

EDITORIAL

Research Notes: Communication Design

Communication Design is the official publication of the International Council of Design (ico-D). It was formerly *Iridescent* – an online peer-reviewed research journal, which sought to establish a benchmark for design research and to make this available to a broad international audience. *Communication Design*, like its predecessor, was born out of the Council's strategic aim to support the development of communication design education including all facets of theory, practice and research. *Iridescent's* first supervising editor (2009–2011) was the Dutch writer Max Bruinsma who proposed that *Iridescent* should be a 'prism on design research' in that it would 'filter the luster and see what it is composed of' (Bruinsma 2011, 10). My tenure as Supervising Editor began in 2011 and saw the publication through its change in branding. Whilst the name may have changed, the journal's remit remains much the same: *Communication Design* is a lens through which emerging discourses in contemporary communication design research and professional practices are made manifest, critically examined and developed.

We can trace these goals even further back into ico-D's publishing history. The biannual magazine *Icographic*, for example, founded in 1971 by John Halas and designed and edited by Patrick Wallis Burke (1), actively sought to bring to the attention of a wide design audience a diverse range of research projects and reports about the visual world. This included scholarly research into sign perception, typefaces for bilingual printing, new technologies of laser holography, the role of the book designer, changing responsibilities of the typographic designer, problem-solving in the man made environment, and design from the perspective of a woman designer. *Icographic* was notable for the publication of articles by both practitioners and academics, and for rich graphic imagery from designers around the world.

As we begin with a new volume of *Communication Design* and a new publisher, it seems timely to revisit what we mean by the term 'communication design'. In his book *Communication Design: Principles, Methods and Practice* (2004) Jorge Frascara (president of Icoграда from 1985–1987) acknowledges the difficulties of pinning down a single definition. He problematizes the use of the term 'graphic design' as having too much emphasis on the physical nature of what we do and less emphasis on the profession. Frascara proposes instead the term 'visual communication design' where 'the three essential elements of the profession: a method (design); an objective (communication); and a medium (vision)' are contained. (Frascara 2004, 4) However, in recent times, visual communication design has become an expanded practice. The remit of the designer has necessarily broadened from the design of the visual to also include the design of sound, haptics, experiences and services. And as a result, it might be argued that the term 'communication design' better describes and supports a range of new kinds of practices, processes, and methods.

The board members of ico-D and this journal's editors thought long and hard about what to name our publication. We came up with several iterations before resting on the title of 'Communication Design'. We added the subtitle to ensure clear articulation of our interest in broadening out the scope to 'Interdisciplinary and Graphic Design Research'. In our view, the title better reflects where contemporary design practice and research is heading, and it allows space for the definition to evolve.

The breadth of approaches is made evident in this issue. James Branch's article 'Mapping the Mast (2014)' examines communications infrastructures through a case study research project focusing on a 'contested mobile mast' situated in Winchester, UK. The project takes as its

A quarterly Review of International
Visual Communication Design
Issue number 1, June 1971

icographic

1

Price per issue 1 US dollar

Special issue on VisCom 71
the Congress and Exhibition on
the Learning Industry

Contents

Speakers at VisCom 71
Congress and Exhibition
Computer animated movies

Differentiating images
Symbol design in the GDR
Two Belgian designers
Armin Hofmann
Design and Science

Holography
Icograda exhibition in Prague
Audio-visual hardware
Definition of Cybernetic
Design organisations in Sweden

