



# Introduction

Design, recognized as a professional practice, an economic force, and a potent form of cultural expression, is a complex phenomenon. To cultivate an appreciation of the rich human complexity of design—to see the thing whole—is one of the goals of *Design Issues*. Paradoxically, one of the primary strategies for achieving this involves pulling design’s “wholeness” apart and carefully examining its different aspects and manifestations article by article, issue by issue. The editors are convinced that through this approach of articulating the parts we will come to a renewed appreciation of the whole. Rather than fixing upon a single vision of design and feeding our readers a steady diet of the same thing, *Design Issues* challenges readers to explore along with the journal’s editors the intricate relationships between ideas and experiences that inform each issue.

Two articles in this issue examine key books in twentieth century design literature. In “A Natural History of a Disembodied Eye: The Structure of Gyorgy Kepes’s *Language of Vision*” Michael Golec takes a fresh look at what he reminds us was one of the most important books of its era (originally published in 1944) to deal with the relationship between sense perception and modern art and design. Golec draws our attention to the problematic aspects of Kepes’s quest for “a generative and universal structure of language.” A similar strategy involving the close reading of a seminal text shapes Vincent Michael’s article “Reyner Banham: Signs and Designs in the Time Without Style.” In his analysis of Banham’s 1960 book *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Michael argues that Banham’s revisionist account of the Modern Movement sought to reanimate rather than reject the ideas of early modernist designers. Color and material—constituent elements of design—serve as the point of departure for two other essays included here. In “Color and Consumption” Stephen Eskilson suggests that the story of color has been inadequately treated in most histories of modern design. To appreciate what one of his sources labeled the “chromatic revolution” of the early twentieth century, Eskilson argues we need to see this revolution in terms of the interaction among various discrete areas of design activity and knowledge such as theater design, fine arts, and retail marketing. Dennis Doordan uses his book review of Nancy Moore Bess’s *Bamboo in Japan* to suggest some of the issues designers need to consider in any discussion of materials and their impact on design form. In “Product Development and Changing Cultural Landscapes—Is Our Future in Snowboarding?”



Tanja Kotro and Mika Pantzar employ the concept of cultural landscapes to explore the changing role of designers in today's constantly evolving marketplace. The authors are interested in situations in which continuous product renewal often means the original appeal behind products changes. Consumers, they argue, increasingly act as co-producers rather than passive consumers of products and designers, therefore, must recognize their own evolving role in the product development cycle as interpreters of cultural landscapes as well as technically adept inventors. Language, rather than landscape, serves as Fiona Doloughan's subject. In "The Language of Reflective Practice in Art and Design" she suggests that the kind of language needed to articulate the complex and multi-layered way of thinking characteristics of design will itself be "multi-layered and metaphorical ...rather than transparent and one-dimensional."

Finally, since its inception, *Design Issues* has served as a vehicle for conveying contemporary programs, manifestos and critical documents to the design community. This issue includes The ICOGRADA Design Education Manifesto presented as the ICOGRADA Congress in Seoul in October, 2000. The text of the manifesto is supplemented by Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl's and San-Soo Ahn's introduction that provides a fascinating commentary on manifestos in general and the drafting of this particular document.

Richard Buchanan  
Dennis Doordan  
Victor Margolin

#### **Gyorgy Kepes 1906–2001**

Gyorgy Kepes was an important figure for designers. He taught an innovative course in visual communication at the New Bauhaus in Chicago and wrote a book, *Language of Vision*, which helped move graphic design in America towards a more conceptual and theoretical practice. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Kepes was a pioneer in bringing together artists and scientists to seek common ground and the the series of books he edited, *Vision + Value*, included writings by some of the leading thinkers in the arts, science, and the humanities. He will be missed.