All together now?

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All Together Now ...

I live in a small market town in England, which happens to have a very strong live music scene. The town boasts a couple of concert halls, is home to a couple of successful annual music festivals, and offers a range of regular open-mic nights, tune sessions, acoustic music nights, and folk club meetings that take place in different public houses and village halls around the area. These cover many different types of music – folk, blues, roots music, Americana, electronica, and even jazz – and if one so desired, one could watch or play live music almost every night. The most interesting of these music nights to my mind takes place every Sunday evening at The Nook, a down-to-earth drinking house packed with characterful people, often referred to as 'local colour'. The music here consists largely of traditional Irish jigs and reels, interspersed with traditional and modern folk songs either sung accompanied or a cappella. An eclectic mix of instruments is always present, including fiddles, mandolins, concertinas, accordions, flutes, whistles, bodhráns, and guitars. At random, one musician will start playing a tune, and after listening for a few bars we, the other musicians, join in – either playing along with the melody, or providing accompaniment by playing chords. Knowing the structure of traditional music and its 'rules' as far as they exist, each player almost instantly knows which key the tune is being played in, what chords to play, when one part of the tune will change into another, and, most crucially, when the tune will finish. Hearing all of these players work together, lost in their own worlds while they concentrate on playing the tune at often alarming speed, is a real experience, and as one we negotiate the chord changes and all, seemingly miraculously, finish abruptly at the same time. The other night, I started to sing a song, playing my guitar, and, as is usual when a song is played, the other musicians took more of a back seat. Some played along quietly, but most just listened intently and joined in singing the choruses when they appeared. I gave the slightest of nods to a fiddle player that was gently accompanying me, to let him know I was about to give him an opening in the song to play a solo, and at exactly the right point he launched into a stunning variation on the melody for a few bars before knowing just when to let me, as the vocalist, take over again. All this with no rehearsal or prior practice – indeed, often the musicians working together do not even know each other. It really is quite magical.

It strikes me that there are huge similarities between the act of designing and playing music. Design too is hugely diverse in its disciplinary range, occurs in numerous places, and is performed by designers either working alone, in pairs, as small groups, or as part of a large team. When working as a team, each knows when to work together, when to take the lead role, and when to allow others the space to reach their potential and just provide the necessary support, fully aware that the team together provides far more than the sum of its parts. Some designers work together regularly and have well-defined procedures in place for each project, whereas others may be brought together for the first time purely to work on one project. Yet, because of their understanding of the 'rules' of design as far as they exist, and because they understand the design process and know where they fit in the overall scheme, designers easily manage to work together to produce a final product or service in a way they might struggle to do working

alone. What ties them all together is their creativity. So, rather than tying the papers in this issue together by drawing threads out of each paper that relate to each other, I would purely celebrate their diversity, safe in the knowledge that their relation to each other through their discourse around different aspects of design is enough.

Continuing with our series of reflective opinion pieces on the changes in design research since the inception of The Design Journal 20 years ago, Susan Walker tackles the thorny issue of the apparent paucity in graphic design research. She points to the fact that over the last 20 years graphic design has, in fact, proliferated under a growing number of disciplinary designations, each hosting examples of highlevel, quality research. Part of the problem, Walker argues, may be the lack of understanding of this diversity when it is placed under the over-simplistic rubric of 'graphic design'.

In a thought-provoking paper titled 'Beyond Human Centred Design: Supporting a New Materiality in the Internet of Things, or How to Design when a Toaster is One of Your Clients', Leon Cruickshank and Nina Trivedi explore the technological developments affording previously passive objects agency – raising the controversial consideration of non-human objects being placed at the centre of the design process. This might sound contentious until one considers the extent to which autonomous technological systems already play a significant role in determining the experience of our everyday lives. A position, the authors point out, that will only strengthen in future. Now is the time, they argue, to engage with the implications for the design process arising from smart objects having agency and develop new fundamental principles for design that take non-human actors into account.

