

# Introduction

The topics and themes of design are diverse, just as are the ways we write about design. In *Design Issues*, we strive to let the plurality of subjects and formats flourish. That plurality is evident in this issue, which includes three articles, a reflection, an interview, a charter, and a variety of reviews. Although the subjects and formats in this issue are diverse, a commonality also exists among them: all of the works inquire into the social and cultural conditions of design and encourage greater appreciation for the reciprocal relationship between design and those conditions.

Richard Buchanan's article "Surroundings and Environments in Fourth Order Design," begins with an examination of how surroundings become environments and a discussion of prospect and refuge as themes in interior design. Buchanan traces these ideas through multiple contexts, including a garden in China, the Suzhou Museum designed by I. M. Pei, and an information system (IS) of a hospital intensive care unit. Through an insightful analysis, Buchanan draws forth an expanded notion of interior design, emphasizing that not only does interior design transform surroundings into environments, "but it is also about integration in the wholeness of the environment." From this discussion, Buchanan goes on to explain the role of dialectic in fourth order design. He offers a typology of idealist, materialist, and skeptical dialectics, and a series of implications of fourth order design that prompt both reflection and action. In an appropriately dialectical manner, Buchanan then returns to the issues raised at the beginning of the article, and we see that prospect and refuge are not just evident in interior design but are themes for design action and thought more broadly.

In the article "The Idea of Environmental Design Revisited," Yongqi Lou examines ambiguity in the field of environmental design in contemporary China. For Lou, this ambiguity is problematic because it thwarts the growth of the discipline. A source of this ambiguity is the confusion around the word environment itself—what comprises an environment? Lou offers a characterization of the environment as "a system of conditions." The work of environmental design is, then, to "create, accommodate, facilitate, foster, enable, instigate or restore conditions that interact with other conditions." Lou uses this theme of the environment as an opening to

connect the work of environmental design back to Buchanan's Four Orders of design. The result is a new consideration—that environmental design is a practice of much more than the configuration of objects in space; environmental design is re-cast as practice fundamentally concerned with human experience in systems.

Ruedi Baur and Ulrike Felsing also investigate design in contemporary China in their article "On the Cultural Anchorings of Knowledge Visualization." Their concerns are with the cultural implications of images and, in particular, the visual translations of Chinese knowledge graphics. Through their research, Baur and Felsing identify a set of important frames of reference in traditional Chinese elements, which then can be graphically manipulated in the translation process. With an understanding of these working elements, Baur and Felsing produce a series of diagrams that translate knowledge graphics; these resulting diagrams function as integrated aspects of their argument. Although this article's reported outcomes are particular to Chinese knowledge graphics, Baur and Felsing suggest that the visual translations topic is of broad relevance to design research, as it enables inquiry into both verbal and visual meaning.

John Heskett's *Industrial Design* (1980) is a canonical text of design history. We have the privilege of publishing a recently discovered 1981 interview of Heskett by both graduate students and faculty at Middlesex Polytechnic. The interview has been edited and divided into two parts by Clive Dilnot and Lilian Sanchez-Moreno, and in this issue we are publishing Part 1: "Problems in Writing Histories of Design." (Part 2 will publish in the next issue of *Design Issues*.) Dilnot and Sanchez-Moreno provide context for Heskett's work and the interview, taking care to describe the intellectual and institutional challenges of writing histories in general, and of writing a history of design in particular. As they note, what is distinctive about Heskett's *Industrial Design* is that it did not follow models of art history, but that it took on design on its own terms. How this unfolds, in the actual writing of the book—from the chapters' structures to what Heskett would have liked to include but did not—is shared through the lively text of the interview.

In the reflection "A Re-View from the Margin: Interior Design," Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand revisits her 2004 *Design Issues* published article (vol. 20, no. 4), in which she examined the marginality of interior design, specifically in relation to architecture. In this essay, she returns to ask, "is interior design still on the margin?" Renewing the feminist perspective, which informed her initial analysis, Havenhand argues that interior design is still at the

margins and is so because, in the field, “gender is at the root of identity politics,” and those issues of gender have yet to be addressed. In particular, Havenhand draws upon the idea of embarrassment to address some of the issues of interior design—arguing that the field is not only embarrassed that it is not architecture, but also embarrassed that it is feminine. Havenhand does not resolve these issues in the course of her reflection, but provides readers with a “restating and reframing” of the gender issues in interior design.

“The Lancaster Care Charter,” created by thirty-two signers, responds to the question, “does design care?” As a charter, it sets out to present an agenda for both “the design of Care and the care of Design.” For the Charter’s signers, a caring orientation in design places design in the midst of a collection of histories, places, cultures, and identities, and it begins by recognizing the many ways that design is entangled in social context. The idea that undergirds their argument is that design is fundamentally a relational practice: “to design is to make a difference in the world and in relations.” This difference is, or could be, one of caring. They go on to suggest three conditions for futures in which design and care are entwined: Care of Complexity, Care of the Project, and Care of Relations. The charter ends with a bold statement of vision for design, in which the field and practice are called on to commit and engage with caring across diverse contexts and scales: “our world, our cities, our livelihoods, our relationships, and for each other.”

Bruce Brown  
Richard Buchanan  
Carl DiSalvo  
Dennis Doordan  
Kipum Lee  
Victor Margolin  
Ramia Mazé