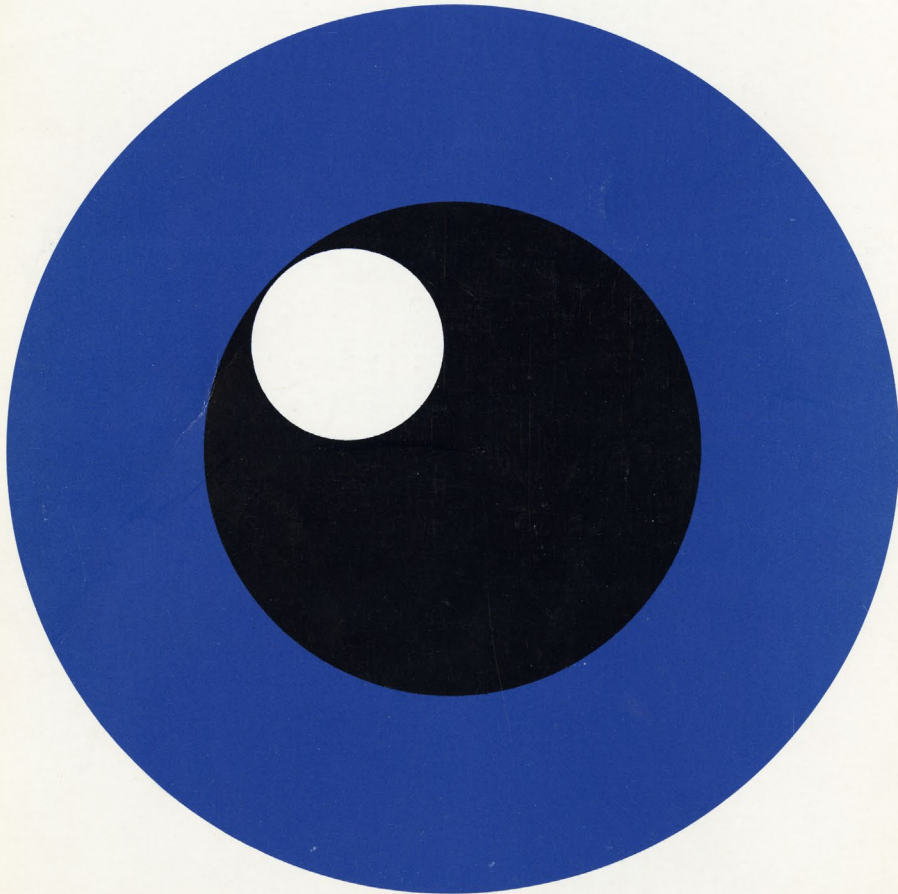


Figure 1. icographic: A quarterly Review of International Visual Communication Design. Issue number 1, June 1971. Design: Patrick Burke and Geoff White. Image courtesy of ICOGRADA Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives.

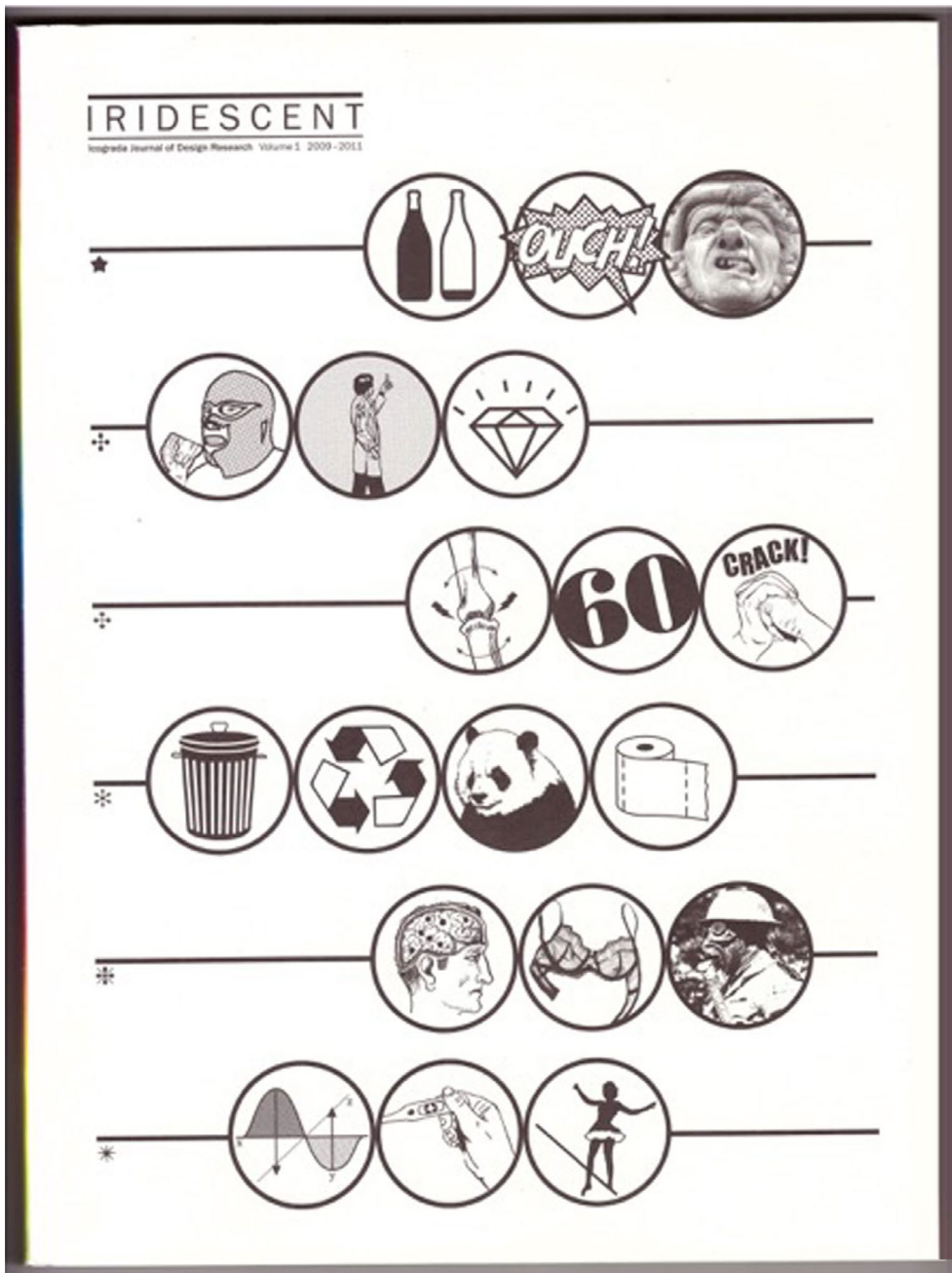


Figure 2. Cover from *Iridescent: Icograda Journal of Design Research*, Autumn, Volume 1 (2009–2011). Design: Fabbrica: Arianna Di Betta, Michela Povoleri; Creative Direction: Omar Vulpinari. Copyright: International Council of Design (ico-D).

