

Introduction

Designers don't write; they draw, they model, they make things. We are all familiar with this tired claim. The work speaks for itself is another version of the same argument. Despite the eloquence and undeniably positive impact of much design work, there are good reasons to challenge the model of the competent but silent designer. In today's global community exposure to evidence-based solutions and innovative new proposals occurs in a multitude of ways. Conversations about values, techniques and evidence unfold within communities marked by dramatically different levels of design literacy and social imagination. The absence of an informed and articulate design perspective in important international forums is a matter of concern.

A case in point: in December 2015 delegates from 195 nations signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Paris Agreement calls upon signatory parties to actively address climate change by promoting "sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production" and "to address gaps and needs, both current and emerging, in implementing capacity building in developing countries." Clearly there is an important agenda for design here. While there is much to celebrate in these laudable goals, it is distressing to note how marginal the concept of design appears to be in the global conversation and the associated body of supporting scientific and technical literature surrounding the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The word design is almost totally missing from the lexicon of scientists and political leaders concerned with climate change. The absence of a design sensibility results in stunted conversations and myopic proposals for pressing global issues such as climate change, social justice, and sustainable economic development. Where it does appear, the word design is usually subordinated to the language of policymaking and the drafting of regulations as in the phrase "the design of new policies." This subordination occurs despite that the design community is a rich and dynamic repository of experiences, research, products, tools, and visions that range from the local to the global in scope.

Each issue of *Design Issues* provides evidence of such a claim and this issue is no different. Some articles address issues and concerns that resonate with those raised in the Paris Agreement. Marc Steen writes about capacity building and design for wellbeing; Heather McKinnon talks about changing patterns of energy consumption; and Anna Plazowska reviews Al Goowan's biography of

Victor Papanek—an early and influential advocate for socially and environmentally responsible design. Other articles in this issue enrich and refine our understanding of design itself either through reflections on design process, discussions of significant themes, or essays that probe particular aspects of design work. Derek Ham writes about the role of play in the creative process; Per Liljenberg Halstrøm explores how designers communicate the values that shape their work; Damla Tonuk probes the often subtle ways in which materials shape product designs. Catherine Moriarty focuses on the way we research and represent networks of relationships; Arden Stern explores how type designers construct a provocative dialogue between the recent past and the distant past; and Sebnem Timur Ogut reviews the Museum of Innocence in Istanbul, Turkey and introduces the reader to Orhan Pamuk’s multi-layered treatment of the intersection of the “real” and the “imaginary” in the pages of his eponymous novel.

In order to exercise its distinctive voice and to participate effectively in global efforts to confront the daunting challenges and exciting opportunities of our times, the design community must express itself in as many different ways as possible. The nature of global conversations today requires plural forms of engagement. Therefore, we must model and make *and* research and write; contribute to the design of policies, as well as the design of artifacts; and empower people for the long term, as well as equip them for the present. From evidence-based forms of argument, to crusading calls for meaningful and achievable change, to celebrations of our collective imaginations and the human spirit, the design community has much to contribute to the global conversations that literally shape our world.

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

In Memoriam

Ken Isaacs (1927–2016)

The editors of *Design Issues* regret the passing of Ken Isaacs, architect and designer of the “Knowledge Box,” “Micro House,” “Living Structures,” and many pieces of furniture. Ken was named Professor Emeritus after 30 years of teaching in the Department of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago.