

visual: design: scholarship

Research Journal of the
Australian Graphic Design Association

Volume 3, Number 2, 2007, pp.26–38

Learning continuums: emerging paradigms *reflections on the impact of graduate design education on professional design practice in the 21stC*

Ian McArthur

Postgraduate study is increasingly considered by many to be an important part of the professional designer's education. As a result, universities and design colleges in Australia and elsewhere face intense competition in their development of comprehensive and appropriate study offerings to attract local and international students. This is the case especially among institutions that possess established links and partnerships with universities and colleges in Asia. China has become a particularly attractive as a source for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and primarily for financial reasons, participation in engaging with this market is high across the higher education sector internationally. The global context is important in this paper, which explores the relevance of postgraduate design education to current and emerging industry needs and expectations. This account is written from a perspective influenced profoundly by professional experiences and parallel postgraduate study undertaken by the author through a western university, while living in The People's Republic of China. In addressing the question of relevance of postgraduate study to industry, reflections are offered with the intent of fostering discussion about how design graduates are trained to deal with the inevitable impact of shifts in design practice, globalisation and the emergence of China. The text draws on materials developed during postgraduate study and includes references to a major dissertation and project that examines these considerations.

A G D A

Copyright: You may download a copy of this paper for your own personal use. This paper must not be published elsewhere (to mailing lists, bulletin boards, etc.) without the author's explicit permission. If you do copy this paper you must include this copyright note. Please observe the usual academic conventions of quotations and citation.

Citation: McArthur, I. (2007) Learning continuums: emerging paradigms—reflections on the impact of graduate design education on professional design practice in the 21stC, *visual:design:scholarship*, vol.3, no.2, pp.26–38 online at: <http://www.agda.com.au/vds/vds030204.pdf>

ISSN 1833-2226

Learning continuums: Emerging paradigms

Reflections on the impact of graduate design education on professional design practice in the 21C

Ian McArthur

Having over 25 years experience as designer and design educationalist, Ian McArthur has held leadership roles in vocational and higher education in Australia and South East Asia. From 2001 - 2003 the author was Program Director of Graphic Design, La Salle DHU International Design College [Dong-Hua University, Shanghai, China]. He holds a Master of Design [Middlesex University, UK] and two education degrees [UTS, Sydney]. Ian's professional practice focuses on cross cultural design management and is based on a perspective that China, India, and Asia more generally, offer significant opportunities for design as a profession to maximise the potentials of collaborative practice, new technologies and design education in the global community.

Ian is currently Coordinator of COFA Online Undergraduate courses and is a member of the Omnium Research Group at The College of Fine Arts (UNSW).

Background and context

The practice of design is changing. This is of course not necessarily a new phenomenon. Our work as designers has always been moulded by developments in technology and has always reflected the societal shifts and cultural values of the day. Notwithstanding this, the central role of designers has remained fairly constant, being traditionally concerned with making critical judgments about the aesthetics or function of images, information, objects, products, and environments. However, the emerging paradigm increasingly positions the primary role of the designer as that of a facilitator – or orchestrator, of the diverse inputs and processes required to effectively address contemporary design problems. There is now, more than ever previously, a need to be adaptable and able to morph into team-based contexts that can be characterised as multi disciplinary, cross-cultural and online. Design education programs, and indeed the design industry itself, must move rapidly to reflect this or risk irrelevance as other professions also move into this territory.

There are often shortfalls and inadequacies in the education students receive. The skills they need to effectively work in professional practice are not necessarily the ones that are emphasised. DiPaola, Dorosh and Brandt (2004) describe a situation where, "Today's educational system adapts too slowly, if at all, to the rapidly-changing economic realities of the increasingly digital marketplace. Students need new methods and strategies for development of skills and systems that bridge the gap between schoolwork and professional work..."

