The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts
Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation
School of Design

# Fifty Years of Failures at DRS2016
## Contribution to a research project by Søren Rosenbak

Per Galle, 2016-04-04.

As part of a research project sponsored by the DRS (Design Research Society), Søren Rosenbak, currently a Ph.D. student at Umeå University, invited a number of respondents, including myself, to provide an answer (maximum 100 words) to the question '*In what way has Design Research failed in the last 50 years*', and to nominate someone else to do the same. This document contains my reply to his kind invitation 'to help open the constructive discussion concerning failure (and future success) at DRS2016 [a conference to be held by Design Research Society] by contributing to the project'.

**'Answering the question: In what way has Design Research failed in the last 50 years?'**

Design has become subject to serious academic inquiry, and today, many design schools offer research-based teaching by designers holding a Ph.D. This is a major achievement, and some self-indulgence in looking back seems justified. But we can't afford any smugness about the theoretical underpinnings of design. For what can we offer that merits comparison with, say, the deep understanding of anatomy and physiology, and the huge body of clinical theory that supports the work of medical doctors, for the benefit of their patients? How much design theory actually improves designing, for the benefit of our clients and society at large?

[100 words.]

**'Nominating someone (within or beyond design) who you would like to see answer the same question.'**

I would like to nominate Dr. Glenn Parsons, of the Philosophy Department, Ryerson University (http://www.ryerson.ca/philosophy/facultystaff/parsons-glen.html). As a professional philosopher, he has published on core issues of design (Parsons, 2016; Parsons & Carlson, 2008). His 2016 book (very readable in style, and highly commendable for designers and design students) directly addresses the nature of design and design knowledge.

**References:**

Parsons, G. (2016). *The Philosophy of Design*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Parsons, G., & Carlson, A. (2008). *Functional Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.