Introduction

One way to understand the ongoing amplification and extension of design is to see how it is being driven by market and societal demand. With a public that is familiar with design thinking and social design, there is a kind of design renaissance today where those who are not necessarily from within the design community see its value. This "pull" that design currently enjoys is evident in several ways: those working in consultancies are adding a more balanced approach to traditional business-heavy perspectives at the request of more sophisticated clients; those in corporations are building in-house design capabilities to meet the needs of their internal constituents; and those working in and for non-profits are translating and facilitating authentic insights regarding the underserved who desire to be engaged in more humane and equitable ways.

There is another way that design continues to expand and it is through its own "push" mechanism. It is a healthy sign when a discipline—not seeking to rest on its own laurels—takes on a continuous and collective reflection-in-action. Like the concept of a learning organization, designers are busy pushing beyond their own set of boundaries, approaching design itself as a learning discipline where action and course correction are constantly at play.

The authors in this issue, adopting the latter approach to developing design, push themselves and the discipline beyond the status quo. Though they use different terms to describe the idea of incompleteness and the opportunity to expand, their message is uniform: design is but one dimension in our complex world and yet it serves an important function in the shaping of larger wholes. In his follow up to providing a Hegelian understanding of the nature of design problems, Beckett asks what it means when we say that design problems are complex. To explore this, he introduces another concept from Hegel—determination of reflection—which posits that complexity is "the result of the circular reasoning of the reflexive determination of a social system." That is, in the kind of social complexity that is proper to design problems, what is central is belief—which is required to keep our understanding of complexity and systems intact—rather than the rational/pragmatic. In Beckett's interpretation of the social, he pushes the essence of design problems beyond complexity as commonly understood and into the realm of the transcendental and ideological.

Neubauer, Bohemia, and Harman bring another kind of disciplinary self-examination and opportunity for enlargement by interrogating what they describe as taken-for-granted categories within design practice. Similar to Beckett's argument, they point to the privileged place of dominant design ideas that need to be reexamined. They question notions of design that heavily rely on a designer's subjectivity, things hidden from view, and taking place "in the head." They call for a shift away from the representation of design as an epistemology of tacit knowledge to what they call the object of design where the emphasis is on "the work of assembling" ontological categories that have until now escaped proper critical examination.

The next two articles push on existing boundaries by calling for a transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to design. In her article, Ambole puts forward the idea of an embedded designer whose aim is to engage with social issues in places like Africa using a much more balanced approach than designers have done in the past. Design, at times, has been accused of promulgating an imperialist agenda, and embedding itself as one contributor in a global transdisciplinary framework is one way to hardwire its own self-regulatory mechanism. In Yu's article, the reordering work remains within the service design community rather than a global audience. In an effort to achieve internal coherence for researchers and practitioners, she presents a typology of three service design concepts and an integrative framework where future inquiry and practical use may emerge via cross-fertilization among the different perspectives.

The last two among our featured articles open up design to new possibilities through serendipity and playfulness. Pena takes the reader and viewer beyond "fixed" or established font design and into "metadesign" where the metaphor is language or sound remixing. He argues for an emphasis on methodology—the design of the design of a font, i.e., meta-font—and writes that the metadesigner, like a music producer, must be comfortable with a certain degree of uncertainty. In Nguyen's article on the playfulness in Japanese visual culture, ambiguity within an "Asian grammar of design" is analyzed. According to the author, it is in the context of Japanese socio-cultural environments that the subject matter of the article—in particular, Japanese Design Movement posters—is fully understood and appreciated. In both articles, the production process of exploration and experimentation is key to deciphering the intent and is a necessary condition to push on conventional boundaries.

This issue closes with a reflection piece by a designer who has experienced the transformation of design in another Asian context and book reviews from various contributors. In his personal account as a practitioner and within the span of a single career,

Chang traces shifting public perception and appreciation of design as an indicator of design's development in South Korea. In what he calls design curation, he reverberates the aforementioned idea of "meta," "or "designing the design," in the holistic design program of the Olympic games. However, rather than an Asian grammar of design, what he describes is a rhetoric and dialectic of design; by emphasizing the communicative function of design, which is both shaped by and shapes the attitudes and emotions of the general public, he pushes design into a national context.

Taking us to another Asian context, Hague reviews a book dealing with the contemporary issue of identity in Hong Kong. In his summary of the work by Wendy Siuyi Wong, he writes, "powerful bodies can all too easily swallow up smaller cultures if sustained attention is not paid to maintaining those cultures' integrities." Design—through the material expression of comics, advertising and graphic design—"shows in microcosm many of the issues facing Hong Kong in a larger sense." Next, in her review of *Design History Beyond the Canon,* Held provides a reserved endorsement of a product intended to "consider alternative stories, offer unusual approaches, or challenge conventional design historical narratives" without holding back criticism for voices left out. Finally, Strand's introduction to Gillian Hadfield's new book takes us beyond a national context and into what Thomas Friedman famously calls a flat and global world. Design now touches the realm of legal scholars and economists, a realm traditionally guarded by insiders and characterized by "stuck" institutions where they have "protectionism and monopoly down to a science."

It is evident from the articles in this issue that design has its own generative power for growth and relevance. At *Design Issues,* we engage in this disciplinary iteration through our three related and central themes: an appreciation of *history* and what has been laid out as a foundation of design to date; the formulation of *theory* or a lens by which to see where the discipline is or should be headed; and a healthy *criticism* to judge and elucidate various issues within a growing discipline. The interpretation of these themes in contemporary circumstances and their ongoing interrelationships is itself a larger theme that we continue to celebrate and promote in *Design Issues.*

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