when making things for use. It works with an account of the making process proposed by the literary philosopher, Elaine Scarry, as clarified by the sociologist of technology, Bruno Latour. Scarry argues that there is an animism at the heart of making and in the background of all use of artefacts. To this extent, artefacts are judged, in everyday use as well as the professional design process, by how deep and wide and active their knowledge of human needs and desires is. This paper suggests that given that this animism is inherent to the process and outcomes of design, artefacts can also be judged by whether they promote new knowledge about human needs and desires, though such judgments can only be made on the basis of carefully staged use experiences of the designs.