

# Introduction

The work assembled in this issue addresses a stimulating variety of topics and themes and frames our understanding of design in provocative and diverse ways.

In recent years *Design Issues* has tracked efforts to expand and refine an appreciation of design as a distinctive way to connect thinking and acting. The first article by Stephanie Wilson and Lisa Zamberlan is a contribution to this on-going process of rendering design less mysterious. In their piece on the design of a hospital bed Søsler Brodersen, Meiken Hansen and Hanne Lindegaard remind us that design in healthcare settings involves more than the design of discrete objects. Designers are involved in what they identify as the configuration of socio-material assemblies.

DJ Huppertz's latest contribution to the journal is a re-assessment of Herbert Simon's seminal book *The Science of Design*. Simon's text has long been considered foundational for design and truly seminal texts demand regular and thoughtful revisiting. Returning to classic texts like Simon's is one way a field like design matures; another useful strategy involves the recovery and presentation of archival materials that enrich our understanding of the interaction between design and technology. John Harwood draws from the papers of Elliot Noyes and Charles and Ray Eames to present documents from the 1950s and 60s that shed new light on a fascinating chapter in the story of computer design. The memoranda Harwood has retrieved belong to an intriguing historical moment when computers were no longer strictly the domain of a small community of scientists and engineers and designers were beginning to grapple with the challenge of making the new technology accessible to the non-specialist.

In reviewing the emergence of critical design as an operative design strategy Matt Malpass probes the implications of the concept of critical design for the traditional understanding of such basic design concepts as function. In their account of design for the Portugal's national airline TAP Leonor Ferrão and Pedro Gentil-Homem demonstrate how design analysis can be used as a lens through which to assess the discrepancy between the ideologically determined image of a country projected through an enterprise such as the national airline and the socio-economic reality that begins just beyond the runway. The relationship between design visions and designed realities is central to the final article included here by Alen Žunić and Fedja Vukić. The authors described how efforts to

articulate a comprehensive vision of modernism ultimately fared better in the pages of architectural journals than on the building sites of Socialist housing campaigns in Croatia. Film and book reviews by Victor Margolin, John Blakinger, Gökhan Ersan, Peter McNeil and Kees Dorst complete the Table of Contents.

A simple listing of articles, documents and reviews is inadequate to portray this (or any) issue of the journal. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts and a further comment is warranted here. In recent decades a vibrant design culture has emerged. Research is one focused component of this culture. Typically a design researcher comes to the journal in search of material relevant to a particular topic. But readers return to the journal—issue after issue, volume after volume—in search of more than material that supports their research. Design culture thrives on sustained conversations addressing a diversity of topics. The editors of *Design Issues* are committed to supporting this broader concept of design culture. We think of the journal as a forum, an intellectual space in which people passionate about design (or sometimes simply curious) can take the pulse of design discourse, be exposed to areas of inquiry different from their own and reflect on a broad spectrum of design activities and positions. There is an excitement in being part of such an on-going intellectual adventure. Enjoy!

Bruce Brown  
Richard Buchanan  
Carl DiSalvo  
Dennis Doordan  
Victor Margolin

#### ***Kenji Ekuan 1929–2015***

We regret the passing of Kenji Ekuan, Japanese industrial designer, on February 8, 2015 in Tokyo. Ekuan was a leader in promoting industrial design as a profession in Japan and around the world. Trained as a Buddhist monk as well as a designer, Ekuan was a co-founder of GK Design, one of Japan's leading postwar design firms; and as a principal of that firm, he was responsible for the design of myriad products ranging from motorcycles and bicycles to lighting fixtures and musical instruments. One iconic GK product is the Kikkoman soy sauce bottle of 1961. Ekuan was active on international design juries and in Japanese and international design organizations. He was President of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) from 1976 to 1979. His book *The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox* (1998) has been widely read by designers and students around the world.