

# Introduction

As the twenty-first century continues to unfold so our relationships with the designed world become ever more crucial in determining how we shape and experience life. Alongside environmental change must be placed a second potential crisis—poverty of imagination. Now having the technologies to realize most anything we wish to do, the question is no longer “how can this be made” but “what do we want to do.” And this challenge requires the kinds of creative imagination so intrinsic to design.

In this spirit Katerina Romanenko reminds us of a time in the early twentieth century when the driving mission of socialist propaganda was so intense that it had to invent ways of overcoming the technological constraints of that time in order to envision a new society. The Soviet State’s assertion that “masses of workers, think much more in terms of images than in abstract formulas” challenged designers to subjugate the rudimentary printing technologies through the invention of photomontage techniques. Catherine de Smet, in giving us an admirably detailed account of Jean Widmer’s creation of a logo for the Centre Georges Pompidou in the 1970s, also highlights the “sticky” quality such images can possess—the power they have to cling in our collective memory despite attempts to dislodge them.

Julka Almquist and Julia Lupton examine the relationships we have with designed artifacts as both users and consumers. On the one hand their usefulness to our functional existence and, on the other, the levels of meaning they transport into our collective psyche. In between these two imperatives they postulate a new middle ground for design practice that integrates affordance and meaning. Mads Nygaard Folkmann argues that it is not the practical or functional aspects of a designed object that first engages us but its aesthetic qualities—it is this aesthetic dimension that renders it a vital means of communication and shapes our sensuous experience of the world. Approaching the debate from another perspective Oscar Person and Dirk Snelders argue that families of things will have an intrinsic style that embraces both designed artifacts and everyday objects. In this framework they see brand styles as the means to identify a product’s origin and make sense of its place in the world, so affording companies a competitive advantage in the market place.

Nathan Crilly shifts the debate into creative process. Using the case study of scientific progress set out in Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* he demonstrates that innovation requires both long periods of incremental development and brief moments of creative leap—not one or the other. Alongside this Jon

Kolko sets out the drivers causing synthesis to emerge in complex design scenarios and Philippe d'Anjou addresses the moral character of the designer as a key factor in design ethics.

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