Designing Culture: The Technological Imagination at Work

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The renowned cultural theorist and media designer Anne Balsamo maintains that technology and culture are inseparable; those who engage in technological innovation are designing the cultures of the future. *Designing Culture* is a call for taking culture seriously in the design and development of innovative technologies. Balsamo contends that the wellspring of technological innovation is the technological imagination, a quality of mind that enables people to think with technology, to transform what is known into what is possible. She describes the technological imagination at work in several multimedia collaborations in which she was involved as a designer or developer. One of these entailed the creation of an interactive documentary for the NGO Forum held in conjunction with the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. (That documentary is included as a DVD in *Designing Culture*.) Balsamo also recounts the development of the interactive museum exhibit *XFR: Experiments in the Future of Reading*, created by the group RED (Research in Experimental Documents) at Xerox PARC. She speculates on what it would mean to cultivate imaginations as ingenious in creating new democratic cultural possibilities as they are in creating new kinds of technologies and digital media. *Designing Culture* is a manifesto for transforming educational programs and developing learning strategies adequate to the task of inspiring culturally attuned technological imaginations.

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