theoretical starting point research undertaken by media scholar Lisa Parks on the deliberate act of disguising mobile masts as trees in the US and what this means for artists and communities. Branch extends Park's analysis (and others, including Bruno Latour with Actor Network Theory) by asking what is the role of communication design in representing mobile masts and infrastructures 'in a way that encourages citizens to participate in sustained discussions and decisions about ownership, development and access'? His findings reveal a context of local politics and DIY protest, where ultimately what is exposed through a process of mapping are the explicit interactions among people, objects and systems.

Typography and type design continue to be a key area of scholarship for design researchers. Articles on type appeared frequently in the early issues of *Icographic*, and Michele Buchanan's piece titled '@facevalue // expanding our typographic repertoire' continues this tradition. Here Buchanan proposes a new set of typographic glyphs using existing punctuation marks to denote tones as a way of enhancing communicating through text-based media (e.g. IM, social media, email and texting). Buchanan takes her research directly to the focus groups who are practiced users: a group of high school students in Winnipeg, Canada. Through a survey method she is able to test the 'intent and interpretation' so as to 'advance the clarity of our text-based dialogues.'

The reading of images and their meanings as formed in popular culture establishes a foundation for exploring brands and urban subcultures in an article by Bobby Campbell titled 'Hot Sauce and White Chocolate: And1 and Ghetto Style in Basketball'. Campbell contrasts the advertising campaigns and branding of the American sport apparel company And1 with the perceived opportunism of other athletic brands who have co-opted inner-city cultural expressions including graffiti and hip hop music. His analysis determines that a 'credible' relationship to the streetball community is made explicit, in part, through the aesthetics of And1's branding and marketing of 'urban black anti-hero style'.

Design education is at the heart of what we do and research into the delivery and development of our curricula remains an important focus. Grant Ellmers' article builds upon existing models of project-based learning: 'The Graphic Design Project: Employing Structured and Critical Reflection to Guide Student Learning' takes us through his research process and toward the development of a reflective learning framework. His research is tested in the classroom with final session undergraduate Graphic Design majors at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Another form of reflective practice is explored in Andreas Luescher's visual article 'Poster as Design Dialogue'. He engages with the idea of a visual dialogue by using the poster as a tool for evaluating the final semester experience of senior architecture Design Studio students. The results are a series of dynamic portraits of studio culture using collage as a methodology.

The history and theory of graphic design continues to be an underdeveloped area of academic study. Our hope is that by highlighting a different archive in each issue related to communication design, we could spark not only an interest in the history of artefacts but also in how archives can inform design practice. In this issue, Catherine Moriarty provides insights into the organizational history of ico-D in her article on 'The Archive of the International Council of Graphic Design Associations at the University of Brighton'. Whilst the work of prominent designers is important, so too, she argues, is 'an equally fascinating but less spectacular paper trail' that is found behind the scenes and gives us insights into the processes, business and design decisions that are taken in order to produce the work. Archives are not only repositories of artefacts but also of knowledge, and they warrant featuring, which we will be doing in each issue.

An academic journal would not be complete without a reviews section. Our reviews editors are reaching out internationally to cover a broad range of exhibitions, conferences, films, policy documents and much more. In this issue Rebecca Ross reviews an exhibition held at London's Barbican Centre titled 'The Last Digital Revolution' where she highlights amongst other points, the importance of archiving digital history. 'Craft values', with a practitioner-based approach

to research, is the subject of Philip Luscombe's review of the University of Falmouth's two-day conference: 'All Makers Now? Craft Values in Twenty-first Century Production'.

Future issues will build upon the directions established here. We are very pleased to be publishing with Routledge/Taylor and Francis as the next chapter of ico-D's publication history begins.

Notes

1. Patrick Wallis Burke was a Principle Lecturer at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication in Chislehurst, UK. At the time ico-D was known as the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) and then as now, was committed to promoting the profession and design education internationally.

References

Bruinsma, Max. 2011. "Iridescent: A Prism on Design Research." In *Iridescent: Icograda Journal of Design Research, Autumn, Volume 1, 2009–2011*, edited by Max Bruinsma, 10–11. Montreal: Icograda.

Frascara, Jorge. 2004. *Communication Design: Principles, Methods and Practice*. New York: Allworth Press.

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