

Editorial

The first two articles in this issue of *Image & Text* consider current and recent conceptions and visual expressions of cultural and national identity respectively. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's suggestion that identification is never a settled question, but rather something informed by historically specific developments and based on fantasy, projection and idealisation, is ably demonstrated by Stella Viljoen's article *Imagined Community: 1950s kiekies of the volk*. The article investigates ideas of cultural and gendered identity held by the Afrikaner community in the 1950s and their visual articulation in a selection of covers from the magazine *Huisgenoot* published during that decade. Viljoen maintains that the 1950s may be considered a significant period in the formation of Afrikaner cultural identity. It marked a watershed in the transition from a vernacular politics and identity to a secular, globalised paradigm where Afrikaner cultural identity and its visual manifestations increasingly align with westernised ideas and mass-produced imagery. Concomitantly the rhetoric of aspirational romanticism that characterised earlier covers of the magazine, shifted to a rhetoric of populist consumption.

While Viljoen engages directly with the subject of identity, the article by Marian Sauthoff on the design of a typeface and signage for South Africa's new Constitutional Court building touches more covertly and implicitly on matters of identity. Sauthoff provides an account of the intricate process of designing the typeface that incorporates details related to the manner in which designer Garth Walker was inspired by particular historical and contemporary political circumstances and how he set out to encapsulate and mirror South Africa's new democratic order. She relates the ap-

proach and process followed by designer Walker to broader streams of typographic thinking and practice. These include social documentation and bricolage as the creative inspiration and impetus for designing type both locally and abroad, as well as more formal and structured initiatives to recover and document African indigenous writing and symbolic systems. Sauthoff suggests that, relative to international efforts, the building of public awareness and understanding of the conceptual and technical realities of type design and explanations of the expressive and connotative dimensions of type and typography have not received the attention they deserve in South Africa.

The final two articles consider the design process, not from the position of the lone designer, but as a collaborative endeavour situated in the context of developing communities. Both articles describe and comment on Interdesign 2005, a forum convened by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid) as part of its on-going programme to explore and contribute to international design issues. Interdesign 2005 gave an international group of mid-career designers an opportunity to address the topic of sustainable rural transport and specifically to develop feasible concepts for transportation suited to the circumstances and needs of three diverse communities in the North West Province of South Africa. The three communities comprised a deep rural, semi-rural and informal settlement respectively. Based on her participation and observation of Interdesign 2005, Hester du Plessis calls for greater sensitivity on the part of designers towards the needs, perceptions and complexities of developing communities. Du Plessis suggests that a multi-disciplinary team that includes social

scientists and the implementation of appropriate research methods to uncover and better understand the various dimensions of developing communities could contribute to the creation of products that are sustainable and accepted by user communities.

Interdesign 2005 saw the inclusion of a focus area devoted solely to communication design. As this was the first time that communication designers had formed part of an Interdesign project, their role and possible contributions had not previously been considered or specifically defined. In her article, Ria van Zyl contextualises the activities of communication designers by recounting the research conducted with school children in the form of workshops undertaken in the preliminary stages of the project. Van Zyl demonstrates how these workshops not only yielded a wealth of information potentially relevant to the design of products, but also how they moved the children into an area of active user participation in the design process. She goes on to detail integrated communication and process models and frameworks devised in subsequent phases of the project that clearly and systematically present meta-perspectives that are bound to facilitate the understanding and planning of complex design projects for developing communities. Similar to Du Plessis, Van Zyl bases her article on her observations and participation in Interdesign 2005, thus reinforcing both authors' stance for a more penetrating and on-going engagement with development projects, rather than a short intervention that may or may not produce sustainable design solutions.