

Introduction

“Design culture” is a phrase used rather casually to identify what characterizes the vast, complex, and often wonderful spirit of creative inquiry that we appreciate and love in our broad realm. It emerged as a less aggressive alternative to descriptions of design as a discipline or a body of disciplines—and certainly it serves to distinguish design from the scholasticism that the phrase “design science” sometimes takes on in the hands of writers for whom “design process” becomes an all-absorbing object of research. “Discipline” and “science” have been serviceable terms from an early time, and each helped to distinguish design from other disciplines and sciences that possessed their own academic credentials and histories in universities or in general understanding. However, without trying to define the concept of culture here, we may nonetheless say that the current issue of the journal is like a cultural probe into design as it is practiced and reflected upon today in different parts of the world and with different perspectives of theory and history.

Hillary Carey begins this issue with “Designing Equitable Worlds: Six Orientations to Evoke the Future.” As she writes, “This article aims to understand how design can engage long-term perspectives to support the work of advocating for racial justice in the United States.” She works at the intersection of several areas of study and theory, exploring a design approach to a social and cultural problem found in many countries. A variety of methods play an active role in the work, and what emerges are orientations around “Social Dreaming,” “Calling Forth,” “Prophetic Imagination and Reframing,” “Prefigurative Agreements,” “Prefigurative Performance,” and “Pre-enactment.” It is an original work that offers a positive movement toward the future.

Similarly engaging, the next article by Aysun Aytaç, Sabine Junginger, and Jon Rogers carries the design tool of cultural probes from the 1990s into the new digital world. The article has a long title that belies its scope: “Exploring the Potential of Off-The-Shelf Tools as Digital Probes: Appropriation of a Mobile Diary App.” What is gained or lost, the authors ask, when there is a shift from on-site observational studies to remote in-situ and in-person design research? This raises questions for design researchers. The authors share their own experience with a mobile diary app (MDA) and place it in the context of new approaches to cultural probes in the form of digital probes and diary studies that are valuable in the new circumstances of design research. Along the way, they provide

a useful perspective on a wide variety of literature on cultural probes. They ask and reply: “What makes something a Probe? The literature offers a plethora of unhelpful definitions with many misinterpretations about their original intentions.” What makes this a valuable and original contribution is more than a discussion of the technical aspects of cultural probes—past and present—but a focus on an important issue in contemporary design research. They conclude in this way: “One aspect that we find needs to be explored more deeply here is how making takes form when probes shift in materiality, for which its implications for design research remains to be seen.”

The next article is a departure from what is called “moral disengagement theory,” described in the literature of psychology, social psychology, and education as a process or method of convincing oneself that ethical standards do not apply in a particular situation. Clearly, this is an important issue for the current moment in many more contexts than design. Değer Özkaramanlı and Michael Nagenborg discuss “Moral Engagement in Design: Five Considerations for Unpacking the Ethical Dimensions of Design Methods.” The main purpose of the article is to introduce the concept of “moral engagement” in design—in essence, positioning the inquiry in the context of other discussions of design ethics. The authors are interested in “how design methods can support the emergent and situated nature of ethical questions and moral dilemmas,” an area that they suggest remains largely unexplored. The article employs an interdisciplinary approach to build a bridge between design ethics and design methods, relying on a definition of design as a discipline. The argument is divided into three parts: moral engagement in design, challenges for moral engagement in design, and suggestions for how the theme of moral engagement may be explored further in design research. The argument is interesting and potentially important as designers rediscover their moral and ethical engagement with society.

In the next article, Robert Harland and Yaron Meron bring greater balance to discussions of design thinking as well as discussions about the nature of Graphic Design (and its distinction from Visual Communication and then Communication Design). The concept of design thinking, itself, is often misunderstood and misrepresented—a touchstone for the rough seas of distortion that design has faced in recent years as it has expanded beyond a craft practice into a thoughtful strategic art of creative inquiry in many areas of human action. But for Harland and Meron, writing in “Design Thinking: Standing on the Shoulders of . . . Graphic Design!,” there are also discussions, definitions, and depictions of graphic design that “escape critical scrutiny” in the context of design thinking. They give a strong reminder that the key concepts of design thinking are found as well in the practices of graphic design as in any other branch of design. As they say, the purpose

of their article is “to encourage more integrity, accuracy, and rigor in the treatment of graphic design in design thinking discourses.” They make good use of the Four Orders of Design to make their case, and they encourage others to push back against the attitude that graphic design is somehow less significant than other practices.

Though Harland and Meron do not cite this bit of history, no less a figure than Augusto Morello, former president of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID)—a witness at the founding of that organization in the United Kingdom in the late 1950s—remarked in a private conversation that the venerated British architect-cum-industrial designer Misha Black was the person most responsible for excluding graphic design from the establishment of that organization because the practice was “too arty” and not rigorous or scientific enough. From that point in 1957, *two* international organizations were advocating for design in the modern world, a breach not yet healed.

We follow Harland and Meron’s discussion of graphic design with an appropriate and forceful article by Jane Connory, “Designing Period Shame: Period Product Advertising in Australian Women’s Magazines.” As she explains, “For all the good graphic design can do, it can also reinforce harmful norms and perpetuate their existence through printed media.” The example, in this case, is “the design of period product advertising (pad ads) for pads and tampons.” Through a well-designed research project, Connory reviews the social context spanning over 100 years of advertising and subtle messaging, using what we may recognize as a rhetorical analysis of the communication. Connory concludes with this observation of the implementation: “Empathic design processes and tools that evoke a real understanding of the consumer is what can continue to improve a positive evolution in advertising.” An excellent example of the rhetorical dimension of design thinking in graphic design (a.k.a. communication design).

Moritz Hartstang and Jürgen Held contribute to the discussion of design as a discipline by adding another method. They attempt to resolve what they regard as a paradox: that some researchers seek to justify the identity of design as an independent discipline while at the same time urging the integration of design with other disciplines. Their article “Collaborative Effect-Centered Problem-Solving” is a somewhat obscure title for a refreshing if not unique argument that the “separation of disciplines does not correspond to reality and restricts the individuality of people and the development of disciplines.” The article is anchored in a dispute with design theorist Nigel Cross, whose concept of “designerly knowledge” has been scrutinized by Richard Herriott’s “The Delightful Phrase: Are There Really Designerly Ways of Knowing?” (*Design Issues*, Vol. 39, No. 3 Autumn 2023).

Occasionally, we find the concept of design placed in an unfamiliar setting that may be puzzling at first but then gives

unexpected light and perhaps delight. We think this is the case with Koumudi Patil's "Shape of the Design Worldview: Does Language Inform the Design Sense?" As the author explains, "This study explores the possibility of interpreting the Banarasi design worldview of play and toys, as expressed in the Banarasi language in a community of toy designers in India." However, the article is about more than Indian culture. It is also a quiet walk through the uses of language to shape design thinking not only in India but in any cultural context that is carried in language and expressed in objects such as toys. For those who may have studied linguistics or perhaps learned about the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis that the structure of language influences how we think and how we perceive the world, this article will be intriguing. As Patil explains, "It is argued that native language not only affects our thinking in the presence or absence of a specific vocabulary, gestures, or a grammatical category but also in how we perceive events in nonverbal event representations, such as pictorial sequences. In other words, language can potentially affect our mental imagery and its signifier in semiotic media, like gestures and pictures."

Our final article follows a Manifesto that we published in a previous issue. The Manifesto addressed an initiative of the European Union (EU). (See Vol. 40, No. 2 Spring 2024.) The initiative is called the "New European Bauhaus (NEB)," and it seeks to encourage design responses to emerging problems faced by the EU in the twenty-first century. In this issue, we publish a subsequent discussion of the initiative by Nicholas B. Torretta, Mariana Pestana, Frederico Duarte, Cristiano Predroso-Roussado, Luisa Metelo Seixas, Valentina Nisi, and Nuno Jardim Nunes. The title is "Navigating Problematic Bauhaus Inheritances: Critiques, Implications, and Questions from the Bauhaus of the Seas NEB Lighthouse." The authors' discussion provides background and context for one project under the original initiative, called the Bauhaus of the Seas Sails project (BoSS). As explained, "In practice the BoSS project aims at exploring possibilities for regenerative relations to water bodies and involving more-than-humans [in] such process." It is interesting to observe the design response to the EU initiative.

After the wide array of articles in this issue, we turn to a review of *The Climate Book*, created by Greta Thunberg. The review is by Dennis Doordan, who provides a useful background sketch of Greta Thunberg as well as a discussion of the structure and purpose of the book. As Doordan explains, *The Climate Book* is comprised of 102 short essays written by a variety of distinguished individuals, and it provides a primer on climate change filled with analyses of its causes, assessments of its impact, and prescriptions for dealing with it. Doordan observes that there is much for designers to learn from this book about science.

As a final note, we are pleased to welcome Xin Xiangyang to the editorial group of *Design Issues*. He is a Professor of Design at Tongji University in Shanghai and a widely published and respected designer and design researcher. He was named the Interaction Designer of the Year by the Interaction Design Association (IXDA) at its San Francisco conference in 2015, noting his leadership in encouraging and developing interaction design in China. He has served as an Associate Editor of *Design Issues* for several years and, among many other projects, has been responsible for the annual Chinese language editions of *Design Issues* published in China—a series of volumes that have been cited by the Ministry of Education for their important contribution to Chinese culture.

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