

# EDITORIAL

*The nurturing and establishment of a credible academic base for design in South Africa has long been a personal commitment and one of the reasons for initially instituting Image & Text. The granting of academic accreditation by the Department of Education (from Number 6, 1996) was seen as a milestone along the way to reaching this goal. Being granted a position on the accredited publications list acknowledges that the calibre of content and writing in a publication meets a high academic standard. Equally encouraging has been the number and variety of articles being submitted for publication in the journal, showing how writers of diverse persuasions engage in purposeful debate with their subject. Regardless of the eclectic range of thoughtful and sometimes provocative contributions received, continuities and overlaps between design's component disciplines and allied fields are apparent and can be discerned.*

A theme that weaves its way through this issue of *Image & Text* is the question of identity, both historical and contemporary, technical and conceptual. It is explored from a number of viewpoints: professional, personal, societal, architectural and by means of graphic and linguistic expressions. Retha van Niekerk demonstrates the manner in which the *Horingboom Oasis* advertisement, one of a series of television commercials for Castrol Oil, deals humorously with how South Africa is attempting to forge an identity which comes to terms with the inequalities of the past. The profile/portfolio of TinTemple, a young graphic design consultancy in Johannesburg, underscores the way a uniquely South African visual aesthetic is being refined and distilled as an extension to an earlier and more direct appropriation of vernacular sources and inspirations. Jacques Lange points out that one of the cardinal issues confronting industry regulation is that of identity - how designers perceive themselves and how they would wish to be perceived. In a fascinating analysis of the exhibition *PORTRAITS, PRINTS AND PAPER* Marilet Sienaert explores the idea of shifting and constantly transforming self-identity revealed in the work of writer and artist Breyten Breytenbach.

Federico Freschi, Sabine Marschall and Jeanne van Eeden consider the built environment; Marschall from the stance of regionalism and Freschi through an exposition of the iconographic meanings of façades in the architecture of W H Grant between 1920 and 1934. Examples of Grant's architecture in central Cape Town are reviewed as an appropriate response to the South African urban context and to the concept of modernity in terms of corporate expansion and identity. Van Eeden places the suburban mall within the parameters of Postmodern post-industrial capitalism, illustrating how it contributes to the creation of class, economic and social identity. Anton Kannemeyer and Rolf Gaede delineate distinguishing attributes which imbue identity. Kannemeyer describes the inherent characteristics and technical processes that make comics successful. Gaede examines the visual-verbal dichotomy and defines the distinctive features of written and pictorial texts, a consideration of some import in South Africa with its varying levels of literacy.

Hopefully the information and debates conveyed through the pages of this journal do not remain within the academic and practising arenas, but serve to enlighten clients about dimensions of design which are perhaps less familiar to them. As design journalist and critic Rick Poynor comments in *Design without Boundaries*, '[t]he received wisdom among design insiders is that new design "languages" are changing the semantics of visual communication. Yet if ... the work ... does portend new forms of mediation and new kinds of media literacy, then outside the professional design magazines a phenomenon of the utmost significance is going largely unnoticed, or being touched on in only the most superficial terms'. There is a need for designers, in an increasingly complex and changing design environment, to keep their clients abreast of developments in design thinking and analysis.