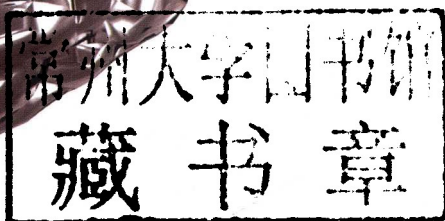


DESIGNFORWARD

CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

HARTMUT ESSLINGER FOUNDER OF FROG DESIGN

ARNOLDSCHÉ ART PUBLISHERS



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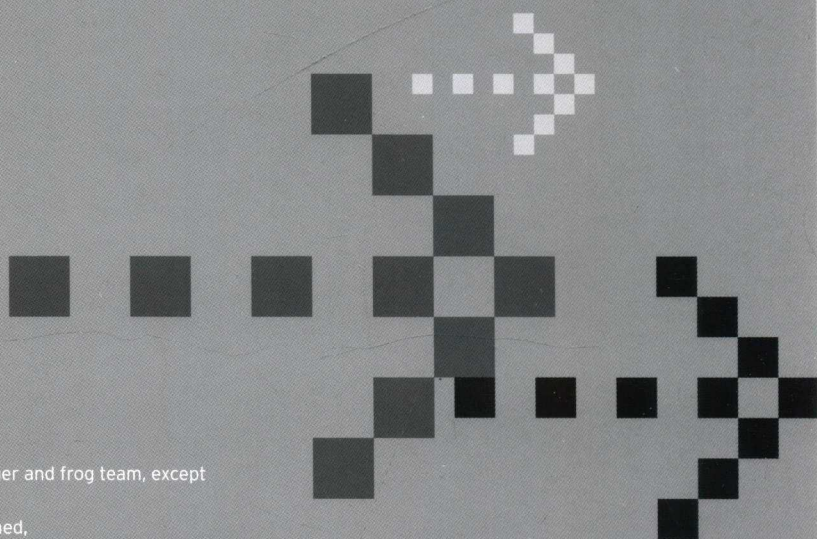
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INTRODUCTION

After a long career with frog – the design agency I founded in 1969 – and as a creative consultant for some of the world's best and most successful entrepreneurs, executives, and companies, I wrote my first book, *a fine line – how design strategies are shaping the future of business*.¹ In that book, I focused on the corporate side of the business-design alliance and outlined why Strategic Design is most successful when it is an integral part of a company's innovation and business strategy. Due to both the business focus and the limited space, *a fine line* wasn't as complete as many would have wished, and I fielded many questions about organization and process in the field of design and in the working relationship between business and design. Because *a fine line* was published in German, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, the feedback was – and still is – global in nature. I used the questions, comments, and criticism that I received about my first book as my motivation for writing *Design Forward* as well as for structuring the information I offer within it.

In general, the input I received fell within three categories. I used those categories to structure the contents of *Design Forward* in three parts:

- **Part I: Creating a New Culture of Design.** In this part, I offer an overview of the design profession, its historic development, current challenges, and future opportunities. The chapters in this part explore what we mean when we talk about creativity, the role of creativity in business, and how my earliest creative experiences helped to form my own design practice and approach the process of “right brain-left brain” collaboration. This part also offers specific ideas that can help any company make the best use of design in its strategic plan and operation.

- **Part 2: Shaping the Design Revolution.** Here, we explore the educational opportunities and challenges of training students – of both design and business – in the professional competencies necessary for effective cross-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration. To illustrate the outcomes of the educational approach I outline here, this part includes a portfolio of the work of my own design students.
- **Part 3: Leading By Design.** In this part, we examine the role of design in business today and how that role must evolve if we are to create a more productive, sustainable future. I offer my perspectives on the growing urgency for a more integrated, strategic role for design in business, along with a careful review of the power of business-design collaboration in driving the evolution of material and social cultures around the world. I provide advice for finding and choosing the right designer – and the right design clients – and examine the potential benefits of business leadership with a deeper understanding and appreciation for creativity and its processes.

History is inextricably linked to the future. In this book, I offer my personal views about the road that has brought design and business to their current states, and the best ways we can move forward along a new path by building competitive, globally networked industries fueled by Strategic Design. Much of what you are about to read is my opinion, and many may disagree with my views. But, I have been blessed with great success, and I have learned much from my failures, so my views, ideas, and proposals are, at least, worth considering. The only constant in life is change, and with that truth before me, I have kept the focus of this book trained on the burning challenges we face in transforming our current business relationships and models – issues such as outdated forms of corporate structure, overproduction of goods, financial and ecological waste, and unjust social imbalance. There will be many solutions to these problems, but they all will require new ways of thinking and working, not only between different professions – Strategic Design being well positioned as a holistic catalyst – but also across different countries, cultures, and mentalities. No matter what specific form these transformations take, we must move from a “money culture” to a “human culture.” That power shift has already begun, but we need to accelerate the change.

