

# Introduction

In this volume of *Design Issues* we offer readers an opportunity to engage with questions that include: how designers can best become agents of change in order to create an ethics of designing that suggests humanly satisfying directions for future work; has humanism had its day in design ethics because it does not set the *humanitas* of mankind high enough; how can designers merge strategic design thinking with well-crafted media artifacts in order to amplify the value of an organization's intellectual capital; how can students best learn the interplay between form, function, human need, social context, and business strategies when designing interactive products; why do some designs take so long to become mass-produced items and others become the single most accepted ones; what is the place of rigor in practice-led research; is there any real difference between the mind-set of a successful researcher and the mind-set of a successful designer?

Victor Margolin opens our debates with "Design, the Future and the Human Spirit" in which he observes that while "the world has heard many calls for social change, few have come from designers themselves." This he follows with a survey of the ways in which designers might formulate their role as change agents and determine a course of action. The paper concludes by drawing attention to the increasing number of ethical issues that designers will have to face in future scenarios and how, historically, the task of the designer was simpler than it is today, so accelerating the urgency for designers to create an ethics of designing. Later in the journal's pages Tony Fry and Brad Cokelet discuss the *Archevorks Papers* that include Clive Dilnot's *Ethics? Design?* and Victor Margolin's *Healing the World: A Challenge for Design*. In reviewing the latter Tony Fry contends that we "cannot be moderate when...Unsustainable humanity is 'wounding its world' ever more violently" and that design has to undergo a major political transformation. Brad Cokelet's review of *Ethics? Design?* by Clive Dilnot takes its central theme to be a negotiation between the ideal world and the real world in order to produce products (artifacts) that have ethically desirable results. Cokelet suggests that this approach will leave us unable to identify those ideals necessary for an ethics of design whereas Dilnot alternatively sees that such ideals may turn any attempt at design ethics into a romantic fantasy.

Adam Kallish and Paul Atkinson continue our debates through the metaphors of lion and mouse. In "Feeding the Lion," Kallish recounts how internal design groups can either be victim or

champion within the corporate culture of a complex organization. Using his experience at Arthur Andersen & Co. as the case study Kallish demonstrates how its internal design service moved beyond an “obligation contract of production” to one that provided “deeper values.” In “The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men” Paul Atkinson charts the origins of the computer mouse along with its historical development. Through this Atkinson demonstrates how the mouse helped to change stereotypes in the office (in a way not anticipated by its designers) by separating the computer’s association with the typewriter. He points out that in coincidence with significant social changes concerning feminist issues and sexual equality in the late-1970s and early-1980s the mouse played an important role in helping to reconfigure the perception of male and female roles, so coming to embody the “deeper values” identified by Kallish. The issue of gender identities is again underlined in Fedja Vukić’s review of *Modernity, Women and Men: An Introduction to Design and Culture* in which Penny Sparke demonstrates how design has gained its professional independence within modern culture, along with the relevance of design policies in relation to gender identities.

In “The Design Enterprise: Rethinking the HCI Education Paradigm” Anthony Faiola asks if educators are attending to the kind of curriculum development that will allow for the emergence of a new generation of interaction designers who understand the socio-behavioral contexts in which interactive systems might best be built. They argue that to do so a new theoretical basis and an integrated framework for research will be required. Michael Biggs and Daniela Büchler go on to offer some valuable insights on the place of rigor in design research. They articulate rigor as the strength of the chain of reasoning that connects a research answer to a research question with the central links of the chain comprising the research method—the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the method determining the validity or otherwise of the outcome. Owain Pedgley and Paul Wormald extend the debate by questioning the legitimacy and efficacy of including design activity within a doctoral research program leading to a Ph.D. They argue that design activity alone does not possess the essential criteria for it to be legitimately equivalent to research practice but that designing can be integrated into a Ph.D. so long as the kind of rigorous research methodology identified by Biggs and Büchler is adopted.

The wide relevance of all these debates can be witnessed in Fenggen Qian’s report (“The Future of Design Education in Different Cultural Contexts”) of the international conference held at Shantou University Cheung Kong School of Art and Design in December 2005.

So the questions posed in this volume of *Design Issues* demonstrate our aim to discuss such key challenges through the journal’s pages. We hope that by inviting such intellectual worlds to confront each other that the ensuing collisions and encounters will generate

those sustained conversations so necessary to our enhanced understanding of design and its place in the physical world. We also hope they will help us evolve the precise languages necessary to exchange such complex ideas and to see them realized with authority and power.

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