Introduction

The decade of the 1990s was a watershed for design as a field of practice and inquiry. The search for better understanding of design through history, criticism, and theory expanded in many venues around the world. Research and serious writing achieved a respected place in the design community, and the connection between design and other fields of learning received new, productive attention. We are now beginning to see the fruits of development through a growing body of literature on diverse facets of design. However, it is important to remember that one of the key sources of vitality in design studies is design practice—the creation of communications, artifacts, interactions, and environments that serve human beings in the accomplishment of their diverse goals in life. The effective and responsible practice of design is where our studies of history, criticism, and theory find a fundamental grounding.

This issue of the journal begins with a sophisticated critical discussion of "deconstructive design" and the work of Scott Makela. Kirsten Strom explores the distinction between "absorptive" and "theatrical" expression offered by art historian and critic Michael Fried. Though Fried regards the absorbed contemplation of the visual as a superior form of experience—prizing the fine arts and dismissing the engagement of design—Strom explains both the origin and goals of graphic design as a medium aspiring to actively court the viewer's attention in order to compete and communicate in a world of visual distraction. She discusses the role of text and image in graphic design and, to the point of her article, the special exploration of type and image in the work of Scott Makela. Without reducing an explanation of his distinctive style to his condition of dyslexia, she shows how the altered perception of the dyslectic affords an opportunity to deconstruct the supposed universals of detached contemplation and objectivity that Fried asserts.

The next articles discuss the history of design education in Turkey and Japan. Design education is an important theme in Design Issues—see the special issue "Educating the Designer" (7:1, autumn 1990) as well as other individual articles—and perhaps now is a good time to explain why. First, the editors believe—along with a growing number of others—that an understanding of design education is essential if one is to understand design itself in human culture. There is an important dialectic between design education and professional design practice. For good or bad, what is taught in the schools emerges as the dominant thread of professional design practice, helping to explain both the strengths and weaknesses of

the field. Recessive and emergent practices take shape around the dominant vision of design education, and this dialectic deserves ongoing exploration. Second, the editors also believe that design education is one of the most important expressions of different national agendas for design and social life. This is illustrated in the two articles presented in this issue of the journal. Alpay Er, Fatma Korkut and Özlem Er discuss the development of industrial design education in Turkey from the 1950s to the 1970s, describing the involvement of the United States. Yoshinori Amagai discusses the beginnings of design education in modern Japan, starting in 1876 with the establishment of the Art School of the Ministry of Public Works.

Following is an article by, Elzbeita Kazmierczak which explores communication design and, specifically, the concept of diagrammatic reasoning and modeling in design. She argues that design is concerned with making meaning, and that a focus on received meaning shifts the focus of design from a preoccupation with objects to a focus on cognitive processes within the receiver. In essence, she argues, design shifts from a static notion of content to a dynamic process of inducing and guiding the cognitive processes of the viewer. From this follows a rewarding discussion of information, graphic diagrams, semiotics, and related themes.

If Kazmierczak addresses theoretical issues in a recognized area of design inquiry, Sherry Blankenship's article on the cultural differences between Arabic calligraphy and Latin typography begins to open up a new area for discussion. This brief article serves to bring new materials to the attention of the design community. We hope that it will lead to further exploration of the development of design in Arabic countries of the Middle East, where design plays an interesting—and increasingly important—role in commerce and social life.

The next article is a healthy reminder that designers—and design educators—sometimes turn serious design issues into slogans, and in the process lose the advantage of new ideas. Michael Siu discusses the "user-oriented" approach to design, pointing out that user needs are often not seriously researched and addressed. He argues for a different view of the designer's role, emphasizing ideas of user-participation in the design process. In his words,

> *The main concern of designers should be what actually happens when someone uses their designs, for that is the ultimate measure of every design's worth.*
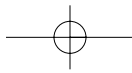
We conclude this issue of the journal with a remembrance of designer and design historian Philip B. Meggs, whose recent death is another loss for the design community. We share Roger Remington's warm regard for a friend and colleague who valued teaching and research, and who respected design as a field of inquiry and practice.

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