

Introduction

Each article in this issue is a foray into a different aspect of design. The reader will find fresh insight into a familiar chapter in the history of type design in Kay Amer't's contribution and be reminded by Gay McDonald of the role of cultural institutions in the Cold War. Mohammad Ali Yaghan's discussion of "Arabizi," a contemporary form of written slang, prompts us to think about the impact of modern communication technologies on ancient scripts. An article by Geke Ludden, Hendrick Schifferstein, and Paul Hekkert probing the nature of innovation and Barry Wylant's piece on the implications of surprise as a design strategy focus our attention on the way designers think about designing. Early in their contribution to this issue, Daniel Christian Wahl and Seaton Baxter remind us that design is "fundamental to all human activity." There is nothing in this assertion that will strike the regular readers of this journal as outrageous. Indeed, the cumulative effect of the articles assembled here seems to reinforce our sense of design's pervasive presence in the past as well as the present and its critical role in giving shape and direction to the future. *Design Issues* has consistently served as a forum for promoting a more sophisticated understanding of design's contribution to the human-made order of things. This human-made order of things, Wahl and Baxter argue, is in crisis; our modern advanced civilization is unsustainable. They go on to note that given their location at the "nexus of values, attitudes, needs, and actions" designers can, indeed they must perform a role of enormous importance in the design and construction not just of signs, symbols, artifacts, and networks but of broadly-based conversations about the future of the world and our place in it. With their ability to envision, develop and communicate alternatives to the status quo, designers bring a distinctive set of skills to significant public discussions concerning the human community's migration to sustainable models of the future. Embedded in the challenge of designing conversations rather than commodities is the notion of co-creation and the designer as facilitator rather than form-giver. The challenge may appear daunting and in the context of pressing environmental and social concerns, the time frame available distressingly short. But designers routinely embrace daunting challenges; this is part of their distinctive identity as a professional community and a reason for all of us to be hopeful.

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