The urgency I feel for this goal sparked my second professional passion, that of educating a new generation of designers. Although education has assumed a larger role in my life during the past few years, I am not new to the profession. My first official assignment as an educator began in 1989 when I accepted a call to be one of ten founding professors for the Hochschule fuer Gestaltung (HfG; College of Design) Karlsruhe in Germany, where I pioneered the first convergent design class in Germany – which we called Digital Bauhaus – combining work in both physical and virtual products. I was given a substantial boost in my work with that class by the ZKM (Center for Art and Media) in Karlsruhe, the world’s first “digital museum.” That first teaching

experience taught me that educating students in design wasn't the same as mentoring designers at frog; open education has different objectives. Accepting that students have different talents, and that all of those talents have to be encouraged, was a major step for me. A quote by Galileo Galilei became my great inspiration: "We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves."

From 2005 to 2011, I taught at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria, where I took over the Master's class ID2, which became a great success. My students won many national and global design awards, the class was ranked highly by Bloomberg Business Week, and my graduates landed good jobs around the world. Together with assistants Stefan Zinell, Nikolas Heep, Matthias Pfeffer, Martina Fineder, and Peter Knobloch, the students and I invented new methods and processes with a clear focus on *convergent, social, and sustainable*.

Some of my student's best work appears in this publication. In addition to a portfolio of student designs, this book includes chapters by some of my doctoral students, including Johanna Schoenberger's research into creative business leadership, and Markus Kretschmer's examination of creative sciences. In addition, you will read about two research projects my students conducted on the economic effects of design and its legacy, and the important recovery of the estate of the great Austrian-American designer Victor Papanek, whose work is described and analyzed in this book by Martina Fineder and Thomas Geisler.

I think it fair to say that the past six years of teaching and researching have opened up for me some new perspectives about the professional education of designers and about creative education in general. I am convinced that in order to meet our global challenges, we need radical changes and improvements in creative education. We also must understand that young people have the perspective of an entire life ahead of them, and we cannot afford to limit the potential of creative children by pushing them through a school system that basically stifles their talent. Students shouldn't have to wait until they've graduated from high school to enjoy, explore, and expand their creativity.

