

# Introduction

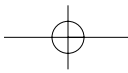
Each issue of the journal tells a quiet story about the development of design thinking in our time. Individual articles stand on their own and explore their own issues and themes, but often there are important themes connecting the articles. Discovering these themes is one of the pleasures of editing, and we often like to share our discoveries with readers so that they, too, may be encouraged to explore in this way, tracing our direction of thinking or exploring other connections. This is one of the strategies that we hope makes *Design Issues* valuable for readers with specific interests and at all levels of experience. We also hope it makes *Design Issues* a valuable tool in the studio or classroom, where students may be encouraged to discover not only the important particulars of our field but also the emerging coherence of its discourse.

Richard Buchanan's "Design Research and the New Learning" begins this issue by addressing one of the central problems of design today: the nature and value of design research and design knowledge. Buchanan distinguishes between "old learning" and "new learning," and he argues that design has become the new learning of our time. As this argument unfolds, it also offers four themes that serve to connect the later articles in this volume: research, historical context, the nature and use of definitions in design thinking, and the changing nature of products.

Raimonda Riccini's "Innovation as a Field of Historical Knowledge for Industrial Design" discusses the relationship between design research and historical research. Riccini argues that historical research has played—and continues to play—a critical role in establishing the definition and boundaries of industrial design as well as contributing significantly to design theory. Innovation is a key subject in this discussion, and Riccini argues that the particularity of circumstances and "historical vicissitudes" provide a catalyst to both practice and theory. Readers will also want to consider what kind of history Riccini proposes and contrast this with other kinds of history that are illustrated in this and former issues of the journal.

Tomás Maldonado's "Taking Eyeglasses Seriously" does, indeed, take eyeglasses seriously. He uses this product type to explore the relationship between technology and society, arguing that technology is not something outside of society—and, hence, something "autonomous" and a "cause" of social change—but something inside society that both "pushes" and "pulls" social change. The birth and development of eyeglasses reveals how important historical circumstances are in identifying the moments





when technology pushes society and, in turn, is pulled by society. This essay reminds us how important the history and philosophy of technology is for the field of design—and, like Riccini’s article, how important the circumstances and contingencies of history are for an understanding of design.

Nigel Cross’s “Can Machines Design?” presents a personal history of his research into the relationship between humans and computers and his efforts to understand the human ability to design. The title of his essay turns the common question “can a machine think” in a new direction, and the argument ultimately leads back to what we have learned and stand to learn from machines about how people design. One of the most interesting features of this article is the discussion of computer programs to identify “bad” design in the area of graphic design.

Wendy Siuyi Wong’s “Detachment and Unification: A Chinese Graphic Design History in Greater China Since 1979” is more than a chronicle of the period. Wong identifies many of the social and organizational influences on the development of graphic design in this complex part of the world. She also points the reader toward the deep issue of finding identity amid ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. This is a useful survey for anyone interested in the problems of design in “Greater China.” It once again demonstrates the importance of history for understanding design practice and theory.

The final selection in this issue of the journal is a review article by Carma Gorman on recent feminist scholarship on design and designers. Gorman focuses on Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000, an exhibition curated by Pat Kirkham, the catalogue of the exhibition, and a special issue growing out of the exhibition that was published in the journal *Studies in the Decorative Arts*. She also discusses Joan Rothchild’s *Design and Feminism*. Gorman challenges recent work on women and design on the basis of the definitions of “design” and “designer” that inform the work.

Richard Buchanan

Dennis Doordan

Victor Margolin

*The editors want to congratulate Kevin Barnhurst, whose article “Civic Picturing versus Realistic Photojournalism: The Regime of Illustrated News, 1856–1901,” received the Covert Award, given each year for the best article in the history of the media. The letter to Kevin included this comment: “We had a number of outstanding entries in this year’s competition, and the task of judging was a difficult one. The ground-breaking nature of your scholarship led to our selection of your piece.” This article was published in Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 2000) of Design Issues.*