Openness to change is essential in order to cope with the increasing complexity of the global terrain, and more evolved skill sets are needed to address challenges the design profession faces. GK Van Patter (2005) of the NextD Foundation suggests that: "In the old days of linear processing the designer was often called in near the end of the project as form giver. In parallel processing environments all stakeholders are much more likely to be in the room from the beginning of the project. Therefore the question today is: do designers have the skills and tools necessary to participate in the initial strategic stages of complex projects? Design education has been extremely slow to wake up to the implications of these two above-mentioned drivers." Whereas designers have often worked within distinct 'silo' like disciplines, there is clearly increased emphasis on cross-disciplinary approaches. As Buchanan (2004, p35) states, "Design is no longer a self-contained discipline that can exist in isolation. Designers must understand and work closely with colleagues in other disciplines." The design process is becoming a social and inclusive structure, contrasting with the often exclusive and somewhat 'mysterious' process of traditional practice. Emphasis is now on "how" a solution can be reached rather than "what" the end product might be (or look like). This has lent a new transparency and a more obviously externalised complexion to the practice of design.

Design problems within single discipline-based contexts are typically relatively simple and can often be solved by one person, or teams of designers working from a similar skill/knowledge base. In contrast, the emergent context requires a shift in approach that encompasses diverse, often non-discipline specific processes running in parallel. We are witnessing a dramatic shift to a globally networked online, collaborative, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary paradigm of practice. It may, as some argue, be a case of change, or lose credibility in terms of professional leadership as other disciplines co-opt what has traditionally been seen as the realm of the designer. 'Design thinking' has become a buzzword in business and business education particularly in the USA and Europe with business schools incorporating design subjects into their programs. Expect to see traditionalists struggling with issues that are not yet clearly defined. At this point there are more questions than answers.

If design graduates need to be multidisciplinary in outlook and capability, cross-culturally literate and adaptive, facilitators and collaborators – then what does this mean for the way design education is delivered? What are the skills design graduates need in the global environment? How are these skills identified and delivered? What is the "connect" between undergraduate and postgraduate education and how is this interpreted by course developers and in turn industry?

The American-based but global enterprise IDEO is very clear about the kinds of graduates needed and how this can be achieved. Their assertion is that higher education needs to realise the importance of interdisciplinary practice and work across disciplines, universities, and industries to increase the value of student's experiences. IDEO maintain

that institutions should teach rapid visualization skills in association with methodologies required in large informational projects. Importantly, this balance must be achieved while maintaining the craft skills of design students.

Above all, higher education institutions must teach designers to be good learners. ...IDEO hires those who demonstrate the ability to learn quickly. Projects often do not allow or demand that IDEO designers become 100% experts in a client's area of expertise. Instead, IDEO designers must get up to speed quickly on enough of the issues while leveraging their design expertise...

— Danny Stillion, IDEO (2000, p.34)

The bigger picture

The international language and emphasis of design has become increasingly affected by the emergence of China and other Asian economies as key drivers of product development and the opening of new markets. This is significantly reshaping all sectors of industry, not least the design industry. More western designers and academics (including Australians) are looking to engage with the China market, but as anyone who has spent any significant amount of time in China will recognize, successful integration of design practice and pedagogy into oriental cultural contexts will only be achieved on terms that may well be unfamiliar to the western mind. How do we as educators (and industry) respond to that? Meeting the needs of the international marketplace depends on broadening our assumptions and exploring diverse realities (Buchanan, 2004, p.38).

Engagement is essential, and in fact this presents significant opportunity if approached in an eyes wide-open manner. The China scenario is unique but often not recognised as such. Clearly, as Lorraine Justice, Head of the School of Design at Hong Kong Polytechnic, points out, there is an ongoing shift from the idea of 'made in China' to that of 'designed in China'. The demand for design from the many thousands of factories between Shanghai and Hong Kong instructed by the government to create products, make a profit, and not lie dormant is unprecedented – but so is the associated complexity.

