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Editor's letter

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«THE VISIBLE UNIVERSE IS A STOREHOUSE OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS TO WHICH THE IMAGINATION GIVES A RELATIVE VALUE; IT IS A SORT OF PASTURE WHICH THE IMAGINATION MUST DIGEST AND TRANSFORM»

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

SIGNED

LAUNCH ISSUE

EDITOR'S LETTER

The word SIGNED is an anagram for DESIGN. Maybe there's a message in that. The design process is a profound signature of our creativity and the purest artefact of our common humanity. In the 1968 movie *The Planet of the Apes*, there is a scene in which Charlton Heston, who plays the human space ship captain, is forced to realise that the planet he has crashed upon is Earth. He does so because he comes across the remains of the Statue of Liberty, designed by Frédéric Bartholdi.

It is design, the way in which we take the materials of the natural world and shape them in accordance with our imagination, that makes this planet uniquely human. Should the human race ever be obliterated, future visitors from space will know our story by the things we made. That is how we SIGNED this earth, by DESIGN.

Our chances of avoiding an apocalypse are enhanced if we SIGN our environment with a clear sense of values, with a feel for what increases the quality of life for all. And thus this launch issue of *Signed*, the HKDI's new tri-annual magazine, is devoted to value-driven design, with stories about Charles and Ray Eames, who looked for human connections in everything they did; Peter Buffett, who, despite his billionaire father, finds true value in music and humility; and Koyo William, an HKDI alumni who is pushing the boundaries of environmentally sensitive fashion.

We also explore the ways design can help improve life for elders, raise green consciousness and protect endangered ethnic minorities like the Miao people of China. We hope *Signed* will begin a conversation within the HKDI community, and between HKDI and the rest of the design world about the values of design and their place in the human project. And why *Signed*, apart from its anagrammatical qualities? One explanation lies in the power of signing, be it by way of a signature or by giving an entity a sign. Let the great philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein explain, "There is no such thing as subtracting the cardinal number 5 from the cardinal number 3. But with the introduction of signed integers, we have a new system of numbers... The new statement that was accepted, namely that one can subtract +5 from +3 (to get -2) applies to signed integers, which means something quite different." In other words things that are signed – a number, an intersection, a painting, a contract – are changed. And that's what design does to the world; it changes it forever.

DANIEL JEFFREYS
Editor-In-Chief