INTRODUCTION

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The year 2000 represented a watershed year in the history of Design Education and Design Promotion in South Africa. For many years there has been active lobbying and advocacy to bring home to all sectors of South African society (national and provincial governments and administrations, education authorities, captains of industry, professional designers, design engineers, architects and planners, educators of every stripe, etc.) the absolute imperative to put design and design education at the centre of government strategic thinking. It has been a never-ending endeavour, with educators and design promoters, with almost no resources, continuing to pursue this agenda with unflagging energy and commitment.

And these efforts have started to bear fruit.......

In February 2000, The Design Education Forum of Southern Africa, together with the Design Institute of the South African Bureau of Standards, organized a Design Summit, held at the end of February in Cape Town, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders. For the first time a large number of individuals from different sectors came together to forge links and start developing strategies for promoting design and design education, to the ultimate benefit of South African society. The discussions which were initiated at this Summit have continued, and part of this Conference was devoted to a workshop looking at some of the critical issues. The reports of this workshop, together with some of the findings from

the Design Education task team at the Summit are included at the end of these Proceedings.

The theme of this conference, Reshaping South Africa by Design, was derived directly from the conclusions of the Summit, and the outcomes of that event are reflected to a certain extent in the conference structure. Some of this will be apparent from these published Proceedings, some will be less tangible. There was a conscious attempt to bring together a wider range of disciplines than had previously been the case. For the first time we had delegates and presenters from such diverse fields as architecture, engineering, craft, and the school sector. The networking that took place as a result of this rich mélange started to forge the kind of cross-sectoral links which will eventually bear fruit in tangible projects.

We were also very privileged to have had as one of our keynote speakers Dr Richard Buchanan, who was brought out with National Research Foundation funding as an International Research Fellow. His keynote address is an important document and he draws extensively on the opening speech of the Hon. Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, capturing and echoing some of the fundamental insights that the Minister broached.

Prof Asmal elaborated in his address on the importance of design and design thinking, and, as Dr Buchanan indicates, used the design of the new South African constitution to exemplify the power of the design process. In the end Prof. Asmal departed considerably from his prepared speech, and it is a matter of profound regret that a live recording was not

made at the time, and that many of his insights are not fully represented in the printed text.

However, what is of great significance is that, for the first time, a Minister of Education in the South African government clearly demonstrated a profound understanding of the role of design for social and economic development. This augurs well for future developments and growth in this particular discipline.

The opening address of Prof Asmal, and the keynote address of Prof Pitika Ntuli both highlight the context in which this Conference took place. The African Renaissance is a theme that President Thabo Mbeki has expressed as a core initiative in focussing South African, indeed African thinking on recognising the rich knowledge and heritage resources of our continent and their potential for developing unique solutions to the problems we face. Design has a key role to play in realising this potential, and we need more and more to reflect in our educational processes on how we can harnass these resources to realize our goal of educating young designers to meet the challenges facing our African society.

These reflections are beginning to form a significant part of our Design Education Forum conferences. Most of the papers and presentations in this publication are evidence of that.

We still have a long to go in developing a design research culture in our institutions, but there is increasing awareness of the need to do so. Research is the tool by which knowledge of our context can be developed and appropriate solutions sought and found for the multiplicity

of problems that we face. The Design Education Forum annual conferences provide an important forum for critical debates and for nurturing a research culture. For this reason we believe it important that there be a full record of all presentations, even those that perhaps do not meet the academic standards usually required of academic conferences. We function in a developing country, an emerging economy, and our academic discourse likewise reflects a development process. Delegates have important contributions to make to the emerging discourse, even if not expressed with academic rigour. The process of sharing their insights is the first step toward participating in critical debates, and their knowledge should not be lost.

The Proceedings are organized into sections which reflect this differential. A specific section has been set aside for refereed and accepted papers. Papers which either were not submitted for review, did not sufficiently meet the required academic standards, or arrived too late to be subject to review, have been included in another section. Where possible, we have also tried to reflect the content of some of the workshops and informal presentations. Some are merely summarized in an abstract; others have more extensive text. We have also departed from standard proceedings in that, where possible, we have included images. It has always seemed strange to me that a discipline which is so strongly visual is usually represented in conference proceedings in the form of text, diagrams and tables only. I hope that some of the richness of the visual offerings will be captured in this document.

In 2001 the tertiary design institutions in the Gauteng region will be hosting an international conference, timed to coincide with the Design South

Africa International Conference and Board meetings of Icograda and IFI. These events will be taking place within the newly designated South African Design Week, a government initiative which arose directly out of the Design Summit recommendations. The content, focus and approach that is evident in these Proceedings will be taken forward to that event.

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