Introduction

Design is constantly changing; hence, attempts to construct design theories are challenging. Nonetheless, there is a long tradition of reflection on the act of designing that considers the nature of design knowledge and how it is applied. Among the first to write about this subject were Nigel Cross and Donald Schön, both of whose work has continued to be a touchstone for further reflection. In 1992, Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne introduced in this journal the idea of design as a hermeneutic practice, characterizing it as an open and interpretive activity. Now twenty years later, Marcus Jahnke responds to Coyne and Snodgrass' earlier article by addressing the hermeneutic theory of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, which he argues will strengthen the hermeneutic perspective on design practice by shifting the emphasis from interpreting what already exists to what he calls "the poetic practice of creating new meaning." Schön's seminal book *The Reflective Practitioner* remains a touchstone for Jahnke, and he seeks to amplify Schön's studies of designing by introducing Ricoeur's notion of the hermeneutic spiral, which he believes will help researchers to understand how designers process the many complex elements that make up an open design project.

Claudia Mareis' article is also concerned with design philosophy, especially the concept of tacit knowledge that was introduced by Michael Polanyi, the Hungarian-British scientist, economist, and philosopher. Besides Polanyi, Donald Schön is a point of reference as well as is Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of *habitus*. Mareis acknowledges the inclusion of tacit knowledge in many theories of designing but argues that it is not a natural phenomenon; rather, it arises from a sociocultural context and new methods of design research are required to understand it.

Whereas Jahnke and Mareis consider design from the point of view of theory, Anthony Crabbe is concerned with how design operates in a specific milieu, the developing world. Through three case studies, he shows that design situations in developing countries are multifaceted and argues that successful interventions require the careful consideration of many factors that are not necessarily obvious. Tension may arise between the well-meaning intentions of aid agencies and the disadvantaged people in whose communities they seek to be effective. Crabbe highlights three different kinds of design projects and shows how they relate to the principles of the Natural Step, a strategy for successful aid assistance.

Crabbe addresses the issue of how tensions can arise between the local and the global around specific projects, while Christine Guth considers the globalization through the circulation of a singular image, the print called "Under the Wave of Kanagawa" by the Japanese *ukiyo-e* printmaker, Hokusai. Guth demonstrates how the wave image takes on multiple meanings as it moves around the world. Its compelling visual qualities, she states, have been readily adapted to different contexts from museums to companies that make skateboards and sneakers. The point about globalization that both Crabbe and Guth address in complimentary ways is that there may be varied responses to a situation or a commodity. In their own ways, both authors contribute to the ongoing discussion of how different groups of people produce meaning in a globalized world.

Elizabeth Guffy's article on Jim Crow signs in the segregated South introduces a previously hidden yet highly significant topic to design history—the systems of public signs that marked the segregated spaces, whether bus waiting rooms, drinking fountains, or toilets, for whites and blacks. Today we think of public signage as universal and assume that everyone has the same rights to make use of public space; but while the American South remained segregated for years after the Emancipation Proclamation, signs designating segregated public spaces denoted entirely separate wayfinding strategies whose misunderstanding might have dire consequences.

Design history is addressed in different ways by several other authors in this issue. Stéphane Laurent, a French design historian, laments the slow development of awareness in France of design as a subject of public discourse. He cites as one cause, the long-standing distinction between major and minor arts, concluding that design in France still has to overcome the historic stigma of belonging to the latter category.

In her review of the most recent Design History Society conference in Barcelona, where the theme was "Design Activism and Social Change," Grace Lees-Maffei reflects on the difference between design activism and design reform. She reviews a number of the papers that were presented at the conference as well as Henk Oosterling's keynote speech and seminal texts by Alastair Fuad-Luke and Tony Fry in order to consider the key question of how activism and reform differ. In her conclusion, she emphasizes the way that design has changed, even in the past twenty years, noting that today many practitioners as well as design historians and theorists feel compelled to embrace design activism as a way to combat the overwhelming problems that we all face.

Jonathan Mekinda's review of Katerina Ruedi Ray's *Bauhaus Dream-House* continues the engagement with history by showing how the author has adopted a revisionist approach to Bauhaus studies by focusing on the school as an institution rather than on the

things that were made there. By coincidence, Bertrand Goldberg, whose exhibition Maura Lucking reviews here, was one of the few American students to study at the Bauhaus.

Returning to the opening theme of this editorial, the idea that design is constantly changing, Carl DiSalvo reviews an edited volume, *Digital Blur: Creative Practices at the Boundaries of Architecture, Design and Art* that brings together papers from a symposium on interdisciplinarity that was held in Edinburgh. Presentations by practitioners are combined with several essays that both document disciplinary practice and argue that disciplinarity should end. Rebecca Dalvesco points to new directions in design in her review of the Hyperlinks exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, in which the exploration of transdisciplinary design methodologies was a central theme.

What the range of articles and reviews in this issue of the journal shows is that design reflection moves simultaneously in various directions, seeking on the one hand to nail down principles that might be widely relevant and on the other to account for the constantly changing configurations of activity that mirror a world that itself is in a constant state of flux.

Bruce Brown
Richard Buchanan
Dennis Doordan
Victor Margolin