

Introduction

The publication of *Design Issues* 20:4, which completes our twentieth anniversary year, invites a look back on how we have marked our anniversary's celebration. We began the celebration with an issue that indexed all the article, documents, and book reviews that appeared in the journal during the twenty previous years. This amounted to over five-hundred items from more than twenty-five countries. Perusing that list, one sees evidence of a community that embraces many different researchers who work in the areas of design, history, theory, and criticism.

To recognize design's global presence, we dedicated the second anniversary issue to design in South Africa, where a vital group of designers, historians, and theorists is not only producing stimulating design but also thoughtful reflection on it. Our third issue connected us across disciplines to the Science, Technology, and Society movement, which has now recognized design as central to its thinking about technology and its social effects.

Each of the articles in this fourth anniversary issue represents in its own way evidence of how design research has developed since *Design Issues* began publication in 1984. They indicate as well how the level of discussion and debate in the emerging field of design studies has become more richly textured. In his article on Darwinian design, John Langrish shows us how we might use concepts from biology to understand design as a developmental process. He challenges sociologist Herbert Spencer's notion of progressive evolution, which, he argues, has become a dominant paradigm for discussions of evolution and design. Instead, he proposes a study of "memetics," which derives from Richard Dawkins's concept of self-replicating ideas. Langrish claims that "memetics" follows Darwin's evolutionary thoughts more closely than Spencer's do and he argues for a Darwinian non-progressive theory of change. Unlike earlier design thinkers who sought replicate scientific theory in the realm of design, Langrish does not engage science as a model but instead as a metaphor that can elucidate the process of design's development without imposing inappropriate characteristics on it.

Tom Fisher shows us how an understanding of plastic as a material can be enriched by a use of multidisciplinary research methods from sociology, history, anthropology, and psychology. He seeks to understand plastic as a material that evokes particular feelings in the consumer, while recognizing that these feelings are not universal. Instead, they depend on the consumer's personal orientation to plastic as physical material and immaterial sign. Among the consumers

he interviews are fetishists who interpret their bodily contact with plastic in a highly erotic manner.

Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand draws on feminist scholarship to reinterpret the social meaning that has historically been attributed to interior design as a profession. She begins her article with an account of how interior design has been historically understood as the weak feminine binary in relation to the stronger masculine practice of architecture. Then she draws on theories propounded by Donna Haraway, Carol Gilligan, Karen Franck and others to propose a new empowered reading of interior design that is based on feminine strength.

Suga Yasuko, in her article on the "Chamber of Horrors" at London's Museum of Ornamental Art in the 1850s, addresses a subject that was assiduously avoided by early design historians, the "ugly" object. Suga describes the moral impetus for the Chamber of Horrors, noting that it was a way to teach the public about good taste by showing them bad examples to avoid. Suga characterizes this bad taste according to ideas of the time and shifts the moralizing about it to theorists of the period such as Henry Cole rather than incorporate that moralizing in her own interpretation of history.

Anthony Crabb presents several case studies carried out by the Design Contract Research Unit at Britain's Nottingham Trent University in order to explore the different ways that pragmatic research can contribute to a pool of "design knowledge." Crabb's emphasis on applied investigation forms part of a debate that is particularly strong in Great Britain on the nature of design practice as a form of research. Crabb argues that even research for commercial clients allows for the formulation of interesting research questions.

Sulfikar Amir, in his article on design policy in the Third World, shifts the debate on design for development away from the early ideas of Victor Papanek about low-tech design towards questions of how design can become part of a national industrial policy. Although studies on design policy have been carried out in industrialized countries for a long time, little work on this topic has been done in the developing world. Amir sees design policy as a way to encourage local corporations to make better and more intensive use of design in the processes of product development and innovation. He is particularly interested in a "human-centered design policy," which can direct design activity towards goals of well being while also addressing the conditions of the market.

Chris Rust returns us to the topic of design knowledge by exploring the question of designers' tacit knowledge and how it can be used constructively in the design process. He is particularly interested in strategies of teamwork and looks at how tacit knowledge can complement the contributions of other members of a design team such as those who produce quantitative data. Like Anthony Crabb, Rust is interested in the different kinds of activity that might be considered within an expanded definition of design research.

Our book review section in this issue has an unusual feature. Three different reviewers have considered books by critic Steven Heller on issues of design history and practice. Not only do the reviews provide a detailed depiction of Heller's thought as it is evident within several volumes but they also show how diverse critical responses to an author's work can be.

In sum, the conclusion of our anniversary year leaves us with a sense that design studies is in a healthy state. In the sense that John Langrish reads Darwin's theories, its evolution is fueled by the continued production of new ideas that are expanding the scope of its investigations and deepening its methods of inquiry.

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