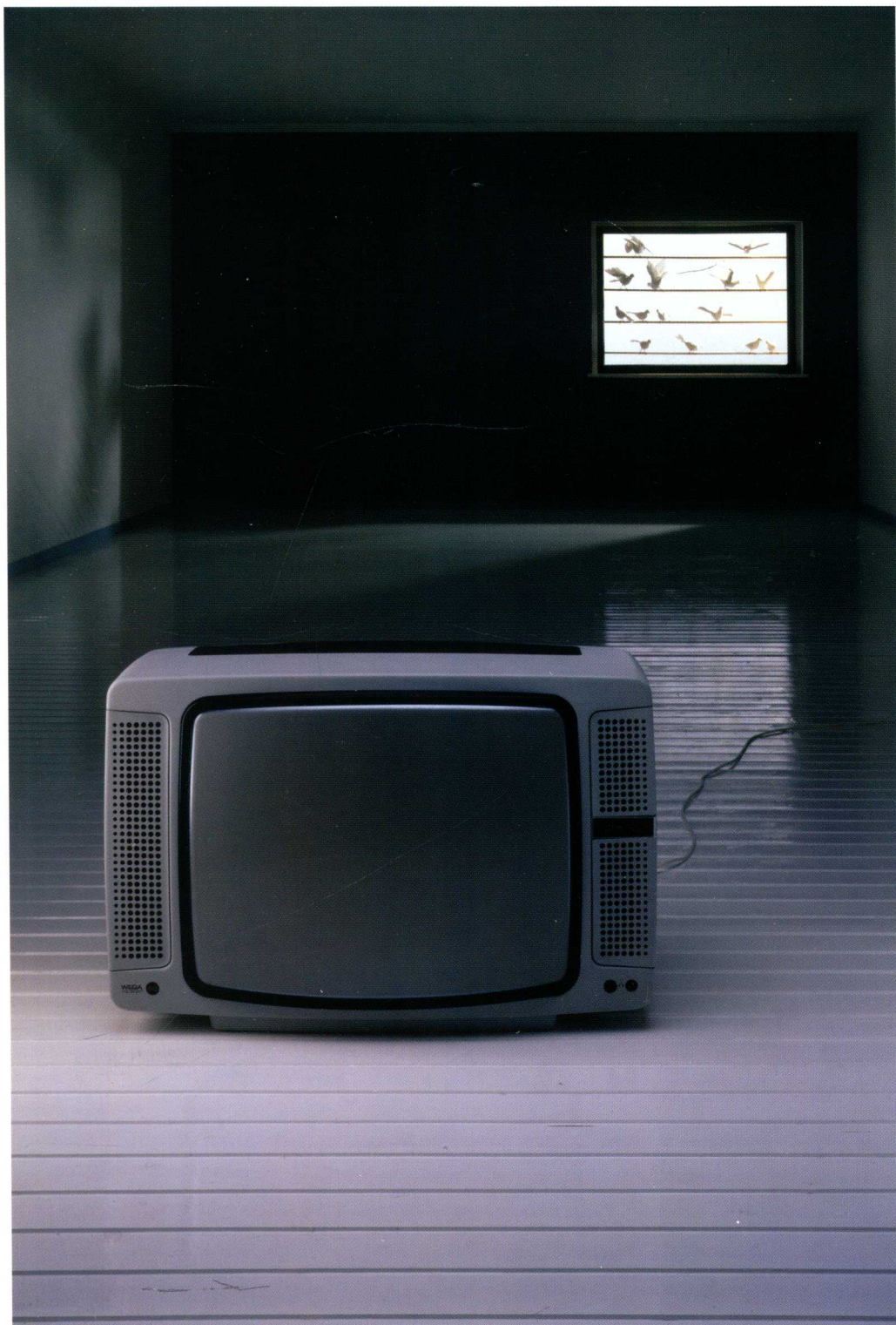
Finally, I also take time in this book to look ahead toward new opportunities, as I propose some practical ideas for positive change. To expand upon these ideas, I describe my decision to accept the invitation by the DeTao Masters Academy, Beijing, to set up the new Master Class for Strategic Design at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA) within Fudan University, Shanghai. Why China? As you will learn in this book, I have agreed to help build a Strategic Design program in China because that's where most consumer-tech products – and, soon, most automobiles – are being produced. As I argue in the final chapters of this book, because most of these products are designed in the United States or Europe, the motivation behind them is "make it cheap" rather than "make it sustainable," and the processes involved are fragmented. I believe that we have to educate a new creative elite in China, which will be able to collaborate on a global scale and create great products following Lao Tzu's dictum that "Less is more." If we want to drive

an environmentally responsible, sustainable form of manufacturing, we have to end disjointed and often wasteful manufacturing processes, and China is a good place to start that work.

Right now we have a very emotional and sometimes irrational discussion about the relationship between the United States and China, which actually has emerged as a kind of codependency. There is a lot talk about cheap products made in China, trade deficits, and currency politics. The Chinese view on these issues is often overshadowed by China's reputation for exploiting its people and natural resources in order to produce zillions of products, most of which have been badly designed in the West. Naturally, there are many books written on this subject by investment bankers chasing money or wannabees like Donald Trump as well as too many naïve speeches by politicians who only want to get re-elected. In my view, none of this helps solve the very real problems we face in global production. What we need is a new and creative way to solve the challenges – ideas that extend beyond the United States and China – and we need to begin by designing the right stuff. Only then, can we convert the challenges before us into great opportunity. We may not all agree on the “how” behind this movement, but we all should be able to agree on the “why” that drives it. The bottom line I propose in this book is simple: We need dramatic change by new thinking and bold action, and the watchwords for this change are *convergent*, *social*, and *sustainable*.

Design creates physical and visual results, and we have tried to encapsulate both forms in *Design Forward*. The design of this book supports its role as an object both for reading and for viewing. Gregory Hom – frog's longtime creative director – created a visual code that elevates the book's storytelling function into a visual experience. I hope you will enjoy that experience and remember the thread of fundamental design principle that runs throughout these pages: Form follows emotion.

1 Hartmut Esslinger, *a fine line: how design strategies are shaping the future of business*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, an imprint of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009.





PART 1

CREATING A NEW CULTURE OF DESIGN

