



December 2018

Editor's Note

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-de-signed>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2018) "Editor's Note," *SIGNED: The Magazine of The Hong Kong Design Institute*: , 1-
Available at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-de-signed/vol20/iss20/18>

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Design at VTC Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *SIGNED: The Magazine of The Hong Kong Design Institute* by an authorized editor of VTC Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact wchu@vtc.edu.hk.

Ever since the sword was invented in Ancient Egypt some 3,600 years ago, it has been used to wage war and settle scores. For several hundred years in Europe, duels to the death were fought — first with swords, then with pistols — to avenge a gentleman's impugned “honour”: the term to “throw down the gauntlet” (a metal glove worn by armoured knights) is still employed to mean issuing a challenge.

Yet fencing as a pure sport did not fully emerge until its inclusion in the first Olympic Games in 1896. It had, however, long been part of an aristocratic education, with young men being sent to learn the finer points (literally!) of what was regarded as a “noble art”. The give-and-take of fencing was said to inculcate moral values, swordplay being “like conversation — you have to learn to listen to your opponent”.

Hence the dichotomy: on the one hand fencing is a contest, with a winner and a loser, but on the other it is a collaboration, with both sides seeking a kind of truth. Or as Nelson Mandela put it: “Strong people are formed by opposition, like kites that rise against the wind.”

French is the lingua franca of fencing, with most of us being familiar with the injunction “En garde!” (“Get ready!”) and the word “touché” to acknowledge a hit, as heard in the dozens of famous films featuring

“swashbuckling” actors from Errol Flynn to Johnny Depp.

In this second of our series on Design Thinking, in which we compare three kinds of creative set-up — the solo operator, the two-person bureau and the large studio — with sports with which they have a certain affinity, we are examining the similarities between a design duo and fencing. It is our contention that for all the obvious differences, the two have a lot in common.

And perhaps the unifying factor is Design Thinking. As Olympic fencer Tim Morehouse sums it up in an adjoining article: “The only way to determine if something meets the bar you've set is by testing it in the real world... sometimes you will look silly when you are testing out a new move... but don't let that deter you. The moves that I ultimately developed to succeed at the Olympics came through years of work and years of ‘looking silly’.”

In other words, he developed his winning moves through trial-and-error. And for that, you need a partner. Your relationship with that partner can be convivial or competitive, but you need someone to bounce ideas off — to “look silly” with if necessary. And don't forget that the words “duo” and “duel” both simply derive from the Latin word for two. It takes two to tango, two to fence... and two to form the most basic creative alliance.

AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF DESIGN.