

# Introduction 1993

## Statement of Editorial Policy: To Begin Again

*Design Issues* was founded in 1983 by a small group of designers, educators, and scholars who believed that a forum was urgently needed for serious discussion of the role of design in the contemporary world. This discussion, they reasoned, would have to include *historical perspectives* on where design has been, *critical discussions* of where design is at present, and *theoretical discussions* that may help to reveal where design will be headed in the future. All three would be needed because any one would be insufficient to convey the complexity of design if it existed in isolation from the others. The mixture of history, criticism, and theory became a signature of *Design Issues*, along with a commitment to pluralism—a belief that the understanding of design is best advanced through the interplay of contrasting perspectives and approaches represented among those who practice design as well as those who study it.

This signature will remain essentially unchanged in the relocation of *Design Issues* from the University of Illinois at Chicago to Carnegie Mellon University. But there will be other changes suited to new directions in design practice and design studies. For example, *Design Issues* will now be published three times each year to better serve the growing diversity of interests among designers and those who study design. In addition, we will invite more articles by practicing designers, because the issues of practice today are an important window into the evolving nature of design that must be addressed more thoroughly.

To understand further changes coming in the journal, consider a description of the kind of writer and reader we hope will participate in *Design Issues*. We will seek writers who are curious and intrigued by design and view their work as a responsible exploration of the subject. They will be individuals who value not only the concrete experience of design as both a mundane and profoundly significant feature of human culture, but who also value the challenge of expressing the assumptions that lie behind the work of designers, the objects created by designers, and the efforts of those who study design. In short, they will be men and women who pose exciting and challenging questions about design and seek reasonable answers, drawing on whatever evidence, disciplinary knowledge, or inspiration they regard as appropriate.

In turn, we will invite these writers to imagine their readers as people who are passionately interested in design and want to read clear, reasonable discussions of the subject that may shed new

and unexpected light on one of the most perplexing and influential features of the contemporary world. These readers may be professional designers, design educators, scholars of design, or experts in some other discipline related to design. They may be museum curators, students, or general readers. Their original interest may be graphic and communication design, industrial and product design, engineering design, or any of the new areas in which design has been systematically applied in recent years, such as exhibition design, human-machine interaction, retail and other interior environmental design, robotics, virtual spaces, human-computer interfaces, software, or interactive media. But most of all, they will be readers who seek an alternative to the short, thin, and sometimes self-promoting articles that have become too common in many commercial design publications in the United States and abroad. Clearly, we are satisfied that *Design Issues* is not intended for everyone. Our readers are those who seek relevant connections to their own work in any discussion of design and who do not mind wrestling with unfamiliar subjects or ideas.

As editors, our primary test in selecting manuscripts is simply this: "Why should anyone interested in design read this article?" The answer, for us, must be that it contributes to the understanding of the conception and planning of the human-made environment of graphic images and symbols, industrial products, services and activities, or systems shaped by designers to support the activities of men and women in all walks of life. The understanding may be historical, critical, or theoretic. It may be derived from the experience of designing or the fruit of scholarly research. It may focus on the classic expressions of graphic or industrial design or on one of the many new areas of design application and technology. It may probe issues of design education or the display of design in museums. It may address problems of design policy and management in corporations (what is the impact of TQM and the Learning Organization on design today?) or the difficulties of integrating marketing, engineering, and design in product development. It may seek to clarify the subtle problems of information design and the new blending of words and images found in many areas of design. It may examine the career of products in everyday life in the project that our colleague Tony Fry describes as "writing culture." It may even address aspects of architectural design or urban planning—provided that ideas about design emerge in a form that is potentially useful to all designers and those who seek to understand design.

In short, the identity of *Design Issues* does not lie in the limits of one branch of designing—we are open to exploration of all branches. Nor does it lie in an area of professional or academic specialization illustrated by any one of our contributors—we encourage writers from any discipline or professional background who want to explore a facet of design. Nor does it lie in a signature style of writing and reasoning that excludes contributions from indi-

viduals of different backgrounds—we seek many voices. Instead, the unity of the journal lies in the judgment of the editors that these articles contribute to the advance of design in practice or in study.

Who shall judge our judgment? Time, and the reader. Our readers will be an important source of guidance. Please tell us when you disagree with something you have read—and, at the same time, please tell us where you think the journal *should* be headed if it is to successfully pursue the changing character of design in the contemporary world. When content warrants and space permits, we will publish letters and responses from time to time in a special section of the journal. However, guidance will also be the responsibility of the new Editorial Board and the new Advisory Board of the journal, with distinguished individuals who represent distinction and excellence along the wider path that *Design Issues* seeks to explore.

As at the founding of *Design Issues*, we continue to believe that a forum is urgently needed for serious discussion of the role of design in the contemporary world, and we want this journal to be the best forum available today for thoughtful reflection.

Finally, for inspiration we are reminded of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's remarks on the resilience of character displayed by Moholy at the surprise closing of the New Bauhaus a year after its initial opening in Chicago. "For Moholy it was the signal for a new beginning of which he had had so many in his life. With Plato he believed that a new beginning is like a God, saving all things." So, too, with *Design Issues*. Let us begin again.

Richard Buchanan  
Dennis Doordan  
Victor Margolin

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