...all of those factories are eventually going to have their own design departments or design consultants helping these factories to put out their own products.... China does not have enough designers to design products, let alone provide design leadership. The world doesn't have enough designers to supply China.... China knows that in order to compete in the World Trade Organization they will need to improve design efforts so their products can compete in the world market. This information will be like a bullet from a silencer to the West if people don't realize what this effort in China means in the large scheme.

— *Designing the Future – Exploring China's Design Transformation*
Lorraine Justice, Head of the School of Design Hong Kong Polytechnic –
www.nextd.org



Figure 1. Xujiahui shopping district, Shanghai (2002) Emblematic of China's rapidly growing demand for design

I do not mean to suggest however that it is simply a problem of supply and demand. Dilnot (2003, p.14) tells us that, "One of the terrible consequences of late capitalism is that it persuades us – to a degree impels us – to live in a perpetual present, excising both historical and futurological understanding. The present today means 'the economic modernization of China' – a good and laudable goal given the material impoverishment of the vast majority of China's citizens for most of this century." But China, Dilnot predicts, will encounter very severe ecological crises in the coming decades impacting on development and environment in the widest sense. The economic implications of these problems are likely to be massive, as will be the social and political ramifications. This raises, what for me is one of the more crucial issues—that of the ethical dilemma of how design, and by implication designers, will work within the complexities and consequences of these processes. He also predicts that, "... major problems will manifest themselves globally, as well as in China, by, say 2015, and perhaps much earlier and that this will begin to require a new kind of scientific, technological, and planning effort in which design is centrally involved. It follows that a student who graduates today ... will be facing these problems at, say, age forty-five ... the peak of his or her career. How well trained will he or she be to face these problems?" (2003, p.14). Dilnot's position quite correctly identifies that the problem is profound in scale and has serious implications for the credibility of the profession to say nothing of the wider consequences.

To date, we are seeing few innovators in design education that are able to expose students to learning that provides experiences in global, virtual teams working on complex design problems. The exploration of Buchanan's "diverse realities" unavoidably implies immersion in different cultures and an embrace of 'otherness'. This is of course a challenging scenario to industry and individuals, designers and academics alike. But it is a challenge that cannot be avoided if we are to retain traction and viability as an industry. Designers and educators are therefore impelled to envisage a pedagogy at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels that addresses the requirements of a global economy while promoting sustainable cross-cultural practice that positions the role of the designer in response to the new realities of industry.

Establishing a focus

Before relocating to Asia at the beginning of 2001 to work as a designer and design educationalist, after six years leading the design department at Hunter Institute of Technology in Newcastle, I had almost no idea of the emergence of this bigger picture.

Such matters were not part of my day-to-day practice or perspective. How design education and practice related to the global context, and more specifically Asia, was not discussed much in my experience in Australia. Like all of my peers, the important professional concerns were focused on the local context and the needs of industry in a regional sense.



Figure 2. In the studio, LDHU International Design College, Shanghai (2002)

As I adjusted to a new and ‘alien’ cultural landscape (foreigners or ‘lowai’ are officially classed as aliens in mainland China), it became apparent that even with considerable industry experience, there were limitations to professional progression for those without postgraduate qualifications. Education is highly valued in Asia, arguably more so than anywhere else. Indicative of the extent of this outlook is the assertion by the UK based Trade and Investment Council (2004) that, “Educational books make up a significant 83.8 per cent of China’s book sales.” Whereas in Australia, I have observed, one might be employed as a designer on the strength of experience and portfolio, in an Asian context qualifications are generally more highly prized. My relocation itself however appeared to lead me to the opportunity to remedy this situation.

