

S I V I
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EDITORIAL comment

This edition of *Image & Text* invites readers to review a number of pertinent design issues - the development context, the primacy of the visual in design, embracing the digital age and the creation of a South African cultural landscape through popular expressions of entertainment and the medium of advertising. Although the articles deal with seemingly diverse topics, each in its own way confirms that designers need to continually reflect on the essence of what they do, their attitudes, preconceptions and how they define themselves.

An accusation sometimes levelled at designers is that they regard the visual as self-evident. They know how to talk to each other but spend too little time cultivating the understanding and

skills required to share design concepts and knowledge with others. The ideas of translation, transposition and transference explored by author Benjamin Mayer and sculptor Willem Boshoff offer a widening of perspectives that encourages the type of versatility needed to transcend the visual and confront cardinal issues in the pragmatic contexts of everyday design practice.

Mirjam Southwell's observations on prevalent perceptions of what it is possible to manufacture in developing countries, assumptions of what is 'best' for developing countries and the consequential internalisation of inferiorisation in the self-identities of these countries, underscores the need for an assertive and strategically coordinated approach to the promotion and development of design in South Africa. Interesting models for consideration were presented at the recent,

excellent one-day seminar *Design: 2000 and Beyond* hosted by the SABS Design Institute in Pretoria. Current ICSID board members, on a visit to South Africa, outlined envisaged future developments in design and detailed international, national and corporate design strategies. While the presentations raised some provocative questions and provided a good forum for deliberation, they did not offer tidy answers or neat solutions to our particular situation or problems. The matrix of economic, political and social factors within which the South African design industry must advance is unique. It calls for greater attention to the strengthening of our indigenous knowledge base and the expansion of a critical and stringent local discourse about design.

Consistent themes running through all the papers and discussion sessions at the seminar were the importance of design education as a fundamental aspect in sustainable design development and the powerful role of technology in shaping design. The incorporation of digital technology as a substitute for traditional media and methods in local design education has become well established. The need for graphic designers to be more than computer literate, but also to become digitally enabled with the skills and knowledge to move comfortably from print to audio, sound and text in digital media, and to participate in new working configurations, as suggested by author Anthony Bizos in his article, points in the direction of alliances and collaborations less cultivated in South African design education.

At the University of Pretoria closer ties between the Departments of Visual Arts and Information Science are being forged. Design and Visual Communication courses taught by the Visual Arts Department are mandatory for publishing and multimedia students studying for degrees with the Department of Information Science. As from next year, design students in the Visual Arts Department will complete a number of semester courses and modules in Information Science. These include not only the production of digital products, but also information management, the ethics of information and systems development. Students will be encouraged to work in collaborative teams comprising multidisciplinary participants. Interestingly, while senior design students reacted favourably to the inclusion of information science in their own course, the opening up of design courses to 'non-designers' elicited a mixed response. Some students voiced a concern that this would diminish the designer's professional standing and encourage a proliferation of mediocre design standards. These comments provided a good opportunity for students to consider the implications of role convergence and its impact on their professional futures and to identify the unique qualities the designer brings to the collaborative situation.

A final comment on collaboration must take the form of acknowledgement to the sponsors of *Image & Text*. This is the seventh design sponsorship from Blueprint Design and the fifth time Future Graphics has sponsored reproduction. First Paper House, Spicers, and Finwood Papers have each sponsored the paper for an issue, Papersmith and Son has sponsored two issues and Peters Papers has generously sponsored this edition. Creda Press has contributed to the printing of three editions, while Whitnall Simonson, Klem-Lloyd and Remata Bureau have each supported an issue. Printing sponsorship for this edition is from Ultra Litho. A founding objective of the journal was the fostering of a design dialogue and a local design readership. That this has been achieved has in a large measure been possible because of the goodwill of our sponsors.

tion (ik·spresh'in) n.1 Act
ode of uttering
nting, as by language, or
2 any act or object by
some truth or idea
d. 3 That what is uttered
embodiment of a thought
ard aspect, the ensemble
ace when communicating
s. 5 Effective utterance of
and feeling