



# FIXPERTS

## Repair is Beautiful - Paulo Goldstein

Most broken things can be fixed, once you understand the problem. The problem might be simple, complicated or even complex, but some how it can be fixed.

The same way is true of solutions: these might be simple, complicated or complex - it all depends on what causes the problem and what is behind the it.



Things break. That is a fact. While this can be due to “wear and tear”, human flaw or even planned obsolescence, what if the problem is something not tangible, not made of a “material” thing? What if the problem is a feeling made of a combination of broken things?

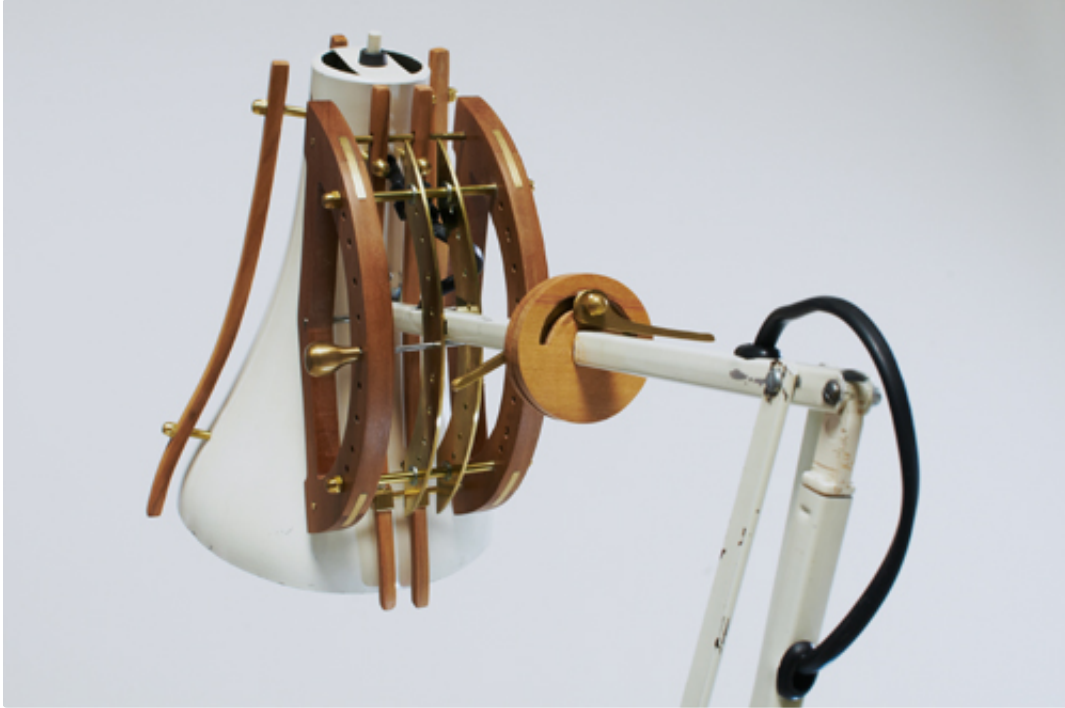


In the past two years of my life, I've been working on a project called “Repair is Beautiful”, which started during my [MA in Industrial Design at](http://fixperts-org.tumblr.com/post/52211974010/repair-is-beautiful)

Central Saint Martins. Before that, I used to work with stop-motion animation as a sculptor model-maker for films such as Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie*. Before that, I did illustration, BA Fine Arts in Brazil and so on... so making things and improvising is something that I've been doing ever since I was a child, repairing my broken GI Joe's.



In 2008 the financial crisis started in US. It affected everybody at different levels and intensity. I got unemployed for a whole year. This created a strong feeling of frustration and that became the original inspiration for my final MA project. Can I repair a broken feeling, such as frustration?



So I started to reverse engineering my problem, which at first looked very simple, but simplicity and complexity often mask each other.



The causes of my frustration were an unintended consequence of a collection of solutions intended to solve a problem inside an extremely complex system ( in this case the financial system). I was frustrated because I was powerless when faced with such an immense problem; I had no control over the results of it and no effective solution to deal with the new situation. To try to understand what was broken, I started to research systems and I began to realise that similar problems that create a domino effect inside the financial structure, could also be found in a coffee machine at the university and other everyday things, because of the way we organise our social, economic, transport and other systems around us.





A complex system is made of many parts (e.g. people, institutions, financial system, a combination of all, etc...) that each somehow interact and affect each other. Once something goes wrong inside a complex system, it is really difficult to locate the problem. Then, when or if it is found, sometimes it isn't possible to remove the broken part because the whole system might collapse, so the solution is to work around the problem, by creating new

connections and building new bridges between the parts, keeping this fragile complex system in balance.



During my research on my MA I came across, a few authors such as [E.F.](#)

[Schumacher](#), [David Pye](#), [Richard Sennett](#) among others, who influenced my response towards my problem. Schumacher says that growth and efficiency are the main concerns of our economic system, and technology is the major tool to achieve these goals. Instead, Schumacher proposed taking technology back to real needs and ‘actual size of man. Man is small, and, therefore, small is beautiful’. (*Small is Beautiful: Impressions of Fritz Schumacher, 1978, 9 minutes*).



The full title of my project is: “Repair is Beautiful – Homo Faber and the broken things”. The term *homo faber* means “man-the-maker” and in my project, the term stands for values of craftsmanship, empowerment of the individual and resourcefulness. This *homo faber* persona, with their hands-on approach and use of human ingenuity and creativity, tries to control this uncontrollable and complex scenario, of financial crisis. This leads to neurotic behaviour seen in the design of over repaired objects that reflect their environment. Repair and craftsmanship play a crucial role in balancing idealism with practicality by showing an alternative that is not better, just different.





Apart from the conceptual aspects mentioned before, what led the motivation to create from these pieces was a desire for the celebration of repair, the empowerment of craftsmanship and the attempt to get the feeling of control back in my own hands. I was inspired by Schumacher's idea of scaling things down, by [Bruno Latour's](#) discussions of the power negotiation between man and technology and Pye's view of the nature of workmanship, and combined their views with my own frustration of being

completely powerless when faced by the small scale consequences of financial crisis.



In a very practical sense, I developed a repair methodology based on scaling down the complex broken system, projecting it into broken objects that I can put my hands on and repair by applying unintended consequences in the repair process. By doing so I found a way to deal with my frustration, as repairing broken objects using elements of this broken system has created intriguing new objects that talk about the absurdity of it

all. I can't repair the whole system or social structure and I can't affect it in the same scale that they affect me, but I can make pieces that reflect the environment that created them and question our society as a whole.



Latour, B. (1992). *Where are the missing masses, sociology of a few mundane artefacts*. [Internet] Available from: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/258>. [Accessed 15 April 2012].

Latour, B. (2008). *A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (With Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)* [Internet] Available from: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/69>. [Accessed 5 May 2012].

Pye, D. (1968). *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*. London: The Herbert Press

Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is Beautiful – Economics as if people mattered*. 2010 ed. Harper Perennial

*Small Is Beautiful: Impressions of Fritz Schumacher* (1978) Directed by Donald Brittain, Barrie Howells and Douglas Kiefer. Canada: NFB .

[Internet] Available from: [http://www.nfb.ca/film/small\\_is\\_beautiful](http://www.nfb.ca/film/small_is_beautiful).  
[Accessed 5May 2012].

*Paulo Goldstein* is a Brazilian - Italian designer/maker/artist based in London who always had a passion for “making things”. For more info [www.paulogoldstein.com](http://www.paulogoldstein.com)



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## Notes

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