30 My role of Program Director of Graphic Design and Multimedia at La Salle DHU International Design College (LDHU) in Shanghai was a complex one. In addition to

managing, marketing, teaching and providing leadership in the diploma level graphic design and multimedia programs, there was the responsibility for the development, management, and delivery, of degree level undergraduate programs. The courses were validated by Middlesex University, which continues to be engaged in numerous similar partnerships around the world. One of the conditions of the validation agreement between the two institutions was that the international teaching faculty, especially Program Managers, be encouraged to undertake postgraduate studies at Masters level to further lend both credibility and expertise to the fledgling undergraduate program offered at the college's campuses in Singapore, Shanghai and Beijing. Convinced that this would be beneficial to my professional development, enrolling in the program was a logical step. The MA Design (Profession Practice) was administered from London with contact from lecturers and course coordinators via email and coursework provided in printed learning materials.

My previous experience as practitioner and educator was acknowledged in the form of credit points attributed after an extensive process of documentation of learning, practice, and professional specializations. The Middlesex postgraduate program was structured as coursework with a strong research emphasis that directed students to investigate a relevant area of interest to them. I had for some time been experimenting with, and developing online learning resources and strategies related to design education at vocational level, and the question of cross-cultural application of these tools had been at the forefront of my curiosity about the topic. Therefore it was logical, and exciting, to have the opportunity to further legitimise this ongoing professional interest. The theme of the final major project was encapsulated in the question *"Can promoting and delivering design and design education be effective in an online cross-cultural context?"*

The action research approach of the course was very beneficial in revealing opportunities for investigation into the development of online design education, design processes across cultural boundaries, and the education of designers in the emerging global market. Given my location, this ultimately provided insight into many of the underlying and discreet processes involved in working within the Chinese cultural context. Furthermore, my observations and experiences in the local Shanghai industry indicated that cross-cultural, globally dispersed design teams were rapidly becoming a reality, and that economically, China is a significant driver of new configurations of how, why and where design is conducted and the kinds of outputs produced.

Informed by these notions my objective of developing new cross-cultural online learning materials evolved into the most significant of the project aims and this culminated in The COLLABOR8 Project. After testing materials developed previously for teaching foundation design studies online without much success, I began to explore how the students' cultural background could be leveraged in creating meaningful learning experiences. My initial successes using this strategy in the classroom lead me to consider how this could be utilized in the online learning environment to create collaborative projects. The first of two COLLABOR8 projects (so far) was a collective learning experience linking Chinese interior design students with Australian graphic design students online, to work together on a design problem through exchange and development of ideas, images and text within small workgroups. The project employed simple web technologies (email, instant messaging, discussion boards) to facilitate and support relationships between the learners. The focus was on fostering mutually "creative understandings" through collaborative processes that allowed for personal expression of cultural identity through design activity. My dissertation

argued that the COLLABOR8 methodology, "... identifies and resolves the issue of how online educational resources might be applied to design education and how this can, in the current context of globalisation, be useful in providing opportunities for contemporary work practices that transcend national borders and cultural difference and integrate people in valuable and profitable relationships...."



Figure 3. [left] COLLABOR8 Student collaboration: "Time", Liu JinLiu [China] and Renee Harrison [Australia] 2003 and [Right] Student work: "Memory" Zhang Ling [2003]

Reflections on the postgraduate experience

My own study experience, in some respects, mirrored that of the online student – physically separated from peers and instructors, all learning mediated by technological interfaces. Undertaken in geographic isolation from tutors and mentors, and with few reference resources available in English, the process presented significant difficulties. This proved, in a sense useful, because it revealed first hand the challenges faced in a distance mode of education very clearly.

