

Editorial

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The second issue of *Image & Text* for 2016 is again an open issue, that is, it is not built around a specific theme, but contains five articles that deal with current work by researchers. Two articles deal with the issue of the representation and consumption of African-American and Afrikaner cultural identity respectively in popular visual culture. Thereafter, one article focuses on the experiential properties of type, and the issue of design for sustainability is tackled in the next article. The last research article deals with an investigation of material conceptualism in the work of the fine artist Alan Alborough. In addition to the research articles, there is a conference report on *People, images, a world. Images of human beings in missionary magazines during the time of the German Empire*, held in Mainz. As always, there are common areas between the articles that indicate the richness of current research into visual culture.

The first article is by Pramod K Nayar from the University of Hyderabad, India, and is entitled 'From graphic passing to witnessing the graphic: racial identity and public self-fashioning in *Incognegro*'. In this article, Nayar investigates Mat Johnson and Walter Pleece's graphic novel about lynching set in the American south in the 1930s. *Incognegro* (2008) uses the format of the graphic novel to deal with issues related to cultural and ethnic identity in the American south, and particularly the consequences of what happens when the African-American character Zane "passes" for white in a so-called 'racial masquerade'. The article centres on the practice of lynching and how this was spectacularised as a result of the technological agencies of modernity such as the railroad and camera, and postcards and the circulation of visual images of lynching feature in the discussion. This article forges a compelling argument around the performance of race and adds to our understanding of cultural complicity in the operations of racism.

The next article, 'Imagi(ni)ng 'alternativity': *Loslyf*, mainstream Afrikaans pornography and post-apartheid Afrikaner identity' by Marnell Kirsten, probes this first soft-porn magazine produced in Afrikaans in South Africa. Kirsten investigates the context in which this controversial publication appeared in 1995, only one year after the first

democratic elections in South Africa. Under the editorship of Ryk Hattingh, Kirsten believes that '*Loslyf* provides a glimpse into the desires, tensions and tastes of and for an imagined community potentially still shaped by a past ruled by censorship.' The author shows how the generally generic content of this type of publication was adapted to reflect the political and cultural context of the Afrikaans-speaking audience, which was until then uniformly categorised as being conservative and visually naïve. Kirsten concludes that 'even though *Loslyf* seems to be an exemplary exercise in finding the equilibrium between moments of being funny and clever, political and politically incorrect, kitsch and avant-garde', its attempt at 'alternativity' could not be sustained in the long run.

The third article, by Kyle Rath, is entitled 'Letters that speak: framing experiential properties of type'. Rath offers a wide-ranging overview of a relatively new field of investigation that concerns the ability of letterforms to encapsulate differing emotional responses in viewers. Rath looks at the structural and communicative forms of letterforms as agents of meaning in their own right. In other words, he maintains that letterforms are not just supplements to the semantics and rhetoric of the text, but indeed have their own level of rich connotative associations that deserve to be used with more sensitivity. Rath alludes to a number of case studies that illustrate this point, and warns against the generic use of letterforms and easy, standardised options that impoverish the inherent communicative potential of typography. He thus pleads for a more informed attitude by designers, who must learn to 'discern and internalise intentionally the communicative complexity of letterforms.'

The next article, 'Design for Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions: towards a more responsive curriculum in Cape Town' by Laskarina Yiannakaris and Mugendi K M'Rithaa returns the focus to communication design. The authors direct their attention at *Design for Sustainability* as circumscribed by bodies such as the United Nations and to what extent it is currently incorporated in the curricula of selected tertiary institutions in the Cape Town area. They emphasise that Design for Sustainability, which ultimately aims 'to build a community of change agents who are responsive to the environmental, sociocultural and economic impacts of their work', cannot be ignored in the South African context. They suggest in their findings that much more needs to be done in various sectors of the design community to attune students to their future roles as socially aware and engaged participants in society.

In the last article, 'Dismantling dichotomies: Alan Alborough's material conceptualism', Alison Kearney remarks that although a number of publications have appeared that deal with Alborough, 'much of the writing on Alborough fails to explore the apparent disjuncture between the material and conceptual in his work.' In an attempt to

redress this, Kearney engages with the materials that Alborough uses frequently in his large-scale works and they dialogue with the conceptual. In addition to looking closely at Alborough's most common materials – 'industrial materials like cable ties, plastic bottles, clothes pegs and fishing gut' – the author also looks at how his art-making contests the conventions of display imbricated in art exhibitions, as well as the manner in which spectators are encouraged to engage with the materiality and conceptualism of his art objects.

As previously noted, this issue ends with a conference report. Lize Kriel gives an account of the *People, images, a world. Images of human beings in missionary magazines during the time of the German Empire* conference held in Mainz in October 2016.

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