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## **Reading Response #1**

In the past week I've tried to explain the concept of this class and this book to friends and family and have found that it's been difficult to convey. The person I'm explaining to always seems to come away with the wrong impression: oh, you're adding aesthetics to functional design, you're hiding layers of meaning in design, you're making it look cute. These takes aren't completely wrong, but they don't really grasp the point. I thought this passage captures it succinctly: "Something about it' appeals to our sense of beauty, of simplicity – but also reminds us that not everything worthwhile needs to serve a practical purpose (like the idea of play). The pencil bag is both purposeful and, at the same time, free from purpose" (Ch 1, Page 28). The concept of play I think is very powerful. Everyone knows play is important, everyone who's ever been a child understands without explanation. It's just because. It would then be tempting to label artful design as imbuing playfulness or gamifying something, but that too wouldn't be quite right. The Byxbee park pole field<sup>1</sup> I discussed in my chapter 1 etude demonstrates this, it combines aesthetics, function, history, while highlighting environmental degradation and the hope for renewal. No one would ever call it playful (though it is in a park); the mood there was rather solemn at dusk, wistful yet hopeful, but I felt it accurately embodied artful design. There is a graphic on page 47 that I thought was helpful in understanding, where the concepts of Pragmatics and Aesthetics flank the Chinese person 人 character, and our class discussion of 'Means to an End' vs 'End in Itself' further explored this synthesis. I've found this is a helpful way to think about it, a design synthesis by creating a web of connections between functional and aesthetic elements of a design. Another concept that I gravitated towards was Principle 1.17: "Design Should Understand Us" (Ch 1, Page 50). While developing designs, I've found that an overwhelming abundance of tools can lead us into an alluring pitfall: the desire to use as many fancy power tools and complicated software suites as possible. In this way it's easy to lose sight on the actual design destination as we are distracted by the journey, and we forget that the destination will invariably lead to a person. This is an epidemic in music production, where the newest plugin often finds itself on tracks where it may or may not belong. Kunwoo has pointed out a few times in class the importance of creative constraints and deadlines, and I think that's dead on. With some many ways and means for everything, its crucial set boundaries, both material and temporal, to keep the designer's vehicle from veering off too far into side quests.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Community-Services/Arts-Sciences/Public-Art-Program/Collection/The-Pole-Field-Chevrons-Wind-Wave> , <https://www.peterrichardsart.com/byxbee-park.html>