Schon's theory of reflection-in-action [1987, p.26] provides a suitable reference point to reflect upon the learning achieved. Learning emerges through observation, experience, reflection and hypothesis. During this learning process, there were numerous instances where realization emerged from reflection. This resulted in changes and evolutions of strategy as responses to new information, shifting factors and new priorities. Subsequently, the documentation and the final project developed as the result of reflection on 'reflection-in-action'. The course modules required 1) documentation of previous work history and learning, 2) development of a comprehensive plan identifying the scope of an area of research, and 3) the execution of the plan documenting, developing and extending the original study proposal into an open ended process that, in this instance, was to evolve within my design practice and teaching. Following an exegetic process documents were produced articulating appropriate responses to the various objectives set within the

curriculum. Students in the course were required to write about their intuitions, thoughts and feelings to express and describe motivations, experiences and ideas as they related to their work history. However, articulating the ongoing process of research and reflection was, for me, unusually challenging. I found that expressing the nature and implications of the experience of living and working in the Chinese culture through verbalization and writing often proved inadequate in constructing precise and meaningful descriptions for others.

Buchanan's aforementioned assertion that design is a social process resonates when reviewing the documentation I produced during the initial course module *Recognition and Accreditation of Learning*. Much of my previous professional history has been involved with community or public contexts. Therefore, it subsequently appeared appropriate and logical that the outcome of the major project was a *collaborative* response to the proposed question of delivering educational experiences across cultures utilising online technologies. Additionally, the collective nature of Chinese society meant that I was experiencing unfamiliar ways of working that are relevant to the emergent global dynamic where China is increasingly central to design and production processes. Such processes are indicative of the kinds of skills design graduates will increasingly need to be cognisant of in order to work in the global arena.

Working with cultural processes

Attending meetings with co-workers, suppliers, clients and others highlighted the inherently paradoxical role of being simultaneously observer/manager and learner/facilitator. This was beneficial in providing practical experience with, and demonstration of, important and culturally appropriate behaviours. Organisational structures of all kinds in China are very hierarchical and 'status gap' is a key consideration. The kinds of behaviours I needed to master and be sensitive to were wide ranging but included showing appropriate deference to seniority, acknowledging rank in introductions, correct use of business cards, adoption of appropriately respectful location and body language, and an emphasis on listening. What struck me was that the more sensitively and reflectively this was carried out the more successful the subsequent outcome would be in terms of meeting my own expectations for a project. A specific example can be seen in the negotiations related to the specifying of appropriate stock from the large paper supplier Hiap Moh.

Throughout a series of meeting where samples were provided and discussed in detail, advice offered and designs reviewed for appropriateness, the process was one where the importance of politeness, respect and acknowledgement of each participant's knowledge was paramount. Great care was taken to ensure both supplier and client's needs were discussed and as far as possible met. In fact the underlying process was characterised by 'mianzi', a deeply acculturated aspect of Chinese society based on the giving, and saving of face. Failure to acknowledge and work with this process will undoubtedly result in failure of any transaction. In this instance, rather than being a rapid business transaction carried out expediently and efficiently the respective parties did not appear to be concerned with how much time was saved or attributed but rather focussed on a successful outcome for each stakeholder. The experience was of particular use in defining and participating in Chinese cultural and business processes related to achieving strategic objectives by fostering and nurturing business relationships through courteous, and exploratory enquiry and response.

33 Parallel to this one can observe in this situation the role of another crucial cultural

mechanism '*guanxi*'. Translated literally as 'relationship' it is used in a sense that in a similar western context may be described as a kind of nepotism but is in fact a very advanced form of social networking where established and *trusted* relationships are the basis of all business and social transactions. This is an extraordinarily subtle form open to ongoing open-ended negotiation once established. Investment in time is essential for fostering *guanxi*. A formal relationship between the paper company and the college was clearly well established through prior collaborations and an appropriate amount of mutual respect was in place. This was expressed through the presence of senior personnel, as well as more junior staff from both organizations. The process of investing in long term genuine relationships and friendships firmly based in trust and respect is crucial to one's success in any aspect of Chinese life.

A key factor was the experience of being unable to express myself directly. Communication was often conducted through an intermediary. This in itself echoes Chinese culture where directness is often avoided in observance of the cultural mechanisms of *guanxi* and *mianzi*. These two dominant social constructions are deeply acculturated and must be considered in many if not all transactions. It is important to consider the consequences of actions that may in a western situation be considered "normal", but in Chinese culture be offensive or unacceptable, and have negative effects on outcomes. Through trial and error the foreigner comes to terms with these essentials for survival in China. Acquiring a currency in this area was a prerequisite to meeting the specified course objectives.

