Shaping Industrial Design Education in Australia

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EDITORIAL

SHAPING INDUSTRIAL DESIGN EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Welcome to our first 'prototype' issue of the Industrial Design Educators Network (IDEN) journal. By prototype, as per a design process, we envisage this issue to be the first of a series of evolving issues of the journal for the Industrial Design Educators Network. Each issue will focus on emergent themes giving a voice and forum for Industrial Design educators in our region to discuss and share industrial design education issues and research. The journal aims to fill a void between academic peer reviewed journals and consumer orientated design journals. It will exist primarily as an online product enabling easy dissemination and quick access. However, appreciating the need for a tangible 'product' we will also produce a limited number of 100 print copies. We believe this should be sufficient to stock a number of libraries as well as the shelves of the odd academic.

IDEN has over the last several years evolved as an informal grouping of Industrial Design program heads from across Australia and New Zealand. It first formed as the Industrial Design National Network in 2005 at a meeting in Canberra hosted by Stephen Trathen. The Network discussed a range of shared concerns and initiatives around benchmarking curriculums, graduate standards and employer expectations.

Its new name, IDEN, was formulated as an inclusive acronym for our NZ colleagues from across the ditch and to include in the future the greater Asia Pacific region.

The theme adopted for issue one is Shaping Industrial Design Education in Australia. The backdrop for this theme is a recent succession of educational program reviews that have occurred or are occurring at many universities. In our region University of South Australia, Canberra University and Auckland University of Technology have moved to a 3 year undergraduate program with a lead-in to post graduate study. This is based on the so-called 'Bologna model', which advocates a three-year undergraduate program with advanced courses taught in a postgraduate environment. Sometimes referred to as a 3+2 or 4+1 model. Other universities have indicated that they may also follow as periodic or forced curriculum reviews occur.

Stepping back from the educational setting there are bigger questions as to the direction and future of Industrial Design in our region. It has always been the case that employment opportunities within the narrow definitions of Industrial design have been few and highly sort after. This is likely to remain the case with a 'challenged' local manufacturing sector and the 'sideways growth' in Industrial Design professional services.

Nevertheless despite increasing class sizes and subsequent graduate numbers, Industrial Design graduates continue to find interesting and rewarding careers in diverse fields and benefit from their creative problem solving skills and knowledge of materials, process and usability. The theme of large class sizes is a theme explored in the paper by Andrew Scott and Marianella Chamorro-Koc (Teaching Strategies in the Context of a First Year Industrial Design Large-Sized Class). They outline the challenge of engaging student learning in large class studio contexts. Focusing upon the first year they describe two strategies, team-based off-site experiences, and intensive 'concept bomb' activities in the classroom as a means to reinforce leaning experience.

Beyond the immediate questions of dealing with class sizes an overwhelming response to our call for papers centres around themes of change and unsustainability. This should be of no surprise as current circumstances in our society are defined by uncertainty and change as we deal with economic and political volatility in a backdrop of an unfolding ecological crisis that many still fail to recognize and others remain indecisive as to what to do. Tony Fry's paper 'Designed Away Your Dreams' offers us a context to approach such complex and challenging questions. He challenges designers to deliver a totally different design agenda based upon a design practice of elimination, adaptation and redirection to deal with dramatic change in an age of unsettlement.

With specific regard to climate change, Jonathon Allen, Tara Andrews and Abby Mellick-Lopes ('Industrial Design is Dead. Long Live Industrial Design') argue that Industrial Design curricula must change in response to a climate-changed future and the current university climate. Designers will require interdisciplinary competencies if they are to be effective in mitigating climate change impacts, but more importantly on how to work within changed socioeconomic contexts resulting from climate change. To do so it will require design students to first develop their ecological literacy. The objective to develop designer's knowledge at critical and complex thinking is discussed by Steve Reay and Andrew Withell in their paper 'From Product Design to Design Thinking: The establishment of a new product/industrial design programme in New Zealand'. Following Auckland University of Technology's move to the 3+1 model in 2008 Withell and Reay reflect on the outcomes of the challenges, and the future opportunities of their first cohort under the new program structure. A core element to the new program was the integration of 'Design Thinking' together with traditional 'Design Skills'. The result was that students who embraced the new approach developed design solutions with deeper environmental and social values. While new 'values' become increasingly important to design, other older values still resonate in our conversations about what constitutes good Industrial Design education and practice. In the final essay, a compilation of discussion pieces by the late Jim Montague to Industrial Design staff in 1985 ('Memo to Staff of the Industrial Design Department. Sydney College of the Arts 1985'), we glimpse into the past as to the, context, concerns and vision for implementing new curriculum.

The shape of industrial design education in our region is changing, and as evident from the papers in this first issue of IDEN, is likely to change at a much accelerated rate over the coming years. We hope this journal and the educators network will be influential and contribute to shaping the changes occurring in our respective institutions. We also hope you enjoy IDEN issue no. 1 and it would be great to hear from you with regards to this 'prototype' issue by letting us know what works, what doesn't, along with your new ideas and recommendations. What would you like to see in issue no. 2? The more engagement and feedback IDEN receives from you the more relevant IDEN can become.

→ Miles Park and Berto Pandolfo