In 'Gut Feeling in Small Design Consultancies', Bob Jerrard, Lynn Martin, and Lucy Wright use a localized study to explore the issue of instinctive responses by designers in tackling design problems. Small design consultancies are examined because the authors suggest they are more likely to use 'informal' decision-making processes, despite the fact that, for those consultancies, such approaches are likely to present far higher risk than for a large company which might more easily absorb failure. Using participant observation, individual staff at 'serial innovating small firms' were interviewed over a six-month period to produce a series of narratives. These narratives were then analysed to compare the uses of rigorous analytical decision-making against the use of 'gut feeling' and tacit knowledge in product innovation cycles. The authors conclude that gut feeling is a frequently misunderstood term and that, although limited in scope, the research suggests that design teams regularly adopt both approaches throughout the new product development (NPD) process, with the use of gut feeling even being considered by many to be an aspect of 'best practice' in small consultancies.

In 'Green Can Be the New White for Wedding Dresses' Sang-Hee Kwon examines the little-discussed area of sustainability in relation to the large-scale western wedding event. Through focusing on social practices and attitudes to fashion in South Korea, the author aims to suggest more eco-friendly alternatives to the

traditional white wedding dresses that use so much material and are usually only worn once, which might be adopted globally. The eco-wedding is a fairly recent phenomenon – a reaction to the excesses of the typical event that is seen as a product of business marketing imperatives. The different types of eco-wedding dresses discussed include dresses made of eco-friendly materials, dresses made from repurposed materials, dresses made using less material and producing less waste, previously worn dresses, and convertible garments that can be transformed post wedding. Kwon concludes that a significant hurdle to be overcome is changing attitudes towards recycled materials and raising awareness of the available alternatives. The poor regard in which many hold the appeal and cost of the designs currently available also suggests that a more diverse range of styles needs to be provided.

The authors Suna Løwe Nielsen, Poul Christensen, Astrid Lassen, and Mette Mikkelsen attempt to bring together two research fields in their paper 'Hunting the Opportunity – The Promising Nexus of Design and Entrepreneurship'. Seeing the commonality shared between the two fields, in the ways that they both approach problems and aim to take advantage of future opportunities, the authors suggest there might be a 'promising nexus' where it can be made clear how design contributes to developing new business openings, and how entrepreneurship helps design to fulfil human needs. Using a case study of concept electric cars, the paper suggests there is value in an 'opportunity design process' that integrates the 'fuzzy' front end of the design process with the 'fuzzy' back end of the entrepreneurial process. Opportunity design, the authors state, brings conceptual and methodological knowledge together to activate analytical and practical knowledge, and so generate new opportunity spaces.

'Digitizing Traditional Cultural Designs' by Meong Jin Shin and Stephen Westland looks at the possibilities of developing a digital design tool to help transfer ideas from the past into contemporary contexts. The authors see three strategies: digitizing a concept of an original cultural design in order to apply it to a modern product; digitizing traditional design elements such as patterns and colours in order to apply them to contemporary materials; and digitizing a design system or production method to allow users to develop their own designs. Using this last strategy as a test bed, the researchers developed a digital design tool to digitize traditional Korean 'bojagi' designs and then enable users to create their own designs from those elements. The positive responses indicate the tool has potential in the fields of design practice, marketing, and education.

Jung Soo Lee and Sheila Danko are concerned with introducing a method to record and analyse the idea-generation and development practices used by fashion designers. Their paper, 'Revealing the Design Process: Inventing a Meta-Analysis Method for Documenting the Fashion Design Process', firstly reviews a variety of approaches to capturing design knowledge before describing a new meta-analysis method. The experimental study involved running practice-based design sessions with fashion designers, who were then interviewed about the approaches they had adopted. These data were used to generate a 'coding map' that provided an overview of the sequence of design processes used and documents the relevant features designers take from their sources of inspiration

to adapt into new concepts. The authors believe this meta-analysis method could be of significant use in design education, and for self-development of design practitioners.

The Journal's new section on PhD study reports outlines the work of Lucy Robertson, who describes her ongoing practice-led research into sonic textiles for health and wellbeing at the University of Dundee. Her research looks at combining traditional textile techniques with conductive materials, sound design, and aesthetics. Through this work, Robertson seeks to explore the development of self-identity through making, and to examine the ways in which textiles could be used as a vehicle to help further our understanding of dementia or help people with sensory impairment.

The issue concludes with two valuable book reviews. John Knight provides a summary of the emerging area of practice described in Design Anthropological Futures edited by Rachel Charlotte Smith et al., and Jan Michl provides a considered critique of Design and the Creation of Value, drafted by John Heskett and posthumously edited by Clive Dilnot and Suzan Boztepe.