Introduction

This issue of *Design Issues* explores topics of continuing relevance. It first contains a major collection of special issue essays on the construction of a design history. Also included is a book review on the significance of time in the design of history, a reflective essay on the evolution of design for disability locating it in a new climate of post-Universal Design, and an exhibition review offering some thoughts on our shifting sense of materiality in post-COVID environments.

The articles assembled by the guest editors of this special issue of *Design Issues* explore the designation of "Swiss graphic design," "Swiss typography," or "Swiss style" as an international standard applicable to a variety of media, such as, posters, books, corporate identities, and signage systems. This visual standard was claimed to be one of the country's leading products when proposed to UNESCO in 2014 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. The guest editors and authors of this special issue observe that the history of Swiss design was initially built by a group of Western, male designers writing about selected objects in a small number of prestigious professional journals, and that many of those texts set out to address a targeted audience of design enthusiasts, which so resulted in a neat history of Swiss graphic design. Hence, this served to reduce its rich past to a small number of actors working within a more narrowly defined timeframe. The guest editors and authors also point out, that because many of these histories were not driven by research questions, they seldom entered into academic discourse or dealt with the complex underlying structures of design research, education, and practice. So, this special issue revisits the history of Swiss graphic design and typography, not as a monolithic label or style, but as a multi-faceted construction within an international discourse. This work has been supported by a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation—making it their largest funded project in the field of design research.

In his review of *Design, History and Time: New Temporalities in a Digital Age*, Stephen Boyd Davis considers the different emphases of its three sections—the first being dominated by perceptions of time, the second with the interpretation of historical material evidence, and the third with designs that seem to explicitly engage with time. He suggests that one thing clearly emerging from these essays

is that history is a design. Commenting on Herbert Simon's much quoted aphorism, "everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones," Boyd Davis observes that Simon was thinking about designing the future. So this volume emphasizes how we design certain pasts to suit and shape our chosen narratives—it being a truism of historiography that histories are selective and formative. With some weight Boyd Davis concludes that, "those who succeed in designing the past may control the future."

In her review essay, "In the Wake of Universal Design: Mapping the Terrain," Elizabeth Guffey points out that, whereas design for inclusiveness is undergoing a paradigm shift, the expansion of design for disability has been so rapid and multifaceted that it is stimulating unsettling new questions—as well as answers. Growing out of Universal Design's reliance on established anthropometrics and out-dated ideas of standardization, design for disability is now giving shape and meaning to a new era where design is on demand with increasing customization, the rise of participatory and co-design, and the advent of the DIY movement. Guffey elaborates this condition through five themes: First, "Misfitting" recognizes that disability is a social construct shifting discussion away from the specifics of individual cases and toward widespread misfits between bodies and a world that has not been constructed with them in mind. Second, "User-initiated" asserts that disabled people cannot be dismissed as actionless stakeholders waiting to be rescued by intelligent, sovereign designers. So post–Universal Design intertwines participatory design with ideas of disability empowerment. Third, Guffey's theme "Mass Customization" highlights a contradiction underlying Universal Design—namely, its roots in collective and often totalizing design solutions based on factory standardization. The new era of assistive digital technologies is one factor that helps to make design more adaptable, matching to each person regardless of ability or need. Fourth, "Disability Dongle" identifies the recent flowering of ideas around disability-friendly drones, robots, and smart textiles as altruist projections of goodwill, often developed with little or no input from disabled people themselves, so overlooking their genuine needs. In her fifth and final theme, "Critical Speculation," Guffey asks if culture can be used to leverage all of these issues.

In his review of *Neri Oxman: Material Ecology*, organized by Paola Antonelli and Anna Burckhardt at MoMA, Dennis Doordan reflects on the absence of a walk-through gallery experience due to the coronavirus pandemic. Missing the physical and sensory

interaction with materials so redolent of a gallery experience, Doordan's review of the exhibition is solely based on its online presence. Here, he observes that, whereas the accompanying videos produced by Oxman would normally be a supplement to the gallery experience, they now have shifted to center stage to offer a richly rewarding experience as the most valuable part of the online experience. Focused on Antonelli's long-standing interest in the intersection of science, engineering, and design, this exhibition is about process as product and is design driven by speculation rather than application. With her colleagues at MIT, Oxman explains how she distils algorithms and mathematical behaviors from natural entities, then applies them to the fabrication of new materials. As Doordan observes, it is ironic that access to an exhibition so focused on biology and its relationship to design has been thwarted by a biological agent: the coronavirus.

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

The editors regret that the Introduction of vol. 36, no. 4 (Autumn 2020) inadvertently reversed the authors' names. Correctly, Niya Stoimenova and Rebecca Price co-authored "Exploring the Nuances of Designing (with/for) Artificial Intelligence."