The learning documented in the final dissertation was also informed by my emerging understanding of aspects of Chinese typography and design. Mediated through the input of translators and assistants, the design process provided a unique opportunity to observe and learn in parallel to managing and providing leadership. Assimilation within Chinese workplace culture, observing the appropriate cultural protocol and processes in order to achieve design solutions, and create positive learning experiences, while meeting design objectives, proved invaluable as a means to establishing viable and productive working relationships. As a vehicle for the course's final dissertation The COLLABOR8 Project was assessed as having effectively fulfilled the broad underlying aim of being able to facilitate learning about cross-cultural design utilising online tools. The consensus between myself, and the course supervisors appeared to be signalling significant potential to further develop methodologies for bringing about learning in a contemporary idiom for digital designers.

A reality check

Returning to a leadership role in vocational design education in Australia was characterised by culture shock and professional indifference from peers to the experience and knowledge gathered in China. Subsequently, I reluctantly accepted a general internalized view that the postgraduate experience had little tangible value to me after all. Within three years I took up an offer of a higher education role at The College of Fine Arts (UNSW) out of the educational management loop. It might, however be argued that despite substantial reservations about the relevance of my particular postgraduate experience to work practices here in Australia, it has been appropriate preparation for working within a diverse multicultural student base. This is all the more so as a significant part of my current activities are involved with the coordination of undergraduate, elective and public online courses in art and design education. Further to this, my ongoing collaboration with

a Shanghai-based design group (instigated initially as part of the research “experience”) forms another tangible and industrially relevant outcome of the program. Cross-cultural design and online collaboration have therefore shown some relevance to my subsequent professional development, although not necessarily in ways that have furthered my ‘career’ in terms of my own expectations. I would make a point here of suggesting that I see my expectations being typical of postgraduate students.

Upon reflection, the achievements and insights gained in this postgraduate course have been significant albeit tempered with limited interest from peers in Australia. It is clear the program was beneficial in developing my understanding of, and orientation to, design research in general. There remains the issue however of whether relevance and demand for this knowledge within the design industry in Australia exists, regardless of the realities of the global context. Observation suggests the creative industries in Australia are inevitably small, and cross-cultural design collaboration as a standard in practice is still relatively new. Despite the ubiquity of internet-based communication, geography, and the notorious “tyranny of distance” certainly plays a part in this situation.

The research I carried out during the course was specifically focused on China and the potentials of working collaboratively in online design education contexts. Initially, my subsequent professional experiences suggested that this focus was too specialized and not necessarily one that has been embraced by traditional design education institutions, or indeed the design profession itself. One is therefore inclined to question the course outcomes as a source of industry relevant professional development when confronted with general indifference from colleagues in both industry and educational contexts to the knowledge generated in the research. Is a postgraduate course encouraging students to focus tightly on their own interests relevant to the broader industry? Individual research interests do not necessarily assume patterns that are resonant with the requirements of industries.



Figure 4. Examples of the author’s ongoing cross-cultural practice – graphics for e-cards prepared in web-based collaboration with Chinese peers (2006–2007)

On the other hand, this situation may be reframed to argue that the local design industry may not necessarily be ready to adopt the essential changes that would enable engaging with Asia/China over the long term. There is evidence to suggest that designers globally are wary a perceived negative effect that China will have on business. Much hyperbole is generated in the media, by business associations and in industry-based publications such as CORE 77 and others about China and its influence on all sectors of industry. Writing in CORE 77, Elaine Ann suggests that given “China’s staggering GDP growth rate of 9.1% and its emerging 1.3 billion people market (almost 5 times the size of the U.S. population) many western designers are concerned that all design jobs will migrate to China. The emergent “China Paradigm” – for want of a better term – although unavoidable, is extraordinarily complex and fraught with difficulties that defy easy understanding or the application of simple “truths”.

