Foreword

One of the great paradoxes in design education is that undergraduate students are encouraged to study and model the behaviors and attitudes of famous designers, but without being aware that such esteemed individuals rarely work in isolation. The vast majority of designers work in teams, as part of both the conceptualization and production processes. Even 'design-auteurs' or 'artist-designers' must still interact with, respectively, clients, consultants and contractors, or patrons, curators and publishers. As a result of this, collaboration is widely considered an essential part of the design process and a critical skill for developing a career in the design industries. However, while design practitioners and the professional bodies that represent them acknowledge the importance of groups and teams, there has been a general reluctance (either an unwillingness or inability) to emphasize the importance or team processes, or embed the development of team skills, in undergraduate design curricula. There are many reasons for this situation existing, but we cannot underestimate the general attitude, implicit in much design education and promulgated through the design media, that creativity is an individual trait.

One of the oldest myths about creativity is that it is found in the subconscious part of each person's mind, and it is only through engagement with a muse – a mystical teacher or source of inspiration – that a person's creative potential is unleashed. This conceit, often known as the 'romantic' model of creativity, stresses the importance of only one relationship, between teacher and student, and even then, the student is a strangely passive participant in the process. Parallels to this idea can be found in the historical apprenticeship and enculturation models of design education. In the former, the student is treated as either a passive vessel, waiting to be filled with knowledge, or as a tool, much like a pair of compasses, which is an extension of the master's hand. Through the apprenticeship model, the master transforms the student by passing on his or her own individual creativity and skills. The enculturation model, the historic antecedent of studio-based teaching, has a surprisingly similar educational transaction at its core. However, in its more recent and enlightened incarnation, it too stresses that creativity is innate to an individual, and education nurtures or draws it out, allowing the individual to reach their true potential. If such innate potential is not present, then a range of learnt strategies can be substituted.

There are certainly alternatives to these three models, including those which stress that creativity can be learnt if an appropriate context is available. Nevertheless, in the three classic models of design pedagogy and cognition, the relationships that exist are either between the teacher and student, or the student and the design. Neither of these acknowledge the critical importance of the team, in developing and applying creative skills. Indeed, a startling lacunae is uncovered if we seek to explain why so much has been written about teamwork, teambuilding and team operations in some fields (especially management and business), and design processes and creativity in others, but there is little or no overlap between the two.

It is in this context that Richard Tucker's book, *Collaboration and Student Engagement in Design Education*, is so significant. It offers a landmark contribution to design scholarship and pedagogy, focussing to the problem of educating students for an environment where groups, teams and collaborative modes of working are not only common, but essential. Tucker's book acknowledges the challenges that have beset previous attempts to introduce team-based creative processes in schools of design. For example, there have often been practical disincentives for schools to encourage (or require) their students to design in teams including the fact that design teachers are often in their positions by virtue of their capacity to design, rather than their ability to prepare people for understanding and improving interpersonal communication and relations. Conversely, where teamwork assignments do exist in schools, they are sometimes used opportunistically, as an efficient means of assessing work, rather than as an important learning occasion. Students themselves can strongly resist team projects and especially those where there is some level of creativity or innovation required. They often falsely assume that their creative potential will be somehow diminished through its contact with others. Further complicating the adoption of appropriate team-opportunities in design schools, there are often bureaucratic impediments to team projects, including the need to provide grades that differentiate between levels of contribution.

Across the 15 chapters in this book, these issues and others are discussed in detail and a range of practical solutions are proposed and demonstrated. Fundamentally, Tucker's book brings together a series of case studies, from a broad disciplinary and geographic base, which readers can use to improve the way they prepare students for a career in design. While some isolated studies on these topics have been published in the past, this book's scope and aspiration set it apart from all previous work on the topic. I strongly encourage readers to see what lessons they can adopt or adapt, and thereby understand that the gap that so often exists between design education and teamwork, can be bridged in many productive and exciting ways.

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