



January 2012

## Editor's letter

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### Recommended Citation

(2012) "Editor's letter," *SIGNED: The Magazine of The Hong Kong Design Institute*: , Article 17.

Available at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-de-signed/vol2/iss2/17>

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«THE UNIVERSE  
IS TRANS-  
FORMATION;  
OUR LIFE IS  
WHAT OUR  
THOUGHTS  
MAKE IT.»

MARCUS AURELIUS

# TRANSFORM

ISSUE TWO

## EDITOR'S LETTER

The influential German artist, illustrator and educator Josef Albers spent much of his life studying colour and exploring its use in abstract painting and graphic design. He began his career in Berlin as part of the Bauhaus movement, was forced to move to the US when the Nazis closed Bauhaus and in six decades of work he collaborated with great artists such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Willem de Kooning and his students included revolutionary painters like Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Ray Johnson and Susan Weil. Albers' became head of the Department of Design at Yale University in 1950 and remained an influential figure there until his death in 1976. In 1971 he founded, with his wife, the Josef and Anni Albers foundation, which is devoted to studying art in its social context, based on Albers refusal to divorce art from its cultural consequences. Toward the end of his life Albers wrote, "I've handled colour as a man should behave. You may conclude that I consider ethics and aesthetics as one." In other words, Albers always tried to use his art in ways that would improve the environment in which he lived. For him art and design should serve society and not vice versa. This makes Albers and his fellow theorists in Bauhaus a suitable source of inspiration for this second edition of SIGNED, in which we explore the way that art, aesthetics and design can transform education and how education can, in turn, transform society as much as it serves the needs of individuals. We hear from Michael Lynch, the new CEO of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, who believes the new billion dollar arts and entertainment centre "needs to reflect the art forms people

are interested in." And Liz McLafferty (in *Tailor Made*) plus three influential jewellery designers (in *Shining Stars*) talk about how designing clothes and accessories can both be done in ways that are more sustainable, creating aesthetically desirable objects while protecting the beauty of the planet. This theme is also at the heart of *Change Agents*, which features the work of Professors Helmut Langer and Fumi Musada, who argue that applying the principles of sustainable design is an essential aspect of good aesthetics. In *Play by Play*, the history of Hong Kong's toy industry provides a case study of the way design shapes the lives of those it touches, while *Matrix of Delights* reveals how new curatorial techniques founded on innovative technologies can help preserve and give new life to ancient cultures like the Dun Huang. Art for arts' sake still has a role to play in the aesthetic and creative life of humanity but the crisis facing the environment and economy as non-reusable raw materials are exhausted forces all in the design community to ask if the ecological consequences of their work makes our current lifestyle more sustainable, or less. If ethics and aesthetics are one, then the stroke of a pen, the slice of a chisel and the stitching together of one piece of fabric with another are as much moral as they are artistic acts. Art is transformation, design is metamorphosis, and thus it's increasingly apparent that the changes wrought by the aesthetic arts and crafts have a role to play in creating a world and a society that is both beautiful and sustainable.

DANIEL JEFFREYS  
Editor-In-Chief