Coupled with the nature of the postgraduate program discussed here, this particular set of circumstances led the course advisors to agree that a research focus of cross-cultural design education in web based contexts was a strongly justifiable direction in which to proceed. It examined relevant issues regarding the emergence of China and web-based design education (mirroring industry trends to globally distributed teams). Such factors appeared to point to a strong relevance to both industry and education. Industry generally requires educational models that reflect changes in practices and in turn more generally respond to the needs of society. The situation has implications far broader than simply the issue of rapid economic development in China. A similar perspective is supported by design educationalists such as Anne Normoyle [13 March, 2003], who cites the need to encourage a wider perspective through [4],

“... the development of training programs that are increasingly relevant to an industry that is becoming increasingly global. To achieve this, the education itself must become more globally focused. Content that allows appreciation of global markets, global responsibility and strategies that enhance responsiveness should compliment existing content and be structured to allow for an appreciation for the global market place.”

— Normoyle, A., International Fashion Education Forum, Shanghai, 2003

Normoyle’s apparent reference to vocational and further levels of education and more specifically “training” reveal, I suggest, an implied requirement for corresponding developments in higher education that reflects the nature of the kinds of roles postgraduates will undertake. It is important that all levels of practice and production embrace the standards that industry expects.

Conclusions about the postgraduate study experience

It is reasonable to assume that students undertake postgraduate study in order to fulfill intellectual ambitions, improve career prospects, achieve personal goals and raise the level of one’s practice in a way that supports this. In addition, developing a deeper perspective on one’s professional discipline is a common expectation.

Given the reflective account posited here, there *is* evidence of a positive learning continuum fostered at least in part by postgraduate study. What still remains an ongoing challenge at both personal and professional levels is the leveraging of the learning acquired

in order to continue development. The imperative to undertake a doctorate looms large and this in itself is an obviously serious and ongoing commitment. Again however, the question of postgraduate design education's current relevance to industry is raised. One might argue that postgraduate design education makes a lot of sense if one's industry is academia. However within the graphic design industry in Australia, I have observed very few (if any) designers with a PhD qualification that forms a significant *necessity* in their practice.

Research into graphic design positions available within Australia (and the wider Asia region) illustrates that what is required in senior roles (Creative Director/Art Director) is long-term experience in Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) or the global 4A advertising agencies (as they are known in Asia) internationally and domestically. Evidence of experience in branding and brand management is highly regarded and sought after but although most courses do provide learning experiences in the area of branding, real *experience* cannot actually be gained in academic programs. Most students leave undergraduate and postgraduate programs and enter industry armed with a range of ideation, conceptual, presentation, research and technical skills and begin to acquire learning on the job. Academically speaking, the usual requirement is that of BA Design with a strong portfolio. I conclude therefore that on the basis of advertised creative positions and their selection criteria, postgraduate academic experiences are not especially valued in the graphic design industry in Australia. Experience and portfolio are shown to represent everything a potential applicant is expected to demonstrate. This is certainly the case in positions within the typical advertising context – even at the higher end of the market.

Ultimately however, providing industry, designers and academics are able to change ingrained perceptions and behaviours, the ongoing adoption and development of digital collaborative tools across industry, and the cross-cultural scenarios offered to practitioners by globalisation and an emerging China is promising. Technology has tended to decrease the influence of national borders and those who are equipped to make the transitions required to operate within the new spaces opening up in the global economy will benefit most through being able to adopt new models of practice. Given that there is still significant lack of clarity about what these new skill sets might actually be, the ability to adapt to scenarios outside one's traditional areas of expertise is now paramount. Graduates and lecturers within both undergraduate and postgraduate programs need to be cognisant (and comfortable) that the traditional perceptions of what a designer "does", are no longer so relevant.

References

Buchanan, R., *Design Issues: Volume 20, Number 1*, Winter 2004

Changing China — The Creative Industry Perspective: A Market Analysis Of China's Digital And Design Industries UK, Trade and Investment Council, 2004

Designing the Future - Exploring China's Design Transformation", Lorraine Justice, Head of the School of Design Hong Kong Polytechnic. Retrieved July 18, 2007, from <http://www.nextd.org/02/05/02/index.html>

Stillion, D., IDEO, 2000, Retrieved August 21 2007 from <http://www.ideo.com/pdf/Interactions3-00.pdf>

Dilnot, C., *Design Issues: Volume 19, Number 3*, Summer 2003

DiPaola, S, Dorosh, D, Brandt, G, *Ratava's Line: Emergent, Learning and Design Using*

Collaborative Virtual Worlds. Retrieved February 22, 2007, from <http://www.digitalspace.com/papers/sig2004-paper-ratava/index.html>

Elaine Ann, *The Top 10 Myths & Truths about Design in China*, Retrieved July 18, 2007 from http://www.core77.com/reactor/08.04_china.asp

Normoyle, A., International Fashion Education Forum, Shanghai, 2003

Schon, D. (1985). *The Design Studio: An exploration of its traditions & potential*. London: RIBA Publications Limited.

Vanpatter, G.K. (2003). *iMFrame: Innovation Models Evaluation Framework*, NextDesign Leadership Institute. Retrieved February 20 2007 from <http://www.nextd.org/03/index.html>

visual: design: scholarship

Research Journal of the
Australian Graphic Design Association

MANAGING EDITORS—

email:
journal.editor@agda.com.au

ISSN: 1833-2226

Mark Roxburgh
University of Technology Sydney

Sidney Newton
University of New South Wales

Katherine Moline
College of Fine Arts
University of New South Wales

visual:design:scholarship is a fully refereed, online journal that aims to stimulate, support and disseminate design research with a focus on visual communication design in the Australian context. The journal seeks particularly to encourage contributions that speak to, and on behalf of, the visual communication design industry in Australasia. The aim is to include contributions from students, practitioners and academics. A range of research approaches, methods and forms of presentation is anticipated.

visual:design:scholarship is published online continuously, as articles become available. All of the articles in any given calendar year will comprise a separate volume. Special editions will be published as additional numbers within each volume.

Types of Contribution

Refereed Articles (minimum 3,000–5,000 words or equivalent, no maximum). Original and previously unpublished scholarship in visual communication design of a research or developmental nature, including: case studies, student dissertations, minor theses, research reports, new methodologies, substantial position statements, reflective analyses, critical reviews, visual essays, experimental practice and curriculum developments. This is an opportunity to have a scholarly work internationally blind refereed for academic publication.

Format Requirements

We are interested in a variety of formats for refereed articles. All submissions require the following:

- a separate page indicating a Title for the article/statement/view, the Full Name for each Author with their current affiliations, a Contact Address listing email and telephone details. Please avoid the identification of authors within the manuscript.
- an abstract or short summary of 100–200 words.
- 3–6 keywords that identify the main issues for the readership.

- the main document should be clearly organised with a hierarchy of headings and sub-headings that structure the presentation. The style should be clear and concise, presented for an Australian graphic design audience. In general, please avoid the use of footnotes and endnotes. Referencing should follow the Harvard Style (reference in the text by author, name and date, cited at the end in alphabetical order), and all tables and figures should have descriptive captions (including source information). A short (100–200 word) biography of each author for reader information would be appreciated. We also encourage authors to submit examples of their own practice, student work or other examples that generally illustrate and support the tenor of the article. Such examples of work will be published along with the biographies.

Submission

Submissions should be emailed to the Editors in Word (.doc) format only. For other submission possibilities, please contact the editors.

Email: journal.editor@agda.com.au